

WORKERS WORLD

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California budget crisis Rich guy proposes cuts for workers, poor

By John Parker
Los Angeles

The unfolding capitalist economic crisis is now hitting state budgets like an avalanche. The state of California, which alone boasts the world's eighth-biggest economy, is a case in point. Despite its tremendous productive capacity in agriculture, mineral extraction, manufacturing, fisheries, tourism and more, and its abundant pool of skilled workers, politicians here are crying poverty.

On Jan. 15, in his State of the State address, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger declared that California faced "insolvency within weeks." He is proposing Draconian cuts in the state's budget that would hobble education; leave many elderly, blind and disabled people stranded; and cut off welfare to families if the parents fail to find work.

Union and community demonstrations in Los Angeles, San Diego and the state capital of Sacramento challenged the Republican governor's speech. The day before, a State of the People assembly had been held in Sacramento.

Making the poor pay

While the governor claims he's for expanding the state's health-care system to cover almost all uninsured residents, he is proposing to cut as much as \$1 billion from Medi-Cal, California's medical-service program for the poor, elderly and disabled.

Schwarzenegger, who accuses his political rivals of wanting to "spread the

wealth," has plenty of it himself. His personal fortune was estimated at \$800 million in 2006, according to San Francisco's ABC-TV affiliate. That's not counting the wealth of his spouse, Maria Shriver, who is also a multimillionaire and a member of the super-rich Kennedy family.

The last time California had a budget crisis, in 1991, it imposed an income tax on the wealthiest residents that lasted five years. Schwarzenegger opposes raising taxes on rich Californians like himself. Instead, he has proposed a 1.5 point increase in the state sales tax—a regressive move that puts the burden almost entirely on the workers and the middle class. Californians already pay a sales tax ranging from 7.25 percent to 9.25 percent, depending on the community. (www.tax-foundation.org)

The governor also proposes cutting K-12 education funding by \$2.5 billion, and funding for the University of California and California State University systems by \$132 million.

All these cuts also represent a huge attack on public workers and their unions.

Politicians maneuver to escape blame

Last summer Schwarzenegger attempted to unilaterally slash state workers' pay to minimum wage. This anti-worker, anti-union measure was blocked by California Controller John Chiang, an elected Democrat. Chiang has also supported a union legal action to block the governor's attempt to force state workers to take two

unpaid days off per month and to close some state agencies for two days each month.

Chiang, however, is not opposed to state workers' concessions or budget cuts, just the way they are implemented. He says he prefers that the state unions negotiate concessions in the same manner as the auto workers.

On Jan. 16, Chiang said that, unless the governor and state legislature agreed on a new budget, he would be forced on Feb. 1 to cut off "assistance for more than a million aged, blind and disabled Californians that goes to pay their rent, utilities or put food on their tables," among other payments. (www.sco.ca.gov)

The social service payments to be withheld total \$424 million. But California will be paying \$826 million in a "legally protected" payment to the banks—debt service. That's almost twice the cost of the social service payments. How many of these financial institutions profited from the feeding frenzy over mortgages and then received federal bailout dollars when the bubble burst?

Cutting off checks

According to the California Disability Community Action Network, recipients of Supplemental Security Income/State Supplemental Payment will receive their full checks in February and March. But programs not assured are Calworks, including Temporary Assistance for Basic Needs; Student Aid Cal-Grants; county administrative costs for Medi-Cal; and

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JOBS DISASTER

Pace of layoffs quickens 5

Company name	2009 date of announcement	Number of jobs cut	Percent of work force
Corning	1/27	3,500	13%
Cooper Industries	1/27	2,200	7%
Clariant	1/27	1,000	5%
Texas Instruments	1/26	3,400	12%
Caterpillar	1/26	20,000	18%
Home Depot	1/26	7,000	2%
Sprint Nextel	1/26	8,000	13%
Pfizer	1/26	8,300 ***	10%
ING	1/26	7,000	5%
Philips Electronics	1/26	6,000	5%
Corus	1/26	3,500	10%
Harley-Davidson	1/23	1,100	11%
Microsoft	1/22	5,000	5%
Huntsman	1/22	1,175	9%
Intel	1/21	6,000	7%
UAL	1/21	1,000	2%
Eaton	1/20	5,200	6%
Bose	1/20	1,000	10%
Rohm & Haas	1/20	900	5.7%
Clear Channel	1/20	1,850	9%
ConocoPhillips	1/16	1,300	4%
Circuit City	1/16	34,000	100%*
Pfizer	1/16	3,200 **	3%
AMD	1/16	1,100	9%
Hertz Global Hldgs.	1/16	4,000	13%
Wellpoint	1/16	1,500	3.6%
Saks	1/15	1,100	9%
MeadWestvaco	1/15	2,000	10%
Autodesk	1/15	750	10%
Motorola	1/14	4,000	6%
Barclays	1/14	2,100	1.3%
Neiman Marcus	1/13	375	3%
Cummins	1/13	800	2%
Seagate Tech.	1/12	800	10%
Cessna	1/12	2,000	N/A
Boeing	1/09	4,500	7%
(of commercial-airplane staff)			
Walgreen	1/08	1,000	9%
Lenovo Group	1/08	2,500	11%
EMC	1/07	2,400	7%
Logitech Int'l	1/06	500	5%
Alcoa	1/06	15,000	14.5%
Cigna	1/05	1,100	4%

* Company in liquidation

** Includes announcements of 2,400 cuts on Jan. 16 and 800 layoffs on Jan. 13.

*** Number of employees affected by plant closures, not all will lose jobs

Source: Wall Street Journal



WW PHOTO: BOB McCUBBIN

LEONARD PELTIER

Under renewed attack 3

SUPPORT WAR RESISTERS

Canada deports GIs 8

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Struggle still needed 2

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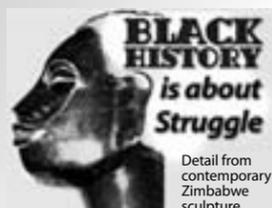
MUMIA ABU-JAMAL on



Cover of the 'Huey P. Newton Reader' Available at Leftbooks.com

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Martin Luther King 10



Detail from contemporary Zimbabwe sculpture

Women urged to 'organize, organize, organize' as

Obama strikes down global gag rule

By Kris Hamel

President Barack Obama on Jan. 23 rescinded what is known as "the global gag rule." This policy, instituted by former President George W. Bush on his first day in office in 2001, has had severely detrimental effects on millions of women worldwide.

The rule banned U.S. aid funds from going to international family planning groups that perform or provide counseling about abortions. It also prohibited funding for groups that lobby to legalize abortion or provide information about abortion. In order to receive U.S. funds, health providers were "gagged" from even speaking the word "abortion," preventing them from offering women a full range of reproductive health and family planning services.

The Planned Parenthood Action Fund stated: "Clinics have closed, contraceptive supplies have dwindled, and women were left without basic and critical health care services. As a result, there were more unwanted pregnancies and more unsafe abortions. Today, one woman dies every minute of every day due to pregnancy-related causes, including unsafe abortion, and over 200 million women in developing countries who wish to delay or end childbearing lack access to modern contraceptives." (ppaction.org)

Gill Greer of the International Planned Parenthood Federation in London declared, "For eight long years, the global gag rule has been used by the Bush administration to play politics with the lives of poor women across the world." (Washington Post, Jan. 24)

The IPPF estimates it lost about \$100 million in U.S. funding in the past eight years, which could have prevented 36 million pregnancies and 15 million abortions. "This is the true legacy of the global gag rule," said Greer. (ippf.org, Jan. 23)

Struggle must move forward

Women's rights and reproductive rights organizations were among those congratulating Obama on his historic inauguration. Despite the hopes for a new era for reproductive health and rights that the new administration seems to herald, many acknowledge the difficult challenges ahead.

"We must continue to organize, organize, organize ... and in our organizing, we must be sure to keep women's health clinics safe and open," exhorted the Feminist Majority Foundation in a Jan. 22 message marking the 36th anniversary of Roe v. Wade. (E-mail to FMF listserv) Noting that "anti-[choice] extremists have called for 'a return to the streets' in the wake of their massive election year losses," the FMF reports that in Lincoln, Neb., on Jan. 16: "A suspicious fire caused extensive smoke damage at one of the only abortion clinics in the state. The clinic's physician and his family have long

been the target of extremist threats and the victims of a previous arson." Women's health clinics in Allentown, Pa.; Birmingham, Ala.; and Charlotte, N.C., are also facing increased activity by anti-choice forces.

RH Reality Check reports: "On President Obama's second day in office, and on the 36th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, an SUV has smashed into the front entrance of a Planned Parenthood in St. Paul, Minnesota, the only Planned Parenthood clinic in the state that offers abortions. The collision occurred at 7:30 a.m., when only one clinic staffer was indoors. That staffer was unhurt." (rhrealitycheck.org, Jan. 22)

National Organization for Women president Kim Gandy, in a message entitled "We Must Face Reality," stated, "Until we have a more positive [Supreme] Court, or a Congress that will pass the Freedom of Choice Act—both of which may take years—those of us who believe in women's rights must mount campaigns in every state where the radical religious and political right wingers have spread their influence in state government." (E-mail to NOW listserv, Jan. 22)

Although both houses of Congress now have Democratic majorities, 57 percent of U.S. representatives and 60 percent of senators do not support women's reproductive rights. (nara.org)

It is expected that Obama will act swiftly to repeal the new Department of Health and Human Services regulation allowing health care providers to refuse women care based on the providers' personal beliefs about abortion and contraception.

Center for Reproductive Rights President Nancy Northup said the HSS regulation, imposed by Bush as one of his last acts in office, "drastically interfere[s] with the ability of more than 17 million women to get quality health services—including contraception, counseling and information necessary to make decisions about their own reproductive health. In particular it compromises the health of women who rely on public programs." (reproductiverights.org, Jan. 20)

Women's rights and reproductive rights leaders and organizations are also calling on Obama to strike the Hyde Amendment, which denies abortion access to women enrolled in Medicaid, and other funding restrictions from his first federal budget. Northup notes: "These policies have put millions of low-income women in dangerous situations, forcing some to continue with a pregnancy even when it jeopardizes their health. In fact, 20-35 percent of Medicaid-eligible women who would choose abortion don't when public funds are not available."

Other measures being fought for include the nomination of federal judges committed to upholding Roe v. Wade and established constitutional rights for women; restoration of funding to the United Nations Population Fund, which works on reproductive rights and family planning issues; striking funding for abstinence-only programs in proposed budgets for the Maternal and Child Health Services Title V Block Grant and Community-Based Abstinence-Education programs; and promotion of reproductive health care policies guided by science instead of right-wing ideology. □

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Leonard Peltier attacked in prison

By Caleb T. Maupin

On Jan. 13, when Leonard Peltier arrived at Canaan Federal Prison in Pennsylvania after being transferred from another facility in the state, he was brutally assaulted by a group of inmates. A letter from Peltier's sister, Betty Peltier-Solano, says he suffered numerous head blows and "blood was everywhere." She also said one of his fingers has been broken. He has been put in solitary confinement.

Peltier's sister blames the FBI for this attack, as they have been responsible for so many attacks against him, both political and physical.

Since 1975 Peltier, a leader of the American Indian Movement who courageously battled the FBI in defense of his people and their sovereignty, has been in federal prison for a crime it is widely believed he did not commit.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has worked long and hard to ensure that Peltier remains behind bars. The FBI openly

admits that it paid a woman who testified against him in 2004 the sum of \$42,000 "in compensation." When rumors circulated that President Bill Clinton was considering a pardon for Peltier, the FBI staged a demonstration in front of the White House calling for his continued imprisonment. In 1978, fellow political prisoner Standing Deer came forward with the news that the FBI had approached him about assassinating Peltier.

