

## Prospects for the New Year: Jobs picture bleak

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

The New Year's season is ideally a time of cheerful hope for the future. But for many in the United States this year, it is the time to turn down the heater, scrimp on food for the family, and contemplate many more months of standing in unemployment lines.

Few communities have been immune to the current jobs crisis; it has hit people like an epidemic. In some areas, the recession has made a bad situation much worse. Some inner-city neighborhoods, like the mainly Puerto Rican and Black Fairhill section of Philadelphia, have been left with almost half the population jobless.

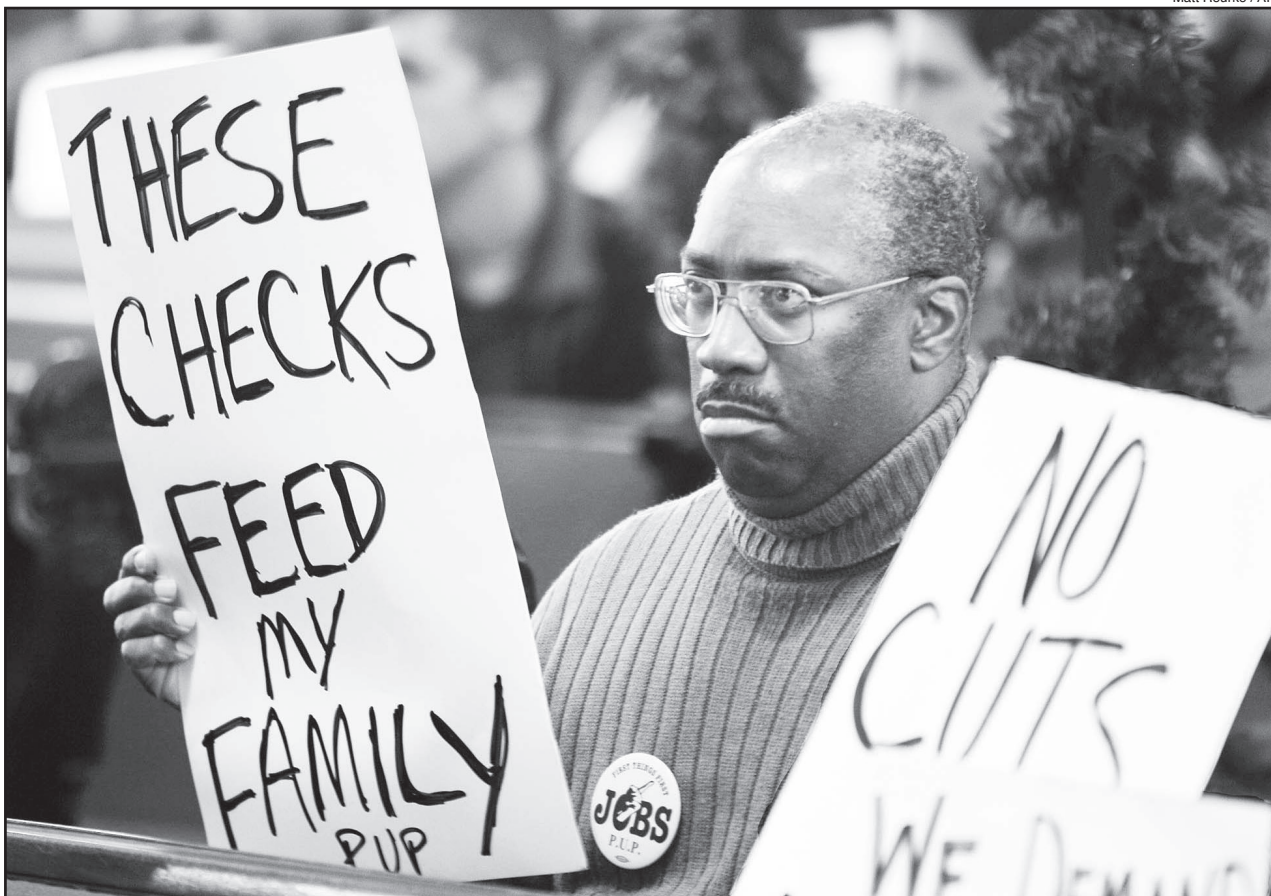
At the end of 2010, there were 14.5 million people officially unemployed in the United States, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), while another 11.5 million were stuck in unwanted part-time jobs or had even "given up" looking for work.

The latter category is important in trying to make sense of the government report that unemployment fell to 9.4% in December after edging up to 9.8% the previous month. The "decline" largely reflects the fact that the government deducted from its unemployment figures the number of jobless people who are considered to have not "searched for work" during the month.

Almost 4 million U.S. workers "left the labor force" since the beginning of the economic recession—most of them, according to the BLS, because they were "discouraged" about looking for jobs. If those "discouraged" workers were added in, the U.S. unemployment rate would be over 15 percent. Yet even that figure ignores part-time workers who cannot find full-time jobs; the real U.S. unemployment rate is probably over 19 percent.

It is easy to understand why many are discouraged. They are finding that *decent* jobs are almost non-existent. Often the jobs they do find offer lower wages than their old ones, and are insufficient to pay the bills.

The Philadelphia *Inquirer* in recent weeks has been running a series of profiles of unemployed workers in the region, which are often quite poignant. One of the people interviewed by the *Inquirer* was Donna Oxford, a



Matt Rourke / AP

former administrative assistant who was laid off from an e-commerce company in December 2007. "These days," *Inquirer* staff writer Jane M. Von Bergen wrote, "Oxford stacks a pile of job-research books on her kitchen table. Her house, outside Coatesville, is cheerful, but a plastic sheet covers her front door to keep out a draft.

"Between unemployment benefits and a part-time job at the YMCA, she earns no more than \$175 a week, and she worries about how she'll support her family. ... 'I haven't paid the mortgage in a couple of months,' she

(Above) Vigil for the Unemployed, held at the Arch St. Methodist Church in Philadelphia, Nov. 10.

said. ... 'Yes, it's sad that I'm going to be homeless soon,' said Oxford, her voice catching, her eyes swelling with tears...."

Oxford, without a full-time job for over three years, has joined the ranks of the "long-term unemployed," a category that is getting increasing acknowledgment in the

(continued on page 9)

## Afghan war expands despite opposition by U.S. majority



B.K. Bangash / AP

(Above) Dec. 10 protest in Islamabad against U.S. drone attacks, responsible for many deaths of Pakistani civilians.

By GERRY FOLEY

The Obama administration's year-end review of the state of its war effort in Afghanistan, of course, endeavored to be positive, citing some progress. However, it had to be guarded, admitting that whatever gains have been made are "fragile" and "reversible." Just how fragile has been indicated by a number of articles in major press organs and a UN report.

The *New York Times* pointed out Dec. 15: "The growing fragility of the north highlights the limitations of the American effort here, hampered by waning political support at home and a fixed number of troops. The Pentagon's year-end review will emphasize hard-won progress in the south, the heartland of the insurgency, where the military has concentrated most troops. But those advances have come at the expense of security in the north and east, with some questioning the wisdom of the focus on the south and whether

the coalition can control the entire country."

The article described a situation of rampant gangsterism in the north by a tangle of armed groups supposedly allied with the Kabul government but not controlled by it. In this area, where the Pushtuns, the historic base of support of the Taliban, are in a minority, the dominant ethnic groups there have been hostile to the Taliban. But *The Times* article explained that the local populations are so tired of being plundered and intimidated by the various militias and warlords that they are beginning to see the Taliban as the lesser evil. Despite the brutality of the Taliban when they ruled Afghanistan, they gained a reputation at least for being honest and disciplined.

What the article in question did not consider, but what would be much more threatening for the U.S.-led war effort in the long run, are the indications that the resistance to the occupation is becoming more broadly nationalistic and less limited to Islamists or Taliban.

(continued on page 11)

**INSIDE SOCIALIST ACTION:**  
Protest grand jury hearings! — 2  
Attacks on U.S. public sector — 3

Workers fight back in Europe — 4  
WikiLeaks — 6  
Canada news — 8

Canada & Latin America — 9  
Films: *Made in Dagenham* — 10  
Georgia prisoners strike — 12

# Activists subpoenaed for grand jury hearing — Join the Jan. 25 nationwide protests!

By DAVID BERNT

CHICAGO—On Dec. 21, four new subpoenas were issued to antiwar activists here, in the Justice Department's McCarthy-style attacks on the antiwar movement. A total of 23 people have now been subpoenaed.

The witch hunt dates back to Sept. 24, when 14 homes were raided by the FBI in Chicago and Minneapolis in an alleged attempt to investigate "material support" for terrorism. Federal agents carried away boxes of papers, books, computers, and personal belongings from the victims of the raids.

These activists are clearly being targeted for their public support and organizing on behalf of the people of Palestine and Colombia in their struggle against repressive U.S.-funded regimes, and their support of U.S.-based socialist and international-solidarity organizations. The U.S. Justice Department is attempting to silence these activists while sending a message to activists around the country that antiwar activism will be treated as a crime.

Nine of the subpoenaed activists have been ordered to appear before a grand jury on Jan. 25. All 14 of the originally subpoenaed activists invoked their Fifth Amendment rights when they were called to the grand jury in October. Since then, three of those activists—Tracy Molm, Anh Pham, and Sarah Martin—have had their subpoenas reactivated.

On Dec. 3, three students who were active in solidar-



Craig Lassig / AP

ity with Palestine were subpoenaed, two more activists on Dec. 8, and four more on Dec. 21.

It is expected that U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald may offer some or all of the subpoenaed activists conditional immunity at the grand jury, eliminating their Fifth Amendment rights, and thereby compelling them

to either cooperate in the government's witch hunt or face indefinite jail time for "contempt of court."

A protest is being organized outside the federal courthouse on Jan. 25 in Chicago and outside FBI and federal buildings in cities across the country, demanding an end to the grand jury and an end to the FBI raids.

Activists around the country have continued to organize in defense of the targeted activists. On Dec. 10 in Chicago, over 200 people attended the annual People's Thanksgiving fund raiser organized by *Fight Back* newspaper and raised more than \$7000 for the legal defense. Many student and civil-liberties groups and trade-union bodies have passed resolutions denouncing the raids and subpoenas, including AFSCME Council 5, St. Paul Labor Federation, San Francisco Labor Council, Troy Area Labor Council, SEIU Local 73, Teamsters Local 705, and the Chicago Teachers Union.

On Dec. 23, about 75 people attended a press conference inside the Federal Dirksen Building in Chicago to respond to the latest subpoenas. Palestine solidarity activist Maureen Murphy, editor of the website *The Electronic Intifada* and one of those subpoenaed on Dec. 21, read the following statement:

"I have no intention in participating in the government's witch hunt. It is very clear that no crime has been committed and that the government's motivation in issuing these subpoenas is to have us name the names of other activists not only here in the United States, but also in places like Palestine and Colombia, where many of us have traveled to learn about the human rights situations in those places.

"We can only assume that the U.S. government shares intelligence with the governments of Israel and Colombia, whose repressive military rule the U.S. bankrolls at the U.S. taxpayers' expense. And it is essentially a prison sentence or worse for human rights activists in Palestine and Colombia to be singled out and identified in this way. And I have no intention in playing any role in that." For information on the nationwide protests on Jan. 25, see [www.stopfbi.net](http://www.stopfbi.net). ■

## 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: Jan. 9, 2011

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**

© 2010 GCC/IBT 869-M

For info about Socialist Action and how to join: Socialist Action National Office, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610, [socialistaction@gmail.com](mailto:socialistaction@gmail.com), (510) 268-9429

Socialist Action newspaper editorial offices: [socialistactionnews@yahoo.com](mailto:socialistactionnews@yahoo.com) Website: [www.socialistaction.org](http://www.socialistaction.org)

## WHERE TO FIND SOCIALIST ACTION

• ASHLAND, Ore.: [damonjure@earthlink.net](mailto:damonjure@earthlink.net)  
• ASHLAND, Wis.: [northlandiguana@gmail.com](mailto:northlandiguana@gmail.com)

• BOSTON: [boston-socialistaction@gmail.com](mailto:boston-socialistaction@gmail.com) (781) 630-0250

• CARRBORO, N.C.: (919) 967-2866, [robonica@lycos.com](mailto:robonica@lycos.com)

• CHICAGO: P.O. Box 578428 Chicago, IL 60657, [chisocialistaction@yahoo.com](mailto:chisocialistaction@yahoo.com)

• CONNECTICUT: (860) 478-5300

• DULUTH, MINN.: P.O. Box 16853, Duluth, MN 55816, [rissorrevolution@yahoo.com](mailto:rissorrevolution@yahoo.com), [www.the-red-raven.blogspot.com](http://www.the-red-raven.blogspot.com)

• FLORIDA: [socialistaction\\_tampa@hotmail.com](mailto:socialistaction_tampa@hotmail.com)

• KANSAS CITY: [kcsa@workernet.org](mailto:kcsa@workernet.org) (816) 221-3638

• Louisville area / Lexington, Ky.: [redlotus51@yahoo.com](mailto:redlotus51@yahoo.com), (502) 451-2193

• MINNEAPOLIS/St. Paul: (612) 802-1482, [socialistaction@visi.com](mailto:socialistaction@visi.com)

• NEW YORK CITY: (212) 781-5157

• PHILADELPHIA: [philly.socialistaction@gmail.com](mailto:philly.socialistaction@gmail.com)

• PORTLAND, ORE.: (503) 233-1629 [gary1917@aol.com](mailto:gary1917@aol.com)

• PROVIDENCE: [ADGAGNE@YAHOO.COM](mailto:ADGAGNE@YAHOO.COM), (401) 419-1706

• SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA: P.O. Box 10328, OAKLAND, CA 94610 (510) 268-9429, [sfsocialistaction@gmail.com](mailto:sfsocialistaction@gmail.com)

• SUPERIOR, Wis.: [wainosunrise@yahoo.com](mailto:wainosunrise@yahoo.com)

• WASHINGTON, DC: [christopher.towne@gmail.com](mailto:christopher.towne@gmail.com) (202) 286-5493

## SOCIALIST ACTION CANADA

NATIONAL OFFICE

526 Roxton Road, Toronto, Ont. M6G 3R4, (416) 535-8779 [www.socialistaction-canada.blogspot.com](http://www.socialistaction-canada.blogspot.com)

## Subscribe to Socialist Action

Get Socialist Action newspaper each month by 1st-class mail!

