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Fighting for the right to jobs and justice

Republic workers occupy Chicago plant

By Dante Strobino and Ben Carroll

Dec. 9—Chanting “You got bailed out; we got sold out!” workers at the Republic Windows and Doors factory in Chicago picketed outside Bank of America Dec. 3 after learning from their company that the bank was shutting Republic’s doors. Later that night, the majority Latin@ workforce, organized into Electrical Workers Local 1110, voted unanimously to occupy their factory if management went forward with its plans.

When the morning of Dec. 5 came around, the bosses at Republic must have expected a quick resolution when they decided to shut down the factory and lay off the 270 workers. But instead of walking off the job feeling dejected, these workers took bold and decisive action and have been occupying the factory floor since 10 a.m. that morning. Such a tactic has not been used by workers in almost 20 years. The last time a workplace occupation occurred was when workers in the Mine Workers union in Pittston, W.Va., took over their facility in 1989; that occupation lasted to the spring of 1990.

Republic closed up shop after Bank of America refused to extend a line of credit to the company to keep the factory open. With only three days’ notice—a flagrant violation of Illinois’ Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act, which requires at least 60 days’ notice before a plant closure—the factory put the workers out in the cold right before the holiday season without a job and the pay they were due. The company hoped they could move across the border to Iowa where they could find cheaper, non-union labor.



Workers sitting in cafeteria of occupied Republic plant.

PHOTO: UE

Bank of America’s refusal to grant Republic a loan comes after a \$25 billion federal bailout was given to the bank—money taken out of the pockets of the workers and oppressed people via taxes.

“Taxpayers would like to see that bailout money go toward saving jobs, not saving C.E.O.’s,” said Leah Fried, an UE organizer. “This is outrageous.” (New York Times, Dec. 8)

UE continues to display its unique rank-and-file, member-run character in this struggle. Elected UE officers at national and local levels are maintaining a firm stance defending the Local 1110 workers all the way, including their just demands to keep the plant open.

“Amidst this crisis, workers are showing that we have no other choice but to fight back. Our backs are against the wall. The

Republic workers’ takeover reflects what needs to be the response. It is an example of how to exercise our power over this crisis—take back the means that produce all the wealth in the first place,” UE Local 150 President Angaza Laughinghouse told Workers World. “The truth of the matter is that the workers should own that factory.”

As autoworkers in the United Auto Workers caravan to Washington, D.C., to request federal money for General Motors, Ford and Chrysler to maintain their jobs, the last thing their corporate bosses and the government want is for them to hear the news of the UE workers at Republic. Workers know their ultimate power rests with their labor and what they deserve is the run of the factory and all the things

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As solidarity builds: *‘Spirit of workers remains high’*

On the evening of Dec. 9, Bail Out the People Movement organizers Sharon Black and Jill White gave the following eyewitness update to WW from the lobby of the Republic Windows and Doors plant in Chicago:

“The spirit of the workers remains very high and strong as they continue to provide round-the-clock security during their occupation of the plant. These heroic workers have vowed to stay in the plant up until Christmas or beyond to win the kind of justice they seek. Leah Fried, an UE organizer, told us that no matter what the outcome of the negotiations between the leadership of UE Local 1110, Congressperson Luis Gutierrez, representatives of Bank of America and Republic’s management, solidarity demonstrations around the country should happen because of the broad political issue of demanding a bailout for all the workers.” □

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A voice for liberation



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Philadelphia, Dec. 6, one of many protests in cities around the world.

PHOTOS: AUDREY HOAK



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This week ...

ODETTA

A powerful voice of the civil rights movement

By **Monica Moorehead & Dolores Cox**

"Sometimes I feel like a motherless child ... a long ways from home"
—Taken from a "Negro" spiritual



Monica Moorehead and Odetta backstage at 1987 benefit concert, Montgomery, Ala.

This spiritual expresses the horrific impact of U.S. slavery on millions of African people stolen from their homeland. The legendary African-American folk singer, Odetta, sang this spiritual and others like it with immeasurable feelings of deep sorrow and anguish.

Bestowed the honorific "Queen of America's Folk Music" by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Odetta's voice was silenced on Dec. 2 with her passing from heart failure in a Harlem, N.Y., hospital. She was 77 years old. When Rosa Parks, known as "the mother of the civil rights movement," was asked which songs inspired her, her reply was the ones that Odetta sang.

Odetta Holmes was born Dec. 31, 1930, in Birmingham, Ala., during the Great Depression. At the age of six her family moved to Los Angeles. She started playing the acoustic guitar at the age of 19. In the 1950s she performed in the musical "Finian's Rainbow" and sang in coffee houses before permanently moving to New York. Her first solo album, "Odetta Sings Ballads and Blues," was released in 1956. She would eventually perform at New York's Carnegie Hall.

For Odetta, folk music—be it spirituals, blues or work songs—was a vehicle for expressing the plight and experiences of racism and injustice experienced by Black people dating back to the days of slavery.

Odetta was instrumental in bringing work songs to a broader audience. These were songs originally sung by Black prisoners on chain gangs to express their enslaved-like conditions in the South—picking cotton in the fields or breaking up rocks with sledgehammers under the gun and whip, from sunup to sundown.

In reference to work songs, Odetta stated, "They were liberation songs. You're walking down life's road, society's foot is on your throat, every which way you turn you can't get from under that foot. And you reach a fork in the road and you can either lie down and die or insist upon your life." (New York Times, Dec. 3) Odetta also sang songs about working women, including mothers comforting crying babies while rocking them to sleep.

Odetta used her talents to push forward the struggle for social justice on many fronts.

The 1963 March on Washington, which brought out 250,000 people to demand jobs and full equality for all, is best known for Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" rally speech. Odetta sang three songs at that rally.

She marched alongside Dr. King in the Selma-to-Montgomery march in 1965. She did fundraising concerts for important mobilizations. She performed at the NYC's Village Gate to help raise funds for the 100,000-strong, anti-war, May 3, 1981, March on the Pentagon.

WW managing editor, Monica Moorehead, commented, "Odetta performed two benefit concerts in 1987 and 1993 to support Snow Hill Institute for the Performing Arts in Alabama. This institute was founded by my great-

grandfather, William James Edwards, in 1893 to teach former slaves how to read, write and learn a trade. With very little resources, the school was reopened by my mother, Consuela Lee, to teach indigent, Black rural children their rich heritage of jazz, spirituals and folk music. The fact that Odetta would take time out of her busy schedule to showcase her incredible talents in support of a small, isolated school in the poor county of Wilcox was so awe inspiring and an experience that all who were present will never forget. She is someone who all cultural artists should aspire to be."

Moorehead's uncle, acoustic bassist and composer, Bill Lee aka William James Edwards Lee III, told WW, "I became a folk-jazz bassist while I lived in Chicago at the Gate of Horn club, just north of downtown Chicago. Another bassist asked me to sub for him while I was working with Josh White. I became the house bass player.

"Odetta followed Josh White as the next attraction and we 'hit it off.' She asked me to become her bass player and we immediately became a duo in the late 1950s. I found her to be musical and understanding in her approach to life. We traveled all over the world together, including Africa. Our concerts were successful and people everywhere loved Odetta's music."

In 1999, Odetta was awarded the National Endowment for the Arts' National Medal of Arts. And in 2003, the U.S. Library of Congress presented Odetta with the 'Living Legend Award.'

Odetta was hoping to sing at Barack Obama's upcoming Jan. 20 presidential inauguration, and had a poster of him over her hospital bed when she died. Even with her physical death, recordings of Odetta's music will continue to have the power to heal, to soothe frustration and inspire Black people.

The lyrics to the spiritual, "Oh, Freedom!" that Odetta performed at the 1963 March on Washington succinctly epitomizes her life:

*"Oh freedom, Oh freedom, Oh freedom over me!
An' befo' I'd be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave!
An' go home to my Lord an' be free."*

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U.S. activists in solidarity with political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal

Dec. 6 was declared an International Day of Solidarity with death row political prisoner, Mumia Abu-Jamal. Events were held in France, Switzerland, Germany, England and Mexico, while in the U.S. events were organized in Detroit, San Francisco, Baltimore, Portland, San Diego and other cities. Mumia's lawyers are currently appealing to the U.S. Supreme Court for a new guilt-phase trial, while the Philadelphia district attorney is appealing to the same court in an effort to execute Mumia without a new sentencing-phase jury trial. The following are summaries of some of the U.S. events.

PHILADELPHIA

Hundreds of spirited and determined demonstrators straddled both sides of a circular drive around Philadelphia's City Hall across from District Attorney Lynn Abraham's office on Dec. 6 to confront her attempt to fast track the execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Abraham, known as "the deadliest DA in the U.S.," has called on the U.S. Supreme Court to reinstate Abu-Jamal's death sentence, despite mounds of evidence of his innocence. The largely youthful crowd filled the frigid December air with chants of "No Justice, No Peace! Until Mumia Abu-Jamal's Released!"

The rally opened with a phoned-in solidarity greeting live from Venezuelan campesino leader Braulio Álvarez, a member of the National Assembly representing the Yaracuy states.

Álvarez called from a protest outside the U.S. Embassy in Caracas where Venezuelans gathered to present a letter to the U.S. ambassador calling for the state in Pennsylvania to immediately liberate Abu-Jamal.

Pam Africa of the MOVE organization and International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal challenged the assertion by District Attorney Abraham that there was no evidence that Abu-Jamal was innocent or denied a fair trial. Africa called on Captain William Fisher, head of Philadelphia's Police Department of Civil Affairs, to come forward, and she proceeded to pile his arms with mounds of books, files, CD's and photos containing evidence that has been gathered over the years to take to Abraham.

Noting that in 1981 and again in 1985 both the police and district attorney were given copies of photos taken by independent photojournalist Pedro Polakoff that contradicted prosecution witnesses' accounts, Africa challenged Abraham's position that evidence proving Abu-Jamal's innocence was not timely and therefore could not be admitted to court. Africa noted that the prosecution had these photos, yet kept them from defense attorneys.

The rally was followed by a march past the Union League on S. Broad Street, where earlier in the day President George W. Bush was present to see his portrait hung. Some protesters carried placards with a photo of Bush behind bars for war crimes with the slogan "Jail Bush! Free Mumia!"

At 13th and Locust streets the march stopped for a brief enactment of the 1981 crime scene, where Hans Bennett of Journalists for Mumia outlined the contradictory statements of state witnesses that have since been exposed as lies by Polakoff's photos and other eyewitness accounts.

The march concluded with another spirited rally as protesters occupied Market Street outside the Federal Court building, where speakers included Manolo de

los Santos of the Iglesia San Romero de Las Américas; Suzanne Ross of the New York Free Mumia Coalition; and Ashanti Alston of the Jericho Movement, who spent more than a decade in prison. Alston spoke of the need to free all political prisoners, including Leonard Peltier and the San Francisco 8.

Monica Moorehead of the International Action Center spoke on Abu-Jamal's refusal to compromise his principles and his continued political contributions through radio commentaries and weekly columns on issues from imperialist wars abroad to the economic crisis at home. "With almost two million people foreclosed out of homes this year and millions unemployed, we have to link these wars at home when we raise the political struggle against prisons, police brutality and stop and frisk. Mumia would want us to."

Fight Imperialism, Stand Together organizer Larry Hales remarked that it has been 39 years since the murders of Black Panther members Fred Hampton and Mark Clark by Chicago police. "We don't want to wait 39 years to observe another anniversary about Mumia. Young people today aren't being educated about the great social movements, but they are going to be radicalized as they fight back against the conditions they face today, and they'll come to understand the importance of raising political prisoners' demands."

—Betsey Piette

MONTANA

Student and community activists in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal met on Dec. 2 in Missoula, Mont., on the campus of the University of Montana (UM) to hear Larry



Suzanne Ross holds photo of Braulio Álvarez, Philadelphia, Dec. 6.



Pam Africa presents pieces of the widely acknowledged evidence of Abu-Jamal's innocence.

Hales, an International Action Center organizer, and see the film distributed by the Peoples Video Network, "The Framing of an Execution: Mumia Abu-Jamal and the Media."

Rachael Carroll, an organizer with the Montana Human Rights Network and Montana Abolition Coalition, a statewide movement against the death penalty, also spoke. The coalition was also a sponsor of the event.

