

Obama, Congress call for austerity; U.S. workers are their prime target

By ANDREW POLLACK

While their European competitors impose country-wide austerity plans, and their Chinese trade rivals focus on continued state support for booming industries, capitalists here at home seek to boost their global competitive stance, and overcome their profitability crisis, with their longstanding policy of misery by a thousand cuts. That means attacking the U.S. working class for the most part—one industry, one policy, one benefit at a time.

But the absence of resistance to such cuts has emboldened both ruling political parties to go after bigger game. The most threatening example at the moment is the call by the co-chairs of Obama's "Deficit Reduction Commission" in late November for a drastic overhaul of Social Security. The co-chair of the commission, Alan Simpson, told the executive director of the National Older Women's League that Social Security was "like a milk cow with 310 million tits."

Co-chairs Simpson and Erskine Bowles would like to gradually raise the early retirement age from 62 to 64 and the standard retirement age from 67 to 69. They would reduce scheduled benefits for better-off retirees and use a less-generous measure of inflation to calculate cost-of-living increases. The commission co-chairs also want to keep taxes low for corporations and the rich, but eliminate or slash tax benefits for workers' health care and housing.

Liberal columnists have pointed out that Social Security is self-financing, and so it is an odd target for a body charged with reducing a deficit to which the program doesn't contribute.

National Nurses United pointed out that delayed retirement is a particular burden for workers in occupations like nursing with tremendous physical pressures. NNU also noted that the commission's goals are designed to allow "high-income earners to continue to receive tax breaks and our endless Middle Eastern wars [to] continue unabated."

Another "budget-balancing panel"—headed by Alice Rivlin, a budget director under President Bill Clinton, and Pete Domenici, a former Republican senator from



Jin Lee / Bloomberg

New Mexico—issued a report that largely mirrored the recommendations of the Simpson-Bowles Commission. And both panels' proposed cuts will be reinforced by parallel attacks at state and municipal levels, carried out simultaneously but separately in each governmental entity—thus fragmenting potential labor response in the absence of more far-seeing leadership.

The *Washington Post* reported, "Consensus is forming on what steps to take in cutting the deficit." This bipartisan consensus includes "big cuts at the Pentagon. Higher taxes, including those on home ownership and

(Above) April 2010 march on Wall Street, organized by the AFL-CIO. Labor officials have done little to lead fight against government cutback demands.

health care. Smaller Social Security checks and higher Medicare premiums." We can be sure the Pentagon cuts will be minimized. But they're dead serious about the rest, as well as others not named—especially attacks on pensions and job security for public workers.

Reports from a recent meeting of state governors said

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New York meeting launches April 9 antiwar action

By CHRISTINE MARIE

Over 300 activists met at St. Mark's Church in Manhattan on Nov. 6 to launch the United National Antiwar Committee (UNAC) in the Northeast region. People came from up and down the East Coast and the Midwest to begin organizing efforts for the bi-coastal demonstrations planned for April 9 to Bring the Troops Home Now. The demonstrations will take place in New York City and San Francisco.

UNAC was initiated at a national antiwar conference in Albany, N.Y., last July, where 800 activists from 35 states unanimously approved the call for the April 9 actions and a comprehensive series of nationwide antiwar events lead-

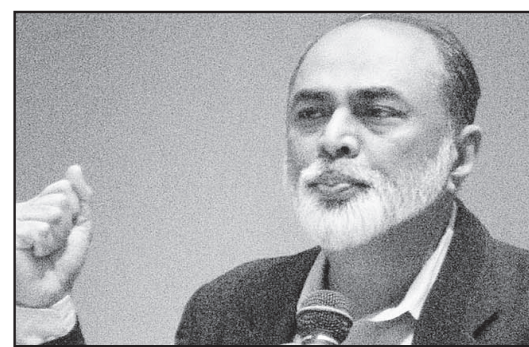
ing up to the date.

Malik Mujahid, founder of the new Muslim Peace Coalition-USA, anticipated the themes to be presented by the nearly 40 subsequent speakers at the Nov. 6 meeting, when, in his keynote address, he said that building April 9 would require "everyday getting connected with everyone who stands for peace and justice for *all*, not just for some." Mujahid introduced several antiwar clerics from mosques across the city who were dedicated to mobilizing New York's Muslim communities for April 9. Some 75 Muslim activists from New York were participants in the Nov. 6 meeting.

Speaker after speaker pointed out that an antiwar movement that is powerful

enough to halt the U.S. government's war drive would need to be one that has overcome the obstacles of Islamophobia, racism, class prejudice, and xenophobia to unify the millions in action.

The alternative was described from the floor by Alicia McWilliams-McCollum, whose nephew was one of the African American men from Newburgh, N.Y., recently entrapped by the FBI and presented to the nation as a terrorist threat justifying war and the Patriot Act. "I see all the people in this room," McWilliams cried, "and I ask, where were you? We don't need four people in the court room, we need to stand together in our thousands to de-



Malik Mujahid: Muslim Peace Coalition-USA

feat this new Cointelpro."

The lesson, it seems, is being absorbed by a broader section of the movement than ever before, as panelists returned

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'Tis the season to buy, buy, buy!

By BRONSON ROZIER

'Tis the season to be jolly, or so we are told over, and over, and over again. It's also the season to go out and buy! buy! buy! At one time the drumbeat to buy started the day after Thanksgiving. That time is long gone. Now with the rush of the capitalists and retailers to get ever more money, Christmas decorations pop up along with the Hallowe'en costumes.

Sitting down here in the working class, it's not so easy to be jolly with the constant blaring—whether carols, flashing lights, or commercials—that to buy is to be happy. Buy for your children (at the best quality and highest prices) or they will be scarred for life! You are bad parents if you didn't spend hundreds of dollars on toys, electronics, or latest video games and system.

A new angle they play in these economic hard times is "we've had a rough year, we deserve a little happiness" in our miserable lives. Again, happiness is defined as buying something—which isn't always possible for the unemployed or those with part-time jobs that pay less than half their former income. On the other hand, folks lucky enough to have jobs are working 60-80 hours a week, and will probably be happy if they can sleep through the holidays.

This holiday that used to be a quiet day of celebration for those of faith—and for us others a nice quiet time with our families—has become a guilt-tripping horror so the rich can get richer.

And in much of the world it is far, far worse. The bankers in the imperial countries demand that the developing countries pay heavy interest on their loans in order to survive. And while they rake in trillions, whole countries don't have money for elementary



sanitation or development of agriculture to feed the local population. The UN says 240,000 children (the death toll in the atom-bomb destruction of Nagasaki) die of preventable diseases each year—often due to the water they drink, which contains harmful bacteria and protozoa that carry diseases.

While the rich celebrate Christmas in their mansions, feasting on food and drink from around the world, most of the world's population suffers from a lack of housing, schooling, and food.

But despite all this gloom and doom, dear readers, I do hope hearing the truth might relieve some weight from your shoulders. You are not responsible, you are

not a bad parent or an uncaring spouse. You are the victim of a system—the capitalist system—that steals from the poor to give to the richest.

There is joy and hope in this Scrooge-like tale. It comes from the promise that we can band together the poor, the working people, many from the middle class, and those abused and tortured by this system worldwide. It is the joy that this barbaric system can be taken down.

We can build a system run democratically by the working class that will meet everyone's basic needs. It will free the scientists and technicians to work for science and technology—and not profit. Instead of being hated by the world for all the wars and horrors we bring them, people in the United States and other technologically advanced countries will be loved for our doctors, teachers, and builders. Then all the holidays will be our holidays to celebrate as we please in a world of peace and abundance. ■

Update: Hutchinson for Congress

Close to a thousand people voted socialist in Connecticut's congressional election in November. Socialist Action's candidate in the state's First District, Christopher Hutchinson, an art teacher, received 976 votes in a four-way race, including John Larson, the fourth-highest ranking Democrat in the House of Representatives. Five parties held lines on the ballot.

John Larson received 61%, with 139,113 votes (57.7% on the Democratic Party line, and 3.5% on the Working Families Party line). Republican Ann Brickely got 37%, with 84,084 votes, and Green Party candidate Ken Krayske got 1% with 2565 votes.

Meanwhile, in Ohio, school teacher and labor activist Dan LaBotz, running as the candidate of the Socialist Party, received about 27,000 votes for U.S. Senate.

A WORKERS' ACTION PROGRAM TO FIGHT THE CRISIS

We propose an EMERGENCY CONGRESS OF LABOR to discuss and take steps to implement the following demands —

1) Bail out the people, not the bankers! Open the account books of the banks to full public inspection. Nationalize the banks to be supervised by workers' committees.

2) No foreclosures! No forced evictions! Cancel usurious debt payments, and reduce mortgage payments in proportion to their capitalist-caused decline in value.

3) Full employment at union wages! An emergency public works program to employ all jobless workers and youth! Employ people to build what we need — low-cost quality housing, efficient mass transportation, cheap and renewable sources of power, schools, clinics — and to conserve our water, forests, farmland, and open space.

4) Immediate and full withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq & Afghanistan! Close all U.S. bases abroad! No money for the military — use funds instead for public works! Convert the war industries to making products for people's needs and to combat global warming.

5) Reduce the workweek to 30 hours with no cut in pay, and cut the retirement age to 55. Provide unemployment and retirement payments at the level of union wages and benefits.

6) To combat inflation: A sliding scale of wages and pensions that matches the rises in consumer prices. To combat high medical costs: A free, universal, public health-care system.

7) Immediate citizenship for all undocumented workers. No job discrimination; equal pay for equal work — regardless of gender, sexual orientation, skin color, or national origin.

8) Nationalize manufacturing, big agribusiness, energy, and transportation corporations and place them under the control of elected committees of workers.

9) To mobilize support for the demands it adopts, the EMERGENCY CONGRESS should organize ACTION COMMITTEES in every workplace and neighborhood threatened by the crisis. These committees can draw up more concrete demands than the ones outlined above.

10) To put all these measures into effect, we need a LABOR PARTY — based on a fighting union movement and all people who are oppressed and exploited. For a workers' government!

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By JOHN LESLIE

A right turn in U.S. politics?

Following the Republican victory in last month's mid-term election, most of the media have pointed to a right turn in U.S. politics. They assume that working people showed by their vote that they reject "big government" and the "liberal" policies of the Obama administration.

The ultra-right Tea Party did secure a high level of influence in the Republican Party. The Tea Party leadership rests in the hands of reactionary and even white racist forces; but the base of the movement is more complex. Many are older, white "middle class" people concerned with rising taxes, who were manipulated by claims of a "government takeover of health care" and government-controlled "death panels." Some of them, because of their reliance on government programs like Medicare and Social Security, might be won to a broad defense of these programs against the coming wave of austerity measures and cutbacks.

The truth is that both capitalist parties campaigned on a program of austerity and budget cutting. This goes for the incoming "liberal" Democratic governors of California and New York—Brown and Cuomo. It should also be noted that no major party candidates made an issue of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Democrats could have urged a shifting of war dollars to creating jobs at home, funding education and health care, and rebuilding the infrastructure, but that was not on their pro-corporate, pro-imperialist agenda.

The Democrats have accommodated themselves to right-wing attacks on Muslims and stepped up attacks on immigrant workers. For example, an incumbent Democratic state representative in Pennsylvania went so far as to visit construction sites to check the papers of workers. Democrats included language about "getting tough" with so-called illegal aliens in their campaigns.

Polls show that the Tea Party has the support of about 18% of the population. Interestingly, other polls show that about 30% of the U.S. population thinks that socialism is a good idea. Of course, many of these folks don't understand what socialism means. This represents an opportunity to explain more fully what the socialist alternative would look like.

These numbers show not so much a rightward swing in U.S. politics as a lack of clarity amongst working people and the middle classes. The election does not

represent a massive turn into the Republican Party. Instead, it appears that the mass base of the Democrats, demoralized and unmotivated, stayed home. On the other side, the ultra-right turned out its supporters. But the truth is that only 40% of the electorate bothered to vote, which shows a lack of faith in either capitalist party to solve the problems we face.

