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Coalition plans May Day actions

Immigrant rights activists meet in Los Angeles

By Minnie Bruce Pratt and LeiLani Dowell
Los Angeles

In an historic development in the U.S. immigrant rights struggle, a coalition of national organizations met in Los Angeles on Feb. 3-4 to plan and coordinate the "Great American Boycott II" for May 1.

Called by the March 25 Coalition, initiator of the 2006 May Day actions that brought millions into the streets, the coalition aims to defend immigrant workers and show their power by bringing "business as usual" to a halt across the country on May Day.

William Torres of the coalition described the boycott as "the ultimate fight for dignity and justice."

After the 2006 actions, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) stepped up vicious raids and deportations in an attempt to stop immigrant workers from organizing.

In one of hundreds of examples, ICE combined union-busting with immigrant worker repression by arresting 21 workers at a North Carolina hog-processing plant on Jan. 24. The raid followed two major protests at the Smithfield plant: one initiated by Latina women to stop harassment over immigration papers, and another led by African-American workers to demand union recognition and Martin Luther King Day as a paid holiday. (Workers World, Feb. 2)

The Smithfield raids came after similar raids on thousands of workers at Swift and Co. meatpacking plants in six states on Dec. 12, 2006, when ICE agents terrorized and arrested workers from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Sudan, Ethiopia and elsewhere.

Conference mobilizes to defend workers

A press conference and demonstration condemning the raids, called by March 25 Coalition organizers on Feb. 2 outside the Los Angeles Federal Building, drew a militant 80 people. Two Latina women from a local factory raided the previous day came

and described the brutalization by ICE agents, who had held guns to the heads of workers.

The next day Teresa Gutierrez of the New York May 1 Coalition and the International Action Center emphasized: "This conference gathers the movement to defend immigrant workers—from

Houston immigration raids protested 4

fighting ICE attacks to changing devastating day-to-day working conditions. By mobilizing in the streets, we defeated the Sensenbrenner bill. Together, we can stop the raids!"

Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner sponsored the racist and punitive H.R. 4437, passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in December 2005. One of its many discriminatory components was the proposed erection of a 700-mile wall along the U.S.-Mexican border. Because of massive worker protest in 2006, the bill died in the U.S. Senate.

Chito Quijano, of the progressive Filipino alliance BAYAN-USA and the California Nurses Association, recounted a call for help from a cousin, a documented worker and 20-year U.S. resident, arrested on a trumped-up charge by ICE and threatened with deportation. Quijano said: "Sensenbrenner was the fire that fed last year's massive protest. This year, the raids will be the fuel."

A plenary on "Globalization of Immigrant Labor and Transnational Capitalism" featured Teresa Gutierrez and William Robinson, professor of sociology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and one of the leading U.S. academic critics of capitalism. Robinson outlined the growth of immigration and repression in the United States over the last 30 years, pointing out that contemporary "transnational capitalism" makes the profits it needs to sustain its existence through the value produced by low-wage labor of immigrants. To keep those profits it must maintain economic, legal and cultural control of

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Feb. 2 protest in front of Los Angeles Federal Building against anti-immigrant raids.

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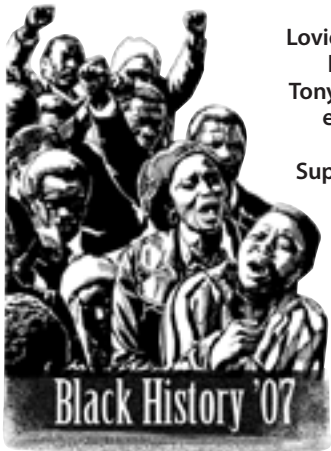
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Lovie Smith, left, and Tony Dungy embrace after Super Bowl Feb. 4.



DESPITE NFL RACISM

Tony Dungy, Lovie Smith make Super Bowl history

By Monica Moorehead

Black history and sports history were made on Feb. 4 when two African-American professional football head coaches, Tony Dungy of the Indianapolis Colts and Lovie Smith of the Chicago Bears, led their teams to the most popular one-day sports event in the U.S. and one of the most popular worldwide—the Super Bowl.

The Super Bowl is the showdown between the winner of the National Football Conference and the winner of the American Football Conference to determine the champion of the National Football League.

Until now, the most significant Super Bowl since its inception in 1967—in terms of social significance—was in 1988, when Doug Williams became the first Black quarterback to play in a Super Bowl. He also won the Most Valuable Player award.

Now Dungy has become the first Black head coach to ever win the Super Bowl as the Colts defeated the Bears by the score of 29-17 in Miami. Dungy, the prior head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, gave Smith his first job as an assistant coach. Dungy's Colts coaching staff is half people of color.

The sight of the two coaches embracing at the end of Super Bowl XLI was captured by media all around the world. Smith told the media after the game that if he couldn't win the Super Bowl, he would have wanted Dungy to win based on their personal relationship and the fact that Dungy is Black.

Racism and sports

This year, 2007, will mark the 60th anniversary of the great Jackie Robinson, an African American, breaking the color barrier of Major League Baseball, a feat that challenged white supremacy in other areas of sports and U.S. society as a whole before the Civil Rights movement took root in the South.

This year also marks the 20th anniversary of when the former Los Angeles Dodgers General Manager Al Campanis made the racist statement that Black people "may not have some of the necessities" to become managers of baseball teams.

College and professional football was integrated long before Robinson signed with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. MLB, however, was a more popular and prestigious sport at the time, being dubbed as "America's pastime."

When Robinson was asked to play in an old-timers game following his retirement, he refused, stating, "I must sorrowfully refuse until I see more progress being made off the playing field on the coaching lines and in the managerial departments." (edgeofsports.com)

Football has gained more popularity over the decades, especially with the influence of TV. Today, the NFL players are at least 70 percent African American but up until Super Bowl XLI, there are still only six Black head coaches out of 32—besides Dungy and Smith, there are Herman Edwards, Marvin Lewis, Romeo Crennell and the recently hired Mike Tomlin. Smith is currently the lowest paid coach in the entire NFL.

This gross disparity should raise the question: Why aren't at least 70 percent of the NFL head coaches Black? This goal could be met with a NFL-sponsored coaches' training program especially for Black people and other people of color who have been systematically denied this opportunity.

When it comes to executive positions in the NFL, the numbers are even more dismal. There are only three Black general managers and no Black owners. (edgeofsports.com)

The increase in Black NFL coaches did not come about out of any anti-racist consciousness on the part of the majority white owners. Back in 2002, the late Black lawyer Johnnie Cochran and another lawyer, Cyrus Mehri, threatened to bring a lawsuit against the NFL for racial discrimination in their hiring practices. At that time, there were only two Black head coaches in the NFL.

The impending lawsuit forced the NFL to implement the "Rooney rule," named after Pittsburgh Steelers' owner, Art Rooney. This rule states that for every head coach vacancy, NFL owners must interview, although not necessarily hire, at least one person of color for the job. Rooney just hired Mike Tomlin for the Steelers' new coaching job.

Bomani Jones wrote for ESPN.com regarding the NFL, "There is nothing worth celebrating about a league that has to force its franchises to interview nonwhite coaching candidates and finally has a black coach in the 41st edition of its biggest game. That's not a good thing. That's a damn shame."

In National Collegiate Athletic Association football, amongst 119 Division One teams, there are only six Black head coaches, where 50 percent of these NCAA players are Black. (mercurynews.com)

The achievements of Tony Dungy and Lovie Smith not only signaled a great historical leap forward but also show how much farther the NFL has to go to strengthen affirmative action, including quotas, when it comes to hiring more coaches of color.

