

WORKERS WORLD



Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!

workers.org

Sept 26, 2013

Vol. 55, No. 38

\$1

NYC unions, community join forces Protests save Brooklyn hospital

By G. Dunkel
New York

Brooklyn Judge Johnny Lee Baynes ruled Sept. 12 that New York state's justification for the closing of Long Island College Hospital was "unconstitutionally vague" and did not take the medical needs of the community into account. His ruling actually applies to all the New York hospitals threatened with closure.

For the past decade, the state has been trying to close hospitals in New York City, claiming they are too expensive but not bothering to prove that the communities they serve don't need them. St. Vincent's Medical Center was closed in 2010, leaving a half-million people on Manhattan's Lower West Side underserved.

In fact, because many people are now living longer, they need more care as they get older and frailer.

The New York State Nurses Association, along with 1199 SEIU United Health Care Workers and Concerned Physicians of LICH, sued, protested time and time again, and attended court hearings and bankruptcy proceedings en masse. Their members went door-to-door in the community explaining that keeping their jobs meant keeping health care locally available.

An important factor in mobilizing community support was the nearly weekly marches the coalition to save LICH held. They marched down Fulton Street, chanting "Brooklyn, Brooklyn, can't you see, we have a health care emergency!"

Unions and community groups trying to keep open Interfaith Medical Center, another hospital threatened with closure in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood, quickly joined the struggle over LICH.

Black churches in the community endorsed the campaign, especially after the closure of IMC was raised, and this drew in Black politicians. The marches included one that went across the Brooklyn Bridge, and these protests often had a militant element, with people blocking traffic and getting arrested. A vigil brought out enough people that IMC was surrounded

by protesters holding hands.

As the campaign developed, citywide groups like the National Action Network, headed by the Rev. Al Sharpton, and the New York Communities for Change became involved, broadening the struggle.

The mass pressure this protest movement built up brought in big-name politicians, in particular Bill de Blasio, the Democratic politician who came in first in the recent Democratic mayoral primary for New York.

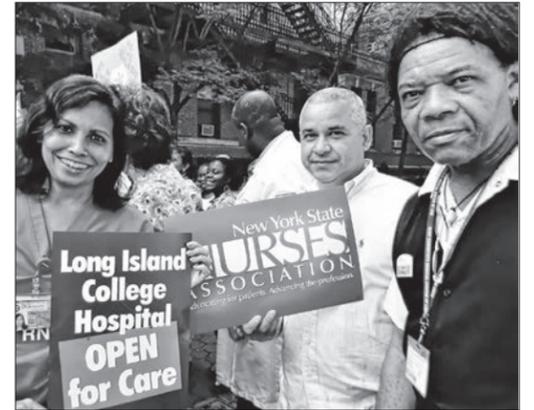
De Blasio and his supporters made a big

presence at the victory rally the unions held, but it was the unions, their members and the community that really won the victory.

The state obviously will appeal and will try to whittle away at LICH even if it can't officially close it. The unions and the community intend to remain vigilant. □

Long Island College Hospital workers participate in Sept. 13 press conference announcing their victory.

WW PHOTO ANNE PRUDEN



INCOME GAP

Worst ever for workers 4

WORKERS' ASSEMBLIES

Demand higher wages 5

FREE THEM NOW!

► Marissa Alexander

► Cuban Five 3



HANDS OFF SYRIA

- Whose chemical weapons? 8-9
- War clouds remain
- Syrian-American mobilization

U.S. anti-war activists in Damascus



Anti-war delegation from U.S. meet with Syrian youth at their 'Over Our Dead Bodies' encampment on Mount Qasioun outside Damascus. These youth have pledged to resist any imperialist attack on Syria. U.S. delegates are Ramsey Clark, Cynthia McKinney, John Parker, Sara Flounders, Dedon Kamathi and Johnny Achi.

Subscribe to Workers World

workers.org

- 4 weeks trial \$4 1 year subscription \$30
- Sign me up for the WWP Supporter Program.

workers.org/articles/donate/supporters_

Name _____

Email _____

Street _____

Phone _____

City/State/Zip _____

WORKERS WORLD 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Fl,
New York, NY 10011 212.627.2994

RESISTANCE IN TURKEY, FRANCE 8

MICHIGAN

Anti-fracking movement worries gas industry



WORKERS WORLD
this week...

By Martha Grevatt

Capitalist propaganda has a peculiar way of turning reality on its head.

A case in point is the well-funded effort to defeat an anti-fracking ballot initiative in Michigan. Hijacking the typical language of a bona fide mass appeal for a progressive cause, the Michigan Chamber of Commerce claims that “over the next year” it “will be building a grassroots force that will trump any paid efforts by out-of-state individuals to ban hydraulic fracturing in Michigan. We will be organizing rallies, events, and penning letters to the editor. With your help, we can defeat this illogical proposal.”

The Chamber’s “Protect Michigan’s Energy Future” site also blames “out-of-state interest groups” for threatening jobs and “energy independence.” To defeat this “dangerous” effort to let the voters decide on a fracking ban, these humble one-percenters “cannot do it alone.”

We could not make this up!

In actuality, the “grassroots force” of well-heeled contributors reads like a “Who’s Who” of the fracking industry — with a little capitalist-class solidarity shown by Lilly, Nestle Waters, Amway and their ilk. Out-of-state energy interests are among the largest contributors to the hundreds of thousands of dollars that have been raised. They are paying for the pro-fracking billboards popping up along state highways. Denver-based Encana USA, which has applied for more than 500 separate fracking permits, is on the list of contributors of \$10,000 or more.

The real grassroots force is the all-volunteer army of hundreds of petitioners, working on a shoestring budget to get a fracking ban on the ballot statewide. The ballot proposal of the Committee to Ban Fracking in Michigan eliminates language of a 1939 law obligating the state to “foster the development of the [gas and oil] industry along the most favorable conditions and with a view to the maximum production of these natural products” and instead commits the state “to protect human health and water.”

People in Michigan have good reasons to back this initiative. Horizontal hydraulic fracturing is a relatively new but dangerous technology used to drill for methane, natural gas trapped in the earth’s shale rock layer. Horizontal fracturing is unlike the older vertical fracturing technique, which involves drilling straight down to the shale and forcing pockets of methane up to the surface hydraulically. With horizontal fracking the drilling continues horizontally for thousands of feet after the drill reaches the target depth.

The technique uses anywhere from 5 million to more than 20 million gallons of water every time the energy companies drill. This water is laced with hundreds of chemicals, some known carcinogens and others concealed from the public under a 2004 federal law protecting “trade secrets.” The water cannot be treated. Fracking not only steals and destroys water resources. It is also known to contaminate groundwater and drinking water. And while methane is touted as a clean-burning fuel, the methane that escapes during fracking is a greenhouse gas more than 20 times more potent than fossil fuels.

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality has, using the language of the 1939 law as justification, approved the leasing of hundreds of thousands of acres of

public lands to the same gas companies that are backing the Chamber of Commerce’s campaign.

Nature lovers are seeing frack wells in public parks. Once a land lease is granted, the water on the land is free. One petitioner described seeing a dried-up lake in Indian Springs Metropark northeast of Detroit — the water was used for fracking what turned out to be a dry well.

While the majority of land leased for fracking is in the northern section of Michigan’s Lower Peninsula, the Collingwood-Antrim Shale extends as far south as Detroit, where there is an abundance of vacant land due to the mass demolition of abandoned foreclosed homes. Thus, there could even be fracking inside city limits.

It is atypical for a propaganda blitz over a ballot initiative to begin before petitions are even submitted; the mass campaign is usually launched after the proposal has been approved to appear on the ballot. The Chamber’s campaign is intended to convince voters not to sign the petition.

Response to a recent anti-fracking demonstration, however, suggests that voters aren’t swayed by the Chamber ads. Two 18-foot banners draped from a freeway overpass drew a steady stream of honks, waves, thumbs-up and peace signs from motorists. Only a few dozen responded with thumbs down and obscene gestures.

The aggressive and dangerous push to frack for profit is one of many ways that capitalism is harmful to people in Michigan. The same system that puts profit before people is responsible for the closing of scores of auto and other manufacturing plants. For more than 100 years, the capitalist economy has been dominated by the finance capitalists, who have bled Detroit dry and are now after city workers’ pensions and prized public assets. Only a mass movement that links all of these pressing issues can save the planet from these predatory thieves.

For more information on the anti-fracking campaign, visit letsbanfracking.org. □

Workers rights now! Build Workers World!

Our name says it all: Workers World. That’s what we’re fighting for: a world where workers come first, where no one is oppressed or exploited in any facet of life. Where workers’ rights are the law, and everyone’s needs are met by sharing the plenty we create.

Marx envisioned this dream about 150 years ago, when he observed that all things of value are created by workers’ labor. The major problem is capitalist ownership, which enables the 1% to skim off the cream (profits) from what the 99% create. Then, the bosses stir up divisions among us — racism, sexism, homophobia, class and cultural differences.

Now workers who don’t make a living wage are rising up and inspiring their sisters and brothers in the working class to unite with them for a better life. But we have to trash capitalism.

Workers World is diametrically opposed to big-business press propaganda. That means we don’t solicit corporate advertising or pander to the ideology of the 1%.

You can become a member of the Supporter Program by contributing a lump sum of \$75, \$100, \$300 or more. Or send a monthly donation starting with as little as \$6, \$10 or \$25.

Send your check made out to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St., 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011.

Include your address, email and phone number, and let us know if we can include you in our 2013 Supporter Program. □

★ In the U.S.

- Protests save Brooklyn hospital..... 1
- Anti-fracking movement worries gas industry 2
- Nationwide rallies demand justice for Marissa Alexander . 3
- Yellow ribbons & a new book to free the Cuban 5 3
- Income gap grows still wider 4
- Letter to the editor 4
- Activists protest postal service privatization 4
- Nat’l day to raise workers’ wages 5
- Autoworkers discuss fightback strategy 5
- On the picket line 5
- Detroit emergency manager dictates ‘lights out’ 6
- Economic contraction and military expansion 7
- Syrian Americans say ‘No!’ to U.S. war on their country... 8
- A brief history of marriage, part 17..... 11

★ Around the world

- Turkey protests death of student activist 8
- U.S. backs brutal Egyptian military regime..... 8
- Syrian agreement postpones U.S. aggressive war 9
- U.S. solidarity & fact-finding delegation visits Syria..... 9
- Chemical weapons arsenals 9

★ Editorials

- Korea, Rodman style 10

★ Noticias en Español

- La claridad 12
- Trabajadores en Colombia..... 12

Workers World

147 W. 24th St., 2nd Fl.

New York, N.Y. 10011

Phone: 212.627.2994

E-mail: ww@workers.org

Web: www.workers.org

Vol. 55, No. 38 • Sept. 26, 2013

Closing date: Sept. 17, 2013

Editor: Deirdre Griswold

Technical Editors: Lal Roohk, Andy Katz

Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, LeiLani Dowell,

Leslie Feinberg, Kris Hamel, Monica Moorehead,

Gary Wilson

West Coast Editor: John Parker

Contributing Editors: Abayomi Azikiwe,

Greg Butterfield, Jaimeson Champion, G. Dunkel,

Fred Goldstein, Teresa Gutierrez, Larry Hales,

Berta Joubert-Ceci, Cheryl LaBash,

Milt Neidenberg, Betsey Piette, Minnie Bruce Pratt,

Gloria Rubac

Technical Staff: Sue Davis, Keith Fine, Bob McCubbin

Mundo Obrero: Carl Glenn, Teresa Gutierrez,

Berta Joubert-Ceci, Donna Lazarus, Michael Martínez,

Carlos Vargas

Supporter Program: Sue Davis, coordinator

Copyright © 2013 Workers World. Verbatim copying and distribution of articles is permitted in any medium without royalty provided this notice is preserved.

Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published weekly except the first week of January by WW Publishers, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Phone: 212.627.2994. Subscriptions: One year: \$30; institutions: \$35. Letters to the editor may be condensed and edited. Articles can be freely reprinted, with credit to Workers World, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl., New York, NY 10011. Back issues and individual articles are available on microfilm and/or photocopy from NA Publishing, Inc, P.O. Box 998, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-0998. A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org.

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

Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to

Workers World, 147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl.

New York, N.Y. 10011.

JOIN US

Workers World Party (WWP) fights for socialism and engages in struggles on all the issues that face the working class & oppressed peoples — Black & white, Latino/a, Asian, Arab and Native peoples, women & men, young & old, lesbian, gay, bi, straight, trans, disabled, working, unemployed, undocumented & students.

If you would like to know more about WWP, or to join us in these struggles, contact the branch nearest you.

National Office
147 W. 24th St. 2nd Fl.
New York, NY 10011
212.627.2994
wwp@workers.org

Atlanta
P.O. Box 5565
Atlanta, GA 30307
404.627.0185
atlanta@workers.org

Baltimore
c/o Solidarity Center
2011 N. Charles St.
Baltimore, MD 21218
443.221.3775
baltimore@workers.org

Bay Area
1305 Franklin St. #411
Oakland, CA 94612
510.600.5800
bayarea@workers.org

Boston
284 Amory St.
Boston, MA 02130
617.286.6574
boston@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.
367 Delaware Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14202
716.883.2534
buffalo@workers.org

Chicago
27 N. Wacker Dr. #138
Chicago, IL 60606
chicago@workers.org
312.229.0161

Cleveland
P.O. Box 5963
Cleveland, OH 44101
216.738.0320
cleveland@workers.org

Denver
denver@workers.org

Detroit
5920 Second Ave.
Detroit, MI 48202
313.459.0777
detroit@workers.org

Durham, N.C.
804 Old Fayetteville St.
Durham, NC 27701
919.322.9970
durham@workers.org

Houston
P.O. Box 3454
Houston, TX 77253-3454
713.503.2633
houston@workers.org

Los Angeles
5278 W Pico Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90019
la@workers.org
323.306.6240

Milwaukee
milwaukee@workers.org

Philadelphia
P.O. Box 34249
Philadelphia, PA 19101
610.931.2615
phila@workers.org

Pittsburgh
pittsburgh@workers.org
Rochester, N.Y.
585.436.6458
rochester@workers.org

Rockford, IL
rockford@workers.org
San Diego
P.O. Box 33447
San Diego, CA 92163
619.692.0355
sandiego@workers.org

Tucson, Ariz.
tucson@workers.org

Washington, D.C.
P.O. Box 57300
Washington, DC 20037
dc@workers.org

Nationwide rallies demand justice for Marissa Alexander

Dozens of people gathered in Philadelphia on Sept. 14 as part of a Nationwide Day of Rallies calling for Justice for Marissa Alexander, a mother of three children incarcerated in Florida after attempting to defend herself from an abusive spouse who had previously injured her.

Alexander, who is African-American, fired a warning shot into a wall to ward off her estranged spouse, who was threatening to kill her. No one was killed or injured, yet Alexander was convicted of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. Despite Florida's "stand your ground" self-defense law that let George Zimmerman walk free after murdering Black teenager Trayvon Martin, Alexander was sentenced to 20 years. Florida State Attorney Angela Corey was the prosecutor in both cases.

The Sept. 14 rallies took place on Alexander's birthday, and cards for her were circulated at the West Philadelphia event in Cedar Park. Participants also signed letters to Florida Gov. Rick Scott demanding Alexander's freedom.

Initiated by Building Peoples' Power, the Philadelphia rally brought together members of MOVE, Decarcerate PA, Workers World Party, Global Women's Strike, International Concerned Friends and Family of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the Philadelphia International Action Center and the Philadelphia Peoples Power



Assembly. Speakers included Patrice Armstead of Building People's Power; Ramona Africa; Temple University professor Dr. Anthony Monteiro; Reggie Abdullah Carter of Decarcerate PA; Pam Africa; and Ewuare X. Osayande, editor of "Stand Our Ground – Poems for Trayvon Martin and Marissa Alexander," who read selections from his book.

In Atlanta, the gazebo behind the Old Courthouse in Decatur was the site of a rally in support of Alexander's freedom. Attendees wrote messages on postcards to Marissa, signed petitions to the governor of Florida and listened to rally speakers, many of whom work with women survivors of abuse and women prisoners and their families.

— **Betsy Piette and Dianne Mathiowetz**



Philadelphia, Sept. 14.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Yellow ribbons & a new book to free the Cuban 5

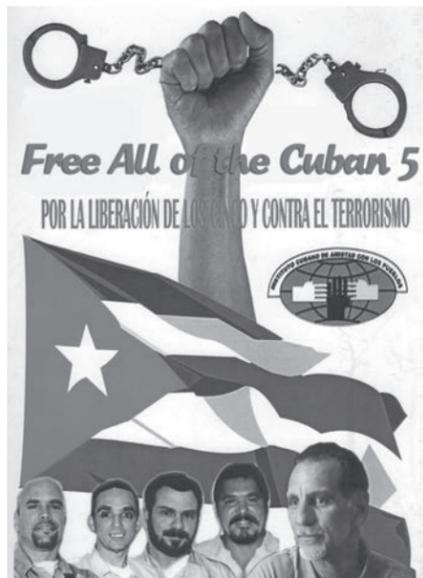
by Cheryl LaBash
New York

Cubans festooned their island with yellow ribbons on Sept. 12, marking the 15th anniversary of the arrest of five Cuban men in Miami. Even the Washington Post, which has ignored or been hostile to the campaign to free the Cuban 5, published an Associated Press article that day headlined "Havana dresses up with yellow ribbons in campaign to push for Cuban 5 agents' release."

In Washington, D.C., the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban 5 took yellow ribbons to the White House sidewalk in a spirited and noisy lunchtime "vigil" on the Sept. 12 anniversary. White House security refused to accept a hand-delivered letter to the president.

The letter read in part: "We ask you once again to make use of your prerogatives as President of the United States and immediately free Gerardo, Ramón, Antonio and Fernando. The entire world is waiting for a gesture from you to end this colossal injustice. The entire world is 'watching.'"

The Cuban 5 were imprisoned in 1998 for the "crime" of defending their homeland. Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero and Fernando González remain in various federal prisons, with Hernández dealt an outrageous



sentence of double life plus 15 years.

The yellow ribbon campaign was initiated by René González, who completed his full sentence and is home in Cuba with his family. Famous Cuban artists, including Silvio Rodríguez, videoed a stirring rendition of "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree."

The vigil at the White House was part of the East Coast tour by author Stephen Kimber, who is introducing his new book, "What Lies Across the Water: The Real Story of the Cuban Five." (Winni-



PHOTO: INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE FREEDOM OF THE CUBAN 5

peg, MB: Fernwood Publishing, 2013)

Three events in Washington, D.C., concluded with an emotion-filled cultural evening of solidarity at the Venezuelan Embassy's Bolivarian Hall on Sept. 13. Activist actor Danny Glover made a surprise appearance, speaking not only for the freedom of the Cuban 5, but for an end to the U.S. blockade of Cuba.

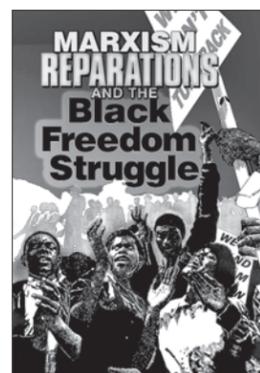
This event included a tribute to writer and filmmaker, Saul Landau, who died of cancer on Sept. 9. His support for the Cuban Revolution, which began shortly after

the 1959 Revolution, was the subject of many of his movies, books, articles and lectures. Landau had visited Hernández in prison many times, accompanying Glover.

Three events in New York City were capped off with a meeting on Sept. 16 initiated by union leaders from the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, demonstrating how the movement to free the Cuban 5 is growing.

Kimber's book is an important tool to inspire the "jury of millions" within the United States that has the ultimate power to open the prison door for all of the Cuban 5. The book tour will end in Boston on Sept. 17 where Noam Chomsky will join Kimber at a program at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

For more information on the struggle to free the Cuban 5, see theCuban5.org.



MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

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

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

Domestic Workers United Demand Passage of a Bill of Rights Imani Henry

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

Harriet Tubman, Woman Warrior Mumia Abu-Jamal

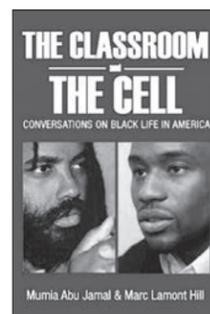
Racism & Poverty in the Delta Larry Hales

Haiti Needs Reparations, Not Sanctions Pat Chin

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

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

Available at Amazon and other bookstores.



The Classroom & the Cell:

Conversations on Black Life in America
Mumia Abu-Jamal & Marc Lamont Hill

This book delves into the problems of Black life in America and offers real, concrete solutions.

Order at: www.freemumia.com/?p=684

What capitalism does best

Income gap grows still wider

By Deirdre Griswold

For ever so long, workers have been told that this capitalist system we live under works to our benefit. Sure, the bosses get more than we do, but it's all for the good of everyone and there couldn't be any production without their expertise — and capital.

There are several different arguments here that need to be roundly refuted. One is that the capitalists have some particular expertise necessary for the production of goods and services.

The financial disaster of 2008 and the ensuing disaster for the working class showed once again that whatever skills — legal or illegal — the bosses have for making themselves rich, they are not the skills needed to run a healthy economy — one that addresses the needs of the people as its primary goal.

Sure, they were good at figuring out how to break up mortgages into little pieces and sell them on the financial markets. Or rather, the financial advisers they hired were good at it. But actually creating homes for people to live in? The capitalists' financial skills have, in fact, wound up putting millions of people out on the street while what once were their homes — mortgaged, of course — often go to ruin.

In this period, the wages of those workers lucky enough to have jobs have either stagnated or declined. But after a few trillion dollars worth of government bailouts, the bosses' capital is once again making the very rich even richer.

How much richer?

Study confirms income gap grows still wider

More than half the income earned in 2012 went to just 10 percent of the U.S. population, according to a new study by economist Emmanuel Saez of Berkeley called "Striking It Richer: The Evolution of Top Incomes in the United States (Updated with 2012 preliminary estimates)." Putting it another way, the wealthier 10 percent each pulled in about 10 times the income of those in the other 90 percent.

But that's only half the story. The much smaller 1 percent took in more than 20 percent of the country's total earnings,

one of the highest levels on record since 1913. This means the wealthy 1 percent each raked in 25 times what the other 99 percent got.

And even that's not the whole story, because while earnings of the 99 percent, on average, have been flat since 2008, the incomes of the very, very richest — the 0.01 percent — have shot up by a third.

Remember, we're just talking about income here. The assets of the very, very rich — which accumulate over decades, even generations, and include mansions, expensive art, private planes and trophy cars, etc., in addition to the billions in capital they invest to make even more money — are monumental compared to what an average worker might own. Which is pretty close to zero.

In fact, when the financial crisis hit in 2008, the ratio of household debt to disposable income (what you have left after taxes are taken out) in the U.S. had reached its highest point ever. It was 128 percent, meaning workers owed much more than they earned and were on a treadmill of debt payments that could go on forever. What happened was that, as the economy tanked, millions of them lost what they thought they owned as the banks and financiers foreclosed on their mortgages, their cars, etc.

The picture couldn't be clearer. Capitalism in the U.S. — and much of the rest of the world — is quite efficient at making the very, very rich richer, but it fails miserably when it comes to meeting people's needs for a stable existence.

Is this the result of false policies or is it built into the system itself? If such a thing as a feeling, caring capitalist came along, would he/she be able to change the system?

One who tried to reform

At one time, a few such people existed. One was the 29-year-old manufacturer Robert Owen, who lived in the early 19th century and directed a large cotton mill in New Lanark, Scotland, at a time when industrial workers' lives were atrocious. Frederick Engels, Karl Marx's closest collaborator, gave Owen his due in the book "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific."

