

## All out for United National Antiwar Conference!

**July 23-25 meeting in Albany will unite broad sections of the antiwar movement.**

By THE EDITORS

Thirty national organizations are co-sponsoring an open conference of antiwar and social justice activists on July 23-25 in Albany, N.Y. Hundreds of activists across the country are expected to attend the United National Antiwar Conference. The central objective is to re-mobilize and expand the U.S. antiwar movement to challenge the irrational and bipartisan government policies of never-ending wars and interventions abroad and economic and social wars against working people at home.

"Bring the troops and military dollars home now!" and "Money for human needs—for jobs, education, housing, pensions, health care, and the environment—not war!" are the central demands of this unprecedented national gathering. Some 30 plenary and 95 workshop speakers are scheduled to make the connection between the trillions expended for war and corporate profits abroad and the trillions lost to U.S. workers and gifted to the corporate elite and their banking and financial institutions.

The Albany conference aims to unite the broadest range of antiwar groups in many a year. While initiated by the National Assembly Against U.S. Wars and Occupations, a network including representatives of some 40 local, regional and national groups, the conference Planning Committee consists of one representative from each of the 30 co-sponsoring national organizations. These include the National Assembly, US Labor Against the War, Women's International League

for Peace and Freedom, Peace Action, Arab American Union Members Council, Bailout the People Movement, Black Agenda Report, Campaign for Peace and Democracy, Campus Antiwar Network, Code Pink, International Action Center, Iraq Veterans Against the War, National Lawyers Guild, Peace of the Action, Progressive Democrats of America, The Fellowship of Reconciliation, Veterans for Peace, Voices for Creative Non-violence, Women's International League for Peace and

(Above) Protest at Senate hearing to confirm Gen. David Petraeus as commander in Afghanistan war.



Freedom, and World Can't Wait.

After months of deliberations, this leadership core is proposing a nine-point Draft Action Plan for the consideration of all conference participants. The Action

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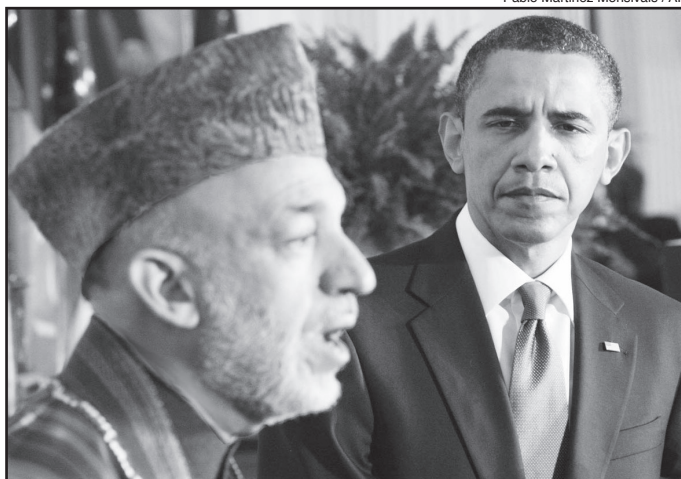
## Justifications collapse for U.S. war in Afghanistan

By GERRY FOLEY

Recent weeks have seen four major stories about Afghanistan: The firing of General McChrystal for publicly expressing contempt for the civilian authorities, the revelation that the private security firms hired to protect NATO convoys were paying off the Taliban, the London School of Economics report that the Pakistan intelligence agency, ISI, is still supporting the Taliban, and the Pentagon-sponsored report that Afghanistan holds rich sources of minerals. According to U.S. officials, the country's known deposits of minerals such as iron, lithium, copper, gold, and cobalt are worth some \$1 trillion.

Taken as a whole, these reports demonstrate the irredeemable disaster of the U.S.-led war. The only story that might be taken as positive for the U.S. commitment was the one about mineral wealth in Afghanistan; and precisely because the other news was so negative, even it inspired doubts in the critical media.

For example, an account posted June 18 on Alternet



noted: "The timing of the publication of a major *New York Times* story on the vast untapped mineral wealth that lies beneath Afghanistan's soil is raising major questions about the intent of the Pentagon, which re-

leased the information.

"Given the increasingly negative news that has come out of Afghanistan—and of U.S. strategy there—some analysts believe the front-page article is designed to reverse growing public sentiment that the war is not worth the cost."

If the Pentagon intended the report of potential mineral wealth to justify the war, it of course did nothing to vindicate its motives. If it hoped to redeem the war effort by showing that it offered profits for U.S. corporations, after the disillusionment with the U.S. war for oil in Iraq (the value of which was well known), the effect could only be to discredit U.S. claims about waging war for the sake of the Afghan people oppressed by the Taliban and for the security of America.

Throughout the war, there have been arguments that the U.S. sought material advantage in Af-

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# Oakland longshore workers refuse Israeli cargo

By MARC ROME

OAKLAND, Calif.—On June 20, ILWU Local 10 members refused to cross a day-long picket of an Israeli ship at the Port of Oakland. More than 700 persons, representing a diverse range of workers, students, and community activists, walked the pickets over course of the day, which began before dawn, at 5:30 a.m.

Chants of “Free, free Palestine! Don’t cross the picket line!” filled the air, keeping high the spirits of more than 500 picketing the entrances to three berths. Just before 9:30 a.m., they cheered an announcement that an emergency arbitrator had ruled in favor of the union’s claim that the workers on the morning shift could not work because the picket had made it unsafe to enter the docks. The workers did not receive disciplinary measures for refusal to cross the picket line.

A second picket of at least 200 began at 4:30 p.m. By 6 p.m., just as the Zim Lines ship was docking, word arrived that SSA Terminals, the port operator, decided against ordering workers for the evening shift change. Picket organizers and unionists attributed the decision to the size and strength of the pickets in the morning. A Chinese ship also arrived that day and met the same fate as its Israeli counterpart. No goods were unloaded for 24 hours.

A counter-mobilization consisted of two Zionist supporters waving Israeli and U.S. flags.

The picket was organized by the Labor/Community Committee in Solidarity with the Palestinian People, an ad hoc coalition of nearly 100 union members, organizations, and individuals throughout the Bay Area. It marked the first time in history that U.S. workers have refused to unload Israeli cargo, and it sent a powerful message of solidarity to all Palestinians, whose historic homeland was attacked by Israel in 1948, the start of a long-term strategy of land theft and ethnic cleansing.

The spark for the port of Oakland action was the Zionist massacre of nine heroic Freedom Flotilla crew members—part of an relief effort to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza—who were slain by the Israeli military on May 31. Six other crew members remain miss-



Palestinians in Gaza look across border into Egypt.

ing and are presumed dead.

The beleaguered inhabitants of the Gaza Strip continue struggling against a three-year Israeli blockade, which is fully backed by the U.S. government. Similar actions and work stoppages are taking place elsewhere around the world, including South Africa, Norway, and Sweden. Solidarity messages urging the ILWU to refuse to unload Israeli cargo were sent by the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU); UK Palestine Solidarity Committee; The Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions National Committee; and the Oakland Education Association.

The PGFTU statement cited similar “historic and massive” dock actions in 1984 by the ILWU, when they refused to unload South African cargo to boycott their apartheid regime.

The Cuban Workers Central (CTC) message read: “The Cuban workers support the just protest of the workers and community of the San Francisco Bay Area that will take place on June 20 against the cruel and inhumane blockade which the Israeli government maintains in the Gaza Strip, depriving thousands of women, children, and men of the most basic rights, especially the right to life.

“Our people have lived for 50 years under an unjust and abominable blockade by the U.S. government, so we understand very well how the Palestinian people

feel and we will always be in solidarity with their just cause. Today we send you our most sincere support. Long live the soli-

darity of the working class! End the Blockade of Gaza! Respect and Justice for the people of Palestine!” ■

## Before BP

BP didn’t begin as BP. Indeed, it didn’t begin as British Petroleum. In 1908, it was known as the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, and it exploited Iran’s natural resources and labor ruthlessly. Majority shares of the company were owned by the British government, and Iran offered a rich yield for APOC.

In 1947, for example, the company pulled in after-tax profits of £40 million, while Iran received a mere £7 million. The average Iranian worker, housed in huts assembled of rusted, hammered oil cans, lived in desolate oil towns, and earned about 50 cents a day.

One observer from Iran’s Petroleum Institute described one such shanty town, Kaghazabad (Farsi for “Paper City”) as a place where “in every crevice hung the foul sulfurous stench of burning oil.” Instead of streets, narrow alleyways existed, which the describer called “an emporium for rats.” He said the town was so desolate that there was no single tree.

Is there any wonder that the government of Mohammed Mossadegh wanted to nationalize the country’s oil wealth—or that the CIA (and MI-5, British Intelligence) assured his ouster and imposed the dictator, the Shah? BP plundered the country, making money, hand over fist.

Now, they are plundering American natural resources—its southern shorelines, and its matchless fishing and shrimping grounds—and the chickens have indeed, come home to roost.

© MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

Source: Majidi, Mazda, “The latest crime in BP’s criminal history,” *Liberation*, June 4, 2010, p. 7.

### 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!

### SOCIALIST ACTION. Closing news date: July 6, 2010

Editor: Michael Schreiber International Editor: Gerry Foley Canada Editor: Barry Weisleder

Socialist Action (ISSN 0747-4237) is published monthly by Socialist Action Publishing Association, P.O. Box 460501, San Francisco, CA 94146-0501. Postmaster: Send address changes to: Socialist Action, P.O. BOX 460501, San Francisco, CA 94146-0501. RATES: For one year (12 issues, 1st-class mail): U.S., Canada, Mexico — \$20. All other countries — \$30. Money orders and checks should be in U.S. dollars.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of Socialist Action. These are expressed in editorials. Socialist Action is edited, designed, and laid out entirely by volunteer labor. It is printed by members of Local 583, Allied Printing Trades Council, San Francisco, Calif.

**SOCIALIST ACTION**

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# Opposition rises against U.S. wars and occupations

Virginia Mayo / AP



Olivier Douliery / Abaca Press / MCT



By JEFF MACKLER

The United National Antiwar Conference, in Albany, N.Y., July 23-25, takes place against the backdrop of mounting opposition to the U.S. wars in the Middle East and to the devastating effects of a crisis-ridden economy on the security and livelihoods of tens of millions of Americans.

Conference organizers have made important progress in bringing together a movement that has often been marked by internal divisions. This combines with the ebbing of illusions that President Obama would chart a course fundamentally different from his predecessor. Indeed, the Obama administration and the Democratic Party majority in Congress have exceeded George Bush and Co. in war spending and in allotting unprecedented trillions to bail out the rich at the expense of the vast majority.

The mobilization of the working-class majority is central to countering the warmakers and corporate elite on every front. The challenge before the movement today is to close the gap between belief and action—ultimately leading to the organization of massive antiwar protests in the streets.

"Nine Years On," reads a June 27 *Christian Science Monitor* headline, "Only 41 Percent of Americans Believe U.S. Can 'Win' in Afghanistan." This marks an important shift in the thinking of those who believed that the United States was not only invincible but also justified in its wars in Iraq and especially in Afghanistan.

Although the U.S. possesses the most sophisticated array of weapons of mass destruction, 100,000 troops, an equal number of mercenary forces and close to a trillion dollars a year in military expenditures, exceeding all other nations combined, the majority of Americans are today skeptical about the U.S. capacity to defeat a group with no high-grade weaponry in one of the poorest countries on earth. There is little doubt that a good portion of this skepticism stems from the fact that increasing numbers of Americans have come to believe that they have no stake in this imperial project in the first place.

America's top military commander in Afghanistan, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, was fired in late June by President Obama, supposedly for some still unsubstantiated remarks he and his aides made to the pop-culture rock 'n roll magazine, *Rolling Stone*.

The June 29 Congressional hearings to confirm the U.S. and NATO's top gun in the Middle East as McChrystal's replacement, Gen. David H. Petraeus of "Iraq surge" fame, suggest that more

## Notwithstanding the Taliban's regressive social agenda, it appears to have won the allegiance of broad sectors of the Afghan population, who despise the U.S.-installed Karzai regime and his well-bribed local henchmen.

was at stake than *Rolling Stone's* "quotations"—which have been wildly misrepresented as the general's challenging "civilian control over the military."