Carroll reported that the Montana component of the prison-industrial complex is part of the racist trend throughout the United States, where members of oppressed nations are imprisoned and receive death sentences far beyond their numbers in the population. She said, "American Indians in Montana are about 6 percent of the population, but Indian women comprise between 42 percent and 75 percent of all women in prison in the state. In addition, Indian men comprise more than 22 percent of both prisoners and those receiving the death penalty."

Both Hales and Carroll spoke about the need for people to get involved in local and statewide actions against the racist death penalty as well as to support Mumia and demand that his legal lynching be stopped. Both organizers encouraged those present to follow the advice of Mumia to "Organize! Organize! Organize!"

Elisabeth Stoeckel, a UM graduate student, chaired the meeting and represented the Social Justice Action Network, an event sponsor and a UM organization that provides social work graduate students with the opportunity to get involved with social justice activities on campus and in

the community. Other UM groups supporting the event included Students for Economic and Social Justice, Students for Peace and Justice and the International Action Center in Montana.

The day before the Missoula event, activists and members of Amnesty International and the IAC gathered in Dillon, Mont., on the campus of the University of Montana Western. They heard Larry Hales speak about Mumia's case and then engaged in a lively discussion to plan further actions in support of Mumia and the statewide movement against the death penalty in Montana.

The meetings in Missoula and Dillon were the first held in the state by the International Action Center in Montana, and are seen by state organizers of the IAC and other involved groups as stepping stones to building a statewide network to not only oppose the racist death penalty and the unjust imprisonment of oppressed and poor people, but also to engage in other political action against economic and political injustice.

—John Lewis

BUFFALO, N.Y.

Activists in the fight to free U.S. political prisoners gathered in Buffalo to watch a new video, "Fighting for Mumia's Freedom: A Report from Philadelphia." They also watched a CBS-produced program, "West 57th," that told so much truth about the case of Leonard Peltier that it outraged the government when it was aired in the 1980s. A lively discussion followed.

—Ellie Dorritie



CLEVELAND

WWW PHOTO: SUSAN SCHNUR

Nearly 100 people braved a snowstorm in Cleveland on Dec. 6 to protest the 27 years of wrongful imprisonment of Mumia Abu-Jamal and to recommit to the struggle for his freedom.

Abu-Jamal's life was put in the context of J. Edgar Hoover's war against the Black Panther Party by Abdul Qahhar,

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Prisoners support Mumia Abu-Jamal

On Dec. 6, at Cleveland's event protesting the injustice of 27 years of wrongful imprisonment of Mumia Abu-Jamal, two of the prisoners framed on false charges in connection with the 1993 Lucasville, Ohio, prison uprising sent these excerpted messages of solidarity, which were read by their relatives.

Due to widespread campaigns for their freedom, both prisoners are finally out of solitary confinement after more than 15 years. Mosi O. Paki, an uprising participant, never received a trial but was charged with an internal prison rules infraction. Greg Curry's charges materialized out of thin air when he refused to testify falsely against other prisoners following the uprising.



Revolutionary greetings, comrades and brothers and sisters. Revolution means change, which is overdue for the innocent but railroaded Move 9 and the "voice of the voiceless," Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Since learning about Mumia in early 1989, I find it hard to separate him and the Move Organization, nor the staged

railroading and ongoing confinement of the innocent voice of Mumia's that spoke truth to corruption and falsehood. This brother never failed to step to the plate for the people's benefit. Let us all step to the plate for this brave, innocent brother until he is released from this nearly three decades of wrongful confinement. From one political prisoner for another—

Free Mumia Now!

**Ona Move in the Struggle,
Mosi O. Paki**

Greetings. I'd like to first thank all of you who participate in struggle. Your efforts and energy keep the sunlight bright. I've read much about Mumia Abu-Jamal [and] his unselfish love for oppressed people, so it's really great to see international support for justice in his case.

I can recall reading W. E. B. DuBois once saying, "It's easy to gather support for the famous and well off. But who will defend the less known?" There are many of us with solid evidence who, all things equal, would be set free. Please, comrades, become familiar with our cases and get to know us personally. Many of us are prepared to join you in struggle and growth.

**Freedom First,
Greg Curry**



Workers' conference plans fightback on foreclosures, utility shutoffs

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions hosted a workers' and poor peoples' conference on the capitalist crisis on Dec. 6. Anger, determination, compassion and solidarity emanated from the more than 80 participants gathered at Central United Methodist Church in downtown Detroit.

The pervasive economic crisis, especially in the banking and auto sectors, was examined from the perspective of fighting further attacks on working people. Discussion centered on the struggle for a moratorium to stop all foreclosures and evictions, utility shutoffs and plant closings, and to bail out the people, not the banks.

Rev. Ed Rowe, pastor of Central United Methodist Church, welcomed the conference goers. He stated he was proud that the Moratorium NOW! Coalition has its office in the church, and that Central Methodist continues to be a place where many struggles are carried out daily.

Coalition leader Abayomi Azikiwe gave a keynote talk on the work of the foreclosure moratorium campaign in Michigan. "This conference is taking place at an historic time—the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. But we are fighting back," said Azikiwe. "Today we salute the union workers who are occupying the Republic Doors and Windows factory in Chicago in their fight against the bosses and Bank of America."

Azikiwe described the collapse of the capitalist economic system and its impact on poor and working people. The high

level of political discussion which followed flowed from the participants' own struggles to survive and their involvement in the peoples' movement.

Lorene Parker is fighting Bank of America's attempt to evict her from her home. She told how she tried contacting the bank to work out a payment plan after she underwent a heart and liver double transplant and fell behind on her mortgage. The bank's response to Parker's plight was to move ahead with her foreclosure and eviction.

The conference attendees unanimously called for an action outside Bank of America in downtown Detroit on Dec. 10 to demand an immediate loan modification for Parker and to stop the sheriff's sale of her home scheduled for Dec. 11. The demonstration will also be in solidarity with the UE workers occupying the plant in Chicago, where because Bank of America withdrew its loan, the company announced it was closing and would not pay workers their vacation and severance required under federal law.

A letter to Bank of America officials was signed by everyone at the conference and will be delivered during the Dec. 10 demonstration. Bail Out the People activists in North Carolina will also hand-deliver the letter to the bank president when they demonstrate outside Bank of America's headquarters in Charlotte on Dec. 8.

Belva Davis from Detroit's East English Village received her eviction notice from a Wall Street trust company earlier that morning. After the conference, the participants formed a car caravan to Davis' eastside neighborhood for a militant rally in front of her house. Several neighbors,



WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

Protest in front of Belva Davis' house, Dec. 6.

including a steelworker who just got laid off from his job, came out to support her.

State Sen. Hansen Clarke, sponsor of SB 1306, pledged to keep the struggle alive in the state legislature: "If you are willing to keep fighting, I will keep on fighting. One of my first acts in January, when the legislature reconvenes, will be to reintroduce a bill for a two-year moratorium on foreclosures and evictions."

Labor activist Frank Hammer, former president of United Auto Workers Local 909, spoke about the caravan of auto workers that will leave Detroit Dec. 7 for Washington, D.C., to intervene on behalf of union workers at the Capitol Hill auto industry hearings. Retired Local 909 president, Al Benchich, also spoke.

Coalition leader Sandra Hines motivated the audience to keep struggling. Hines, who faced foreclosure and eviction one year ago from her family's home of 37 years, is now facing another eviction because her landlord has not paid the mortgage.

Mint farmer Linette Crosby of rural St. Johns, Mich., told of her family's struggle to save their historic farm from foreclosure. Farmer Diane Zechmeister of Oakland, Mich., told how she just sold her horses in order to make a mortgage payment to Washington Mutual, now owned by JPMorgan Chase. Her interest-only payments are \$2,500 per month.

Dave Segraves is also being foreclosed on by Chase Bank. He held up his Dec. 8

eviction notice. Other speakers included renters' rights activists Julia Wallace and Arturo Valasquez of Los Angeles, Maureen Taylor of the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization, people's attorney Vanessa Fluker and coalition activist Debbie Johnson.

Many action proposals were adopted, including a demonstration outside DTE Energy in Detroit to demand a moratorium on utility shutoffs and a protest at the Capitol in Lansing when Gov. Jennifer Granholm delivers her state of the state address in early 2009.

The week prior to the conference, coalition organizer and people's attorney Jerry Goldberg represented Mary Eady, a senior on a fixed income, in court proceedings to stop her eviction from her home of 47 years by Wells Fargo Bank. Goldberg argued forcefully that the bank, which received \$25 billion in taxpayer money in the recent federal bailout, has a duty under federal law to renegotiate the terms of borrowers' loans. The judge adjourned the proceedings for one month pending her decision.

Coalition activists were joined by organizers from Call 'Em Out at the Detroit home of Marvin and Louise Morris for a candlelight vigil and neighborhood march on Dec. 4. The Morrisses have been victims of constant abuse by the loan servicer HomEq and are being threatened with eviction by Barclays Bank. □



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Communities challenge city budget cuts

By Audrey Hoak
Philadelphia

Mayor Michael Nutter is preparing to balance his budget through draconian cuts in services, pensions, grants and jobs in Philadelphia at the expense of the city's most vulnerable population.

In November, Nutter announced plans to whittle down a potential five-year, \$1 billion deficit. The first round of cuts includes limits to trash collection and snow plowing; closing of fire stations; elimination of residential street cleaning; and closing 68 of 81 city swimming pools. The cuts include reducing in half the

city's promised \$4 million to Philadelphia Community College.

A \$4.6 million cut to the Department of Human Services will cause the city to lose \$18 million in state matching funds, leaving a \$23 million gap in human services in a city that uses \$22 million from the non-discretionary portion of its budget to pay for the incarceration of youth.

The Byron Story Youth Restoration Center in predominantly African-American North Philadelphia is faced with closing its doors on Jan. 1. While the center is supported by local organizations, its primary source of funding comes from

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FIST on Republic Windows workers:

'Take destiny into your hands'

Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) youth group applauds the workers at Republic Windows and Doors for taking the bold action to occupy the plant, instead of walking off the job feeling dejected when management decided to close the factory and lay them off without the required-by-law 60-day notification or 60 days' pay. We also applaud the Electrical Workers for backing up the workers.

We support the call made by the Bail Out the People Movement, including the Dec. 8-13 days of action for protests in front of your local Bank of America office or building. The BOPM call also states, "Support the demands of the Republic Windows and Doors workers: management must meet with the workers; workers must receive 60 days' full pay; and no repression against the workers, no attempts to remove, arrest or charge them."

The workers' decisive action may become the tinderbox of a broad fightback against the misery and despair foisted upon workers and the oppressed, celled together by the objective nature of a system based on exploitation so that a small group of people can reap greater and greater profit.

But, what's more, it illuminates perfect-

ly what should become a mantra for our struggle during these times, "Bail out the workers, not the banks!"

It is Bank of America, after having received \$25 billion in federal monies—money taken from the workers and the oppressed via taxes—that is refusing to release the loan money to Republic that should be used to pay the workers.

Republic Windows and Doors thought it could close up the factory, after having sold the land, and move to a place further south to get cheaper labor; they also must have thought that the workers would walk away hanging their heads. This would be understandable, as workers are being battered by the economic crisis. Both the owners of companies and the U.S. government are heaping the brunt of hardship on the backs of all workers and the oppressed.

The workers at Republic had a different idea and upped the ante, taking their immediate future in their own hands. What they are really asking for is very little—75 days' pay guaranteed by law. What they deserve is to run the factory, including access to all the things needed to produce products.

FIST stands in solidarity and calls on all

Congress vs. the UAW

By Martha Grevatt

When General Motors President Charles E. “Engine Charlie” Wilson was in line to be U.S. secretary of defense, he was quoted as saying, “What’s good for General Motors is good for the country.” It turned out to be a slight misquote, but the phrase became symbolic of the tremendous political clout held by the captains of the auto industry. After Wilson, Ford Motor Co. President Robert McNamara inherited the job.

What a contrast to the humiliating drubbing by Congress of the CEOs of GM, Ford and Chrysler, who swallowed their executive pride and agreed to work for a dollar a year as they begged for \$34 billion to help them survive in the next few months.

