

WISCONSIN SHOWDOWN

Workers, students defy union busting, layoffs

By Sharon Black
State Capitol, Madison, Wis.

March 1 — In a back-and-forth struggle where the final result has still not been determined, the mass mobilization to stop Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker's aggressive assault on workers is growing stronger as the confrontation continues.

On March 1, as Gov. Walker delivers his cutback budget speech, nearly 100 young protesters still occupy the state Capitol. Thousands continue to protest outside.

Last night we saw youth in sleeping bags start a "Walkerville" outside the Capitol, reminiscent of the "Hoover-villes" named after Herbert Hoover, the U.S. president who presided over the 1929 stock market crash and the ensuing Great Depression.

Enduring freezing temperatures, those outside supported those valiant workers and youth who remain inside the Capitol. The occupation of the building is into its third week now against the anti-union "budget repair bill," which would sweep away collective bargaining rights for public-sector workers, slash public education and more.

Following a big Feb. 27 battle and victory (see below), Gov. Walker abruptly violated an agreement to open the Capitol normally on Feb. 28 after "cleaning."

On the morning of Feb. 28, protesters who went out for coffee found themselves locked out, along with the general public and Capitol workers and elected officials. The building was abruptly sealed off. Workers were ordered to both weld and screw down ground floor windows. Only those with Walker's OK were allowed inside. This appeared to be aimed at stifling protest at the governor's March 1 budgetary address.

Cheryl LaBash, a Detroit activist who has participated in the occupation since Feb 19, told WW: "The governor has taken draconian measures that are constitutionally illegal. He has in effect shut down the Capitol to the public. We have been in constant touch with the brave youth who are continuing to hold out inside, who report that the hundreds of banners and signs taped to the wall remain intact and that they are strong."

The Capitol belongs to the people

On Feb. 27, elated workers and students celebrated and danced filling the Capitol with chants of "People's power — workers power!" and "This is what democracy looks like!" They sang "Solidarity Forever" and "We Shall Overcome." The 4 p.m. deadline to vacate the ornate Capitol for "cleaning" passed. Many of the thousand remaining inside vowed to stay and be arrested.

Seasoned trade unionists from the Steel Workers union joined high school and college students. People

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No U.S. attack on Libya!

By Sara Flounders

The worst thing that could happen to the people of Libya is U.S. intervention.

The worst thing that could happen to the revolutionary upsurge shaking the Arab world is U.S. intervention in Libya.

The White House is meeting with its allies among the European imperialist NATO countries to discuss imposing a no-fly zone over Libya, jamming all communications of President Moammar Gadhafi inside Libya and carving military corridors into Libya from Egypt and Tunisia, supposedly to "assist refugees." (New York Times, Feb. 27)

This means positioning U.S./NATO troops in Egypt and Tunisia close to Libya's two richest oil fields, in both the east and west. It means the Pentagon coordinating maneuvers with the Egyptian and Tunisian militaries. What could be more dangerous to the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions?

Italy, once the colonizer of Libya, has suspended a 2008 treaty with Libya that includes a nonaggression clause, a move that could allow it to take part in future "peacekeeping" operations there and enable the use of its military bases in any possible intervention. Several U.S. and NATO bases in Italy, including the U.S. Sixth Fleet base near Naples, could be staging areas for action against Libya.

President Barack Obama has announced that "the full range of options" is under consideration. This is Washington-speak for military operations.

Meanwhile, adding to the frenzy for military in-

tervention is the release of a public letter from the Foreign Policy Initiative, a right-wing think tank seen as the successor to the Project for the New American Century, calling for the U.S. and NATO to "immediately" prepare military action to help bring down the Gadhafi regime.

The public appeal's signers include William Kristol, Richard Perle, Paul Wolfowitz, Elliott Abrams, Douglas Feith and more than a dozen former senior officials from the Bush administration, plus several prominent liberal Democrats, such as Neil Hicks of Human Rights First and Bill Clinton's "human rights" chief, John Shattuck.

The letter called for economic sanctions and military action: deploying NATO warplanes and a naval armada to enforce no-fly zones and that have the capability to disable Libyan naval vessels.

Sens. John McCain and Joseph Lieberman while in Tel Aviv on Feb. 25 called for Washington to supply Libyan rebels with arms and establish a no-fly zone over the country.

Not to be overlooked are calls for U.N. contingents of medical and humanitarian workers, human rights monitors and investigators from the International Criminal Court to be sent to Libya with an "armed escort."

Providing humanitarian aid doesn't have to include the military. Turkey has evacuated 7,000 of its nationals on ferries and chartered flights. Some 29,000 Chinese workers have left via ferries, chartered flights and ground transportation.

However, the evacuation of European nation-

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PHILADELPHIA

Feb. 24 rally brought out many public sector workers in support of Wisconsin occupation in Madison. See solidarity round-up pages 6-7.

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WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Michigan

Students fight anti-trans bias

By Martha Grevatt

Last fall students at Mona Shores High School in Muskegon, Mich., made history by electing Oakleigh Marshall Reed homecoming king. Reed — known to his classmates as Oak — is a transgender youth. School records have him listed as female under the birth name Oakleigh Marie.

Oak's parents, teachers and classmates all respect Oak's gender identity, referring to the popular honors student as "he" or "him." He marches in the band in a tuxedo and will graduate in a "boy's" cap and gown. He plans to have gender-reassignment surgery when he turns 18.

Yet after he won the popular vote, the principal at Mona Shores High informed Oak that he could not be homecoming king because he was still registered as female. District administrators backed the principal, insisting that a king had to be biologically male.

This discriminatory act did not go unchallenged. Students launched a Facebook campaign called "Oak is My King." They wore T-shirts to school with the same slogan. The student council opposed the principal's decision.

Oak's mother was furious. "He was voted for homecoming king and, according to the votes, he should have been homecoming king, and it's just sad, and it just breaks my heart that all these people all voted and it was taken away, it was completely taken away from him." (Metro Weekly, Sept. 27)

The American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan filed a lawsuit on behalf of Oak.

It was announced Feb. 14 that the school administration yielded to student sentiment by agreeing that homecoming and prom elections would be gender-neutral — no more kings or queens, just the two highest vote-getters of any gender.

Mona Shores School District includes parts of Muskegon, population 40,000, and Norton Shores, population 23,000. While the more economically secure Norton Shores is 95 percent white with only 5 percent of the population in poverty, 40 percent of Muskegon's residents are people of color. Muskegon County, population 174,000, has a poverty rate of almost 18 percent. (2010 Census)

Muskegon, founded by fur traders, grew up around the timber industry in the 1800s. Still called "lumber town," this blue-collar community on the eastern shores of Lake Michigan is now home to many factory workers. They are employed by Alcoa, the Brunswick bowling ball company and several auto parts firms — if they are lucky enough to be working.

The victory of Oak and his classmates against bigotry is a victory for working-class unity — the kind of unity students and workers need as Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder prepares to break teacher unions and destroy public education. □

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After grassroots struggle, city bans fracking

By Ellie Dorritie
Buffalo, N.Y.

After months of demonstrations and repeatedly packing the gallery at City Council meetings, Frack Action Buffalo, a local grassroots group, and its supporters celebrated a major victory. The city of Buffalo's Common Council became the first major city government in New York State — and the second in the U.S. — to ban hydraulic fracturing for natural gas. The Council passed "Buffalo's Community Protection from Natural Gas Extraction Ordinance" on Feb. 8 by a 9-0 vote.

The activists succeeded in combating an assault on Buffalo's media and legislators by spokespeople from the powerful gas and oil industry, who targeted this very poor city with propaganda about huge numbers of jobs to be created by fracking. The Frack Action group's success was the result of intense research, informational meetings in many communities and detailed presentations to lawmakers.

Buffalo follows in the footsteps of Pittsburgh which passed a similar ban last November. However, the Buffalo law not only prohibits drillers from fracking for gas in Buffalo. It also bars the disposal of drilling wastewater or other production wastes within city limits. This is where the Buffalo law is different from Pittsburgh's: it takes on the issue of what to do with the millions of gallons of wastewater generated by the process. This dangerous byproduct of fracking contains carcinogens, volatile organic compounds and radioactive material.

In Pennsylvania, as reported in January by the Associated Press, the Department of Environmental Protection

authorized the discharge of at least 3.6 million barrels of fracking wastewater — with minimal to no treatment — into rivers and streams across the state.

Immediately after Buffalo's ban was passed, the Pittsburgh City Council passed a resolution supporting Buffalo's ban on fracking.

Shortly afterward, it was revealed in New York State Department of Environmental Conservation documents that wastewater from vertical fracking wells has been knowingly accepted by Buffalo water treatment facilities, although they could not properly treat it. Contaminants were therefore released into the Niagara River, the water source for several towns and for the huge mists of Niagara Falls.

Frack Action Buffalo has called for a demonstration at the Buffalo office of the DEC on March 7, coordinating with solidarity actions at DEC headquarters in the state capital and others across the state, to demand that New York's governor define this waste as "hazardous material" and keep it out of sewage treatment plants that are unable to clean it.

"Buffalo is leading the way," said Rita Yelda, a student at Buffalo State and organizer with Frack Action Buffalo at their press conference following the Council vote. "And we urge other cities and towns to pass similar bans. We want to tell Albany: We will stand up in defense of our communities if you will not."

Fracking is unregulated at the federal level due to exemptions given to the powerful gas and oil industry in the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act. □

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Ohio workers say 'No union busting'

On Feb. 22, Ohio unionists and their supporters poured into Columbus, the capital of Ohio. More than 8,000 people carried signs that said, "From Wisconsin to Ohio, No to Union Busting." They clogged the State House and filled out the surrounding area.

They were protesting moves by the right-wing Ohio Gov. John Kasich — whose last job was with Lehman Brothers — to eliminate collective bargaining rights for public sector workers.

The Ohio Education Association called the rally. Many teachers and school staff were there, but also attending were bus drivers, state office workers and firefighters from around the state.

Many other union militants were there to show support and solidarity. Members of the United Auto Workers, the United Steelworkers and the Food and Commercial Workers Union, as well as construction-trade workers, demanded a halt to union busting. Students and retirees also joined in the militant and multinational crowd.



Everyone knew that this was only the first day in Ohio in the long battle to protect collective bargaining. In understanding that unions must unite around the country, many workers were chanting for a general strike in order to show the power of unions to the bosses and the rich.

— Report and photos by Susan Schnur, member of the Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 268

Activists in South support public workers

By Dante Strobino
Raleigh, N.C.

The Labor, Faith and Civil Rights Coalition in Defense of the Public Sector rallied in Raleigh, N.C., on Feb. 21. Workers and community members showed support for Wisconsin workers, who are fighting to maintain collective bargaining rights, and demanded these rights in North Carolina, where they were banned in 1959.

The momentum built in Wisconsin is strengthening the movement to repeal North Carolina's ban.

Protesters marched to the General Assembly, led by the Rev. Dr. William Barber II, president of N.C. NAACP; Angaza Laughinghouse, president of UE Local 150; Monserrat Alvarez, of Raleigh Fight Imperialism, Stand Together; N.C. AFL-CIO President James Andrews; and the Rev. Nelson Johnson, director of Beloved Community Center in Greensboro.

They delivered copies of the coalition's statement of principles and the U.N. International Labor Organization's ruling — which called on the state to resume collective bargaining — to Thom Tillis, speaker of the House, and Phil Berger, president pro tempore of the Senate. Both Tea Party members, they aim to slash thousands of state jobs and further erode vital services



Raleigh, N.C., Feb. 21.

