

W50 years WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite! workers.org

DEC. 25, 2008

VOL. 50, NO. 51

50¢

Making real change happen Labor wins two historic battles

Smithfield workers vote in union

By Peter Gilbert
Raleigh, N.C.

Workers at the world's largest packinghouse, a hog processing facility in Tar Heel, N.C., won their 15-year struggle to organize this Smithfield plant. They voted 2,041-1,879 to certify the United Food and Commercial Workers in the NLRB election conducted over Dec. 10-11. This was the third election held at the plant since it opened in 1992. The NLRB contested the two others, held in 1994 and 1997, finding that Smithfield carried out illegal intimidation and attacks on workers, and these were finally thrown out.

The bargaining unit was over 4,600 workers, of whom over 4,000 voted in the two-day election. The plant has a majority of about 3,300 African-American work-

ers, and has about 1,300 Latina/o workers. There are a few Native American and white workers. The plant was majority of Latin American origin until last year, when many workers were scared away as a result of Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids.

In 2006 Smithfield finally lost their last appeal from the 1997 election in a circuit court, and asked for a new election. The workers demanded that the company recognize the union, having shown how difficult a fair election would be. For two years workers and community supporters around the U.S. picketed stores carrying Smithfield products and demanded that the Company respect the Smithfield workers' basic rights. In October 2007 the company responded by refusing to

Continued on page 3



WW PHOTO: SHARON BLACK

UE Local 1110 President Armando Robles: 'It is a victory for every worker.'

Scared by Republic sit-in, banks pay up

By Sharon Black
Chicago

Workers streamed out of the Republic Windows and Doors factory on Dec. 10 chanting "¡Si se puede!" (Yes we can!) After a six-day-long occupation, they were able to force the world's largest private bank, Bank of America, to fully fund 60-days severance pay, health insurance and earned vacation pay for workers.

Armando Robles, president of the United Electrical Workers Local 1110, who worked the night shift, remarked, "You can do anything when you have the support of every one of your co-workers." He added, "This is not a victory for us. It is a victory for every worker in this country."

United Electrical Workers representatives announced that Bank of America and JPMorganChase have agreed to a \$1.75 million loan which will go into a separate fund that will be used to pay the eight

weeks of pay due to the workers by the WARN act, two months health insurance and earned vacation pay. In addition the union is setting up a separate fund from all of the donations that have flowed in called the "Windows of Opportunity" to explore keeping the factory open.

Their struggle gained national and international attention. Close to 1,000 protesters gathered at the Bank of America's downtown headquarters earlier in the day on Dec. 10. Rev. Gregory Livingston of Rainbow/PUSH declared, "Bank of America got \$25 billion. Republic workers got how much? Zero."

Jill White, an organizer with the Illinois Moratorium Committee who attended the march with a group of community supporters, stated, "The Republic workers have showed the way for all of us. If the banks go to evict us from our homes, then we should stay in and refuse to leave. We should call on our neighbors to picket and protest." □

Ode to shoes

EDITORIAL 10



CARTOON: CARLOS LATUFF

Subscribe to Workers World

Eight weeks trial: \$4 One year: \$25

NAME _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

WORKERS WORLD
55 W. 17 St. NY, NY 10011 212-627-2994

www.workers.org

CHICAGO SIT-IN

What lessons?

6-7

CRISIS IN AUTO

- Role of Congress
- General strike? Think about it

5



FIGHT FOR YOUR HOME

Lorene Parker

Michigan Moratorium

4

REV. PINKNEY

Bail to be set

3

GIs & vets step up organizing against war

By Dee Knight

Hempstead 15 charges dismissed

In a remarkable reversal, the Nassau County, N.Y., district attorney dismissed all charges on Nov. 15 against the Hempstead 15. The case stemmed from a police attack a month earlier on members of Iraq Veterans Against the War, who were attempting to present questions to candidates Barack Obama and John McCain at their final debate.

Instead of ushering the IVAW group into the debate site as they requested, riot police on horseback assaulted the veterans. One veteran, Nick Morgan, was trampled when a cop's horse knocked Morgan down, stomping down hard on his face. Morgan sustained a crushing blow to his head—a cheek bone was broken in three places, and his eye socket was shattered.

The veterans had wanted to ask two questions, according to IVAW spokesperson Matthis Chiroux. To candidate Obama: "As president, are you prepared to back up your own words [about the illegality of the Iraq War] and the U.S. Constitution by supporting service members refusing to participate in what you describe as an illegal occupation?" To McCain: "What promises are you willing to make ... to the veterans of the United States, to prove that you will ensure the V.A. is fully funded, staffed and capable of preventing troops from suffering as they are now?"

Instead of getting an answer, the veterans were arrested and charged with disorderly conduct. They were arraigned in early November, but the district attorney's office has decided to dismiss the charges instead. Morgan and the IVAW say they are preparing a civil suit for the assault.

"This is a decisive victory for activists and veterans everywhere, and for the Constitution," said Chiroux. He added that the outcome "would not have been possible without you, our supporters and allies. It was the calls, the demonstrations, the petitions and the grass-roots exposure that made the difference."

'Bring the Guard Home' campaign

A campaign to "Bring the Guard home! It's the law!" is slated for a January 21 launch, immediately following Inauguration Day, in Washington, D.C. Organizers say momentum for the campaign has been building over the course of 2008, as state after state has joined the effort. Vermonters initiated the campaign in January with the introduction of legislation ending future deployments of the Vermont National Guard to Iraq. Legislators in New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island fol-

lowed with similar legislation in those states.

The launch will include a press conference at the National Press Club featuring state legislative sponsors, veterans, military families, legal counsel and key campaign coalition partners. For more information on this campaign go to www.BringtheGuardHome.org

GI coffeehouses opening

In another development, the GI Voice in Lakewood, Wash., near Fort Lewis, announced the opening of "Coffee Strong"—the second GI coffeehouse to open since the Vietnam War ended. A Different Drummer Cafe, a joint project of Citizen Soldier and Vietnam Veterans Against the War, located in Watertown, N.Y., near Fort Drum, opened in November 2006.

Two more coffeehouses are slated to open soon, GI Voice reports: Under the Hood in Killeen, Texas, near Fort Hood, and The Norfolk OffBase near the Norfolk Naval Station in Virginia. GI Voice added that plans are underway for a joint national speaking and media tour for these four projects, as well as to help build support for future coffeehouses.

This effort to support GI resistance coincides with a surge in efforts to build "sanctuary" for war resisters. Sanctuary is part of the tradition of the "underground railroad" in slavery times—local people, as individuals, churches, unions or whole communities built a network of support that runaway slaves could count on as they fled to freedom. Now as then, the support is often secret, but now more and more it is becoming public.

Whole communities, even city councils, are declaring themselves to be in support of war resisters, prepared to do whatever is necessary to protect and help the resisters. For example, the Common Council of Ithaca, N.Y., unannouncedly proclaimed itself on Oct. 1 to be a "Community of Sanctuary," which "respects the right of its residents to support lawfully and proactively military personnel ... who are organizing to stop the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan."

Courage To Resist, based in Oakland, Calif., is preparing a "Sanctuary Organizers Kit" as a supplement to its popular brochure titled "Five Simple Things You Can Do to Organize War Resister Support." The brochure says "Resisters might find themselves in need of a place to stay, legal funds, assistance with a family problem or moral support. A national support campaign might call for rallies throughout the country, letter writing, or speaking tours. Building a community of allies ensures that there is a base in your community that can be mobilized."

This type of base building helps GIs have the confidence to resist, knowing they have support and protection from the broader community. □

Throw a Shoe and Subscribe to Workers World.

We aim to get the news out and in doing so we don't hesitate to throw the shoe where it fits best. We live in a world of fake news. The corporations and big banks that own this so-called media plot overtime to make sure we don't get the truth and fight back. Workers World is a different kind of newspaper. Our voices are not those of the status quo or the system's defenders. In WW, you find the voice of workers and oppressed people who strive for a different world in which no one is held down by the chains of exploitation, racism, sexism or anti-LGBT bigotry.

To receive Workers World Newspaper in 2009 Eight-week trial subscription for \$4 One year for \$25

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____ PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

Clip & return to WW Publishers 55 W. 17th St., 5th Fl., NY, NY 10011 212.627.2994 email: ww@workers.org www.workers.org

JOIN US.

Workers World Party (WWP) fights on all issues that face the working class and oppressed peoples—Black and white, Latin@, Asian, Arab and Native peoples, women and men, young and old, lesbian, gay, bi, straight, trans, disabled, working, unemployed and students. If you would like to know more about WWP, or to join us in these struggles, contact the branch nearest you.

National Office
55 W. 17 St.,
New York, NY 10011
212-627-2994;
Fax (212) 675-7869
wwp@workers.org
Atlanta
P.O. Box 424,
Atlanta, GA 30301
404-627-0185
atlanta@workers.org
Baltimore
c/o Solidarity Center
2011 N. Charles St., Bsm.
Baltimore, MD 21218
443-909-8964
baltimore@workers.org
Boston
284 Amory St.,
Boston, MA 02130
617-983-3835
Fax (617) 983-3836
boston@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.
367 Delaware Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14202
716-883-2534
buffalo@workers.org
Chicago
27 N. Wacker Dr. #138
Chicago, IL 60606
773-381-5839
chicago@workers.org
Cleveland
P.O. Box 5963
Cleveland, OH 44101
216-531-4004
cleveland@workers.org
Denver
denver@workers.org
Detroit
5920 Second Ave.,
Detroit, MI 48202
313-831-0750
detroit@workers.org

Houston
P.O. Box 595
Houston,
TX 77001-0595
713-861-5965
houston@workers.org
Los Angeles
111N. La Brea Ave., #408
Inglewood, CA 90301
310-677-8647
la@workers.org
Milwaukee
milwaukee@workers.org
Philadelphia
P.O. Box 23843,
Philadelphia,
PA 19143
610-931-2615
phila@workers.org
Raleigh, N.C.
raleigh@workers.org

Richmond, Va.
P.O. Box 14602,
Richmond, VA 23221
richmond@workers.org
Rochester, N.Y.
585-436-6458
rochester@workers.org
San Diego, Calif.
P.O. Box 33447
San Diego, CA 92163
619-692-0355
San Francisco
2940 16th St., #207
San Francisco, CA 94103
415-738-4739
sf@workers.org
Tucson, Ariz.
tucson@workers.org
Washington, D.C.
P.O. Box 57300,
Washington, DC 20037,
dc@workers.org

This week ...



★ In the U.S.

Scared by Republic sit-in, banks pay up 1
Smithfield workers vote in union 1
GIs & vets step up organizing against war 2
Rev. Edward Pinkney granted bond hearing 3
LGBT community wins domestic partner rule. 3
Fight against banks stops Detroit foreclosures. 4
On the picket line 4
Senate's union-busting spurs anger in auto plants 5
UAW must fight back with general strike. 5
Were real targets Obama and UAW? 6
'Bailout the workers, not Bank of America' 6
Republic Window workers occupation victory 7
Detroit labor activists meet Republic's workers 8
Health care decays in the 'rust belt' 8

★ Around the world

WW in 1991: ABC of the crisis in the USSR 8
Portugal's Communists say: 'The struggle continues' 9
Rightist maneuvers to suspend Canadian parliament 9
Ukraine appeal 9
Shooting of Greek youth sparks national rebellion 10
Solidarity with Greek youth and workers 10
Damascus congress affirms Palestinian rights 11
Ramsey Clark receives U.N. Human Rights Award 11

★ Editorials

Ode to shoes 10

★ Noticias En Español

Protestas de emergencia 12

Workers World
55 West 17 Street
New York, N.Y. 10011
Phone: (212) 627-2994
Fax: (212) 675-7869
E-mail: editor@workers.org
Web: www.workers.org

Vol. 50, No. 51 • Dec. 25, 2008
Closing date: Dec. 16, 2008

Editor: Deirdre Griswold
Technical Editor: Lal Roohk
Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, LeiLani Dowell,
Leslie Feinberg, Monica Moorehead, Gary Wilson
West Coast Editor: John Parker

Contributing Editors: Abayomi Azikiwe,
Greg Butterfield, Jaimeson Champion, G. Dunkel,
Fred Goldstein, Teresa Gutierrez, Larry Hales,
Kris Hamel, David Hoskins, Berta Joubert-Ceci,
Cheryl LaBash, Milt Neidenberg, Bryan G. Pfeifer,
Betsey Piette, Minnie Bruce Pratt, Gloria Rubac

Technical Staff: Sue Davis, Shelley Ettinger,
Bob McCubbin, Maggie Vascassenno

Mundo Obrero: Carl Glenn, Teresa Gutierrez,
Berta Joubert-Ceci, Donna Lazarus, Michael Martínez,
Carlos Vargas

Copyright © 2008 Workers World. Verbatim copying and distribution of articles is permitted in any medium without royalty provided this notice is preserved.

Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published weekly except the first week of January by WW Publishers, 55 W. 17 St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011. Phone: (212) 627-2994. Subscriptions: One year: \$25; institutions: \$35. Letters to the editor may be condensed and edited. Articles can be freely reprinted, with credit to Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., New York, NY 10011. Back issues and individual articles are available on microfilm and/or photocopy from University Microfilms International, 300 Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106. A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org.

A headline digest is available via e-mail subscription. Subscription information is at www.workers.org/email.php.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., 5th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10011.

Rev. Edward Pinkney of Benton Harbor granted bond hearing

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

In a long-awaited decision, the Michigan Court of Appeals ruled favorably on a motion filed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to grant bond to Rev. Edward Pinkney.

Pinkney, who is the leader of the Black Autonomy Network of Community Organizers (BANCO) in Benton Harbor, was sentenced in May 2007 to one year in jail and five years probation on alleged vote-fraud charges. An all-white jury in racially divided Berrien County, located in the southwest region of Michigan, delivered the verdict.

After sitting at his home for seven months on a tether, with the restriction that he could not walk outside on his lawn, Pinkney had his probation revoked by trial Judge Alfred M. Butzbaugh and was ordered jailed because of an article that was published in the People's Tribune newspaper.

After Judge Butzbaugh recused himself from the violation of probation hearing against Pinkney, Judge Wiley proceeded to sentence the Baptist minister to three-to-10 years in prison for supposedly threatening Judge Butzbaugh in that same December 2007 article.

Michigan ACLU Legal Director Michael J. Steinberg, in an ACLU statement, emphasized that "We are thrilled that Rev. Edward Pinkney will be home with his family celebrating Christmas instead of sitting in prison for criticizing a judge. The court properly recognized that serious constitutional questions are raised when a minister is thrown in prison for predicting what God might do."

In the newspaper article in question, Rev. Pinkney quoted a passage from the Bible saying that God would "curse" the judge unless he "hearkened unto the voice of the Lord thy God to observe and to do all that is right." The minister also

expressed his view that the judge was racist, dumb and corrupt.

The ACLU wrote in its Dec. 11 statement that it "argued in its motion for bond pending appeal that the statements Rev. Pinkney made in his newspaper editorial, while offensive to many, are clearly protected speech under the First Amendment. The ACLU further urged the Court of Appeals to release Rev. Pinkney on bond while it considers the appeal of his sentence."

In the order issued on Dec. 10, the Michigan Court of Appeals not only granted the ACLU motion but also is set to decide on the merits of Rev. Pinkney's appeal in 2009. A bond hearing was set for Dec. 18 in Berrien County with Judge Wiley presiding.

Rev. Pinkney's sentencing sparked a national campaign demanding his release. In recent reports from the various prisons where he has been incarcerated over the last year, Pinkney said he felt that his life was seriously threatened.

People from the state of Michigan and throughout the country wrote letters, e-mails and made telephone calls to the prisons in order to seek information on Rev. Pinkney's condition. Over the last several months, he has been transferred to at least five different correctional facilities around the state.

Rev. Pinkney's plight and Berrien County

In Berrien County, which is divided between the poor and predominately African-American Benton Harbor and the white and more affluent St. Joseph, there has been a long history of racism and injustice.

Rev. Pinkney, through his organizing efforts, sought to expose the racism inherent in the law-enforcement and court systems in Berrien County. BANCO has organized numerous protest activities over the last several years.

Rev. Edward Pinkney with bullhorn, May 14, 2007.
WW PHOTO: ABAYOMI AZIKIWE



In 2003, the African-American community in Benton Harbor rose up in a rebellion that lasted for three days. This uprising was spawned when a young African-American motorcyclist died as a result of a police chase.

Despite pledges from the state government to intervene in support of the people of Benton Harbor, conditions within the city have worsened over the last five years. Unemployment is astronomically high, which has resulted in one of the largest foreclosure and eviction rates in Michigan.

In a recent affront to the Benton Harbor community, the City Commission voted to lease 22 acres of Jean Klock Park to a private group known as the Harbor Shores Community Redevelopment in order to build three holes of a Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf Course. Jean Klock Park is Benton Harbor's only park on Lake Michigan.

An environmental group, Friends of Jean Klock Park, have taken legal action to halt the efforts of the Harbor Shores Community Redevelopment project. Berrien County trial Judge Scott Schofield dismissed a lawsuit filed by the group in August to halt the seizure of the 22 acres for the construction of a golf course.

The Friends of Jean Klock Park said that the private development scheme violated the deed that created the park in 1917 as a site specifically for public recreation in the city of Benton Harbor.

According to the local Herald-Palladium newspaper in Berrien County: "The high-end golf course will be open to the public but operated by Harbor Shores—a private, nonprofit consortium of the Alliance for World Class Communities, Cornerstone Alliance and Whirlpool Foundation. The course is the centerpiece of the Harbor Shores residential and resort develop-

ment planned to cover 530 acres in Benton Harbor, Benton Township and St. Joseph."

The significance of the case against Rev. Pinkney

This type of politically motivated frame-up occurs far too often in the United States against activists, particularly from oppressed communities, who dare to stand up and organize against racism and class exploitation. Most people within the African-American community and its allies saw this attack on Rev. Pinkney as an effort aimed at discouraging and intimidating anyone who attempts to organize for better living conditions and equality before the legal system.

However, Rev. Pinkney has remained steadfast in his position as an organizer and religious leader. He has never wavered on the question of his innocence and right to engage in protected speech as well as political activity.

The recent victory in the Michigan Appeals Court should serve as an inspiration to other defense committees working to liberate political prisoners throughout the U.S. Although Pinkney may eventually be vindicated in the courts, it is the organized and conscious might of the people that will be the ultimate decisive factor in the freeing of all political prisoners.

Abayomi Azikiwe has traveled on numerous occasions to Berrien County to cover the case of Rev. Pinkney as well as race relations in this southwest Michigan community.

Smithfield workers vote in union

Continued from page 1

negotiate and by trying to intimidate the union and their supporters with a RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act) lawsuit, claiming that workers exercising their basic rights and using some of their power, amounted to extortion.

On Oct. 27, the union and the company agreed to a new election in exchange for Smithfield dropping its lawsuit. Despite the fact that the previous elections were thrown out because of the company's actions, the workers won major concessions that ensured a fair election. Under the terms of the agreement, union organizers were allowed access to the plant itself, to talk to workers and distribute literature in the cafeteria and break rooms.

This was the first time in the 15-year struggle to organize the plant that organizers had an opportunity to talk to workers on a more equal footing with the bosses. The agreement required the company to discontinue its attacks on the union. Beginning at the start of November, over a hundred organizers came to Tar Heel, not just from the UFCW, but also from SEIU and other unions in the Change to Win coalition.

Throughout the final days of the cam-



Smithfield rally in New York City in 1996.

paign, workers took inspiration from President-elect Obama's historic victory. As one Smithfield worker stated, "We changed the White House. We can change the Hog-House." The victorious union election also came on the heels of the Republic workers' victory in Chicago, another inspiration to the Smithfield workers.

The workers now have a year where the company must negotiate with them, but the company is not required by law to sign a contract. Smithfield and the UFCW do have contracts at 26 other plants outside North Carolina. How good this contract will be depends on the workers' continued unity and militancy, and will require continued support and solidarity from workers and communities around the U.S.

Gilbert is a former UFCW organizer.

LGBT community wins domestic partner rule

By Martha Grevatt
Cleveland

The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community of Cleveland won a major victory with City Council's passage of a domestic partner registry on Dec. 8.

The measure will allow same-sex couples, as well as unmarried heterosexual couples and other individuals who live with and depend on one another, to register with the City. Cleveland is the third Ohio city to pass such an ordinance, following Toledo and Cleveland Heights.

While this gain falls far short of marriage equality, being able to obtain written documentation of one's committed relationship is a huge step forward. The registry is a challenge to the forces behind

Proposition 8 in California, and to those who four years ago passed Issue One in Ohio. That state constitutional amendment, one of the worst in the country, not only bans same-sex marriage but also its "approximation." At the time some feared its wording would be used against domestic-partner benefits won by state employee unions.

Over 200 LGBT community members and their supporters packed the City Council meeting where the 13-to-seven vote took place. Their joy was shared by Joe Santiago, the first openly gay person and second Latin@ to be elected to Council. The victory was greeted with sustained applause, prompting the Council president to rap the gavel and call for order. □

Fight against banks stops Detroit foreclosures

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions called protests to demand justice for Detroit homeowners Lorene Parker and Belva Davis. The people's struggle against the banks and predatory lenders resulted in important victories for the two.

On Dec. 10, about 75 protesters, including trade unionists, students and youth, converged on Bank of America in downtown Detroit. They were outraged that the bank, a recipient of \$25 billion from the recent federal bank bailout, was moving forward to foreclose on the home of Lorene Parker.

Parker, 52, is a cardiovascular nurse and has lived in her Detroit home for ten years. Several years ago, a possible viral infection caused her heart to fail. At the same time, her liver was compromised because she contracted hepatitis C from a needle stick at work.

Parker made history in 2006 when she became the first double transplant patient at the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio. She received a new heart and liver during an 11-hour operation.

Because of her disability after major surgery and mounting medical bills, Parker was unable to keep up with her mortgage payments to Bank of America. For the past several months she had diligently tried to contact bank representatives in order to explain her situation and have her loan modified. She got nowhere.

Parker contacted people's attorney Vanessa Fluker of the Moratorium NOW! Coalition. At the Dec. 6 coalition conference in Detroit, Parker described her plight and the group called a protest at Bank of America on Dec. 10. The bank had scheduled a sheriff's sale of Parker's home on Dec. 11.

The demonstration to support Parker was also in solidarity with UE workers occupying the Republic Windows and Doors factory in Chicago and to press Bank of America to comply with these workers' demands. Parker's foreclosure fight against Bank of America was included in leaflets and signs in many cities around the U.S. at demonstrations in support of the Chicago plant takeover.

With signs and banners, the demonstrators kept up a militant lunchtime picket line outside the bank's office at the Guardian Building. "Bailout the people, not the banks!" was a prominent chant.

When Parker and Fluker went inside to demand to speak with a Bank of America official and security guards accompanied them onto the elevator, demonstrators seized the opportunity to pour into the building's lobby. They occupied it for fifteen minutes, chanting



Lorene Parker, on bullhorn, at rally supporting her case against Bank of America.

be involved. I definitely support a two-year moratorium on foreclosures and I don't see why it wasn't done when the crisis started. If anything it's too late—look how many people have already lost their homes."

Rally to stop eviction

Immediately following the coalition's conference on Dec. 6, over 50 activists descended on the eastside home of Belva Davis for a neighborhood rally to stop her imminent eviction.

Davis went through a period of job loss and reduced income and fell behind on her mortgage payments. After finding a decent-paying job, she contacted her servicer, Ocwen Financial, and asked for a loan forbearance or modification. It refused.