Without a firm political anchor in a working-class program and organization, voters will always tend to swing back and forth to punish those in power. I would caution against writing a premature obituary for the Democrats. In 2006, voters rejected the policies of the GOP by giving the Democrats a majority in both the Senate and the House. This majority was further enhanced in the 2008 election when Obama was elected. Afterward, the talking heads on TV talked about the "end" of the Republican Party and other such nonsense.

This trend shows that neither capitalist party is capable of offering any solutions to the crisis; only a continuation of war and austerity. This is why we have to link the "war at home" (one-sided class war against workers and the oppressed) and the war over there. This is what makes building the United National Antiwar Committee (UNAC) so crucial. The contradictions of this system are sharpening, and we are presented with the opportunity to build a fightback on issues that millions of working people feel are important to their lives.

We also need an uncompromising fight for independence from the parties of the ruling class. The Democrats are as much a part of the institutional set-up of U.S. capitalism as the Republicans. While the Republicans tend to be more reactionary on the surface, the Democrats have the function of disorienting and confusing opposition. They attempt to draw the leadership of mass movements into a relationship based on "access" and "influence," and the working class gets sold out. To put it bluntly; the Democratic Party is where the peoples' movements go to die.

In the recent election, the pro-Democratic Party "left" tried to play up the boogymen of an impending right-wing takeover led by the likes of Glen Beck and Sarah

Palin. But how do we stop the far right? Certainly not by accommodating ourselves to their program at every turn.

After the election defeat, Obama said he hoped to work with the Republicans to move things forward. He spoke favorably about seeking a "bipartisan" unity to balance the budget and "fix" programs like Social Security. Concretely, this means an all-out offensive against programs that millions of people depend on.

This is the purpose of the Obama Deficit Commission—to sell major cuts in programs like Social Security and Medicare in the name of fiscal responsibility. Forget raising taxes on the rich or solutions that favor working people.

More than anything, this election reflected a reaction by the mass of voters to the perceived inaction of the party that promised "change" and then did little to achieve it. Millions have lost jobs, and millions more fear the loss of their jobs. They see the foreclosure crisis and bank bailouts while nothing is done for the most vulnerable. They see an economy that creates few jobs; and those it does create are low-wage, no benefit jobs—often part time.

They see a union movement that gives millions of dollars and thousands of volunteer hours to the Democrats but has done little to oppose concessions and trade deals or to defend the interests of the broader working class. There was no fight for EFCA, no fight for a substantial increase in the minimum wage, no mobilization for a real health-care bill, and no opposition to the wars that are draining this economy. After all, we can't embarrass our "friends" the Democrats!

Bourgeois elections decide very little. The mass activity of the working class and the oppressed on the other 364 days of the year is what makes the difference.

The way forward is not easy. We have several key interlinked tasks ahead of us—to build a mass antiwar movement that ties the social and economic crisis at home to the wars over there, to rebuild a class-struggle wing in the unions, and ultimately to form a mass party of working people and the oppressed that is capable of struggling for political power. ■

... Workers

(continued from page 1)

that "everything is on the table" for possible cuts. This is necessitated by state funding gaps of more than \$425 billion and surging borrowing costs for states (and cities as well). Governors of both parties, of course, ruled out tax increases on the rich.

On a level less noticeable to workers not typically informed of class-wide events, but no less insidious, bosses around the country continue their one-company-at-a-time imposition of cuts. One increasingly common scheme is the imposition of permanent two-tier labor schemes.

Louis Uchitelle reported in *The New York Times* on Nov. 19, "Even at manufacturing companies that are profitable, union workers are reluctantly agreeing to tiered contracts that create two levels of pay." In recent decades such schemes were presented as temporary measures until profitability returned. But increasingly employers are dropping the pre-

tense and admitting they are imposing a permanent second tier with lower wages, benefits, worse work rules, casual status or no union membership—just because they can. In some cases, workers in the higher tier will be stuck into the lower one if called back after a layoff.

The result of such cuts is already showing in booming corporate profits, which are up 28% over the past year, and reached an all-time high (although not adjusted for inflation) in the third quarter. Profits have grown for seven consecutive quarters.

Part of the profit boom is due to comparisons with last year's low levels, especially the disastrous balance sheets of financial companies that took huge write-downs on bad investments. Another part, however, is their successful use of the crisis to squeeze workers. Thus businesses' spending on compensation for employees rose only 7.6%. Economists also attribute the rise in part to stronger productivity (i.e., more goods turned out by fewer workers), as well as to rapidly expanding markets in countries such as India and China.

Nonetheless, said Paul Dales of Capital Economics, "The [U.S.] economy is not growing fast enough to reduce significantly the unemployment rate or to prevent a slide into deflation. This is unlikely to change in 2011 or 2012."

What's more, such profits, as they are not based on a revival of system-wide consumption and production, can't last—just as the very modest return to growth in GDP this year is merely a temporary upswing before the next, and likely far more severe, return to absolute decline in GDP. Dependence on China and other growing markets is running up against limits there as well.

Even in the midst of this temporary return to profitability, the Federal Reserve said in late November that the official unemployment rate would still be at least 8% when the next presidential election arrives, in late 2012. And as we go to press, Congress appears likely to refuse to extend unemployment benefits, meaning millions will enter the holiday season facing eviction and hunger.

In contrast to the nationwide revolts in some European countries, as well as a

recent nationwide public-worker strike in South Africa, resistance to the rulers' policies in the U.S. has been as fragmented as the cuts imposed on them in bits and pieces. But there are small signs of resistance, including ones that could be a precursor to an overall working-class fightback.

Militant autoworkers, for instance, continue efforts to combine resistance to attacks in their particular industry with advocacy for nationwide plans to boost employment while reversing climate damage. Their campaign was described in a *Labor Notes* article concerning a meeting of UAW dissidents planning resistance to union President Bob King's "collaborative" policies in bargaining for next year's contracts.

The journal reported that Al Benchich, retired president of UAW Local 909, noted that a gathering of the activists was held "in the shadow of a large wind turbine generator and adjacent to a solar panel farm—the kind of green products that Autoworkers Caravan [the dissidents' organization] has advocated be produced at converted auto plants." ■



(Left) Protesters battled police outside Greek parliament after lawmakers approved drastic austerity cuts, May 6.

Report from Greece: Open class war

By VANGELIS ITESIS

Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou recently warned the members of his social-democratic party (PASOK) that “political stability in this country is what we must keep as the apple of our eye.” Six months earlier, the president of the Third Hellenic Republic, Karolos Papoulias, had anxiously admonished Greek society to take a step back from impending chaos: “we have reached the edge of the precipice.” Both these statements referred not so much to the growing possibility of economic bankruptcy for Greece as to the danger of uncontrolled social resistance from below.

As soon as PASOK officials had scored an electoral triumph in the fall of 2009, they discovered the grim reality of the Greek economic situation. The national debt was swelling rapidly, the revised budget deficit figures were rising higher than expected, and the international credit rating agencies were downgrading government debt to “junk” status. Papandreou was ostensibly astonished by the findings of his ministers, who had daringly disclosed, as the official story goes, what the former government had chosen not to reveal. He declared his personal willingness to save the sinking country, and to put aside his electoral campaign promises for socialism “instead of neoliberal barbarism.”

Evidently, this was not the right time for acting in accordance with the mandate given by the voters, who had just rejected the neoliberal policies of the former right-wing government. According to the prime minister, the country would be put back on its feet by heavy doses of this same barbarism—which had led not just the Greek economy but the most developed economies of the world to the threshold of collapse.

As a matter of fact, Papandreou was not alone in taking such a posture. The pressure of debt holders, who were losing confidence in the ability of the Greek government to pay them back, was palpable. Economic analysts, in their strange idiom, underlined “unrestrained spending,” “cheap lending,” and “failure to implement financial reforms” as the chief causes of

the evil that had befallen upon “irresponsible” Greeks.

European Union and IMF executives came to offer their technical skills in mastering the debt, while the Greek government pronounced more or less a state of emergency, signing a memorandum outlining the terms of economic aid by its continental partners in the EU, and its global partners in the IMF. Surprising as it might seem to mainstream political theorists, democracy is a complete luxury when the magnitudes of the deficit run high.

In reality, all those cliff-hanging words idolizing fiscal stability bear the mark of a globally concerted endeavor to change the relationship of class forces in a sharpening social antagonism. It is no coincidence that the same rhetoric now is applied in the cases of Ireland, Portugal, Spain, the UK, even the USA: share the burden, give life to the free market! Each national population is assigned the responsibility to shoulder collectively the burden of the crisis, in order that a global agenda of “reforms” can be pursued everywhere with the same effectiveness.

The problem, they tell us, is excessive social spending—the ability, in other words, of the majority of the population to have some access to the social wealth that their living labor produces, and that a tiny minority usurps, owing to the established power relations in the sphere of production. Their recipe is monotonous, because it corresponds to a global offensive strategy: reduce expenditures concerning wages, health care benefits, social security, public education, even public transportation; and increase expenditures to support private investment and bail out the private banks.

Yet, however “irresponsible” they are portrayed as being, the Greek working class never decided to pour 28 billion euros last year, and 25 billion additionally this year, into saving Greek bankers’ revenues. This was a gift bestowed by the former government as well as the present one upon the real masters of the game.

Yes, we are in a state of emergency, in a war launched by capital against living labor on a world scale. In Greece, this sense of being at war permeated public discourse, and repeatedly infiltrated the speeches

of leading political personalities. The working class, and especially the so-called *new* working class—composed of mostly educated, precariously employed people, scarcely represented by the traditional unions—by no means abstained from the struggles against capital.

In fact, Greece’s new proletariat had a heavy record of resistance, involving such major events as the most massive and radical student movement of the last decades against the commodification of education, in 2006-2007, and the social revolt of December 2008—on the occasion of Alexandros Gregoropoulos’ assassination by a cop, which shook the country and seriously threatened its political stability. These new layers of the working class were the main targets of the ruling class’s strategies for increased discipline.

Last spring, the government successfully passed the most extreme anti-labor bills that Greek capitalists had ever dreamed of—at least during the last 30 years. The measures included wage reductions in the public sector, new legislation with regard to social security and health care that involved the increase of the retirement age, etc.

The organized labor movement was unable to draw an effective line of resistance. After six general strikes—one of which, held on May 5, was perhaps the most massive strike Greece had seen after the fall of the military regime in 1974—the leadership of the Greek Workers’ Confederation signed an agreement of social peace with the bosses. This was done without the trade-union officials having gained anything, and without even having put into question the “burden-sharing” rhetoric of the government.

The left was also overtaken by the events. Most of its forces, especially the two main organizations that represent the left in Greece, the Communist Party and SYRIZA (a reformist-bureaucratic coalition of a left social-democratic party, SYNASBISMOS, with some anti-capitalist organizations) proved to be incapable both of giving a perspective of victory to the ongoing struggle by endorsing radical demands, and of promoting independent massive action and forms of workers’ self-organization that would be the essential conditions for such a victory.

Anarchists, who now constitute a relatively massive political force, particularly in radicalized proletarian youth sectors, failed to articulate the spirit of resistance into a political strategy. Even worse, some anarchist riot groups succumbed to cynical violence; during the May 5 demonstration, three bank employees were found dead after being entrapped in a building blindly set on fire. At the end, despite the mass mobilizations, the government remained stable in its position; the outcome of this crucial combat appeared to be significantly favorable to Greek capitalism.

Fortunately, this is not the end of the story. The mass strikes in France and the social struggles in Britain and elsewhere have helped to counterbalance the setback in morale that was beginning to affect the working class in Greece.

