

WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!



MARCH 17, 2011 Vol. 53, No. 10 50¢

THROUGHOUT WISCONSIN People's rebellion grows

By Martha Grevatt
Madison, Wis.

The movement to stop Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker's "budget repair bill" continues to draw mass support nationally and internationally. The resistance has blossomed into a statewide people's rebellion with rallies, demonstrations, candlelight vigils and other protest actions all focused on "kill the bill."

A mass rally at the state Capitol in Madison March 5 drew 50,000 people, according to the state AFL-CIO. Even the police estimated 30,000 to 40,000 participated. On March 6 thousands also protested at the Capitol.

Again, it was the solid opposition to the bill's language stripping public workers of virtually all collective bargaining rights that brought out tens of thousands of union members. They came from all over Wisconsin as well as Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Colorado, Ohio, the Dakotas and other states.

All the public sector unions turned out. Together they represent hundreds of thousands of Wisconsin's teachers, health care providers, firefighters, janitors, office workers, transit workers and more. Students, who sparked the people's rebellion by occupying the state Capitol Feb. 15, were again out in force from K-12 and higher education on March 5 and 6.

The Amalgamated Transit Union chose March 5 to mobilize with buses and carpools coming from around the Midwest. Private sector workers were there in solidarity, with large contingents from the Teamsters, Laborers and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Members of the Pipefitters, Plumbers, Sheet Metal Workers, Bricklayers, Carpenters, Steamfitters, Boilermakers, Electricians, Steelworkers and United Auto Workers unions also participated. All were united in an

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Libya repels attack as U.S. seeks 'regime change'

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

As of March 7, Libyan military forces have stepped up their counter-offensive against rebel units backed by the U.S. and European Union countries. Government soldiers have retaken the town of Bin Jawad and are mounting assaults on rebels near the oil port of Ras Lanuf as well as Az Zawiyah, Tobruk and Misurata.

Meanwhile, Western and allied media sources have escalated their disinformation campaign against Moammar Gadhafi and the Libyan government in an effort to create the conditions for the overthrow of this oil-rich, North African state.

Gadhafi and the Libyan government are portrayed as the worst form of dictatorship in the world. Leading foreign policy operatives of the U.S. government like Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Ambassador to the U.N. Susan Rice have openly called for Gadhafi's removal.

The biased news coverage of developments in Libya has created the atmosphere for widespread vilification of Gadhafi and his government.

ICC threatens Libya from Europe

On March 3 the International Criminal Court, based in The Hague, Netherlands, announced that Gadhafi, his sons and other leading figures in the Libyan government are under investigation for alleged war crimes. This institution has been dubbed by many people around the world as the "African Criminal Court," since it has focused almost exclusively on leaders within the continent.

The ICC has issued warrants against Sudan's president, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, for alleged crimes committed during that government's efforts to restore order in the face of attacks by rebels operating in the western Darfur re-

gion of this central African state. The warrants against Bashir have been drawn up over the objections of both the African Union and the Arab League.

ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo told the international press on March 3, "I would like to use this opportunity to put [Libya] on notice. I want to be clear: If their troops commit crimes, they could be made

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LIBYA:
A dilemma for U.S. 11

From Madison to Boston, students spark struggle



WW PHOTOS: MARTHA GREVATT; STEVE KIRSCHBAUM

Pictured left, young people march against Gov. Walker's anti-union bill in Madison, Wis., March 5. Right, students defend public education in Boston, March 2.

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More than a century later

International Women's Day lives

By Kathy Durkin

March 8 is International Women's Day. It recognizes the global solidarity of working and oppressed women and hails their struggles.

Although concealed by capitalist governments, political figures and the media, this day has working-class and socialist roots. European socialists — who were fighting for women workers' economic and political rights — founded it.

German socialist Clara Zetkin proposed International Women's Day at the Second International Women's Socialist Conference in Copenhagen in August 1910, and 100 delegates from 17 countries agreed. IWD's founders maintained that an annual, globally coordinated day of struggle with the same demands would strengthen women's fights in different countries.

As a socialist, Zetkin aimed to advance the anti-capitalist movement, as she saw socialism as the only way to end women's oppression. Showing her internationalism, Zetkin also condemned German chauvinism and discrimination based on nationality.

Moreover, Zetkin sought to build solidarity among women in increasingly hostile capitalist countries and to develop an international anti-war movement. So militant was her activism against the imperialist World War I and Germany's role that she was imprisoned. Protests set her free.

IWD's socialist founders were inspired by the militant actions of New York City women garment workers, mostly immigrants, and the key role played by socialists. They cited the 15,000-strong demonstration on March 8, 1908, for economic and political rights and unionization. In November 1909 a three-month strike began, known as the "Uprising of the 20,000."

IWD started a revolution!

In 1911, 1 million women marched for their rights throughout Europe during the first coordinated International Women's Day.

When Russian women walked out of the textile factories and onto the streets of St. Petersburg on International Women's Day in 1917, it was earthshaking. They joined hungry women who were attacking grocery stores and bakeries to protest exorbitant food prices.

Their joint mass protest demanded "Peace, land and bread." Grabbing soldiers' rifles, they called out, "Put down your bayonets. Join us!" Their fervor grew; soon 90,000 protesters were in the streets. Their militant actions sparked the struggle that toppled the oppressive czarist regime, paving the way for workers' revolution.

The Soviet Union officially recognized IWD in 1921; it was the first government to enact laws codifying

women's rights. The new socialist country did what no capitalist country had done.

To this day, there is not an Equal Rights Amendment in the United States because of the vociferous opposition of the right-wing superrich. They profit from women's inequality and the superexploitation of Black women, Latinas, immigrants and other oppressed workers.

Yet socialist Cuba has annually commemorated this special day — in deed as well as word. There, with the guidance of the Federation of Cuban Women, women have continually made gains, which are legally guaranteed.

For decades this vital day, promoted by socialists, has been commemorated by liberation movements, progressive forces and women workers. Creative and militant actions have aimed at imperialist war, capitalist globalization, poverty, exploitation, racism, oppression of lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer people, and all forms of sexist discrimination and inequality.

The global capitalist crisis and IMF/World Bank-imposed government austerity programs have created more joblessness for women, more migrant workers, low wages and cuts in vital social programs. However, women workers have taken to the streets worldwide to say "No!"

This year women internationally are heartened by their Arab sisters, who are boldly demanding their rights in pro-U.S. dictatorships in Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain and other Middle Eastern and North African countries.

In 1970 women of Youth Against War & Fascism and Workers World Party revived IWD's militant, class-conscious, struggle traditions by marching to New York City's Women's House of Detention. They protested inequality, racism, poverty and political repression and expressed solidarity with those imprisoned, including the New York Panther 21.

Last year the International Working Women's Day Coalition commemorated IWD's 100th anniversary in New York City. They honored women's resistance and rallied for unity of struggles at home with those abroad.

At the Triangle Shirtwaist factory site they honored the 146 workers, mostly immigrant women and children, who died in the fire on March 25, 1911, due to capitalist greed. Protests after the fire won important workplace safety regulations.

Today's capitalist crisis is affecting women workers here, as corporate bosses lay off or underemploy them, cutting salaries and benefits. Unions are under attack by the superrich, their right-wing government mouthpieces and the media.

Women workers are in the forefront challenging these attacks on their lives. Wisconsin public sector employees, with students and youth, occupied the state Capitol. Health care workers have gone on strike. Immigrants have strongly protested racist attacks.

The economic attacks on reproductive and other health care, subsidized childcare and food programs, which mainly hit single mothers, low-wage workers and poor women, are increasingly being met with protests. Communities are mobilizing against state and city budget cuts. The struggle is growing.

The century since International Women's Day was launched has borne out its founders' conclusions: Constant struggle is needed under capitalism, and this system will not end women's oppression and inequality. Only socialism will do that.

The writer's grandmother, Sophie Stoller, an immigrant garment worker, joined the Uprising of the 20,000 and worked at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, but was ill and didn't work on the day of the fire.

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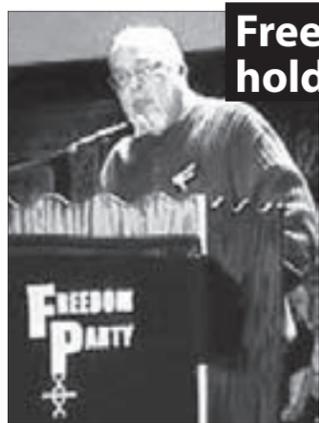
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Freedom Party holds convention

More than 400 activists attended the first Freedom Party Convention in New York City Feb. 12-13. At the podium is Ramon Jimenez, the Freedom Party state attorney general candidate in 2010.

— Larry Holmes

PHOTO: MICHAEL OTTO

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

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Indigenous prisoner demands rights

The following is a statement from Jason Campbell, an Indigenous inmate in Ohio State Penitentiary where Lucasville uprising prisoners Siddique Abdullah Hasan, Bomani Shakur and Jason Robb recently won significant improvements in the terms of their confinement through a 12-day hunger strike and an international support campaign. Campbell chose to start his hunger strike Feb. 27 because it is the 38th anniversary of the struggle of Wounded Knee led by the American Indian Movement against the U.S. government. Campbell's religious necklace was taken, even though this had been approved as a religious accommodation. To sign a petition to support Jason Campbell's demands, go to iacenter.org/prisoners/campbellpetition.

Thank you for your interest in my current plight. I am grateful that there is at least one voice still willing to speak up on behalf of those in my position.

Since my incarceration in 2003, I have diligently fought for the religious rights of incarcerated Native Americans in Ohio prisons. I feel, seeing that I have the ability, that it is my responsibility to insure that we have the same protections under the law that other faith-based groups generally enjoy. Personally, I have requested everything I could think of, trying to get as much approved as I could — as I know it would set the tone for what others will be allowed in the future. Basically, I am being prevented from practicing my Native beliefs in every way. I have requested and been denied all of the following: tobacco, tobacco ties (twists), moccasins,

feathers, beads (sewn into objects like a head band or medicine bag), fur, animal hair (such as horse and buffalo), head band (of a color other than white — where beads are concerned), sacred objects (for Medicine Bag and Medicine Bundle), Native American flute, hand drum, rattle, access to sweat lodge (for purification), and to have a “Sun Dance” ceremony.

I also have requested and have been approved for a “prayer pipe,” Medicine Bag, and a Medicine Bundle, but I must point out that these are useless without tobacco for the prayer pipe and sacred objects for the Medicine Bag and Medicine Bundle. Without tobacco, I am unable to pray. Without sacred objects for the Medicine Bag and Medicine Bundle, they are just empty vessels — void of their purpose.

One last thing. My hunger strike is not

considered “official” until after I refuse my ninth meal — which will be March 2 at breakfast. When I get to the ninth meal and refuse to come off of the hunger strike, I will be moved to the segregation block (the Hole). I’m told it is to prevent other prisoners from giving me food. In fact, I believe that it is to punish me into coming off of the hunger strike by putting me in a cell with no electricity. If you can find a way to address this as well, it would be much appreciated.

I hope, fervently, that this information can help you in assisting me — and through me — all other Native Americans in Ohio prisons. Present and future. Thank you again for your help.

“Mitakuye Oyasin” (to all my relations)
Sincerely,
Jason Campbell #476-229

46 years later

Remembering ‘Bloody Sunday’

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Selma, Ala.

The grainy black-and-white images are horrifyingly familiar — a column of Civil Rights marchers, numbering about 600, many dressed in their Sunday best, faces so young, expressions so intent and serious, walking across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala., stopping before a wall of riot-gear state troopers. Then a rush by the baton-wielding men in blue uniforms, muscling their way into the waiting women and men who slowly retreat, turn to run, fall and are trampled by the crowd and the horses of the mounted police. Then the sounds of clubs hitting flesh and bone, people screaming, bodies hitting the pavement; the sight of blood flowing, tear gas clouds obscuring the bodies, the injured being hurried away.