— \$10 for six months — \$20 for 12 months — \$37 for 24 months

Note: We no longer offer subscriptions sent by 2nd-class mail.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

I want to join the Socialist Action Newspaper Supporters Club.  
I enclose an extra contribution of:  \$100  \$200  Other

Clip and mail to: P.O. Box 460501, San Francisco, CA 94146-0501.  
Credit cards: See [www.socialistaction.org](http://www.socialistaction.org) to subscribe with PayPal.

# U.S. public sector under attack

By ANDREW POLLACK

Politicians of both major parties in the United States, from the federal level down to the smallest towns, are making clear the next big ruling-class assault will come in the public sector. While the labor movement is ill prepared to combat that assault, it is ironically in that sector where workers can perhaps best make a stand to turn around the bosses' overall offensive.

Let's begin by looking at the latest wave of these attacks. Foremost among them was President Barack Obama's Nov. 30 order of a two-year pay freeze for two million federal workers. Several commentators called it Obama's PATCO, referring to Ronald Reagan's savage anti-union attack on air-traffic controllers, which emboldened private employers to follow his lead.

In monetary terms Obama's freeze is mostly symbolic. It would cut just \$5 billion by 2012, or 0.4% of the \$1.3 trillion deficit. But we can be sure he'll follow it with more such measures, and that local and state governments will echo his "debt reduction" logic to demand cuts of their own. Private firms will ask for comparable concessions.

Then in mid-December, Obama reached a deal with Republicans to continue Bush's tax cuts, including for the richest Americans. The deal also reduced the amount of Social Security taxes workers pay from 6.2% to 4.2% for one year. The long-term effect of that move will be to endanger Social Security's fiscal soundness and perhaps even its existence. By making the program dependent for the first time on general revenues, it sets up a scenario in which politicians can demand its curtailment or abolition using deficit-cutting, tax-slashing rhetoric.

Numerous governors-elect have announced plans to attack public workers in their states. Ohio's John Kasich announced he would end collective bargaining for child-care and home-care workers. In Wisconsin, Scott Walker has called for tripling health-care costs for public workers and ending their right to collectively bargain if they don't agree. Walker also floated the idea of making Wisconsin a "right-to-work" state.

Even supposedly pro-labor Democratic candidates have been blunt about their intentions to go after labor. In New York, governor-elect Andrew Cuomo said during his campaign that labor would have to make steep sacrifices. After the election he formed a team of business executives to advise him on where to cut, and to craft advertising promoting the attacks—a team joined by New York City Building Trades union leader Gary Barbera, who repeated the "we must all sacrifice" mantra.

Jerry Brown, returning to the California governor's mansion, declared he would have to "do things that labor doesn't like"—including reducing public-employee pensions. Oregon's newly elected Gov. John Kitzhaber said he would hold down projected pay increases for public-sector workers.

Meanwhile, attacks on teachers and students continue to increase. The Los Angeles Unified School District is demanding pay cuts, and "value added" evaluations to replace tenure. And the ideological assault in the form of propaganda for school "saviors" who impose testing and bust unions is swelling, thanks in great part to financing by a foundation headed by Bill Gates. A draft bill in Illinois—which faces opposition from the progressive Chicago Teachers Union—would strip teachers' unions of many rights, decimate tenure rights, and restrict teacher say on school affairs, reducing their ability to bargain over issues that impact students such as class size and staffing.

The dropping of pro-labor rhetoric by Democrats has conservative commentators gloating. *Washington Post* business columnist Charles Lane announced that "the big political story in 2011 will be the struggle to rein in public-sector unions, whose pay, pensions and health benefits are bankrupting some of the biggest states. ... What's really interesting, as I've written, somewhat obsessively, is the looming struggle between budget-cutting Democrats and the unions.

"This is the contest that will determine whether Democrats can survive ... by putting the sustainability of vital public services ahead of the unions' demands."

James Pethokoukis reported in a Reuters column titled, "Secret GOP plan: Push states to declare bankruptcy and smash unions," that "Congressional Republicans appear to be quietly but methodically executing a plan that would (a) avoid a federal bailout of spendthrift states and (b) cripple public employee



Patrick Semansky / AP

(Left) Protest against state cuts to higher education, held outside capitol building in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Nov. 10.

that matter) rationale for the U.S. state structures. Yet these states pay for and provide services that in most industrialized countries were long ago taken over by national governments to take advantage of economies of scale. And states pay for those services by regressive taxes, and by bonds that yield massive profits to private investors.

So in times of crisis, the impact of a downturn plays out in irrational ways, varying by state. But in all cases the state's rulers, and their allies in Washington, seek to force each state's workers to pay for the crisis. (In the same way, the differential impact of the crisis within Europe is a product of the artificial restriction, by vestigial nation-state boundaries, of continent-wide investment, production, and consumption flows. See article on page 4.)

But it doesn't take a sophisticated grasp of capital's functioning, much less of irrational, outdated political structures, for workers to know they are being stripped of public services that they need now more than ever.

That's why the potential for a class-wide defense of public-sector workers and the services they provide is possible. Workers desperately need jobs, and they know that they and their families need education, health care, and other services that can only be rationally provided by the public sector.

To turn that awareness into struggle, we can start with building solidarity with particular struggles of city and state workers. We can hold conferences to compare notes on the attacks and organize solidarity, and to call common nationwide days of action in defense of the public sector as a whole. At such conferences, with the participation of community groups, we can draw up a list of services needing to be expanded, and formulate demands on the bosses' profits and the Pentagon's budget to fund them. ■

unions by pushing cash-strapped states ... to declare bankruptcy."

Pethokoukis repeated claims that states would have unfunded pension liabilities of up to \$3 trillion in coming years, and looked hopefully to legislation amending federal bankruptcy law so states can declare bankruptcy and then tear up union contracts.

Alongside efforts to savage the public workforce are new unprecedented steps to curtail public services. For instance, more than 20% of Detroit's 139 square miles would be refused services under a plan developed by Mayor Dave Bing, who wants to force residents of some neighborhoods to move into other parts of the city.

Yet amidst this campaign against the public sector came renewed evidence that the private sector is in no position to lead the economy out of depression. A *Wall Street Journal* article titled "Companies Cling to Cash" said that "rather than pouring their money into building plants or hiring workers, nonfinancial companies in the U.S. were sitting on \$1.93 trillion in cash and other liquid assets at the end of September. ... Cash accounted for 7.4% of the companies' total assets—the largest share since 1959."

"The cash buildup shows the deep caution many companies feel about investing in expansion while the economic recovery remains painfully slow and high unemployment and battered household finances continue to limit consumers' ability to spend."

A *New York Times* article on Dec. 4 made a telling comparison between the public sector crisis and other aspects of the global downturn: "The finances of some state and local governments are so distressed that analysts say they are reminded of the run-up to the subprime mortgage meltdown or of the debt crisis hitting nations in Europe... at some point investors could balk at lending to the weakest states, setting off a crisis that could spread to the stronger ones, much as the turmoil in Europe has spread from country to country."

This gets to what's really behind the crisis in the public sector. Most fundamental is the long-term crisis of profitability that the global economy has been in for decades. But the crisis plays out on a terrain of economic and political structures that have long outlived their usefulness or even survivability, whether states within the U.S., or countries on the European continent.

There is clearly no economic (or political, for

## WikiLeaks Did What the Corporate Press Couldn't or Wouldn't Do: They Gave the People a True View

By MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

**"The U.S. has spent tons of billions of dollars and thousands of lives in defense of one of the most corrupt nations on earth."**

If the WikiLeaks saga has shown us anything, it's that things are seldom what they seem; and allies, in truth, are almost indistinguishable from adversaries. That's because what a nation says, and what a nation does, are often two different things. And what a diplomat SAYS?

There is one discourse for public consumption; what they say in confidential government cables is another. For example, the U.S. has spent tons of billions of bucks to "stabilize" Afghanistan, and for almost a decade presidents and diplomats have spoken glowingly of Afghan President Hamid Karzai as a force for democracy in the region. Presidents have embraced him and lauded him as a valued ally.

In public, that is. Diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks and published by some newspapers tell an entirely different tale. They describe Karzai as a man of "deep seated insecurities" (if so, it's probably because he remembers how the U.S. treated its "trusted allies," the Diem brothers in Vietnam, in the '60s!), and a man unable to grasp the basics of statecraft.

Other cables describe naked corruption, the selling of ministers' offices, high-level favors for drug kingpins, and their power in the country. One cable quotes Karzai as saying, "I wish I had the Taliban as my soldiers!" This cable was sent two years ago!

WikiLeaks did what the corporate press couldn't or wouldn't do; they gave the people a true view into state relations, especially in a nation where the U.S. has spent tons of billions of dollars and thousands or lives (not to mention untold thousands of Afghan lives!) in defense of one of the most corrupt nations on earth.

WikiLeaks has performed a powerful and valuable public service. © MAJ 2011

# Europe's fightback holds lessons for all workers

By ANDREW POLLACK

Just as in the U.S., the deepening crisis in Europe is developing on two levels. On the one hand is an economic system going through one of its regular, decades-long downturns. On the other hand, that downturn is played out on a terrain of nation-states of differing economic size and strength, which themselves are the products of long-term political evolutions. And these nation-states, which long ago lost their economic rationale for separate existence, nonetheless continue to frustrate even the feeble efforts of the European Union to unite the continent's markets.

Despite the differences in how the crisis plays out in each country, common to all of them is the rhetoric used by the bosses and the policies being pushed. Common also are the initial weaknesses of each country's working class flowing from past defeats.

But equally common have been inspiring strikes and demonstrations, which are beginning to break down those weaknesses. Flowing naturally from those struggles are calls by revolutionaries across the continent to deepen and, most importantly, to unify the struggles.

An article by Ingo Schmidt for Canada's Socialist Project summarized well the roots and current manifestations of the crisis: "The rich and powerful in the centers of the Euro-zone are concerned. The convenient practice of dumping most of the costs of economic crises on workers in the periphery [i.e. the poorer European nations], so that workers in the centers feel safe from income and job losses, doesn't work as smoothly as it did so often in the past. Protests and strikes flare up from Athens to Dublin but also Paris and London. ... German workers, who are told the crisis is over, are deeply suspicious about the security of their jobs and incomes."

Commenting on a proposal to turn the ad-hoc funds used to "save" the Greek and Irish, and soon other, economies in the periphery into a permanent fund, he pointed out that "this IMF-style fund doesn't solve the uneven development of the European centers and its periphery, which is, together with a world-wide over-accumulation of capital, the root causes for such crises."

Rather than unifying and harmonizing development levels across Europe, as the EU was supposedly designed to achieve, the EU "has generated systemic macroeconomic imbalances: a bloc of surplus countries centered on Germany on the one side, and a deficit bloc in the Mediterranean periphery on the other."

Schmidt notes that countries that have only recently joined the "surplus" club did so when social democratic governments boosted exports by cheapening labor. Once they'd done that favor for capital, their ruling classes tapped populist resentment to install conservative governments, while also encouraging far-right parties, such as that of the openly racist and Islamophobic Geert Wilders in the Netherlands.

The parallels on the U.S. political scene are obvious—except that the United States is still at the stage in which the Democrats, with their cuts, are preparing the stage for a government-wide Republican ascendancy (and a bigger Tea Party-type movement, echoing Wilders' rhetoric).

