

WORKERS WORLD

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DÍA INTERNACIONAL DE L@S TRABAJADOR@S

Crece la unidad entre inmigrantes, comunidad negra y sindicalistas



WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

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Por Teresa Gutiérrez

Read English translation on page 6.

27 de abril—El 25 de abril, cuando se dio a conocer el veredicto de inocente a favor de los policías que asesinaron al joven afroamericano Sean Bell (23 años), activistas por los derechos de l@s inmigrantes, y much@s inmigrantes se unieron espontáneamente al movimiento progresista en una marcha de protesta contra este veredicto racista, en Queens, N.Y.

En noviembre de 2006, en la víspera de su matrimonio, Sean Bell murió bajo una lluvia de 50 balas. En las calles de Nueva York, los policías se convirtieron en juez, jurado y verdugo. El veredicto fue un nuevo mensaje enviado por el estado capitalista: las vidas de los negros no valen nada.

Inmigrantes y activistas pro inmigrantes convergieron en Queens junto a l@s que han estado organizándose por meses para obtener justicia para Bell. Llevaban letreros que decían: "Mexicanos apoyan a Sean Bell" y "NYPD + ICE = Racismo" (NYPD - Departamento de Policía de Nueva York; ICE - Departamento de Inmigración y Aduanas)

Este hecho es enormemente importante por la creciente solidaridad que representa entre latin@s y afroamerican@s. Pero también es importante para la causa de los derechos de l@s inmigrantes.

Este tipo de solidaridad y unidad no es tan sólo importante. Es decisiva.

Desde las históricas protestas de l@s inmigrantes en la primavera de 2006, el estado capitalista ha estado empeñado en llevar a cabo ataques masivos contra l@s inmigrantes.

Por los últimos dos años, las iniciativas que buscan promover la aprobación de leyes pro inmigrantes y pro trabajador@s en el Congreso de EEUU, han fracasado. En 2007 hubo un impasse, luego de que cientos de activistas sindicales y progresistas, además de inmigrantes, llegaron a Washington, D.C. en un esfuerzo por motivar al Congreso a aprobar una legislación progresista.

A est@s activistas primero se les dijo que esperaran a las elecciones congresionales de noviembre. Después se les dijo que esperaran hasta después de las elecciones presidenciales; este mensaje vino de elementos dentro del Congreso con mayor afinidad hacia esta causa.

Pero paralelamente a este impasse en la legislación, políticas odiosas, racistas, anti obreras y anti inmigrante, continúan siendo aplicadas en este país todos los días. Es imposible contabilizar las formas en que las instituciones capitalistas locales, estatales y nacionales están aplicando estas políticas diariamente, y de la forma más opresiva posible.

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April 25, Jamaica, Queens, N.Y.

WW PHOTOS: JOHN CATALINOTTO

Angry marchers react to verdict

'NYPD go to hell! We are all Sean Bell!'

By Tyneisha Bowens
Queens, N.Y.

On April 25 in a Jamaica, Queens, courtroom, a judge acquitted three New York Police Department officers responsible for the November 2006 fatal shooting of 23-year-old Sean Bell. The horrific attack, which took place the night before

Bell was to get married, also wounded Joseph Guzman and Trent Benefield. All three shooting victims are African-American.

District Attorney Richard Brown announced the judge's ruling in front of the families and friends of the NYPD's victims as well as the media. Brown then defended the verdict and stated that "reforms" in

the NYPD were likely to come from the case. Outside the court the family, friends and supporters of Bell, Guzman and Benefield mourned and protested the decision with a march around the courthouse. This was followed by a visit to Bell's grave site.

In preparation for the possible

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Mass pressure forces charges dropped against Denver activist

Special to Workers World

All charges were dropped on April 22 against Denver political activist Larry Hales. Hales had been assaulted by 10 Denver cops last Nov 30. The cops had busted into Hales's home without permission at 10:30 at night, handcuffed his partner to a chair, ripped out some of his hair and ripped his clothes, and charged Hales with interfering with the police.

Hales, a leading Denver activist against police brutality and war, is also leading organizing efforts for protests at the Democratic National Convention in Denver this August, and is well known to the Denver police. Hales had been providing housing for a parolee who had been a police brutality victim. A parole visit had been the pretext for the cops' raid on Hales' home, but the parolee was not at home at the time. The cops did not have permission to enter or search in the house when the parolee was not present.

A widespread support campaign grew around the case, demanding that all charges be dropped. The National Justice for Larry Hales campaign launched an online petition which generated over 160,000 email messages to the members of the Denver legislature, the mayor, city attorney and the judge in the case, the Colorado Congressional delegation, Congressional leaders, President George W. Bush, Attorney General Michael Mukasey, and members of the media. Public officials such as Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner, unions like USW 8751 Boston School Bus Union and many rank and file union leaders, religious leaders like Bishop Filipe Teixeira OFSJC,



Shareef Aleem, Larry Hales and Melissa Kleinman. WW PHOTO: JOHN PARKER

lawyers and other public figures faxed letters supporting Hales.

Commenting on the victory, Larry Hales said, "The City Attorney's office decided to drop the charges against me because of the attack and the violation of my and Melissa Kleinman's Fourth Amendment rights. But if there was no campaign and the case not made public, I believe they would

have gone forward, wasting time, resources and possibly sending me to jail for an extended period of time, up to a year.

"I do not believe in luck or chance, but Melissa and myself did escape great bodily injury or death, and so our case was never as bad as many others. What happened to us is more indicative of what many people who try and house parolees and the parolees themselves face. Their homes are ransacked and the parolees are goaded into a response and if they respond are violated and sent back to prison.

"However, in our case there were a great many cops and parole officers and to some it may seem surreal, but what happened on November 30 is just more of the same, of the state using its forces to harass and intimidate. They were held off and defeated by a mass campaign of support and this is what made the difference.

"Melissa and I would like to thank the International Action Center, the Troops Out Now Coalition, the Recreate 68 Alliance, USW 8751, Bishop Teixeira, Boston City Councilperson Chuck Turner, the Partisan Defense Committee, the Pan-African Newswire and all organizations and individuals that came to our assistance.

"In the struggle, in solidarity, build a Workers World." □

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'NYPD go to hell! We are all Sean Bell!'

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acquittal, the Peoples Justice for Community Control and Police Accountability Coalition called for a rally and community speakout during the evening of April 25. Speakers included families of victims killed and brutalized by the NYPD, cultural performers and representatives of various endorsing organizations.

Community members and organizations including the Audre Lorde Project, CAAAV: Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence, Make the Road by Walking, Parents Against Police Brutality, May 1st Coalition for Immigrant and Workers Rights, Million Worker March Movement and the International Action Center marched without a permit from District Attorney Brown's office to the site of the killing, which is now a memorial to Sean Bell, where a second rally was held.

The marchers chanted: "NYPD go to hell! We are all Sean Bell!" and "No Justice, No Peace, No racist police!" Marchers were welcomed into homes, businesses and buses. At one point a white truck driver honked and chanted with protesters as the youth led him through the march.

Following the official end of the People's Justice march and rally, a spontaneous march led by community members including the Bloods (Black Liberation Organization Of Defense), a street organization originally formed in the 1970s, proceeded to the 40 Projects

in Southside Jamaica, Queens.

The unpermitted march took the streets of Queens, holding a rally in the South Jamaica Housing Development and marching to the local NYPD precinct. Youth of the community joined the march and supporters lined the streets as the protesters yelled, "Fuck the police!" The marchers faced off with more than 50 NYPD officers at the precinct, where they held a speakout and continued their chants. The march ended after midnight. One protester and one legal observer were arrested and released on bail.

The acquittal has sparked a series of actions across the country protesting the verdict, including a demonstration led by the Rev. Al Sharpton on April 26 in Harlem. The Peoples Justice march, numbering about 1,500 altogether and consisting mostly of youth, included a diverse spectrum of nationality, sex, gender and sexuality.

The state killing of Sean Bell, like that of Amadou Diallo in 1999, is another in the series of attacks on the self-determination of the Black community. The responses to the verdict were actions of self-defense and resistance by people of color, women, LGBT/Queer folks and youth, who blocked the streets chanting: "Whose Streets, Our Streets!" and "Justice for Sean Bell!"

The writer is an organizer of the youth group Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST), which participated in the April 25th marches.

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Supreme Court ignores fatal flaws, OKs executions

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

Starting in May executions in the United States will resume after a seven-month, de facto moratorium that began last September, when the Supreme Court agreed to hear a Kentucky challenge to the constitutionality of lethal injection procedures.

On April 16 the U.S. Supreme Court, in a splintered opinion, ruled 7-2 in *Baze v. Rees* that the three-drug protocol used in the state of Kentucky did not violate the 8th Amendment to the Constitution's prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment.

Responding to the ruling, Harvey "Tee" Earvin wrote from Texas death row: "The Court's determination to kill us must be met by our determination to end the killing. Death row prisoners must commit today to organizing ourselves, our families and our friends. We need them in the streets with the activists who are fighting the death penalty.

"The mood on the row has changed drastically since the ruling. The men here become friends, we are a community. When something bad happens to one it affects us all. And when there's good news, we are all happy. But this court ruling negatively affects every single one of us," he continues. Earvin is a founder of the Texas prisoner organization, Panthers United for Revolutionary Education (PURE).

Seven out of nine justices wrote separate opinions in the case, which indicates that the court is far from a consensus about how to resolve additional challenges that are likely to arise, both around lethal injection protocol and the death penalty itself.

But the court totally ignored the fundamental facts of the death penalty (DP) itself—that it is racially biased, meted out only to the poor, and that innocent people are often convicted and likely to be executed.

Garcia White writes from Texas death row: "How is it that everything concerning the DP is a hurried-up and rushed thing? What's the rush when we see and know that there are all kinds of flaws in the whole system?"

The American Veterinary Association forbids putting down animals with the three drugs now used in lethal injections. Prisoner Quinton Jones told *Workers World*: "It's a damn shame when animals are put down with a higher standard of care and decency or the handlers must answer to the highest court. Now the Supreme Court has approved a lower standard for human beings."

During the seven months that no person in the U.S. was executed, several significant events occurred:

- New Jersey abolished the death penalty.
- The Supreme Court ruled that the use of the electric chair is unconstitutional, which left the state of Nebraska with no effective death penalty since electrocution was the only method used there.
- The American Bar Association called for a national moratorium on executions and the United Nations voted for an international moratorium, reflecting a worldwide trend limiting executions.
- Also during the last seven months, hearings in California and Tennessee have studied their respective death penalty systems, and New Mexico and New Hampshire have raised constitutional

questions regarding application of the death penalty in those states. Wrongful convictions have led to releases in Dallas. Ongoing crime-lab woes and district attorney scandals in Houston continue to make headlines in Texas.

The last person executed in the U.S. was Michael Richard in Texas last Sept. 25. Texas' highest court had decided to close at 5 o'clock that day instead of waiting 20 minutes for an appeal for Richard based on the Supreme Court's acceptance of the Kentucky case just hours before Richard's execution.

As of April 29, there are 11 executions scheduled in the U.S. with dozens more likely in the coming months. It is no accident that 10 of these 11 scheduled are in Georgia, Virginia, Louisiana and Texas, all former Confederate states where capital punishment has historically been a legal alternative to lynching.

While the Supreme Court responded to one state's question about its lethal injection method, many more questions about capital punishment remain unanswered.

Justice John Paul Stevens, the court's most senior member, took aim at the entire system of capital punishment, writing in an opinion that it was a "pointless and needless extinction of life with only marginal contributions to any discernible social or public purposes."

It is the first time 87-year-old Stevens has called on states to stop executions entirely.

Many on death row in Texas have communicated with *Workers World*:

Ronnie Neal says: "This ruling affects us all, not just those given immediate dates. The fact is the door is open. The death

Continued on page 5

From Mumia Abu-Jamal on death row

Symbols vs. Substance

From an April 12, 2008, audio column. Go to www.prisonradio.org to hear Mumia's audio messages & www.millions4mumia.org to get updates on the campaign to free him.



Our national politics is largely the stuff of illusion.

It is the stuff of spin. It is the manipulation of images to pluck the heartstrings, or to stoke the furnaces of emotion.

Any emotion will do: love, hate, fear. All are but instruments upon which politicians will play to move people to the polls, to get them either to vote for them, or against their opponents.

