

200,000 flood Washington, DC, to demand immigrants' rights

Astrid Rieken / Getty Images



By LISA LUINENBURG

On March 21, some 200,000 people, overwhelmingly Latino immigrants, gathered on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., to demand immigration reform. Thousands of people rode in on buses, traveling across the country so they could participate in the march in the nation's capital, making it the largest demonstration to have taken place since Obama became president. They came with their friends, their families, their unions, their churches, and their local community groups, holding colorful banners, chanting, and demanding an alternative to the increasingly harsh climate that many immigrants face in the U.S. today.

Lively crowds of youth, workers, and families chanted, "¡Sí se puede!" while waving American flags or holding homemade signs that declared, "No human being is illegal!" or "Legalization for all!" Others carried signs that asked Obama to live up to the promises he had made to the immigrant community.

The rally in Washington, D.C., wasn't organized by community groups and churches but by Reform Immigration for America (RIFA), a group with strong ties to the Democratic Party and millions of dollars to spend on promoting the Obama administration's version of immigration reform. RIFA backs immigration reform proposals like Rep. Luis Gutierrez's (D-Ill.) bill, the Comprehensive Immigration Reform for America's Security and Prosperity Act of 2009 (CIR ASAP 2009). The Gutierrez proposal, while offering an earned path to citizenship for most undocumented immigrants, counterposes this offer of "legalization" with increased enforcement provisions like E-verify and border militarization, and the first steps towards an expanded guest-worker pro-

gram. The Obama administration, on the other hand, has announced that it will back the forthcoming Schumer-Graham immigration reform proposal, an even more draconian version of the Gutierrez bill.

Many people at the march expressed frustration with Obama's lack of action on immigration reform during his first year in office. "We've been waiting for so long," Rudy Romero, 19, told *The New York Times*. "I know it takes time, but a promise is a promise. We are demanding it today." A young woman, Andrea Rentaria, added, "We want to step up and say, 'Hey, wake up. We're here. We're still waiting. We've given you time to settle in. When is this going happen?'"

President Obama himself did not attend the immigration rally on March 21, but he did address the crowd via a pre-taped video speech. At first, the crowd cheered loudly for the president, but as he continued to speak, many faces began to fall.

"Real change doesn't start in the White House or the halls of Congress. It starts with people like you, in communities across this country standing up and making your voices heard," Obama began. But then he went on to congratulate Senators Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) and Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) on their soon-to-be-released legislative proposal for immigration reform. "They developed a framework that includes common sense, effective strategies to protect our borders and enforce the law while offering a path to citizenship for hardworking people who register, pay taxes, pay a fine, and agree to play by the rules," said Obama. "You know as well as I do that this won't happen overnight but if we work together across ethnic, state and party lines, we can build a future worthy of our history as a nation of immigrants and a nation of laws."

The Schumer-Graham proposal on immigration reform, announced to the press several days before the march, is a far cry from the legalization for all demanded by the crowds that filled the National Mall on Sunday. "Our plan has four pillars: requiring biometric Social Security cards to ensure that illegal workers cannot get jobs; fulfilling and strengthening our commitments on border security and interior enforcement; creating a process for admitting temporary workers; and implementing a tough but fair path to legalization for those already here," wrote Schumer and Graham in the *Washington Post* on March 19.

According to the article, that "tough but fair path to legalization" would require undocumented immigrants to admit they broke the law, perform community service, pay back taxes and fines, learn English, and pass background checks, all before going to the "back of the line" to apply for a Green Card. Many immigrants are still waiting in line after the amnesty of 1986, caught up in endless bureaucratic backlogs. The Schumer-Graham proposal would only force families to wait even longer to be reunited.

Even worse, the Schumer-Graham proposal fails to end the raids and deportations that have terrorized immigrant communities. Rather, it increases interior enforcement and border militarization programs that have led to the deaths and maltreatment of thousands of immigrants. And the guest-worker programs it proposes to control future flows of low-skilled immigrant workers would only open the door for low wages and increased exploitation of immigrant and U.S.-born workers alike. Expanded use of employer sanctions tactics like E-verify

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Repression continues in Honduras

By CLAY WADENA

Orlando Sierra / AFP / Getty Images

The wave of repression has continued in Honduras without pause, with the body count of journalists alone reaching seven for the month of March. The most recent victims, radio journalists Jose Bayardo and Manuel de Jesus Juarez, had been documenting human rights' abuses since the coup that ousted democratically elected President Manuel "Mel" Zelaya in June of 2009.

Early in March an Organization of American States' report was released that documented murder, torture, rape, and intimidation against anti-coup activists and their families.

"The commission observes with dismay that it appears that sons and daughters of leaders of the Resistance Front are being killed, kidnapped, attacked and threatened as a strategy to silence the activists," the report said.

Claudia Maritza Brizuela, the daughter of a union and community leader who opposed the coup, was killed in her home on Feb. 24 in front of her two children. Vanessa Zepeda Alonzo, a 29-year-old anti-coup activist, was kidnapped, murdered, and her body dumped from a car days later on Feb. 3.

Meanwhile, the U.S. government has consistently been the murderous Honduran oligarchy's biggest ally. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spent much of her five-day trip in Latin America in early March calling for more countries to officially recognize the government of Honduras.

"We support the work that President Lobo is doing to promote national unity and strengthen democracy," Clinton said at a news conference in Guatemala. But Porfirio Lobo Sosa was brought to power by an election held under a coup-installed "interim government," in a vote in which abstention rates were high (the popular National Resistance Front had called for abstention rather than legitimizing the coup by participating).

The resistance is currently calling for non-binding ref-



Friends and family of college student Joseph Ochoa protest at the U.S. embassy in Tegucigalpa, March 9. Ochoa was murdered while accompanying U.S. journalist Carol Cabrera.

erendum in late June to display the popular support for forming a constituent assembly to rewrite the Honduran constitution.

"We are going to work very hard for the next two and a half months to get to a poll next June 28, the date of the coup. We have not yet determined what form it will take, but we know that it will be an instrument that will not only serve to count the people who support the constituent assembly process, but also to further the process of uniting us, of mobilizing and organizing," said Carlos H. Reyes, president of STIBYS, the beverage workers' union.

The perseverance of activists who continue to work around the National Resistance Front has brought about the continued assassinations by coup-supporters, but the resistance maintains its strength and courage in the road forward to a Honduras that is not dominated by the national oligarchy and its foreign sponsors. ■

Vale Inco workers stand firm

By BARRY WEISLEDER

After eight months on strike, workers in Sudbury, Ontario, overwhelmingly rejected contract demands from Brazilian-based nickel giant Vale Inco on March 12.

More than 88 per cent of members of United Steelworkers Local 6500 voted down a five-year deal that would phase out defined pension benefits, cut special bonus pay, reduce employee workplace rights, allow more contracting-out and provide no assurances some would return to their jobs. Despite the hardship of members losing thousands of dollars in pay, the percentage of workers voting against the concessions 'offer' is higher than when they opposed the initial company position and walked off the job last July.

In the meantime, Vale hired scabs and sued the union for allegedly engaging in unlawful activity and property damage. The USW is counter-suing, but concentrating on strengthening picket lines and rallying support from far and wide.

Over 3000 people marched and rallied in the streets of the nickel capital on March 22 to show they back the embattled workers. *Socialist Action* correspondent Judy Koch joined hundreds who boarded buses in Toronto and other cities to attend the boisterous gathering. She reported that "participants in the march were very enthusiastic".

Avid interest in socialist ideas was reflected in sales of *Socialist Action* newspaper (a bundle of 40 copies sold out quickly) and by the warm welcome for an SA strike support leaflet. At the same time, workers across Canada are coming to appreciate the significance of the current struggle.

Nickel miners in Sudbury, and at other

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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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Forward to the United National Antiwar Conf., July 23-24!

Thousands mobilize for March 20 antiwar actions

By BOB CHRISFIELD

Five thousand antiwar protesters in Washington, D.C., and 3000 in both San Francisco and Los Angeles, mobilized on March 20, the 7th anniversary of the murderous U.S. war against the Iraqi people, to demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. troops and mercenaries from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Groups from throughout the eastern United States chartered buses to Washington, and many organized colorful contingents in the march. The San Francisco and L.A. demonstrations had a similar regional character. Large numbers of youth, people of color, and immigrants joined the protests. Many brought signs and banners linking the wars to the cutbacks in education and social services at home.

The highly spirited demonstrations were spearheaded by the ANSWER Coalition (Act Now to Stop Wars and End Racism) with the support of a number of antiwar, veterans, military families, Arab-American, labor, and social justice groups. The demonstrations were supported by the National Assembly to End the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars and Occupations (National Assembly).

The National Assembly has worked to broaden the forces currently active in the antiwar movement. This has resulted in the recent announcement of the United National Antiwar Conference (UNAC) in Albany, N.Y., July 23-25. UNAC sponsors include After Downing Street; Arab American Union Members Council; Black Agenda Report; Campaign for Peace and Democracy; Campus Antiwar Network; Code Pink; Iraq Veterans Against the War; National Assembly to End the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars and Occupations; Peace of the Action/Cindy Sheehan; Progressive Democrats of America; The Fellowship of Reconciliation; U.S. Labor Against the War; Veterans for Peace; Voices for Creative Nonviolence; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; and World Can't Wait.

March 20 demonstration demands included "Free Palestine!" as well as "Reparations for Haiti!" and opposition to sanctions against Iran. Many speakers focused on linking the demand "Money for Jobs, Education and Health Care" to the distorted priorities of the Obama administration and its record of spending more money for war than the previous administration of George Bush.

The Obama "surge," associated with the sending of an additional 30,000 troops to Afghanistan to raze and ravage its cities and peoples, has resulted in a dramatic increase in the slaughter of the Afghani people and a doubling of the kill rate of U.S. soldiers. No doubt when U.S. strategists are faced with the task of defeating the Afghani resistance by employing massive bombing and search-and-destroy ground-based missions across most of the country, an increase in the loss of American lives is inevitable.

Unlike previous U.S. efforts in Afghanistan, when massive bombing raids were employed to destroy entire villages and towns and to drive all present into the countryside, today the U.S. warmakers have proclaimed that the bombings will be followed by a more extensive and long-term U.S. ground occupation, during which time an Afghani army will supposedly be armed and trained to "defend" the country.

Meanwhile, President Obama paid a surprise visit to Afghanistan on March 28, where he publicly reprimanded President Hamid Karzai and his "government" while insisting that progress be made "on the civilian process" with regard to "corruption and the rule of law." As with Iraq, U.S. officials are pressing Karzai, whose election to the presidency last year was universally condemned as a fraud, to form alliances with elements of the very Taliban resistance forces that the U.S. drove from power eight years ago and are currently fighting.

Meanwhile, Karzai, while utterly dependent on U.S. support to remain in power, has expressed discomfort at being portrayed as merely an American proxy. *The New York Times*, on March 29, cited Afghani sources concerning a speech that Karzai gave at the Presidential Palace in Kabul in January. One person who heard the speech told the newspaper that Karzai "believes that America is trying to dominate the region, and that he is the only one who can stand up to them."

The Times continued: "Mr. Karzai said that, left alone, he could strike a deal with the Taliban, but that the United States refuses to allow him. The American goal, he said, was to keep the Afghan conflict going, and thereby allow American troops to stay in the country."

It was clear to the thousands present in Washington, D.C., and on the West Coast on March 20 that the U.S. has no intention of winding down or withdrawing from Iraq or Afghanistan. Indeed, a week after the protests and the announcement of the results of the U.S.-conducted Iraqi elections, *The New York Times* reported, "The secular party of



(Above) Part of the March 20 antiwar rally near the White House, in Washington, D.C.

Ayad Allawi, a former interim prime minister [in 2005] once derided as an American puppet, won a wafer-thin victory in Iraq's election, setting the stage for a protracted period of political uncertainty and possible violence that could threaten plans to withdraw American troops."

Of course, the U.S. "plans to withdraw," including negotiated time lines and dates that were designed to defuse mass antiwar sentiment in the U.S. and in Iraq, contained as many loopholes as necessary to maintain U.S. troops in Iraq indefinitely.