In last month’s municipal and regional elections, the ruling social-democratic party retained its lead, but the far left reinforced its electoral representation. For example, the coalition of several anti-capitalist and revolutionary organizations named ANTARSYA (“mutiny” in Greek), which had kept the strongest stance against the capitalist offensive during the previous period of struggle, scored higher than ever. It was the first time that anti-capitalist and revolutionary groups working together had managed to take some visible steps onto the central political stage—electing some of their members to municipal and regional councils.

Yet, there was some alarmingly bad news: a fascist candidate scored 5 percent in the municipality of Athens and was elected to the municipal council. This, of course, has to be seen in regard to both the growing anti-immigrant sentiment seen in some Athens neighborhoods and to the constant backdoor support offered by sectors of the state to these Nazi thugs as a force available to be used at will against communist and anarchist militants.

The most important event from a class-struggle point of view, however, happened on Nov. 17. Over 50,000 people participated in the demonstration annually held on that day in memory of the Polytechnic School uprising of 1973. It was the largest Nov. 17 demonstration in the last decade. The contingents of anti-capitalist and revolutionary organizations and of autonomous/anarchist groups attracted, once more, several thousand militants. Thousands of red and black flags were waved, once more, under the night sky of Athens.

The war is not over. Political personnel representing the Greek bourgeoisie must truly strive to keep political stability as the “apple of their eye.” On that score, however, they still have reasons to worry. ■

Calling all Israeli refugees ... of Zionism!

Sofa Landver, Israel’s minister of immigrant absorption, is trying to lure at least 15,000 former citizens of Israel from around the world to go back home. She spoke in Toronto on Nov. 24, after campaign stops in New York and Boston.

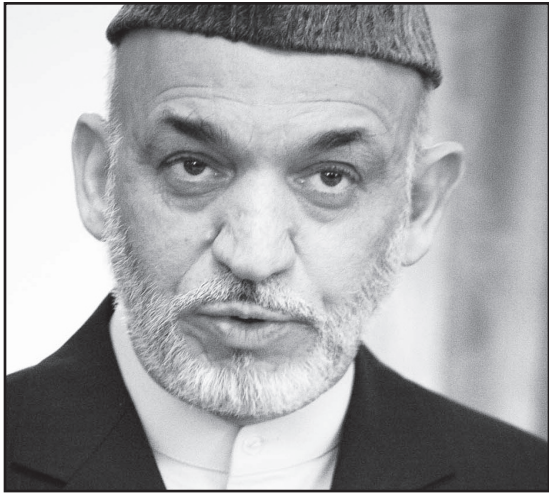
Why? To stop the ‘brain drain’ from the Jewish state’, said Landver, a speech pathologist who moved with her dentist husband from the former Soviet Union to Israel in 1979. But why are so many Israelis, especially the scientists and professionals now being targeted to return, leaving in the first place? Toronto, alone, has some 50,000 Israeli expatriates.

Opposition parties in the Knesset say it is due to low wages, with doctors earning as little as the equivalent of \$6 an hour, said one politician to *The*

Jerusalem Post this month. To counter that and win them back, Landver is pitching tax breaks, health insurance, and free tuition for higher education.

But the problem may not be only economic. Physical insecurity is real in a state that was founded on ethnic cleansing, buttressed by racist laws. While that state continues to expand by means of physical displacement of an indigenous population, and is surrounded by nations composed of hundreds of millions people hostile to its apartheid and expansionist practices, the prospects for peace are slim.

Instead of a haven for historically persecuted world Jewry, Israel is more and more evidently a death trap for the Jews there, millions of whom would rather be somewhere else. Zionism produces wave upon wave of refugees, and not all of them are Palestinian. — BARRY WEISLEDER



By GERRY FOLEY

It was the bad luck of the war makers that at the same time as they raised the possibility of an unending military intervention in Afghanistan, their claims of negotiating with the insurgents exploded in their faces. The alleged Taliban representative they were talking to turned out to be a swindler.

The news prompted a column by Maureen Dowd, who is usually the satirical corner of *The New York Times* editorial page. In the Nov. 23 issue she wrote: "And we wonder why we haven't found Osama bin Laden. Though we're pouring billions into intelligence in Afghanistan, we can't even tell the difference between a no-name faker and a senior member of the Taliban. The tragedy of Afghanistan has descended into farce."

Dowd continued: "...it turns out that Afghan and NATO leaders have been negotiating for months with an imposter pretending to be a top Taliban commander—even as Gen. David Petraeus was assuring reporters that there were promising overtures to President Hamid Karzai from the Taliban about ending the war. Those familiar with the greatest Afghan con yet say that the British had spent a year developing the fake Taliban leader as a source and, despite a heated debate and C.I.A. skepticism, General Petraeus was buying into it. The West was putting planes and assets at the poseur's disposal, and paying him a sum in the low six figures."

The fake Taliban leader was undoubtedly one of the most innocent of the crooks and double dealers the U.S. chiefs have been working with in Afghanistan, as Dowd pointed out: "Indeed, sometimes it feels as if the entire region is taking us for a ride. Everybody is lining up for Western cash, treating America, the British and NATO like suckers. President Karzai and his brother toy with us for their immense personal profit, even as they corrupt their own elections."

Dowd would have been more objective, not to say, less nationally arrogant, if she had pointed out that the biggest robbers are the U.S. corporations that are collecting a bonanza from the U.S. war effort and are hand in glove with the local robbers. She might also have had more sympathy for Karzai's dilemma, since in order to maintain even a minimal credibility, he has to try to demonstrate, however impotently, that he is defending his people from abuses at the hands of the occupation forces.

Juan Cole described Karzai's problem in an article posted on the on-line journal *Alternet* Nov. 18: "During the past two months, the U.S. military has fought a major campaign in the environs of the southern Pashtun city of Kandahar, launching night raids and attempting to push insurgents out of the orchards and farms to the east of the metropolis. Many local farmers were displaced, losing their crops in the midst of the violence, and forced to become day laborers in the slums of Kandahar. Presumably these Pashtun clans who found themselves in the crossfire between the Taliban and the U.S. put pressure on Karzai to call a halt to the operation."

Jeremy Scahill offered a more complete picture in a *Nation* article posted on *Alternet* Nov. 23: "The [night] raids undoubtedly have produced scores of successful kill or capture operations, but serious questions abound over the NATO definitions of Taliban commanders, sub-commanders and foot soldiers. Most significantly, the raids consistently result in the killing of innocent civilians, a fact that is problematic for NATO and the Karzai government."

A number of liberal journalists pointed to the huge material cost of the U.S. war effort, which costs around \$7 billion a month. In the Nov. 24 *Huffington Post*, Derrick Crowe wrote: "Given the failure of the escalation strategy to produce even marginally strategically significant success, it makes no sense whatsoever for President Obama to extend this failing war through 2014. Doing so will cost the American taxpayer, on the low end, close to half-a-trillion dollars. We need that half-trillion dollars at home to put people back to work, not wasted on a war that's not making us safer. If Congress and the president keep spending our dollars this way, no one should believe for a second that

U.S.-led Afghanistan war loses credibility with liberal journalists

Joe Raedle / Getty Images



(Above) U.S. Marines sent to destroy Taliban supply routes in southern Afghanistan in 2009.

(Left) Afghan President Hamid Karzai.

they're serious about getting our economy back on track."

What the liberal commentators did not consider is that the interests of the big U.S. corporations are not the same as those of the U.S. people, or even of the U.S. economy in general. Many of them are making huge profits from the U.S. wars and they do not want to invest that money in the United States. They can make bigger profits and not have to deal with American workers by investing in a war machine staffed by low-wage, unprotected third world workers and by feeding off the U.S. public for huge overseas works, such as bases and the new giant U.S. "embassy" in Kabul, planned to cost three fourths of a billion dollars (and that is before "cost overruns").

Some commentators have argued that these huge projects mean that the U.S. intends to maintain permanent fortresses in Iraq and Afghanistan. But is also possible that the corporations, and their military-industrial partners, do not really care if these projects have to be abandoned. They will get their money regardless. A large percentage of the so-called reconstruction projects in Iraq, costing many millions of dollars, were never finished. Ironically, some of the critics of grossly wasteful industrialization and industry in the Stalinist countries argued that waste was really the goal of the ruling bureaucracies. It may be that, in its decadence, American capitalism actually approaches that.

The tone of journalists writing for publications that helped to spread illusions in Obama and his administration has become notably cynical in their comments on the war and the "flexible" date for foreign withdrawal. Thus, Tom Engelhardt wrote in an article posted on the Nov. 24 *Alternet*: "Going, going, gone! You can almost hear the announcer's voice throbbing with excitement, only we're not talking about home runs here, but about the disappearing date on which, for the United States and its military, the Afghan War will officially end.

"Practically speaking, the answer to when it will be

over is: just this side of never. If you take the word of our Afghan War commander, the secretary of defense, and top officials of the Obama administration and NATO, we're not leaving any time soon."

Engelhardt also made a point with far-reaching implications: "Nor, officials rushed to say, was anyone talking about 2014 as a date for *all* American troops to head for the exits, just 'combat troops'—and maybe not even all of them. Possibly tens of thousands of trainers and other so-called non-combat forces would stay on to help with the 'transition process.' This follows the Iraq pattern where 50,000 American troops remain after the departure of U.S. 'combat' forces to great media fanfare."

Engelhardt had good reason for his cynicism about the claims of U.S. officials. But has he, or any of the liberal columnists becoming disillusioned with Obama, thought about the implications of permanent U.S. military occupation of countries like Iraq and Afghanistan? This is something that anyone interested in a decent and secure life for Americans has to think about.

The prospect of a new colonialism swallowing up the material and human resources of the country for the benefit of giant corporations and mercenary outfits and subjecting entire nations to systematic terror is a grim one. It is also a confirmation of how closely a declining U.S. capitalism is intertwined with a warfare state dominated by predatory groups.

The fight for a better future, or maybe any kind of future, requires an immediate struggle against the warfare state and its new colonialism. And that fight has to be waged independently of the politicians beholden to those who profit from war. No trust can be given to politicians who promise withdrawal but are committed to permanent war and military occupation. ■

Die-in for Queer Rights

By CARYN JENSEN

HARTFORD, Conn.—On Nov. 12 at the State Capitol here, as many as 150 people turned out for a die-in for queer rights. The "Homophobia Kills!" Die-In was planned in response to the increased media coverage of the queer suicides happening across the country and mirrored after two other die-ins that had already taken place in New York and Boston.

In mid-October, four queer activists—Aaron McAuliffe, Al Riccio, Caryn Jensen, and Samson Hampton—met at Aaron's house to discuss the possibility of doing a die-in. Joined by Laura Vollhardt, the five activists spent the next month planning and promoting the event.

Additionally, the action was endorsed by 17 different groups, including the Connecticut Green Party, True Colors, Inc. Sexual Minority Youth and Family Services, GetEQUAL, and the Connecticut branch of Socialist Action.

The die-in was followed by a march through Hartford and a rally back at the State Capitol, where Al

Riccio and Kamora Herrington, head of the True Colors mentoring program, delivered speeches. Aaron McAuliffe performed original poetry and then emceed an open mike, where many queer youth spoke out about personal struggles with transphobia and homophobia. The rally's demands were as follows:

- More safe spaces and housing. Publicly-funded safe housing specifically for runaway, abused, and homeless queer youth.
- The right to self-defense. The right to protect ourselves and each other from abuse without repercussions. This includes intellectual, emotional, social, and physical self-defense.
- Equal access to education. Comprehensive programs in public schools on queer people/practices in history, art, science, religion, and literature. Honest sexual education that is inclusive of all genders and sexual identities as well access to informed counseling services.