The only one to get a pat on the back during the bailout hearings was United Auto Workers President Ron Gettelfinger. This was after several hundred local union leaders voted, with only five dissenters, to eliminate the “controversial” jobs bank—which merely grants laid-off workers an additional two years of income security.

The union also agreed to let the automakers delay scheduled payments on the Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association, a UAW-administered fund designed to relieve the employers of their obligations to fund retiree health benefits. Working UAW members have already been paying for the VEBA through cuts in the Cost Of Living Allowance; five quarterly adjustments have left workers making seven cents less per hour now than in 2007.

Watching the congressional hearings, you’d almost think that these self-righteous elected officials were genuinely appalled by the excessive salaries and perks, the disregard for the environment, and the managerial ineptitude of the three corporate leaders.

In fact, the Democrats and Republicans remain loyal servants of Big Capital. What has changed? One difference is the shift in the capitalist economy in the past quarter century. Now the bulk of surplus value—profits—comes from the super-exploitation of low-wage workers in the service sector and of workers in oppressed countries producing goods and services for slave wages. This in part explains the diminished influence of the U.S. auto companies.

The debate over the spoils taken from the workers in the form of taxes reveals finance capital’s political power. The same Wall Street financiers who, in the glory days of the automobile industry set its rapid expansion in motion, now have Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson putting up a fuss over giving a fraction of the \$700-billion-dollar Troubled Assets Recovery Program funds set aside for banks. The banking executives unapologetically enjoy the same obscene compensation and indulgences as GM, Ford and Chrysler LLC CEOs Rick Wagoner, Alan Mulally and Bob Nardelli, respectively.

The real stakeholders—those whose livelihoods directly or indirectly depend on the car industry—are treated like so many extras in a drama of corporate-government conflict.

The latest development in Washington is a plan to grant the car manufacturers “bridge loans” of \$15 billion. Even this paltry sum could be rejected by the House, the Senate or the White House. Why? For the cost of a fraction of the Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac bailout, or a few weeks of warfare in Iraq, why not just cough up the money and go on recess as planned?

These politicians aren’t concerned about abusive executive compensation; if they were they would pass a law against it. As their names imply, the Senate Banking and House Finance Committees are beholden to the banks, whose fortunes ultimately depend on maximizing surplus value created by the exploitation of wage labor at the point of production. They want to see the union wage scale and ultimately the union itself destroyed.

According to the Detroit News, “Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., said Saturday he was ‘disappointed’ with the still-unwritten rescue because it did not require major union givebacks or debt restructuring moves” while “the White House wants a trustee named by Bush to wring concessions from the automakers and their unions before any loan money can be released.”

What the Senate Banking Committee chair, Democrat Christopher Dodd, is demanding is even more extreme: “Chrysler, is, I think, basically gone, probably ought to be merged.” A GM-Chrysler merger would create so-called “overcapacity,” leading to plant closings and mass layoffs. (Detroit News, Dec. 7)

For the 139,000 UAW-represented Big Three workers—whose numbers will drop

again by year’s end—two options are presented. The lesser evil is a federal bailout ordering drastic restructuring. The greater evil, a Delphi-style bankruptcy, would have the same purpose of wiping out jobs and driving down wages and benefits. Either scenario gives the bosses a convenient excuse—“government orders”—to impose cuts now to reap big profits in the future.

The worst case scenario, liquidation of a company, could affect some 2.5 million to 6 million jobs.

The attack on the UAW is an attack on the whole working class. Historically, when the UAW won a wage increase, it set the standard for other industries. As union wages rose, non-union wages had to follow close behind to discourage unionizing. Likewise, if wages are cut in auto, that will exert downward pressure on all workers’ wages. When one union is weakened, all unions are weakened.

The rank and file are being urged by their union officials to contact their congressional representatives and ask them to support the bailout. Yet as a grassroots car caravan against concessions demonstrated, many want to do more.

When one Chrysler UAW local held an emergency meeting on a Saturday, hundreds turned up. One worker spoke on the need to tell Congress that we oppose any merger, while another asked why we don’t have the government give us the money to run the company. “Yeah, let’s get rid of the bosses,” a third worker chimed in. “Let’s tell Congress: hands off our wages, hands off our pensions, hands off our jobs and hands off our union!” □

Autoworker speaks on UAW contract

By David Sole
Detroit

Autoworkers need to take a fresh look at their contracts in order to resist further concessions and develop a strategy that does not hold them hostage to the threat of plant closings, layoffs or bankruptcy proceedings. The place to start is with the opening sentences of the contract.

The UAW-GM contract begins with: “The management of General Motors recognizes that it cannot get along without labor any more than labor can get along without the management. Both are in the same business... General Motors holds that the basic interests of employers and employees are the same.”

All workers who have sweated on the

people, students, youth and other workers and oppressed people to stand up and support the workers at Republic Windows and Doors. Their action may be decisive and may inspire workers at GM, Chrysler and Ford to occupy the factories; students facing higher tuition to occupy their campuses; and people being kicked out of their homes to occupy their homes with allies and neighbors.

Instead of bailing out the banks, the billions of bailout money for banks and automakers and the money being spent to wage imperialist wars should go to those who create all the wealth—for jobs, healthcare, housing and education.

These are demands that we should fight for and win by any means necessary!

**Be like the workers at Republic Windows and Doors:
Seize the time!
All power to the people!
Fight Imperialism,
Stand Together**

Dec. 7, 2008



assembly line know in their bones that the basic interests of the boss and the workers are not the same. The business of management is to make profits. The “business” of the workers is to make enough to provide a decent living for themselves and their families.

Management wants to hide the fundamental fact that the interest of the capitalist bosses and of “their” workers is diametrically opposed. It is a class antagonism based on exploitation. Sometimes this antagonism is more muted, at other times more open. With the onset of the current deep capitalist economic crisis, the very survival of the workers and the existence of their union are in question.

The founders of the United Auto Workers knew very well about classes. They built our unions in violent class battles during the 1930s. It was rich versus poor, bosses versus workers, capitalist class versus working class.

A hint of this remains in the first paragraphs of the UAW Constitution: “Managerial decisions have a far reaching impact upon the quality of life enjoyed by the workers, the family, and the community. Management must recognize that it has basic responsibilities to advance the welfare of the workers and the whole society and not alone to the stockholders. It is essential, therefore, that the concerns of workers and of society be taken into account when basic management decisions are made.”

Douglas Fraser, International UAW president at the time of the first round of concessions in the 1970s, decried “the one-sided class war” being waged against the autoworkers. He identified the character of the attacks as being based on antagonistic classes. But his formulation showed he was unwilling to make it a two-sided class war by fighting back. Every subse-

quent UAW top leader has shrunk from this conclusion to this day.

What would it mean for the UAW to expose the antagonistic class positions instead of lamely following the lead of the auto bosses? It isn’t simply saying no to concessions or going on strike to stop takeaways. When the whole economy is in crisis, a massive depression looms, and the Big Three are threatening bankruptcy, autoworkers are tremendously fearful about losing their jobs. With no alternative presented to them, most will vote for another round of concessions.

If the UAW contracts were to be reopened, the first thing to go should be the entire false “identity of interests” introduction. A bold statement of the true conditions of class struggle on the shop floor and the broader community needs to be proclaimed.

Then the autoworkers need to challenge the “management’s rights” clause—paragraph eight of the UAW-GM contract—which states: “...the products to be manufactured, the location of the plants, the schedules of production, the methods, processes and means of manufacturing are solely and exclusively the responsibility of the Corporation.”

But the corporations have run the business into the ground. At the very least, management has been irresponsible. The crisis facing millions of workers dependent upon this industry calls into question their right to continue to manage. The UAW Constitution demands that management take into account the workers and the community in its decision making.

Even management knew that they had to do something different when the government bailed out Chrysler Corporation in the late 1970s. In exchange for the first

concessions contracts, UAW President Douglas Fraser was given a seat on the Chrysler Board of Directors. From a union point of view this was ridiculous. One vote on a big board of bosses and bankers was meaningless.

But from another angle, it was a recognition that the workers ought to have a say in running the company in light of the new, dire conditions and the taxpayer-funded bailout.

How much worse are things today! As the crisis deepens workers must think about whether they “can’t do without management.” The unthinkable might start looking reasonable. Why can’t workers’ representatives and representatives of the communities in which factories are located be made the new management of the Big Three?

Government funds could be used for plants to be retrofitted for production of fuel-efficient vehicles. With the need for a massive economic stimulus program being discussed by the incoming Obama administration, the unions and communities can demand government contracts to build mass transit.

The highly skilled and disciplined autoworkers inside the many plants still in existence can quickly adjust to produce whatever is needed to rebuild the failing infrastructure of the U.S. Many new jobs would be created.

None of this can happen without a struggle. The place to start is with an understanding by the autoworkers—and all workers—of their importance and their power as the working class.

Sole worked for GM Fleetwood from 1971 until the plant closed in 1987. He is vested in the GM retirement fund. He is currently president of UAW Local 2334 in Detroit.

**WORKERS WORLD
COMMENTARY**

Int'l conference strategizes for migrant rights

By Teresa Gutierrez
Mexico City, Mexico

In yet another example of the growing movement for migrant rights in the U.S. and around the world, a significant and historic conference took place in Mexico City from Nov. 24 through Nov. 29.

The "For a World without Borders: The Second Campaign on Migration & Human Rights" conference opened up with a stirring and moving tribute to people who are facing the brunt of a vicious anti-immigrant attack. The conference was organized by the Center for Migration and Human Rights of the Autonomous University of the City of Mexico; Camilo Perez Bustillo, Mesoamerican Migrant Movement; Casa de las Amigos; and Elvira Arellano.

This writer attends many immigrant rights events. It is safe to say that this event was unique, full of testimony from victims as well as a perspective on fighting back, not only in the U.S. but in Mexico and indeed around the world.

The conference was so impactful that hardly a day went by that women and men did not have tears in their eyes.

Presenters included a video message from Flor Crisóstomo, an Indigenous woman who has bravely taken sanctuary at Adalberto United Methodist Church in Chicago. Crisóstomo gave a stirring message, saying that her fight for justice would go on no matter what.

Cristal Dillman gave a short but heart-breaking statement. Dillman is the wife of Luis Eduardo Ramirez, who was beaten to death by a racist gang in Shenandoah, Pa., several months ago. Her tragedy continued as she was forced to leave her home in Pennsylvania, fleeing to Mexico after police and other thugs continued to taunt, threaten and terrorize her for fighting for

justice for her husband.

In a statement to the press, Dillman stated that she is speaking out wherever she can—not just for her husband, but so that no more migrants have to go through what her husband did. Dillman is white and her husband was Mexican.

Nelly Santos Rosa is from Honduras. She organized a caravan of women from that country all the way to Mexico City.

Santos Rosa comes from a poor community, an area wrecked not only from the wave of people who have been forced to migrate but from the tragedy of not knowing what happens to many who leave. Many sons and daughters, husbands and mothers are never heard from again.

The conference documented how many migrants die on the railroad trains as they jump on, making their way to the U.S. Others are kidnapped and tortured or killed. The mothers and families want to know what happens to those migrants who never make it past Mexico.

A running theme of the conference was to spotlight the inhumane and double standard on migrants practiced by the Mexican government. It has become a human tragedy that so many migrants are brutally victimized by Mexican organized crime or the Mexican police, with impunity from the Mexican government.

Mexican activists at the conference are demanding justice for these families from Central America. In fact, one of the key supporters and a speaker at the conference was "diputado" and member of the Mexican Congress, José Jacques "Pepe" Medina.

Jacques "Pepe" Medina is the first appointed member of the Congress to represent migrants and comes as a result of a long history of supporting the immigrant struggle both in Mexico and the U.S.

Another tragedy was presented by David Greene, who also performed hip-hop at the event. Greene was deported to Mexico almost two years ago because of a run-in with the legal system. As a result of a glitch in his adoption papers more than 27 years ago, David was deported to Mexico, despite having no family whatsoever there or not knowing a single person in that country. He spoke absolutely no Spanish.

Greene's case is a tragic example of how incredibly inhumane U.S. immigration policy is.

An Indigenous leader from Guatemala, María Eliza Orozco, gave a stirring account of Guatemalan migrants, especially from a woman's viewpoint. She ended her comments by declaring that people simply can no longer take anymore and that the struggle must be worldwide and militant.