Engels described how, under Owen's

leadership, the factory became a model colony. Workers who had become terribly demoralized by poverty and long hours were able to stabilize their lives and raise healthy families.

This model factory had a 10-and-a-half-hour workday when all the others demanded 13 and 14 hours. It had the first preschools, where children as young as 2 were cared for instead of being left on their own while their parents worked. When there was a crisis of overproduction in textiles, which lasted for four months, the workers got their full wages anyway.

But Owen himself realized that even this great success, which showed that humane conditions could be instituted and the factory still turn a sizable profit for the owners, would not change the industry. The great wealth created by workers using the new manufacturing technology was still the private property of the owners.

Engels said Owen came to realize that "the newly-created gigantic productive forces, hitherto used only to enrich individuals and to enslave the masses, offered to Owen the foundations for a reconstruction of society; they were destined, as the common property of all, to be worked for the common good of all."

As soon as Owen, who had been lionized in "society" as a great philanthropist, came forward with this communist view, he was attacked on all sides. He eventually decided that the only way for society to move forward was through the struggle of the workers themselves.

Owen gave up his position in manufacturing and spent the rest of his life struggling on the side of the workers. Because of this, he was elected president of the first congress of the English trade unions, where they united into a single

great association in order to better fight the bosses.

Capitalism won't reform from within

Today, capitalist "reformers" set up foundations and make pretty speeches, but would any of them give up their fortunes in order to fight for the rights of the workers?

Today, the world is facing the largest "natural disaster" in history: global warming. Industry is responsible for most of the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. But not one capitalist corporation is willing to give up its profits, not even to save the world. Instead, they have set up new markets to trade — and make money on — credits to pollute.

And we're supposed to believe that they'll reform when it comes to the growing poverty of the workers. But what else can you expect from a class that makes the biggest profits out of the machinery of war and even from prisons where millions of workers, a majority of them people of color and immigrants, are crammed together or held in solitary confinement, basically for being poor and unable to afford a lawyer?

United in struggle, the organized power of the working class — all genders, all nationalities, all backgrounds, employed or jobless, documented or undocumented, in or fighting to get unions, together with the oppressed communities — is the only tried-and-true way to reverse the further degradation of wages and working conditions.

Such a struggle also holds within it the potential to rebuild the movement to rid the world of this archaic, cruel and destructive system of capitalism once and for all. □

Letter to the editor:

AFL-CIO delegates against U.S. wars

One by one or in small groups, delegates to the the AFL-CIO national convention, held Sept. 8-11 in Los Angeles, passed by — friendly and talkative as we handed out more than 500 leaflets motivating the AFL-CIO to take a stand against the war in Syria. The leaflets featured an open letter to the delegates from Workers World Party entitled "Why we must oppose war on Syria." Smiles, handshakes, comments of good luck and short chats were common as we leafleted outside with no official standing. Delegates expressed hope that the issue of the threatened U.S. war on Syria would be raised at the convention.

The sentiment against war on Syria was overwhelming, although many were influenced by the relentless propaganda in the bourgeois press against the Syrian government. But no one we spoke with was for bombing Syria. Our flyer reminded them that "the government lied about the Gulf of Tonkin to start the Vietnam war; it lied about WMD [weapons of mass destruction] in Iraq; why should we believe anything they tell us to start a war in Syria? At this critical moment, when there are so many issues confronting working people, there is no more pressing issue than the threat of war in Syria."

We urged the convention to take front and center on this issue, to reflect the over-

whelming opposition to the war among its own members and the working class generally, and to not leave opposition to the war to racist, anti-union demagogues such as Ron Paul or Newt Gingrich, who receive so much media attention. The flyer also explained that "while there never seems to be money for food stamps, unemployment insurance, to raise the minimum wage, for health care, Social Security and other pressing needs, there always seems to be money to wage war."

It also stated, "Syrian workers have the same needs as workers in the U.S. — another war would take resources desperately needed here to destroy the lives of people in Syria. As representatives of millions of organized workers, who hope to organize millions more who are unorganized, nothing would raise the reputation of organized labor more than to take the lead on opposing war in Syria. ... As usual, it is always the working people and the poor who pay the most for the war and make the greatest sacrifices."

Anti-war resolutions were presented by three unions and passed by the convention, all calling for an end to the war in Afghanistan and a reduction in the military budget. But none of these resolutions mentioned the war on Syria. To this writer's knowledge, no discussion of the war threats

Continued on page 11

Activists protest postal service privatization

By Joe Piette
Los Angeles

Members of Communities and Postal Workers United and Community-Labor United for Postal Jobs and Services attended the quadrennial AFL-CIO convention here from Sept. 8 to 11. The postal activists were there to broaden the movement to save the U.S. Postal Service.

They handed out hundreds of "Privatization hurts all workers" fliers and CPWU newsletters. At least 400 signatures were gathered on petitions; many signers expressed interest in doing more to save the post office in their cities and towns.

"Resolution 40: A Postal Service for the 21st Century: Innovation and Growth, Not Downsizing and Decline" was passed unanimously by the convention delegates, after remarks from Western Regional Coordinator Omar Gonzales, of the American Postal Workers Union;



President John Haggerty, of the National Postal Mail Handlers Union; and President Fred Rolando, of the National Association of Letter Carriers.

Piette is a retired postal worker.

On the picket line

by Sue Davis

Union rights for grocery workers in Brooklyn, N.Y.

On Sept. 20, it will be a year since Latino/a immigrant workers at the so-called “Golden Farm” grocery in Brooklyn, N.Y., voted to join the Retail, Wholesale union. When owner Sonny Kim began to fire and force out pro-union workers, labor and community groups, led by New York Communities for Change, Occupy Kensington and 99 Pickets, called a boycott and held frequent pickets over the last year to demand that Kim respect the workers’ right to union representation.

A Sept. 10 email from Occupy Kensington noted that after Sept. 20, “Mr. Kim can arrange a challenge to the union and organize a re-vote inside the store. A re-vote he would likely win, as he has fired two of the workers who voted for the union and forced out several others by cutting their hours. Without a contract and without the union, the remaining pro-union workers ... will have no protection from Mr. Kim.”

That’s why labor and community activists, joined by the Rude Mechanical Orchestra playing “We Shall Overcome” and a giant inflated rat, rallied at the grocery Sept. 15. Their chants included “Exploitation ain’t the way! Pay your workers better pay!” “What’s outrageous? Poverty wages!” and “What’s disgusting? Union busting!” (Anne Pruden contributed to this story.)



WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

Sept. 15 protest at Golden Farms grocery in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Walmart workers demand living wage in 15 cities

On Sept. 5, hundreds of Walmart workers and thousands of their supporters in more than 15 cities across the country picketed for livable wages and improved working conditions for some of the nation’s lowest-paid workers. OUR Walmart, a union-backed group of Walmart workers, reported that 109 protesters were arrested for acts of civil disobedience in 11 cities. Protesters also called for the reinstatement of 20 employees who were illegally fired after strikes and protests at company headquarters in June. OUR Walmart has filed more than 100 unfair labor practice charges against Walmart with the National Labor Relations Board.

Actions took place in Los Angeles; San Francisco; Dallas; Chicago; Miami; New York; Boston; Sacramento, Calif.; and Washington, D.C. A protest in Raleigh, N.C., drew attention when a video of the flash mob inside the store, organized by Local 1208 of the Food and Commercial Workers union, was posted on YouTube (tinyurl.com/mjurzzz). It shows about a dozen, mostly Black and Brown workers in bright yellow T-shirts (with “1208 Steppers” on the front and “Steppin’ 4 Justice” on the back) doing a well-choreographed, well-rehearsed break dance.

This was the biggest national day of action targeting Walmart since “Black Friday” last November, when 400 workers went on strike. OUR Walmart told The Nation magazine that “widespread, massive strikes and protests [are planned] for Black Friday,” the day after the so-called “Thanksgiving” holiday. (Sept. 6)

Cablevision workers rap for contract at Aug. 24 March

Cablevision workers from Brooklyn rapped at the podium at the 50th anniversary March for Jobs and Freedom on Aug. 24 in Washington about why they’re fighting for a contract. The 280 workers having been struggling for more than 18 months to get multimillionaire Cablevision owner James Dolan to sign a contract with the Communication Workers for union representation. In the process they have endured illegal terminations, threats, illegal surveillance, bad faith bargaining and lower wages than all the other technicians at Cablevision.

Continued on page 11

BALTIMORE

Workers assembly calls for nat’l day to raise workers’ wages

By Steven Ceci
Baltimore

On Sept. 1, a cross section of workers, young and old, employed and unemployed, convened for a Workers’ Assembly here. They testified and voted affirmatively for three action proposals: 1) to call on people from around the country to join Baltimore in marking the 75th anniversary of the enactment of the first minimum wage on Oct. 24, with protests to raise workers’ wages; 2) to conduct a major statewide campaign for a \$15-an-hour minimum wage; and 3) to continue to build a movement for workers’ assemblies that would defend and organize for the rights of all workers, regardless of place of employment or whether they presently had a job, and that would include all of the community, particularly youth.

Crystal Richardson, a young worker, testified about how badly her boss had treated her and how her work hours had been cut to eight hours — just one shift a week. She was so enthusiastic about the action proposals that she raised an amendment to call for building workers’ assemblies all across the country.

Richardson explained, “I have family and friends in Florida who are suffering terribly; they need a workers’ assembly there as much as in Baltimore.” She had become involved in the Workers’ Assembly effort through protests called by the People’s Power Assembly around Trayvon Martin’s case.

The Workers’ Assembly was called by the Baltimore People’s Power Assembly and the Baltimore Chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and was initiated and proposed at a Poor

People’s Campaign March in May.

The Rev. C. D. Witherspoon, Baltimore SCLC president, exclaimed, “We don’t need a minimum wage — we need a living wage.” Referring to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s movement for economic justice, he explained that the Workers’ Assembly grew out of the 2013 Poor People’s Campaign and the need to fight poverty.

Fred Mason, president of the Maryland and D.C. AFL-CIO Council, electrified the audience in his opening talk. He carefully quoted from the preamble of the U.S. Constitution, explaining that people had the right to rebel, that when “any form of government became destructive to these ends — the people have the right to alter or abolish it.”

He referenced the more than 50 percent unemployment rate for Black youth and other injustices to explain that the government clearly did not serve the people. Mason also spoke about people’s movements around the world, including Brazil, stressing that protest in the streets was necessary.

Mason explained that if the minimum wage had kept pace with the cost of living, it would be \$15.23 an hour. He also stated that the union movement “needed to have transformative relations with others engaged in the struggle.”

Riveting testimony

The assembly ran 90 minutes over its scheduled time due to the excitement of those who attended and testified.

Some of the riveting testimony included airport worker Yaseen Abdul-Malik, a member of UNITE HERE Local 7, who described his terrible working conditions and

low pay at the Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport. He explained, “I have to work two jobs that have damaged my leg. I cannot afford the surgery to correct the damage, and as a result I might lose my leg.” Abdul-Malik urged attendees to sign a bill of rights for airport workers and to support his union’s effort to organize low-paid airport workers.

May 1 Immigrant and Workers Rights Coalition Co-Coordinator Teresa Gutiérrez got a standing ovation when she added the struggle for immigrant rights, justice for transgender victims of violence, and opposing the war on Syria to the day’s discussion.

Retired workers also spoke, along with those who had no jobs. Many younger delegates listened raptly, despite the lateness of the hour as Vivian Weinstein described her younger life as a low-wage worker. She urged the group to not forget those who are retired and their problems.

Representatives from the American Federation of Government Employees raised the conditions of low-paid, furloughed government workers, while those from the Food and Commercial Workers union described the poverty wages and no benefits of Walmart workers. Even musicians from a local band testified about how they were abused by club owners. They offered to hold benefits for the campaign to raise wages.