Davis's loan is owned by a Wall Street securitization fund—HSBC Bank USA, NA, as trustee on behalf of ACE Securities Corporation Home Equity Loan Trust and for the registered holders of ACE Securities Corporation Home Equity Loan Trust, Series 2006-ASAP6, Asset Backed-Through Certificates. This 36-word entity holds Davis's loan and refused to reinstate her mortgage unless she gave them \$19,000 in cash up front.

Attorney and organizer Jerry Goldberg represented Davis in a court hearing to stop the eviction. Goldberg told Workers World, "Section 1403 of the Housing and Economic Recovery Act—which bailed out Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac—mandates that a servicer do a loan modification or workout agreement if the net-value result would be greater than the net value of the home sold under foreclosure."

Property values in Detroit have plummeted because of the foreclosure epidemic. On Davis's block alone, homes that sold for \$150,000 five years ago have recently sold for as little as \$12,000 after foreclosure.

At the Dec. 12 hearing, the lender asked for a judgment of possession to evict Davis, but the judge refused. Instead, she ordered the lender to enter negotiations for a loan modification. The court set a Feb. 2 hearing if the workout is not resolved by then.

According to Goldberg: "This is one case to test the viability of HERA to protect homeowners as a defense against evictions and foreclosures. Section 1403 applies to every foreclosure in securitized mortgages. This offers the potential to further challenge many illegal foreclosures and evictions and keep more people in their homes." □



loudly, and left before police arrived.

Afterwards, Detroit police confiscated the coalition's bullhorn and threatened to ticket organizer Jerry Goldberg for disorderly conduct. Goldberg was shown on television yelling, "Why are you harassing us? It's Bank of America you should be arresting!" Protesters chanted loudly to get the bullhorn back from the cops, who eventually relented and returned it without ticketing anyone.

The protest and Parker's case received widespread media coverage, including the Detroit News, Detroit Free Press, Michigan Citizen, Reuters news service, and radio and Fox TV-2. A documentary film crew from Traverse City, Mich., covered the protest and interviewed participants.

On Dec. 11, the day after the demonstration, Bank of America called off the sheriff's sale of Parker's home and wrote her attorney that the foreclosure was postponed until Jan. 22. The next day, the bank cancelled the foreclosure and put in writing a loan modification that will allow Parker to stay in her home. Parker signed the agreement Dec. 12.

Workers World asked Parker about the struggle to save her home. "It's very important for people to know about this coalition," she said. "I informed

all my friends and coworkers that they need to get involved. Without the group and numbers the banks are not going to listen to people. The more people we have the better."

Parker continued: "Even though my situation is under control, I am still going to



ON THE PICKET LINE
by Sue Davis

SAG to vote on strike

The Screen Actors Guild announced Dec. 10 that it will mail out strike authorization ballots on Jan. 2. SAG's board of directors is recommending a yes vote. "A yes vote sends a strong message that we are serious about fending off rollbacks and getting what is fair for actors in new media," said Alan Rosenberg, SAG president. (SAG press release) Rosenberg stressed that SAG's aim is to negotiate a contract that remunerates actors fairly for their work, especially in electronic media. The threat of a strike before the Academy Awards on Feb. 22 gives the actors a big stick. But is it enough to force the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers to budge from its miserly final offer? Stay tuned.

Boycott Stella D'oro cookies!

The 140 workers who bake cookies at New York City's Stella D'oro factory in the Bronx celebrated four months on strike with a demonstration on Dec. 10, picketer Sara Catalinotto told Workers World. A biting rain did not dampen the spirits of the workers, their supporters from several Dominican organizations and union workers at two nearby community colleges. The workers, many of whom are immigrants, have been on strike since Aug. 13 after Brynwood Partners, which bought the factory in 2006, offered Bakers' Local 50 a contract that cuts wages, paid holidays and paid sick days. The workers have called for a boycott of Stella D'oro products. For other strike information, visit www.stelladorostrike2008.com

Wal-Mart to pay \$54 million in back wages

Originally scheduled to pay \$2 billion in fines for two million violations of wage and employee laws in Minnesota, Wal-Mart got off easy on Dec. 9 when it agreed to a \$54.25 million settlement that covers about 100,000 current and former workers at Wal-Mart and Sam's Club stores from September 1998 through November 2008. This settlement is one of more than 70 suits won by employees accusing Wal-Mart, the biggest, wealthiest, anti-union retailer in the world, of cheating workers out of rest breaks and wages. (New York Times, Dec. 10) Would Wal-Mart owners and executives change their ways if they were forced to go to jail instead of paying fines?

No way to treat 'guest' workers!

The Bush Labor Department introduced new rules Dec. 11 that make it easier for agribusiness to hire temporary foreign farm workers on H-2A visas. Although farmer and worker groups want changes in "guest" worker regulations, they do not support these measures, which, according to Bruce Goldstein, director of Farmworker Justice, institute low wages and poor working conditions. (New York Times, Dec. 12) In his final month in office Bush is rushing to turn back the clock on workers' rights as well as on environmental protections and reproductive health care.

Ron Carey, ¡Presente!

Ron Carey, the Teamster president who led a successful 15-day strike against the United Parcel Service in the summer of 1997, died of lung cancer at 72 in Queens, N.Y., on Dec. 11. The victory, which gave 185,000 workers substantial raises, better pension benefits and the promise of 10,000 new full-time positions, was the labor movement's biggest victory in 30 years. (Washington Post, Dec. 13) But that victory so enraged the ruling class that the government charged him in November 1997 with using union funds to finance his reelection campaign. Though this once rank-and-file UPS driver whose courage, integrity and leadership invigorated the Teamsters and the AFL-CIO was vindicated in a jury trial in 2001, Carey was nevertheless banned from resuming union work. Many testimonials to Carey are posted on the Teamsters for a Democratic Union Web site (www.tdu.org). □

Senate's union-busting spurs anger in auto plants

By Martha Grevatt

The House of Representatives passed a bill Dec. 9 to make \$14 billion available immediately to General Motors, Chrysler and Ford. GM and Chrysler would get an emergency "bridge loan" to cover expenses while Ford would get a line of credit for future use if needed. The funds would come out of an already-approved \$25 billion for developing fuel-efficient vehicles.

Congress, including leading House Democrats, made bogus allusions to "equality of sacrifice" as they demanded that current and retired members of the United Auto Workers absorb the cost of restructuring the industry.

Their real agenda was spelled out in the bill itself: to "prohibit the eligible automobile manufacturer which received the loan from consummating any such proposed sale, investment, **contract** [our emphasis—MG], commitment, or other transaction, if the President's designee determines that consummation of such transaction would be inconsistent with or detrimental to the long-term viability of the eligible automobile manufacturer." (Detroit Free Press) In other words, a so-called "car czar" would have the power to dismantle union contracts.

Yet the fear of one of the Detroit Three (formerly known as the Big Three) going under was so deep that UAW President Ron Gettelfinger worked overtime to win passage of the House bill.

Then on Dec. 11, with "right-to-work"-state Republicans leading the assault, the bailout died in the Senate. It wasn't enough that House Majority Leader Nancy Pelosi took the position that "everyone is getting haircuts in terms of the conditions. Labor has to take a haircut." What Bob Corker of Tennessee, Richard Shelby of Alabama and their cohorts wanted was the union's head.

The UAW was presented with a non-negotiable demand that it reduce labor costs immediately to be equivalent to those at non-union plants of Honda, Toyota and other overseas carmakers.

Like a broken record the senators repeated the myth that UAW members make \$80 an hour. Actually wages at other auto plants are relatively close to those of union autoworkers. What differs are the "legacy costs" of supporting almost 800,000 UAW members collecting pensions. Yet even these cost figures disregard the fact that pensions are legally defined as deferred wages—earned years ago by retirees when they were still on the job.

By calling for "parity" in 2009, these incarnations of Taft and Hartley were after not only concessions from the UAW but a complete surrender. It was more than even Gettelfinger could go along with. Now Shelby, Corker and company are making it look like it's the union's own fault if the companies run out of cash and can't make payroll.

Autoworkers on the shop floor saw the Senate action for what it was: a brazen attempt to break their union. Chrysler workers also heard the call for them to submit to a job-killing merger with GM or some foreign auto firm, or else face bankruptcy or complete annihilation. Shelby and Corker were flooded with calls from angry workers and their family members.

As of this writing the White House has given no word as to the terms under which the automakers might now tap into the Troubled Assets Recovery Program, through which \$700 billion was set aside to bail out the banks. Any variation on the failed Congressional bill will require some kind of concessions from the UAW right away. The future of collective bargaining will be subject to the dictates of the czar, probably drawn from the ranks of finance capital.

The UAW leadership has tied its own hands with the no-win strategy of saving at all costs the very capitalists who have cut the workforce down to a fraction of its former strength. They have taken on the bowed posture of a debtor—of one forever indebted to those "gracious" bosses who "give" workers their jobs.

In fact the rank-and-file workers are the companies' biggest creditors. On any given day they are owed a minimum of five days' pay for work already performed. As future retirees they are owed billions of dollars in deferred wages to be collected upon retirement.

Now GM, Ford and Chrysler owe billions of dollars more to the UAW, which has allowed them to delay payment into a fund set up to cover retiree health care. Washington is demanding the workers take half of that owed payment in company stock. This would make them part owners as well as creditors.

When workers begin to understand who really owes whom, then they can start to think outside the suicidal box of class collaboration.

As the biggest creditor, in the case of bankruptcy the workers would have the legal right to seize the assets of a debtor in possession. Furthermore, their investment—representing millions of hours of hard labor—is threatened by the reckless spending and well-proven ineptitude of management. Thus workers could, even if bankruptcy is avoided, argue the right to take over the plants to protect their stake—possibly under eminent domain.

Dec. 30 is the 72nd anniversary of the beginning of the Flint Sit-Down Strike that forced GM to recognize the UAW. On Dec. 5, 2008, that tradition was revived in Chicago, by the workers at Republic Windows and Doors. In studying both history and current events, justifiably angry autoworkers will learn that it is possible to fight and win.

Grevatt is a 21-year Chrysler worker and executive board member of UAW Local 122 in Twinsburg, Ohio.

'In cases of great emergency'

UAW must fight back with general strike, class struggle

By David Sole
Detroit

As the Big Three auto companies continue to descend into the ashes—of abandoned factories, laid-off workers, destroyed communities—autoworkers must recognize this as a crisis of the bosses, of the ruling class and their system of capitalism. Capitalism is a system that goes from one economic crisis to the next. Driven by the need for profits, the bosses will do anything to maximize the bottom line.

Workers, the working class, need something else. They are not driven by profit. They want and need decent-paying jobs, job security, health care and pensions they can live on. The crisis in auto cannot be solved until autoworkers and community representatives take control of the giant auto corporations to redirect them to produce for need, not profit.

But even if the workers and the broader public were to become educated to this possibility and begin to accept it as a necessity for survival, how can it be done?

For autoworkers an answer lies in Article 50, Section 8 of the UAW Constitution. This is another one of those provisions that must have been put into the earliest founding documents of the UAW. It still rings with the ardor and vision of the class fighters from an earlier age. And it is still on the books.

Article 50, Section 8 lays out how the UAW can declare a general strike: "In cases of great emergency, when the existence of the International Union is involved, together with the economic and social standing of our membership, the International President and the

International Executive Board shall have authority to declare a general strike within the industry by a two-thirds vote of the International Executive Board, whenever in their good judgment it shall be deemed proper for the purpose of preserving and perpetuating the rights and living standards of the general membership of our International Union, provided, under no circumstances shall it call such a strike until approved by a referendum vote of the membership."

The UAW has never invoked Article 50, Section 8. But conditions facing autoworkers have never been grimmer. Certainly the "rights and living standards of the general membership" are threatened as never before.