Other speakers included Emma Lozano from Pueblo Sin Fronteras in Chicago, as well as Rev. Walter Coleman from the Adalberto United Methodist Church, Rufino Domínguez from Binational Front of Indigenous Organizations (FIOB) in California and Victoria Cintrón from the Mississippi Immigrants' Rights Alliance.

Conference ends with a plan of action

Organizers and attendees were determined to take the spirit of the conference into action. Several days of events were voted on.

These include a Dec. 18 International Day of Human Rights; Jan. 21 protests in front of U.S. embassies in conjunction with events in Washington, D.C.; March 8 International Women's Day activities dedicated to women migrants and their families, and a denunciation of sexual trafficking; and worldwide actions on May Day 2009.

Another recurring theme at the conference was linking up with other worldwide formations on migration. This included agreeing to join up with the International Migrant Alliance, which is based out of the Philippines but internationally located, as well as MIREDES and the World Social Forum.

Gutierrez was a presenter at the conference, representing IMA and the May 1st Coalition for Worker and Immigrant Rights.

Communities challenge city budget cuts

Continued from page 4

DHS. The center provides youth with education, social skills and anti-violence alternatives. A total of 525 people have earned their GED because of the center.

A number of these students spoke out at a public meeting and explained that without the center it was unlikely they would have achieved their goals. Students, parents, teachers and neighbors marched from the center to City Hall. With very little time to mobilize before the January deadline, they have started petitions and outreach strategies along with a planned presence at future DHS and City Council meetings.

Protests target library closings

Others are fighting Nutter's unprecedented proposal to close 11 of the city's 54 branch libraries and sell the buildings. Nine of the 11 are in areas where 40 percent of the children live below the poverty line. Most are in communities of color.

With fewer than 50 percent of Philadelphia schools offering on-site library services, the community libraries provide the only source of free books, as well as after-school havens with continued learning programs and resources for youth. They are also home to senior activities and book clubs, and are used by nearby preschools. With an estimated half of the city population having no home computers, many people rely on their local branches to do research or look for jobs.

Siobhan Reardon, the head of the Philadelphia Free Library System, claims that patrons will receive these services elsewhere, but people aren't buying it. A proposal by the Friends of the Library to keep these branches open three days a week was rejected.

Numerous rallies at the branches, each building on the momentum of the last, pressured the City Council into passing a nonbinding resolution to delay the January closings to allow further analysis. Mayor Nutter was also pressured into holding eight town hall meetings where angry protesters challenged city officials.

On Dec. 6, over 300 people gathered for a rally at the Central Branch Library, where one woman in the crowd asked if oil had been discovered under the libraries. Others questioned government's priorities to bail out banks, spend \$341.5 million each day in Iraq and give huge tax breaks to the city's wealthiest corporations while foreclosing on homes and trying to take away vital services.

A leaflet from the Philadelphia Bail Out the People Campaign challenged the city's tax policies that allow corporations and wealthy citizens to pay little or no property taxes. It noted that nearly \$80 million in revenue could be provided annually by overturning a tax-abatement program that gives 8,000 owners of million-dollar condominiums up to 90 percent savings on their tax bills for 10 years. □

Worker trampled to death at store

Wal-Mart & capitalism to blame

By Larry Hales

The family of Jdimytai Damour, the 34-year-old immigrant worker who was trampled to death while working at Wal-Mart in Valley Stream, N.Y., has filed a lawsuit against the giant retail chain.

A huge crowd had come to shop on the Friday after "Thanksgiving." Known as "Black Friday," it is supposed to be the busiest shopping day of the year—the day when retail stores look to become profitable for the whole year. The crowd broke through a door and overwhelmed the temporary worker, who died from asphyxiation.

Damour had been hired at Wal-Mart through a temporary agency and had only been there for a week. While the police and many media outlets have focused on the crowds, criminalizing them, the lawsuit shows the complicity of Wal-Mart and rightly blames the retailer for his death.

It is a sign of the sickness of this society that a person could be trampled by a throng of people looking for deals on consumer goods and that the crowd, in callous disregard of another's life, continued to shop after being notified of the worker's death.

This sickness, however, is not something inherent in human nature. It is a sickness born of a system, a system that also breeds greed. It is a system where retailers, hoping to procure great profits, air commercials of huge crowds clamoring outside their doors, chanting and yelling to get inside so they can beat others to

get deals that are limited for a few hours or one day.

One mattress company has an outrageous commercial where workers at the store affix mattresses to their bodies, and once they open the door they are trampled by a crowd looking for bargains.

The frenzy for deals is manufactured. At a time of economic crisis, when workers and the oppressed are looking to secure consumer goods at low prices—prices much lower than on most other days—this frenzy becomes amplified. Retailers such as Wal-Mart are well aware of this.

In a Wal-Mart statement after Damour's death, the company said in part: "We consider Mr. Damour part of the Wal-Mart family, and are saddened by his death. ... We have been in communication with members of his family to do what we can to help them through this difficult time. Our associates know that when incidents like this occur, we take care of our own."

But Wal-Mart's claim rings hollow. Wal-Mart is the largest employer in the U.S. and one of the largest on the planet. The Walton family are multibillionaires, and their combined fortunes dwarf that of even the richest of other families.

Wal-Mart is notoriously anti-union and pays its workers poverty wages. According to a 2005 article in Political Affairs magazine, in 2004 the average full-time worker at Wal-Mart received \$9.68 per hour before taxes. That wage is a liberal estimate.

After the average tax rate, that pay falls below the poverty rate for a family of three. Part-time workers make at the most

\$8 per hour. The Food and Commercial Workers union says Wal-Mart workers have to pay one-fifth of their wages if they want health care coverage.

Wal-Mart is vicious when it comes to unions and intimidates, harasses and fires workers who openly demand unionization. Wal-Mart closed a store in Quebec in 2005 after the workers voted for union representation to win higher wages, better health care and a better work atmosphere.

The Political Affairs article also highlights the low wages subcontract workers around the world make for assembling items sold by Wal-Mart—17 cents per hour in Bangladesh, 23 cents per hour in Nicaragua and 53 cents per hour in Swaziland.

It is a sick joke for Wal-Mart to claim, "We take care of our own." The truth is closer to what is alleged in the Damour lawsuit: the retailer "engaged in specific marketing and advertising techniques to specifically attract a large crowd and create an environment of frenzy and mayhem and was otherwise careless, reckless and negligent."

Wal-Mart cares for one thing only—profit. It tramples the rights of workers, and it was more concerned with profit than with the life of Jdimytai Damour. The profit motive is what the capitalist system is built around, and consumerism flows from this system, as do other anti-social ills.

The family is right. Wal-Mart is to blame. □

Inspiring displays of international solidarity at workers' conference in Tijuana

By Bob McCubbin
Tijuana, Mexico

The fifth Cuba/Venezuela/Mexico/North America Labor Conference, with representation from eight countries and virtually every region of the U.S., took place the weekend of Dec. 5-7 in Tijuana, Mexico. Sponsors of the conference included the U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange; Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas; World Organization for the Right of the People to Healthcare—Service Employees International Union 1199 NY; International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five; National Network on Cuba; Venezuela Solidarity Network; International Action Center; Cuba Solidarity New York; Southwest Workers Union; and Convergencia de los Movimientos de los Pueblos de las Americas; among others.

The issue brought up by speaker after speaker throughout the three-day conference, and the theme of the Dec. 5 evening social, was freedom for the Cuban Five and humane visitation rights—especially for Olga Salanueva and Adriana Perez, who are denied all access to their loved ones. These five heroic Cuban revolutionaries, arrested, tried and imprisoned in the U.S. for their efforts to expose the criminal plans of counterrevolutionary terrorists based in Miami, must be set free!

It is the height of hypocrisy on the part of the U.S. government that these men, who at great personal risk dedicated themselves to exposing terrorist activities, have been held captive in U.S. federal prisons for more than 10 years. Magali Llorca Ruiz, the mother of Fernando González, one of the Five, spoke on several occasions during the conference and was honored with several gifts during a presentation by Clarence Thomas, International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 Executive Board member.

The Dec. 5 evening program, in a hall hung with banners honoring the Five and U.S. political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, included presentations by Cheryl LaBash, one of the main conference organizers, who called on U.S.-based unions to follow the example of British trade unionists who educate and engage workers on the case of the Five; Alicia Jrapko, leader of the International Committee for Freedom for the Cuban Five, who condemned the U.S. government for the heartless punishment inflicted on family members of the Five by preventing family visits; Andrés Morejón of ICAP, the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples, who spoke of the tremendous solidarity that Cuba and the Five have received from organizations and committees all over the world; and Silvia Garcia, representing the Cuban National Assembly of Peoples Power, who provided details of the legal struggle to free the Five. Solidarity messages were also read.

The Dec. 6-7 sessions were chaired by conference organizers Cheryl LaBash and Ignacio Meneses, and by SEIU Local 1199 leader Radames Rivera.

Ernesto Freire Cazanás, head officer of the Foreign Relations Department of the CTC (Cuban Workers Confederation), led off the Dec. 6 morning session with dramatic figures highlighting the achievements of the Cuban Revolution, both domestically and with regard to international relations. He praised the conference for providing the opportunity for communication among the various countries present.

Larry Holmes of the May 1st Coalition

for Worker and Immigrant Rights spoke for Teresa Gutierrez, who was unable to travel due to illness following a trip abroad. He observed that the election of Barack Obama reflects enormous changes in the U.S. working class. The huge outpouring of immigrant workers in May 2006 was the first indication that Obama could win. Holmes noted that the primary reason for the increasing repression of immigrant workers is their ability to influence non-immigrant workers. Holmes emphasized the necessity for Black and white workers to stand with their immigrant sisters and brothers this coming May Day.

Ramón Carmona, representing the World Federation of Trade Unions, reported on the May 2008 trade union conference in Quito, Ecuador and urged everyone's attendance at the next conference, which will be held in Brazil. Carmona concluded his presentation with the observation that the terrible repression of trade unionists in Colombia is an indication of how frightened the capitalist rulers are of the workers.

Edgar Paez, from the National Board of Sinaltrainal, the Colombian union of food industry workers, gave a detailed description of the murderous repression being suffered by workers and trade union activists in Colombia. But in the face of this state terrorism and a crushing economic collapse presently affecting millions of Colombians, the working class is fighting back. Paez noted that among the struggles presently underway in Colombia are a work stoppage by truckers and cane cutters and a strike by court workers.

Representing the Confederation of Haitian Workers was General Secretary Paul LouLou Chery, who remarked that Haiti is "the mother of freedom in our region." Haiti achieved its independence from France by defeating the racist colonial power militarily in 1804. But he also commented that Haiti is the poorest country in the hemisphere, with 5 million workers but only 200,000 formally employed. The food situation is grave following the devastation of recent hurricanes. Solidarity in the form of material aid is urgently needed.

Concluding the session, Ignacio Meneses thanked SEIU Locals 721 and 1199, and UNITE HERE Western Region, Local 2. It was their enthusiastic assistance that ensured a successful conference.

Elmer LaBog, chairperson of Kilusang Mayo Uno, a revolutionary organization of the Filipino working class, spoke of the impact of so-called globalization in the Philippines: repressive laws, no job security, many violations of International Labor Organization standards, militarization, assassinations and massacres. The Filipino workers' strategies of resistance include demonstrations, strikes and cultural activities that educate and organize the workers.

Mario López Choque, general secretary

Left to right: Mike Martinez, FIST; Ernesto Freire, CTC Foreign Relations Head Of cer; Cheryl LaBash, U.S./Cuba Labor Exchange; Alicia Jrapko, Int'l. Ctte. for the Freedom of the Cuban Five; Magali Llorca, mother of Fernando Gonzalez one of the Cuban Five.



WW PHOTO: BOB MCCUBBIN

of the Confederation of Bolivian Workers, provided a detailed description of the struggle of the Bolivian workers and peasants, beginning in the year 1982, to free themselves from the tentacles of imperialism. The struggle continues and he concluded with the demands, "All bosses out of Bolivia! U.S. ambassador and USAID out of Bolivia!"