Peltier pointed out, "When we exposed the Government misconduct, the Government stopped arguing that I 'shot the agents,' and began arguing that my conviction should be upheld on aiding and abetting grounds, even though the only two people I could have aided and abetted, Robert Robideau and Dino Butler, were acquitted on self-defense grounds." (www.counterpunch.org, Jan. 29, 2007)

Call and request Leonard Peltier be treated with dignity and respect and let



prison officials know that the public will hold them accountable for his safety and well-being. Peltier's register (prison ID) number is 89637-132.

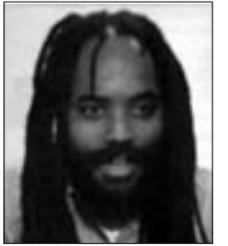
Contact: Warden Ronnie R. Holt, Warden, USP-Canaan, 3057 Easton Turnpike, Waymart, PA 18472; phone: 570-488-8000; fax: 570-488-8130; e-mail: caa/execassistant@bop.gov. D. Scott Dodrill, Director, Northeast Regional Office, Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2nd and Chestnut streets, 7th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19106; phone: 215-521-7301; e-mail: nero/execassistant@bop.gov. Harley G. Lappin, Director, Bureau of Prisons, U.S. Department of Justice, 320 First Street NW, Rm. 654, Washington, DC 20534; phone: 202-307-3250; fax: 202-514-6878.

Also ask President Obama to investigate this incident: The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20500; comments: 202-456-1111; fax: 202-456-2461; e-mail: www.whitehouse.gov/contact. □

From Mumia Abu-Jamal on death row

Huey A memory

(1942-1989)



Taken from a Jan. 7 audio column. Go to www.prisonradio.org to hear Mumia's recordings.

Huey P. Newton's name, and more importantly, his history of resistance and struggle, are little more than a mystery for many younger people in their 20s.

The name and works of a third-rate rapper are more familiar to the average Black youth, and that's hardly surprising given the failure of the public school system.

For the public school system is invested in ignorance, and Huey P. Newton was a rebel and more, a Black revolutionary.

Inspired by the civil rights movement and the violent attacks on Blacks trying to vote, Huey felt a bolder, more radical stance was needed.

At the age of 24, he co-founded the Black Panther Party, and the group expanded by leaps and bounds. Begun in October 1966, in three years it had grown to over 40 chapters and branches across the country, with an international section in Algiers, North Africa.

Dedicated to the principles of Black self-defense and Black freedom, the Party became the foremost radical group of the era, with a wealth of supporters and enemies.

Chief among enemies was the U.S. government, which in the words of the FBI's head, J. Edgar Hoover, considered it "the greatest threat to national security."

For many thousands of Black youth, the rebelliousness of the Party spoke to their spirits more truly than did the peaceful resistance represented by Dr. Martin Luther King.

Huey was not a pacifist, and neither were millions of Black people.

But Huey, for all his brilliance, flair and resolve, was only human, and as the saying goes, "To err is human." Under attack from without and within, the Party made missteps that contributed to its demise by the early 1980s.

But it is the best of Huey P. Newton that survives: the bold soldier, the minister of defense, the thinker and writer who gave his best to the Black Freedom movement, who inspired millions of others to stand. □

McGee also fought to broaden affirmative action in contract bidding and city hiring policies, opposed massive tax breaks for corporations in the city, supported jobs, cultural and education programs for youth, fought police harassment, and supported political prisoners including Mumia Abu-Jamal.

As our visit wound up, McGee asked Workers World to thank his supporters, specifically the Black community in Milwaukee, and said the fight is not over for him as he is appealing his federal case and preparing for his state court appearance.

"I maintain my innocence. It was a systematic attack on me. The injustice and wickedness of the government must be fought," said McGee.

Gesturing to his cellblock, McGee said, "So many innocent people are in jail. They can't afford lawyers." He called on poor and working people to "challenge the system and become involved in some causes."

Write to: Michael McGee Jr., Waukesha County Jail, P.O. Box 0217, Waukesha, WI 53187-0217.

BUFFALO RALLY DEMANDS

'Free Palestine! Free Peltier!'

A Jan. 22 protest at the Federal Building in Buffalo, N.Y., demanded an end to U.S. support for Israel's war machine, an end to the blockade of Gaza and an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine. There were chants of "Free, free Palestine" and signs calling for U.S. and Israeli accountability for atrocities and war crimes in Gaza. The demonstration was called by the Peace, Justice and Anti-War Coalition.

The Buffalo/WNY International Action Center, a member group of the PJAW Coalition, also brought demands to secure the safety of American Indian Movement leader Leonard Peltier, who has been unjustly imprisoned for more than 30 years. Peltier was severely beaten upon his recent transfer to Canaan Federal Penitentiary in Waymart, Pa. (see accompanying article).

—Report and photo by Ellie Dorritie



Michael McGee: 'government injustice must be fought'



Michael McGee

Editor's note: On Dec. 28, Workers World contributing editor Bryan G. Pfeifer visited former Milwaukee Alderman Michael McGee Jr. at the Waukesha County Jail in Waukesha, Wis., a suburb 20 miles west of Milwaukee. McGee, an African American, was convicted in October 2008 of bribery, extortion and seven other counts by a jury with no African Americans. He was sentenced to six-and-a-half years in federal prison.

McGee will be in the Waukesha jail until he is sentenced Feb. 13 on state felony charges of election official fraud and a misdemeanor charge of violating court orders, charges that could bring a maximum of four-and-a-half years in prison and \$15,000 in fines.

By Bryan G. Pfeifer

Michael McGee has been in jail since May 31, 2007, when he was arrested at home in front of his spouse, three children and neighbors. He was initially charged with a host of federal and then state charges and his original bail was set at \$250,000. After mass protests in the Black community, it was reduced to \$50,000. A judge refused to release McGee, however, stating the FBI had tapped his jail phone and recorded alleged threats against informants. McGee continues to be subject to FBI and other state harassment.

McGee spent summer 2007 in "the hole" in Milwaukee County jail. He was then transferred to Dodge County jail in Juneau, an all-white rural area, for a month. Then he was moved to the

Waukesha County jail and placed in "the hole" for the first seven months, ostensibly for "his protection," according to the jail administration.

Despite strong support from his defense committee and community members who held demonstrations, packed the courtroom, wrote letters to judges and more, the horrendous conditions and logistical nightmares imposed on McGee and his attorneys have made it extremely difficult to wage an effective defense against the viciously racist state and federal prosecutors.

The corporate media have consistently described McGee in a racist manner. With a few notable exceptions, white progressive individuals and organizations have been virtually silent during McGee's frame-up and legal lynching, except to denounce him.

McGee told Workers World that during the federal trial he was entrapped and that prosecution witnesses contradicted themselves. The prosecution was allowed to enter fabricated evidence and attempted to pit Arab and Indian witnesses against African-American witnesses. He said there were also numerous double standards in terms of white elected officials being charged with far worse crimes yet being treated by the state and feds far less severely, such as requiring minimal or no bail.

Asked why he thinks he was targeted by state and federal officials, McGee described his numerous progressive contributions to the city of Milwaukee before, during and after being an alderman. He pointed to specific actions he took as an alderman that particularly angered the rich, who are the bosses of the political servants that prosecuted him.

During his time in elected office, McGee engaged in many progressive actions including fighting police brutality, protesting the near-murder of Frank Jude Jr. by the Milwaukee police, refusing to "play ball" with developers who are rapidly gentrifying downtown Milwaukee and poor and working people's neighborhoods, and writing to Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez to inquire about heating oil assistance for poor Milwaukee residents.

'The right level of concessions'

Auto layoffs continue as new round of givebacks begins

By Martha Grevatt

On Dec. 22 Chrysler LLC took the unprecedented step of shutting down every plant in the corporation for four to six weeks to reduce inventory. As production resumes, however, many workers are hopeful about the new deal that gives Italian car maker Fiat a 35 percent ownership in exchange for access to small car technology. The perception is that Chrysler will use the existing Fiat platform to build fuel-efficient subcompact and mini cars in the United States.

With the threat of bankruptcy hanging over their heads every day, the workers are understandably positive about the arrangement with Fiat. Many would be willing to make additional concessions to facilitate a deal that would seemingly protect or even expand jobs at Chrysler.

This fear factor plays into the hands of Fiat CEO Sergio Marchionne, who has stated that "if the right level of concessions are made, we can find a way to make this work." (Detroit News, Jan. 22) Fiat's push for givebacks from the United Auto Workers follows the trend set by the Treasury Department. Government loans to Chrysler and General Motors are contingent on the union granting previously unthinkable concessions.

On Jan. 23, workers on indefinite or permanent layoff learned it was the last day of the "controversial" jobs bank. The jobs bank allowed workers to collect a paycheck even after their plant jobs were eliminated by technology or outsourcing.

Some worked for charities and received 40 hours' pay, while others not placed in a "nontraditional" job were paid 85 percent of that.

Hundreds of workers are now on "enhanced layoff" with no advance notice. They receive Supplemental Unemployment Benefits on top of state unemployment insurance. How long they will collect SUB remains to be seen, as the loan terms call for SUB to be eliminated.

Another big question affects not only the workers who were in the jobs bank but thousands who were supposed to be placed in the bank after a maximum 48 weeks of layoff. What happens now after the 48 weeks? UAW officials have yet to answer that question.

Are workers worrying needlessly? Should they assume the crisis is only temporary and will soon be alleviated when they start cranking out the minis? Chrysler will have the new small cars in the showrooms within two years. The catch, however, is that "details such as which Fiat model, how it would be badged or where it would be built have not been determined." (Detroit News, Jan. 22)

The Fiat-Chrysler partnership could prove detrimental to workers on both sides of the Atlantic in the long run. Marchionne's expressed strategy—and he is articulating the long-range perspective of every auto boss in Europe, Asia, and North America—is to exploit the present downturn to foster a permanent restructuring of the industry. "Viability" is to be achieved by paying less and less money to

fewer and fewer workers.

"The Chrysler arrangement is a first step in this direction," Marchionne said. "By far, it's not the last." (Detroit News, Jan. 22)

Meanwhile, GM has announced another round of layoffs. Another whole shift will be cut at the Lordstown, Ohio, assembly plant, which went from three shifts to two in 2008. Talks are in progress for the jobs bank to end at GM, with the expectation that Ford will also expect the UAW to follow the pattern.

The corporate media routinely characterize the jobs bank as "controversial." During the bailout hearings the southern Republican senators whined repeatedly about paying workers—laid off through no fault of their own—not to work.

But isn't that what profit is all about? Consider the billions of dollars in profits the automakers made before the current downturn. If labor costs are roughly 10 percent of a vehicle cost, and a sport utility vehicle—popular before the recent spike in gasoline prices—was being sold for \$30,000, the cost of labor came to around \$3,000. Profits on those vehicles, however, averaged close to \$10,000. So weren't the profiteers being paid not to work? Worse, they were paid for work done by someone else.

Consider also the example of interest. How much labor on the part of a lender is involved in closing a mortgage? Maybe 40 hours or less. Yet on a 30-year mortgage a bank might collect as much as three times the value of a home in mortgage payments. Aren't finance capitalists paid for not working, as they exploit the fact that

working-class home buyers aren't paid enough for their labor power to afford to pay cash for a modest home?

UAW needs to get off the concession train

It is time for the UAW to recognize the obvious: Concessions do not save jobs. No matter how big, givebacks are no guarantee against bankruptcy in the future.