The "unexpected" results of the Iraq election gave Allawi's "secular" coalition 91 seats in the 325-seat Parliament, far short of the majority needed to establish a government. The results were immediately challenged by Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, whose "State of Law" coalition, a poor name for a government that is renowned for corruption, received 89 seats. Maliki had previously governed by patching together a coalition of Shiite parties. Third place went to the overtly anti-U.S. Moqtada al-Sadr, whose Shiite-based National Alliance won 70 seats. The Kurdish party received 43 votes.

The competing factions are not expected to agree on a majority government for several months. If Allawi fails to form such a majority government, the Maliki forces may yet form a Shiite coalition that suffices to rule. Regardless, while the contending forces negotiate as to who will rule and who will control the greater portion of Iraq's oil, there is no doubt that the U.S. will have a hand in the outcome. Washington is not indifferent to how Iraqi oil will be divided up among the warring factions as well as the contract language necessary to preference U.S. imperialist interests as opposed to its competitors, who also seek a stake in the booty.

As in Afghanistan, the U.S. "solution" centers on massive military force accompanied by brokering deals, sometimes with its worst enemies, to cool the majority opposition to the U.S. war and occupation. It is clear that this occupation is far from ending and that the war against Afghanistan also has no end in sight. Further, U.S. drone plane bombing attacks in Pakistan, as well as U.S. death-squad killings, remain the order of the day and threaten to destabilize that country too.

Imperialist war in the modern era has taken on new forms that daily undermine the declining proposition that we live in a civilized world that operates on a rational, if not humane, basis. The U.S. war in Iraq includes the largest percentage of privatized forces (mercenaries) ever. These include paid assassins who operate outside the parameters of military authority. It includes depleted uranium weapons (with a dose of even more lethal plutonium included) capable of mass destruction on a scale unknown in past wars, as well as drone planes operated with precision from halfway around the world that deliver bombs on unsuspecting targets.

Central to the perverse mentality that permeates U.S. imperial policy and its military commanders in the field is the notion that America has the moral, political, and economic right to control the world and bend it to its will regardless of the cost in human lives, not to mention environmental destruction. The U.S. is embroiled in two wars that cannot be won without murdering vast portions of the occupied populations.

A similar logic was employed in Vietnam, where saturation bombing, napalm, and deadly agent orange defoliation of vast areas of the country's jungles and forests were employed to provide better visibility of the "enemy." Four million Vietnamese were slaughtered. Millions more today suffer the terrible after-effects of dioxin and other carcinogens saturating the soils and water of that country. Meanwhile, Vietnam vets, 45 years later, are still denied compensation, with specious arguments that their horrific diseases are unrelated to the chemical and biological warfare experiments on a whole people.

The U.S. was forced to withdraw from Vietnam because its people would not submit, because American soldiers rejected the logic of mass murder and became unreliable instruments of U.S. policy, and because a massive, independent antiwar movement that mobilized millions in the streets brought into question the legitimacy of the system itself.

Today's antiwar movement remains deeply divided, with important sectors ceasing to exist as viable entities, as is the case with United for Peace and Justice (UFPJ). This was a significant coalition but with a fatal flaw. It measured its success by its capacity to fight the Republican "Bush's

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Saturday, April 17

- 11:30 a.m. — The Young Karl Marx: Origins of the "Communist Manifesto."
- 12:30 p.m. — Eco-Socialism: The Revolutionary Approach to Combat Climate Change.
- 2 p.m. — Street Art of the Revolution.
- 4 p.m. — Working-Class and Political Movements in Pakistan.
- 6 p.m. — Is Socialism Possible in the United States Today? (A \$7 delicious buffet dinner is available!)

Sunday, April 18

- 10:30 a.m. — Black History: Rediscovering Hubert Harrison — The Voice of Harlem Radicalism.
- 12:30 p.m. — Update on Mumia Abu-Jamal.
- 1 p.m. — Black Liberation in the 1960s: Lessons for Today.
- 3 p.m. — "Building a United Antiwar Movement: The Fight Against War in the Middle East and Victimization of Muslims in the U.S."
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U.S. and Israel pretend to quarrel over settlements

By ANDREW POLLACK

In the midst of the dispute over Al-Quds (see article on next page), Tel Aviv sparked a diplomatic spat with its sponsors in Washington. The initial cause was the announcement by Israel, made during Vice President Joe Biden's visit, that it would build 1600 new homes for Jewish settlers in Al-Quds. Mostly ignored by the media was a report by Israel's Planning Ministry that 50,000 new housing units in eastern Jerusalem neighborhoods were in various stages of planning and approval.

U.S. officials feigned outrage—not because they oppose settlement construction, but because they fear the Zionists aren't properly acting out the diplomatic charade. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that the timing of the announcement was “insulting,” and top aide David Axelrod called it an “affront” that “seemed calculated” to undermine the peace talks.

Behind the spat were longstanding Obama administration fears that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wasn't giving quisling Palestinian leaders Mahmoud Abbas and Salam Fayyad sufficient cover to sign another sell-out accord. Now he was making it too humiliating for them even to say they wanted to come to the negotiating table.

In the midst of this lover's quarrel, Netanyahu said plans to build homes for settlers in Al-Quds would go ahead. The response of Clinton was to ask him to make a “substantial gesture” towards Palestinians to help restart peace talks. Gesture indeed. The U.S. government—itsself occupying land in Iraq, Afghanistan, Haiti and elsewhere, and sitting atop an empire built on ethnic cleansing and occupation—has no quarrel with the deeds of the Zionists, only with their timing and rhetoric. It needs the Israeli government as an outpost in the Middle East.

So Washington, while sending stern signals over Netanyahu's intransigence, never raised the specter of withholding aid or loan guarantees. This left Netanyahu free to tell the annual conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee: “The Jewish people were building Jerusalem 3000 years ago and the Jewish people are building Jerusalem today. Jerusalem is not a settlement. It is our capital.” Building in Jerusalem, he said, is like building in Tel Aviv. And saying his policy was inseparable from that of all previous Israeli governments, he added: “Everyone knows that these neighborhoods will be part of Israel in any peace settlement. Therefore, building them in no way precludes the possibility of a two-state solution.”

Haaretz reported that on returning from Washington, Netanyahu said he was building in Jerusalem “on

his own accord and not because coalition partners are pressuring him to do so. ... Netanyahu clarified that he has no intention of breaking up his right-wing coalition to form a more moderate centrist alliance, despite continuing pressure from the U.S. ... ‘I do not need coalition partners to pressure me into continuing to build in Jerusalem. I, myself, plan to continue building in Jerusalem as all previous prime ministers did before me.’”

There is speculation that Washington wants to force Netanyahu to break up his far-right coalition and include Tzipi Livni and her Kadima party—not because her policies are different, but because she knows better how to play the game. Livni too is an ardent advocate of settlements in eastern Al-Quds, and during the current diplomatic crisis, said Jonathan Cook in *Counterpunch*, she emphasized that “by ‘acting stupidly’ in stoking a row with the U.S., Netanyahu had risked ‘weakening’ Israel's hold on Jerusalem.”

Israel's latest gambit is to try to end the crisis through a policy of “Don't ask, don't tell” about further construction—a policy the U.S. has not yet ruled out. Despite claims by Michael Oren, Israel's ambassador to the U.S., that the dispute had brought relations to a 35-year low, we can be sure Washington will not cut a dime of the \$3 billion in annual aid to Israel. Given the shaky hold on world hegemony that the United States retains due to its adventures in Iraq and Afghanistan, it can't afford too deep a breach with its most important ally in the region.

Haaretz correspondent Amos Harel reported that in the midst of the diplomatic row, “the [Israeli] Defense Ministry and Pentagon were concluding yet another huge deal. Israel will buy three new Hercules-J transport aircraft, built by Lockheed Martin, at a cost of \$250 million. The planes will be manufactured according to Israeli specifications and include many systems produced by Israeli military suppliers.

“The deal goes to show that a continuing diplomatic crisis between Israel and the U.S. has still to make itself felt as far as defense relations are concerned. ... Over the past two years defense ties have flourished. The air force now holds extensive exercises with its American counterpart, while this November a large joint missile defense exercise, code-named Juniper-Cobra, is due to take place in Israel.

“Against a background of high-level tensions between Obama and Netanyahu, the U.S. defense establishment has been careful to build an alternative in the form of direct and friendly links with Israeli defense officials.” Israel has also announced plans to replace its aging fleet of F-16 fighter jets with new, U.S.-made F-35 fighters.

The media gave prominent coverage to this theme of supposed conflict between Israeli and U.S. interests. The most cited example was the testimony to Congress of General David Petraeus, commander of U.S. Central Command (Centcom), which oversees the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Petraeus told Senators: “The enduring hostilities between Israel and some of its neighbors present distinct challenges to our ability to advance our interests in Centcom's Area of Respon-

sibility (AOR)... Arab anger over the Palestinian question limits the strength and depth of U.S. partnerships with governments and peoples in the AOR and weakens the legitimacy of moderate regimes in the Arab world. Meanwhile, al-Qaeda and other militant groups exploit that anger to mobilize support. The conflict also gives Iran influence in the Arab world through its clients, Lebanese Hizballah and Hamas.”

Two of CNN's leading talking heads gave extensive coverage to Petraeus's statements, focusing on the perceived threat to “America's national interests.”

Lieutenant Gen. Keith Dayton, the U.S. officer responsible for creating and training the Palestinian Authority security force that has cracked down on West Bank militants and restrained them from attacking Israel over the past few years, echoed Petraeus in a speech last year. Describing the belief of PA security forces that they were in training to serve an eventual independent Palestine, he said, “There is perhaps a two-year shelf life on being told that you're creating a state, when you're not.”

Biden was quoted as having berated Netanyahu—behind closed doors—over his plans for settlement expansion, warning it would put at risk the lives of American personnel in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Biden later denied the quote, and in public said, “there is no space between the U.S. and Israel when it comes to security, none.”

Israel, and its U.S. lobby, deride this supposed conflict of interests and argue that peace with the Palestinians would do nothing to assuage hatred of other Arabs and Muslims for the U.S. Given Washington's many wars and support of repressive dictatorships, there's truth in this argument. Left unsaid is that neither Washington nor Tel Aviv can ever achieve real peace with any Arab or Muslim peoples: the inherently expansionist nature of imperialism mandates a permanent state of dominance over, and if need be war against, those resisting rule by Western corporations and the states that protect them.

But Petraeus's claim that support for Zionism is “against America's national interests” has been eagerly jumped on, not only by right-wingers who couple it with claims that the “Jewish lobby” runs U.S. politics but even by some liberals, who think this will help put pressure on Israel to agree to a two-state solution. Even some progressive activists have quoted Petraeus out of context, ignoring his main goal: facilitating victory for the U.S. and for all its allies in all their wars.

There is no question that there are differences of opinion, reflecting real differences in material interests, between the United States and Israel. That is inevitable in a relationship between the world's biggest imperialist power and a colonial-settler state which, while happily acting as Washington's guard dog in the region, can survive only by following its own expansionist needs—needs inherent in its nature as a capitalist regime.

This contradictory relationship of allies with common interests arguing when those interests diverge was the case also in disputes between the United States and allies such as the UK or France during the two World Wars and in the Cold War. It has also been the case during the wars against Iraq, as all imperialist powers united to get rid of the Saddam Hussein regime, while squabbling with each other over how many troops to provide, the shape of the occupation government, and the rights of each imperialist country's oil companies to newly-privatized oil fields.

In the current world setting, calling for opposition to Zionism by defending the alleged national interests of the United States is a betrayal of the victims of Washington's wars, occupations, and support for dictators in Iraq, Afghanistan, Honduras, Haiti, and on and on.

But it's not just a moral issue: We should be glad that U.S. dominance is threatened by this falling out among thieves: the weaker the U.S. position in Iraq and Afghanistan and the stronger the resistance there, the more maneuvering room the Palestinians have to fight for their own liberation—and vice versa. Just as Che called for “two, three, many Vietnams,” seeing the connection between the liberation struggle there and those in Latin America and elsewhere, we say “two, three, many Palestines!”

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A socialist perspective on the fight against imperialist war. 55-page pamphlet, \$3.

• What's at Stake in the Fight for Immigrant Rights? 70 pp., \$4

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Order these pamphlets from Socialist Action Books, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610. Please add \$1 per pamphlet for shipping.