Edgar Sarango, the vice-president of the Confederation of Workers of Ecuador, spoke of a 10-year-long crisis in Ecuador: terrible social instability, divisions among the workers, political opportunism, devastating inflation and the consequent emigration of 2.5 million citizens. The program of the present government, led by Rafael Correa, includes a struggle against corruption, the defense of national sovereignty, institutionalizing the democratic process, expanding social services and protecting natural resources. Sarango emphasized that the class struggle will continue as long as classes of rich and poor exist. He concluded, "Nothing will stop us!"

UNITE HERE Western States Joint Board director and international vice president Cristina Vasquez addressed the growing economic catastrophe for workers in the U.S. She noted that one in 10 families is behind in their mortgage payments or facing foreclosure. She commented that the unions helped Barack Obama get elected. Now "we have our list of demands. Immigration reform was first on the list when we met with the transition team in [Washington,] D.C." Second on the list is health care for everyone. Third is an employee free choice act—the so-called card check. Finally, she emphasized, "No more 'free trade' agreements!"

Rosie Martinez, chairperson of the Latino Caucus of SEIU Local 721, focused on the exploitation of women workers, calling special attention to the plight of maquiladora workers. She introduced Hermandad Mexicana leader Gloria Saucedo, who has set up the "Casa de Elvira Arellano," a shelter in Tijuana for undocumented workers victimized by Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids and pushed back into Mexico with no resources. Saucedo received a standing ovation from conference attendees.

Clarence Thomas, executive board member of Local 10 of the ILWU, recount-

ed the proud history of his local, noting that Local 10 organizer Harry Bridges was himself an immigrant worker who understood the connection between race and class. Thomas suggested that although the workers find it difficult to compete with lobbyists and corporate lawyers who defend the rich, we have the ability to take action at the point of production and must use that weapon.

The Dec. 6 dinner included a program focusing on U.S. political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, on death row for 27 years and, following a Supreme Court ruling, once again facing the possibility of execution. Hosted by Sabrina Green of International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, it included a live hookup with activist and Move member Ramona Africa, and a recorded message to the conference from Mumia himself.

The Dec. 7 meeting focused on the struggles of immigrant workers and conference resolutions. Benjamin Prado, central committee member of Union del Barrio, exposed the border wall as an illegitimate border, forming part of a U.S. military strategy that criminalizes workers and condemns many to their death for simply seeking work.

Fernando Castillo of the Mexican Electrical Workers Union described the struggle of the Cananea miners, whose militant strike sparked the Mexican revolution of 1910. Their current struggle is challenging the sellout Mexican government and its neoliberal policies, protesting the proposed selling off of the national oil company and ongoing state repression, including the recent arrest of Cananea miner leader Pavón Campos.

Juan Jose Gutierrez, leader of the Movimiento Latino USA, provided an overview of where immigration reform stands with the election of Barack Obama. He spoke of the historic marches of 2006, the repression that followed and the duty labor unions have to support immigrant workers' rights.

The conference completed with a global resolution that continued the unifying process begun in Ecuador last May with the Quito Declaration. There was also a resolution supporting the Republic Window and Door workers' sit-in, an endorsement of a May 2009 Workers' Solidarity Month, support for framed-up ILWU workers and for Mexican miners. The sixth labor conference in Tijuana is planned for Dec. 2009 to continue uniting workers of all the Americas.

This report has focused on the presentations of scheduled speakers, but there was also very active participation on the part of the audience. Of special note was the remarkable translation service provided throughout all three conference meetings on Dec. 6 by Miami-based FIST organizer Mike Martinez. The reporter would also like to thank Ben Prado of Unión del Barrio for the additional information provided for the preparation of this report. □

Low-Wage Capitalism

Timely new book by Fred Goldstein describes in sweeping detail the drastic effect on the working class of new technology and the restructuring of global capitalism in the post-Soviet era. It uses Karl Marx's law of wages and other findings to show that these developments are not only continuing to drive down wages but are creating the material basis for future social upheaval. The analysis rests on three basic developments in the last three decades:

- The world's workforce available to exploitation by transnational capitalist corporations doubled in the wake of the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe.
- The technological revolutions of the digital age, in both production and communications, have allowed transnational corporations to destroy high-wage jobs and simultaneously expand the global workforce to generate a worldwide wage competition.
- The decline in the economic condition of the workers, driven by the laws of capitalism and the capitalist class, is leading to the end of working-class compromise and retreat and must end up in a profound revival of the struggle against capital.

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Cholera outbreak and medical crisis caused by sanctions

Imperialists launch new efforts to topple Zimbabwe government

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Fresh calls have been made for the overthrow of the elected Zimbabwe government headed by President Robert Mugabe and the Zimbabwe African National Union—Patriotic Front.

Demands for the resignation or forced removal of the government have been going on for more than a decade. The country has been under constant threat and attack since the government in this former British colony declared that it would redistribute land confiscated by the European settler class.

A current outbreak of cholera in the country, coupled with growing cases of anthrax infections in cattle, has given Britain, the U.S., European Union and their allies a false basis for plotting to engage in a western-backed regime-change project against the ZANU-PF, which fought for the national liberation of Zimbabwe during the 1970s.

Zimbabwe Information Minister Sikhanyiso Ndlovu condemned the western propaganda campaign against the government. He pointed to the years of economic blockade and disinformation as the root cause of the humanitarian crisis inside the country.

“Zimbabwe is a sovereign state, with a president elected in accordance with the constitution of Zimbabwe. No foreign leader, regardless of how powerful they are, has the right to call on him to step down on their whim,” Ndlovu told Reuters. (Dec. 8)

Leaders of the EU, meeting in Brussels on Dec. 8, made repeated calls for the overthrow of the ZANU-PF government. In a statement, EU Foreign Policy Chief Javier Solana said, “I think the moment has arrived to put all the pressure for Mugabe to step down.”

French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who is currently the head of the EU, remarked at the summit: “I say today that President Mugabe must go. Zimbabwe has suffered enough.”

EU leaders took under consideration a proposal to add more names to a list of Zimbabwean governmental officials who are banned from traveling inside their member countries. President Mugabe and other leading Zimbabwe cabinet ministers are not allowed to visit these European countries, many of which are former slave-owning and colonial states.

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner told Reuters that an intervention was necessary: “Cholera is killing. We need international intervention for this matter, not a military one, but a strong intervention to stop this cholera epidemic, which could allow for other things.” (Dec. 8)

Zimbabwe has accused Britain of planning an invasion. Judging from recent statements issued by the regime of Prime Minister Gordon Brown, this, it seems, is in all likelihood in the works. British Foreign Minister David Miliband said, “There is a crying need for change in Zimbabwe.”

Other pro-western political leaders on the continent have followed the imperialist lead. Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga has called upon the African Union, an organization of all independent states, to send military forces into Zimbabwe and forcefully remove the government.

This statement by Odinga comes less than one year after large-scale inter-party violence in that East African nation, stemming from disagreements over a national presidential election. Far more people died and were displaced in Kenya than have perished in Zimbabwe in the recent cholera outbreak. Odinga never called for western intervention during the Kenyan crisis of 2007-8, which required a negotiated settlement brokered by the AU and others within the international community.

Others who have called for removal of the Zimbabwe government include the pro-western Botswana Foreign Minister Phandu Skelemani. Retired South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, has called for the forceful removal of the Mugabe government.

Government declares national emergency

The ZANU-PF government declared a national emergency on Dec. 4 as a result of the cholera outbreak.

The disease arises from the consumption of unclean drinking water. The government has stated that the imposition of sanctions and the country's overall economic crisis has resulted in the lack of chlorine and other chemicals to purify the water systems.

The cholera outbreak had claimed 563 lives by Dec. 4. Dr. David Parirenyatwa, the minister of health and child welfare, said that problems were compounded by the crisis in the health sector. He said the hospitals were in dire need of drugs, food and medical equipment.

“Our central hospitals are literally not functioning. Our staff is demotivated and we need your support to ensure that they start coming to work and our health system is revived,” Dr. Parirenyatwa said.

The government issued an emergency appeal for the importation of medical equipment, surgical sundries, renal and laundry equipment, x-ray films and boilers. Dr. Parirenyatwa noted that shortages in medical supplies threatened to derail the country's anti-retroviral program to HIV patients that has made some progress in recent years.

“The emergency appeal will help us reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with the current socio-economic environment by December 2009. We are hoping that within the next 12 months we would have achieved the package,” Dr. Parirenyatwa said. (Zimbabwe Herald, December 4).

The government has taken measures to reverse the situation. According to the Zimbabwe Herald: “The Government has acquired 505 tonnes of aluminum sulphate and pledged a further US\$1 million a week towards the procurement of water treatment chemicals with some Harare suburbs having started receiving water supplies on December 1.” (Dec. 4)

The neighboring Republic of Namibia has been the first country to respond to the national emergency. The government of President Hifikepune Pohamba has donated water purification chemicals, drugs and medical equipment valued at US\$200,000.

According to the Herald, “Handing over the donation which included malaria treatment drugs, antibiotics, needles and drips to the Government at Manyama

Airbase in Harare yesterday, Namibian Minister of Health and Social Welfare Dr. Richard Kamwi pledged more medical supplies to help in the fight against cholera.” (Dec. 8).

Dr. Kamwi said: “Namibia had been following the health situation in Zimbabwe with concern and I feel we actually delayed in responding. You (Zimbabwians) deserve this donation. This is the first consignment from our own stocks and for now, we have just brought 60 percent and we will send the remaining 40 percent in due course.”

South African health officials visited Zimbabwe on Dec. 8 to assess the situation. Health ministry spokespersons in South Africa said that eight people had died from cholera in the Limpopo province, which borders Zimbabwe. Reuters also claims that cases of cholera have been cited in Mozambique, Botswana and Zambia. (Dec. 8)

What caused the crisis?

The Zimbabwe government and other progressive forces acquainted with the region have stated in no uncertain terms that the current crisis is caused by the imposition of economic sanctions by the western imperialist countries against the ZANU-PF state.

Since the implementation of a comprehensive land redistribution program in Zimbabwe since 2000, the country has endured a blockade; the financing of a right-wing opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change; plots aimed at overthrowing the administration; as well as a well-financed media campaign designed to vilify President Robert Mugabe and the ruling party.

The ZANU-PF government has embarked upon an extensive negotiation process for the creation of a national unity government with the opposition forces. The key opposition leaders in the Movement for Democratic Change—Tsvangirai faction have refused to implement an agreement signed several months ago in Harare. The agreement would create a broader cabinet and bring in politicians who have been supported by the U.S., Britain and the EU.

A so-called “Elders Group,” which is financed by western interests including British billionaire Sir Richard Branson and rock star Peter Gabriel, has received US\$18 million toward a recent effort aimed at influencing the political situation on the African continent. Led by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, retired Archbishop Tutu and Graca Machel, the group is in partnership with the Bridgeway Foundation and Humanity United.

African-American solidarity activist Obi Egbuna explains: “While the founder of Bridgeway Foundation, John Montgomery, started the group in 1993 after hearing a preacher in church discuss the work of Amnesty International, Humanity United is directly and openly affiliated with the Genocide Prevention Task Force co-chaired by former U.S. Secretary of Defence William Cohen and former U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright.”

“This task force is jointly convened by the U.S. Holocaust Museum, American Academy of Diplomacy and the U.S. Institute of Peace, which is directly funded by the U.S. Congress. The timing of the ‘Elders’ decision to visit Zimbabwe

and the rest of its founding membership pool should arouse suspicion [and] force the masses of Zimbabwe and the rest of Africa, who are obviously tired of the West meddling in our political affairs, not to be misled.” (Zimbabwe Herald, Dec. 8)

The Obama administration and Africa policy

This new push to overthrow the ZANU-PF government could be designed to take action prior to the inauguration of President-elect Barack Obama on Jan. 20, 2009. During the early days of his campaign in 2008, Obama was criticized by African solidarity forces for making statements that were perceived as hostile to the Zimbabwe government.

Current Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stated in early December that it was time for President Mugabe to be overthrown. This provocative and illegal proposal represents the continuation of the hostile U.S. policy toward Zimbabwe and other states in Africa that refuse to follow Washington's dictates.