The meeting was co-chaired by Andre Powell, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees delegate to the Baltimore Metropolitan AFL-CIO Council, and Sharon Black, representing the People’s Power Assembly. □

Autoworkers discuss fightback strategy

By Martha Grevatt

In a recent op-ed piece, United Auto Workers President Bob King touted the cooperative relationship between the union and U.S. auto companies. He cited the 2009 bankruptcy bailout, where “all stakeholders — management, labor, suppliers, dealers, debt holders and others — accepted some responsibility for the crisis and all shared in the sacrifice during the restructuring.” (Detroit News, Aug. 7)

For workers on the shop floor, however, reality bears little resemblance to King’s fairy-tale vision of cooperation. Production workers hired after September of 2007 make one-half to two-thirds the pay of higher seniority workers doing the exact same work. Higher seniority workers have not had a raise since 2005.

The skilled trades workforce has been slashed through job consolidation and outsourcing. All of this follows the loss of hun-

dreds of thousands of production jobs through automation and the closing of more than 75 General Motors, Ford and Chrysler plants since 2004.

More and more workers are being placed on “Alternative Work Schedules,” where they work mandatory 10- or 12-hour days and weekends for straight-time pay. The work is hard, hot and sometimes dangerous. Those lucky enough to retire have had their health benefits reduced. At the same time, the companies are making billions of dollars in profits.

These and other concerns were brought to light during the fourth annual “Autoworker Speakout,” held Sept. 8 in Detroit and sponsored by the rank-and-file activist group Autoworker Caravan.

After sharing testimony about the real situation in our plants, UAW members discussed their strategy for next year’s national convention. Autoworker Caravan members plan to run for delegate slots and submit resolutions

grouped around the theme of “Re-build Our Fighting Union.”

A wide range of issues fall under this umbrella, such as opposing misnamed “right to work” legislation, expanding union democracy via direct election of the International Executive Board, and calling for a general strike. Also included are the fights for low-wage and unemployed workers, demanding an end to concessions, two-tier pay and “alternative work schedules,” and building global worker solidarity.

Workers also heard a report from two former UAW presidents who were part of a solidarity delegation to Bogotá, Colombia, to stand with the fired, injured GM workers who have camped outside the U.S. Embassy for more than two years. The meeting sent a message of solidarity to GM Opel workers in Bochum, Germany, who are in the midst of a fight to stop company plans to close their factory.

Martha Grevatt is a 26-year UAW Chrysler worker.

DETROIT

Emergency manager dictates 'lights out'

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

When the lights went out at the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center (CAYMAC) in downtown Detroit on Sept. 11, it was one of the hottest days of the year. People were trapped in elevators, while civil servants and court employees were sent home since they could not complete their work for the day.

Soon it was discovered that the power had been turned off intentionally under the guise of preventing a possibly larger and more protracted outage encompassing broader areas of the city. When statements were made by two functionaries of Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr, blaming city employees for the drastic measures, it became clear that politics were involved in the decision.

Detroit, like many other municipal areas around the United States, needs massive reinvestment in its power-supplying infrastructure. The systematic disinvestment in cities and the privatization of public services are the objective of the corporations and banks which dictate governmental decisions and expenditures.

DTE Energy has a virtual monopoly on the supply of electricity and natural gas services in the Detroit metropolitan area. Power outages have become more frequent in recent years due to the failure of this major corporation to upgrade its infrastructure, which is valued at more than \$20 billion.

The Detroit Public Lighting Department system has been in need of a massive overhaul for decades. Large sections of the city remain dark in the evening hours, making driving and walking a major hazard.

CAYMAC and other large public structures in Detroit are supplied power

through the Detroit Public Lighting system and not DTE Energy. This has been a major focus of the energy supplier and its minions for a number of years.

What is the solution to this problem for EM Orr, who was appointed by Michigan's reactionary governor against the will of the people of Detroit six months ago? A plan has been underway for some time under corporate-oriented Mayor Dave Bing, who has served as a board member for the power company, to turn over public lighting to DTE Energy to manage its operations.

When two aides of Orr spoke to the media on Sept. 11-12, they as much admitted the political character of the power outage. Bill Nowlings, who is the spokesperson for the EM, said, "The outages are a precautionary measure while DTE and city crews work to fix two main lines in the grid that went down earlier today." (Fox2 News Detroit, Sept. 12)

Nowling went on to say, "That city grid customers were asked to reduce power, but failed to, so we had to move intentional outages to protect crucial service." These decisions were made without any consultation with the mayor's office or the City Council.

The major downtown buildings impacted by the power outage were CAYMAC, the McNamara Federal Building, the Detroit Public Library main branch on Woodward Avenue, Wayne State University, the Frank Murphy Hall of Justice, the Detroit Institute of Arts, and the People Mover, an elevated train that services downtown.

'Strong message' for privatization

Gary Brown, who resigned his City Council position as president pro-tem to take a position with EM Orr, told local Fox2 News Sept. 12 that the power outage was intentional. Brown, who was fired as a top police official under former Mayor

Kwame Kilpatrick, sued the city and won a large settlement in 2008, precipitating perjury and misconduct charges against Kilpatrick, which led to the mayor's resignation.

Brown ran for City Council in 2009 and was elected as the second-highest voter-getter on the legislative body. During his City Council tenure he supported a right-wing, corporate agenda advocating massive service cuts and layoffs of municipal employees.

Three months ago Brown jumped ship from the City Council and took a position with the state-appointed EM for a salary three times higher than the one he earned as an elected official. Under emergency management, functionaries are paid salaries that far exceed those of elected officials and civil servants, even though the city has been placed in a so-called "financial emergency" and bankruptcy.

Brown, when asked why the power was turned off and were the occupants of the buildings warned, said, "We did start calling our customers prior to taking them down and asking them to turn off air conditioners, but they weren't responding as fast as we would like them to, so we had to send them a strong message by turning the power off."

Brown said that the real problem is the Detroit Public Lighting Department's aging grid, which is the real reason the city says it has agreed to turn over services to DTE. "The transfer has not happened yet. If we don't take precautionary measures, we could lose large parts of the city and we can't allow that to happen."

Nonetheless, DTE Energy is a major part of the problems facing the people of Detroit. The corporation shuts off services for more than 100,000 customers each year throughout the area. These shutoffs have caused tremendous suffering and deaths.

Turning over the city lighting system to DTE Energy will not benefit the people of Detroit or southeastern Michigan. In September 2010, a series of 85 fires erupted in various parts of Detroit, which many people attributed to the failure of DTE Energy to respond to complaints about power surges and fallen wires.

The Michigan Public Service Commission, which is supposed to monitor the operations of the utility companies, held hearings in 2010 in response to complaints about DTE Energy's role in the fires. The PSC absolved the company of responsibility, though public apprehension about the energy supplier continues.

Oct. 5-6 weekend of solidarity with Detroit

When power services are shut off, it forces people out of their homes and the city. DTE Energy has refused to impose a moratorium on utility shutoffs as demanded during the last four years by the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs. The coalition held demonstrations against DTE in 2009 and took the corporation to court to force it to turn the power back on in an apartment building in Highland Park that same year.

On Oct. 5 and 6, Moratorium NOW! and other organizations and individuals from around the U.S. will gather in downtown Detroit at Grand Circus Park for an International People's Assembly Against the Banks and Against Austerity.

The gathering will continue the struggle against the imposition of emergency management in Detroit, which has the largest per capita African-American population in the U.S., as well as against the city bankruptcy and disenfranchisement of the city's residents. The assembly will link the struggles facing Detroiters with those affected by similar problems wrought by the banks and corporations throughout the U.S. and internationally.

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition has been holding demonstrations outside the federal courthouse in downtown where the bankruptcy hearings are held. David Sole, former president of United Auto Workers Local 2334 and a retired city employee, has spearheaded the organization of the Stop the Theft of Our Pensions Committee. Retiree pensions are under threat by the EM, who is working for the banks and corporations in their efforts to destroy the city unions and expropriate workers' and retirees' benefits. A large banner reading "Cancel the Debt" when hoisted outside the courthouse has drawn the attention of local, national and world media.

Two major bankruptcy court hearings are coming up that activists are urging Detroiters to attend. On Sept. 19, more than 100 people who have filed objections to the bankruptcy will be heard in court, and on Oct. 23-24 a hearing on the constitutionality of the bankruptcy will take place. The Michigan constitution prohibits cities from taking actions that threaten workers' pensions.

The International People's Assembly Against the Banks and Against Austerity will feature speakers, workshops, mass demonstrations and strategy sessions. Endorsements are still coming in, and organizers are encouraging all concerned organizations and individuals to pledge their support.

For more information on the Oct. 5-6 event in Detroit, visit the following websites: moratorium-mi.org, internationalpeoplesassembly.org and detroitdebtmoratorium.org.

On the 5th Anniversary of the Federal \$700 Billion Bank Bailout ...

A CALL FOR AN
 INTERNATIONAL
 PEOPLE'S
 ASSEMBLY

AGAINST
 THE BANKS
 AND AGAINST AUSTERITY

SATURDAY & SUNDAY
 OCT 5 & 6, 2013

Grand Circus Park, Woodward & Adams
 DETROIT, MICHIGAN, USA



We call on all activists fighting banker-imposed austerity — here in the U.S. and worldwide — to come to Detroit, Michigan, on Oct. 5 and 6, 2013. Join the people of this city under siege in convening the International People's Assembly Against the Banks and Against Austerity.

Coalition for an International People's Assembly Against the Banks & Against Austerity

For more information and/or to list your organization or yourself as a convener:

Call **313-744-7912** or email: moratorium@moratorium-mi.org

Web moratorium-mi.org DetroitDebtMoratorium.org InternationalPeoplesAssembly.org

Economic contraction and military expansion

By Sam Marcy

This essay is reprinted from the pamphlet "Reindustrialization: The Menace Behind the Promise," written by Workers World Party founder Sam Marcy in 1980. Although written more than three decades ago, it describes the economic processes and contradictions behind the decline of U.S. imperialism's world position, which is even more evident today. In the intervening years, Wall Street enjoyed a temporary boost because of the collapse of the socialist bloc headed by the USSR, which opened up vast new markets to the firms on Wall Street. Today, however, the drive toward war in order to stave off a recurrence of the 2008 crash is more dangerous than ever.

At a time of deepening economic crisis, many of the bourgeois ideologists and particularly their economists have increasingly turned their research to analyzing the nature and profound implications of the great economic crisis that began with the stock market crisis of 1929.

A recurring thought which continues to haunt many in the ruling class is the possibility that, notwithstanding current predictions, there may yet occur an economic catastrophe of the dimensions of the 1929 debacle.

One of those professors who concerns himself with the 1929 economic crisis is Charles P. Kindleberger. In his book, "The World in Depression, 1929-1939," he presents the thesis that "The world depression of 1929 was so widespread, so deep, and so prolonged, not because of the deep disturbances to the monetary system but because the monetary system itself was basically unstable" and therefore broke down.

According to Kindleberger, when the economic leadership of Britain eroded after World War I and the U.S. failed to take it over, the monetary system collapsed of its own weight.

Monetary instability not cause of collapse

Kindleberger's thesis is not a new approach. Many bourgeois economists have dealt extensively with the monetary crisis of the early 1930s and in one way or another they attribute the crisis either to mismanagement or accidental factors.

It was not, of course, the instability or imperfections of the capitalist monetary system that were the cause of the great economic collapse. The cause of the crisis, as has been the case ever since the first worldwide capitalist crisis of 1825, was capitalist overproduction. The recurring monetary crises, which have become so pervasive in the imperialist epoch, are the effects of capitalist overproduction, not the cause.

Nevertheless, Kindleberger does point up a very important aspect of the world capitalist economy during that entire period which has relevance today, particu-

larly as it affects the U.S. It is clear from his book, although he does not precisely say so, that it was not just the economic leadership of Britain that had become eroded. The significant fact that emerges from the entire era of the 1930s was that Britain, notwithstanding its victorious position after World War I, had lost considerable ground in the economic basis for its military, diplomatic and political leadership on a world scale.