WW PHOTO: DANTE STROBINO

in their 2011-12 budget proposals.

UE Electrical Workers Local 150, the N.C. Public Service Workers Union, the N.C. NAACP State Conference and the International Worker Justice Campaign initiated this coalition. They want the ban lifted and call for the state to set up a framework to grant public sector workers collective bargaining rights. This is crucial to a broad program to defend public sector jobs and services, now under attack by federal, state and local governments.

Their founding statement says: "The public sector is the basic safety net for providing working-class and poor people the basic essential human needs. It must be protected. ... In order to wage a powerful struggle in defense of public services, which is being exemplified by the protests in Wisconsin, there must be a struggle

to defend the workers that provide these services. The right to collective bargaining, for workers to have input in shaping the decisions about working conditions, must be a basic right and major demand of broad coalitions that must be formed in defense of the public sector."

These issues are also crucial in Virginia and other Southern states, where public sector workers are denied collective bargaining rights.

The document cites the ILO ruling, which found that the federal government and North Carolina violated international laws by denying collective bargaining rights to public sector workers. The decision responded to a N.C. Public Service Workers Union-UE Local 150 complaint.

Coalition members joined the Feb. 12, statewide, Historic Thousands on Jones

Street demonstration to defend public sector workers and services. HKonJ has organized since 2007 to bring thousands of African-American community members, workers and allies to a People's Assembly march to the North Carolina Legislature in Raleigh to demand a 14-point people's program.

The new coalition plans a "People's Budget" campaign of people's assemblies to be held in N.C. cities, giving workers and communities a genuine voice in bringing forward their demands for government budgets to meet workers' and oppressed peoples' needs.

That corporations have been able to leave Northern and Western unionized areas to set up "run-away shops" in the low-wage South reflects a historical weakness of the labor movement in not organizing there. This, as well as the legacy of Jim Crow racism, has contributed to the creation of reactionary organizations, such as the Tea Party, which aim to destroy public and private sector unions in states where unions have been stronger.

Workers throughout the country must unite with community and workers' organizations and other sectors to unleash their collective power. During the capitalist crisis, this unity is key to organizing peoples' power.

Federal funds for poor communities axed

By Edward Yudelovich

On Feb. 6, former President Ronald Reagan's 100th birthday, the Barack Obama administration proposed steep cuts in two of the leading programs benefiting America's poorest communities: community service grants and community development block grants. According to White House Budget Director Jacob Lew, the former will be cut in half, with the balance going to a "competitive grant program." CDBG funding will be cut by 7.5 percent, or \$300 million.

Obama, who proudly promoted his experience as a "community organizer" in his 2008 presidential campaign, will cut organizing jobs in low-income communities more than any president since Reagan.

But the Republican majority in the House of Representatives outdid Obama by proposing reduction of the CDBG appropriation by over \$500 million.

On Feb. 19 the House also voted to slash

more than \$60 billion from hundreds of federal programs, including health care, Title X family planning, education, the environment and 40-percent cuts in foreign-aid programs that fight AIDS, malaria and hunger. If these cuts are implemented, the Social Security Administration would have to furlough employees.

The gap between the Democratic and Republican parties on the federal budget now threatens a government shutdown that would, in one fell swoop, discontinue payments to U.S. soldiers, cut off benefits to veterans, and stop Social Security payments to seniors

Considering that the CDBG program creates more than 100,000 jobs in construction, renovation and community services each year in low-income neighborhoods and generates more than \$300 million annually in program income for cities and states, the cuts proposed by both President Obama and the Republican House would have a significantly negative impact on the

already floundering national economy.

Signed into law in 1974, the Community Development Block Grant is one of the longest-running programs of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. CDBG funds local community development activities such as affordable housing, anti-poverty programs and infrastructure development.

CDBG has consistently provided about \$4 billion per year to more than 1,100 local and state governments to create jobs and desperately needed services, especially in low-income communities. CDBG funding helps provide a range of services targeted to low-income and middle-income residents by helping with homeownership assistance, developing senior and youth centers, providing employment training and offering mental health services.

CDBG also includes a loan guarantee program that provides assistance for financing economic development activities, construction projects and property

acquisition intended to aid low- and middle-income residents. Larger cities and counties receive annual entitlements under the program, while smaller jurisdictions compete for discretionary grants awarded through the state.

Yet many Congress members, especially those most recently elected to office from the racist Tea Party, appear to know very little about the program, including how it has been used to directly benefit communities in the districts they were supposedly elected to represent.

Recipients of CDBG grants are required to submit documentation to HUD proving that the grant funds were utilized in areas where 51 percent of the residents were of low or moderate income based on the last federal census. Larger cities and urban counties are required to submit a Consolidated Plan to HUD and hold public meetings to solicit input from the community to ensure that proposed projects

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Rallies defend women's reproductive rights

NEW YORK CITY

A large demonstration was held in New York City's Foley Square to protest legislation passed by the House of Representatives to cut Title X, the National Family Planning Program, and bar Planned Parenthood from receiving any federal funds. Planned Parenthood of New York City reports that 6,000 participated at the Feb. 26 protest.

"This was the largest outpouring for women's reproductive rights in New York City in the last 20 years," said Sue Davis of Workers World Party and a longtime women's reproductive rights activist. "The crowd was more multinational than in the past and young women were at least half the crowd."

Many marched to join the protest at Foley Square from a rally at City Hall



held earlier that day in support of Wisconsin workers fighting passage of a bill that would destroy collective bargaining rights for public sector unions.

Planned Parenthood of New York City called the "Stand Up For Women's Health" rally. The group said the bill, pushed through by the Republican leadership in the House, is an assault on women who

rely on Planned Parenthood for primary and preventive health care, including life-saving breast and cervical cancer screenings, HIV testing, annual exams, family planning visits and birth control.

Title X serves 5 million poor women, of whom 20 percent are Black and 28 percent Latina. Eliminating it would be devastating; it would wipe out funds for prenatal care, nutrition programs for pregnant women and their children, Head Start and childcare for 368,000 children.

Walk for Choice says that demonstrations were held in 45 U.S. cities on Feb. 26 to protest this right-wing attack on women's rights.

— Report and photo by Brenda Ryan

BUFFALO, N.Y.

A Buffalo demonstration to support Planned Parenthood brought out mothers, fathers, grandmothers, students, gay men and other activists. They stood and protested in the Buffalo snow against announced cuts to family planning and Title X funding. Buffalo and Niagara Planned Parenthood helped organize thousands of reproductive rights supporters twice in the 1990s and booted national mobilizations of anti-choice bigots out of town.

— Bev Hiestand



WW PHOTO: ELLIE DORRITTE

Cleveland Prison Emergency Summit meets

By Sharon Dannan
Cleveland

The Black Studies Department of Cleveland State University hosted a groundbreaking "Prison Emergency Summit" on Feb. 26. Activists, students and other interested individuals from the Ohio cities of Cleveland, Columbus, Toledo and Youngstown, as well as Pittsburgh, attended the gathering.

The all-day conference gave serious attention to the deliberate injustices practiced by the incarceration industry and the impending crisis due to worsening conditions under prison privatization. A highlight was the screening of the important new documentary, "Dark Little Secret," which is about the prison-industrial complex.

News was given on the continuing mistreatment of alleged leaders of the vast prisoner strike in Georgia last December. However, there was encouraging news, too, of the indictment of seven guards in



WW PHOTO: SUSAN SCHNUR

Larry Hicks Jr., Denise Taylor, Ibrahim Qahhar, Brett Jackson.

connection with the death of one prisoner and the injuries of many, related to the strike. An excellent presentation brought into focus the role of the 13th Amendment in perpetuating slavery.

Imam Siddique Abdullah Hasan, one of the recently victorious Lucasville hunger strikers, spoke to the gathering by cell phone. In addition, messages were read from several of the prisoners who participated in the uprising at the Lucasville prison. It was also announced that Jason Campbell, a Native American prisoner at Ohio State Penitentiary, began a hunger strike on Feb. 27 to protest the denial of his right to practice his religion.

The Lucasville Uprising Freedom Network and the New Black Panther Party-Cleveland Link coordinated the conference. The Cleveland Anarchist Black Cross and the Joaquin Hicks Real People Movement helped with its planning. Many other organizations supported the effort with information tables, donations, performers, volunteers and speakers. □

Protesters demand foreclosure moratorium

Protesters gathered Feb. 18 outside the McNamara Federal Building in downtown Detroit for a demonstration called by the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions & Utility Shutoffs and the People Before Banks Coalition. They were targeting the office of U.S. Sen. Carl Levin and demanding a national moratorium to stop all foreclosures and evictions.

Black women from a Detroit church were there, as were white male workers from the suburbs who are now laid off

from jobs in auto-related industries and facing foreclosure. Several youth and students also attended.

Many first-time participants came because they saw anti-foreclosure attorney and moratorium coalition leader Vanessa Fluker on a recent "Defenders" segment on a WDIV TV 4 news broadcast. Reporter Kevin Dietz interviewed Fluker and showed excerpts from her recent testimony before a Congressional panel in Washington, D.C.

Fluker exposed the "silent bailout" the banks are receiving and the role of government-owned Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac in carrying out mass foreclosures and evictions across the country.

This was the second in a series of protests aimed at federal elected officials. Coalition organizers stressed the "criminal role of the U.S. government" in the ever-growing foreclosure crisis and how a moratorium can be won in the streets.

— Kris Hamel

On the Picket Line

By Sue Davis

D.C. nurses vote to strike

Registered nurses at the largest hospital in Washington voted Feb. 16 to authorize a one-day strike on March 4. The 1,650 RNs, represented by National Nurses United since Oct. 6, have been working at Washington Hospital Center without a contract since June 2010. The nurses cite problems with patient safety from understaffing, lack of respect by managerial staff, and the administration's attempt to rescind hard-won economic gains.

The NNU filed new charges with the National Labor Relations Board on Feb. 24 alleging that WHC blocked union access to its members; spied on and threatened union members; engaged in bad-faith bargaining; and improperly ceased dues check-off. Pressure on WHC mounted when 10 D.C. Council members wrote the hospital urging them to respect the nurses' issues and to offer a fair agreement. Their letter called the 13 percent annual turnover rate of WHC nurses over the past six years "disturbing." (Union City! — online daily newsletter of D.C. Metro AFL-CIO Council, Feb. 17 and 25)

Poll shows support for public unions

A USA Today/Gallop poll, released Feb. 22, showed that 61 percent of respondents would oppose a bill in their state similar to one being pushed by Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker to kill public sector collective bargaining. (Communication Workers online weekly bulletin, Feb. 25)

House budget vote cuts NLRB funding

As part of their austerity package, House of Representatives Republicans have included a 20 percent cut in the budget for the National Labor Relations Board. Though no true friend of labor, the NLRB's role is to investigate violations of workers' rights, oversee elections and try labor disputes. NLRB Chair Wilma Liebman said the already backlogged agency (a holdover from years of Bush inaction) would have to furlough staff for 55 days, forcing it to "severely curtail all of its operations." The House first tried stripping all funding from the NLRB, but that amendment failed when 60 Republicans joined in voting it down. (CWA bulletin, Feb. 25)

D.C. union solidarity with Mexican workers

As part of the week-long Global Action for Workers' Rights in Mexico that began Feb. 14, union activists and supporters in Washington picketed the Mexican Embassy on Feb. 16 demanding an end to the Mexican government's ongoing intimidation of workers and labor rights violations. Mine Workers union president, Cecil Roberts, called the 2006 Pasta de Conchos mine explosion that killed 65 workers "industrial homicide." No one has been accused or tried for that crime. He also condemned the Mexican army's attack on the miners' 2007 strike over health and safety violations. Roberts and three other union leaders delivered a letter to a Mexican Embassy representative calling on the government to "enforce the law, comply with fundamental labor rights and bring an end to the repression of Mexican workers." (Union City! Feb. 17) □

Wisconsin: School for labor's fightback

By David Sole

Editor's note: The writer is a municipal worker, longtime union activist and past president of United Auto Workers Local 2334 in Detroit. He was in Madison, Wis., Feb. 19-21, with a solidarity delegation from Detroit and Chicago.