Like all generals in the service of capitalism, McChrystal's assignment, public relations statements aside, was to kill as many Afghan insurgents as possible and let the ruling class's assigned "negotiators" decide how the spoils of war are to be allocated—if the U.S. wins. The spoils include everything from permanent military bases to be used against capitalist competitors in the region like Russia and China, multi-billion-dollar grants to Blackwater and related for-profit mercenary operations, construction of or access to oil pipelines, and control over the recently revealed but long ago discovered mineral wealth of Afghanistan—which the Pentagon valued at about \$1 trillion.

A number of Congress members did press Petraeus during his confirmation hearing as to whether he would continue McChrystal's claimed policy of curbing the most outrageous of the U.S. air strikes and artillery bombardments that regularly take a heavy toll on Afghan civilians. The clever Petraeus dodged the question, only to state that protecting the lives of U.S. troops has always been central to U.S. objectives. That is, Petraeus would drop as many, if not more, bombs as McChrystal while negotiations with the "enemy" proceeded under cover of both McChrystal's and Petraeus's so-called humane method of conducting modern warfare.

In less "civilized" times—as in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam—body counts were proudly reported to the media to demonstrate the success of U.S. military operations. Today's humane standards of mass murder require that the number of "enemy" dead be left to speculators, while the U.S. insists that its "smart bombs," "precision bombing," and "rules of engagement" enable it to pinpoint the bad guys—thus minimizing civilian casualties!

But media obfuscation aside, there is no such thing as a clean war. The Vietnam War saw the U.S. slaughter some 4 million Vietnamese, the vast majority, non-combatants. Iraq War figures are approaching 2 million—again, mostly

civilians.

The real problem facing the U.S. in Afghanistan is that the war and occupation are universally hated by the Afghan people. After nine years it is widely admitted that U.S. efforts to construct an effective Afghan Army have come to naught, with its U.S.-supplied weapons routinely turned over to the Afghan resistance.

Notwithstanding the Taliban's regressive social agenda, it appears to have won the allegiance of broad sectors of the Afghan population, who despise the U.S.-installed Hamid Karzai regime and his well-bribed coterie of local henchmen. History once again demonstrates that the Afghan people, as with oppressed people everywhere, prefer to resolve their own problems rather than be subject to foreign rule.

The same Rasmussen poll, in which only 41 percent of Americans believed that the U.S. could "win" in Afghanistan, indicated that a plurality, 48 percent, believed that "ending the Afghanistan War is more important than winning it." The post-9/11 patriotic and "anti-terrorism" fervor whipped up for a decade by the corporate media to justify the 2001 takeover of Afghanistan and the 2003 "conquest" of Iraq has steadily given way to a deep questioning of U.S. war aims everywhere.

Few if any believe that the real enemy is the tiny core of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda or the former Taliban government officials—once U.S. allies—with whom both "President" Karzai and U.S. diplomats today negotiate, albeit with different factions, regarding a "solution." Even fewer believe that the trillions gifted to bail out U.S. banks and other financial institutions have anything to do with the welfare of the American people.

U.S. generals and diplomats are currently outraged at President Karzai's efforts to broker an agreement with various Taliban factions only because Karzai's proposed future partners in the exploitation of Afghanistan are different from those the U.S. deems as likely players in their game. Karzai is more than willing to cede future control over some Taliban/Pashtun-dominated provinces in Afghanistan and to

(Above) Protesters at Senate committee hearing to confirm appointment of Gen. David Petraeus as head of troops in Afghanistan.

(Left) Gen. Petraeus speaks July 1 at NATO's Brussels headquarters.

find an accommodation with Pakistani military officers who favor similar solutions to placate their own Pashtun-dominated portions of Pakistan.

Karzai is motivated by the knowledge, and openly states the view, that the U.S. can't win in Afghanistan—as the U.S. could not win in Vietnam. While a few Republican Congress members pressed Petraeus during the recent hearings to repudiate President Obama's "pledge" to "begin" the withdrawal of U.S. forces by July 2010, Petraeus deftly sidestepped this issue, knowing full well that the U.S. has no intention of leaving Afghanistan in defeat even if currently confronted with the bitter fact that there is no prospect of victory in sight.

Meanwhile, the U.S. is moving to enforce the recent UN-imposed sanctions against Iran, another critical issue that will undoubtedly be before the Albany antiwar conference. Noam Chomsky, the conference's keynote speaker (via a video recording) warned against U.S. "imperial" intentions in a June 28 article entitled, "The Iranian Threat."

Says Chomsky, "The Obama administration has been rapidly expanding its offensive capacity in the African island of Diego Garcia, claimed by Britain, which had expelled the population so that the U.S. could build the massive base it uses for attacking the Middle East and Central Asia. The Navy reports sending a submarine tender to the island to service nuclear-powered guided-missile submarines with Tomahawk missiles, which can carry nuclear warheads. Each submarine is reported to have the striking power of a typical carrier battle group."

"According to a U.S. Navy cargo manifest obtained by the *Sunday Herald* (Glasgow), the substantial military equipment Obama has dispatched includes 387 'bunker busters' used for blasting hardened underground structures. Planning for these 'massive ordnance penetrators,' the most powerful bombs in the arsenal short of nuclear weapons, was initiated in the Bush administration, but languished. On taking office, Obama immediately accelerated the plans, and they are to be deployed several years ahead of schedule, aiming specifically at Iran."

Chomsky continues with a revealing quote from Dan Plesch, director of the

(continued on page 4)

# ... Justifications collapse for war in Afghanistan

his background was in “special ops,” that is, covert operations largely outside the law and outside of civilian purview. So, it is hardly surprising that he came to view the civilian authorities as antagonists. Some commentators noted

that in the modern “volunteer” army, a military culture is developing that is distinct from and hostile to the civilian political world.

The privatization of U.S. military forces—that is, an increasingly reliance on mercenary forces recruited by murder-for-profit companies—has also contributed to building a separate obscure world.

*The New York Times* of June 22 reported a congressional study of the role of mercenaries in Afghanistan: “The 79-page report, entitled ‘Warlord Inc.’, paints an anarchic picture of contemporary Afghanistan, with the country’s major highways being controlled by groups of freelance gunmen who answer to no one—and who are being paid for by the United States.

“Afghanistan, the investigation found, plays host to hundreds of unregistered private security companies employing as many as 70,000 largely unsupervised gunmen. ‘The principal private security subcontractors,’ the report said, “are warlords, strongmen, commanders and militia leaders who compete with the Afghan central government for power and authority.”

However, they not only “compete” with the Afghan government, but they apparently are complicit with corrupt components of it. “Mr. Ruhullah,” *The Times* reported, “commands a force of about 600 gunmen that works for Watan Risk Management, a security firm overseen by Rashid and Rateb Popal, who are cousins of President Hamid Karzai.

“At the heart of the problem, the investigation found, is that the American military pays trucking companies to move its supplies across Afghanistan—and leaves it up to the trucking companies to protect themselves. The trucking companies in turn pay warlords and commanders to provide security.

“These subcontracts, the investigation found, are handed out without any oversight from the Department of Defense, despite clear instructions from Congress that the department provide such oversight. The report states that military officers in Kabul had little idea whom the trucking companies were paying to provide security or how much they spent for it, and had rarely if ever inspected a convoy to find out.”

In all, this region is a basket of snakes for any foreign governments that want to intervene or for private interests that may want to exploit local resources. And one of the biggest snakes is the Pakistan intelligence agency, the ISI. The report on ISI support for the Taliban by a team at the London School of Economics, released June 13, confirmed the double game that the Pakistani authorities continue to play, covertly supporting the Taliban, while claiming to be U.S. allies against it.

The Pakistani government has made deals with the Taliban before in its tribal areas, alleging that it cannot fight the whole Taliban at once. Thus, it is currently fighting the Taliban in South Waziristan, and leaving a refuge for Taliban fighters in North Waziristan. The basis for this understanding seems to be that Pakistan will leave the Taliban alone as long it focuses on Afghanistan, and attack it when it threatens the Pakistan authorities. Allegedly, the Pakistani authorities have been seeking to maintain a relationship with the Taliban to use it as a pawn against growing Indian influence in Afghanistan. The central focus of the ISI has long been waging a covert war against India.

According to the London School of Economics report, the ISI is even represented on the Taliban governing body. Al Jazeera reported June 16: “It [the report] claims the ISI provides funding and training for the Taliban, and that the agency has representatives on the so-called Quetta Shura, the Taliban’s leadership council, which is believed to meet in Pakistan.”

The author of the report, Matt Waldman, wrote: “The Pakistan government’s apparent duplicity—and awareness of it among the American public and political establishment—could have enormous geopolitical implications. Without a change in Pakistani behaviour it will be difficult if not impossible for international forces and the Afghan government to make progress against the insurgency.”

All in all, the conditions of Afghanistan clearly represent a tangle that is beyond even the resources of the United States to dominate, even if it is ready to throw away trillions of dollars and thousands of American lives. And the polls show that the American public has begun to realize that. It is going to become harder and harder for U.S. politicians, all of whom serve big business (so far the only parties that have profited from the war), to continue to defend it.

But the apparent determination of the Obama administration to continue the war, despite all the damaging revelations, shows that only the active protest of hundreds of thousands of Americans in the streets can force the U.S. authorities to disengage from this quagmire. ■



Justin Sullivan / Getty Images

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ghanistan. But up until now, the main advantage was the possibility of running a pipeline through the country to tap Central Asian oil. There was such a project sponsored by Unocal, but it was abandoned because of the dim prospects for assuring the stability of the country.

Exports of minerals, such as iron, would require even greater stability and much more ambitious infrastructure, such as roads and railroads. The U.S. client ruler Karzai immediately tried to capitalize on the report to attract foreign investors.

In fact, potential investors will need local political allies, but such allies would need to be able to guarantee security, and at the moment the only local force capable of that seems to be the Taliban. That fact adds spice to the speculation about foreign competition for Afghan mineral resources.

However, mining operations, unlike a pipeline, would be local, and that raises the possibility of conflict among the ethnic groups and warlords that could tear the country apart. Because of their needs for labor, large-scale mining operations would also be disruptive of the traditional social structures. Mining development would probably require the emergence of an Afghan neocolonial bourgeoisie, which, when developed, would be a new social layer in the country.

It is also possible that more easily transportable minerals, like gold, platinum, and precious stones, could be looted by pirates working for different corporations, as is the case today in the Congo-Kinshasa. That

(Above) U.S. and Afghan medics carry a wounded soldier near Kandahar, June 29, as fighting escalates in the region.

would likely lead to more violent competition among many international actors.

There has been much comment on apparent efforts by Karzai to make a deal with the Taliban. The Taliban leadership has fervently denied any possibility of that.

A problem for any deal with the Taliban is the Push-tun national-chauvinist history of that Islamist movement. Under Taliban rule, the Hazaras (9 percent of the population), a predominately Shiite Persian-speaking people, suffered special oppression. Moreover, the Uzbeks (9 percent of the population) and Tadzhiks (27 percent of the population) were the backbone of the Northern Alliance, which was continuing a civil war against the Taliban at the time of U.S. intervention.

An article in the June 26 *New York Times* documented the opposition to a deal with the Taliban among the ethnic minorities. For example: “‘Karzai has begun the ethnic war,’ said Mohammed Mohaqeq, a Hazara leader and a former ally of the president. ‘The future is very dark.’” About 100,000 Afghans died in the civil war between the Northern Alliance and the Taliban.

In this context, the U.S. authorities might maintain that a continued U.S. military presence is necessary to maintain the stability of the country, as they have in a similar situation in Iraq. But there is no way the U.S. could do that in Afghanistan. The U.S. has failed to defeat the Taliban, and it is hard to foresee that the Taliban would accept a continued U.S. presence in their country.

The McChrystal scandal also revealed the fundamental impossibility of a foreign occupation in pacifying Afghanistan. Much of the commentary over McChrystal’s firing stressed that he was unpopular with the troops because the restrictions he imposed on them, trying to reduce the slaughter of innocent civilians.