What all of this really means in the day-to-day lives of many of the voters is actually quite minimal, for politicians don't really care about what voters want. They care about those who can afford them—those who pay them well for their services.

In essence, politics is a business, and voters are merely bare necessities.

We see this in the vast, obscene amounts of money raised for virtually all political offices.

At bottom, politics is the elevation of symbol over substance, for it seeks to create the illusion of change, while leaving unchanged the essential power relations at the lower levels of society.

Politics is great for changing forms, but it stumbles at changing essentials.

We've seen that in South Africa, where the faces of those in political power have changed dramatically—in its starkest sense, from palest white to darkest black—and yet those who hold financial power, immense wealth, and thus, those who control politicians, remain predominantly white—and remain in ultimate control.

Conversely, for the Black urban and rural poor, their lives are almost as hopeless as before, for what has changed is that a Black middle class has arisen into their political ascendancy.

Here in the U.S., we often boast about Blacks having more and more political offices in local, state and federal government posts. Yet, if this is so (and it is), why are our lives so miserable, so threatened, so endangered? Why are our communities so dysfunctional?

Why are Black urban schools so underperforming? Why are Black and Latin@ homeowners the bulk of folks losing their homes to foreclosures?

Why are so many of our lives nightmares of survival in the midst of plenty?

How is it that more Black politicians ultimately means less Black political power?

It's because black-faced politicians can best advance the aims of white economic supremacy, for they are but employees of white wealth, who do the duty of those who can afford them.

That great French observer of American politics, Alexis de Tocqueville, aptly noted, "Than politics the American citizen knows no higher profession—for it is the most lucrative."

Black politicians confuse us with their presence—not their power.

For power is the ability to make change in the conditions of people's lives for the better, to represent their interests, and to gain resources for the betterment of Black people and their communities.

Presence is merely being there, being there in the place of a white politician, doing essentially nothing differently. □

The injustice continues: MOVE 9 women denied parole

By Hans Bennett

The Philadelphia Inquirer announced April 22 that the three remaining MOVE 9 women—Debbie Sims Africa, Janet Hollaway Africa and Janine Phillips Africa—were denied parole by the Pennsylvania Parole Board. The Inquirer quotes parole board spokesperson Leo Dunn as saying that parole had been denied because the three MOVE prisoners had "minimized or denied the 'nature and circumstances' of the offense, 'refused to accept responsibility' and lacked remorse. He said the fourth reason for the rejections was the 'negative recommendation' by the prosecutor."

The parole board used several of the stipulations that MOVE spokesperson Ramona Africa had predicted that they would try and use to deny parole, including that the MOVE women "refused to accept responsibility" and lacked remorse. The unfairness and arguable illegality of this is so obvious, because how can you expect someone to "admit guilt" when they've always said they are innocent? Where does remorse come from if someone is actually innocent?

The "nature and circumstances" stipulation is a blatant resentment, since the serious nature of the charges were considered by the judge at the time when he ruled that MOVE should be eligible for parole after 30 years. How can this fairly be used to deny parole?

A further outrage is that the women never even faced weapons charges, unlike the male MOVE 9 prisoners. Because of this, it had been thought by many observers that

the women would have a better chance of receiving parole.

Therefore, if this is any indication, it does not look good for the MOVE 9 men, for whom the parole decision is still pending. If supporters want to make a difference and hold the parole board accountable for these blatantly unconstitutional parole stipulations, we must increase public pressure.

This blatantly unfair decision can only serve to validate the argument that the MOVE 9 are indeed "political prisoners."

At www.move9parole.blogspot.com

SF8 members in court

Four of the San Francisco 8—former members of the Black Panther Party and community activists—were in court in San Francisco again on April 21, at a hearing to discuss legal "discovery" or evidence, to be used to prosecute the men. Their trial is scheduled to begin in September.

Francisco Torres, Hank Jones, Ray Boudreaux and Richard Brown are all charged in the killing of a San Francisco policeman in 1971. Although the same charges against the SF8 were dismissed in the mid-1970s, after the passage of 37 years the charges were refiled in 2007 by the umbrella group of repressive agencies called the "Phoenix Taskforce." This taskforce includes the San Francisco Police Department, California Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation

and the U.S. Attorney. Most important about this court date, however, is that people from the local community and from other cities came early in the morning to rally outside the courthouse and then pack the courtroom. The support for these community representatives, including longtime activists who are now African-American elders, is crucial to exposing the injustice of dredging up the dismissed charges in an obvious campaign of harassment against these men, meant to send a chilling signal to young and veteran activists alike. An April 29 hearing will be the next opportunity to come out and stand in solidarity with the SF8. For more information, go to the Web site: www.FreetheSF8.org

The writer is a member of Journalists for Mumia. Be in Philadelphia, May 10, 12-3 p.m., 11th and Market, to demand freedom for the MOVE 9. Call 215-387-4107 for more information.

—Joan Marquardt

American Axle strikers confront stockholders' meeting

By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Detroit

Taking it to the streets with their mighty rank-and-file power, striking workers at American Axle & Manufacturing, their loved ones, including many children, and allies confronted an AAM stockholders meeting April 24 chanting, "We are the union, the mighty, mighty union! AAM look around! Detroit is a union town!" and singing "Solidarity Forever!"

This magnificent workers' action of about 2,000 was sponsored by the striking Local 235 in Hamtramck, Mich. with participation from striking Local 262 in Detroit and numerous UAW locals as well as unions, community and student organizations throughout Michigan and beyond.

The April 24 action was organized in response to mass anger after an April 18 rally to take place in downtown Detroit next to GM headquarters was canceled abruptly by the UAW International for no valid reason except a weak excuse that "negotiations are progressing." Thousands were expected to attend the April 18 rally.

But in the proud UAW tradition of rank-and-file resistance, the strikers are fighting back against not only AAM's and other bosses' greed but also any sellout concessions. The strikers are fighting hard, refusing to accept any concessionary contract similar to those implemented at Delphi, Dana Corp. and the Big Three. Such agreements would drive the workers into poverty with buyouts, buy-downs and a two-tier wage structure.

Those on the picket lines are clear that they are fighting for all workers. If AAM, an extremely profitable company, can get away with massive concessions, that would open the door for an even bigger bosses' onslaught in the auto industry as well as in other sectors.

Over 3,600 workers at five AAM plants in Michigan and New York have been on strike for nine weeks. Charging an unfair labor practice, the UAW says the company refused to open its books in a serious manner. Since the strike began AAM has



WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

Police brutality on the picketline, April 24.

released some financial information, but only after the UAW International agreed to a confidential agreement. The two sides continue to bargain.

AAM wants to cut the workers' pay in half, eliminate pensions and gut benefits—despite the fact that the company made \$37 million in profits last year. This is an affront to the dignity and respect of workers internationally. CEO Richard Dauch himself made \$10.2 million last year, while the workers make on average about \$45,000 to \$50,000 before taxes.

At the April 24 AAM stockholders' meeting, the company blamed the strikers for a \$27 million net loss for the three-month period of Jan. 1 to March 31. The company claims that the strike caused sales to drop by approximately \$132 million and its operating income to decrease by \$45.8 million. AAM's revenue dropped by 26.7 percent to \$587.6 million in the first quarter this year compared to \$802.2 million during the same quarter in 2007.

In solidarity: 'Here we stand'

Gathering at the UAW Local 235 union hall, a sea of marchers wearing blue UAW solidarity T-shirts and hoisting multicolored union placards took over Holbrook Avenue, the main street running through the massive AAM plant and into the city of Hamtramck, on April 24.

Local 262 members from the Detroit

Forge and others from UAW Region 1 participated, as did unions such as the Graduate Employee Organization (GEO) from U. of Michigan—Ann Arbor, the Union of Part-Time Faculty (UPTF-AFT) from Wayne State, the machinists, electrical and teachers' unions, Labor Notes, the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice (MECAWI) and many more. International solidarity has been solid from day one of the strike Feb. 26. All kinds of assistance for the strikers continue to arrive on a daily basis.

Within seconds of stepping off, the marchers were surrounded and menaced by at least 20 Detroit and Hamtramck marked and unmarked police vehicles, including a massive bus with wire mesh and bars on the windows as well as the Detroit tactical squad, armed and with bulletproof vests. The police blocked off Holbrook Avenue entirely, not allowing any vehicles at all to pass for the duration of the strikers' rally.

Undeterred, the strikers and their allies militantly refused to back down against this police state terror for almost three hours while the stockholders' meeting took place. Alternately and periodically taking the streets and the sidewalks, marchers held a moving picket at the west gate of the AAM world headquarters building, where the stockholders' meeting took place.

Two Detroit police and the tactical squad held open the south end gate, but not without resistance. As stockholders' cars left the AAM parking structure jeers, boos and chants of "bums" and "scabs" greeted them. The rally and march were covered by local, state, national and international media.

One Black woman worker was brutally arrested by police. While crossing the street she was clotheslined by a Detroit police officer. While defending herself, the officer forcefully grabbed and choked her and two other officers moved in to help with this criminal assault witnessed

by hundreds of workers, many of whom photographed and filmed the attack.

After workers moved in on the cops to stop them from possibly choking the striker to death, the cops handcuffed the sister and virtually dragged her to a police car where they shoved her in the backseat.

The arrested striker was refused her medication by the cops even after her sister told them she had recently had a heart attack and needed her medicine. The outpouring of the anger from the strikers was immediate as they chanted, "Let her go!" and confronted the cops.

As the cop car with the arrested striker sped off, tensions increased but the strikers' discipline prevented a police riot. The UAW is working on the arrested sister's release and pursuing legal redress. Immediately after the rally Dana Edwards, Local 235's shop committee chairperson, met workers at the union hall who had film and video of this incident and downloaded it for documentation and mobilization.

The strikers and their allies vow that these and many other creative, militant actions will increase and broaden if AAM doesn't come to its senses.

"What we work for is something that's human, just human rights, that we have a fair chance to live our lives, to help our children to accomplish something in their lives. But what they want from us is just ridiculous. I love this solidarity today. You can't help but to come here and see this, to see and feel the vibrations of this out here. How dare American Axle come with the trifling pittance they're offering us. It's ridiculous. So here we stand. Across the board what we need is a workers' strike all across this great nation. And let our voices really be heard," said Adolphus Heath while marching April 24. Heath, a Black worker, started working at GM in 1977 and has been at AAM since 1994.

Send donations, provisions and support resolutions to UAW Local 235, 2140 Holbrook Ave., Hamtramck, MI 48212; 313-871-1190; adrianrking@hotmail.com or billalford74@yahoo.com; and UAW Local 262, 8490 Saint Aubin St., Hamtramck, MI 48212; 313-874-5770. □

Activists support family facing foreclosure

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

The dumpster was returned to the Maxwell home on the morning of April 23, one week after community activists successfully emptied it and moved the family's belongings back into their foreclosed home on Detroit's near northwest side.

An emergency demonstration called by the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions convened at the home in the afternoon in solidarity with the Maxwells and all those facing foreclosure in Detroit. Activists with the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice (MECAWI), Michigan Welfare Rights Organization (MWRO), ACORN, Call 'Em Out and other groups participated.

While the demonstrators gathered in front of the home, a tow truck came to take the dumpster away. People cheered but knew that the dumpster was on its way to another foreclosed home, although the driver claimed he didn't know where it was going next.

An emergency motion was filed in



WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

On April 23, Michelle Maxwell, sitting, speaks to Detroit Free Press reporter about her foreclosed home while Maxwell's daughter holds sign.

Detroit's 36th District Court to set aside the judgment for eviction entered by the court on Feb. 28. On April 25, community activists packed the courtroom with the Maxwell family as Judge E. Lynise Bryant-Weekes heard arguments on why the family should be allowed to stay in their home. A community attorney rep-

resented the Maxwells on a pro bono basis.

The judge refused to consider that the Maxwells had no legal representation at the previous hearing when the eviction was ordered. She refused to hear the legitimate grounds for challenging the foreclosure. "The deadlines have passed and I must uphold the law," she stated. Judge Bryant-Weekes set an eviction date for April 29, but extended it to May 5 at the request of the family.

Like 99 percent of people losing their homes to foreclosure, the Maxwells had no attorney to challenge the irregularities and illegalities of their mortgage. So they were railroaded through the foreclosure process in assembly line-like courts along with tens of thousands of other homeowners.