Correction: In our March issue, the article “Mumia Abu-Jamal's Case Stuck in Legal Limbo” used the phrase “convicted police killer Mumia Abu-Jamal.” The editors should have added the word “wrongly” in brackets to make clear that we believe Mumia is innocent of the murder charges against him and was framed up by the police and legal system.

By GERRY FOLEY

7th anniversary of U.S. assault on Iraq

The seventh anniversary of the U.S. assault on Iraq has just passed and commentators in the press have been inspired to draw balance sheets of the greatest imperialist adventure for the United States since the Vietnam War. These assessments have generally been in the liberal press, since the conservatives have presumably not found it very encouraging to look at the results of nearly a trillion dollars expended and more than 4000 lives sacrificed, to say nothing of the untold hundreds of thousands of Iraqis who lost their lives, their livelihoods, and their physical security.

Some liberals were also led to note that the rightists are claiming that the Obama administration is ruining the United States by proposing to spend nearly a trillion dollars on health care for poor and sick Americans over the next 10 years, though these loud-mouthed prophets of doom fail to notice the comparable amount poured into the Iraq War—which has brought no positive benefit for anyone, not even the imperialist companies that hoped to sink their proboscises into Iraq's oil.

The Iraqi resistance and the mass hatred inspired by the U.S. devastation of the country has made it impossible for the U.S. oil companies to achieve their aims and has cast a deep shadow over any future prospects for them in the country. That is not to say that no American corporations profited. Some of the biggest did, but by plundering the U.S. Treasury, by robbing the U.S. economy.

The aftermath of this is a multiplying series of scandals. The latest is enormous overcharging by KBR, a subsidiary of Halliburton, the company of former Vice President Dick Cheney. Based on an article in the magazine *Mother Jones*, the *Huffington Post* reported March 25: "It was just a single contract for a single job on a single base in Iraq. The Department of Defense agreed to pay the megacontractor KBR ... \$5 million a year to repair tactical vehicles, from Humvees to big rigs, at Joint Base Balad, ... a large airfield and supply center north of Baghdad. Yet according to a new Pentagon report ... what the military got was as many as 144 civilian mechanics, each doing as little as 43 minutes of work a month, with virtually no oversight.

"The report, issued March 3 by the DOD's [Department of Defense] inspector general, found that between late 2008 and mid-2009, KBR performed less than 7 percent of the work it was expected to do, but still got paid in full."

This was just one small example of huge plundering: "The \$4.6 million blown on this particular contract is a relatively small loss considering that in 2009 alone, the government had a blanket deal worth \$5 billion ... with



(Left) Ayad Allawi campaign poster looms above Baghdad police checkpoint.

the 19th century when war profiteers killed more American soldiers than enemy bullets.

But now the "free enterprisers" feed freely off the public trough. They have become parasites as well as bandits like their exalted forbearers of the Gilded Age.

Some liberal commentators have speculated hopefully that Obama wants to get out of Iraq and Afghanistan in a short period of time to leave the guilt for these disasters squarely on the Bush administration and its neoconservative advisers. It is likely that Obama wants to reduce the American involvement in these countries, which is imposing material and political costs that must eventually weaken the "American free enterprise system" as a whole. But he is riding a tiger that is not going to change its stripes.

The U.S. imperialist machine will try to maintain its hold on these and other countries by cheaper and more devious devices that by no means exclude the use of military force. An indication of this is the commentary in the capitalist press that the disputes among Iraqi factions over the recent elections would "delay the withdrawal of American troops."

When did it become the duty of the United States to use its military forces to ensure political stability in Iraq? Such an alleged responsibility implies an indefinite U.S. involvement in the country. In fact, U.S. military commanders have said on several occasions that they are not committed to withdrawal dates stipulated in the Status of Forces agreement that the U.S. government signed with the Iraqi authorities.

It is the task of socialists who understand the nature and imperatives of decadent U.S. imperialism and its "free enterprise" system to urge well-intentioned Americans who want to see an end to the suffering of the Iraqi people inflicted by U.S. intervention and an end to the waste of American resources and lives for the sake solely of the profits of big parasitic corporations to demand an immediate and total U.S. withdrawal from these countries. Only relentless protests in the street and relentless exposure of the machinations of the U.S. government can force the big money interests that dominate our country to remove their claws from these ravaged countries and from our plundered pockets. ■

KBR (formerly known as the Halliburton ... subsidiary Kellogg Brown & Root). Just days before the Pentagon released the Balad report, KBR announced ... it had won a new \$2.3 billion-plus, five-year Iraq contract. But the inspector general's modest investigation offers new insight into just how little KBR delivers and how toothless the Pentagon is to prevent contractor waste.

"Moreover, the government's own auditors predict that as the military draws down its forces in Iraq, KBR will keep most of its workforce intact, enabling it to collect \$190 million or more in unnecessary expenses. Much of any 'peace dividend' ... from the war's gradual end—potentially hundreds of billions of dollars—could wind up in the hands of contractors."

Rambunctious rightists in Texas want to change the name of capitalism in high school textbooks to "the American free-enterprise system." The experience of Iraq and Afghanistan shows graphically just how "free" the American economic system has become today, like the free-enterprise system that prevailed at the end of

Attacks on Al-Quds spark Palestinian resistance

By ANDREW POLLACK

On March 14 thousands of Zionist soldiers and cops surrounded the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Al-Quds (Jerusalem) in preparation for a joint settler/government dedication of a synagogue near the mosque, the third holiest site in Islam. Zionist forces barred Palestinians from entering the mosque compound (Haram al-Sharif), then raided the mosque itself, arresting some worshippers and expelling the others.

In response, thousands of Palestinian youth launched protests in Al-Quds and throughout the West Bank. They were met with tear gas and rubber bullets. About 100 Palestinians were injured and at least 60 detained. Four youths were murdered during protests in Nablus the following weekend.

Police set up roadblocks to prevent Palestinians from pre-1967 areas of Israel from joining protests in Al-Quds. Solidarity rallies were held across the Gaza Strip. Palestinian Authority police prevented protests in some areas, just as they had repressed protests against Israel's massacres in Gaza.

Every Friday for years there has been restrictions on worshippers attempting to enter the mosque, and since mid-March only men over 50 and women have been allowed in. In response, a variety of religious and political forces called for Palestinians to come to Al-Quds to defend their right to pray and to be present in case of a settler/government attack.

These events are the culmination of a series of incidents heightening fears of a more massive assault on the mosque and on eastern Al-Quds. Right-wing Jews handed out Arabic fliers in Al-Quds calling on "non-Jews to leave the land of Is-



(Above) Israeli police detain a boy at Shufat refugee camp, near Jerusalem, on March 19.

rael," and others called for Al-Aqsa to be blown up.

The Zionist government recently declared two sites that are sacred to Muslims, Masjid Bilal bin Rabah (Rachel's Tomb) and the Ibrahimi Mosque (Cave of the Patriarchs), on the official Jewish "heritage" list, sparking worries of further desecration and/or bans on worship at those sites.

Excavations under the Al-Aqsa Mosque, supposedly for archaeological purposes, threaten the stability of its foundations. At the end of the month, Tel Aviv announced it would carry out new construction in the Mosque compound (the Haram al-Sharif) to expand the Jewish praying area, a move that if carried out would spark mass protests.

Thousands of graves in the oldest Palestinian cemetery in Al-Quds, the Mamilla Cemetery, are under threat of desecration by the Simon Wiesenthal Center for "Tolerance." And Palestinian fam-

ilies in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of Al-Quds who were expelled from their homes to make room for settlers have been camped out in protest across the street for months.

Events in Al-Quds come in the context of increasing repression throughout Palestine. Israeli occupation forces sealed off the entire West Bank during the above protests. When Passover began, the annual racist policy of closing the entire West Bank was carried out.

Detention without charges of leaders of protests against the Apartheid Wall have mushroomed, as have night-time raids on homes, including detention of children. Weekly protests challenging the blockade and "no-go zones" in Gaza are met with violent repression and arrests. Palestinian Christians face restrictions

as well, inspiring church leaders to issue the "Kairos Palestine-2009" declaration, an appeal to churches worldwide to boycott Israel.

As we go to press, Christians are defying the annual restrictions on Palestinians' right to worship at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and other holy sites during Easter week, and church leaders have called on their followers to go to the sites without applying for permits from the Israeli government.

In the U.S., Palestinians and supporters mobilized immediately in response to the attacks. The U.S. Palestinian Community Network issued a statement calling for protests, and one of the first to respond was Al-Awda NY, which, in coalition with American Muslims for Palestine and other community allies, held a march in Manhattan from Times Square to Herald Square.

At the end point, Al-Awda handed out leaflets in front of retailer H&M to launch its Boycott Zionism campaign. (H&M is the target of a global boycott because it is opening seven stores in Israel, including in Al-Quds.) The same week, the UC Berkeley student senate passed a resolution calling for divestment of all funds in corporations doing business with Israel.

In Palestine itself there are predictions by many of a third Intifada. It's too soon to know whether this might occur in the near future or, if it did, how quickly forces to the left of Fatah would be able to respond to organize the masses to resist the repression and sellouts that have ended previous Intifadas. But Palestinians have shown through decades of resistance that they will never give up.

Supporters in the U.S. and around the world must act now to create the greatest possible maneuvering room for a third Intifada, whenever it begins—as it will sooner or later. ■

Democrats' health 'reform' bails out insurance and drug corporations

Anne Sherwood / Getty Images



(Left) Demonstrators for genuine health-care reform rubbed shoulders with ultra-right Tea Party people when Obama spoke in Belgrade, Mont., last August.

Widespread confusion over Obama's health proposals ultimately benefited the corporations who profit from the new law.

Amendment's ban on use of federal money for abortion. NOW also objected to Obama's support for a "conscience clause" through which essential emergency services are denied. If a woman is raped, under this clause she could be denied emergency contraception that she might desperately need.

In a PBS interview with Bill Moyers, Dr. Marcia Angell, editor emeritus of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, said, "The bill actually expands and cements insurers' position as the lynchpin of health care reform. ... A lot of people say, 'Let's hold our nose and pass it, because it's a step in the right direction.' And I say, it's a step in the wrong direction." Medicare was being slashed, she said, to subsidize the private health insurance industry. This financial shift explains the bill's much-touted relief to the federal deficit.

Single-payer activists such as DeMoro, as well as Physicians for a National Health Program and its state affiliates, noted some positive aspects of the bill:

- Increased funding for community health centers, nearly doubling their current patient volume.
 - Reducing but not eliminating the "donut hole" gap in prescription drug coverage for which Medicare enrollees have to pay fully out of pocket.
 - Insurance regulations covering members' dependent children until age 26, new restrictions on limits on annual and lifetime insurance coverage, and some limits to dropping children with pre-existing conditions.
 - Permission for individual states to waive some federal regulations to allow adoption of programs like an expanded Medicare. Some activist groups will use this clause to focus on achieving state-level single-payer programs.
 - Expansion of Medicaid to cover 16 million additional low income people. But activists note that the program remains significantly under-funded, and so care providers often drop out for inadequate reimbursement. What's more, the bill's added federal subsidies to states (which normally bear half of Medicaid's costs) will expire in 2016.
- In fact, the states, which are all facing budget crises in the current Great Recession, are already beginning to slash away at Medicaid and other health-care programs. So when all is said and done, the level of Medicaid-provided health care could be even less than it currently is.
- States are finding they can't find required matching funds, without which the Feds won't contribute their share of Medicaid spending. This is at a time when the recession and high unemployment have driven Medicaid enrollment up dramatically—by 3.3 million people over the last year. When Recovery Act funding runs out at the end of 2010, states are expected to remove hundreds of thousands from Medicaid. Many governors' proposed budgets for state fiscal year 2011 already include drastic cuts to Medicaid.
- In any case, PNHP and other activists echoed DeMoro when she said, regarding the bill's positive features: "All of these reforms could, and should, have been enacted on their own without the poison pills that accompanied them." PNHP noted that even had the bill included a "public option," it wouldn't have mattered as "even a robust public option would have foregone 90% of the bureaucratic savings achievable under single payer." *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman quoted Newt Gingrich, former Republican speaker of the House, as saying, "They [Democrats] will have destroyed their party much as Lyndon Johnson shattered the Democratic Party for 40 years by passing civil rights legislation." And Krugman cited "racial hate-mongering" in an op-ed in *Investor's Business Daily*, which declared that health reform is "affirmative action on steroids, deciding everything from who becomes a doctor to who gets treatment on the basis of skin color."