In fact, despite the restrictions, atrocious killings of innocents have continued. The basic problem is that the foreign troops are intruders. They do not know the local populations, and since it is local people who attack them, they tend to view all the locals as enemies or potential enemies who threaten their lives. This encourages a maximum, indiscriminate response to any threat, and a dynamic of vengeance on the population for the killing of soldiers.

This tendency was well documented already in the 1950s in the eventually futile attempt of the French military to suppress the Algerian independence movement (at the cost of a million Algerian dead).

However, it is precisely the slaughter and terrorizing of innocent civilians that provided the basic impetus for the revival of the Taliban after their initial rout at the hands of the interventionists. Thus, foreign occupiers are in an inescapable dilemma. (In Iraq, they were extricated, at least partially, from their dilemma by al-Qaeda’s sectarian slaughter of Shi’ites, which divided the Iraqi resistance.)

Commentary on McChrystal’s antagonism to the civilian authorities also stressed that

## ... Opposition rises

(continued from page 3)

Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy at the University of London:

“They are gearing up totally for the destruction of Iran,” says Plesch. “US bombers and long range missiles are ready today to destroy 10,000 targets in Iran in a few hours. The firepower of US forces has quadrupled since 2003.” Chomsky adds, “accelerating under Obama.”

U.S. threats of war today extend to North Korea. Obama administration officials blame a North Korean mini-submarine for the sinking of the South Korean warship *Cheonan*. Although no evidence has been produced to substantiate this charge, it serves the U.S. need to justify new interventions and additional billions in military expenditures to prime its failing economy. The highly monopolized military-industrial complex is among the few sectors of the U.S. economy where the virtual absence of competition, domestic or foreign, provides for stupendous profit rates far in excess of the pitiful levels that today prevail in the general industrial sectors.

Antiwar activists are mobilizing across the country to join the discussions and debates in Albany that have the potential of re-activating an antiwar movement that had been momentarily disarmed by illusions that the election of Barack Obama represented a fundamental shift in U.S. foreign and domestic policy.

These illusions are rapidly being shattered as it becomes clear that there are no saviors in capitalist America other than the organized masses themselves. When they take the field to challenge the status quo, what seemed impossible only a few months ago can be the order of the day today. ■

By ANDREW POLLACK

With the economic crisis worsening, how can labor fight back? There are some small but significant examples of struggles waged recently, or coming soon, that hold out hope for the kind of wider fightback needed in such a crisis.

- An opposition slate in the Chicago Teachers Union turned out the old guard as members rebelled against their support for anti-teacher, anti-student “reforms” in the city’s system—reforms which its former head, Arne Duncan, is now carrying out on a national level as Obama’s Education Secretary (see story on page 8).

- A high-school student walkout in New York stopped the transit authority from taking away their free transit cards.

- The refusal of Bay Area dockworkers on June 20 to handle a Zim Lines ship sailing under the Israeli flag is the first ever action by U.S. workers against the Zionist regime, and breaks open a debate on Palestine largely shut down until now. This is a crucial development against Washington’s hitherto successful pitting of U.S. workers against Arab and Muslim workers.

- On June 10, some 12,000 members of the Minnesota Nurses Association carried out the biggest nursing strike in U.S. history. Their main demand was higher nurse-to-patient ratios. They are scheduled to begin an open-ended strike on July 6.

The nurse-patient ratio demand is exactly the kind of demand—linking the rights of workers on the job, and the need for more such jobs, with the needs of workers receiving their services—that can be emulated by other public workers under attack, such as teachers. And such industry-specific demands must be generalized into a program calling for public works jobs for the entire working class until every worker who wants a job has one, and every worker needing a service gets it.

In the same vein, the AFL-CIO mobilization against Peter Peterson’s “America Speaks” hearings (aimed at gutting Social Security and Medicare) must be repeated and deepened against all such events—including especially those of Obama’s own commission. Such mobilizations can also be opportunities to talk about how to win for the first time in this country a real, comprehensive old-age security system.

- Labor also has an opportunity to mobilize in defense of the sector of the class hardest hit by the crisis. Mainstream Black civil rights leaders have proposed a mobilization on Aug. 28 against right-wing pundit Glenn Beck’s usurpation of the Washington Memorial on the anniversary of the historic 1963 March on Washington. These same leaders are promoting an Oct. 2 national march for jobs and justice in DC—initiated by New York’s SEIU Local 1199 and the national NAACP and endorsed by the AFL-CIO—as a follow up to the Aug. 28 protest.

Said NAACP President Ben Jealous in making the link: “We will be fighting Glenn Beck on Aug. 28 and we will be using that to leverage the second march. ... Our people are dying right now, literally, from lack of access to jobs.”

- At the United National Antiwar Conference, to be held in Albany July 23-25, a draft Action Program offers several opportunities for labor to link its concerns with those of antiwar activists. The proposal

# Labor’s fight against war, racism and unemployment



Ken Jones / Bloomberg

(Above) Kaiser Permanente health workers protest California budget cuts.

includes putting antiwar resolutions before city councils and town meetings, and initiating voter referendums, that would link war spending to denial of public services. Projected local protests from Oct. 6 to 16, bi-coastal mass spring mobilizations on April 9, 2011, and a series of national tours of prominent speakers are all projected to link demands for immediate troop withdrawals to increased funding of social programs.

On the question of war, as in the fight to save public sector jobs or Social Security, labor must start not from what’s “feasible” for the system, but what working people need.

One proposal being pushed by a variety of antiwar groups calls for a 25 percent cut in the military budget. Yet this would still leave spending at astronomical Cold War levels, both in absolute terms and as a percent of GDP.

Instead, we say: Not one penny for weapons to kill those resisting imperialist domination! And not one more death, whether of US, Iraqi or Afghan soldiers or civilians!

Rather than specify a dollar amount to be redirected away from the military budget, we demand that the government allocate every last dollar needed to secure a decent standard of living, including for conversion away from a mode of production that is killing the planet. The money must come from those who have profited from this system, bankrupted our economy, and launched wars to protect their profits.

And it’s not just a question of redirecting money; even more so, it’s a question of power. Labor’s ability to fight for itself at home is strengthened to the extent that it can stop its masters’ adventures on behalf of profit abroad—and is weakened to the extent it ignores that duty.

One of the best explanations of this linkage came in a recent column in the newspaper of the United Electrical Workers (UE), focusing on the crimes here and abroad of oil giant BP. Editor Al Hart noted that BP has not only repeatedly caused the deaths of workers in unsafe plants and savaged the environment in the U.S. Its very origins and power depended primarily on military adventures abroad to secure its ability to steal resources and exploit foreign workforces.

The most flagrant abuse of such power was the 1953 U.S.-organized coup ousting Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh, carried out in retaliation for his having nationalized BP (then called the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company) in 1951.

Hart concludes: “Perhaps it is time for us to do what Prime Minister Mossadegh and the Iranian people did in 1951, and declare that BP is unfit to control our resources—and that our oil, our environment, and our government should belong to us.”

That’s the spirit we need to fight the crisis, in the United States, and throughout the world! ■

## ... Antiwar

(continued from page 1)

Plan includes a wide range of activities, culminating in a proposed bi-coastal—New York and San Francisco—mass mobilization on April 9, 2011 (see nationalpeaceconference.com). The conference is based on one-person-one-vote and open to everyone who agrees with its central demands.

Participants may submit additional demands to the assembly, as well as resolutions and action proposals, and these will be discussed and voted on at the scheduled plenary sessions.

A special Palestine Caucus meeting is scheduled, in which leading activists are expected to propose the incorporation of demands on the U.S. government to end all U.S. aid to the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Resolutions and action proposals are also being drafted in support of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaigns, and challenges to the Israeli blockade of Gaza and the murderous U.S.-backed attacks

on the Freedom Flotilla.

At least 30 workshops are scheduled, with prominent panelists analyzing and initiating critical discussions on U.S. policies and taking up several of the key debates in the antiwar movement itself. These include issues concerning Iran, Israel, Africa, Palestine, (“Is a Two State Possible?”); Haiti, Honduras, Colombia, and other flashpoints in Latin America and the Caribbean, “Immigrant Reform and the Militarization of the Border,” “Defending Muslim Political Prisoners and Guantanamo Detainees,” “War, Militarism and the Assault on Civil Liberties and Communities of Color,” and well as “Health Care, No Warfare.”

Other workshops will focus on “The Faith Community and Antiwar Movement,” “Organizing Veterans and Military Families,” “Global Warming and War: Breaking the Consumption-Fossil Fuel Cycle,” U.S. Foreign Policy and the Economic Crisis: A Vital Labor Concern,” and Building Solidarity with Unions and Workers in Countries Targeted by U.S. Imperialism.”

One workshop that is certain to attract attention is entitled, “The Rise of

Right Wing Populism and the Tea Party Movement: Do We Need a ‘Right-Left Antiwar Coalition?’” This workshop is slated as a debate between activists who see the organization of working people and the oppressed as the core social forces necessary to drive the movement forward and those who believe that there is a possible limited convergence with some right-wing forces like Ron Paul’s libertarians.

These right-wing groupings often claim to be antiwar, but their views in regard to critical social demands like “Money for jobs, health care, education, housing and pensions” are reactionary. Opponents of the “left-right alliance” view hold that overtures to the right can only narrow the movement’s base and exclude the very social forces that are critical to the movement’s success.

The conference is expected to conclude with the adoption of a broad program of activities to help guide the movement in the year ahead. Implementation of this program, however—including the critical April 9 mass demonstrations proposed for New York and San Francisco—is contingent on the general agreement of the

co-sponsoring groups and others who are motivated to join in to establish a “Continuations Committee,” or another such ad hoc formation, to help organize and coordinate the decisions approved by the conference. UNAC conference organizers are hopeful that the 30 co-sponsors will return to their respective organizations and seek approval for their active participation.

To the extent that the conference functions as an inclusive, coherent, and united body, clearly demanding the immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops from the Middle East and prepared to link the fight against U.S. wars with the critical social issues associated with the deepening economic crisis, the basis will have been laid for a resurgent and vibrant movement. The success of the conference will also undoubtedly be measured by its size and breadth.

While conference registration at the Crown Plaza Hotel site in Albany begins on Friday, July 23, UNAC organizers reported on June 30 that hundreds of activists had already pre-registered, a strong indication that an authoritative gathering is in the making. All Out for Albany, N.Y., July 23-25! ■

# Has the U.S. entered its Third Depression?

Ken James / Bloomberg



(Above) Union workers march in Chicago's financial district to demand jobs, April 28. (Left) Protest at Wells Fargo shareholders' meeting in San Francisco, April 27.

By ANDREW POLLACK

In May, worries provoked by “debt crises” in Greece and elsewhere in Europe refocused attention on increasingly tepid economic indicators in the United States. As these indicators worsened in June, *The New York Times* liberal columnist Paul Krugman worried that the “Great Recession” had all along been just the start of a new Depression.

In his June 27 column, Krugman warned against claims of a supposed recovery: “Neither the Long Depression of the 19th century nor the Great Depression of the 20th was an era of nonstop decline ... episodes of improvement were never enough to undo the damage from the initial slump. ...

“We are now, I fear, in the early stages of a third depression. It will probably look more like the Long Depression than the much more severe Great Depression. But the cost—to the world economy and, above all, to the millions of lives blighted by the absence of jobs—will nonetheless be immense.”

The U.S. added just 83,000 private-sector jobs in June. The economy needs to add about 130,000 to 150,000 jobs a month, private or public, just to keep pace with new workers entering the market, not even counting the millions laid-off.

Federal Reserve chair Ben Bernanke admitted the alleged recovery is “not going to be fast enough to put back eight million people who lost their jobs within a few years.” The more than 7 million long-term unemployed, those out of work for 27 weeks or more, is the most since the Labor Department began collecting such data shortly after the Great Depression.

Other indicators are equally bleak. On June 30 *The Wall Street Journal* reported that thanks to “European debt woes, China’s slowing growth and the stagnating U.S. recovery,” the second quarter could be the worst for U.S. stocks in over a year. The various stock indices in the U.S. are down to levels of last October, ending the supposed bull market of recent months.

Advocates of greater government stimulus pointed to the decline in the housing market now that federal home-buyer tax credits have expired. New home sales plunged 33% in May to an annual rate of 300,000—the lowest level on record.