After the hearing, as supporters gathered in the corridor outside the courtroom, Maureen Taylor of MWRO stated:

"This proves that poor people have no rights, that if you can't afford an attorney, so be it. Poor people cannot get justice in a courtroom. We need to keep fighting."

Abayomi Azikiwe of MECAWI told Workers World: "This is precisely why we need a moratorium. There are thousands of families like the Maxwells all throughout Metro Detroit. We need to step up the struggle to force the state legislature to enact the two-year foreclosure moratorium law. We can't wait another day."

MECAWI organizer Jerry Goldberg spoke at the Labor and Community Conference held at UAW Region 1A on April 26. Sponsored by the Labor Studies Center of the University of Michigan, the conference linked community issues such as health care and the environment to the labor struggle. Goldberg spoke on the foreclosure crisis and motivated the audience to support the two-year mortgage foreclosure moratorium introduced by State Sen. Hansen Clarke. Participants signed up to support the bill and responded enthusiastically to the developing struggle. □

Where's the outcry?

Drug giant profits from human suffering

By Betsey Piette

Just two days after the Philadelphia-based pharmaceutical giant Merck & Co. Inc. reported that first quarter 2008 earnings had soared on a special \$2.2 billion pretax gain from a limited partnership with AstraZeneca, federal inspectors reported finding 49 "areas of concern" involving contamination of Merck's products, including children's vaccines.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which spent 30 days at the company's plants between November 2007 and January 2008, issued a 21-page report suggesting the problems "could be a symptom of Merck's cost cutting in the face of rapid growth of its vaccine business."

The FDA report, however, has not been published. Unlike the hew and cry when Chinese drug manufacturing plants were accused of making tainted heparin and

heparin-related products, there seems to be no outpouring of condemnation by U.S. media against this U.S.-based firm. However, the Philadelphia Inquirer did obtain details of the report through a Freedom of Information Act request.

In 2007 Merck & Co. Inc. revenues were \$24.2 billion. Merck is a well-known name in vaccine production, which accounted for an increase in company sales from \$1.1 billion in 2005 to \$4.3 billion in 2007.

The federal investigation cited instances of unwanted "fibers" on the stoppers of MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine vials at the company's vast plant in Montgomery County outside Philadelphia. This same plant was the source of a chemical spill that contaminated a nearby recreation area and closed water-intake pipes on the Schuylkill River in 2006. Merck paid out \$20 million for that incident.

Consumers are not the only ones nega-

tively impacted by Merck's "cost-cutting" measures. By 2007 Merck had cut about 6,000 jobs and plans to eliminate 7,000 more in 2008.

Inspectors also found instances of contaminated children's vaccines and uninvestigated complaints at Merck's West Point plant. Samuel Young, a retired FDA deputy director, told the Philadelphia Inquirer, "Vaccine-makers were supposed to investigate vaccine lots if their use was associated with a death or a life-threatening event." (April 24, 2008)

The FDA report noted that Merck had failed to investigate two such cases. In 2005 a patient treated with Merck's pneumococcal vaccine Pneumovax developed a half-dollar-size abscess and required intravenous antibiotics to contain the infection.

Another extremely serious problem is its vaccine Gardasil to prevent Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) infection, which causes 70 percent of all cervical cancer cases. FDA documents indicate Gardasil may have been responsible for at least eight deaths in a number of countries. Since its approval, there have been more than 3,400 complaints of adverse reactions to the drug.

Other quality control problems at Merck's West Point plant resulted in the shutdown of bulk production of varicella-related vaccine for chicken pox and disruption of the supply of Vaqta for hepatitis A.

In December 2007, the company voluntarily withdrew 1.2 million doses of the childhood vaccines PedvaxHIB and Comvax because it could not guarantee the products' sterility. FDA inspectors criticized Merck for making a manufacturing change involving the withdrawn vac-

cines in mid-2006 and then later reversing course and claiming that the change was the reason for the withdrawal.

Merck recently announced it would pay \$4.85 billion to settle tens of thousands of lawsuits stemming from its painkiller Vioxx, which it pulled from the market in 2004.

While it appears that the FDA may take no action where Merck is concerned, China's State Food and Drug Administration, after the safety of raw materials came under fire, issued a directive to the makers of heparin and heparin-related products to strengthen quality control standards, even though there was no concrete evidence that drugs manufactured in Chinese plants were the cause of 21 reportedly heparin-related deaths in the U.S.

U.S. corporate media and anti-China bloggers were quick to turn the heparin-related deaths into the latest "don't buy products made in China" campaign, following similar scares around alleged "exploding cellphone batteries," "children swallowing magnets" and "anti-freeze in toothpaste," to name a few.

The motivation behind these anti-China campaigns, however, may have a lot more to do with China's rise as an economic power at a time when U.S. economic influence is declining, than concern over the health and safety of consumer products.

These attacks are also useful in diverting attention away from the serious underfunding of U.S. product safety monitoring agencies like the Food and Drug Administration. It has experienced a multimillion-dollar funding cutback that has resulted in serious understaffing at the same time Bush and Congress are spending \$341.4 million per day on war. □

WW in 1971

Phone workers defy court, battle cops

Editor's note: *Workers World is in its 50th year of publication. Throughout the year, we will share with our readers some of the paper's content over the past half century. Below is a reprint from a 1971 article on a wildcat strike of 19,000 members of the Communication Workers of America in New York City in response to unfair overtime benefits given to 500 "craftsmen" from out-of-state.*

NEW YORK, Jan. 14—At a jam packed, standing room only rally of over 6,000 telephone workers in Manhattan Center here today, rank-and-file workers of Local 1101 of the Communication Workers of America rocked the hall with shouts of "strike" and "Ma Bell, go to hell" as they voted to continue their three-day walk-out against the Bell Telephone Co. and its \$50 billion parent company, the AT&T monopoly.

While Howard Banker, president of Local 1101, (who had defied the court order ordering the workers back to their jobs) was talking about the seriousness of the injunction and the financial penalties to the union, the membership roared out, "Burn it, burn it." As cigarette lighters were lit up all around the auditorium, Banker tore the injunction up into small pieces. The auditorium broke into

pandemonium.

When the president was again heard, he reported that all New York State locals were being pulled out as well as Western Electric Locals 1103 and 1106. The meeting adjourned with an announcement of a noon demonstration against the international office of AT&T at 195 Broadway in the Wall Street area.

Chanting "Ma Bell, go to hell," the membership poured out onto 34th St. and 8th Ave. and got into trains, buses and cars. At the company office downtown, nearly two thousand Black and white workers surrounded the office, spilling over into the streets. Eggs were splattered on the windows and scabs were hit as they entered and left through the revolving doors. Cops charged at the workers on the line with clubs swinging. "Pigs, pigs," roared the rank and file as they fought back with icy snowballs, rocks and whatever else they could lay their hands on.

Both Black and white workers took some casualties and arrests. In a final act of militancy, before they left to return to the picket lines where they work, hundreds of workers trashed some buildings in the Wall Street area, including the New York office of the Bell Telephone Co. at West Street. □



Supreme Court OKs executions

Continued from page 3

chamber is once again operational. Any number at any time can be called. Yours or mine."

Juan Reynoso proclaims: "I will fight to the death. What else is there left? I'll never give in, until my last damn breath."

Milton Mathis, whose family in Houston is concerned about the issues of his limited mental abilities, said: "This ruling affects me because I have had a date once already and at any time my number can be called. As I brace myself for the fear of the unknown, my only hope is that there will be someday justice for the poor and the have-nots."

Activist Howard Guidry, also with PURE, wrote from his death row cell in

Livingston, Texas: "With the recent ruling comes a wave of urgency and desperation for most of the men on Texas death row. It is difficult to interpret the tension here. Executions are being scheduled. Men are grasping desperately for relief from the appeals courts. Some men have resigned to planning their funerals. We are going to be herded into the slaughter pen. Four brothers here in Texas are already in the so-called death watch cells. Men are talking about raising money for their own funeral. They are talking about the law. They are desperate. It's fight or die and fight we must!"

The writer is a Houston organizer of the Texas Death Penalty Abolition Movement.

CHINA & TIBET

Thanks for the WW article including the San Francisco Olympic Torch events. There were so many pro-China people. I was amazed at the huge number of Chinese flags!

But the number of anti-China/pro-Tibet was probably more than the 300 reported. Among the anti-China forces there were south Vietnamese carrying that old colonial yellow flag with the three red stripes in it, too! From what I have seen here in S.F., there are way too many—even one would be too many—so-called "progressives" who are completely wrong on China and Tibet.

And then there were the banners hung on the Golden Gate Bridge. The fact that traffic control was smoothly maintained while they were on the bridge and the media got there so fast that at least one station did an interview with one of the three guys still high up on the bridge structure, it looked to me like some law enforcement knew there would be a pro-Tibet action in advance. Other media did lengthy live video feeds.

When "Stop AIDS Now Or Else" activists carried out the first blockade of the bridge in the late 1980s, they were immediately threatened with being fire-hosed off the bridge. Traffic came to a complete standstill. No bourgeois media were there in time to cover the action. The photos printed, including the one in the New York Times, had to be purchased from the one independent photographer there. The stronger penalties for

uch actions at the Golden Gate Bridge, including "conspiracy," were put in place after the AIDS action.

The pro-Tibet demonstrators—there were only about six to eight of them—were of course arrested and some spent time in jail. They were initially charged with both felonies and misdemeanors, but the felonies have already been dropped. All the remaining charges may also be quietly dropped, too.

The financial cost of the Olympic Torch run to the City of San Francisco is huge, too. It is mostly for the extra police and for the public transportation impacted. Even though 99.9 percent of the bystanders never got to see the Torch run because it was secretly rerouted way across town, I for one—viewing from the windows of the office building where I was at work—was just happy that so many Chinese people came out, some with great effort, and proudly waved their red flags.

Joan Marquardt
San Francisco
April 23

Tibet & the CIA's anti-China Crusade
Has Tibet become the front line of a new national liberation struggle? Or is something else happening there?

This collection of articles from Workers World newspaper should be read by everyone who wants to look beyond the anti-China hype about Tibet and understand what's really going on.

Order online at www.leftbooks.com

LETTER
TO THE
EDITOR

MAY DAY 2008

Unity grows among immigrants, Black community and labor

By Teresa Gutierrez

April 27—On April 25 when the not guilty verdict against the cop killers of Sean Bell, a 23-year-old African American was announced, immigrant rights activists and many immigrants spontaneously joined the progressive movement in a demonstration in Queens, N.Y., to protest the racist verdict.

In November 2006 on the night before his wedding, Sean Bell was killed in a hail of 50 bullets. In the streets of New York, the cops became judge, jury and executioner. The verdict was once again a message sent by the capitalist state that the lives of Black people are worth nothing.

Immigrants and immigrant activists converged in Queens alongside those who had been for months organizing justice for Bell. They held signs that read, "Mexicans Support Sean Bell" and "NYPD Plus ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] Equals Racism."

This development is enormously important for the tremendous growing solidarity that it represents among Latin@ and Black people. But it is also important for the cause of immigrant rights.

This kind of solidarity and unity is not only significant. It is decisive.

Since the historic upsurge of immigrants in the spring of 2006, the capitalist state has been determined to carry out a massive attack against immigrants.

For the last two years, efforts to get pro-immigrant, pro-worker and humane immigrant legislation through Congress have failed. A stalemate occurred in 2007 after hundreds of labor and progressive activists as well as immigrants descended upon Washington, D.C., in efforts to lobby Congress for progressive legislation.

These activists were first told to wait until the November congressional elections. Then they were told to wait until after the presidential elections; this came from friendlier congressional elements.

But in parallel with this stalemate in legislation, a vicious, racist, anti-worker and anti-immigrant policy has been imple-



WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

May Day press conference, April 28, New York City. Third from the left is Teresa Gutierrez.

mented in this country every day. In too many ways to count, capitalist institutions locally, statewide and nationally are applying anti-immigration policies every day and in the most oppressive way possible.

These attacks are diverse, from ICE raids and deportations to police investigations and legislation that is punitive and repressive. Racial profiling by police officials is sweeping the country.

The abuses are so pervasive that even many mainstream newspapers have spoken out against the raids and the profiling. And even the Pope, no friend of the oppressed and one who tried to put a squish on the pro-poor and revolutionary liberation theology, has been forced to speak out against U.S. immigration policy.