What is most interesting, and of great importance, is the provision requiring a referendum vote of the entire UAW membership. This is critical because even if the leadership of the International UAW were interested in calling such a general strike, it doesn't necessarily follow that all members would understand or support such a move. More to the point, though, is that referendum votes can be held by individual local union memberships, initiated by rank-and-file action at union meetings. This could start a national discussion of a possible general strike and begin to press the top leaders for action.

But even a general strike by the UAW alone is not a cure-all. Such a step must draw in the other unions, community organizations and all poor and oppressed people. Serious discussion of this tactic and, even more important, popularizing a program of demands must patiently be carried out for a period of time.

The program for the autoworkers must include labor-community control over the auto industry. Other layers of the population must be inspired to support a general strike through demands for national health care, 100-percent guarantee of pensions, jobs, housing, education and so forth.

There would be no hurry toward setting a date. A step-by-step, serious plan of education and preparation would have an electrifying effect on tens of millions of people who have been looking for some way to fight back.

Such a procedure would also be what the ruling class fears most: class education of the entire working class in the U.S. The rich and powerful would be infuriated, but also tremendously afraid. Every concrete step taken in furtherance of Article 50, Section 8 and a broader participation

would enrage the ruling class and their paid media lapdogs.

There is no indication that the current leaders of the UAW International Executive Board are willing or able to look in this direction. On the contrary, they are already committed to backing the Big Three executives' campaign for a government bailout/loan package that will include more concessions from the union members.

It will be up to the union membership—awakened to the growing danger to their jobs, wages, benefits and pensions—to begin thinking and looking for a new way out. Class solidarity and class struggle offer that way.

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

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.

Order online at www.Leftbooks.com



Arrest of Illinois gov

Were real targets Obama and UAW?

By Fred Goldstein

From remarks made during the Dec. 9 membership meeting of the New York branch of Workers World Party.

I would like to comment on the arrest of Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich this week.

It is certainly true that his arrest, coming in the midst of the UE workers' sit-in at Republic Windows and Doors, was aimed at the UE workers, particularly since it came a day after Blagojevich was shown all over television standing outside the plant with the workers.

It is also true that the arrest was timed to prevent Blagojevich from carrying out his threat to suspend all transactions of the state with Bank of America, which he had announced the day before.

But I want to call attention to another important aspect of the arrest. It was directed against Barack Obama.

There has been much talk about whether or not Obama is going to initiate a "New Deal." We don't know what he is going to do. Regardless of his politics, regardless of his appointments—and we do not take responsibility for anything he may do—two days before the arrest, Obama did what no president has done since the Roosevelt administration. He came out unequivocally in favor of the UE workers and publicly stated that their demands should be met.

It is generally agreed that from a legal point of view U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald acted prematurely. He publicized a mere complaint. There have been no grand jury proceedings, no indictment, only a complaint filled with hearsay. The extraordinary thoroughness that Fitzgerald applied in the case of G. Gordon Liddy was thrown out the window. This time Fitzgerald sacrificed preparation for political timing.

The occupation of Republic in Chicago, the Smithfield victory, the UAW struggle—the 'Obama effect' has stimulated hope among sections of the working class, especially the most downtrodden.

The investigation into Blagojevich has been underway for six years. Why suddenly make it center stage on that day of all days? When UE workers in Chicago are engaged in a plant occupation, are supported by Obama and the governor and, what is most important, when the bosses are in the midst of a campaign to break the United Auto Workers union.

The action may have been directed to help Bank of America, but what do Bank of America and all the bosses know about sit-ins and plant occupations? They are more keenly aware of their role in the history of the U.S. class struggle than the workers.

They know that the greatest plant occupation in the history of this country was carried out by the UAW in 1936 and 1937. They know that this sit-in brought General Motors to its knees. They know that this occupation changed the face of the labor movement and won the right to industrial organization—and that it took place in Flint, Mich.

The bosses know that workers all around the region can quickly be reminded of this—especially as they see the attacks coming at them from all sides.

Obama's statement of support was made in the midst of a struggle in which workers were claiming the right to seize private property, the property of Republic Windows and Doors, the property of the bosses, and hold it as part of protecting

their own assets in the fight for their jobs. What could be more anathema to the bourgeoisie as they carry out round after round of layoffs?

While Obama carefully restricted his support to the workers' right to their severance pay under federal law, nevertheless, it was a great morale builder for the workers.

This raid, dragging the governor to jail at six in the morning, was calculated to warn Obama not to do anything like this ever again. The fact that the future president of the United States utters a word in support of struggling workers during an oncoming depression is inflammatory in the extreme, as far as the bosses are concerned. It gives ammunition and encouragement to the rank and file and any militant leaders in every union to open up a struggle to save their jobs and to block concessions.

But more importantly, this plant occupation, this heroic sit-in, even though it involved only 250 to 300 workers, was taking place in the midst of a major campaign, by virtually all factions of the ruling class, to break the United Auto Workers union and force intolerable concessions down their throats.

Obama made his remarks not only in the midst of the UE plant occupation but at the height of the campaign to use the crisis of General Motors and Chrysler as a battering ram against the auto workers.

Different factions of the ruling class have different approaches. But the fact is that the UAW is the big issue of concern, the overriding issue of the class struggle right now.

Negotiations for the auto bailout broke down when Senate Republicans demanded that the UAW bring wages and benefit levels down to those at Toyota, Honda and Nissan—all nonunion plants, mostly in the South. When UAW President Ron Gettelfinger could not agree to such onerous terms, negotiations over the bailout collapsed. But the right-wing senators were speaking the mind of most of the ruling class, which has been beating the drums for the UAW to make concessions since the question of the auto bailout first came up.

What has this to do with arresting Blagojevich and making the indictment against him public? It was calculated to put an end to any support by Obama for workers and to the plant occupation itself.

What did the Bank of America and JPMorganChase, Republic's other creditor, want? They wanted this occupation off the front pages. They wanted the workers out of the plant. They did not want anything to prolong it, especially encouragement from Obama.

The minute they had the opportunity, they surrendered to the demands of the workers for severance pay and benefits owed in order to put an end to the occupation. They wanted to stem the virus of working-class resistance and plant occupation before it could spread—especially to the rest of the Midwest.

Of course, the workers had every right to take the settlement. This alone was a major victory. The Bank of America never gives anything to anybody. Without the struggle, they would never have given

Continued on page 8

Emergency protests demand: 'Bail out the

By Monica Moorehead

Dec. 10—Today, the sixth day of the workers' occupation of the Republic Windows and Doors plant in Chicago, emergency actions took place in cities across the country in support of the takeover and targeting local Bank of America offices and buildings. Today's demonstrations are part of a Dec. 8-13 week of solidarity with the Republic workers, and were called on one- to two-day notice by community and political activists to raise broad awareness of the workers' struggle.

A Dec. 7 Bail Out the People Movement statement read in part: "About 250 employees of Republic Windows and Doors plant in Chicago began an occupation of the plant on Friday, Dec. 5, the last scheduled day of the plant's operation. The workers, members of the United Electrical Workers Union Local 1110, were not given the legally mandated 60-day prior notification of the plant's closing; also the plant's management and owners did not show up for a meeting with the workers scheduled for Dec. 5.

"The workers decided to occupy the plant. They have vowed to stay in the plant until they receive, at the very least, 60 days' pay. The owners say that they had to close because Bank of America refused to extend them any more credit. Bank of America has received hundreds of billions of dollars over the past three months in bailout money from the government.

"These workers, who are overwhelm-

ingly Latin@ immigrants, have taken a courageous stand by putting their bodies on the line in their fight for the right to feed their families and to be treated with respect and dignity like all human beings. In a way, they are fighting for the rights of all workers who are under attack, whether they are restaurant workers, public employees or autoworkers fighting to hold on to their jobs and union.

"We must stand with them."

In **Baltimore**, about 25 to 30 people came out in the rain to protest against Bank of America; an open-microphone rally took place there. A delegation of four people attempted to deliver a protest letter to the bank manager, who refused to accept the letter. The delegation pledged to hold another picket in front the bank in the near future.

A noisy and militant demonstration in support of the Chicago UE workers was held in **Buffalo, N.Y.**, in front of the downtown Bank of America headquarters building. It was well received in a city that was hit the same day with another round of local job losses and threats to autoworkers. Representatives from the International Action Center, WNY Peace Center, an anarchist youth group and Citizen Action participated.

Two rallies in Chicago

In **Chicago**, a thousand protesters of many nationalities braved the bitter cold to surround a downtown Bank of America office. Among the labor unions represented



WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

were UE and Service Employee locals. Two other support rallies were held on Dec. 6 and 9. Activists traveled from Cleveland, Detroit, New York, Baltimore and elsewhere to demand justice for the Republic workers.

In **Detroit**, 75 protesters held a very spirited and militant demonstration at the Detroit headquarters of Bank of America in the Guardian Building in the heart of the financial district. Called by the Moratorium Now! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions, the action received media coverage from FOX 2, USA Today, the Detroit Free Press, a documentary film crew, Peoples Tribune and others.

Besides raising the demands of the Republic workers, there was support for Lorene Parker, whose house is being foreclosed by Bank of America in Detroit. Parker addressed the crowd and the media.

The protesters went into the lobby of the building and occupied it for about ten

minutes, chanting slogans against foreclosure and for a moratorium. Security was nowhere in sight. The receptionists threatened to call the cops. The response from the protesters was, "Go ahead. We pay your salaries, not the bank."

In downtown **Los Angeles**, the Bank of America office near Pershing Square shut their doors before the official closing time to avoid the possibility of having protesters come in to disrupt business there. Picketers chanted, "Bank of America, shame on you, save the plant for Chicago workers," "Bail out the people, not the banks" and "Banks got bailed out, they got sold out, justice, justice for UE workers." Protesters included activists from Bayan-USA, SEIU Local 721, Labor's Militant Voice the Labor-Community Coalition and the International Action Center.

"Chicago workers lead the fight, a job is a right" was one of many chants heard on a picket line in front of the **New York**

Republic Window workers occupation—everyone's victory!

By Sharon Black
Chicago

There are not enough adjectives to express the kind of gratitude due the courageous workers of the Chicago Republic Window and Doors factory.

They have lit a torch to show the way in the midst of a growing economic crisis. History may well distinguish their action as the first significant one in a growing battle that must and will take place between capital and labor.

The majority of the factory's workers are immigrant workers from South and Central America who have perhaps the most to lose. Like many other low-paid workers, they live paycheck to paycheck. But unlike U.S.-born workers, they bear the brunt of possible deportation, and all of the workers, both foreign and U.S. born, who are Latina/o and Black, face a daily battle against racism.

It is with a double sense of gratitude that workers everywhere must give thanks once again to immigrant workers and their community. Like the historic protests and boycotts that swept the country on May Day 2006—which revived this historic workers' holiday—today's victory for these workers is a victory for all.

If there were one big lesson to learn from this struggle it would be the importance of solidarity. The contribution made by the Republic Window workers to all of the working class is the strongest argument that can be made against anti-immigrant division and violence.

Occupation: A long overdue tactic

The occupation and sit-in of factories and workplaces is not a brand-new tactic. For those familiar with labor history—it

was the militant sit-ins and occupations of the auto plants in the 1930s that began a wave all across the country of organizing industrial workers without special skills. It was such a popular tactic that songs were written about it.

This tactic hasn't been employed, especially by the official labor movement, for a long period in the U.S. despite many efforts to explain its usefulness.

In the 1986 book "High Tech, Low Pay," in the section on "Offensive Strategies: Workers Control," its author, Sam Marcy, explains: "There are means by which the workers can go beyond the established capital-labor relationship that is the framework of capitalist exploitation. They can seize and occupy the plants and thereby force a new and different type of crisis on the ruling class, instead of remaining in a narrow, often frustrating endurance contest between the employers and the workers."

Every community organizer, student or trade unionist should apply this tactic and agitate for it in a popular and bold way. If your home is being foreclosed stay—don't leave. If your plant closes—then sit in. Why should workers or the community not claim what is rightfully theirs?

