

WORKERS WORLD

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Gov't panel does the bosses' dirty work Tries to cut Social Security, Medicare

By Deirdre Griswold

Another huge fraud is being perpetrated so the rich can get their way. Their weapon is fear. The corporate media are full of pundits explaining the government must cut the national budget or everything will collapse.

And how must it be cut? By going after Social Security and Medicare, first and foremost. In other words, squeeze the elderly and the sick.

That's the message now coming out of the commission appointed by President Barack Obama to deal with the budget deficit. The bipartisan panel is co-chaired by Democrat Erskine Bowles, a former Clinton White House chief of staff, and Republican Alan Simpson, a former U.S. senator from Wyoming.

The commission was appointed last winter but held up its recommendations until after the election. Both Democrats and Republicans were happy with that — neither wants to shoulder the blame for what is undoubtedly the most unpopular move in years.

The wealthy financiers and business moguls in the United States who make up the ruling class have been on an offensive against the working class for many years. They've restructured industry, replacing workers with machines. They've taken their capital overseas to exploit even lower-paid workers and then demanded that workers here accept less or else.

But with all that, their capitalist system went into a downward spiral three years ago and, as far as jobs go, hasn't recovered. Government revenues fell with the

capitalist recession. The administration threw trillions of dollars at the banks and auto corporations to bail them out.

And last year the rich got their politicians at all levels of government to vote for cutting the social service budgets — so there'd be plenty of money to pay interest to the bankers on past loans and to pay the military-industrial complex for all the costly hardware used to carry out imperialist wars and invasions.

The federal government is deeply in debt and running a deficit. But why? Not because workers here get too many benefits. Given the tremendous wealth that exists in this country, the lack of good schools, health care, housing, pensions and other needed state services is scandalous. The U.S. is way behind other developed countries in these areas.

The other side of the coin — literally — is the miserably small taxes on the rich, which have been cut and cut and cut while workers' net income has shrunk.

More money thrown at the banks, corporations and war machine. Lower taxes on the rich. Result: a big deficit. That's a no-brainer.

But the panel doesn't see it that way. They want to raise the retirement age of workers in this country to 69 and at the same time cut our benefits. Yes, work until you drop, that's the message.

Remember all that money you paid into your retirement with every paycheck? You thought it was yours, that it was part of your wages being banked by the gov-

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WW PHOTOS: G. DUNKEL

Town Hall meeting exposes war on dissent

WORKERS WORLD
this week...

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

Speaking at a Nov. 10 Town Hall meeting here on the war on dissent, Minneapolis anti-war and Colombia-solidarity activist Jess Sundin received a standing ovation after describing her experience as a target of FBI raids on Sept. 24. "We have got to push back to stop these attacks," Sundin stated. "We can't let them attempt to silence us."

Sundin joined a panel that included former FBI agent Michael German, who now works for the American Civil Liberties Union Policy Counsel; Paul Hetznecker, a criminal defense/civil rights attorney from Philadelphia; and Mary Catherine Roper, senior staff attorney with the ACLU of Pennsylvania. The program was hosted by activist attorney Michael Coard.

The Town Hall meeting was initiated through the joint efforts of the ACLU and the First Amendment Network. The latter coalition arose in September 2010 in response to revelations that the Pennsylvania Office of Homeland Security paid the Institute of Terrorism Research and Response, a private Israeli-based firm, to spy on activities of more than 300 individuals and activist organizations throughout the state. The pretext was a hunt for potential "terror" risks.

Sundin, a founding member of the Twin Cities Anti-war Committee, told what she experienced when FBI agents raided her home looking for evidence to support charges against her and other activists of "material support for terrorism." Not only did they seize computers and mailing lists, they even searched her six-year-old daughter's belongings.

Ten years ago Sundin traveled to Colombia where she met with many people resisting the U.S. military, including some groups on Washington's list of alleged "terrorist organizations." She returned home and spoke out against U.S. repression of Colombians.

Sundin noted that the 1996 law banning "material support to foreign terrorist organizations," expanded after Sept. 11, 2001, has been used to prosecute Somali women in Minnesota simply for collecting used clothing to send to their homeland.

"Anyone involved in Central American solidarity work, anti-apartheid activities or speaking out in defense of the Irish liberation movement in the 1980s would have been affected by this law if those activities were taking place today," she said.

All the people targeted by the September FBI raids including Sundin have been subpoenaed, but so far all have refused to appear before a federal grand jury.

Mary Catherine Roper described Pennsylvania Homeland Security spying on area activists as a "wholesale attack on the right to dissent." Roper noted that while the state cancelled its \$103,000 contract with ITRR, it re-signed such spying to the Pennsylvania state police.

"Our solution is not in the courts that have only served to protect government secrecy since 9/11," said Roper. "We need to organize public outrage."

Having served as legal counsel for hundreds of activists



WW PHOTOS: JOE PIETTE

Philadelphia Town Hall meeting. Panelists Michael Coard, Michael German and Jess Sundin at right.



arrested for protesting at the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia in 2000, Paul Hetznecker was all too familiar with the city's history of political repression.

Of groups like ITRR, Hetznecker said, "Much of the time what the government gets from these right-wing groups is garbage." Yet, he added, it leads to anti-war groups becoming targets of federal investigations and put on "terrorist watch lists."

"In the 1950s the label of 'communists' was used to stifle dissent," Hetznecker noted. "Today it's 'terrorist.' Where does that leave you if you are simply opposing environmental damage from gas drilling in Pennsylvania?"

Michael German, a former FBI agent now employed by the ACLU in Washington, raised that this type of intelligence-gathering activity has always happened at the "fringe of the law," but now it is increasingly in the open.

"The kind of spying activities that targeted activists at Pittsburgh's Thomas Merton Center, in Maryland and most recently Pennsylvania is only 'new' in the sense that it has formalized the merger of state, local, federal and now private operations. Military intelligence is also increasingly involved in domestic spying operations," he noted.

German described the privatization of spying: "What we are afraid is happening is that when federal regulations prohibit any [spying] activity, they can pass it off to whichever entity has the most restrictive release rules, which are usually private companies and the military."

"All of us are victims of this. Once dissent is suppressed against one of us, all of us are threatened," stressed German.

Sponsors of the event included the ACLU, Brandywine Peace Community, CAIR-PA, International Action Center, Kensington Welfare Rights Union, Granny Peace Brigade, National Lawyers Guild, Poor Peoples Economic Summit, International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, The Shalom Center, Workers World Party and the Philadelphia Branch of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

Because many of the activities targeted by the office of Homeland Security involved protests of the growing natural gas industry, several environmental organizations also participated and endorsed the event. □

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WE ARE ALL MUMIA!

By **Betsey Piette**
Philadelphia

More than 500 people, mostly African American and youth, mobilized for an outdoor rally Nov. 9 here in support of political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. The rally lasted through a 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals hearing on whether the death sentence would be reinstated for Abu-Jamal, who has maintained his innocence since being railroaded to death row for the 1981 killing of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner.

Abu-Jamal's supporters included a delegation from the Transport Workers Union Local 100; Charles Barron, the New York Freedom Party gubernatorial candidate; Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition, NYC; International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal; and the International Action Center. Activists traveled from as far away as California, Texas, Arizona, Germany, France and Russia.

Shenice Morris told Workers World that she and two other high school students missed school to attend: "We are not going to sit down and be oppressed. Mumia's case is an example of just how corrupt this government is. We are tired of the attacks on the African-American community. It has to stop."

Larry Holmes with the Bail Out the People Movement stated: "We are all Mumia. We want to see Mumia walk out as a free man. We will not give up until that happens. Around the world Mumia has come to symbolize the struggles of African Americans for freedom and against oppression."

Inside the court, a three-judge panel convened to reexamine their 2008 decision regarding confusion over jury instructions in the sentencing phase of Abu-Jamal's 1982 trial. Two years ago these judges, finding that the jury had been given flawed and misleading instructions, upheld an earlier decision by Judge William Yohn to vacate the death sentence. Yohn's decision left Abu-Jamal in prison for life without the possibility of parole.

However in January 2010 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a lower court order vacating the death sentence in another case had been in error. That case, which also focused on confusing language on a jury ballot form and misleading instructions to the jury, involved neo-Nazi Frank Spizak, who was sentenced to death for the random killings of Black and Jewish people.

An appeal of the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals decision in Abu-Jamal's case, filed by the Philadelphia district attorney, was pending in the Supreme Court. After ruling against Spizak, the court sent Abu-Jamal's appeal back to the 3rd Circuit, asking them to review their decision in light of the Spizak ruling.

While Assistant District Attorney Hugh Burns tried to argue that the issues in Abu-Jamal's case were "almost identical" to those in Spizak's, Widener University law professor Judith Ritter, arguing for Abu-Jamal, countered that the two jury forms were "fundamentally different." Ritter successfully argued the same issue before these judges in 2008.

At a press conference following the hearing, Professor Johanna Fernandez with Educators for Mumia said she "found it very disturbing that the court was obsessive over semantics and insignificant details, without being willing to consider the case as a whole — the overwhelming evidence of innocence and the totality of violations of Mumia's legal and constitutional rights."

No decision is expected until 2011, but even if the judges uphold their 2008 deci-

sion, the district attorney's office can appeal again to the Supreme Court. And the Supreme Court could vote to reverse the lower court and reinstate the death penalty.

If the Supreme Court chooses not to take the case or lets the lower court ruling stand, the district attorney would have to decide whether to seek a new penalty-phase trial or to leave Abu-Jamal with a life sentence. A new trial would give Abu-Jamal the chance to introduce new evidence regarding the killing.

It's clear that support for Abu-Jamal cannot be allowed to waiver. Supporters vowed to intensify a campaign demanding that Attorney General Eric Holder conduct an investigation into the numerous violations of Abu-Jamal's civil rights.

Justice debated

The high energy at the rally was fueled by an event the night before where two Abu-Jamal supporters, Fernandez and attorney Michael Coard, took on Philadelphia District Attorney Seth Williams and filmmaker Tigre Hill in a debate on the case.

Hill, who is African American, had previewed his anti-Abu-Jamal, pro-Fraternal-Order-of-Police film, "The Barrel of a Gun," to a mostly white audience of cops and politicians in September. He set up the Nov. 8 debate to follow a screening of his film at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia the night before Abu-Jamal's hearing.

It's hard to believe Hill did not anticipate that Abu-Jamal supporters would pack the hall, or that Fernandez and Coard would trounce him and Williams, but that's exactly what happened.

Hill's film claims that Abu-Jamal conspired with his brother, William Cook, to murder Faulkner because Abu-Jamal was a former member of the Black Panther Party and a supporter of the MOVE Organization that "always wanted to kill police."

Long on innuendo but seriously short on

MIAMI

Militant youth lead march to defend Mumia

By **Mike Martinez**
Miami

The streets were dark and cold. Shops and stores were closing, and from a distance the only noise that could be heard came from sidewalk bistros and cafes catering to an upscale clientele. Homeless people seeking shelter hid at bus stops where small groups of workers waited for rides home. Downtown Miami was becoming a ghost town.

Almost out of nowhere the sound of conga drums shattered the silence. Megaphones amplified the voices of young protesters crying, "Free Mumia now!"

A rally of about 20 people gathered in front of the Claude Pepper Federal Building. Holding signs with photographs of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the protesters formed a picket line, chanting, "If Mumia dies, there'll be fire in the skies!" Chants led by Miami Fight Imperialism, Stand Together were followed by members of NCOBRA and the Republic of New Africa. Poets from the radical poets' organization GRUNTZ joined in.

Homeless people appeared from nowhere. They stood by amazed and with approving looks on their faces while dancing and stepping to the African drum beats.