The struggle now unfolding in Wisconsin will go down in history as the beginning of the long delayed fightback of the U.S. working class. Union and progressive activists have been scanning the horizon for decades, really since the "Reagan revolution," for signs of a labor resurgence against concessions, unemployment and union busting. Not a few have given in to demoralization, convinced that the working class of this country would not be able to rise to its feet. It has taken only a few days for the workers and students of Wisconsin to prove them wrong.

History has repeatedly shown that repression breeds resistance and that many important fights arose from the working class defending itself. In Wisconsin the cocky Gov. Scott Walker, egged on by his Tea Party cronies, went way beyond demands for concessions from public workers to propose ending any real collective bargaining rights for these 175,000 workers.

It may be that Walker overreached himself in his right-wing enthusiasm. It is more likely that the Wall Street corporate bosses and bankers, to whom Wisconsin and other states and municipalities are beholden to the tune of billions upon billions of dollars in loans, gave orders for this new phase of the attack on workers and their organizations. It is certainly no coincidence that bills with almost identical language are being introduced and discussed in other states at the same time.

Now tens of thousands of workers are

in motion. They are meeting, discussing, marching, rallying and striking in unprecedented numbers to defend their collective bargaining rights. Special notice must be taken of the students, both in colleges and high schools, who took the advanced position of seizing, occupying and holding the state Capitol building in Madison. Their energy and enthusiasm are impressive. Their commitment to the struggle for union rights and against cuts to education has fired up the student movement across the U.S.

It can be said, with no exaggeration, that the United States has not seen anything like this mobilization since the 1930s or 1940s. Certainly there have been strikes, large and often bitter. There have been mass marches, like Solidarity Day that labor called in 1981 against PATCO union busting. But they are nothing in scope and depth like the developments in Wisconsin.

One can find many things missing in the Wisconsin struggle. The students lack organization and experience. The union leaders also have little experience to lean on to counter this plan to destroy the unions wholesale. This is inevitable after such a long hiatus in open class warfare. It is only in the struggle that this experience will be gained. New organizations and greater consciousness will emerge as the struggle continues.

'Necessary cutbacks' or general strike?

More attention must be paid to exposing the lie that "cutbacks are necessary." It needs to be pointed out that there is plenty of money to cover the big deficits in municipal, state and the federal budgets. The profits of the corporations and banks are at a record high — tax them. Interest to the banks is draining the public treasuries — put a freeze on debt service payments. The Pentagon budget and imperi-

alist wars abroad add up to over a trillion dollars a year — slash it. Not a penny has to come from the workers or from critical social service programs.

The Feb. 21 resolution by the Wisconsin South Central Federation of Labor — representing about 45,000 workers in six counties — for a general strike represents a new stage in the struggle. Even during the vicious union-busting attack on the Detroit newspaper strikers in 1995, the Metro-Detroit AFL-CIO central labor council rejected a motion from the floor to have all local unions "vote to authorize a general strike if the council decides it necessary." The reason given at the time was that "it has never happened in U.S. history." The fact is that U.S. labor history records many general strikes, like those in Seattle in 1919 and San Francisco in 1934. But union leaders in an era of relative labor peace often shrink from the thought of all-out class warfare.

A general strike would require education and preparation. It would be foolish to think that a mass across-the-board walkout would happen or succeed by just issuing the call. The Wisconsin resolution

specified that education begin in all locals on the function of and preparation for a general strike. Serious and careful work in every local union must now begin.

The public, especially the students, must be informed and organized, too. The unions must have a plan — and let the public know — for emergency services. And union leaders and members must be ready for the inevitable attack from the government. Some of the media are already giving dire warnings against a general strike, citing the hated Taft-Hartley Act. It will be incumbent upon national union leaders to gather support and prepare action to show solidarity with the Wisconsin workers in the face of certain government retaliation.

Whatever the outcome of the battle of Wisconsin, the labor movement will never be the same. The growing resentment against all the many attacks on workers, the cutbacks in social services, the racism and oppression permeating society are making a massive fightback necessary and inevitable throughout the United States. Wisconsin workers and students have shown the way. □



Class struggle — a Wisconsin tradition

By Stephen Millies

People around the world, from California to Cairo, are supporting Wisconsin's workers, who've seized their state Capitol building to fight union busting. But this wasn't the first time people seized the Capitol in Madison.

On Sept. 29, 1969, Milwaukee mothers receiving public assistance, led by Father Jim Groppi and supported by 5,000 University of Wisconsin students, took over the Capitol. They held it for 11 hours and chased out the state legislators.

This was a struggle against welfare cuts. Racist politicians wanted to cut out the winter clothing allowance so that poor people would be driven out of the state or freeze to death.

Among the state assembly members chased out was future governor Tommy Thompson, who took his revenge on poor people by abolishing welfare in the 1990s. Thompson and a majority of the state assembly had Groppi convicted of contempt and sentenced to jail without even allowing a legal defense. The U.S. Supreme Court later threw out Groppi's conviction.

Activists are proud that Wisconsin enacted the first workers' compensation law a century ago. The state also passed the first unemployment insurance act in the 1930s.

Racism, prisons and rebellion

But as Lloyd Barbee, who led the state's Civil Rights movement, said, "Wisconsin was progressive just for white people."

Barbee, who died in 2002, was one of the assembly members who supported the mothers on public assistance in 1969.

One out of every 25 African Americans in Wisconsin is incarcerated. That's 4 percent of all Black people in the state. Twelve thousand African Americans are in Wisconsin prisons. Back in 1963, the state had fewer than 3,000 prisoners. The great migration of African Americans didn't really reach Wisconsin until the 1950s. Even today just 6 percent of the state's population is Black. Four percent are Latino/a.

Yet factory after factory in Milwaukee and Racine, Wis., had large numbers of Black workers. Thousands of African Americans were employed in Milwaukee's A.O. Smith plant, which made car frames for General Motors.

Mexican workers filled the meatpacking plants in Milwaukee's Menominee River valley.

Four people were killed in the 1967 rebellion of Milwaukee's Black community. Only the much larger Detroit and Newark uprisings that year had more casualties.

Even before this revolt, Milwaukee was convulsed by daily demonstrations of the NAACP Youth Council, led by Father Groppi, demanding a law against housing discrimination. Every year, Vel Phillips — the first African American and first woman elected to the Milwaukee City Council — would introduce a fair housing law, only to have it voted down 18-1. Lloyd Barbee helped organize the 1965 boycott of the city's segregated school system.

Twenty-five thousand people marched down Wisconsin Avenue in downtown Milwaukee following Dr. King's assassination on April 4, 1968. This march amounted to a Black general strike with close to one-fourth of the African Americans in the city participating in it. This writer remembers the riot police, armed with tear gas launchers, preventing people from crossing the Milwaukee River to the East Side, where the city's financial district is located.

During this period the Milwaukee chapter of the Black Panther Party grew rapidly. High school students were especially attracted to the Panthers. "The Milwaukee Three" — Panther members Booker T. Collins Jr., Jesse Lee White and Earl W. Leverette — were framed up.

Vicious capitalists

Because of the relatively small size of Wisconsin's Black community, the ruling class has used the state as a laboratory for reaction. Social services have been cut to the bone. Milwaukee is filled with charter schools.

It was deindustrialization in Milwaukee that allowed capitalists to attack all workers. Plants like A.O. Smith and American Motors were torn down. White and African-American workers were thrown out of union strongholds in Milwaukee, but the Black working class was hurt much more. The result was a big weakening of the labor movement.

Plant shutdowns across Wisconsin have continued with the General Motors

plant in Janesville now closed.

Capitalists in Wisconsin are vicious. In 1886 the National Guard killed six Polish-American workers demanding the eight-hour day. In 1898, 2,000 workers in seven woodworking mills in Oshkosh, Wis., went on strike for 14 weeks.

Three union organizers were arrested for "conspiracy." They were found innocent after a two-day summation by their attorney, Clarence Darrow. His speech to the court remains a classic defense of workers' rights.

It took decades to organize Kohler, the big toilet and bathtub maker. This outfit is located in the company town of Kohler, just outside Sheboygan, Wis.

Two strikers were killed and 40 others were wounded on July 27, 1934. The National Guard was then called in to finish the job of crushing the strike.

The United Auto Workers finally forced Kohler to sign a contract in 1962 after an eight-year strike.

Big capitalists like the Bradley and Greede families founded the John Birch Society, whose headquarters are now in Appleton, Wis.

As late as 1970, Milwaukee's huge Allen-Bradley plant refused to hire Black workers. The Bradley Foundation helped finance publication of the "Bell Curve," a racist manifesto that claims African Americans are inferior.

The writer was a member of Milwaukee's Workers World Party branch from 1968 to 1978. A fuller version of this article is at www.workers.org.

A youth's perspective:

'In Madison we see our future'

By Salvatore Cipriano
Madison, Wis.

Editor's note: The writer is a youth activist and high-school senior from Detroit who took part in a solidarity delegation to Madison, Wis., from Feb. 20-22.

When you first step into the Capitol, it is hard not to be overwhelmed by the feeling of inspiration and solidarity flowing through every corridor and hall. The sight of an ocean of people stirs a hope that is unknown to some and forgotten by many. The main part of the rotunda on the first floor is filled with students who have been organizing the occupation. They have a loudspeaker which everyone gets to use.

The students have played an integral role in this struggle, forming the base for the occupation by organizing sleep-over lists, food donations, medical staff and an information center all within the Capitol itself. Posters are set up, much like a sign in the mall or a building, pointing people toward their desired location.

The second floor has booths that give out information or free literature, and a reserve of food and beverages is at the end of one of the halls. The charging station, lined with people who are blogging the struggle to every corner of the world, is located on one of the hallways, open to all who need to juice their electronic devices.

At night, the second floor is packed with sleeping bodies of the students and workers who decide to "hold down the fort" and ensure they don't lose their footing inside the building.

People sleep, find friends or make



From left: Bryan G. Pfeifer, Salvatore Cipriano and David Sole inside the Wisconsin Capitol, Feb. 22.

new friends during this time, allowing a sense of community to blossom within the building. After spending a day or two there, you develop a feeling of kinship with the other people — a respect. Occupying the Capitol has allowed me to understand the feeling of camaraderie that is possible among workers and youth.

The third floor is filled with sleeping bags and groupings of people having conversations. This is a great place to meet new people and exchange ideas, as it is a place to get away from the loud chanting and wonderful music and have talks. It also provides a magical view of the entire rotunda — only here are you allowed to see the entire size of the protest.

The diversity of the ongoing event is also quite incredible. Various groups of unions, students, activists and pro-worker

organizations have traveled to Madison to show solidarity with the people of Wisconsin who are fighting the union-busting policies of the new right-wing regime. People from California to New York, Texas to North Dakota all have come to support the occupation.