Repression breeds resistance

Medill Reports, a Northwestern University—Washington publication of the Medill School, states that use of a little known 1996 law that permits cooperation between police officials and ICE "has mushroomed in the past year."

"Under the program city and state officials may take on some immigration law enforcement funds, a prerogative left to the federal government.

"A total of 47 state and local law enforce-

ment agencies are stepping in where Congress left off ... when it failed to pass immigration reform."

The program is officially called 287(g), Immigration and Nationality Act; Delegation of Immigration Authority.

The law has resulted in abuse such as in Prince William County in Northern Virginia, where it is reported that the jails there are terrifyingly overcrowded.

In Maricopa County, Ariz., known as ground zero for fascistlike terror against immigrants and Latin@s, Sheriff Joe Arpaio has been accused of "mounting a posse" against immigrants.

Also in Arizona, right-wing racist legislators are attempting to bar public schools from teaching anything related to the history of people who are not white. A Republican representative, Russell Pearce, said his target is not "diversity instruction but schools that use taxpayer dollars to indoctrinate students" in what he characterized as "anti-American or seditious thinking."

It was that kind of racist thinking that lay behind the attacks against Rev. Jeremiah Wright, former pastor of Barack Obama.

According to the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, "ICE agents arrested 4,000 people in work-

place raids between October 2006 and September 2007." These raids have a chilling effect in the immigrant community, but they are also anti-union as they are often aimed to bust up organizing drives.

In other attacks, the City Council of Merrimack, N.H., voted on April 17 to adopt an ordinance to ban nonresidents from the local beaches. The law was geared to keep out Latin@ immigrants.

This repression will not continue without a fightback. Across the country, dozens and dozens of cities will be marching on May Day for immigrant and workers' rights. Coalitions around the country report growing unity. In Chicago, for example, the immigrant rights movement has met with leaders of Rainbow Push to work together for May Day.

In New York City, a U.S.-born truck driver will be leading the march from Union Square to downtown Manhattan for the closing rally, not on foot but with his semi-rig truck. This is a big development because it is yet another example of the seeds of unity and solidarity that are coalescing in the class struggle.

The immigrant struggle cannot advance without the solidarity and unity of U.S.-born workers. The struggle against unemployment and home foreclosures cannot advance without standing in solidarity with immigrants. And unity among Black people and Latin@s will be the final lynchpin that can end the capitalist system's attacks against the multinational working class altogether.

That is why the fact that Mexican and other immigrants went all the way from the Bronx to Queens to show their solidarity with justice for Sean Bell is a revolutionary act. These kinds of actions must be duplicated and multiplied so that at a May Day very soon, tens of millions of workers from around the world and those born in the U.S. will march not just against attacks against immigrants or against people of color or high gas and food prices but against the capitalist system altogether. In those acts lie the seeds of liberation.

Continued on page 10

Demand full rights in France

Strikes of undocumented workers spread

By G. Dunkel

Beginning April 15, the start of the tourist season, 1,300 undocumented workers—mainly from West Africa—went on strike and occupied their worksites throughout Paris and its suburbs to demand full, legal status in France. The strikes are being coordinated by the General Confederation of Workers (CGT), one of the five major union confederations in France, and Rights Now (Droits devant!).

Most of the strikes were against restaurants—both chains and very posh ones, hotels, janitorial services, landscaping and construction companies doing building renovation and maintenance. Some of the strikes also demanded higher wages and better working conditions. Many of the workers have five, seven or even 10 years on the job.

According to Francine Blanche, the CGT organizer who has been coordinating the strike, 830 requests for work visas had been filed with the government by April 25, and she expects another 150—mainly

of women who are home health aides—to be filed on April 28. A few have already been granted.

The strikes pose a major political problem for the Sarkozy government, which made expelling 25,000 undocumented immigrants a year part of its electoral platform and a premise of its unofficial alliance with the fascist National Front (FN). The government of Spain legalized nearly 570,000 workers in 2006 and Italy legalized 500,000 the same year.

Brice Hortefeux, minister of immigration, told the French newspaper *Le Figaro*, "Without ambiguity, there will be no massive legalization." He insists that it will be done on a case-by-case basis as the law requires, even though the vice-president of the FN, Marie Le Pen, is calling for a mobilization against any legalization.

The immigration department estimates that there are between 200,000 and 400,000 undocumented workers in France, while the associations of restaurant and hotel owners estimate that there are at least 50,000 to 100,000 undocu-



mented workers in France's restaurants and hotels.

Without these undocumented workers, the tourist industry in France would not be able to function. Andre Daguin, head of the hotel association, has publicly called for the legalization of at least 50,000 workers.

Legalization, according to some public opinion polls, is supported by over 60 percent of the French. Legalization would protect the workers involved from deportation. It would also give them the right to get the health care, the pensions and the other social benefits that come out of their salaries but are currently not available to

them because of their legal status. If they become legal, they can also bring their families into the country.

According to the French newspaper *L'Humanite*, the delegation of strikers that went into the Ministry of Labor April 16 was supported by a large number of elected officials, progressive organizations and ordinary citizens. Local support groups for the strikes of the undocumented have been set up along with strike-support collection boxes in workplaces where the CGT is strong.

Blanche thinks the strikes could spread because the CGT has been getting calls from all over France from undocumented workers and the situation has been a major topic in the French media the past two weeks.

The CGT organized a barbecue April 26 for all the strikers at the offices of the Federation of Janitorial Companies, which have been occupied since April 15. When the Federation asked the court to order the cops to clear its building, the court turned down the request because it

LATIN AMERICA NEWS

► New U.S. military threat

U.S. imperialism is ramping up its military threats in Latin America and the Caribbean. On April 24 the U.S. Navy announced the re-establishment of the U.S. Fourth Fleet to increase and coordinate the U.S. military presence there. As a sign of its aggressive intent, the new commander is Rear Adm. Joseph D. Kernan, who has been head of the Naval Special Warfare Command, better known as the SEALs.

The SEALs' Web site says, "The most important trait that distinguishes Navy SEALs from all other military forces is that SEALs are maritime Special Forces, as they strike from and return to the sea. ... Their stealth and clandestine methods of operation allow them to conduct multiple missions against targets that larger forces cannot approach undetected."

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, reacting on state television to the Navy announcement, said: "They don't scare us in the least. Along with Brazil we're studying the creation of a South American Defense Council."

The Navy's announcement came at the same time that more U.S. politicians, like House Majority leader Nancy Pelosi, are admitting the failure of the U.S. blockade on Cuba, which was intended to starve the island into abandoning its socialist revolution. As the failure of the blockade is recognized, the military threat to Cuba and other countries in the region from the rebuilt Fourth Fleet cannot be ignored.

► Attempt to split Bolivia

A dangerous U.S.-backed referendum is scheduled for May 4 in Santa Cruz, an oil-rich province of Bolivia where a rich, white, pro-imperialist minority is attempting to undermine the government of Evo Morales. Morales is the first Indigenous president of Bolivia. Using the smokescreen of "autonomy," the campaign to withdraw from Bolivia is an effort to break up a nation populated mostly by Indigenous peoples, who endured hundreds of years of colonial oppression, and rob them of their most valuable resources.

Venezuelan President Chávez called an emergency meeting of ALBA, the Bolivarian Alternative of the Americas, in Caracas on April 24 to discuss the danger in Bolivia. Other countries of the region, including Argentina, Ecuador and Brazil, expressed their concern. Chávez calls the vote "Operation Kosovo"—a plot to split up Bolivia and create a pro-Washington rump state in the east. Interestingly enough, the U.S. ambassador to Bolivia, Philip S. Goldberg, was the ambassador to Yugoslavia and a key figure in the separation of Kosovo from that country.

An online petition is exposing this fraud. Headed "The Conspiracy to Divide Bolivia Must Be Denounced," it says in part:

"The subversive and unconstitutional actions of the oligarchic groups to try to

divide the Bolivian nation reflect the racist and elitist minds of these sectors and constitute a very dangerous precedent not only for the country's integrity, but for other countries in our region.

"History shows with ample eloquence, the terrible consequences that the divisionary and separatist processes supported and induced by foreign interests have had for humanity.

"Faced with this situation the signers below would like to express their support for the government of Evo Morales Ayma, for his policies for change and for the sovereign constituent process of the Bolivian people. At the same time we reject the so-called Santa Cruz Autonomy Statute due to its unconstitutionality and the attempt against the unity of a nation of our America."

To sign on and forward, go to www.todosconbolivia.org.

► Meeting in Cuba on Marxism today

Havana will host the IVth International Conference on Karl Marx and the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century, May 5-8. The conference opens on the 190th anniversary of Marx's birth and is dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the victory of the Cuban revolution of Jan. 1, 1959.

"These are times of special importance for the destiny of humanity, given the increase in imperialist aggression and its confrontation with the resistance of peoples from all corners of the globe, who are engaged in important struggles. ...

"With the passage of 125 years since the death of Karl Marx, the strength of his work and its permanent capability to be enriched is demonstrated by the actions of all those who struggle for the emancipatory ideals announced 160 years ago in 'The Manifesto of the Communist Party.'

"How can we contribute today to 'the emancipation of the modern proletariat [working class],' to forge 'the consciousness of its own situation and needs, and the consciousness of the conditions required for its own emancipation?' This is a challenge which today is more urgent than ever, given the continual and accelerated destruction of all our spaces of mutual coexistence, a process which is driven by the internal logic of capital."

The conference will focus on three themes: the nature of capitalism, imperialism and their contradictions; the construction of a new militant internationalism,

social movements, classes and contemporary forms of class struggle; and the socialist alternative—the need to go beyond the reforms of capitalism, the analysis of socialist experiences and practical proposals to construct a communist society.

Havana is a fitting place for such a conference to examine and evaluate the changes in international working class struggles as a global economic crisis unfolds that proves anew how valid and relevant the theories of Marx and Engels are today.

► Left coalition wins in Paraguay

Paraguay, a small country tucked between Brazil and Argentina, is the latest Latin American nation to elect a left-leaning government. President-elect Fernando Lugo, popularly known as "the candidate of the poor," is a former Catholic bishop who resigned his church position, saying he could do nothing there for the people, to become the candidate of a coalition of 10 parties and 20 social movements. With 40 percent of the vote, he managed to unseat the Colorado Party, which had ruled Paraguay for 61 years.

For 35 of those years, the dictatorship of Gen. Alfredo Stroessner had absolute sway, jailing, torturing and exiling thousands. The Cuban newspaper Granma reported on April 25 that "Under the Stroessner dictatorship [Lugo's] father was imprisoned more than 20 times, his brothers were tortured and close friends and relatives expelled from the country, as he himself was in 1983, due to what was perceived to be the subversive nature of his sermons."

Notorious for its corruption, the Colorado Party left Paraguay one of the poorest and least developed countries in South America. Officially, 43 percent of the people live in poverty and unemployment is 13 percent. The election of Lugo has unleashed great expectations among the poor in Paraguay, who, as elsewhere in Latin America, include many Indigenous people, left impoverished since the days of colonialism.

According to Granma, the program of the coalition "includes the creation of jobs for 100,000 unemployed families; pensions for 200,000 senior citizens; the construction of 40,000 homes per year and the annual creation of 50,000 new jobs; highway construction, sanitation and infrastructural works; contracts for 30,000 teachers to improve education and, within that, the building of 20,000 new classrooms per year; support for research and culture; and the prioritization of primary health care and free access to those services, which includes significant investment in hospitals and medicines.

"The program also promotes an agrarian reform that is not solely confined to land distribution but includes technical aid and credits; reduced electricity and water rates and many other services for the population. In Paraguay 70 percent of productive land belongs to just 2.5 percent of owners."

Its larger neighbors, where progressive regimes have also been elected, are expected to help Paraguay's development.

► Ecuador declares Mining Mandate

Ecuador's Constituent Assembly, working to take control of the country's resources and protect the land from polluting transnationals, on April 18 declared a Mining Mandate that suspended the activities of foreign concessions for 180 days while a new mining law is drafted and adopted. The mandate also limits mining companies to a maximum of three concessions.

Ecuador says it is setting the stage for "responsible mining practices" and expects to have the new mining law drafted by late May. At present, a case against Chevron before Ecuadorean courts charges the company with massive pollution at all its drilling sites in the country.