Schmidt noted the parallel between Europe-wide production shifts and those in the United States, comparing U.S. corporations that migrated to Southern right-to-work states in the 1980s, to break unions, to German capital that jumped at the chance to pit unorganized workers in the East of Germany against better-organized workers in the West. "The result was wage restraint that no other capitalist class in Europe could match." That's the basis on which Germany's stronger economy today rests—a basis ever more shaky as the weaker countries fall deeper into debt and offer shrinking markets for surplus countries' exports.

What's more, the supposed integration of the peripheral countries into the Europe-wide market happened in a way that left them relegated to the less efficient, less capital-intensive end of the production chain—the most expendable links in a crisis.



Protesters rally in Dublin on Nov. 27 against Ireland's austerity program, imposed in accord with dictates of the IMF and the banks.

Schmidt ends with a call "to build coalitions between deficit and surplus countries. After all, many workers in the latter think they have to make sacrifices to the benefit of Irish and Greek slackers but don't realize that they are effectively bailing out the rich who had invested in the periphery." And the part "that stays in Ireland and Greece helps the rich in those two countries."

Proving Schmidt's point about the woes even in surplus countries, the Dec. 24 *Wall Street Journal* reported that Bavaria "is at the center of Germany's resilient economic success, driving the nation's growth even as much of Europe struggles to stay solvent."

"Except that many people in this region, and around the nation, seem subdued and uncertain about their own financial health. Germany's good fortune ... is widely viewed here as having come at the expense of its workers, who for the past decade have sacrificed wages and benefits to make their employers more competitive."

The *Journal* quoted several German workers resentful at sending money to poorer European countries and expressing nostalgia for the Deutschmark, as the gains from export-driven trade in the Euro zone hasn't trickled down to those making the goods.

"Low salaries—and higher prices—are a core complaint of German workers who are increasingly demanding wage increases after a decade in which their real earnings dropped by 4.5%. Exports have grown robustly in part because workers agreed years ago to reduced wages and reduced hours to make Germany more competitive."

On Nov. 24, three million Portuguese workers took part in a general strike called by the country's two union federations, the General Union of Workers (UGT) and General Confederation of the Workers of Portugal (CGTP, linked to the Communist Party). It was prepared with a demonstration in Lisbon on Nov. 7 of 300,000 workers.

The strike was called in response to the government's plan to bring the public deficit down by cutting public sector wages, freezing pensions, slashing social spending, and increasing Value Added Taxes.

*Labor Notes* reported that Transport Workers Union Local 100, which represents subway and bus workers in New York City, was invited to send a solidarity delegation to Lisbon as guests of the Railway Workers Union and the CGTP. The delegates reported on their return: "Although the government has not backed down from its planned budget, railway unionists and activists from left parties feel that the strike raised the fight to a new level and are optimistic that they will be

able to force a change in government policies."

Manuel Carvalho da Silva, leader of the CGTP, said: "From now on we will be more demanding and strong in defending our demands such as the minimum wage, compliance with the agreements on defense of workers and the unemployed, and the demand for different policies."

Two Portuguese Marxists, Brais Fernandez and Xaquín Pastoriza, summarized the lessons of the strike on the website of the International Marxist Tendency ([www.marxist.com](http://www.marxist.com)), in an essay that mirrored conclusions of revolutionaries about similar upsurges elsewhere in Europe: "So far workers' demands have been mainly defensive in character with a view to preserve rights acquired in decades of battles..."

"The recent movements in France and Greece show that in the current situation it is difficult to stop the adjustment and austerity plans. ... Under these conditions the union movement needs a serious strategy of struggle which increases the intensity of the movement."

The authors called for recurring and prolonged general strikes in Portugal, and they raise the idea of European-wide mobilizations. "Moreover, it is important that the Portuguese left adopts a program that emphasizes that these attacks are the consequence of the crisis of the capitalist system and therefore require a genuinely socialist program to fight them."

A general strike was also held in Greece on Dec. 15, following up on the big Nov. 17 rally (see article on next page). The strikes were called to protest the latest stage of labor "reforms" demanded by the European Union and the IMF when they extended a \$146 billion loan provided in May. The reforms include a new round of pay cuts and salary caps in the public sector, and restrictions on collective bargaining in the private sector.

Echoing the logic of all budget cutters in this period, Socialist Prime Minister George Papandreou said, "We want to keep firms afloat and prevent layoffs" by allowing bosses to cut costs.

Meanwhile, students came to the fore in the fight against cuts in the UK. Alan Thornett of Socialist Resistance wrote in *International Viewpoint* that the ruling class has launched "the biggest package of cuts in Britain in living memory—the sacking of at least 500,000 public sector workers, with an additional 500,000 job losses in the private sector as a consequence. ... Their project is to put an end to the age of welfare which opened up as the Second World War came to an end."

The bosses' rhetoric in Britain sounds just like that in conservative U.S. media outlets, with "endless stories of 'benefit scroungers' sponging off 'hard working taxpayers' and 'housing cheats' living in luxury accommodation with huge families. ... Public sector workers are demonized as useless bureaucrats sitting in overstuffed workplaces waiting to draw their 'gold plated' pensions. ... Alongside all this reactionary spin has gone the ridiculous mantra that the debt must be repaid and 'there is no alternative.'"

Thornett described the almost complete abdication of national union leadership: "In most industries massive attacks have already taken place without resistance. ... Under these very weak conditions action against the cuts does not come easy. This is why the student demonstrations we have seen in recent weeks have been so magnificent. The response from the students in terms of mass demonstrations, occupations and protests exceeded all expectations."

Thornett noted with optimism a Nov. 27 conference against the cuts, which united parts of the movement that had previously jealously guarded their turf.

Meanwhile, revolutionaries in France were drawing a balance sheet of the revolt there and what it implied for the next stage of fightback. New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) Executive Member Fred Borras wrote: "The government repeated that increased life expectancy would cause the bankruptcy of the French pension system, concealing its real goal, to get rid of it."

"Since the government's 'pedagogy' on pensions had not been particularly effective, we saw crude operations like the aborted attempt to divert attention onto law-and-order issues or onto the Roma ... Nothing worked. Nothing, except attrition."

"Taking into account the scope of the attack and the level of determination of the government, it would have been necessary to strike much harder. Not to be satisfied with blocking this or that branch of industry but blocking the whole country. Only an ongoing gen-

(continued on page 5)

# ... Europe

(continued from page 4)

eral strike would have made that possible.”

The hesitancy to broaden or continue the strike among rank-and-file workers “relates first of all to a lack of confidence in the possibility of winning. ... In certain sectors the weight of past defeats weighs negatively in the balance. Other important factors were the atomization of the working class, the extent of unemployment and precarious work, uncertainty about the future, the difficulty of ‘making ends meet.’” All of this was exacerbated by the willingness to compromise of top union leaderships.

Nonetheless, “The first tests of mobilization showed a high level of readiness for action, and trade-union activists on the ground wanted to push further and harder. Local inter-union coordinating committees demonstrated greater combativeness, multiplying blockades involving workers from different sectors, adding departmental one-day strikes to those announced at a national level.” Unfortunately, “Nothing arose on a national level like this.”

Still, “since the end of the revolt, union recruitment has increased. ... Teams of radical young trade-union militants have emerged and that is an asset for the future.” And although the government succeeded in passing its bill, “it lost on the idea that its policy is the only one possible ... an invaluable gain in these times of crisis.”

The need for continent-wide unity among anti-cuts activists was the centerpiece of the Third European Anti-capitalist Conference, held in Paris at the height of the French revolt.

The statement adopted by the conference highlighted the “deep and durable character of the crisis,” which is “structural rather than temporary.” It noted that neoliberal economic policies are accompanied by “a return to ‘values’ that tend to legitimate the return to the house of hundreds of thousands of women. ... The governments are trying to divert anger by encouraging xenophobia and racism, targeting immigrants and the Roma as scapegoats.” (Unfortunately, the statement doesn’t mention the mushrooming Islamophobia promoted by the same forces.)

In addition, in Germany, Switzerland, and Poland, “there is a new offensive favoring the construction of nuclear power stations, which is only beginning” yet has already provoked protests.

Alongside a series of demands in defense of wages, services, and benefits, the conference noted that “the crisis also shows clearly the predatory character of the profit system, by recklessly exploiting natural resources, annihilating peasant agriculture, destroying ecosystems, causing global warming. As never before, justice and self-management, emancipatory projects, and a socialist horizon are becoming consubstantial with the environmental struggle.

“To fulfill fundamental human needs, it’s necessary to abolish the illegitimate public debt,” and banks and hedge funds must be “expropriated in order to socialize credit.” Winning such measures “requires a government born from the mobilizations, under their control and able to impose respect for workers’ rights.

“The future belongs to socialism, to social ownership of all the main means of production, whose management already depends on the cooperation of billions of men and women at an international scale.” ■

Matt Cardy / Getty Images



Students at the University of Bristol take part in Nov. 30 demonstrations throughout Britain against education budget cuts and rise in tuition fees.



Alkis Konstantinidis / AP

## General strike in Greece

By VANGELIS ITESIS

On Dec. 15, electronic media throughout the globe focused once more on the Greek crisis. The big news this time less involved rising bond spreads or other financial ratings than active human beings collectively fighting for a better life, for a life no longer subjugated to profits for a few. TV newscasters spoke darkly of “riots in Athens,” but what had just happened was one of the most successful and massive general strikes in the recent history of Greece.

Several months ago, the Greek General Confederation of Labor had declared a one-day nationwide strike for Dec. 15. Union bureaucrats, of course, neither expected nor wished this day to really be a day of workers’ independent mass action. They merely wanted to wash their hands of the open class war that Greek and European capitalists have launched, and to show that they still represent the workers by organizing a strike some days before Christmas—when, according to their calculations, only walks through shopping malls would be at stake.

The bureaucrats did not foresee that the social-democratic government—faithful to its promise to “save the economy,” i.e., the capitalists’ profits—would choose the same “dead period” as the most appropriate time for changing the legal framework concerning workers’ collective bargaining rights.

National collective agreements that regulate minimum wages, allowances, and salary increases are to be substituted by local workplace agreements in which the bosses will have the upper hand. Employers thus will be at ease to impose the most favorable terms for their own objectives in the negotiation process. It is not difficult to see that this amounts to a large-scale reduction of wages in the private sector, similar to what has been already achieved in the public sector after last years’ emergency measures taken under the shadow of the Memorandum of Financial Support mechanism that the Greek government signed with the EU and IMF.

The target of lowering wages by centrally and universally determined conditions is what govern-

ment officials call “an all-embracing change” in the economy, enforced by a “renascent and effective state apparatus.”

The spirit of resistance, however, evinced in not just a few recent social struggles throughout Europe—such as France, Britain, and Italy—has not abandoned Greek shores. The union bureaucrats had declared the general strike as yet another ritual to indicate the trade unions’ readiness to participate in the game of social bargaining. Instead, the coordinating efforts of grassroots labor activists transformed the event into a visible demonstration of the power that workers have when they collectively take to the streets and posit themselves as a class against the ruling class.

This is the only possible answer to the question of how the country can be saved. Hundreds of thousands of people marched against a parliament building that is now revealed to be the headquarters of the capitalist war camp.

The “riots” to which the attention of the mass media in Greece was once again attracted must be seen this time more as signs of an impending storm. Revolutionary socialists look to mass action—preferably peaceful—as our method. But violence is what the state and the capitalists have chosen as a way of conduct; streets on fire are the offspring of their own policies. In playing with the lives of working people, they play indeed with fire.

The government may continue to pass bills, the EU officials may speculate about the future of capitalist Europe, the bosses may whet their blades, but they all have to encounter and to overpower a real opponent—the working class. Our main task is to reinforce this opponent, to make the working class united, stronger, capable of fighting back and overthrowing capitalism in Greece, and in the whole of Europe and the world.

Since the capitalist class and their governments have chosen to launch a globally orchestrated war, we ultimately have but one choice: to reload the perspective of a world socialist revolution as the only alternative. ■

### GREEK REVOLUTIONARIES DISCUSS STRATEGY

The annual convention of OKDE-Spartakos, Greek section of the Fourth International, was held in Athens, Dec. 17-19. Delegates were aware that the period is critical, the class struggle is intense, and the political tasks falling on revolutionaries’ shoulders are important and immense.

The political resolution confirmed the validity of the decision previously taken to actively participate in the building of the anti-capitalist political coalition ANTARSYA, in collaboration with several other anti-capitalist and socialist organizations.

This time, however, after heated debate, a more cautious approach to the problems of anti-capitalist regroupment was endorsed. Emphasis shifted away from the perspective of the transformation of the ANTARSYA coalition into a broad anti-capitalist party. Instead, the delegates opted for the evolution of ANTARSYA from an electoral coalition to a political federation in which the Greek FI section will keep its organizational autonomy, trying to articulate a revolutionary Marxist strategy on the grounds of the common experience created by actual social struggles, putting forward transitional demands in face of the deepening crisis, and linking more closely the political work done inside ANTARSYA with the tasks of building a revolutionary party in Greece. This, of course, is a subjective evaluation of the political resolution made by the author of this note.—V.I.