These scenes from the March 7, 1965, march, better known as “Bloody Sunday,” have become a standard television clip, a kind of media shorthand whenever the Civil Rights Movement is referenced. What this portrayal of the struggle for voting rights in a sound bite does, maybe deliberately, is to distort the years of efforts by the Black population of Selma and the nearby counties to register to vote. It ignores the heroic work of young volunteers with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, starting in 1963, who faced death by racist elements like the Ku Klux Klan for helping to prepare these disenfranchised people to take Jim-Crow-required literacy tests.

It hides the firebombed houses, the loss of jobs, the beatings, the evictions and the murder of Jimmie Lee Jackson, shot Feb. 18, 1965, in nearby Marion, Ala. The 26-year-old Jackson was with his mother and grandfather during a peaceful march to protest the arrest of Rev. James Orange, an organizer with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The march was attacked by an array of police agencies including Alabama State troopers. It was only this past November that the Alabama State trooper who killed Jackson pleaded guilty to this crime. James Bonard Fowler was sentenced to six months in the Perry County jail.

The death of Jackson at the hands of an Alabama State trooper was the immediate reason for the decision to march from Selma to the state capitol of Montgomery on March 7, 1965. Some had wanted to carry his body on the 50-mile trek to make it plain to arch-segregationist and then Gov. George Wallace that nothing was going to turn them around. The march to the state capitol finally happened on March 9, 1965. A commemorative march took place this March 6 on the 46th anniversary of Bloody Sunday.

Every year since, these momentous acts of courage and determination are commemorated in Selma with a re-enactment of the march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge on the anniversary of Bloody Sunday. Many accompanying events serve to educate and motivate, such as programs featuring the leaders and foot soldiers of the Civil Rights Movement whose lives of



activism reflect the ebbs and flows, gains and losses of the struggle for equality and liberation. It is their stories that add di-

mension and truth to the grainy black-and-white images the corporate media show on Bloody Sunday. □

New York City

Law exposes ‘pregnancy centers’

Special to Workers World
New York

On March 2 the New York City Council voted to regulate so-called “crisis pregnancy centers.” These are centers set up to look like a doctor’s office or clinic where pregnant women can seek care for pregnancy, abortion or contraception, including the morning-after pill. But their only mission is to convince women not to have abortions.

These centers usually have no licensed medical personnel on site and, until now, were not licensed or regulated in any way. Privacy laws safeguarding the confidentiality of patient information do not apply to these centers. Women who go there have to perform their own pregnancy tests — using a pregnancy test kit sold over the counter in pharmacies — because the centers are not licensed to do medical tests or procedures.

The new law requires that these phony centers notify clients whether or not there are licensed medical personnel on site; clearly state that they do not provide or offer referrals for abortion care, the morning-after pill or any form of contraception; and ensure confidentiality of all information collected from clients. The law requires this notification at the centers and in all advertising, both in print and online. Taking into account the special vulnerability of non-English speakers to the deceptive tactics used, all notifications must be in Spanish as well as English.

These sham centers are often located near or even in the same building as Planned Parenthood or other abortion providers in order to lure women with unintended pregnancies and subject them to anti-abortion propaganda. They do not provide medically accurate information about pregnancy, contraception or abortion and promote discredited notions about links between abortion and breast cancer.

Donna Lieberman, the executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, says abortion foes’ free speech is not curbed by the new law. “But they don’t have the right to dress up as doctors and masquerade as health care providers and deceive women into thinking they’ve been to the doctor when they have not.” (New York Times, March 2) □

Artists in Solidarity with Haitian Women

A fundraiser was held March 5 in the Bronx borough of New York City in solidarity with Haitian women who have faced gender violence while living in makeshift tents in the Port-au-Prince area of Cité de Soleil since the Jan.

12, 2010, earthquake. The South Bronx cultural event was organized by The Legacy Circle. Artists who dedicated their talents included disc jockey Asho, Alma Moyo, Carmen Mojica, 809 Ladies and others. Rocio Silverio, pictured, emceed the event.

— Report and photo by Monica Moorehead



Memorial for Dave Axelrod March 20

Workers World Party will hold a memorial celebration of the life of Dave Axelrod on Sunday, March 20, at 4 p.m. at the Solidarity Center in Manhattan. Axelrod dedicated his entire life to the fight for socialism. He was a devoted member of Workers World and leader of Youth Against War & Fascism. All his co-workers, friends and neighbors are invited to attend and share their remembrances of Axelrod. The Solidarity Center is on the 5th floor at 55 West 17th St. (near 6th Ave). Read the obituary at <http://tinyurl.com/4fmk58a>. □

Despite gov't, media hype

Jobless recovery persists

By Fred Goldstein

The big-business press and television are hyping the February job numbers as evidence of a coming turnaround in the recovery for workers. The government announced that 192,000 net new jobs were created last month and that the private sector created 222,000 jobs. Thus the unemployment rate was declared to have gone down from 9 percent to 8.9 percent.

But no matter how much hype is mustered behind these figures — no matter how much the pundits read good news into a miserable situation — the jobless recovery continues without letup.

The Wall Street Journal, of all publications, lifted the lid on the truth concealed in the current statistics.

One key gauge of the labor market's health — the labor force participation rate, which measures the percentage of adults who have jobs or are seeking them — remained stuck at its lowest point since the mid-1980s.

A low participation rate both saps the economy's long-term growth potential and can obscure deeper problems in the labor market. If, for example, labor force participation today were at the same level as before the recession, the jobless rate would have been 11.5 percent in February.

In other words, no matter how the government slices and dices the statis-

tics, millions of workers gave up looking for jobs long ago, and the statisticians of the capitalist government have no desire to count them. Thus they are not entered into the calculations of the unemployment rate.

The economy has officially added an average of 136,000 jobs per month since November. According to the Economic Policy Institute, which bases its numbers on the Bureau of Labor Statistics, it takes 127,000 per month just to keep up with new entries into the labor force.

Considering there are 13.7 million people officially unemployed — an estimated 8 million underemployed and more than 2 million officially counted as having dropped out — at the present pace of job growth, there will not be a dent in mass unemployment. By one calculation from the liberal think-tank Center for American Progress, it would take until 2033 just to get back to 5 percent unemployment!

While there was much crowing about the pitiful figure of 222,000 jobs added in the private sector, there was no report on how many of them are temporary jobs, low-wage jobs or short-hour jobs. The bosses have adopted a "just-in-time" hiring policy of temporary workers who can be disposed of at any moment.

Furthermore, the media quietly stated that state and local governments laid off 30,000 workers in February. States

have cut 82,000 jobs and localities have cut 377,000 jobs since August 2008. And unless the working class can stop the state and local governments, backed by the bankers and bosses, the plan is to escalate layoffs of public sector workers.

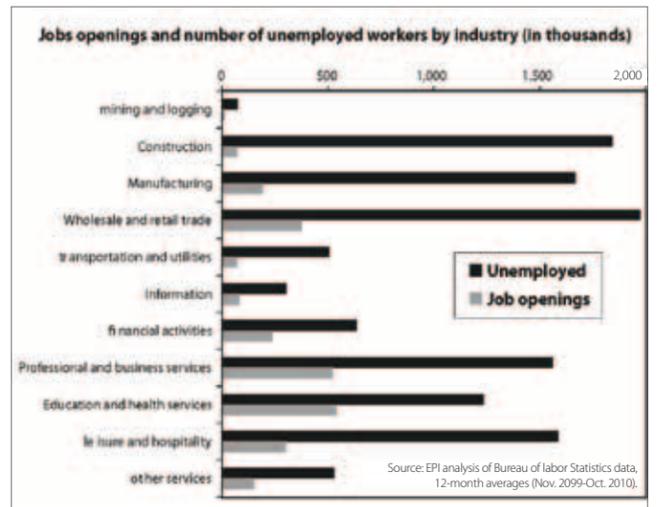
At the end of it all, there are around 30 million workers still unemployed, underemployed or who have dropped out and are totally unaccounted for in the government statistics.

Time for a working-class recovery

The capitalist state, the Federal Reserve, the Treasury Department and the White House have pumped \$10 trillion into the economy, mostly to bail out the auto industry and the banks, which also get loan guarantees.

Bankers' profits are higher than ever. Corporate profits are up. The capitalists are recovering, but for the tens of millions of workers it is still a jobless recovery.

What is a jobless recovery? It is a recovery of business production and profits while jobs either continue to be lost or whatever gains take place are minimal. Under capitalism historically, business recoveries are supposed to be accompanied by an upsurge in hiring, not job loss-



es or job stagnation.

The first jobless recovery in the U.S. since the Great Depression followed the recession of 1991. This was followed by a second and much worse one after the 2000-2001 downturn. What the U.S. working class is experiencing today is the third consecutive jobless recovery. Only this one is far more severe, far more protracted and shows little sign of abating.

Capitalism has hit an impasse. The more productive it becomes, the fewer workers it needs and the lower wages it pays.

The class struggle of the workers — to keep the ruling class from unloading on them the huge debt crisis incurred by bailing out the millionaires and billionaires — and the fight for jobs are the only way out.

The workers in Wisconsin and all the workers around the country who have rallied to their cause have set in motion a movement which must grow and spread so that it can become the spark that lights the fire of mass fightback to turn the capitalist recovery into a working-class recovery. □

Michigan: don't be divided

Domestic partner benefits approved while public sector unions face givebacks

By Martha Grevatt

In 2004, as part of a right-wing appeal to bigotry designed to get President George W. Bush re-elected, voters were bombarded with rhetoric against same-sex marriage. Michigan, Ohio and other states passed mini-DOMAs — modeling the federal "Defense of Marriage Act" in defining marriage as a union of "one man and one woman."

It was outrageous enough to amend state constitutions to deny such a basic civil right to the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer communities, but six years later the right wing continues to push for the broadest possible interpretation. Same-sex and unmarried opposite-sex couples are being denied a whole host of rights that might otherwise be afforded to "domestic partners."

Everything from equal access to campus housing to protection for victims of domestic violence has come under the scrutiny of groups such as the American Family Association. In Michigan, they cite the actual language of the state's "Marriage Protection Amendment," which states, "The union of one man and one woman in marriage shall be the only agreement recognized as a marriage or similar union for any purpose." (legislature.mi.gov)

During the 2004 campaign the AFA argued that voters didn't have to worry about anyone losing health benefits because the MPA was a "marriage only" amendment. They made an about-face after they won its passage, however, using the words "for any purpose" in an amicus brief supporting the governor, Democrat Jennifer Granholm, against the Michigan chapter of Pride at Work.

The ACLU had filed a lawsuit in 2005 on behalf of Pride at Work, seeking a de-

claratory ruling that the MPA does not prohibit public employers from providing health benefits to same-sex domestic partners. These benefits had been negotiated for state government and university employees by their unions the year before.

The case proceeded through the state courts, some ruling in favor of LGBTQ workers and some against, until in 2008 the Michigan Supreme Court ruled that the "for any purpose" wording meant that providing equal benefits violated the 2004 amendment. The ruling was a serious setback for the LGBTQ community.

Now the Michigan Civil Service Commission has not only restored but expanded those benefits with a 3-1 decision allowing coverage for one "other eligible adult" (OEA) — any adult, other than tenants or live-in aids, living with the worker for more than a year and who intends to continue living with the worker. Dependents of the OEA are also covered. Some communities and universities had already been providing OEA or "household member" coverage; they changed the language from "domestic partner" in anticipation of the 2008 ruling.

The right wing is fuming over having to cover even more uninsured people. They have to acknowledge that what they consider a subverting of the MPA is perfectly constitutional — in fact, they are using it to argue in other states that passing more mini-DOMAs won't cost anyone their health care. At present 27 states have passed anti-marriage amendments, but a growing number of states allow or recognize same-sex marriages or civil unions.