Billionaire investor George Soros said in a speech on June 10 that “we have just entered Act II” of the crisis.” Soros, like Krugman and other liberals, warned against proposals by “deficit hawks” to abandon stimulus efforts, saying the current situation is “eerily” reminiscent of the 1930s, with governments under pressure to narrow budget deficits at a time of weak recovery.

The loss of stimulus funding is hitting state and local governments hard; they face combined deficits of \$137 billion this year and \$144 billion in 2011. Some states have already gone through most of the federal education funds earmarked for the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years, and have begun cutting services and firing tens of thousands of teachers. Jobs, wages, and pensions of all public sector workers are coming under increasing attack.

Yet amidst all this bad news President Barack Obama maintained his Hooveresque optimism, saying, “the

**Amidst all the bad news, Obama maintains his Hooveresque optimism, saying that ‘the economy is strengthening.’**

economy is strengthening.” And ignoring liberals’ pleas for renewed stimulus, he threatened to veto the supplementary war-spending bill unless House Democrats dropped their attempt to add \$10 billion to save teacher jobs. (The veto threat was also in retaliation for an attempt to cut a quarter of the \$4 billion from his “Race to the Top” teacher/student testing program, which funnels money to the richest, most anti-union schools.)

Also singing Obama’s austerity tune are “moderate” Democrats in the Senate, who on three separate occasions in May and June refused to pass an equivalent to the House bill extending unemployment benefits, citing worries over the deficit.

#### “A dangerous experiment”

In two separate publisher’s editorials, and in repeated op-ed columns, the liberals running *The New York Times* complained about federal inaction on saving or creating jobs, and lambasted those putting long-term deficit worries over the short-term need to stimulate the economy to stave off a depression. Yet the Senate, *The Times* noted, didn’t hesitate to preserve tax breaks for the wealthy.

The worries of the paper’s editors was signaled by the front-page placement of a column by David Leonhardt, usually relegated to the business section. He warned: “The world’s rich countries are now conducting a dangerous experiment. They are repeating an economic policy out of the 1930s—starting to cut spending and raise taxes before a recovery is assured.”

Reporting that governments around the world were simultaneously ending stimulus measures, he noted: “Policy makers are betting that the private sector can make up for the withdrawal of stimulus over the next couple of years. ... If they’re wrong, they may set off a vicious new cycle, in which public spending cuts weaken the world economy and beget new private spending cuts.”

The investing class in general is worried about the sparse opportunities for profitable investment, so much so that, as *The Wall Street Journal* reported, “U.S. companies are holding more cash in the bank than at any point on record ... nonfinancial companies had socked away \$1.84 trillion in cash and other liquid assets as of the end of March, up 26% from a year earlier and the largest-ever increase in records going back to 1952. Cash made up about 7% of all company assets ... the highest level since 1963.

“While renewed confidence in corporate-bond markets has allowed big companies to raise a re-

cord amount of money, many are still hesitant to spend the cash on hiring or expansion amid doubts about the strength of the recovery. They are also anxious to keep cash on hand in case Europe’s debt troubles lead to a new market freeze.”

The austerity through deficit reduction approach was unanimously agreed to by the Group of 20 (a group of the biggest imperialist countries) at its June meeting in Toronto. While Obama lectured the group about the need for pro-growth policies, European bankers told the *London Telegraph* that Obama himself has gone just as far as the Europeans in tightening fiscal policy with his jobs and budget-cutting policies. The final agreement reached in Toronto called for all member countries to halve their deficits by 2013.

Liberals like Krugman argue that if a third depression occurs, it “will be primarily a failure of policy”—like that agreed to in Toronto. “Governments are obsessing about inflation when the real threat is deflation, preaching the need for belt-tightening when the real problem is inadequate spending....

“There is no evidence that short-run fiscal austerity in the face of a depressed economy reassures investors,” he wrote, noting that troubles in Greece, Ireland, and elsewhere worsened after massive cuts to lessen their deficits. And the price will be paid, he declared, by “tens of millions of unemployed workers, many of whom will go jobless for years, and some of whom will never work again.”

Reinforcing predictions of the futility of deficit reduction is a profile in *The New York Times* of Ireland’s recent experience, headlined, “The High Cost of Austerity”: “The once thriving nation is struggling, with no sign of a rapid turnaround in sight.” Rather than being rewarded for cutting spending and raises taxes, “Ireland is being penalized. Lacking stimulus money, the Irish economy shrank 7.1% last year and remains in recession.” Joblessness is above 13%, and over 5% of the workforce has been out of work for a year or more.

“Despite its strenuous efforts ... investors fear that the austerity program, by retarding growth and so far failing to reduce borrowing, will make it harder for Dublin to pay its bills rather than easier.” Yet amidst these cuts, \$37 billion was found for “zombie banks” like Anglo Irish, which was nationalized after lavishing loans on developers.

#### Obama goes after Social Security

The prime vehicle for Obama’s austerity plans is his deficit commission, which will recommend drastic cuts in Social Security, Medicare, and other programs, and higher taxes for workers, with an aim of reducing annual deficits to 3% of GDP by 2015—a target in keeping with the G-20 agreement, despite Obama’s rhetoric about the need for growth.

Refuting claims of insolvency, critics of his commission—and of its brother body set up by billionaire Peter Peterson—point out that if the Treasury would repay the \$2.6 trillion in surplus Social Security taxes borrowed over the years, the program could pay full benefits through 2037. That surplus will rise to \$4.3 trillion by 2023, and cover all benefits until the 2040s.

As for Medicare’s financial troubles, these—and the plight of patients swindled by private insurers—can be solved overnight with a single-payer system.

The AFL-CIO urged members and allies to attend town hall meetings held on June 26 in 20 cities, called

(continued on page 9)

By CLAY WADENA

## Puerto Rican student struggle continues as government undermines strike pact

Students at University of Puerto Rico (UPR) led a 60-day occupation and strike this spring against austerity measures. The action spread to 10 of the 11 UPR campuses and eventually forced not only the temporary closure of the entire UPR system but the capitulation of the administration to the students' main demands, at least temporarily.

The strike ended June 21, and students at all 11 campuses democratically ratified the agreement that was negotiated with the school administration. But the UPR Board of Trustees and the government are already on the attack—taking steps to reintroduce many of the same measures that were rejected.

The students' high level of organization and resilience against a university administration that tried to make the students and faculty pay for the system's budget shortfall should be an excellent example and inspiration to all students who face similar measures. Governments and administrations around the world are seeking to cut education funds and raise rates—portraying these measures as necessary evils because of the economic recession.

The students at UPR have shown that students can lead a fightback that includes faculty, university employees, and friendly unions to defend the right of education.

The action was first called by a democratic meeting of over 3000 students who assembled on the Río Piedras campus April 21 to begin a two-day occupation of the campus to force the administration to negotiate in good faith. When the administration refused to do so, a longer-term occupation and strike was undertaken, which was later joined by almost all other campuses in the UPR system, including some that were historically known to be more conservative.

The UPR students acted in a highly disciplined and organized manner from the beginning, while proceeding democratically at every turn. They repeatedly fended off attempts by the riot police to enter the campus gates. They organized to provide food and water while police tried to lay siege to the campus; surrounding the campus in riot gear, cutting off supplies and physically brutalizing some of students and their allies.

The students held teach-ins, traditional dance classes, poetry readings, and film screenings, and many campuses also held concerts. They utilized every available means to get their message out, including internet blogs, Facebook, and a radio station they put together themselves (streaming live at [radiohuelga.com/wordpress](http://radiohuelga.com/wordpress) to this day).

The students earned widespread support not only from parents but from university faculty, unions and workers throughout Puerto Rico. A one-day general strike was carried out by unions on May 18 in solidarity with the students. Solidarity was voiced by musical celebrities such as Ricky Martin, Rubén Blades, and the group Calle 13—and when Cuban singer Silvio Rodríguez stopped in Puerto Rico for a concert on May 31, he dedicated a song to the students. A group of professors in the U.S. issued a letter of support, and U.S. students who are facing similar cuts have taken special note of their comrades in Puerto Rico and held solidarity protests.



Ricardo Arduengo / AP

(Above) Riot police attack students outside the Capitol building in San Juan, P.R., June 30.

**The students provided an example for all who believe that students and workers should not have to pay for the capitalist crisis.**

The main demands that were secured on paper by the students in the agreement that was signed by the Board of Trustees may seem familiar to students everywhere: no tuition hike or special fee for this fall semester, no privatization of UPR campuses, an amendment to legislation that wouldn't allow the eliminate of tuition waivers for underprivileged students, and finally an agreement that no students involved in the occupation and protests would face punishment.

Although it seemed at first as though the UPR students had achieved substantial gains, the government and university administrations immediately betrayed the agreement. The government rammed through legislation, "Senate Bill 30," without debate or discussion, that adds four more governor-appointed members to the Board of Trustees. The expanded Board rapidly instituted new cuts and a \$800 student fee, to begin in January.

A student coordinating committee held a protest on June 26 to demand that the strike agreement be honored and to protest improper involvement by the government. On June 30, police attacked a peaceful

rally outside the Capitol building. They used clubs and pepper spray, severely injuring dozens.

The conservative governor of Puerto Rico is Luis Fortuño, who has pushed through notorious anti-worker legislation like "Law 7," which fired many workers to close the budget deficit. His pursuit of austerity measures that pay for the capitalist recession by punishing workers and students has now led to massive government intervention into university affairs at UPR.

Some campuses seem to have been aware of the treachery they faced even when they saw the wording of the negotiated agreement that was signed, and only conditionally ratified the agreement because they did not want their support for the agreement to be misconstrued as acceptance of tuition hikes in January for spring semester.

Despite the government's attempts to overturn the agreement, the students achieved a real victory. They demonstrated their determination, seriousness, and organizational capability when defending their right to education. They have secured allies in their struggle locally and internationally and made it crystal clear that they will have a hand in determining their future.

They've provided a useful example for all of those who believe that students and workers shouldn't have to pay for the capitalist crisis. With the same resolve and more support from labor on the island, there is no limit to what they can achieve. ■

## Attorney Lynne Stewart faces 30-year sentence

By JEFF MACKLER

The full force of the U.S. criminal "justice" system is today aimed at an innocent political prisoner, 30-year human-rights attorney and radical political activist Lynne Stewart.

On July 15, Federal District Court John Koeltl, who in 2005 sentenced Stewart to 28 months in prison following her frame-up trial and jury conviction on four counts of "conspiracy to aid and abet terrorism," is set to reconsider his sentence. Koeltl was ordered to do so when his relatively short sentence was vacated by a two-judge majority of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

Judges Robert D. Sack and Guido Calabresi ruled that Koeltl's sentence was flawed because he had declined to determine whether Stewart committed perjury when she testified at her trial that she believed that she was effectively operating under a "bubble" protecting her from prosecution when she is-

sued a press release on behalf of her client, blind Sheik Omar Abdel Rachman.

Dissenting Judge John M. Walker, who called Stewart's sentence "breathtakingly low" in view of Stewart's "extraordinarily severe criminal conduct," deemed the Second Circuit's majority opinion "substantively unreasonable." Walker essentially sought to impose a 30-year sentence on Stewart.

The three-judge panel on Dec. 20 followed its initial ruling with even tougher language demanding that Koeltl revisit his treatment of the "terrorism enhancement" aspects of the law.

Government prosecutors, who in 2005 sought a 30-year sentence, submitted a 155-page memorandum arguing in support of their original demand, a document that demonstrates how government officials routinely use lies and twisted logic to turn the victim into the criminal.

Stewart's attorneys, Liz Fink and Jill Shellow, countered with a full rendition of the facts of the case. They argued

convincingly that the Special Administrative Measure (SAM) that Stewart was convicted of violating by releasing a statement from her client to the media was well within the established practice of Stewart's experienced and mentoring co-counsels—former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark and past American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee President Abdeen Jabarra. Both had issued similar statements to the press with no government reprisal.

At worst in such matters, government officials refuse defense attorney visiting rights with their clients until an agreement on the meaning of a SAM is reached. Indeed, in Stewart's case, when the matter was brought to then Attorney General Janet Reno, the government declined to prosecute or otherwise take any action against Stewart.