This is undoubtedly one of the most inspiring aspects of the event. Not only do we have unionized and non-unionized workers from both the public and private sectors, but workers and students from every race, creed and sexuality all standing as one.

"The people united will never be defeated!" This common chant is brought to life before our very eyes. In Madison we see our future and the future of the labor movement in the United States, and it is awe-inspiring. □

Workers, students p Protests acro

By Kris Hamel

A mighty giant is beginning to awaken. The fighting workers and youth of Wisconsin, who are battling a right-wing offensive seeking to decimate collective bargaining in



Basketball players union supports Wisconsin workers

The following statements were issued Feb. 25 by National Basketball Players Association representatives in opposition to the passing of the anti-union "budget repair bill" by the Wisconsin Assembly on Feb. 24.

"Last night's vote by the Wisconsin Assembly was an attempt to undermine organized labor and the men and women across the country who depend on their unions for a voice in the workplace. The NBPA proudly supports our brothers and sisters in Wisconsin and their stand for unequivocal collective bargaining rights."

— **Billy Hunter, NBPA executive director**

"Wisconsin public-sector workers tirelessly deliver services on a daily basis to millions of Wisconsin residents. The right of these hardworking men and women to organize and bargain collectively is fundamental. Wisconsin's workers deserve better than last night's vote. Today, our union stands proudly with our fellow union members throughout the state as they continue their fight."

— **Keyon Dooling, NBPA first vice president, Milwaukee Bucks**



Above and right, Philadelphia trade unionists in solidarity with Wisconsin.

Funds for poor communities axed

Continued from page 3
are aligned with the community's most urgent needs.

In the city of Newark,

CDBG funds projects such as replacing curbs and sidewalks, paving streets, installing water lines and improving storm drainage. In New York City, CDBG funds housing assistance to local neighborhoods

and cleaning vacant lots to reduce the health hazard of rat infestation.

"It is literally the lifeblood for creating affordable housing in Philadelphia," said that city's mayor, Michael Nutter. "The program commonly called 'CDBG' has helped get homeless people off the street and built up neighborhoods there. Everyone knows that it works. You will hear as much about it from Republican mayors as from Democrat mayors." (Reuters, Feb. 8)

The willingness of both parties in both the executive and legislative branches of government in Washington to gut a program like CDBG — a program which makes so much sense when measured by the service it provides to the poorest communities and by the positive stimulation to local economies — only proves that these pro-capitalist politicians cannot be relied on to address the needs of the masses of workers and oppressed. For a blueprint of struggle on strategy on how to address those needs, we need only look to developments in the streets of Madison, Wis., and Cairo, Egypt. □

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Bertell Ollman, author & Professor of Politics, New York University

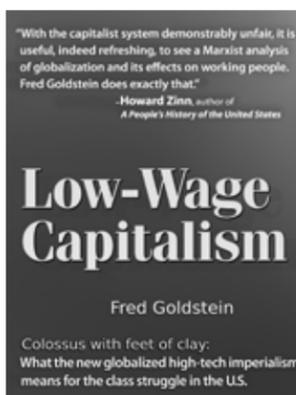
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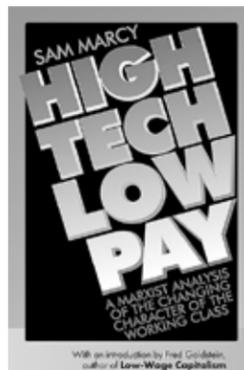
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HIGH TECH, LOW PAY

A Marxist analysis of the changing character of the working class

More than twenty years ago Sam Marcy wrote that the scientific-technological revolution is accelerating a shift to lower-paying jobs and to more women, Black and Latino/a workers. A new introduction by Fred Goldstein explains the roots of the current economic crisis, with its disastrous unemployment, that has heightened the need for a working-class resurgence.



Books available at Leftbooks.com & bookstores across the country

pour out in solidarity

cross U.S. support union struggle in Wisconsin

that state, have inspired and put in motion the multinational working class throughout the entire United States. Workers in unions, in non-union jobs and unemployed, along with students, youth and

activists of all ages, have been galvanized by the electrifying struggle unfolding in Wisconsin where workers have taken a stand and said "Enough!"

Solidarity demonstrations involving many tens of thousands of people were held in all 50 states, in cities and towns large and small, on Feb. 26 and other dates since the Feb. 14 confrontation began in Madison. Here is a sampling of just a few of the demonstrations that occurred Feb. 26 and several days prior.

Thousands rallied at the **Los Angeles** City Hall. A delegation of Los Angeles union workers had just returned from Wisconsin and reported on staying inside the Capitol building in Madison. Thousands of union members, students and progressive community activists rallied in **Sacramento, Calif.**, around the **Bay Area** and in **San Diego**.

More than 3,000 union members came out to a candlelight vigil on the steps of the Capitol building in Sacramento. Under the banner of "We Are One," speaker after speaker expressed solidarity with their union sisters and brothers in Wisconsin. David Sanchez, president of the California Teachers Association, drew loud applause when he said, "Working people did not create this economic crisis — Wall Street did!"

A small rally by the California Tea Party also on the steps of the Capitol in Sacramento was dwarfed by the angry workers, who easily drowned them out with their rally for workers' rights.

Hundreds of people rallied in downtown **San Francisco**. Even with a serious rainstorm threatening, a large assemblage of local unionists and supporters massed at the **San Diego** County Administration Building to proclaim their solidarity with their sister and brother workers on the front lines in Wisconsin.

Several thousand workers demonstrated in **Chicago**. At least 10 union buses also went from Chicago to Madison to join in the protests there. In **New York City** thousands demonstrated, including many members from Service Employees Union Local 1199 health care workers and janitors, Communication Workers union, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees District Council 37 workers, and teachers' and other educational workers' unions, among others.



San Diego

WW PHOTOS: BOB MCCUBBIN



Philadelphia



Northern California

WW PHOTOS: JUDY GREENSPAN



New York

WW PHOTOS: TONY MURPHY

In **Buffalo, N.Y.**, the largest grassroots, pro-union, community-organized rally in decades brought hundreds to the steps of City Hall. A militant crowd of rank-and-file union members, students, community activists and politician allies sent greetings of support to Wisconsin.

'Make Wall Street pay!'

Hundreds of union members, their families and community supporters filled the plaza, steps and sidewalk in front of the Georgia state Capitol in **Atlanta** on Feb. 23. "Stop the War on Workers" signs were held high as the crowd chanted continuously, accompanied by blaring honks of solidarity from passing cars. Called by the Atlanta North Georgia Labor Council to show support for Wisconsin public sector workers, the rally was also a message to the anti-labor members of the Georgia Assembly who are scapegoating teachers, public services and immigrant workers for the budget crisis in the state.

Among the many unions participating were AFSCME, Teamsters, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Machinists union, United Auto Workers, SEIU, building trades and others. Students from public colleges and universities, members of Jobs with Justice, Georgia Peace and Justice Coalition and other social justice groups were there. One of the International Action Center banners — "Workers and students didn't cause the economic crisis! We say: Make Wall Street pay" — summed up the solution proposed by many of the most militant speakers.

Students at the University of Georgia also held a Wisconsin support rally at the arches leading to the campus. There has been an active living-wage campaign there for a number of years, struggling to win higher wages and better working con-

ditions for campus workers. Another rally was held at the Georgia Capitol on Feb. 26.

More than 1,000 union activists and supporters picketed the annual conference of the National Governors Association in downtown **Washington, D.C.**, on Feb. 27. Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker was originally scheduled to chair a panel discussion at the conference but cancelled at the last minute. Chanting "Kill the bill!" and "What's disgusting? Union busting!" the demonstrators hoped to dissuade all the governors from trying to destroy collective bargaining rights in their states.

On Feb. 22 and again on Feb. 26, thousands of unionists and community activists jammed the front of the Massachusetts Capitol in **Boston** to show their militant solidarity with the workers and students in Wisconsin and to defend union rights. Large numbers were there from the Massachusetts Teachers Association and the Boston Teachers Union, as well as students, construction workers, AFSCME and SEIU locals, and other unionists and supporters. The Bail Out the People Movement's "Kill the Bill or Shut It Down" flyer was very well received by demonstrators, as were Workers World newspapers.

Thousands demonstrated at the Capitol in **Lansing, Mich.**, on Feb. 23 in defense of union rights and against attacks by Gov. Rick Snyder as he attempts to balance the state budget on the backs of the workers, students and unemployed. Union firefighters from the downriver-Detroit suburb of Allen Park were there. The Allen Park City Council voted recently to eliminate the entire fire department, which makes more than 2,500 runs per year. Thousands more from around Michigan came out in Lansing on Feb. 26 to support the Wisconsin workers in their fight to keep collective bargaining.

Sue Davis, G. Dunkel, Bev Hiestand, Judy Greenspan, Dianne Mathiowetz, Bob McCubbin, Frank Neisser and Jill White contributed to this round-up.



Sacramento

The Merida Initiative

Is 'another Egypt' brewing in Mexico?

By Teresa Gutierrez

In a recent issue, Gutierrez explained how U.S. imperialism has seized on the "war on drugs" to intervene in Mexico, but its real target is the huge mass movement that is building against intolerable conditions there.

To justify intervention, the U.S. government went all out to characterize Mexico in terms similar to those used in its war on Iraq.

U.S. propaganda has gone from referring to Mexico as a "close ally" to it being a "failed state," "narco-haven" and "threat to national security." Mexican workers forced to come to the U.S. as a result of NAFTA, the "free trade" agreement with the U.S. that bankrupted local producers, are lumped together as "potential terrorists."

These phrases are used to justify the militarization of Mexico and the southern U.S. border. This began in earnest with the implementation of Plan México — now called the Merida Initiative.

The State Department website says the Merida Initiative is a multiyear program that "demonstrates the United States' commitment to work in partnership with governments in Mexico" as well as Central America, the Dominican Republic

and Haiti "to confront criminal organizations whose illicit actions ... erode the rule of law and threaten the national security of the United States. It provide(s) equipment and training in support of law enforcement."

The Merida Initiative goes back to NAFTA, specifically the "Security and Prosperity Partnership" set up under the Bush administration. Just like Plan Colombia, it is the armed wing of U.S. economic policies.

The New York Times wrote on Feb. 1 that the Obama administration "will face renewed scrutiny to account for the \$1.4 billion, multiyear Merida Initiative."

Clearly the \$1.4 billion spent on the Merida Initiative — money **PART 2** — has been used against the Mexican people. It has gone to protect the drug industry, not stop it.

More than 45,000 Mexican troops have been deployed into the communities. Human rights groups call this repressive trend the "criminalization of protest." More than 35,000 people have been killed in the drug war, many of them innocent bystanders or low-level runners, desperate for an income. There have been beheadings and killings as part of the drug cartels' infighting. People in the resistance and struggle for change have also

been targeted.

As an example of Mexican government complicity, one of the main leaders of the Sinaloa drug cartel was allowed cell phone use while in a maximum security prison. He also got the best food available and visits from women and others. No other prisoners got this royal treatment.

Suspiciously, this drug runner escaped the high-security prison. Activists and journalists in Mexico say he was allowed to escape because a sector of the Mexican government is in an unholy alliance with one of the drug cartels, resulting in assassinations against government officials for taking sides.

