

WORKERS WORLD



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Bosses stunned as Boeing workers reject giveback contract

By Jim McMahan
Seattle

A two-to-one “no” vote by the 31,000 members of Machinists District 751 (IAM) rejected Boeing’s attempt to ram a cutback labor contract down their throats. The Nov. 13 Seattle-area vote also upended the company’s plans to consolidate its labor contract with \$8.7 billion in state tax breaks for the company. The tax breaks had been forced through the Washington state Legislature on Nov. 9 in a hurry-up, three-day session.

The package deal would have committed Boeing to continue assembling the redesigned 777X airplane at its Everett, Wash., plant with a supposed guarantee of 50,000 jobs. Boeing executives were then hoping to take this hugely favorable production deal to the Dubai airshow over the Nov. 16-17 weekend and take home megabillions in orders for the plane. In fact Boeing got orders of \$95 billion, reported the Nov. 18 New York Times.

The IAM top leadership had apparently

been in quiet negotiations with Boeing for some time on this eight-year labor contract extension, but the contract was presented to the workers as an ultimatum, with only a week or so to decide. The workers were told to agree to the contract extension or Boeing, which is heading toward record profits this year, would consider taking its 777X jobs and production elsewhere.

The proposed eight-year extension included a no-strike pledge through 2024; a 1 percent raise one year and nothing the next; converting the Machinists’ solid pension plan into a regressive 401(k); greatly increased medical plan costs; and more than doubling the time it takes new hires to reach top pay scale, from nearly 10 to 20 years.

The Machinists have gone on strike many times to gain and hold onto their benefits over the years. So the company said it would sweeten the deal with a \$10,000 cash signing bonus — far less than what the workers would have to give up.

A “Vote No” rally of 400 was held out-

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Singing the international workers’ anthem.

Workers World Party conference

Socialist solidarity in action

5-11

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Conference marches to NYC Veolia office to support Boston school bus union.

NORTH CAROLINA

Mental health workers demand safety, rights and raises

**By Dante Strobino
Durham, N.C.**

Jessica Brandon, a mother of three whose 40-year-old husband has had four heart attacks, is the sole wage earner in her family. For the past five and a half years she has worked as a health care technician at Central Regional Hospital in Butner, N.C., one of three state psychiatric hospitals. Brandon says that after paying essential bills for the family, she typically has less than \$40 left for the month.

There is nothing unusual about her story. In fact, most of the state's 15,000 employees at mental health facilities are living at or below the poverty level. An overwhelming number of health care technicians — 82 percent — are stuck at the bottom of their salary grade, no matter their seniority.

Many have worked in their jobs for five to 10 years but still earn only around \$25,000 a year. Like all state employees, they have not had a raise since 2008.

Most have to work second jobs to support their families and meet ever rising living costs. Often these are minimum wage jobs at fast-food restaurants.

After working 40 to 60 hours a week cleaning, bathing, walking, entertaining, teaching and providing all the daily tasks required to keep their clients safe and active, the additional 10 to 20 hours at a second job can be more than exhausting. Overwork and fatigue make it very difficult to focus on the essential tasks of caring for those with mental illness.

Bonita Johnson, a food service assistant at Murdoch Center, says: "We make low wages and are expected to buy work clothes and keep lots of white tops clean, with our own money. If we aren't paid right, we at least want help with our uniforms because we are expected to wear white tops, solid pants, hairnets and nonskid shoes, and are told to stay clean and stain free. At the same time, we are not supplied with funds, aprons or anything else to make these uniforms affordable." Johnson works a second job at a Chick-fil-A in Wake Forest several evenings each week.

When Gov. Pat McCrory refused to expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, he basically left an additional half-million poor people, who have no health insurance, to die. North Carolina could have received up to \$16 billion in federal funding for Medicaid expansion over the next five years. McCrory would rather tell state employees and other poor residents to tighten their belts, that the state can't afford to provide them health coverage.

Despite all this hardship and stress on the workforce, McCrory felt it was necessary to release a memo to Department of Health and Human Services employees in March 2013 saying they all would have to sacrifice, find more efficiencies and expect no pay raises in the foreseeable future. Yet McCrory and DHHS Secretary Aldona Vos somehow found at least \$1.7 million to hand out raises to underqualified political appointees within the department.

Recipients of the governor's generosity include Ricky

Diaz and Matthew McKillip, two 24-year-old McCrory campaign staffers who were awarded \$85,000 and \$87,500 gigs, both at significant pay increases over their predecessors. Joe Hauck, vice president of a company headed by Vos' spouse, was given a contract capped at \$310,000 to "reorganize, redirect and restructure the Department," according to Diaz.

Mental health workers' Bill of Rights

Wos claims that Hauck has a plan to save the state \$5 million by hiring more permanent nurses in the state facilities. Bringing in more permanent nurses, providing a more stable workforce, will definitely assist in improving patient care and reduce stress among workers. However, in the current climate of low morale and high turnover, this plan is not likely to save any money. Turnover of staff costs the state tens of millions of dollars each year. Since January 2012, turnover at Cherry Hospital in Goldsboro is 40 percent; among registered nurses turnover is 46 percent. Similar turnover rates apply to all state-operated facilities. According to Beverly Moriarty, a registered nurse, workers can't wait to quit.

These turnover rates are due to staff cuts, low wages and dangerous work environments. Also driving down morale and driving up turnover are policies on which staff have no input and whose contradictions often put employees in "damned if you do, damned if you don't" situations, in the words of former licensed practical nurse Bernice Lunsford. The best way to provide quality care to clients is to create stable jobs and respect workers' basic rights.

According to information from DHHS Human Resources, there are 15 percent fewer filled positions since the so-called Mental Health Reform Plan was adopted in 2001, a reduction of 1,500 jobs. In the last three years alone, 619 positions have been cut (over 7 percent) at the state's institutions.

Employees must cover more clients and work more mandatory overtime. They are heavily pressured not to take any vacation or comp time and are placed under increasing stress.

State mental health workers belonging to UE Local 150, North Carolina Public Service Workers Union, have been campaigning since 2008 for a Mental Health Workers' Bill of Rights. In February, state Rep. Larry Bell (D-Clinton) introduced House Bill 130, which would grant rights to adequate staffing, input on decisions, a safe workplace, the right to refuse excessive overtime, a family-supporting wage and more.

Kevin Yancey, UE 150 statewide chief shop steward and youth program assistant, says, "Workers need a seat at the table so that we can help the administration navigate through a situation that they cannot see."

The union's DHHS Council held a demonstration on Nov. 14 at Dorothea Dix Hospital in Raleigh. Workers demanded that Vos meet with the union, extend Medicaid coverage under the Affordable Care Act and grant workers "safety, rights and raises," the slogan of their current campaign.

Strobino is a field organizer with UE Local 150.



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On the Picket Line

by Sue Davis

More car washers organize in NYC

Immigrant workers at four more New York City car washes, two in the Bronx and two in Queens, signed three-year contracts with the Department Store (RWDSU) and the Food and Commercial Workers unions in New York City, UFCW announced Oct. 24. The workers will get an immediate wage increase, with three more raises, bringing the workers' pay to a minimum of \$9.18 an hour. The contract set up a grievance procedure, protections for immigrants and against discrimination, increased job security, a posted work schedule with hours and overtime evenly distributed, an equitable system for distributing tips, and bonuses for five holidays. Starting next year, workers will get five paid days off and two personal days, in addition to the right to take family leave and time to take care of immigration issues. Ernesto Salazar, who works at Webster Car Wash in the Bronx, said: "We will no longer be treated without dignity; now the bosses have to respect us. We hope to serve as an example to other carwashers!" The unions' WASH New York Campaign has won a total of seven union elections within the last several months. UFCW reports that the campaign is improving workplace safety at car washes across the city.

Voters approve minimum wage hikes

On Nov. 5, voters in New Jersey passed a referendum giving minimum-wage workers a raise. By a margin of 61 percent, they approved an amendment to the state constitution that will raise the minimum hourly wage to \$8.25 on Jan. 1 and then step it up annually to keep pace with inflation. They passed it despite Gov. Chris Christie's veto last year.

Also on Nov. 5, voters in the Seattle suburb of SeaTac approved the "Good Jobs Initiative" referendum sponsored by labor unions and other groups by 54 percent. That will raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour for more than 6,000 workers at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and at airport-related businesses, including hotels, car-rental agencies and parking lots. Washington state's current minimum wage is \$9.19, the highest in the nation.

In July, a Hart Research Associates poll showed 80 percent of respondents supported raising the federal minimum wage. That was confirmed by a Nov. 11 Gallup poll where 76 percent of respondents approved the hike. Even President Obama has gotten on board. The Nov. 7 New York Times reported that Obama now supports the Harkin-Miller bill, which would raise the federal minimum from the current \$7.25, where it's been since 2009, to \$10.10 an hour in 2015. However, the House defeated the raise by a vote of 233 to 184 when it was attached to another bill on March 15. Stay tuned.

Also on Nov. 5, voters in Cincinnati defeated a ballot initiative by 78 percent that would have eliminated the city's pension plan for public workers and replaced it with a 401(k) retirement plan.

Walmart strike in Los Angeles, Seattle, Chicago

Between Nov. 8 and Nov. 13, workers at Walmart stores in Los Angeles, Seattle and Chicago, supported by hundreds of activists, held one-day strikes in the run-up to the biggest shopping day of the year — "Black Friday," the day after the so-called "Thanksgiving" holiday. OUR Walmart is planning actions all over the country for that day. Salon online reported Nov. 12 that subcontracted janitorial workers who clean banks, stores like Target and other corporations in Minneapolis/St. Paul plan to strike that day as well. □

A win for people of Detroit

Judge says no to secret fees in bankruptcy

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

In the struggle to stop the racist bankruptcy and emergency management imposed by the big banks on the city of Detroit, pickets chanted outside the downtown headquarters of Bank of America at lunchtime on Nov. 12.

They targeted the financial giant because of its role — along with United Bank of Switzerland and the London-based Barclays — in what activists call an "additional \$350 million robbery by the banks of municipal retirees and Detroit residents." Most of this money will go to pay a termination fee on a "nefarious interest rate swap." Some \$230 million will go directly to the profit coffers of BoA and UBS. Barclays, of LIBOR scandal infamy, is brokering the deal.

Several UBS and BoA executives have recently been found guilty and sentenced to prison terms for fraud in connection with municipal bonds.

Two days after the protest, on Nov. 14, Bankruptcy Judge Steven Rhodes sided with people's attorney Jerome Goldberg and denied an outrageous motion made by the emergency manager and the banks to keep secret the huge fees they will make from the deal. Barclays even reportedly flew in a bar-



Protest at Bank of America, Nov. 12.

WWW PHOTO: KRIS HAMEL

ristar from London to appear at the hearing in the federal court.

Goldberg successfully argued that under the Michigan Freedom of Information Act, the fee agreement must be disclosed. A Detroit Free Press article called the ruling "a win for [municipal] unions." (freep.com, Nov. 14)

Goldberg told Workers World, "The interest rate swap agreement, if approved by the court, will cost Detroiters 20 percent of their city income taxes, or \$4 million per month for the first six years after conclusion of the

bankruptcy. It should be the other way around. The banks owe Detroit for destroying our city with their predatory lending and massive foreclosures."

A trial on the issue of the \$350 million termination fee agreement will begin on Dec. 10. Organizers with the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions & Utility Shutoffs are planning a major demonstration outside the courthouse on that date. The coalition is demanding a cancellation of the city's debt to the criminal banks. □

Oakland truckers authorize strike

By Terri Kay
Oakland, Calif.