Delphi UAW workers have already learned this painful lesson. After they granted major concessions the company declared bankruptcy, closed most plants, and slashed wages and benefits even further. Delphi is still in bankruptcy and may never emerge.

Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee is using the Fiat-Chrysler agreement to argue that Chrysler is now a foreign company and must pay back the loan immediately.

It would be worthwhile for auto workers to study Italian labor history. In the 1920s workers at Fiat and Alfa Romeo (now owned by Fiat) took over the plants. They showed they could build cars without bosses, and raised the demand for workers' control.

The UAW rank and file can provide ample proof of managerial ineptitude, and can easily demonstrate its capacity to run a "viable" company. It's time the union leadership advance the slogan of workers' control. Let the government forget about bailing out the bosses—give the money to the workers with no strings attached.

Bosses: What are they good for? Absolutely nothing. □

'Make the banks and corporations pay!'

Boston bus drivers attack wage freeze and layoff demands

By Steve Gillis
Boston

In his "State of the City" address on Jan. 13, Boston Mayor Thomas Menino declared that solving the city's economic crisis, including a projected \$140 million budget shortfall for fiscal year 2010, requires that municipal workers accept a wage freeze to save 900 service workers from termination. He warned of inevitable layoffs and massive cuts to vital services, even if the city's 17,000 union workers were to agree to hand their meager raises back to city coffers.

The city chief executive's threat was aimed at a much broader target than the highest paid middle managers at city hall. Its target stretched beyond the 3,000 teachers, the city's biggest bargaining unit; firefighters and custodians, who've been without a contract for years; clerical and health workers; parks, transportation, streets and waste workers; librarians and community center staffers; and school bus monitors who, paid a flat rate for each bus trip, make less than the legal minimum wage. All of these have taken concessions in recent years as local columnists rail against their "no longer affordable" benefits.

Cheered on by the Boston Municipal Research Bureau, mouthpiece of Boston's businesses, Menino also directed his frigid message at some of the most militant representatives of private-sector workers in the city.

Minutes after what the Boston Globe

described as scattered applause from the mayor's "grim faced supporters," School Superintendent Caron Johnson faxed the mayor's threat to Frantz Mendes, president of the 800-strong Boston School Bus Drivers' union, United Steel Workers Local 8751.

Four months earlier the drivers had secured a three-year contract that wrested significant gains from British-owned First Student, Inc., the biggest private-sector school and interstate bus company in the United States. Months of picketing, rallies, community organizing and strike preparation had enabled the local to turn back the national concessionary tide, winning long-term disability benefits; enhanced vision, retirement, wage and bonus agreements; groundbreaking language to curtail global positioning system abuse; as well as no concessions, no reduction in forces and 10 new jobs for the union's largely Haitian, Cape Verdean and African-American family.

The mayor's attack on Local 8751—whose members provide the means for safe, quality, desegregated education, fulfilling a 1974 federal court victory of the city's Black and Latin@ communities—



USW Local 8751 picket captains' meeting, June 30, 2008.

WW PHOTO: FRANK NEISSER

provides a welcome smokescreen for First Student, to which he had handed a \$6 million dollar signing bonus in 2008 based on the corporation's monopoly domination of the market.

Local 8751's leadership immediately kicked into battle mode, reaching out to the union's political allies like City Councilor Chuck Turner, the Greater Boston Labor Council and the Steel Workers national union. The local called for reconstituting the powerful city-wide coalition that took on the city and the Democratic National Convention to win contracts for nearly all 41 city unions and the school bus drivers in 2004.

On Jan. 15, Local 8751 President Frantz Mendes and stewards from all four work yards joined 41 other unions in Mayor Menino's Eagle Room, where his finance director and labor relations head presented a flim-flam of slides and pie charts lay-

ing out their position that the workers and community services must be cut to save the city's treasury. The mayor promised fewer layoffs to those who cooperate and the brunt of terminations to those who didn't.

Local 8751 representatives took the floor to charge Menino with illegal interference in private collective bargaining, an unfair labor practice defined by the Wagner Act of 1935. They elicited the only ovation of the meeting, demanding a freeze on debt payments to the banks—by far the lion's share of the budget shortfall. They offered the clear alternative of going after the real estate developers, as well as the universities and hospitals—which report millions of dollars in profits, collectively own more than half of the city's land and devour millions in city services, but pay little to nothing in taxes as "nonprofit organizations."

Continued on the next page

Crisis of workers deepens

Fightback measures are called for

By Fred Goldstein

By the time the stock market closed on Jan. 26, 11 large U.S. corporations had announced a total of 60,000 new layoffs in just that one day.

Caterpillar, the largest manufacturer of construction and mining equipment in the world, announced 20,000 layoffs, or 18 percent of its global work force.

Home Depot, the largest home equipment dealer in the U.S., announced 7,000 layoffs and the closing of 34 of its high-end EXPO Design Centers.

Sprint Nextel will lay off 8,000, or 13 percent of its workforce.

The giant drug company Pfizer is projecting 8,300 layoffs after its \$68-billion purchase of another huge pharmaceutical, Wyeth.

Toward the end of the day Texas Instruments announced another 3,400 layoffs, 12 percent of its workforce, and there was a belated announcement that IBM had sent out pink slips to another 2,800 workers.

Caterpillar, which had sales of \$12.92 billion last quarter and is a bellwether for the economy because of its global reach and its crucial role in construction worldwide, predicted that 2009 would be its worst year since the end of World War II.

Altogether, large U.S. companies publicly announced more than 170,000 layoffs (see accompanying chart) in the first four weeks of this year, but hundreds of thousands more are expected to be added when the government releases its monthly statistics early in February.

As workers lose their incomes, the

They called on those assembled to meet to plan a fight back in the spirit of the longtime labor movement slogan, "An injury to one is an injury to all!"

When the mayor abruptly closed the meeting, Local 8751 stewards distributed a notice addressed to the mayor, First Student, the press, and all unionists wanting to join in a fight back. Entitled "Wage freeze & layoffs—we say 'No way!' Make the bankers and corporations pay!" the statement, available at www.boston-schoolbusunion.org, reads in part:

"Tuesday night's 'State of the City' speech by Mayor Menino was a dream come true for ... the bankers and corporate representatives who came ... to cheer their mayor on. Not once did Menino mention the mortgage swindlers, the debt predators, the stocks, bonds and hedge fund schemers, the billion dollar golden parachutes and tax freeloaders whose unbridled profiteering has caused the current unprecedented economic crisis.

"Instead, the mayor has outrageously called on union leaders to help him bust their own members' hard-earned labor agreements, whose meager wages and disappearing benefits today cause Boston's working women and men to choose between trying to stop criminal foreclosures and evictions, staving off the brutal cold, paying for skyrocketing health insurance, or properly feeding their families."

The statement concluded: "On the 80th anniversary of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birth, it is time to rekindle the flame of the movement for economic justice—uniting labor and the communities in the fight to fund his historic dream! The entire labor movement and all who support justice must stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in city unions."

Gillis is vice-president of USW Local 8751.

defaulting on mortgage payments, credit cards, auto loans and student loans keeps rising. As the defaults rise, the bad debts on the books of the banks go up. The deepening crisis of the workers aggravates the financial crisis of the bankers.

Gov't rushes to save banks

The capitalist government in Washington has not been trying to solve the banks' problem of insolvency by rushing to the aid of the millions of workers who are defaulting on their debts and losing their homes and jobs. Instead, it has put limited aid to the workers on the slow track while it rushes to find ways to bolster the banks.

Citigroup and Bank of America had merely to apply to the government, filling out a perfunctory request form, and they immediately received \$45 billion each in installments, with guarantees of \$300 billion and \$100 billion, respectively, to cover bad debts. Other banks have received similar handouts, adding up to hundreds of billions of dollars in direct infusions of capital and in bad debt guarantees.

As fast as the Obama administration draws up plans for its stimulus package, the deterioration of the economic situation outpaces these modest plans to deal with it.

So far \$700 billion has been officially appropriated for the financial crisis. But, according to an article in the Washington Post of Jan. 24, "with the economy deteriorating rapidly, financial companies are incurring trillions of dollars in losses on failing mortgage loans and other assets, forcing the federal government to consider substantially expanding its response to the crisis. ... Leading economists and lawmakers calculate that hundreds of billions more could be required." There is talk of raising the official bank bailout fund to \$1 trillion—in cash.

As for the foreclosure crisis, the administration has officially pledged \$50 billion to help homeowners avoid foreclosures. But Goldman Sachs estimates there is more than \$1 trillion outstanding in bad mortgage debt. At a private luncheon on Jan. 22, economists were talking about needing \$250 billion for the foreclosure rescue program.

"Foreclosures have skyrocketed," according to the Post, "with an estimated 8 million families expected to lose their homes over the next four years."

Losing 500,000 jobs per month

Mark Sandy of Moody's Economy.com told the Post: "Conditions are eroding far more rapidly than anyone anticipated. ... The job market is now consistently losing 500,000-plus jobs per month, something you couldn't have envisioned eight to 12 weeks ago. Losses in the banking system over the last week or two have been much larger than people had been expecting. We're coming to the realization that these things are self-reinforcing and the problems aren't developing in a linear way.

They're getting worse very rapidly."

The bourgeois "experts" cannot fathom their own system. They are utterly taken aback when capitalism behaves the way it has been behaving since the first real global collapse in 1825.

The capitalist system goes through a cycle of expansion that leads to a glut of goods, stocks, land deals and so on that always ends up in a crash. As each capitalist or capitalist grouping fights for market share of commodities, gambles on speculative gains in the stock market, the bond market, the real estate market, etc., things always end up in a catastrophe, which the bosses then push off onto the workers.

As capitalism has decayed under imperialism, has become more financial, more parasitic, more speculative, the tendency increases for the crashes to be more devastating.

Only the tunnel vision of capitalists driven by profit lust could keep them and their experts from seeing the inevitable end of this anarchic system of production and finance:

- No capitalist knows if the commodities produced can be sold.
- No one knows if the stock they buy will go up or down.
- No one knows when the upward cycle of speculative buying and selling of land or houses will reverse itself and come crashing down with a vengeance.

Furthermore, it was clear to all who wished to see that selling junk mortgage bonds around the world to institutions, municipalities and states alike, while calling them AAA, highest-rated, could only result eventually in a global crisis.

The financiers who stand at the pinnacle of capitalist society, the bankers who control the financial resources of society and therefore dictate the fate of hundreds of millions of workers all around the world, have used those resources in a mad race after profits—by any speculative, fraudulent means necessary. And they have brought the system to ruin.

Now the capitalist government must step in with trillions taken from the workers and the middle class and bail out the banks, because that is the only way they can conceive of under present circumstances to bail out the capitalist profit system.

Government intervention shows above all, however, that bankers are completely unnecessary to the functioning of society. Their only role is to get rich by financing exploitation and debt.

What capitalist 'nationalization' means

Right now "nationalization" of the banks is being discussed. It is a measure of the feeling of powerlessness to control their own capitalist system that economists, politicians and advisers are even contemplating the very thought of nationalization of the banks. In the days before this crisis, no one in the establishment would have dared to introduce this idea,

even into the most private conversation. The word "nationalization" was not in the vocabulary of U.S. bourgeois society.

But this crisis has forced sections of the ruling class to think the unthinkable.

Nationalization under the capitalist class, that is, the takeover and running of a bank or an industrial corporation or an industry, has historically been used for the purposes of rescuing the capitalist bank or enterprise from complete ruin. The goal has been to take it over temporarily, put the enterprise back on its feet until it becomes profitable again, and then sell it back to the bosses.