The Constituent Assembly is in the final stages of drafting a new constitution that will lay the basis for big changes in policies regarding the economy, political and social rights, nature and the environment.

It is also dealing with the question of national sovereignty, which was violated on March 1 when the Colombian air force, with U.S. support, attacked a gathering inside Ecuador and killed 25 people, including leaders of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

Two days later, Ecuador broke off diplomatic ties with its neighbor. President Rafael Correa then removed the minister of defense, the army chief of intelligence, and commanders of the army, air force and joint chiefs, charging them with collusion with the U.S. and Colombia in the attack.

Ecuador's armed forces, through holding companies, control "one of Ecuador's largest airlines and enterprises in the munitions, shrimp fishing, construction, clothing, flower farming and hydroelectric industries, making the military one of the country's most powerful economic groups." (New York Times, April 21)

The Sovereignty group in the Constituent Assembly is looking into whether U.S. planes from the Manta air base in Ecuador were involved in the Colombian attack, and has called on Colombia to surrender the videotapes of its own planes involved in the operation.

Washington's lease on Manta, the only U.S. air base in South America, is due to expire next year, and President Correa has already said that Ecuador does not want it renewed.

—Cheryl LaBash and Deirdre Griswold



England and Wales

Teachers strike for more pay

The National Union of Teachers called a one-day strike April 24 after the government offered a 2.45 percent raise. About one-third of the schools in England and Wales were affected by the strike.

"Teachers do not take the decision to strike easily, or lightly, but teachers' patience has been stretched to the limit," said Christine Blower, acting general secretary of the NUT.

"The Retail Price Index, which features on government Web sites as the figure used for pay bargaining, is currently running at a yearly average of 4.1 percent. The current pay offer of 2.45 percent is well below that and can be seen in no other way than as a pay cut," she said.

Besides the demonstration of hundreds of thousands in London, seen at left, there were many other protests throughout England and Wales.

—G. Dunkle

Continued from page 6

wasn't filled out properly.

While the owners of the companies where these 1,300 workers are on strike are suffering economically from the loss of business, it really is a political strike against the deeply unpopular government of Nicolas Sarkozy. With the support of a powerful and militant union confederation like the CGT, with public opinion and justice on their side, these 1,300 courageous workers have a good chance of winning. □

Zimbabwe confronts greatest destabilization effort

By Abayomi Azikiwe

Following are excerpts from an article that can be read in its entirety at panafricannews.blogspot.com. Azikiwe is the editor of *Pan-African News Wire*.

Once again the imperialist nations and their allied press agencies along with other surrogate organizations have set out to destabilize the government of President Robert Mugabe and the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union, Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) Party. Utilizing the circumstances surrounding the delay in the announcement of the results in the March 29 poll for the parliament and presidential elections, the chorus of calls for regime change has dominated the airwaves and print media.

U.S. envoy Jendayi Frazer, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, was dispatched in late April to African countries to trumpet the idea of regime change in Zimbabwe. UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown has openly announced in the British Parliament that Mugabe must resign and hand over power to the pro-Western opposition party—Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

The British have promised the MDC leadership the sum of one billion pounds annually in order to purportedly rebuild the economy of Zimbabwe, wrecked by the machinations of the former colonial power in London in cooperation with the United States and the European Union (EU). What moral right do these imperialist nations have to interfere in the internal affairs of Zimbabwe and consequently Africa as a whole?

With specific reference to the U.S., the whole idea of criticizing the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) represents the height of hypocrisy. Was it not the current Bush regime that came into office in 2000 as a result of the disenfranchisement of hundreds of thousands of voters, many of whom were African Americans, during the debacle in Florida that led to the ascendancy of the present administration?

Even in 2004 the Congressional Black Caucus and other civil rights organizations challenged the decisive vote count in Ohio that gave the necessary margin to declare George W. Bush the victor for a disastrous second term in Washington. Nonetheless, when democratic elections do not suit the interests of imperialism, such as what happened in Palestine when Hamas won the majority of seats in the Authority, the results were rejected not only by the state of Israel but also the U.S.

When Zimbabwe gained its independence in 1980, it was considered a major accomplishment that would eventually lead to the triumph of the national liberation struggles in southern Africa.

Under the Lancaster House accords of 1979-1980, the British settlers would maintain control of most of the land in Zimbabwe for a period of ten years. The whites would be guaranteed a 20 percent bloc within the House of Parliament for a decade and the independent government would not nationalize the mines and other business interests inside the country.

However, it was agreed that the UK and the U.S. would supply funding for a land reform program within ten years to subsidize the gradual removal of the British from the prime land in Zimbabwe and the re-emergence of self-sufficient African farmers and agricultural workers.

By the end of the 1990s, the ZANU-PF government of President Robert Mugabe, after patiently waiting for two decades

for the unfulfilled promises of the former colonial power of Britain and their imperialist partners in the U.S., the passage of constitutional amendments granted the right to seize the farms of approximately 50 percent of the white settlers for the resettlement of the African people.

With the assistance of the revolutionary war veterans from the national liberation struggle of the 1960s and 1970s, these farms were occupied and the settlers, who held both Zimbabwean and British citizenship, were forced to leave and concede ownership to the government, which developed plans for land redistribution.

Destabilization and the neoliberal agenda

Since 1998, when it became clear that the ZANU-PF government would eventually embark upon a radical land reform program, the Western imperialist countries set out to bring down the administration of President Robert Mugabe. In a referendum to give an electoral mandate to the constitutional reforms designed to escalate the land redistribution program, the formation of an alliance of internal opposition forces backed by the settler colonialists and their external allies in the UK and the U.S. were able to defeat the initiative.

Further evidence of the inroads made by the pro-Western political interests in Zimbabwe was the growth of the recently formed Movement for Democratic Change. In the parliamentary elections held during June of 2000, the ruling ZANU-PF party won a majority by a small margin after months of a concerted and well-financed propaganda campaign targeting the land reform program.

This was accompanied by the persistent efforts of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other Western financial institutions to weaken the economy of Zimbabwe. The country, which is geographically landlocked, depends heavily on the transport of goods through the neighboring Republic of South Africa and Mozambique. By 2002, when presidential elections were held, the ruling ZANU-PF party had consolidated the land reform program and was able to defeat the opposition MDC at the polls.

Yet the efforts of the imperialists and their collaborators inside the country among the white settlers, the opposition MDC leadership as well as the local capitalist class, continued their efforts to destabilize the Zimbabwe government led by ZANU-PF. When attempts to stage violent regime-change demonstrations failed, the economy came under siege.

The refusal of financial institutions to grant credit to the government, the hoarding of consumer goods to drive up prices coupled with sanctions and the eventual suspension of the country from the British Commonwealth had a dramatic impact on the ability of the ZANU-PF government to provide basic services to the people.

Eventually Zimbabwe would withdraw completely from the old colonialism imposed Commonwealth and develop a "Look East" policy which would emphasize greater cooperation and trade within Africa itself and between the country and Asian nations, particularly China. This policy helped provide breathing space for

the ZANU-PF government, since China also offered diplomatic support to the Mugabe administration by preventing efforts to bring the country before the United Nations Security Council to discuss supposed human rights violations.

The role of the People's Republic of China in Africa has been a cause for tremendous consternation in Western ruling circles. China has extended its economic cooperation within many countries on the African continent. In Sudan, they have provided an outlet for the distribution of petroleum resources from their growing oil industry, which the U.S. has been prevented from participating in for over a decade.

This past April, the U.S. and Britain attempted to impose an illegal arms embargo against Zimbabwe after it was discovered that a substantial shipment of weapons and military equipment was being sent to the country. First a white-dominated dockworkers union in South Africa went to court to prevent the arms shipment sent by China from being unloaded and transported to landlocked Zimbabwe. It was recently announced that the Republic of Angola would allow the arms to be unloaded through their ports.

U.S. envoy Jendayi Frazer was dispatched to the continent to pressure various governments to both support Western efforts to set an embargo outside the U.N. Security Council and to also advance the notion of a so-called "government of national unity" where the pro-Western MDC opposition party would be in the forefront.

The problems associated with the delay in elections results in Zimbabwe were utilized as an excuse to make a major push toward regime change in this southern African nation. According to the MDC, the ruling party lost the March 29 elections. Yet the actual figures from the first tabulation and the recount only place the MDC slightly ahead of ZANU-PF in the lower house of Parliament; neither the opposition or the ruling party achieved an outright majority.

ZANU-PF has speculated that the results of the presidential elections would not give a majority to either the ruling party or the opposition MDC. The ZANU-PF politburo in a recent meeting stated that they were prepared for a runoff election, while the MDC has rejected the idea of a second round in the elections, which is mandated by the constitution if no party wins more than 50 percent in the race for head-of-state.

All of the major Western corporate and governmentally controlled press agencies have come out in support of the opposition MDC. The leaders of this party are given prime coverage through interviews and the publicizing of their unsubstantiated accusations related to vote rigging, alleged violence committed by the ZANU-PF government and its neocolonial schemes purportedly designed to restructure the economy of Zimbabwe.

Amid massive criticism from Western press agencies and governments, South African President Thabo Mbeki has refused to aid in the Western destabilization efforts aimed at toppling the Zimbabwe state and the placing of the pro-Western MDC in power. Mbeki has

rejected the notion that there is a crisis in the country requiring international intervention.

In addition, the newly elected president of the ruling African National Congress of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, who recently visited the UK and met with Prime Minister Gordon Brown, also refused to condemn the Zimbabwe government. Despite the convening of a special summit of the regional Southern African Development Community (SADC) in early April to discuss the political situation in Zimbabwe, the grouping of 14 states in the subcontinent have not taken any action that would interfere in the internal affairs of Zimbabwe and its ruling ZANU-PF Party.

The right to self-determination and sovereignty

The only real program of the opposition MDC is to carry out the political and economic designs of the Western imperialist nations and their class collaborators inside of Zimbabwe. The MDC has every intention of returning the farms seized by the ZANU-PF government after 2000 to the white settlers.

Also the "Look East" policy has been a specific target of the anti-Mugabe forces because a change in this foreign policy orientation would damage relations between Zimbabwe and China. China has been a staunch supporter of Zimbabwe extending back to the era of the armed struggle for national independence during the 1970s.

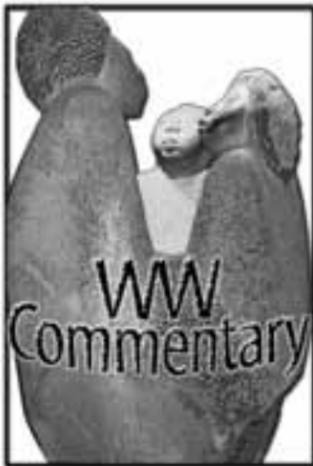
Moreover, the U.S. and Britain have supplied arms and economic support to those regimes in Africa and other so-called Third World countries which carry out their policies. In Africa, the U.S. supports the regime of Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, which receives the second largest grant of U.S. aid, only followed by the Israeli state in occupied Palestine.

In Latin America, the U.S. supplies massive amounts of military and economic assistance to Colombia which is the third largest recipient of U.S. aid behind Israel and Egypt. This U.S. assistance is provided to supposedly fight narcoterrorism, yet the major purveyors of violence in Colombia are those counterrevolutionary elements that have firm links to the drug trade and who serve as a surrogate military force to prevent the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) from coming to power inside the country.

The internal political and economic problems of the nation of Zimbabwe can best be resolved by the people themselves. It is obvious from the long history of U.S. and UK involvement in Africa that these imperialist nations have always been the perpetuators or supporters of slavery, colonialism and neocolonialism.

During the many years of brutal oppression and exploitation under colonialism, the U.S. never supported any genuine liberation movement in Africa. Since independence the U.S. policies have only hampered these nations from gaining genuine liberation from the economic tentacles of international finance capital.

What has occurred in Zimbabwe over the last several years is the direct by-product of imperialist intervention and manipulation of the political economy of this southern African country. The government of President Robert Mugabe, like any other sovereign state, has the right to protect its own interests and to safeguard its people and institutions from outside forces seeking undemocratic forms of regime change. □



Contemporary sculpture from Zimbabwe

Big business, Pentagon

Real sponsors of pro-war spin

By LeiLani Dowell

How many times in the past five years have you turned on CNN or another news network to find some “military analyst”—usually a former general or military official—giving his opinion on how well the occupation of Iraq was going, or why the U.S. should continue with the war?