(continued on page 7)

By ANDREW POLLACK

In late March, after months of debate, Congress passed, and President Barack Obama signed into law, a bill that progressive columnist Chris Hedges accurately described as "the health-care industry's version of the Wall Street bailout."

Rose Ann DeMoro, head of National Nurses United, said the bill "fails to deliver on the promise of a single standard of excellence in care for all and instead makes piecemeal adjustments to the current privatized, for-profit health-care behemoth." She added that boasts comparing the bill to Social Security and Medicare were "intended to mollify liberal supporters following repeated concessions to the health-care industry and conservative Democrats."

Some of the failings in the bill cited by DeMoro, Hedges, and other advocates of a single-payer ("Medicare for All") system were:

- A mandate forcing people without coverage to buy insurance. This is a gift to insurers worth at least \$447 billion from government subsidies alone, not to mention the huge sums workers will have to dig out of their own pockets. Policies will cost up to 9.7% of workers' incomes but cover an average of only 70% of medical expenses. Even if they can afford the premiums, many will meet financial ruin—or be forced to forego care—because of high co-pays and deductibles.
- Premiums will continue to climb. Threats by the Obama administration to create a federal authority to look at insurer rate hikes were dropped. Similarly, limits on out-of-pocket payments are vaguely worded.
- No standard benefits package, meaning no guarantee that patients will get the care needed; instead, a requirement that benefits should be "comparable to" current employer provided plans.
- The much-touted end of denial of claims is also shot through with loopholes, and is subject to review by state governments, many of which, said DeMoro, "have systems now in place that are dominated by the insurance industry." And insurers may continue to drop coverage for "fraud or intentional misrepresentation"—the main pretext now used.
- Permitting insurers to sell policies across state lines, exempting patient protections passed in more regulated states.
- Allowing insurers to charge three times more based on age and/or certain conditions, and to use marketing techniques to cherry-pick healthier, less costly enrollees. Big companies with a predominantly female workforce can be charged higher gender-based rates at least until 2017.
- Taxing employer-provided health benefits for the first time, starting with "Cadillac Plans," i.e., those whose value exceeds \$10,200 for individuals or \$27,500 for families. With no real checks on premium hikes, many plans will rapidly reach that amount by the start date, 2018. Workers will have to switch to

The bill 'sends the outrageous message that it is acceptable to negotiate health-care reform on the backs of women.'

— NOW Pres. Terry O'Neill

plans providing little medical and/or financial protection. And employers will rush to drop coverage completely.

- A windfall for Big Pharma. Obama blocked provisions to give the government more power to negotiate drug prices and gave the name brand drug-makers 12 years of marketing monopoly.

- 23 million residents of the U.S. will remain without any insurance. Pointing to Massachusetts, whose legislation was the model for the bill, Hedges noted that one in six people there say they cannot afford care, and tens of thousands have been evicted from the program because of budget cuts. "The 45,000 Americans who die each year because they cannot afford coverage will not be saved" under the federal bill.

- The bill will cut about \$40 billion from Medicare payments to safety-net hospitals, threatening care for tens of millions without insurance who depend on those hospitals.

Discrimination against women and immigrants

National Organization for Women President Terry O'Neill called the bill a "highly flawed, diminished piece of legislation that continues reliance on a failing, profit-driven private insurance system." Noting that the key to the deal was Obama's knuckling under to anti-choice fanatics, she said the bill "sends the outrageous message that it is acceptable to negotiate health-care reform on the backs of women." The bill's permission of age-rating, she noted, "has a disproportionate impact on women, whose incomes and savings are lower due to a lifetime of systematic wage discrimination."

O'Neill also denounced the bill's discrimination against immigrants. Legal residents will face a five-year waiting period before being eligible for Medicaid, and undocumented workers will not even be permitted to use their own money to buy insurance (even though they pay income taxes and Social Security taxes that are used to fund others' health care.)

These provisions aren't about saving money, she said. "They are there because of ugly anti-immigrant sentiment, and must be eliminated."

The turning point in securing the bill's passage was a deal with anti-abortion Democrats, in which Obama signed an executive order reiterating the Hyde

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Yet liberals echoed Obama's claims that the bill was the greatest thing since Social Security or Medicare. And *New York Times* economics columnist David Leonhardt claimed that the bill is the government's "biggest attack on economic inequality" in over three decades. "It is the centerpiece of [Obama's] deliberate effort to end what historians have called the age of Reagan."

But DeMoro quoted former Labor Secretary Robert Reich as saying, "don't believe anyone who says Obama's health-care legislation marks a swing of the pendulum back toward the Great Society and the New Deal...."

"Obama's health bill is a very conservative piece of legislation. Unlike Social Security and Medicare, which expanded a public safety net, this bill requires people—in the midst of the mass unemployment and the worse economic downturn since the Great Depression—to pay thousands of dollars out of pocket to big private companies for a product that may or may not provide health coverage in return.

"The administration and its major supporters shut out advocates of more far-reaching reform, while vilifying critics on the left. ... As more Americans recognize the bill does not resemble the distortions peddled by the right, and become disappointed by their rising medical bills and ongoing fights with insurers for needed care, there will be new opportunity to press the case for real reform."

The AFL-CIO, on the other hand, called the bill a "momentous step toward comprehensive health care," "not a baby step or half measure," and "an opportunity to change history." This was despite AFL-CIO President Rich Trumka having been summoned to the White House for a last-minute meeting in which he was told that the deal he'd brokered on taxing health-care benefits was off. On Jan. 14, Trumka had announced that he had negotiated an improved formula for determining the threshold at which the 40% excise tax on "Cadillac plans" would kick in. Obama told him that formula would be weakened.

The AFL-CIO claimed victory because the final bill exempts all plans until 2018, not just union-negotiated plans. That at least stops labor from looking like it had protected only its own members and not the working class as a whole. But that will be cold comfort come 2018 for most workers, as health-care inflation puts millions more into the range of the excise tax.

No change "from within the Democratic Party"

Of the dozens of sponsors of the main single-payer bill, HR676, only two voted against the Obama plan during its first passage in the House a few months ago. The final hold-out, Dennis Kucinich, who had sworn to oppose the legislation unless there was a public option, switched sides after Obama twisted his arm. Such capitulations by mass organizations and so-called "friends" in office allowed the media to present obstructionist Republicans, and cheerleading racist and homophobic scum, as the only opposition to the Obama plan swindle.

Hedges, citing mammoth contributions to the Democrats by insurers and drug makers, said the bill "is another example of why change will never come from within the Democratic Party. The party is owned and managed by corporations. ... Change will come only by building movements that stand in fierce and uncompromising opposition to the Democrats and the Republicans. If they can herd Kucinich and John Conyers [676's author] ... onto the House floor to vote for this corporate theft, what is the point in pretending there is any room left for us in the party?"

Meanwhile, Republicans, both elected officials and Astroturf activists, fought against the bill with a venom that would make you think they were holding the fort against socialized medicine. The day of the bill's passage in the House, members of the embryonic fascist Tea Party movement lined up to yell racial epithets at Rep. John Lewis and others, and to shout homophobic insults at Rep. Barney Frank. In the days after the bill passed, 10 Democratic legislators got federal law enforcement protection after receiving death threats and having their homes or offices vandalized.

Many media pundits noted the irony in free-market Republicans so viciously opposing a bill that grants hundreds of billions to private corporations. Jon Flanders, a member of the Troy Area Labor Council and a leader in New York single-payer efforts, explained clearly the sinister shell game behind this supposed irony: "Here is where the true beauty of the two-party capitalist political system kicks in. The problem of spiraling health care costs must be solved within the framework of capitalism, without damaging the material interests of the major corporations in the field..."

"The working class must be forced to pick up an increasing portion of the costs of health care. There is always the possibility that this might stimulate a ple-



(Left) Obama signs the Health Care Act on March 23, surrounded by Democratic congressional supporters.

The administration and its major supporters shut out advocates of more far reaching reform, while vilifying critics on the left.'

— Former Labor Sec. Robt. Reich

beian revolt. ... So in the face of that threat of unpleasantness, the two parties have a division of labor. ... To the Democrats falls the task of passing the corporate bailout 'Republican' bill. ... Their problem is how to sell this to their base, with the growing anger against for-profit health insurers complicating matters.

"There is a lot of smoke and mirrors about a public option to divert the masses right up to a vote. But this ploy must be abandoned in the end. The whole enterprise could sink at this stage of the game. This is where the Republicans come in, teabags waving aloft. Pounding the podium in faux-hysteria, they posture as the saviors of the free market, implacable enemies of totalitarian government, the only ones standing in a thin red line against the advance of socialism.

"The Republican tirades work their magic both on their own base and on the base of the Democratic Party. The teabaggers get energized, mobilizing in protest, raising visions of brown-shirted hordes in the minds of the Democratic base. 'My God, we have to beat these fascists,' becomes the mantra. Which is exactly the political cover that the leaders of the Democrats need to bring home the bacon, and pass the bailout bill. Which they do, with much congratulation all around by most of the liberals so insistent on a public option only weeks earlier.

"So both parties have strutted on the stage to the satisfaction of their supporters, to all appearances doing what they were elected to do. And the health insur-

ance bailout is accomplished. As a piece of stagecraft, it's a thing of beauty...."

As soon as the bill passed, employers began taking massive charge-offs against future earnings, claiming huge anticipated losses from elimination of tax subsidies for some retirees' drug coverage. AT&T's \$1 billion charge is the biggest so far. Yet these companies will actually come out way ahead, said White House senior adviser Valerie Jarrett: "What they're going to have to write off is nothing compared to the enormous financial benefits to those very same companies by health insurance reform that will bring down their costs substantially."

And she told no lie when she said of the bill: "On balance, business will come out way ahead, and that was one of the president's objectives."

The Labor Campaign for Single-Payer said that comparisons of the bill to Social Security "might be true had President Roosevelt turned over the Social Security Administration to Goldman Sachs," and that comparisons to Medicare "also might be true had President Johnson deliberately designed a plan that excluded millions of senior citizens from coverage."

The Campaign said that at its National Meeting in early March, "we came to the conclusion that, in the end, the debate between those who maintain that the current legislation is 'better than nothing' versus those who believe it will 'make things worse' will lead us nowhere. What is important now is to make sure that this incredible movement that has arisen to fight for the right to health care for all in America continues beyond this moment..."

"We've already won the battle of ideas. During the two-year debate preceding this week's votes, single-payer Medicare-for-All emerged as the gold standard against which all other reforms were measured. There is no longer any credible dispute over the fact that Medicare-for-All is the most cost-effective and just way to provide quality health care for all in America."

All of this bodes well, said the Campaign, for increased education and mobilization as the material impact of the bill's main features kicks in: "The health-care system that will emerge from this legislation is unstable and financially unsustainable. It is headed for crisis, perhaps even before it is fully implemented in 2017. We will explore the impact of the new legislation on collective bargaining and will act in solidarity with workers everywhere who stand up and fight for health care."

The Campaign, and all other single-payer activists, are hitting the ground running even before the bill's impact hits home, and are starting now to rebuild the single-payer movement on an even bigger basis. In that process, the exposure of even the most liberal Democrats during this debate as false friends—combined with that party's attacks on workers over immigration, war, discrimination, and jobs—will hopefully revive sentiment for independent labor political action, without which real health-care reform is impossible. ■

... Antiwar rallies

(continued from page 3)

War." With the election of Democrat Barack Obama, UFPJ's leaders saw its mission as being in conflict with its orientation to Democratic Party "lesser evilism." It could not bring itself to mobilize in the nation's capital against the wars now taken on by Obama and his equally imperialist cohorts. UFPJ remains as a diffuse network focused on opposition to nuclear weapons.

The same could be said for several other formations that have yet to understand the dire necessity of constructing a united and independent antiwar movement—that is, a movement that fights all the wars, occupations, and interventions of imperial America.

There is little doubt that there are other factors that have qualitatively reduced the size and breath of the present antiwar movement. The massive attacks on working people arising out of the capitalist economic crisis have had a demoralizing effect on the antiwar and most all other social movements. There is mass opposition to U.S. wars but not yet mass protests on the order of the hundreds of thousands that mobilized in 2001-2005.