Economic base eroded

The British Empire, as it stood during the economic crisis — militarily, diplomatically and politically — no longer had the formidable economic base to sustain its world imperialist leadership. The financial and economic cost of maintaining such leadership was far out of proportion with the returns required for a thriving imperialist exploiter.

Already, in the 1920s, the British financial and industrial aristocracy was faced with the looming prospect of the loss of "our India," as the U.S. was later forced to face the prospect of losing "our China." The financial and economic responsibilities that British imperialism had toward the battered capitalist states of Europe, as well as its far-flung empire, put increasing strains on its obsolescent coal and metal industries, as well as its transport industry, including even the shipping industry.

Britain did not "surrender" its economic leadership to the U.S., as Kindleberger maintains. The U.S. conquered British markets by economic warfare, particularly in Latin America and parts of Asia. All of this was told at the time in an illuminating book with the expressive title "America Conquers Britain" by Ludwell Denny.

Britain lost its world leadership because it could not economically compete with the U.S., notwithstanding that its navy was second to none and that its worldwide empire was still juridically and militarily under its control.

The worldwide revolutionary upsurge of the national liberation struggles, already fully in view in China, India and Indonesia, made it clear that military expansion by the British imperialists while their economic base was narrowing, both at home and abroad, created an impossible situation for Britain. An explosion, a collapse, was inevitable.

Fallback position for British capital

There was, however, a silver lining in this darker picture for British finance capital and for the imperialists as a whole. There was a fallback position for Britain that prevented the kind of explosion that could have ended only in a revolutionary conflagration and turned Britain into a genuine socialist republic.

While American finance capital took over many of the markets of Britain and generally strengthened its position in relation to all of Western Europe and Japan, at the same time it secured the continued existence of Britain as a formidable imperialist power. In addition, it became the guarantor of the vital interests of Britain — as against other imperialist rivals such as Germany, as well as Japan — and a general bulwark of world political reaction.

Thus the acute contradiction arising from the profound divergence between Britain's shrinking economic base and its ever-growing financial, diplomatic and military commitments found a fallback

position in the none-too-gentle embrace of U.S. finance capital, with its great military potential.

But how is it with the U.S. today?

There are some striking similarities between the British position of the 1930s and the U.S. position today. Like Britain, only more, the U.S. is in the grip of a profound geopolitical contradiction, one that becomes clearer with each passing day.

Basic contradiction

On the one hand, the U.S. is in the midst of a steadily expanding military buildup of unprecedented and virtually unimaginable proportions. On the other hand, the economic basis for sustaining such an unbridled military posture has been slowly but surely eroding.

The current economic crisis will surely accelerate and continue the erosion. The malady, however, goes much deeper than the current crisis, nor did it spring into existence with the pronouncement of the Carter Doctrine.

Unlike Britain in the 1930s, the U.S. has no fallback position, a fact which both the political and economic planners at the summits of the capitalist establishment cannot but be deeply aware.

A few years after World War II, the U.S. was the economic and military leader of world imperialism. It was the unquestioned dominant power in world affairs and had attained virtually supreme political and military hegemony over the bourgeois world and over the dependent, underdeveloped countries and oppressed peoples in the orbit of the world imperialist system.

At that time, in the early 1950s, the U.S. was responsible for more than 50 percent of the world's gross production. At the beginning of the 1960s, the U.S. share of the world's gross production had diminished to somewhere in the neighborhood of 35 percent. Today, according to the best estimates, it is between 25 and 27 percent. [As of 2013, it has declined to about 22 percent.]

Weakened geopolitical position

Were the gross national product of the U.S. produced for human use and not for profit, it would be more than sufficient to satisfy the great needs of the population of the U.S. and then some.

But production for purposes of capitalist profit, which entails competition for capitalist markets and sources of raw materials, poses an entirely different set of circumstances and inevitably brings into play the geopolitical position of the U.S. From that point of view the relative position of the U.S. as a world power becomes tremendously weakened.

It means, for instance, that in the event of any serious military struggle, the adversary, whether it be the imperialist rivals or the socialist countries, may have access to a portion of three-quarters of the world's total production.

Just as significantly, the U.S.'s relative share of the world's gross product will continue to decline as the productive forces in the rest of the world must inevitably continue to expand relative to the U.S. position. In a world socialist cooperative commonwealth, on the other hand, the share of U.S. production, even though on a relatively diminishing scale, would be of tremendous importance because of the U.S.'s highly sophisticated technology and its capacity for mass production.

Beginning of general decline

World War II enabled the U.S. to exercise its economic, political and military hegemony over the bourgeois world. From the end of the war until the final defeat of the U.S. during the Vietnam War, the U.S. capitalist economy experienced a general economic upsurge, notwithstanding several capitalist recessions which were of generally short duration.

A significant aspect of the economic cycles was that each peak of the economic cycle was lower than the preceding ones — a symptom of the beginning of general decline and erosion of the U.S. economic base.

The U.S. military buildup began around 1946, when the military-industrial complex was fully validated by government decree in the form of a memorandum from Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower in April 1946 when he was Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army. [See "Generals Over the White House" by Sam Marcy, available at workers.org.]

The military buildup that was in full swing in the 1950s and continued without any pause in tempo until the end of the Vietnam War occurred therefore during a period of general economic upsurge, notwithstanding several significant recessions. The buildup also occurred while U.S. imperialism retained most of its markets under its military umbrella.

How markedly different is the situation today!

The military buildup continues after the U.S. has lost its dominant position in Asia and has been severely restricted and is under heavy pressure in all of Latin America. Its position in Europe has become politically and economically weakened. In the Middle East it is most vulnerable to revolutionary attack from the oppressed people. Thus, while military expansion continues, the U.S. economic base continues to deteriorate and contract.

The sources for the extraction of surplus value on a world scale have been narrowed and encumbered by revolutionary pressure of a most intense character from the oppressed peoples and underdeveloped countries.

Finally, like Britain, the basic industries of the U.S. are in decline, in a state of decadence, and under fierce competitive attack by the very allies which the U.S. government did so much to cultivate and resuscitate following World War II.

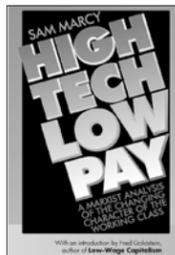
Even the most superficial observers of the state of the U.S. world position cannot but be struck by the increasing divergence between two organic tendencies which are a product of monopoly capitalism.

On the one hand, there is the evident economic contraction of both the domestic and world economic base of U.S. imperialism. On the other hand, there is the continuing and relentless drive for military expansion. Both of these tendencies grow organically from the body politic of the capitalist class structure of exploitation and oppression.

The continued existence, side by side, of these two tendencies as though they were independent of each other is absolutely incompatible and of necessity leads to a catastrophe. There is no imperialist fallback position for U.S. capitalism.

There is, however, a socialist solution to the catastrophic sharpening of this acute imperialist contradiction.

— June 17, 1980



High Tech, Low Pay
A Marxist Analysis
of the Changing Character
of the Working Class

By Sam Marcy

with an updated introduction by Fred Goldstein, author of *Low Wage Capitalism*.

Books are available at Amazon.com and other bookstores around the country.



Syrian Americans say 'No!' to U.S. war on their country

A significant turnout of nearly 1,000 anti-war demonstrators, most from the Syrian-American community, marched in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 9, the day that the U.S. Congress reconvened and the day before President Barack Obama withdrew the war resolution against Syria. The first topic on Congress' agenda was to discuss the resolution giving the executive authority to bomb Syria. This was the last thing wanted by many of the

Syrian-origin people living in the U.S., and so they came to protest.

While the Syrian American Forum had called the demonstration and organized nine buses from different parts of the country, many of the participants were not members of that group but came as individuals or in other organizations. Their motivation was to stop the illegal and destructive U.S. attack on their country.

Chanting was dominated by the slo-

gans "USA/NATO, hands off Syria," "No war on Syria" and other anti-war slogans. Many people carried Syrian flags. The presence of so many Syrians showed that not only does the U.S. population in general want to stop U.S. involvement, but so do Syrian Americans and, by extension, so do most of the people in Syria.

The Georgia Peace and Justice Coalition/Atlanta took its message of "No War on Syria" to the pedestrian-friendly down-

town square of Decatur, a suburb of Atlanta, on Sept. 14. The large signs and sound of whistles blowing attracted the attention and support of drivers in passing cars and those walking by, who were overwhelmingly against an attack on Syria. Many expressed doubt that government officials were telling the truth about Syria.

The United National Antiwar Coalition and Dianne Mathiowetz contributed to this article, which John Catalinotto edited.

Turkey protests death of student activist

By G. Dunkel

Ahmed Atakan was a young Turkish student who was killed by the cops on Sept. 10 while protesting the Turkish government's support of the opponents of the Bashar Al-Assad government in Syria.

His death touched off five nights of protests in Istanbul, Ankara and Antakya (Antioch), where protesters chanting Atakan's name confronted cops firing tear gas, stun grenades and rubber bullets. The protesters, as seen in TV clips, responded to the cops with fireworks and flare guns, dragging burning barricades into the streets.

The protests in Istanbul centered

around Ghezi Square, the locus of major protests in June.

When he was killed, Atakan was participating in a sit-in in the governor's office in Hatay, a province of Turkey on the Syrian border. Bahar Kimyongür, a journalist from Turkey living in Belgium with close ties to Hatay, told Workers World in a Sept. 10 email that beyond Turkey's support for the U.S. efforts in Syria, Atakan was also protesting against the "flood of terrorists [into Hatay] who have practiced religious and ethnic cleansing in Syria."

Two people living in Atakan's neighborhood in Antakya were killed by the cops in earlier protests against Turkey's

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan government. According to Kimyongür, Hatay historically has been a very diverse, multi-ethnic, multisection city firmly opposed to the government's support of U.S. imperialism for the past 30 months.

While the protests in September are smaller than the ones that erupted in June, they have a harder edge and, according to CNN (Sept. 10), appear to be less sectarian. More minorities have come out. Atakan was an Alevis, the largest minority in Turkey, which has historic ties to the Alawites of Syria.

The Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), a party which struggles for Kurdish independence, has called on its supporters

to join the protests. According to Agence France Presse, the PKK said, "The combat of the people for democracy in Turkey and the combat of the Kurdish people for liberty and democracy will be united." (Sept. 11) The PKK has also announced that it is suspending the withdrawal of its armed militants from Turkey, since the Turkish government has not kept its promises to reform.

The galvanizing factors of these protests seem to be anger at Erdoğan and a call for greater civil liberties. The Turkish government and its allies in Washington have to be worried about the breadth, strength and persistence of these demonstrations. □

U.S. backs brutal Egyptian military regime

By Chris Fry

Armed to the teeth by the U.S., the Egyptian military regime under General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi is brutally attacking not only the conservative Muslim Brotherhood, but also a wide range of progressive groups and individuals, including striking workers, journalists and the Palestinians in Gaza. The U.S. has continued to provide guns and ammunition to the military regime — up to \$1.3 billion's worth annually. (New York Times, Aug. 25)

The Barack Obama administration has not even declared the military takeover in Egypt a coup. Such a declaration would mean a cutoff of the massive weapons assistance that the U.S. provides to Egypt's military.

Late this spring, thousands of Egyptians poured into the streets to protest

the repressive government of President Mohammed Morsi. On July 3, using these protests as a cover, the Egyptian military conducted a coup and overthrew the government, placing Morsi in prison. The new regime declared a "state of emergency," which permits the military and police to smash all dissension from their iron-fisted rule.

On Aug. 14, police and troops attacked two "camps" of peaceful protesters in Cairo, made up mostly of members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Thousands were killed, and thousands more were arrested. Human Rights Watch described this incident as "the most serious incident of mass unlawful killings in modern Egyptian history."