In Ohio — where the Supreme Court ruled that providing domestic partner benefits did not violate the state's anti-marriage amendment — anti-union and anti-LGBTQ lawmakers have sneaked

into a Wisconsin-style budget-cutting bill, SB5, a line defining marriage as being between "one man and one woman." To insert this into a bill in a state where same-sex marriage is already illegal can mean only one thing. "This bill will eliminate all domestic partnership benefits, straight or gay, besides attacking unions," stated Mark Szabo, who organized a demonstration in Cleveland against the sneaky bigots. "Basically we are trying to protect what small rights we have."

In Michigan, the latest tactic by the right wing is to make an issue of the cost of providing OEA benefits. The new governor, Republican Rick Snyder, said that while the current OEA language is clearly legal, he is "frustrated and disappointed" about having to provide health care to uninsured adults at a possible cost of almost \$6 million. That amount is roughly three-thousandths of 1 percent of the state deficit! Some right-wing pundits are calling for the abolition of the Civil Service Commission, established in 1908 by constitutional amendment to administer the providing of civil and human services.

By ranting against the negligible cost,

Snyder is consciously attempting to pit union workers — whose wages, pensions, and benefits are in danger — against the LGBTQ community. Snyder despises both.

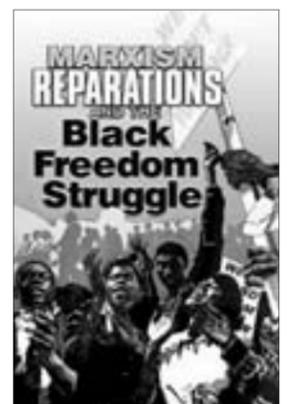
Unfortunately, the Michigan State Employees Association, citing the 3 percent pay cut taken by its members, bought into the propaganda and stated its opposition to "extra benefits." More importantly, though, the two major unions for state workers — the Service Employees union and United Auto Workers Local 6000 — support equal benefits.

Responding to the latest threat by the Republican-dominated state Legislature to overturn the commission's directive, Local 6000 legislative liaison Ray Holman stated, "This was negotiated. ... It's not really appropriate for the legislature to try to overturn the civil service commission." (Between the Lines, March 3)

Tens of thousands of union workers have been protesting Snyder's union-busting "budget repair" plan. They must not let themselves get sidetracked by scapegoating or bigotry, but should stand with all workers and oppressed communities, which are in the crosshairs of the ruling class. □

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

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Available at www.Leftbooks.com

No PATCO moment in Wisconsin

By Fred Goldstein

The great struggle of the Wisconsin public workers has galvanized union solidarity on a national level not seen since 1981. That was when the AFL-CIO organized the Solidarity Day demonstration of half a million workers in Washington, D.C., after President Ronald Reagan had fired 18,000 air traffic controllers, members of the PATCO union, and banned them from federal employment for life.

But Solidarity Day in 1981 was a one-shot, symbolic action that came and went because the issue was quickly abandoned by the top leadership after the demonstration was over. This time it's different.

The determined and sustained stand by the Wisconsin unions, students and community supporters against the union-busting, right-wing Gov. Scott Walker and his corporate backers has aroused workers all over the country. It has raised hope that the unending nightmare of attacks on the working class, and the unions in particular, can be stopped. The direct action of occupying the Capitol building in Madison for two weeks has inspired unionists and their sympathizers from all 50 states — and even from other countries — who have rallied to the cause with donations and other expressions of solidarity.

Wisconsin has shown the potential power, not only of a united labor struggle, but of a budding alliance among unions, the community, and students and youth. Such a prospect can turn the nightmare that labor has been facing into a nightmare for the bosses and bankers.

A majority now favor union rights

Indeed, big business is extremely worried about what effect this eruption of union solidarity will have on the general population and has sent its pollsters to find out. All the polling outfits, including the Wall Street Journal/NBC, the right-wing Rasmussen Reports and several others, got the same results. Sympathy for unions is back on the map in the United States, with 60 percent and more favoring the defense of collective bargaining rights and a similar majority in favor of unions.

The Wisconsin struggle has overcome a decades-long campaign of slander against unions and has successfully countered the effects of all the big business propaganda against so-called “overpaid public workers.”

The defense of collective bargaining as a fundamental right in Wisconsin has strong implications for future campaigns against anti-union, “right-to-work” laws in the South and Southwest.

Despite the great progress that has been made and the great potential that this struggle holds, however, strong measures are going to be needed for victory.

Wisconsin's public employees are facing a hard-right governor who has a hard-right majority in both houses of the Legislature. This is a struggle against the capitalist state, which has capitalist legal authority, judges, financial power and the instruments of force at its disposal to be used against the workers. This is far greater immediate power than any private corporation has at its disposal.

Up against bondholders and bankers

Equally important, the unions are not up against just Gov. Walker, the billionaire Koch brothers, who help to finance the anti-union slander campaign, and the Tea Party.

They are up against the rich bondholders, the bankers who stand behind them and the entire ruling class. These forces

are hoping Walker can kill off collective bargaining rights in Wisconsin. Of course, they want it to be done without provoking a great class struggle — they are fearful of such a development. But they are silently behind Walker.

Consider the following item that appeared in the Philadelphia Enquirer online on Feb. 22:

“Of all the Republican proposals for not paying retired teachers and state troopers the pensions promised in more prosperous times, investors prefer Wisconsin-style union-busting over the state-bankruptcy gamble proposed by ex-U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich and ex-Florida Gov. Jeb Bush

“State bankruptcy could let governments break their union contracts and cancel benefits, but it ‘is less desirable to the bondholder, because it creates a higher level of uncertainty that would increase borrowing costs for states and local municipalities,’ says Michael Crow, who manages \$3 billion in clients’ bond investments in state and local governments for Glenmede, the Philadelphia trust bank.

“Barring unions from negotiating benefits, as Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker wants to do, is more likely to improve states’ credit.”

Behind the bondholders stand the banks. Banks have guaranteed \$53 billion in state and municipal bonds that come due in 2011 alone. Another \$24 billion more come due in 2012, and so on.

While the Koch brothers may be cheering Walker on, their view coincides with the view of a large section of finance capital. These are the same financiers who were bailed out to the tune of \$10 trillion, who are making record profits, and who are paying politicians like Walker to declare that there is no money, so the unions and the poor have to be sacrificed.

Walker dreams of a ‘PATCO moment’

Gov. Walker told a blogger, whom he mistakenly thought to be one of the Koch brothers, that this was going to be his “PATCO moment.” This must be taken deadly seriously by the entire labor union movement.

Back in 1981, the AFL-CIO leadership was in a state of denial about the seriousness of the firing of the air traffic controllers. But that firing was the opening shot in a 30-year-long anti-labor offensive. The anti-labor offensive unleashed by and supported by the Reagan administration demanded huge concessions on wages, benefits, working conditions and other union rights. The bosses aimed their fire at the industrial unions.

The current offensive has taken aim at teachers and public workers in general.

During the anti-labor offensive of the last 30 years, the top union officialdom left every local union to face the combined forces of big capital on its own. Valiant struggles against concessions

were carried out by the copper miners at Phelps Dodge in 1983, the Hormel meat packers in UFCW Local P-9 in 1985, the paper workers at International Paper in 1987, the UAW strike at Caterpillar in 1993, the rubber workers at Bridgestone/Firestone in 1995, the Detroit newspaper strike of 1995-1997 and many more.

All these strikes were carried out against the centralized forces of corporate capital, backed by the banks and the capitalist state. Its judges issued anti-union injunctions upon request, and the police and National Guard escorted in armies of scabs to break the strikes.

Without the mobilization of the labor movement in alliance with the community, the heroism of the rank-and-file workers and local union leaders was insufficient to overcome the demands for concessions.

Combined forces needed to bring victory

It is not just Walker who is looking for a “PATCO moment.” It is the ruling class as a whole.

Under these conditions, the burden of overcoming the Walker regime and his ruling-class backers should not be left on the shoulders of the Wisconsin workers alone. Nor should the public workers of Ohio — who have just suffered a setback — or the public workers of Indiana, Michigan and all the other states coming under attack be left to fight isolated battles.

This offensive against public workers is clearly orchestrated by the central powers of the capitalist class. They are in control of the media, the state, and all the levers of power and influence needed to carry out this vicious campaign.

The national leadership of the AFL-CIO, of Change to Win and all independent unions must unite to support this struggle, and not just symbolically.

Nor should the labor movement rely solo on the 14 Wisconsin Democratic state senators. These senators, under the pressure of the struggle, took a bold move — bold for politicians — and left the state to deny the Republicans a quorum. It was a progressive act for which they have been vilified by the right wing, fined, threatened with arrest, had privileges removed, etc.

Their act gave the workers valuable time to mobilize mass support and strengthen the struggle at the Capitol. But they are legislators, and they can only legislate what the workers are able to win on the ground. The fate of this struggle cannot rely on whether or not the Republicans can get a quorum. It is up to the working class to carry out the actual struggle to force Walker and the ruling class to back off.

The union leadership correctly made collective bargaining their fundamental priority. But they gave in to the psychological and political pressure of big business. Instead of saying “Tax the rich” and showing that public employees are

underpaid compared to the private sector, they unnecessarily made concessions on health care and pensions without any struggle. But these concessions could also be reversed in the course of the struggle.

Idea of a general strike

The question of a general strike has been raised by the Wisconsin South Central Labor Federation. Just raising it, if only as a threat, is an advance for the union movement. Even a short general strike of a limited duration, from one to a few days, is a major undertaking and could energize the whole working class. A full-fledged general strike is a most serious matter in the struggle between the classes. It would require great logistical, strategic and tactical preparation. It involves organizing transportation, the supply of food, emergency medical services, services to the poor, education and other questions of social and economic organization. It means building up support in the community in advance through mass propaganda and organization. It would require educating the workers. Above all it would require the greatest unity among the unions and with the general population. If a general strike were to be carried out, the workers would have to be prepared to confront the fury of the ruling class. To successfully carry out a general strike in Wisconsin would certainly require the support of the entire labor movement, along with the support of the community.

The AFL-CIO has called for a mobilization in Madison on March 12. This is a step in the right direction. It raises another option of a Solidarity-style massive demonstration, with hundreds of thousands occupying the state capital until the legislation is dropped. Such a mobilization could set the stage for a general strike. It could also reverse the layoffs announced by Walker.

Such a demonstration would send a message not only to Walker in Wisconsin but also to Gov. John Kasich in Ohio, Gov. Mitch Daniels in Indiana, Gov. Rick Snyder in Michigan and to the entire ruling class that they will face a fierce class struggle if they try to impose these onerous concessions on the workers.

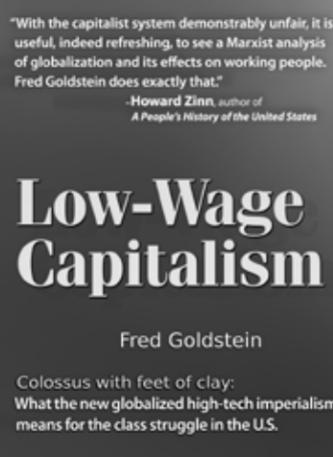
Any such mass mobilization would have to raise the question of jobs in a major way. This would send a signal to the millions of unemployed, especially those in the Black, Latino/a and Native communities, which suffer from extremely high unemployment, that the unions are on their side. This is crucial to building not just union solidarity but class solidarity within the working class as a whole.

These are the types of measures necessary to deny Walker, the Koch brothers, the bankers and the bosses their “PATCO moment” and to revive the class struggle on a scale needed to push the economic crisis back onto the backs of the millionaires and billionaires, where it belongs. □

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DETROIT

Student action met with police violence

On March 2 students and their labor-community allies protested at Wayne State University as part of the National Day of Action to Defend Public Education. Sponsored by the student organization By Any Means Necessary, a speakout took place in Gullen Mall, in the center of campus, to denounce Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder's plan to cut state spending to WSU by 15 percent; tuition increases; union busting under the guise of privatization; on-going racist attacks on the Detroit public schools; among other demands.