In response to the ruckus, police and security stormed out of the federal building, forming a line at the entrance. Their boss must have told them to keep calm because they stayed back and left the rally

After the hearing, supporters speak out to 'Free Mumia!' including Johanna Fernandez, co-producer of the film, 'Justice on Trial: The Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal.'



WW PHOTOS:
JOE PIETTE

facts, "The Barrel of a Gun" presents a one-sided portrayal of the revolutionary Black movements of the 1960s and 1970s as a group of "violent, extremist, communist-sympathizing radicals out to kill cops."

There is never any mention of the rampant police repression against the Black and Latino/a communities, nor of the widespread corruption that eventually led to federal investigations of the Philadelphia police department. Hill ignores the fact that Black Panther Party members carried guns in self-defense after dozens of their comrades were killed by police.

Williams tried to minimize the facts as well, repeating a refrain that "four witnesses said they saw Mumia shoot Faulkner" and "Mumia confessed." When Williams said, "We're bound by the facts," he was greeted by jeers from the audience.

Fernandez responded that the prosecution's star witness, Cynthia White, initially picked out Kenneth Freeman, a passenger in William Cook's car, in a lineup. Police coerced White to change her testimony. Fernandez noted that 15 of the police involved in collecting evidence in Abu-Jamal's case were brought up on corruption charges for evidence tampering in other cases, but the jury was not told that.

Fernandez has produced another documentary on the case entitled "Justice on Trial." She challenged Williams and Hill

to "stick to the facts in the case, not the ones you make up."

Coard spoke of the inherent racism in the U.S. and compared Abu-Jamal's case to those of thousands of other Black and poor people who are railroaded through the judicial system without adequate representation or juries of their peers. Coard noted that the police failed to perform gun residue tests on Abu-Jamal's hands to prove he had even fired a gun the night Faulkner was shot.

Coard also pointed out that Abu-Jamal's attorney during the original trial, Anthony Williams, was eventually disbarred.

Seemingly nervous that the debate was not going his way, Hill left the stage at one point to be coached on the sideline. He returned with yet another lie: that Abu-Jamal's former attorney, Robert Bryan, "was going to argue for self-defense." Fernandez and the audience booted this outright lie.

A highlight of the debate came when Coard stood up and hand-delivered an order charging Hill with copyright infringement for using substantial footage from the film "Black and Blue" without obtaining permission from its owner, Hugh King. "Black and Blue" focuses on police brutality in Philadelphia. The order instructed Hill to cease screening and disseminating his film and to destroy all copies or risk a lawsuit. □

alone. Chants were yelled in their direction, as activists vented their frustrations about the injustice being done to Mumia.

One brother began yelling, "Tell the truth!" Others followed with "Stop lying!" This became a popular chant: "Tell the truth! Stop lying! Tell the truth! Stop lying! Tell the truth! Stop lying!" The chant soon assumed the rhythm and flow of the drum beats.

Deep-seated anger at the system could be felt, heard and seen at that rally. Participants and observers alike were pumping their fists in the air in enthusiasm. Everyone was chanting as loud as they could. The fervor rose like mercury in a thermometer, with everyone chanting as loud as they could, some even losing their voices.

A Miami FIST youth began chanting an old Black Panther chant, "The revolution has come." Then everyone yelled, "Free Mumia!" The chant continued, "It's time to pick up the gun — Free Mumia!" The cops were visibly disturbed as that chant continued.

As time went on, the rally attracted more people. Black youth waiting for the bus began to grab picket signs and join the chants. Their buses came and left, but they didn't get on them. Instead, they marched half a mile to Miami's Torch of Friendship, a public gathering space where demonstrations are frequently held.

As protesters crossed the street to begin marching, the cops walked in front

of them and ordered them to cross to another street. The cops stated that the sidewalk the protesters were attempting to use was federal property. All the cops were white, and their attitude angered the crowd. Youth began to challenge the cops, and a fight almost broke out as one of the cops reached for his holster.

An activist yelled into the megaphone, "Ignore those racist pigs. If they won't let us march on the sidewalk, then we'll take the streets!" Surrounded and outnumbered, the cops changed their attitude. An officer politely asked the demonstrators, "Please continue your march across the street." Protesters marched forward, without a permit, into the night.

Although no media or TV crews caught it, we know that the state definitely took note of this action and the mood of resistance on the streets of Miami. We hope that our voices are heard and that this small contribution can influence the state and stay their hand from killing our innocent comrade, Mumia Abu-Jamal.

We also hope and have faith that those young people watching from passing cars and buses or who were just walking home and by chance saw and heard our militant march, become filled with revolutionary spirit, and are inspired to follow our lead or join us in the coming battles breaking out everyday.

Martinez is a leader of Miami FIST, which helped organize the demonstration.

Workers fight firings, resist attacks on public housing

By Sharon Danann
Cleveland

Public housing is under attack nationwide. In the line of fire are Public Housing Authority workers, some of whom want to fight back. Tenants suffer collateral damage through deteriorating living conditions. The attack is part of the overall assault on programs for the poor, an intensification of poverty for the benefit of the wealthy.

In June a PHA Directors Association conference called "Planning for Change" included a training on the mandatory program introduced under the George W. Bush administration called Asset Based Management. Borrowing the concept of "asset management" from the business world, ABM requires each public housing project to operate independently and at a profit. A suggested means to this end is privatization, using property management companies.

Also up for grabs is the mission of the PHAs. The presentation raised the question, "Who are we in the context of a 21st-century housing provider?" The answers included "public housing caretakers," "local affordable housing developer" or "entrepreneurial PHA." (MDStrum Housing Services Inc., June 7) Since the PHAs are bound by the Housing Act of 1937 to be public housing caretakers, becoming developers or entrepreneurs means they may be straying from their legal mandate.

In Ohio the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority is rolling back the clock on job security for American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees Local 1355, which repre-

sents maintenance and clerical workers. CMHA finds fraudulent ways to fire workers "for cause," which makes them ineligible for unemployment benefits. Management's strategy is to terrorize the workers on for-cause charges based on provocations, frame-ups, distortions and outright lies.

CMHA has fired almost 80 workers in the past two years. The tenants are now being charged for each repair order they put in. The result is a serious deterioration in living conditions and less need for maintenance and clerical workers. These layoffs are dressed as terminations.

Dave Patterson, former president of the local, is the main organizer of union activists. During his tenure he won partial resolution of a significant wage gap through bold rallies and media exposure. He filed many grievances and handled many arbitrations on behalf of members whom the International union had not supported. Both CMHA and the regional officers of AFSCME found Patterson's fighting spirit difficult to work with.

Patterson told Workers World in October, "The anti-union movement is based on divide and conquer. They create infighting and turmoil." Divisive tactics swept Patterson out of office and put in Elkanard Smith.

Bosses target militant unionists

Kevin Mitchell was fired in 2007 for alleged cell phone use on the job. Successful arbitration brought him back in 2009. He was appointed steward and then decided to run for president against Smith. Speaking to WW earlier this year, he charged, "Elkanard is in cahoots with CMHA."

Smith quickly withdrew Mitchell as steward, but his supporters submitted a petition to retain him.

CMHA wasn't happy about the grievance Mitchell had won for unpaid overtime during his brief tenure as steward. They used the techniques of provocation and set-up to fire Mitchell for "cursing loudly," "profane and obscene language" and "insubordination."

The alleged profanity was Mitchell's repeating aloud a death threat from Smith, which Smith later admitted. The alleged insubordination was when Mitchell did not comply with a supervisor's command to "Sit!" fast enough to suit her. Mitchell's pending unfair labor practices case takes up these issues, among others.

Mitchell informed WW that his unemployment benefits were denied based on a whole new lie. CMHA stated that they found him in a closet avoiding work, though no details of date or place were given. It is a testament to CMHA's clout that Ohio Jobs and Family Services bought this flimsy line.

Salita Baker, chief steward of the clerical workers and a leading activist, has not been notified about several clerical terminations which could easily have been challenged. Instead, she told WW that Smith, who represented the workers, has failed to adequately defend them.

In addition, since 2007 CMHA maintenance workers have been told to change into uniforms with insignia identifying them as employees of Western Reserve Management. They are then transported off housing project properties to rehab foreclosed houses and apartments in the suburbs, which have been purchased by CMHA for Section 8 housing. Patterson considers this an illegal use of their labor under Housing Act terms and a pay scale violation under their union contract. But more importantly, CMHA has been a major player in tipping the balance in favor of foreclosures.

"It's the biggest Ponzi scheme in America. The banks are at the top, hand in hand with the U.S. government. The PHAs are in the middle, buying up houses with taxpayer dollars. And the little people are at the bottom, being forced out of their homes," Patterson told WW.

These few examples of CMHA treachery are part of a long-term strategy to break up public sector unions and to privatize public housing and place it in the grasping hands of greedy developers, while covertly placing large sums of public money in private bank coffers. At CMHA, activist workers are fighting back. □

On the Picket Line

by Sue Davis

Hyatt housekeepers file OSHA complaints

More than 3,500 mostly women housekeepers in 12 Hyatt hotels in eight cities filed injury complaints with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration on Nov. 9. This unprecedented move by UNITE-HERE Local 2 members was based on a study of 50 U.S. hotels operated by the five largest U.S. hotel chains that showed housekeepers have the highest injury rates among hotel workers and that housekeepers at Hyatt hotels have the highest injury rates in all the hotels studied. The report, published in the American Journal of Industrial Medicine earlier this year, showed that women hotel workers were 50 percent more likely to be injured than men, and Latina women had almost double the risk of injury as their white female counterparts. Housekeepers at Hyatt hotels risked injury at a rate almost twice that of workers at hotels with the lowest rate. The OSHA complaint offered recommendations like using fitted sheets to reduce the number of times women must lift 100-pound mattresses, supplying long-handled mops and dusters so workers can avoid climbing and crawling, and scheduling reasonable room quotas to help prevent injuries. Complaints were filed by Hyatt workers in Chicago; Honolulu; Indianapolis; San Antonio; and Long Beach, Los Angeles, Santa Clara and San Francisco in California.

Nurses in D.C. plan one-day strike

Nurses at the Washington Hospital Center in Washington, D.C., who have been fighting for a decent contract for months, voted to strike on Nov. 24 to bring the hospital back to the bargaining table. The nurses are frustrated because management won't agree to their demands for patient safety or recognize National Nurses United as their union. Management also refuses to change unsafe staffing conditions and is demanding unauthorized takeaways in pay and paid time off. (Union City!, the online newsletter of Metro Washington Council AFL-CIO, Nov. 12)

Flight attendants union challenges Delta vote

The first union representation election for Delta flight attendants since the merger of Delta and Northwest Airlines ended with a vote rejecting the flight attendants union (AFA-CWA) by less than 300 out of 18,000 votes cast. AFA-CWA President Patricia Friend announced Nov. 3 that the union is "submitting interference charges against Delta management for their illegal and unfair methods to sway the vote." As in past campaigns, Delta ran an anti-union drive based on fear and misinformation. (AFL-CIO blog, Nov. 3)

Midwest grocery store workers approve contracts

In early November more than 21,000 grocery store workers in the Midwest approved three-year contracts that included modest raises, reports the Food and Commercial Workers union. More than 9,000 checkers, stockers, baggers and department managers at 104 stores in St. Louis' three largest grocery chains are represented by UFCW Local 655, while more than 12,000 workers are represented by UFCW Local 75 in Cincinnati-area Kroger stores. Local 75 members will also see improved benefits, including higher pension contributions. □

Pittsburgh City Council bans gas drilling

By Betsey Piette

Less than a week after a major rally in their city against fracking, the Pittsburgh City Council banned Marcellus Shale gas drilling inside city limits by an 8-to-0 vote on Nov. 9.