Since then, the regime has cracked down on progressive groups and individuals. In Suez, police and military units

broke up a strike of steelworkers, who were demanding more pay, health benefits and the rehiring of a dozen fired workers. The regime charged strike leaders with being "Islamist" and arrested them.

A newspaper supporting the military takeover, Youm El Saba, quoted the regime's labor minister as blaming the Muslim Brotherhood for inciting strikes in several cities.

Tarek Loubani, a Canadian physician with Palestinian roots, and John Greyson, a progressive Toronto filmmaker, were arrested and held while simply trying to walk back to their Cairo hotel.

Five workers for the religious website Islam Today were arrested for simply calling the military takeover a coup.

In the delta province of Beheira, soldiers shot and killed Tamer Abdel Raouf, the local head of the official newspaper, Al Ahram, at a checkpoint, even though the car bore a press badge from a meeting with the governor. A witness said that Raouf was shot in the head while turning the car slowly, according to a soldier's instruction. No apology was issued, and the witness himself was arrested by the military regime.

Two prominent members of the "April 6" group, which participated in the "Arab Spring" movement against Mubarak, were arrested for "spying for Western powers to stir unrest in Egypt." These are the exact same charges that the infamous Mubarak regime used against progressives for opposing his dictatorship.

Prosecutors have even opened an investigation of young protesters calling for the military to remove Morsi. They are being accused of "disturbing the public order" by criticizing the release from prison of the former U.S.-backed dictator, Hosni Mubarak.

In the last month, the Egyptian military has destroyed 150 tunnels that bring much-needed food, construction materials, fuel and medicines into Palestinian Gaza.

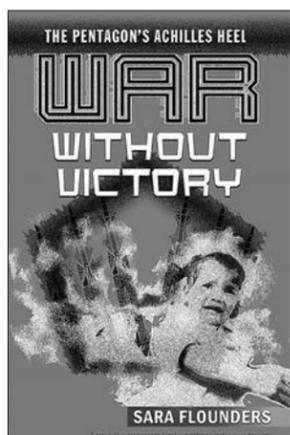
Threats from the police and military have been stepped up. Egypt's Interior Ministry "affirms that it will confront with utmost decisiveness practices such as blocking roads or obstructing traffic." (Press TV, Sept. 14)

Meanwhile, the military regime is holding secret court hearings for Mubarak, which seemed to be aimed to "vindicate" the former dictator and blame his brutal repression on the Muslim Brotherhood.

The crackdown has reduced the numbers of public demonstrations by the regime's opponents, but armed resistance to the military junta has broken out in the Sinai and other regions.

Although the U.S. government has criticized the brutality of Egypt's military government, it is clear that imperialism has no real objection to using the Egyptian military as a battering ram against the people's uprising that was and is the Arab Spring.

End U.S. military shipments to Egypt now! □



WAR WITHOUT VICTORY

by Sara Flounders

"By revealing the underbelly of the empire, Flounders sheds insight on how to stand up to the imperialist war machine and, in so doing, save ourselves and humanity."

— Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann,

President, U.N. General Assembly, 2008-2009;

Foreign Minister of Nicaragua's Sandinista government.

Available on amazon.com and bookstores around the country.

PentagonAchillesHeel.com

Syrian agreement postpones U.S. aggressive war

By John Catalinotto

Sept. 16 — While U.S. warships continued to sail in the Eastern Mediterranean to keep the Syrian people under threat, Russian-U.S. negotiations resulted in an agreement on Sept. 14 that the Syrian government, acting under United Nations supervision, would destroy whatever chemical weapons it possesses.

Secretary of State John Kerry, whose role seems to be that of “hard cop” in this crisis, has continued to threaten Syria with military action. Kerry insists that Syria must list all its chemical weapons within two weeks and destroy them all by mid-2014 — unreasonable demands — or else “there will be consequences.” (New York Times, Sept. 16)

Commentary in the corporate U.S. media and among U.S. politicians was mainly focused on evaluating how the negotiations affected the strategic interests of U.S. imperialism, with varied analyses.

Most U.S. commentaries attacked Russian President Vladimir Putin for taking a leading role in the negotiations. Some praised President Barack Obama for cleverly finessing a difficult situation and succeeding in disarming Syria. Others attacked him for weakly submitting to Putin and “betraying” the opposition forces in Syria.

After a meeting with Kerry, Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu spoke positively about the accord.

These commentaries have nothing to do with the interests of the working class

in the U.S. or worldwide. They only involve evaluating the interests and tactics of U.S. imperialism and its clients in the Middle East.

No U.S. worker, employed or unemployed, no oppressed person and only a very few rich people in the U.S. have anything to gain from U.S. involvement in a war with Syria. A war would be a loss to the great bulk of the population who want jobs, higher pay, better schools and health care and do not want any part in another slaughter.

Since, as Kerry has said, the attack is “still on the table,” the U.S. working class must continue to mobilize against such an attack in order to defend its interests as well as to show solidarity with the Syrian people.

According to the U.S.-Russian agreement, Syria must provide a “comprehensive listing” of all its chemical weapons within a week. That includes storage, production and research sites. The agreement also requires “immediate and unfettered” access to these sites by international inspectors.

Inspections are to be completed by November, as is the destruction of equipment for mixing and filling munitions with chemical agents. All chemical weapons are to be eliminated by mid-2014.

This timetable is unrealistic. More than 15 years after the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention went into effect, neither Russia nor the U.S. has eliminated all their weapons. The U.S. still has almost six times the chemical weapons

Syria is supposed to have.

President Obama pulled back on Sept. 10 from his attempt to win support in Congress for the war when it became apparent the attempt would likely fail. For the first time at least in recent history, not only was the U.S. population solidly against the war, so was a majority of Congress.

So, too, were most U.S. troops. A “Military Times survey of more than 750 active-duty troops this week found service members oppose military action in Syria by a margin of about three-to-one.” (Navy Times, Sept. 12)

With as little support among its usual allies as among the U.S. population, Putin’s willingness to negotiate provided Obama a way out of the corner his “red line in the sand” had put him in. Only French imperialism was ready to join the military effort to win a foothold in its former colonial possession, and even the British Parliament voted against the war.

At the same time, the Syrian government said it was pleased that the vicious U.S. attack was at least postponed. The Russian government, which had also put naval vessels in the region, was obviously pleased to have arranged the agreement.

In an attempt to bolster the anti-Assad opposition, the U.S. openly delivered new weapons to the “rebels” after negotiations with Russia began. The fighting in Syria, which has taken about 110,000 lives, including some 45,000 government troops and militia fighters, will continue.

The U.S. and other NATO countries, including Turkey, as well as the Saudi

Arabian and Gulf monarchies, will continue to feed weapons to the “rebels” who kill Syrians, as they have for the last two-and-a-half years.

U.N. inspectors say they found sarin

On Sept. 16, the U.N. special investigators released their report on Syria, saying that the nerve gas sarin was used on Aug. 21, based on lab reports on victims’ blood. The U.N. had no comment on which side actually employed the sarin.

The Russian and Syrian governments both accuse elements among the opposition to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad of using the chemical weapons. They and many other observers say it would have been stupid and suicidal for the government to use such weapons when U.N. inspectors had just entered Damascus.

Despite the lack of evidence proving Syrian government crimes, U.S. officials and the corporate media repeat ad nauseam that “Assad used chemical weapons against his own people.” Nearly everyone in the U.S. commenting on the Syrian crisis also repeats this unproved “Big Lie.” They also repeat the U.S. administration’s charge that 1,400 people died on Aug. 21. Other British and French reports say that about 350 to 500 people died, a big discrepancy that also discredits the U.S. claim.

While the agreement has postponed drastic military action, it has neither removed the U.S. threat nor eliminated U.S. imperialism’s drive to find a more effective pretext for opening a new war. □

U.S. solidarity & fact-finding delegation visits Syria

By John Catalinotto

A delegation of anti-war and human-rights activists from the United States entered Syria Sept. 16 on a fact-finding and people-to-people solidarity trip. The participants plan to counter the ubiquitous pro-war propaganda spread in the U.S. and NATO imperialist countries and former colonial powers that demonizes the Syrian government.

The delegation includes former U.S. Attorney General and human rights lawyer Ramsey Clark; former six-term Congressperson from Georgia Cynthia McKinney; Dedon Kamathi, of the All-African People’s Revolutionary Party and Pacifica Radio; and Johnny Achi, of

Arab Americans 4 Syria in Los Angeles. The International Action Center, which pulled together the delegation, sent key organizers John Parker from Los Angeles and Sara Flounders from New York.

Delegation members have played a big role organizing anti-war actions in the United States since the U.S. began threatening Syria during the last week of August. They intend to use their experience in Syria to strengthen their anti-war organizing among the U.S. population, which is overwhelmingly opposed to U.S. military action against Syria.

IAC co-coordinator Flounders told Workers World that since the U.S. continues to threaten Syria with rocket and bomb attack and since Secretary of State John Kerry has said it is still the U.S.

strategic plan to remove Syrian President Bashar al-Assad from power, even if all Syrian chemical weapons are destroyed, “It is vitally important to bring the truth about the Syrian situation back to the people of the United States.”

Flounders said the delegation is in Syria “to bring back reports after talking with and meeting with some of the more than 4 million people displaced by the war. This is a war the U.S. government has funded and provoked. We aim to see some of the enormous damage created by this war. We also want to see how the Syrian people have mobilized to resist the war and carry out their everyday life, including providing health care.”

Before entering Syria, the delegation attended in Beirut, Lebanon, the Arab

International Forum Against US Aggression on Syria organized by the Arab International Centre for Communication and Solidarity. The Sept. 16 forum was organized to counter the threat of a U.S. attack against Syria.

Participants at the forum, beside the delegation, included anti-war leader and Member of Parliament George Galloway from Britain; ambassadors of Syria, Russia, Lebanon, Palestine and Nicaragua; and many leading organizations from Europe, North Africa and Western Asia. Some of the other organizations sending representatives from the U.S. were the International Anti-imperialist Coordinating Committee, the Answer Coalition and the United National Antiwar Coalition, as well as the IAC. □

Chemical weapons arsenals and the hidden truths about the ‘Convention’

The hammering by politicians and the corporate media about chemical weapons use in Syria, which, according to secret CIA “evidence” was used by government forces, has generated the widespread false impression that it is only Syria that now possesses such weapons and threatens the rest of the world with them. That’s the power of the weapon of mass distraction, which is able to focus public attention on a single point, making everything else vanish.

Germany, in 1915-1917, was the first to use chemical weapons: first liquid chlo-

rine and phosgene, later the asphyxiating and blistering agent, mustard gas. In response, Britain and France also produced this deadly gas. The nerve gas Tabun, which causes death by suffocation, was discovered in 1936 by researchers from the German company IG Farben (the same company that produced Zyklon B, used in gas chambers). In 1936, Italy used chemical weapons in Ethiopia, and had already used them in Libya in 1930.

Germany produced the even more lethal chemical agents Sarin and Soman. They were not used by Adolf Hitler, prob-

ably because at first he feared retaliation by the United States and Great Britain, which had major chemical arsenals, and in the last phase of the war, because not enough planes remained to carry out such an attack.

During the Cold War, the chemical arms race accelerated with the discovery of the most toxic nerve gas, VX, whose production began in the U.S. in 1961. Then, the first binary chemical weapons were produced in the U.S.: These are bullets, bombs and missile warheads that contain two separate chemical compo-

nents, which when separate are relatively harmless, but which during the trajectory are combined into a toxic mix. The U.S. and the USSR amassed the largest and most lethal chemical weapons, but the “chemical club” rapidly expanded to include other countries.

After the Cold War ended, the Chemical Weapons Convention came into force in 1997, banning the use of chemical weapons and establishing the destruction of existing stockpiles. Now 16 years later, however, neither the U.S. nor Russia has

Continued on page 10

Korea, Rodman style

Dennis Rodman's skill as a basketball All-Star is matched by his penchant for making "outrageous" statements that hit home — to use a metaphor from another sport. In other words, he often says what others may be thinking but dare not utter out loud.