It is important for anti-war and anti-imperialist forces in the U.S. and Western Europe to reject this new thrust aimed at regime change in Zimbabwe. In every state where the U.S., Britain and the EU have intervened, humanitarian, economic and political crises have developed which far outstrip the current situation in Zimbabwe.

In Iraq, it has been reported that more than 1 million people have died as a direct result of the U.S. occupation. In Afghanistan, resistance forces have charged the U.S./NATO forces with genocide.

Somalia—where the U.S. encouraged and financed an invasion and occupation by neighboring Ethiopia—has suffered the worse humanitarian crisis in Africa, leaving thousands dead and 2 million people displaced both internally and externally. At present the puppet government installed by the U.S. is near collapse, with Ethiopian military forces requesting approval from the U.S. to flee the country under growing attacks from the resistance forces throughout the country.

Inside the U.S. itself, working people, nationally oppressed and the poor are suffering the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. In November, more than 530,000 workers were thrown out of their jobs. Nearly 10 million workers are employed part-time because they cannot find full-time jobs. Financial institutions and industrial facilities are being propped up by the taxpayers, who are growing poorer every month.

Nearly 50 million people in the U.S. are without medical coverage. Hospitals have been closing for the last two years, while the defense budget is in excess of \$720 billion.

Consequently, the U.S. and the imperialist states have no moral right to dictate policy to Zimbabwe or any other African country. Only the creation of a workers' and peoples' government in the U.S. can create the conditions for genuine international peace and reconciliation between the peoples of the U.S. and the global community. □

What YOU should know about the hidden war in Congo—past & present
By Abayomi Azikiwe Reprinted from WW

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Puppet gov't signs SOFA deal, Iraqi people reject it

By John Catalinotto

The Bush administration has managed to bribe, bully and shove its Status of Forces Agreement down the throats of the Iraqi parliament. About 54 percent of the present members of this puppet body voted to support SOFA on Nov. 27; many members were absent. On Dec. 4 the puppet Iraqi presidential council signed the treaty.

Those who constitute the main part of the armed and unarmed resistance to the U.S. occupation—what the corporate media call the “Sunni resistance”—have made it clear that the Iraqi people will continue to fight against the forces governing Baghdad’s Green Zone.

In addition, the mass organization identified with Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr—which participates in the occupation parliament—not only voted against the treaty but noisily disrupted during the vote. It also brought 20,000 people into the streets to condemn the U.S. occupation and SOFA.

A referendum of all Iraqis must be held by mid-2009 to ratify SOFA. This referendum was a concession to some of the political forces in Iraq that are sensitive to

the mass pressure against SOFA.

The SOFA agreement would systemize the U.S. military occupation of Iraq, which up to now has been allowed by a United Nations resolution. SOFA is allegedly aimed at getting U.S. troops out of Iraq by 2011. However, it allows U.S. bases to stay indefinitely, gives U.S. companies the main access to Iraq’s vast deposits of crude oil, and puts U.S. military forces in a position to strike at Iraq’s neighbors, like Syria and Iran, and intimidate the rest of the Middle East and East Africa.

The SOFA agreement, signed by the outgoing George W. Bush gang, doubles the 16-to-18-month limit on the U.S. occupation promised by President-elect Barack Obama during his campaign.

SOFA also leaves about 50,000 Iraqis, many of them from Sunni communities, in prisons that the U.S. would turn over to the puppet Iraqi regime. This regime considers all those prisoners to be enemies. Even people with little or no direct participation in the resistance, arrested in U.S. sweeps, could face death squads.

U.S. had to disguise SOFA

Because there was so much resistance

to SOFA within Iraq—even within the puppet parliament—the U.S. was forced to concede some points on paper that restored what looked like a bit of sovereignty to the Iraqis.

As is so often the case in sticky diplomacy, however, some of the more difficult points were presented in language vague enough to allow different interpretations.

U.S. officials admitted Nov. 25 that several of the provisions were vague, including one that “bans the launch of attacks on other countries from Iraq, a requirement to notify the Iraqis in advance of U.S. military operations and the question of Iraqi legal jurisdiction over American troops and military contractors.” (McClatchy, Nov. 26)

The U.S. even withheld the official English translation of the agreement until after the Nov. 27 parliamentary vote. It was an attempt to keep a dispute over the interpretation of SOFA from breaking out in a public debate before the decision.

Iraqis protest

Even the puppet Iraqi parliament could barely get a majority to accept the pact. And the popular resistance to it, expressed

through many organizations, continues.

In a statement released Nov. 27, the Political Council of the Iraqi Resistance said it “rejects this illegal agreement, as well as all the agreements made in the shadow of the occupation, by the hand of a government that is no more than a creation of the occupier and does not represent the popular will of our patient people.”

In an open letter to the Iraqi people, the Association of Muslim Ulemas of Iraq wrote: “The occupation is going to continue, which is why it is logical and natural to think that the resistance will continue its struggle. ... This means that Iraq will not experience peace, that the bleeding will not stop, that the U.S. will continue bombing and carrying out pillages and arrests, with the excuse that they are fighting people beyond the margins of the law. We will live these next years like past ones.”

Abu Mohamed, political spokesperson for the Jihad and Liberation Front, close to the Ba’ath Party, said, “SOFA is nothing more than a U.S. decision; it is not an accord between two equal parties, between two independent states.” (These three quotes are from iraqsolidaridad.org.) □

Surge in GI/vet resistance and support

By Dee Knight

Signs of a surge in GI resistance have emerged recently. The surge is matched by strong expressions of support from people in the U.S. and elsewhere.

In Germany, Army Specialist André Shepherd asked for asylum on Nov. 27. The 31-year-old African-American served in Iraq between September 2004 and February 2005 as an “Apache” helicopter mechanic. He has been living underground in Germany since going AWOL last year.

Shepherd has had strong support from the Germany-based Military Counseling Network, Stop the War Brigade and Connection eV, as well as Iraq Veterans Against the War—especially IVAW-Germany.

His lawyer, Reinhard Marx, observes that under a 2004 European directive—now part of German law—that a country must grant asylum to military resisters if the conflicts they are fleeing from are being conducted in an unlawful manner.

“Legally, his prospects are looking very good,” Marx said. A German federal court ruled in 2005 that the U.S. war in Iraq violates international law. Chris Capps, IVAW regional organizer for Europe, reports that “André is having his first hearing Tuesday, Dec. 9, and he will be writing a post on our blog.” (www.ivaw-europe.blogspot.com)

Shepherd’s asylum application is the first such move by a U.S. war resister in Europe since the U.S. invaded and occupied Iraq and Afghanistan.

“I could not in good conscience continue to serve,” Shepherd said at a news conference. (Reuters, Nov. 27) “We have destroyed nations, killed leaders, raided homes, tortured, kidnapped, lied, and manipulated not just citizens and leaders of our enemies, but of our allies as well.

“It is a sickening feeling to realize that I took part in what was basically a daily slaughter of a proud people.”

He added that after he “heard about people being ripped to shreds from the machine guns or being blown to bits by

the Hellfire missiles” and “buildings and infrastructures being destroyed, I began to feel ashamed about what I was doing.

“I am remorseful for my contribution to these heinous acts, and I swear that I will never make these mistakes again.”

“When enlisting,” he commented, “I took an oath to ‘support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic.’ I had to choose between ignoring my beliefs and leaving the military illegally. For me, the correct path was clear: I had to leave.”

Shepherd is applying for asylum in Germany, where the Nuremberg trials took place 60 years ago. “One of the main things that were established during these trials,” he observed, “was that one cannot defend one’s actions by claiming to have merely been following orders.

“If I had stayed in the U.S. Army and continued to participate in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, I could not legally argue that I was ‘just doing my job.’ Here in Germany it was established that everyone, even a soldier, must take responsibility for his or her actions, no matter how many superiors are giving orders.”

If successful, Shepherd’s application will create a precedent for the U.S. military in Germany. After Iraq, the second-largest Pentagon presence overseas is housed there: 66,000 active-duty personnel. As an asylum seeker, Shepherd is now under the protection of the German federal government.

PTSD GI demands treatment

Meanwhile, at Fort Drum in upstate New York, Private Trevor L., 22, of Austin, Tex., turned himself in on Dec. 4 demanding treatment for severe post-traumatic stress disorder. He was accompanied by his lawyer, Tod Ensign, and had requested the support of the Common Council of Ithaca, N.Y., where he had spoken to supporters the night before.

Private L. served 15 months with a unit of the 10th Mountain Division in combat in Afghanistan where he suffered serious mental and physical injuries. Upon



PHOTO: IVAW/GERMANY

PFC André Shepherd, Darnell Stephen Summers from Germany’s Stop the War Brigade, and Chris Capps, IVAW regional organizer for Europe.

returning to Fort Drum, he was unable to get mental health care and eventually left the base in search of adequate treatment.

He returned to Fort Drum with a psychological evaluation, prepared by a Houston trauma specialist, stating that he suffers from “a severe post-traumatic stress disorder and a major depression, severe,” according to attorney Ensign, who is also director of Citizen Soldier, a GI/veterans’ rights advocacy group based in New York City. (blip.tv/file/1553993, Dec. 8)

Following the example of several other U.S. cities, Ithaca’s Common Council on Oct. 1 had unanimously proclaimed the city a “Community of Sanctuary” that “respects the right of its residents to support lawfully and proactively military personnel ... who are organizing to stop the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.” (The Ithaca Journal, Oct. 2)

Ensign told Workers World that Private

L.’s request to be assigned to a Warrior Transition Unit and either get special treatment or be dismissed was rejected by the base commander. Instead, he was ordered to return to his unit, which is slated to re-deploy to Afghanistan later this month.

Warrior Transition Units have been set up at all military bases in the U.S. to handle soldiers with physical or mental injuries. “The problem is they only have space for half as many soldiers as the number who need them,” Ensign said. The Army Times reported on Nov. 4 that the number of such units was expanded in October “in the wake of reports about poor conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., including shoddy housing and bureaucratic delays for outpatients there.”

Ensign intends to press for an administrative discharge for Private L. □



Greece: 'Cops, pigs, murderers'

When two cops gunned down 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos in central Athens, the Greek people greeted this assault with an uprising from northern Salonika to the southern island of Crete. Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets for the next four days, burning garbage barrels to make barricades and trashing anything connected to the Greek state.

The cops' killing an unarmed youth intersects a workers' struggle to defend their interests during the economic crisis. On the defensive from the mass rebellion, the center-right government has charged one of the cops with murder. The Police Association apologized to the Grigoropoulos family. But this has not stopped the righteous people's rebellion.

The organized workers' movement is backing up the spontaneous uprising of

the masses of people at this cop outrage. The Communist Party (KKE), with a revolutionary history and a mass base, organized a protest on Dec. 8 along these lines that led to further clashes. A general strike called for Dec. 10 to raise general workers' demands has now added demands regarding the killing of the Greek teenager.

With the memory of Sean Bell and the dozens of African-American, Latin@ and other oppressed and working-class youth gunned down in the U.S., the progressive movement here and the workers' movement in particular should express its solidarity to the Greek workers, youth and people who are demanding justice following the murder of Alexandros Grigoropoulos. We say along with the Greek demonstrators, "down with the cops, pigs, murderers." □

Fighting for the right to jobs and justice Republic workers occupy Chicago plant

Continued from page 1

by which its products are produced. After investing their sweat and labor in running the factory, it has become their property right.

The Republic workers' struggle has elicited support from labor and community allies from across the country. The Bail Out the People Movement announced a week of action from Dec. 8-13, calling for local actions at Bank of Americas across the country to demand the bank use the \$25 billion of taxpayers' money to give these workers their jobs back.

In addition to labor and community support, President-elect Barack Obama, Illinois Rep. Luis Guterrez, members of the Chicago City Council, Jessie Jackson of the Rainbow PUSH coalition, Cook County officials and Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich have all come out in support of the workers' struggle. Gov. Blagojevich has even instructed the entire state of Illinois, and is calling on other government entities, to divest from Bank of America and to freeze

all of the assets held by Bank of America. This is a monumental victory, which was only won through the hard-fought struggle of the Republic workers.

On Dec. 8 in Charlotte, N.C., at Bank of America's world headquarters, members of UE Local 150 and about 20 community supporters rallied in support of the Republic workers to demand that Bank of America extend the loan needed to reopen the factory. Workers traveled from across the state to lead a spirited demonstration in front of the bank, which evoked strong support from passersby.