The students held a banner that read "Solidarity with WI students & workers!" After the speakout protesters marched to the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center downtown while being harassed by cops along the entire miles-long route. Undaunted, the protesters faced down the cops even after one cop rammed his patrol car into a youth and ran over his foot. The students kept on marching.

On March 3 another Defend Public Education protest, sponsored by Wayne State students opposed to education cuts, took place at Wayne State with the same

issues. Chants included "Bail out the students, not the banks." When protesters marched through campus buildings with their lead banner that read "Solidarity with WI Students & Workers" while chanting "Out of the classroom, into the streets," they were physically attacked by campus police who threatened the students and their allies with arrest and attempted to rip their banners. The protesters defied the police lies that campus buildings were private property and marched through a few more campus buildings on their way back to Gullen Mall, where another Defend Public Education protest will take place March 10.

These actions were preceded by a Michigan visit by Larry Hales, a leader of the Defend Public Education coalition and FIST (Fight Imperialism, Stand Together). Hales was in Michigan Feb. 27 to March 1 and spoke to students at Michigan State University, the Arts Academy in the Woods and Wayne State University. He was also the featured speaker at a Feb. 28 Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice meeting in Detroit.



Supporting organizations at both Wayne State protests included MECAWI; the Moratorium NOW! Coalition; National Lawyers Guild-Wayne State Chapter; Organization for a Free Society; the

Socialist Party; TrumblePlex; the Union of Part-Time Faculty/American Federation of Teachers Local 477 at WSU; and Workers World Party.

— Report and photo by Bryan G. Pfeifer

The rise & fall of public education in the U.S.

Gary, Ind., steel mills needed the Froebel school

PART 1

By Gene Clancy

At the juncture of Michigan and West 15th streets in Gary, Ind., there is an unusual monument. The concrete and brick structure, located in an otherwise vacant field, which is itself surrounded by dilapidated housing and closed businesses, celebrates the Froebel school. For over two decades in the early 20th century, Froebel was considered by many to be the best high school in the United States.

There is no longer a school, or even a school building, at the site. Froebel was converted to a junior high school in 1969 and permanently closed in 1977. Photos taken shortly before the school was torn down reveal a somber picture of decline and physical decay. (Froebel school, Gary, Ind., flickr.com)

The history of the public schools of Gary

is a microcosm of what has happened to public education in the U.S. generally in the last 100 years. The latest proposed budget by Indiana's Republican governor, Mitch Daniels, cuts annual education funding for the state by \$300 million.

The biggest loser among regional schools under the plan is the Gary Community School Corp. State funding for Gary schools will drop from \$94.2 million this year to \$79.2 million in 2012 and \$74.3 million in 2013, a decline of more than 20 percent. (Not every regional school corporation is losing state funding. Crown Point, a wealthy suburb 28 minutes south of Gary but in the same county, will receive an increase of 1.5 percent. (Crown Point.com))

A biased and racist school rating system set up by the state of Indiana gives all three of Gary's high schools only one point out of a possible 10. (Gary Commu-

nity School Corp. website)

But in 1916, a very different picture was being drawn of Gary's public schools. Educational luminaries and social reformers, including John Dewey and his daughter Evelyn Dewey, famously concluded that Gary had built wonderful examples of "schools of tomorrow." Indeed, visitors from around the world traveled there, hoping to capture a glimpse of the future. In 1916, the prominent *Survey* magazine printed an impressive sketch of the Froebel school in Gary, showing the remarkable range of activities then available in an up-to-date school system.

Froebel held 2,000 students and was a beehive of activity. The sketch simultaneously showed some children working in libraries, another class studying in science labs, other pupils laboring in manual training or domestic science classes, with still others engaged on the playing fields. Students moved from work, to play, to study, and back again across the course of the school day to maximize efficiency.

Froebel was open every evening for academic instruction or for social center ac-

tivities, community lectures and entertainment. A member of the New York Board of Education called the Gary Plan "the divine spark of common sense." (Ronald D. Cohen, "Children of the Mill: Schooling and Society in Gary Indiana 1906-1960")

In the early 20th century, public schools in Gary and throughout the country did not just offer curricular and extracurricular choices to children, but also provided medical care, child and infant care, social welfare services, recreation for the entire family, adult programs, facilities for people with disabilities and employment opportunities, and served as an anchor for the community.

It is important to remember that these were public schools. Big business not only dominated the school systems as it has always done up to the present day, but also actively encouraged and even helped finance schools such as the Froebel school. So what happened?

Clancy is a retired secondary school teacher in Rochester, N.Y. This is the first of a three-part article, available in full at workers.org.

New York City

Activists vow: On to Wall Street March 24

At a meeting at New York City's Hostos College on March 5, some 200 labor, student and community activists gave a ringing endorsement for a large-scale mobilization to rally at City Hall and march to Wall Street on March 24. The coalition includes numerous public sector unions, the CUNY (City University of New York) Mobilization Network, the South Bronx Community Congress, the Freedom Party, the Coalition for Public Education and the Bail Out the People Movement.

Brenda Stokely, a co-founder of the Million Worker March Movement and former president of AFSCME District Council 1707, called on organizers to "unite and concentrate forces, and take the action plan to all campuses, communities and unions across the city."

Darnell Morris, an organizer for Service Employees Local 1199, said union-

ists "need to join with students to mobilize broad and deep" for the March 24 action at City Hall and Wall Street.

Larry Hales, of the CUNY Mobilization Network, told the audience, "Together we can force the mayor and governor not just to hear us, but to change their plans."

Ramon Jimenez, a founder of the South Bronx Community Congress, made a call for "unity politics" to face "the storm that's coming" with the proposed budget cuts at city and state levels.

Larry Holmes, of the Bail Out the People Movement, emphasized that the cuts are part of a large-scale, national assault on public sector unions, coming not just from one or two governors, but from Wall Street. "That's why we need to march on Wall Street. We need to bring what's happening in Wisconsin to New York," Holmes declared.

— Dee Knight

LGBTQ peoples protest for

By Shelley Ettinger
New York

Hoisting signs proclaiming "Using queers to oppress Palestinians [is] just not fabulous," "Don't censor queer organizing" and "We need solidarity, not bigotry, Don't lock out pro-Palestinian queers," activists gathered in front of New York's Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Community Center the evening of March 5 to protest cancellation of an Israeli Apartheid Week event.

The demonstration culminated two weeks of outrage that began when LGBT Center Executive Director Glenda Testone unilaterally ousted the group Siege Busters and its planned "Party to End Apartheid." Testone had acted after a small coterie of reactionaries, apparently backed by one or more wealthy financial donors, issued a news release calling IAW



"anti-Semitic" and threatened to organize a boycott of the Center.

LGBT organizations and activists around the country denounced this move against queer solidarity with Palestine. Statements and letters demanding that the Center rescind its ban on Siege Busters were issued by groups including the Audre Lorde Project, Palestinian Queers for Boycott Divestment and Sanctions, Aswat-Palestinian Gay Wom-

BOSTON

Students, educators fight school closings

By Frank Neisser
Boston

Students from the Social Justice Academy in Hyde Park militantly marched on March 2, chanting, "SOS - Save our Schools!" SJA was one of 18 schools that Mayor Thomas Menino's Boston School Committee voted to close last December.

The students are determined to fight on. At Hyde Park High School, they discussed the school closings and attacks on public education. Then they marched to English High School, carrying coffins

into a School Committee public hearing on their proposed budget. The students' die-in dramatized the death of public education.

The budget would cut \$60 million, close schools, lay off employees and cut transportation. These plans would limit parents' choices in Roxbury's, Dorchester's and Mattapan's oppressed communities, and harm special education students and English language learners.

Sasha De La Cruz of El Movimiento co-organized the protest, and Fernando Fernii Rodriguez led chants. Boston

School Bus Drivers, Steelworkers Local 8751 provided the sound truck and march security.

The Coalition for Equal Quality Education leafleted for a protest at the upcoming School Committee budget hearings. A demonstration is called for March 23 at the School Committee headquarters when the vote will be held on the budget plan. This protest is part of the National Month of Action to Defend Public Education and the March 31 Student Strike.

On Feb. 15, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights agreed to

investigate a legal complaint filed by the Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts. It asserts that the School Department's plan to close and merge 18 schools is racist and disproportionately burdens Black and Latino/a students and parents.

A Boston Globe editorial echoed the racist role of the powerful financial and political establishment in Boston and the state of Massachusetts. It called on the school superintendent to proceed quickly to close schools and cut transportation. This is despite the discrimination complaint. □

Walkouts launch nationwide resistance

By Caleb T. Maupin

Students in high schools, colleges and universities throughout the U.S. walked out of classes, mainly on March 2, to help launch a month-long protest against cutbacks in public education, including the closing of schools and mass layoffs of teachers.

These walkouts represented student resistance against the bankers' drive to gut public education in response to the alleged "budget crisis."

The scene of one mass action was Lincoln High School in South Dallas, Texas when 200 students left school without permission of administrators. By the end of the day, hundreds more students had joined their classmates.

"We can't wait until June, July, August. The time to start is now in March," said Damarcus Offord, president of the Lin-

coln High Student Council who led the protest outside the school. He linked the massive cutbacks to the growing dropout rates, proclaiming: "Losing our teachers is losing our students." (<http://tinyurl.com/4spyv7k>)

Eight different high schools organized walkouts near Phoenix, not only to protest cutbacks but against a proposed law requiring schools to report undocumented immigrant students. The rallying cry was "Education, not deportation!" referring to the local war on immigrants. The national attacks on public sector workers and the cutbacks in education were also condemned. (Huffington Post, March 4)

In Boise, Idaho, 130 students walked out of South Junior High School. After rallying outside the school, they proceeded to the Capitol building where they joined high school students from around the state. They were eventually escorted

out of the public building by police officers and forced to rally outside. (Idaho Statesman, March 2)

In Berkeley, Calif., 1,000 classes at the University of California were canceled by sympathetic professors who opposed tuition hikes. Nine students were arrested, including four who occupied the fourth-story ledge of a campus building, refusing to leave for hours. When they finally left, they were "greeted with hugs and cheers" from their fellow students. (KABC, March 4)

Students at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee took over Peck Theater, a large campus building, on the morning of March 4. The action was in solidarity with the workers and students who occupied the Capitol building in Madison and protesting assaults on public sector unions by Gov. Scott Walker. Like their comrades at the Capitol, they are refusing

to leave until their demands are met.

Three hundred students at Dickinson College in Pennsylvania occupied a campus building March 2 to demand an end to the tolerance for sexual assault by the administration, which has created a hostile environment for women. They are demanding that the college remove students guilty of sexual assault from campus — a promise made a year before but still to be enacted.

The myth that youth in today's U.S. are a "video-game generation" with no drive to challenge authority is being refuted daily as students rise up in nearly every corner of the country. Students are not limiting their defiance to blog posts or tweets, but occupying the very institutions responsible for their insecure future.

"Wisconsin fever" is spreading across the U.S. — the condition is particularly infectious among the youth. □

Thousands march to protest teacher firings

By an American Federation of Teachers national delegate

The city of Providence, R.I., sent termination letters Feb. 23 to all of its 1,926 teachers. Newly elected Mayor Angel Tavares claimed he was doing this to guarantee flexibility in addressing the budget deficit. He is also going to close an unspecified number of schools.

On March 2, thousands of teachers, including contingents from other Rhode Island cities, members of other unions, and community and progressive organizations flooded the streets around Providence City Hall to protest Tavares' attack on the Providence Teachers Union. The protest was

part of a nationwide response to attacks on public education.

Teachers and union members pointed out that this was a direct attack on the seniority and collective bargaining rights of the PTU. This attack was done unilaterally by management with no consultation with the union. (Providence Journal, March 3).

Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers — said in a Facebook statement that the union and the school board have been cooperating on "improving low-performing schools, developing an innovative hiring process and revamping the teacher evaluation system." The PTU is the only AFT local to endorse President Barack Obama's Race to the Top Program, which promotes privatizing education. But this "cooperation" didn't protect the PTU from a mass firing.

In contrast to what is happening in the

Midwest, where Republican governors have targeted public sector unions, Tavares is a Democrat who has decided to use an iron fist to take on other unions beside the PTU. Tavares is also proposing to sell off parts of Providence's public "crown jewel," Roger Williams Park.

A giant orange and black banner at the March 2 rally reading "Save our schools, Defend public education!" was held by members of the SOS (Save Our Schools) Coalition. That group just finished a hard-fought community struggle in 2010 against seven school closings attempted by former Mayor David Cicilline and School Superintendent Tom Brady. Together, students, parents and teachers mounted a struggle strong enough to save five of the seven schools.

The SOS Coalition says there is plenty of money for public education,

jobs and other human needs if trillions of dollars are no longer poured down the rat-holes of tax-breaks for the rich, bank bailouts, corporate welfare, wars and ever-expanding military budgets.

Weingarten stated at the Providence rally: "Something insane is going on. I thought the only insanity was in Wisconsin." But it is not really "insanity" for the rich and powerful in this country to attack unions. They are driven to remove restrictions on how public funds for education are spent.

Providence may be the first major system to fire teachers, but much larger school districts in both New York City and Los Angeles are considering such moves.

Bill Bateman, a long-time Providence activist, contributed to this article.

or Palestine

en, Jews Against the Occupation-NYC, Irish Queers and by authors Sarah Schulman, Judith Butler, longtime activist Cleve Jones and other individuals.

More than 1,500 people have signed an online petition titled "Save New York's LGBT Center! Don't Let Wealthy Bigots Shut Down Free Speech!"

A multinational crowd of young activists and longtime organizers attended the March 5 protest, which took place at the same time that the banned meeting had been scheduled. They were loud, determined and energetic. Backed by the music of the Rude Mechanical Orchestra, they chanted "We're here, we're queer, and we support Palestine" and sang "Boycott Israel" to the tune of Lady Gaga's song "Bad Romance."

At the demonstration's end, organizers promised to continue the struggle against the Center's racist exclusion of pro-Palestine groups. □



PROVIDENCE, R.I.

Anti-war forces in Madison demand 'Jobs, not wars!'

By Bryan G. Pfeifer

From the beginning of the people's struggle against Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker's "budget repair bill," at the behest of the banks, corporations and the Pentagon, thousands of peace and anti-war forces have traveled to Madison and other parts of the state to confront the politicians' and their rich backers' lie that there's no money for people's needs.

The United National Anti-War Committee sent a solidarity delegation to Madison for the tens-of-thousands-strong Feb. 26 protest at the state Capitol. UNAC members from Minnesota, Illinois, Vermont and Virginia carried a 25-foot banner that read, "Stop the war on unions, Muslims, immigrants and communities of color!" They passed out thousands of

fliers linking defense of unions with opposing wars abroad.

The UNAC statement concludes by demanding, "Money For Jobs, Not War!" and calling on poor and working people to support, build for and attend the anti-war rally and marches in New York City on April 9 and April 10 in San Francisco. Go to UNACPeace.org to read their entire statement of solidarity with Wisconsin workers.

According to Costofwar, since 2001 taxpayers in Wisconsin — the overwhelming majority of whom are poor and working people — have been robbed of more than \$18 billion to fund just the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. As in the countries where the U.S. is waging war, domestically the effects of the U.S. wars affect children, women and people of color the

worst. (costofwar.com/en)

U.S. Labor Against the War states, "Solidarity with Public Workers in Wisconsin Is a Stand for Public Workers and Labor Rights Everywhere." (uslaboragainstar.org/).

Iraq Veterans Against the War issued a statement to members of the Wisconsin National Guard during the weekend of Feb. 18 that reads in part: "In the midst of the growing protests in Madison, and across the Midwest, Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker recently stated that he was preparing the National Guard to respond to any problems following the introduction of union-busting legislation in Wisconsin. We know that National Guard troops have been used in the past against striking

workers, protesting students, and to quell urban rebellions in the U.S., at times with horrifying results (think Jackson and Kent State, 1970). But recent events in Egypt remind us that service members have the power to side with the people." (www.ivaw.org)

Other organizations also sending solidarity delegations to Madison are Veterans For Peace, the Wisconsin Network For Peace and Justice, Peace Action Wisconsin, Courage to Resist, the Answer Coalition, the International Action Center, the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice, Stop FBI Repression and Women Against Military Madness.

The writer is an organizer with MECAWI, a member of UNAC.

March 19 & April 9 actions

Both an upturn in worldwide struggles and a stepped-up organizing schedule have added momentum to the spring anti-war mobilizations set months in advance but still on target. These demonstrations will both focus on the criminal eight-year U.S. occupation of Iraq and nine-year occupation of Afghanistan, while staying on alert for new interventions in Pakistan and perhaps Libya.

The United National Anti-war Coalition, which is planning major protests in San Francisco on April 10 and New York on April 9, has also made important gains with endorsers, including the over 50-year-old anti-war group Peace Action New York State and the 300,000-strong

1199 United Health Care Workers-East. For more information, go to www.nation-alpeaceconference.org.

In the New York City area, UNAC has set up a central organizing office at 296 Ninth Ave. near 28th Street at the Church of the Holy Apostles (646-998-6103).

On March 19, the eighth anniversary of the U.S. invasion and ongoing occupation of Iraq, demonstrations will take place in Washington, D.C., San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago and other cities demanding an end to U.S. war and military intervention abroad and funding for people's needs at home, initiated by the Answer Coalition. For more information, go to www.answercoalition.org.

— John Catalinotto

Libya repels attack as U.S. seeks 'regime change'

Continued from page 1

criminally responsible." (CNN, March 3)

Moreno-Ocampo acknowledged to questions, "This is the beginning of the investigation. I can give no details. We cannot confirm these allegations that these civilians were bombed by planes."

Libya's human rights standing

The United Nations Human Rights Council based in Geneva has suspended Libya from participating in its activities and the country's representative to Geneva has defected. Prior to the new round of attacks against this North African state, however, this same council had prepared

a report praising Libya's record on human rights. (Reuters, March 3)

In relationship to the status of women in Libya, the report said: "The delegation indicated that women were highly regarded in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, and their rights were guaranteed by all laws and legislation. Discriminatory laws had been revoked." (Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Human Rights Council, Jan. 4)

The report goes on to note that "Libyan women occupied prominent positions in the public sector, the judicial system, the public prosecutor's office, the police and the military. Libyan legislation also guaranteed children their rights, and provided for special care for children with special needs, the elderly and persons with disabilities."

Venezuelan proposal rejected by imperialists

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has submitted a proposal to mediate the current conflict inside Libya by establishing a negotiating team to be dispatched to the country and the region. This effort was outright rejected by the imperialist states of the U.S. and France.

Venezuela and Libya, two large-scale, oil-producing states, have good diplomatic and economic relations. When Libya was chair of the African Union in 2009 and president of the United Nations General Assembly, Gadhafi led a delegation of African representatives to Venezuela to participate in a high-level meeting with Latin American states.

The Arab League said that it was interested in the Venezuelan peace proposal. However, the U.S. and France apparently felt that such an effort would lend too much credibility to both Venezuela and the Arab League.

The African Union, a 53-member organization of independent African states, has issued two statements on the situation in Libya, which have largely been ignored by the U.S., the U.N. and the international corporate-oriented media.

The AU Peace and Security Council supported "the aspirations of the people of Libya for democracy, political reform, justice and socio-economic development" but stressed "the need to preserve the territorial integrity and unity of the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya."

The biased reporting of the corporate media and the threats leveled by the International Criminal Court, the United States, NATO and the European Union indicate clearly that the Western governments are seeking to institute regime change in this North African country. □

Wisconsin rebellion grows

Continued from page 1

understanding of the classic union slogan — which appeared on many homemade signs — "An injury to one is an injury to all."

There were many indicators of overwhelming working-class and popular support for the fight against both union busting and the draconian cuts in social services Walker has proposed. Doctors, sporting lab coats and stethoscopes, marched to defend their low-income patients who stand to lose health care coverage if Walker cuts state-funded "Badgercare." The Sierra Club carried signs against the bill, which will weaken recycling programs.

Arriving in the morning and marching for hours before the rally officially began, a multinational group of middle and high school students from Racine, Wis., roused everyone with the popular chant: "This is what democracy looks like."

Homemade signs blasted Walker for his servile relationship — exposed by the now-famous prank phone call — with the wealthy Koch brothers, who are major financial backers of the Tea Party. The governor was lampooned as a "Koch [pronounced "coke"] addict."

On March 6 the National Association of Letter Carriers, sponsors of that day's rally, turned out hundreds of members to "deliver" a message of solidarity. NALC Branch 214 in San Francisco had passed unanimously on March 2 a resolution titled "Support the Initiative for a General Strike in Wisconsin — and Prepare for Nationally Coordinated Solidarity Job Actions." The resolution was in solidarity with one passed in February by the South Central Federation of Labor based in Madison.

The Associated Press reported March 6 that 700 Walker supporters, rallying at

the Alliant Energy building in Madison, were met by "hundreds" of protesters. At the state Capitol rally — which drew many thousands despite the anti-right-wing protest — it was announced that 1,000 protesters were outside the Alliant building while fewer than 100 Walker supporters were counted inside in a room with a 400-person maximum capacity.

Earlier, on March 3, National Nurses United led a march of thousands in Madison demanding that the bill be killed entirely and that there be no more cuts for workers.

Grassroots organizing statewide

Before and during the big rallies in the capital March 5 and 6, Walker was on a statewide bus "tour" sponsored by the Tea Party-linked group Americans for Prosperity. In small to medium-size towns across the state, there was opposition at every stop, beginning on March 3 when the tour started, with protests numbering anywhere from 250 to 1,300 people from Milwaukee to La Crosse.

On March 2, in an action sponsored by Students for a Democratic Society; the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; and the Milwaukee Graduate Assistants Association/American Federation of Teachers, hundreds of students at the University of Milwaukee walked out of class as part of the National Day of Action to Defend Public Education and also in opposition to the "budget repair bill." Earlier in the week, students from SDS and other organizations occupied the theater building at UW-Milwaukee in protest against education cuts and the bill.

Poor and working people in Wisconsin have also been targeting Koch-owned in-

dustries throughout the state. Expressing outrage at Walker's union-busting bill, Rev. Jesse Jackson led a cheering crowd of more than 600, the majority African Americans, at the Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church in Milwaukee March 4.

A major rally organized by the Wisconsin AFL-CIO is scheduled for March 12. State mobilizing for this includes farmers who will drive their tractors to Madison. The day before students from Milwaukee's Riverside High School and other schools will begin an 80-mile walk to Madison at 6 a.m., which is scheduled to arrive at the Capitol the next day for the rally.

The atmosphere in Madison is one of determination and unity, with signs of support in the windows of shops, restaurants and cafes. The blackboard in Ian's Pizza lists all the many countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas whose people ordered pizza for the students and workers who took part in the occupation. Donations are coming in from all 50 U.S. states. Solidarity statements are pouring in to local unions, federations, students and community organizations.

What's the next step? Discussions include reoccupying the Capitol building and/or a general strike. Many groups, including Bail Out the People Movement, got a good reception to leaflets supporting the latter. At the March 6 rally, state president of the Firefighters union Mahlon Mitchell — who participated in the 18-day Capitol occupation — got the crowd motivated with the chant: "You go, we go!"

For updates and information, go to www.wisafclcio.org, www.wisafclcio.typepad.com and www.bailoutpeople.org.

Bryan G. Pfeifer contributed to this article.