All of the organizers are involved in planning future protests for queer rights in Connecticut and around the region. ■

Obama finds deep resistance to monetary, trade policies

Ted Aljibe / AFP

Kim Jae-Hwan / AFP / Getty Images



By ANDREW POLLACK

Barack Obama is beginning to take on an eerie resemblance to Rodney Dangerfield—"I get no respect!" First, his party suffers massive midterm election losses, followed soon thereafter by more in a long series of embarrassing revelations about his puppets in Baghdad and Kabul. Then Benjamin Netanyahu, his partner in the Middle East "peace process," turns a usually amicable charade into a Punch 'n' Judy show.

As a last resort in his pursuit of some respect, the president went to the G20 meeting on trade in Seoul, South Korea. But there's no solidarity among thieves, and he was met with hoots from an audience shouting, "No, you can't!"

This farce would be amusing if it were not the potential prelude for a larger tragedy: a global trade war in which the world's workers would be the cannon fodder. And it can't be a good sign for global peace that tensions in the Koreas have burst out into an actual exchange of gunfire, at the same time as economic relations between the U.S. and North Korea's main backer, China, are steadily worsening.

The trip was supposed to have been the occasion for finalization of a long-awaited free-trade agreement with Seoul, a key goal in Obama's plans to revive the U.S. economy by doubling exports (the fallacy behind such plans is addressed below). No such agreement was reached.

Obama's attempt during the trip to continue bullying China into strengthening its currency, another measure that would supposedly boost U.S. exports, also fell on deaf ears. The hypocrisy of his rhetoric in the face of the Fed's recent devaluation of the dollar by pumping \$600 billion into circulation was too much even for normally diplomatic heads of state to ignore.

In fact, China has little choice but to go its own way in response to heightened economic difficulties. While the U.S. and other Western economies are tightly dependent on an ever-expanding Chinese domestic market, China must either rein in its economy or fall prey to rampant inflation. Recognition of these contradictory interests has pummeled world stock markets whenever they get news of fiscal tightening by Beijing.

China has also recently announced new limits on foreigners' ability to buy residential or commercial property, part of an effort to curb speculative money inflows and ease inflationary

pressures.

But by the same token, the U.S. and other Western powers have no choice, from their own narrow perspective, but to keep grumbling at the Chinese state's intervention in its economy—although in the interests of historical fairness, one can't ignore the fact that each of them have done the same at each crucial turning point in their own evolution in order to bolster key industries and fend off competitors.

Typical of the grumbling was a Nov. 16 *Wall Street Journal* survey. Noting that "Western anger with China has focused on Beijing's cheap-currency policy," *The Journal* detailed the other mechanisms used to support its industries and the stability of its state finances: "Central to China's approach are policies that champion state-owned firms and other so-called national champions, seek aggressively to obtain advanced technology, and manage its exchange rate to benefit exporters. It leverages state control of the financial system to channel low-cost capital to domestic industries—and to resource-rich foreign nations whose oil and minerals China needs to maintain rapid growth."

Yet despite the grumbling, were it not for the industries and domestic markets created by this state policy, the consumption-fueled U.S. "boom" of the 1990s would have collapsed long before the onset of the 2007-8 "financial crisis." Similarly, the financing of America's trade deficit by Chinese foreign exchange would have been impossible, removing another crutch from a tottering U.S. economy.

But the ever-ungrateful U.S. government never ceases to whine about the alleged undervaluation of China's currency, a key tool in making these imports and exchange crutches possible. While many U.S.-based multinationals join the whining chorus, others know that without the Chinese market, they would long ago have run up against the brick wall of U.S. consumption limits.

It's particularly ironic that the latest outlet for U.S. frustrations is China's state sponsorship of "green technology" through offers of cheap land for factories, export tax breaks, and other subsidies—making Obama's alleged support for similar policies look embarrassingly stingy.

Not only does China help prop up the U.S. foreign debt but, as *The Journal* had to admit, it provides direct financing to Western corporations. The case study in

The Wall Street Journal article revolved around privately held telecommunications equipment maker Huawei Technologies, whose expansion was supported by China Development Bank, which in 2004 extended a five-year, \$10 billion credit line "and routinely lends money to foreign buyers to finance their purchases of Huawei products."

But as always, the declining economic power clings to the Holy Writ of the outdated religion on which it rose to power: "Our competition has gotten tougher during a period for the U.S. of profound economic weakness that magnifies any perceived threat," said Charlene Barshefsky, a leading trade official under President Bill Clinton. There is a "significant and profound—almost theological—question about the rules as they exist."

She could have added, though, that the "profound economic weakness" she refers to has an impact on losers and winners in a global crisis this deep—thus, China's has an immediate need for the measures so widely denounced.

Will QE2 float?

When his Federal Reserve pumped \$600 billion into the U.S. monetary veins, Obama hoped a side benefit would be expanded exports due to the cheapening of the dollar. But the Fed's action, dubbed QE2 for Quantitative Easing Two, is likely to resemble more the Titanic than the cruise ship its moniker mimics. The impact on U.S. exports of the Fed's action will be lessened by the unprecedented presence of U.S. manufacturing and service facilities in other countries.

Companies such as GM and GE increasingly make goods in the same countries where they are sold, effectively taking exchange rates out of the equation. In addition, companies that do export goods, and might benefit from the devalued dollar, often get imports from abroad and will thus pay higher prices

(Above) Obama addresses G20 in Seoul, South Korea, on Nov. 12.

(Left) Huge protest in Seoul at start of G20 summit.

for them due to the new exchange rate. What's more, companies supposedly able to hire more workers thanks to devaluation, and thus exporting advantages, will mostly turn to heightened productivity through automation coupled with draconian anti-labor practices to boost output.

Nigel Gault, chief U.S. economist at IHS Global Insight, pointed out that the dollar has been falling for years anyway, dropping by 31% against major currencies since 2001. During that time, American exports increased by 45%—but manufacturing employment dropped by nearly a third in that time, to 11.7 million workers from 16.4 million.

Even Gary Hufbauer, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, who expects a weaker dollar to lead to a \$100 billion increase in American exports over the next two years, and a resulting addition of 500,000 jobs, noted that this would barely put a dent in the figure of almost 15 million without a job.

In any case, it's unlikely much of the \$600 billion will go to productive investment, given the still limited absorption capacity of consumers still reeling from unemployment, mortgage woes, and other setbacks.

Not surprisingly, Washington's economic rivals also took a dim view of Obama's currency fix. In Seoul, leaders of the G20 (the world's 20 most important economies) turned a deaf ear to U.S. appeals to join the denunciation of China's allegedly undervalued currency, the renminbi. Most of them pointed out the hypocrisy of such an appeal coming from a president whose central bank had just dramatically weakened his

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By ANDREW POLLACK

The epidemic of national crises in the European Union spread in November to Ireland, whose government responded to global bankers' demands for repayment of debts with a savage four-year austerity plan worth \$20 billion.

The plan includes thousands of public-sector job cuts, a 12-percent decrease in the minimum wage, steep increases in the value-added tax, and massive service cuts.

The plan, however, won't touch the country's 12.5% corporate tax rate, a rate so low that, coupled with low wages compared to most of the continent, it has made Ireland a popular base for multinational corporations' factories.

Taxes had already been raised and public workers' salaries slashed by up to 20% as the Irish economy shrank 7.1% last year.

The ruling party, Fianna Fail, was supported in calling for the austerity plan by the Green Party, but the Greens later announced that they would pull out of the governmental coalition. Signs that the crisis was far from over came the day after the plan was agreed to as protests began, the government stepped down, and Moody's lowered the rating on Irish debt several notches.

Worried that accepting a bailout would ruin the country's credit rating, the Irish government had for weeks resisted applying for a bailout, insisting it could make enough cuts to satisfy bankers on its own. And once granted, the bailout didn't do much to reassure investors. One reason is that they see looming debt repayment problems in Portugal and Spain.

All three countries are suffering from the hangover of popped housing bubbles and the resulting financial shocks. In addition, their room for maneuver is limited by being part of a European Union whose currency is tied to a fixed exchange rate. Unlike countries such as Argentina and Russia, which devalued their currencies to escape debt crises—or like the U.S. and China, which do so to boost their competitive position and increase exports—Ireland and other troubled European countries that use the euro have no such option. EU membership also requires submitting to the dictates on how large a country's debt and deficit can be relative to GDP.

Before the bailout, investors made clear, including by letting the euro's value plunge, that they were just as worried about Ireland's woes spreading to the rest of the continent. The bailout came from a fund set up last year when Greece appeared on the verge of bankruptcy. Yet worries persist about whether the fund is big enough to bail out other, larger economies such as that of Spain.

Some liberal economists called for giving Irish banks a "haircut"—economic jargon for letting investors pay the price of their own investing follies. But following the pattern set in the United States—the world's most im-

Irish government heeds bankers' demands to heighten austerity



Peter Muhly / AFP / Getty Images

The Irish bailout isn't doing much to reassure investors, who see looming debt problems in Portugal and Spain.

portant economy and home to its biggest banks—the EU never gave any serious thought to any option other than reassuring bondholders by opening the public troughs further to them.

This was despite the fact that the ludicrously high Irish banking losses—standing at \$109 billion, or 50% of the economy—could hardly be said to bear any relationship to real economic assets. Similarly, Ireland's total external debt is a fantastic 10 times the size of its economy. Such lunatic ratios are just the most extreme manifestations of the insane speculative frenzy seizing capital around the world.

During the G-20 summit in Seoul of major industrial powers, European financial chiefs from Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and Britain made clear to bondholders that at most they might be asked for a voluntary commitment to help cover some of the losses suffered in Ireland, Portugal, or similar debt-ridden countries. And they indicated that even if such voluntary pledges were ad-

opted, they wouldn't be requested until 2013, meaning current bondholders would not be affected.

Such beneficence is most touching, especially as it is precisely investors in those countries, and the U.S., who stand to lose the most in a default. In the euro zone, more than 2 trillion euros in sovereign debt belonging to Greece, Ireland, Spain, and Portugal is held largely by German, French, and British banks.

Germany, possessing the continent's strongest and healthiest economy, has been particularly stern in its demand that smaller EU countries impose austerity. This is one of several indications that the uneven development on the continent has been barely impacted by the supposedly unifying dynamic of a multinational economic union—which is exactly what one would expect from a union built on the inevitably contradictory interests of capitalist nations.

In the country from the lower tier that is next expected to face a crisis, Portuguese Finance Minister Fernando Teixeira dos Santos said his government was preparing a budget that would cut wages, freeze pensions, and raise taxes. Like the Irish government, he begged the bankers to give him a chance to impose cuts on his own without a bailout and all the strings attached to it.

Meanwhile, Spain—which is another second-tier, hard-hit victim of the housing bubble and the broader crisis—

(Above) Police confront protesters at gates of prime minister's office in Dublin, Nov. 22, as Irish government considers austerity package details.

struggles to close its own deficit of 9% of GDP with a stagnant economy and unemployment over 20%. In late November the spread, or risk premium, between Spanish and German bonds widened to a record high of 2.3%.

Modest protests against the Irish government's plan broke out immediately, and larger ones are expected. Meanwhile, revolutionaries in the country are raising an alternative perspective, demanding nationalization of the failing Irish banks, with all losses to be eaten by wealthy investors. They are also demanding redirection of bailout funds to public works and jobs, and mortgage reduction.

They call for a United Socialist Europe, built on the democratic rule of workers, in place of the current capitalist European Union—which takes its orders from bankers, bondholders, and corporation executives.

Working-class resistance to the bosses' "solutions" to the crisis has spread from mass strikes and rallies in Greece, to a near-revolutionary situation in France, mass student demonstrations and occupations in the UK, and a late November general strike in Portugal. With proper leadership, this continent-wide contagion of revolt could be fatal for the capitalist system. ■

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own currency.

China itself reacted with bitter, if diplomatically phrased, resentment—especially as it has been attempting to bolster domestic consumption, just as Obama demands.

In fact, some see this as an explanation for the relative lack of repression against mass strikes in the last year, mostly against Japanese-owned companies in China. The idea is that Beijing sees such strikes for higher wages, if properly contained, as one of many weapons to boost the consumption capacity of its own workers.