An academic from the University of Guadalajara writes that the drug activity in Mexico generates a whopping \$20 billion annually and employs half a million people. This enormous sum of money amounts to an ocean of blood to a ravenous insatiable vampire. There is absolutely no way that the U.S. banks that launder this incredible amount of money or the corrupt customs agencies that reap its benefits will stop the flow of drugs into the U.S.

The U.S. and Mexican war on drugs is really a war on the people. Leaders of the workers, peasants and Indigenous movement are framed on drug charges. People in Chihuahua who were picked up

under guidelines of the Merida Initiative on three-year-old warrants were charged not with drugs but with organizing anti-NAFTA protests!

An area in Mexico where the violence has been especially brutal is Ciudad Juarez.

On Jan. 31, U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano went to El Paso, Texas, just across the border from Ciudad Juarez. That same weekend the movement held an event commemorating the massacres of 18 young people in Juarez a year earlier.

Napolitano mentioned not a word of those killings nor of the more than 400 women workers, mainly employed in the "free trade zone" plants called maquiladoras, who have disappeared or been savagely beaten to death in the area.

Instead, she praised the Mexican government for its war on drugs and extended the U.S. government's backing.

But no amount of praise or endless funding for repression will be able to stop the tide of resistance in Mexico. Even in the epicenter of violence, Ciudad Juarez, the people are organizing. A slogan in Mexico declares: "No nos rendimos, no nos callamos, no los olvidamos" (We will not give up, we will not shut up, we will not forget).

To be continued.

Workers, students defy union busting, layoffs

WISCONSIN SHOWDOWN

Continued from page 1

facing their first-ever arrest came with their children. Hundreds who spent sleepless nights on the cold marble floors had forged bonds of friendship that kept them strong.

Before the 4 p.m. deadline a speak-out raged on, with participants describing why they came and what should be done.

Those inside heard that thousands of people were ringing the Capitol demanding to come in after the doors were shut.

Police from all sorts of divisions were deployed — local Madison police, state police and various sheriffs' offices, including a SWAT team from northern Wisconsin. One Democratic legislator urged people to leave. He was ignored.

The two lower floors were filled with demonstrators. A majority went to the second floor — those who would defy the order to leave, including a delegation of local clergy and older union leaders. Firefighters and even some "cops for labor" joined, showing the depth and strength of this movement.

An older Wisconsin worker, who carried a homemade sign reading "Clean Walker out of the WI Capitol," explained it this way: "We are just fed up and tired.

Many of us are farmers who are holding down two and three jobs just to make ends meet. Walker says we are lazy. How can he call us freeloaders? Walker doesn't know what he has done. We can stay here forever, as long as it takes."

The sentiment of those protesting the union-busting bill has turned into a movement to recall Walker and a movement that has won wide and deep support.

As a local bartender stated, "This is class war. This is not just about Walker; it's about a fight against the Tea Party and the rich."

Armando Robles, president of the Chicago United Electrical Workers Local 1110 that conducted the successful occupation of the Chicago Windows and Doors workers, spoke to the crowd during the celebration in the Capitol. Ana Marie from FIST — Fight Imperialism, Stand Together — in North Carolina translated.

The struggle in Wisconsin has gained national support not only from the official trade union movement, which has held protests all over the country, but also from grassroots community groups like the Bail Out the People Movement and the immigrant rights community, which have called for broad support.

Students and teachers were the initial spark and an important backbone of the fight. Michael Landers, a special education teacher at Milwaukee Tech High School and a member of the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association, has attended numerous protests against Walker's bill at the state Capitol in Madison and also in Milwaukee.

He exclaimed: "I am so proud that we have collectively stood up and found our voice in the face of this blatant attack on workers and students. The sense of shared purpose, camaraderie, and solidarity has been incredible. I have never been a part of such a diverse and united movement, and feel grateful to be able to contribute to the struggle. I have never been surer that the people united cannot be defeated."

Today's climax did not come out of the air. Massive demonstrations took place first in Wisconsin and then around the country. Democratic state senators have fled the state, refusing to participate in the Senate vote, in effect making it impossible to legally pass the bill by denying a quorum.

The people intervened. Teachers called out sick for a week, closing schools in 20

districts. Those occupying the Capitol used every creative tactic at their disposal to forestall even the Assembly vote, where passage was assured. Democratic Party legislators tacked more than 100 amendments onto the bill. But it was the incredible outpouring and tenacity of the people that actually held these legislators' feet to the fire. A record 7,000 people testified around the clock.

150,000 rally in Madison Feb. 26

On Feb. 26, some 150,000 people came to the Capitol grounds, defying a snow storm to attend "the largest protest they had seen in Madison since the Vietnam War."

Solidarity between the public worker unions and the private sector was unshakeable. Support poured in from around the country — 161 workers flew in from Los Angeles, including nurses, grocery workers and International Longshore and Warehouse Union workers.

The South Central Labor Federation passed a very important resolution that endorsed the call to vote for a general strike if the bill is passed.

There are still many tricks that Walker and his supporters can unleash to force the bill's passage, or parts of it. In addition, Walker has threatened to lay off 1,500 state workers in retaliation if the Democratic senators refuse to return.

Walker has likened himself to Ronald Reagan and has called this his PATCO, referring to Reagan's breaking of the air traffic controllers' strike in 1981.

A sleeping giant has finally awakened. No one knows what will take place during the next phase of this struggle, but the class struggle in the U.S. has emerged — and that is heartening to everyone.

Bryan G. Pfeifer and Cheryl LaBash contributed to this article.

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

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

Includes: **Racism, National Oppression & Self-Determination** Larry Holmes

Black Labor from Chattel Slavery to Wage Slavery Sam Marcy

Black Youth: Repression & Resistance Leilani Dowell

The Struggle for Socialism Is Key Monica Moorehead

Black & Brown Unity: A Pillar of Struggle for Human Rights & Global Justice! Saladin Muhammad

Alabama's Black Belt: Legacy of Slavery, Sharecropping & Segregation Consuela Lee

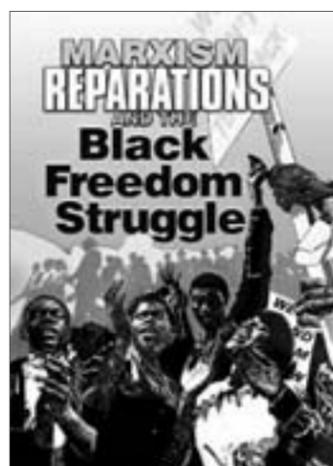
Harriet Tubman, Woman Warrior Mumia Abu-Jamal

Are Conditions Ripe Again Today? 40th Anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion John Parker

Racism & Poverty in the Delta Larry Hales

Haiti Needs Reparations, Not Sanctions Pat Chin

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COVER GRAPHIC: SAHU BARON

While U.S. tries to 'influence' developments

Tensions grow between military, masses in Egypt

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

A new cabinet was sworn in on Feb. 22 in the aftermath of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's resignation and the suspension of parliament and the previous government. This was precipitated by the Feb. 11 Supreme Military Council's coup. The new cabinet's appointment and publication of the first set of political reforms on Feb. 26 is an attempt to address the Egyptian people's demands for a rapid return to civilian rule.

The reform package resulted from discussions among the military, civilian organizations and a panel of "experts," which was established by the ruling military council. This panel is expected to call for a national referendum in March on proposed changes to the constitution.

After the March referendum, national elections involving political parties are anticipated by September. Sobhi Saleh, who was appointed to the judicial committee set up by the military council, told Al Jazeera, "The military council hands power to the people in a gradual process." (Feb. 26)

Demonstrations on Feb. 25-26 were called to celebrate the two-week anniversary of Mubarak's resignation and also guard against what activists called a "counter-revolution of the people's power."

During the Feb. 25 demonstration, activists called for the resignation of Ahmed Shafiq's interim government, the immediate release of political prisoners, and a general amnesty for all protesters who were arrested since Jan. 25. Shafiq had served under Mubarak.

But Feb. 26 actions by the military raised concerns inside Egypt. Al Jazeera reported that the army "used force to disperse activists gathered in Cairo's Tahrir Square to demand the removal of Hosni Mubarak loyalists from the interim cabinet."

Reuters reported, "Soldiers fired in the air and used batons in the early hours of Saturday to disperse the crowd. Demonstrators had also gathered in front of the parliament building in Cairo, where police beat protesters and used tasers to suppress the crowds."

Ashraf Omar, a demonstrator, told Al Jazeera, "I am one of thousands of people who stood their ground after the army started dispersing the protesters, shooting live bullets into the air to scare them. It is a cat-and-mouse chase between the army and the people. There is no more unity between the people and the army."

"They were using tasers and sticks to beat us without any control. I thought things would change. I wanted to give the government a chance but there is no hope with this regime," stressed Omar. "There is no use. I am back on the street. I either live with dignity or I die here."

Soldiers who attacked protesters in Tahrir Square and the parliament building that day wore black masks so activists could not identify them. Military buses were brought in to detain demonstrators who refused to move out of the square.

Imperialists move to derail revolutionary movement

Egypt's democratic movement is not only confronting the country's military, but is also up against U.S. and other imperialist states' efforts to control and mis-

direct the struggle for a genuine transformation of the state and society.

On Feb. 28 it was announced that the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development has 1 billion euros available to invest in Egypt and Morocco, which also had recent mass demonstrations.

Bloomberg News reported that bank president Thomas Mirow said, "The EBRD, which has fostered the building of market economies in Eastern Europe in the past two decades stands ready to help nations in North Africa and the Middle East."

At the same time, militarist U.S. Sens. John McCain and Joseph Lieberman visited Israel and Egypt in efforts to influence the situation in the region. They told the international media that Israel would be even more secure under the "democratic" regimes that will be established in North Africa and the Arab Peninsula.

"In the short-term, [Israel is] obviously less secure because of the unpredictability here and the situation is unpredictable. But in the long-run, I think [Israelis] are confident they can do business better with democracies than they can with dictatorships," McCain told the French Press Agency on Feb. 27.

Lieberman added that the U.S. "should feel good about the assistance we have given the Egyptian military over the years since the peace deal" with Israel in 1979. He continued, "The Egyptian military really allowed this revolution in Egypt to be peaceful and let the people carry out their desire for political freedom and economic opportunity."

The French Press Agency also reported that McCain and Lieberman held high-level meetings with the Egyptian military and "urged them to be inclusive, to meet

with opposition figures, to be thoughtful about how and when they hold elections because the Egyptian military doesn't want to run this country."

Gareth Porter, a Washington-based investigative journalist, emphasized that the two senators were sent to assess the current situation in the region amid ongoing strikes and mass demonstrations by Egyptian youth and workers' organizations. Porter said that their statements indicate "how ignorant the right-wing senators are about the nature of the democracy movement and the problem that is now faced in Egypt." (Press TV, Feb. 28)

On Feb. 27, the Ampal-American Israel Corporation — which has a 12.5 percent interest in East Mediterranean Gas — said Egyptian gas supplies would resume to Israel on March 4. The Egyptian National Gas Company's flow was disrupted due to an explosion in the Sinai.

The situations in Egypt and Tunisia are also becoming more complicated in light of Western imperialists' efforts to remove the Libyan government from office. The United States and NATO are using the events to enhance their military involvement in North Africa.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, professing concern about the "humanitarian" situation of tens of thousands of displaced workers who have worked in Libya's oil and construction industries, announced that "aid" teams are being sent to Egypt's border with Libya. She told AFP, "We're also immediately dispatching two expert humanitarian teams to the borders with Tunisia and Egypt, to assist those fleeing the violence." (Feb. 28)

Meanwhile, the Pentagon is moving war ships and planes closer to Libya. □

Science fiction from the outlook of the oppressed

By **Betsey Piette**

WW BOOK REVIEW

"*Fire on the Mountain,*" by Terry Bisson; PM Press, 2d ed., 2009.