After meeting with the California Air Resources Board and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District on Nov. 13, the Port of Oakland Truckers Association held a general membership meeting and "voted unanimously for what amounts to a strike authorization if their demands aren't met." (POTA press release)

While the truckers' association was meeting with CARB, Mayor Jean Quan and Port of Oakland Executive Director Chris Lytle at City Hall, over 70 truckers surrounded the downtown plaza in a deafening convoy, honking their horns in support of their representatives. Meanwhile, a group of supporters held a solidarity demonstration out front, handing out fliers on the truckers' demands.

POTA's press release explains that its representatives "pushed for an extension of the CARB-enforced January 1 deadline [forcing truckers] to acquire



PHOTO: ALICE LOAIZA

Port truckers' convoy surrounded Oakland City Hall, Nov. 13.

trucks built in 2007 or later in order to continue working at the port. In addition, they requested grant funding to help 800 at-risk truckers offset the financial burden of costly truck upgrades required by current law. CARB denied these requests and claimed the deadline could not be extended and available monies had already been reallocated. Before the meeting ended,

Mayor Quan and Director Chris Lytle claimed they would take a look into port and city finances to find funding for POTA truckers.

"To encourage efficiency at the port, POTA demands include a congestion fee of \$50 per hour after the first two hours truckers spend waiting in line to pick up a load. The association is also asking for an emissions fee of \$50 per load for all Port of Oakland truck drivers to help offset the costs of buying and maintaining CARB-compliant trucks. Finally, the association is demanding transparency in CARB's relationship with the Port of Oakland, specifically in the enforcement of regulations outlining minimum efficiency of terminal operation.

"POTA representatives have made it clear they expect response on funding from city and port officials by Wednesday, Nov. 20. If they are denied funding again, a work stoppage may take place as early as next week. The group has organized two prior work stoppages since August of 2013." □

Boeing workers reject giveback

Continued from page 1

side the Everett IAM union hall on Nov. 8. Wilson Ferguson, president of the district's Local A, called the new deal "the Walmartization of aerospace." (Seattle Times, Nov. 11) Earlier that week, workers marched through the Everett plant on their lunch break chanting "Vote No." Many went to the Seattle hall where District 751 Directing Business Representative Tom Wroblewski was forced to tear up the "crappy" contract instead of trying to sell it.

The state legislature had passed an \$8.7 billion multiyear tax-cut package

for Boeing — the largest subsidy given by a state or local government in U.S. history. This was supposedly to help keep Boeing jobs in the Seattle area, but was really craven bowing down to the company. That would probably bring on massive cuts in vital programs, including education, health care, environmental protection and much more. The state legislature is already under a court order to increase spending for basic education; the education funding crisis would only increase.

For now, the tax-cut deal has been set aside as Boeing reviews compet-

ing sites for its production and as the union and bosses take a measure of their opposing strengths.

Boeing, state politicians and the media want the Machinists to sacrifice to bring their living standards down to a "competitive" level with low-wage labor. But Machinists are showing growing awareness that the wages and benefits they have long fought for are part of the struggle of all labor. Union wages, good pensions and full medical care are a right and must not be surrendered — especially by a strong union, experienced in the struggle. □

Energy industry wants government to rescue its profits

By Betsey Piette

For nearly a decade, the natural gas industry has drained valuable water resources, poisoned the land with dangerous chemicals, released radiation into water supplies and increased the danger of global warming through its unconventional drilling method known as hydraulic fracturing, fracking for short.

To get away with this environmental destruction, the energy industry unleashed a massive public relations campaign promoting fracking as a source of cheap natural gas needed to make the U.S. “energy independent.”

Potential investors were lured with the promise of “100-year supplies” of natural gas in formations like the Marcellus Shale in the northeastern U.S. and the Barnett Shale in the Southwest. Politicians were bought off by the dozens to pave the way for unfettered drilling with limited oversight.

Now the industry, caught up in its own hype, faces a crisis brought on by the capitalist economic system, where production goals always put profit before human need. Concerns over environmental destruction did not deter drilling. Concerns over the impact of overproduction on profit margins, however, may be the real game changer.

Three events combined to cut the industry’s profit potential. Overproduction of natural gas started with a drilling surge

from 2005 to 2008; this caused prices to nosedive. The economic recession that started in 2008 also diminished demand for natural gas. The high cost of hydraulic fracturing technology, needed to extract natural gas, also cut into profits.

Shale gas drilling needed higher natural gas prices to remain profitable. The International Energy Agency in 2010 estimated the production cost for shale gas between \$4 and \$9 per thousand cubic feet (Mcf), not counting lease costs. Prior to 2008, natural gas sold for over \$13 per Mcf. By April 2012, the price dropped to around \$2 per Mcf. (Foodandwaterwatch.org, Nov. 11, 2012)

The severe drop in U.S. market prices has left the top 50 energy companies, with fracking investments averaging \$126 billion per year since 2006, unable to cover production costs.

After years of making huge investments, many corporations now find their lease assets far less lucrative than promised. ExxonMobil became the largest producer of natural gas in the U.S. when it purchased Texas-based XTO Energy in 2010. Two years later, reacting to the price drop, XTO Energy’s CEO, Rex Tillerson, said: “We are all losing our shirts today. ... It’s all in the red.” (Foodandwaterwatch.org)

To add to the drillers’ dilemma, many companies must actively drill or forfeit their leases. Landowners, anticipating hefty royalty checks, find payments de-

creasing in amount and then stopping altogether. Some energy companies deduct production costs from royalty payments. Some leaseholders have received bills, asking for payment, instead of checks.

In the casino world of venture capitalism, investors are faced with the decision whether to hold or to fold. Many are backing out of investments.

In the first half of 2013, oil and gas investments in North America dropped 52 percent with massive write-offs in shale. Eighteen months after buying Chesapeake Energy’s shale assets in Fayetteville, Ark., the Australian transnational BHP Billiton wrote off more than 50 percent of the purchase price. Shell also sold off 50 percent of its shale assets. Private equity investments in shale have dropped 90 percent since 2012. (Energy-policyforum.org, Oct. 1)

The Norwegian pension and insurance company giant, Storebrand, recently divested from 19 natural gas companies after determining that fossil fuel companies would be “worthless financially.” (Alternet, Oct. 15)

From gas to oil

From 2000 to 2009, three-quarters of all drilling rigs in the U.S. were extracting natural gas. In 2009, operations moved to the Bakken formation in North Dakota and the Eagle Ford Field in Texas to drill for oil. By August 2012, 75 percent of drilling rigs were fracking for oil.

The industry hoped to take advantage of the higher price of oil while biding their time until natural gas prices increased. Even this strategy caused problems. An analysis by the Canadian firm Global Sustainability Research found accessible oil in these formations declining at the rate of 40 percent per year. (Science News, Oct. 28)

With the cost to drill for shale oil up to \$85 per barrel, fracking for oil proved less profitable than anticipated, since the market price averaged only \$69 per barrel. In August 2013, Royal Dutch Shell, which had shifted drilling activity from shale gas to oil, wrote off \$2 billion in oil lease assets.

Government to the rescue

With the glut of natural gas pushing profits down and driving investors to dump their holdings, there is increased industry pressure on the federal government to come to the owners’ rescue.

U.S. corporations know they can count on government intervention when they get into trouble. The Federal Reserve bailed out the banks after the sub-prime mortgage crisis. Auto industry giants got government assistance to restructure and rob workers of their benefits.

The energy industry has long enjoyed a partnership with government officials on every level. To guarantee the continuance of \$24 billion in federal tax subsidies, en-

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Two opposing views on climate change

By Deirdre Griswold

Part 1, published in the Nov. 21 issue of Workers World, covered the risks brought by climate change, Washington’s sabotage of international agreements and the failure of market-based “solutions.”

The driving force of capitalist production is private profit. Each corporate entity has a responsibility not to society as a whole but to the bottom line: producing profits for its owners and shareholders.

Whatever damage its operations may be doing to humanity or to the environment are not its “business.” In order to improve its image, it may make concessions when under enormous public pressure to clean up this or that, as BP and other companies were forced to do after the disastrous Gulf oil spill. But its owners will never accept taking a real loss. They are in the business of making money, not friends, and will try to make the problem go away with a public relations blitz rather than any real overhaul of their operations.

The only conclusion that can be had from this is that the environmental movement must become consciously and militantly anti-capitalist. But that is not enough.

There is a strong trend toward anarchism in the movement. Many see the answer as moving backward toward simpler ways of living and producing. This nostalgia for a presumably better past forgets that in addition to what was produced by small farmers and artisans — many of whom had to toil around the clock just to survive — early capitalist societies grew rich on the superexploitation of enslaved and/or colonized peoples.

Modern technology has penetrated everywhere in the world because it is more efficient, is labor saving and offers economies of scale. It is not the technology itself that is to blame for the current crisis. It should become the vehicle to a shorter workweek and an easier life for all. But the technology today is shaped and warped to serve the interests of a superrich owning class, rather than the needs of the people.

In relation to the environmental crisis, are there any concrete examples to show that modern technology can be developed on a large scale to counter global warming?

Yes, very definitely. Most people here don’t even know it, but China is making tremendous gains in reducing carbon emissions by investing large sums in alternative energy and improvements to its electrical grid. Instead, all we hear about is China’s big air quality problem, which indeed is quite severe.

Much is made of the fact that in recent years China’s annual GGEs exceeded those of the U.S. for the first time. Does this show that China isn’t doing as much as the U.S. to mitigate climate change? Not at all.

First of all, China has the world’s largest population. It also has become “the factory of the world” as many companies have moved their manufacturing to China. But on a per capita basis, the U.S. was the seventh-largest emitter of greenhouse gases in both 2000 and 2005. China, by contrast, was in 99th place in 2000 and 72nd place in 2005. So while its emissions per person rose as its industry grew, it still was way, way down the list as compared to the U.S. (Figures from the World Resources Institute.)

PART 2

In addition, the facts and figures show that China, which so recently was a terribly poor country, is now number one in the world in its commitment of vast resources to developing sustainable energy.

An article posted Sept. 24 by Michael Davidson of theenergycollective.com sums up China’s achievements:

“China’s deployment of renewable electricity generation — starting with hydropower, then wind, and now biomass and solar — is massive. China leads the world in installed renewable energy capacity (both including and excluding hydro) and has sustained annual wind additions in excess of 10 gigawatts (10 GW) for four straight years. Half of the hydropower installed worldwide last year was in China. And solar and biomass-fired electricity are expected to grow ten-fold over the period 2010-2020. Most striking amidst all these impressive accomplishments has been the Chinese government’s seemingly unwavering financial support for renewable energy generators even as other countries scale back or restructure similar support programs. ...

“Investment in renewable energy has risen steadily in China over the last decade, with the wind and solar sectors hitting a record \$68 billion in 2012, according to Bloomberg New Energy Finance. These sums — together with massive state-led investments in hydropower — have translated into a surge of renewable energy capacity. ... Renewables now provide more than a quarter of China’s electricity generating capacity.”

Capitalist market relations certainly exist in China, but they do not control the backbone of the economy. The ability to plan and carry out this massive,

state-supported green development in response to global warming comes ultimately from the socialist restructuring of Chinese society, made possible by its decades-long revolution.

That revolution mobilized the workers and peasants to defeat the landlords and capitalists and set up their own state structure — the same state that is now investing so heavily in renewables. That’s what makes China so different from India, for example, another huge country, but one where the old ruling class was never uprooted.