He has certainly touched a prickly nerve of the U.S. imperialist foreign policy establishment by going to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, not once, but twice now. And he has plans to return with a team of All-Star and Hall of Fame players from the U.S. to put on an exhibition game with the north Koreans.

The explosion of media attacks and slurs against him — all the way from the straight-laced channels and newspapers to the supposedly hip comics and "alternate" media — was to be expected.

It was a publicity stunt, say some. He is just promoting himself. But why would they vilify him for that? Isn't that what all celebrities are supposed to do? U.S. culture is 98 percent based on promoting the latest superstar.

Rodman had the audacity to say nice things about the 30-year-old leader of the DPRK, Kim Jong Un. This really drives the media nuts. Hello? Are U.S. cultural figures supposed to insult foreign heads of state they meet? If they go to Saudi Arabia, or Turkey, or France for that matter, are they required to make snide remarks to reporters about their hosts? But it seems that different rules apply when the country visited is the DPRK.

In reports about Rodman's visits, the media here love to describe north Korea as a "hermit kingdom," meaning that it isolates itself. Hello again? They invited Rodman in, didn't they? TV talk show hosts gasp, as though it's impossible to go there. But Workers World for years has had articles and interviews with people who have visited the DPRK — U.S. citizens as well as people from south Korea. It must really enrage the National Security Agency minders who read our paper that we greatly admire the accomplishments of the DPRK, which has a socialist economic system.

Korea has been divided since the end of World War II, when U.S. troops occupied the south. They have remained ever since. The Korean people, north and south, passionately want reunification. Every political party has to profess its support for reunification, at least on paper. Not to do so would enrage the people, who have been divided from their relatives on the opposite sides of the demilitarized zone for almost seven decades now.

However, it is a crime in the south for its citizens to visit the north. Actually, under the National Security Law there, it's a crime just to possess postcards of the north's beautiful capital city, Pyongyang. Several leaders of the United Progressive Party, which has representatives in the south's legislature, are in jail today on charges of "treason." One of the accusations against them is that they praised the north.

If the media here are worried that the DPRK is "isolated," why don't they demand that the south let its people visit the north, so they can see the situation for themselves?

South Korean troops at the demilitarized zone that separates the two halves of Korea just shot and killed a south Korean man they said was trying to "sneak" across the border into the north. (New York Times, Sept. 16) "Sneaking" is the only way they can go, unless they are among the very few south Korean managers and officials who get permission to work in a special economic zone located in the north that is operated by both sides.

All these facts are totally ignored when the mass media, forced to cover something as newsworthy as Rodman's trips, talk about the situation in Korea. All the old clichés come out and are repeated as fact: the people in the north are starving, it's a brutal dictatorship that imprisons huge numbers in concentration camps, etc., etc., ad nauseam.

None of this is true. The DPRK has survived 65 years of military attacks and pressure from U.S. imperialism not by oppressing its people but because the people are united and ready to fight for their country and their socialist system. And the Pentagon knows it — they suffered their first defeats at the hands of the north Koreans, after the U.S. invaded in 1950.

Despite three years of that most brutal war, followed by sanctions meant to cripple their economy and annual war exercises by the U.S., south Korea and now Japan right off their shores, the north Koreans have made great material progress while building up a strong defense.

What is the basis for this unity and determination? Korea's socialist system, which is based on public ownership of the means of production, not private property and the profit motive. There are no billionaires in the DPRK, no 1% growing richer at the expense of the 99%.

Of course, to the corporate U.S. media, this is the greatest crime ever. And so they are outraged when a Black man from the U.S., who is supposed to be grateful for what he has achieved, pokes a hole in the web of lies they have constructed about a small but stalwart, independent Asian country — and refuses to apologize for it. □

Chemical weapons arsenals and the hidden truths

Continued from page 9

completely destroyed its stockpiles, since they have not observed the established deadlines. According to official data, the U.S. still holds approximately 5,500 tons of chemical weapons.

Russia has much more, about 21,500 tons, inherited from Soviet arsenals. A simple quantitative comparison, however, is misleading: the U.S., Russia and other technologically advanced countries retain the ability to build sophisticated binary chemical weapons and always combine their nuclear war exercises with those of chemical warfare.

According to one dimension, which is also quantitative, the U.S., which is leading the campaign against chemical weapons in Syria, owns approximately six times what Syria does. According to an estimate by French intelligence, probably inflated, Syria is supposed to have about 1,000 tons of chemical agents and substances suitable for producing chemical weapons.

Why hasn't Syria signed the Chemical Weapons Convention? The answer basically is that the Syrians need to counter Israel's nuclear weapons and not only that. In the 1960s, Israel had also built a sophisticated arsenal of chemical weapons. But just as with Israel's nuclear weapons, this remains secret because Israel has signed, but not ratified, the Chemical Weapons Convention.

According to a report by Foreign Policy magazine, based on a 1983 CIA document, advanced research on chemical weapons was conducted in the Israeli Center for Biological Research, and these weapons were produced and stored in the Negev Desert, at Dimona, where Israel also produces its nuclear weapons. Even the Sept. 10 Jerusalem Post reports this.

Even if Israel has not maintained such an arsenal, writes the journal *Jane's*, it has the ability to "develop an offensive chemical weapons program within several months." (Jane's CBRN Assessments, 23 July 2009, www.janes.com) It is understandable then why even Egypt has not signed the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The U.S. and Israel have never officially violated the rule prohibiting the use of chemical weapons, since the chemical dioxin (Agent Orange), used extensively by the U.S. in Vietnam, and the chemical white phosphorous bombs used by the U.S. in Iraq, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Libya, and by Israel in Gaza, are not considered chemical weapons. This is not much of a consolation for the families who have seen children born deformed from Agent Orange or burned to death by white phosphorus.

This article was written by Manlio Dinucci and published in Il Manifesto on Sept. 12, and was translated into English by Workers World Managing Editor John Catalinotto.

Workers World Party National Conference

Save the date: New York City Sat. & Sun. Nov. 16-17

Plenaries & break-outs to discuss Marxist, pro-socialist views including:

- Irreversible capitalist economic crisis
- Fighting racism & national oppression
- Opposing imperialist wars & occupations
- Uniting all workers – organized & unorganized; undocumented & documented

Go to workers.org/wwp in Sept. for updates on venue, literature, schedule, housing and more

From matrilineal clan to patriarchy —

Feasting as an instrument for deepening social inequality

By Bob McCubbin

The dissolution of the matrilineal clan effectively isolated the woman from her mothers, sisters and brothers. She, rather than her husband, became the outsider: first, as a new addition to her husband's patrilineal, patrilocal clan, and later, as growing economic inequality tore asunder all vestiges of clan society, as an agricultural worker and household slave in a patriarchal family unit.

The institution of slavery was unknown in pre-class society. When captives were taken in interclan conflicts, they were either killed or adopted into the victorious clan. Even as the beginnings of political inequality appeared with the rise of tribal chiefdoms, as long as the prevailing mode of production was foraging/hunting, the idea of singling out some special group of people to work solely for the benefit of others was unthinkable.

The development of material surplus and the accompanying economic inequality that it engendered changed all that. In Part 15 of this series, we described how, with the introduction of agricultural production, polygynous marriages were one important source of additional labor — in the form of multiple wives and children — that men's enterprises like cattle herding and crop cultivation required. The previous work obligation that the potential husband owed to the woman's clan — a way of winning their approval to the idea of his joining their clan — became something totally different.

Now, the ambitious and fortunate farmer, whose agricultural surplus was a source of economic power, could afford to pay a substantial bride price to his prospective wife's family for what, in addition to having a sex partner, actually constituted access to her labor power, hopefully over her entire adult lifetime. What word should be used to describe this relationship?

Feasting as an innovation of transitional society

Since it was not all farmers, but only the most "ambitious and fortunate" ones, who were able to accumulate the wealth and prestige that constituted the raw ma-

terial for the first class societies, it would deepen our understanding of this transition to examine one of the social practices that helped to effect this change. This nearly worldwide phenomenon found in transitional societies has recently received detailed consideration by archeologists, ethnographers and anthropologists in a book-length collection of papers titled "Feasts: Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives on Food, Politics, and Power." (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 2001)

Co-editors Michael Dietler and Brian Hayden explain their interest in the subject and offer a definition of feasting in the book's introduction: "Both of the editors came to the conclusion over a decade ago that feasts are an extremely significant aspect of social life on a worldwide scale, and that understanding them is crucial for apprehending and comprehending many social and cultural processes in ancient societies. ... Feasts are events essentially constituted by the communal consumption of food and/or drink." (pp. 2-3) Further along they write, "[Feasts] are commonly a central element of life crisis ceremonies such as initiations, weddings, and burials." (p. 9)

Then, they address the political aspect of feasting as it relates to relations between men and women: "Feasting frequently involves a gendered asymmetry in terms of labor and benefits. That is, very often female labor largely supports a system of feasting in which men are the primary beneficiaries in the political arena. ... These labor inputs are one of the main reasons why there is such a strong linkage between polygyny and male political power. ... In brief, cases where women provide the agricultural, culinary, and serving labor for male political activities are quite common. ... However, cases of the inverse pattern (where men consistently provide the agricultural, culinary, and serving labor that underwrites feasts formally hosted by women) may exist, but they are extremely rare." (p. 11)

Importantly, Hayden indicates that the phenomenon of feasting assumes the existence of surplus food. It's therefore not surprising that there is no evidence for this kind of event among foraging and

hunting groups. "With the emergence of transegalitarian societies (those between chiefdoms and true egalitarian societies [i.e., matrilineal clans]), the full range of feasting ... becomes established. A range of other developments characterizes transegalitarian societies. These developments include the production of reliable surpluses, storage of food and valuables, private ownership of resources and products, the transformation of surpluses into prestige items, economically based competition, and the establishment of contractual debts." (p. 44)

The occasions for feasting dealt with in this book range widely from the marking of life-transforming events, such as marriages, to the organization of large work parties, to the attempts at personal prestige-building by individual men. For our purposes, however, we'll need to concentrate our attention on the economic and political motives that seem common to most of these various occasions.

The politics of the feast

Hayden generalizes that "the drive to achieve advantages through feasting is probably the single most important impetus behind the intensified production of surpluses beyond household needs for survival." (p. 27) This assertion may be somewhat of an overstatement, since the utility of access to surplus food in ameliorating occasional calamities like crop failures would also have provided an impetus for increasing food production. But what, exactly, were the advantages offered by feasting that Hayden refers to?

We mentioned in Part 16 of this series the practice of interclan gift exchange, a collective custom among foragers and hunters whose obligatory nature had the effect of stabilizing interclan relations. The innovation of feasting with the transition to agricultural production can be seen as an elaboration of this earlier practice, but with several important differences.

First, the collective nature of the previous practice is missing. Now, there is an individual male host, backed up, of course, by his family members, who provide the necessary labor. Second, the usual offerings are no longer token food items given and received, but a more or less elaborate banquet type of event to be enjoyed — and appreciated — by the lucky invited guests. Third, the obvious imbalance of obligation inherent in a feast is somewhat smoothed over by the festive character of the event. But, as they say, the devil will have his due.

Among the various advantages accruing to the hosts that are mentioned by the book's contributors are 1) social pres-

tige — useful for those seeking increased political authority; 2) wealth — when the guests are made to feel obligated to bring contributions to the feast, the host gets to keep the "leftovers," which may include storable food or luxury items; 3) labor mobilization — the host may make clear that the gratitude felt by the guests must be channeled into a collective work project of benefit to him; and 4) formalizing social inequalities — the men eat first, the women later; the guests eat, the workers serve; the "special guests" get special food, the others get more ordinary food; seating is arranged based on the value of the gift brought by each guest, etc.