UE 150 attempted to deliver a letter supporting the members of UE Local 1110 to bank executives and CEO Kenneth Lewis, but members and supporters were met by bank security and Charlotte police when they stepped into the building. Nonetheless, their message of support for the workers was heard loud and clear by the executives at Bank of America.

Strobino is an organizer with UE Local 150.

U.S. activists in solidarity with political prisoner, Mumia Abu-Jamal

Continued on page 3

chair of the Cleveland chapter of the New Black Panther Party. Devin Branch of the Cleveland October 22 Organizing Committee described Abu-Jamal's frame-up and the important aspects of his legal case.

Rev. Nozomi Ikuta and Yahya Abdusabur spoke about the situation of the Puerto Rican freedom fighters still in prison and the frame-up of Imam Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin (the former H. Rap Brown).

Messages of solidarity from prisoners falsely convicted in connection with the 1993 Lucasville prison uprising were read. The audience cheered recent victories in the campaign for the Lucasville prisoners as counted out by Sharon Danann of the Lucasville Uprising Freedom Network. Jackie Thomas, spouse of Lucasville pris-

oner Rasheem Matthews, told how they tracked down the witnesses who testified falsely against Matthews and urged the audience to pack the courtroom during Matthews' new trial.

Artists from the Hip Hop Workshop, a project aimed at keeping youth out of gangs while creating music without offensive language, provided poetry, dance, rap and hip-hop. The event was seen as a step toward a broader campaign on prison issues.

—Sharon Danaan

SAN DIEGO

On Dec. 7, the African American Artists and Writers hosted an Evening of Solidarity to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal at the Malcolm X Library in Southeast San Diego.

A number of attendees left the Cuba/Venezuela/Mexico/North American Labor Conference in Tijuana early and

Never forget Fred Hampton & Mark Clark

By Stephen Millies

Thirty-nine years ago Black Panther Party leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were assassinated in Chicago on Dec. 4, 1969, in a pre-dawn police raid on West Monroe Street. President Richard Nixon, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley and Cook County State's Attorney Edward Hanrahan were responsible.

At least 28 members of the Black Panther Party were killed as a result of the FBI's COINTELPRO extermination program, which was approved by the Nixon administration.

The Chicago Tribune ran photos of a door supposedly filled with bullet holes to prove that the police were fired upon. Upon examination these holes turned out to be nails. There is an ongoing struggle to rename Monroe Street after Hampton, a move bitterly fought by the local cops.

Hampton grew up in Maywood, a Black suburb just west of Chicago. A natural leader, Hampton became a revolutionary and infused everyone around him with his optimism.

Hampton was a tremendous organizer who helped make the Illinois Black Panther Party chapter the largest in the country. I remember a 1969 Chicago rally to free Panther Chairman Bobby Seale where six buses came from the small Black community of Rockford, Ill.

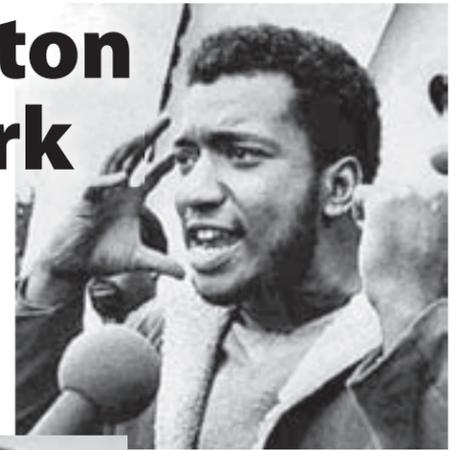
Cops busted Hampton for handing out hundreds of ice cream bars to kids. While in jail, Hampton won over the leader of the Young Lords to revolutionary politics.

Hampton was only 21 years old when he died, yet the FBI had already over 4,000

walked across the U.S./Mexico border to be a part of this gathering. This made the meeting truly international, linking the struggle to free Mumia with the struggles of the many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean that were represented at the conference.

Sylvia Telefar of AAWA opened the discussion by saying, "We are all warriors on the ground—stepping up the struggle to free Mumia." Speakers included John Parker, Los Angeles International Action Center; Sabrina Green, Free the Move 9 and International Concerned Family & Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal; and Paul LouLou Chery, general secretary of the Federation of Haitian Workers. Dave Welsh of the Haiti Action Committee was scheduled to speak and interpret for Chery, but was delayed at the border to support a Haitian brother, Benissiot Docios, who was detained. (Docios was allowed through Customs only after he paid a "fine" of hundreds of dollars.)

Parker spoke about how important it is to link up the issues of people all over the world, stressing that Mumia's essays are about this type of solidarity. Parker noted that Mumia rarely writes about himself. Green gave an update on the Move 9 and initiated a phone call to Pam Africa, who applauded the solidarity action. Africa gave an update on Mumia's case and a Dec. 6 march in Philadelphia. On The Move showed a video by Hans Bennett (see www.abu-jamal-news.com).



Fred Hampton, above, was 21, and Mark Clark, left, 17 when they were gunned down.



pages of information on him. That's how dangerous he was to the capitalists. Cops fired additional bullets into Hampton's head to make sure he was dead.

In a 2006 interview with WW reporter Eric Struch, Fred Hampton Jr. talked about his father and Chicago:

"In this city, in particular, the names do not even change, and the actual criminals, how they have been rewarded, they have been elevated. There is no better example that we can lay out than the present mayor of Chicago and the former state's attorney, Richard Daley, who is the son of gangster Daley Sr., who during his tenure was responsible for how the assassinations of Chairman Fred and Mark Clark had went down."

Hampton Sr. used to say, "You can kill the revolutionary, but you can't kill the revolution." We must not let the wealthy execute Mumia Abu-Jamal, who was 15 years old when he helped form the Philadelphia chapter of the Black Panther Party.

If Hampton and Clark were alive today, they would be with the courageous workers occupying the Republic Windows factory in Chicago.

The writer attended the funeral of Hampton and Clark.

Elder Eusi Kwayana, a local activist, member of the Langston Hughes Poetry Circle and a native of Guyana, spoke about a letter that he wrote in May to the Brazilian government concerning the disappearance of Haitian civil rights activist Lovinski Pierre-Antoine. Kwayana was central in bringing together Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese people during Guyana's independence struggle. Kwayana said that what the state is trying to do to Mumia is "a lynching."

Zola Mohammad spoke of the struggle to free freedom fighters Imam Jamil and Leonard Peltier. Dianne Mathiowetz of Atlanta said, "Let us not forget Troy Davis. We send revolutionary greetings to the Cuban 5 and all political prisoners."

Jim Moreno, a poet with the Langston Hughes Poetry Circle who attended the Tijuana conference, recited a poem that was inspired when he talked to LouLou Chery. One question in the poem concerned the hunger of the people of Haiti, to which Chery responded that the people hunger for the return of democratically elected president Bertrand Aristide.

Chery spoke of solidarity and unity and the work that is taking place to build the Federation of Haitian Workers (CTH). He said that Haiti is a poor country with a strong and rich history.

A group photo from the meeting will be sent to Mumia.

—Gloria Verdieu

Nepal, scientific socialism and people's war

Excerpts from a talk given by David Hoskins at the WWP National Conference, Nov. 15-16.

On Aug. 15 Nepal's Constituent Assembly elected—with 80 percent of the vote—Maoist party chairman Prachanda as the country's prime minister.

Prachanda's election comes after 12 years of intense political struggle. The Maoist party is Nepal's largest party and is immensely popular with the masses. For more than a decade the party led an armed struggle that toppled the monarchy and led to the creation of a Constituent Assembly tasked with drafting a new constitution.

The Maoists placed first in the April Constituent Assembly elections. The first historic meeting of that assembly culminated in the total abolition of Nepal's monarchy and the declaration of Nepal as a federal democratic republic.

From 1996 to 2006 the People's Liberation Army was successful in liberating 80 percent of the countryside. Revolutionaries erected parallel state structures in the liberated zones that provided justice against corrupt landowners through revolutionary courts. They built roads and clean wells for drinking water, and provided healthcare to the poor.

In April 2006 the revolutionaries joined hands with a coalition of parliamentary parties in calling for a countrywide general strike against the ex-king, Gyanendra. The strike was backed by the revolutionary arms of the PLA which had launched a daring offensive across the country—over-

running police posts and army barracks and freeing political prisoners from jails.

As a result, the king restored the parliament, which promptly ordered the arrest of five of Gyanendra's high-ranking cabinet officials, declared Nepal a secular state, and stripped the monarchy of its control of the armed forces. By June negotiators from the Maoist party and the coalition government had reached an agreement to establish a new interim government and constitution and to hold elections to the Constituent Assembly.

The abolition of Nepal's 240-year-old monarchy eradicated the political foundation of a brutal caste society that has impoverished the Nepalese masses. Nepal ranks among the 50 poorest countries in the world. Eighty-five percent of the population lives in rural areas without dependable electricity, running water or basic sanitation.

Malnutrition is rampant among children and one-third of the population lives below the official poverty line. Literacy runs a little less than 50 percent and only 35 percent among women. Nepal's infant mortality rate is 62 deaths per 1,000 live births, compared to five deaths per 1,000 in socialist Cuba.

Almost half the country is unemployed. Poor living conditions fueled the militant consciousness of the masses and paved the way for the Maoists to enjoy a mass base of support for the revolution. Even though it is a small, semifeudal, landlocked country of only 29 million, the advances made during 12 years of Nepal's revolution are

quite significant.

The recent political developments in Nepal are a vindication of scientific socialism and the strategy of people's war. Not since the South African liberation struggle first defeated apartheid and then brought Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress to power in 1994, has an armed struggle succeeded in bringing about a political revolution.

Nepal's Constituent Assembly elections and the Maoists' first place victory, the abolition of monarchy and establishment of a democratic republic, are the successes of a socialist-led armed political revolution. The Maoists were able to accomplish these goals despite firm support for Nepal's feudal monarchy by the United States, Britain and India.

Nepal's revolution is at a sensitive juncture—land reform has yet to be addressed. There is extreme pressure from opposition parties to return all properties seized during the course of the people's war, and the Maoists are attempting to integrate their people's army with the former Royal Nepalese Army, potentially leaving the masses defenseless if a royalist counter-revolution is attempted.

Internationally the revolution is iso-



WW PHOTO: GARY WILSON
David Hoskins

lated—the Soviet Union no longer exists, China no longer actively supports armed revolutionary movements, and Cuba still struggles every day just to defend its 50-year-old socialist revolution. The Maoist leadership is well aware of the obstacles they face and have called upon revolutionary forces worldwide to support the Nepalese revolution.

The state of the revolutionary movement in Asia takes on new significance in light of

the recent advances made in Nepal and the rising global capitalist crisis. Merrill Lynch chief, John Thain, recently admitted that emerging markets—like those in the Philippines and India—will not be spared from this crisis since all equity markets are linked, and each individual economy will be affected according to its reliance on global trade and commerce.

As the crisis escalates in these emerging economies, the necessary conditions for the advancement of armed struggle may become more favorable. Dedicated, experienced revolutionaries exist throughout Asia ready to push the struggle forward in such an event.

The revolutionaries in Nepal are making daring contributions to the international socialist revolution. It is our responsibility as U.S. revolutionaries to offer our unconditional support to the Nepalese revolution. □



WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL
Dante Strobino

Excerpted from a talk given by Dante Strobino at the WWP National Conference, Nov. 15-16.

Barack Obama won the popular vote in North Carolina by 11,000 votes. This is the first time a Democrat won the state's electoral college votes since 1976. Democrat Kay Hagan won the race for U.S. Senate, defeating incumbent Republican Elizabeth Dole, for the seat once occupied by deeply racist, segregationist Sen. Jesse Helms, who held the post for 30 years. This seat had been in the hands of Republicans since 1973.

This change has happened for a number of reasons. I am going to focus on the conditions in the South—the flux of capital through the South, job loss as a result of the unorganized workforce and the vibrant movement growing in the South.

The South is the fastest-growing region in the country. Nine new political districts will be drawn here in the 2010 census. This means nine electoral college votes will be shifted to the South.

South Carolina has the fastest growing immigrant population in the country. North Carolina and Tennessee are next. Most African Americans live in the South.