Socialist revolution may seem a distant prospect in the United States. Of course it is extremely important that the environmental movement make demands on the capitalist government now — for things like expanding environmental protection and spending the people’s tax moneys on improving public transportation, the electric grid, the aging power stations, etc., which could provide millions of jobs while reducing fossil fuel consumption.

But this is just as much an uphill battle as changing the system itself. What’s important is not to have a shred of confidence in the capitalist class or its government to solve this monumental problem.

We are headed into turbulent times, and the working class must be told the truth about this system. Some concessions may be wrung out of it by the militant, organized struggle of the workers and oppressed, but it is a system that is at war with the masses of people and the environment. It must be destroyed and the wealth — both natural and human-created — liberated for the good of humanity and all life on our unique planet. □

WWP Conference

Grapples with strategies to overturn dead-end capitalism

By John Catalinotto
New York

Workers. Youth. Detroit. Boston. These are now in the forefront of the consciousness of many of the political activists who attended this year's Workers World Party annual national conference. It was a life-changing experience. Not just the words, but the electric atmosphere sparked early in the Nov. 16-17 weekend meeting here in New York. More than 300 attended from 20 states and dozens of cities.

As the party prepared to grapple with strategy for this period of dead-end capitalism, Boston school bus unionists arrived. In the midst of their own life-and-death struggle against the Veolia transnational monopoly, a busload of Boston school bus drivers, mainly of Haitian and Cape Verdean origin, walked into the meeting hall to the cheers and shouts of the hundreds of participants, many of them young people attending their first WWP conference.

When Veolia's management and Boston officials attacked some Steelworkers Local 8751 leaders and baited them as WWP members, it seems unlikely they had in mind strengthening solidarity between the union and the party. But that's what happened. The drivers listened attentively to a Marxist analysis of the capitalist crisis.

At the end, conference participants approved a resolution to battle Veolia wherever possible and help the union defend its leaders and win.

From Garrett Dicembre's introduction Saturday morning to the open-mike session on Sunday, participants could hear and feel the change in consciousness of the working class. Youths, themselves in low-paid and insecure jobs, described their own moment of realization that the U.S. "American dream" had turned into their nightmare of abuse, racism, sexual harassment and job loss — and led them to commit to a life of organized class struggle.

Minutes after the bus drivers filled three rows of seats at the front of the hall, the delegation from Cuba's U.N. Mission arrived. This sparked another round of cheers. WWP and its friends have felt close solidarity with socialist Cuba since the Cuban Revolution first confronted U.S. imperialism.

As Ariel Hernandez Hernandez, first secretary of the mission, described Cuba's measures to defend its socialist gains against the U.S. blockade, cheers and chants of "Free the Cuban Five" and "Cuba sí, bloqueo no" filled the room and set the mood for the conference.

Tackling dead-end capitalism

The first session's presentations had a double task: Not only explaining how and why a global civilization is decomposing, but also opening discussions about strategies to mobilize the working class to fight to overturn the system. Talks from this and other sessions will be excerpted in this and future issues of WW and published online.

Secretariat member Fred Goldstein presented a Marxist analysis of the concentration of service workers, now a majority of the working class, in low-paid,

non-union jobs in giant chain stores that place workers experiencing similar pay and conditions in close vicinity of each other and to organizers.

First Secretary Larry Holmes, who examined the overall deteriorating economic conditions for workers in the U.S. and worldwide, urged participation in the movement of low-wage workers, specifically to support a Dec. 5 strike action already in motion. Holmes' address will be published in the next issue.

Abayomi Azikiwe explained how Detroit had become the prime example of the banks' move to pillage the cities. There the ruling class is using ongoing bankruptcy proceedings to transfer more billions from the workers to the banks. The Moratorium NOW! Coalition is calling for a mass demonstration outside the federal court on Dec. 10 to demand rejection of a deal with Barclays Bank.

WWP Secretariat member Teresa Gutierrez discussed the impact of the crisis on migrants in the U.S. since the splendid upsurge of 2006 and that year's May Day general strike. With 2.5 million deportations since President Barack Obama took office, hundreds of thousands of arrests and continued militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border, a new leap in consciousness is taking place among migrant youths. Some have even voluntarily taken arrests in order to enter massive detention centers to organize migrant workers.

WWP Secretariat member Monica Moorehead, who chaired the opening plenary, paid tribute to USW 8751, the Boston School Bus Drivers Union. A founder of the union and grievance committee chair, now fired, Stevan Kirschbaum both explained how Veolia had broken the contract and led the crowd in singing union songs. His and the other school bus drivers' presentation of Veolia's union-busting tactics and their fightback drew angry chants of "Veolia must go!" and pledges to defend the fired unionists and get their jobs back.

A break-out session during lunch to discuss tactics to confront the transnational giant and win the struggle in Boston drew more than 100 participants. The session, which included remarks by Local 8751 Vice President Steve Gillis, produced the conference resolution to stand with Local 8751.

FIST and the 'Trayvon generation'

The youth organization, Fight Imperialism — Stand Together, or FIST, was put on the map. New York's Caleb Maupin reviewed the anti-imperialist struggle history of WWP and Youth Against War & Fascism in an earlier generation of youth activists. Detroit's Tachae Davis and North Carolina's Eva Panjwani brought that spirit of struggle to 2013. Colleen Davidson from Baltimore chaired, and Q Wideman of NC Heat performed her own poem.

That this second plenary title spoke of the "Trayvon generation" showed the youth's focus on the fight against rac-



Cuban diplomat Ariel Hernandez Hernandez speaks in first plenary.

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

ist killings by cops and others, "stop-and-frisk" and the "school-to-prison pipeline." FIST's program also defends women's and lesbian-gay-bi-trans-queer rights and the struggle of migrant workers — where young people are now taking the lead. These struggles will be integrated with the fight for jobs at a living wage.

Putting these words quickly into action that Nov. 16 evening, FIST led a march and demonstration to a nearby Veolia headquarters, a Bank of America office and a McDonald's restaurant to protest union busting, the robber banks, police brutality and low wages.

A third plenary took up establishing popular organizations independent of capitalist political parties that combined community and labor struggles. Under discussion were the People's Power Assemblies and Workers' Assemblies.

Summer Smith from Salt Lake City chaired. Speakers included New York's Larry Hales and Baltimore's Sharon Black — where the assembly movement has already participated in and led local and regional resistance. Los Angeles' John Parker commented on defending Syria against U.S.-NATO intervention.

Peter Gilbert from North Carolina described the assault by the rightist Tea Party, which has monopolized the state government and launched attacks on workers and nationally oppressed people in the "right-to-work" (for less), anti-union state.

WWP on anti-imperialism, socialist unity

The final plenary in this intense day took up WWP's anti-imperialist initiatives and socialist unity. WWP's firmness on anti-imperialism set the program for the anti-war movement. Mundo Obrero editor Berta Joubert-Ceci spoke on Latin America, and International Action Center co-coordinator and WWP Secretariat member Sara Flounders spoke on Lenin's position on fighting imperialist war.

Guest speaker Joe Lombardo, of the United National Antiwar Coalition, also described UNAC's goal of targeting U.S. imperialism as the central unifying theme for its protests here. Guest speaker Kazem Azin, of Solidarity Iran, thanked WWP for its consistent anti-imperialist role in the anti-war movement.

WW managing editor Kris Hamel discussed how to point the way toward socialism by raising transitional demands that the capitalists are sure to reject, such as "Take it from the banks, not city workers" in her city of Detroit.

Guest speaker Joe Iosbaker, of the Freedom Road Socialist Organization, targeted three years ago by a repressive federal grand jury, raised the need for

continued solidarity, at this time with Rasmea Odeh, a Palestinian woman arrested Oct. 22 in Chicago for having been jailed by Israeli occupiers 45 years ago.

WWP managing editor LeiLani Dowell, who chaired, discussed developments in Honduras and WWP's solidarity with the resistance movement there that formed after the 2009 coup. Its candidate in the coming presidential election is leading in the polls. The next day guests Lucy Pagoada and Celina Montes from that movement addressed the conference.

Also on Sunday, BAYAN USA Secretary-General Bernadette Ellorin discussed the natural disaster exacerbated by government neglect in parts of the Philippines and U.S. imperialism's use of the climate disaster to re-occupy parts of the country. Abayomi Azikiwe discussed developments in Africa, including increased U.S. military intervention. Activist Betty Davis spoke on the ongoing struggle to win compassionate release for imprisoned, terminally ill, people's lawyer Lynne Stewart.

Open mike and closing session

On Nov. 17, an open mike allowed both seasoned communists and new activists an opportunity to respond to the points raised at the conference or relate their experiences in the class struggle. Tova Fry from the Bay Area and Imani Henry from New York chaired.

The closing session, chaired by Dianne Mathiowetz from Atlanta, included an analysis by WW editor Deirdre Griswold of the circumstances surrounding the 1963 assassination of President John Kennedy. She explained that a coverup of the role of the far right continues to this day and reviewed WWP's work in helping organize an independent investigation at that time.

Also, Joyce Chediak reported on the first conference meeting of WWP's caucus of people with disabilities, how disability is a social construction and how to fight for rights for people with disabilities.

Larry Holmes appealed for people to join the party as new political leaders are sorely needed for the struggles sure to arise in the near future.

Participants at the conference approved both a resolution of international solidarity and one of solidarity with USW Local 8751.

The conference opened with rousing singing by Pam Parker, accompanied on guitar by Richard Miller, and closed with the entire conference singing "The Internationale" in English and Spanish, along with a chant demanding freedom for political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

The conference was live-streamed on the Internet. □

Young people say:

'Fight back! Build people's power'

By Andy Katz and Ben Carroll
New York

Young people from across the U.S. mobilized to attend the Workers World Party National Conference held Nov. 16–17 in New York. They represented many struggles and regions around the country, including Los Angeles; Salt Lake City; Rockford, Ill.; Bloomington, Ind.; Detroit; cities in North Carolina; Baltimore; Philadelphia; Buffalo, N.Y.; New York City, Boston and elsewhere.

Bao-Hanh Tran, who traveled from Los Angeles to attend the conference, told Workers World: "I think the socialist analysis Workers World Party offers is a great antidote to the nonsense and lies I was given in high school and on TV. I came all the way to NYC for this conference from LA because I really believe we can make change through this organization!"

The youth of Workers World Party organized the second plenary session of the conference titled "The Trayvon Generation: What's next in the post-employment economy under the new Jim Crow."

The session highlighted the changing consciousness among young people in this period of austerity, the intensified war on youth of color, and the struggles that youth are taking up to fight back. Q Wideman, a leading organizer of North Carolina high school students, opened the plenary with a spoken-word piece about the school-to-prison pipeline. Tachae Davis from Detroit, Caleb Maupin from New York and Eva Panjwani from Durham, N.C., all spoke during the session.

Fight Imperialism — Stand Together

Throughout the weekend, the revolutionary youth organization Fight Imper-



During the conference, FIST led a March for People's Power against union busting, racism, austerity and low wages.

alism — Stand Together (FIST) played an active role in all events at the conference.

FIST had issued a special appeal to youth to attend the conference and helped organize caravans from many parts of the country.

Danielle Boachié, who came with a FIST delegation from North Carolina, summarized the sentiments of many who were there, telling Workers World: "As an immigrant, I heard all the time about how great

life was or would be in the United States. But since living here, I've seen that's far from the truth. I'm a feminist blogger, and I'm here because I want to go beyond writing and into action and organizing."