National Front for Popular Resistance in Honduras holds delegate assembly

By Heather Cottin
Tegucigalpa, Honduras

The National Front for Popular Resistance (FNRP) in Honduras held a national assembly in capital city Tegucigalpa on Feb. 26 and 27. Some 1,500 delegates represented the 18 municipal departments in Honduras and the country's "19th department," members of the Honduran diaspora around the world. Three members of the International Action Center's Latin America-Caribbean Solidarity Committee attended: two observers and an elected delegate from the Honduran diaspora.

At a meeting two days before the assembly, to which the IAC Committee was invited, FNRP subcoordinator Juan Barahona told us the National Assembly for Popular Resistance must focus on three things: "unity, unity and unity." During the assembly on Feb. 26, he said that the group's goals were "holding a national constituent assembly, returning [exiled President Manuel] Zelaya to the country and taking political power to transform Honduran society." (Washington Post, Feb. 26)

This was a democratic assembly, filled with debate and passion. The key issue was whether the FNRP would participate in elections in 2013. The majority voted not to participate. The FNRP did not say it would never participate in elections, but that they plan to organize in their own way.

A delegate described the "ocean" of people there: "This great multitude starts from the little creeks in the mountains, which feed into big streams in the hills and tumble into rivers in the valleys to pour into the sea of popular resistance in Honduras."

The call for unity encompasses diverse communities in Honduras, including lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer communities and women, the Afro-Honduran Garifuna community, Indigenous peoples, peasants, union leaders, workers including teachers and lawyers, youth and students, small business owners, intellectuals and more. Waving yellow identification cards, delegates voted for resolutions to promote just inclusion and representation. They analyzed the objective conditions and planned to develop, in regional assemblies around the country, the necessary strategy and tactics to confront the oligarchy and its defenders. And they voted for Zelaya to serve as coordinator of the FNRP.

PART 1

The present is history

Almost two years ago, on June 28, 2009, the Honduran military kidnapped Zelaya from his home at the behest of the country's oligarchy. They took him out of the country through the U.S. military airbase at Palmerola in Honduras.

Though Zelaya was a man from the wealthy class, as president he was convinced by union and peasant leaders to work to improve conditions in Honduras, the poorest country in Central America. These leaders showed him how neoliberal privatization schemes were impoverishing Honduras.

Zelaya listened, promoting agrarian reform and environmentalism and raising the minimum wage. Zelaya wanted to turn the Palmerola airbase, from which the U.S. military dominates Central America, into a civilian airport. He began to talk of taking Honduras out of the U.S.-imposed Central America Free



PHOTO: VOESLSOBERANO.COM

Trade Agreement, which was economically crushing the region's farmers and workers. He planned to have Honduras join the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), which promotes social, political and economic integration among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Because the country's 1982 Constitution favored foreign investors and the oligarchy, Zelaya's government planned a vote to be held on June 28, 2009, which, if passed, would take steps toward creating a new constitutional assembly. Instead, that morning the military took over. Wikileaks documents show U.S. government participation.

The resistance was born. For 214 days, thousands of fearless resistance members poured into the streets of every city and department in protest. The army and police fought the people with guns, tear gas, water cannons and truckloads of troops. Zelaya himself came back secretly, taking

refuge in the Brazilian embassy.

The U.S. government set up a phony election administered by the "golpistas" (coup plotters) on Jan. 27, 2010. Pepe Lobo Sosa became president and the oligarchy stayed in power. With the help of their rich Uncle Sam, a dozen wealthy families still run the country. All of Zelaya's reforms have been canceled.

The U.S. government calls Honduras a "democracy" and ignores the growing poverty, murders and torture of hundreds of peasants, LGBTQ people, women, unionists, Indigenous people, teachers, journalists, Garifuna people and youth activists. These are the martyrs of the resistance.

At the National Assembly for Popular Resistance, speakers denounced the immunity the Lobo government tacitly grants to perpetrators of these crimes. The FNRP dedicated the assembly to the martyrs and vowed to build real democracy in Honduras.

To be continued.

Is another Egypt brewing in Mexico?

By Teresa Gutierrez

President Barack Obama and Mexico's illegitimate President Felipe Calderón met March 3 at the White House and announced plans to work further together.

Specifically, the two presidents, according to the New York Times, announced a "breakthrough on a festering trade dispute" about Mexican trucks operating on U.S. soil. After a long-standing dispute, one where the Teamsters union fought against the use of Mexican trucks on U.S. highways, Obama said a plan for cross-border trucking would begin.

Of more significance, Obama commended Calderón's efforts on the drug war that makes U.S. news almost every day.

Since Calderón stole the presidential election in 2006, Mexico's drug war has cost over 35,000 Mexican lives. It has become a war against the people, not a war to stop drugs.

Mexico has ominously become ever more militarized and protest has become increasingly "criminalized." Innocent lives have been lost. The Mexican government has used the drug industry to terrorize the people, attack political activists and has attempted to instill fear and terror among the masses.

Yet President Obama said not a word about the actual situation gripping Mexico. Instead, he authorized the handover of more money — stolen from the people of this country — to the Mexican government under the Merida Initiative, an accord that is part of the North American Free Trade Agreement, known as NAFTA.

For example, Obama announced that the U.S. would now expedite the delivery of military equipment as well as training that Washington had promised Mexico under the Merida Initiative.

Drug war part of intense imperialist design

U.S. media coverage of the March 3 meeting referred to tensions between the two countries. This characterization is misleading and distorts reality: Calderón is totally in the hands of U.S. imperialism.

Any publicity of a rift between the two governments is meant to mask U.S. imperialism's increasing attempt to dominate Mexico. It is also meant to pay lip-service to the Mexican people's centuries-old resistance to U.S. control.

The U.S.-Calderón plan to use the so-called drug war to facilitate U.S. control of Mexico is growing more ominous. James Cockcroft, the author of several books on Mexico and Latin America, takes this complicity between imperialism and the Mexican bourgeoisie even further. Cockcroft writes:

"Some describe Calderón as the 'most visible figure of the mafia' who is trying to create a military police state. This includes the participation of the capos [drug leaders] in the administration of society, not as a parallel state or a state within the state but as an integral part of the state. As Calderón himself has recognized, in some parts of Mexico narco kingpins charge taxes, impose laws and curfews, and build public support with their neighborhood social service projects."

PART 3

This glaringly highlights the militarization of Mexico. Whether it is by legal or extralegal means, U.S. imperialism and the Mexican puppets who do their bidding are militarizing the country in preparation for further domination and a total assault on the Mexican people.

Cockcroft states: "Calderón is throwing away national sovereignty by integrating Mexico with the United States."

According to Mexican researcher, political scientist and activist Gilberto López y Rivas, who writes in *Contralinea.mx*, an investigative publication, "Calderón is on a path to completely sell out Mexico's autonomy."

López, a member of Paz Con Democracia (Peace with Democracy), reveals the dangerous "Plan Mexico 2030: Project of Great Vision," which, according to López, totally violates the Mexican Constitution of 1917 and guarantees "the future integral occupation" of Mexico by the U.S., which will finish off the Mexican state.

The plan lays out a program for the "privatization of the energy sector, biosphere reserves, education, social security for state employees, and other public sectors" and calls for repression of political movements.



HAITI: A Slave Revolution

200 Years after 1804 UPDATED 2010: Includes the coup against President Aristide and the January 2010 earthquake.

Authors include: Mumia Abu-Jamal, Ramsey Clark, Pat Chin, Edwidge Danticat, Frederick Douglass, Greg Dunkel, Ben Dupuy, Sara Flounders, Stan Goff, Kim Ives, Fleurimond Kerns, Paul Laraque, Maud LeBlanc, Sam Marcy, Franz Mendes & Steve Gillis, Felix Morriseau-Leroy, Johnnie Stevens, Abayomi Azikiwe, Larry Hales, Monica Moorehead, Saeed Shabazz.

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Cuban statement on Libya & human rights

WW gives over its editorial space this issue to the following excerpts from a statement by Cuba's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, presented March 1 to the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva. The complete statement is available online at workers.org.

Humanity's conscience is repulsed by the deaths of innocent people under any circumstances, anyplace. Cuba fully shares the worldwide concern for the loss of civilian lives in Libya and hopes that its people are able to reach a peaceful and sovereign solution to the civil war occurring there, with no foreign interference, and can guarantee the integrity of that nation.

Most certainly the Libyan people oppose any foreign military intervention, which would delay an agreement even further and cause thousands of deaths, displacement and enormous injury to the population.

Cuba categorically rejects any attempt whatsoever to take advantage of the tragic situation created in order to occupy Libya and control its oil.

It is noteworthy that the voracity for oil, not peace or the protection of Libyan lives, is the motivation inciting the political forces, primarily conservative, which today, in the United States and some European countries, are calling for a NATO military intervention in Libyan territory. Nor does it appear that objectivity, accuracy or a commitment to the truth are prevailing in part of the press, reports being used by media giants to fan the flames.

Given the magnitude of what is taking place in Libya and the Arab world, in the context of a global economic crisis, responsibility and a long-term vision should prevail on the part of governments in the developed countries. Although the goodwill of some could be exploited, it is clear that a military intervention would lead to a war with serious consequences for human lives, especially the millions of poor who comprise four-fifths of humanity.

Despite the paucity of some facts and information, the reality is that the origins of the situation in North Africa and the Middle East are to be found within the crisis of the rapacious policy imposed by the United States and its NATO allies in the region. The price of food has tripled, water is scarce, the desert is growing, poverty is on the rise and with it, repugnant social inequality and exclusion in the distribution of the opulent wealth garnered from oil in the region.

The fundamental human right is the right to life, which is not worth living without human dignity.

The way in which the right to life is being violated should arouse concern. According to various sources, more than 111 million people have perished in armed conflicts during modern wars. It cannot be forgotten in this room that, if in World War I civilian deaths amounted to 5 percent of total casualties, in the subsequent wars of conquest after

1990, basically in Iraq, with more than 1 million, and Afghanistan with more than 70,000, the deaths of innocents stand at 90 percent. The proportion of children in these figures is horrific and unprecedented.

The concept of "collateral damage," an offense to human nature, has been accepted in the military doctrine of NATO and the very powerful nations.

In the last decade, humanitarian international law has been trampled, as is occurring on the U.S. Guantánamo Naval Base, which usurps Cuban territory.

As a consequence of those wars, global refugee figures have increased by 34 percent, to more than 26 million people.

Military spending increased by 49 percent in the decade, to reach \$1.5 trillion, more than half of that figure in the United States alone. The industrial-military complex continues producing wars. ...

If the essential human right is the right to life, will the Council be ready to suspend the membership of states that unleash a war?

Is the Council proposing to make some substantial contribution to eliminating the principal threat to the life of the human species which is the existence of enormous arsenals of nuclear weapons, an infinitesimal part of which, or the explosion of 100 warheads, would provoke a nuclear winter, according to irrefutable scientific evidence?

Will it establish a thematic procedure on the impact of climate change in the exercise of human rights and proclaim the right to a healthy atmosphere?

Will it suspend states which finance and supply military aid utilized by recipient states for mass, flagrant and systematic violations of human rights and for attacks on the civilian population, like those taking place in Palestine?

Will it apply that measure against powerful countries which are perpetrating extra-judicial executions in the territory of other states with the use of high technology, such as smart bombs and drone aircraft?

What will happen to states which accept secret illegal prisons in their territories, facilitate the transit of secret flights with kidnapped persons aboard, or participate in acts of torture? □

Rebellions continue across North Africa, Arabia

By John Catalinotto

With the corporate media's attention concentrated on Libya, its oil reserves and the real danger of U.S. and NATO's military intervention, one could almost forget that enormous popular revolts are percolating throughout North Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.

Tunisia was the first country whose 10 million people forced out an entrenched, imperialist-backed dictatorship last Jan. 14. This first revolutionary wave drove out Zine el Abidine Ben Ali and his corrupt family.

Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi, who had been in office since 1998, remained to head the government. The mass movement, which had been demanding Ghannouchi's resignation, ebbed by the beginning of February.