But in the post-9/11-generated climate of political hysteria five years later, Bush-appointed Attorney General John Ashcroft decided to make an example of Stewart, an example aimed at

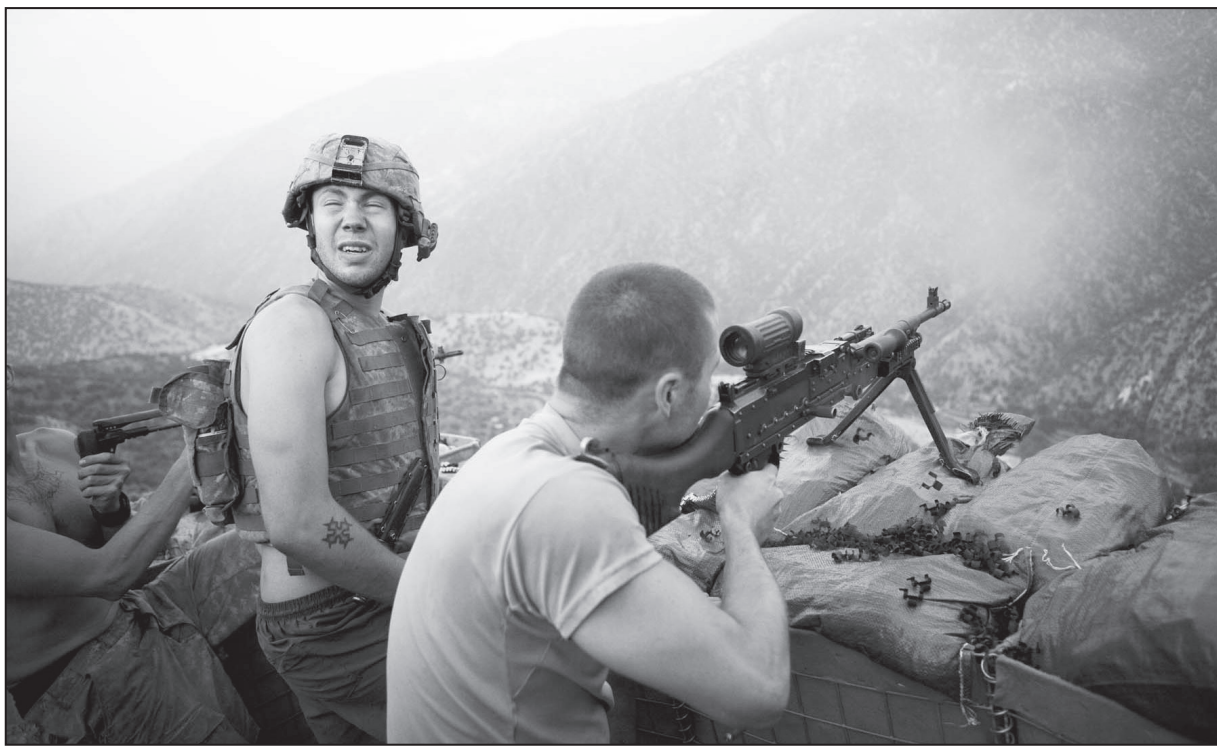
warning future attorneys that the mere act of defending anyone whom the government charged with "conspiracy to aid and abet terrorism" could trigger grave consequences.

On July 15, Judge Koeltl will make the decision of his lifetime. Known for his meticulous preparation in such matters, and already having enraged the powers that be with his "light" sentence of Stewart, he will either bend to the heavy political pressure exerted on him from several quarters or reaffirm his original opinion.

Should he do so, Stewart—70 and in poor health—can be expected to leave prison in less than two years to recover and lead a productive life. An extended sentence would likely lead to her demise behind bars, a brilliant and dedicated fighter sacrificed on the altar of capitalist vengeance.

We can only hope that the winds of change that are stirring the consciousness of millions today in the context of an American capitalism in economic and moral crisis catches Koeltl's attention and assists in his doing the right thing. ■

# RESTREPO: WAR'S DAILY GRIND



By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

Sebastian Junger of “Into the Wild” and “The Perfect Storm” fame, and co-director/photographer Tim Hetherington were imbedded in 2007 through 2008 with the U. S. Army’s Second Platoon in Afghanistan’s Korengal Valley, a Taliban stronghold and one of the most dangerous places in the country.

The boyish and playful soldiers deployed to the Valley in the filmmakers’ documentary, “Restrepo,” are a tight-knit group under 35, who turn deadly serious readying for, or being under, an attack.

The film follows them when they are weighed down by huge, heavy backpacks, belts loaded with gear, and weapons, as they trudge up steep, rocky mountainsides. We watch as they set up do-it-yourself barricades of chicken-wire-reinforced cylinders of thick cardboard. Somehow, they seem unconcerned that they could be attacked before they finish what at first seems like flimsy protection until they fill the structure with shovels-full of dirt. These procedures must be repeated each time they move to a new outpost.

They are filthy; their camo-cloth covered helmets, torn. They look exhausted. Once the barricades are

completed, a housekeeping chore is stressed: the daily burning of “poop.” We may bomb your villages to rubble, kill civilians, terrorize your wives and children, but, hey, we leave none of our shit behind!

Early on, Restrepo, a favorite among the men, is killed. He had been their entertainer—cracking jokes, playing the guitar, and singing. The filmmakers use a lot of footage showing flashbacks of Restrepo, and after his death, his grieving buddies.

The men get orders to set up another outpost a mile away. Hetherington filmed the drudgery involved in this endeavor—the slow and careful pace while under attack by automatic weapons and RPGs (we never see the “enemy”). Once secured, they name the outpost Restrepo in his honor (as is the film). Helicopters maneuver through RPG fire to rescue the wounded and airlift the dead—scenes reminiscent of those witnessed during the Vietnam War.

Plumes of white smoke and fiery blasts mark a vast landscape not unlike the Sierra Nevada range or the Northern California wilderness against which the soldiers appear small, vulnerable, and insignificant. One even asks, “What are we doing here?”

The soundtrack captures the songs of birds. We are

aware that their little lives will go on, while over a hundred-thousand soldiers, wreaking the forces of death and destruction on indigenous humans, have invaded their territory.

In over 150 or more feet of edited film, Junger kept a scene of a mistaken hit on civilians. A few adults and children were killed or wounded. We witness the family’s grief and anger towards the Americans. The offer of money as compensation only intensifies their emotions. Also, when the soldiers kill a wounded cow, its owner refuses both money and food. Money may buy another cow, if they can persuade someone to sell; food will run out whereas a cow is a constant source of milk and cheese.

There are scenes of Capt. Dan Kearney at *shuras* with Afghan elders—tall, thin, elegant old men whose long beards and wispy hair beneath their turbans are red with henna. One elder tries to figure out how to insert a straw into a juice box as Kearney explains that the Americans are there to help them get rid of the Taliban, who are making them risk their lives by killing Americans for the equivalent of five dollars while they hide out in the hills. The elders say that they are terrified that they’ll be killed if they don’t.

Kearney tries to convince the skeptical elders that working with the Americans is better: Once the Taliban is gone, they will build an asphalt road from their village to Kandahar. Goods will be transported and villagers will make money. He asks them to tell him of any suspicious men and/or munitions found in the village. In other words—to spy.

Junger interviewed Dan Kearney and a few soldiers when their term ended. One baby-faced soldier who suffers from PTSD grew up on a farm in Oregon, where he killed farm animals for food. Another, who smiled throughout the interview, says he takes multiple sleeping pills to shut off horrific images that haunt him, but fails. So, he does not sleep in order to avoid nightmares.

Outside of filming Kearney’s pep-talks—rah-rah-rah for democracy and America—Junger and Hetherington don’t take sides but just tell it like it is. The herky-jerky shots from hand-held cameras, jumping from an outdoor scene to a close-up of a face, to a cell phone image, a sleeping form on a cot, and Junger’s barely-heard off-camera remarks, are not only disconcerting, but also create a feeling of detachment.

Hetherington’s film work is outstanding when he pulls back to capture the breathtakingly beautiful terraced mountainsides, the stone homes built into them, the quiet peacefulness of the village where robed men and women go about their business and bareheaded children romp and play—scenes that make us very aware of the wrongness of our being there. ■

## Chicago rank-and-file teachers win election victory

By COREY MATTSON

CHICAGO—The Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE) emerged victorious in the June 11 run-off election of the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), defeating the incumbent United Progressive Caucus (UPC) in a landslide victory.

It had become clear, when the final counts were announced on June 12, that the UPC, headed by Marilyn Stewart, had suffered a total defeat. Karen Lewis, head of the CORE slate, won the CTU presidency, and CORE won all four top union offices, each garnering more than 12,000 votes to fewer than 8300 for each of the UPC candidates. CORE also won all nine citywide offices, all six of the vice presidencies for high schools, and all 17 vice-presidencies for elementary schools.

The CORE landslide is especially impressive in that the UPC had the benefit of incumbency and had no intention of playing fair. According to estimates by Substance News Online, the UPC supporters spent a quarter-million dollars to try to re-elect Stewart, if one includes the blatant “outrageously corrupt” use of staff time used in the effort, and spent over \$100,000 on mailings alone. The UPC resorted to vicious attacks, including spreading lies and redbaiting, and collaborated with the Chicago Schools CEO, Ron Huberman, in trying to ban union election campaigning in the schools, which was ultimately unsuccessful.

CORE overcame these disadvantages by strong organization and the strength of its program, most of which is anathema to many leaders in the two national teacher unions. Key elements of its program are a real opposition to corporate attacks on public schools promoted by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Obama’s Race to the

Top (RTTT); a willingness to contest district budget cuts (which is currently in play as CORE’s first battle with the Chicago Schools CEO and Board of Education); a principled reliance on grassroots member mobilization and community coalitions as the primary tools of struggle; and a strong advocacy for internal union democracy, including the fostering of internal debate.

Building opposition to the attacks on public schools and unions was how CORE got its start, when two years ago it coalesced in response to Renaissance 2010, Chicago’s school reform plan. Ren 2010 used the notorious NCLB to aggressively close “underperforming” Chicago schools and replace them with charter schools, most non-union and run top-down.

With bipartisan backing in both houses of Congress, NCLB has set up a rigged, class-biased, national testing system. Under NCLB it is inevitable that many urban schools would fail to pass the tests, and by casting blame on the teachers, officials at every level could attack teacher unions and their hard-won gains. As schools closed and layoffs mounted in Chicago in the last few years, due process was ignored, a problem that is occurring in districts throughout the nation.

During the six-year term of the UPC, the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) lost 6000 members due to school closings. In its election campaign, CORE faulted the outgoing UPC under Marilyn Stewart for not defending Chicago schools and teachers, a criticism that is applicable to the leadership of other locals across the country.

In response to the apathy of CTU leaders, CORE turned to the Chicago community to find allies. It organized the Grassroots Education Movement (GEM), a coalition that brought together 14 com-

munity organizations with CORE, to fight the school closings. Over the past two years, GEM vigorously challenged every planned school closing and successfully stopped the closing of 12 neighborhood schools. CORE showed that grassroots union mobilization, allied with community actors, could achieve success.

The national significance of CORE’s victory in the CTU, one of the largest teacher union locals in the AFT, is that it challenges the two teacher unions to oppose the attack on teachers. This is especially true given that President Obama—guided by CORE’s nemesis, former Chicago Schools CEO and the current Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan—has unleashed an attack on teachers that is more severe than even NCLB under Bush.

The heads of both the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Educational Association (NEA) content themselves so far with sniping from the sidelines, but in the main have continued to support the Obama administration rather than mount the needed mobilization to counter the measures.

In the next few years, the new CTU will have to confront two elements of Obama’s education policy: Race to the Top and his plan for reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), known as NCLB under President Bush.

RTTT is a federal program, part of Obama’s stimulus bill, that will competitively award a total of \$4.3 billion to states that have demonstrated acceptance of the administration’s educational priorities.

In deciding upon the cash winners, Secretary Duncan clearly favors those states that have lifted caps on the number of permitted charter schools and allow for teacher evaluation and pay to be tied to student test scores. Already, former Chi-

cago Schools CEO Arne Duncan passed a version of merit pay in Chicago with support from outgoing CTU President Stewart.