During lunch on Saturday, FIST hosted a standing-room-only breakout discussion with more than 50 young people ready to do just that. They discussed the struggles happening in different parts of the country, the issues that most impact

youth in their areas, what are the attitudes of young people toward revolutionary politics in each of their regions, and how to better coordinate organizing by revolutionary youth across the country. The breakout discussion resolved to find ways to be in more regular communication with one another after the conference and build FIST chapters in their areas, where possible.

FIST also organized a March for People's Power that took place immediately after the close of the conference on Saturday night. The march stopped by significant targets in midtown Manhattan — the New York City corporate headquarters of the racist, union-busting, global corporation Veolia, a Bank of America office and several fast food restaurants.

Members of the Boston School Bus Drivers, Steelworkers Local 8751 joined FIST and other conference participants on the march and spoke at the offices of Veolia about their ongoing struggle against the company and the fight to reinstate the five leaders of the union who are under attack.

Members of Liberate CUNY joined FIST at the Bank of America office to speak about the ongoing struggle around the CUNY 6, student loan debt and resistance against bank-imposed austerity in Detroit. At the fast food restaurants, the march expressed solidarity with low-wage workers' ongoing struggle to win \$15 an hour and a union.

Without a doubt, the young people, and all who attended the conference, left with renewed revolutionary spirit. They will be bringing it back to the struggles they are engaged in throughout the country to build FIST, Workers World Party and the fight for people's power. □

Resolution in solidarity with Local 8751



The following resolution was passed unanimously on Nov. 17 at the national conference of Workers World Party. It grew out of a workshop on waging a campaign against the criminal, transnational conglomerate Veolia, which is attempting to bust the Boston School Bus Drivers Union, Steelworkers Local 8751.

Whereas the Boston School Bus Drivers Union Steelworkers Local 8751, is comprised of hundreds of mostly Black and Brown immigrants who have, since the local's founding in 1976, been closely linked to Boston's communities, especially its many communities of color, through the children whom they care for daily on their way to and from school;

Whereas over the last 37 years Local 8751 has shown class solidarity with many local, regional, national and international workers' and communi-

ty struggles — including the current struggle to stop the resegregation of Boston's schools, as well as many struggles against war, racism, sexism, anti-LGBTQ bigotry, and all forms of oppression and exploitation — which provides a living example of social unionism that should be emulated by the entire labor movement;

Whereas Veolia has since it took over management of Boston's school bus system in July 2013 consistently and willfully violated numerous terms of Local

8751's contract, which were detailed in a complaint filed in September with the National Labor Relations Board;

Whereas Veolia's sudden illegal lockout of Local 8751 on Oct. 8 and the subsequent firing of four leaders of the union — who are responsible for carrying out all activities that benefit union members, including defending the contract — must be viewed as a racist attack on an exemplary union and an outright attempt to bust the union in order for the city to proceed with its plans to re-

segregate Boston's school system; Therefore this national conference of Workers World Party resolves: That Grievance Chair Stevan Kirschbaum, Vice President Steve Gillis, Recording Secretary Andre Francois and Steward Garry Murchison be immediately reinstated as school bus drivers so they can resume their elected offices and continue to serve the rank and file of Local 8751;

And be it further resolved: That Workers World Party will organize a national educational campaign, including fact sheets, demonstrations, forums and social media, to expose Veolia's criminal, anti-social activities, including its history of bribery, corruption, embezzlement, contempt for workers and their unions, environmental destruction, profits from the illegal and inhuman Israeli occupation of Palestine, and privatization of public services through its energy, water, transportation and environmental divisions.

And be it further resolved: That Workers World Party will build a broad coalition with other unions and environmental, faith-based, social justice and community groups, both in the U.S. and around the world, to internationalize the struggle against Veolia as a prime example of greedy, ruthless, global monopoly capitalism that seeks to impoverish and tyrannize all peoples around the world. □

Workers World Conference photos were taken by G. Dunkel, Brenda Ryan, Joe Piette and Janet Mayes.

Migrants and the world capitalist crisis

From a WWP Conference talk by Secretariat member Teresa Gutierrez.

I had a dilemma in preparing this talk. What should I focus on? Should it be the migrant struggle? Or another issue I care deeply about, global warming? As we witness heart-wrenching devastation in the Philippines, how can you not think about the climate crisis? What has been the U.S. response? Further militarization of the country! But we say U.S. troops should get out of the Philippines now — after paying reparations for centuries of plunder.

The climate crisis necessitates that our party consider dedicating a specially convened conference on this issue, which cries out for worldwide socialist revolution. We have to get this message out that the only thing that can save humanity from this crisis is to abolish the capitalist system. Only organizations and governments that thoroughly put the needs of the people before the capitalist class have the answers. Cuba of course took it further; they ousted and kept out the capitalist class altogether!



Teresa Gutierrez.

But as a comrade born in stolen Mexico, I need to bring the party's attention to developments on the immigration question. I place my remarks within the context of the pre-conference document written by Comrade Holmes.

As we have written about extensively, the global working class faces an unprecedented capitalist economic crisis. Capitalism is at a dead end. And a dying animal is a desperate animal, a dangerous animal.

As Marxists, we know that every single capitalist crisis contains the seeds of the system's own destruction. How do we

prepare for this destruction? How do we accelerate it? First, of course, by studying the crisis and its period well.

Conditions for migrants here and around the world provide much material for understanding this crisis as well as the next steps of the struggle: building the People's Power and Workers' Assemblies, recruiting and in general preparing the party to be even more battle ready.

Where is the struggle for migrant rights today?

The upsurge of millions of migrants and their supporters in 2006 pushed back heinous U.S. legislation. But the ruling class took note of this massive upsurge and carefully and meticulously responded accordingly. It began to wage an unprecedented assault against this vulnerable sector of the working class.

It mirrored the monstrous assault on the Black community. Mass incarcerations and mass deportations of oppressed people became the rule. An entire generation is experiencing untold dehumanization and degradation. This is a war on the oppressed, especially on youth.

Since 2008, about 2.5 million workers have been deported under the Obama administration. Thousands have been picked up under the E-Verify system. Racial profiling is wide sweeping. It is now a felony to cross the border without documents!

And if current legislation in Washington passes, it will be a felony for a so-called citizen to give an undocumented worker water in the scorching Arizona

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Talks from the Conference

On this and the following pages are somewhat abridged versions of some of the talks given at the WWP National Conference on Nov. 16-17 in New York City. More of the speeches will appear in future issues. The talks in this issue are mainly from the Opening Plenary, "The State of the Working Class and Oppressed: A Socialist Perspective on the Current Character of the Capitalist Crisis." Video of the conference will soon be posted on the Workers World Party website, workers.org/wwp. □

As capitalism hits a wall

Low-wage workers' struggle shows what's to come

From a WWP Conference talk by Secretariat member Fred Goldstein.

Six years after the crisis began and four years after the so-called capitalist recovery, our diagnosis of capitalism at a dead end has been completely confirmed.

There are still close to 12 million officially unemployed, 8 million workers forced to work part time and millions who have dropped out of the workforce — perhaps 25 to 30 million workers unemployed or underemployed in the U.S. alone. The youth are hit the hardest, and Black and Latina/o youth suffer the most. This despite the Federal Reserve pumping \$85 billion a month into the economy.

The bosses and bankers are more and more resorting to speculative paper profits and looting public institutions, the way bankers are looting Detroit. But speculation and looting don't create jobs; they destroy them. That is no way out of the crisis.

Food stamps are being slashed. Hunger is on the rise. These cutbacks are hitting more than 4 million people, most of whom have jobs but still live in poverty.

Unions are under attack, from the Boston school bus drivers to the Bay Area Rapid Transit union in San Francisco to New York school bus drivers. The pro-big-business Supreme Court is now hearing arguments about outlawing card check and employer neutrality agreements.

The health care crisis of millions is being aggravated by the near collapse of the Affordable Care Act website. And the crisis is pushing capitalist politics to the right.

Racist violence and repression persist, as illustrated by the cold-blooded murder of 19-year-old Renisha Marie McBride in Dearborn, Mich., by a trigger-happy racist. Attacks on women's rights and lesbian-gay-bi-trans-queer people have escalated. Deportations of the undocumented have not slowed down, and the drive for further militarization of the border goes on. Militarism and the devastation of the environment continue unabated.

In Europe there is record unemployment. In Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, unemployment and poverty rates are much higher than in the big capitalist countries.

Indeed, capitalism is still at a dead end. And it may soon be time for Workers World Party to think about marches to demand jobs and food.

How high-tech capitalism creates low-wage workers

I would like to touch on the historic question confronting the party, the radical movement and, above all, the union movement: organizing the working class for the struggle against the bosses and ultimately against capitalism. I want to put into historical perspective the low-wage workers' movement and its significance as a harbinger of future struggles.

Karl Marx in the Communist Manifesto pointed out that the greatest accomplishments of the capitalist class were the development of gigantic productive forces and the creation of the working class. These two developments went hand in hand.

The capitalist class concentrated the workers into great capitalist enterprises, bringing them out of rural isolation and putting them together, where they could organize against the very bosses who brought them there to exploit them and extract unpaid labor, or surplus value.

Over the history of capitalism the character and organization of the working class changed as the development of the productive forces progressed, from the early period of craft associations — like tailors, shoemakers, weavers, wheelwrights — to the larger craft unions of the industrial era — pipefitters, engineers — to the semi-skilled industrial unions of the era of mass production and assembly lines.

And in recent decades the capitalist class has created a vast service proletariat in the U.S. and other big capitalist countries.

The U.S. agricultural population, who were the majority in the mid-19th century,

was rapidly concentrated into cities, into factories and mines and mills, in the era of industrialization. Out of this grew the class struggle to create first craft unions and later, in the 1930s, industrial unions.

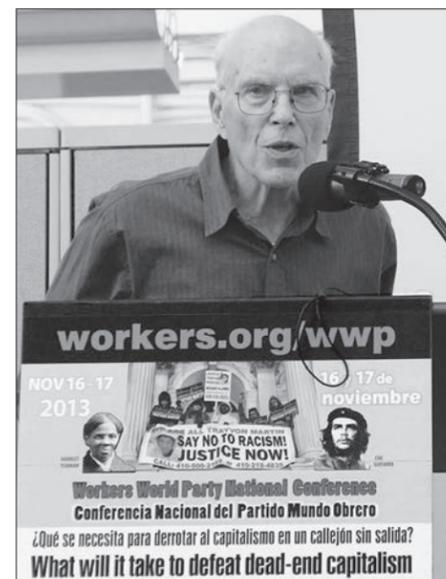
But just as in the previous era the capitalist class created the industrial working class, in the era of globalization and the scientific-technological revolution, big capital has created the vast, low-wage service proletariat, which is now numerically preponderant.

By pouring money and technology into commercial capital, transportation, finance and trade, the bankers and bosses have drawn millions of workers who were previously isolated in small businesses into low-wage, high-profit retail chains and healthcare services, education and transportation.

Tens of millions who once worked in tiny shops, local stores selling stationery, lumber, hardware, groceries, clothing, appliances, books, as well as pharmacies, restaurants and diners, etc., were invisible, without an identity, so to speak. They were completely isolated from other workers and subject to the whims of a small business owner.

What capitalism has done in the last 30 years is to concentrate these occupations into vast chains like Walmart, McDonald's, Home Depot, Staples, CVS, Old Navy, Bed Bath & Beyond, Target, P.C. Richards, Barnes & Noble, Starbucks, and so on. Many have been placed side by side in great shopping malls and transportation hubs. The workers in these chains have a common employer, a common identity and a common knowledge of each other's misery and exploitation. A McDonald's worker in the Bronx can identify with and talk to a McDonald's worker in East Los Angeles.