Developing countries such as Brazil, Thailand, and Indonesia told Obama in no uncertain terms that they fear his \$600 billion in monetary expansion could lead to asset price bubbles as part of a flood of "hot" money onto Third World markets. Their economies, unable to chan-

nel the floodtide into production and consumption, could find themselves to be the plaything of global investors who would briefly sink the newfound funds into speculative investments within their borders and then just as quickly pull out, leaving them vulnerable to a crash.

The dispute over currencies, and trade policy in general, is heightening already-existing worries of a resurgence of the type of protectionist policies that exacerbated the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The director general of the Chinese Ministry of Finance's international department said major reserve-currency issuers such as the United States "should not only take into account their national circumstances but should also bear in mind the possible impacts on the global economy." But given the way the economic system works, and the policies dictated by that system to each nation's rulers, such cooperation is inherently

hamstrung.

Another goal of the G20 meeting was to even out "trade imbalances." Here too Obama met defeat. He had wanted specific numerical targets on trade surpluses and deficits. But what he got was a final accord that said "persistently large imbalances" would be measured by what it called "indicative guidelines" to be determined later.

The final language was seen as a victory for China, as well as Europe's biggest economy, Germany, whose officials insisted that imbalances must be rectified not just in trade but in fiscal, monetary, labor, and other policies. Germany, joined by France, berated Obama for relying on currency manipulation instead of imposing draconian austerity plans on the scale increasingly used in Europe.

On a lighter note, the champ did have one chump in his corner: Bob King, the United Auto Workers president, praised

Obama for his close consultation with the union and automakers: "They kept everybody in the loop. It was a great example of how you work together. They had (automakers) in the loop. They had labor, the unions in the loop."

Said King: "I am hopeful that working together we can expand global trade, because that's important to our economy and to world peace, but it has to be done in a way that's fair to our membership. We're showing—with the new General Motors, with Ford, with Chrysler—we're showing that we can compete with anybody in the world. We've got the best quality products. We've got the highest productivity in our facilities. We're working on continuous improvement everyday."

This statement comes as dissidents in his union gear up for a widely expected sellout by King in bargaining with U.S. automakers next year. ■

Harper sticks it to the antiwar majority

By BARRY WEISLEDER

In a bruising blow to government credibility and bourgeois decorum, Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his minority Conservative regime extended the 'mission' of Canadian Forces in Afghanistan by three years, without even the formality of a debate and vote in the House of Commons. Only a formality it evidently would have been, since the Official Opposition Liberal Party has been pushing for an extension of the imperialist occupation since Liberal External Affairs Critic (and ex-NDP Ontario Premier) Bob Rae returned from his summer visit to Kabul and Kandahar singing the praises of the military's civilizing influence abroad.

Violation of the decision by Parliament in 2008 to withdraw all Canadian troops by the end of 2011 was widely predicted. The extension is now cynically presented in the guise of a non-combat "training mission" slated to end in 2014. Then, supposedly, the Afghan army and police will be able to fend for themselves against the insurgency. This is 'Vietnamization' by any other name.

Everyone knows that 'training' occurs in the field of combat, not just in a classroom 'behind the wire'. The mocking change of rubric will not stem the flow of Canadian casualties, already encompassing over 1600 mangled bodies and minds, and 152 lives snuffed out by a combination of road-side explosives, snipers, and suicide bombers that operate on all sides of the 'wire'—to say nothing of the continuing toll on Afghans, tens of thousands of whom have perished in the conflict.

In a country consumed by war since 1979, training in the arts of armed combat is not lacking. The problem of the Afghan army and police, and those whom they target for recruitment, is that they don't want to fight

for a corrupt government propped up by foreigners. According to NATO documents, the military alliance believes it has to train 23 recruits for every 10 soldiers that stay with the Afghan National Army.

Every year 20 per cent of the army and 25 per cent of the Afghan National Civil Order Police quit. Private security forces scoop up some trained soldiers. Some die in combat. Many defect to the Taliban or to other insurgent groups, which not only pay better than the \$165(U.S.) a month NATO issues to enlistees but offer the opportunity of fighting for the home side.

What would happen in a post-occupation Afghanistan? As brave Afghan ex-MP and outspoken feminist Malalai Joya told audiences in an October speaking tour across Canada, once the NATO armies of occupation leave, the Afghan people will be able to concentrate on fighting one enemy rather than two.

A reduced Canadian contingent of 950 soldiers for the 'training mission', down from the present 2500 combatants, will still cost \$500 million a year for their supply and upkeep. Another \$200 million will go toward "development work" and transition costs. Close to \$20 billion has already been spent or committed by Ottawa for the intervention. (What has Washington to show for spending \$350 billion there so far?)

According to the latest Harris-Decima poll, 60 per cent of Canadians surveyed are opposed to any Canadian military presence in Afghanistan. Other polls show 80 per cent opposed to the latest extension of the 'mission'.

Both the labour-based New Democratic Party and the nationalist Bloc Quebecois in Parliament have demanded withdrawal of Canadian Forces by June 2011. The NDP leadership had to be dragged towards that position by leftist and antiwar activists in the party. The shift occurred at the September 2006 NDP fed-

eral convention in Quebec City, where the NDP Socialist Caucus played a prominent role in pushing leader Jack Layton beyond an 'out of Kandahar' stance to an 'out of Afghanistan now' policy. Still, vestiges of liberal 'peacekeeping' illusions in the army and state continue to crop up in the statements of NDP officials. They commonly relapse into talk of 'redeployment' of troops to Africa, Haiti and other conflict zones.

Indeed, the Toronto *Star* stressed in a Nov. 17 editorial, "the Commons never demanded a wholesale military exit when it 'capped' the Kandahar mission. It called for the redeployment of Canadian Forces troops out of Kandahar by December 2011" and "emphasized the need to train and equip Afghan forces."

The *Star*, a staunchly pro-Liberal Party paper, says, "the new mission is true to that call". The NDP leadership, which played sotto voce at the time, now bears a portion of the blame for the rulers being able to camouflage their latest military gambit.

Autumn was a tough season for the Harper Tories: losing their bid for a UN Security Council seat to Portugal, losing a military air force base in the United Arab Emirates, and having to suffer two popular speaking tours across Canada by former British MP George Galloway—who Canadian Border Security illegally barred from entering the country in 2009. Their latest bludgeon, extending an aggressive military presence abroad without even a public discussion, is all too reminiscent of Harper's decision to prorogue Parliament, twice. Recall, that was done in part to avoid accountability for Canadian Forces' complicity with the torture of prisoners of war in Afghanistan.

The government's sanctimonious invocations to 'support our troops' and to 'make sure their sacrifice is not in vain' seem to shatter on contact with the reality of how veterans are treated. Thousands live in physical and mental misery, forced to battle Ottawa for adequate funding for medicine and shelter. The New Veterans' Charter introduced by the Conservative government in 2006 replaced lifetime pensions to injured vets with a poor combination of lump sum payments and income support. This doesn't sit well with the Tory base. Nor is the rest of the population impressed with the lack of 'progress' on democracy, clean government, women's rights or finding Osama Bin Laden, the oft-touted initial aims of the intervention.

Concerning what the war is really about, the major commercial media rarely, if ever, mentions that Afghanistan is a potential energy supply corridor and a treasure trove of enormous mineral wealth. If NATO negotiates a *modus vivendi* with Taliban and associated forces to prolong the Western occupation, those will be the reasons, none of which are humanitarian.

The Nov. 20 NATO Summit in Lisbon, Portugal, confirmed plans to stay in Afghanistan for decades to come. The challenge facing the antiwar movement is to mobilize the antiwar, anti-occupation majority into the streets. It is not enough to decry the Emperor's nudity. Mass protest action is needed on a Pan-Canadian and global level to withdraw the troops and trainers, to end the occupation now.

The Canadian Peace Alliance should take up the call of the U.S.-based United National Anti-War Committee for protest rallies and demonstrations on April 9. An international Day of Action against the imperialist war makers and war alliances should be a top priority. ■

Toronto Trotsky School 2010

"Marxism versus Anarchism" was the biggest draw at the third annual Socialist Action Trotsky School in Toronto, Nov. 19-20. The Saturday afternoon debate featured SA-USA leader Adam Shils, from Chicago, and Mick Sweetman, a member of the Ontario-based anarchist group Common Cause. It showed how such an encounter can be respectful of differences while sharp and informative.

Although serious differences remain over the need for a revolutionary party and a workers' state to lead the transition to socialism, this conversation confirmed there is a basis for Marxists and anarchists to work together. That includes efforts to end the wars of occupation in the Middle East, campaigning to free U.S. political prisoner Mumia

Abu-Jamal, and working to build a class-struggle opposition in the unions to end labour concessions and to foster union democracy.

In all, over 50 people attended the two-day Education for Activists Conference held at the University of Toronto. The talk on "James P. Cannon—Building the revolutionary party under North American conditions" was preceded by an enthusiastic collection to send NDP Youth to a 're-vote' meeting imposed by Ontario NDP officials (see story below).

"The Relevance of the Ideas of Leon Trotsky" by this writer, and "What It Means to be a Revolutionary Today" by Toronto SA executive member Julius Arscott, sparked animated and stimulating discussions. Participants kept the literature table staff busy handling a steady stream of purchases of SA newspapers, buttons, and booklets. — B.W.

Ontario New Democratic Youth: rightists overturn socialist win

By TYLER MACKINNON

On the first weekend of November, up to 70 students and young workers met in a small hall in Hamilton to make big changes. It was the convention of the Ontario New Democratic Youth ONDY. It occurs once a year to debate, discuss, and resolve issues within the Ontario New Democrat Party, and ensure a strong voice for party members under the age of 26 years.

Although the aim of the conference was a united voice for the party's youth, from the moment one entered the room a clear division was evident. This was mainly due to the effort made by right-wing social democrats to deprive the Toronto Young New Democrats (a downtown-Toronto-based group) of its club charter.

Why? It was due the hostility of the outgoing ONDY Executive to socialist ideas, which they claim 'misrepresented the party', and to the alleged TYND "allegiance to a Marxist magazine, *Fightback*".

This clear violation of democratic principles fostered great tensions throughout the weekend and shaped the debates that took place. Due to the attack on internal democracy, members of TYND, *Fightback*, supporters of Socialist Action, and



Socialist Action member Tyler Mackinnon was elected to the executive of ONDY, but lost his position in a bureaucratic coup. Here he speaks to a meeting of the NDP Socialist Caucus.

the broad NDP Socialist Caucus rallied youth to the conference and worked together to see every pro-democracy and pro-socialist resolution passed.

This included support for policies favouring free post-secondary education, free dental care, and condemning both

Socialist Action

the G20 Summit and the police brutality that accompanied it, as well as reversing the attempt to exclude TYND.

By the end of the conference, every leftist resolution had been adopted.

On the Sunday of the conference, it was time to vote for a new executive to lead ONDY. Under the banner of a 'United Slate for a Democratic and Activist ONDY' the leftist youth worked together and won every position on the executive.

Alas, the win was short-lived. The losers complained to senior party officials, who overturned the results on a technicality.

They claimed that a few of the voters and candidates joined the NDP less than 30 days prior to the vote, although the party staff doing registration at the Youth convention did not raise this concern until the very last minute. Their demand to re-register all 70 participants was a delay tactic designed to scuttle the election on Nov. 7.

Subsequently, the party's top Administrative Committee imposed a Nov. 28

re-vote on the ONDY. It was conducted at the site of the ONDP Provincial Council, to which most of the original voters could not afford to travel to vote again. There, right-wing social democratic youth took 17 out of 20 positions on the ONDY Executive. The margin favouring the right wing was about 50 to 20 for most positions contested.