Dietler observes, "The relationship of giver to receiver, or host to guest, translates into a relationship of social superiority and inferiority unless and until the equivalent can be returned. ... In this feature, the potential of hospitality to be manipulated as a tool in defining social relations, lies the crux of commensal [feasting] politics." (pp. 74-75)

The feast as an instrument for the exploitation of labor

Regarding so-called "work feasts" in particular, contributors Dietler and Ingrid Herbich note that "regardless of the formal ideology of a society, large work feasts that are viewed as a finite exchange transaction with no reciprocal labor obligations can result, in the course of practice, in asymmetrical labor flows, such that some individuals or households derive wealth and prestige from the labor of others. This fact has profound significance for the long-term development of social relations and economic structures." (pp. 257-58)

The practice of holding feasts, along with the other economically based social innovations that we've previously noted, has brought us into a new world, a world dominated by men. The prevalence of feasting in transitional societies appears to have been an important vehicle in establishing the male social, political and economic dominance that relegated wives to the status of field and household slaves.

That said, we need, from this point on, to be mindful that we have entered the time period when human society becomes divided into haves and have nots, when the contradictory interests of the conflicting social classes are the motive force propelling social change. In a flash of class consciousness, Dietler reminds us, "Whatever kings, chiefs, or elite classes are doing with their food, common households will continue to hold feasts in their own way to establish community and personal relationships, mobilize labor, and build symbolic capital." (p. 93) □

On the Picket Line

by Sue Davis

Cablevision workers rap for contract

Continued from page 5

To sign a petition addressed to "Dear Mr. Dolan: Where the Papers At?" visit tinyurl.com/mxfnesz. While you're at the site, check out the link to their militant performance on YouTube. (cwa-union.org, Aug. 29)

Rainbow Solidarity In Defense of CUBA



This groundbreaking book by Leslie Feinberg documents revolutionary Cuba's inspiring trajectory of progress towards liberation of sexualities, genders and sexes.

Book available at Amazon.com
workers.org/lavender-red

Indiana judge rules state 'right-to-work' law unconstitutional

Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels signed a "right-to-work" (for less) law on Feb. 1, 2012, over the noisy objections of thousands of union workers who took their protest from the statehouse to the Super Bowl Village to bring a national spotlight on the anti-worker move. Local 150 of the Operating Engineers union soon filed a suit stating the law violates the state constitution. And on Sept. 10, a state judge agreed with them. But the Indiana Attorney General filed an appeal on Sept. 12, which means the suit is headed to the state Supreme Court. (Indystar.com, Sept. 12) Stay tuned. □

AFL-CIO delegates against U.S. wars

Continued from page 4

against Syria was ever allowed during the convention, though a resolution by a Chicago local of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees against war in Syria was passed out.

There was, however, an important resolution denouncing the military coup in Honduras and supporting the resistance movement and its inclusion in upcoming November elections there. It also called

for the elections to be fair and without intimidation.

Also circulated outside and sometimes inside the convention were leaflets about the growing struggle against the dreadful cutbacks looming in Detroit; about the campaign against postal closings and privatization; a flyer motivating a growing "A Job is a Right" movement; as well as Workers World newspaper.

— Paul Wilcox

¡Proletarios y oprimidos de todos los países unios!

EDITORIAL

Una grieta que deja entrar la claridad

En esta época de armas terriblemente destructivas y de la capacidad de agencias gubernamentales estadounidenses de espiar sobre todas las comunicaciones privadas — cuando son digitalizadas, como la mayoría ya son — hay una tendencia a considerar al estado capitalista como todopoderoso, un gigante que puede arrollar a todos/as si así lo quiere.

No lo es. Pero toma una crisis política y/o económica para hacerlo aparente.

En el análisis final, el estado se basa en la fuerza, el ejército, la policía, los tribunales, las cárceles y todas las agencias anexas que respaldan la represión. Cuando se enumeran todas estas agencias, son millones las personas que están involucradas en una u otra capacidad para hacerla funcionar. La mayoría de ellas no se ven a sí mismas como guardianes del orden capitalista-imperialista. Sin embargo, eso es lo que son. Y cuando el sistema entra en crisis, cuando decenas de millones de trabajadores/as se enfrentan a la inseguridad económica que podría llevar incluso a la pérdida de su hogar y al hambre, la lealtad de muchos/as de aquellos/as que trabajan para el estado capitalista se tambalea.

En estos momentos el gobierno federal ha reducido un 10 por ciento de los presupuestos de muchos organismos y dice que no tiene el dinero para reparar puentes, inspeccionar la carne, financiar programas para niños/as pobres, mantener abiertas las oficinas de correos y para realizar miles de otras tareas vitales.

Pero tiene el dinero para enviar destructores al Mediterráneo con cientos de misiles de crucero para atacar a Siria. Eso ha provocado una gran reacción de las masas del pueblo que claramente ha rechazado ese ataque.

Y ha llevado a algunos de los que en algún momento tenían autorización de máxima seguridad, a quienes se les confiaban los tipos de secretos del gobierno que supuestamente no deberían salir a la luz, a dar la alarma. Edward Snowden y Chelsea [Bradley] Manning no han sido las únicas personas. Ellos pueden que sean solo un síntoma de una corriente mucho más grande de desafección.

La última señal de esto es una declaración pública del Steering Group of Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (Junta Directiva de Profesionales Veteranos en la Inteligencia por la Salud Mental) que refuta la denuncia de la administración Obama, la cual dice que el ejército sirio había utilizado gas venenoso contra civiles en un suburbio de Damasco.

Doce ex militares y funcionarios de inteligencia firmaron el comunicado enviado a Obama, que comienza diciendo, “Lamentamos informarle que algunos de nuestros ex compañeros nos dicen, categóricamente, que contrariamente a las afirmaciones de su administración, la inteligencia más fiable demuestra que Bashar al-Assad NO fue el responsable del incidente químico que mató e hirió a civiles sirios el 21 de agosto y que los funcionarios de la inteligencia británica también lo saben”.

Titulado “¿Es Siria una trampa?”, la declaración puede encontrarse en un número de diferentes sitios del Web, incluyendo wikispooks.com. Lo que indica es un círculo mucho más amplio de disidencia en el interior del establecimiento sobre la política de guerra del gobierno, ya que los doce funcionarios retirados que firmaron la declaración dijeron que fueron informados por personas en servicio activo que tienen acceso a los datos en bruto que no se muestran al público, a los medios de comunicación ni incluso a los mismos miembros del Congreso.

El estado aparentemente todopoderoso, por lo tanto, está sujeto a las mismas tensiones que están obligando a las masas de gente a organizarse y luchar.

Mientras escribimos esto, la administración Obama puede estar retirándose de su esfuerzo para un ataque inmediato. Ciertamente se arriesga a más oposición si no da ni siquiera la apariencia de escuchar al pueblo.

Pero las fuerzas del imperialismo no están influidas por la lógica o el llamado a la conciencia. La lucha contra las guerras rapaces por ganancias debe ser parte de cada agenda progresista, porque la guerra misma entonces se convierte en la excusa para infligir aún más dolor a las masas en nombre del patriotismo y el sacrificio — nada de lo cual se exige a los súper-ricos. □

Trabajadores despedidos de GM en Colombia decididos a vencer

Por Martha Grevatt

Durante dos años y dos meses, un decidido grupo de trabajadores automotrices despedidos han vivido en tiendas de campaña frente a la embajada estadounidense en Bogotá, Colombia. Ellos, junto a cientos de sus homólogos, fueron despedidos por el crimen de sufrir discapacidades y lesiones relacionadas con el trabajo. La General Motors, su antiguo empleador, aún se niega a negociar una solución justa con la Asociación de Trabajadores y Extrabajadores Enfermos de General Motors Colmotores (Asotrecol).

La embajada de Estados Unidos fue escogida como blanco de la protesta por la participación accionaria de Washington en la GM y su papel en el rescate [económico] en el 2009 de esa compañía. Estos valientes trabajadores han sostenido tres huelgas de hambre, con los labios cosidos para dramatizar sus dificultades. No sólo fueron despedidos, sino que se falsificaron documentos para negarles la compensación a estos trabajadores.

Su lucha es difícil. Su grave situación financiera significa que sus familias a veces se queden sin comida; algunos han sido desalojados y otros se enfrentan a una ejecución hipotecaria. Sin dinero para las cirugías que necesitan, sus condiciones físicas se siguen deteriorando.

Sus espíritus se levantaron enormemente sin embargo, cuando llegó una delegación de solidaridad desde Detroit. Dos ex presidentes de la UAW, Melvin Thompson y Frank Hammer, se unieron al campamento y vivieron con las familias durante dos semanas. Una semana después, se les unieron el reverendo Charles Williams, presidente del capítulo de Detroit de la Red Nacional de Acción (NAN por las siglas en inglés) y la activista de NAN, Debra Simmons. Otra activista que apoya a Asotrecol, Paige Shell-Spurling, de Portland, Oregon también fue parte de la delegación de solidaridad.

Los cinco activistas también protestaron junto a un grupo de mineros heridos despedidos de otra región de Colombia que han sido inspirados por Asotrecol. Poco después de que los activistas estadounidenses regresaron al campamento, los mineros fueron golpeados brutalmente por la policía. Colombia es el lugar más peligroso del mundo para los/as sindicalistas y los/as defensores/as de los derechos de los/as trabajadores/as.

Mientras la delegación estaba allí, llegó por Western Union otra cosa para animar el espíritu de los trabajadores despedidos, casi 900 dólares donados por los/as trabajadores/as de la Chrysler en la zona de Detroit quienes son miembros de la Seccional 869 de UAW. Esta donación permitió que uno de los trabajadores tuviera la cirugía abdominal que necesitaba como consecuencia de la huelga de hambre. Han sido las donaciones de los/as partidarios/as en los Estados Unidos, especialmente con los más de \$10.000 aportados por los/as miembros de la UAW, que han mantenido el campamento como un símbolo de resistencia.

En agosto, después de que la delegación regresara a Estados Unidos, la Embajada intentó ilegalmente desalojar el campamento, el cual no está en terrenos de la Embajada. Comenzó una cuarta huelga de hambre y Carlos Ernesto Trujillo, quien no podía trabajar en la GM debido a lesiones en el hombro, se amarró a una cruz en una protesta de crucifixión. A solo 15 horas más tarde, el presidente de Asotrecol Jorge Parra aseguró un acuerdo de funcionarios del gobierno, de suspender el desalojo. El acuerdo también prometió que un ejecutivo de la sede de GM en Detroit se comprometería a participar en la mediación el 22 de agosto con Asotrecol.

La mediación no tuvo lugar como se había sido prometido. Asotrecol se reunió con miembros de la gerencia de la planta de Colmotores, pero sus problemas siguen sin resolverse.

Sin embargo, su lucha está teniendo un impacto enorme. Dentro de la planta de Colmotores grandes cambios han ocurrido en el campo de seguridad y ergonomía. Los trabajadores heridos e incapacitados ya no están siendo despedidos.

La delegación de solidaridad ha estado compartiendo sus experiencias con activistas de Detroit, incluyendo a miembros de la Coalición ¡Moratoria Ahora! para Detener las Ejecuciones Hipotecarias, los Desalojos y Cierres de Utilidades. Más recientemente, Hammer y Thompson se dirigieron al grupo de miembros Caravana de Trabajadores/as Automotrices. “No hay ninguna separación entre Asotrecol y nosotros”, explicó Thompson. “Las empresas usan la violencia económica. Lo que nosotros/as tenemos que hacer absolutamente, es cantar la misma canción”.

Martha Grevatt es una trabajadora de la UAW Chrysler desde hace 26 años.

Reserve la fecha: Ciudad de Nueva York
Sábado 16 y domingo 17 de noviembre

Plenarias y talleres para discutir el punto de vista pro-socialista y marxista sobre:

- La irreversible crisis económica capitalista
- Lucha contra el racismo y la opresión nacional
- Uniendo a todos/as los/as trabajadores/as - organizados/as y no organizados/as; indocumentados/as y documentados/as
- Oponer resistencia a las guerras y ocupaciones imperialistas

...Y mucho más