Pre-notification & a 'Job is a Right'

The Republic Windows workers' struggle also raises a very important concept that needs to be energetically and forcefully fought for on a broad basis both by the community at large and the union movement—that is for "pre-notification."

The federal Worker Adjustment Retraining Notification Act (WARN) calls for 60-days' notice or severance pay, from employers who hire more than 100 workers, in the event of a layoff or job closing. This is inadequate—even though bosses

frequently violate WARN without consequences. In addition, it does not cover workplaces where the company files for bankruptcy. In the case of the Republic Windows and Doors, it took a daring struggle to win what would have been otherwise lost in a long legal tangle.

Serious pre-notification means six months' notice. Only with such a time frame can there be the necessary time to organize a fightback to prevent the closing. This is also true regarding the demand for a moratorium on home foreclosures, for example.

What the Republic Windows workers showed in practice and made public at press conferences was that their occupation was in defense of preserving their assets. During the period that they stayed, the company could not remove the equipment. In essence, they preserved their property right to a job.

This concept, that workers have a right to their job as strong as any other property right, must be deepened and popularized in every worker's mind during this period when layoffs are sweeping the country.

The United Electrical Workers were able to broaden and politicize this battle by generating a popular campaign against Bank of America. BofA had cut off the Republic factory's line of credit despite the infusion of \$25 billion of taxpayer money for BofA as part of Congress' bailout of the financial sector. Targeting BofA was a well-crafted strategy that was gathering national attention and sympathy, including calls by Chicago aldermen and the Cook County Council to divest their funds from BofA.

Role of the state

Police held back from ejecting or arresting the Republic workers, whose struggle

very quickly became a popular symbol of the fight against the big banks. It would have been politically embarrassing for President-elect Barack Obama, if in his home state police beat and arrested a relatively small group of workers who were defying this bank. Obama instead did something unprecedented in decades for a U.S. president by making a statement in support of the workers. The workers and the union were able to utilize this statement to push their struggle forward.

The forces of reaction were also steadily at work. Illinois Gov. Robert Blagojevich was detained on a pending corruption charge immediately following his announcement that the state would withdraw its funds from BofA. Some reports mentioned Obama, whose Senate seat was under discussion by Blagojevich. The timing cannot be viewed as a mere coincidence.

This was not only aimed at the workers occupying a tiny plant in the heart of Chicago—it was also that Obama himself "shouldn't give concessions" to the workers. In the final analysis the corporate masters pulling the strings were concerned with the larger issues of GM and the specter that autoworkers and others may rebel too.

Corruption among politicians is nothing new in Chicago. In addition, the charges and rumors against the Service Employees International Union related to this case are equally absurd. Even commentators in the corporate media admit that the allegations make very little sense.

The fact that a union leader on a high level would set up a meeting with a politician is nothing new. It is common knowledge that many union campaigns by state workers and others have been brokered in this way—none of this is illegal. The problem doesn't lie with illegality—the problem is that in most cases these strategies do not strengthen the working-class movement and generally tend to leave the workers passive and unarmed for future battles.

Solidarity & the union movement

In Chicago itself, solidarity was exemplary. Workers from both the AFL-CIO and the Change to Win unions provided help. On Dec. 10, some 1,000 union members, along with the progressive movement, marched outside of Bank of America's downtown offices. Messages and supporters were beginning to flow in from outside of Chicago and from around the world.

What was unfortunate was the relative silence of the top leadership of both labor confederations when they should have immediately expressed unconditional solidarity. Such a statement of solidarity would have strengthened the entire union movement and sent a strong message to corporate boardrooms everywhere that labor will stand together.

The union movement should take a special lesson from how UE conducted this struggle. First and foremost, the rank-and-file workers were prepared, informed and ultimately made the decisions on what was fundamentally important for them. This was crucial in forging a victory.

One especially important observation is that the Republic workers proved they can carry out their tasks without the bosses and do it well. This was clear to anyone on the ground watching events unfold. The workers guarded the plant, organized food, kept order, cleaned the floors, and they could easily manage production. Workers don't need the bosses at all. □

workers, not Bank of America'



WW PHOTO: ELLIE DORRITTE



CHARLOTTE, N.C., DEC. 9.

WW PHOTO: DANTE STROBINO



CHICAGO

WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

City Bank of America office across from City Hall. The action was co-sponsored by the Bail Out the People Movement and the May 1st Coalition for Immigrant and Workers' Rights. When the New York police tried to tell the protesters they could not hold a demonstration in front of the bank, activists told them that the sidewalk is public property and they had the right to stay. The police then backed off and the picket line proceeded.

Workers World spoke with veteran UE supporter Lillian Liftlander, whose name was Rosenberg in the 1940s when she worked as a researcher in the union's national office. "I came out today because it is the UE. I really like the slogan, 'Bank of America gets bailed out; we got sold out.'" This Manhattan resident still gets the UE News and tries to weigh in when she can.

"The UE took part in a demonstration in Washington, D.C., a few years ago," said Liftlander, "and the workers all wore shirts

that had printed on the back: 'The members run this union.' That's what's best about the UE." Liftlander sent greetings from her 98-year-old union buddy who just wasn't up to picketing on this rainy day.

In Philadelphia a protest was held in the rain at the Center City Bank of America. Ten minutes before the picket was scheduled to start, people were already there with their own handmade signs and banners. More than 20 people came for the rally, which received a significantly positive response from people going by. Activists from the International Action Center, Action AIDS, Code Pink, International Workers of the World and other unions participated. There was also a "honk against the bailout, solidarity with the Chicago workers" sign, which got a very good response.

In Raleigh, N.C., many public workers, members of UE Local 150 and community supporters gathered at the legislature chanting, "Bail out the workers, not

the banks" and then marched to the Bank of America financial buildings to deliver a message of solidarity with their brothers and sisters at the Republic Windows and Doors plant in Chicago.

In San Francisco, the San Francisco Labor Council, AFL-CIO, the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement-SF Chapter and ANSWER co-sponsored a solidarity demonstration with the Chicago Republic workers at the Bank of America office. Four people were arrested at the protest. Supporters of death-row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal also joined the demonstration. Longshore Local 10 members, including Clarence Thomas, attended.

Contributors to this roundup are Abayomi Azikiwe, Sharon Black, John Catalinotto, Steven Ceci, Ellie Dorritte, Jerry Goldberg, Larry Hales, Kris Hamel, Cheryl LaBash, Joan Marquardt, Betsey Plette and Dante Strobino.

Health care decays in the 'Rust Belt'

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

Decades of decline in the living conditions of the working class in this country are now being followed by a severe crash of the capitalist economic system, the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930s. There is little disagreement that if the ruling class has its way, this next period will be devastating for our class.

The Rust Belt city of Buffalo, N.Y., has already experienced unabated decline for the last several decades. Today Buffalo is the third poorest mid-sized city in the country. Once a center in steel production, almost all of that is gone, along with all the other industries associated with it, including parts businesses. The future of the

remaining Ford and GM auto plants located outside the city limits is very bleak.

The result of this economic devastation has been totally shaped by institutional racism. Racist redlining by the banks and suburbanization have emptied the city of much of the white population. The majority of investment in businesses, jobs, housing, the university, new schools and shopping malls has been outside the city. Left behind is a city that is now 60 percent people of color—African Americans, Latinos and Latinas, small Arab and Yemeni communities and a smaller number of recent African immigrants.

The only investment in the city has been for gentrification—building expensive condos for the rich along the waterfront. There is no urban renewal, only bulldoz-

ing hundreds of the 10,000 city-owned abandoned homes. Needless to say, there was no housing bubble in Buffalo, even in the suburbs.

Heating bills cost as much as housing. The schools are in terrible shape. Buffalo's subway system travels back and forth along a Main Street of banks, state and federal buildings, empty stores and social service agencies, and a small portion of neighborhoods. A recent study of the poverty within the city has noted that the lack of a good mass transit system has left the poor and unemployed who live within the city unable to access jobs that are mostly in the suburbs. And yet, once again, there is an effort to raise the cost of bus fare. The only way to maintain such oppressive conditions is police brutality and a control board that takes more and more tax money from the workers, cutting the services we need and giving that money to the banks and developers.

The largest employer in the city is the health care industry. Over the last decade the health care unions have had to fight to preserve even these jobs as health care institutions have been repeatedly cut back. Several hospitals have been closed in a forced merger by the state. Now they are facing large cutbacks in state Medicaid and eventually Medicare funding.

As the best-paying steel and auto jobs have disappeared, the number of workers who can afford health care has diminished. Most health care insurance has been employer-based. As people lose jobs, they lose health care coverage. If GM closes or merges, thousands could lose their jobs. Already local health insurance companies have been greatly affected by GM's announcement that it will no longer provide retiree health care coverage.

Health care advocates have been working for years on proposals that improve access to care but fall short of guaranteeing all people the right to free, quality health care. During the presidential elec-



WW PHOTO: GARY WILSON

tion the candidates proposed that more people be included in existing plans—but these plans are now cutting services or excluding coverage for some existing health conditions. In addition, there are no attempts to cut the profits of the pharmaceutical companies.

It is clear that the health care crises will be at the top of both the capitalists' agenda and the agenda of poor, working and unemployed workers.

What the ruling class has done to Buffalo is what they have planned for all the cities—to leave our class feeling hopeless and defenseless. However, now there are signs of change. The Barack Obama presidential campaign has raised the hopes of our class to think that it is possible for people to make great changes to improve their lives. Even in Buffalo, it has created enormous energy and optimism. It has also created an organization.

And so the contradiction exists between a ruling class that will do anything to keep its exploitive economic system from collapsing and the awakening masses who are now organizing to build a new society that can meet their needs. Change is also coming from the ruling class, but it will not be what people need. It will not make it possible for us to survive until we fight back.

As leaders in the struggle we have to understand this contradiction and decide: "What do we do?" Can we provide an analysis of capitalism that will help to offer a new path of struggle for all the people who want to fight? Can we provide leadership in the struggle for the things we need? □



WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

Detroit labor activists meet Republic's workers

Special to Workers World Chicago

On Dec. 10 a five-person delegation from Detroit traveled to Chicago to support the workers at Republic Windows and Doors. The delegation first joined the rally in downtown Chicago at the Bank of America. They then visited the Republic plant where they joined with their fellow workers—the majority Latina/o immigrants—by shaking hands, sharing their union's solidarity statements in both English and Spanish, and being welcomed onto the shop floor where the occupation was taking place.

The inspirational visit ended with chants of "¡Si Se Puede!" and "Bail Out the Workers Not the Banks!"

The Detroit delegation included Alan Pollock, a former UAW rank-and-file machinist; David Sole, president of UAW Local 2334; Rosendo Delgado of Latinos Unidos and an UAW rank-and-file member; Ignacio Meneses, UAW retiree and member of Labor Exchange and Latinos Unidos; and Bryan G. Pfeifer, staff organizer for the Union of Part-Time Faculty (UPTF)-AFT at Wayne State University. All delegation members are also members of the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions. □

ABC of the crisis in the USSR

As part of our archival series in WW's 50th year, we reprint below a short excerpt from an article that appeared on Sept. 5, 1991, shortly before the USSR was dissolved. See the full text at www.workers.org/marcy/cd/sam91/1991html/s910905.htm.

By Sam Marcy

Boris Yeltsin, the chief architect of capitalist counterrevolution in the USSR, and his partner in crime Mikhail Gorbachev seem now to be firmly in the saddle.

Economic decline and social and political disintegration are absolutely inevitable. The imperialists of the world know this. No amount of hurried state visits by John Major, the Thatcherite British prime minister, will in any way persuade George Bush to quickly open U.S. imperialism's treasuries to the USSR.

What the Gorbachev regime has been doing over the last five years in its effort to decentralize socialist planning in the USSR is like breaking up giant ocean liners in an attempt to create small rowboats.

It's an ideal of the petty bourgeois merchant and shopkeeper.