In other words, it has been used to strengthen the system of exploitation when some aspect of the system has become weakened.

The nationalization of the major enterprises of British industry after World War II is a classic example. It was carried out by successive Labor governments with understandable popular support from the workers and was presented as a socialist measure. But it left the capitalist ruling class intact. Once the economy had completely recovered, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher began to give back to private capitalists what was profitable.

Time for a people's fightback

In the meantime, workers are losing their homes and livelihoods. They are being battered from pillar to post on a daily basis by the inhuman wave of layoffs and foreclosures. The capitalist government in Washington and the financial authorities at the Treasury Department and the Federal Reserve Board have already given the banks over a trillion dollars and are now rushing to give them more on an emergency basis.

What is the real emergency, which needs immediate attention? It is that tens of millions of workers and their families are rapidly being driven to the wall by the economic crisis. Social tensions are increasing. Racist killings and beatings are increasing, especially by the police. Arrests of the poor are rising as more workers are driven to commit crimes of survival. The scapegoating of immigrant workers is growing under the impact of the crisis.

The workers and the oppressed are not just losing paper wealth. They do not have millions of dollars stashed away in personal wealth to be tapped for a rainy day. They are losing the means to sustain living.

The only way out of this crisis for the working class is to organize a massive fightback.

A movement is taking shape to launch peoples' assemblies and community-labor alliances whose aim is to broaden the struggle by uniting the various movements into a common front.

This is an essential first step for the workers and oppressed to put their needs on the agenda, ahead of the Wall Street billionaires. □



Low-Wage Capitalism www.LowWageCapitalism.com

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- The world's workforce available to exploitation by transnational capitalist corporations doubled in the wake of the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe.

- The technological revolutions of the digital age, in both production and communications, have allowed transnational corporations to destroy high-wage jobs and simultaneously expand the global workforce to generate a worldwide wage competition.

- The decline in the economic condition of the workers, driven by the laws of capitalism and the capitalist class, is leading to the end of working-class compromise and retreat and must end up in a profound revival of the struggle against capital.

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'Moratorium NOW!'

Michigan activists organize to confront the governor

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

Organizers with the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions are gearing up for a Feb. 3 demonstration at the state Capitol in Lansing, Mich., when Gov. Jennifer Granholm delivers her annual State of the State address. Activists continue to demand that the governor declare a state of economic emergency in Michigan and take executive measures to give immediate relief to the people, including imposition of a two-year moratorium on foreclosures and evictions.

Coalition leader Vanessa Fluker, an attorney who represents homeowners in foreclosure and eviction cases, told Workers World: "Now more than ever Michigan is in a state of economic emergency—everyone can see it and feel it—but the governor and legislature won't act. They won't declare a state of emergency. They won't put a halt on foreclosures. They won't do these things even though they don't

cost a dime, because that means taking sides with the people over the banks. We can't wait another day for the people to get some relief."

Conditions for workers and the poor in Michigan are dire. The state's jobless rate increased a full point from November to December, with the loss of an additional 59,000 jobs in every sector of the economy. Officially unemployed are 10.6 percent of the workforce. Last year 173,000 workers in the state lost their jobs, on top of the approximately half-million who became jobless in the previous six years. (Detroit News, Jan. 22)

Unemployment and poverty rates for African Americans have been in double digits for years. In Detroit, a primarily African-American city, one in three residents lives in poverty. Flint and Kalamazoo are even higher, each with a 35.5 percent poverty rate. (Detroit News, Aug. 27)

Coalition organizers note that foreclosures continue unabated day after day, leaving many cities and towns with abandoned neighborhoods full of empty, vandalized homes. Home values statewide have plummeted to unprecedented levels. The median home value in metropolitan Detroit is now \$53,000, while in the city of Detroit it is a shocking \$7,500. (Detroit News, Jan. 14)

According to Fluker: "The Housing and Economic Recovery Act is the bailout bill that rescued Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. HERA is a 315-page document that contains one page amending provisions to the consumer Truth in Lending Act. It mandates that banks and lenders do loan modifications or work out agreements with borrowers so that the net value of a home is greater than what it would be if it were sold

under foreclosure. But this law is totally ignored by the bankers and politicians.

"According to HERA," said Fluker, "given the low property values in Michigan, every single mortgage in Detroit would be eligible for modification. A two-year moratorium on foreclosures would give people a chance to take advantage of this act so they could stay in their homes and have loans that reflect their home's real value and a fair, equitable mortgage. Right now it's impossible to do that. Not one bank that's announced a loan modification program has an effective mechanism set up to do it. That includes Countrywide, now owned by Bank of America, which is under court order because of its predatory lending practices to modify loans in 12 states, including Michigan."

"The Obama economic stimulus plan, according to experts, will optimally create 158,000 jobs in Michigan over the next 18 months, not even enough to replace the jobs that were lost last year," coalition organizer Jerry Goldberg told Workers World. "The people of Michigan need relief on a massive scale immediately. That's why the demand for a state of economic emergency and a moratorium on foreclosures, evictions, utility shutoffs and plant closings is so crucial. Michigan leads the country in every area of economic devastation. Our proposals will cost nothing and provide people immediate relief while long-term solutions are found. In fact, there should be a national moratorium in place to allow the Obama economic plan to start working."

For more information on the Feb. 3 demonstration, contact the Moratorium NOW! Coalition at 313-887-4344 or visit www.moratorium-mi.org. □

WW PHOTO: KRIS HAMEL
Vanessa Fluker speaking at Dec. 10 rally outside Bank of America in downtown Detroit.

Michigan sheriff asks gov for moratorium

Wayne County Sheriff Warren Evans has sent a letter to Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm requesting she declare a state of economic emergency in the county and a six-month moratorium on foreclosures.

Evans' request was denied by the governor, despite its citing of Michigan law outlining the governor's authority to execute emergency measures. Liz Boyd of the governor's office stated, "The foreclosure problem is a crisis that has been well-doc-

umented," but added, "The governor does not have the authority to declare a moratorium." (Michigan Messenger, Jan. 23)

Moratorium NOW! Coalition organizers and attorneys assert that the governor has emergency powers that are clearly defined under Michigan statutes, including the authority to declare a state of emergency and a moratorium on foreclosures.

—Kris Hamel

ON KING DAY

Honoring Rubie Curl-Pinkins: a 'sister who dared'

Excerpted remarks made by Wayne Curtis, a local artist and former Black Panther Party member, at Detroit's annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day event. Curtis' work was presented to Rubie Curl-Pinkins, recipient of the 2009 award, who successfully fought eviction from her home in July (see workers.org, Aug. 3).

First of all, I'll say all power to the people, all power to Ms. Rubie Curl-Pinkins. And all power to the people's revolutionary movements and political institutions that are serving the people's needs, as the true servants of the people throughout the world, on the North and South American continents and Gaza.

As we remember the birth of MLK today, we can see that we have not been defeated! Our glorious struggle still continues to develop on all levels and fronts, as the corporate people are trying to implement their brand of hate and total control throughout the world.

This struggle will continue until the world's people have the freedom to determine their own destinies. But for now we will continue to develop the forces to create a people's societal environment that will enable us to ignore, with complete protection, the hideous regulations, laws and economic procedures of the capitalist dominant culture.

The forces of nature did not create Ms. Rubie Curl-Pinkins to submit to the foreclosure of her home, to become homeless



WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

Rubie Curl-Pinkins

because of a hideous economic procedure, even if it is the law. Huey [Newton] taught us—people do not obey laws; laws obey people. In other words, people make laws to serve them. We are here today to celebrate the power of the people and the power of Ms. Curl-Pinkins, who together were able to denounce corporate law and announce that the laws of nature and humanity are best to sustain us.

We are here today to give homage to Ms. Curl-Pinkins as a sister who dared to make history in the face of her false adversaries—the Countrywide mortgage company, with their illusionary prestige of power—with a drawing I created called "Sisters Who Dare," that was a gift to my mom.

Ms. Ruth Ann Curtis-Mitchell, my mother, was a sister who dared to change

her role in this capitalist misogynist society. She defied the racism and misogyny that would have made her marginal and later displaced.

She told me once that somebody at GM [General Motors] told her that her bosses would become angry about her free will in that so-called workplace. "I have no bosses," she replied. My mother fought

on that level for civil rights and human rights. She educated her enemies by her actions of nonsubmission to their backward ideology.

I am pleased to present this drawing of "Sisters Who Dare" to you, Ms. Rubie Curl-Pinkins. I say, "All power to the people! All power to Ms. Rubie, a sister who dared!" □

MARXISM, REPARATIONS and the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper. Edited by Monica Moorehead. Includes:

Racism, national oppression and self-determination by Larry Holmes

Black labor from chattel slavery to wage slavery by Sam Marcy

Harriet Tubman: woman warrior by Mumia Abu-Jamal

Causes of turmoil in Jamaica by Pat Chin

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Black and Brown unity: A pillar of struggle for human rights & global justice! by Saladin Muhammad

Are conditions ripe again today? 40th anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion by John Parker

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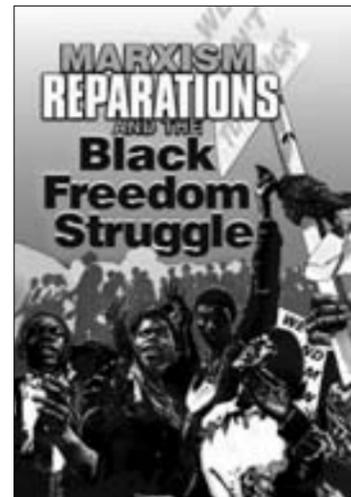


ILLUSTRATION: SAHU BARRON

Los Angeles conference calls for grassroots fightback

By Bob McCubbin
Los Angeles

Following on the heels of a highly successful Fightback Conference that took place in New York City on Jan. 17, the Bail Out the People Movement's call for a West Coast meeting on Jan. 24 drew over 100 activists to the Service Employees Local 721 union hall in Los Angeles. Participants came from as far away as the San Francisco Bay area and Tucson, Ariz. National and regional organizers of the Bail Out the People Movement were also present.

Rosie Martinez, Local 721 Executive Board member and Latino Caucus chair, welcomed the conference attendees and pointed out that labor in general has a vested interest in the issues taken up at the conference. "We're ready to fight back to change this country for the better," she said.

Kuusela Hilo of the Filipino group Bayan USA and John Parker of the Los Angeles International Action Center co-chaired the conference.

The first speaker was Larry Holmes, a national organizer for the Bail Out the People Movement. He reported on the New York meeting a week earlier and announced that plans are under way for a Midwest fight-back conference in the near future.

Holmes said the fight-back movement is based on understanding that the present economic crisis will only get worse and that "fixing" the banks is not our problem. What is required of us, he said, is to build a mass movement to get people's social needs met.

Holmes said mass movements in the 1930s put pressure on President Franklin Roosevelt and that an equally militant movement is needed now to put pressure on the Obama administration. The pro-



Susan Abulhawa top right, John Parker at right.



WW PHOTOS:
BOB MCCUBBIN



Rosie Martinez



Kuusela Hilo

jected government "stimulus" program now under discussion in Washington is "too little too late," stated Holmes.

The fight-back alternative includes a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions, solidarity with immigrant workers, and addressing the needs of all the unemployed, including part-time workers who need full-time jobs, unemployed youths and prisoner workers.

The projected mass mobilizations for marches and rallies will focus on International Women's Day, the April 4 anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination and May Day. Plans for the fall include a national march for jobs and against war, and a national people's assembly. This all depends on recruiting thousands of volunteers.