# Harassment of WikiLeaks reflects mounting assault on civil liberties

Tertius Pickard / AP



(Left) Dec. 10 march in Brisbane, Australia, in defense of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

BY JEFF MACKLER

The WikiLeaks release of a quarter-million secret U.S. diplomatic cables in early December, as well as the earlier WikiLeaks revelations on U.S. mass murder of civilians and other heinous policies in Afghanistan and Iraq, confirm the fact that technological progress in the field of communications dramatically reduces the gap between the commission and cover-up of the crimes of the ruling imperial powers and their exposure to the world's people.

As sensational as WikiLeaks' revelations are, the great bulk of U.S. imperialism's policies remain hidden from public view. The CIA's announced budget for 2010 of some \$80 billion, for example, does not include the expenditures for this agency's clandestine operations—that is, its Black Budget total of \$1.1 trillion. The latter covers secret funds for "special operations." These include assassinations, orchestrated coups to replace unfriendly governments, and similar dirty deeds that are known only to the select few.

Nevertheless, WikiLeaks' 37-year-old founder, Julian Assange, and his full-time staff of five associates and 800 volunteers, did have a secret weapon that forced his unsuspecting partners in the print media (*Le Monde* in France, *El Pais* in Spain, the German *Der Spiegel*, *The Guardian* in England, and *The New York Times*) to refrain from their usual cover-ups. The authenticity of WikiLeaks' revelations *could not be denied*. The hundreds of thousands of documents all had the official imprimatur of the U.S. government and its various agencies, staff, and soldiers on the front line.

It was as if WikiLeaks had the official keys to the vaults containing the recorded history of significant portions of U.S. imperialism's horrors for the past 10 years. And indeed it had! Many of the "classified" embassy revelations came directly from the government's computers, access to which is apparently available to thousands of people with the proper password and related codes. It appears that some 900,000 Americans are today classified with some level of

**The embassy cables released by WikiLeaks reveal the imperial arrogance of U.S. officials around the world, who treat their peers with contempt and disdain.**

government "security clearance."

Even a small percentage of these, the disgruntled few, so to speak, would be sufficient to punch a gaping hole in almost any security system. Daniel Ellsberg's 1971 release to *The New York Times* of the Pentagon Papers, exposing U.S. war crimes during the Vietnam War, is a case in point.

Bradley Manning, a 23-year-old military intelligence analyst, imprisoned for the past six months—currently at the U.S. Marine Base in Quantico, Va.—is another. Manning denies the charges against him that he released classified videos depicting U.S. helicopters near Baghdad blatantly firing on and murdering some dozen civilians, including two Reuters reporters.

The videos evidence a cold-blooded, coordinated mass murder, replete with military personnel reveling in their success as they mechanically go through the motions of mis-identifying photographic equipment as automatic rifles and innocent rescue efforts by nearby civilians as terrorist associated.

Assange went to great lengths to praise Bradley Manning without confirming that Manning was the source of the video leaks. Said Assange, "If indeed it is the case, as alleged by the Pentagon, that the young soldier—Bradley Manning—is behind some of our recent disclosures, then he is without doubt an unparalleled hero."

Manning's conditions of imprisonment have been described by his attorney, David Coombs, as akin to torture aimed at extracting a "confession" that involves implicating Assange and WikiLeaks as co-conspirators to com-

mit espionage. Under U.S. law, charges involving so-called conspiracy allow for obtaining easy convictions of people that have no association with any crime. Attorney Lynne Stewart's issuance of a press release on behalf of her 1995 client, the "blind Sheikh" Omar Abdel Rachman, was deemed as a "conspiracy to aid and abet terrorism." Stewart is currently imprisoned for 10 years. In the same vein, a series of Supreme

Court decisions and related legislation have today defined the term "material aid to terrorism" so broadly as to include virtually anyone.

## U.S. war data uncovered

President Obama himself, with regard to the 90,000 WikiLeaks documents on the Afghan War released last July, sought to dismiss or undermine the revelations with the claim that they were old hat and that with his appointment of Gen. Stanley McChrystal—subsequently fired for other reasons—to head U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, his administration had changed U.S. policy and was now taking greater care to minimize the massive U.S. "collateral" murders of innocent civilians.

Assange quickly dismissed Obama's statement with a mass of U.S. new official military data indicating that the Afghan civilian kill rate had not diminished. He told Amy Goodman of the "Democracy Now!" news program that in addition to the facts on record that refute Obama's statements, there is a huge gap between the "words" contained in announced government policy and the facts documented on the ground. The latter demonstrated the U.S. slaughter of some 20,000 Afghan civilians from 2002 to 2010.

WikiLeaks staffers took great care to compare the "kill" figures reported directly by soldiers on the ground with the final "edited" figures later released by the Pentagon, noting in all cases that the latter had been sanitized—that is, reduced—for public consumption. Further, the WikiLeaks figures, according to

Assange, represent only a small portion of civilian casualties, the vast number still remaining unreported or unaccounted for. The norm, said Assange, is that only the "big" kills are reported.

Similarly, WikiLeaks' 390,000 classified documents on the Iraq War total the number of civilians killed at 285,000. This figure, and all of the above, were meticulously tabulated from official U.S. reports written by individual soldiers in the field, various intelligence agencies, and Pentagon officials. They exclude, of course, the unreported "casualties" as well as the death-squad murders committed by various "private" war contractors. But even here WikiLeaks tallies do include data on the wholesale killings committed by U.S. Task Force 373, a secret American assassination team taking its orders from various Afghan government and U.S. officials.

In short, WikiLeaks does not presume to present totals of all those killed by U.S. forces during the 10-year Afghan War or the eight-year Iraq War. Other institutions have provided such data. In Iraq, for example, since the 1991 Desert Storm, U.S. saturation bombing, and mass murder there, figures close to 1.5 million dead have been reported by respected international agencies. These include civilian deaths directly attributed to the decade-long U.S. sanctions against Iraq following Desert Storm.

The actual content of the WikiLeaks embassy cables released to date is in the main far from sensational. Rather, it evidences the imperial and crude arrogance of U.S. officials around the world, who treat their peers in other countries with contempt and disdain and who roar at any evidence of independence from what is assumed to be their imperial masters. As has been known for decades, for example, U.S. allies in the Arab monarch states are revealed in the cables to be vehement in urging the U.S. to attack Iran while their public position is to express solidarity with their Iranian "neighbors."

Many of the revelations are more an embarrassment, as with angry judgments regarding the character of Gordon Brown, Britain's former Prime Minister, who the United States suggests, should be replaced—as he was in the next election.

A more serious but still not unexpected WikiLeaks revelation has former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in a confidential April 25, 2008, memo to the U.S. State Department confirming that Israel, in a clandestine attack, destroyed a Syrian nuclear reactor. The document confirmed that Israel and the United States collaborated on intelligence for the mission. Rice stated, "The U.S. intelligence community conducted an intensive, months-long effort to confirm and corroborate the information Israel provided us on the reactor and to gather more details from our own sources and methods." The WikiLeaks-provided cable was the first official confirmation of U.S. involvement.

Similarly, it was revealed that the U.S. employed economic pressure against a reluctant Irish government to guarantee continued use of Ireland's Shannon Airport to transport military materials to Israel that had been exhausted after its attack on Lebanon. Another cable revealed that the U.S. has pressured the Ethiopian Army to send some 50,00

(continued on page 7)

(continued from page 6)

troops to invade Somalia.

### Gov't, media, corporations panic

The corporate media in “democratic” nations, where free speech is accorded at least lip service, had a simple choice with regard to the WikiLeaks material—report the truth or risk the accusation and associated embarrassment that the media was little more than a semi-official instrument of the state power.

The historic Jeffersonian notion that the central aim of a free press is to expose government wrongdoing has been all but transmuted into its opposite. In the name of protecting the “national security” interests of the government, the so-called free press today serves as the instrument of the government to mis-inform the people. With regard to WikiLeaks *The New York Times* gave the government some 24 hours to prepare its response before reporting the WikiLeaks revelations.

Most of the corporate media, especially in the U.S., chose this middle course; they first handed over all the material they received from WikiLeaks to the White House media staff for vetting and then published key portions of the texts—all the while literally refusing to click on to the WikiLeaks website. The U.S. media's strange behavior in this respect was no accident. The government itself has issued orders to each and every government employee to not use either government or home or any other computers to view the revelations.

Apparently, *The New York Times's* instinct was to consider itself in this “government employee” category. The absurdity of this decision was not lost on Assange himself, who noted with a smile that the *The Times* used the material he had sent them but declined to check the WikiLeaks site itself.

Some stunned officials took the government's warning more than seriously. The president of the private Columbia University in New York City sent out a notice to all students that a possible career in public service could be jeopardized if they clicked onto the WikiLeaks website! The government's ban on clicking sent a shiver across the country, since such a warning contains within it the implication that any and all clicks on any website are recorded somewhere in cyberspace and eventually end up in a government file.

Panic was undoubtedly in the air as a virtual army of U.S. embassy and consular officials raced to contact offended government officials around the world to assure them that the undeniable denunciations and harsh judgments penned by them and now presented to the world were really just errors of judgment. The “national security” furor was not lost on international corporations that acceded to government pressure to minimize WikiLeaks' effectiveness. Amazon Web Services and Apple Inc booted out WikiLeaks, as did the Bank of America, American Express, Visa, PayPal and MasterCard.

Anticipating retaliation, including the closing down of his website, Assange took the precaution of sending encrypted copies of the over 250,000 damning embassy cables, mostly focused on the past three years, to some 100,000 locations. “If something happens to us,” he stated, “the key parts will be released automatically” via the marvel of computer technology. To date only some 220 cables have been released.

Assange told the London-based *Daily Mail* that there had been death threats against him and his WikiLeaks associates. “The threats against our lives are a matter of public record. However, we are taking the appropriate precautions to the degree that we are able when dealing with a superpower.” Several commentators on FOX-TV's “news” programs urged assassination for Assange. Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative journalist and WikiLeaks sup-



**‘If Bradley Manning is behind some of our recent disclosures, then he is without doubt an unparalleled hero.’**

**— Julian Assange**

porter Seymour Hersh, citing concern for his personal safety, warned Assange against any visits to the United States.

### Congress looks to Espionage Act

Vice President Joseph Biden, in a mid-December “Meet the Press” interview, called Assange a “high-tech terrorist” and announced that the U.S. government was looking into ways to prosecute him.

The Obama administration's attempt to build a criminal case against WikiLeaks took a major step on Dec. 14, when the U.S. District Court in Eastern Virginia ordered Twitter (and reportedly, Facebook, Google, and other web organizations) to turn over account information, phone numbers, and private messages from Assange, Manning, and three other people who have worked with WikiLeaks.

The House of Representatives sponsored a hearing on whether the Espionage Act of 1917 might be an appropriate tool against WikiLeaks. A conviction under this law carries the death sentence, although European law prohibits extradition when the death penalty is in play. Nevertheless, a conviction would mean a long prison sentence.

Congress also debated the constitutionality of freedom of speech itself, when it is deemed by the government to endanger its “national security interests.” This was a reference to the McCarthy-era witch-hunt period, in which the U.S. Supreme Court, under the leadership of Chief Justice Felix Frankfurter, consistently “balanced” First Amendment rights against the “need

to combat” the “communist menace” — yesterday's despicable version of today's “war on terror.”

An important commentary on the Espionage Act and in defense of Assange was written by Robbie Meeropol on the website of the Rosenberg Fund for Children: “I view the Espionage Act of 1917 as a lifelong nemesis. My parents [Julius and Ethel Rosenberg] were charged, tried and ultimately executed after being indicted for Conspiracy to Commit Espionage under that act.

“The 1917 Act has a notorious history. It originally served to squelch opposition to World War I. It criminalized criticism of the war effort, and sent hundreds of dissenters to jail just for voicing their opinions. It transformed dissent into treason.

“Many who attacked the law noted that the framers of the Constitution had specifically limited what constituted treason by writing it into the Constitution: ‘Treason against the United States shall consist only in levying war against them, or in adhering to their enemies, giving them aid and comfort’ (Article III, section 3). The framers felt this narrow definition was necessary to prevent treason from becoming what some called ‘the weapon of a political faction.’ Furthermore, in their discussions at the Constitutional Convention they agreed that spoken opposition was protected by the First Amendment and could never be considered treason.”

Meeropol explained how in times of political stress, capitalist courts tend to subordinate constitutional rights to the interests of the ruling power.

Meanwhile, the Swedish government stepped into the fray with a request that the British government extradite Assange, an Australian citizen, to Sweden to face charges of sexual abuse and rape. After a series of hearings on the matter, Assange was released on \$379,000 bail provided by a number of internationally prominent intellectuals and artists, including filmmakers Ken Loach and Michael Moore.