Decentralization has brought one economic disaster after another. The attempt to break up the mines and sell them to investors from abroad is the worst example of reactionary utopianism. It's even worse with the oil industry, which is wholly integrated, as are iron and steel and the military-industrial complex.

The absurdity of chopping up the socialist sector while at the same time wildly promising the masses a higher living standard is bound to bring the real criminal conspirators to grief.

The Gorbachev regime, immediately after he became party general secretary at the Central Committee plenary meeting in 1985, slowly and gradually began a course of development that led straight to capitalist restoration at home and the intervention of the imperialist bourgeoisie. For too long a time, the Communist Party leadership, in disregard of revolutionary tradition and resting on privileges it had accumulated over the years for itself, went along with Gorbachev. ...



Were real targets Obama and UAW?

Continued from page 6

a nickel to anyone. Bank of America is throwing people out of their homes, denying credit, and laying off 30,000 to 35,000 of its own workers.

So let's not forget what this attack on Blagojevich was about. It was an attempt to defuse the struggle of the workers and take it out of the limelight. And it was a warning to Obama to stay out of it.

Workers, no matter whether class-conscious or not, were in support of the UE workers. The occupation was universally supported among the workers and much of the middle class. It became a popular cause. Politicians and others jumped on the bandwagon.

Furthermore, it cannot be regarded as a mere coincidence that at this same moment the Smithfield workers in the right-to-work, anti-union state of North Carolina voted, after 15 years and numerous unsuccessful attempts, to have the United Food and Commercial Workers represent them.

This could be attributed to "the Obama effect" because of the hope and optimism his victory has stimulated among sections of the working class, especially the most downtrodden. Forget about what he may or may not do in the future.

During the great upsurge of the 1930s, organizers seized on the conciliatory attitude of the Roosevelt administration towards labor, telling workers, "President Roosevelt wants you to join the union." Of course this was an exaggeration, but a believable one. The capitalists are

supremely conscious of this potential.

This arrest and attack on Blagojevich cannot be seen in any other context than as an attack on Obama, on the autoworkers and on the working class as a whole. Right now, Fitzgerald has said that Obama is in the clear and has nothing to do with the scandal. But at the same time, the investigation is ongoing. The threat is always there to escalate the struggle further in the direction of the Obama administration—not only out of bourgeois political factionalism but also to push him back from any ideas about further supporting workers in struggle.

This is what class-conscious workers must keep in mind as they view this whole public relations extravaganza.

A final thought. The heroic struggle of the UE workers may not be over. They are still in it in the sense that they have not given up the idea of saving their jobs. Doing this with a down payment from the Bank of America and raising the rest of it from workers' funds may have a difficult future in a capitalist environment. But it leaves open the possibility to renew demands that the Bank of America, the banks in general and the capitalist government use bailout money to keep the plant open.

The workers are still in it and we should keep our powder dry and be ready to do everything to support them if another chapter unfolds in this important struggle.

Goldstein is author of the newly released book "Low-Wage Capitalism—Colossus with Feet of Clay."

Portugal's Communists say: 'The struggle continues'

By John Catalinotto
Lisbon, Portugal

The 1,400-plus delegates at the 18th Congress of the Portuguese Communist Party, and the thousands of other PCP militants invited to observe, made it clear that in this one corner of imperialist Europe there is a living, breathing combat organization with roots in every laboring and productive section of society.

From Nov. 29 to Dec. 1, the delegates and observers filled the one-time bullring called Campo Pequeno here in Lisbon. The delegates' task was to review, amend or accept the hundreds of "theses" in the party program that had been in discussion since last February, and to elect a new central committee and leadership. This it did, with near unanimity.

According to the PCP reports, the youngest delegate was 16 and the oldest 93. More than 60 percent were leaders of mass organizations like unions and women's, youth, fishers, immigrants, professional and community groups. Another 36 percent were elected officials, mostly in local governments of cities, towns and other local subdivisions.

After PCP Secretary-General Jeronimo de Sousa—who was later re-elected to this post—opened the political discussion with a general view of the situation in the world, in Europe and in Portugal, there followed a series of concise contributions by dozens of other leaders of the party and mass organizations. Many evoked standing, fist-raised chants from the delegates of "PCP! PCP!" or cries of "The struggle continues!"

("A luta continua!") Their obvious dedication to the 60,000-member party and the workers' struggle in general was inspiring to any observer trying to build a similar organization.

While welcoming all the international guests, the delegates gave their strongest applause to the statements from the Communist Party of Cuba and from Fretilin, the liberation organization of East Timor, which was once a colony of Portuguese imperialism before the anti-fascist "April Revolution" of 1974.

The capitalist crisis

Far from a routine discussion, this one took place at an early phase in what Marxist analysts worldwide, including the PCP comrades, see as a systemic crisis of capitalism, one that can't be resolved by reformist programs or by waiting and enduring a year or two. To overcome the crisis, the working class must take control of the means of production and planning, that is, it must make changes leading toward socialism.

Yet, because of the continued damage from the disappearance of the Soviet Union, the workers' movement worldwide, and especially in the imperialist countries of Western Europe, North America and Japan, is unable to put socialist transformation on the agenda.

Even defensive victories come hard. For example, more than 120,000 of the 200,000 Portuguese teachers gathered in Lisbon Nov. 8 for a magnificent demonstration to defend their rights. Yet the government, led by the "Socialist Party" leader



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

Communist delegates showed close ties to working class. Lisbon, Dec. 1.

Jose Socrates—a socialist in name alone—chose to ignore this tremendous protest and insist it would continue to impose anti-teacher, anti-student "reforms."

How then to continue to defend workers' interests while preparing for a struggle that can change society?

As another PCP leader, Albano Nunes, said in his talk to the Congress, "The PCP never vacillated in its devotion to a socialist and communist ideal. Neither the hardest blows from the fascist dictatorship, nor the devastating advance of the Nazi hordes in the homeland of the soviets, nor

the dramatic divisions and conflicts in the international communist movement, nor the defeats of socialism in the USSR and Eastern Europe two decades ago has shaken us of this conviction."

Nunes added, "As a requirement of our epoch that the October Revolution [Russia, 1917] inaugurated and that we will again make a reality in Portugal, it will be necessary to strengthen our party and to persist confidently in the struggle in defense of the aspirations of the workers and the people without ever losing of sight of our glorious and beautiful ideal." □

CANADA

Rightist maneuvers to suspend Parliament

By G. Dunkel

Facing the loss of a confidence vote in the Canadian Parliament, which would have led to his government's dismissal, Prime Minister Stephen Harper in early December asked Gov. General Michaëlle Jean to suspend the country's legislature for eight weeks. Jean is the representative of the Queen of England, who is also Canada's head of state. She agreed, so through this maneuver Harper stays in power another two months.

This type of suspension, called a prorogation, has never been employed before in Canada to avoid a no-confidence vote. In fact, some bloggers in Canada (nowpublic.com/world) claim it has never been used this way in any other constitutional monarchy in the world.

This desperate attempt to hold on to power by any means available reflects Canada's unstable economy and politics. It is comparable to when the U.S. Supreme Court threw Florida's vote to George W. Bush in 2000. Its implications for Canada's bourgeois democracy are just as grave as Bush's victory was in the U.S.

Harper's Conservative Party has a minority in Parliament. In elections held this past October, it failed to gain any additional seats in Quebec because of its disparaging cuts in federal funds that promote Quebec's culture.

In Quebec, which contains close to one quarter of Canada's people, almost 85 percent speak French as their first language. Among them are large French-speaking Haitian and North African communities. The party that represents 49 out of Quebec's 75 parliamentary districts (called

"ridings") is the Bloc Quebecois.

The BQ came out of the separatist movement in Quebec, but its current program is directed toward defending Quebec's interests as a province inside Canada.

The Harper administration had presented a budget that was headed for defeat. It included suspending the right of federal employees to strike and bargain collectively; cutting unemployment benefits and works programs; and abolishing subsidies to the political parties based on how many votes they get. Harper, who represents the oil-rich province of Alberta, was pushing for an austerity budget at a time when Canada's economy is in a period of rapid decline.

Canada didn't go through a subprime

mortgage mess and doesn't have an equivalent to U.S. agencies like Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which promoted unrestrained speculation in housing. However, the Canadian and U.S. economies are so intertwined that Canada cannot escape the effects of the financial meltdown in its southern neighbor. Many of its public pension systems are now facing a shortfall of 15 to 20 percent. (The Montreal Gazette, Nov. 14)

One figure reveals the economic network between these two countries: the flow of trade. Both incoming and outgoing, it amounts to \$300 billion a year, the largest flow between any two countries in the world.

The Liberal Party and the more progres-

sive New Democratic Party hold 76 and 37 seats, respectively, in Parliament. Once they announced that they had formed a coalition, and that the BQ with 49 seats would support them, Harper and his Conservative Party unleashed a torrent of chauvinist diatribes against "the Liberals uniting with the socialists" with the support of "the separatists." As of Dec. 5, according to La Presse, one of the main newspapers in Quebec, these diatribes had appeared solely in English.

The struggle over the budget and the suspension of Parliament is not over. The weekend of Dec. 6-7 saw small but nationwide demonstrations. Those in Quebec were filled with union banners and the fleur-de-lis, the national flag of Quebec. □

UKRAINE

Appeal for support for fired trade union organizers

Workers World received the following appeal through the Workers Action newspaper (proletar.org.ua), calling for support from the Coordination Council of the Workers' Movement (KSRD) of Ukraine, a formerly socialist country of 46 million people now ruled by a pro-U.S. capitalist regime.

In Ukraine, the consequences of the world economic crisis are already seriously impacting workers in many sectors of the economy. In metallurgy there has been a huge slump in production. Enterprises have been closed, wages slashed and masses of workers have been fired or laid off.

Unfortunately, resistance to these acts of the capitalists has been largely prevented because the workers' movement of our country has experienced the strongest recession for the past eight years.

The overwhelming majority of trade unions, even those once known for their fighting spirit, are now degraded. Their structures have turned into appendages of the administrators of the factories, and they now completely support the owners' decisions on salary reductions and deteriorating working conditions.

Many independent workers' organizations have broken up, been destroyed or have fewer members. The real workers'

movement has several weakened organizations that have survived despite many complexities and pressures. The capitalists and their state especially hate these organizations.

Now, in the current conditions of economic crisis, small and very modest actions are leading to a revival of the workers' movement. Workers in various enterprises have started to listen to the opinion of existing activists and workers' organizations.

The capitalists, afraid of a growing independent workers' movement, have taken measures to stop workers from

Continued on page 10

Ode to shoes

Ah, lowly objects of mundane human existence, forever condemned to carry on your backs the weight of the world, this ode is to you. Because of you we tender-feet are able to trudge through burning deserts and freezing slush. We slap you upon the pavements of great metropolises and quiet villages until your seams split, your tongues loll and your soles disintegrate. You are then discarded to the ashbins of history, leaving no record of your great service to humanity.

But now comes a humble pair of shoes that shall live forever.

When you flew through the air, one after the other, in a transcendent arc that nearly clipped the ears of W. Mad Dog, a great sigh went up to the heavens and swept the globe. It was the sigh that comes when a door long shut is cracked open, when a torment long denied at last finds its breath.

A presidential media appearance! How many shoes have attended such solemn and august occasions before, dutifully shuffling in and out on cue, never drawing attention to their presence. But this time, you could not remain rooted to the floor. This time it was one WMD too many. You soared and with you went the hopes of suffering humanity.

You rode in on the feet of Muntader al-Zaidi, a 29-year-old Iraqi journalist who, it turned out subsequently, kept a poster of Che on the wall of his modest apartment. As he threw the first shoe, he shouted to WMD, "This is a

gift from the Iraqis; this is the farewell kiss, you dog!"

Perhaps that shoe's mate felt left out—but not for long. "This is from the widows, the orphans and those who were killed in Iraq!" was Zaidi's greeting to the president as he lofted the second shoe.