Dave Welsh, San Francisco Labor Council member, spoke on the need for organized labor to unite with all communities suffering from the developing economic crisis. There are many issues in these communities that need to be addressed by the fight-back. Deepening our understanding of them and developing struggle strategies can only come from closer contact with the people involved.

University of California-Santa Barbara student Daniela Rodriguez spoke on the

funding cuts that are making education less affordable or accessible for students. Teresa Gutierrez, national organizer for the May 1 Coalition, emphasized the key role that immigrant workers from all over the world are playing in the growing fight-back. She suggested that the recent ruling-class-directed attacks on immigrant workers were motivated by their knowledge that an economic crisis was coming. Needing to direct blame for the crisis away from themselves, they want to scapegoat immigrant workers.

In the New York area organized labor is already playing an important role in building for a May 1 mobilization this year. The goal is for May 1 actions to include all workers, documented and undocumented, union members and nonunionized workers.

The San Francisco 8 are a group of community activists, most former members of the Black Panther Party, who have been framed for the 1971 murder of a police officer and an alleged "conspiracy." Hank Jones, one of the eight, reminded the conference that it is foolish to expect to get justice out of an unjust system. He called for unity and recognition of the rights of all the people on the planet.

Larry Hales, a leader of the youth group FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together—came to the conference directly from Oakland, Calif., where he had stood in solidarity with community residents still seething over the BART police execution of Black youth Oscar Grant. Hales denounced the ongoing national police terror campaign against Black youths. (See Hales' full report at www.workers.org)

Joy Sison de Guzman, representing Migrante International-IMA and Asia-Pacific Mission for Migrants, spoke on the horrific plight of several hundred million migrant workers forced by economic pressures to leave their home countries. At least 10 million Filipina/o migrant workers are super-exploited in 196 countries.

Hamid Khan from the South Asian Network is a Los Angeles area labor organizer born in Pakistan. He described his participation in a 70-mile Sonoran desert walk, following the route of thousands

of Mexican and Central American workers on their way to job opportunities in the U.S. He also described the onerous working conditions of the approximately 5,000 taxi drivers in the Los Angeles area.

A special highlight of the conference was a presentation by Susan Abulhawa, author of "The Scar of David," a novel that the Palestine Chronicle characterized as "a must read for those who wish to not only understand the catastrophe of the Palestinians with their minds but also with their hearts." Abulhawa's account of Israeli atrocities in Gaza with the full backing of the U.S. was followed by another presentation on the crimes of the apartheid settler state by Mazen Almoukdad representing Al-Awda, the Palestine Right to Return Coalition.

Also speaking on the struggle of the Palestinian people were 10-year-old Sekou Parker and Paul Teitelbaum, an International Action Center organizer based in Tucson, Ariz. All money from a collection taken up at the conference and from sales of Abulhawa's novel will be donated to the fund to rebuild a Gaza psychiatric hospital destroyed by the Zionist invaders.

Service Employees organizer Charles Doakes provided important information on the foreclosure tsunami now under way in the United States. He characterized it as the greatest robbery since the days of the Jesse James gang. He accused the banks of widespread fraud and pointed out that no one has gone to jail for it.

Eric Boyd, a senior policy advisor for U.S. Rep. Laura Richardson, urged conference attendees to dialog with her. "She's listening," he said.

Service Employees activist Morris "Big Money" Griffin pointed to the U.S. corporate obsession with oil profits, and urged an expansion of the grassroots education campaign on Gaza and the Palestinian struggle.

Three workshops—focusing on international solidarity, the economic crisis, and fighting social divisions—allowed the conference attendees to discuss how to implement the conference goals. The final session featured reports from each of the workshops and a moving video about the struggle of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., produced by Habi Arts. □

California budget crisis

Rich gov proposes cuts for workers, poor

Continued from page 1

Alcohol and Drug Abuse treatment and Mental Health.

The months-long budget debate between the governor and legislature has ignored the primary responsibility of state governments: to provide for the welfare of the people.

California's surging unemployment rate is now officially more than 9 percent. In 2008 about 21 percent of all U.S. home foreclosures were in California. Unemployed workers can't afford mortgages or rent. When the sale prices of homes fall, the property tax revenues go down, too.

Instead of invoking legal precedent from the 1930s and issuing a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions that would immediately help workers and communities, the governor is bowing to the banks. They insist on being paid their blood-money interest before state funds are spent on anything else.

Democrats agree to slash budget

Is any side in the California budget battle providing pro-worker solutions? According to the Jan. 26 Los Angeles Times, a fiscal plan passed by the Democrats in the state

legislature "proposed cuts [that] would mean that money for the state's university systems would decrease. Transportation and schools would take a hit. Funds for regional centers that help treat developmental disabilities in babies and toddlers would decline. Cash to help the elderly, blind and disabled keep up with rising food costs would be slashed. ...

"None of these cuts has been enacted. But the fact that they ... have been separately backed by Republicans ensures that they will be at the top of the list when lawmakers finally decide how to bridge a budget gap projected to exceed \$40 billion within a year and a half."

At a Labor-Community Fightback Conference in Los Angeles sponsored by the Bail Out the People Movement on Jan. 24, Californians United for a Responsible Budget pointed out that at the same time the governor and legislature are attempting to cut education and public-works projects, a \$12 billion prison construction plan is being pushed through.

Youths need jobs, not jails—especially Black and Latin@ youths who are disproportionately victims of the racist prison-industrial complex and dilapidated prison-like schools. □

Students fuel movement for divestment from Israel

By Lila Goldstein

Since the invasion of Gaza began on Dec. 27, the idea of divestment and boycott against Israel has spread to college campuses all over the country. A group called Students for Justice in Palestine based at Hampshire College, a small liberal arts school in western Massachusetts, has been advocating for divestment at its school for the last two years.

SJP has been taking actions on their campus to bring about awareness of the Israeli occupation, all centering around the divestment campaign. They have organized protests in the town of Amherst, Mass., most recently on January 10th in reaction to the invasion of Gaza. For the past two years organizers have set up a mock wall in the center of their campus, where they hand out information on checkpoints and the real separation wall—which isolates some 60,500 Palestinians living in 42 villages and towns.

The group is very diverse, with varying opinions, but all have a common goal—to end the Israeli occupation and to bring justice to the Palestinian people. Two

members of the group are actually Israeli refuseniks who spent a large portion of their young lives organizing and fighting within Israeli territory. One of them spent two years in an Israeli jail. Another SJP member is Palestinian.

Unlike the U.S. media and most college campuses, SJP has held many open dialogues on the campus, giving the student population an outlet to discuss this very important topic. Guest speakers from all over the country and from both Israeli and Palestinian territories have come to Hampshire to talk, give lectures, read poetry and connect with other activist groups. Author Naomi Klein is coming to the school in February to give a talk on the Israeli occupation.

SJP's demands

The following are SJP's demands: "Hampshire College calls on the U.S. government to stop financing the Israeli occupation. We support dialogue on our campus and between the leaderships of the two peoples as long as it is sincere and with the intention to end the oppression of the Palestinian people. As an institution

we will not support, invest in or finance any individual, group or institution that is economically involved with the occupation. We support the Palestinian right to resist the occupation in accordance with international law.

"Due to our mandate as an institution of higher education, we are committed to support the Palestinian right to education, which is denied by the occupation, through exchange programs and academic support. In solidarity with the Palestinian people, our educational program will provide a stage for unheard Palestinian voices."

After these demands were made, SJP compiled a list of six companies that the school should specifically divest from: 1) Caterpillar, which sells armored bulldozers used to demolish homes and uproot olive trees and is responsible for the death of Rachel Corrie. 2) United Technologies, which makes Blackhawk helicopters that attack Palestinian buildings and civilians. 3) General Electric, which makes engines for the "Apache" helicopters. 4) ITT, which supplies the Israeli military with communications, electronic and

night vision equipment used by its forces in the occupied territories. 5) Motorola, which has a contract to develop wireless encrypted communications for the Israeli military in the territories and is a majority investor in one of Israel's four cell phone companies. 6) Terex, which supplies Israel with tactical trucks, flood light towers and cranes for the separation wall, and provides associated logistical support to the Israeli Army.

Hampshire has a history of divestment. It was the first college to divest from South Africa and was the first to come out against the war in Afghanistan.

Every day students hear and read about the ever growing death toll among the Palestinian people. The U.S. role in the Israeli occupation is integral. Students can no longer watch their money go to the investment in an illegal and racist occupation. This is one aspect of the many actions that are being taken by the people of this country who are outraged at the war crimes that are being committed with U.S. military funding.

Long live Palestine!

Goldstein is a member of SJP.

Palestinian self-determination raised at Berlin conference

Sara Flounders, co-director of the International Action Center and a contributor to Workers World newspaper, presented a 30-minute keynote talk at an important Rosa Luxemburg Conference in Berlin, Germany, on Jan. 10. Some 1,600 progressive Germans attended the conference, hosted by the Berlin daily newspaper Junge Welt (jungewelt.de). Judging from both positive and negative comments in the German media about Flounders' talk, her comments contributed to the controversial political discussion among the German left, especially regarding Palestine. The following is Workers World managing editor John Catalinotto's Jan. 25 interview with Flounders.

Workers World: Why was it that your comments had such resonance in the discussion among German leftists?

SF: It was really a question of timing. What we had to say—that revolutionary socialists should show solidarity with all

the forces resisting U.S. and world imperialism, even those with which we have ideological differences, that is, the Islamic resistances—would have always been part of a political argument. But it would perhaps have been an academic argument.

It became part of the living struggle because I was speaking as the Israelis, with U.S. and EU backing, were assaulting and slaughtering the civilian population of Gaza.

In the hours before I was scheduled to speak I learned that not only the parliamentary left—the Left Party—but also some other groups considered communist had taken a position criticizing Hamas for launching rockets. The broad peace movement had made no strong mobilization against the Israeli assault, as had happened, for example, in Spain and Britain. And I learned that even much of the anarchist movement defends Israel 100 percent, in a distorted reaction to anti-Semitism.

Canada deports war resisters

Campaign launched for sanctuary

By Dee Knight

Iraq war resisters Cliff Cornell and Chris Teske were deported from Canada last week. Teske crossed the British Columbia-Washington state border unassisted on Jan. 22 at an undisclosed location. Cornell planned to do the same on Jan. 23.

The two resisters now join thousands of their fellow resisters in the U.S. who live a clandestine existence while deciding whether to turn themselves in.

Kimberly Rivera was luckier: she got a stay of the order that she leave on Jan. 27. Rivera served in Iraq in 2006. Her experience in Iraq convinced her that the war was immoral and that she could not participate in it, and in 2007 she refused redeployment and became the first woman to

publicly seek refuge in Canada as a U.S. Iraq war resister. She now lives in Toronto with her spouse Mario, her 6-year-old son Christian, her 4-year-old daughter Rebecca and her newborn daughter Katie.

The government of Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper is planning more deportations. Army Sgt. Patrick Hart, his spouse Jill and their son have been ordered to leave Jan. 29. Hart is a New York native who served nine years in the Army until he was stationed in Kuwait during 2004. In 2005, Hart went absent without leave rather than be deployed to Iraq. After arriving in Canada he declared, "If you want to support the troops, bring them home."

Dean Walcott was ordered to leave Jan.

Continued on page 10

Sara Flounders at Rosa Luxemburg Conference in Berlin, Jan. 10.

PHOTO: GABRIELE SENFT



Under those conditions, I knew I would have to emphasize the position of solidarity with the struggles of oppressed peoples, including supporting the right of the oppressed to defend themselves.

WW: How did you do that?