Racist profiling in sports is as pervasive under capitalist U.S. society as police brutality, and only a struggle from below can turn the situation around.

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Vol. 49, No. 6 • Feb. 15, 2007
Closing date: Feb. 7, 2007

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Workers World (ISSN-1070-4205) is published weekly except the first week of January by WW Publishers, 55 W. 17 St., N.Y., N.Y. 10011. Phone: (212) 627-2994. Subscriptions: One year: \$25; foreign and institutions: \$35. Letters to the editor may be condensed and edited. Articles can be freely reprinted, with credit to Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., New York, NY 10011. Back issues and individual articles are available on microfilm and/or photocopy from University Microfilms International, 300 Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106. A searchable archive is available on the Web at www.workers.org.

A headline digest is available via e-mail subscription.

Send an e-mail message to WWnews-subscribe@workersworld.net.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Workers World, 55 W. 17 St., 5th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10011.

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Stop & frisk policy

NYPD targets people of color

By Brenda Ryan
New York

There are plenty of statistics that document the horrible reality of racism. Now there's another: half a million people were stopped and searched by police in New York City last year, 55 percent of whom were Black and 30 percent Latin@.

The New York Police Department released the data to the New York City Council on Feb. 2. While the NYPD is required by law to provide a quarterly report on the number of people that police stop, question and frisk, with a breakdown by race and gender, it hasn't done so since mid-2003.

The number of stops has skyrocketed in the last four years. In 2002, 97,296 people were stopped compared to 508,540 in 2006. The stop and search procedure has been in place since the administration of former Mayor John Lindsay in the 1960s.

The city council passed the 2001 law requiring the NYPD to report "stop and frisk" statistics in reaction to community outrage over the police killing of Amadou Diallo, an immigrant worker from Guinea, who was shot in a hail of 41 bullets. The

four undercover cops who killed him said they mistook his wallet for a gun. His death showed the brutality of racial profiling.

It was the police killing of another unarmed man, African-American Sean Bell, which drew attention to the NYPD's failure to submit its "stop and frisk" data. In late November, several undercover police officers fired 50 bullets at Bell and three of his friends as they drove away from a bachelor party for Bell. A few days later the New York Civil Liberties Union sent a letter to the police commissioner calling on him to comply with the law and provide the information.

While the police department has been silent on the subject, the number of complaints from people who've been stopped and searched has grown. The New York Times reported Feb. 3 that the Civilian Complaint Review Board, an independent city body that investigates charges of police misconduct, received 2,556 complaints last year, more than double the 1,128 complaints it received in 2003.

The numbers though don't show the humiliation, terror and frequent death that people of color routinely suffer at the hands of the police. In 1998 the New

Jersey Police Department's decades long history of stopping people of color on the highway became public after the police shot and wounded four Black and Latino young men driving on the New Jersey turnpike en route to basketball tryouts.

Only a few cases of police stopping or shooting Blacks and Latin@s make it into the news. But it happens every week in cities around the country. In 2004, a New York cop shot and killed 19-year-old Timothy Stansbury as he opened the door of the roof of his building in Brooklyn's Louis Armstrong housing project. He was using the roof to get to an adjoining building to attend a party.

That same year San Diego Chargers linebacker Steve Foley was shot three times outside his home by a police officer who claimed he suspected Foley of drunken driving. In 2005, five Black Somerville High School athletes were attacked and beaten by 10 white police in Medford, Mass., as they tried to attend a town carnival. And last year an elderly woman in Atlanta who shot at police trying to break into her house was shot and killed.

Such assaults rarely or never happen, of course, in the wealthy neighborhoods.

And that was clear in the volumes of data the NYPD released on their stop and frisk incidents, which were tallied by precinct and transit district. The New York Times reported Feb. 5 that in the 75th precinct, with some of the city's poorest neighborhoods, the police stopped and questioned or frisked someone about once every 24 minutes. By comparison, in the 1st precinct, which includes the wealthy Wall Street, Tribeca and SoHo districts, the police stopped one person about every 16 hours.

The Times reported that Rev. Al Sharpton had announced that his organization, the National Action Network, would begin gathering plaintiffs to launch a class action against the city. A class action was filed against the city in 1999 by the Center for Constitutional Rights on behalf of 10 young men of color who were stopped and frisked by undercover cops. In 2003, the plaintiffs won a settlement in Daniels v. the City of New York, which required the NYPD to audit officers who conduct stop and frisks to determine if they are based on "reasonable suspicion." Only the people's struggle though can stop the racism, including police brutality, that's endemic to the capitalist system. □

Ohio political prisoner: 'Fight or die'

Ohio prosecutors allege that Keith Lamar was the leader of a group of prisoners dubbed the death squad and was responsible for ordering the deaths of five inmates during Ohio's longest and bloodiest prison uprising, at Lucasville in 1993. Since the uprising he has taken the African name Bomani Shakur.

Bomani Shakur has proclaimed his innocence. He reports that police beat him, left him naked in freezing conditions for long periods and in cells without plumbing in order to make him confess to acts he didn't commit and to get him to become a witness for the state. He encouraged other prisoners not to make false confessions or turn state's evidence.

He is now on death row as one of the Lucasville Five.

Following is an excerpt of an interview by Bomani Shakur's cousin, Kevin Lowery. An earlier interview can be found at www.prisonersolidarity.org.

Lowery: How is everything going, Bomani?

Bomani: Things are going surprisingly well. A lot has happened since we last spoke. [His self-published] book "Condemned" has been well received and is in the process of being reproduced for wider circulation. I've also won several crucial decisions in court and am one step closer to receiving a new trial. The court granted me an evidentiary hearing. I'll be going back to court in mid-March.

Lowery: Great. For those of us who aren't familiar with an evidentiary hearing, could you explain what it is?

Bomani: Sure. It's a hearing that will allow me to present evidence. The best thing about a hearing of this sort is that I'll get to put the state on the stand and question them about why they withheld certain things. This will allow me to further expand the official record and give the court a more in-depth rendering of the issues.

Lowery: In speaking about the riot, what are some of the things you want people to keep in mind?

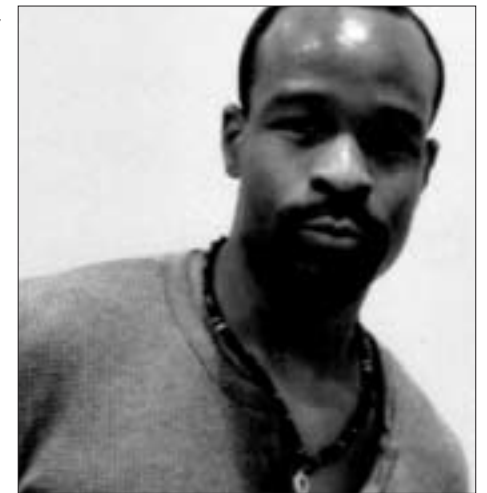
Bomani: Well, first and foremost, people should keep their minds open and let the facts speak for themselves. As time goes by, it's starting to come out that the state hid evidence, forced certain individuals to lie, paid for testimony, etc., etc. So people need to suspend judgment long enough to look into what actually took place.

I think when it's all over, said and done, Lucasville will go down as one of the biggest fiascos ever. And the fact that five men were placed on death row will, I

think, spearhead the movement to abolish the death penalty altogether here in Ohio.