In a word, the new high-tech, globalized phase of capitalism has brought these workers out of obscurity into the network of the socialized labor force. The situation cries out for organization.



Fred Goldstein

A myth that has circulated for years is beginning to be eroded by the low-wage workers' actions. It says that the workers in these chains cannot be organized. They are too spread out. There is too much turnover. The owners have deep pockets and can crush any attempt to organize, etc.

New radical movement is organizing

Fortunately, the new radical movement, both outside and inside the labor movement, including but not limited to Occupy Wall Street, has begun to look back in labor history to try to find precedents that will help guide them.

One example, which I wrote about five years ago in "Low-Wage Capitalism," is the great Woolworth's sit-down strike of 1937, which led to organizing the chain. A paper, put out by forces from OWS, has instructive formulations:

"In 1937 [Woolworth's] had an empire of over 2,000 stores in the USA and Canada plus more in Cuba, the UK and Germany. ... It was the WalMart of its day. It had ruthlessly put small mom and pop stores out of business. ... Founder Frank Woolworth was an expert at finding cheap sweatshop and child labor in Europe.

"At precisely 11 a.m. that February 27th, a union organizer blew a loud whistle and began yelling 'STRIKE! STRIKE!'

Continued on page 11

USW Local 8751 leads the way

From a WWP Conference talk by Secretariat member Monica Moorehead.

When it comes to the U.S. labor movement, there are very few unions that fit the description of being organizing centers for the entire working class. There are the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 in the Bay Area, United Electrical Workers Local 150 and Black Workers For Justice.

There is also Steelworkers Local 8751, the Boston School Bus Drivers Union. This union, which our Party had such a significant role in founding, grew out of the struggle against racism, especially the horrific attacks on Black school children who were being bused to all-white schools in South Boston.

The situation in Boston during the early 1970s was very similar to the situation in the Deep South — separate and unequal schools and education. A national march of 25,000 people in Boston on

Dec. 14, 1974, brought together people of all nationalities, ages and political experiences under one broad slogan, “Say No to Racism.”

It was a popular way of expressing the right of self-determination for the Black community. For a period of time, this mobilization helped to beat back the racists, but today these same racist forces have reared their ugly heads in an all-out campaign to resegregate the neighborhoods, including the schools.

Enter Veolia — a French-based transnational corporation in over a hundred countries which has a notorious history of union busting, low wages and privatizing services. Veolia is part of a broad conspiracy on the part of the city government and Boston Public Schools to destroy the right to public education. Their first target is the school bus drivers’ union. But as they have witnessed since Oct. 8, when the workers were illegally locked out, they



Monica Moorehead

are messing with the wrong union. They expected this union to abandon their leaders, who have consistently fought for their economic and political rights, but they grossly miscalculated.

This union not only fights for the best wages and benefits but also fights for the political rights of the entire class. This

union has organized delegations to Haiti; protested against apartheid South Africa; organized for Pride marches; defended Palestinians’ right to their homeland; mobilized for the 2012 March on Wall Street South against the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte; and more.

USW 8751 is all about class unity and solidarity — words that are the antithesis to what Veolia is all about, which are divide, conquer and then destroy. The bus drivers are part of the community. They are rooted in the political movement, and that is why Veolia won’t win in Boston, just as they didn’t win in St. Louis; Sarasota, Fla.; occupied Palestine and elsewhere.

Our WW newspaper is THE paper of the bus drivers. USW 8751 leads the way in the struggle against Veolia and any other union-busting, criminal conglomerate that attempts to break the solidarity of the workers and oppressed. Union busting is disgusting!! □

Lessons of the Kennedy assassination

From a WWP Conference talk by Secretariat member Deirdre Griswold.

Fifty years after the assassination of President Kennedy, the same intense propaganda campaign has been mounted in the same capitalist media. They are still trying to convince the world that a lone gunman named Lee Harvey Oswald — a disgruntled low-wage worker and supposed leftist who supported Cuba — carried out the assassination by himself with an antiquated, bolt-action rifle by firing on the presidential motorcade from a sixth-floor window, while at his job.

Kennedy’s killing was followed two days later by the fatal shooting of Oswald in a police station garage while surrounded by Dallas cops. This time the assassination was caught on film. The shooter was undeniably Jack Ruby, a nightclub owner with connections to the Mob and an intimate of the Dallas police. Why would someone like that do it? Out of patriotism, they said. So everything was neatly tied up with no need to put Oswald on trial. The accused, supposedly presumed innocent until proven guilty by a jury of his peers, was judged guilty by the entire bourgeois establishment and its media.

Well, people didn’t believe the story then, and they sure don’t believe it now.

Our party played an important role in exposing the social forces behind the assassination. What we did then should be studied as a model for how a revolutionary party needs to respond to a political shock like the Kennedy assassination, which sent most of the left movement in this country into panic and confusion.

The head of our party, Sam Marcy, wrote three major articles in our paper in the first month after the assassination. He called the assassination an attempt by the ultra-right to pull off a coup d’etat — one that failed to take power, but was covered up by the bourgeois establishment, who were afraid of both the fascist right-wing and of the people’s reaction if the truth were to get out.

It’s important to understand what was happening in that period. The stability of U.S. imperialism was being shaken at home and abroad. The Civil Rights Movement was fighting to break up the apartheid system of segregation in the U.S.

South. In Asia, Africa and Latin America, socialist revolutions and anti-colonial struggles were ousting the imperialists and their stooges.

The Bay of Pigs invasion by Cuban mercenaries trained and armed by the CIA had ended in a total fiasco in 1961. That was followed by the missile crisis, when a wing of the U.S. military were ready to risk nuclear war with the USSR.

Just one month before Kennedy was assassinated, the CIA had engineered



Deirdre Griswold

the assassination of the Diem brothers in Vietnam. They were so hated by the people that Washington feared their regime might fall, and with it the neocolonial ambitions of the U.S. to dominate the region.

We of course had been exposing the Kennedy administration for carrying out these inter-

ventions. And we also attacked it for allowing racist terror to rage in the South with the complicity of the authorities there. The Birmingham church bombing that killed four little girls had just happened in September. There wasn’t an issue of our paper that didn’t take on the imperialist government headed by Kennedy.

But we also knew that the far-right blamed Kennedy for all the setbacks to imperialism and to white supremacy. They wanted to replace him with a “man on horseback,” a fascist dictatorship that would move to crush all opposition at any cost.

The first act of our youth in 1962, before we even had a name for our group, was to call a demonstration against George Lincoln Rockwell, head of the American Nazi Party, who was touring the country and was scheduled to speak in New York. For a first action, it was pretty damn successful. Some 1,000 people showed up, most of them high school students, along with survivors of Hitler’s concentration camps wearing their camp uniforms. Rockwell, who boasted about how tough he was, didn’t show up.

When Kennedy was shot, we knew who had the motive and the means to do it. The anti-Kennedy right-wing was being bankrolled by figures like Texas oilman H.L. Hunt. Kennedy’s U.N. ambassador, Adlai Stevenson, had been attacked and spat on by a right-wing crowd in Dallas

just days before the assassination.

Toward an independent investigation

So when a progressive New York lawyer, Mark Lane, wrote an article for the newspaper National Guardian outlining the main inconsistencies in the government’s story about the Kennedy assassination, we contacted Lane and said we were willing to work with him on bringing out the truth. That’s how the Citizens Committee of Inquiry, of which he was director and I was the executive secretary, got started. The committee sent people to Texas to interview witnesses, and it widely publicized its findings.

Six nights a week for a year, Lane gave a lecture at an Off-Broadway theater here, and it was packed every night. People came from all over the country to hear him. And when he wrote the book “Rush to Judgment,” based on our committee’s investigation, it was on the New York Times bestseller list for six months.

The committee attracted a lot of people who wanted to fight the right as well as the Johnson administration. Of course, some of them saw Kennedy through rose-colored glasses, but most were pretty hip.

The assassination had been intended to crush the progressive movement. But because of the campaign that was waged very effectively to expose the right-wing, it had the opposite effect. As the Vietnam War was escalated under Johnson, many of those who resisted the war told us they first became political because of the Kennedy assassination.

Role of the Kennedy Democrats

There were many lessons to be learned from the assassination. A very important one was that the Democratic Party would not really go after the right, even when their own president was assassinated. Johnson got the liberal head of the Supreme Court, Earl Warren, to preside over the commission that covered up the right-wing conspiracy.

Later, the leaders of the Democratic Party again showed their true stripes when the right-wing launched a virulent campaign against busing in Boston, the stronghold of the Kennedy political machine. In 1973, when weekly rallies were being held by racist whites who wanted to keep the schools segregated, and the Nazis and Klan were sending organizers to Boston to whip it up, what did the Kennedys do?

Ted Kennedy, in the middle of this racist mobilization in his own home town,

went to Decatur, Ala., on July 4, 1973, to present Gov. George Wallace with a “Spirit of America” award. Kennedy had aspirations to run for president in 1976 and wanted Wallace to get him the support of the so-called Dixiecrat machine.

George Wallace! — infamous for saying during his inauguration that he was for “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever.” Wallace, who just one month before the Kennedy assassination stood in a schoolhouse door in Huntsville, Ala., to keep four Black students from enrolling.

Ted Kennedy did nothing to stop the right-wing mobilization against busing in Boston. But our comrades did, and in 1974 we organized a fantastic demonstration of 25,000 people to say no to racism! That’s how you fight the right.

And they went on to organize the drivers of those school buses into a powerful union. And because of that the Boston bus drivers are here today, ready to fight this right-wing corporation, Veolia.

Capitalism today is even more unstable than it was in 1963. An era of struggle by the workers and all the oppressed is opening up, this time inside the imperialist countries themselves, goaded by the attacks of the huge corporations and banks.

Billionaires like the Koch brothers have bankrolled the far-right Tea Party types and tried to shred what remains of bourgeois democracy, axing voting rights and redistricting. Nevertheless, many voters are turning the other way, as we have seen in some recent elections, notably in this city. And it’s not just at the polls — most importantly, it’s in the streets, as we have been discussing in this conference.

We must be alert to the possibility of another political shock coming from the far-right. The capitalist government is increasingly in disarray. Washington was temporarily paralyzed by the budget struggle, leading Wall Street to read the riot act to its own proteges.

This makes the far right increasingly desperate and prone to adventurism. But we have no reason to run and panic.

Yes, we are in the belly of the beast. The soft underbelly. The place where these overlords of the universe are the most vulnerable. Because, with all their military, and all their spying, and all their money, if they lose control over the workers and oppressed of this country, then they are nothing.

Build a workers’ world! □

Lessons from Detroit:

Socialist ideology and mass organizing

From a WWP Conference talk by Abayomi Azikiwe.

Detroit has been and will continue to be at the forefront of the struggle against the ravages of capitalism in the contemporary period. The situation in Detroit and throughout the state of Michigan illustrates clearly that the so-called economic recovery championed by the Obama administration and the corporate media does not exist.

Our view is that there is no real recovery for the working class and the oppressed under capitalism. The only real solution to the economic crisis is the overthrow of the capitalist system and the construction of socialism.

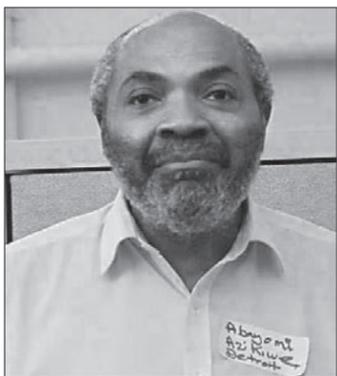
This position has been articulated by Workers World Party through Sam Marcy in his "High Tech, Low Pay" thesis first advanced during the mid-1980s and continued in the last five years by Fred Goldstein in "Low-Wage Capitalism" and "Capitalism at a Dead End."