SF: I said that, contrary to the media lies, Hamas is not a terrorist group but a mass organization that is deeply connected to the entire Palestinian people and elected by them. The U.S. and Israel decided that the Palestinians had voted the wrong way and have been trying to destroy Hamas since. Previously, the U.S. and the Israeli state targeted Fatah and the PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] the same way.

Washington and Tel Aviv want to destroy any organization that fights for Palestinian self-determination, because the Palestinian struggle—and especially Gaza—for 60 years has been the shining example of resistance to occupation, an example of national liberation for all the world. The imperialists hope that by smashing the civilian population they can defeat this struggle and demoralize millions.

I said we know that the Israelis planned the war for months in advance, if not for years. We know that Israel has held Gaza under siege for 18 months, an act of war. We know that a siege means there is no real cease-fire, and that the rockets are just an excuse for Israeli propaganda.

I was speaking in Berlin on the weekend to honor the two revolutionaries, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, who were opponents of German imperialism in World War I and whom the German rightists and even German Social

Democrats called traitors for their war opposition. Liebknecht and Luxemburg were murdered by the generals. Tens of thousands of people come that weekend from all over Germany to lay flowers on their graves. I based some of my argument on the heroic history of these two revolutionary heroes.

I also said, and with special emphasis, "The Palestinians in Gaza have every right to fire rockets and to dig tunnels against Israel's sure starvation and siege. We must defend this right to resist!"

WW: What was the reaction?

SF: From the people at the conference, I got the strongest applause of the day. Of course, Junge Welt—although it is not a particular party's newspaper and represents various left opinions—has a general anti-imperialist position. In 1999 it took a strong position in defense of Yugoslavia against NATO. It attracts some of the most revolutionary people in Germany.

Still, the enthusiastic support showed that many on the German left appreciated a strong stand against this horrific assault on the children and other civilians of Gaza. They welcomed an anti-imperialist voice from the United States.

My talk was reported extensively in Junge Welt—and later the reactionary press quoted from this report in an attempt to criticize the conference.

Of course, the struggle on this issue will continue in Germany just as it has for decades here in the United States. The left will have to counter anti-Arab and anti-Islamic bias. They will have to fight ruling-class opinion, which still lines up with the U.S. and Israel in the region, and which sends troops to Afghanistan.

We were honored that Junge Welt invited us to speak at such an important conference and that we could participate in this debate that is so important to the development of the German anti-imperialist movement and to solidarity with Palestine.

To read Flounders' talk in Berlin, see iacenter.org.

Gaza massacre globally isolates Israeli settler state

By John Catalinotto

Israel's savage assault on the civilian population of Gaza has aroused the greatest worldwide outrage ever against the U.S.-backed settler state. Perhaps nothing symbolized this more than the reporting of veteran anti-apartheid fighter Dennis Brutus leading a protest in Durban, South Africa, against Israeli Ambassador Dov Segev-Steinberg. Brutus was instrumental in the cultural boycott campaign against apartheid South Africa in the 1980s and 1990s.

After watching three weeks of a horrific war against a people, the world is on the verge of a campaign against the Israeli state similar to the one that helped weaken the apartheid South Africa regime in that earlier period. This is now known worldwide as the Campaign for Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions, or BDS, which would involve massive refusal to buy from or invest in the major corporations that operate in, support or provide repressive weapons to the Israeli state.

Nearly every group opposed to the Israeli occupation of Palestine or the latest massacre in Gaza has raised the BDS Campaign as a way to proceed with the struggle, from anti-globalization spokesperson Naomi Klein to the trade unions of South Africa.

Many individuals, organizations and even countries are also mobilizing to bring people-to-people aid to the Palestinians in Gaza on a humanitarian basis. Venezuela has sent a team of 20 doctors, for example.

Protests continue worldwide

Even as the Israeli regime announced a cease-fire and planned withdrawal from Gaza, some of the largest protests were taking place the weekend of Jan. 17. Tens of thousands gathered in Islamabad and Karachi, Pakistan, and burned both Israeli and U.S. flags. In almost every country there were protests that weekend. In Asia there were protests in Srinagar, Kashmir; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Jakarta, Indonesia; Islamabad, Pakistan;

and even occupied Kabul, Afghanistan. In Ankara, Turkey, the people went to the U.S. Embassy where they denounced the U.S. as a partner in the Israeli crimes.

In Europe 200,000 people marched in Rome while tens of thousands took to the streets in London, Paris and Madrid, with other protests throughout the Spanish state, including 15,000 in Santiago de Compostela, the capital of Galicia, on Jan. 18. Other protests took place in the Scandinavian countries.

Protests Jan. 15 in Panama compared the killing of Palestinian civilians to the 1964 and 1989 U.S. assaults on Panamanian civilians. Demonstrations also took place in Chile and Brazil.

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak cancelled his visit to Tel Aviv University on Jan. 19 after students called him a "murderer." One war resisters' organization in the Israeli state, Courage to Refuse, published a newspaper advertisement condemning the killing of hundreds of Palestinian civilians and calling on soldiers to refuse to fight in Gaza.

With the cease-fire holding, most demonstrations were smaller the weekend of Jan. 24 and aimed at specific targets to make a point. Some 1,500 people flew a Palestinian flag over Lisbon, Portugal.

One of the most telling actions was the protest at the BBC in London, after that media monopoly had refused to publicize an appeal for humanitarian aid to Gaza. Unions at the BBC and church organizations throughout Britain joined the ongoing protest against BBC's management. Currently a broad section of the population is campaigning to return licenses to the BBC, a type of boycott campaign.

War crimes trials

There are attempts underway to bring charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Israeli rulers and military. There are at least two initiatives on this. One is to bring charges through the International Criminal Court (to see petition, visit tlaxcala.es and click on Campaigns). A second is to attempt to have the United Nations General Assembly cre-

ate a special tribunal that would hear the case against Israel (petitiononline.com/EAFORD09/).

Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the Gaza-based Palestinian Center for Human Rights and B'tselem, the Israeli Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, have said Israel should be investigated for possible war crimes.

While there are many obstacles to bringing such charges—for example, neither the U.S. nor Israel recognizes the authority of the ICC—simply the idea of these charges has had results. Already Tel Aviv has appointed a team of international law experts, led by the Israeli justice minister, to defend its soldiers and officers against possible charges.

Although no charges have yet been brought against the U.S. government for its complicity with and arming of the Israeli military, protests worldwide have pointed at the U.S. role in the massacre.

While the U.S. veto power on the U.N. Security Council makes it unlikely any U.N. institution will put Israel on trial,

there are still other legal possibilities. "Israeli officials with a direct chain of command to atrocities can be brought to national courts provided that they are physically present in that jurisdiction," according to one international attorney giving an anonymous opinion. That means if, for example, an Israeli official were traveling in Spain, he or she might face arrest and trial under Spanish law. Such a thing happened to the Chilean fascist, Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

Some have raised the possibility of holding people's tribunals. These are public presentations of testimony of war crimes that can politically condemn the Israeli officials and generals and their collaborators. While it cannot directly punish the guilty parties, a people's tribunal has the advantage that it can also expose U.S. imperialism and the European Union states that supported Israel's onslaught on Gaza.

Popular tribunals can be coordinated with plans for boycott, divestment and sanctions.

E-mail: jcat@workers.org

A decisive loss for Israel

The following essay by Mousa Abu Marzook, deputy chief of the Hamas political bureau, was published in the Guardian on Jan. 22.

Israel's objectives from the war on Gaza were set long before its launch: to remove the Hamas movement and government, achieve the reinstallation of the Fatah leader, Mahmoud Abbas, in Gaza, and end the armed resistance. Two other objectives were not announced. First, restore the Israeli public's wavering confidence in its armed forces after its defeat by Hizballah in 2006. Second, boost the coalition government in the coming elections.

Accordingly, we declare that Israel lost, and lost decisively. What did it achieve? The killing of large numbers of civilians, children and women, and the destruction of homes, ministry buildings and other infrastructure with the most advanced United States weapons and other internationally banned chemical and phosphorous elements. Almost 2,000 children were killed and injured in desperate pursuit of political goals. Many international organizations called these attacks war crimes, yet barely a word of denunciation was uttered by any Western leader. What message does the European Union mean to send Palestinians by its shameful silence on these crimes, when it speaks incessantly on human rights?

If anything, the last three weeks, and previous 18 months, have proved that the Palestinians can never be broken by either starvation, economic strangulation or brutal attack. European leaders have only one option: to recognize the outcome of a democratic process they had called for and supported.

The aggression failed to undermine or weaken the Hamas-led government, or turn Palestinians against Hamas. If anything, public support is stronger than ever in Palestine and worldwide. Hamas's military capabilities have not been hurt, either. This explains Israel scurrying to sign such a strange agreement with the U.S. to stop arms reaching Hamas. It is

doomed to fail. As the former Israeli chief of staff Moshe Yaalon and [right-wing Likud party leader] Benjamin Netanyahu agreed, Israeli forces failed to achieve their objectives.

Why is Israel allowed a continuous flow of the most lethal arms, including banned weapons, while national resistance movements are denied the means of defense? International laws permit occupied nations to resist their occupiers, and that is a right we aim to utilize to the full.

Israel must accept the reality that it is incapable of breaking the Palestinian resistance. Similarly, Europe must accept that bringing back Abbas on an Israeli tank is not an option. Nor are attempts to win by "diplomacy" what the might of the Israeli military failed to secure by force. To state that all aid for Gaza reconstruction must go through the illegal government of appointed Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad suggests there is no end to some parties' exploitation of Palestinians. We will never cease to pursue national unity, but we will never allow it to be attained by compromising Palestinian rights.

And to President Obama we say: The wave of hope that met your election was heavily dampened by your silence on the Gaza massacre. This was compounded by your pre-election statement siding with the Israeli settlers of Sderot. You would do well to know the history of the places of which you speak. Sderot, which may be known to some as an Israeli town, lies on the ruins of Najd, a Palestinian village ransacked in May 1948 by Zionist terrorist gangs. Villagers were forced from their beds and homes with nothing but the clothes they were wearing, rendering them refugees for the next 61 years. That is the story of Sderot. It is never a good start to get your tyrant and victims mixed up, but there is still room for a revival of passionate optimism. Only if you decide to fairly address the issue of the 6 million Palestinian refugees and the ending of occupation of Palestinian lands, including Jerusalem, will you be able to start a new relationship with the Muslim world. □

CUBAN FIVE condemn Israeli aggression in Gaza

The following Jan. 21 urgent message to the Palestinian people was translated by Granma International. Go to www.granma.cu. These Cuban heroes have been falsely jailed in U.S. prisons for over 10 years for defending their homeland against U.S.-backed terrorist acts organized by right-wing Cubans in Miami and elsewhere.

It is with profound pain and infinite indignation that we have witnessed the criminal massacre of the Palestinian people; there are no words to describe this holocaust. The death of every innocent child, woman and man and the destruction of the homeland's holy ground are crimes against humanity and debts that will someday be paid for dearly by the governments of Israel, the United States—which supports the former—and international imperialism.

From five prisons scattered throughout the bowels of the United States, we

condemn this crime with all our strength. We demand that the barbarity stop now, and we send all of our love and support from the deepest part of our souls to the beloved Palestinian people. We will be with you today and always. If there is one thing that profoundly hurts us about our imprisonment, it is that we cannot do much more for you, for your cause, for our peoples, but we trust that soon we will be able to accompany you physically.

The world must unite and condemn the Israeli government, the United States government and the imperialist governments, creators of holocausts.

Stop the war and massacre! Long live the Palestinian people! ¡Venceremos!