Too often science fiction visions of future worlds paint bleak pictures of earth and humankind devastated by catastrophic wars, which drive surviving humans to seek other planets to exploit. The message is a mix of "change things before it gets too late" and "be glad you aren't living in the future."

While Terry Bisson's "Fire on the Mountain" is set in 1959, the book offers an historic transformation that looks back 100 years and explores what the future could have been had the raid on Harper's Ferry ended with different victors.

Originally planned for July 1859, with strategic support from Harriet Tubman, the raid on the Harper's Ferry arsenal was delayed until Oct. 16 when John Brown and 21 men struck without the ailing Tubman. Brown's forces were cut off and defeated by U.S. Marines led by West Point Col. Robert E. Lee.

In Bisson's vision, Tubman joins Brown. A small army of Africans, who have fled slavery, join them, as well as abolitionists. They are well equipped with modern weaponry. Lee commands federal troops sent to trap Brown and Tubman, confident that they can defeat Brown's forces. Instead, Brown's army decisively defeats Lee's troops in a battle in Roanoke.

Imagining socialist Nova Africa

The raid opens the way for a victory by anti-slavery forces and leads to the

overthrow of slavery and the creation of a socialist Nova Africa, forever changing the course of history. Frederick Douglass risks arrest to openly support the uprising at a Philadelphia abolitionist rally. Poet Walt Whitman goes south to join Brown. Support comes from Haiti, the first Black republic in the Western Hemisphere; an English brigade raised by Karl Marx; Italian socialist Giuseppe Garibaldi; and the Mexican republic.

Since the raid took place as originally planned on July 4, that becomes Nova Africa's Independence Day. Nova Africa's socialist government is recognized by Latin American powers, a newly freed Cuba and Puerto Rico, and the Eloheh, the government-in-exile of the Cherokee. The heroic battle against slavery inspires Mexicans living in Texas, California and Arizona to overthrow their occupiers and rejoin revolutionary, republican Mexico.

In 1959, there is an independent Quebec and a Dineh nation. Africa is socialist. U.S. imperialism never materialized as a dominant world force. Moreover, the socialist South has just celebrated its centennial.

In that context, the book opens as Yamin Abraham Martin Odinga crosses the Appalachian border between Nova Africa and recently socialized USSA. With her is an ancient doctor's bag containing the papers of Dr. Abraham, her great-grandfather, which she planned to read at the Harper's Ferry centennial celebration, however, she is three months late. A Black cosmonaut team, set to land on Mars, stirs memories of the death of her spouse, an astronaut who died during Nova Africa's first Mars mission.

Her daughter is traveling with her to deliver the papers to the Harper's Ferry museum director, Scott Grissom, a veteran of the "Second Revolutionary War" that brought socialism to the northern U.S. in 1948. Grissom shares letters from Thomas Hunter, the anti-slavery doctor who trained Dr. Abraham to become a doctor when they were members of Brown's army.

Dr. Abraham's memoirs tell of his youth, first when he was enslaved, and then joined Brown's forces. His writings, and the letters by Hunter, the abolitionist son of a pro-slavery family, provide different perspectives on the Harper's Ferry raid and the events that rocked the abolitionist movement in its aftermath.

Like the historic account of the Harper's Ferry raid provided by Osborne P. Anderson, a Black revolutionary who took up arms to join Brown, Dr. Abraham's letters reflect the turmoil resulting from this raid on both enslaved Africans and the white slave owners. Anderson's account is in "A Voice from Harper's Ferry: The Unfinished Revolution" published by World View Forum in 2000.

Mumia writes introduction

In this book's introduction, Mumia Abu-Jamal, writing from Pennsylvania's death row, observes, "All great fiction borrows from what might have been: But what world might we have been born into had John Brown succeeded? With this single poignant story, Bisson molds a world as sweet as banana cream pies, and as briny as hot tears." Mumia concludes it is "guaranteed to make your spine tingle."

First published in the U.S. in 1988, and then long unavailable here, the book was reissued in 2009 with Mumia's introduction. It was published in France in 2001 as "Nova Africa." The author has also written screenplays about Paul Robeson, John Brown and Mumia.

Bisson examines the obstacles that the oppressed in any given revolution must surely face in order to ultimately take the final step to revolt. Egypt's unfolding revolutionary struggle today makes Bisson's account seem less like fiction and more a missed historical opportunity.

The author explores the growing support by oppressed African people toward Brown, Tubman and their cadre as the struggle develops and the resistance forces are able to hold their ground against the opposing troops. Enslaved Africans provide secret material support to the resistance. Some abandon their captivity to join Brown's forces, as this book's Dr. Abraham did when he was 12 years old, to become a revolutionary fighter. Fires set at plantations' houses burn down these symbols of slavery's oppression.

Here, Brown and Tubman's army creates a literal beacon — actual fires kept burning in the mountains — that lets the oppressed know this resistance lives on, much like those who refused to yield ground in Cairo's Tahrir Square. Like the beacons in "Fire on the Mountain," Egypt's revolutionary struggle is offering hope to the world's oppressed.

"*Fire on the Mountain*" and "*A Voice from Harper's Ferry*" can be ordered online at www.Leftbooks.com.

Behind the demonizing of Gadhafi

Africa continues to be the most underdeveloped continent, despite having the world's most abundant mineral wealth.

The United States in 1847 created Liberia as a place to send freed African-American slaves. Eventually it became the biggest rubber plantation in the world. In the late 19th century, most of the rest of Africa was carved up by the European colonial powers, including Germany, Britain, Portugal, Spain, Italy, France and Belgium. By the time of World War I, Africa was nothing more than a gigantic plantation, with hundreds of millions of African peoples made into virtual slaves and their resources ripped off to help enrich European and U.S. capitalists.

After World War II, anti-colonial struggles spread like wildfire throughout Africa, bringing forth dynamic African leaders at the head of campaigns for independence and sovereignty from their former colonial oppressors. These heroic leaders included Patrice Lumumba, Amilcar Cabral, Samora Machel and Kwame Nkrumah.

Libya had been an Italian colony until Italy's defeat in World War II. After the war, the U.S. and Britain set up a monarchy in Libya under King Idris I. Moammar al-Gadhafi was a military officer when he led a coup in 1969 against the monarchy. This led to the nationalization of Libya's oil and social gains for the Libyan people.

In recent years, however, U.S. sanctions and military aggression against the Gadhafi regime led the government to make concessions and agree to austerity measures demanded by imperialist banks, all of which fueled unrest in the population.

On top of this growing imperialist intervention and pressure, the capitalist media are carrying out a vicious, vindictive campaign against Gadhafi, characterizing him in demonizing, racist terms like "mad dog." Such terms are never used to describe former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak or other U.S. puppets in the Arab world, from Saudi Arabia to Jordan to Bahrain.

The U.S. has imposed sanctions on President Gadhafi and his family's bank accounts; by contrast, the U.S. did not impose similar sanctions on Mubarak and his reported \$70 billion in bank accounts. While President Barack Obama has publicly called for Gadhafi to step down from office, he treated Mubarak with kid gloves before the resolve of the Egyptian masses forced Mubarak to leave office.

The racist, hostile treatment of Gadhafi is not an isolated example. Another African leader who has been demonized in a comparable manner is Robert Mugabe, president of Zimbabwe. Unlike Gadhafi, Mugabe has been the leader of a national liberation movement, ZANU-PF. Mugabe forced Britain, the colonial oppressor, to the bargaining table in 1979 to work out an agreement in which Britain would subsidize the giving back to African war veterans of millions of acres of land stolen by white farmers. But Britain didn't live up to the agreement. When Mugabe kept his promise to these freedom fighters by seizing the land, the U.S. and British governments in 2000 imposed genocidal sanctions on the Zimbabwean economy and also sought to isolate Mugabe with a prolonged character assassination. They called him a "tyrant" and "despot" and accused him of starving his people — when the real culprits were "structural adjustment" measures imposed by the IMF,

along with periods of severe drought.

The Western imperialists have also made every effort to demonize President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan while funding secessionist movements in the oil-rich South and West of the country, imposing sanctions and bringing criminal charges against him in the International Criminal Court.

It is the right of any oppressed people to oppose and organize against their leaders if basic needs and rights are not being met. It is not the right of imperialist governments to manipulate, exploit and outright intervene in the internal affairs of another country while personally and politically demonizing their leaders. This is a violation of the basic right to self-determination.

There have been reports from news sources, including Al Jazeera, that low-waged migrants from Chad, Niger and other sub-Saharan African countries working in Libya have been physically attacked and accused of being "mercenaries" hired by Gadhafi. These attacks are being carried out by anti-Gadhafi forces who are receiving backing from the West.

The imperialists don't care about any suffering of the Libyan people but will do what they deem in their interests to gain control of the oil that Libya possesses. The people of Libya don't need imperialist intervention; they need and deserve reparations from imperialist banks and governments that have held back real economic development and political independence on a continent that has been severely abused for centuries, beginning with the devastating slave trade.

It is imperative that the progressive movement in the U.S. take up the clarion call of getting imperialism off the backs of the African people by intensifying the class struggle here. This is what real solidarity is all about. □

Solidarity versus FBI repression

By John Catalinotto
New York

Attendees at regional conferences Feb. 19 in New York City and Chapel Hill, N.C., enthusiastically applauded anti-war and solidarity activists who have stood up to extreme intimidation and refused to testify before a Chicago grand jury. The meetings were part of growing support for 23 activists who have all taken the principled position that they will not appear before the grand jury.

The New York conference endorsed an action program that includes participating in national anti-war events in March and April, calling mass protests when activists are summoned to appear at grand jury sessions, and organizing emergency protests when indictments are handed down.

Two earlier regional conferences were held Feb. 12 in Oakland, Calif., and Chicago.

An original 14 subpoenas were issued last September after FBI raids on the homes of activists, mostly in Minneapolis-St. Paul and Chicago. Those subpoenas were vacated, but nine new ones were issued in December and three of the original 14 were issued second subpoenas. On Jan. 25 the newly subpoenaed people also refused to testify. The grand jury now must decide how to go on with its attack on the

'Great Day of Anger'

Thousands of Iraqis defy puppet regime, occupation

By John Catalinotto

Defying threats from the puppet government and several party militias, thousands of Iraqis from Basra in the south to Suleimaniya in the Kurdish north took to the streets Feb. 25 in a "Great Day of Anger" inspired by the uprisings across the Arab world.

The specific demands of the protesters were for electricity and against poverty and corruption. The continued occupation of Iraq by 50,000 U.S. troops and tens of thousands of mercenaries known as "contractors," however, gives any Iraqi protest a sharply political content. A chronicle of the day's actions by Iraqi human rights activist Asma al-Haidari offers the following characterization of the protest:

"The Iraqi People are demonstrating against corruption, absolute and abysmal poverty, unemployment, total lack of services, and occupation, and very importantly corruption, administrative and fiscal corruption. They are also demonstrating demanding freedom and human dignity and the immediate expulsion of the occupation. They are demonstrating for Iraq and have come together as Iraqis." (www.iraqsolidarity.org, Feb. 25)

Government forces attacked protesters in Fallujah, Hawija, Baghdad, Mosul and other cities, with the media reporting that at least 10 people were killed. In some towns, in response to the regime's attacks, demonstrators tried to storm government buildings, according to Reuters reports on Feb. 25 and 26.