Nationally, half of capital invested these days is not in production, but in finance. Charlotte, N.C., is the largest center of finance capital in the country. Bank of America, which just bought Countrywide

and Wachovia, are headquartered there. Housing foreclosures disproportionately affect people in the South.

In 2009, Alabama will be the largest auto-producing state in the country. Major transportation hubs, roads and infrastructure are being developed particularly in Texas to facilitate trade among the U.S., Canada and Mexico without having to use heavily unionized ports with militant workers.

The South is the home of the military-industrial complex. Thirty-five to 45 percent of U.S. troops come from the South. Fifty-six percent of troops are based in the South, which is the only region where the number of troops is expanding. Forty-two to 50 percent of defense contractors are headquartered in the South. North Carolina is the most military-friendly state.

With all this intense development of industry, the military and capital, there is still a huge base of poor and unorganized workers who continue to become poorer. North Carolina has faced the most manufacturing job losses in the country in the past decade due to outsourcing of textiles.

Then, in October, Pilgrim Pride announced it was about to close shop and gut 20,000 poultry jobs in North Carolina. Last year, Pilgrim Pride was subject to ICE raids across the country that detained hundreds of immigrant workers. And the company closed a huge poultry plant in Siler City with mostly Latin@ workers.

Now that workers in Moncure are on strike at their plywood factory, the bosses have hired the fired poultry workers to cross the picket line. As Black workers walk the picket line, Latin@ workers are brought in right in front of them. This pitting of Black workers against Latin@s is not a new trick.

Organize the South!

There are fewer union members in all the 11 Southern states combined than there are in the single state of New York. Still, over the last few years the trend in the South has been toward some high-profile labor campaigns that have gotten international attention.

Many if not most of these struggles involve immigrant workers. Recent struggles include the Houston janitors organizing and the Service Employees union winning a city-wide union contract that will more than double the wages of over 5,300 janitors and their families. The Farm Labor Organizing Committee had a recent victory over Mt. Olive Pickles, covering over 7,000 migrant workers. And FLOC has a current campaign against RJ Reynolds Tobacco.

Over the last two years the Immokalee Workers fighting for agricultural workers in southern Florida, mostly in tomato fields, have won better wages after confronting Taco Bell and Yum Brands, then McDonald's. And very recently they won against Burger King.

In North Carolina, workers at Smithfield Hog Slaughtering Plant—the world's largest hog slaughtering facility—have been struggling for 15 years for a contract. They recently entered negotiations with management after several powerful strikes, and after ICE raids designed to intimidate them.

Then there is a struggle that I am currently in the middle of: public-sector workers with UE Local 150 in North Carolina and Local 160 in Virginia. These are the two states that alone deny public sector workers the right to collectively bargain.

Groups like the Black Workers for Justice and the Mississippi Workers Center have been involved in vibrant, visible campaigns that have galvanized the community and religious leaders

in supporting many workers' struggle. In North Carolina, there has been great motion around fighting for a People's Agenda with a coalition of 81 organizations, including UE 150 and BWFJ and spearheaded by the NAACP, but led by other organizations of oppressed people and workers.

In February 2007 and again in 2008, 5,000 to 7,000 oppressed people and workers took to the streets around this agenda, which includes collective bargaining for public workers, addressing racist chapters of North Carolina's history, jobs, uplifting historically Black colleges, health insurance, immigrant rights and to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Since the last march, Black Workers for Justice has been pushing for and building local People's Assemblies throughout the state. In Raleigh we have held four assemblies, the first with over 100 people. These assemblies have been composed of rank-and-file workers, churchgoers and folks who otherwise have never been involved in organizing or fighting back.

We leafleted and built for these assemblies at every Obama rally, at college campuses, at workplaces, in our union meetings. Assemblies have also taken place in Chapel Hill and Rocky Mount, and other forces are stepping in and building around the People's Agenda.

In December there will be a Southern Human Rights Organizing Conference in Durham, N.C., attracting workers, community members, students, youth, faith-based organizations and many from throughout the South to continue this process. We will be touring the Duplin County hog lagoons on African-American land and discussing a movement fighting environmental racism.

Comrades, it is time to organize the South! □

M★NDO OBRERO

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Las contradicciones del imperialismo estadounidense

Por Sara Flounders

Observemos algunas de las contradicciones del imperialismo de Estados Unidos, un sistema en declive y en serio estado de deterioro. Hay una crisis de todas las instituciones capitalistas. Ni siquiera sabemos los niveles de enfermedad y descomposición del sistema basado en décadas de colosales subsidios que el inmenso presupuesto militar estadounidense representa.

La clase dominante estadounidense está tratando desesperadamente de imponerse y revertir sus infortunios. Pero cada esfuerzo confirma su debilidad y profundiza la crisis. Ya no tienen la influencia económica para respaldar su posición global.

¿Cuál debe ser el planteamiento para las fuerzas revolucionarias aquí en el centro de este sistema que se descompone?

Estamos a favor de la derrota de esta clase de piratas, ladrones, saqueadores y de todos los mercenarios cínicos que trabajan para ellos. Una victoria de las fuerzas de resistencia en cualquier parte del mundo fortalece a la clase trabajadora en una escala global, incluyendo aquí en el centro imperialista. No estamos interesad@s en salvar el imperialismo. Estamos aquí para derrocarlo.

Al comienzo de la Primera Guerra Mundial, el ruso revolucionario Lenin, argumentó que l@s trabajador@s no pueden ganar ni lograr nada en ninguna guerra imperialista. Sus verdaderos enemigos son los líderes imperialistas que mandan a l@s trabajador@s y campesin@s al frente de las batallas. Lo que esto significa en esencia, es confrontar a la clase capitalista.

Lenin explicó la diferencia entre la posición comunista y la de l@s pacifistas quienes condenan igualmente a todas las guerras. El definió las guerras justas como aquellas que son libradas por una clase oprimida contra la clase opresora y las guerras de liberación nacional por los países oprimidos.

No podemos aceptar el llamado de muchos imperialistas liberales de salir de Irak para entrar en Afganistán. Rechazamos todos los llamados para la intervención de la ONU y la OTAN en Sudán, el Congo y Georgia. No existen guerras imperialistas buenas ni humanitarias.

Sam Marcy, fundador del Partido Workers World /Mundo Obrero, revivió este debate en un maravilloso libro titulado, "Los Bolcheviques y la Guerra: Lecciones para el Movimiento Antigüerra de Hoy."



MO FOTO: G. DUNKEL

Hoy Estados Unidos está en guerra contra el mundo

Mientras más conectemos la guerra, el presupuesto militar que es un rescate para las grandes corporaciones del país y el rescate de los bancos con las movilizaciones en contra de los recortes que l@s trabajador@s enfrentan, más ayudamos a desarrollar la conciencia de clase.

Estados Unidos es el país más rico del mundo, con una gran capacidad productiva, pero es un país con un presupuesto militar tan inflado y devastador, que todos los programas sociales posibles han sido ya recortados hasta la médula. La expectativa de vida, la mortandad infantil, y los estándares de salud y vida en los EEUU actualmente están por debajo de todos los demás países industrializados, y están cayendo a una rapidez acelerada.

Alrededor del mundo, la brecha entre los súper ricos, los dueños de las corporaciones gigantescas, y las miles de millones de personas que están viviendo en condiciones de miseria está más ancha que nunca antes en la historia del mundo. Doscientos multimillonarios son dueños de más riquezas que lo que tienen dos mil millones de la población del mundo.

Esta clase solo puede sobrevivir por la acumulación de aún más riquezas, resultando en aún más pobreza. No tienen ninguna solución fuera de la guerra sin fin. No tienen nada positivo que contribuir.

Es una situación imposible y una contradicción explosiva, imposible de reconciliar.

Pero ahora la economía capitalista y dos guerras brutales imperialistas de los EEUU han fracasado.

El imperialismo estadounidense no puede desprenderse de las guerras, no puede simplemente abandonarlas y ceder su control de regiones tan cruciales. Pero tampoco puede quedarse. La máquina militar de la clase dominante está siendo derrotada.

Hay crisis gigantes e inesperadas en el porvenir del imperialismo de los EEUU, tan inesperadas e incontrolables como la crisis económica.

Consideremos esto: Ellos no previeron la posibilidad de resistencia en Afganistán. Entregaron la guerra a sus aliados de la OTAN, desplegaron tropas en varias bases militares y sobornaron algunos jefes militares.

No hubo ninguna reconstrucción. Solo publicaron algunos comunicados de prensa prometiendo la liberación de la mujer y la construcción de escuelas, y a continu-

ación comenzaron la próxima guerra.

Esta semana un conjunto militar de suministros de los EEUU, con protección de helicópteros y satélites de vigilancia en la estratosfera, fue secuestrado en el Paso Khyber mientras estaba todavía en Pakistán. El Paso Khyber es la vena yugular de la OTAN —un 75 por ciento de todos los abastecimientos pasan por esta estrecha y difícil vía montañosa de 30 millas.

Hace siete años las fuerzas militares de los EEUU tomaron Afganistán sin una sola baja estadounidense. Ahora han perdido el control de partes enteras de Pakistán, un país inestable de 170 millones de personas, y tienen problemas abasteciendo a sus fuerzas en Afganistán. Su única respuesta es lanzar más bombas y más cohetes.

Pensemos en Irak: Hoy, más de la tercera parte de la población iraquí está muerta, herida, deshabilitada, encarcelada, desplazada internamente o refugiada en otro lugar. Esta es la gran victoria del "surge", el incremento de las tropas estadounidenses en Irak el año pasado.

El sentimiento en contra de la ocupación entre l@s iraquíes es más fuerte que nunca mientras las condiciones de vida están más que desesperadas.

Estas eran las guerras de apertura para la reconquista global por los Estados Unidos.

Pensemos en los términos usados hace solo cinco años: "El Nuevo Orden Mundial", "El Nuevo Siglo Americano [Estadounidense]", "Choque y Espanto", y el arrogante "Misión Cumplida". ¿Recuerdan el plan totalmente criminal para la dominación completa del resto del mundo por los Estados Unidos mediante el uso de fuerza? ¿Recuerdan la lista del "Eje del Mal"?

Pero no pueden retornar a Irak a la era colonial.

Éste es el mismo problema que tiene Israel con la lucha heroica del pueblo palestino. A pesar de los ceses al fuego, los tanques y helicópteros israelíes han bom-

bardeado Gaza una y otra vez. Aún así l@s luchador@s palestin@s han construido cientos de túneles y han demolido barreras en la frontera.

Durante el verano, hubo huelgas masivas en Corea del Sur que cerraron industrias, embarques y puertos. Aún en las manifestaciones contra la importación de carne de res estadounidense, millones alzaron la demanda política de que se fueran inmediatamente las tropas estadounidenses.

Estados Unidos tiene ahora más de 700 bases, y está buscando dónde establecer más en África y en el sur de Asia. Pero desde las Islas Filipinas a Polonia y de la República Checa a Ecuador las demandas son "Fuera las bases estadounidenses."

Ahora cada competidor capitalista ya no está de acuerdo con aceptar las maniobras desesperadas y discordantes de la política estadounidense. Los aliados imperialistas europeos han retirado tropas de Irak, están en vías de retirar tropas de Afganistán y rehusaron respaldar a los Estados Unidos en Georgia.

La nueva y emergente clase capitalista rusa se imaginaba que iba a ser aliada del imperialismo estadounidense en la explotación a largo plazo de las enormes industrias que habían pertenecido al estado socialista.

Pero luego de ver a las ex repúblicas de la Unión Soviética hacerse instrumentos del imperialismo y con bases militares en su contra, finalmente se impusieron en Georgia este verano. Éste fue otro gran contratiempo para los Estados Unidos.

Pero el militarismo es un estimulante. Tiene que tomar su curso, sin embargo la economía estadounidense no puede existir sin él. Es una adicción que está hundiendo a la economía capitalista.

Lo que se necesita es que l@s trabajador@s se concienticen como clase del costo del militarismo infinito, de la necesidad de solidaridad, y de la necesidad de darse cuenta de su propio poder colectivo para lograr su propia supervivencia. □



Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, Ramón Labañino Salazar, Rene González Sehwerert, Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez y Fernando González Llort.



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