When the public sees just how corrupt this system is and how politicians use capital punishment as a tool to further their political careers, people are going to call for change, just like they're doing now concerning the war in Iraq. It's all about getting the truth out, man. And the truth about capital punishment is that only the poor and underprivileged are being killed. I didn't kill anybody in the riot and, inas-

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Bomani Shakur at Ohio State Penitentiary.

MUMIA ABU-JAMAL

Legal update, reply from mayor of Paris

The following edited letter was sent on Jan. 30. Go to www.millions4mumia.org for more background information on this development and other legal updates.

Dear Friends:

Since last spring we have been engaged on behalf of Mumia Abu-Jamal in briefing before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, Philadelphia. It is the most extensive I have seen in three decades of specializing in capital litigation. The pending issues concern the death penalty, racism that has permeated the proceedings for a quarter of the century, and prosecutorial and judicial abuse. They are of great constitutional significance. Last fall I was notified by the court that oral arguments would be scheduled for January, but that was later rescinded. At this time we have no indication as to when we will be permitted to orally argue the merits of the issues.

In November Mumia and I together sent letters to the Mayor of Paris and its Council. It was in response to an appalling letter sent to Paris by a few misguided politicians from the Philadelphia area. I wrote: "Their demand that the honorary citizenship of Mr. Abu-Jamal be revoked is an affront not only to the citizens of Paris, but is insulting to people around the globe who are opposed to the death penalty and human-rights abuses."

Mumia's letter eloquently pointed out that "these people are merchants of death who wish to trick you into their campaign" to not only kill my client, but also "to wipe [his] name from the face of the earth." Their deal "is but another lie, a devil's bargain that they are powerless to grant under any stretch of American or international law."

I am pleased to advise that the Mayor's office has responded in a most positive manner. In the great French tradition of championing human rights, the December 5 response to me said: "The Mayor of Paris has received your letter concerning the situation of your client, Mumia Abu-Jamal and thank you."

"As mentioned in your mail, some representatives of the city of Philadelphia have recently wished to express their disapproval toward the decision of the Paris City Council to have selected in December 2001, Mumia Abu-Jamal as 'honorary citizen of the City of Paris.'

"Though the denunciation by these representatives is concentrated on the Cities of Paris and of Saint Denis, nobody ignores that many other Cities in France, in the United States and in the world, have shown their support to Mumia Abu-Jamal.

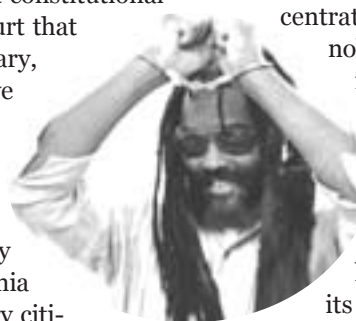
"We have established that the arrival of this Delegation in France, announced for end of November, has simply never taken place.

"It is clear that the city of Paris stays mobilized in this fight and wish to affirm with force its (engagement) commitment in order that the capital punishment shall one day disappear of the planet.

"I will be grateful for you to transmit this information to your client and assure him of the support of the City of Paris of which he is honorary citizen."

We will keep you informed as there are further developments in the case.

With best wishes, Robert R. Bryan
Law Offices of R.R. Bryan, Lead counsel for Mumia Abu-Jamal
2088 Union Street, Suite 4, San Francisco, Calif. 94123



'Stop all ICE raids!'

Activists protest immigrant roundup

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

Demonstrators held a large, spirited demonstration here outside the detention center on Feb. 3 in solidarity with 53 immigrant workers rounded up in a raid last week.

The Coalition in Defense of the Community called the event. Latin@ protesters from Mexico and El Salvador and Chicanos were joined by African-American and white supporters. They chanted and carried signs demanding immigration reform and a moratorium on raids.

Just weeks after President Bush vowed to "enforce our immigration laws at the work site" in his State of the Union address, federal agents carried out this latest raid in a string of roundups. While this one was small in comparison with the December sweep of Swift and Co. meat-packing plants in six states, the already precarious lives of over 50 families were seriously damaged.

The workers were rounded up in a pre-dawn raid on Feb. 1, at Republic Waste Services by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents. The workers said the agents swarmed the company parking lot as employees were warming trucks and waiting on helpers so they could go pick up garbage.

Workers described the raid as frightening and very chaotic. After a few hours, two Department of Homeland Security buses were filled with people from Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala. Workers who had documents were asked by frantic detained co-workers to call their families and let them know what happened.

Ohio political prisoner:

Bomani Shakur

Continued from page 3

much as my life is not for them to take, I intend to keep on fighting.

Lowery: Speaking of which, I just read about the rally in front of the supermax prison. Would you care to elaborate on that? I hear it was a big success.

Bomani: It was. Despite the horrible weather—it was raining real bad—quite a few people came out to lend their support. I felt a deep sense of thankfulness looking out my window and seeing all of them standing in the rain, speaking truth to power. It was a beautiful thing! Of course I was too far away to see individual faces or signs, but that made it all the more meaningful in that everyone became my brothers and sisters.

The rally was done to protest against the death penalty, but we're also trying to keep the Lucasville situation in focus. A lot of people—besides the 11 that were killed during the riot—lost their lives as a result of what happened and we're trying to do something about that.

Lowery: Who are some of the other people involved?

Bomani: Well, besides the Lucasville Five—which consists of myself, S.A. Hasan, James Were (Namir Mateen), Jason Robb and George Skatzes—there are countless others who were sentenced to life in prison: Greg Curry, Derek Cannon, Eric Scales, Timothy Grinnell, Mosi Paki (Elvin Jones), and the list goes



The raid came as a complete surprise to the workers. "Some of us were in the trucks. Then we seen the helicopters and all of a sudden the parking lot was full of immigration," said one worker. "It was very frightening."

During the Feb. 3 demonstration, members of the anti-immigrant organizations Border Watch and the Minutemen held a counter protest, with the Houston police protecting them from angry protesters. The groups faced off for more than two hours.

A militant group of youth managed to out-shout the racist groups who carried large U.S. flags and shouted insults. Chanting "Aquí estamos y no nos vamos" and "The people united will never be defeated," protestors remained strong and vocal, despite harassment from the cops and the racists.

Signs read, "Melt the ICE!" and "Solidarity with Immigrants!" Most passing motorists honked in solidarity.

Activists will face off against Border Watch again on Feb. 10 as the anti-immigrant group continues its harassment of workers at day labor job sites. □

on. People can go to www.ourfight4justice.com to learn about some of these individuals.

Lowery: Bomani, you wrote in your book that the riot was a "set-up." For those who haven't had the chance to read your book yet, why don't you elaborate on that.

Bomani: Yeah well, in the early 1990s, supermax prisons began to proliferate as the focus shifted from rehabilitation to warehousing, and Ohio wanted to get on board. The problem in making the shift came about because Ohio didn't need another prison and therefore couldn't convince the state legislature to provide the funding. To create the justification for a new supermax, prison officials began to implement repressive tactics to induce prisoners to revolt. I know this sounds outlandish, but it's the standard modus operandi of those in power. ...

We're all connected. What is happening to people in the Middle East is happening to us as well. So Power to the People!

Lowery: Well said. Stay strong, Bomani.

Bomani: Always.

A copy of Bomani Shakur's book, "Condemned," can be obtained for \$10 from the Cleveland Lucasville Five Defense Committee, P.O. Box 5963, Cleveland, OH 44101.

Janitors win family health care

Twin Cities—The threat of a strike helped 4,200 janitors who clean the airport and corporate offices in Minneapolis and St. Paul negotiate a contract in the wee hours of Feb. 5 that includes family health care coverage. Up to now only 14 members could afford such coverage.