Assange, compelled to wear an electronic monitoring device, is awaiting a decision of the British courts on the extradition request. Should he eventually be convicted in Sweden, he could face up to two years in prison.

His attorney, Mark Stephens, said that the leaked material from Sweden neglected to include important exculpatory evidence—that is, evidence proving Assange's innocence. Many figures prominent in public life see the hand of U.S. intelligence agencies in this matter and have expressed doubts about the sex charges against Assange and about the veracity of his accusers.

The effort to repress the WikiLeaks revelations has its parallels in mounting attacks on civil liberties more generally. Republican Congressman Peter King, who is set to assume the chair of the House Homeland Security Committee, has stated that he intends to launch



### Targets of U.S. witch hunt (clockwise):

- Lynn Stewart, convicted on spurious charges of aiding “terrorism,” serving 10 years in federal prison.
- Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, charged with sex crimes in Sweden and facing possible criminal prosecution in the U.S.
- Bradley Manning, jailed in solitary confinement on charges that he released classified U.S. military documents and videos.

an investigation on “radicalization” among American Muslims, a community already beset with massive FBI raids on Muslim mosques and the victim of hundreds of arrests based on charges that the government refuses to reveal—citing “national security” concerns.

Similarly, Palestinian communities are subjected to horrendous persecution on trumped-up charges and accusations of conspiracy to aid and abet terrorism. The infamous Holy Land Five Case, in which the U.S. Supreme Court in June 2010 defined “material aid to terrorism” as including the charitable contributions of the Holy Land Foundation to beleaguered Palestinian and other oppressed communities around the world, served notice that the parameters of government persecution were virtually unlimited. In the Holy Land Five case the court allowed the introduction of secret evidence against this charitable organization, evidence that was deemed irrefutable.

And in one of the most egregious attempts by the U.S. government to flaunt civil liberties, 23 antiwar and social justice activists, some associated with the Freedom Road Socialist Organization, have been subpoenaed by grand juries on charges of “possible” involvement in conspiracies to aid and abet terrorism.

The fight for fundamental civil liberties and democracy looms high on the agenda of all social justice movements. This fight is inseparable from the fight against all U.S. wars and threats of wars—from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan and the Middle East in general, to Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa. All are aimed at advancing the interests of the U.S. ruling-class elite at the expense of working people everywhere.

The mobilization to build mass antiwar and social justice protests in New York and San Francisco on April 9 aims to unite all the victims of U.S. imperial policy. Solidarity with WikiLeaks and the victims of government repression at home and abroad is a prerequisite toward the construction of a massive movement to reverse the present tide of war and plunder and secure civil liberties for all. ■

Chang W. Lee / NY Times

Fabrice Coffrini / AFP / Getty Images

## Will the NDP and Labour rise to the challenges of 2011?

By BARRY WEISLEDER

Beyond North America, labour is on the march and the left is finding its voice again. Well into the third year of the global economic crisis, growing opposition to capitalist policies is fueled by layoffs, social cutbacks, rising school fees, currency wars, environmental catastrophes, attacks on civil liberties, and festering imperial military interventions.

So why do the accumulating conditions for a radical resurgence seem to spell trepidation and crisis for the labour-based New Democratic Party and for unions in Canada? Could it be that the labour leadership has been driving in reverse gear for so long that they find it difficult to stop, and shift into forward?

The problems are numerous. Many are self-inflicted. Instead of fighting the bosses, some union leaders are fighting one another. Conflicts over raiding (in the Canadian Labour Congress) and bids to undermine top elected officers (in the Ontario Federation of Labour) testify to that.

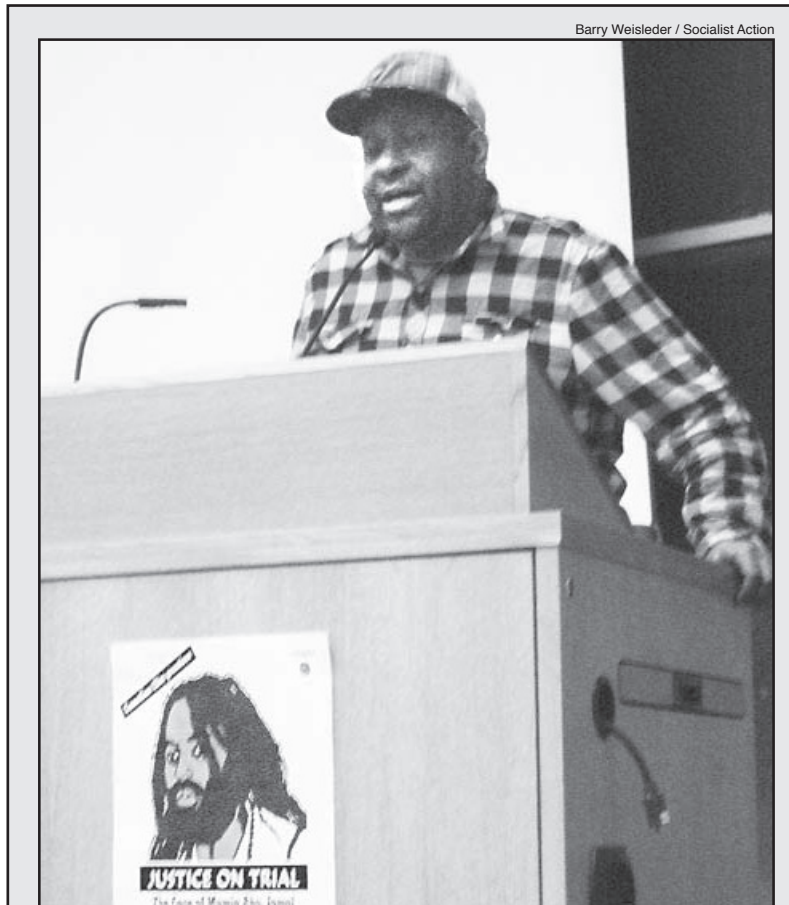
Instead of mobilizing the rank and file to reverse corporate bail-outs and tax gifts to the rich, union leaders tend to rely on weak ad campaigns, legalistic initiatives, and token rallies. Instead of bolstering labour's political independence, the tops play footsie (or cohabit) with Liberals. Instead of deepening workers' democracy, the brass clamp down on the left, and treat the NDP membership like a milch cow rather than as a source of new ideas and energy.

This helps to explain the public cynicism that surrounds labour and its political arm in English Canada. It reveals why the party cannot translate its opposition to the war in Afghanistan and its resistance to the attack on pensions, welfare, and public services into significant growth at the polls.

The likelihood of a federal election in Spring 2011 should be good news for the NDP. Party debts are paid and many of its candidates are already in the field. But the NDP vote in three federal by-elections on Nov. 29 sank like a stone; it even lost its long-held seat in Winnipeg North. Even more inauspicious was the municipal election disaster in Toronto, where a voter revolt against the lethal combination of service cuts and tax hikes turfed the Liberal/NDP regime at City Hall in favour of a right-wing populist mayor and allied anti-labour councillors.

As in west coast British Columbia, the Ontario NDP failed to channel popular opposition to a heightened Harmonized Sales Tax, which could

have been done by demanding its abolition and its replacement by major tax hikes on the rich. Proposing paltry exceptions to the regressive tax, and steering clear of a radical critique of the bourgeois tax system, has allowed right-wing populists to run wild with the



### "Justice on Trial" premieres in Toronto

Toronto radio host Norman "Otis" Richmond (above) chaired a Dec. 13 film screening and forum about Mumia Abu-Jamal. Over 80 people braved a cold Toronto night to attend the Canadian premiere of the new film "Justice on Trial: The case of Mumia Abu-Jamal" at U of Toronto Medical Sciences Auditorium.

Abu-Jamal, a respected author/radio broadcaster, has been on death row for 28 years for a murder he did not commit. "Justice on Trial" exposes many aspects of his legal lynching—judicial bias, prosecutorial misconduct, racism, police corruption, and evidence tampering. This indictment of the U.S. "justice" system is an answer to the campaign of the Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police and civic authorities, who framed Mumia and seek his execution.

The event was sponsored by Socialist Action, Common Cause, and the Bolshevik Tendency. It was endorsed by over 20 other organizations. The screening was preceded by the remarks of representatives of the sponsoring groups, and a lively discussion followed. The meeting raised over \$600, including a donation by a CUPE union local, to help offset the filmmakers' expenses.

issue, especially in BC.

Dissatisfaction with BC NDP Leader Carol James within her own provincial legislative caucus forced her to resign from the top job. Her anemic response to the sales-tax hike, which was a broken promise that forced Liberal Premier Gordon Campbell to quit in November, was only the tip of the political iceberg. James's refusal to campaign in 2009 for reversal of Liberal provincial cutbacks, and her ongoing attempts to distance the NDP from its traditional labour base—while appealing to the business elite, which remains firmly aligned with the BC Liberals—proved to be her undoing as NDP leader.

This turn of events shows the potential to win the party ranks to the fight for a pro-labour, socialist agenda—a fight that can succeed only if it is actively waged.

In the meantime, the NDP is flailing away, still identified with the late-2008 aborted federal coalition with the Liberal Party, and still smarting from the split in the NDP parliamentary caucus over the federal gun registry. The social democratic leadership is so perplexed that Leader Jack Layton may even summon his MPs to vote for the next Conservative federal budget just to avoid precipitating a Spring election.

Internally, morale is low, reflected in stagnant membership figures. The undemocratic move last March by the Ontario NDP executive to postpone the party's provincial convention by nearly two years likewise does not inspire confidence. Neither does the decision by the senior party executive to impose a "re-vote" that overturned the win by leftists at the Ontario New Democratic Youth Convention (see article in December 2010 *Socialist Action*).

The disorientation, confusion, even crisis in sections of the NDP reflect also the state of the labour movement, and vice-versa. At the BC Federation of Labour Convention, held Nov. 29-Dec. 3, there was little word about the schism among the NDP tops. But division within the labour brass was evident when most of the CUPE delegation walked away for an entire session.

This left the BC Government Employees' Union in the hall even though the latter will be outside the Fed in January due to the imminent expulsion of the federal public service umbrella, the National Union of Public and General Employees, over non-payment of dues to the CLC. That is NUPGE's response to a dispute over raiding of its affiliates by other unions in three western provinces.

On the positive side of the ledger, the BC Fed adopted a sharp critique of the global corporate agenda. But it did so without mapping out a mass action response to it. At the same time it voted to end its practice of hosting annual Fed conventions in favour of holding them only once every two years—a prescription for a less responsive, less accountable, and less democratic union federation.

It is the last thing workers want, highlighting the urgent need for a class-struggle opposition in the unions and the NDP to mine the deep reserves of working-class solidarity, to sweep aside the misleaders of our class, and to fight for a Workers' Agenda against the employers' relentless austerity drive. ■

## Stock market pension plan is a Tory scam

The latest brutal assault on the social wage is Ottawa's reversal on the Canada Pension Plan. Instead of enhancing the CPP, which federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty promised to do when he met with his provincial counterparts in Prince Edward Island last summer, the Tories are pushing a private sector scheme.

Leaning heavily on the capitalist economic crisis as a convenient crutch, Prime Minister Stephen Harper said, "Now is not the time for CPP premium increases." Does Harper appreciate the cruel irony of asking impecunious pensioners to invest in the stock market, which had three meltdowns in 15 years (1997, 2002 and 2008)?

The CPP, which provides a guaranteed benefit to all seniors, should be increased immediately. Why? Because ...

- It is impossible to live on a basic pension of \$11,200 a year.
- Sixty per cent of workers have no workplace pension.

- One-third of Canadians between the ages of 24 and 64 have no personal retirement savings.

- Only one in four taxpayers put any money into a Registered Retirement Savings Plan in 2008. After 25 years of stagnant or declining wages, it is hardly surprising how difficult it is for people to save on their own.

- 1.6 million Canadian seniors today live in poverty, with incomes below \$16,000 a year.

At the present time, the Canadian Labour Congress is campaigning for a doubling of Canada and Quebec Pension Plan benefits, to be phased in by small premium increases over seven years. The resulting \$22,400 annual pension income would be an improvement, but still woefully inadequate, especially seven years from now, and beyond.

The CPP, which hasn't been expanded since its inception 45 years ago, should be tripled, and the main burden of the contribution increase should be borne

by big business and the rich. Yes, the class that has gained the most from two decades of corporate tax cuts, and that appropriated more than 30 per cent of the extra income generated during the so-called boom years (according to Linda McQuaig and Neil Brook's recent book "The Trouble with Billionaires"), should pay for this and other pressing social needs.

Naturally, any increase in CPP benefits is opposed by the banks, financial institutions, and insurance companies, which have profited enormously by selling RRSPs.