Since that time a second wave of revolutionary upsurge has erupted. According to reports by Alma Allende in Tunis, some 100,000 people seized the Qasbah square once more on Feb. 25-26. This time the occupation was impeccably organized, with the UGTT union federation, political parties and other popular organizations playing a big role.

On Feb. 27, Ghannouchi resigned. The next day two more ministers that were holdovers from the Ben Ali regime, those of Industry and Finance, also resigned. Later, four more ministers connected with the old regime also decided to step down.

The following weekend, the new government promised a Constituent Assembly — after a delay of four and a half months — and elections next July. With the lukewarm acceptance of these proposals, the second occupation of the Qasbah ended.

Egypt with its 85 million people stunned the world when mass uprisings forced the 30-year, U.S.-backed dictator Hosni Mubarak to resign and flee to the resort town of Sharm-el-Sheik. A council of top officers from the Egyptian armed forces took over the government and has been issuing communiqués aimed at "restoring order." That does not necessarily mean that all these commands are being obeyed.

Demonstrations continued and on Feb. 25-26 there were reports that the gathering in Tahrir Square, located in the center of Cairo and the national focus of the Feb. 11 revolt, was as large as any that had taken place earlier.

On March 4 and 5, the target of demonstrators shifted to the offices of the hated State Security Services, with thousands storming their headquarters buildings in Cairo and Alexandria. Those in the anti-Mubarak opposition said the demonstrators seized the files from these buildings in order to prevent the police authorities

from destroying them and covering up their crimes.

Washington saw the Mubarak regime as a key ally and a linchpin to its strategy for controlling the region and defending its own and Israeli interests.

In Egypt and Tunisia, the strategy of the imperialists and the ruling circles to prevent the revolutionary upsurge from sweeping them aside seems to follow the saying made popular in the best-selling Italian historical novel, "The Leopard," by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa. The novel describes events in Sicily during Italy's movement for unification in the 1860s. "If we want things to stay as they are," says a young member of the aristocracy, "things will have to change."

In some other countries in the region, the rulers have no intention of being replaced, nor do the imperialists appear to have viable alternatives.

In **Bahrain**, demonstrators have been in the streets for more than three weeks demanding an end to the reign of King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa. Their first attempt to occupy Pearl Square in central Manama was shattered when security forces opened fire on the sleeping demonstrators, killing seven. Manama is the capital of the once oil-rich nation of 1.2 million people, more than half of them foreign workers, living on an island 34 miles long and 11 miles wide, 92 percent of which is desert.

Bahrain hosts the U.S. Fifth Fleet. Up to now not only has the Pentagon supplied all of Bahrain's arms, but the U.S. State Department has stood behind the brutal monarch. This strategically important oil and banking center is reachable from Saudi Arabia over a 20-mile causeway and is only 150 miles from the Iranian coast across the gulf. Tanks were driven across the causeway from Saudi Arabia to reinforce the Bahraini king's weapons to repress the demonstrators.

Massive demonstrations took place on Feb. 25 in Pearl Square, some estimated the numbers at 200,000. Demonstrators blockaded parliament on Feb. 28, stopping a meeting of the upper house, whose members are all appointed by the king. (Xinhua, Feb. 28)

On March 4-5 thousands of demonstrators moved from Pearl Square to surround the Al-Kudaibiya Palace, where every Sunday the regime meets. The security forces took up positions there. "The people demand the end of the regime," was the cry of the crowd. (AFP, March 5)

Yemen, at the southeast corner of the Arabian Peninsula, is impoverished and oil-poor compared with Bahrain, and has a population of 23.5 million, nearly as many as in the bordering and enormously larger Saudi Arabia. The opposition has called for ever greater protests so that President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who has already said he would not run for re-election in 2013, would be forced to resign now.

Some 30,000 marched on March 4 in downtown Sana'a, the capital, according to the Wall Street Journal (March 5), demanding the resignation of President Saleh. Eyewitnesses told the Journal that another march in a town 100 miles from the capital, raising the same demands, was fired on with rockets by an army unit, with eight people killed.

There is great resistance to making even cosmetic concessions to the mass movement, not only from the rulers of Yemen and Bahrain, but also from those in Saudi Arabia. The royal family there has already banned any manifestation whatsoever of opposition forces. □



New York City, March 6.

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

Rally says no to anti-Muslim bigotry

Muslims from the New York City area joined hundreds of others March 6 to "Say no to anti-Muslim bigotry" with an "I am a Muslim too" rally in the Times Square area. The protest anticipated that Rep. Peter King's Congressional hearings, set to open on March 10, plan to scapegoat Muslims and allegedly "examine the threat of Islamic radicalization."

Among those speaking was Sara Flounders of the International Action Center and the United National Antiwar Coalition. She linked defending Muslims against prejudice to anti-war efforts and invited the audience to the April 9 anti-war protest in New York.

— John Catalinotto

U.S. slaughters Afghan civilians including children

By Gene Clancy

On March 1 in the village of Nanglam in Afghanistan, the people heard gunfire in the nearby mountains. They became worried when some of their children did not return home. The boys had been out collecting firewood since morning, and the villagers went to look for them.

"Finally we found the dead bodies," said Ashabuddin, a shopkeeper from a nearby village whose nephew Khalid was among the missing. "Some of the dead bodies were really badly chopped up by the rockets," he said. "The head of a child was missing. Others were missing limbs."

"We tried to find the body pieces and put them together. As it was getting late, we brought down the bodies in a rope bed. We buried them in the village's cemetery," Ashabuddin added. "The children were all from poor families; otherwise, no one would send their sons up to the mountains despite the known threats."

Khalid, 14, was the only male in the family, Ashabuddin said. "He was studying in sixth grade of the orphanage school and working because his father died four

years ago due to a long-term sickness. His father was a day laborer. He has 13 sisters and two mothers. He was the sole breadwinner of the family. I don't know what would happen to his family, to his sisters and mothers. They are all female and poor." (New York Times, March 2)

In all, nine children ranging in age from 9 to 15 years old were massacred by U.S. helicopter gunships. A tenth boy, Hemad, aged 11, was wounded and only survived because he was hidden by branches from a tree which had been shattered by a rocket. "The helicopters," said Hemad, "shot the boys one after another." (New York Times)

Responses to this war crime were so furious that Gen. David H. Petraeus was forced to issue an apology, claiming that the killings were a case of "mistaken identity." On March 2, over 200 people in Nanglam protested the boys' deaths. Waving white flags, they shouted, "Death to America!" and "Death to Obama and his colleagues and associates!"

Mohammed Bismil, the 20-year-old brother of two boys killed in the strike told the Wall Street Journal that he didn't care about Petraeus' apology. "The only option

I have is to pick up a Kalashnikov, RPG [rocket propelled grenade] or a suicide vest to fight," he said. (DailyMail, March 3)

A racist, genocidal campaign

The Kunar valley region of Afghanistan has long been a target of U.S. and NATO forces in the region. The province is informally known to the U.S. military occupying Afghanistan as "Enemy Central" and "Indian country."

Since the 101st Airborne Division arrived in eastern Afghanistan in June of 2010, its troops have killed about 2,500 people, compared with about 1,500 in the same period the previous year, according to Maj. Gen. John Campbell, the top commander in eastern Afghanistan.

"That's been our most kinetic area," said Campbell. "We've dropped over 900 bombs since we've been here, and probably greater than 50 percent has been up there. We've fired over 30,000 artillery rounds, mortar rounds, and much of it has been up there." (Washington Post Foreign Service, Feb. 20)

In February, Afghan government officials alleged that a U.S. military opera-

tion in the remote mountains in the same province killed 65 people, including 22 women and more than 30 children. In another incident, NATO forces killed an Afghan army officer and his entire family.

Meeting with Afghan government officials to discuss the incidents, NATO's commander, Gen. David Petraeus, "insinuated that some Afghan parents deliberately burn their children's hands and feet to present them as civilian casualties." Petraeus has not responded to the widespread outrage his comment has produced. (Guardian, Feb. 22)

The fact that a man of Petraeus' stature feels he can publicly make such a racist comment shows that the U.S. and its allies have no respect for any Afghans, ordinary civilians or government officials alike. The imperialists are equally contemptuous of human life, even if it is children they are killing.

The U.S. must immediately withdraw its troops from Afghanistan and pay reparations for all the mayhem and slaughter they have caused. War criminals such as Gen. Petraeus should be put on trial and punished. □

The U.S. vs. Libya

On the horns of a dilemma

By Deirdre Griswold

This article is based on a talk given March 4 at a meeting of the New York branch of Workers World Party.

The U.S. imperialist ruling class is on the horns of a dilemma over what to do about Libya. In modern terms, it finds itself in what could be called a lose-lose situation.

Ever since a movement of junior officers deposed Libya's monarchy in 1969, and especially since its leader, Moammar Gadhafi, nationalized Libya's oil, the imperialists in the U.S. and in Europe have wanted to get rid of him.

They tried to weaken his regime with economic sanctions, decades of CIA training and financing of opponents in exile, and in 1986 a direct air assault on Tripoli and Benghazi in which 60 people were killed by U.S. bombs — one of them Gadhafi's infant daughter.

The pressures on Libya were so great that in 2003, after the U.S. carried out its "shock and awe" assault on Iraq, Gadhafi made political and economic concessions to imperialism, opening up areas of the Libyan economy and ending state subsidies on many needed items. But while imperialist heads of state then congratulated Gadhafi and seemed to accept his regime, none of this was enough, especially for the U.S.

When the protests against the U.S.-backed dictatorships in Tunisia and Egypt began at the end of 2010, and grew into such huge mass demonstrations that even Washington was forced to call on Hosni Mubarak to step down, the idea grew in Western circles that now was the time to dislodge Gadhafi. This seems to have struck a chord with some elements in Libya, especially in the eastern city of Benghazi, which is situated near Libya's major oil fields, pipelines, refineries and ports. Protests began. However, they very soon morphed into a well-armed rebellion against the Libyan government aimed at seizing control of the country.

While the U.S. and other imperialist powers have been involved in brokering a change of faces in Egypt and Tunisia

in order to retain the same basic power structures — which are unacceptable to millions of people — they have cheered on the armed opposition in Libya since the beginning.

What is their dilemma? It is this: After several weeks of fighting, Gadhafi has not been overthrown and has strong support in Tripoli, the capital city where one-third of Libya's population lives. The rebel forces appear to be in retreat — and may not all have the same aims. The Western media cites those who have been calling for intervention.

If the imperialists openly intervene to secure the military overthrow of Gadhafi, this would undermine their carefully orchestrated efforts to appear to side with the people of the region while urging non-violence. This problem has been openly discussed, although in more veiled language, in the U.S. capitalist media.

Biggest U.S. stakes are in the Gulf

So which is more important to them, Libya — or Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Bahrain, Yemen, Kuwait, Oman — and possibly even Saudi Arabia, if the revolts spread?

We ourselves have pointed out that U.S. oil corporations are salivating over the prospect of gaining control over the 47 billion barrels of oil under the desert sands of Libya. At the present time, the U.S. imports no oil from Libya. (Nevertheless, prices are being opportunistically hiked here at the gas pumps, supposedly because of the Libyan crisis.) Even more important to the billionaire class, U.S. oil companies like ConocoPhillips, Marathon, Hess and Occidental Petroleum, while profiting from the exploration, drilling, pumping, refining and exporting of Libya's oil, have much larger interests elsewhere.

Libya's proven oil reserves, the largest in Africa, pale in comparison to those in the U.S.-aligned and -armed Gulf states — some 700 billion barrels, not counting Iran.

Mass uprisings are shaking many of these states despite heavy repression — which gets very little attention in the Western media compared to Libya. The social gulf in these countries between rich

and poor, haves and have-nots, is immense compared to Libya, where oil income has been used to attain the highest human development index in Africa.