After their contract expired on Dec. 31, members of Service Employees' Local 26, who are part of the union's national Justice for Janitors campaign, voted to strike on Jan. 13. On Jan. 30, more than 200 members flooded the skyways linking major buildings in Minneapolis with a sea of purple T-shirts to publicize their struggle for affordable coverage.

Thanks to a visible community struggle over the last six months, the workers, 70 percent of whom are Latin@ immigrants, won support from more than 100 local clergy and public officials, include the mayor of St. Paul.

The head of the local Teamsters union vowed that his members would not cross Local 26 picket lines.

"I think it's shameful that workers have to threaten a strike in order to get their basic needs met. These workers are fighting the fight for all workers," said Bill McCarthy, president of the Minneapolis Central Labor Union Council, AFL-CIO, at www.workdayminnesota.org. (Jan. 30)

In another Justice for Janitors struggle, this time in Florida, more than 300 Haitian and Latin@ groundskeepers, janitors, bus drivers and maintenance workers at Nova Southeastern University became the third group of university workers in less than a year to win union representation.

A SEIU press release noted that this "effectively creates a new standard for contract workers in South Florida."

Women office worker:

Fight to protect pensions

What do you do when the boss's final contract offer would cut pensions for your union of mostly older women office

Coalition plans May Day

Continued from page 1
immigrant workers.

Gutierrez highlighted the use of racism to divide the working class in its quest for profits. She cited recent inflammatory remarks by right-winger Pat Buchanan and former National Security Council member Samuel Huntington, that project when the United States will cease to have a "European" majority and characterize immigrants as threatening the country's "national identity."

Gutierrez posed a crucial question: "How, given the repression against immigrants, can we sustain the magnificent movement begun May Day 2006, and bring unity to the immigrant rights struggle?" She pointed out that the biggest fear of the right wing in the United States was that the immigrant question will cause all workers to question what kind of society the United States will be, and will raise the possibility of working-class unity across all nationalities.

Working-class unity

The theme of working-class unity across borders wove through the proceedings. Javier Rodríguez, a March 25 Coalition convener, said: "This conference is significant because it is the first organized national effort to convene the major coalitions and groups that are more to the left, that initiated last year's May 1 boycott. This is the movement that will attempt to coalesce to establish a historical alliance of Latin@s and African Americans. All the roots are here at this conference, with significant representation from both groups."

Clarence Thomas, an initiator of the Million Worker March, member of International Longshore Workers Union Local 10 and the Alameda County Central Labor Council's Executive Board, paid homage to the country and people of Mexico for their support in the historical struggle against U.S. slavery, and called for the absolute right of Mexican@s to

travel across the U.S.-Mexican border without reprisals. He noted that on May 1, 2006, in the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, immigrant truckers refused to move shipping containers, shutting down 90 percent of the shipping. Those ports handle 40 percent of all container traffic coming into the United States.

Thomas vowed to return to Local 10 to ask that it participate in May 1 in a "meaningful way," adding, "This is a rank-and-file movement, and that's what's keeping it afloat."

Another emphasis of the conference was on international unity across borders, with a plenary featuring Pablo Franco Hernández of the Unión de Juristas de México and attorney for Oaxacan political prisoners, and Senator José Jacques Medina of the PRD (Partido de la Revolución Democrática) of Mexico. Both spoke of the movement against repression in the state of Oaxaca and its importance to the immigrant rights struggle within U.S. borders, tied as both movements are to resisting the misery and death wreaked by forces of capitalist globalization. The Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca organized massive demonstrations during 2006 for people-directed political autonomy; the Mexican government mounted violent reprisals, including arrests of Flavio Sosa and other leaders.

Medina called for an immediate end to massive deportations within the United States, and emphasized his opposition to any temporary worker program—"modern slavery to a handful of corporations."

In a plenary on "History and Analysis of the Immigrant and Civil Rights Movement 1968-2006," Ché López of the Border Social Forum chronicled the immigrant rights movement in North America from 1848 to the formation of his own organization in 2006, drawing together activists on both sides of the border to internationalize the struggle. He connected the new surge of organizing to a rise in class

PHOTOS: INDYMEDIA

Top, Feb. 3 protest sign reads: Roundups tear apart our families.

ON THE PICKETLINE

by Sue Davis

workers? And you know the company already signed contracts with all its other unions protecting pensions of their mostly male members. First you vote down the offer, and then you picket.

The 120 members of OPEIU Local 35 were so angry about this obvious discrimination against women they rejected the offer on Jan. 16 and picketed Miller Brewing in Milwaukee on Jan. 25. The local has been negotiating a new contract for months with South African Brewery, which owns Miller.

"The company's pension demand is like asking our members to throw away two or more decades of dedicated and dependable labor," said Judy Burnick, Local 35 business manager, in a Jan. 25 union media release.

With a workforce overwhelmingly made up of women over 50 years of age, with 20 or more years on the job, most local members are within five to 10 years of retirement.

The union release noted: "With revenues in excess of \$15.3 billion and profits in excess of \$2.9 billion, SAB/Miller can well afford to meet their retirement obligations to these female workers."

LGBT organizations demand: Raise minimum wage

Noting that low-wage jobs and stagnant pay are issues affecting many in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) communities, Nancy Wohlforth, co-presi-

dent of Pride at Work, AFL-CIO, sent a letter Jan. 17 to the Senate urging passage of the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2007 signed by eleven LGBT organizations.

To read this precedent-setting statement and a list of signing organizations, go to www.prideatwork.org.

The Senate passed one version of the bill on Feb. 1 with \$8.3 million tax breaks for small businesses, while the House of Representatives passed a bill on Jan. 10 without tax breaks. The bill, raising the minimum wage from \$5.15 an hour in small increments to \$7.25 an hour by 2009, is the first raise for low-wage workers in eleven years. But first the two houses of Congress must agree on one bill.

What's not widely known is that not having one bill is holding up the annual—that's right, annual—Congressional pay hike. A raise of 1.7 percent of the current lawmakers' salary of \$165,200—\$2,760—is projected for this year. And Republicans and Democrats are quibbling over when to make their raise effective. If the minimum wage bill passes soon, the date the lawmakers' raise becomes effective is June 1, 2007. (New York Times, Jan. 30)

Why make low-wage workers wait two years for their sorely needed raise? Such obvious inequality is truly obscene when you consider that it will take someone earning \$7.25 an hour 381 hours, or nearly 48 workdays or 10 weeks, to earn the same \$2,760.

That's capitalism! □

actions

struggle against the current U.S. imperialist agenda, calling for May 1 to represent millions of immigrant and migrant workers all over the world as International Workers Day: "Social change needs to be created from the bottom, and will be by immigrants."

Stating "I'm here to say the face of the immigrant rights movement is international," Vicente Panamá Alba of the May 1 Coalition, New York, affirmed, "We are committed to mobilizing the international working class in New York for May 1."

A video message from Elvira Arellano brought forward the special oppression and resistance of women immigrant workers. Arellano, founder of La Familia Unida Latina, has been in sanctuary in Chicago for six months in defiance of threatened deportation. She affirmed, "I am not a criminal. I am a mother and a father to my son. I fight so the undocumented people will be respected."

Speakers and workshops at the conference emphasized the need to highlight the issues of immigrant women, such as their vulnerability to rape, sexual harassment and domestic violence when deportation



ICE raided this Latina's job, taking half the workforce, but she joined the Feb. 2 protest.

can be used as a threat. Participants called for greater visibility and representation by women in the struggle, and stressed the leadership and resistance of women. One such leader was María Guardado, a former member of the FMLN, the liberation movement of El Salvador, who praised the conference as "a day to launch a great, important movement that is much needed, as we have to organize against the entire system that is the enemy of us all."