Tennessee and Delaware won the first round of the race and were awarded \$500 million and \$100 million, respectively, but a second round is currently in progress, and states are again vying to win the cash allotments.

While some states dropped out of the second round, unable to secure the agreement of unions, numerous unions in both the AFT and NEA have nonetheless signed off on RTTT. Illinois is still in the running, having lifted its cap on charter schools from 60 to 115 with significant union support.

Leaders of CORE rightly argue against RTTT participation. Unfortunately, as Nate Goldbaum reported in CORE’s April newsletter, AFT President Randi Weingarten encouraged local unions to work with legislators in securing the grant money.

Besides RTTT, urban schools will also face Obama’s abysmal plans for ESEA reauthorization (known as NCLB under Bush). Now that the NCLB has already successfully attacked urban schools, Obama wants to get rid of the old NCLB bar whereby every school must demonstrate perfect student proficiency by 2014 or face corrective action, an impossible feat for almost any school. Many applaud this supposed repudiation of NCLB, but Obama and Duncan know that NCLB’s absurdities would soon negatively impact almost all schools across the nation and face greater opposition.

In its place, Obama has called for the “turnaround” of the lowest-performing 5% of schools in a state, where turnarounds can include school closure, charter takeover, removal of staff, and work requirements that could be imposed with-

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# Fourth International debates party-building strategy

By JEFF MACKLER

More than 200 delegates, observers, and invited guests from some 45 countries attended the 16<sup>th</sup> World Congress of the Fourth International (FI), Feb. 23-28 in Belgium. The FI is the world socialist organization founded in 1938 by Leon Trotsky with the help of cothinkers worldwide, including James P. Cannon, the pioneer of American Trotskyism.

The draft reports prepared by the FI leadership to initiate the pre-World Congress on-line discussion appear in the *International Viewpoint* website under "Documents of the FI." A critical assessment of these texts, entitled, "Socialist Action USA: A contribution to the pre-World Congress discussion," appears in the same place.

Three main resolutions were presented for discussion and debate. The first two, on "The World Political Situation" and on "Capitalist Climate Change and Our Tasks" were accepted with little dissent and accompanied by a generally rich and productive discussion.

But there were sharp disagreements with regard to the third report on "The Role and Tasks of the FI." Socialist Action cast its fraternal vote in favor of the first two resolutions and against the "Role and Tasks" text. Reactionary U.S. legislation bars Socialist Action's formal membership in the FI. Its delegates therefore participate in a fraternal capacity only.

"The World Political Report" contained a description of the terrible effects on the world's working classes due to the international capitalist economic crisis, a crisis that was properly judged as flowing from fundamental structural flaws in the capitalist system itself.

The second resolution and reports on the world climate crisis represented an important theoretical advance, as well as an important contribution to the world workers' movement more generally. The text on climate change combined a thoroughgoing Marxist analysis with the science of ecology, a wealth of factual material, a rejection of a "productivist" (capitalist or Stalinist) way out, a series of transitional and immediate demands, proposals for united mass actions, and a broad appreciation of the magnitude and importance of the climate crisis issue.

The resolution began with a clear and unequivocal statement of the magnitude and importance of the issue: "The climate change that is underway is not the product of human activity in general but of the productivist paradigm developed by capitalism and imitated by other systems that claim to be alternatives to the former. Faced with the danger of a social and ecological catastrophe which is without precedent and is irreversible on a human timescale, the system, incapable of calling into question its fundamental logic of accumulation, is engaged in a dangerous technological forward flight from which there is no way out."

## Debate on "Tasks" resolution

The third resolution debated at the World Congress, "The Role and Tasks of the Fourth International," drew serious criticism from a number of delegates. The text expressed the view that the priority of the FI today must be the construction of "broad anti-capitalist parties" everywhere—as well as a "new international based on such parties."

The FI's primary objective since its founding has been to build mass revolutionary Leninist parties worldwide aimed at the organization of the working class and its allies among the oppressed to take political power and construct socialist societies. Unclear in the resolution was whether its call for "broad anti-capitalist parties" was meant to supplant the FI's historic party-building strategy.

The debate also concerned the role of FI parties that would participate in these "broad anti-capitalist parties." Were they to organize as a tendency, caucus, or



Petros Giannakouris / AP

In the current capitalist crisis, resistance to the attacks on the world's working classes has been limited. But workers in Greece are showing the way forward:

(Left) March in Athens, June 28, against government plans to privatize power plants. Banner reads, "We resist."

programmatic agreement and with whom we find ourselves working together toward the same goals in the mass movement.

Indeed, the struggle to unify the working class in united-front mass actions that challenge specific policies of the capitalist class (such as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan or attacks on immigrant rights) is a central tool of revolutionaries throughout the world to advance our common cause and simultaneously win the best fighters to socialist politics.

## Build the Fourth International!

While the "Role and Tasks" text was approved by the great majority of the delegates, the vote was not without major reservations and also reflected a view that the discussion would be continued.

It was clear from the concluding remarks of the reporter for "The Role and Tasks of the FI" text that the sharp World Congress debates had an important impact on the FI leadership. The reporter essentially accepted an amendment to the text indicating that the disparate views were far from resolved and that the debate would continue at future FI meetings.

A significant number of World Congress participants were enthusiastic, serious, and well-informed youth, an indication that FI sections have been able to assemble a layer of young fighters to replace the older cadre in the years ahead.

The World Congress took place at a difficult time for revolutionaries throughout the world—a time when the attacks on the world's working classes have taken a great toll while resistance has been generally limited. These defeats undoubtedly weighed heavily on the Congress deliberations, leading some to look for short-cut solutions that ignore the rich lessons of the past.

It became increasingly evident during the World Congress that the critical need to build the Fourth International, based on the construction of revolutionary socialist parties of the Leninist type, will remain central to the FI's future discussions and debates. ■

some such formation designed to win new FI members to a clear revolutionary program and party—or were they to become absorbed into such parties without a clear revolutionary program and Trotskyist identity?

This issue was particularly relevant in light of last year's dissolution of the French section of the Fourth International, the Revolutionary Communist League, into the New Anti-Capitalist Party, and the absence of any organized FI current within the organization. Was the NPA to be the new model for revolutionaries as opposed to building a Leninist party?

The text had been prepared by the FI's International Committee after deliberations over the course of more than a year. Some 72 comrades took the floor to express a wide range of views on the resolution.

As the discussion proceeded, it became obvious that there was little agreement among the delegates as to the meaning and purpose of "broad anti-capitalist parties." Neither the ambiguous language of the text nor the reporter explained whether these parties were envisioned as an alternative to building revolutionary parties based on the historic program of the FI or even whether these parties were to be socialist at all.

In Socialist Action's view, a tactical decision as to what kind of formations revolutionary socialists participate in must be subordinate to our strategic objective—the construction of revolutionary parties aimed at the organization of the working class and its allies in the struggle for socialism. Of course, party-building can take many forms, from participation in reformist or social-democratic parties, to principled fusions, or unifications with currents with whom we find major

## ... A new Depression?

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"America Speaks," funded by Peterson. The sessions, designed "to preach about the dangers of the deficit," were in fact, said the Federation, "nothing more than efforts to soften up the public to accept Medicare and Social Security cuts."

Thanks to their attendance, unionists and friends at the meetings burst through the scripted questions. You can be sure, though, that the results will be misreported by Peterson's group and misinterpreted by Obama's commission, as was the case when results of town hall meetings organized by Bush on health-care reform were ignored after they expressed support for single payer.

### Are the liberals right?

While Krugman et al. advocate spending policies that would at least slow the pace of job loss, we should be clear that their argument with the "deficit hawks" is over timing and style, of how best to preserve the very system that has plunged us into this inevitable crisis.

What liberals miss (or won't say publicly for fear

workers might be listening) is that the savviest and most powerful deficit hawks don't really believe their own rhetoric about short-term tax hikes and spending cuts leading to short-term private investment that could lead to a recovery. What they're really aiming at are the kind of mammoth, savage long-term cuts, at workers' expense, required to reverse decades of profit-rate slide.

And the liberals' only concern is that such a program be implemented slowly and slickly enough to blunt workers' resistance. They recognize, correctly, that if every company, every country, simultaneously carries out massive cutbacks, the mutually reinforcing effect would lead to the kind of catastrophic misery seen in Great Depressions—misery that eventually restores profitability, but only if workers endure without complaint decades of destruction of resources as the system cleanses itself of "excess" capacity. And the liberals remember with fear and hatred the kind of radical movements that arose from such conditions in the last two giant Depressions (1870s and 1930s).

In counterposition to the liberal program, labor needs one of its own, and a plan of militant action to fight for it. ■

(continued from page 8)  
out contractual negotiation.

School performance will be based upon the same NCLB-mandated tests, a corporate practice that will guarantee that there will always be schools facing punitive action (again, most likely those schools educating disadvantaged students in urban centers like Chicago).

At least at the start, the CORE-led CTU can expect little help from its national union leaders. The AFT leadership nationwide and in many locals is reluctant to contest turnaround efforts. In Chicago, for example, the CTU had not contested one school closing prior to CORE's efforts.

In a New Jersey case that received national attention this year, AFT teachers

at Central Falls High School *did* contest a turnaround requiring the district's one-sided imposition of work requirements. The district summarily fired the teachers, and signaling which side he was on in the struggle, Obama supported the firings.

Although Randi Weingarten publicly defended the teachers, she did so incompetently in most media venues, losing the opportunity to educate the public on what it means to be designated a "failing school," which is due to the lack of validity and class bias of NCLB's assessment measures. In the end, the teachers were rehired only when they capitulated to every district demand.

After the Central Falls debacle, the retreat of the AFT is apparent everywhere.

According to a feature in *The New York Times Magazine*, "The Teachers' Unions' Last Stand" by Steven Brill, in last April's contract negotiations in Washington D.C., AFT head Randi Weingarten helped to negotiate away tenure and seniority rights—making it possible for Chancellor Rhee to fire a tenured teacher if deemed ineffective by her and her staff—and agreed to teacher merit pay tied to student test scores. In Colorado, Weingarten endorsed teacher evaluations tied to test scores as the state geared up for RTTT.

The CORE-led CTU has an opportunity to present its alternative union philosophy in the AFT National Convention, held in Seattle, July 7-11. Many locals in both the AFT and NEA do not promote demo-

cratic debate in the union, and leaders in the bureaucracy are able to continue with an ineffectual program of collaboration with district officials and Democratic Party politicians. But without a real struggle from the rank and file, teachers will continue to suffer as successive defeats turn into an historic crisis.

We need a fighting union that stands up for students and teachers, presents a view of education as a collaborative social effort that contributes to the flourishing of the individual and society, and works to change society in ways that contribute to that flourishing. For that reason, teachers need rank-and-file caucuses like CORE in every union local, whether AFT or NEA. ■



## Amid the ruins of Detroit: Social Forum draws thousands

By CRISTOBAL CAVAZOS  
and LISA LUINENBURG

DETROIT—Amid the wreckage of a city that has lost hundreds of thousands of jobs and residents over the past 30 years, the second United States Social Forum (USSF) landed here with 15,000 grassroots activists, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and trade-union organizers. The conference began June 22 for nearly one week of workshops, cultural events, and planning sessions.

Detroit was a “conscious choice” for organizers. In the words of organizer Karlos Gauna Schmieder of Detroit’s Center for Media Justice, “It’s a microcosm of the world economy and a center of resistance to foreclosures and joblessness.” This once powerful automobile industry center, dubbed the “Motor City,” seemed an ideal location for a forum whose expressed goal is “Another World is Possible: Another U.S. is Necessary.” Devastated by a decline in total employment of over 440,000 jobs in the past three decades, Detroit is certainly in need of “another U.S.”

With scenes reminiscent of post-World War II Eastern Europe (deserted stores and supermarkets, neighborhoods of boarded-up houses, and factories and skyscrapers crumbling to dust), it is evident that Detroit too has been bombed—by capitalism. The banks and money lenders, the multi-national corporations, Wall Street gamblers, along with hired-pimp politicians and other opportunistic operatives have all taken turns raping this city before skipping town.