Certainly, the governments of these top-heavy oil states, like the absolute monarchy of King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia, or the emirate of Kuwait run by the al-Sabah dynasty, are inherently unstable. They would have been overthrown long ago were it not for their powerful protector — the billionaire-dominated U.S. government, with its far-flung navy and web of bases around the world.

However, with all its powerful weapons and hundreds of thousands of invading troops, the U.S. has not even been able to crush a resistance movement in impoverished Afghanistan or set up a stable comprador regime in Iraq. And these two aggressions, along with U.S. backing for Israel's brutal occupation of Palestinian land, have turned public opinion in the region sharply against U.S. intervention.

When Barack Obama was elected president, the strategists for imperialism hoped they could reverse this erosion of U.S. influence in the Arab world. They went on a charm offensive that in style was very different from the anti-Muslim agitation of the Bush period. Perhaps the masses saw this as an opening to rise up against dictators like Mubarak without triggering an automatic U.S. intervention.

So which will it be? Will U.S. imperialism show its fangs again and, perhaps with the support of Britain, France, Germany and Italy, declare a "no-fly" zone over Libya in order to paralyze Gadhafi's air force while rebels try to advance and take the capital? It's a possibility, but one fraught with dangers for imperialism.

GAZA: Symbol of Resistance

A book of articles from WW, edited by Joyce Chediak

The compelling story of how Gazans withstood blockade and bombardment only to stand tall, refusing to give up the right to determine their own lives and to choose their own government; how Gaza's courage inspired a worldwide solidarity movement determined to break the blockade and deliver aid; exposes the forces behind the punishment of Gaza, and how a growing people's media is breaking the mainstream media's information blockade on this event.



Available at Leftbooks.com

WISCONSIN:

Escuela para el movimiento sindical

Por David Sole

Nota de la Redacción: El escritor es un trabajador municipal, militante sindical desde hace mucho tiempo y ex presidente del sindicato Trabajadores Automotrices Unidos (UAW) Local 2334 en Detroit. Estuvo en Madison, estado de Wisconsin, del 19 al 21 de febrero con una delegación de solidaridad de Detroit y Chicago.

La lucha que se está desarrollando en Wisconsin pasará a la historia como el comienzo de la lucha que con gran retraso lleva la clase obrera de EEUU. Activistas sindicales y progresistas por décadas han estado explorando el horizonte, realmente desde la “revolución de Reagan”, buscando señales de un resurgimiento del movimiento obrero en contra de las concesiones, el desempleo y la represión sindical. No pocos han cedido a la desmoralización, convencidos de que la clase obrera de este país no se levantaría en lucha. Solo ha tomado unos días para que los/as trabajadores/as y estudiantes de Wisconsin demuestren que estaban equivocados.

La historia ha demostrado repetidamente que la represión engendra resistencia y que muchas luchas importantes surgieron cuando la clase obrera se defendía. En Wisconsin, el arrogante gobernador Scott Walker, incitado por sus compinches del Partido del Té, se atrevió a proponer mucho más que el exigir concesiones de los/as trabajadores/as del sector público; propuso poner fin a cualquier derecho real de negociación colectiva para los/as 175.000 trabajadores/as.

Puede ser que Walker se extralimitó en su entusiasmo derechista. Es más probable que los jefes de las empresas y los banqueros de Wall Street, a quienes Wisconsin y otros estados y municipios están endeudados por miles de millones de dólares en préstamos, dieron la orden para esta nueva fase del ataque contra los/as trabajadores/as y sus organizaciones. Ciertamente no es una coincidencia que proyectos de ley con un lenguaje casi idéntico se estén presentando y discutiendo en otros estados al mismo tiempo.

Ahora decenas de miles de trabajadores/as están en movilización. Se están reuniendo, discutiendo, marchando, y montando huelgas en cantidades sin precedente para defender sus derechos de negociación colectiva. Se tiene que hacer men-

ción especial de los/as estudiantes, tanto de colegios como de escuelas secundarias, quienes adoptaron la posición avanzada al tomar y ocupar el edificio del capitolio estatal en Madison. Su energía y entusiasmo son impresionantes. Su compromiso con la lucha por los derechos sindicales y contra los recortes a la educación ha inspirado al movimiento estudiantil en los EEUU.

Puede decirse sin exageración, que Estados Unidos no ha visto nada como esta movilización desde las décadas de 1930 ó 1940. Ciertamente ha habido huelgas, grandes y a menudo muy duras. Ha habido manifestaciones masivas, como el Día de la Solidaridad que el movimiento sindical convocó en 1981 contra el golpe contra el sindicato PATCO. Pero no son nada comparados con el alcance y la profundidad de los eventos en Wisconsin.

Uno puede encontrar muchas cosas que faltan en la lucha de Wisconsin. Los/as estudiantes carecen de organización y experiencia. Los/as dirigentes sindicales tampoco tienen suficiente experiencia para hacer frente a este plan que intenta destruir a los sindicatos. Esto es inevitable después de tan largo paréntesis en la guerra abierta de clases. Es sólo a través de la lucha que esta experiencia será adquirida. Nuevas organizaciones y una mayor conciencia surgirán conforme la lucha continúa.

¿‘Recortes necesarios’ o huelga general?

Más atención debe ser prestada para exponer la mentira de que “los recortes son necesarios”. Es necesario señalar que hay bastante dinero para cubrir los grandes déficits en los presupuestos municipales, estatales y federales. Las ganancias de las corporaciones y los bancos están a un nivel récord - impóngansele impuestos. Los intereses pagados a los bancos están drenando el tesoro público — congélese los pagos del servicio de la deuda. El presupuesto del Pentágono y de las guerras imperialistas suma más de un billón de dólares al año — córtese. Ni un centavo debe provenir de los/as trabajadores/as o de los programas críticos de servicio social.

La resolución del 21 de febrero para una huelga general por la Federación Sindical del Centro-Sur de Wisconsin que representa cerca de 45.000 trabajadores/as en seis condados, representa una nueva etapa en la lucha. Incluso durante

el vicioso ataque antisindical contra los/as huelguistas de la industria de los periódicos de Detroit en 1995, el Consejo Central Sindical de Metro-Detroit de la AFL-CIO rechazó una moción para que todos los sindicatos locales “voten para autorizar una huelga general si el consejo decide que es necesario”. La razón dada en aquel momento fue que “nunca ha sucedido en la historia de EEUU”. El hecho es que en la historia del movimiento sindical de los EEUU han ocurrido muchas huelgas generales, como las de Seattle en 1919 y en San Francisco en 1934. Pero los líderes sindicales en época de relativa paz laboral, a menudo se alejan de la idea de una confrontación clasista.

Una huelga general requiere educación y preparación. Sería absurdo pensar que una huelga masiva con la participación de trabajadores/as de todas las industrias pudiera ocurrir o ser exitosa al sólo emitir un llamado. La resolución de Wisconsin especificó que la educación comienza en todos los locales de los sindicatos, sobre la función y la preparación de una huelga general. El trabajo serio y cuidadoso de todos los sindicatos locales debe comenzar ahora.

El público, especialmente los/as estudiantes, deben estar informados/as y organizados/as también. Los sindicatos deben tener un plan — y que el público lo sepa — sobre los servicios de emergencia. Y los/as dirigentes sindicales y los/as miembros deben estar preparados/as para el inevitable ataque del gobierno. Algunos de los medios de comunicación ya están dando serias advertencias en contra de una huelga general, citando la odiada Ley Taft-Hartley. Corresponderá a los/as dirigentes sindicales nacionales para obtener apoyo y preparar acciones para mostrar su solidaridad con los/as trabajadores/as de Wisconsin que indudablemente enfrentarán represalias del gobierno.

Sea cual sea el resultado de la batalla de Wisconsin, el movimiento obrero jamás será el mismo. El creciente resentimiento contra los múltiples ataques a los/as trabajadores/as, los recortes en los servicios sociales, el racismo y la opresión que impregna la sociedad, están haciendo necesaria e inevitable una gran lucha en todo Estados Unidos. Los/as trabajadores/as y los/as estudiantes de Wisconsin han mostrado el camino. □

En la línea de piquete

Por Sue Davis

Enfermeras/os de Washington votan por huelga

Las/os enfermeras/os certificadas/os (RN) del hospital más grande de Washington, votaron el 16 de febrero para aprobar una huelga de un día el 4 de marzo. Las/os 1.650 enfermeras/os representadas/os por el sindicato National Nurses United (NNU) desde el 6 de octubre, han estado trabajando en el Centro de Hospital de Washington (WHC) sin un contrato desde junio 2010. Las/os enfermeras/os señalan problemas con la seguridad de las/os pacientes debido al recorte de personal, la falta de respeto por el personal administrativo, y el intento por parte de la administración de rescindir los beneficios económicos duramente ganados.

La NNU sometió nuevos cargos a la Junta Nacional de Relaciones Laborales el 24 de febrero alegando que el WHC bloqueó el acceso sindical a sus miembros; espió y amenazó a miembros del sindicato; negoció con mala fe; e indebidamente dejó de cobrar cuotas sindicales. La presión sobre WHC aumentó cuando 10 concejales del Distrito de Columbia (D.C.) escribieron al hospital para exhortarle a respetar los problemas de las/os enfermeras/os y ofrecer un convenio justo. Su carta calificaba la tasa de un 13 por ciento anual de cambio de personal durante los pasados seis años como algo “perturbador”. (Union City! — periódico diario en la red del Consejo AFL-CIO de D.C. Metro, 17 y 25 de febrero)

Encuesta demuestra apoyo para los sindicatos públicos

Una encuesta de USA Today/ Gallop publicada el 22 de febrero, mostró que un 61 por ciento de las personas que respondieron se opondrían a una ley en su estado similar a la que está siendo impulsada por el gobernador de Wisconsin, Scott Walker, para eliminar negociaciones colectivas de los sindicatos del sector público. (Boletín semanal en la red de los/as Trabajadores/as de Comunicaciones CWA, 25 de febrero)

Cámara de Representantes recorta fondos que benefician sindicatos

Como parte de sus planes de austeridad, las/os republicanos de la Cámara de Representantes han incluido un recorte del 20 por ciento en el presupuesto de la Junta Nacional de Relaciones Laborales (NLRB). Aunque no es un verdadero amigo del sector sindical, el papel de la NLRB es investigar violaciones a los derechos de las/os trabajadoras/es, monitorear las elecciones y mediar disputas laborales. La Directora de la NLRB, Wilma Liebman, dijo que la agencia, que ya tiene una acumulación de casos (dejados desde los años de inacción por parte de Bush) tendría que suspender temporalmente su personal por 55 días, forzándola a “reducir severamente todas sus operaciones”. Primero, la Cámara trató de quitar todo el financiamiento de la NLRB, pero esa enmienda fracasó cuando 60 republicanos se unieron para votar contra ella. (Boletín de CWA, 25 de febrero)

Solidaridad sindical en D.C. con las/os trabajadoras/es mexicanas/os

Como parte de la semana de Acción Global por los Derechos de las/os Trabajadoras/es en México, que comenzó el 14 de febrero, activistas y partidarios sindicales en Washington se manifestaron frente a la Embajada de México el 16 de febrero para exigir el fin a la intimidación y a las violaciones de los derechos de las/os trabajadoras/es por el gobierno mexicano. El presidente del sindicato de mineros, Cecil Roberts, calificó la explosión minera en 2006 de Pasta de Conchos, en la cual murieron 65 trabajadores, un “homicidio industrial”. Nadie ha sido acusado o juzgado por ese crimen. También condenó el ataque del ejército mexicano contra la huelga de los mineros en 2007 por violaciones de salud y seguridad. Roberts y otros tres líderes sindicales entregaron una carta a un representante de la Embajada Mexicana en la cual exhortaron al gobierno a “cumplir la ley, cumplir con los derechos laborales fundamentales y terminar con la represión de trabajadoras/es mexicanas/os”. (Union City! 17 de febrero) □

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