Enter the Conservative federal government, and their political cousins in the province of Alberta. They propose a new Pooled Registered Pension Plan—a voluntary scheme to be administered by the financial industry. Small and large firms could use this to offer private pensions to their employees, who would pay into it, but get a pension based only on market performance. It would spread a grow-

ing disease, the focus of a bitter labour struggle at Vale Inco, and now at Stelco, in which management seeks to replace "defined benefits" with "defined contributions". The latter embodies the possibility of little or no pension for the entrapped workers.

Ontario Federation of Labour President Sid Ryan, who was among two dozen protesters who occupied Finance Minister Flaherty's office in Whitby, Ontario, on Dec. 19, called the Tory scheme "a gimmick to get the issue of pensions off the front pages." Ryan was all too kind. Actually, it is a wretched scam designed to rip off the working class and further subsidize financial Capital. It is a case of kicking workers while we're down.

The appropriate answer to the conniving Tories, and to the more subtle but equally venal Liberals, is for workers to stand up and fight back. General strikes from Portugal to Greece, powerful and unifying actions scarcely reported in the North American media, show the way to defend pensions and other threatened social gains. — BARRY WEISLEDER



By YVES ENGLER

# Canada employs 'human-rights' group to disrupt Venezuela

While many on the left know that Washington has spent tens of millions of dollars funding groups that oppose Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, less well known is Ottawa's role, especially that of the Canadian government's "arms-length" human rights organization, Rights & Democracy (R&D).

Montreal-based R&D recently gave its 2010 John Humphrey Award to the Venezuelan non-governmental organization PROVEA (El Programa Venezolano de Educación-Acción en Derechos Humanos). According to R&D's website, "the Award consists of a grant of \$30,000 and a [December] speaking tour of Canadian cities to help increase awareness of the recipient's human rights work." PROVEA is highly critical of Venezuela's elected government. In December 2008 Venezuela's interior and justice minister called PROVEA "liars" who were "paid in [U.S.] dollars."

During a September visit "to meet with representatives of PROVEA and other [Venezuelan] organizations devoted to human rights and democratic development," R&D President Gérard Latulippe blogged about his and PROVEA's political views: "Marino [Betancourt, director general of PROVEA] told me about recent practices of harassment and criminalization of the government towards civil society organizations." In another post Latulippe explained, "We have witnessed in recent years the restriction of the right to freedom of expression. Since 2004-2005, the government of President Chavez has taken important legislative measures which limit this right."

Upon returning to Canada, Latulippe cited Venezuela as a country with "no democracy." He told *Embassy* magazine, "You can see the emergence of a new model of democracy, where in fact it's trying to make an alternative to democracy by saying people can have a better life even if there's no democracy. You have the example of Russia. You have an example of Venezuela."

Latulippe's claims have no basis in reality. On top of improving living conditions for the country's poor, the Chavez-led government has taken initiatives to increase democratic space. They have also won a dozen elections/referendums over the past 12 years (and lost only one).

R&D, which is funded almost entirely by the federal government, takes its cues from Ottawa. The Canadian government has repeatedly attacked Chavez. In April 2009 Stephen Harper responded to a question regarding Venezuela by saying, "I don't take any of these rogue states lightly," and after expressing "concerns over the shrinkage of democratic space" in September, Minister for the Americas Peter Kent said, "This is an election month in Venezuela and the official media has again fired up some of the anti-Semitic slurs against the Jewish community as happened during the Gaza incursion."

Even the head of Canada's military recently criticized the Chavez government in the *Canadian Military Journal*. After a tour of South America, Walter Natynczyk



(Left) Bolivian Pres. Evo Morales and Venezuelan Pres. Hugo Chavez at April 10, 2010, climate-change conference in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

wrote, "Regrettably, some countries, such as Venezuela, are experiencing the politicization of their armed forces."

The Harper government's attacks against Venezuela are part of its campaign against the region's progressive forces. Barely discussed in the media, the Harper government's shift of aid from Africa to Latin America was largely designed to stunt Latin America's recent rejection of neoliberalism and U.S. dependence by supporting the region's right-wing governments and movements.

To combat independent-minded, leftist governments and movements, Harper's Conservatives have "played a more active role in supporting U.S. ideologically-driven [democracy promotion] initiatives," notes researcher Neil A. Burron. They opened a South America-focused "democracy promotion" centre at the Canadian Embassy in Peru. Staffed by two diplomats, this secretive venture may clash with the Organization of American States's non-intervention clause.

According to documents unearthed by Anthony Fenton, in November 2007 Ottawa gave the Justice and Development Consortium (Asociación Civil Consorcio Desarrollo y Justicia) \$94,580 "to consolidate and expand the democracy network in Latin America and the Caribbean." The Justice and Development Consortium—funded by the U.S. government's CIA front group National Endowment for Democracy—has worked to unite opposition to leftist Latin American governments.

Similarly, in the spring of 2008 the Canadian Embassy in Panama teamed up with the National En-

dowment for Democracy to organize a meeting for prominent members of the opposition in Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba, and Ecuador. It was designed to respond to the "new era of populism and authoritarianism in Latin America." The meeting spawned the Red Latinoamericana y del Caribe para la Democracia, "which brings together mainstream NGOs critical of the leftist governments in the hemisphere."

The foremost researcher on U.S. funding to the anti-Chavez opposition, Eva Golinger, claims Canadian groups are playing a growing role in Venezuela, and according to a May 2010 report from Spanish NGO Fríde, "Canada is the third most important provider of democracy assistance" to Venezuela after the U.S. and Spain.

Burron describes an interview with a Canadian "official [who] repeatedly expressed concerns about the quality of democracy in Venezuela, noting that the [federal government's] Glyn Berry program provided funds to a 'get out the vote' campaign in the last round of elections in that country." You can bet it wasn't designed to get Chavez supporters to the polls.

Ottawa is not forthcoming with information about the groups they fund in Venezuela, but according to disclosures made in response to a question by former NDP Foreign Affairs critic Alexa McDonough, Canada helped finance Súmate, an NGO at the forefront of anti-Chavez political campaigns. Canada gave Súmate \$22,000 in 2005-06. Minister of International Cooperation José Verner explained that "Canada considered Súmate to be an experienced NGO with the capability to promote respect for democracy, particularly a free and fair electoral process in Venezuela."

Yet the name of Súmate leader Maria Corina Machado, who Foreign Affairs invited to Ottawa in January 2005, appeared on a list of people who endorsed the 2002 coup against Chavez, for which she faced charges of treason.

The simple truth is that the current government in Ottawa supports the old elites that long worked with the U.S. empire. It opposes the progressive social transformations taking place in a number of Latin American countries and as a result it supports civil society groups opposed to these developments. ■

*Yves Engler is the author of "Canada and Israel: Building Apartheid" and the "Black Book of Canadian Foreign Policy". For more info: <http://yvesengler.com>.*

## ... Jobs picture

(continued from page 1)

media. Last year, the percentage of workers who were unemployed for more than six months rose to a staggering 45.6 percent. The average length of unemployment topped 34 weeks in 2010, up from 29.1 weeks in 2009—the longest number of weeks since the Labor Department started keeping records in 1948.

What options are there for unemployed workers these days? Some households that had relied on two or more breadwinners in the past must now live on the income only of one person who is working. Workers who feel they are too old to be hired in a good job might elect to take "early retirement" if they are lucky enough to qualify for pensions or Social Security, or if they have savings. But few have very much in the bank.

The employment picture will not get better soon. Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke cautions, "It could take four to five more years for the job market to normalize fully." But even that might be far too rosy a scenario. The U.S. economy would have to add 500,000 jobs every month for three years to restore the economy to pre-recession job levels. Many economists point out that

U.S. employment levels might never stabilize to what was considered "normal" a few years ago—and could even get much worse if the economy should fall back into a "double-dip" recession.

Important portions of the U.S. economy are still downsizing. Construction lost 16,000 jobs last month. Government offices are laying off workers due to the budget crunch.

Yet a few sectors of the economy—such as the automobile industry, which is riding high on government bailouts—seem to be awakening. A Dec. 29 AP dispatch points out that some U.S. employers have begun hiring new workers, "but the jobs are going elsewhere. The Economic Policy Institute, a Washington think tank, says American companies have created 1.4 million jobs overseas this year, compared with less than 1 million in the U.S."

Former Labor Secretary Robert Reich commented a year ago on his blog: "The basic assumption that jobs will eventually return when the economy recovers is probably wrong. Some jobs will come back, of course. But the reality that no one wants to talk about is a structural change in the economy that's been going on for years but which the Great Recession has dramatically accelerated."

"Under the pressure of this awful recession, many companies have found ways

to cut their payrolls for good. They've discovered that new software and computer technologies have made workers in Asia and Latin America just about as productive as Americans, and that the Internet allows far more work to be efficiently outsourced abroad.

"This means many Americans won't be rehired unless they're willing to settle for much lower wages and benefits. Today's official unemployment numbers hide the extent to which Americans are already on this path."

Is there no way out of this dilemma? Frances Fox Piven, writing in the *Nation* (Jan. 10-17), outlines some elementary steps to create decent and beneficial jobs. Demands that we have also called for in *Socialist Action* would include massive investments in public-service programs, and using government resources to "spur big new initiatives in infrastructure and green energy." Unfortunately, Piven notes, "Nothing like this seems to be on the agenda. Instead the next Congress is going to be fixated on an Alice in Wonderland policy of deficit reduction by means of tax and spending cuts."

Piven points out that organizing unemployed workers presents many unique difficulties since "when people lose their jobs they are dispersed, no longer much connected to their fellow workers or

their unions." Still, fighting organizations of unemployed workers had success in some localities at the time of the mass union drives of the 1930s.

Today, Piven says, "An effective movement of the unemployed will have to look something like the strikes and riots that have spread across Greece in response to the austerity measures forced on the Greek government by the European Union, or like the student protests that recently spread with lightening speed across England in response to the prospect of greatly increased school fees."

"A loose and spontaneous movement of this sort could emerge. It is made more likely because unemployment rates are especially high among younger workers."

We agree with Piven in many respects, while observing that mass movements that appear spontaneous on the surface often come about only as a result of long organizing efforts behind the scenes.

Unemployment, which is endemic to the capitalist system, must become a central issue for a revitalized and fighting labor movement in this country. A key job-creating demand that labor must fight for is lowering the workweek to 30 hours for 40-hours pay. Success will require a clean break with the Democratic Party. Workers need their own party, able to take on the bosses' government—and win. ■

# Films: *Made in Dagenham*

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH  
and MICHAEL SCHREIBER

"Made in Dagenham" is one of the best labor-oriented films to open in commercial movie houses in recent years. It is a touching, warm, and often humorous picture of British working-class life in the 1960s. And the struggle it portrays will leave you cheering.

The film (directed by Nigel Cole, with screenplay by William Ivory) is a dramatization of the three-week strike in 1968 by women at the Ford plant in Dagenham, on the outskirts of London. The victory of the sewing machinists was key in the fight to abolish wage discrimination against women, and helped to launch the feminist movement in Britain. Their militant and uncompromising struggle holds many lessons for the labor and social movements today.

"Made in Dagenham" opens on a scene of women working in a sweatshop atmosphere at industrial-size sewing machines and cutters, making upholstery for car seats in Ford automobiles. Many women are stripped to their underclothes in order to endure the sweltering heat. And when it rains, they unfurl umbrellas to protect their machines from run-off from the holes in the roof.

Most of the women are married to men who work on the plant's automobile assembly lines. (A lot of the women acting in the film are workers in real life, who were recently laid off from a Hoover plant in Wales.) The filmmakers captured the look of the late-sixties suburban working class with the women's beehive and flip hairdos, make-up, and dress styles. There are great scenes of them bicycling to work in the rain and passersby bringing them food and hot tea on the picket line. Sally Hawkins plays the petite but spunky sewing-machine operator, Rita O'Grady.

A subplot involves the World War II vet husband of one of the women who meets a tragic end, making Rita feel guilty for pushing her agenda. On the other hand, Rita gains the unexpected sympathy of a wealthy woman, Lisa Hopkins (Rosamund Pike), whose child attends the same school as Rita's son. Lisa happens to be married to a wealthy Ford official, Peter (Rupert Graves), in an upscale, split-level home; yet despite her Master's in History, he treats her like a maid.

Albert Passingham (Bob Hoskins), a sympathetic union rep, announces that the women are being reclassified into less-skilled Category B jobs, and that they will be paid 15% less than the full B rate received by men. The news infuriates them. Rita, the most vociferous, is chosen as the spokeswoman to bring their



Sally Hawkins (ctr.) as Rita O'Grady, a strike organizer in "Made in Dagenham."

grievance to management. When their written and vocal complaints prove ineffectual, they decide to strike.

Management tries to talk them out of it, threatening that a strike would bring production to a halt and no one would get any money; how would their husbands put food on the table? The union bureaucrats also try to browbeat the women into staying on the job. The head of the local union, who calls his cohorts "comrades" and spouts half-remembered quotes from Marx, argues that the women's fight against pay discrimination is really not very important in the scheme of things. And even worse, he claims, their militancy could upset the union's plans for friendly negotiations with corporations on the national level.