Detroit, which was the heartland of industrial capitalism from the early through later decades of the 20th century, poses profound challenges for the organization and mobilization of the people based on a revolutionary program. How do we organize workers, many of whom are from the oppressed nations, when their jobs, schools, houses and communities are being systematically destroyed through capitalist restructuring?

Where do we begin in this period and what is to be done in light of the fact that the traditional basis for the organization of the proletariat has undergone monumental changes?

We have no other choice except to go where the workers and the oppressed are toiling and living. We must approach our struggle based upon the concrete conditions in existence during this period.

Wherever the workers and oppressed are we must be among them learning



Abayomi Azikiwe.

from their thinking and actions and engaging the masses with a revolutionary ideology and program that addresses their needs and aspirations.

Mass organization and revolutionary ideology

Our approach has been rooted in the most obvious aspects of the capitalist crisis. Through the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice (MECAWI), we sought

not only to advance and maintain an anti-imperialist stance on United States military interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Haiti, Somalia, Libya and Syria, but also to stress that the Pentagon budget, the attacks on the Middle Eastern and Muslim communities represent the continuation of war even within the domestic confines of the U.S.

MECAWI's slogan of "Money for our cities, not for war!" appealed directly to the instinctive opposition to imperialist war among the oppressed and the working class. This same programmatic approach led us to seriously address the "housing question" when in 2007 tens of thousands of working-class families in metropolitan Detroit were being thrown

out of their homes.

The Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions & Utility Shutoffs took the most logical step by working directly with families to save their homes but to also demand a general halt to foreclosures and evictions.

These efforts won limited victories for individual homeowners and have extended the struggle to encompass both the role of the banks and the government agencies of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Today broader forces in Detroit and across the country are involved in the movement against foreclosures and evictions.

Sections of the United Auto Workers, the Steelworkers, the Service Employees

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Becoming a revolutionary

Joining Workers World Party

From a WWP Conference welcoming talk by Garrett Dicembre.

Before two years ago, I'd never imagined making a speech about how I came to join a revolutionary party. I grew up in a conservative rural town in western New York. History lessons were a crash-course in anti-communism, with textbooks the Pentagon itself could have authored. All this, against the backdrop of 9/11 fear mongering.

Throughout grade school I witnessed what the imperialists could do as live footage of Iraq's destruction was broadcast worldwide. Images of Baghdad burning, the utter lack of humanity, the callous destruction of a sovereign country ... haunted me. It was at that point that I stopped trusting what I was being told and began questioning the real motives



Garrett Dicembre

behind these wars.

I read about other U.S. wars and quickly realized who the real terrorists were, beginning with genocide against the Native peoples of the Americas and the horrific history of slavery, which manifests itself in today's mass incarceration of people of color and

racist police brutality.

During university I became involved politically, but quickly became frustrated. I kept hitting brick walls because I was still working within the constraints of capitalist politics. Eventually it became clear that a system evil to the core cannot possibly be reformed for good.

In 2011, when the U.S. began its bombardment of Libya, I found new politi-

cal consciousness. I saw footage of the deaths and the destruction of the country, the murder of Gadhafi, the lynching and ethnic cleansing. I found Workers World when searching for a perspective that respected the sovereignty and right to self-determination of Libya.

I was invited to attend the Party conference last year, where I met many of my dear comrades and gained a deeper political analysis that has guided my perspective ever since. But it wasn't just a deeper understanding of political theory, of Marxist-Leninist analysis that was important at that conference.

Putting politics into practice

Last year Gaza was being bombed mercilessly by Zionist occupying forces, and I was able to get out into the streets with Palestinians and other anti-war activists as we shouted in Times Square: "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free!"

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Going to Honduras to support popular struggle

From a WWP Conference talk by LeiLani Dowell.

This week a delegation will travel to Honduras to show our solidarity with the resistance there during the country's national elections. This will be the third time the International Action Center has sent a delegation to Honduras. The first was in October 2009, when democratically elected President Mel Zelaya was overthrown in a U.S.-supported coup. We were able to witness with our own eyes a burgeoning and exciting resistance movement incorporating all sectors of Honduras's working class.

That movement has continued to grow, organized under the umbrella National Popular Resistance Front — FNRP in Spanish. They have created the Libertad y Refundación party, also known as LIBRE, and their candidate, Xiomara Castro de Zelaya, has a narrow lead in the polls over the ruling National Party candidate.

Castro de Zelaya is the spouse of Mel Zelaya, and if elected will be the fourth woman president of a Central American country, and the first for Honduras. She vows to hold a National Constituent Assembly to include all sectors of Honduran society in rewriting the country's Consti-

tution — the goal that Mel Zelaya attempted before being ousted by right-wing forces — and in demilitarizing the country.

As the movement in Honduras has grown, however, so has repression. Porfirio Lobo was "elected" in 2009 — "elected" in quotes because no country in the Western Hemisphere, except the U.S., said the elections following the coup were in any way legitimate. Since then, Hondurans have faced a number of repressive measures: from the kidnapping, torture and assassination of resistance activists and leaders, journalists, lesbian-gay-bi-trans-queer people and lawyers; to death squad, "social-cleansing" killing operations, committed by the Honduran police forces; to the imprisonment of resistance leaders under frame-up, bogus charges.

Since the coup, at least 104 campesinos have been assassinated, as well as six LIBRE officers and candidates. Five LGBTQ people were assassinated in August alone. The same forces who carried out the coup now occupy top positions in the military and government.

Meanwhile, the Center for Economic and Policy Research reports that the economic and social progress that occurred during Mel Zelaya's tenure has largely been reversed. While extreme poverty

decreased under Zelaya, it has increased by 26 percent under Lobo. The number of workers making minimum wage has increased from 29 percent to 45 percent.

For its part, the U.S. has increased its funding for the Honduran police and military every year since 2010 — to at least \$95 million in 2012. The U.S. is heavily funding the election process in Honduras this year, and while 12 U.S. senators have sent a letter to Secretary of State John Kerry urging him to ensure that the elections are free and fair, the U.S. track record with Central American elections should give everyone pause.

Yet the resistance continues, as it always will anywhere a people are continually and ruthlessly oppressed. Campesinos and indigenous people — often led by women — continue to occupy lands stolen from them by multinational corporations and conglomerates. The FNRP continues to garner support on the streets — even



LeiLani Dowell

in the face of a newly formed military police force, with some 5,000 officers roaming the streets in black face masks.

We are proud to be participating in this third delegation to Honduras: to monitor the elections, to meet with indigenous and campesino groups, and to report back through the pages of our newspaper and other avenues. We recognize the importance of the struggle in

Honduras — the momentum of the resistance that is inspiring Central and Latin America. The resistance has already won a victory by the very fact of its continued existence. But the victory of Xiomara Castro de Zelaya will strike a blow to the U.S. model of dealing with Latin American countries through coups when opposition to imperialist neoliberalism and privatization flares up.

Castro de Zelaya has called for "democratic socialism" in Honduras, and it is of utmost importance that we pay close attention and provide support and solidarity to the people of Honduras. □

Unity March to free Oscar López Rivera

By Donna Lazarus
New York

The Community Coalition for the Freedom of Oscar López Rivera, a Puerto Rican political prisoner held 32 years in federal U.S. prisons, has called for a march on Saturday, Nov. 23.

López Rivera is a Vietnam veteran and Chicago community activist and organizer, jailed for his work in support of Puerto Rican independence.

The Community Coalition is working with schools, churches, community organizations, labor unions, human rights groups, activists and elected officials to demand that President Barack Obama exercise his constitutional power of pardon and release López Rivera. This demonstration is one of a number of events taking place the same day in both the U.S. and Puerto Rico as part of the current campaign for Oscar's release.

The demonstration will gather at 11 a.m. at the Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center, 107 Suffolk St. on the Lower East Side of Manhattan and march to Conti-



Continental Army Plaza near El Puente Headquarters, 211 South 4th St. in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, N.Y.

For more information, contact the Community Coalition for the Freedom of Oscar López Rivera at 347-254-2413, 718-398-2581 or 646-765-8604; or email virualboricua@gmail.com □

Socialist ideology and mass organizing

Continued from page 9

union and numerous community organizations have taken up this fight, freeing us up to address the looming crises of the cities that threaten pensions, health care, municipal services, public education and the right to self-determination among the nationally oppressed.

Intensifying class struggle

These developments are a reflection of what the banks and corporations are attempting to carry out in Detroit, and it portends much for the future status of the working class and oppressed across the U.S. and indeed the world. What people need to know around the country and globally is that Detroit did not file for bankruptcy, but this illegal action is being implemented by an imposed, so-called "emergency manager" who, through the Michigan governor, is working on behalf of finance capital to steal every gain won through protracted struggles over the last 80 years.

We have intervened in the Detroit economic crisis as well as the bankruptcy. Our slogan is "Cancel the debt!" The banks claim that Detroit owes \$18 billion to \$22 billion in obligations to the same financial institutions that stole our jobs, houses, city services and educational system. Our position is we owe the banks nothing; the banks owe us.

As Comrade Fidel Castro advocated over 30 years ago, the international debt crisis was not the creation of the major-

ity of people throughout the world. Consequently, we have no responsibility to pay for a crisis that was not created by us, but by the capitalists and the imperialists.

On Oct. 23 in Detroit, more than 1,000 workers, retirees and community activists surrounded the federal courthouse at the opening of the bankruptcy eligibility trial chanting, "Hands off our pensions [health care, city services, art assets], make the BANKS pay!"

We are certain that this unprecedented fightback will spread across the U.S. There must be a national coalition of the cities to fight the banks and ensure that they pay for damages done to the overwhelming majority of people in the U.S.

Our struggle here in the U.S. must align itself with the workers' movements in Greece, Portugal, Spain, Belgium, Italy and other states in Europe which are facing the same crisis. The escalating militancy among the South African workers is a reflection of the world capitalist crisis and one in which the South African Communist Party through its Red October Campaign has focused also on the role of the banks.

Our party must enhance and deepen its work among the masses. We must bring a Marxist analysis to the struggles around housing, police terrorism and austerity. As a Leninist party we know that the people must be organized along revolutionary lines in order for victory to be achieved. □

Becoming a revolutionary

Joining Workers World Party

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It was the experience of being out in the streets and putting those politics into practice that I first experienced solidarity — solidarity with those resisting imperialism, those defending their sovereignty against occupying forces, those being exploited.

I learned the real meaning of the word "revolution" at that conference. It means smashing the ruling class, smashing our oppressor. It means organizing against them. It means taking control of the means of production to create a just soci-

ety. It means joining a revolutionary party.

I decided to join Workers World Party because I knew it stood staunchly with the poor, the oppressed and exploited here in the U.S. and around the globe. I experienced a feeling of unity. I became part of the struggle.

Workers World Party has always represented a party of solidarity, unity and struggle, one of complete support for the most oppressed, raising their struggles to the forefront. The Party's perspective is critical to the movement for liberation and socialism. □

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

THURS., NOV. 28, 2013

Cole's Hill, Plymouth, Mass.

Since 1970, Native Americans have gathered at noon on Cole's Hill in Plymouth to commemorate a National Day of Mourning on the U.S. "Thanksgiving" holiday. Many Native Americans do not celebrate the arrival of the Pilgrims and other European settlers.