National and transnational action reports and report-backs from the workshops including statements from religious leaders. Mohammed Hanif, imam with the Muslim American Society Freedom Foundation, vowed support, saying, "We are all brothers and sisters, to live together and fight together." Bishop Filipe C. Teixeira, OFSJC, originally of Angola, said, "As a religious leader, as an immigrant man, I find in this conference ... unity with my brothers and sisters who are struggling."

Northern California organizer Evelina Molina reminded workshop participants, "The farm worker movement was a class struggle. Let's name this movement for what it is: a class struggle!" Molina helped organize 40,000 in May 2006 with KBBF's "Voice of the Worker" in Santa Rosa—the first community-based non-profit Spanish language radio station, which celebrated 35 years in 2006.

Leon Waters of the People's Hurricane Relief Fund drew the connections between the immigrant rights struggle and that of people displaced internally, like the survivors of Hurricane Katrina.

Walter Sinche from Pachamama Ecuadorian Organizations stated that the rights of Indigenous people throughout the Americas must be raised in the immigrant rights struggle. Sinche said he will march on May Day because it "is better to lose your job than your dignity."

The need to close the disconnect between the anti-war movement and

Report faults Con Ed, PSC in power outage

By Mary Owen
Queens, N.Y.

On Jan. 30, a second report on the July 2006 Queens power outage ripped into utility giant Con Edison for "an unacceptable lack of accountability ... as evidenced by their actions before, during and after" the outage that plunged over 174,000 people in working-class immigrant communities into darkness for more than nine days.

The report by the New York State Assembly Queens Power Outage Task Force echoed many findings of a Jan. 17 Public Service Commission report, which also zapped Con Ed management for the outage. The report also agreed with the PSC staff's recommendation for a formal proceeding that could result in substantial penalties for the megabucks utility.

However, the task force found that PSC staff reductions during Gov. George Pataki's administration contributed to the agency's "lax scrutiny" of Con Ed. The state watchdog had about 800 employees in 1995, when Pataki took office, but now has just over 500. Nearly half are older than 55 and due to retire in the next 10 years.

Even more alarming, the task force found that deregulation of the electrical power industry statewide has essentially left profit-making providers monitoring themselves.

"The utilities responsible for distribution of electricity through the grid were left to operate as a monopoly," the task force reported. "Basic economics and experience tells us that monopolies operating free from stringent regulations are a recipe for disaster. The results of this policy mistake for Queens residents, which are eerily reminiscent of those related to the 1999 Washington Heights-Inwood power outage, are now all too clear."

The task force lambasted Con Edison for not anticipating the increased stress on the Long Island City network and investing in improvements and modernization. The report contained a litany of the utility's other failures in the Queens outage, including not adequately compensating residents and small business owners for their full losses—something the Western Queens Power for the People Campaign has been fighting for. (See www.powerforthepeople.info)

The task force made many positive recommendations, including a long "to do" list for Con Edison to cleanup its well-documented failures and a proposal that it spend \$20 million over three years on a state-of-the-art grid in western Queens.

Although the task force asked whether Con Ed's monopoly should be "of indefinite duration," however, it hedged on really going after the corporate giant's hegemony, recommending only that the state review the monopoly every 10 years. □



March 25 Coalition's William Torres demands, "Stop the raids!" at Feb. 2 protest.

WW PHOTOS: CHERYL LABASH

the immigration struggle and to educate the anti-war movement on the "other wars" in the United States, as well as the need for the immigrant rights struggle to endorse anti-war actions, was part of the report-back from the "U.S. Wars, Iraq and Immigration" workshop by Dianne Mathiowetz of the International Action Center-Atlanta.

Participating groups and organizations included Chispa, ELAC, Students for Immigrant Rights, APALC, South Asian Network, Korea Truth Commission, Hands Off Public Housing-New Orleans, Coalición de Derechos Humanos, Committee for Justice for Héctor Rivas, Mujeres Unidas Y Activas, Comité Pro-Amnistía Y Justicia Social, Jobs with Justice, TIGRA, Voices Crossing Frontiers/Voces Cruzando Fronteras, Unión del Barrio, P.U.E.B.L.O., UCLA Labor Center, IBT 808, U.S.-Cuba Labor Exchange, SEIU 660, Bay Area Teamsters, FIST—Fight Imperialism, Stand Together, National Lawyers Guild, Sex Workers Across Borders, Workers World Party, Freedom Socialist Party, World Can't Wait, and Peace & Freedom Party.

The conference closed with agreement on the points of unity and recommendations for action.

A statement by Emma Lozano, Director of the Chicago-based Sin Fronteras/La Familia Latina Unida, was given to each participant. It read in part: "Even the best spokespeople in Congress call our people lawbreakers and say we must go to the back of the line. ... While they debate, we must demand a moratorium! We must resist. ... We must join in the boycott!"

Fernando Ledezma, a teacher and member of United Teachers Los Angeles, said, "Martin Luther King spoke of 'content of character' and I think it is critical to measure people not by what they are worth in money, but by how they contribute toward society. May 1 will be a celebration of measuring people by the content of their character."

John Parker from the March 25 Coalition commented about the conference, "This is a great beginning towards building a strong and united movement towards May 1, 2007 that could stop the raids and deportations and make a significant contribution to the struggle to win full legalization rights for all workers. And, given the makeup of labor, immigrant rights, social justice and anti-war organizations that participated in this conference a great contribution to unity and strength has been made." □

Blaming the victims

U.S. occupation at root of violence in Iraq

By Sara Flounders

The Bush administration released on Feb. 1 a vile four-page summary of a longer classified report on Iraq called the National Intelligence Estimate. Prepared by 16 U.S. intelligence agencies active there, the summary described the situation in Iraq as going from bad to worse.

That conclusion is probably the only statement in the report that is true. The rest, prepared by the same spy agencies that in 2002 backed up all the Bush administration's false claims of "weapons of mass destruction" and Iraq's "links to terrorism," is a series of distortions and slanders of the Iraqis. With unintentional irony it suggests that the Pentagon, which brought "shock and awe" to Iraq, now has to stay to pacify the Iraqis, who are plagued with a genetic or cultural "ready recourse to violence."

The problems in Iraq are described in the report in the same way that the corporate media defines the chaos there. Rather than summarize these false arguments that everyone has heard so often until they seem to be part of the air we breathe, this article will debunk them with historical truth and show who is to blame for the "unraveling" of Iraq.

It is important first to recognize that the "sectarian violence" in Iraq today has no precedence in Iraq's history. The now common bombings and assassinations in Baghdad were uncommon even during the first two years of U.S. occupation, and those that occurred were understood as political attacks on occupation forces and their collaborators.

At the time of the 2003 U.S. invasion Iraq was considered the most secular state in the region, with a strong national identity. Shiites and Sunnis lived in intermixed neighborhoods in major cities such as Baghdad, Mosul and Kirkuk. They often intermarried. Their religious differences were less pronounced than those between Catholic and Protestant groups in the U.S. today.

Shiites in Baath Party

Before 2003, both the Iraq Army and government bureaucracy were organized on a secular basis. Now nearly every article in the corporate media states that the Shiites in Iraq were totally oppressed and completely excluded from all positions of power. This is an intentionally divisive myth and was exposed in an Al-Jazeera article on Dec. 19, 2006, entitled "Media bias 'threat' to Iraq."