Many of the 50 never before attended an ONDY convention, and probably never will again. They were rallied by the party establishment to return the Youth wing to the role of a subordinate election-training school, as opposed to a year-round campaigning organization that fights alongside young workers and students against capitalist rule and for real socialist change.

To put the ONDY back on an activist footing, and to win the NDP to an activist, anti-capitalist perspective, it won't be possible for groups like *Fightback* and the TYND to do it alone, as the coup in the ONDY demonstrated. They need to join with radicals, young and veteran alike, in the Socialist Caucus, the common front of the NDP left.

In any event, the shameful right-wing coup that seized control of the ONDY will not be forgotten. ■

By CLAY WADENA

Western writers often write about Latin Americans as some sort of child-like race that “found” democracy late and has had trouble grasping it ever since. They treat them—as they do the oppressed all around the world—with arrogance and paternalism the likes of which one hears in the imperialist logic of “bringing democracy” to Iraq.

The underlying tone of these articles implies that it is somehow a result of Latinos’ cultural peculiarities (an “affinity for caudillos,” among other things) that has led to so many coups and dictatorships. This subtle racism gives a free pass to the imperialists and capitalists, who comprise the *real* reason why Latin Americans have had any “difficulty” democratically deciding their destiny.

There is a long and tragic history in Latin America of coups and dictatorships, and the blood of the innocent stains the hands of the right-wing elements in their home nations *and* their imperial handlers.

Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz was ousted in 1954 in a CIA-backed coup, in a scenario that would unfortunately become recurring. Arbenz had renegotiated the land rights of United Fruit Company, a notorious U.S. company that had made vast profits in Guatemala. The CIA funded ambitious military brass to overthrow the democratically elected Arbenz, terrorized urban and rural supporters of the president, and bombarded the country with hostile propaganda that threatened to use the full force of the imperialist military. The coup was successful and would be replicated: the CIA would act quickly when any leader renegotiated the privileges of American corporations in Latin America.

In 1973, Chilean President Salvador Allende would also fall to a military coup, but he—unlike Arbenz—wouldn’t make it out alive. Allende had threatened to nationalize the copper mines of Chile, the most important export of Chile, and the industry most dominated by U.S. capitalist interests. He tried his hardest to carve out a third way, “La Via Chilena,” independent of Western capitalism and Eastern bureaucratic “communism,” but his mild attempts at reform were met with another CIA-backed coup.

U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, speaking at the time, demonstrated the capitalists’ view of the “hallowed” principles of democracy when he said that “the issues are much too important for the Chilean voters to be left to decide for themselves.” The incoming military regime of Augusto Pinochet became among the most brutal in South America—quickly liquidating the radicalized elements of Chilean society.

Both Arbenz and Allende had pursued leftist agendas of varying degrees, but neither was actively attempting to fundamentally dismantle capitalism and build a social system based on human needs (despite what their imperialist detractors claimed). Also, they both had chances to give arms to workers’ militias who were demanding them—hoping to defend their social gains and democratic rights by any means necessary—but neither president did, leaving the working class exposed and vulnerable as the right wing’s heel fell upon them.

Today we continue to see military coups taking place, with the successful coup in Honduras last year and the failed coup attempt in Ecuador on Sept. 30 being the most recent examples. Much as they did during coups of the past, the capitalist media is quick to “put the spin” on these events and portray them positively.

In an op-ed published by the San Francisco *Examiner* recently, Jaime Darenblum wrote that the Honduran military coup of 2009 was “a remarkable democratic achievement.” This is in reference to the Honduran military taking the democratically elected President Manuel Zelaya prisoner (in the middle of the night) and putting him on a plane to Costa Rica at gunpoint! It’s hard to imagine the twisted logic needed to couch this event in positive terms, but this is the usual modus operandi for the big-business press.

President Zelaya had raised the minimum wage and was attempting to hold a referendum on convening a constituent assembly that threatened to infringe on the profits and privileges of the Honduran oligarchy. The military and oligarchs opted to remove Zelaya in the traditional style—a coup—but did everything they could to portray it to the world as legal. The Honduran oligarchy even went to the lengths of securing lawyers that could legally cover their tracks and give apologists like Darenblum their talking points.

The grisly repression in Honduras following the coup has been chronicled by groups like Amnesty International since the coup first took place (see *Socialist Action* of April 2010, “Repression Continues In Honduras”) and shows no signs of letting up.

Most recently at least six campesino farmers, members of the Unified Campesino Movement of Aguan (MUCA), were murdered by private mercenaries protecting their wealthy employer’s land. According to the president of the Committee for the Defense of

U.S. applauds (and orchestrates) military coups in Latin America



(Left) Participant in Nov. 20-21 vigil at the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Ga. The U.S. military “school” is notorious for training Latin American torturers and coup-makers.

Police attacked the non-violent gathering, arresting four activists and several members of the press. For more information and to help defend the detainees, see www.soaw.org.

While many in the right wing mischaracterize these center-left leaders as “communists,” there are also those on the left who believe these leaders have revolutionary credentials or that they are steadfast allies to the revolutionary struggle. But both Correa and Zelaya had only been pursuing rather limited reforms when they ran afoul of the right-wing elements in their home countries. Much like Arbenz and Allende before them, they were not attempting to conquer the capitalists.

Revolutionary socialists stand with the masses of these countries when their democratic rights come under attack, and support their right to have their elected leaders serve their full term. This solidarity continues into the aftermath, such as the struggles the FNRP (Resistance Front) in Honduras continues to go through today as it pushes ahead for a legitimate Constituent Assembly.

But we also raise the alarm: reformist leaders will leave workers unprepared and vulnerable when the right-wing attack comes. Their perspective neither takes the threat of the capitalist class seriously enough nor prepares for defense against and victory over that class.

Even President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, a man that many revolutionaries around the world regard as a comrade, has faults in this area. While it is true that Chavez has armed workers in his country to an extent, something that no other leader we have mentioned did, the weaknesses of his political perspective are evident.

For example, when speaking this year to 35,000 assembled members of the civilian militia on the anniversary of the 2002 failed coup against him, Chavez said that in the event of his assassination the militia should “know what [they] would have to do. Simply take all power in Venezuela, absolutely all, sweep away the bourgeoisie from all political and economic spaces, deepen the revolution.” This revolutionary program should be Chavez’ program for today, not the contingency plan for his death.

Workers everywhere have to be prepared for a right-wing offensive themselves, and cannot count on reformist leaders to properly defend against the right wing, let alone succeed in victory to socialism. ■

... Mumia Abu-Jamal

(continued from page 12)

for future appeals by Mumia’s defense. Mumia has the right to ask Judge Yohn to address those issues related to the improper sentencing process in his trial that the judge had left open in 2001.

In this period of final court appeals, the state is mustering its forces to send Mumia to the death chamber. It is essential that all those who cherish civil liberties, all those who oppose the horrendous death penalty, likewise mobilize in public forums and the streets to save the life of an innocent man. Twice before, the Pennsylvania governor signed an order to execute Mumia, and twice before, his death was averted at the eleventh hour—due in large part to the massive outcry of rage that arose around the world.

We must not allow Pennsylvania’s incoming right-wing governor, Thomas Corbett, to sign yet another (and final) order to take Mumia’s life. Free Mumia! ■

For more information: International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, (215) 476-8812 or The Mobilization to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal, (510) 268-9429, freemumia.org.



Reformer Sandy Pope to oppose Hoffa for Teamster president

By DAVID BERNT

Veteran Teamster reform activist Sandy Pope has announced her candidacy for the union presidency in next year's election. Pope will face off against 12-year incumbent Jimmy Hoffa Jr. and a slate headed by Fred Gegare, a current vice president who was elected on the Hoffa slate in 2006.

A former freight driver, Sandy Pope worked for the International under former President Ron Carey, who was elected by a rank-and-file rebellion against the old-guard gangsters and who went on to lead the historic national UPS strike in 1997. Pope is the president of Local 805, a warehouse local based in Long Island. Under her leadership, Local 805 has been transformed from a gangster-run do-nothing union into one that has gained national recognition for aggressive organizing drives and negotiating strong contracts.

In contrast, the International under 12 years of Hoffa Jr. has transformed one of the largest and most powerful unions in the country into a sinking ship. Under Hoffa's watch the membership in the union's traditional base, freight trucking, is now one third of the size when Hoffa was first elected. Massive concessions given to major employers on pensions have put the future of Teamsters pension plans into doubt. Hoffa allowed the union's largest (and very profitable) employer, UPS, to withdraw from the Central States Pension Fund.

Hoffa came into office promising to "restore Teamster power." Instead, the rank and file has endured 12 years of concessionary contracts and weakened pensions.

The son of legendary Teamster leader Jimmy Hoffa Sr., Hoffa Junior's ascendancy to the head of the Teamsters union has everything to do with the legacy of his last name. Hoffa Jr. spent most of his adult life as a lawyer, including stints as a company-side labor-law practitioner with no affiliation to the union he now runs.

When, in 1991, an insurgent reform movement elected a militant local president, Ron Carey, to the presidency

HARLEM RALLY FOR HAITI

By MARTY GOODMAN

NEW YORK—On Nov. 20, some 50 protesters gathered in solidarity with Haiti across the street from former President Bill Clinton's penthouse office on 125th St. in Harlem. Demonstrators chanted, "U.S. out of Haiti! Clinton out of Harlem!" Clinton was appointed United Nations envoy to Haiti after the Jan. 12 earthquake, which killed over 200,000 and made more than 1 ½ million homeless.

The event also included a march down 125th St. to a panel discussion on Haiti at Saint Mary's church and an evening film showing at a neighborhood theater. The activities were sponsored by the Black is Back coalition and its member organizations, *Black Agenda Report* and the Harlem Tenants Council.

Rally organizer Nellie Hester Bailey, executive director of the Harlem Tenants Council, told *Socialist Action*, "Haiti has moved to the back burner of the news. We wanted to call attention in Harlem and beyond that Haiti is very much on the front burner of the radical Black movement of Black is Back.

"The \$10 billion that was promised is not forthcoming. Once again it is a political football for the imperialist forces in Haiti, i.e., the U.S., France, and Canada primarily, with their guns trained on the Haiti population under the banner of the UN peacekeeping forces.

"We also wanted to highlight the dire emergency with respect to the cholera epidemic, which has left close to a 1000 or more dead, as well as the 1.5 million who continue to be homeless 10 months after the earthquake. We are demanding: where is the money? Haitians should decide what happens to the money, not the World Bank or the Haiti Interim Reconstruction Commission, co-chaired by Bill Clinton and the prime minister of Haiti [Jean-Max Bellerive].

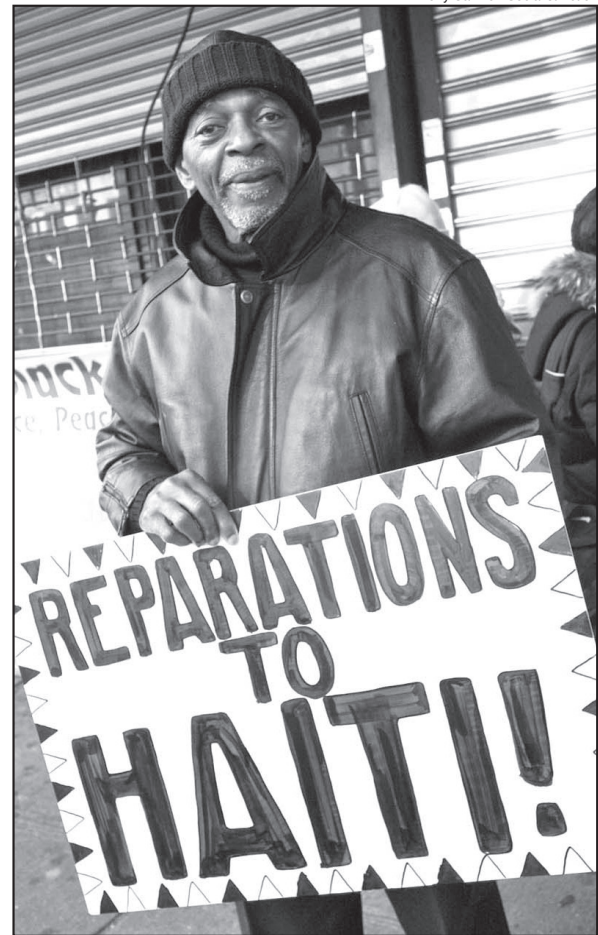
"We also demand that the \$10 billion not be filtered down through the hands of the corrupt non-governmental organizations—who are living large while Haitians die and live in death-like conditions in makeshift camps which exacerbate health conditions like the lack of treated drinking water. That includes the risk of rape and violence against women and girls."