"We cannot let this industry run unabated throughout our cities, towns and natural environment," said City Councilman Doug Shields, who was also a featured speaker at the Nov. 3 anti-fracking rally. Council president Darlene Harris raised concerns about the effects of drilling and industry chemicals on the health of residents, stating "I can't vote any other way." (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Nov. 10).

The council's vote challenges court rulings that give the state the authority over drilling. Supporters hope the council's action will encourage other communities to follow suit in defying the gas industry, which has started hydraulic fracturing or fracking in other areas of Pennsylvania.

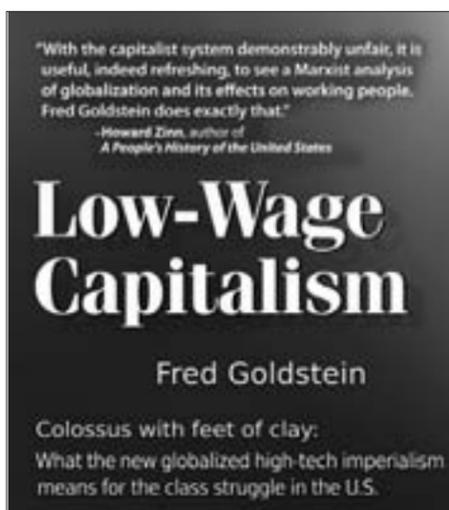
The Pittsburgh Council ban was crafted by the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund, whose spokesperson Ben Price reported hearing from three other municipalities interested in their own bans within hours of the vote.

Price called the proposed ban "a local bill of rights," noting that city residents should have rights to exclude drilling in

their neighborhoods, no matter what rights the state gives to corporations. (PPG)

The Marcellus Shale Coalition representing the gas industry accused Shields of wanting to deny private property owners their "fundamental rights." The industry is suggesting a legal challenge to the Pittsburgh ban.

Council members indicated they are up for a legal fight. "I'd love to have some discovery here," said Councilperson Bruce Kraus. "I am not about to gamble with some of the most basic human rights people possess — clean air and clean water, safe environments in which to live and raise families." (PPG) □



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NATIONAL CONFERENCE SAYS

Down with capitalism, fight for world socialism

By Monica Moorehead
New York

Some 300 Party members, friends and allies representing many important struggles at home and abroad attended the annual Workers World Party national conference Nov. 13-14. They came from cities where Party branches are located and other parts of the country. Some revolutionaries traveled to the conference from as far away as Canada and India. The very multinational crowd included many young people.

The conference boldly called to the broader movement with the theme of "Abolish Capitalism, Fight for a Socialist Future." Conference plenary sessions, breakout groups and open mike sessions focused on the growing epidemic of unemployment, cutbacks, war and racism in the current phase of this unprecedented global capitalist economic crisis, which is approaching its third year.

Many of the talks exposed that this current crisis has proven that capitalism, an economic system based on making profits, is incapable of meeting the needs of the people and that socialism is the only solution to meeting human needs and saving the planet.

Participants joined three workshops: student and youth organizing; community and labor outreach; and Workers World newspaper.

The opening plenary session examined the recent bourgeois midterm elections, the capitalist crisis, a defense of Marxism and a call for socialist unity among the left. The panel included three members of the WWP secretariat: Teresa Gutierrez, Larry Holmes and Fred Goldstein. Gutierrez is a co-coordinator of the May 1 Coalition for Worker and Immigrant Rights. Holmes is a leader of the Bail Out the People Movement. Goldstein is the author of the book, "Low Wage Capitalism."

Excerpts from the first plenary session

talks appear in this, the Nov. 25 issue of Workers World; other contributions will appear in future issues of WW.

Also speaking in this panel were two leaders of Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST): Larry Hales and Elena Everett. Hales is a leading member of WWP and a contributing editor of WW newspaper. Everett is a founding member of the newest branch of WWP in Durham, N.C.

Crisis and resistance amongst workers, women, youth

The second plenary session included two panels. The first panel spoke specifically to the impact of the capitalist crisis on African Americans, women, young and aging workers, immigrants, union organizing in the South, the environment, mass organizing and a call for a government-sponsored jobs program for the unemployed.

The WWP leading members who spoke were Sharon Black, a health care worker, United Food and Commercial Workers Union organizer and founding member of the Baltimore All-Peoples Congress; Phebe Eckfeldt, a leader of the Boston Women's Fightback Network and union representative of AFSCME Local 3650 Harvard Union of Technical and Clerical Workers; John Parker from Los Angeles and West Coast coordinator of the International Action Center; Dante Strobino from Durham, N.C., Raleigh FIST organizer and field organizer for UE Local 150, North Carolina Public Service Workers Union; Betsey Piette, from Philadelphia, WW contributing editor; and Martha Grevatt, auto worker for 23 years in Ohio, now based in Detroit. From Baltimore, Andre Powell, an activist in the lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer movement, chaired the panel.

The second panel focused on the fight-back of youth and students and included some of the most dynamic young members of WWP. The issues raised in this

panel were struggles involving the re-segregation of public schools, women's rights, the Free Palestine campus movement, Latin America, and exploring myths about imperialism and socialism.

The speakers were Ben Carroll and Scott Williams, FIST organizers from Durham and Raleigh; Myia Campbell, Boston Women's Fightback Network leader; Megan Spencer, East Lansing, Mich., co-founder of the Coalition Against Sexual Violence at Michigan State University; Caleb Maupin, Cleveland FIST organizer; Lila Goldstein, Boston FIST member; and Mike Martinez, a Miami FIST and May Day Coalition organizer.

Building solidarity at home, abroad

The third plenary session focused on the struggle against imperialism and the need for international workers solidarity including the right to self-determination. Party speakers were Abayomi Azikiwe, a WW contributing editor, editor of Pan-African News Wire and member of the Detroit Committee to Stop FBI/Grand Jury Repression; Sara Flounders, WWP secretariat member and IAC coordinator in New York; John Catalinotto, WW managing editor and WWP representative to international meetings; Berta Joubert-Ceci from Philadelphia and staff member of Workers World/Mundo Obrero; Dianne Mathiowetz, an IAC organizer in Atlanta; and Steven Kirschbaum, founder of United Steelworkers Local 8751 Boston School Bus Union and an organizer with the Committee to Support Chuck Turner.

Joubert-Ceci paid tribute to Lolita Lebrón and Juan Mari Bras, heroic leaders of the Puerto Rican independence struggle who died recently. Cheryl LaBash, co-chair of the U.S.-Cuba Labor Exchange, paid tribute to the late Rev. Lucius Walker of IFCO/Pastors for Peace, a longtime Cuba solidarity activist. Lucy Pagoada, member of Honduran Resistancia-USA and the IAC Latin America-Caribbean

Solidarity Committee, spoke on the ongoing resistance to the 2009 U.S.-supported rightwing coup in Honduras.

Mick Kelly from the Freedom Road Socialist Organization publicly thanked WWP on behalf of himself and 13 other anti-war and socialist activists who were victims of FBI raids in Midwest cities this past Sept. 24. In early October, these activists refused to testify before a repressive grand jury hearing in Chicago. Aaron Merced gave solidarity greetings from the Canada-based Fire This Time Movement for Social Justice.

The plenary sessions on Sunday were devoted to why workers need a revolutionary party. Party speakers included Deirdre Griswold, WWP founding member and WW editor; LeiLani Dowell, WW managing editor, FIST leader and lesbian/gay/bi/trans/queer activist; David Sole, Detroit branch founding member; Gloria Verdieu, San Diego Coalition to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal and IAC leader; Peter Gilbert, Durham and Raleigh FIST founder; Gavrielle Gemma, New York organizer with the Bail Out the People Movement; and Judy Greenspan from San Francisco.

Larry Holmes gave the conference summation in which he called for a renewed urgency to prioritize the need to build anti-capitalist and pro-socialist unity. The conference ended with the singing of the communist anthem, The Internationale.

Cultural performances were provided by The Last Internationale, a revolutionary anarchist group, who sang "Workers of the World Unite," along with spoken word by Myia Campbell and Mike Martinez. Podcasts of plenary talks will be posted at workers.tv. Read more than 30 conference solidarity greetings at workers.org.

The writer, Monica Moorehead, WWP secretariat member and editor of "Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle," spoke in the first panel of the second plenary session.

System of exploitation reaches an impasse

Following are excerpts from the Nov. 13 talk at the Workers World Party national conference by Fred Goldstein based upon a pre-conference document entitled "The Capitalist Crisis." Excerpts of the document were published in the last two issues of Workers World; the entire document is available at www.workersworld.net. Goldstein is a member of the Secretariat of Workers World Party and the author of the book "Low-Wage Capitalism."

We study the capitalist crisis not as an academic matter, but as a way of sharpening our revolutionary perspective in the struggle to overthrow capitalism and fight for a socialist future. From that point of view we see that this is a rare moment in history, a moment at which a world historic social system, the capitalist system, has reached an impasse and cannot go forward. It is moving in the direction of dragging humanity down.

One of the most important features of the present crisis is the fact that the capitalist state has become the principal prop of the system. It is an admission that the so-called "free market" system can no longer work on its own.

This was demonstrated dramatically the day after the elections when the Federal Reserve Board announced to the world that it was going to pump \$600 bil-

lion more into the banks and to financiers in the hope that it would create wealth and more jobs. This is on top of \$10.6 trillion already put into the system. Ben Bernanke, the head of the Federal Reserve, openly stated that economic growth was anemic and could not deal with the unemployment crisis. Bernanke also said that if \$600 billion were not enough, the Federal Reserve would put in more.

It is important to know, in order to understand the crisis at the G-20 meeting in Seoul, South Korea, this week, that this money was entirely printed money. The Fed created this money out of nothing. It is not putting in money that it has. It is putting in money that it is creating. The Federal Reserve "buys" a five- or 10-year bond from some banker by creating an account in a Federal Reserve Bank for the rich to draw on when they want and for what they want. This will inevitably debase the dollar as a world currency.

But, most importantly, the financial authorities do not have even the slightest evidence that this new infusion of money will work. In fact, the deep reluctance of the capitalists to borrow for investment purposes and job creation indicates that it will not work.

Instead of pouring \$600 billion into a federal jobs program for workers, who desperately need jobs and who can actually create real wealth and value, not

fictional paper value, the Federal Reserve is pouring it into the accounts of bankers and other billionaire investors. This is the capitalists' approach to the crisis — that is, to enrich themselves.

And the greatest sign that U.S. capitalism is moving backwards, and dragging the workers and oppressed with it, is the new deficit commission. It should be called the "capitalist commission to soak the masses and save the rich."

Its mission completely verifies our analysis that capitalism is at an impasse and headed toward deeper crisis. The document put forward the other day by the two commission co-chairs will probably change drastically in its details over time. But what it signifies is that the ruling class is reacting to the crisis by getting ready to impose an austerity program on the workers and the oppressed.

The original proposal seeks to cut the deficit by \$4 trillion through cutbacks to Social Security benefits, raising the retirement age to 69, cutting back on Medicaid, cutting social spending, changing the tax structure to lower corporate taxes and in-



Fred Goldstein

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

come taxes on the rich, and many other methods. Their crisis is so severe that they have even proposed cuts in the military.

The deficit commission is the result of the bailouts. The financial crisis is not because of Social Security or Medicaid. It is because of all the money that has been spent to support the banks, to buy toxic mortgages, to bail out the auto industry, to bail out AIG and other financial parasites. It is because the bosses have laid off millions of workers across the country and the government tax revenue is decreasing as the economy goes down.