An extensive exposé in the April 20 New York Times has revealed that many of these “opinions” have been bought by the Bush administration in an unprecedented and ongoing propaganda campaign.

The article, “Message Machine: Behind TV Analysts, Pentagon’s Hidden Hand,” described a network of military analysts that “represent more than 150 military contractors either as lobbyists, senior executives, board members or consultants ... all part of a vast assemblage of contractors scrambling for hundreds of billions by the administration’s war on terror.”

At the beginning of 2002, the campaign to garner public support for the second Iraq war was launched, with these analysts at the forefront.

Whenever the Pentagon wanted a particular spin on affairs, or whenever negative coverage of the “war on terror” appeared in the media, the analysts would

be rushed to briefings and scripted tours—from Guantánamo to Iraq—where they would be given the Pentagon line.

They then would appear on the news or write op-ed pieces repeating that line. “Internal Pentagon documents repeatedly refer to the military analysts as ‘message force multipliers’ or ‘surrogates’ who could be counted on to deliver administration ‘themes and messages’ to millions of Americans ‘in the form of their own opinions,’” the Times reports.

In return for espousing favorable sentiments on the air, the analysts—who were instructed not to publicly discuss their contacts with the Pentagon—received business advantages from the Bush administration, including paid trips to Iraq; briefings with military leaders and White House, State Department and Justice Department officials; and access to classified materials. Those who failed to put forth the “correct” version of the war were dropped.

Entire ruling class complicit

The exposé reminds readers of “other administration tactics that subverted traditional journalism. Federal agencies, for example, have paid columnists to write favorably about the administration. They

have distributed to local TV stations hundreds of fake news segments with fawning accounts of administration accomplishments. The Pentagon itself has made covert payments to Iraqi newspapers to publish coalition propaganda.”

What is becoming clearer through revelations like the Times article is that it’s not just the Bush administration that is guilty of the war and occupation of Iraq—it’s the entire ruling class, from the corporate media to retired generals to the Democrats. All saw the means to make profit from the war and continued occupation, and therefore all kept their mouths shut despite any misgivings they may have had. This article only appears now because many in the ruling class see the situation in Iraq as a complete disaster.

The article is useful in that it provides more evidence of what anti-war forces and independent media outlets have been saying since before the war began: that the case for war was built on a bed of lies. Yet the article fails to mention the anti-war movement at all, once again ignoring it in favor of “experts”—even in an article exposing those experts as charlatans.

Less than a week after the Times exposé was published, the corporate media was awash with what appears to be a buildup

for war against Iran—including increased public allegations that Iran is supporting the insurgency in Iraq; the firing of warning shots by a U.S. Navy-contracted vessel at two speedboats several miles off the coast of Iran; and the statement by Adm. Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that the Pentagon is planning “potential military courses of action” with regards to Iran.

Like Iraq, this new buildup has been spoon-fed to the “military analysts,” according to the Times. In April 2006, when several generals openly criticized then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, a special meeting with the analysts was held.

“Even as they assured Mr. Rumsfeld that they stood ready to help in this public relations offensive,” the Times reports, “the analysts sought guidance on what they should cite as the next ‘milestone.’ ...

“Days later, Mr. Rumsfeld wrote a memorandum distilling their collective guidance into bullet points. Two were underlined:

“Focus on the Global War on Terror—not simply Iraq. The wider war—the long war.”

“Link Iraq to Iran. Iran is the concern.”
Email: ldowell@workers.org

What does rightist win in Italy elections mean?

By John Catalinotto

The party of rightist media magnate Silvio Berlusconi and his allies won a large majority in the Italian parliamentary elections of April 13-14. As a result, Berlusconi, considered an ally of U.S. President George W. Bush, will become prime minister for the third time.

With 47 percent of the vote, Berlusconi’s coalition won 343 of the 630 seats in the lower house and a similar portion of the Senate. His largest opponent, the Democratic Party-led coalition whose head is Walter Veltroni, won 239 seats.

While Veltroni’s coalition is described as “center-left” and Berlusconi’s as “center-right,” many of their policies coincide in practice. The outgoing “center-left” government, under Roman Prodi—the predecessor to Veltroni—sent Italian troops to Afghanistan and Lebanon, supported the secession of Kosovo from Serbia and significantly increased Italy’s military spending.

The vote was also a disaster—in the electoral arena—for any communist parties in Parliament. For the first time since World War II, there will be no members of the Italian Parliament who identify themselves as communists. After the 2006 elections, in contrast, the Communist Refoundation Party (RC) had 41 members in the lower house and 27 in the Senate, and the Communist Party of Italy (PCdI) had 16 members in the lower house, which also had 15 Greens. Now there are none of the above.

During the last “center-left” government led by Prodi, the larger communist parties joined the government coalition. Fausto Bertinotti, leader of the Refoundation Communists, was even elected president of the lower house. The RC was unable to even defend existing workers’ rights, let alone increase them, yet it shared responsibility for the government’s regressive domestic and foreign policies.

Bertinotti’s party alienated many militants by voting with the government—even on sending troops to Afghanistan and

increasing the military budget. Without RC support in Parliament, the Prodi government would have fallen earlier. In the end, the government fell in February when a minor bourgeois party voted against it in the Senate.

That government also failed to enact laws protecting jobs for young people, arousing a massive protest of 800,000 workers and youth in Rome last Oct. 21. To underline the contradictions inherent in the situation, the two communist parties played key roles in organizing the protest directed at the government. Yet they remained part of this government until it fell in February.

Electoral rules promote coalitions

For decades, Italy’s proportional representation laws allowed many parties—even the smallest—to have representatives in Parliament. Currently the Italian capitalist ruling class is attempting to impose a less democratic political structure more like the U.S. system. Two capitalist parties—one slightly more to the right than the other—would alternate in office under this new system.

In the hope of holding their seats in Parliament, or at least in winning some representation in the April election, the

two communist parties, the Greens and a small new party joined to form the “left-rainbow” electoral bloc. The RC and PCdI gave up the communist hammer-and-sickle icon. Their policies alienated many of the most revolutionary workers and activists.

Running separately but as part of the coalition with Prodi in 2006, the “Rainbow” parties got over 10 percent or almost 4 million votes. They only got 3.1 percent or about 1.2 million votes this April running as a bloc but separate from the Veltroni coalition.

Part of that loss came about because two smaller tendencies split from Refoundation to run separately on the ballot—with hammer and sickle symbols and a more leftist program—for what could only be a protest vote, as they could not reach the 4-percent level required for winning seats. Each got about 0.5 percent of the vote, or around 180,000 votes each.

A larger group of usually communist voters actively boycotted the election, something that is done very rarely in Italy as traditionally nearly all eligible Italians vote. Only 80 percent of Italians voted this time, compared to 83 percent in 2006. Thus maybe another half-million to a million people may have withheld their

vote out of left-wing anger at the Bertinotti leadership.

Another half-million to a million may have voted for Veltroni’s coalition as a “lesser evil” in the hope of forestalling a win by Berlusconi.

While this Parliamentary loss represents an historic turning point for the communist movement, most of the lost votes were not a shift to the right but reflect a rejection of the policies followed by the leaders of the organizations involved. There can still be a strong struggle by workers outside Parliament—in the factories and the streets.

There was one part of the lost votes, however, that is more serious.

Loss to Northern League

In the more industrial northern part of Italy, people are working more but earning less. In the south, there is heavy unemployment. In all areas there are fewer secure jobs for young people, who now face a lower standard of living than their parents had. Under these conditions, the failure of the left to lead an anti-capitalist struggle can lead some workers to demagogic, right-wing parties.

The Northern League (LN), a Berlusconi ally, promotes autonomy for those northern regions and is xenophobic against both immigrants and Italy’s south. The LN’s strength has been among the Italian smaller capitalists, many of whom these days are on the brink of ruin. The LN doubled its votes, to about 8.3 percent.

Disappointingly for progressive workers, the League’s propaganda—Italy’s version of Lou Dobbs and Tom Tancredo—attracted maybe a half-million workers’ votes that had gone to the Communists in earlier elections in Italy’s north. To reverse this setback will require serious struggle.

CR head Bertinotti has resigned and retired from politics. The Refoundation Communist activists are meeting and re-evaluating their role, as are other anti-imperialist tendencies.

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MARKET ELECTIONS

How Democracy Serves the Rich

By Vince Copeland

Every four years, big money chooses the presidential candidates. Their war chests filled to the brim, they are then packaged by the media as ‘the people’s choice.’

It’s U.S.-style democracy-of the rich, by the rich and for the rich. But how do these chosen politicians win the votes of the millions as well as the millionaires?

In this fascinating tour through the history of U.S. presidential elections, Vince Copeland explains the devious art of capitalist politics. And he shows how mass movements can upset even the best-laid plans of the “king-makers.” Who has been excluded from voting? How were electoral politics used to betray Black freedom after the Civil War?

Order online from Leftbooks.com



Socialist Cuba: Slander and reality

An April 28 Washington Post editorial grudgingly admits the Cuban economy is growing and life for Cuban workers is improving. It says, "Cuban President Raúl Castro has introduced a handful of micro-reforms." Cubans can "buy cellphones, computers and microwave ovens." The Post points out rightly that the movement is growing, even in Congress, to end the U.S. blockade of Cuba.

But at a time when living conditions for U.S. workers—with incomes slashed by job losses, pay cuts and shortened working hours—are sinking under the weight of skyrocketing food and fuel prices, the Post diverts attention from this bleak reality, as well as the fact that socialist Cuba is moving forward. How? By pulling out the old and tired false charges that Cuba imprisons 55 "dissidents" and suppresses those who plead their case, the "Ladies in White."

The Post ignored the Cuban Foreign Ministry statement about the U.S. State Department's latest creation: "One of the groupings that have been particularly sponsored, backed, and financed by the U.S. Interest Section has been precisely the so-called 'Ladies in White,' which has currently been chosen by president George W. Bush and his special services as a spearhead against Cuba. ... Only in the course of the present year, 2008, the U.S. government has allocated 45.7 million dollars to pay to its mercenary groups in Cuba and put up provocations. ..." These are U.S. tax dollars misused to attack Cuba.

Can it also be that the Post editors missed the front page New York Times article (April 23) reporting that 2.3 million people suffer in U.S. prisons? Quite a number are internationally recognized political prisoners—including five Cubans who tried to prevent loss of life by observing Miami-based paramilitaries planning violence against Cuba. The Cuban 5 now serve life-plus terms in federal prisons.

Did they miss that the police who killed Sean Bell were acquitted this week? That people of color, immigrants, white workers and youth are brutalized daily by capitalist state agents, from cops to "homeland security" agents to neo-Nazi/Klan/Minuteman racists?

While the life expectancy for U.S. women is declining, the life expectancy for Cuban women is lengthening, meeting or exceeding that of the

U.S.—an astounding accomplishment for a small developing country.

Health care in Cuba is free and universal. Health clinics have been modernized and high-tech clinic facilities are being constructed. Cuba shares its medical accomplishments by sending doctors around the world, building hospitals, clinics and medical schools, and training doctors from other countries.

Education is universal and free, and Cuba has the highest literacy rate in the Americas. In the U.S., an increasingly privatized education system provides substandard education for the working class, particularly in oppressed communities. Schools in Cuba have been renovated, while they crumble in cities across the U.S.

The Post scoffs that Cuban "state workers may get deeds to apartments they have been renting for decades." But getting a paid deed after decades of paying a very low rent might seem like a better idea for the one out of every 194 U.S. homebuyers who received a foreclosure notice in the first three months of 2008.

From banks to General Motors, which announced 3,500 additional layoffs on April 29, more U.S. workers are losing their jobs. Meanwhile, Cuban unemployment is only 1.8 percent.

As the 50th anniversary of the Cuban socialist revolution nears on Jan. 1, 2009, it is important to review the relentless attempts by U.S. imperialism to turn back the clock: direct military attacks like the "Bay of Pigs" invasion; covert terror bombings of department stores, hotels, an airliner and other buildings in Cuba and other countries; an economic blockade designed to starve the Cuban people into submission; biological warfare against economic targets and human beings; unsuccessful assassination attempts against Fidel Castro; and funding "dissidents" who can be used in a propaganda campaign to hide the profound and widespread support for the Cuban revolution.