Similarly, there is mass opposition to the attacks on the labor movement and working people more gener-

ally; there is mass opposition to the proven climate crisis threats to the environment, to the horrors that immigrant workers are subjected to, to the attacks on women's right to choose, to the rising racist and scapegoating sentiments generated from within both established capitalist parties.

In 16 short months, the Obama administration has registered a string of broken promises and implemented reactionary policies on numerous critical social and political issues. It has bailed out the corporate elite and its banks, insurance companies, and corporations to a degree unprecedented in U.S. history. And it has taken these trillions out of the pockets of working people as never before. It has mortgaged the nation's future in a mass of unpayable debt, running its printing presses full speed to spew out trillions in Treasury bonds and cash to pay for endless wars and interventions at the expense of the vast majority.

It is only a matter of time until the gap dissolves between the mass opposition to these policies and a concerted fightback, resolving the contradictions of the present moment. The ability of the broad antiwar and other critical social forces that have the experience and will to unite the millions in massive actions to stop all U.S. wars and end the attacks on all working people will prove critical in the months and years ahead. The July 23-25 United National Antiwar Conference in Albany, N.Y., will be a good place to begin. ■



(Left) March 24 rally for immigrants' rights outside Sen. Diane Feinstein's office in San Francisco.

... Immigrants

(continued from page 1)

and I-9 audits, or "silent raids," have already been used to fire thousands of workers and break unions in places like Los Angeles and Minneapolis.

The article in the *Washington Post* also states that the Schumer-Graham immigration reform proposal would require all U.S. citizens and legal immigrants to carry biometric ID cards. These high-tech Social Security cards would hold DNA information on all U.S. citizens and residents. Increased security measures like these erode the basic freedoms of everyone living in the U.S. and increase the general climate of fear in a post-9/11 world.

Speakers at the March 21 rally included Rep. Nydia M. Velazquez (D-N.Y.), the leader of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, Rep. Luis Gutierrez, Roman Catholic Cardinal Roger M. Mahoney of Los Angeles, and the Rev. Jesse Jackson. While most speakers urged the need for a comprehensive immigration reform, they said little of

substance, pumping up the crowd but avoiding any real discussion of the issues that many Latino and other immigrant communities face daily. Leaders of grassroots community groups have commented that many Latinos don't actually know what the Gutierrez immigration proposal contains or how it would really affect them in their daily lives.

One group that was at the rally, the Grassroots Immigrant Justice Network (GIJN), is attempting to address that very problem. At a press conference last week, the GIJN asked for a broader community dialogue on immigration reform. "Our principal goal is to generate a national dialogue based on an alternative framework which views immigration as an issue of labor mobility and human rights in an era of economic globalization," stated Isabel Garcia of the GIJN in a recent press release. "If you want to deal with the issues surrounding the mass migration of people anywhere in the world, you must address the root causes, it's that simple."

In a press conference on March 17, Nativo Lopez, a member of the GIJN and the National Director of the Hermandad Mexicana Latinoamericana, laid out a new set of principles for the immigrant rights movement.

Among other issues, Lopez stressed the need to address the root causes of migration, including trade agreements like NAFTA that have displaced thousands of workers and caused mass waves of migration across the U.S.-Mexico border. "If we don't address the immigration issue honestly, 20 years in the future we will be in the same place we are now," said Lopez.

Other speakers at the GIJN press conference included David Silva Villalobos, president of the Executive Board of the Peoples Legal Defense Committee of California, INC.; Isabel Garcia, co-chair of the Coalición de Derechos Humanos in Arizona; Carlos Arango, executive director of Casa Aztlán in Chicago; noted labor and immigration journalist David Bacon; student activist Daniela Ortiz-Bahamonde of Stop the Raids, Students of Trinity College; and Juan Jose Bocanegra, an immigrant rights activist in Seattle. Members of the GIJN called for a clear and easy path to legalization that addresses the huge backlogs of applicants, demanded an end to raids and deportations, border militarization and the criminalization of workers, and denounced the use of guest worker programs. To find out more about the Grassroots Immigrant Justice Network, to listen to their press conference, or to sign their Open Letter on immigration reform, visit www.grassrootsimmigrantjusticenetwork.blogspot.com.

In 2006, we witnessed one of the largest mass demonstrations in U.S. history, led by immigrants. Immigrant communities across the country protested against the reactionary Sensenbrenner legislation and demanded a new approach to immigration—one based on human rights and labor mobility. They demanded an end to the raids and deportations that were terrorizing their communities. The U.S. sat up and listened to what they had to say, and the Sensenbrenner bill was defeated.

On March 21, we once again saw a historic mass gathering of the immigrant community. The immigrants and their allies who filled the National Mall made it very clear that they will no longer stand for the use of programs like E-verify and 287(g) to threaten their communities and put their jobs and their families in jeopardy. They came out in force to hold President Obama accountable for his promises, surpassing even the expectations of the organizers of the rally. Once again, immigrants have stood up for their livelihoods and their rights.

Now more than ever is the time for all workers to join forces and take up the banner for immigrant rights. This time around, it will take another massive concerted effort for immigrants to open a new dialogue on immigration reform, pushing forward legislation that will truly relieve the suffering of immigrant families and that will grant an unconditional amnesty for all while addressing the underlying causes of migration. Only by joining hands and joining our struggles can we overcome the fear and hatred that has plagued our nation for too long.

All out for May 1, International Workers' Day, when immigrant-rights rallies are planned nationwide! ■

Nepal nears constitutional crisis

By CLAY WADENA

As the May 28 deadline for the completion of Nepal's constitution quickly nears, almost all analysts agree that it is highly unlikely it will be finished on time. Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) leaders have threatened to spearhead a social revolt if right-wing elements do not stop delaying the completion of the constitution and other elements of the 2006 peace agreement.

The peace agreement that ended the Maoist "People's War" and monarchist rule (among other things) contains a provision that would allow the deadline to be extended for six months. This would also extend the interim constitution, but an extension currently seems unlikely, as most politicians rarely mention it.

Major issues called for in the 2006 peace agreement have yet to be resolved. For the constitution to be finished on time there are a number of things that have to be worked out quickly by the Constituent Assembly. One roadblock has been debate over the question of whether the federal state would be formed by ethnic groups or geographically. Another is whether the judiciary branch of the government would be under the legislative branch or be independent of other branches.

Possibly an even more contentious matter of the peace agreement surrounds the PLA (the 20,000-strong Maoist rebel army) and the refusal by

Nepal Army generals to allow a merger of these two forces. This was mandated by the peace agreement, but there has been no progress. Maoist rebels have languished in UN-monitored camps for some three years while waiting to be integrated.

This was one of the main reasons that the UN dispatched its top political official, B. Lynn Pascoe, to Nepal on March 11. Pascoe said that Nepal's peace process was at a "very serious point." He added, "The question of the future of the two armies should not remain unresolved any longer."

However, even Pascoe was rebuffed by Nepal Army Chief General Chhatraman Singh Gurun, who told him that the rebel forces would not be integrated en masse, echoing statements made by other military leaders. The military leadership prefers that the PLA disband and its members then come up individually for consideration into the Nepal Army. This position runs counter to the peace agreement (something the Maoists routinely point out).

The Nepal Army, particularly its leadership and officers, pose a grave threat to the Nepalese revolution. They have refused every attempt at civilian control and democratization. It was just this issue that brought down the former Maoist-led ruling government coalition,



Guatam Singh

leaving the Maoists (who have the largest bloc in the Constituent Assembly) in a minority outside the new coalition. Yet the Maoists have the support of broad sections of workers and peasants in Nepal, a country devastated by poverty and unemployment of the highest order.

It is unclear how this situation will be resolved or if it will be resolved at all. Even if the Maoists were to get their way, and have the PLA integrated into the Nepalese Army, the fusion would likely be disastrous as long as the old officer

corps and the capitalist state that they serve continue to exist. For example, when the Chinese Communists (under Stalin's direction) fused with the bourgeois Kuomintang forces in the 1920s, and disarmed the organizations of the workers, it ultimately led to their near decimation. Similarly, trusting bourgeois military forces was one of the major factors that led to Chilean President Salvador Allende's death in 1973 and the ensuing Pinochet military dictatorship.

The entire project of the Maoists to form a reformist "Federal Democratic Republic," together with parties of the newly crowned capitalist class, has no promise of success. The monarchists, bourgeoisie, and big landlords will do everything they can to subvert and derail the popular will. They will oppose any attempts toward thorough land reform, ending poverty, democratizing society, and countering the pressures of imperialism. To ensure that the status quo is maintained, they will use the Nepal Army against the masses if need be.

For true success, the example of the Cuban Revolution provides useful insights. The Cuban revolutionaries found that in their pursuit of a nationalist-oriented program it was necessary to go beyond mere bourgeois-democratic reforms and to undertake a socialist revolution; expropriating the capitalists and setting up a government of the oppressed. Merging their rebel army with the reactionary army of Batista that they had fought against was unthinkable.

We must support the liberation struggle in Nepal and look forward to the day when the Nepalese masses finally rule the country. ■

By **BARRY WEISLEDER**

Prime Minister Stephen Harper said he had to pro-
rogate Parliament for three months in order to
“re-calibrate” his minority Conservative government.
What he meant by that became depressingly clear in
the 2010 federal budget presented on March 4.

In it the Conservatives vow to freeze or scale back
operating budgets, which entails cutting federal ser-
vices and jobs, and possibly cancelling negotiated
wage hikes. The only federal department that will see
an increase is the military, which in 2008 was prom-
ised an annual 2 per cent boost.

While there’s no new money for job creation, work-
ers will pay higher employment insurance premiums.
Absent is any aid for seniors living in poverty, any na-
tional child-care programme, or any boost for social
housing construction—indeed, the latter will be cut.
Air travellers will shell out more in security charges
on round-trip flights.

In sharp contrast is a \$47 billion tax break for busi-
ness. Tory Finance Minister Jim Flaherty bragged to
MPs that Canada would have “the lowest corporate
income tax rate in the G7 by 2012.” No wonder Ottawa
has record-high deficits and debt. In the play book of
capitalist governments, red ink is just a convenient ex-
cuse to cut public services, de-regulate business, and
make working people pay for the global crisis we did
not create.

But the worst news was in the fine print. Budget
2010 is overwhelmingly negative on the environmen-
tal front. It contains no action to fight climate change
and no efforts to create green jobs. Instead, its primary
focus is on facilitating and accelerating the operations
of the oil and gas industry.

In a dramatic move, the Budget takes environmental
assessments for energy projects away from the Envi-
ronmental Assessment Agency and turns responsibility
over to the industry-friendly National Energy Board
(NEB) or the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission
(CNSC). The close relationship between the NEB and
the oil and gas industries, combined with the ability of
the Minister of Natural Resources to appoint up to six
temporary members, would seriously diminish Can-
ada’s environmental protections. The CNSC has also
been criticized for a lack of independence following
the politically motivated firing of former Chair Linda
Keen over the medical isotope crisis.

It also fails to renew the ecoENERGY for Renewable

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

Harper’s Environmental Deficit

Power program, which provided a production incen-
tive for renewable electricity of one cent per kilowatt,
despite the fact that 90% of wind power development
in Canada has occurred since its inception.

The budget confirms that the Canadian Foundation
for Climate and Atmospheric Science will not receive
additional funding to continue its vital research, thus
wasting expertise and resources that took years to
develop. The Foundation’s numerous projects at uni-
versities across the country, which are seen as key to
understanding the dynamics and implications of cli-
mate change, are already being dismantled. Young sci-
entists, trained at substantial taxpayers’ expense, have
begun leaving the country in search of work.

After a one-year increase of \$105 million, Environ-
ment Canada will have \$53 million cut from its bud-
get over three years in a strategic review that includes
a proposal to end all Environment Canada reporting
that is not required by law.

While it offers no systematic plan to reduce green-
house gases and effectively ends major federal invest-
ment in renewable energy, the Budget does contain
a few eco-tokens. It sets aside \$100 million over four
years for a Next Generation Renewable Power Initia-
tive to advance clean energy technologies in the for-
estry sector—less than 1/7th of the \$750 million that
the industry asked for, and too small to make a signifi-
cant impact.

The Budget also contains an additional top up of \$80
million for the popular ecoENERGY Retrofit-Homes
program, which provides home and property owners
with grants up to \$5000 per unit to offset the cost of
making energy efficiency improvements.