Where are you now, oh noble shoes? Have sinister bureaucrats with the Secret Service sliced you apart, trying to find some clue as to who lovingly tanned your leather, stitched your seams, added a touch of polish? Did they search you for weapons of mass destruction? How dense. The WMD was at the podium.

Even if you are bloodied and abused now, you and Zaidi cannot be erased. The liberating deed was done. The stifling weight of bourgeois decorum couldn't stop it. The pure oxygen of freedom and sovereignty, for which so many have given their lives, filtered through even the reinforced concrete and razor wire of the puke-Green Zone.

The day will come when monuments of bronzed shoes will dot the street corners. Perhaps your torturers know this. Maybe, before disassembling you, these creatures of free enterprise calculated what you will be worth soon on E-Bay and wondered if they could trade you as they did Iraq's archeological treasures.

But they have lost. And your brief journey, defying the tug of gravity and the gravity of the occasion, proves it. □

Shooting of Greek youth sparks national rebellion

By Larry Hales

Two cops in the Exarchia neighborhood of Athens, Greece, gunned down 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos on Dec. 6. Hours after the shooting, young people in Athens began to rebel against the cops. The next day the rebellions began to spread to other major cities, including to Thessaloniki—the second largest city—to the north and the island of Crete to the south.

Stunned by the rebellions that erupted after the killing of the unarmed youth, the right-wing government of Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis responded by arresting the two cops involved. Since the arrests, the shooter, Epaminondas Korkoneas, has been charged with voluntary homicide and his partner with being an accomplice.

With the arrests and charges the right-wing government was attempting to stop the rebellions. These have continued, however, along with mass protests and a general strike that had already been planned, but has added demands regarding the murder of Grigoropoulos.

Not even the false sympathy of Karamanlis, who said, "Like all Greeks I am deeply saddened," nor an apology from the Police Association could cease what had been long brewing.

The police and the government have tried to portray the incident as isolated. At times they indicated that the shooting was a mistake. The cops' story blames the youth, justifying the killing by claiming they were merely defending themselves from attack.

A friend of Alexandros Grigoropoulos, who was at his side when the young man was killed, tells a different story. According to the friend, Nikos R., "When someone threw the plastic bottle, the police, both of them if I am not mistaken, took their weapons out of their holsters, aimed in front of them, that is towards the place where I, Alexandros and the other person were, and three continuous shots were heard. I forgot to tell you that I am sure that one of the two police officers held his weapon with both hands. I saw then—and I am absolutely sure—that the police weren't shooting either towards the sky or towards the ground. They aimed towards our location and fired!"

"Alexandros fell down, if I am not mistaken, on the first or second gunshot, surely any-ways before the third. ... Afterwards, I didn't know what was going on. People were yelling and some people lifted up Alexandros' shirt. I saw that he had a hole in the middle

of the chest and a little towards the heart. There was blood from the wound."

Nikos ends his statement to the interviewer with, "The only thing I want to tell you is that they didn't kill Alexandros. They murdered him in cold blood." (athens.indymedia.org)

There is little doubt that the masses of workers and students in Greece see the killing as Alexandros' friend did and that this viewpoint is what sparked the insurrections across all of Greece and initiated solidarity actions in countries throughout Europe and in other parts of the world.

However, the killing of Grigoropoulos is not the sole cause of the rebellions. It may have been the catalyst to the violence at the moment, but if the insurrection's primary goal was to seek the arrest of those responsible, then perhaps things would have settled.

It is the violent nature of the state apparatus as a whole that is partly responsible. More than that, though, the state is beholden to a system that perpetuates violence, economic and physical violence. This system is in a state of decline and workers and the poor are suffering from it, as capitalist states pile the burden upon the workers' shoulders—this fact is ultimately where another truth emanates from. This truth is that oppression and repression breed resistance.

Tens of thousands marched spontaneously on Dec. 7 and 8. Organized marches were called by many coalitions and parties on the left. And the rebellions continued to rage.

Teachers began a strike on Dec. 9 in protest of the killing.

On Dec. 10, after the rebellions had raged for four days, a general strike was carried out, organized by the trade unions close to the Communist Party (KKE). Though the strike had been previously planned as a response to the rising unemployment, poverty, privatizations and other actions of the government, it also raised demands for justice for Alexandros Grigoropoulos.

The strike shut the country down as hundreds of thousands of workers, with the thousands that were already engaging in the rebellions, converged for demonstrations against the government throughout the country, the largest taking place in Athens.

Capitalist media outlets have begun to focus less and less on the situation in Greece. The struggle there continues to remain in the streets and is drawing in broad sectors that could unite behind common demands and a common goal seeking to end the suffering of workers and the poor and put an end to state repression. □

An appeal: Support fired Ukrainian trade union organizers

Continued from page 9

fighting back.

Recently, reprisals against workers have taken place in several cities. In the city of Mariupol—the large metallurgical center in Donetsk area—owners of a metallurgical combine have dismissed the heads of small independent trade unions that have called on workers to protest against wage cuts.

Workers have been intimidated, detained and kept out of the factories, not only by private security guards armed with machine guns but also by militia (police). In Kiev, a group of security guards at an airplane factory tried to prevent the distribution of our newspaper, Workers' Action, threatening our comrades with pistols. Armed militia have tried to arrest our members. This is not the first such case at the Kiev factories.

The largest of the still-fighting organizations in the workers' movement of Ukraine is the Independent Trade Union of Miners (NPG) from the Imeni Barakova mine in the Lugansk area. These workers have been under fierce attack by the bosses. But they have engaged in strikes, marches and protest camps. Some 100-150 copies of our newspaper are distributed to members of this trade union on a regular basis.

The NPG helps create fighting trade unions in other cities and settlements

of the Lugansk area. The union hates the administration and owners of not only the mines, but every capitalist enterprise. The private owner of the mine, billionaire Rinat Ahmetov, wants to break this trade union in order to intimidate all mine workers in an attempt to show that the workers' organization is incapable of protecting itself.

In violation of the law, NPG vice-chairman Michail Mikerin and union committee members Lyudmila Kotvitskaja, Vladimir Panchenko and Grigory Tkach have been fired from work. Local courts and the Supreme Court, carrying out the will of the mine owners, have refused to restore many trade-union activists to their jobs.

The Coordination Council of Workers' Movement (KSRD) of Ukraine supports the struggle of all workers to their jobs and wages.

Please send letters in support of NPG members at the Imeni Barakova mine to the following: Supreme Court of Ukraine, 01024 Ukraine, street P. Orlika, 4, Kiev; the State Office of Public Prosecutor of Ukraine, 01001 Ukraine, street Riznytska, 13/15, Kiev; Lugansk Regional State Administration, 91016 Ukraine, Lugansk, Ploshchad Heroev VOV, 3 (e-mail: gubernator@loga.gov.ua). Send copies to the KSRD at ksrdd@pisem.net. □



Activists organized by the youth group FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together) protested at the Greek National Tourist Organization in New York on Dec. 16 in solidarity with youth and workers in Greece. The demonstration demanded justice for Alexandros Grigoropoulos, a 15-year-old who

was shot and killed by Greek police.

In response to the action, an official from the Tourist Organization met with a delegation of protestors to hear their concerns. FIST plans on holding more demonstrations in solidarity with the struggle of the people of Greece in the near future.

—Report and photo by LeiLani Dowell

Damascus, Syria

Thousands at congress affirm Palestinian Right of Return

By Sara Flounders
Damascus, Syria

More than 5,000 delegates filled the hall to overflowing at the Arab International Congress for the Right of Return, held in Damascus, Syria, on Nov. 23 and 24. Delegates came from 54 countries.

The gathering was a strong demonstration of support for the struggle of the Palestinian people and their historic demands.

The two-day event was aimed at establishing the Right of Return of Palestinian refugees, which was defined as a firm Palestinian and Arab principle that is not subject to bargaining, concessions or trade-offs and cannot lapse with the passage of time.

A ringing declaration on the Right of Return, adopted at the final plenary session of the giant assembly, confirmed once again that this right is considered inalienable and at the core of the Palestinian cause. It condemned the expulsion of the Palestinian people as a crime of ethnic cleansing and a crime against humanity. It also called for resistance to all "population exchange" and "transfer" initiatives and settlements, as well as to the racist wall that has been built by the Israeli state to change the demographic and geographic identity of Palestine.

The congress hailed the continuing "culture of resistance" because it is "the shortest way to achieve the return of Palestinians to their homes" and called for protecting and fortifying this right at the Islamic, national and international levels.

The congress was held in line with a year of activities to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Nakba (catastrophe), the Arabic term for the Zionist usurpation of Palestine in 1948.

Organizers of the event explained that the 5,000 delegates came from a widely inclusive range of organizations, associa-

tions, political parties and unions. There were Palestinian, Arab, Islamic and international personalities of all persuasions. Palestinian communities from all parts of the world were represented.

Solidarity with Gaza, Jerusalem and prisoners

Almost every speaker at the two-day gathering also condemned the continuing Zionist siege of 1.5 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip as a crime against humanity and a crime of genocide. Speakers and the congress declaration noted that the siege, now in its second year, has isolated Gaza from the entire world and deprived the population of the vital necessities of life.

The congress called for "immediate Egyptian steps to open the Rafah Crossing, the only opening of the Gaza Strip to the outside world and their only remaining lifeline. They must allow the Gaza Strip to import the necessities of life, transportation and basic services such as water, electricity, fuel and medicine. ... The complicity of the Egyptian government does not represent the true nationalist and patriotic will of the Egyptian people."

Many speakers emphasized the need to break the oppressive siege imposed on the Gaza Strip by all means and methods. Solidarity initiatives were highlighted. These included the journeys to Gaza by the boats "Hope" and "Dignity," which brought aid in defiance of an Israeli blockade.

Other declarations and speakers condemned Israel's efforts to eradicate the Palestinian identity of Jerusalem through continuing expulsions and the destruction of homes, as well as its attempts to isolate the indigenous Jerusalemite population from the rest of Palestine and restrict their movement by building walls, fences and settlements.

The most honored guests at the gathering were Palestinian prisoners who had served decades in Israeli prisons. Awards,

waves of cheers and revolutionary chants applauded their determination, perseverance and heroic steadfastness.

The congress also sent a strong message of solidarity to the "12,000 male and female prisoners still held in Zionist prisons who continue to face abuse, torture and denial of their most basic rights." It denounced the Israeli kidnapping of the great bulk of parliamentarians democratically elected by the Palestinian people, many of whom are now held in prison.

Other declarations focused on Sudan and Lebanon. The declaration on Sudan condemned the Zionist role in the plots to dismember Sudan and undermine its national unity and its Arab, African and Islamic identity. It opposed all forms of colonial intervention, dubious internationalization and provocative initiatives. The declaration on Lebanon saluted the resistance in Lebanon and its great victory over the Israeli invasion of 2006.

U.S. harassment of delegates

It is hardly surprising that a meeting full of such revolutionary determination received no coverage or attention in the Western corporate media. Nor is it too unexpected that efforts to block attendance to the conference might come in many different forms.

Cynthia McKinney was kept from boarding a flight to the congress in what she termed a "misunderstanding" at the Atlanta airport. McKinney, this year's Green Party presidential candidate and a former six-term member of Congress, released a press statement containing the speech she had prepared for the conference. It commemorated the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and condemned the denial of the Right of Return to Palestinians as a violation of the Universal Declaration.

[Flounders also had great difficulty boarding a flight from New York to

attend the International Right of Return conference. Almost three hours of technical problems, sudden, inexplicable "visa problems," and three extra security checks held up her boarding until the final minute before the gates were to close.—WW]

A statement from the International Action Center, based in New York, expressed support for the fundamental and collective right of all Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and to self-determination as well as political, economic and civil equality. It also condemned the siege of Gaza.