The frequent meetings and picket-line activities alienate the women from their families. Husbands and children complain of late or non-existent meals. When the wives travel to other towns to rally support, their husbands are left to cook, clean, and get

the kids off to school.

The women vote to strike; production stops; men are laid-off, and the plant is closed. Rita and her husband can no longer keep up payments on their refrigerator, and a crew from the appliance store carts it away. Many families likewise suffer. But Rita's husband slowly begins to understand the importance of Rita's activities in the labor movement, and he proudly offers her his support.

In the meantime, Ford's top management—including a Ford honcho from the United States—tries to engineer a deal with the union bureaucracy to end the walkout. But their efforts fail. At an important union conference, Rita gives a simple but impassioned speech, which convinces a large majority of the delegates to vote to sanction the Dagenham strike.

By this time, the Dagenham women have been receiving national publicity. Their militant action is a thorn in the side of Harold Wilson's Labor Party government, which is under pressure by the corporations to put an end to the strike wave now overtaking Britain. Barbara Castle (excellent, spot-on performance by Miranda Richardson), the Secretary of State for Employment and Productivity in Wilson's cabinet, asks the women to meet her in her office. Castle intervenes, and the strike ends.

The women did not achieve equal pay but 92% of a man's earnings, rising to the full Category B rate the following year. Still, this ruling didn't end happily: a court of inquiry (under the Industrial Courts Act 1919) was set up to consider their re-grading, but it failed to rule in their favor, and the women were only re-graded into Category C (fully skilled) following another strike in 1984, lasting six weeks.

The Dagenham sewing machinists' actions proved that working women and men have the power to win against odds that might seem to be overwhelming—if only they keep up the fight. Their actions led to the passing of the Equal Pay Act 1970, which came into force in 1975, and for the first time, prohibited inequality in terms of pay and conditions of employment between men and women in the UK.

Yet in Britain today, women still receive an average of 17 percent less than men in similar job categories. Many companies routinely flout government regulations on pay equality—and get away with it.

In the United States, the gap is even wider; women make 77 cents to a dollar despite the passage of the Equal Pay Act in 1963. One only has to read the details of conditions with which this act applies state-by-state to understand why the United States is backward in its dealing with equal pay for women. Hopefully, "Made in Dagenham" will help to bring the issue of pay discrimination against women to the fore. ■

## Too much 'sentiment' but not enough story

The surprise winner of the 2010 Giller Prize for best English-Canadian fiction, "The Sentimentalists," by Johanna Skibsrud (Douglas and McIntyre, Vancouver/Toronto, 2010, 218 pages) is both an artistic and political disappointment. The judges went a little overboard with their laudable encouragement of the young poet-turned-novelist. They are apparently willing to overlook tortuous sentence structure, a painful over-indulgence in bracketed subordinate clauses, and dense lyricism that suffocates an interesting story line. Frequent bursts of creative metaphorical prose do not rescue Skibsrud's stumbling transition to the novel form.

"The Sentimentalists" could have channelled the intense public interest in war crimes, post-traumatic stress disorder and WikiLeaks. It is a tale told by the daughter of a Vietnam War veteran. Her dad, haunted

by the horror of an actual massacre by U.S. Marines of a village of Vietnamese peasants in 1967, leaves his North Dakota trailer and moves to a small Ontario town.

There the vet lives with the father of his soldier buddy, who died mysteriously, possibly the victim of an attempted cover-up. The daughter has issues too—a failed romantic relationship, estrangement from her frequently absent, alcoholic father—but the more she learns about the horrors that contorted their lives, the more she concludes that the past is irretrievably subjective and ultimately unknowable.

This novel is a missed opportunity. It could have dramatized a compelling history that has contemporary resonance. It could have situated it in today's big picture of power, profit, and the system's multi-million victims. Connecting past and present wars of imperial intervention, and linking the toxic fogs that they propagate, alas, is a job for another writer.

— BARRY WEISLEDER

## Anniversary of Haiti earthquake

The Jan. 12<sup>th</sup> Haiti Committee, a coalition of progressive Haitian organizations and their supporters, will be holding a press conference at the Haitian Consulate at 271 Madison Ave., New York, on Jan. 12, at 1 p.m. This will mark the anniversary of the devastating earthquake.

The committee demands: Occupation Troops Out of Haiti Now! Release All Emergency Aid to Haitian Popular Organizations Now!

The military troops occupying Haiti, under the banner of the United Nations (MINUSTAH), have shown themselves to be anything but non-partisan peacekeepers. At the tune of \$612 million last year, occupation forces have repeatedly murdered unarmed civilians assembled to demonstrate their displeasure with the status quo. It has become clear that they are there at the behest of foreign powers and their domestic cronies.

At the six-month anniversary, The Disaster Accountability Project released a report detailing a "shocking lack of transparency" in Haiti relief operations. According to its director, "donors have been duped. They generously donated in response to urgent appeals to save lives and help the people of Haiti after the devastating earthquake. Now, after billions in cash was raised, earthquake survivors are dying of cholera because conditions are so poor and the donated money is sitting in the bank. This is not what donors had in mind."

We have reached the one-year mark and the situation for Haitians has grown much worse. Some 1.3 million people are still living under sticks and scraps of plastic, with inadequate water, sanitation, health care, or food.

The international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which should have made basic sanitation and water infrastructure a priority, have failed miserably. With a few notable exceptions like Doctors Without Borders and Partners in Health, many of these NGOs are self-serving, and have refused to work with Haitian popular organizations on the ground. The Cuban medical team has also made a significant and exemplary contribution.

Jan. 12<sup>th</sup> Committee member Ray Laforest commented, "International solidarity and assistance is needed and appreciated, and the popular sector should be at the forefront of decision making in building a new Haiti that represents the interests of the majority." More information: (646) 334.2613, (646) 898.7328. ■

## Barriers to Abortion Access & Reproductive Rights

A Connecticut Socialist Action Forum

Friday, January 21, 2011 - 7pm  
La Paloma Sabanera - 405 Capitol Ave, Hartford, CT

for more info contact Marissa Janczewska at  
marissajanczewska@gmail.com or 860-218-0566



## ... Antiwar

(continued from page 1)

The webzine *Salon* reported Dec. 27: "The big takeaway from the Obama administration's review of the Afghan war this month was that the strategy is working. But a new independent assessment suggests just the opposite: that, in fact, the situation is deteriorating.

"It comes in the form of United Nations security maps obtained and described by the *Wall Street Journal*. These maps are used by UN personnel to make decisions about where they can operate within the country—so presumably the UN takes their composition seriously. According to the *Journal*, this is the change that occurred between the March and October editions of the maps:

"In the October map, just as in March's, nearly all of southern Afghanistan—the focus of the coalition's military offensives—remained painted the red of 'very high risk,' with no noted improvements. At the same time, the green belt of 'low risk' districts in northern, central and western Afghanistan shriveled. ... The U.N.'s October map upgraded to 'high risk' 16 previously more secure districts."

Another contradictory report from an authoritative source was cited Dec. 24 by the webzine *Alternet*: "Ironically, while President Obama's review was all about the positive, the latest National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Afghanistan was leaked just the day before. And boy, did they see things differently. The NIE is important—it reflects the consensus view of all 16 U.S. intelligence agencies—the CIA, the DIA, the NSA and all the rest. And what they said was profoundly different from the rosy-eyed assessment of the White House and the Pentagon.

"Officials briefed on the NIE said it acknowledged that large swaths of Afghanistan are still at risk of falling to the Taliban. And that there is no chance for anything resembling success in Afghanistan without the kind of massive shift in Pakistan that would eliminate the Afghan Taliban's current access to safe havens across the border.

"And as of now, since the government in Pakistan we're propping up with billions of dollars in military and economic aid has made quite clear that it—especially its powerful ISI intelligence agency—has no intention of ending support for the Afghan Taliban, the possibility of "success" seems to be just about zero."

However, instead of retreating, it seems that the U.S. military is edging toward expanding the war into Pakistan. *The New York Times* reported Dec. 16: "The drone strikes in Pakistan have already risen significantly over the past year. The Central Intelligence Agency carried out roughly 53 Predator attacks in 2009, which was more than President

George W. Bush authorized during his entire presidency. The figure has more than doubled this year, though presidential aides will not publicly discuss the program because it is technically secret."

The same issue of *The Times* noted: "The Obama administration plans to further step up attacks on Al Qaeda and Taliban insurgents in the tribal areas of Pakistan, to address one of the fundamental weaknesses uncovered in its year-end review of its Afghanistan war strategy."

This report drew immediate denials from U.S. authorities because their Pakistani allies have made it clear that they will not tolerate the open incursion of U.S. forces into any territory under their formal jurisdiction, even if they do not control it. The Pakistani regime's determination was made clear when a U.S. helicopter fired on a Pakistani border post. Pakistan closed the access roads used by U.S. supply vehicles for a period, leaving the stranded convoys vulnerable to attack by jihadis in Pakistan.

Hatred of the U.S., fueled in particular by drone attacks that have killed many ordinary Pakistanis who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, has put wind in the sails of Islamists in the religiously based state long fostered by the U.S. The Islamists have just demonstrated their power by shutting the country down in a protest against the government's indication that it might repeal the theocratic blasphemy law. Thus, the Pakistani neocolonial government has to tread a very fine line in its alliance with the U.S. But the U.S. keeps pushing—at the risk of toppling it.

Already, the civil war between the Pakistani government and the Taliban has led to massive internal displacement. In its Dec. 28 issue, *The New York Times* published a report on the Pakistani refugee camps from an expert on refugees, who noted: "I fear that, for those living in the region's slum camps, things will never go back to what they were before. And it would not be the first time.

"When we walked away from Afghanistan after the fall of the Soviet Union, we left Pakistan to deal with the largest population of refugees in the world. Two decades later, these Afghan refugees and their Pakistani-born children are, despite recent repatriation schemes, largely still in Pakistan: permanent, destitute, and unwelcome, their urban camps indistinguishable from slums.

"And for those who need more than reasons of human tragedy: the Taliban was born out of Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan, and Pakistan's displaced populations are already a source of flaring ethnic tensions there."

Within Afghanistan itself, the direct human cost of the war is increasing. *The Washington Post* reported Dec. 23: "The number of civilians killed or wounded in the Afghan war increased by 20 percent during the first 10 months of this

year, compared with the same period last year, according to a UN report issued this week.

"The quarterly report said the period between July and October saw a 66 percent spike in security incidents compared with the same time frame last year. Assassinations reached an all-time high in August, it said, with most attacks targeting civilians and Afghan police. Suicide attacks occurred an average of three times a week, most of them directed at NATO troops, police and Afghan government officials."

The war is creating running sores in Afghan and Pakistani society that will not be soon healed. At the same time, it is a huge drain on the U.S. economy that threatens to grow and even become chronic. *The Washington Post* reported Dec. 20: A year ago, Michael E. O'Hanlon, a senior fellow and military expert at the Brookings Institution, predicted, "We are looking at two decades of supplying a few billion a year to Afghanistan. ... It's a reasonable guess that for 20 years, we essentially will have to fund half the Afghan budget."

The article continued: "Just last week, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers put out a 'presolicitation notice' for a contractor to build the eighth of nine planned increments for troop housing 'to replace expeditionary housing facilities' for 1,520 personnel. According to the notice, building the proposed facility could cost from \$25 million to \$100 million. The contract will not be awarded before March.

"What's interesting is that the facility is expected to take a year to build, meaning it would not be completed before April 2012. That's less than two years before the 2014 date when Afghans are expected to take over security, with the U.S. presence reduced to training units.

"But is that the real plan? Back in 2008, a supplemental funding bill for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars contained \$62 million for an ammunition storage facility at Bagram, where 12 planned 'igloos' were to support Army and Air Force needs. In requesting that money from Congress, the Army wrote, 'As a forward operating site, Bagram must be able to provide for a long-term, steady state presence which is able to surge to meet theater contingency requirements.' A year earlier, Adm. William J. Fallon, then commander of U.S. Central Command, described Bagram to Congress as 'the centerpiece for the CENTCOM Master Plan for future access to and operations in Central Asia.'"

So, are the U.S. authorities planning a permanent military involvement in "Central Asia?" That would be a major expansion in the U.S. military investment abroad, on top of the Middle East, with greater dangers, because it involves the risk at some point of confrontation with major powers, Russia and China.

Already, in its Dec. 29 issue, *The Economist*, one of the best informed press or-

(Above) Protest against U.S. attacks in Pakistan nears the presidential palace in Islamabad, Dec. 10.

gans of the British bourgeoisie, asked if the U.S. expenditure in the Middle East was worth it for U.S. capitalism: "Yet even if America's influence endures, is it worth the price? Few Americans realise that the Persian Gulf nowadays supplies barely 10% of America's oil. Its value is far less than what the Pentagon spends on American fleets and bases in the region, even excluding the costs of war in Iraq and Afghanistan."