Critics of the so-called relief effort say that the Haitian people have received only a small proportion of the international aid pledged, some not at all. According to the Canada Haiti Action Network (CHAN), UN

figures reveal that of the \$6.036 billion pledged to Haiti over 18 months at a March meeting of the Haiti Interim Reconstruction Commission, only a fraction has gone to Haiti "relief," which includes international governmental agencies, charities, and non-governmental organizations. As of September, says CHAN, only 22% or \$1.9 billion of the total had been spent or committed to Haiti in 2010.

Haiti remains under a despised U.S./UN military occupation. Earlier in the year, Doctors Without Borders and many other aid organizations and agencies, including Cuban doctors, faced obstruction of their emergency relief efforts by the U.S. military and the Obama administration. ■

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of the union, the discredited old-guard gangsters dug up Hoffa Junior from obscurity and had him appointed administrative assistant to Detroit Local 299 so they could use his name to regain power. When Ron Carey was unjustly removed from office for charges for which he was later vindicated, Hoffa used his name to get elected president of the Teamsters despite never serving as a Teamster officer at any level.

Sandy Pope offers Teamsters a fundamentally different type of leadership to the backroom concessions and rampant corruption of the Hoffa administration. Pope calls for a program to mobilize the membership to enforce and win better contracts. At her keynote speech at the recent Teamsters for a Democratic Union conven-

tion, Sandy Pope asked, "Why is Hoffa so afraid of the members? And why am I not afraid of our members? Well, first off, I'm a Teamster."

The Sandy Pope campaign faces an uphill battle against a well-funded opponent. Hoffa has the advantage of incumbency, including a well-funded campaign and the allegiance of the vast majority of local officers. However, he also has a record of failure—which members know all too well.

Teamster activists across the country are building the campaign and getting the word out to the rank and file that there is an alternative. A Sandy Pope victory would be a major step toward realizing Hoffa's broken promise of "restoring Teamsters power." ■

Hundreds march for justice for cleaning workers

By LISA LUINENBURG

MINNEAPOLIS—On Nov. 6, over 300 retail cleaning workers, union leaders, people of faith, and other allies marched together down Lake Street to demand improvements in wages and working conditions for low-wage cleaning workers in the Twin Cities. This march was the public launch of the Campaign for Justice in Retail Cleaning organized by the Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha (Center of Workers United in Struggle, also known as CTUL) and cleaning workers in Minneapolis.

Their website states that "CTUL is an organization where workers build power to lead the struggle for fair wages, better working conditions, basic respect, and a voice in our workplaces. We are an organization of workers and for workers, committed to winning this struggle, and in doing so, create a better future for the next generation."

CTUL is made up of and directed by low-wage workers (the majority of whom are immigrants) who lack the support of a union to organize in their

workplaces. Through popular education, community organizing and public campaigns, workers involved with CTUL have been able to recover almost \$500,000 in back wages.

Over the past decade, fierce competition between corporate retail giants to lower costs for consumers have resulted in decreased wages, employee layoffs, and increased workloads for cleaning workers. Retail cleaner Mario Colloly said in a recent interview with *Workday Minnesota*, "Many years ago at the stores I clean, some workers made up to \$11 or \$12 an hour. Now the workforce has been reduced, our workload has nearly doubled and many cleaning workers are barely making minimum wage. But it's not just us, this problem is happening across the industry..."

In fact, working conditions for retail cleaners have recently degraded so much that they have led to many abuses of labor law. As people marched down a three-mile stretch of Lake Street on Nov. 6 (located in the heart of the Latino community in Minneapolis) chanting, "Target, escucha! Estamos en la lucha!"

workers stopped in front of Target, Lunds, SuperValu, and Cub Foods to highlight these labor abuses.

The crowd booed as workers cited labor law violations while speaking through megaphones. These violations include a retail cleaning slavery ring uncovered in the Northeastern United States in July 2010; violations of the Fair Labor Standards Act that resulted in a settlement of \$3.8 million for Maryland cleaning workers in 2009; and a 2007 investigation by the U.S. Department of Labor into 106 violations totaling \$25,000 of unpaid overtime wages for retail cleaning workers in Minnesota.

Last April, Minneapolis retail cleaning workers represented by CTUL sent letters to Target, SuperValu, Lunds & Byerly's, and Cub Foods detailing human rights abuses on the job and requesting a meeting with store managers. After their repeated requests to set up meetings were refused or ignored, the workers decided to make their fight public. The March for Retail Justice on Nov. 6 was the first step in a campaign to put public pressure on local retail chains to

improve working conditions and wages. Workers announced that they would focus their campaign on SuperValu and Cub Foods, the stores that in their opinion have committed the most egregious violations of workers' rights in Minneapolis.

Students, faith leaders, public officials, and representatives of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, the Cincinnati Interfaith Workers Center, the United Workers Association of Baltimore, and UFCW Local 1189 all voiced their support of the campaign at rallies before and after the march. CTUL is demanding that representatives of SuperValu and Cub Foods meet with workers "to create a code of conduct guaranteeing fair wages and working conditions for the workers who clean their stores."

Their next steps include a postcard campaign and organizing more demonstrations to raise public awareness about these issues and to increase public pressure on stores to meet the workers' demands. To find out more information or to support this campaign, visit www.ctul.net. ■

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

Truth to Power

Director Doug Liman's film "Fair Game" is based on Valerie Plame's eponymous book. The movie stirs up the anger and disbelief we all felt in early spring 2003 when we were fed the lies that led up to Bush's so-called war. Hopefully, it will spur us once again to act to end Bush's, and now Obama's, wars.

This beautifully shot film by Liman, in which he uses many video and TV clips, opens on CIA agent Valerie Plame in various foreign locations. Meanwhile, back in the USA, President George W. Bush wants to invade Iraq, having shifted his attention from Afghanistan. Liman often uses a hand-held camera, creating jerky cuts and shakiness that lends the film immediacy.

Plame (a perfectly cast Naomi Watts), once back in D.C., is briefed by her CIA boss Bill Johnson (Noah Emmerich) about the possible invasion of Iraq. On TV, Condi Rice talks about aluminum tubes shipped to Iraq used to enrich uranium for WMDs. She invokes the scary "mushroom cloud" threat.

Liman also includes the televised congressional hearing in which Colin Powell shows "proof" of Saddam's mobile biological weapons facilities (which turned out to be abandoned, rusting trucks); and a clip of Bush's State of the Union address when he intones the noxious 16 words: "The British Government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa." Later, it's made clear that the uranium is yellowcake from Niger.

Plame's husband, ex-diplomat Joe Wilson (an excellent, much matured Sean Penn), had once been posted to Africa. Plame's CIA superiors need concrete information about yellowcake for a report to the White House and the Pentagon; they recruit Joe to go to Niger undercover.

Once there, Wilson concludes that the logistics of shipping 500 tons of enriched yellowcake from Niger to Iraq would have attracted world-wide attention.



(Left) Naomi Watts (ctr.) as CIA agent Valerie Plame in "Fair Game."

Bottom line, no such purchase was made. But Cheney sends his stooge, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby (a shifty-eyed, bushy-browed David Andrews), to the CIA to coerce officials into massaging reports to track with the Bush administration's yellowcake scenario. Bush soon announces that bombers are on their way to Iraq.

Watching film clips of the night bombing of Baghdad—smoke and flames against the darkened sky, hearing the thunderous roar of bombs, and building collapsing; civilians shouting, screaming, running for

their lives, I couldn't help contrast it with films showing the attack on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon. The Baghdad bombing seemed enormous in comparison, which doesn't minimize the Twin Tower horror. It has been recorded that from March to June 2003 to 2006, 151,000 Iraqi citizens were killed.

The Wilsons are outraged. In his article for the *Washington Post*, "What I Didn't Find in Africa," Joe Wilson basically called the Bush administration liars. Subsequently, in retaliation, *New York Times* journalist Robert Novak wrote a piece naming Plame as a CIA agent. The "outing" destroys her career and almost ends her marriage. She becomes persona non grata, a pariah.

Subsequently, the Wilsons sued the Bush administration. In 2007, hearings were held. A clip during the end credits shows Valerie Plame testifying against Libby. He was later charged and convicted of felonies unconnected to Novak's unveiling of Plame, and sentenced to a couple of years in prison. Bush later commuted his sentence.

In "Fair Game," Doug Liman and screenwriters Jez and John-Henry Butterworth depict the CIA as good guys and the Bush administration as bad. We who read alternative media and the internet know that the CIA is behind disappearances, the operation of notorious "Black Sites," and the imprisonment and torture of alleged terror suspects without due process—all against international law. For decades since World War II, the CIA has been behind the toppling of foreign governments and other such atrocities.

However, this film's message is about the importance of speaking truth to power at whatever cost. ■



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... Antiwar

(continued from page 1)

again and again to the need to take on the increased efforts by the U.S. government to "manufacture" terror suspects. The meeting heard as well from Shaheena Parveen, the mother of a similarly imprisoned South Asian youth and a member of Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM). DRUM's day-to-day work dramatizes the intimate connection between attacks on the Muslim and immigrant communities.

Abayome Azikiwe of the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice explained the case of Iman Luqman Ammen Abdullah, an African American community leader from Detroit who was lured to a warehouse in an apparent FBI sting operation and then shot 21 times.

Steve Downs, the attorney who founded Project SALAM, said that his organization will not rest until it has uncovered the cases of hundreds of other Muslim-American victims of entrapment and found ways to support their families. The antiwar activists in the room applauded vigorously, a seeming majority aware that efforts to involve the communities most strongly opposed to Washington's wars—that

is, the Black, Latino, and Muslim communities—required a new level of solidarity with the war's victims here at home.

Those victims, of course, include the millions reeling from the bipartisan effort to reduce the deficit on the backs of poor and working people. Marty Nathan, a leader with the Northampton, Mass., campaign to Bring Our War Dollars Home, urged the room to understand how they really convinced the Northampton Town Council to pass their resolution. "We won," she said, "by talking to laid-off workers, to the homeless, to neglected veterans, to educators, to the workers at the soup kitchens, none of whom thought of themselves as 'antiwar' before.

This is one of the bricks that must be laid to build a massive antiwar movement."

Larry Holmes of the Bail Out the People Movement said that around April 9, the date of the projected antiwar demonstration, he hoped that the streets of New York would be regularly filled with protests against the cuts to public jobs, pensions, and benefits promised by the newly elected Governor Cuomo.

Margaret Kimberley, an editor and senior columnist with *Black Agenda Report*, argued for the independence of our movement from the Democratic and Republican parties if the movement is to connect with the most economically victimized. "Think of ACORN," she said. "This organization would not be any worse off if Sarah Palin were president!"

To bring working people in the United States into the antiwar fold, argued Adaner Usmani of Action for a Progressive Pakistan and the Pakistani Labor Party, we must offer them a real understanding of what is happening in the countries under U.S. attack.

While the U.S. government whips up Islamophobia and tries to paint Pakistan as a nation of Taliban, terrorists, and jihadists, he said, "the country is composed in its majority of workers and peasants first and foremost. Just this summer, the largest textile mills were shut down by a militant strike, and 100,000 workers brought one of Paki-

stan's largest cities to a halt for almost two weeks demanding that the government honor a pledge to raise wages."