"Information about Iraq propagated by Western media is often woefully inaccurate or downright wrong, according to leading Arab figures, and such distortions are damaging any chance of peace in the country," says the article.

The article quotes a spokesperson from the Arab Baath Socialist Party, the ruling political party in Iraq from 1968 to 2003: "Most Western media outlets have been helping the U.S. occupation authorities to portray the Baath party as a Sunni party which suppressed the Shia and deprived them of their rights. ... The Committee of Debaathification issued a list of 100,000 senior Iraqi Baathists who would not be allowed to enjoy governmental posts, 66,000 of them were Shia—so how is the Baath party a Sunni party?"

And at the top of the Baath party? Consider the U.S. occupation's own list of 55 top Iraqi officials who they wanted dead or alive, starting with President Saddam Hussein. Of this famous "deck

While Washington pays lip service to a united Iraq, 'divide and rule' has always been central to imperialism's response to pan-Arab and now pan-Islamic resistance.

of cards," half were Shiite; others were Sunnis, along with Christian and Kurds, according to this same article.

Occupation is root of violence

The U.S. invasion and occupation is responsible for the violence in Iraq today. Journalists, correspondents and editors omit this basic underlying fact in almost all coverage of "sectarian violence." The U.S. occupation army, its officials, its contractors—another name for mercenaries—wreak violence daily. They are not innocent bystanders who stumbled into the country to bring democracy and reconciliation.

Before the 1991 U.S. war, Iraq had the highest standard of living in the region, full literacy and full free health care.

Pentagon air power unleashed 110,000 aerial sorties in 1991, targeting every industrial complex, communications center, reservoir, pumping station, filtration plant and food processing plant in the country, along with schools, hospitals and housing. Sporadic U.S. bombing continued for 12 years, along with U.S. and U.N. imposed starvation sanctions. This created an artificial famine, designed to strangle the entire country, and led to 1.5 million Iraqi deaths. Then came the 2003 U.S. massive bombardment, invasion and occupation.

Occupiers set up a sectarian structure

The U.S. "occupation authority," headed by L. Paul Bremer, then began to set up a structure that accentuated sectarian differences. Bremer closed down all the state-owned industries, started privatizing the formerly publicly owned oil resources of Iraq, and installed a hand-picked group of collaborators into office, most of whom had lived outside Iraq for over 30 years.

The collaborators were part of the old corrupt feudal class, who had been overthrown in the 1958 Iraqi Revolution. Reinstalled by the U.S., they revived the old system of clan chiefs that British colonialism had relied on, along with the most reactionary religious fundamentalists. Still, they had to demonstrate their craven loyalty by organizing witch hunts that rounded up former Baath Party members.

Bremer purged tens of thousands of Iraqi teachers, technicians, scientists and administrators at every level of government who had previously belonged to the Baath Party. This "debaathification" program barred them from working, holding office, or even voting.

The occupation authority decided who could run for office and form political parties, favoring those based on religious sects, with the elections organized strictly along sectarian lines. Since the armed resistance to the U.S. occupation was strongest in the mainly Sunni areas, Shiite and Kurdish-based parties received a larger portion of the seats in parliament and the control of ministries where they could hand out thousands of jobs and government appointments. The U.S. forces then used the threat of isolation to cajole some Sunnis into collaborating with the occupation.

The U.S. occupation authority also orga-

nized the Iraqi military units on a sectarian basis. They consciously used Shia units in Sunni areas and Sunni units against Shia resistance, while the media emphasized the sectarian fighting. The Iraqi media is hardly an independent force. To assure a U.S.-friendly line, the Pentagon awarded a \$96 million contract to a U.S. communications company, Harris Corp., to establish the al-Iraqiya television and radio network and a national newspaper. The U.S. occupation forces appointed the directors, producers, staff and the journalists.

The U.S. occupation authority also pushed through a constitution that further hardened religious antagonisms and regional differences. Iraqis warned when this constitution was rushed to a vote in October 2005 that it would push the rights of women back 50 years, break the central government and promote sectarianism and even civil war.

Before 1991, rights for women in Iraq were the most advanced in the region.

While Washington always paid lip service to supporting a united Iraq, heightening the divisions among Iraqis was always part of Washington's war plans. The constitution was actually drafted prior to the U.S. invasion by a task force of Iraqi expatriates the U.S. State Department pulled together. The final constitution gave both provinces and competing ministries the power to have their own security forces.

Washington's hidden hand

Even without covert operations to stir up trouble, the U.S. occupation has created the structure and put the divisive policies in place. In an impoverished, war-torn country they have brought into office thousands of collaborators whose position and continued privileges are based on a divided, occupied and traumatized Iraq.

That there are at least 16 secret U.S. intelligence agencies, each with its own agenda and agents operating in Iraq, is another source of violence and instability. There are now 100,000 contractors working for the U.S. in Iraq, with some 30,000 to 50,000 working in "security" (Washington Post, Dec. 5, 2006). These are all hired guns. In addition the Israeli Mossad and other countries' Special Forces have committed personnel.

The arrest on Sept. 19, 2005, of two British agents disguised as Arab "terrorists" with a car full of explosives in Basra raised international speculation and wide suspicion of a hidden hand behind the bombings there. Unable to secure the release of their two disguised terrorists from the local police, British forces took extraordinary action and bulldozed the police compound and jail in order to free them before they could be interrogated.

'Divide and rule' Iraq?

Both Washington rightist neo-cons and liberal commentators have argued that the only way to subdue and control Iraq is to divide it into a Kurdish north, Sunni center and Shiite south.

This view was strongly advocated by Peter Galbraith in the book "The End of Iraq" and in his columns in New Republic, which have been reprinted across the U.S. Earlier, Galbraith's view

prevailed regarding Yugoslavia and he became the U.S. ambassador to Croatia. He viewed the unraveling of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia as essential to U.S. hegemony.

Leslie Gelb, a former editor and columnist for the New York Times and president emeritus of the Rockefeller-created Council on Foreign Relations, also raised this view in a widely published article, "The Three-State Solution." (New York Times, Nov. 26, 2003) Gelb contrasted the problems in Iraq to imperialism's success in breaking up Yugoslavia.

Another commentator given wide coverage is David Brooks, who sees NATO-occupied Bosnia as a "model that could help stabilize Iraq. Brooks applauds the resurgence of American hegemony and calls for a soft partition of Iraq. He is a regular columnist for the New York Times and Washington Post, a contributing editor at Newsweek, and a commentator on PBS's News Hour with Jim Lehrer and NPR's All Things Considered.

The imperialist strategy of the U.S., and earlier Britain and France, has always been based on «divide and rule. This was their policy toward the indigenous peoples of the Americas, Africa, the Indian subcontinent and Western Asia, also known as the Middle East.

To control the Middle East the colonial powers played on differences and hostility between communities, whether they be Sunni and Shiite, Druze and Christians on the one hand, or Kurds, Iranians and other nationalities on the other. Breaking areas into mini-states was the imperialist response to the revolutionary challenge of anti-colonial pan-Arab nationalism. Today it is the response to pan-Islamic resistance.

The official U.S. position has always been to support a unified, sovereign and democratic Iraq. With so many top imperialist commentators urging a violent breakup, however, it would be naive to assume there are no agencies involved in planning its execution.

Many analysts see this division as the only way to avoid a humiliating U.S. defeat. For example, in a Jan. 14, 2005, article in Newsweek, in an article titled The Salvador option, the subhead read: The Pentagon may put Special Forces-led assassination or kidnapping teams in Iraq. In other words, death squads.