In the days before the demonstrations, the government continually warned people not to take part in the actions, making a barely veiled threat of massacres. Military vehicles and security forces lined the streets around Liberation Square in Baghdad, and a curfew

was in effect. Not only Premier Nuri al-Maliki but significant representatives of the Shiite community, like Moktada al-Sadr and Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, spoke out against participation in the protests.

Still, thousands gathered in the square. One person had a sign that read, "Where's my share of the oil profits?"

It is significant that on the day following the demonstrations, Al-Sistani called on Iraq's government and parliament to take serious steps to improve electricity services, provide jobs and fight corruption, a strong sign that the demonstrations frightened those in power.

Failure of the occupation

It was nearly eight years ago that the U.S., with British support, carried out a "shock and awe" attack on Iraq. The Pentagon's forces managed to quickly defeat the Iraqi army, and George W. Bush even declared "mission accomplished" six weeks after the invasion began. According to U.S. promises, there would soon be a vibrant, stable, economically sound Iraqi democracy.

Instead, eight years of U.S. occupation have brought up to 1 million deaths and as many injuries to Iraqis, have displaced 4 million people inside and outside the country, and have divided a formerly united Iraq into Kurds in the north versus Arabs in the south, Sunni Muslims versus Shiite Muslims.

The occupation and its puppets have not even managed to turn reliable electricity back on in one of the most energy-rich countries in the world.

These days when mass popular revolutions have made the world aware of the brutality of Arab rulers, almost all backed by the U.S., it is wise to remember that an imperialist occupation is the worst scenario for the people. □

movement, which those affected believe will continue in one way or another.

Muslims also target of FBI

One session of the New York conference focused on the many other instances of state repression after passage of the Patriot Act. Most of those targeted have been Muslims victimized by provocateurs working with the FBI, who entrapped people into nothing more than questionable conversations. The state would then bring charges of "conspiracy," since nothing was actually done. Hundreds of people have been convicted and sentenced to long prison terms.

Another important session included discussions by attorneys from the National Lawyers Guild, who provided strategy on what to do if the FBI knocks without having obtained warrants for arrest or search.

Speakers explained how someone subpoenaed but not charged with any alleged crime could still face jail time. The grand jury can offer immunity from prosecution based on a person's testimony. When that happens, the person no longer has Fifth Amendment protection and cannot refuse to testify. The grand jury can then find those who refuse to testify to be in civil contempt and

can imprison them, without any trial, for as long as the grand jury is sitting.

Both Feb. 19 conferences drew organizers from labor, the local communities, anti-war groups, political groups, civil rights and civil liberties organizations. More than 100 — including people from Alabama, Tennessee and Georgia — were present in Chapel Hill at the University of North Carolina School of Law, while some 250 attended the New York meeting, including people from upstate New York, Connecticut, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Three of those who had been subpoenaed were invited speakers at the New York conference: Sara Martin of Women Against Military Madness; Mick Kelly, editor of FightBack newspaper; and Hatem Abudayyeh, the executive director of the Arab American Action Network, a community-based organization in the Chicago area.

For more information, see www.stopfbi.net.

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No U.S. attack on Libya!

Continued from page 1

als from Libya during the crisis includes a military threat and is part of the imperialist jockeying for position regarding Libya's future.

Germany sent three warships, carrying 600 troops, and two military planes to bring 200 German employees of the oil exploration company Wintershall out of a desert camp 600 miles southeast of Tripoli. The British sent the HMS Cumberland warship to evacuate 200 British nationals and announced that the destroyer York was on its way from Gibraltar.

The U.S. announced on Feb. 28 that it was sending the huge aircraft carrier USS Enterprise and the amphibious assault ship USS Kearsarge from the Red Sea to the waters off Libya, where it will join the USS Mount Whitney and other battleships from the Sixth Fleet. U.S. officials called this a "pre-positioning of military assets."

U.N. vote on sanctions

The U.N. Security Council — under U.S. pressure — on Feb. 26 voted to impose sanctions on Libya. Sanctions on Iraq led to the deaths of 1 million children, according to the U.N.'s own agencies.

The sheer hypocrisy of this vote on Libya expressing concern for "human rights" is hard to match. Just four days before the vote, the U.S. used its veto to block a mildly worded resolution criticizing Israeli settlements on Palestinian land in the West Bank.

The U.S. government blocked the Security Council from taking any action during the 2008 Israeli massacre in Gaza, which resulted in the deaths of more than 1,500 Palestinians.

The fact that China went along with the sanctions vote is an unfortunate example of the government in Beijing letting its interest in trade and continued oil shipments take precedence over its past opposition to sanctions that clearly impact civilian populations.

Who leads the opposition?

It is important to look at the opposition movement, especially those being so widely quoted in all the international media. We must assume that people with genuine grievances and wrongs have been caught up in it. But who is actually leading the movement?

A front-page New York Times article of Feb. 25 described how different Libya is from other Arab countries facing rebellions. "Unlike the Facebook-enabled youth rebellions, the insurrection here has been led by people who are more mature and who have been actively opposing the regime for some time." The article describes how arms had been smuggled across the border with Egypt for weeks, allowing the rebellion to "escalate quickly and violently in little more than a week."

The opposition group most widely quoted is the National Front for the Salvation of Libya. The NFSL, founded in 1981, is known to be a CIA-funded organization. It has maintained a military force, called the Libyan National Army, in Egypt near the Libyan border.

Also widely quoted is the National Conference for the Libyan Opposition. This is a coalition formed by the NFSL that also includes the Libyan Constitutional Union, led by Muhammad as-Senussi, a pretender to the Libyan throne. The website of the LCU calls upon the Libyan people to reiterate a pledge of allegiance to King Idris as-Senussi as historical leader of the Libyan people. The Idris monarchy was put in place by Britain and the U.S. after World War II.

Clearly these forces are politically and

socially different from the disenfranchised youth and workers who have marched by the millions against U.S.-backed dictators in Egypt and Tunisia and are today demonstrating in Bahrain, Yemen and Oman.

According to the Times article, the military wing of the NFSL, using smuggled arms, quickly seized police and military posts in the Mediterranean port city of Benghazi and nearby areas north of Libya's richest oil fields. Most of Libya's oil and gas pipelines, refineries and its liquefied natural gas port are in this area. Now reportedly under "opposition control," it includes 80 percent of Libya's oil facilities.

The Libyan opposition, unlike the movements elsewhere in the Arab world, from the beginning appealed for international assistance. And the imperialists quickly responded.

The Wall Street Journal, the voice of big business, in a Feb. 23 editorial wrote, "The U.S. and Europe should help the Libyans overthrow the Gadhafi regime."

U.S. main interest: oil!

When a new development arises, it is important to review the past and ask, what are the interests of U.S. corporations in the region?

Libya has the largest proven oil reserves in Africa, at least 44 billion barrels. It has been producing 1.8 million barrels of oil a day — light crude that is considered top quality and needs less refining. Libya also has large deposits of natural gas that is piped directly to European markets. It is a large country in area with a small population of 6.4 million people.

Oil and gas are today the largest source of profits in the world. Gaining control of oil fields, pipelines, refineries and markets drives a great part of U.S. imperialist policy.

During two decades of U.S. sanctions on Libya, which Washington had calculated would bring down the regime, European corporate interests invested heavily in pipeline and infrastructure development there. Some 85 percent of Libya's energy exports go to Europe.

European transnationals — in particular BP, Royal Dutch Shell, Total, Eni, BASF, Statoil and Rapsol — have dominated Libya's oil market. China has been buying a growing amount of oil produced by Libya's National Oil Corp. and has built a short oil pipeline in Libya. The giant U.S. oil corporations were left out of these lucrative deals.

Manlio Dinucci, an Italian journalist writing for Italy's *Il Manifesto*, explained on Feb. 25, "If Gadhafi is overthrown, the U.S. would be able to topple the entire framework of economic relations with Libya, opening the way to U.S.-based multinationals, so far almost entirely excluded from exploitation of energy reserves in Libya. The United States could thus control the tap for energy sources upon which Europe largely depends and which also supply China."

Libya's background

Italy held Libya as a colony from 1911 until its defeat in World War II. The Western imperialist powers after the war set up regimes across the region that they called independent states but were headed by appointed monarchs with no democratic vote by the people. Libya became a sovereign country in name, but was firmly tied to the U.S. and Britain under a new monarch — King Idris.

In 1969, as a wave of anti-colonial struggles swept the colonized world, revolutionary-minded Pan-Arab nationalist junior military officers overthrew Idris, who was vacationing in Europe. The leader of the coup was 27-year-old Moammar Gadhafi.

Libya changed its name from the Kingdom of Libya to the Libyan Arab Republic and later to the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

The young officers ordered the U.S. and British bases in Libya closed, including the Pentagon's large Wheelus Air Base. They nationalized the oil industry and many commercial interests that had been under U.S. and British imperialist control.

These military officers did not come to power in a revolutionary upheaval of the masses. It was not a socialist revolution. It was still a class society. But Libya was no longer under foreign domination.

Many progressive changes were carried out. The conditions of life for the masses radically improved. Most basic necessities — food, housing, fuel, health care and education — were either heavily subsidized or became entirely free. Subsidies were used to redistribute the national wealth.

Conditions for women changed dramatically. Within 20 years Libya had the highest Human Development Index ranking in Africa — a U.N. measurement of life expectancy, educational attainment and adjusted real income. Through the 1970s and 1980s, Libya was internationally known for taking strong anti-imperialist positions and supporting other revolutionary struggles, from South Africa to Palestine and Northern Ireland.

The U.S. carried out numerous assassination and coup attempts against the Gadhafi regime and financed armed opposition groups like the NFSL. Some U.S. attacks were blatant and open. For example, without warning 66 U.S. jets bombed the Libyan capital of Tripoli and its second-largest city, Benghazi, on April 15, 1986. Gadhafi's home was bombed and his infant daughter killed in the attack, along with hundreds of others.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the U.S. succeeded in isolating Libya through severe economic sanctions. Every effort was made to sabotage the economy and to destabilize the government.

U.S. forces concessions

It was after the massive aerial bombardment of Iraq, followed by a U.S. ground invasion and occupation, that Libya finally succumbed to U.S. demands and changed course.

Gadhafi offered to assist the U.S. in its "war on terror." Libya was forced to accept full responsibility for the Lockerbie disaster and pay \$2.7 billion in indemnities. That was just the beginning. In order for U.S. sanctions to be lifted, Libya had to open its markets and "restructure" its economy.

Regardless of Gadhafi's many concessions and the subsequent grand receptions for him by European heads of state, U.S. imperialism was planning his complete humiliation and downfall.

IMF strategists descended on Libya with programs. They prescribed the same measures they impose on every developing country. But Libya did not have a foreign debt; it has a positive trade balance of \$27 billion a year. But the IMF demanded an end to subsidies of basic necessities in order to undercut the social basis of support for the regime.

For decades, the state had been subsidizing 93 percent of the value of several basic commodities, notably fuel. After accepting the IMF program, the government doubled the price of electricity for consumers. A sudden 30 percent hike in fuel prices touched off increases in many other goods and services.

Libya was told to privatize 360 state-owned companies and enterprises, including steel mills, cement plants, engi-

neering firms, food factories, truck and bus assembly lines, and state farms. This left thousands of workers jobless.