The Cuban Five,
Antonio Guerrero
René González
Fernando González
Gerardo Hernández
Ramón Labañino

FREE THE CUBAN 5



Obama's inauguration— what's next?

The Jan. 20 inauguration of Barack Obama as the first African-American president of the U.S. was an historic event for many reasons. A record number of close to two million people—many of them weeping—stood in the bitter cold for several hours to bear witness to the swearing-in ceremony at the U.S. Capitol. The vast majority had to watch it from several Jumbotrons close to two miles back. The previous record crowd of just over one million people convened during Lyndon B. Johnson's inauguration following the 1964 election.

Bourgeois commentators mentioned the irony that both the Capitol building and the White House, where Obama and his family will be living, were built on the backs of African slaves. For millions of people here and around the world, it was truly a revelation to hear this fact since U.S. history books very seldom mention that slavery existed in various areas of the North as well as in the South.

It was also very noticeable that in the presidential reviewing stand during the inaugural parade, there were many more people of color in attendance. In fact, commentators acknowledged that the reviewing stand held at least one-third people of color, while during the George W. Bush inaugurations, people of color were virtually nonexistent.

For millions of people the inauguration of Obama was viewed as a breath of fresh air following eight years of the Bush regime, which became synonymous with war for empire, an almost complete dismissal of the plight of workers, the poor and oppressed peoples, and the deepening economic crisis. There is understandably a strong feeling of validation amongst Black and other oppressed peoples with the Obama victory.

The Obama presidency represents another chapter in the ongoing struggle for full democratic rights that has been expressed in various heroic forms of

self-determination since the end of the U.S. Civil War, including anti-lynching campaigns, the right to land in the South, civil rights, the right to self-defense, the right to political representation, affirmative action and much more.

There are some who feel that the election of Obama was the culmination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream of full equality. There are others who see the Obama election as moving one step forward in Dr. King's vision for political and economic equality. Above all else, Dr. King was an anti-war and anti-racist activist who believed that only mass action could change the conditions of the workers and oppressed for the better.

Many progressive appeals are being made to President Obama on a number of important political and economic issues at home and abroad. This is all good. At the same time, as the economic suffering gets worse, it is even more important to organize an independent grassroots movement to be in the streets to demand jobs or a livable income, health care, housing, education and an end to police brutality, along with no U.S.-backed wars on Palestine, Afghanistan, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Colombia or elsewhere.

In New York City on Jan. 17 and Los Angeles on Jan. 24, the Bail Out the People Movement sponsored conferences to help lay the basis for building a nationwide fightback struggle for human needs, not to save the bankers and bosses. Part of a working document adopted at both meetings reads, "In 2009, more and more lives are going to be devastated by the biggest global economic crisis since the depression of the 1930s.

"This crisis is the challenge of a lifetime for those of us who have made a commitment to fighting for the rights of people. What we do or fail to do will prove decisive in the coming battle over whose interests in society shall prevail." (www.bailoutpeople.org) □

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Fidel Castro on

The 11th president of the United States

This excerpted "reflection" by revolutionary leader and former Cuban President Fidel Castro originally appeared in Granma Internacional on Jan. 22.

This past Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2009, Barack Obama took over the leadership of the empire as president No. 11 of the United States since the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in January 1959.

Nobody could doubt the sincerity of his words when he affirms that he will turn the country into a model of liberty, [with] respect for human rights in the world and the independence of other peoples. Of course [this offended] barely anyone, except the misanthropes out there in the world. He now has said comfortably that imprisonment and torture on the illegally occupied Guantánamo base will cease immediately, which is beginning to sow doubts among those who worship terror as a necessary instrument of their country's foreign policy.

The intelligent and noble face of the first Black president of the United States since its founding as an independent republic two and one-third centuries ago had transformed itself, with the inspiration of

Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, becoming a living symbol of the American dream.

However, despite all the tests that he has withstood, Obama has not passed the central one. What will he do when the immense power in his hands proves absolutely useless for overcoming the system's insoluble antagonistic contradictions?

I have shortened my "Reflections," just as I resolved to do this year, in order not to interfere or get in the way of the comrades of the Party and state as they make constant decisions about objective difficulties stemming from the world economic crisis. I am fine, but I insist, none of them should feel constrained by any of my Reflections, the seriousness of my condition or my death.

I am reviewing the speeches and materials I have elaborated over more than half a century.

I have had the rare privilege of observing events over such a long period of time. I receive information and meditate calmly on the events. I don't expect to have that privilege in four years, when Obama's first presidential term will have concluded.

Translated by Granma Internacional

From Mumia Abu-Jamal on death row

The forgotten Martin Luther King

The following excerpts come from a recording made on Jan. 15, Dr. King's 80th birthday. Go to www.prisonradio.org to hear Mumia's audio columns.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is once again being resurrected this time of year, in part because his birthday is approaching, but also, of course, because of the imminent swearing-in of President-elect Barack H. Obama—the first Black man in U.S. history to be so honored.

As often is the case, the Rev. King—who is being projected today—bears little relationship to the real, live, breathing and growing man behind the name.

Like many men, he had his highs and his lows, his fears and his doubts, his inspirations and his insights. His Washington speech—known as "I Have a Dream"—was neither his finest, nor his most profound, but like many Black preachers who are master orators, he brought his best to it.

King, like many busy leaders, had others write some of his speeches, and one of those men was Vincent Harding, now a theologian and historian. Harding contributed to King's groundbreaking N.Y. Riverside Church speech, delivered precisely a year before his assassination, where he denounced the Vietnam War—marking his break with an American president (L. B. Johnson), the corporate media and many of his closest allies in the SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference).

President Johnson felt betrayed by King, and the media turned from praise to ridicule. In his book "Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero" (N. Y.: Orbis, 1996), Harding quotes from the Washington Post editorial page which slammed King, who "had diminished his usefulness to his cause, to his country, and to his people" because of his speech against the Vietnam War, which the Vietnamese called "the American War."

But betrayals didn't stop him, nor did

nasty editorials deter him. Indeed, the violence of war radicalized him deeply, so much so that he said later, "The evils of capitalism are as real as the evils of militarism and evils of racism." (Harding, p. 101).

Think of that: capitalism, militarism and racism—as evils. When's the last time you've heard that?

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was being radicalized by the churning events around him—and, a year before his death, he was both anti-war and anti-capitalist.

Ask yourself, if King were alive today, with his views, could he be elected president?

If not, why not? What does that say about the nation's political system? □

Canada deports war resisters

Continued from page 8

30. A Marine from Connecticut, Walcott went AWOL in 2007 following an Iraq deployment and has lived in Canada since. He "was with the military police and all we ever did was run convoys around a very little part of Iraq." (couragetoresist.org)

The struggle in Canada to defend war resisters has been nonstop since last spring. There is a strong War Resister Support Campaign in Canada, which unifies the efforts of labor and religious organizations, students and the peace movement. This coalition sparked a campaign last year that won a parliamentary resolution demanding the government let the war resisters stay. The resolution won the support of all three major opposition parties.

These parties are now united in an urgent effort to bring down the government. Parliament reopened this week after a six-week holiday recess, and the future of the Harper government is at the top of the agenda.

Continued on the next page

U.S. attacks on Pakistani villages draw mass response

By G. Dunkel

CIA-controlled drones attacked two Pakistani villages on Jan. 23, killing at least 22 people according to reports in the Pakistani press. The Dawn, a Pakistani Web site, reported that President Asif Ali Zardari conveyed his concerns to the U.S. ambassador in a meeting that afternoon.

Between December 2007 and August 2008, when Pervez Musharraf was in power, there were only six U.S. missile attacks on the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) along Pakistan's northwest border with Afghanistan. There have been over 30 U.S. missile attacks since August.

The Washington Post on Nov. 16 reported on a tacit agreement between the U.S. and Pakistan allowing the air strikes

in return for suspension of commando raids. Both sides denied that such an agreement is in place, but Pakistan does not appear to have done much to stop the air strikes, other than issuing verbal protests. The strikes increased significantly after Zardari was elected.

According to the News of Islamabad, "Thousands of tribesmen on Saturday attended the funeral prayers of the victims of Friday's drone attacks. ... They condemned the killings and asked U.S. President Barack Obama to spend the money on the welfare of the tribal people instead of killing them with sophisticated weapons."

The News reported further: "Tribal militants and religious scholars present on the occasion were critical of the reporting of the international wire agencies and

the national electronic media which, they said, reported that al-Qaeda operatives were killed in the CIA-operated spy-plane attack. They claimed that all those killed in the attack were innocent and local villagers, who had nothing to do with militancy or the Taliban."

Other reports in the Pakistani press claimed that a number of children were among the casualties.

The outcry in Pakistan the day after the attacks took place confirms the repeated charge from high-placed Pakistani officials that these strikes "alienate the people from the U.S. and undermine the government in Islamabad."

The U.S. media are also getting into the act, trying to portray the Pakistani government as not doing enough to be effective in the struggle against the Taliban.

The New York Times, in a front-page article on Jan. 25, described how a particularly repressive and brutal faction of the Pakistani Taliban has taken control of the Swat, a prosperous area south of the FATA, "within reach of Peshawar, Rawalpindi and Islamabad." The article claims "The military must be conspiring with the Taliban" in Swat for them to be so successful.

Whether or not this claim is correct, the article does not examine how the anger created by all these U.S. attacks on civilians in Pakistan has been used by the Taliban to garner support.

What Pakistan and its neighbor Afghanistan need is an end to terrorist attacks from the U.S. military and the CIA, along with peace and economic development. □

Iceland government collapses as protests escalate

By Michael Kramer

The worldwide crisis of international finance capital has resulted in the collapse of the bourgeois coalition government ruling Iceland. Elections for a new government will be held two years early, in the spring of 2009.

Iceland is an island nation of approximately 313,000 residents located in the North Atlantic. It is a member of NATO. Its climate is tempered by the Gulf Stream and its surrounding waters contain some of the richest fishing grounds in the world. It is also rich in geothermal and hydroelectric energy. Homes are heated by putting pipes into the ground.

As in much of the capitalist world, the government and economy in Iceland have been controlled by MBAs and other finance technocrats. In October 2008 the economic structure they built came crashing down, resulting in the failure of the three largest banks, falling standards of living, devalued currency and a deep freeze with regard to imports and exports.

In the capital city, Reykjavik, ongoing demonstrations against the government have intensified, growing bigger and more militant. On Jan. 20 more than 2,000 pro-

testers surrounded the parliament, throwing snowballs and smoke bombs. On Jan. 21 the prime minister's car was attacked by a larger crowd.

The demonstrations continued into the night. On Jan. 22 the police used tear gas for the first time since 1949.

On Jan. 24 the biggest demonstration yet took place, with around 6,000 protesting—about 2 percent of the population. This is akin to a demonstration of 6 million in the United States.

The minister of commerce and banking resigned the next day.

At this time it is not known where all this is going in Iceland. There are militant youths confronting the bourgeois state but there does not appear to be any revolutionary party involved in the struggle. Similar situations have recently occurred in Bulgaria, Latvia and Lithuania. □

Lawyers for the WRSC have been working to reverse or delay the deportation orders. Federal judges in eastern Canada have tended to make rulings in their favor, but it has gone the other way in the more reactionary western provinces where Harper has greater support.

Sanctuary campaign needed

These "removal orders" mark a turning point for war resisters in Canada. Prior to now, Robin Long was the only war resister deported from Canada since the Vietnam War. He was convicted by an Army court-martial upon his forced return, sentenced to 15 months confinement and is currently held in a brig at Miramar, just north of San Diego, Calif.