The deficit is the result of the capitalist state absorbing the crisis of the bankers and the bosses into itself. It is a capitalist crisis commission that seeks to unload the crisis upon the masses by drastic cutbacks of gains won over the last hundred years.

Consider that the U.S. is the richest, most powerful country in the world, with the largest economy, the highest technology, the biggest businesses. Yet the ruling class, by ordering an austerity program, is admitting that it is facing a dire future and cannot grow out of this crisis on its own.

Continued on page 10

Immigrant rights movement at a crossroads

Following are excerpts from the Nov. 13 talk given at the Workers World Party national conference by Teresa Gutierrez, a member of the Secretariat of Workers World Party and a leader of the May 1 Coalition for Worker and Immigrant Rights.



Teresa Gutierrez

This conference is historic — because it takes place at a time of development in the capitalist system like none other. No communist or class-conscious organizer has faced what we are facing.

Imperialism and capitalism are at a unique point in development. This is a crisis of the entire system. This is not your common boom-and-bust crisis, but one with absolutely no answer to the growing unemployment or any of the myriad problems our class faces here and around the world.

This is a crisis with a jobless recovery. Does this mean we cannot win jobs in this period? Absolutely not! It only means that we must revive the class struggle, together with the ideological struggle, in order to win the jobs and rights workers deserve, including legalization.

The movement for immigrant rights, like many others, is at a crossroad. It is an example of how urgent the need is to revive the ideological struggle. Activists must put on class-conscious glasses in order to not only survive but move the struggle forward.

Jon Stewart attacked Marxism at his silly, obtuse but dangerous rally in Washington. But only Marxism will provide the tools to understand and put an end to the crisis.

How else can immigrant activists go forward? How else can we analyze the elections and their relevance to the passage of pro-immigrant legislation without class lenses?

The Latino vote in many areas of the country was crucial to Democratic elec-

tions. The re-election of Harry Reid is the biggest example.

Republican Latinos were elected in record numbers. The election of anti-immigrant Marc Rubio and Republican Gov. Rick Scott in Florida led immigrants to comment with great fear about their future.

History shows that it matters not who is in Washington but who is in the streets fighting.

In Florida, like elsewhere, there is talk about passing Arizona-like legislation. The alarming implementation of 287(g) — legislation initiated by Clinton, strengthened by Bush and expanded by President Obama — has led to a wave of racial profiling. Immigrants are singled out for arrest without suspicion of a crime. Being stopped for a busted taillight, selling DVDs on a street corner or a tragic domestic violence can quickly lead to deportation.

It is understandable how the fear of the right-wing, how the racist rhetoric of Tea Party candidates propelled many into the

voting booths to pull the Democratic Party lever. But it's a setback. The Democrats have done nothing but sell out the immigrant rights movement.

So what do we do? Organize and fight back, that's what. These are pillars of our party work, whether it is in coalitions or organizing demonstrations.

Our work is guided by the teachings of Lenin and Sam Marcy, our founder. We understand that self-determination and our support of the oppressed play into every struggle. There are nuances and delicacies in every coalition. We worry when and how to criticize and when not to. These are important questions you have got to get right to advance the struggle.

One of the most debated developments in the immigrant rights movement now is that of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. This bill, introduced in 2001, would provide undocumented students with conditional legal status and eventual citizenship if, among other things, they attend college or enlist in the military.

There are few opportunities to attend college; jobs are scarce. The passage of the DREAM Act comes down to a recruitment tool for the imperialist armed forces; it is a forced draft of our immigrant youth. There's no question about it.

But our party and the coalitions we work with have supported the students and youth in this movement. How can you not when undocumented youth have risen up in defiance and declared, "I am undocumented and unafraid." After 10 years of fighting for this bill, they are angry.

This is a complex and even heartbreaking issue. But who will win the hearts and minds of these youth? Harry Reid? Not if we have anything to do with it!

Who will win the allegiance of all the workers and the oppressed? Who will see to it that the working class is marching,

not to the voting booth, but in the streets to Wall Street, the Pentagon and the White House? Who will provide the analysis for the masses as they face unemployment, foreclosures and all the rest? Who will point the way out?

Who will support these youth who yearn for legalization but also point out to them in the most thoughtful and sensitive way: What will happen if the DREAM Act passes as is?

What will that legalized youth do when he or she is sent to Colombia to kill trade unionists or the rebels in the jungle? What will legalized youth do when they are sent to the U.S./Mexican border and ordered to turn their guns on an immigrant family crossing the same border that their family did?

How will you get into the door to raise a revolutionary, Marxist-Leninist analysis if you are attacking their struggle?

Despite the outcome of the elections, make no mistake about it: Latinos/as are not for sale. Our history is ripe with revolutionary fervor. We need only to recapture it.

When we do we will orient not to Colin Powell but to Mumia Abu-Jamal; not to the Democratic Party but to the Cuban Communist Party; not to Marc Rubio but to Fidel Castro; not to Gov. Susan Martinez of New Mexico but to revolutionary sister Lolita Lebron.

We will revive the ideas of Che Guevara, a maximum revolutionary leader of Latino heritage. Che said: "We must bear in mind that imperialism is a world system, the last stage of capitalism — and it must be defeated in a world confrontation."

Comrades and friends, let us begin that world confrontation right here, right now, in the belly of the beast. The time has come. The time is now. There is no way forward but revolution. The capitalist system has run its course. There is no other option but to abolish it and build socialism. □

Education struggles show need for socialism

Following are excerpts from the Nov. 13 talk given at the Workers World Party national conference by Larry Hales, a founding member of Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST).

Over the past year we have seen seeds of greater struggles to come — not only the outpouring of students, education workers, parents and community members on both March 4 and Oct. 7 — but also the tremendous response of students in November 2009 against the 32 percent tuition increase at the University of California system.

March 4 and Oct. 7 were high-water marks in terms of size, militancy and tactics, with thousands pouring out into the streets all across the country. Both deserve analysis, which has been done. The demands have to be expanded, and perhaps the twin mobilizations are the basis for something bigger and broader that can come next year.

March 4 and Oct. 7 were mobilizations in defense of public education and against the severe cutbacks, which are expected to be more severe in 2011.

As Marxists we know that it is workers, who sell their laboring power to the bosses, who can overthrow the system. Capitalism is based on exploitation, and has built within it its own demise.

If we look at the system and its needs and if we look at the present crisis, based

on restructuring done over the years, the technological advances and the fact that imperialist globalization has rapidly built up the working class around the world — by that I mean workers in underdeveloped nations who have been drawn into production, extraction and selling of commodities for corporations or subsidiaries of companies based in the imperialist countries — we see how the competition for jobs, for survival is global now.

Education has been cut back, but education — universal public education — is needed for future workers, to prepare young people for their productive life in service of the system. While access has always been uneven, especially access to higher education, in the imperialist U.S., education was guaranteed from kindergarten to 12th grade, and here in New York, California and a few other places, higher education was for the most part free.

There's been a long attack against public education, going back to white flight and tying funding for education to property values; the crumbling of school infrastructure in oppressed communities; racism; the colonial legacy taught to young people; touting the values of a decadent society; high-stakes testing; attacks on teachers; and privatization.

The attack on public education is racist. The system is being streamlined and will become even more segregated, which

it already is to a great extent. But it is also a scheme of the capitalist class to get their hands on the billions of dollars of public money, from hedge funds bankrolling the building of charter schools to the permanent defunding of public higher education, forcing students to pay higher tuition and to borrow more money from the banks to go to school.

It's no wonder that Wal-Mart, Bill Gates and right-wing foundations of the rich and superrich have spent so much to support charterization, "No child left behind" and the "Race to the top."

The struggle for something better

The above illustrates the need for a system based on human needs.

The capitalist system is in profound crisis, a crisis which has sped up attacks against workers and their social services. The crisis reveals even more the need for struggle independent of parties that serve the ruling class' interests, a struggle for something better.

That something better is socialism. The capitalist system is at a point where unemployment will continue to be high and production is severely contracted to maximize profits. The workers who are left are facing a greater offensive from the bosses to be paid less and less. The capitalist state has poured billions, maybe trillions into the economy, and the capitalist class is attempting to take more public monies



Larry Hales

WWW PHOTOS: G. DUNKEL

through bankrolling charter schools and other schemes.

This is the nature of the system. All the things that have been fought for are things that are now being stripped bare or taken away entirely.

Socialism, a society based on the social ownership of the means of production, is not built off exploitation for profit, but solidarity, producing a social surplus for people's needs, not for profit or greed.

The imperialistic capitalist class needs huge military expenditures to prop up its rule, to steal resources from other nations and forcibly open up markets, all for greater profit.

What need does humanity have for nuclear weapons? Why must more than \$700 billion be spent on the Pentagon? Why are

Continued on the next page

The tasks ahead for revolutionaries and socialists

Following are excerpts from the Nov. 13 talk given at the Workers World Party national conference by Larry Holmes, a member of the Secretariat of Workers World Party and a leader of the Bail Out the People Movement. Go to workersworld.net to read Holmes' preconference document.

Capitalism has entered a new, permanent crisis that goes beyond the reforms which are being taken away. Capitalism does not have the ability to recover itself in any way that is meaningful to the social needs of the working class.

This is not a controversial thesis in our view.

What is controversial is that there are not enough revolutionary Marxists who are talking about it. That is the problem.

Productive forces of the world have reached such an incredible height that they are no longer compatible with capitalism. They have outgrown what has become a barbaric system that is just holding things down. The world, its people and all life are hostage to it.

There is depression, deflation, inflation, bubbles, a crash of this system, of that industry, and at the same time the constant effort to restructure, downsize and steal from the working class as a way to compensate for what capitalism is not getting — because it does not have any new markets on which to dump its over-produced commodities.

Even what the capitalists are trying to do to the workers, under the excuse of reducing the deficit, is a form of restructuring. Let's take everything away to sustain anyone who is not productive — retirees, the poor, the disabled. It is another form of capitalist restructuring, just like downsizing with new, lower wage levels.

This is not common knowledge in the working class. The bourgeoisie is very gifted in concealing it, with their culture of lying and denial, deception and hiding the suffering, and telling workers what they want in order to manipulate them toward one or the other imperialist parties.

Workers are not accustomed to looking at the system. Their reaction is to look at their own situation and the situation of their families and their local situation.

Our working class here is not trained to look at the system, just as they are trained to be passive. This was the problem in the elections. They had no reason to come out and fight for any candidate. So the Tea Party and the money behind them did their thing.

billions given to prop up banks when we need better schools and health care, better roads and bridges, better after-school programs, parks and other needs?

Capitalism has long out-lived its usefulness. It needs an oppressive apparatus to enforce its rule and defend the interests of the extremely small minority who reap the wealth we create.

Such a system is detrimental to our health, to the health of the planet. It is anti-social — the capitalist class is anti-social and must be overthrown for the greater need, the need of all humanity. A better society, a more advanced society is a socialist one, and it must be fought for. A start is building up the movement in defense of our needs and propelling that movement forward from a mere defensive to an offensive struggle for a better world. □

If there had been a referendum on whether everybody gets a job, there would have been a different turnout. But the election wasn't about that.

In time workers will gain this consciousness — in their own natural and uneven way — based on exhausting all possibilities before choosing the struggle. And we will be part of that.

We have to look at our consciousness. We are not above the workers. We are not elitist. But in order for us to be helpful, our consciousness has to be higher. Or else we have nothing to offer.

The big problem is an ideological one.

A generation ago capitalism declared victory over socialism. It has had a big impact on the working class and on its organizations — a demoralizing impact.

What do we do about it now?

We need to be with the struggles — which are all of a defensive character now. But we cannot merely relegate ourselves to just taking up the many, many local struggles and trying to connect them as best we can. It is insufficient.