The growing mass enthusiasm in the region over Washington's humiliation in Iraq and Israel's stunning setback in Lebanon threaten all of the corrupt feudal regimes and military dictatorships held in place by U.S. military power. Popular resistance and unity are a threat to imperialist domination.

The U.S. client regimes in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Jordan and Egypt have stepped forward with the full power of their media in the Arab world to push daily news coverage that heightens the divisions, suspicion and antagonisms between Sunni and Shiite religious sects.

While the chaos of deepening sectarian conflict and civil war will take a devastating toll on the entire Iraqi population, it will not necessarily help the U.S. occupation stabilize its rule in Iraq or in the region. The conflict could instead take on a radical anti-U.S. character and lead to wider anti-imperialist resistance throughout the entire region.

All groupings are distrustful of the U.S. and feel betrayed by U.S. promises because the occupation has brought insecurity, misery and chaos to all of Iraq. □

Bush's budget: Death and taxes—for everyone except the rich

By Robert Dobrow

Twenty thousand dollars a second; \$70 million an hour. That's how much money the Pentagon will be allowed to spend under the administration's planned 2008 federal budget.

The \$2.9 trillion Bush budget defies superlatives. Virtually every government program that addresses human needs is to be cut.

But the military got its largest war chest ever, a staggering two-thirds of a trillion dollars for more war, more nuclear weapons, more militarization of outer space, more U.S. troops around the globe, more bombs, bullets, guns and missiles.

In terms of real, pre-inflation dollars, it's the highest level of military spending since the height of the Korean War in 1952. It's a 10 percent hike from last year's war spending. And this is in addition to \$145 billion in "supplemental funding" that will go directly to the wars of aggression in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Just that supplemental piece alone is enough to provide free tuition for every student enrolled in a public college or university in this country.

The government would cut \$78 billion from health spending over five years. Sixty-six billion dollars would be taken from Medicare, which provides health insurance for 43 million people. And the remaining \$12 billion will come from Medicaid for the poor and from a program that provides health insurance for low-income children.

Ambulance services will be reduced. Rental periods for life-sustaining oxygen equipment will be cut to 13 months from 36 months. Hospitals and hospices will get less, not more. The State Children's Health Insurance Program, which provides coverage for six million low-income children, will see a \$223 million reduction in funds.

Other programs on the chopping block include the Environmental Protection Agency (4.9 percent cut from last year's funding); Low Income Home Energy Assistance (56 percent cut from last year); Amtrak (\$500 million cut from last year); Education Department (5 percent cut); Office of Disability Employment Policy (32 percent cut); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (\$550 million cut).

The budget attack is particularly vicious when it comes to taxes. At present, the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts for the rich are scheduled to expire in 2010. The new budget calls for making these tax giveaways permanent.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, this will translate to a transfer of \$1 trillion in tax cuts for the top 1 percent of households—those with incomes over \$400,000—over the next 10 years. The group estimates that the cost of the tax bonanza for people with incomes over \$1 million will exceed the total amount the federal government devotes to K-12 and vocational education.

Trying to make military spending seem small

The government's line, echoed by the capitalist media, is that "entitlement" programs, like Social Security, are burgeoning out of control, and military spending, while large, is still a small fraction of the total budget.

For instance, an Office of Management and the Budget pie chart, reprinted in the Washington Post, shows "national defense" taking up about one-fifth of

total spending.

But this is deliberate deception. The scam is based on mixing apples and oranges. The Bush budget combines federal fund items, those budget items that get paid for by taxes, with trust fund items like Social Security, Medicare and unemployment insurance, which have their own sources of income and spending separate from taxes.

For most of the 19th and 20th centuries, the government never used to combine federal funds with trust funds in the national budget—until the Vietnam War. Since Vietnam, and since the ever-growing militarization of the capitalist economy, federal and trust funds have been deliberately combined in the budget as a way to make it seem that militarism doesn't eat up such a big share of total spending.

It's not one-fifth. Rather it's more than one-half of tax dollars that are consumed by the military, according to the Center for Defense Information.

Military spending includes not only the "official" Department of Defense budget, but many other war-related projects, such as nuclear weapons programs in the Energy Department, military-related programs in the departments of Homeland Security and Justice and pay-

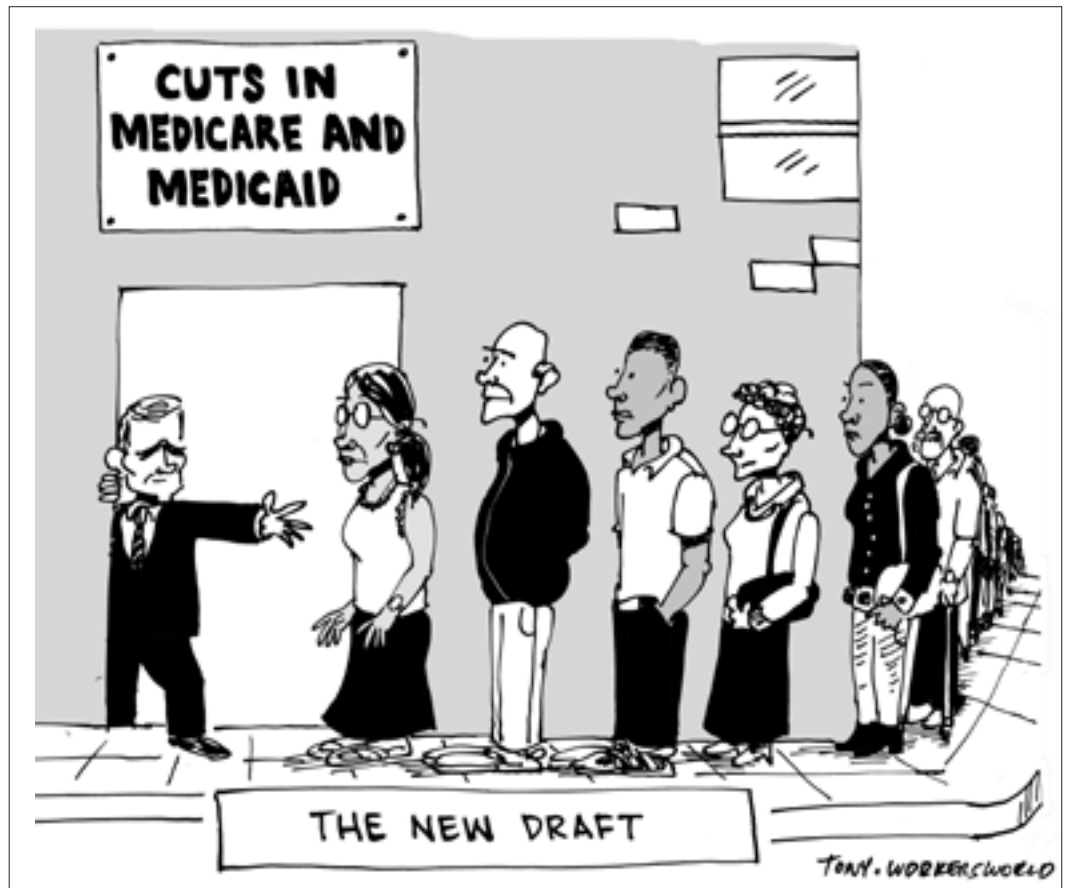
ments to the military and CIA retirement and health care systems.