Developing the potential of human beings is socialist Cuba's priority, not profit and exploitation. Cuba's accomplishments are well known and internationally acknowledged.

Socialism—even socialism attacked every minute by a giant imperialist neighbor to the north—improves life for workers. State Department slanders published as Washington Post editorials can't erase that. □

Un mundo de razones para que TOD@S l@s trabajador@s se unan

Por Deirdre Griswold

Este Primero de Mayo, Día Internacional de l@s Trabajador@s, habrá muchas razones para que l@s trabajador@s de los EEUU —y del mundo entero—salgan a las calles en protesta por sus condiciones y para demandar sus reivindicaciones.

Hay por supuesto las cuestiones acerca del desastre de los despidos, los sueldos reducidos, las aceleraciones de producción, el recorte de horas y otras condiciones de trabajo que van en deterioro.

Pero hay también en la agenda las muchas formas en las cuales l@s trabajador@s y sus comunidades se encuentran bajo asalto por la clase multimillonaria que utiliza el racismo, el sexismo, el odio y temor anti homosexual, el maltrato a l@s inmigrantes, y la propaganda a favor de la guerra para evitar que el pueblo pueda luchar de forma efectiva.

Fue la gigantesca presencia de trabajador@s inmigrantes el 1ro de Mayo de 2006, organizado rápidamente y desde las bases como respuesta a la legislación que amenazaba sus derechos, lo que restauró el 1º de Mayo en los EEUU como el día más importante en la lucha de l@s trabajador@s.

Por décadas, desde el período derechista de los años cincuenta conocido como el macartismo, el 1º de Mayo había sido suprimido en este país como algo demasiado "izquierdista". Era "antipatriótico" marchar en armonía con millones de trabajador@s alrededor del mundo demandando una vida mejor —a pesar de que el 1º de Mayo se originó por la lucha de trabajador@s en Chicago en 1886. Los sindicatos en este país quedaron limitados a los desfiles del Día del Trabajo en septiembre que dejaban fuera las cuestiones sociales más amplias.

Pero ahora está más claro que nunca que los problemas que enfrentan l@s trabajador@s son globales —y que la solidaridad internacional de la clase obrera es imprescindible.

L@s trabajador@s inmigrantes que restablecieron el 1º de Mayo han sido blanco desde entonces de una masiva represión gubernamental. Las marchas de este año de l@s trabajador@s de todos los países deben ser dedicadas a las decenas de miles que no pueden participar porque han sido sujet@s de redadas, detenciones y deportaciones que han roto familias dejándolas en penurias.

Este año, estibador@s valerosos cerrarán los puertos de la Costa Oeste por ocho horas el 1º de Mayo en una huelga contra las guerras en Irak y Afganistán. Otros sindicatos han prometido su apoyo, mostrando que l@s trabajador@s en este país creen que estas guerras sin fin, con sus bajas horribles y su enorme costo, son definitivamente una cuestión para el movimiento sindical.

En muchas partes del país, especialmente en la región del medio oeste, la epidemia de embargos hipotecarios de las viviendas y la demanda por una moratoria, serán planteadas como cuestiones urgentes el 1º de Mayo. L@s trabajador@s allí están siendo golpead@s por partida doble: perdiendo sus trabajos con paga decente a la vez que sube el costo de las hipotecas sub-preferenciales. Estar sin

empleo y sin vivienda es la peor pesadilla que le puede pasar a un/a trabajador/a.

Esta pesadilla está agravada para decenas de millones en los Estados Unidos por el racismo y la opresión nacional. L@s trabajador@s afroamerican@s y latin@s, están perdiendo sus empleos y sus viviendas en cifras desproporcionadas. L@s sobrevivientes de Katrina que sobrevivieron el huracán y la inundación sólo para casi perecer por el abandono, están luchando para que no sean demolidas las viviendas públicas en Nueva Orleans.

El sistema estadounidense de prisiones, el más grande del mundo, está lleno de gente de color que está encarcelada por supuestos "crímenes" de sobrevivencia. Un estudio reciente mostró que la tasa estadounidense de encarcelamiento es cinco veces el promedio mundial.

Y mientras l@s criminales corporativos que estafan miles de millones de dólares pueden salir de la cárcel después de algunos meses o años — si acaso van a la cárcel — hay un sinnúmero de prisioner@s afro-american@s, indígenas y latin@s, como Mumia Abu-Jamal, los 3 de Angola y Leonard Peltier, que pasan la mayor parte de sus vidas tras las rejas porque se niegan a arrodillarse ante el sistema. Son verdaderamente prisioner@s polític@s, así como los 5 cubanos que trataron de proteger a su país de terroristas basados en los Estados Unidos.

Son l@s trabajador@s y l@s pobres l@s más afectad@s por la contaminación industrial corporativa, no sólo donde trabajan y viven, sino como personas que viven en este planeta que está siendo rápidamente degradado por el calentamiento global.

La buena noticia es que mientras se intensifica la opresión de la mujer por el deterioro de las condiciones económicas, es la afiliación de las mujeres en sindicatos que ha resultado en el crecimiento del movimiento laboral en los últimos dos años.

Todas estas cuestiones tienen su lugar en las marchas del 1º de Mayo, junto a otros ejemplos más concretos del porqué la clase trabajadora necesita unirse y luchar, con nuestros hermanos y hermanas del mundo, contra la clase súper-rica que está esparciendo miseria por todos los rincones del mundo. □

Unity grows among immigrants, Black community and labor

Continued from page 6

Workers World Party Secretariat members Teresa Gutierrez and Fred Goldstein will deliver papers at the Fourth International Conference on the Work of Karl Marx and the Challenges of the 21st Century in Havana, Cuba, May 5-8. This article continues the analysis made in Gutierrez's paper on "Immigrants, the Revival of May Day in the United States and the Future for a United Working-class Fightback." Both papers will soon be available on the workers.org Web site in their entirety. Gutierrez is also a leading organizer with the May 1st Coalition for Immigrant and Workers Rights in New York City.



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Inflación, recortes salariales y la desaparición del día laboral de 8 horas

Por Gary Wilson

Si se despertó esta mañana, su salario ha sido recortado.

Primero, está el aumento en los precios de los alimentos. El precio de la leche ha aumentado casi un 25% en los últimos meses, llegando a más de \$4,00 el galón en algunas ciudades. El precio de los huevos se ha duplicado durante este último año. El precio de los alientos ha aumentado casi un 8% en el último año reportó la AP.

Luego está el alza de los precios del gas y la gasolina. La gasolina para automóviles tiene el precio más alto que se ha visto en Estados Unidos: un promedio de más de \$3,50 el galón. La devaluación del dólar también significa inflación en los precios de todos los productos, los cuales en su mayoría son importados. En marzo, el dólar descendió al nivel más bajo en 12 años en comparación con el yen japonés y más bajo que nunca con el euro.

El alza inflacionaria y la devaluación

del dólar significan en realidad un recorte en los salarios de l@s trabajador@s estadounidenses. Este Primero de Mayo, día de l@s trabajador@s en todo el mundo, los recortes salariales, los despidos, el alza en los precios de los alimentos y la crisis de la vivienda estarán en la mente de la mayoría de l@s trabajador@s.

El Primero de Mayo comenzó por una lucha de trabajador@s inmigrantes que vivían en Chicago para demandar un día laboral de 8 horas sin reducción en los salarios.

El 1º de mayo de 1886, 80.000 trabajador@s marcharon por la Avenida Michigan en Chicago. La semana siguiente, después de esta impresionante marcha en Chicago, más de 350.000 trabajador@s se fueron a la huelga en todos los Estados Unidos en apoyo a la demanda de las 8 horas laborales.

Grandes huelgas y luchas siguieron y eventualmente se logró el día laboral de 8 horas y 40 horas por semana, al igual

que el derecho de sindicalización y salarios sindicales. El 1º de Mayo se ha celebrado como día de l@s trabajador@s desde entonces, en honor al movimiento revolucionario que comenzó en Chicago.

Sin embargo, l@s trabajador@s estadounidenses están perdiendo el día laboral de 8 horas. Esto se debe a que el pago por ocho horas no es suficiente. No es extraño que tengan que trabajar tiempo extra, o sea más de ocho horas, para poder ganar lo suficiente para sobrevivir. Quienes no logran tiempo extra muy a menudo tienen que buscar un segundo y hasta un tercer trabajo.

Ahora eso también se está perdiendo. El New York Times reportó el 18 de abril que la "erosión del salario se ha convertido en una fuerza sigilosa que hace bajar la economía de los EEUU. Se ha dado más atención a la pérdida de empleos y al riesgo de despidos. Pero la reducción de horas y del pago para millones de trabajador@s en todo el país parece ser

la mayor contribución en el declive."

El Times continúa, "La reducción de salarios y horas de trabajo para quienes todavía tienen empleos, se ha vuelto en la causa principal del descenso".

El reporte agrega, "Desde noviembre hasta marzo, mientras l@s empresarios comienzan las reducciones en varias formas, el crecimiento salarial cayó debajo del nivel de inflación, lo que significa que los sueldos se redujeron".

El promedio de horas de trabajo semanal está en declive y las horas extras han caído precipitadamente.

Pero como demostraron l@s trabajador@s en 1886, no importa lo que digan l@s capitalistas de que es el mercado que hace recortar los salarios y despedir a l@s trabajador@s, en la mayoría de los casos esto no es cierto. L@s capitalistas pueden y pagarán un salario pleno y justo, si l@s trabajador@s luchan por ello. Pero sin lucha, l@s capitalistas tomarán ventaja y cortarán todo lo que puedan. □

Crece la unidad entre inmigrantes, comunidad negra y sindicalistas

Continúa de página 1

Estos ataques son variados, desde redadas y deportaciones por parte del ICE, hasta investigaciones policiales y legislación punitiva y represiva. Los oficiales de policía han extendido a nivel nacional la práctica de indagar o detener basándose en el color de la piel de la persona.

Los abusos son tan generalizados que incluso los periódicos comerciales se han manifestado en contra de las redadas y la discriminación. Hasta el Papa, quien no es amigo de l@s oprimid@s, y quien intentó aplastar el movimiento a favor de l@s pobres y revolucionari@s conocido como Teología de la Liberación, se ha visto forzado a hablar en contra de la política inmigratoria estadounidense.

La represión engendra resistencia

Medill Reports, una publicación de la Escuela Medill, de la Universidad Northwestern (Estado de Washington) indica que gracias al uso de una poco conocida ley de 1996 que permite la cooperación entre agentes de la policía y el ICE, ésta ha "florecido en el último año".

"Bajo el programa, funcionarios municipales y estatales pueden disponer de fondos destinados al control inmigratorio, algo que es de competencia del Gobierno Federal".

"Un total de 47 agencias policiales estatales y locales están interviniendo en áreas en las que la labor del Congreso fue insuficiente... cuando dejó de aprobar reformas inmigratorias."

El programa es conocido oficialmente como 287(g), Ley de Inmigración y Nacionalidad; Delegación de la Autoridad Inmigratoria.

La ley ha tenido como consecuencias abusos como el ocurrido en el Condado de Prince William, en el Norte de Virginia, en donde se reporta que las cárceles están terriblemente sobrepobladas.

En Maricopa, Arizona, conocida por ser la zona cero de grupos fascistas que aterrorizan a inmigrantes y latin@s, el Alguacil Joe Arpaio ha sido acusado de tomar actitudes en contra de los inmigrantes.

También en Arizona, legisladores derechistas, racistas, están intentando prohibir en las escuelas públicas enseñar cualquier cosa relacionada con la



Teresa Gutierrez habla en una reunión de protesta sobre el veredicto en el caso de Sean Bell, el 25 de abril.

FOTO: ROBERTO MERCADO

gente que no es blanca. Un Representante Republicano, Russell Pearce, dijo que su objetivo no eran "las escuelas donde se da una educación diversificada, sino escuelas que usan el dinero de los contribuyentes para adoctrinar a los estudiantes" en lo que caracterizó como "pensamiento anti americano o sedicioso". Es el tipo de pensamiento racista detrás de los ataques contra el Reverendo Jeremiah Wright, antiguo pastor de Barack Obama.