On the conservation front, the Budget provides \$8
million per year to protect the Great Lakes and cover
administrative costs pertaining to international wa-
ters agreements, but offers no long-term action plan
to safeguard Canada’s waters and watersheds. It con-
tains no funding to extend the Federal Response to the
Mountain Pine Beetle Infestation in British Columbia.

Natural Resources Canada will suffer a \$100 mil-
lion cut over the next three years, making it one of the
hardest-hit departments. The Budget also sets aside
\$11 million to accelerate the Northern regulatory re-
view process for resource projects, in keeping with
the Speech from the Throne’s theme of dismantling the
“daunting maze” of regulations faced by industry.
In addition, a 15% tax credit for mineral exploration
was extended for one year.

In terms of the nuclear industry, the budget recon-
firms that CANDU (Canada Deuterium Uranium reac-
tor), the commercial side of Atomic Energy of Canada
Limited, will be sold in the course of restructuring
and it provides \$300 million for operations in 2010-
2011, much of which is to cover losses incurred during
botched retrofits and repairs to the Chalk River, Onta-
rio, facility. Last year’s spending on AECL ended up
being more than double what was budgeted, raising
questions about what the final figure will be this year.

Finally, the cap on foreign aid spending at 2010-2011
levels will likely impact Ottawa’s willingness to pay
its share of the \$10-billion-a-year international fund
agreed upon at Copenhagen to assist poorer countries
in reducing emissions and adapting to the impacts of
climate change. Harper’s deadly environmental deficit
is soaring out of sight. ■

By **BARRY WEISLEDER**

NDP’s Moral Morass

It was a tough winter for the labour-
based New Democratic Party. Federal
Leader Jack Layton is bravely battling
prostate cancer (we wish him a full and
speedy recovery). Without missing a
beat, he kept hammering the Harper To-
ries over more billions of dollars in give-
aways to the giant banks and big pollut-
ers, drawing special attention to the \$2.8
billion in profit over a three month span
reported by the Royal Bank and the TD
Bank in early March.

But the federal party and the Ontario
NDP had less success with important pol-
icy issues like Palestine, the public fund-
ing of Catholic schools, and upholding the
ONDP constitution.

Confusion and contradiction reign
amongst NDP federal MPs and in the
Ontario NDP legislative caucus. When
a motion was presented by a Conserva-
tive MP in the House of Commons to
condemn Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW,
March 1-7) and to try to stifle debate on
Israel’s crimes against the Palestinian
people, NDP House Leader Libby Davies
opposed it. But right wing NDP MP
s Judy Wacylycia-Leis, Pat Martin and Pe-

ter Stoffer, supported it. Layton tried to
skate around it. But the NDP’s continuing
participation in the so-called Canadian
Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-
Semitism, which equates anti-Zionism
with anti-semitism and wants to ban
criticism of Israel, really speaks volumes.

When a Tory motion against IAW came
before the Ontario legislature, ONDP
Leader Andrea Horwath denounced it
as “divisive” and “unhelpful”—just after
NDP MPP Cheri DiNovo had spoken for it.

While Horwath took no action against
DiNovo, the Leader did stifle another
member of her Ontario caucus. She or-
dered MPP Michael Prue to pull out of
a public hearing on the topic of Ontario
funding of Catholic separate schools on
March 12 in Toronto.

The event was sponsored by the
NDP Socialist Caucus and attract-
ed close to 100 participants to a
University of Toronto auditori-
um. Prue agreed back in Decem-
ber to address the hearing, which
the NDP socialists organized to
promote rank-and-file input into

the official policy review on school fund-
ing mandated by the ONDP convention in
March 2009. The Socialist Caucus calls
for an end to public funding of religious
and private schools. So does the federal
NDP, as a result of an SC resolution de-
bated and adopted at the party federal
convention in 2004. Horwath’s inter-
ference did not sit well with party members.

Neither does what came next. The
ONDP Executive proposed in March to
postpone the Ontario NDP convention for
a year, citing cost and effort that it thinks
should be devoted to the provincial elec-
tion in 2011. However, several problems
arise. The ONDP constitution requires a
provincial party convention every two
years, not three. An election scheduled
by law to occur nearly 20 months from

now is hardly an unforeseen emergency.

But it gets worse. The Executive con-
ducted a mail-in ballot vote of the 257
members of the ONDP Provincial Council
on this issue—instead of bringing it to a
debate and vote at the next council meet-
ing in May. Problems with a site book-
ing could have been overcome; there
are many unionized, spacious, available
hotels in southern Ontario. Finally, the
number of councillors who actually voted
(95-23, with no scrutineers present from
those opposed to the cancellation) would
not constitute a quorum at a properly
convened provincial council meeting.

While the Executive is ploughing ahead,
it may face a shit storm in May. As the So-
cialist Caucus has often observed, if the
NDP wants to overcome the capitalist
democratic deficit, both in terms of for-
eign and domestic affairs, it must first get
its own house in order. ■

Vale Inco Workers

(continued from page 2)

Vale operations from the sandy
shores of Lake Erie to the north-
eastern wilderness of Labrador,
are setting a powerful example of
solidarity and determination to
resist the kind of concessions that
have devastated workers’ collec-
tive agreements in manufacturing
and natural resource industries.

The dispute in Sudbury, where
the USW represents about 3000
employees, is nearly as long as the
8 ½ month strike by 11,700 work-
ers in 1978-79, which holds the

record for most worker-days lost
in Canadian history.

Management has generated
much bad blood since Vale bought
Inco for \$19.4 billion (U.S.) in
2006. Workers filed 4,900 griev-
ances in the three years prior to
the walkout. This marathon strike,
the use of scabs in a hard core
union town, the company’s gross
arrogance, and the sheer value
of the industry all serve to drive
home the point: it is high time
to nationalize Vale Inco, without
any compensation to the biggest
shareholders, and operate it un-
der workers’ and community con-
trol. ■

Socialism 2010: Socialism or Barbarism / Eco-socialism or Extinction

An International Educational Conference, May 20-23

Location: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, U of Toronto, 252 Bloor Street
West. Co-sponsored by: Socialist Action / Ligue pour l’Action socialiste – Canadian state,
Socialist Action – USA, and the Socialist Unity League (LUS) – Mexico

Thursday, May 20: 7 p.m. Palestine, Afghanistan and Haiti: Occupation and
Resistance

Friday, May 21:

4 p.m. Dialectical Materialism – a philosophy for radical change
7 p.m. From Copenhagen to Mexico City – the World at the Brink

Saturday, May 22:

10 a.m. Marx versus Malthus
1 p.m. Combatting the Corporate Agenda – Jobs, Pensions and Poverty
4 p.m. Women’s Liberation Today
7 p.m. World Economic Disorder and the G8/G20 Summits

Sunday, May 23:

11 a.m. Civil rights under attack – Fight back!
2 p.m. Closed session for SA members and invited guests. SA/LAS Convention.

Tickets: \$20 in advance for weekend; \$30 at door for wkend; \$5 per session (or
PWYC)

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Books for children: The Bear that Wasn't

By JOE AUCIELLO

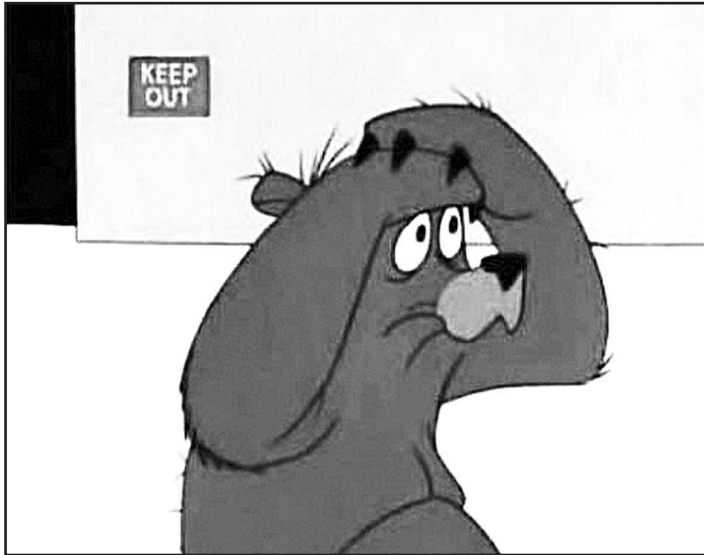
Frank Tashlin, *"The Bear That Wasn't"* (1946, reprinted by New York Review of Books, New York, 2010), hardcover, \$15.95.

"The Bear That Wasn't" is an illustrated children's book written with a political consciousness rarely found in this genre. What's more, the melding of a children's story with a political outlook—elements that would seem an unlikely mix—instead make the book an entertaining and enlightening read.

The story begins cleverly: "Once upon a time, in fact it was on a Tuesday ..." the Bear realizes that winter is approaching, so it is time for him to hibernate. He finds a suitable cave and lies down to sleep. Meanwhile, unknown to the Bear, a huge factory is built above the cave where he has been hibernating. Upon waking, the Bear stumbles into the factory, where a Foreman promptly takes him to be a shirking worker and threatens to report the Bear to the bosses.

The hapless Bear's protestations do nothing but land him into a spiral of ever-increasing conflict and trouble. The Bear is literally dragged up the corporate hierarchy through the offices of various vice-presidents and ultimately to the president. (Further up the corporate ladder, the bosses' desks get bigger; they have more phones, wastebaskets, along with bigger windows and drapes. Management may be confused about the Bear's identity, but they are certain of their own. They know who they are by what they have.) Before long, the bosses' mockery and derision turns to anger. After all, saying 'no' to the company president is a challenge to capitalist authority itself.

Since the Bear refuses to be shaken from his conviction, he is then taken to the zoo and the circus, where other bears fail to recognize him. After all, if he were a bear, he would be in confinement along with them. Finally, the poor Bear is placed on an assembly line and put to work.



Unfortunately for the Bear, he knows who he is. Nature tells him and confirms it. It is Man (and those animals captured by Man) who do not recognize him as a bear. Social exploitation requires that the Bear's identity conform to the need, in the first place, of the machine of which he becomes a part, and of capitalism that swallows them all up—worker, machine, and Bear.

Issues of self-identity and independence form the heart of this children's story; issues of exploitation give it substance and meaning. Clearly, author Frank Tashlin was drawing upon personal experience.

Tashlin was a cartoonist, a director of animated cartoons, a film director, and a writer. He was also a politically conscious union activist who found work at the Walt Disney studios to help with union organizing efforts there. As he explained in a 1971 interview: "One of the reasons I wanted to go to Disney's was to try to help the cause of the union. Ted [Pierce] was the first president of the Screen Cartoonists Guild, as it was called then, and I was vice president, and we used to meet in

cellars—it was like Communist cell meetings.... "The salaries were terrible then. I was making a hundred and fifty at the time, which was what the directors got. ... So we started this union, and it was tough going: everyone was afraid to join. ... I was able to make some inroads over there, and finally we went on strike, and they [Disney management] had to join [recognize] the union."

For all its weighty issues, this book is not as solemn as it might sound. The black and white drawings, full of quiet humor (at the circus, for instance, a performer takes a high dive into a small pool that is being drained by a thirsty elephant) lend a light touch. Through all his travails, the Bear is never angry, only confused, bewildered at what seems to be an incomprehensible case of mistaken identity.

Neither is the story some heavy-handed parable praising the union movement. The Bear does not join with workers and, in an act of interspecies solidarity, confront the bosses' oppression. In fact, the Bear is an isolated being, cut off not only from humans but other bears as well. There is more cooperation with more positive results in "Clifford the Big Red Dog" than there is in "The Bear That Wasn't."

Yet, standing alone, pitching his will against an array of powerful forces, the Bear is an admirable and inspirational figure. He is told, in so many words, "Your self is your social function. Without that, you are nothing." Nonetheless, he replies, firmly but without malice, "I am a Bear." By the end of the story he once again "becomes" what he had been all along.