The focus of the IAC statement was on U.S. support for Israel's crimes: "Coming from the U.S. it is important for us to say that U.S. imperialism is the greatest roadblock to the Palestinian Right to Return and the greatest impediment to any form of peace or justice in the entire region.

"Without the constant infusion of billions of dollars in arms and aid the Zionist state of Israel could not exist one day. U.S. aid averages more than \$15 million a day, every day for the last 60 years. Under both Republican and Democratic Party presidents Israel is always the largest recipient of U.S. aid in the world every year. ... Why? Because Israel is carrying out U.S. policy in the region. U.S. corporate power fully intends Israel to exist as a garrison state and a continuing source of instability in the region....

"Over the past six decades the struggle of the Palestinian people has inspired hundreds of millions of people worldwide because of its dynamism and revolutionary fervor."

Flounders, co-director of the International Action Center, was an invited guest at the Arab International Congress for the Right of Return. The congress resolutions and reports, as well as Cynthia McKinney's statement and the full IAC statement, will be available at iacenter.org.

Ramsey Clark receives U.N. Human Rights Award 2008

Based on a release from the International Action Center.

International Action Center founder Ramsey Clark, a former U.S. attorney general and internationally renowned human-rights defender, received the respected United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights on the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at U.N. Headquarters in New York on Dec. 10.

The president of the General Assembly, Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, who is one of the five members of the selection committee, announced the award, which is made every five years to five human rights defenders whose life's work has been outstanding.

At the U.N. press conference after accepting the award, Ramsey Clark emphasized the U.N.'s role in ensuring world peace, reminding journalists that, "The greatest threat to human rights is war."

The award is given to individuals and organizations in recognition of their out-

standing contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Previous recipients have included Nelson Mandela, Amnesty International, Jimmy Carter, Eleanor Roosevelt and the Rev. Dr. Martin L. King Jr.

Assembly President Miguel D'Escoto said, "As we mark the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we acknowledge the tireless work and invaluable contribution of these individuals and organizations that have fought to see the rights and freedoms embodied in this historic document become a reality for people in all corners of the world."

"These awardees constitute symbols of persistence, valour and tenacity in their resistance to public and private authorities that violate human rights. They constitute a moral force to put an end to systematic human rights violations."

The U.N. announcement described Ramsey Clark as "a veteran human rights defender and rule of law advocate, [who] played a key role in the civil rights and peace movements in the U.S., and

Ramsey Clark helps build protest against possible U.S./ Israeli strike on Iran. IAC's Joyce Chediak at right.

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

more recently has spoken out against abuses committed in the name of 'counter-terrorism.'"

The International Action Center, founded by Ramsey Clark in 1992, is known internationally for its major role in the anti-war movement in the U.S. and its actions in the forefront of extending solidarity to countries and peoples facing U.S. attack and threats.

The many activists and the large all-volunteer staff of the International Action Center, along with hundreds of people who have worked with him over many years, extend their enthusiastic congratulations to Ramsey Clark for his tireless and courageous efforts. This United



Nations Human Rights Award is well deserved.

We remain committed to solidarity with peoples and countries under U.S. attack. We are determined to continue developing ever-wider opposition to U.S. policies of endless war, expanding militarism, racism and growing poverty for millions. ¡Sí, se puede! □

¡Proletarios y oprimidos de todos los países, uníos!

Protestas de emergencia exigen:

Rescate de trabajadores/as, no del Bank of America

Por Monica Moorehead

Dic. 10—Hoy, en el sexto día de la ocupación por los/as trabajadores/as de la planta Republic Windows and Doors en Chicago, se dieron lugar en todo el país acciones de emergencia en apoyo a la toma, teniendo como objetivo las oficinas de las sucursales locales del Bank of America. Las manifestaciones de hoy son parte de la semana de solidaridad entre el 8 y 13 de diciembre con los/as trabajadores/as de la Republic y fueron organizadas con sólo uno ó dos días de aviso por activistas políticos y comunitarios/as para concientizar sobre la toma.

Una declaración de la organización Bail Out the People Movement (Movimiento Pro Rescate del Pueblo) publicada el 7 de diciembre dice en parte: Cerca de 250 empleados/as de la fábrica Republic Windows and Doors en Chicago comenzaron una ocupación de los predios el 5 de diciembre, el último día programado de operación de la planta. Los/as trabajadores/as, miembros/as del sindicato United Electrical Workers Unidos (Trabajadores Electricistas Unidos) Local 1110, no recibieron el mandato de 60 días exigido por ley para el cierre de la planta; además la gerencia y propietarios no se presentaron a la reunión con los/as trabajadores/as programada para el 5 de diciembre.

“Los/as trabajadores/as decidieron ocupar la planta. Han prometido permanecer en la planta hasta que reciban por lo menos 60 días de pago. Los propietarios dicen que tuvieron que cerrar porque el Bank of America rehusó extender su crédito. El Bank of America ha recibido cientos de miles de millones de dólares en rescate durante los últimos tres meses por parte del gobierno federal.

Estos/as trabajadores/as, que en su gran mayoría son inmigrantes latinos/as, han tomado un paso muy valiente arriesgándose en su lucha por el derecho a alimentar a sus familias y ser tratados/as con respeto y dignidad como cualquier ser humano. En cierto modo, están luchando por los derechos de todos/as los/as trabajadores/as que están bajo ataque, ya sean trabajadores/as de restaurantes, empleados/as públicos/as o de la industria automotriz que luchan por mantener sus trabajos y sus sindicatos.

“Debemos apoyarles”

En Baltimore cerca de 30 personas salieron en la lluvia para protestar en contra del Bank of America. Una delegación intentó entregar una carta de protesta al gerente del banco, quien rehusó recibir

la carta. La delegación se comprometió a tener otra protesta frente al banco en un futuro cercano.

Otra manifestación militante en apoyo a los/as trabajadores/as de la UE en Chicago se dio en Buffalo, N.Y. frente a las oficinas del Bank of America. Fue bien recibida en una ciudad que fue golpeada ese mismo día con otra ola de despidos y amenazas para los/as trabajadores/as de la industria automotriz. Representantes del Centro de Acción Internacional, un grupo de jóvenes anarquistas llamado WNY Peace Center y la organización Citizen Action participaron en la protesta.

Dos manifestaciones en Chicago

Bajo un intenso frío en Chicago, mil manifestantes de varias nacionalidades rodearon una sucursal del Bank of America en la parte céntrica de la ciudad. Entre los sindicatos representados estaban las locales de la UE de electricistas y la SEIU de trabajadores/as del servicio civil estatal. Dos manifestaciones de apoyo tuvieron lugar. Activistas viajaron desde Cleveland, Detroit, Nueva York, Baltimore y otros lugares para demandar justicia para los/as trabajadores/as de la Republic.

En Detroit, 75 manifestantes tuvieron una demostración militante frente a la oficina central del Bank of America en Detroit situada en el edificio Guardian en el mismo centro del distrito financiero. Organizada por la Coalición ¡Moratoria Ya! Para Poner un Alto a las Ejecuciones Hipotecarias y Desalojos, la acción recibió cobertura mediática en FOX2, USA Today, Detroit Free Press, Peoples Tribune y otros.

Además de apoyar a los/as trabajadores/as de la Republic, también hubo apoyo para Lorene Parker quien está perdiendo su casa en Detroit por una ejecución hipotecaria del Bank of America. La Sra. Parker se dirigió a los/as manifestantes y a los medios de comunicación.

Los/as manifestantes entraron al vestíbulo del edificio ocupándolo por 10 minutos aproximadamente gritando consignas en contra de las ejecuciones hipotecarias y a favor de una moratoria. No había ningún guardia a la vista. Los/as recepcionistas amenazaron con llamar a la policía. La respuesta de los/as manifestantes fue: “Llámenle, nosotros/as pagamos los salarios suyos, no el banco”.

En el centro de Los Angeles, la sucursal del Bank of America cerca de la Plaza Pershing, cerró sus puertas antes de su hora normal de cierre para evitar la posibilidad de que los/as manifestantes entraran e interrumpieran el negocio. Los/as manifestantes gritaban, “Bank of America,

10 de diciembre
en Nueva York.

MO FOTO:
MONICA MOOREHEAD

qué vergüenza. Salven la fábrica para los/as trabajadores/as de Chicago”. “Rescaten al pueblo, no a los bancos”, y “los bancos fueron rescatados, los/as trabajadores/as fueron vendidos/as, justicia, justicia para los/as trabajadores/as del sindicato UE”. Entre los/as activistas estaban miembros/as de Bayan USA, del sindicato SEIU Local 721, de la Coalición Sindicatos y Comunidad y del Centro de Acción Internacional.

“Los/as trabajadores/as de Chicago encabezan la lucha, el trabajo es un derecho”, fue uno de las muchas consignas que se escuchaban en la línea de piquete frente a una sucursal del Bank of America en Nueva York al otro lado de la calle de la alcaldía. La acción fue co-auspiciada por el Movimiento Pro Rescate del Pueblo y la Coalición 1º de Mayo por Derechos de los/as Inmigrantes y Trabajadores/as. Cuando la policía de Nueva York intentó decirle a los manifestantes que no podían piquetear frente al banco, los/as activistas respondieron que la acera es propiedad pública y tenían el derecho a quedarse. La policía entonces tuvo que echarse atrás y el piquete continuó.

Workers World/Mundo Obrero habló con una partidaria veterana de la UE, Lillian Liftlander — su apellido era Rosenberg en los años 40 cuando trabajaba como investigadora para el sindicato en la oficina nacional. “Vine para participar hoy porque es la UE. Me gusta mucho la consigna, “Bank of America fue rescatado; nosotros/as fuimos vendidos/as.” Esta residente de Manhattan recibe todavía las noticias de la UE y trata de participar cuando puede.

“Hace unos años la UE participó en una manifestación en Washington, D.C.,” dijo ella, “y todos/as los/as trabajadores/as llevaban camisetas que tenían impreso en la espalda: ‘Los/as miembros/as dirigen este sindicato.’ Eso es lo mejor de la UE.” Liftlander dio saludos de un compañero de trabajo que tiene 98 años y no tenía fuerzas para salir a participar en la línea de piquete este día lluvioso.

En Filadelfia, bajo una lluvia una manifestación tuvo lugar en frente del Bank of



America en el centro de la ciudad. Diez minutos antes de que comenzara la línea de piquete, ya había gente allí con sus propios letreros y banderas escritas a mano. Veinte personas o más estuvieron en partes de la manifestación y recibieron una reacción muy positiva de los/as transeúntes. También había un letrero que leía “toque la bocina contra el rescate — solidaridad con los/as trabajadores/as de Chicago” y despertó mucho entusiasmo en la calle.

En Raleigh, NC muchos/as trabajadores/as del sector público, miembros/as de la UE local 150 y simpatizantes comunitarios/as se reunieron frente a la legislatura gritando “Rescaten a los/as trabajadores/as, no a los bancos” y luego marcharon al edificio financiero del Bank of America para entregar un mensaje de solidaridad a sus hermanos y hermanas en Chicago de la fábrica de Republic Windows and Doors.

En San Francisco, ANSWER, San Francisco Labor Council, la AFL-CIO y el Labor Council for Latin American Advancement-Capítulo de San Francisco co-auspiciaron una manifestación frente a las oficinas del Bank of America en solidaridad con los/as trabajadores/as de Republic en Chicago. Cuatro personas fueron detenidas en la protesta. Simpatizantes del prisionero político Mumia Abu-Jamal quien está bajo pena de muerte, también se unieron a la manifestación. Miembros/as del sindicato ILWU (estibadores) local 10 también asistieron, incluyendo a Clarence Thomas.

Colaboraron en este resumen: Abayomi Azikiwe, Sharon Black, John Catalinotto, Steven Ceci, Ellie Dorritie, Jerry Goldberg, Larry Hales, Kris Hamel, Cheryl LaBash, Joan Marquardt, Betsy Piette y Dante Strobino.

Libertad para los cincos de cubano



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