What value, then, could the U.S. extract from "Central Asia"? There is much speculation about this, but fairly indefinite prospects for the foreseeable future. And this area is larger and more unstable than the Middle East, a veritable bottomless pit for U.S. expenditures.

Of course, what *The Economist*, representing a traditional bourgeoisie, did not consider is that American big business may no longer be interested in building up the U.S. economy but rather in drawing higher profits from cheap labor abroad and in parasitically draining the U.S. Treasury for gigantic projects connected to U.S. military expansion that are essentially waste. But the British should see the pattern, because it destroyed their dominant position in the world economy. It is the self-generated poison of imperialism.

Moreover, the Obama administration, despite the fact that it was boosted into office by a reaction against the imperialist running down of the U.S. economy, has shown that it cannot stand up to the big business powerhouses that support this development. Although 80 percent of voters who identify with the Democratic Party have been shown by a recent CNN/Research Corporation poll (see July 2 *Huffington Post*) to be against a continuation of the Afghan War, the president who supposedly represents them shows no sign of any determination to end the U.S. military occupation of Afghanistan or the plans for permanent military bases in "Central Asia."

The CNN poll showed, in fact, that 63 percent of people in the United States are against continuing the war in Afghanistan, and even only 52 percent of those who identify with the reactionary Tea Party movement favor it.

So why is this overwhelming opinion of the American people having no effect on the government that claims to represent them? It can only be because the antiwar majority have not yet demonstrated that they really mean it by going into the streets in massive protests, in which they take direct responsibility for the fate of their country and stop relying on politicians paid and controlled by big business. Such actions would also be the first step in moving toward rebuilding an economy that can meet the needs of the American people, in particular the rising generations who face an ever-darkening economic future. ■

# Georgia convicts face repression following historic work strike

By CLAY WADENA

Thousands of prisoners in Georgia made history on Dec. 9 when they carried out what has been hailed as the largest prisoner strike in American history—refusing to work or leave their cells in 11 of the state’s prisons.

The prisoners issued nine demands that began with a call for a living wage for the work they perform and included demands for better educational and vocational opportunities, better health care, better food and living conditions, better access to their families, ending all cruel and inhumane punishments, and a more just parole process.

The strike lasted a week in most prisons, with isolated pockets of resistance still being reported later, and was an outstanding achievement for the prisoners’ rights movement even if their demands were not immediately met.

Prisoners in Georgia are standing up to a mighty force when they confront their state machinery, as Georgia leads the nation with the highest rate of adults that are under state control or supervision. According to the Pew Center on the States, one out of 13 adults in Georgia is in a prison or jail, or on parole or probation—higher than any other state.

Georgia nearly tripled its prison population between 1988 and 2009, and this included a disproportionate amount of African American inmates, who now make up 63% of Georgia’s prisoners but are only 30% of the state population. Of the Georgia inmates who make it out, two-thirds will be rearrested within three years of their release (such a high recidivism rate that even conservative Newt Gingrich was prompted to write an editorial calling for Georgia to focus on lowering it). Additionally, Georgia spends only \$49 a day per prisoner, compared to a national average of \$79.

On top of it all, Georgia is one of only a few states where the inmates are paid absolutely nothing for their labor (unless they have one of a handful of exclusive jobs that are not readily accessible to the general inmate population). Inmates perform road cleanup for states and local governments and they provide labor to prison-run businesses that make furniture, garments, and signs—but they receive nothing for it. Most inmates across the country work for pennies an hour doing the same thing, a pittance that can’t be considered fair in any way; but in places like Georgia, Texas, and Arkansas they don’t even get that chance.

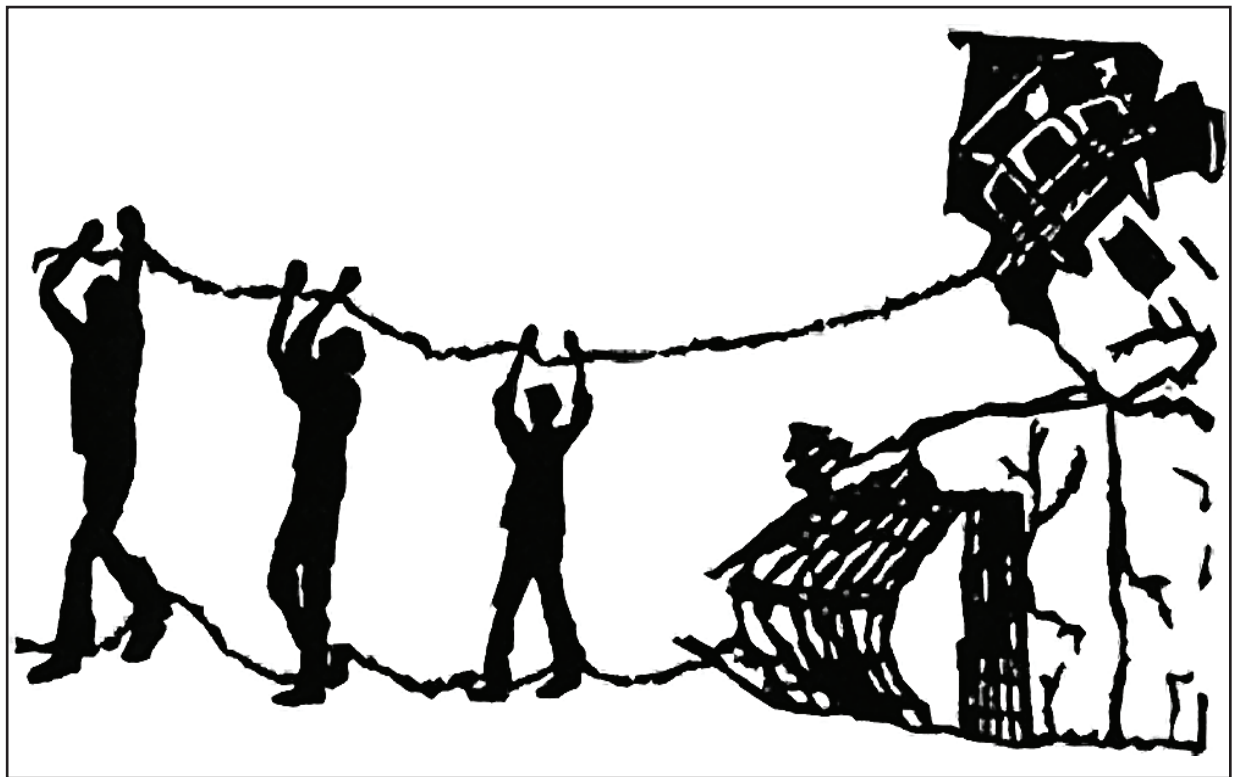
Georgia politicians seemingly wouldn’t have it any other way, and displayed their disgust for the prisoners’ demands when interviewed by the press during and after the strike. Republican state senator Johnny Grant said, “If they want to get paid, they shouldn’t commit crimes. ... If we started paying inmates, we’d also start charging them for room and board, as well. They ought to be careful what they ask for.”

Democratic state representative Barbara Massey Reece agreed: “After all, they are behind those prison walls for a reason. They are there to make restitution to society for whatever their crime was. ... I can’t see paying inmates anything. I would much rather take that money and put 25 more state troopers on the highway. ... Most of the men that I have encountered on [unpaid] work details take real pride in their work and are appreciative of the chance to work. If they weren’t out working, they’d just be sitting behind the fence.”

Don’t be fooled by Ms. Reece’s claims. By issuing their own demands, the prisoners have made sure that no politician can claim to speak for them and paint a rosy picture of modern-day slavery. And contrary to her view that prisoners “appreciated” working for free, the prisoners made it very clear that this issue was the biggest driving force of the entire strike.

It is important to note the desperate economic position these inmates are placed in by the system. They are not provided enough food and amenities to squeak out even a minimally sufficient life, and often come from families who can’t afford to keep money in their commissary account. Even for those inmates who can get money wired in, the monopoly on money transfers held by private company J-Pay takes a 10% commission, and the commissary prices are high. If inmates would like to talk to their family members legally, it costs \$55 a month for once-a-week 15-minute phone conversations.

Normally, the meager conditions of prison life and the astronomical prices they pay for basic necessities are offset, very slightly, by the ability of inmates to earn a tiny amount of money doing work in or for the prison. In Georgia, however, inmates are not even able to provide for themselves in this hyper-exploited



**The prisoners need allies outside the prison walls to assist them in overthrowing this system of modern-day slavery.**

manner, despite the work they do.

With deplorable conditions and practically no institutional route of addressing them, the prisoners took it upon themselves to be heard, and put in a momentous amount of work to pull the strike off and bring their message to the public. This cannot be overstated. It is worth noting the different roadblocks these men faced and overcame, so what they have accomplished can be truly appreciated.

First, these prisoners had to overcome the divisions that normally prevent any type of unified inmate action. Prison administrations count on all forms of racial, sexual, economic, and street-organization violence to sow deep divisions among the prisoners and make them easier to control. In a testament to the organizers of this action, inmates in Georgia were able to overcome these divisions, which normally wreak havoc.

“It’s a universal, unified effort on the part of men who have been treated like slaves, whether Black, white, or Latino,” said Elaine Brown, spokesperson for the prisoners and former leader of the Black Panther Party.

Additionally, the prisoners had to coordinate both the multi-prison protest action and the media outreach from inside prisons, where all normal correspondence can be monitored. To accomplish this, they used contraband cell-phones, bought from prison guards anxious to cash in on the lucrative prison illicit market (where a \$20 cell-phone can easily go for \$350).

In the articles that were eventually written about the strike, much has been made of these cell-phones, both about the ingenuity of the prisoners and the illegal and high-priced nature of the phones themselves. It is worth noting primarily that these prisoners acquired and effectively used these phones under great physical and legal danger; being caught with one is a felony charge and might be accompanied by a ruthless beating from corrections officers.

Coordinating the protest action was done on cell-phones and by word of mouth. But without the cell-phones it would have been nearly impossible to overcome the initial media blackout of their protest action. After a couple days a few major outlets finally covered the prisoner strike, but this was only after the Georgia Dept. of Corrections (DOC) had declared that they had instituted a “lockdown,” and the story was generally reported as such—as opposed to a self-imposed work strike.

It was largely left to the alternative media (notably *Black Agenda Report* and “Democracy Now”), prisoners’ advocates like the Concerned Coalition to Respect Prisoners’ Rights (CCRPR), and the prisoners them-

selves to get the story out. *The New York Times* did not run a story on the strike until after the prisoners had contacted the paper. But the prisoners took responsibility for advancing their message against all odds and had a fair amount of success given the initial blackout.

“The mere fact that this got the attention of the nation, that in itself is a lot, because once it got the attention of the nation, people began looking, people began inquiring. ... It was powerful,” said Robert King, author and Black Panther Party member who organized in Louisiana prisons in the 1970s and spent decades in prison when he was framed by prison officials as a result.

The capitalist media’s hesitation to report on the strike prompted accusations from prison activists that they were purposely withholding the story to prevent the strike from spreading. And while the prisoners struggled to find a hearing for their voice outside of the prison walls, they also faced severe repression inside the walls.

In a statement released New Year’s Eve, the CCRPR detailed a severe reprisal beating administered on accused striker Terrance Bryant Dean at Macon State Prison by prison guards. On Dec. 16, the seventh day of the strike, Dean was reportedly carried from his cell cuffed at his hands and ankles, and beaten unconscious. He was then subsequently hospitalized. Reports of beatings aimed at breaking the strike were reaching activists in the CCRPR at this time, who then demanded that the DOC allow them to tour the affected prisons and talk to prisoners.

Even as the DOC allowed the CCRPR to tour the prisons they did not admit that at least one prisoner was hospitalized from a guard-administered beating. In addition to the plight of Terrance Dean and the strikers at large, the CCRPR has also stated concern for the 37 men that the DOC has identified as strike “conspirators,” who are likely being targeted for violence by the DOC. The CCRPR intends to release a full report on its investigations and the prison visits it has conducted.

Mainstream analysts believe that Georgia is currently facing \$2 billion in budget cuts, and that the state is poised to cut services and funding to prisoners even further, rather than grant prisoners’ wishes. Refusing to negotiate with the prisoners on these issues—while raining terror and brutality upon them—could have tragic results.

Prisoners have been quoted in the press to the effect that cooler heads prevailed this time as prisoners decided what course of action to take, but that without any change the next action may be guided by those who favor violent protest.

These prisoners need allies on the outside of the prison walls who will assist them in building a mass movement dedicated to overthrowing this system of modern-day slavery, these warehouses of human beings. If the DOC sparks a violent confrontation it could turn into a bloodbath, which would generally serve the interests of the oppressors at great cost of human life for the prisoners.

The real conditions of these gulags must be exposed, and this unjust system must be torn down as the French once tore down that old symbol of their own imprisonment—the Bastille. Please join with activists such as those in Socialist Action as we educate, agitate, and organize to end this oppression! ■