Of course, "The Bear That Wasn't" must ultimately succeed as a *children's* book, and it will. Children will surely enjoy the story today as they have enjoyed it in the past. For, of course, children know what it's like to be misunderstood, disbelieved, and to go unheard. Bear's misfortunes, full of social significance recognizable to adults, also echo the misfortunes of children. They will identify with Bear's troubles and share in the happy resolution where all the wrongs are made right, and the world once again feels natural, secure, and safe. ■

Readings for revolutionaries: Marxism in Our Time

By BARRY WEISLEDER

"*Marxism in Our Time*", by Isaac Deutscher (Ramparts Press, San Francisco, 1973, 312 pages) is an anthology of speeches, articles, and interviews that document one remarkable person's struggle to keep revolutionary theory alive and potent in a period of working-class political retreat. The book transports us to the post-World War II capitalist boom.

Isaac Deutscher (1907-1967) was a Jewish-Polish political activist expelled from the Polish Communist Party in 1932 for "exaggerating the danger of Nazism". In 1938 the Stalinist Comintern dissolved the Polish party under the pretext that it was corroded by "Trotskyist and Pilsudskist influences" and had become an agency of fascism and the police. Members of its Central Committee sought refuge in Moscow, but were imprisoned and executed as traitors, on Stalin's orders.

A life-long opponent of capitalism and Stalinism, Deutscher's chief difference with the Trotskyist movement was his view (in 1938 and subsequently) that it was premature to launch the Fourth International. His voluminous writings are steeped in the classical Marxist tradition. Best known is Deutscher's masterpiece, his three-volume biography of Trotsky, "The Prophet Armed", "The Prophet Disarmed", and "The Prophet Outcast". Among his other acclaimed works are "Stalin: a Political Biography" (1949) and his anti-Zionist "Non-Jewish Jew and other essays" (edited by Tamara Deutscher, 1968).

The present outstanding collection merits serious study. It includes: "Trotsky in Our Time", "The Tragedy of the Polish Communist Party" (which exposes the destructiveness of the Comintern's policy zig-zags from opportunism to ultra-leftism, and back again), "The Roots of Bureaucracy", "On Socialist Man", and "Discovering Das Kapital".

Two chapters of the book seem par-



Marxist historian Isaac Deutscher

ticularly relevant at this end of the first decade of the 21st century. In "Marxism in Our Time", notwithstanding the post-war boom, Deutscher returns to the very essentials in the Marxist critique of capitalism: "There is a striking contradiction between the increasingly social character of the process of production and the anti-social character of capitalist property". To those who say such a critique is obsolete, that "since (John Maynard) Keynes, capitalism knows how to plan the economy", Deutscher asks: has capitalism "ever planned except for war purposes?" "Is planning congenial to capitalism?"

Looking back at the decades since the 1960s, about his insistence on the anarchic character of the capitalist mode of production, its proclivity to war as an extension of its cancerous growth and clash of monopolies, and the overall steady proletarianization of humankind, Deutscher and Marxism seem to stand up rather well.

"Marxism and the New Left" presents a cogent argument against those who, responding to the apparent decline in

class struggle in the most developed countries, would discount the working class and socialism. We still encounter such views, including in the so-called Zeitgeist movement, which calls for a purely ideological break with religion, militarism, the big banks and powerful conspirators, without grasping the need to organize working people to take control of the economy.

Speaking to students at Binghamton, N.Y., in 1967, Deutscher said: "Some of you, on the so-called New Left, want to leave behind all ideology in favor of pragmatism. ... But pragmatism is also an idea, ... you are only exchanging one ideology for another."

Concerning political differences on the left, which are often blamed for lost opportunities for revolutionary change, he counters: "All human thinking and all human organization is subject to differentiation. Whether you like it or not, 'squabbling' is the stuff of life; do not be contemptuous of it."

"The (U.S.) Communist Party did not want to 'squabble' with Roosevelt, and it supported fully and uncritically the New Deal. ... The members of the CP from Marxists became Rooseveltians. Then the Communists did not want to 'squabble' with Stalin, to criticize his policy, and therefore they allowed themselves to be turned into mere stooges of Stalin's policy. In this way they committed moral and political suicide. They did not want to 'squabble' with Stalin, nor with Roosevelt—and you will not be much wiser if you too shun ideological debate."

He noted that "the New Left is con-

finned mostly to students and intellectuals." "The role of students is transient. They are not a stable element in society." They can be a vanguard of fascism or communism. Likewise, "Lumpenproletarians [marginalized, often demoralized or desperate sectors, including beggars and thieves] don't change society. If the basic classes change society, then the lumpenproletarians may follow them."

"Crumbs from the table of the affluent society do not satisfy you and they do not satisfy the young workers. Have you tried to talk to them?" Thus Deutscher formulated an appeal to New Leftists to involve themselves in the working class and its struggles, and at the same time, to keep in mind clarity of purpose, programmatic clarity in the process of struggle.

"Do not delude yourselves that your aim—'participatory democracy'— ... is anything more than a vague and meaningless slogan. It implies that you want to participate in the management of society as it is; but the society as it is excludes you from participation by definition. For this, a new form of society is needed. And when you proclaim the end of ideology you also implicitly accept the dominant ideology of the very society which excludes you from participation, the very society against which you are in revolt."

Well said, Old Mole. The Deutscher anthology "Marxism in Our Time" is an important tool in the kit of all who are determined not to re-discover the wheel, but rather to stoke the engine of revolutionary change. ■

Pamphlets on Marxism and Socialism

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The Costly Lie in Money, Trust, and Lives

FILMS

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

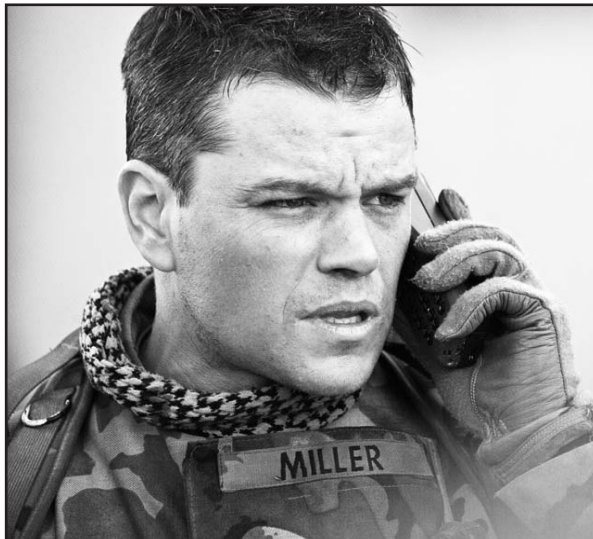
"The Green Zone," a film directed by Paul Greengrass, starring Matt Damon, Greg Kinnear, Brendan Gleeson, and Amy Ryan, written by Brian Helgeland and Rajiv Chandrasekaran.

"Bourne" director Paul Greengrass has made the first Iraq War suspense thriller with his "Bourne" star, Matt Damon. The film, "The Green Zone," based on *Washington Post* National Editor Rajiv Chandrasekaran's book, "Imperial Life in the Emerald City," is as intense as his fictional spy films.

Greengrass opens his film with the early-morning "shock and awe" bombing of Baghdad, the historic and once breathtakingly beautiful city, in March 2003. In horrifyingly realistic scenes, he shows jets screaming overhead, bombs exploding, Iraqi citizens streaming out of their homes, running in the streets, hollering and screaming; buildings crumbling, collapsing, rubble raining down; traffic jammed up in all directions; sirens wailing; fires raging every where against a background of leaping flames and billowing black smoke.

Four weeks later, a stern-faced, armed and armored Matt Damon, playing Chief Intelligence Officer Roy Miller, arrives in Iraq with hard-core intel and maps detailing the "exact locations" of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction. He and his men storm buildings while "looters" rush past. When an official complains, another employs the Rumsfeld rationale, "Democracy is messy."

The WMD sites turn out to be abandoned warehouses coated with decades of pigeon poop. When Miller has questions, he is told not to "stir the pot," do his job and follow orders. A top CIA official, Martin Brown, played by hulking Brendan Gleeson with years of



frustration and bad intel furrowing his massive brow beneath shaggy bangs, has conflicting information for Miller—but Miller, good soldier that he is, wants to believe that U.S. intelligence is correct.

In a chaotic scene in an open square with helicopters churning overhead, Miller stops a soldier from shooting a civilian (Khalid Abdalla) who is lying face down in the dirt. The man speaks English and gives Miller a litany of needs: water, electricity, gasoline, and food. He assures them there are no WMDs there. Miller promises water and christens the man "Freddy." He will be his translator.

Following Brown's lead, Miller discovers on line that a meeting was held in Jordan in 2002 attended by British and U.S. officials and al-Rawi (Yigal Naor), a top general in Saddam's army and the Jack of Clubs in Bush's pack of identity cards. Al-Rawi had told U.S. officials then that there were no WMDs in Iraq.

In the film, an informant alleged to be a source code-named "Magellan" had given the U.S. intel on WMDs, but he ended up being non-existent. In real life, the informant was a real snitch, Rafid Ahmed Alwan, code named "Curveball," who, in 1999, made up the WMD

story in Germany, hoping to get asylum there. The Bush administration employed his fake story about Hussein's weapons of mass destruction to help build the case for the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. Alwan was identified by CBS's "60 Minutes."

Amy Ryan, sweaty in her Banana Republic outfits, plays Lawrie Dayne, a *Washington Post* reporter, who has free reign of the Green Zone and access to anyone, though she can't divulge her informants. One of the improbable scenes of the film takes place at the swimming pool at Hussein's former palace, looking like a Miami Beach resort. Dayne collars Clark Poundstone (Greg Kinnear as a Paul Bremer figure) with her own suspicions; he dismisses her with "just give me something that will look good on CNN."

Many more improbabilities occur in the film: Miller and his men drive into the Green Zone. Freddy, in an unmarked sedan, rolls through the checkpoint without being stopped and questioned. And later, when Miller uncovers information backing up Brown's no WMDs story, he realizes he must handle this alone, since no one believes him. He tells Freddy to "go home." The insurgents had seen Freddy with Miller and his men while they did bad things to their people. Are we to believe, without protection, he won't be killed?

The film ends in typical Greengrass fashion with a heart-stopping chase through narrow alleyways and darkened buildings as helicopters circle and Miller, soldiers, and men in black masks brandishing assault weapons chase, shoot at, and kill Iraqis in business suits who'd been meeting clandestinely with al-Rawi. Miller tries to save al-Rawi now that he knows the truth.

Back at the Baghdad Hotel, Miller sends a report to Lawrie Dayne and to dozens of other major media outlets, debunking the existence of WMDs in Iraq. But did the story ever reach the general public? Now, seven years, tens of thousands killed, and six-plus-billion taxpayer dollars later, we know there were no WMDs and that the world was fed a pack of lies by the Bush and Blair administrations. Yet U.S. troops are still there. Why? ■

'The Ghost Writer'

By JOE AUCIELLO

Roman Polanski's film, "The Ghost Writer," is a well-told tale of a conspiracy theory that is, if a viewer pauses to consider the idea, thoroughly implausible because completely unnecessary. It's also an enjoyable, suspenseful story.

Contradictory, yes, but since when is the unbelievable unentertaining? After all, John Grisham launched a lucrative career on the ludicrous notion that the Mafia needed to secretly control an entire law firm. When it's no secret that attorneys are eagerly bought, why bother? Still, "The Firm" was a runaway best-seller and its movie adaptation was a worldwide box-office draw that earned into the nine figures.

"The Ghost Writer" will not enjoy a similar success, but it's far better. The director, Roman Polanski, shows what he has learned from Alfred Hitchcock and applies the master's film methods to good effect, maintaining a taut line of suspense throughout.

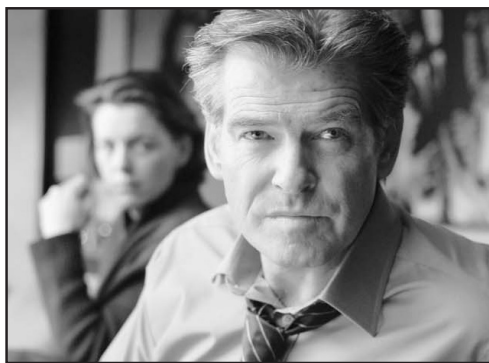
The cinematography, for instance, is essential to the storytelling. The gloomy setting—the dark, barren Cape Cod landscape beset by driving rain and wind—mirrors the barely revealed emotional turmoil of the central characters and complements the story's themes.