De acuerdo con la Red Nacional para los Derechos de los Inmigrantes y Refugiados, "los agentes del ICE arrestaron a 4.000 personas en redadas en los lugares de trabajo entre octubre de 2006 y septiembre de 2007." Estas redadas han tenido un efecto negativo sobre la comunidad inmigrante, pero también son contra los sindicatos, ya que muchas veces tienen la finalidad de interferir con sus campañas organizativas.

En otros ataques, el Concejo de la Ciudad de Merrimack, Nuevo Hampshire, votó el 17 de abril a favor de adoptar una ordenanza que prohibiera a l@s no residentes ir a las playas locales. La ley fue creada para mantener fuera de éstas a l@s inmigrantes latin@s.

Esta represión no continuará sin un contraataque. Por todo el país, decenas

y decenas de ciudades marcharán el 1º de Mayo por los derechos de l@s inmigrantes y trabajador@s. Coaliciones por todo el país han estado reportando más y más unidad. En Chicago por ejemplo, el movimiento por los derechos de l@s inmigrantes se ha reunido con dirigentes de la coalición "Rainbow Push" para trabajar juntos el 1º de mayo.

En la Ciudad de Nueva York, un camiónero estadounidense va a liderar la marcha desde Union Square al centro de Manhattan, para el acto de cierre de la marcha, pero no a pie, sino conduciendo su camión. Este es un hecho importante porque es otro ejemplo de las semillas de solidaridad y unidad que están germinando en la lucha de clases.

La lucha de l@s inmigrantes no puede avanzar sin la solidaridad y unidad de l@s trabajador@s estadounidenses. La lucha contra el desempleo y las reposiciones de casas por los bancos no puede progresar sin mantenerse en solidaridad con l@s inmigrantes. Y la unidad entre afroamerican@s y latin@s será la última gota que termine con los ataques del sistema capitalista contra toda la clase trabajadora multinacional.

Por esto es que el hecho de que l@s mexican@s y otr@s inmigrantes fueran

desde el Bronx hasta Queens para demostrar su solidaridad con Sean Bell, es un acto revolucionario. Este tipo de acciones deben ser reproducidas y multiplicadas para que muy pronto, en un 1º de Mayo, decenas de millones de trabajador@s de todo el mundo y l@s nacid@s en EEUU, marchen no sólo contra los ataques a los inmigrantes, o la gente de color, o contra los altos precios del gas o de los alimentos, sino también contra el mismo sistema capitalista. En estos actos están las semillas de la liberación.

Teresa Gutiérrez y Fred Goldstein de la Secretaría del Partido Workers World/Mundo Obrero presentarán escritos en la Cuarta Conferencia Internacional sobre el trabajo de Karl Marx y los desafíos del siglo XXI en La Habana, Cuba, del 5 al 8 de mayo. El artículo de arriba continúa el análisis hecho en el escrito de Gutiérrez sobre "Inmigrantes, el renacimiento del 1º de Mayo en los Estados Unidos y el futuro para la lucha de una clase obrera unida" Ambos documentos pronto estarán disponibles en su totalidad en el portal de Workers.org. Gutiérrez es también principal organizadora de la Coalición 1º de Mayo para los Derechos de l@s Inmigrantes y l@s trabajador@s en la Ciudad de Nueva York. □

Sindicatos colombianos hacen campaña contra el TLC

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

La administración de George Bush envió el Tratado de Libre Comercio (TLC) que negoció con Colombia al Congreso de los EEUU a principios de abril para someterlo a votación por el mecanismo de "vía rápida", que daría un plazo de 90 días para votarlo, sin la posibilidad de hacer ninguna enmienda.

Sin embargo, la congresista Nancy Pelosi, portavoz de la cámara baja de los EEUU, ha rehusado darle trámite al proyecto de ley, por lo que de momento el proceso se encuentra paralizado.

El hecho de que se posponga la votación es una victoria temporal para los trabajadores colombianos. Se debe primordialmente al arduo trabajo de sindicalistas colombianos, quienes han arriesgado sus vidas viniendo a los EEUU a denunciar los crímenes y la violencia en contra de líderes sindicales en su país. También han recibido delegaciones de líderes sindicales de EEUU, activistas sociales y miembros del congreso de los EEUU para enseñarles de primera mano, las condiciones en Colombia.

Sindicalista colombiano visita Filadelfia

Uno de esos líderes es Édgar Páez, representante internacional de Sinaltrainal, el Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Industria de Alimentos en Colombia. El sindicato representa a los trabajadores de Coca Cola, Chiquita y otras corporaciones multinacionales estadounidenses que han usado a los paramilitares contra los trabajadores con el fin de destruir los sindicatos y maximizar sus ganancias.

Páez estuvo en Filadelfia por dos días como parte de una gira informativa que lo llevó también a Chicago, Minneapolis, Detroit, Boston, Nueva York y Washington.

En Filadelfia fue recibido por la Federación de Empleados Estatales, del Condado y Municipales de los EEUU (AFSCME por sus siglas en inglés) DC 47, la Coalición de Mujeres Sindicalistas (CLUW), el Sindicato Internacional de Empleados de Servicio (SEIU) BJ 32 y el Centro de Acción Internacional, en una noche de solidaridad. Cathy Scott, presidenta de DC 47, abrió el programa en el auditorio del sindicato.

Las consecuencias del Tratado de Libre Comercio de América del Norte (NAFTA por sus siglas en inglés) fueron presentadas por Luis Tlaseca, del Sindicato de Trabajadores de Kaolín (el cual representa a trabajadores mayoritariamente mexicanos quienes laboran en las granjas de hongos de Kenneth Square, donde casi la mitad de los hongos comercializados en los EEUU son cultivados). Tlaseca explicó cómo el NAFTA ha enriquecido a las transnacionales estadounidenses a expensas de pequeños agricultores mexicanos, quienes entonces se ven forzados a emigrar a EEUU para poder sobrevivir.

Paul Dannenfels, presidente del Local 1723 de la AFSCME, en representación



Edgar Páez en Boston el 25 de marzo.

de los trabajadores de la Universidad de Temple, habló de la lucha de su sindicato por un contrato justo. En momentos en que las tarifas universitarias han aumentado paralelamente a los ingresos de la universidad, los beneficios para los trabajadores sindicalizados han disminuido, los costos de salud han aumentado y trabajan sin un contrato desde octubre de 2007.

Masacre de sindicalistas colombianos

Páez expresó que no sólo iba a hablar de las terribles condiciones para los trabajadores colombianos, sino también acerca de las iniciativas que están desarrollando para una Colombia mejor.

Habló de las marchas llevadas a cabo en Colombia y el resto del mundo el 6 de marzo de 2008, contra los crímenes del estado colombiano y a favor de las víctimas. Hubo 28 marchas en Colombia y 70 en otros 60 países, incluyendo en los EEUU.

Cuatro mil sindicalistas han sido asesinados en Colombia en los últimos 20 años (en 2008 ya van 13). Desde la presentación de Páez, cuatro más han sido asesinados. Unos 500 líderes sindicales han tenido que exiliarse ante amenazas de paramilitares.

Cuatro millones de personas, la mayor parte campesinos, han sido desplazados internamente en Colombia. Los paramilitares han robado más de 5 millones de hectáreas de tierra, y la nueva Ley de Justicia y Paz ha legitimado este robo.

Comunidades afrocolombianas también han sido desplazadas, sobre todo para que las corporaciones transnacionales puedan sembrar palma africana en sus tierras.

Estudiantes y organizaciones de mujeres también han sido severamente reprimidas.

Los pobladores indígenas están a punto de ser eliminados por la misma razón: desplazarlos para usar sus tierras en beneficio de las corporaciones transnacionales.

Los criminales permanecen inmunes

por la pasividad del Gobierno colombiano. Por esto, explicó Páez, los sindicatos han tenido que acudir a otros organismos judiciales como las cortes en los EEUU y el Tribunal Permanente de los Pueblos. Demandas contra Drummond, Coca Cola, Chiquita y Occidental Petroleum están siendo ventiladas en el sistema judicial estadounidense.

Chiquita, por ejemplo, dio 1,7 millones de dólares, 3 mil rifles AK-47 y 5 millones de municiones a los paramilitares, quienes han masacrado a miles de trabajadores en Colombia. Páez le recordó a su audiencia que todos los bananos de Colombia que consumimos en EEUU son de Chiquita.

Invitó a todos a participar en las sesiones del Tribunal Permanente de los Pueblos en Colombia, del 21 al 23 de julio de 2008, fecha en que se llevarán a cabo las sesiones finales que abordan la relación de las corporaciones transnacionales con la espiral de violencia.

Al día siguiente Páez fue a la Convención de la Federación Estadounidense de Sindicatos - Congreso de Sindicatos Industriales (AFL-CIO por sus siglas en inglés), la cual se estaba llevando a cabo esa semana en Filadelfia. Gracias a la intervención de Kathy Black, Presidenta del capítulo de Filadelfia de CLUW, Páez fue presentado a los asistentes, quienes se pusieron de pie para ovacionarlo. Fue precedido por el precandidato presidencial demócrata Barack Obama, quien indicó oponerse al TLC con Colombia por la violencia contra los líderes sindicales.

Larry Cohen, presidente de Trabajadores de Comunicaciones de EEUU (CWA), habló acerca de sus experiencias en Colombia, y expresó su admiración y respeto por los trabajadores colombianos. En febrero, Cohen viajó a Bogotá con una delegación de la AFL-CIO para evaluar las condiciones laborales allá, y conoció a Páez.

TLC con Colombia y la conexión Clinton

Hillary Clinton, quien se había dirigido a la convención un día antes, no tocó el

tema de Colombia. El jefe de su estrategia de campaña, Mark J. Penn, se había reunido en privado la semana anterior con la Embajadora de Colombia en EEUU, Carolina Barco, para ahondar en el tema del TLC. Resulta que la firma para la que trabaja Penn, la Burson-Marsteller, había sido contratada por el gobierno colombiano por la suma de 300.000 dólares anuales, para promover el TLC en el Congreso de los EEUU.

Otra firma relacionada con Clinton también está involucrada: el Grupo Glover Park, el cual fue establecido por antiguos funcionarios del Gobierno de Bill Clinton. Sin embargo, en sus discursos de campaña, Clinton ha indicado que no está de acuerdo con Bill Clinton y que se opone al TLC. Muchos sindicalistas ven esto como una treta política.

A pesar del voto en el Congreso, el TLC con Colombia no está muerto todavía, como lo indicó el Latin Business Chronicle (de Miami) el 14 de abril. Decía: "a pesar de la suspensión indefinida de un voto en el Congreso, el TLC EEUU-Colombia podría ser aprobado tan pronto como este año, según expertos en el tema. 'Con un poco de buena voluntad entre el liderazgo congresional, la Casa Blanca y el Gobierno colombiano, creo que todavía hay tiempo para encontrar suficientes puntos en común para aprobar el TLC antes de fin de año', anota Peter Hakim, presidente de Diálogo Interamericano.

El Presidente George W. Bush todavía está promoviendo el TLC con Colombia, aduciendo el tema de la "seguridad nacional", poniendo de este modo mucha presión en el Congreso desde que rehusó someterlo a votación. La Casa Blanca emitió un comunicado congratulando los "avances" del presidente colombiano, Álvaro Uribe, el aliado más cercano de Washington en América Latina, en momentos en que otros países de la región se están alejando del control de EEUU.

También tenemos las declaraciones de Nancy Pelosi. Ella está a favor de posponer una votación porque "si el TLC es votado ahora, perdería, y entonces, ¿qué mensaje estaríamos enviando? Ella deja abierta la posibilidad de un TLC basado en "negociaciones de buena fe entre demócratas y la Casa Blanca", y se reunió con la embajadora colombiana después de la posposición del voto.

Cada semana, más de los aliados más cercanos de Uribe en el Congreso colombiano, están siendo acusados y arrestados por mantener lazos estrechos con los paramilitares. Hasta el momento, 30 están en prisión y 21 más están siendo investigados. Un artículo publicado en la revista semanal Semana.com del 12 de abril, titulado "Las Sillas Vacías", describía cómo el Congreso colombiano no puede funcionar por la ausencia de los legisladores encarcelados, y el nerviosismo de otros esperando ser acusados.

Este es el gobierno que Bush defiende como "democrático". 51 legisladores acusados de crímenes contra la humanidad. Su tipo de gente. □