'Thanksgiving Day' is a reminder of the genocide of millions of Native people, the theft of Native lands, and the relentless assault on Native culture. Participants in National Day of Mourning honor Native ancestors and the struggles of Native peoples to survive today. It is a day of remembrance and spiritual connection, as well as a protest of the racism and oppression that Native Americans continue to experience.

Join us as we dedicate the 44th National Day of Mourning to our brother, Native political prisoner Leonard Peltier.

Add your voice to the millions worldwide who demand his freedom.

Help us in our struggle to create a true awareness of Native peoples and demonstrate the unity of Indigenous peoples internationally.

Help shatter the untrue glass image of the Pilgrims and the unjust system based on racism, sexism, homophobia and war.

Buses to DOM leaving at 6 a.m.

sharp from the Solidarity Center
147 West 24th St., 2nd floor,
New York, NY

The bus will return from Plymouth to NYC at about 4:30 p.m.

Round-trip bus tickets are sliding scale \$30-\$45 (Paying the full price will help cover the cost of subsidized tickets for activists who live on fixed incomes/or are unemployed)

Tickets can be purchased in advance at the Solidarity Center 3 p.m. - 8 p.m., weekdays. Tickets will go fast, don't delay, get your ticket asap. 212.633.6646,

weekdays (3 pm-8 pm).
[facebook.com/
events/1403441596559484/](http://facebook.com/events/1403441596559484/)



United American Indians of New England /LPSG uaine.org and [facebook.com/
events/443389692436245/](http://facebook.com/events/443389692436245/)



Energy industry wants gov't to rescue its profits

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energy corporations invested over \$30 million in congressional campaign contributions from 1989 to 2012. (desmogblog.com, November 2012)

The gas and oil industry's close partnership with politicians has also been a major factor limiting government investment in renewable, non-fossil, alternative energy sources.

While Congress exempted fracking from government oversight through a loophole in the Energy Policy Act of 2005, being free from government supervision does not stop the energy industry from turning to regulatory agencies when it fits their needs. In 2009, under pressure from the industry, the Securities and Exchange Commission relaxed rules on how companies count reserve acres for drilling.

Originally, only gas near active wells (sweet spots) could be considered "proved" reserves and reported to potential investors. The relaxed rule let companies include reserves located farther from producing wells in their estimates. The SEC nixed a requirement that companies have independent auditors investigate their claims.

Overnight, some companies increased estimated reserves by up to 200 percent. While actual production costs did not drop, by averaging them over an increased reserve base, the estimated cost to drill each well dramatically declined. Five shale gas companies reported drops from 48 to 86 percent in production costs per well.

The SEC ruling let companies hide the

actual field production costs by making their prospects look better. The change sent companies' stocks soaring and brought more investors on board.

Should opposition to fracking get too strong in the U.S., the State Department launched its "Global Shale Gas Initiative" in August 2010 to promote exploration for shale gas by U.S. corporations in other countries.

Push for export

The low price of natural gas in the U.S. has also led to an increased push by the energy industry for the Department of Energy to ease restrictions on export of liquid gas to global markets where prices remain considerable higher. By 2012, there were 19 applications for export of natural gas which, if approved, would equal over 40 percent of domestic consumption. (Foodandwaterwatch.org, Nov. 1, 2012)

The question is not if these permits will be approved by a pro-business government but when, and what impact this will have. After nearly a decade of pushing for U.S. dependence on cheap natural shale gas to fuel transportation and electricity, competition with global demand is guaranteed to drive domestic prices up. This will mean increased hardship on municipalities that converted facilities to use natural gas and on households that rely on natural gas for heat.

The export of natural gas would also unleash a new fracking frenzy. The anti-fracking movement needs to be prepared for this and willing to take on not just the natural gas industry but the whole greedy capitalist system. □

Migrants and the world capitalist crisis

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desert or a ride home from work in Tennessee. This is divide-and-conquer at its worst.

Government policy mandates that 35,000 beds in detention centers must be filled every night by detained migrants, making humongous profits for the Corrections Corporation of America. This policy did not stop during the recent government shutdown. The militarization of the border continues. The money allocated to ICE — Immigration and Customs Enforcement — now numbers in the billions.

Young people lead resistance

None of this has stopped the struggle. Resistance to the war on migrants has been diverse and heroic. It can be as small but profound as young people in Mexico throwing rocks at migra agents across the border.

In fact — a note for FIST comrades — most of the resistance is being led by young people. No surprise. Of the 250 million workers who have been forced to migrate from nations around the world, the vast majority are young people.

The Dreamers, after many appeals to Congress, are now very frustrated and are moving in an independent and radical direction.

Over the last few months, young migrants have deliberately gone up to ICE agents and gotten themselves detained. Why? So they can go into CCA detention centers, organize the incarcerated and condemn conditions inside.

The only way you can describe that is bold, damn bold! Those are the kinds of youth we need to join FIST, work with the PPA and recruit to the party. And the resistance goes on, like that of the exemplary struggle of the Boston school bus drivers.

The migrant rights movement, like many others, is not necessarily class conscious or revolutionary. It is diverse,

scattered, single issued, and there are still those who have hopes that the social democrats will lead them out of the void. Class consciousness is not high, but seeds of it are everywhere. This all must be part of our critical assessment.

On other fronts, unions that have made a progressive turn are attempting to fill their ranks with low-wage workers, those traditionally out of the conventional labor movement. We want to work side by side with these sectors, no matter their ties to the capitalist parties. We want to be in the trenches with them and fan the flames of struggle at every turn.

We understand the role of the Democratic Party, which serves to put a brake on the struggle, but we are not ultra-leftists who spew strident rhetoric that can also put a brake on the struggle. Our entire history of more than 50 years is one of nonsectarian, bold but principled intervention. We are some of the best coalition builders in the country, including with social democrats. Let's be proud of that. We know that they are not the enemy; the capitalist class is.

But if the movement is led by those who count on the capitalist parties, then it will be a movement like the capitalist system — at a dead end. The migrant question illuminates this.

There are many who accept the proposed legislation now in Congress. It is not what migrants have been fighting for. It does not address the root causes of migration. That would challenge imperialism itself.

It accepts guest workers, which means accepting Homeland Security's program of slamming the back door while opening wide the front door. More workers are being deported than ever before, at the very same time that more workers are coming in through these guest worker programs than ever before, working in conditions that the Southern Poverty Law Center describes as near slavery.

Need for People's Power Assemblies

The most important thing the Party can do in terms of the mass struggle is build the movement for the People's Power Assemblies. Our class urgently and desperately needs the PPA. The migrant question dramatically demonstrates the need for an independent, class-conscious, revolutionary formation to up the ante.

We need to get into the mass struggle even more. We must fight for every right for our class, whether legalization, an end to the prison pipeline or just a traffic light at the corner.

A dying animal is a dangerous animal. Look at what the ruling class did after the migrant movement upsurge. Workers flexed their muscles in 2006 and said, "Bosses cannot run this country without us. You cannot pick the food in the fields, deliver it in the restaurants, take care of the children, and all the rest, without us." After this upsurge, the ruling class carried out all the anti-immigrant attacks we see today.

The flexing of class power by migrants in 2006 hit the ruling class hard: they lost profits. We must remember that May Day 2006 was a strike, a walkout. That single day cost the ruling class billions of dollars.

Some in the labor movement, many of them well-meaning and dedicated, tried to stop that May Day. Now those same elements are leading the demonstrations for migrant rights, but targeting only the Republicans. That is why we need the PPA.

I think that perhaps the PPAs should soon, maybe not this year or the next but soon, consider taking the example of our migrant sisters and brothers and call for a general strike.

But we cannot and will not call something like that, something so crucial to our class, lightly or cavalierly. Everyone must be united and in genuine collaboration with each other every step of the way for that to mean anything. And we

must examine the material basis and conditions to see if they exist. But sooner or later, we must be bold, like the workers at Chicago's Republic Windows and Doors when they took over their factory in 2008.

Soon we will see workers walk out of factories and offices and then go back and run them without the bosses. But that can only start by building classwide solidarity and consciousness.

We will fight for all this and more. And we will win.

We will win a world with no borders, where workers are free to come and go without fear of being caught like an animal in the desert, without fear of drowning in the icy waters of the Mediterranean, a world where the drive for profits or the death and destruction of climate change no longer create migrants.

I would like to end with a fist up to Honduras. They have an important election coming up where presidential candidate Xiomara Castro is calling for socialism. Like many places around the world, they too are carrying out People's Assemblies. Here is how they describe it in one of their election cards:

"People's power in simple words is the power of the people expressed through different forms of participation in major decisions in the life of a country, the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, international, ... moving from a representative democracy to a participatory one, this people's power must be organized."

Let us take this cue from the workers in Honduras and workers around the world who are assembling everywhere in righteous struggle. The greatest act of solidarity we can give them is to build the revolutionary movement right here in the U.S., a movement that defeats capitalism once and for all. That is the task at hand.

Build a Workers World! Socialism or death! □

As capitalism hits a wall

Low-wage workers' struggle shows what's coming

Continued from page 7

"150 women workers stopped work, folded their arms, sat down and the strike began."

In "Low-Wage Capitalism" you can read how the strike spread throughout the Woolworth chain, then to other department stores, to the East Coast and the Midwest.

Quoting further from the OWS paper: "Generations of corporate propaganda have imbued us with the idea that the workplace is strictly private property; a holy ground upon which we tread only at the sufferance of its owners. ... Freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and the right to petition grievances melt away within its sacred environs."

The document concludes that to organize workers will mean "challenging what Wall Street considers the private spaces of capitalism, the very lion's den of global corporations. ... This will be the Occupy Movement's greatest challenge."

I want to point out two significant things about this piece. The example of the Woolworth's strike shows convincingly that low-wage retail workers can be organized. And it shows that strikes and protests by the low-wage workers' movement today are a harbinger of bigger struggles to come.

To be sure, the industrial proletariat is also becoming more and more low-wage,

and is still significant and highly strategic. But the low-wage service workers are now the preponderant section of the working class.

Woolworth's was spread out across the country. The owners were among the richest corporate families in the world. The major difference between then and now is that the workers were on fire in that period and the labor movement was supportive of the strike and the organizing drive.

There are no structural barriers today to organizing the low-wage workers. The main barrier is fear among the workers in the midst of the economic crisis. But that may be diminishing. The other main obstacle is the timidity of the labor leadership in the face of this historic challenge.

Some of the survivors of OWS and other radicals have evolved away from a general focus on broad income inequality to a focus on the plight of low-wage workers and their anti-capitalist mood is growing. To be sure, they are far from Marxism as we understand it. But a revolutionary party can ignore this at its peril — especially the anti-capitalist mood.

The activists are influencing the workers in a left direction, and both the workers and the radicals will influence the labor movement. The urge of the workers to resist their terrible exploitation will drive this process forward and eventually lead

to some form of break — as it did in the 1930s, when the workers forced the labor leadership to help them organize.

It would be interesting to hand out thousands of applications or petitions to the workers demanding that unions come and organize them. This is what happened in the 1930s. The workers forced the labor leadership to organize them.

I want to end on a theoretical note. The development of the productive forces which led to the creation of the service proletariat, the decimation of the industrial workers, and the rise of the giant chains and big box stores has brought capitalism to a dead end.

The gigantic increase in the productivity of labor due to automation — es-

pecially robots and software, as well as computerized inventory systems and the management of global production chains — is the very same force that constitutes the material foundation for socialism.

Under capitalism automation creates misery, speedup and unemployment. Under socialism automation will lift the burden of labor and create abundance. Wealth will be measured by the amount of leisure time workers have for their personal development as human beings.