Our job is not just to be there and to tail the working class. It is to illuminate the road ahead as best we can.

We have to open a campaign about abolishing capitalism and reviving the struggle for world socialism. If we don't, a lot is at stake.

If we are silent, then it is surrendering to capitalist ideology, racism and war and all their lies. That is unacceptable.

We can learn from the Tea Party. They are paid for by the ruling class, and they



Larry Holmes

are very sharp on their class interest. We are not even calling for a campaign to abolish capitalism, and they are already afraid of us.

There is a reason a lot of their stuff is socialist baiting. It is a preemptive strike. They see the handwriting on the wall. They know where conditions can lead.

We should not be less sharp in our ideological challenge — in relationship to our class interests. It is important for the political movement.

We have a responsibility to the vanguard and potential vanguard elements, as individuals and as organizations, to make sure they are ideologically strong. They are the first layer to bring this discussion to about the need to have a campaign to abolish capitalism and raise the fight for world socialism.

Capitalist ideas are insidious and everywhere.

If you are told by the capitalists that we

have to work together to be competitive against the city next door or some other country like South Korea or India or China, what is a worker to think when the question of fighting to prevent the bosses from taking something away is posed? How can we fight when we are supposed to cooperate with them and when giving up what we are asked to give up is part of that cooperation?

Think about what that does to solidarity. Think about how it generates racism, how it becomes an excuse for war. This working class has got to learn how to defend itself.

This campaign to abolish capitalism and revive the struggle for world socialism needs to be integrated into the mass struggle, not only on the local and national level, but on the international level.

On Feb. 15 and 16, 2003, social democrats, communists, pacifists — the whole realm of different ideologies — brought out millions of people around the world to say no to war. We've got to do that for jobs. We've got to do that to stop foreclosures. We've got to do that to abolish capitalism.

We must have a concrete program that goes along with the campaign to abolish capitalism and bring back socialism on a world level — that program must include social rights to a home, a job, health care and education. This struggle is necessary. It will help our class. It will help radicals. It will help everybody. Our job now is to figure out, if it is the right thing, who to ask to join us and how to proceed. Socialism or death! □

Strengthen the working-class movement in the South

Following are excerpts from the talk by Elena Everett, who introduced the opening plenary of the Workers World Party conference on Nov. 13. Everett is a founding member of the Durham, N.C., branch, which became the newest WWP branch in April 2009.

Our task today is to draw the connections between all struggles; reveal their roots and what is to be done; build on the dynamic and revolutionary Workers World Party regional conferences held this fall, which discussed the current crisis; and put out socialism as the solution toward which we must all be working.

On Sept. 4 more than 100 gathered in Los Angeles. On Sept. 28 Midwest activists came together in Chicago. On Oct. 23 in Durham we had a Southern regional conference on socialism. That was the first time this happened in the South.

This was very significant for us. Our brother Saladin Muhammed, chairperson of Black Workers for Justice and a co-presenter at the Durham conference, described the South as a bastion of reaction. Its economic base was built on slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, and oppression, all of which persist today. It is the least unionized part of the country, where factories move to push down wages and bust unions. The working-class struggle and the Black workers' struggle in the South are deeply intertwined in a defining — if not the defining — struggle of the region.

These regional conferences generated an outpouring of interest from a new generation of potential revolutionaries who want real solutions to the current crisis.



Elena Everett

WW PHOTOS: G. DUNKEL

It's our task to connect these struggles, to show that the same people and corporations that push to privatize, shut down, and re-segregate our schools, fund organizations that bash immigrants, attack higher education, lobby for less environmental regulation, and fund the racist Tea Party. They gain a lot by all this hatred, violence and exploitation.

Meanwhile, the gap between rich and poor is greater than it was during the Depression. Unemployment figures have been in double digits for nearly two years, and the Republican leadership in Congress wants to continue tax breaks for the richest 2 percent.

The crisis can only be overcome by a radical transformation of our society, by replacing this system with one that treats everyone with dignity and puts people's needs first. To get there we must recognize all struggles against oppression as one and work to put the power into the

hands of the people.

We must do everything we can to build solidarity, strengthen our relationships with other working-class forces, and move collectively with unity and discipline. Everyone here who is active in struggle knows this is hard work. We are up to the task. A lot depends on it.

Solidarity, unity and collective action are our tools in this struggle. The capitalist ruling class does everything it can to keep us divided, blaming each other for the crisis. Whether through efforts to re-segregate our public schools to forcing undocumented immigrants into the shadows under threat of deportation; to telling a lesbian couple they cannot sit on a public bench together and hold hands; to Smithfield Packing's management — which during the union organizing campaign met separately with Latino and Latina workers, Black workers and white workers — the bosses aim to keep people apart. These things happen in North Carolina every day.

Allowing these things to happen without resisting — without standing up, organizing and pointing out who gains when we do not work together — is how we lose.

Today we must pledge to win. We must take this task seriously and do everything to build unity and to be in solidarity with all struggles against oppression and injustice. Let us stand together and say no to racism, to bigotry, to budget cuts and immigrant bashing, to anti-lesbian/gay/bi/trans/queer bigotry, sexism and gender oppression. No to capitalism! Together we say yes to human rights, to jobs and health care for all, to being treated with dignity, to respecting the planet. Yes to Socialism! All power to the people! □

While ignoring Black and Latino/a educators...

Bloomberg picks media boss as NYC school chancellor

By Stephen Millies
New York

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, the 10th richest person in the United States with an \$18 billion fortune, picked Cathleen Black as the next public school chancellor.

What qualifications does Black have to run the largest school system in the United States with more than a million students? Absolutely none.

Cathleen Black attended parochial schools and never even belonged to a PTA, since her children attended expensive boarding schools in Connecticut.

State education commissioner David Steiner should veto Bloomberg's appointment of a media tycoon. Black's entire background is in corporate boardrooms, not classrooms.

As president of Hearst magazines, one of the many monthlies Black published was *Cosmopolitan*. From 1983 to 1991, she was publisher of *USA Today*, which, like the Hearst magazine empire, is non-union.

Last year she earned more than \$500,000 as a director of IBM, Coca-Cola and other big outfits.

In 2009 IBM did \$300 million worth of business with New York City public schools. Isn't that a conflict of interest?

Eighty-five percent of students in New York public schools are Asian, Black, Latino/a and Native American. Both the current chancellor Joel Klein and Cathleen Black are white.

Bloomberg's selection of Klein and Black, both of whom are unqualified, is a slap in the face to educators of color. Klein immediately announced a plush job at the News Corp. as an "executive vice president in the office of the chairman, Rupert Murdoch." (*Wall Street Journal*, Nov. 11.)

In her how-to book, "Basic Black," the nominee describes her experience in laying off staff and closing a magazine in the red. That experience may be what Bloomberg is looking for as the city tries to close up to 60 schools and eliminate teachers in the coming year. Opposition to Cathleen Black's appointment has been led by the Freedom Party.

"I think Bloomberg's decision to appoint Cathleen Black is arrogant, absurd and unacceptable," declared City Councilperson Charles Barron, who was the Freedom Party's candidate for governor. "Waiving Klein's lack of credentials was a horrible mistake and look where that got us. He should have consulted the community."

Charles Barron, Assemblywoman Inez Barron and other community leaders spoke at a Nov. 11 news conference in

front of City Hall, where he made those comments.

Testing not teaching

Departing Schools Chancellor Joel Klein may have been dumped by Bloomberg. Klein's claims to have raised test scores were proven phony by the latest state examinations.

Under Klein, tests preparation overrode everything else. This wasn't accountability. Real solutions, like a decrease in classroom size, were ignored.

Klein was instead a big promoter of private non-union charter schools, while seeking to close dozens of "failing" public schools.

This failed record has led to Klein being hailed as an "educational reformer" — not by teachers or parents, but by stock speculators. According to New York Times business columnist Joe Nocera, "As part of his drive to open charter schools, Mr. Klein courted an important ally: New York's wealthy hedge fund community, which has backed them with tens of millions of dollars." (Nov. 13)

Wheeler-dealer Steven Brill told Nocera that the public schools should be run like Bloomberg's media empire, where "nobody has a contract." In other words, teachers and other workers should be fired on whim without union protection.

This is nothing new. Hundreds of the best and most dedicated teachers were fired from the 1940s to 1960s under the notorious Feinberg law for being communists. Workers World Party member Dave Schechter was fired in the early 1970s for allowing his math class students to rally in defense of Black Panther Party leader Bobby Seale.

Brilliant Black educator Dr. Adelaide Sanford was passed over to lead the New York City school system. Before becoming Vice Chancellor of the New York State Board of Regents, Dr. Sanford had been an innovative principal at P.S. 21, the Crispus Attucks School in Brooklyn. She was a classmate of Shirley Chisholm, the first Black congresswoman.

Last March 14, cops beat Dr. Sanford's son and grandson in the Bronx following a basketball game.

Another real educational reformer was Abubadika Sonny Carson, who helped lead the struggle for community control in Brooklyn's Ocean Hill-Brownsville neighborhoods in 1968.

Despite support of the local community board, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn prevented a street from being named for this Black hero, who died in 2002. Yet a block of Broadway in Manhattan was named "Al Jolson Way" for a white singer who performed in blackface. □

Teachers under siege in LA school district

By Scott Scheffer
Los Angeles

The global capitalist crisis is taking a heavy toll on public education. As in many other districts, teachers and other education workers in the Los Angeles Unified School District, the second largest in the United States, are under siege.

This spring LAUSD handed "Reduction in Force" notices to 5,200 workers, mostly teachers. In October the district handed out another 4,600 notices that will result in 990 layoffs and more than 3,000 transfers — many to jobs with fewer hours and less pay — to take effect on Nov. 30. The primary targets of these layoffs and transfers are mostly out-of-classroom workers, like maintenance, custodial, cafeteria and office staff, whose services are crucial to the schools.

On Nov. 19 members of United Teachers Los Angeles will carry out informational leafleting to reach out to parents about the layoffs and the problems they will cause in the schools. The union is calling for a protest at the school board meeting on Nov. 30. (www.utla.net)

LAUSD claims that state budget cuts have left them with a huge shortfall. California received about \$1.2 billion from the state bailout legislation that Congress passed in September. LAUSD received its share.

The district also found several hundred million dollars in the budget that was previously undetected, but it is still not rescinding the layoffs. UTLA has repeatedly urged the district to fight for more funding. Instead, LAUSD is blaming the union for all the district's failures, looking for ways to weaken the union, and trying to turn parents against the union.

Fighting to help the poorest schools

An American Civil Liberties Union lawsuit settlement against LAUSD throws out seniority protection for workers in 45 schools in the current round of layoffs. Although LAUSD was the defendant, the settlement is favored by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and by Schools Superintendent Ramon Cortines.

Instead of improving conditions for the students who were ostensibly the plaintiffs, the suit was transformed into a weapon against seniority rights. Negotiations were carried out with no input from any of the unions that represent LAUSD workers. The suit was launched on behalf of three schools that were disproportionately hit in the layoffs last year and that were left even more understaffed than others in the district. During the following semester, a string of substitute teachers struggled but didn't succeed at their jobs.

LAUSD officials know that the problem

is one of underfunding and not the unions' seniority plan. Beginning in the mid-1980s, a consent decree forced the district to take measures to reverse the disparity in the poorest schools between underfunding and the lack of experienced teachers. It compelled them to set aside extra funds for teacher training in poor schools where there were fewer veteran teachers and to go to extra lengths to recruit more experienced teachers. It was beginning to work; the key ingredient was funding.

In 2006 the consent decree ended, and the progress that had been made waned. Lawyers for LAUSD argued in court that an extension of the decree was unwarranted because the policy changes that occurred would be continued voluntarily. But that didn't happen, so the poorest schools in the district began losing their most experienced teachers again.