With this dramatic backdrop, the U.S. Social Forum advertised itself as “a moment of reflection” and “a space to come up with the people’s solutions to the economic and ecological crisis.” It placed a special emphasis on the “strategic need to unite the struggles of oppressed communities within the United States to the struggles of oppressed nations in the Third World.”

The event was an offshoot of the World Social Forum, which first assembled NGOs, trade-unions, and grassroots organizations—along with support from the Chavez government of Venezuela—in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2001. While both events have operated under the “another world is possible” mantra, the U.S. Social Forum certainly has many issues to tackle in a nation facing severe economic crisis and ecological destruction. Participants were seeking not only an opportunity to air their local grievances but a coherent plan of action against the U.S. imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, against the economic crisis, against an oil spill ravishing the coast of Louisiana, and against the passage in Arizona of SB1070—one of the most racist policies implemented in decades.

The main conveners of the forum were the United Auto Workers, the Eastern Michigan Environmental Action Coun-

cil, Michigan Welfare Rights, Centro Obrero, and Southeast Michigan Jobs with Justice. Other panelists and participants included major contributions from immigrant rights organizations, feminist collectives, LGBT groups, indigenous and other people of color formations, third world movements, reproductive justice alliances, etc.

Included were over 1000 workshops and 50 people’s movement assemblies in barely a five-day span. A sampling of the diversity of the workshops features themes as varied as: “Theater of the Oppressed,” “Why Rural America Matters for Prison Abolition,” “Amazing Grace: AIDS and the Oppression of Girls,” “Using Hip-Hop to Promote Higher Education,” “Venezuela 101,” “Islamophobia,” “The UAW and Toyota,” and “Photography as a Tool for Political Transformation,” among countless others.

The larger Peoples Movement Assemblies included titles themes such as “Justice in Palestine,” “Food Sovereignty,” “Calling All Street Youth!” and “Peoples Charter with Corporate America: Defining an Agenda to Check Corporate Power.”

At the workshop “Dialogue with Activists from the Haitian Popular Movement,” activists from the Haitian Action Committee (HAC) spoke on the humanitarian and economic crisis facing the Caribbean nation. The HAC—a collaboration of Haitian grassroots community activists, U.S. intellectuals, and African American religious leaders—emphasized the role of the United States in destabilizing this nation through both direct military intervention and neo-colonialist economic and trade policy. The earthquake this past year has only further atrophied Haiti’s development, while the United States has taken advantage of the situation to further dominate the country.

In another workshop, entitled “Palestine: Evolution of the Movement of Liberation,” activists from Al-Awda New York along with three Palestinian children, guests from Gaza, analyzed the movement for liberation of the Palestinian people. The children’s testimony was especially touching as they recalled checkpoints, guns pointed at them on the way to school, and their hunger for freedom. The workshop spurred a lively and at times strident discussion on what activists can do to promote the liberation of the Palestinian people in order to, in the words of one event attendee, “prevent this discussion from still taking place 30 years from now.”

Finally, veterans of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW) put on an what can only be described as a soulful and intellectual tempest of a workshop, titled “Detroit Highlighted: The History of Labor in Detroit.” The LRBW was the culmination of growing militancy among Black workers, especially those around the Dodge Main assembly plant in the 1950s and ’60s, that was consummated in a series of wildcat



## Immigrants’ supporters fight SB 1070

By GEORGE SHRIVER

TUCSON, Arizona—Mexican Americans and their allies in this state are gearing up to resist the racial-profiling law SB1070, scheduled to go into effect July 29. A federal court hearing is set for July 22 on a request for an injunction against the law.

In addition, on July 6, the Justice Department said that it would file suit against Arizona. It seeks an injunction against SB1070 on grounds that it infringes on federal jurisdiction.

In the Tucson area, the Derechos Humanos coalition and others are holding protests at the State Building downtown every Friday, 4-7 p.m., as part of a Month of Action. In the Phoenix area, groups are planning

“30 actions in 30 days.”

If no injunction stops the law, the call is for “no school, no work” on July 29. People everywhere are asked to hold support demonstrations for the Arizona resistance on July 29 and after. Such actions are reported in the works in Chicago and Twin Cities.

In Philadelphia, there are plans to urge a boycott of the July 27-29 baseball games, when the Phillies play the Arizona Diamondbacks.

President Obama, meanwhile, made a speech to the nation about immigration on July 1. He criticized SB 1070 as “divisive,” but reinforced efforts to militarize the border. Obama boasted: “We have more boots on the ground on the Southwest border than at any time in our history.” ■

strikes at Dodge Main calling out the Chrysler bosses and racist elements in the United Autoworker (UAW) bureaucracy who routinely failed to defend Black workers.

For close to three hours, the LRBW explained the entrance en masse of Black workers into Detroit to take some of the hardest and lowest paying jobs in the automobile industry, given increased demand for cheap labor during World War II. The LRBW showed through testimony, video clips, and song that militant united fronts of Black and white workers in Detroit won some of the highest wages in the United States for a time.

The USSF was inspired by philosopher Hannah Arendt’s writings on the importance of the public realm for civic engagement and collective deliberation. The forum certainly allowed space for a dynamic assembly to dialogue toward a deeper understanding of our world.

However, a coherent ideological superstructure to tie the many movements together was lacking. Stated event organizer Elena Herrada of Centro Obrero: “I haven’t seen anybody claiming to really have any answers, just seeing everyone saying ‘yeah, how about this’ and ‘how about this.’” Identity politics, lifestyle anarchism, and naïve Third Worldism were much on display at the expense of class-conscious analysis.

Along with a myriad of liberal NGOs such as the Sierra Club, Oxfam, and Amnesty International, event donors from the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and the Ben and Jerry’s Foundation have little interest in radi-

cal change, preferring a perhaps slightly less brutal form of capitalism.

It might also be noted that USSF core sponsor UAW came out of the collapse of Detroit with \$1.3 billion in assets in 2009 and part ownership of the automobile industry, while new autoworkers have seen their wages cut in half in the name of “global competitiveness.” As well, the UAW has supported a succession of Black Democratic Party mayors since the early 1970s, who have done little to stem the collapse of the city.

News coverage of the USSF was virtually non-existent in the bourgeois media while similarly styled but much smaller right-wing gatherings, such as the recent Tea Party convention, received abundant coverage. Such realities point to the weakness of the left in the United States. Lack of working-class ideological cohesion along with promotion of identity politics are the perfect breeding ground for the Democratic Party to disorient the movement with its cynical objectives for continued warfare and corporate plunder.

While problems associated with capitalism were discussed at the USSF, it is time to look beyond capitalism and toward an international socialist reorganization of society and the means of production. It is time to take the dialogue begun at the USSF much deeper to understand the determinant forces—both political and social—that are holding us back.

Where they say we have no answers, we say socialism is the answer! ■

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Far from the G20 Summit galas, 2700 members of Sandy Lake First Nation gathered to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of Treaty 5. In the century since aboriginal people ceded 100,000 square kilometres of land to the British Crown for a few tools and an annual payment of \$5 a head, grinding poverty remains the norm.

Sandy Lake is a fly-in-only community 600 kilometres northwest of Thunder Bay (Lake Superior) that survived for centuries on hunting, trapping, and fishing. Today, aboriginal teen suicide is five to six times higher for First Nations youth between 10 and 24 years of age than for non-aboriginal youth. Of the 600 young people between 18 and 29 living at Sandy Lake, only about 20 have jobs, according to Chief Adam Fiddler.

Canada has gotten "very wealthy" as a result of many treaty arrangements made, says Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Chief Stan Beardy. NAN represents 49 First Nation communities.

"We are not happy." Instead of sharing the wealth and resources of the land, European settlers sidelined the natives, says Beardy. He wonders why Canada has so far not signed the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People. He wonders why Prime Minister Harper talks about a maternal health strategy for the Third World, yet he neglects the problem in his own backyard.

Statistics Canada data shows the aboriginal infant death rate is 1.5 times higher than the Canadian rate. In addition, there are 118 First Nations across Cana-

# Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

## Aboriginal needs ignored by Ottawa, G-20

da where the water is too polluted to drink. According to the Assembly of First Nations, 5486 of 88,485 on-reserve houses do not have sewage services. Around Sandy Lake, many houses have plastic sheets or cardboard serving as windows. Some homes have no outer walls at all, just insulation.

While the federal government spent \$46 million in the Huntsville area to spruce up an already rich part of southern Ontario for a G8 Summit lasting just a few hours, in addition to the \$1.2 Billion-plus for 'security' for the two-day G20 in Toronto, there's precious little for aboriginal communities, or for urban aboriginals. Their plight was not even on the agenda when the henchmen of global capital gathered to plan their future plunder of world resources.



(Above) Socialist Action contingent in G-20 protest march of over 30,000 people in Toronto, June 26.

## NDP Socialists hit Afghan war extension, Liberal coalition

New Democratic Party activists from Hamilton, Oakville, Mississauga, Thornhill, several Toronto constituencies, and from as far away as Winnipeg, Manitoba, gathered at OISE U. of Toronto on June 12 for the Annual NDP Socialist Caucus Federal Conference. Although the next NDP federal convention is June 2011 in Vancouver, B.C., the NDP Socialists are wasting no time in addressing the big issues that face the working class today.

At the top of the SC agenda is ending the war of occupation in Afghanistan and opposing any coalition, let alone merger, of the NDP with the Liberal Party, or any capitalist party. NDP MPs have been too soft-spoken during the current campaign by the business media and the Liberal Party to extend the imperialist war mission beyond the 2011 Canadian troop removal deadline.

One New Democrat MP, Jack Harris, who was part of the infamous Liberal Bob Rae-led junket to Kandahar, has mused about the need for Canadian forces to remain as trainers and to build "institutions" in Afghanistan, which implies a fighting presence there.

That brings us to rumours of a merger with the Liberal Party, the political pillar of Bay Street rule and the whole private profit system of environmental, labour and indigenous injustice. While NDP Leader Jack Layton says 'no one is

authorized to engage in talks', so-called party 'saints' Ed Broadbent and Roy Romanow are talking potential 'deals' with former Prime Minister Jean Chretien and other Liberal honchos. Sadly, the outrageous prospect of such a merger seems credible only because the NDP has moved so far from its CCF and working-class roots.

After illuminating presentations and discussions on domestic social policy (John Clarke, OCAP; Alex Johnstone, women's and children's rights; Robert Ling, End Prohibition of Cannabis) and foreign policy issues (Michael Skinner, Exiting the Afghanistan Quagmire; and this writer speaking on the campaign for democracy, anti-militarism and international solidarity in the NDP), conference participants got down to work on resolutions.

The gathering reaffirmed policies advanced by the SC in the lead up to the 2009 NDP Federal Convention in Halifax, and added three new ones: Legalize Cannabis, Make CPP Benefits a Decent, Living Income for Retirees, and Support the Cochabamba (Bolivia) Protocols on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth.

The conference mandated the incoming SC federal steering committee to write a new resolution on ending the Alberta Tar Sands Project.

All current SC policy resolutions are

posted on the SC web site: [www.ndp-socialists.ca](http://www.ndp-socialists.ca) and will be circulated extensively across the country through NDP riding associations, affiliated unions and youth clubs. The aim is to persuade local organizations to discuss, adopt and forward the SC resolutions to the federal NDP convention for debate, vote and, hopefully, adoption there.

Leading this effort will be the newly elected NDP Socialist Caucus federal steering committee consisting of: from Toronto, Carol Bailey, Elizabeth Byce (elected SC treasurer), Judy Koch, Christos Draxl, Hans Modlich, Esther Mwangi, Doug Phillips, Ross Ashley and Barry Weisleder (elected SC chair); from Hamilton, Robert Ling; from Oakville, Sean Cain; from Thornhill, John Orrett; from Montreal, Robbie Mahood; and from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Rosemary Hnatiuk.

**NDP activists who agree with SC policies and principles and who are interested in joining the SC federal steering committee, which operates primarily through internet consultation, should send a message via the website, or call (416) 535-8779.**

Inside the Ontario NDP, the Socialist Caucus remains the driving force behind grassroots challenges to postponement of the provincial convention by the party establishment and to its ongoing support for public funding for Catholic

separate schools. Although the ONDP Provincial Council meeting on May 29 reaffirmed the party's regressive position on those issues, it was only after a vigorous council debate animated by SC activists. A lively lunch-time forum, attended by 30 ONDP councillors and observers, showed that the NDP Socialists represent the best hope for democracy and the turn to the left so essential to NDP survival in the current neo-liberal climate.