Nonetheless, despite its other qualities, what makes the film stand out is the unraveling of the plot. The conflict that initiates that plot, before it spirals into deeper and more sinister ones, seems straightforward though difficult enough. The former prime minister of England, Adam Lang (a Tony Blair double, played superbly by Pierce Brosnan), has been dictating his memoirs in an exclusive retreat on Martha's Vineyard when his ghost writer turns up drowned.

Meanwhile, Lang has been yanked back in the news, facing accusations from the International Court of Justice (the Hague) that as prime minister he authorized war crimes against suspected terror-

ists. Now the publishers insist the book be completed within a month to capitalize on Lang's notoriety. So, a new ghost (the unnamed character played by Ewan McGregor) is hired, promptly mugged and robbed after leaving the publisher's office with what's thought to be Lang's manuscript, and dispatched to the U.S.

The ghost is an experienced writer, someone who can quickly churn the pot to boiling, but a political naïf, foolish



enough to believe his lack of experience will be a virtue.

Not so. Inside of Lang's fortress-like house, every character is hiding secrets and engaging in betrayal. Complicating the ghost's mission are two significant women in Lang's life: his brainy, power-behind-the-throne wife and his personal assistant/secretary, who seems in many ways to be replacing an increasingly bitter Ms. Lang. This level of domestic complication and intrigue only adds to the larger mystery.

The most vital plot twist occurs when the ghost discovers his deceased predecessor's notes and hidden files. The meaning of this material turns out to be tantalizingly incomplete, but there's enough information to expose some of Lang's deceptions and to hint at deeper secrets yet unrevealed.

For the ghost, the discovery, understanding, and arrangement of these secrets into a meaningful pattern make up

the complex and lengthy plot. The overall arc of the story is a movement from innocence, to questions, to suspicion, and, finally, fatal certainty.

Only in the film's closing minutes is the mystery revealed, but this solution merely settles one question while raising others which cannot be answered. The larger puzzle is still incomplete by the end. This satisfactory irresolution sustains the film's tone of mystery and sus-

picion, and the theme of helplessness in the face of powerful, malevolent forces. At the end, the criminal conspirators are still in control.

It's nonsense, of course, as anyone who has read "The Communist Manifesto" could point out. No conspiracy theory is needed to explain the real crime in the story—the alliance of capitalist nations busily pursuing their class interests. That's a film yet to be made. ■

'Up in the Air'—A matter of ethics

By PETER TURNER

Beneath the scenes and dialogue of "Up in the Air" are profound messages. The film points out the hypocrisy in the rationales attempted by its central character (George Clooney plays a man who travels around the country on contract to help various corporations fire their employees). It shows the personal hollowness resulting from his lack of ethics, and the shallowness of the satisfaction he enjoys from his unencumbered lifestyle.

The self-deception of Clooney's character breaks down when his working routine produces a tragic but predictable outcome. This is fostered by the humanity he sees and comes to respect in the reaction of his apprentice, the ties to family and community he comes to understand during his trip home, and his realization that the woman he would like to share that with has already established it without him.

The achievement of this film is that it draws a neat and orderly picture of a dehumanized man and then demolishes it by the simple yet deeply important lessons of everyday life. Viewers can sense an underlying message and leave the theater dwelling on questions of what defines us as people.

The answer the film provides is that we cannot escape our connections to our fellow workers, communities, families, lovers, and even strangers whose worth as more than the bottom line they initiate can never be avoided. No film in recent

memory does that in terms so subtle yet clear as "Up in the Air," and that is its strength.

The film raises important issues that are ever present in basic social ethics: How do we define ourselves—as individuals and as social beings? Do we have responsibilities to our fellows, those closest to us, and those who we meet in passing? Can we live fulfilling lives while remaining aloof from the emotions that tie us to our social environment?

For us, as socialists, that has its most obvious application in our relations with our fellow workers, because as Marx pointed out, work is a primary social interaction. The nature of our work relations has much to do with why the proletariat is the revolutionary class at this stage of history.

While the lead character in the film is more allied to management than the working class, his humanity brings home the lesson that we all have a fundamental solidarity with everyone around us. It is a good and necessary message to send to the audience, as the alienation that increases with the increasing contradictions of capitalist production and its particular manifestations in our culture poses this question more acutely.

Much could be contributed to the general happiness of people if we had a society based on a cooperative ethic as opposed to a competitive one. This film seems to deliver that message in a more basic way—understated, not specific, but meaningful and important nonetheless. ■

Murky dealings reveal disaster in Afghanistan

By GERRY FOLEY

While the rate of U.S. deaths in Afghanistan has doubled since a year ago, and Obama has made a personal visit to the country, recent speculation about the future of the U.S.-led occupation has centered around projections of a peace deal with a faction of the Taliban forces, specifically the Hezb-i-Islami, led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. The latter once had a close relationship with the U.S. secret services.

Charlie Wilson, the reactionary U.S. congressman who became a patron on covert intervention in the Afghan civil wars when the Soviet Union was backing a client government there, notably referred to him as “pure goodness.” That is a good example of the sense of smell of the U.S. interventionists. Actually, Hekmatyar has one of the worst records of any of the leaders in the Afghan Islamist constellation.

An article published on line by *Newsweek* on March 26 claimed that during the conflict with the Soviet Union, Hekmatyar got the most U.S. aid. The two *Newsweek* journalists also offered a rap sheet on the U.S. hope for splitting the Taliban: “The sprawling Shamshatoo camp, just outside Peshawar, has always been the most tightly organized and disciplined Afghan refugee camp in Pakistan. The only law within its boundaries is that of Hezb-i-Islami (the Party of Islam), led by the notoriously ruthless warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Back in the 1980s, when the camp was Hekmatyar’s main base in the war against the Soviets, people in Peshawar would sometimes see a corpse floating down the canal that ran beside the camp. They knew what that meant: another of Hekmatyar’s supposed internal enemies had been eliminated.”

Hekmatyar has had a shifting relationship with the Taliban: “In the late 1980s his fighters often seemed more intent on ambushing other mujahedin factions than on battling the Soviets. After the collapse of the Soviet-backed regime, Hekmatyar’s artillery and rockets destroyed much of Kabul, at a cost of no one knows how many civilian lives, in a failed attempt to grab power from rival mujahedin leaders. The Taliban drove him out of the country in 1996, but he returned after the U.S. invasion to wage jihad against the Americans, and in 2006 he publicly declared an alliance with Al Qaeda: “They hold the banner, and we stand alongside them as supporters.”

The *Newsweek* article quoted Taliban spokespersons to the effect that they never trusted Hekmatyar, which is likely, and that he controls only a small part of their forces, which may be true. The conflict between Hekmatyar and the Taliban leadership has reportedly led to fighting between the factions that the majority has been unable to stop.

Hekmatyar’s essential condition for making a deal with the U.S. is the withdrawal of foreign troops within a short time. The U.S. officials are apparently interested in negotiating with him, although neither side has any reason to trust the other.

But whatever the outcome of this wheeling and dealing, it raises the question: if the U.S. is prepared to consider making a deal with one of the worst of the Islamic factions and one openly allied in the past with al-Qaeda, why has it waited until now, and what has it gained from its disastrous assault on the country?

In fact, a previous article in *Newsweek* documented the way that the U.S. repression and bombing drove the decisive sections of the Afghan population back into the arms of the routed Taliban. The U.S. commanders finally had to recognize the problem, although the jingoistic right during the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign thundered that it was a slander on our wonderful military forces to say that they actually killed innocent people. However, by their own accounts the U.S. chiefs have been unable to stop the slaughter of innocents.

An article in the March 27 issue of *The New York Times* reported: “American and NATO troops firing from passing convoys and military checkpoints have killed 30 Afghans and wounded 80 others since last summer, but in no instance did the victims prove to be a danger to troops, according to military officials in Kabul.”

The same assessment came from the lips of the new U.S. top commander in Afghanistan: “We have shot an amazing number of people, but to my knowledge, none has ever proven to be a threat,” said Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, who became the senior American and NATO commander in Afghanistan last year. His comments came during a recent video conference to answer questions from troops in the field about civilian casualties.”

Obviously, it is hard to convince Afghans that the oc-



Julie Jacobson / AP

The basic political problem for the U.S. in Afghanistan is that the government it supports is corrupt and without credibility.

(Above) U.S. soldiers search houses for enemy suspects in Nangarhar Province, March 18.

cupation soldiers are their defenders, when these foreign troops are shooting down their countrymen arbitrarily and with impunity. And this is to say nothing of the victims of “collateral damage” in bombings that typically kill far more innocent people than their military targets. A horrific example was the September 2009 bombing in Kunduz that killed 142 people who were trying to take gasoline from tankers seized by the Taliban. It was an atrocity comparable to the Mylai massacre during the Vietnam War. It so shocked German public opinion (German pilots were responsible) that it sparked a crisis in the conservative government of Angela Merkel.

The basic political problem for the U.S. in Afghanistan is that the government it supports is profoundly corrupt and without credibility. The U.S. big press has been suggesting that Obama’s visit to Afghanistan was intended to straighten out the U.S. client Karzai. But how can the U.S. crack down on Karzai when its own contractors are being shown to be as corrupt and ineffective as his government?

An article by a team of journalists in the March 19 *Newsweek* reported: “America has spent more than \$6 billion since 2002 in an effort to create an effective Afghan police force, buying weapons, building police academies, and hiring defense contractors to train the recruits—but the program has been a disaster. More than \$322 million of invoices for police training were approved even though the funds were poorly accounted for, according to a government audit, and fewer than 12 percent of the country’s police units are capable of operating on their own. Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, the State Department’s top representative in the region, has publicly called the Afghan police ‘an inadequate organization, riddled with corruption.’”

The British *Independent* confirmed this estimate in a March 28 article based on internal British government documents: “A series of internal Foreign Office papers obtained by *The Independent* on Sunday lay bare the deep concerns of British officials over the standard of recruits to the Afghan National Police (ANP), ranging from high casualty rates and illiteracy to poor vetting and low pay.

“The memos, which warn that building an effective police force ‘will take many years,’ also reveal how non-existent ‘ghost recruits’ may account for up to a quarter of the purported strength of the police force, often the front line against the Taliban insurgency. The ‘attrition rate’ among police officers—including loss-

es caused by deaths, desertion and dismissals, often due to positive drug tests—is as high as 60 per cent in Helmand province.”

The March 26 *Newsweek* article noted: “Worse, crooked Afghan cops supply much of the ammunition used by the Taliban, according to Saleh Mohammed, an insurgent commander in Helmand province.”

However, it was American private contractors, the new mercenary outfits spawned by the privatization of the U.S. military fostered by the capitalist political regression, who were responsible for training and organizing the Afghan police. In this case, it was mainly DynCorp. But Blackwater and others have been trying to get into the game.

The March 26 *Newsweek* article noted: “The people who oversaw much of the training that did take place were contractors—many of them former American cops or sheriffs [who of course should be above suspicion of corruption!]. They themselves had little proper direction, and the government officials overseeing their activities did not bother to examine most expenses under \$3,000, leaving room for abuse. Amazingly, no single agency or individual ever had control of the training program for long, so lines of accountability were blurred.” Moreover, “the audit says State Department officials ‘did not conduct adequate surveillance for two task orders in excess of \$1 billion.’”

People who work together inevitably interact. So, why should anyone think that these U.S. profit makers have not become intertwined with the Afghan world of corruption?

Of course, any deal the U.S. makes with Hekmatyar is hardly going to convince Afghans that the U.S.-led intervention is going to offer them more honest and democratic government. In fact, the Taliban won a reputation for honesty, despite its repressive outrages. The U.S. clients are not likely to look very clean by comparison.

Thus, whether the U.S. rulers decide to continue their escalation or whether they look for a way of reducing their investment in Afghanistan, the balance sheet of seven years of intervention is negative in every respect. And there is no reason to believe that it is going to get any better no matter what the U.S. does.

However, by its nature, the U.S. regime, based on predatory big business, will not give up foreign adventures unless the American people stay its hand. It will always try to find devious ways of continuing and justifying its intervention at the expense of Americans and other peoples alike. The crookedness and ruthlessness of the mercenary outfits is only one of the more egregious examples.

Americans need to make very clear and unequivocal demands for an end to intervention in Afghanistan and express them loudly and clearly in the streets. They cannot place trust in any politician who is part of the big-business system or give any credibility to excuses for such intervention. ■