This conference is the first step toward recognizing, he argued, "that the undeniable fact of shared oppression represents the only useful foundation for going forward."

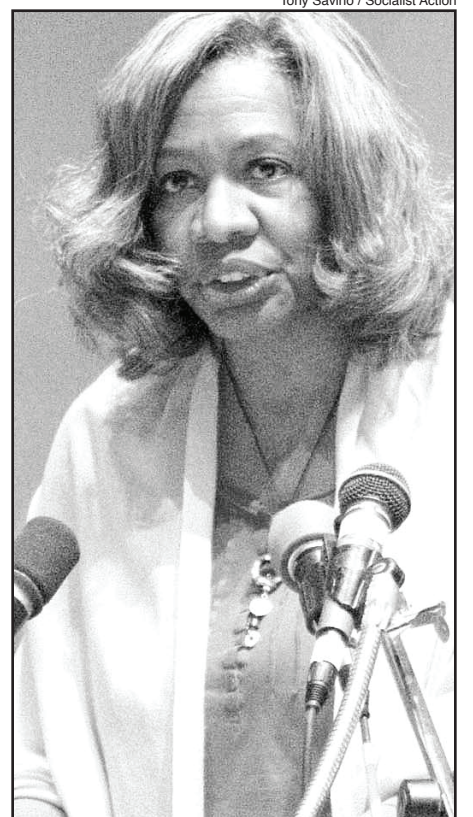
Hanadi Doleh of Al Awdah and the US Palestinian Community Network also called for direct solidarity. The goals of UNAC, as reflected in the End US Aid to Israel resolution passed at the Albany conference, and the goals of the USPCN meeting just held in Chicago, she said, are the same. "Let us work collectively to put them into practice." Nada Khader, the executive director of WESPAC, an organizer of the women's track at the same Chicago conference, and an early presence in the support work for the Newburgh Four, spoke of her new confidence that we can build an antiwar movement that is genuinely welcoming to all and free from exclusion.

Marilyn Levin, a co-chair of UNAC, recounted the political advances made at the Albany conference, spoke of the failure of either political party to address the war in the recent elections, and urged all the groups present in the audience who wanted to build April 9 to join the United National Antiwar Committee and choose representatives to serve on its Continuations Committee. Joe Lombardo, also a co-chair of UNAC, spoke forcefully of the need for mass actions this spring and urged that attendees begin immediately to do the outreach that will make such an action successful.

Sara Flounders of the International Action Center led the important effort to schedule the first national meeting of the Committee to Stop FBI Repression, which followed the UNAC meeting in the evening of Nov. 6. (Read more concerning the FBI attacks on page 12.)

Around \$5000 was pledged for building the April 9 New York City demonstration, and more than 100 activists signed up to participate in UNAC national campaigns that include: Bring the War Dollars Home, Muslim Civil Liberties, Palestine, Iran, No War/No Warming, Witness Against Torture, Teach-Ins, and April 9.

The optimism evidenced by this level of participation was born, in great part, because a broad range of political forces



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(Above) Margaret Kimberley of *Black Agenda Report* speaks at the Nov. 6 UNAC meeting in New York City.

(Left) Maggie Zhou of Climate SOS takes the podium on Nov. 6.

had put aside political or organizational differences and cooperated to make the Nov. 6 meeting successful.

Important pacifist, anti-intervention, religious, solidarity, and left groups that did not work closely together before the Albany UNAC conference have now pulled together and created a pole for antiwar organizing on a political basis that meets the real challenges facing the movement.

The decision by significant forces in the mainstream Muslim community to devote leadership to the antiwar movement is one of the factors inspiring a new level of cooperation.

This new unity, in and of itself, is no guarantee that massive numbers can be mobilized in April. It does, however, lay the basis for the kind of mass outreach that can become possible as the Obama star dims and the confidence to fight back grows. For other reports on the meeting, visit the UNAC website at www.nationalpeaceconference.org. ■

U.S. Court hears sentencing appeal — Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

PHILADELPHIA—On Nov. 9, several hundred people rallied outside the federal courthouse here to “Free Mumia!” Inside the building, meanwhile, a three-judge panel deliberated over the fate of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the political prisoner and noted Black journalist who has been on Pennsylvania’s death row for close to 28 years. Mumia was sentenced to death in 1982 after being convicted on false charges of killing Daniel Faulkner, a Philadelphia police officer. A large amount of evidence has come to light since then indicating that Mumia was the victim of a police frame-up.

The Third Circuit Court of Appeals was in session Nov. 9 to hear arguments as to whether unclear instructions to the jury during the sentencing phase of Mumia’s trial might have encouraged the jurors to choose the death penalty for him instead of life in prison. Almost three years ago, the same three judges had agreed that this appeared to be the case, and ordered a new sentencing hearing for Mumia. But Pennsylvania state prosecutors appealed their decision, and this year, the Supreme Court asked the Third Circuit to reconsider.

The legal build-up for the recent hearing goes back to 2001, when Federal District Judge William Yohn overturned Mumia’s death sentence. Yohn maintained that the sentencing procedure had violated the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1988 *Mills v. Maryland* decision.

The Supreme Court had determined in *Mills* that instructions given to jurors in the trial might have caused them to believe that “they were precluded from considering any mitigating evidence unless all 12 jurors agreed on the existence of a particular mitigating circumstance.” Mumia’s attorneys had argued, and Judge Yohn agreed, that the language of the written form given to jurors in Mumia’s trial had similarly misled them. The verbal instructions given by trial judge Albert Sabo, the attorneys said, further confused the jurors.

The state appealed Yohn’s ruling to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, which upheld his decision on March 27, 2008. But Mumia remained on death row while prosecutors appealed the Third Circuit’s decision to the Supreme Court.

On Jan. 10, 2010, the Supreme Court ordered the Third Circuit to reconsider its decision on Mumia in light of the High Court’s recent rejection of an appeal by Frank Spisak, a neo-Nazi on Ohio’s death row. The Court had ruled that *Mills* did not apply in Spisak’s case—thus introducing the possibility of a narrower



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

The state is mustering its forces to send Mumia to the death chamber. It is crucial that we mobilize to save the life of an innocent man.

interpretation of *Mills* that might open the door for the Third Circuit to reverse its previous decision.

Mumia Abu-Jamal was represented before the Third Circuit on Nov. 9 by Judith Ritter, a professor at Widener law school. Ritter, who had previously and successfully argued Mumia’s case before the same three-judge panel, demonstrated that the facts in his case applied directly and unambiguously to the criteria in the *Mills* decision and that the court must sustain Yohn’s original ruling as well as their own previous decision. But state attorney Hugh Burns asserted that Mumia’s sentencing appeal was “virtually the same” as that of *Spisak*, and on that basis the court should reinstate the death penalty.

Burns was somewhat embarrassed when one of the judges agreed with Ritter that Judge Sabo had employed the word “unanimous” perhaps “seven, eight, or more times” when instructing the jury of its obligations in regard to finding mitigating circumstances. Ritter said that this was “misleading advice,” and counter to the Supreme Court’s intent in *Mills v. Maryland*. The rejection of such unanimity is at the core of the *Mills* decision, which explicitly allows even a single juror to put forward a mitigating circumstance for the jury’s consideration.

The three judges appeared to be receptive to Ritter’s arguments, while directing their sharpest questions to the state attorney. Following the hearing, Ritter was upbeat. She told reporters outside the courtroom: “This court two years ago saw a violation of *Mills*. I don’t believe the judges believe that their earlier decision was incorrect. Nothing has changed that should change their minds.”

But caution is in order. In what some have called the “Mumia exception,” the federal court system has frequently found a way to refuse to apply legal precedents to Mumia’s case. Notwithstanding the fact that other prisoners have obtained redress in similar circumstances, Mumia Abu-Jamal always merits special handling as a political prisoner.

The Third Circuit Court could take several months to render its decision. If it reaffirms its earlier decision to sentence Mumia to life in prison without parole, the state will likely appeal to the Supreme Court.

The state also has the option of asking for a new penalty trial in a Pennsylvania state court, in the hope of obtaining a death sentence again. But the state might wish to avoid such a hearing because of the danger that the defense could present witnesses and new evidence that raise strong questions about Mumia’s guilt. This might include items such as the long-hidden photographs taken by Pedro Polakoff at the crime scene in 1981, which contradict the scenario put forth by police and the prosecution.

While such evidence would not have direct legal ramifications in Mumia’s case, it would be highly embarrassing to the prosecution in the “court of public opinion.”

Mumia, too, would have an opportunity to appeal to the Supreme Court if the Third Circuit were to decide for the death penalty. But given the Supreme Court’s highly reactionary composition, it is unlikely that it would overturn the lower court’s decision.

Nevertheless, even if the court rules for a death sentence on this issue, other legal avenues remain open

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Activists targeted by FBI reject grand jury subpoenas

By DAVID JONES

Three of the antiwar, labor, and international solidarity activists whose homes were raided by the FBI on Sept. 24 will have their subpoenas issued at the time “reactivated,” requiring them to appear before a federal grand jury in Chicago. The three, Anh Pham, Tracy Molm & Sarah Martin, all of Minneapolis, were among 14 activists whose homes were raided by the FBI in Minneapolis and Chicago.

Search warrants had been issued on the request of Patrick Fitzgerald, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, alleging possible connections with and “material support” to organizations on the government’s so-called “Foreign Terrorist Organizations” (FTOs) list.

The 14 raid victims announced that they would invoke their Fifth Amendment right to refuse to testify, insisting they had committed no illegal acts. Following demonstrations and other public protests in cities across the United States and Canada, the subpoenas were “suspended,” but have now been renewed.

It is expected that Fitzgerald will at-



tempt to coerce testimony out of the three re-subpoenaed activists by granting immunity from prosecution to them, effectively nullifying their constitutional right to refuse to testify, and then jail them for an indefinite period on the grounds of “contempt of court” if they persist in refusing to testify. This judi-

cial maneuver makes it clear that the U.S. Attorney’s targets are some or all of the remaining 11 raid victims, especially those who have traveled abroad to meet with and learn about the struggles of oppressed peoples fighting U.S. imperialism.

The search warrants mention “the recruitment, indoctrination and facilitation of other individuals in the United States to travel to Columbia, Palestine, and any other location in support of FTOs including but not limited to FARC, PFLP and Hezbollah.” The warrants also state that among the items to be seized from the homes of the raid victims were materials relating to “the recruitment, indoctrination and facilitation of other individuals in the United States to join FRSO” (Freedom Road Socialist Organization). Many of the activists have stated that they are members or supporters of FRSO.

Two of the three activists whose subpoenas have been “reactivated”—Anh Pham, a long time Vietnamese-American antiwar activist, and Tracy Molm, also an antiwar activist—are part of AFSCME Local 3800, which represents clerical workers at the University of

Minnesota. Pham is a rank-and-file member of the local. Molm is employed as a staff organizer by Local 3800. Martin is a well-known participant in the Iraq Peace Action Coalition in Minneapolis.

AFSCME Council 5, which includes Local 3800 and represents some 40,000 state workers in Minnesota, passed a strongly worded resolution at its recent state convention opposing the raids and judicial persecution of the activists.

The Committee to Stop FBI Repression’s call for actions during the week of Nov. 29-Dec. 3 around the theme of “Call off the Grand Jury—Stop the Witch Hunt!” prompted demonstrations in some 20 cities, focusing on the offices of members of Congress.

The Committee is urging Congressional representatives to take a stand in support of free speech and association, urging them to tell President Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder that a halt is needed in the Justice Department’s assault on the activists. The committee is also seeking funds to help pay for the anticipated legal expenses. More information is available on the committee’s website, <http://www.stopfbi.net/>. ■