So does the SC defense of NDP federal MP and deputy leader Libby Davies (Vancouver East). She was denounced on July 15 by Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Liberal Foreign Affairs critic Bob Rae and NDP Leader Jack Layton—simply for stating that the Israeli occupation of Palestine began in 1948.

The fact that the Zionist state was founded on the expulsion of 750,000 Palestinian Arabs, and the ethnic cleansing, killing and incarceration of many more since 1948, is widely recognized worldwide, including by most NDP members. It explains why the global campaign for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israeli apartheid has gained the support of many unions, municipalities and leading personalities internationally. Telling the truth should be commended, not condemned. Hands off Libby Davies! — B.W.

## Damned in Afghanistan

Touted as the Canadian state's best chance for a lasting legacy in Afghanistan, the \$50 million Dahla Dam irrigation project in Kandahar is all but dead in the water. The Canadian engineering giant SNC Lavalin is losing the battle for control of the project to an Afghan security firm loyal to Afghanistan's ruling Karzai family.

While Ottawa claims the project is on time and budget, a *Toronto Star* investigation, including interviews with more than 20 private contractors, government officials, Afghan tribal leaders and others, reveals the opposite is the case.

A nearly deadly showdown on Feb. 20 between Canadian security officials and Afghan mercenaries proved critical. It led to the resignation of Alan Bell, a Toronto-based security consultant hired by SNC Lavalin, who now refuses to discuss the situation.

Watan Risk Management, a company operated by Rashid Popal, a cousin of President Hamid Karzai, whose largest shareholder is one of the president's brothers, Qayum Karzai, apparently seeks 'protection' money. Watan recently was stripped of the highly lucrative task of escorting NATO convoys on the highway between Kabul and Kandahar. But the removal of Watan and another Afghan firm, Compass Security, lasted barely two weeks.

On the very first day, a NATO supply convoy was attacked, with one truck overturned and burned. Two weeks later, with more than 1000 supply trucks stalled on the highway, the company's security privileges were restored. U.S. officials are investigating whether the Karzai-linked firm may be colluding with insurgents to maximize profits. While Watan denies this, the

mere mention of its name causes Kandahar-based staff with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) "go pale and silent", according to the *Toronto Star*.

To date, 20 per cent of the silt-blocking canals and sub-canals has been dug out. In other words, 80 per cent of the planned works, including the replacement of neglected hydraulic systems and generators at Dahla Dam itself, remains undone. Canadians involved in the project live like prisoners inside a police compound, unable to move without Watan's permission.

The fiasco of the Dahla Dam, set against the mounting death toll of foreign soldiers and local civilians, highlights the wages of imperialist occupation—in support of a regime of war lords and drug barons. This is what the Liberal Party openly, and the Conservative government covertly, wish to extend past the 2011 deadline for removal of Canadian troops. — B.W.

## Dental plan has no teeth for Ontario poor

Ontario's health minister, Deb Matthews, admitted in June that there is no money to improve the oral health of the province's 500,000 working poor. In the 2007 election campaign her Liberal Party promised to introduce dental care for low-income Ontarians, followed up by a budget commitment in 2008 to provide \$45 million annually for three years to help half a million impoverished workers unable to afford private insurance coverage. Now, it seems, that is barely enough to cover dental care for children of the poor.

Thirty-two per cent of Canadians do not have dental insurance, and 17 per cent avoided seeing a licensed dentist last year because of cost, according to Health Canada. As a result, an underground industry of unlicensed and sometimes dangerous dentistry preys upon the poor, and often new immigrants.

Desperation is born of hardship, deepened recently by the Ontario Liberal government's regressive Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) and its heartless elimination of the Special Diet Supplement to welfare (\$250 a month for food). After inflation, welfare benefits today have only 55 per cent of the buying power they had in 1993. Liberals at Queen's Park smile daggers while they make workers and the poorest folk pay for the bail-out to resource industries and auto giants, for the crisis of their profit system. — B.W.

# G-8 and G-20: Summits of deceit and repression

Darren Calabrese / The Canadian Press / AP

## Reject the capitalist agenda of social cuts!

By BARRY WEISLEDER

TORONTO—In the end, the global rulers got what they wanted—a massive propaganda exercise for social cuts, plus a brutal demonstration of police power. As for the working class, we got the bill, \$1.3 billion and counting—just for ‘security’.

During the G20 Summit, held June 27-28 in Toronto, police arrested over 1000 people. That is over double the number incarcerated in the October 1970 Quebec crisis, under the auspices of the infamous War Measures Act. Most caught in the latest sweep were released, many without charges, after being held in filthy cages, in a makeshift ‘jail’, for up to 24 hours without adequate water, food, medication, toilet facilities, privacy for females, or access to legal aid. Police charged hundreds, and still hold dozens.

The business media worked feverishly to spin the threadbare results of the G20 meeting (held on the heels of the G8 Summit in Huntsville, Ontario) into a tapestry of triumph, an ode to worldly consensus and to Canadian hospitality. But plainly, it’s a hard sell—especially in light of the city core lock-down, and the acts of petty vandalism that police permitted (or planned) to occur, before resorting to the use of tear gas, pepper spray, beatings and mass arrests.

Many peaceful protesters, working journalists, downtown shoppers and curious on-lookers were snared by the cop tactics. And so, illusions in bourgeois democracy and in ‘officers of the peace’ fell like a multitude of bowling pins.

Meanwhile, inside the media bubble of the world capitalist summit, there was minimal agreement on detail. This betrayed the actual farce of the high-level gathering, which could have been conducted on Skype for free—minus the mini-police state imposed on Torontonians.

To the extent that the G20 leaders agreed to do anything, the measures they endorsed could hasten a global depression, and quicken the descent into environmental disaster.

The rich countries’ bosses promised to cut their budgetary deficits in half by 2013, and to cap their cumulative debt as a proportion of GDP by 2016. If attempted, without taxing big corporations and the super-rich, such actions would choke off jobs, services and investment in production, plunging economies into crisis, and billions into misery.

But Japan is exempt. Italy is not expected to meet the deadline. While Britain and Germany have announced Draconian cuts, Harper is not saying, and Obama is walking a tightrope. Revealing the blatancy of their class bias, the G8 and G20 rejected a tax on financial institutions (proposed by the more desperate French, Germans and British), and they put off until the next G20 summit in Seoul, South Korea, any discussion of bank regulatory reforms.

Concerning climate change, the summiteers agreed to *contemplate* cuts to the subsidies paid to carbon-emitting oil and gas industries. Of course, such contemplations are subordinate to “country-specific strategies”. Canada’s federal government, for instance, is *increasing* its overall subsidies to the Alberta tar sands. Even the language on climate change from this summit is weaker than that agreed on at the previous G20 gab-fest.

What about the G8, held June 25-28? “The gap between the G8’s compassionate rhetoric and its readiness to help was especially striking”, said the June 27 *Toronto Star* lead editorial.

While hundreds of thousands of women, and nearly 9 million children die needlessly every year, the \$50 billion in aid promised at the Gleneagles summit in 2005 “fell a breathtaking \$20 billion short. ... This is a shabby performance for a rich club that generates close to \$40 trillion in wealth”, stated the *Star*. Canada’s largest circulation daily failed to mention the source of this enormous wealth—the stolen natural resources and exploited labour of workers globally, especially in the Third World.

The G8 leaders went out of their way to caution the United Nations against hoping for much more from them, notwithstanding the ‘Millennium Development Goals’, which aim to reduce world poverty, hunger, and disease by 2015. And really, isn’t that the whole point of the G8 and the G20? There the richest elites do not run the risk of getting outvoted by the 172 other countries represented at the UN—which



## An immediate public inquiry is needed into the police repression at the Toronto G-20 Summit.

(Above) Toronto protesters, July 1, demand a public inquiry into G-8/G-20 ‘security’ measures.

can be mildly embarrassing, even if UN votes change few economic facts on the ground.

On ‘security’ issues, the G8 endorsed a five-year exit plan from Afghanistan (which can always be extended). They denounced Iran and North Korea (without any commitment to eradicate the largest stock piles of nuclear weapons, which happen to be held by the USA, Russia, and Europe).

And they called for an ‘easing’ of Israel’s blockade of Gaza, rather than demanding an end to the siege, let alone the dismantling of the Israeli apartheid wall, or recognition of the right of return for all Palestinian refugees.

None of the ‘decisions’ of the G8 and G20 were actually made at the summits, which serve a rubber-stamp and photo-op function for pre-negotiated policies, steeped in diplomatic vacuity. Thus, working people, the poor, and all oppressed sections of society had good reason to protest long before the summits. After all, we live daily under disaster capitalism.

So, protests proliferated in the week of June 20. This followed the People’s Summit attended by over 1500 at Ryerson University. It continued with demonstrations for aboriginal rights and against the rising tide of poverty, and culminated in the massive rally and march of 30,000, despite persistent rainfall, on Saturday, June 26.

The sponsors of the main demonstration, which set out from Toronto’s Queen’s Park, included the Canadian Labour Congress, the Ontario Federation of Labour, their major union affiliates, as well as the Council of Canadians, Greenpeace, Oxfam, the Canadian Federation of Students, the Ontario Health Coalition, Amnesty International, and numerous feminist organizations. The demo was peaceful and spirited. Chants of “Whose streets? Our streets!” and “This is what democracy looks like!” echoed down University Avenue’s ‘hospital row’, and up through Chinatown on Spadina Ave.

But the huge parade never made it onto prime-time news. Mainstream media coverage fixated on a tiny breakaway group. The so-called Black Bloc, animated by self-described anarchists, went on a window-busting rampage that hit about 40 businesses, and torched four police squad cars. No one was killed or seriously injured. The only injuries were caused by the police, afterwards.

The anger of the Bloquistas against the social in-

justices perpetuated by the G20 is understandable. But their tactics are worse than deplorable. They proved to be straight men for Harper’s predictable punch lines about how ‘security’ spending was justified. The Bloquistas also gave the cops ammunition to brutalize and jail over 1000 innocents, using expanded police powers of search and arrest granted by a secret Ontario Liberal Cabinet decision just weeks prior to the summits.

Now that a majority of the detainees have been released without charge, questions are multiplying. Why did 20,000 cops, including hundreds of them within spitting distance of burning vehicles and shattering store windows, just let it happen? Was it an exercise in policing or PR? And if cop claims are true that they had infiltrated the Bloquistas, how many police were involved in prompting, as opposed to just spying on, the planners of mayhem? NDP and Labour leaders should be expressing rage over these issues instead of obsessing over petty property damage.

Anger over the hundreds of arbitrary arrests, and the de-humanizing treatment meted out by police to detainees, spurred over 3000 people to rally outside Toronto Police Headquarters on June 28. They demanded a full, independent public inquiry. Thousands proceeded to march to City Hall and back to the Legislature at Queen’s Park. Many in the youthful throng chanted “Wasted! Wasted! One billion dollars!” “No justice, no peace!” and the now emblematic cry, “Whose streets? Our streets!”

Socialists were prominent in all of the peaceful, mass protest actions, and received a very positive hearing from the crowds, which included many young women and men attending a demonstration for the first time. Dozens walked behind the Socialist Action banner inscribed with the words “No corporate bail-out. Make Capital pay for the crisis! Nationalize Auto, Steel and Banks—under Workers’ Control!”

SA members collected over \$550 in sales of anti-capitalist, antiwar, and eco-socialist buttons, and *Socialist Action* newspapers in a span of four days. We distributed 1000 trilingual statements against the agenda of the G20 (presenting the policies of our Canada/Quebec, American, and Mexican sister parties). Over 40 activists attended an SA public forum at the People’s Summit, dozens more came to our display table at the Ryerson Hub, and we received applications from five individuals seeking detailed information about, or membership in SA.

Harper and his global partners in crime have stirred a giant from slumber. Will this youthful giant master the policies, strategy, and organization needed to seize the time? No one can say, but socialists have an indispensable, and evidently welcome role to play in this still unfolding drama. ■