Capitalism has created the material and organizational foundation for socialism. What remains is to take that foundation away from the capitalist class by the revolutionary destruction of the profit system, to create a new social system upon the

already existing material foundation created by capitalism — but free of exploitation and directed toward the fulfillment of human need. Namely, socialism.

Down with capitalism! Fight for socialism! Build the multinational proletarian party! □



Honduran activists Celina Montes and Lucy Pagoada at WWP conference.

Acercándose a las aspiraciones de paz del pueblo colombiano

Por Berta Joubert-Ceci

El pasado miércoles 6 de noviembre se publicó la declaración conjunta del gobierno colombiano y la insurgencia de las FARC-EP respecto al acuerdo al que llegaron sobre el segundo punto de la agenda de las Negociaciones de Paz que se han estado llevando a cabo en La Habana, Cuba. El punto en cuestión es la "Participación política".

La declaración comienza enumerando los tres temas centrales del consenso: "1. Derechos y garantías para el ejercicio de la oposición política en general, y en particular para los nuevos movimientos que surjan luego de la firma del Acuerdo Final. Acceso a medios de comunicación. 2. Mecanismos democráticos de participación ciudadana, incluidos los de participación directa, en los diferentes niveles y diversos temas". Y por último "3. Medidas efectivas para promover mayor participación en la política nacional, regional y local de todos los sectores, incluyendo la población más vulnerable, en igualdad de condiciones y con garantías de seguridad". (pazfarc-ep.org, comunicado-conjunto 27, el 6 de noviembre)

Este acuerdo no solo es crucial para Colombia, sino para toda la región, pues sentaría las bases para una democracia participativa que impulsaría el liderazgo de las masas más oprimidas y excluidas de Colombia. Y podría cambiar el país de ser una amenaza (el Israel latinoamericano) regional, a un país verdaderamente soberano y democrático que se integre a los pueblos progresistas. No es como muchas personas piensan, un mero paso a la participación electoral de la insurgencia y posiciones en el Congreso del país.

Así lo explica el comandante Iván Márquez, vocero de las FARC, al leer la declaración de esta organización sobre el acuerdo tomado. "Que se abran las puertas de la verdadera democracia" es el título. Destaca el motor innegable del proceso de las negociaciones: la gran movilización popular de los últimos meses. "Todas las iniciativas presentadas por las FARC en la mesa de conversaciones de La Habana, que hemos denominado 100 propuestas mínimas para la democratización real, la paz con justicia social y la reconciliación nacional, han sido inspiradas en las reivindicaciones y propuestas de las organizaciones sociales y políticas del país, surgidas de los respectivos foros temáticos, y la fuerza de nuestra palabra ha estado en la valerosa movilización de un

pueblo, que sin temerle a la represión y a la criminalización, ha levantado sus banderas para exigir los cambios estructurales que se requieren para la fundamentación de la paz".

¿Cómo se podría lograr esto? Márquez continúa leyendo: "uno de los más importantes logros [es] el compromiso de convocar sin más demoras a los partidos y voceros de las organizaciones sociales a que elaboren los lineamientos para que por fin tengamos un estatuto para la oposición política, y por otro lado, establezcan en eventos democráticos de orden nacional, los fundamentos para que surja una normatización que dé verdadero reconocimiento, con garantías, a la existencia y a los derechos del movimiento social".

A la vez que insiste en el papel esencial del pueblo: "No obstante falta mucho por andar, y es solamente con los pies y la determinación de la gente en las calles, del soberano proponiendo y decidiendo, que será posible la expansión de la democracia como presupuesto de reconciliación, y que lo que hasta ahora son solamente anhelos y compromisos se conviertan en realidad".

Pero por otro lado, Márquez enfatiza la necesidad de esclarecer y exponer los orígenes del conflicto armado y el papel del Estado. Recuerda y advierte la terrible y cruel experiencia de la Unión Patriótica comenzando en los años 80 cuando luego de las conversaciones de paz de la insurgencia con el gobierno del presidente Belisario Betancur, se estableció un partido con fines electorales y sus miembros, (más de 4,000 muertes hasta la fecha) fueron sistemáticamente asesinados/as por paramilitares y las fuerzas de represión del Estado.

Así el vocero de la insurgencia recalca que "La conquista de la paz depende mucho de estos planteamientos; pero, al lado del avance de las conversaciones, hay otros asuntos sin la solución de los

cuales, se hace lenta la marcha: El éxito de la paz depende de la terminación de la corrupción, de ponerle punto final a la interferencia de las mafias que de una u otra forma han capturado al Estado, en todos los órganos: ejecutivo, legislativo y judicial".

Y lo hace responsable: "Dentro de las responsabilidades del Estado está la de haber dejado podrir la justicia, pues la corrupción generalizada que nació hace años en el ejecutivo (contratos y comisiones en todas las esferas), contagió la justicia por aquello de la puerta giratoria, (donde salen los mismos por la misma puerta, y entran los mismos para hacer lo mismo), igual que en el Congreso. Los congresistas investigados y en la cárcel siempre representaron a los partidos y al régimen".

Perspectivas diferentes

Si bien el gobierno y las FARC han firmado un acuerdo al cual han llegado por consenso, sus perspectivas son muy diferentes. La insurgencia aboga porque sea el pueblo quien opine y dirija, sobre todo quienes más han sufrido y a quienes les ha sido negado la participación política en las cuestiones que más les impacta; pero el gobierno piensa de otro modo.

Humberto de la Calle, el principal representante del gobierno en las negociaciones, en un artículo que escribió para el periódico El Tiempo el 9 de noviembre, titulado "Gobierno explica el acuerdo sobre participación política de las Farc", se refirió al pueblo no como soberano, sino como un ente al que hay que "reconocer y regular el papel de estos movimientos, su interlocución con los gobernantes y la instauración de mecanismos que atiendan en forma oportuna las manifestaciones del derecho a la protesta pacífica. A los movimientos que logren una determinada envergadura y que deseen ingresar a la política se les tendería un puente para facilitar ese tránsito. De igual modo, se establecen mecanismos para la discusión democrática con esos movimientos una vez firmado el Acuerdo Final".

Y sobre la guerrilla, insiste en "Una condición esencial para la puesta en marcha de estas iniciativas es la desmovilización de la guerrilla".

Sin embargo, De la Calle admitió que "Se reconoce la irrupción de los movimientos sociales. Es un fenómeno mundial inédito hasta hace poco".

Peligros que se ciernen

Si bien es un acuerdo histórico y extremadamente positivo, hay varios peligros nacionales e internacionales que se ciernen sobre el pueblo colombiano en busca de paz y justicia social. Aparte de la falta de acceso a los medios, la solución de lo cual está incluido en el acuerdo, está el hecho de que "nada está acordado hasta que todo esté acordado". Hace ya un año que empezaron las conversaciones, y no se sabe cuándo terminarán. Mientras tanto, sigue la

represión contra el pueblo y la impunidad para las fuerzas represoras del gobierno.

Los movimientos sociales y sindicales, que no tienen nada que ver con la insurgencia armada, siguen siendo amenazados y asesinados por paramilitares o fuerzas armadas del gobierno en beneficio de corporaciones transnacionales. El 2 de noviembre fue asesinado César García, un líder en Tolima de la resistencia contra la explotación aurífera por la transnacional Anglo Gold Ashanti. Y el 9 de noviembre, Oscar López Triviño, trabajador de Nestlé, fue acorralado a balazos en Bugalagrande luego de que horas antes su sindicato recibiera una amenaza de paramilitares para que no organizaran en contra de Nestlé. El sindicato había comenzado una huelga de hambre días atrás porque Nestlé rehúsa dialogar con los trabajadores.

Aparte de las presiones a nivel nacional de la ultraderecha representada por el ex presidente Álvaro Uribe, están las transnacionales que siguen siendo las beneficiarias del gobierno mientras le roban los territorios al pueblo, el hecho de la colaboración militar de Colombia con la OTAN e Israel, las bases militares de los EE.UU. y sobre todo, las órdenes de éste último al gobierno colombiano.

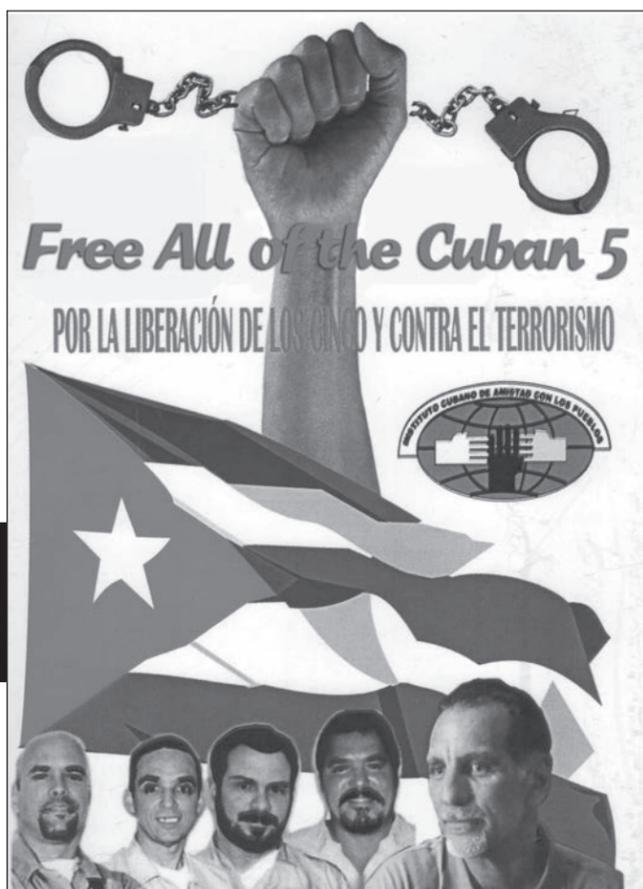
Próxima etapa, crucial el papel de EE.UU.

El próximo punto a discutirse en las negociaciones, será el de "Solución al Problema de las Drogas Ilícitas". Este tema por necesidad va a incluir más explícitamente a los EE.UU. Como resume Alfredo Molano, reportero de El Espectador, "tendrá activa participación el gobierno de Estados Unidos. A partir de ahora su apoyo al proceso de paz es decisivo". Mencionando el problema de narcotráfico, los procesos de extradición a ese país y a Simón Trinidad, preso en EE.UU. y requerido por las FARC como parte de los negociadores en La Habana.

Es interesante que el próximo 3 de diciembre esté pautada una reunión entre Santos y Barack Obama.

Es ahora cuando se requerirá más participación activa de los movimientos de solidaridad en EE.UU. Como dijo en una entrevista el comandante del ELN, Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista -"Nosotros defendemos la tesis de que hoy es imposible la lucha en solitario de un solo pueblo y una sola sociedad porque sus enemigos están dentro y fuera de las fronteras. Asimismo los amigos y compañeros de lucha de los pueblos y las sociedades están dentro y fuera de las fronteras, y con ellos hay que contar en el desarrollo de la lucha". (justiciapaz-colombia.com, 9 de noviembre)

Mientras tanto, los/as colombianos/as en el exilio siguen con detalle y esperanza el proceso. Imelda Daza, desde Suecia, le escribió a la autora de este artículo: "Los colombianos en el exilio seguimos esperanzados el desarrollo de las negociaciones en La Habana. El fin del conflicto y las reformas que posteriormente se acometan deberán garantizar la convivencia, la tolerancia y la posibilidad de participar en política sin temor a más genocidios. El silencio de los fusiles no es suficiente. La paz es ante todo justicia social". □



¡Libertad para todos de Los Cinco Cubanos!

Left to right: Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, Ramón Labañino, y ahora libre René González.