Jeff Paterson, director of the Oakland, Calif.-based Courage to Resist, told Workers World his organization will be "working with these resisters and our allies nationwide to create communities of support for these courageous individuals and to make U.S.-based civilian legal defense available."

Gerry Condon of Project Safe Haven told Workers World: "We must prepare to defend war resisters who are deported and court-martialed. We need to build communities of sanctuary in the U.S. And we need to demand that President Obama grant amnesty to all war resisters." □

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Antiimperialistas se reúnen en el Foro de Beirut

Por Bill Cecil
Beirut, Líbano

Mientras el pueblo de Gaza detenía nuevamente otro intento del ejército israelí que está armado y financiado por Estados Unidos, de erradicar la causa palestina asesinando a su pueblo, delegados/as de todas partes del mundo se reunieron en Beirut para forjar solidaridad y apoyo práctico para su causa entre izquierdistas seculares y fueras islámicas antiimperialistas.

El Dr. Ali Fayyad, director del Centro de Consulta para Estudios y Documentación en Beirut, quien dirigió el Foro de Beirut, expuso las metas del foro: "En esta parte del mundo la resistencia es islámica. El movimiento de resistencia de aquí debe presentarse a otras fuerzas de resistencia contra el imperialismo alrededor del mundo. Las diferencias ideológicas deben posponerse. La resistencia debe prevalecer. ...Una meta importante del foro es cómo, a pesar de las contradicciones ideológicas, encontrar una forma de trabajar juntos para lograr unidad en contra del imperialismo."

El Foro Internacional de Beirut para la Resistencia, el Antiimperialismo y la Solidaridad entre los Pueblos y sus Alternativas que se llevó a cabo entre el 16 y 18 de enero, reunió a 450 delegados/as de todos los continentes habitados, en la tierra del Líbano donde la maquinaria de guerra israelita creada por los EEUU, sufrió su primera derrota estratégica a manos de la Resistencia Libanesa en el año 2006.

Además del grupo patrocinador, también participaron El Encuentro Nacional para Apoyar la Opción de Resistencia (Líbano), en colaboración con la Campaña Internacional en contra de la Ocupación Americana y Sionista (la conferencia del Cairo), el Foro Internacional Antiimperialista y de Solidaridad entre los Pueblos (Conferencia Calcuta-India) y la Campaña Alto a la Guerra (Londres). Cientos de organizaciones de resistencia y personas prominentes endosaron el llamado del Foro de Beirut.

Manik Mukherjee, el secretario general del Foro Internacional Antiimperialista y de Solidaridad entre los Pueblos, quien viajó para trabajar en el Foro de Beirut durante el pasado año, encabezó una importante delegación de la India. También participó la Liga Internacional de la Lucha de los Pueblos.

La cifra más numerosa de delegados/as llegó de Irán e del mundo árabe, incluyendo a los Partidos Ba'ath y Comunista de Siria, pero también hubo muchos/as de América Latina, incluyendo a 30 de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela. Los participantes de Venezuela comprendían a miembros del parlamento, sindicalistas, y jóvenes de los Partidos Socialista Unido y Comunista de Venezuela.

De Europa, además de los grupos colaboradores, acudieron miembros/as del Partido Rojo de Noruega, el Odiario.info de Portugal, el Campo Antiimperialista, partidos obreros de Grecia y Chipre y muchos otros antiimperialistas de toda Europa.

Entre las fuerzas antiguerra de Estados Unidos estaban la ex congresista y candidata presidencial Cynthia KcKinney, el ex Fiscal General de Estados Unidos Ramsey Clark y delegaciones del Centro de Acción Internacional (CAI/IAC) y la Organización del Camino a la Libertad. McKinney estuvo recientemente en la nave Dignity, la cual fue chocada por la marina israelita mientras trataban de entregar ayuda a Gaza. Sara Flounders, codirectora del CAI/IAC, habló en la Sesión Plenaria de Palestina.

Dos campos en el mundo

"Hay dos campos en el mundo, el del imperialismo, encabezado por los EEUU, y el de la resistencia", declaró el subsecretario general de Hizbolá, el Jeque Naim Kassem, en la sesión inicial de la conferencia. "Y pienso que el campo de la resistencia va a prevalecer". Él llamó a los/as luchadores/as por la libertad y la justicia de todo el mundo a que sigan el ejemplo de la resistencia libanesa, donde "Hemos unido a los izquierdistas con los laicos, los

musulmanes comprometidos y los nacionalistas. ... Debemos unirnos para conformar una fuerza urgente y efectiva, sin importarnos el color de la piel, las etnias, los idiomas, las religiones o las creencias.

El Jeque Kassem denunció los intentos de Washington de imponer una "economía de mercado" en otros países, diciendo, "Los pueblos alrededor del mundo descubren que sus problemas están causados por la intervención de los EEUU y debemos unirnos. Pero no hay solidaridad sin el apoyo a la resistencia. ... Gaza hoy es el símbolo de la resistencia y la dignidad humana. Les llamamos a que estén con Gaza para dispersar la oscuridad del imperialismo y del sionismo".

Oradores de Hamas, el partido gobernante elegido democráticamente en Gaza, del Yihad Islámico y del Frente Popular para la Liberación de Palestina provocaron un fuerte aplauso de toda la audiencia mientras describían el horrible sufrimiento y la resistencia heroica del pueblo de Gaza y llamaron a la solidaridad política para que el pueblo palestino no perdiera diplomáticamente lo que defendieron en el campo de batalla.

Los paneles y los talleres de discusión combinaron las presentaciones políticas con propuestas de acción y poderosos testimonios personales. La periodista egipcia Dalia Saladin describió su visita a Gaza en enero del año pasado cuando guerrilleros forzaron la apertura de la frontera con Egipto en Rafa. "Cada hogar tiene por lo menos un mártir y otro discapacitado por la guerra. Pero cuando se camina entre el pueblo, se siente que se ha entrado en una nueva cultura y en una nueva perspectiva social, una cultura bondadosa y de sacrificio por los/as demás, donde los/as más pobres entre los/as pobres, especialmente las madres, dan el ejemplo".

Un hombre libanés, Hussein Shokr, hizo llorar a los/as delegados/as cuando contó cómo un cohete israelí había matado a su esposa y a sus cuatro hijos durante la guerra del 2006 mientras él estaba tra-

bajando en Canadá.

Activistas de Grecia y Chipre contaron de sus esfuerzos para romper físicamente el bloqueo de Gaza y cómo los trabajadores portuarios griegos habían rehusado cargar el barco con armas estadounidenses destinadas a Israel.

Durante la sesión final de la conferencia, la héroe de la resistencia palestina, Leila Khaled del Frente Popular para la Liberación de Palestina habló del "cese al fuego unilateral" anunciado hace poco por las fuerzas israelíes. "Saludamos a todos los que luchan por romper el estado de sitio de Gaza. Afirmamos que esta victoria fue ganada por nuestros guerrilleros. El cese al fuego unilateral comprueba que pese a toda su capacidad destructiva, Israel no pudo lograr todas sus metas en el campo de batalla. Ahora están buscando la ayuda de los EEUU para lograr sus objetivos políticamente. Pero consideramos que la ocupación es un acto de guerra. Cuando la injusticia es la ley, la resistencia es un deber. Y la única respuesta a la ocupación es resistencia y liberación".

Un organizador importante de la conferencia fue Mohamed Kassem, un líder del sindicato libanés de maestros. "Por la primera vez en el Líbano," dijo Kassem, "hemos creado una plataforma para los pueblos en lucha por todo el mundo, laico, nacionalista, izquierdista e islámico para expresar sus opiniones y trabajar juntos/as, contra las guerras en Palestina, Irak y Afganistán, contra las amenazas a Irán y las sanciones contra Sudán, contra el bloqueo de Cuba y los intentos de obstaculizar la dirección revolucionaria de Venezuela, Bolivia y de toda América Latina. . . . Estamos construyendo mecanismos de cooperación internacional y de solidaridad sur-sur, y planeamos intensificar esos esfuerzos en el futuro."

Cecil representó al Centro de Acción Internacional en el Foro de Beirut. Otros documentos y voces del foro aparecerán en un ejemplar de Mundo Obrero que será publicado en el futuro.

La izquierda triunfa en las elecciones del Salvador

Por Heather Cottin

En una elección histórica en El Salvador, el Partido Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional — (FMLN) se ha convertido en el partido de más representación en el parlamento. Del 1980 al 1992, el FMLN fue la mayor fuerza guerrillera en la revolución salvadoreña. El 18 de enero, el FMLN ganó las alcaldías en 82 ciudades de El Salvador, incluyendo la ciudad portuaria La Unión, pero perdió en San Salvador, la capital. El FMLN ganó la mayoría de las 262 municipalidades. (Telesur, 19 de enero)

La "globalización" y la crisis económica mundial han empobrecido a este país centroamericano. El Salvador es más pequeño que Nueva Jersey y tiene una población de 7 millones de personas. Debido a una tasa de desempleo del 65 por ciento en algunas regiones, a los bajos salarios y a las ejecuciones hipotecarias de fincas, casi 2.5 millones de personas han salido del país para buscar trabajo, mayormente hacia los Estados Unidos.

Estos/as exiliados/as económicos/as no tienen el derecho a votar pero las remesas a sus familias, que casi igualan el valor de las exportaciones del Salvador,

mantiene la economía de su país.

Durante los 12 años de la guerra de guerrillas del 1980 al 1991, Washington respaldó a la clase dominante del Salvador. Con fuerte apoyo de los/as trabajadores/as y campesinos/as salvadoreños/as, el FMLN luchó contra el ejército, los escuadrones de muerte y los asesores estadounidenses. La guerra costó más de 100.000 vidas. Un cese al fuego en 1992 colocó en el poder al partido derechista ARENA, asociado a los escuadrones de la muerte y al ejército.

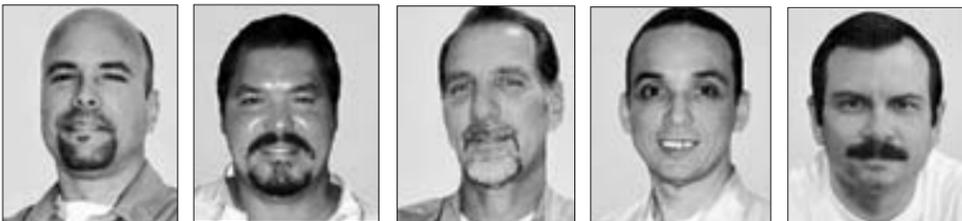
El presidente Antonio Saca, cabeza de ARENA, es el mejor amigo del gobierno estadounidense en Centroamérica.

Saca ha promovido el uso del dólar estadounidense como la moneda corriente en El Salvador, ha promovido leyes anti sindicales y salarios bajos, y ha privatizado el agua, las playas y los servicios públicos. Bajo su régimen, los precios se han duplicado.

El miembro del FMLN Carlos Canales, le dijo a Mundo Obrero que ARENA ganó la alcaldía de San Salvador en vez del FMLN porque "sistemáticamente privó a la capital de fondos para la recogida de basura y otros servicios básicos."

Telesur reportó que el FMLN ganó 37 diputados/as en el Congreso del Salvador, que tiene 84 miembros/as, mientras que ARENA ganó 33. El FMLN ganó en la mayoría de las ciudades grandes y las municipalidades alrededor de San Salvador.

El candidato del FMLN, Mauricio Funes, está a 10 puntos de ventaja en las encuestas para las elecciones presidenciales del Salvador que tendrán lugar en marzo de este año. □



Libertad para los cinco compatriotas cubanos que defendieron a su país del terrorismo y que ahora están presos en EE.UU. por evitar muertes en la isla