Libya had to sell a 60 percent stake in the state-owned oil company, Tamoil Group, and privatize its flour and fodder mills.

The Carnegie Endowment Fund was already charting the impact of economic reforms. A 2005 report titled "Economic Reforms Anger Libyan Citizens" by Eman Wahby said: "Another aspect of structural reform was the end of restrictions on imports. Foreign companies were granted licenses to export to Libya through local agents. As a result, products from all over the world have flooded the previously isolated Libyan market. This was a disaster for workers in Libya's factories, which are unequipped to face competition."

More than \$4 billion in foreign investments poured into Libya. As the bankers and their think tanks knew so well, this did not benefit the Libyan masses — it impoverished them.

But no matter what Gadhafi did, it was never enough for U.S. corporate power.

The magazine *U.S. Banker* in May 2005 ran an article titled "Emerging Markets: Is Libya the Next Frontier for U.S. Banks?" It said, "As the nation passes reforms, profits beckon. But chaos abounds." It interviewed Robert Armao, president of the New York City-based U.S.-Libya Trade and Economic Council. "All the big Western banks are now exploring opportunities there," said Armao. "The political situation with [Gadhafi] is still very suspect." The potential "looks wonderful for banks. Libya is a country untouched and a land of opportunity. It will happen, but it may take a little time."

Libya has never been a socialist country. There is extensive inherited wealth and old privileges. It is a class society with millions of workers, many of them immigrants.

Restructuring the economy to maximize profits for Western bankers destabilized relations, even in the ruling circles. Who gets in on the deals to privatize key industries? Which families? Which tribes? Who is left out?

Recently released Wikileaks cables from the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli show just how carefully the U.S. government was monitoring these imposed changes. A cable titled "Inflation on the rise in Libya" and sent on Jan. 4, 2009, described the impact of "a radical program of privatization and government restructuring."

"The [Libyan government's] termination of subsidies and price controls as part of a broader program of economic reform and privatization has certainly contributed to inflationary pressures and prompted some grumbling. ...

"The combination of high inflation and diminishing subsidies and price controls is worrying for a Libyan public accustomed to greater government cushioning from market forces." (The Telegraph [Britain], Jan. 31)

These U.S. Embassy cables confirm that while continuing to maintain and finance Libyan opposition groups in Egypt, Washington and London were also constantly taking the temperature of the mass domestic discontent caused by their policies.

Today people around the world are deeply inspired by the actions of millions of workers and youths in the streets of Egypt, Tunisia, Bahrain, Yemen and now Oman. The impact is felt even in the inspiring sit-in in Wisconsin.

It is vital for the U.S. political and class-conscious movement to resist the enormous pressure of a U.S.-orchestrated campaign for military intervention in Libya. A new imperialist adventure must be challenged. □

Editorial de Workers World/Mundo Obrero

Libia y el imperialismo

23 de febrero — De todas las luchas actuales en África del norte y el Oriente Medio, la más difícil de dilucidar es la de Libia.

¿Cuál es el carácter de la oposición al régimen de Gadhafi, que según se informa ahora controla la ciudad de Benghazi en el este?

¿Es pura coincidencia que la rebelión comenzó en Benghazi que está al norte de los yacimientos de petróleo más ricos de Libia, así como cerca de la mayor parte de sus oleo y gasoductos, de refinerías y de su puerto de transporte de gas líquido natural (LNG por las siglas en inglés)? ¿Hay un plan para dividir el país?

¿Cuál es el riesgo de una intervención militar imperialista que representaría el peligro más grave para los pueblos de la región entera?

Libia no es como Egipto. Su líder Moammar al-Gadhafi no ha sido una marioneta del imperialismo como Hosni Mubarak. Por muchos años Gadhafi fue aliado de países y movimientos que luchaban contra el imperialismo. Cuando tomó el poder en 1969 a través de un golpe militar, él nacionalizó el petróleo de Libia y utilizó mucho de ese dinero para desarrollar la economía libia. Las condiciones de la vida mejoraron dramáticamente para el pueblo.

Por eso, los imperialistas estaban decididos a destruir a Libia. Estados Unidos lanzó ataques aéreos en Trípoli y Benghazi en 1986 que mató a 60 personas, incluyendo la pequeña hija de Gadhafi — lo cual es raramente mencionado por los medios corporativos. Se impusieron devastadoras sanciones por EEUU y la ONU para arruinar la economía libia.

Después de que EEUUA invadió a Iraq en 2003 y destruyó gran parte de Bagdad con una campaña de bombardeo que el pentágono exultantemente llamó “choque y temor,” Gadhafi intentó proteger a Libia de una adicional amenaza de agresión otorgando grandes concesiones políticas y económicas a los imperialistas. Él abrió la economía a bancos y corporaciones extranjeras; accedió a las demandas del FMI sobre “ajuste estructural”, privatizó muchas empresas propiedad del estado y recortó los subsidios del gobierno para necesidades como alimentos y combustible.

El pueblo libio está sufriendo de los mismos precios elevados y desempleo que son la base de las rebeliones en otras partes y que fluyen de la crisis económica mundial del capitalismo.

No hay duda de que la lucha que recorre el mundo árabe por la libertad política y la justicia económica también ha resonado en Libia. No hay duda de que el descontento con el régimen de Gadhafi está motivando a una sección significativa de la población.

Sin embargo, es importante que los/as progresistas sepan que muchas de las personas que están siendo promovidas en el oeste como líderes de la oposición son agentes experimentados del imperialismo. El 22 de febrero la BBC mostró imágenes de muchedumbres en Benghazi bajando la bandera verde de la república y sustituyéndola

por la bandera del derrocado monarca, rey Idris quién había sido una marioneta de los EEUU y del imperialismo británico.

Los medios occidentales están basando muchos de sus reportajes en hechos supuestos proporcionados por el grupo en el exilio, el Frente Nacional para la Salvación de Libia, que fue entrenado y financiado por la CIA estadounidense. Si usted busca en Google el nombre del Frente más la CIA, encontrará centenares de referencias.

En el editorial del 23 de febrero, el periódico The Wall Street Journal escribió que “EEUU y Europa debían ayudar a los libios a derrocar el régimen de Gadhafi”. No hay mención en los salones o en los pasillos de Washington sobre una intervención para ayudar a la gente de Kuwait o de Arabia Saudita o de Bahrein a derrocar a sus dictadores. Incluso, con toda la hipocresía con la que hablan a favor de las masas en lucha de la región ahora, esto sería inconcebible. En cuanto a Egipto y a Túnez, los imperialistas están haciendo todo lo posible por conseguir que las masas salgan de las calles.

No se habló de una intervención estadounidense para ayudar al pueblo palestino de Gaza cuando millares murieron por el bloqueo, el bombardeo y la invasión de Israel. ¡Todo lo contrario! Estados Unidos intervino para prevenir la censura del estado sionista.

El interés del imperialismo en Libia no es difícil de encontrar. Bloomberg.com escribió el 22 de febrero que mientras que Libia es el tercer productor de petróleo más grande de África, tiene las reservas probadas más grandes del continente — 44,3 mil millones de barriles. Es un país con una población relativamente pequeña pero con el potencial de producir ganancias enormes para las gigantes compañías petroleras. Así es como lo ven los súper ricos, y la base de su supuesta preocupación por los derechos democráticos del pueblo de Libia.

Conseguir concesiones de Gadhafi no es lo suficiente para los imperialistas señores del petróleo. Desean un gobierno que puedan poseer abiertamente. Nunca han perdonado a Gadhafi por derrocar la monarquía y nacionalizar el petróleo. Fidel Castro de Cuba en su columna “Reflexiones”, toma nota del hambre del imperialismo por el petróleo y advierte que EEUU está sentando las bases para una intervención militar en Libia.

En EEUU algunas fuerzas están intentando movilizar una campaña que promueve tal intervención. Debemos oponernos a esto firmemente y recordarle a las personas bien intencionadas y sinceras, las millones de personas matadas y desplazadas por los EEUU por su intervención en Iraq.

La gente progresista siente lo que ve como movimiento popular en Libia. Podemos ayudar más a ese movimiento apoyando sus justas demandas al tiempo que rechazamos la intervención imperialista, en cualquier forma que ésta pueda tomar. Es el pueblo de Libia el que debe decidir su futuro. □

Protestas en Irak contra la ocupación y el régimen títere

Por John Catalinotto

Mientras las protestas populares se esparcen por el mundo árabe, con levantamientos ahora en Marruecos y Argelia, Jordania, Yemen y Bahrein, y hasta en Kuwait, es importante recordar una de las naciones de esta región que se enfrenta a una situación especial: la ocupación por 50.000 tropas estadounidenses. Se trata de Irak, que EEUU y Gran Bretaña invadieron en marzo del 2003 y que EEUU ha ocupado desde entonces. Nadie debe olvidar al considerar los crímenes de los tiranos respaldados por Estados Unidos, que el imperialismo estadounidense es responsable de la muerte de un millón de iraquíes y el desplazamiento de 4 millones.

De acuerdo a personas que han estado en solidaridad con la resistencia iraquí en contra de la invasión y la ocupación ilegal por Estados Unidos y Gran Bretaña y el gobierno títere encabezado por el primer ministro Nouri al-Maliki, recientemente han habido manifestaciones en Basora, Kut, Bagdad, Kirkuk, Ramadi, Sulaimaniya y en decenas de otros lugares. Además, las fuerzas opuestas a la ocupación en Irak convocaron manifestaciones en todo el país el 25 de febrero bajo el nombre del “Día de ira pacífica”.

Estas protestas no tuvieron la atención de los medios dada la masiva insurrección en Egipto. Sin embargo, ha habido protestas y levantamientos significativos en ciudades por todo Irak. Ocurrieron manifestaciones en Basora, segunda ciudad más grande al sur de Irak, el 18 de febrero y en Sulaimaniya, en la zona kurda del norte,

donde 3.000 personas protestaron el 17 de febrero. Al menos dos personas murieron.

Uno de los manifestantes, Qais Jabar, un iraquí con educación universitaria que trabaja como taxista, dijo: “Vivimos en condiciones miserables, sin electricidad, con las calles sucias llenas de barro. Tenemos que hacer cambios. No podemos permanecer en silencio”. (elnuevoherald.com, 18 de febrero)

En Kut, unas 2.000 personas se manifestaron frente a las oficinas del gobernador provincial. Tres de los edificios gubernamentales fueron incendiados. Allí los manifestantes se quejaron de la corrupción, el desempleo, la falta de electricidad y atención médica, y el alto precio de los efectos indispensables. Tres personas murieron, 30 resultaron heridas, y finalmente, el ejército tomó el control de la ciudad que se encuentra entre Basora y Bagdad. Los informes son que los disparos que mataron a la gente vinieron de las fuerzas de seguridad privadas. (Junge Welt, 21 de febrero)

Mientras que la privación económica ha fomentado el apoyo popular a las protestas, éstas definitivamente están dirigidas contra el régimen títere y la ocupación. Las y los simpatizantes de los movimientos de resistencia iraquí hicieron un llamado a las organizaciones de todo el mundo a firmar una petición para apoyar la movilización del 25 de febrero. Exhortaron a las organizaciones a conseguir que todos los tipos de medios de comunicación estuvieran presentes y cubrieran los eventos en Irak, especialmente en Bagdad, el 25 de febrero. Para más información, vea www.brusseltribunal.org y busque “Apoyo a protestas en Irak”. □