Since 2006 when the decree expired, UTLA has asked LAUSD to join with them in devising a plan to improve the disparity and to continue efforts to get more veteran teachers into the poorest schools. However, LAUSD has ignored all such appeals. The lawsuit's settlement will now further reduce the pool of experienced teachers by attacking seniority rights. A judge must still ratify the decision. Meanwhile, the teachers' union is pulling out all the stops to try to reverse it.

Some elements in the capitalist class want to sabotage public education. Their interests lie in charter schools, which open the possibility for privatization. Already, LAUSD has 170 charter schools within the district, the largest number in the country. Another 43 schools are up for bid by charter organizations.

Most charter schools are non-union, and studies show that many haven't lived up to their promise. Supporters like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, The Walton Family, Los Angeles billionaire Eli Broad and others claim to want "innovation" and "fresh ideas" to save the education system. What the capitalists really want is to eliminate unions so they can drive wages down further.

The struggle for the unions that represent workers in the Los Angeles school district is to try to establish some control over how the waves of layoffs occur. They need solidarity from all organized labor and the entire working class during this crisis.

The best strategy to stop the attacks and win full funding for public education must include fighting for the rights of communities that have endured racism and neglect by the Los Angeles school district and in the process build class-wide solidarity. □

Left Hook is the quarterly newspaper of the revolutionary socialist organization for young activists, Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST). Each edition of *Left Hook* will provide analyses of political events, social movements and revolutionary struggles that impact our world. Commentary, theory, culture and news reporting intersect in the pages of *Left Hook* to provide readers with radical analysis from a Marxist perspective.

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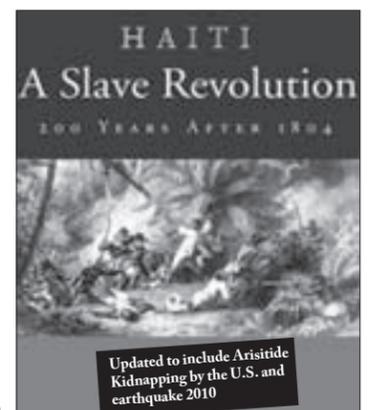


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Updated to include Aristide Kidnapping by the U.S. and earthquake 2010

AFGHANISTAN

Pentagon postpones withdrawal to 2014

By Gene Clancy

In an affront to peace-loving people across the United States and around the world, Washington is walking away from a promise to begin withdrawing U.S. troops from Afghanistan in July 2011. According to the McClatchy Report, the White House has decided to postpone the withdrawal until 2014. (Nov. 9)

This announcement came a week before a major NATO meeting in Lisbon to consider how to turn over military operations to the Afghanistan military. It provided one more reason for what are expected to be massive protests in Lisbon on Nov. 20.

The New York Times on Nov. 11 described the new policy as “effectively a victory for the military” in choosing the strategy. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Gen. David Petraeus, the top NATO commander in Afghanistan, had openly criticized the 2011 date before the Obama administration could even announce they were rethinking their withdrawal policy. The administration still denies that there has been any change in policy, even though Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has come out publicly supporting the new date.

These events make up another gross violation of the principle of civilian control of the military. But this is no surprise. In the U.S. the Pentagon has effec-

tively called the shots on questions of war and peace in every administration since World War II.

Every president from both political parties has found it necessary to publicly defer to “the commanders on the ground” before undertaking even the smallest change in military policy. Even the famous firing of Gen. Douglas MacArthur by President Harry Truman during the 1950-1953 U.S. war on Korea was only done after Truman had secured the support of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff.

This latest incident is all the more egregious because the earlier date of withdrawal was part of an agreement between President Barack Obama and his generals. During a period of declining popular support for the war, Obama agreed to increase U.S. troop levels by 30,000 and backed increased offensive actions by the military in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It was openly admitted that this would cause increased casualties for both NATO troops and Afghan civilians.

This “surge,” the generals told Obama, would beat down the Afghan resistance enough so that military operations could be turned over to the puppet Afghan government beginning in July 2011.

The cost of war

According to a CNN and Opinion Research Corporation poll released on Oct. 15, support for the war in Afghanistan

has never been lower, with only 37 percent of all U.S. residents favoring it, and 52 percent saying the war in Afghanistan has become a Vietnam-type war. Meanwhile, most of the NATO allies of the U.S. are busy with plans for withdrawing their own troops.

For all their so-called concern about big government spending, the right-wing politicians in Congress and elsewhere have had little to say about the war in Afghanistan during or since the recent midterm elections. Where they have spoken out has been to support the military.

Yet the projected cost of another three years of fighting in Afghanistan is staggering and rarely reported. Assuming the current pattern of American casualties and costs through 2012, followed by a 50 percent reduction in those figures in 2013-14, Pentagon data reveal the following:

- October 2001-November 2010: U.S. troops killed, 1378; U.S. troops wounded, 9,256; direct taxpayer costs, \$364 billion.
- 2011 projection: 450 more U.S. troops killed, bringing the cumulative total to 1,850; 5,000 more wounded, bringing the cumulative total to 14,800; another \$113 billion in direct taxpayer costs, bringing the cumulative total to \$503 billion.

- 2012 projection: at present rates, the cumulative death toll will become 2,300; the cumulative wounded number will become 19,800; and the cumulative budget cost will become \$616 billion.

- 2013-14 projections (assuming a 50 percent reduction): another 450 killed over two years, bringing the total to 2,750; another 5,000 wounded over two years, bringing the total to 24,800; another \$113 billion over two years, bringing the total to \$728 billion. (Tom Hayden, “Will the War in Afghanistan Ever End?” thenation.com, Nov. 12)

In plainer terms, the projected U.S. casualties and costs in Afghanistan will double from present levels over the next three years. Meanwhile, the military-industrial complex clamors against health care and demands tax cuts for the rich.

According to the Nov.-Dec. 2010 issue of Foreign Affairs magazine, the war in Afghanistan is now more than twice as expensive as the one in Iraq. (Altman-Haass, “American profligacy and American Power,” p. 31)

Those numbers do not include Pakistan, Yemen or tens of billions of dollars in the growing U.S. intelligence budget. Nor do the tax-dollar figures include rising indirect costs such as veterans’ health care. Nor are the casualties of Afghan civilians known or estimated. □

U.N. meeting exposes U.S. imperialism’s hypocrisy

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

A United Nations Human Rights Council gathering in Switzerland heard testimony from oppressed groups inside the United States who exposed Washington’s official state policy of gross violations against peoples of color and workers in general.

Though it criticizes other states, particularly in the developing regions of the world, the U.S. ruling class itself manipulates racism, and national and gender oppression in efforts to maintain dominance over the majority of people both inside and outside its borders.

During the long struggle to end racism, national oppression and all forms of inequality and discrimination, African-American and left movements have a history of addressing international bodies regarding oppression and exploitation.

Marcus Garvey appealed on behalf of African people to the League of Nations. Paul Robeson, W.E.B. DuBois and William L. Patterson of the Civil Rights Congress presented a document to the U.N. in 1951 entitled, “We Charge Genocide.” Malcolm X tried to bring the U.S. imperialists before the U.N. in 1964-65.

All along, the most advanced sectors of the oppressed have recognized that the struggle for liberation and self-determination must be approached on an international level.

The Bush administration refused to participate in the UNHRC. Its pretext was that it disagreed with the policies of represented governments — most of whom were in the developing regions — and refused to be subject to their questioning.

Currently the UNHCR includes representatives from China, Cuba and Libya, all states on Washington’s enemy list. Nonetheless, the Obama administration has agreed to participate and attended

the early November meeting in Geneva, when U.S.-based groups testified that the U.S. government engages in blatant discrimination against Muslims and other oppressed communities of color.

Civil rights and human rights organizations also revealed that police engage in brutal attacks in urban U.S. communities and that there are numerous political prisoners imprisoned for decades among the largest per capita prison population in the world.

Right-wing media outlets here have attacked the Obama administration for even agreeing to attend the Geneva meeting, where the ruling class’s crimes against humanity can be exposed and discussed at a public international forum.

Rightists attack U.N. forum

A Nov. 4 Fox News article says the Geneva hearings represent “a gamble by the Obama administration to join the council in the first place, rather than shun it in disdain, as the Bush administration did.”

Another critic of the UNHCR is Jim Kelly, director of international affairs for the Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies. Kelly claims that there is no need for oppressed peoples inside the U.S. to speak before or appeal to such world bodies because the rights they are calling for are already guaranteed under the Constitution.

However, these conservative commentators refuse to ask the question that if the U.S. is a democratic state then why does the overwhelming majority within the people of color communities still say that there is institutionalized racism? Why is democracy defined only by elections held every two to four years, where the two main parties that dominate the political system represent the ruling class?

Why are there no real debates within the corporate media or referenda held among the people to determine policy related to the aspirations and needs of the working class and the oppressed? Issues of war and peace; the need for full employment and a living wage; universal health care; quality education; the elimination of racism, sexism, and lesbian/gay/bi/trans/queer oppression; the rights of the disabled, children and seniors; the preservation of the environment; and growing food deficits are not subjected to a democratic process in the U.S.

In socialist countries like Cuba, all citizens are guaranteed the right to education, housing, employment and health care. Under socialism official state policy is committed to ending racism and gender oppression. The elimination of social classes and the right to self-determination for the oppressed are enshrined in the political culture and framework of a socialist society.

As the founder of the Russian Revolution and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the USSR), V.I. Lenin stated as early as 1920 that “under the guise of the equality of the individual in general, bourgeois democracy proclaims the formal or legal equality of the property owner and the proletarian, the exploiter and the exploited, thereby grossly deceiving the oppressed classes. On the plea that all men (and women) are absolutely equal, the bourgeoisie is transforming the idea of equality, which is itself a reflection of relations in commodity production, into a weapon in its struggle against the abolition of classes. The real meaning of the demand for equality consists in its being a demand for the abolition of classes.” (Draft Theses on National and Colonial Questions, 1920)

Demands show need for organized struggle

By highlighting workers and oppressed peoples’ conditions inside the U.S., the witnesses draw attention to the need for organizations that speak directly to the tens of millions subjected to racism, exploitation and bigotry. These rights can only be won when the fundamental structures of capitalist society are uprooted and replaced by socialism.

Participants in the UNHCR meeting in Geneva, which includes representatives of the U.S. Human Rights Network, encompassing organizations such as the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, the Black Workers for Justice, the National Conference of Black Lawyers and others, have made demands on U.S. imperialism to adhere to international norms related to nondiscrimination and the right to self-determination. In the short term, the representatives of the oppressed workers in Geneva are insisting that the U.S. acknowledge its unjust policies and adopt resolutions in support of the downtrodden and the exploited.

The progressive forces in Geneva demanded that the U.S. implement a number of conventions related to ending discrimination, and that no new laws are needed for their enactment.

Overcoming the continued oppression and exploitation of the working class in the U.S. requires a protracted struggle. If the affected groups unite in a program of action aimed at winning economic security, the end to imperialist wars, the elimination of racism, sexism and all forms of inequality, the force of such a movement can effectively change the political landscape of the U.S. and the social relations of the people residing inside the country. It can help bring relief to other workers and oppressed peoples around the world. □

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Behind the attack on Rangel

Rep. Charles B. Rangel was convicted Nov. 16 by a House ethics panel of 12 of the 13 ethics violations he faced. While ethics experts suggest that he will likely be issued a letter of reprimand or a formal censure, rather than being expelled, the trial and conviction cast a shadow over someone the Christian Science Monitor calls "one of the most legendary Black politicians in U.S. history and one whose venerable career contributed to the success of generations of Black politicians." (Aug. 1)

Most importantly, the attack on Rangel amounts to an attack on the whole Black community through the targeting of an elected representative. It occurs at a time of growing crisis for all workers, a crisis even greater for the oppressed.

Why go after Rangel? Rangel has served as the chair of the oldest and possibly most powerful committee in the House — the Ways and Means Committee — since 2007. According to Rangel's congressional website, "As a senior member of the committee and as the vice chairman for the Joint Committee on Taxation, he continues to wield influence over tax revenue legislation and oversight authority over the major issues of the day — economic policy, international trade, welfare, Social Security, Medicare, and health care."

At a time when the government is trying to slash services for the poor left and right, it makes perfect sense that they would go after Rangel — a Black man,

representing a Black community, who presides over the committee that handles the money. It's a wonder the racist politicians in Congress didn't do it sooner.

The right wing will argue that because three new Black Republicans will be taking seats in the new Congress, there is now greater Black representation. However, in the House of Representatives the amount of seniority a representative has directly influences how much power and influence that representative can wield. Rangel has been a congressional representative for 40 years, since 1970. These new representatives will be first timers with little power and probably right-wing politics. And while Rangel's politics have been contradictory at times, his almost unanimous re-election a few weeks ago shows that he has the support of the people of his Harlem district.

Rangel's special role is his seniority and leadership in the House, but he's not the only target of institutional racism. All seven of the lawmakers under full-scale investigation by the House are African-American; not one is white. Meanwhile, the only Black senator in the country, Roland Burris, is under investigation by the Senate Ethics Committee.

This blatant discrimination must be fought. Workers World defends the right of the Black community to choose its own representatives, and the right of those politicians to serve free of racist harassment. □

System of exploitation reaches an impasse

Continued from page 5

During and after World War II, the U.S. government had a deficit far greater than the present U.S. deficit — well over 100 percent of the gross domestic product. But U.S. capitalism was expanding as a world imperialist power, and it paid down its debt in a few years after the war. Today, the opposite is the case. The future is grim for the industrialists and the financiers on Wall Street.

I would like to touch on the G-20 disaster suffered by the Obama administration and U.S. capitalism in Seoul. The U.S. delegation came to tell the Chinese to devalue their currency; they came to tell the Chinese and the German, Japanese, Brazilian and other capitalists to cut down on the exports and let U.S. commodities flood their markets. And they came to force south Korea to sign a trade pact that would open up south Korea to U.S. auto companies. Washington was rebuffed on all issues.

The most important thing for the workers to take away from this crisis at the G-20 is that all the capitalist ruling classes are in a desperate state to increase their exports. Why is that? It's because they cannot sell their commodities at home. They are all suffering from capitalist overproduction and seek to export their way out of their own economic crises. This is a deep symptom of the global nature of the present capitalist crisis.

It is bound to open revolutionary pos-

sibilities just the way it did during the 1930s, when the working class fought under the slogan, "Don't starve, fight!" But it is going to require a revolutionary Marxist party to assist the workers on the only path that can lead out of this crisis — the socialist revolution. □

Commemorate a National Day of Mourning

on the U.S. "thanksgiving" holiday. Many Native Americans do not celebrate the arrival of the Pilgrims and other European settlers. "Thanksgiving" is a reminder of the genocide of millions of Native people, the theft of their lands and the relentless assault on their culture. Honor Native ancestors and the struggles of Native peoples to survive today.

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NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING
Thursday . November 25 . Noon

Cole's Hill (above Plymouth Rock) Plymouth, Mass.

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Gov't panel does the bosses' dirty work

Tries to cut Social Security, Medicare

Continued from page 1

ernment so you could retire in safety. No, suddenly it's theirs to play with.

This whole deal is so raw, so criminal, that not even all the members of the hand-picked panel can go along with it.

Rep. Jan Schakowski of Illinois is on the panel. She knows you don't have to cut old age and medical benefits to balance the budget. She can't endorse the Bowles-Simpson recommendations and announced a plan to "keep Social Security benefits intact, make deep reductions at the Pentagon and raise corporate taxes to target profits and excessive pay for chief

executives. ... [It] would cut nearly \$430 billion from the deficit in 2015, meeting Obama's goal of balancing federal spending and revenues, except for interest on the national debt." (Washington Post, Nov. 16)

She's right. The money is there for Social Security, Medicare and much, much more. There's enormous wealth in the United States. Not one social benefit needs to be touched. But it will take a massive struggle by all affected to stop this offensive against the entire working class, one that is cruelest against its most vulnerable members. □

MUNDO OBRERO

Uniendo la clase obrera en las Américas

Conferencia en Tijuana del 3 al 5 diciembre

Continua de página 12

as del sector automovilístico, del acero, maestros/as, trabajadores/as del cuidado de salud, trabajadores/as de sueldos bajos y muchos/as más, para ir desde los Estados Unidos. Para aumentar el tiempo de discusión, se está organizando traducción simultánea.

La conferencia no está financiada por ninguna organización sindical grande ni ninguna fundación. Depende de la registración de los/as asistentes y de los donativos de individuos para cubrir los considerables costos.

Participantes confirmados/as incluyen a Ermela García Santiago, Secretariado Nacional, Confederación de Trabajadores/as Cubanos/as (CTC); Magaly Batista Enríquez, Relaciones Internacionales, CTC; Silvia García Tabío, Asamblea Nacional Cubana del Poder Popular; Gilda Chacón Bravo, Oficina de las Américas, WFTU/FSM; Jacobo Torres de León, Fuerza Socialista Venezolana de Trabajadores/as Bolivarianos/as, CST; un representante de UNETE de Venezuela; Fredy José Franco, Federación de

Profesores de Enseñanza Superior; José Humberto Montes de Oca Luna, SME; Oliverio Esquivel Reyes, Coordinador Mexicano de WFTU/FSM; Profesor Jorge Cázares Torres, Unión Nacional Mexicana de Educadores, Sec. VIII; un representante de la Unión Mexicana de Mineros; João Batista Lemos, Central de Trabajadores/as Brasileños/as; Adolfo Cardona del sindicato SINALTRAINAL de Colombia, organizador de USW; Edgar Luis Sarango Correa, Vice-Presidente, Confederación de Trabajadores/as del Ecuador; y representantes de los Estados Unidos. Invitados/as pero aún no confirmados/as están representantes de Haití y Puerto Rico.

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Africa's last colony

Western Sahara fights on for independence

Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Thousands of people demonstrated in Madrid, Spain, on Nov. 13 in response to a Nov. 8 massacre carried out by Moroccan security forces in a displaced person's camp at Laayoune, Western Sahara, in northwest Africa. Dozens of Sahawari people were killed, and up to 4,500 injured in the massacre.

A former Spanish colony annexed by Morocco in 1975, the Western Sahara has been a hotly contested zone for nearly three decades since the Polisario Front, a national liberation movement, took up arms to drive out occupiers of their territory.

Members of the National Coordination of Associations in Solidarity with Sahara, which organized the Madrid demonstration, accused the Spanish government of ignoring Morocco's crimes. Leaders of the two main Spanish labor unions joined the demonstrations. (allAfrica.com, Nov. 13)

Although the Spanish government demanded an immediate explanation from Morocco, the massacre has been largely hidden from the international media due to the exclusion of journalists from areas surrounding the camp. According to Radio France International, only reporters from Le Monde and Le Figaro have been granted permission to enter.

On Nov. 10, Moroccan authorities said that the country's security forces had detained 163 Saharawi people. However, the Polisario Front claimed that more than 2,000 people were arrested and that the Moroccan security forces had attacked others in Smara, some 240 kilometers east of Laayoune.

The massacre at Laayoune took place almost simultaneously with U.N. talks between representatives of the Polisario Front and the Moroccan government. The Moroccan government presented plans to grant the Saharawi people autonomy, while the Polisario Front demanded a national referendum on full self-determination and independence. No agreement was reached and the parties decided to continue discussions in December.

Morocco is a monarchy located in northwest Africa. Since the early days of its independence from Britain, it has had



close ties with the United States. Morocco was the first country in the world to recognize the former North American British colonies after their war of independence during the 1770s and early 1780s.

The South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation, in a Nov. 14 statement, urged all parties involved to work out "a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that will provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara." (BuaNews (Tshwane), Nov. 14) Led by the African National Congress, the government of the Republic of South Africa has been a long-time supporter and ally of the Polisario Front and its provisional government.

Historical background

In 1884 the Berlin Conference convened to divide up the African continent among the various colonial and imperialist powers of Western Europe. The Conference recognized Spain's colonial control over the Western Sahara region, where various Indigenous groups have lived for centuries.

During the height of the African liberation movement in 1963, the U.N. Special Committee on Decolonization declared that Western Sahara deserved independence. Two years later, the U.N. General Assembly adopted a resolution requesting that Spain decolonize the territory.

In December 1966, the General Assembly requested that Spain organize a

national referendum within Western Sahara on the future of the colonized nation. Spain's refusal to honor these resolutions, coupled with the Saharawi people's growing independence demands, prompted the masses in 1973 to initiate the Frente Para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y Río de Oro (Polisario). Formed in Zouerate, Mauritania, Polisario's sole purpose was liberating the country.

In 1975, Spain, Mauritania and Morocco signed the Madrid Accords, in which Spain agreed to relinquish administrative control over Western Sahara to Morocco and Mauritania. In December of that same year Morocco sent troops to Laayoune, where fighting erupted between them and the Polisario Front.

In 1976 Spain officially withdrew from its colonial outposts in the Western Sahara, and the Polisario Front established the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic. Fighting raged during the remaining years of the decade, with Mauritania withdrawing any claims to the territory in 1979.

The SADR applied for formal membership in the Organization of African Unity in 1980 and was granted this request in February 1982. In 1984, Morocco withdrew its membership from the OAU in protest.

In 1991, a ceasefire agreement was signed between the Polisario Front and Morocco, with the understanding that a national referendum would be held on Western Saharan independence. Nonetheless, fighting continued sporadically.

Morocco, which is heavily backed by the U.S. and other imperialist states along with Israel, has refused to hold the promised referendum. Even under international law, the Saharawi people have the right to self-determination and full political independence.

Imperialists ignore plight of Saharawi people

The Australia Western Sahara Association has pointed out the underlying reason behind the continued occupation: "Western Sahara is rich in mineral resources, including phosphate mineral rock, which Australia imports, contrary to international law. Western Sahara has one of the best fishing grounds in the

world. Currently its offshore oil resources are being explored." (awsa.org.au)

In a visit to Morocco in November, U.S. Congressperson Keith Ellison of Minnesota stated that relations between Rabat, the capital of Morocco, and Washington could not be better. Ellison noted that the U.S. had "a lot of faith and confidence in the Moroccan people and I have no doubt that Moroccans can produce world-class goods and services and compete with anybody in the world, including the U.S." (Maghreb Arab Press, Nov. 12)

The continued occupation of Western Sahara territory by Morocco, supported by the imperialist states, should attract the attention of anti-imperialists. □



Edited by
Joyce Chediak

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Held in Guantánamo

Youngest U.S. war prisoner gets eight more years

By G. Dunkel

Omar Khadr is a Canadian citizen, born in Scarborough, Ontario, into an Afghan family. Just 24 years old, Khadr has spent the last eight years in U.S. custody, mostly in Guantánamo, for alleged "terrorism" and "war crimes." He is the youngest captive held in the prison and the first since World War II to be prosecuted in a military commission for war crimes allegedly committed while still a minor.

Khadr recently made a plea bargain and was sentenced on Oct. 31 to eight additional years in prison — one more year in Guantánamo, followed by a possible transfer to Canada for the remaining seven years of his sentence. (Globe & Mail, Oct. 31). The jury of higher officers who would have decided his guilt or innocence recommended 40 years imprisonment.

Khadr and his family moved to Jalala-

bad, Afghanistan, in 1996. He experienced first-hand the U.S.-led imperialist war and occupation of his homeland.

In the summer of 2002, he got weapons training and began setting roadside bombs against the U.S. and NATO forces that had invaded and occupied Afghanistan. Khadr said this on Oct. 25, when he pled guilty to war crimes and killing a Special Forces sergeant during a long firefight in 2002, in which Khadr was seriously wounded.

Michael Ratner, president of the Center for Constitutional Rights, explained Khadr's plea and why the U.S. offered him this deal.

"Omar Khadr's so-called plea was a 'show plea.' He pleaded guilty to crimes he was never charged with and crimes about which there was almost no evidence, ex-



Omar Khadr

cept a confession made under torture including threats of gang rape. So why did he do it? Here is what he was facing: life imprisonment and/or being held as an enemy combatant for the rest of his life even without a trial."

Ratner continued: "The Obama administration is trying to save any 'face' they have left: This was the first trial of a child soldier by a Western power since World War II. Khadr was 15 at the time of the alleged acts. Such charges and trials of juveniles are utterly illegal."

One reason for the U.S. wanting to "save face" perhaps is the intense interest that Canadians have had in this case. There have been thousands of articles, TV and radio reports and specials on it. The behavior of the U.S. and its military and intelligence behemoth is being carefully scrutinized in Canada. □

Imperialismo, mercado global de trabajo y la perspectiva revolucionaria

Documento para debate del Partido WW/MO

Los siguientes párrafos son extractos de la segunda parte del documento “El capitalismo en crisis” por Fred Goldstein, escrito para discusión durante la Conferencia Nacional del Partido WW/Mundo Obrero que tuvo lugar los días 13 y 14 de noviembre en la ciudad de Nueva York. Goldstein es también autor del libro “Capitalismo de bajos salarios”.

Cuando Lenin escribió su libro “Imperialismo: fase superior del capitalismo”, las clases gobernantes utilizaban una pequeña parte de sus súper ganancias robadas a las colonias para sobornar a los líderes sindicales en el país y crear una amplia capa privilegiada dentro de la clase obrera.

Ahora sin embargo, con la competencia salarial global bajo el régimen del imperialismo actual, la clase capitalista ha orquestado una “carrera hacia abajo” entre las diferentes secciones de la clase obrera mundial. El forzar a los/as trabajadores/as a luchar entre sí y hacer también competir a los/as trabajadores/as en los países imperialistas con los/as trabajadores/as a bajos salarios en el resto del mundo, está destruyendo los privilegios que tenían sectores de la clase obrera, sobre todo de hombres blancos que dominaban el movimiento obrero.

La extensa destrucción del privilegio es un nuevo aspecto del imperialismo en la era de la revolución científico-tecnológica y el período post-soviético, y debe ser entendida como un nuevo desarrollo desde que Lenin escribió su brillante análisis. Su obra sigue siendo la base para entender el imperialismo como el dominio del capital financiero monopólico. Pero el desarrollo de las fuerzas productivas y los avances en la globalización capitalista han transformado la estructura de clase de la clase obrera mundial y han nivelado su condición haciéndola uniformemente más pobre. Esto eventualmente podrá fortalecer la perspectiva revolucionaria.

Las leyes del marxismo siguen vigentes

La forma de comprender la causa subyacente de la crisis actual es entendiendo el papel del desarrollo de la tecnología bajo el capitalismo y sus efectos sobre la clase obrera.

Sam Marcy, el ya fallecido fundador y líder del Partido WW/Mundo Obrero, en un libro muy importante titulado “Alta tecnología, bajos salarios: un análisis marxista del carácter cambiante de la clase obrera” publicado en 1986, analiza las primeras etapas de la revolución tecnológica y su efecto sobre la clase obrera en los Estados Unidos.

En una sección dedicada al impacto en los sindicatos, él analizó paso a paso las fases del desarrollo de las fuerzas productivas bajo el capitalismo desde la fase de manufactura por medio de la cooperación simple hasta la revolución industrial y la producción en masa por medio de grandes maquinarias — sobre todo la producción en serie (assembly line) a principios del siglo 20. Luego él describe la fase de alta tecnología:

“Esta [producción en masa] etapa ha dado paso a otra fase del desarrollo tecnológico. El período de producción en serie que comenzó con Ford y continuó durante un período luego de la Segunda Guerra Mundial se caracterizó por expansión. Pero la actual etapa, la científico-tecnológica, mientras continúa con algunas de las tendencias de desarrollo anteriores, reduce la fuerza laboral.

“Al igual que todas las etapas anteriores del desarrollo capitalista, la fase actual se basa en la utilización de los/as trabajadores/as como fuerza de trabajo. Sin embargo, su tendencia general es disminuir la fuerza de trabajo al mismo tiempo que trata de aumentar la producción. La revolución tecnológica es por tanto un salto cuántico cuyos devastadores efectos requieren una estrategia revolucionaria para superarla”.

Hay dos tendencias irresistibles y con-

tradictorias enraizadas en el sistema capitalista de ganancias que coexisten lado a lado y se derivan de la misma fuente: la sed de plusvalía, de ganancias. Una de ellas es la tendencia del capital por expandir la producción hasta el límite absoluto de capacidad dada la tecnología disponible, con el fin de maximizar su cuota en los mercados y sus ganancias. La otra es la necesidad del capital de reducir la fuerza laboral y reducir los salarios, también con el fin de maximizar las ganancias. Estas dos tendencias que están integradas en el sistema, inevitablemente terminan en una crisis de sobreproducción — una crisis en la que el volumen cada vez mayor de productos básicos producidos por los/as trabajadores/as no pueden ser comprados por ellos/as a un precio que produzcan ganancias para los capitalistas.

Disminución de la tasa de ganancias

A medida que la tecnología se encarece, tiende a reducir la tasa de ganancias de los capitalistas. Los empresarios gastan sumas de dinero cada vez mayores para utilizar máquinas y equipos más eficientes y más materias primas para obtener una mayor producción con menos trabajadores/as. Así que utilizan menos fuerza de trabajo en relación con los instrumentos de producción. La tasa de ganancias se calcula por la cantidad de la plusvalía extraída de los/as trabajadores/as en relación con el total de la inversión capitalista en los medios de producción y materias primas (capital constante), más los salarios (capital variable).

Cuando la tasa de ganancia cae, cada capitalista intenta introducir nuevas tecnologías para obtener una ventaja sobre sus rivales. El primero en introducir la nueva tecnología consigue una ventaja sobre sus rivales que aún utilizan la tecnología antigua menos productiva. Pero pronto la nueva tecnología se extiende. La ventaja inicial que obtuvo el primer grupo capitalista se pierde. El nuevo y más el-

evado nivel de productividad se convierte en la norma. Todo el sector o grupo de industrias afectadas por la nueva tecnología es ahora más productiva, produciendo cada vez más con menos y menos trabajadores/as. Así el ciclo en la carrera por las nuevas tecnologías comienza nuevamente.

Cuando los/as trabajadores/as producen más mercancías en un momento dado debido a las nuevas tecnologías o simplemente por la aceleración en el trabajo, pasan menos tiempo en cada uno de los productos, o en cada operación que se dedica a la creación de una mercancía. El tiempo de trabajo de los/as obreros/as se extiende sobre cada vez más productos. El tiempo total de trabajo sigue siendo el mismo, pero hay menos tiempo de trabajo incorporado en cada producto en particular. Ya que hay menos tiempo de trabajo incorporado en cada mercancía individual producida utilizando la nueva y más cara tecnología, hay menos plusvalía en cada producto, puesto que la plusvalía sólo viene de la mano de obra humana.

Así que el capitalista tiene que vender más productos con el fin de obtener la misma plusvalía y obtener una ganancia. Se le vuelve cada vez más y más difícil a los empresarios recuperar su dinero para poder cubrir el costo de los equipos y mantener suficientes ganancias del trabajo no remunerado de los/as trabajadores/as. Los capitalistas deben por lo tanto constantemente expandir las ventas para obtener un aumento en la cantidad de ganancias para compensar la disminución en la tasa de ganancias. Esta es la única manera de sostener su rentabilidad y para sobrevivir la guerra a muerte de la competencia capitalista.

Esto inevitablemente lleva a la clase capitalista crear las condiciones que conducen a la sobreproducción y a la crisis.

Lea el texto completo en inglés en workersworld.net. □

Uniando la clase obrera en las Américas Conferencia en Tijuana del 3 al 5 diciembre

Por Cheryl LaBash

Del 3 al 5 de diciembre en Tijuana, México — a tan sólo unos minutos del aeropuerto de San Diego, California — una diversa representación de los/as trabajadores/as de América Latina que se enfrentan a la crisis mundial se reunirá con trabajadores/as de EEUU que están lidiando con devastadores desafíos. Con la experiencia y la base de seis conferencias anteriores, el objetivo de la reunión es hacer crecer la unidad de la clase obrera en las Américas y aumentar su influencia — desde la punta de Chile hasta Alaska — compartiendo experiencias sobre los problemas, pero también examinando las estrategias para luchar y vencer.

De interés especial será la presencia de un representante del Ecuador donde un golpe de estado respaldado por los

Estados Unidos fue vencido el 30 de septiembre. Dolores Huerta, cofundadora de United Farm Workers (Trabajadores/as Agrícolas Unidos/as) en los Estados Unidos, se presentará a través de un video.

La invitada especial Aili Labañino representará a las familias de los Cinco Cubanos — hombres encarcelados injustamente por más de 12 años en los EEUU — en la inauguración de la conferencia la noche de 3 de diciembre. Ella es la hija mayor de Ramón Labañino, actualmente encarcelado en la prisión federal de Jessup en el estado de Georgia. Durante la conferencia se exhibirá por vez primera las caricaturas dibujadas por otro de los Cinco Cubanos, Gerardo Hernández. El está encarcelado en Victorville, California. Su sentencia de dos condenas de vida más 15 años está todavía bajo apelación.

El bloqueo impuesto por el gobierno

estadounidense sobre Cuba ha impedido que líderes sindicales cubanos/as vengan a los Estados Unidos. Entonces el fin de semana del 3 a 5 de diciembre será una oportunidad insólita para discutir la situación cambiante del mundo con estos/as trabajadores/as que han ganado cuidado de salud y educación universal gratuita, y seguridad social para la clase trabajadora, aún bajo las condiciones más difíciles del pasado colonial, casi un medio siglo de un bloqueo imperialista con agresión abierta y secreta, y ahora una crisis económica global que es el resultado de la sobreproducción capitalista.

La delegación venezolana del Centro Socialista de Trabajadores/as (CST) traerá la nueva película de Oliver Stone, “Al sur de la frontera”, que será proyectada y discutida después de la cena del 4 de diciembre.

La agenda de la conferencia incluye discusión de los problemas y los pasos a tomar en la lucha, y también se enfocará en la situación actual en México. Representantes del Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas y trabajadores/as de la aerolínea Mexicana que recientemente fueron despedidos/as de su empleo, hablarán sobre sus esfuerzos en organizar. También se espera la asistencia de mineros y trabajadores/as de las maquiladoras.

Los temas de migración e inmigración, impulsados por los acuerdos imperialistas de “libre comercio” como el Tratado de Libre Comercio de América del Norte (NAFTA), sus efectos y las respuestas de lucha a los tratados incluyendo el Primero de Mayo 2011, concluirán la conferencia el 5 de diciembre.

Ya están inscribiéndose trabajadores/
Continua a página 10