And the biggest source of "hidden" military spending lies in the single largest piece of the federal budget: interest payments on the national debt, which soar to \$470 billion in the new Bush bill.

Most of that debt was raised to pay for past

wars. As of 5 a.m., Feb. 6, the total national debt was \$8,698,256,057,676.85—almost nine trillion dollars—and growing at the rate of over a billion dollars a day.

The capitalist budget is a program for war, death and destruction, the desperate gasps of a system that is bankrupt to its core. □



NYC press conference tells Congress:

'Cut funding for Iraq war!'



Charles Barron, Brenda Stokely, Larry Holmes at City Hall Feb. 6.

City Councilperson Charles Barron announced from the steps of New York's City Hall at a Feb. 6 media conference that he is planning to introduce a resolution in the city council that calls for the U.S. Congress to cut off all funding for the war in Iraq.

Barron was joined at the media conference by anti-war leaders and activists such as Shawna Glover from Black Waxx artists; Bernadette Ellorin from BAYAN-USA; Larry Holmes, Brenda Stokely and Nellie Bailey from the Troops Out Now Coalition (TONC); Vinie Burrows as part of a delegation of Grannies for Peace; students from CCNY; some labor officials and members of the clergy.

President George W. Bush recently

asked Congress to approve \$245 billion more to fund the war in Iraq, and to cut \$78 billion from Medicare and Medicaid.

Councilperson Barron said: "The non-binding resolution being debated in Congress is a diversion. The real issue is the vote on war funding."

Barron continued, "We must demand that Senators Clinton and Schumer stop talking antiwar, and vote against war funding."

Plans for a major New York City march and rally organized by TONC on Feb. 17 to demand that Hillary Clinton, Charles Schumer and Congress cut off war funding, and a march on the Pentagon March 17 were also announced at the media conference.

—Monica Moorehead

WW PHOTOS: SHARON BLACK

**Sat. Feb. 17 NYC
MARCH & RALLY**
Times Square, 1 pm 43rd St. & Brdwy
March to the offices of New York Senators
Hillary Clinton & Charles Schumer

BRING THE TROOPS HOME NOW!
Demand Congress
**CUT OFF
THE
WAR
FUNDS!**

Rainbow Solidarity for Cuban Five circles the planet

By Leslie Feinberg

More than 600 lesbian, gay and bisexual, transgender and transsexual, intersexual and other activists, organizations and allies battling oppression based on sexuality, gender expression and sex have united behind the demand to free the Cuban Five.

The five political prisoners—Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, Fernando Gonzáles, and René González—are serving long sentences in U.S. penitentiaries for the “crime” of infiltrating CIA-backed fascist commando groups in order to halt terror attacks against Cuba from U.S. soil.

The call for “Rainbow Solidarity for the Cuban Five” demands a new trial and freedom for these political prisoners, defense of Cuban sovereignty and self-determination, and a halt to the illegal U.S. acts of war against Cuba—including the economic blockade and CIA-trained, funded and armed attacks by mercenary “contra” armies operating from this country.

A multinational, multi-lingual group of U.S. activists first issued the call for Rainbow Solidarity to Free the Cuban Five on Jan. 7. Within days, some 200 individuals and groups from across the United States and around the globe had signed on. In the next two weeks that number tripled.

Enthusiastic replies poured in from more than two dozen countries, and from more than 215 cities and towns in 38 states in the United States.

The geographic and political arch of the rainbow continues to broaden. A frequently updated list of signers is posted at: www.freethethefive.org.

Roster of hard-working activists

The national organization Pro-Gay Philippines has added its powerful voice to the Rainbow Solidarity demands.

The Puerto Rican Alliance of Los Angeles and its coordinator Lawrence Reyes have endorsed.

Many Italian groups have signed on. These include Coordinamento Nazionale Trans FTM, Movimento Identità Transessuale and Crisalide Azione Trans.

Other signers include the Committee to Defend Palestinian Human Rights and its co-chair, Donna Joss; Walter Lippmann, editor-in-chief of CubaNews; Cianán Russell, chair of the Indiana Transgender Rights Advocacy Alliance; QueerToday.com and its founder, Mark Snyder; Gordene MacKenzie, GenderTalk Radio and director of Women’s Studies, Merrimack College, Beverly, Mass; the

Global Coalition for Peace and its director, Victor (Vyasa) Landa; Worker World Party; Doug Barnes and the Freedom Socialist Party; Starlene Rankin, Green National Committee delegate of the Lavender Caucus of the Green Party of the United States; Viktor Dedaj, webmaster of the Cuba Solidarity Project; the Cuba Edmonton Solidarity Committee in Alberta, Canada; and the Swiss Cuba Association.

Volunteers have translated the call, making it available online in Spanish, English, simplified and traditional Chinese, Farsi, Portuguese, Italian, French and German.

The Japanese translation is ready, and work has already begun in Tagalog and Turkish. Help with other translations is needed.

Many names on the list, viewable at www.freethethefive.org—look for the rainbow—will be recognizable as well-known LGBT activists and others battling oppression based on sexuality, gender and sex, including women’s liberationists.

This roster also reveals that many of these activists are some of the hardest-working organizers in movements here and around the world against imperialist war, neo-liberalism, neo-colonialism, national oppression, racism, police brutality, prison and death penalty abolition, sweatshops and capitalist globalization.

These are also leading activists in the struggle for immigrant rights; women’s liberation, including reproductive rights; jobs; labor union, tenant and community organizing; education; health care and affordable housing; freedom for all U.S. political prisoners and for prisoner rights; national liberation; support for Cuba and the revolutionary movement to overturn capitalism and build an economy based on planning to meet peoples’ needs.

Enthusiastic support for Cuban Five

The Rainbow Solidarity initiative is giving voice to grassroots support for the Cuban Five.

Shahlah Barvenvall, from Malmo, Sweden, writes with the kind of enthusiasm that is characteristic of the responses: “Yes, I want to sign on to the call for Rainbow Solidarity for the Cuban Five!”

Stephen Schryver: “[A]dd my name to your growing list of outraged citizens in this country.”

Tami Starlight, director of Trans Action Canada: “I support this fully!”

Lynda Aubrey, from Elk, Calif.: “Please add my name to the call to free the Cuban 5 (I am a lesbian).”

Tim Sutton: “My partner and I are with you 100 percent.”

Joan Larkin, from Brooklyn, N.Y.: “I have long been outraged by the terrible injustice of their situation.”

Paul Lefrak, a member of OPEIU Local 100 in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., says: “As a gay man in South Florida who calls for freedom for our brothers, the Five, I am delighted to see this initiative. THEY MUST BE FREE!”

U.S. warlord hypocrisy

Other signers hit U.S. imperialist hypocrisy.

Jerry Pendergast, from Athletes United for Peace, U.S.-El Salvador Sister Cities, Nicaragua Solidarity Committee, writes: “These people were trying to prevent an act of terrorism. The country that claims to lead the ‘War On Terror’ is imprisoning them.”

Larry Morton of the Scottish Socialist Freedom Movement: “It is time these Cubans had a fair trial and it is recognized they were protecting their homeland from U.S.-sponsored terrorism.”

Barry Morley, secretary-treasurer of the Community Business and Professionals Association of Canada, states, “It is time for the Bush administration to stop the hypocrisy and make terrorism against Cuba illegal.”

Tighe Barry supports the five as “those most important defenders of everyone’s right to live without fear of terrorism. The patriotic Cuban Five [are] illegally held political prisoners in a country with the most of its own people behind bars.” Barry, who grew up in Miami, adds the need to organize to close down the U.S. prison at Guantanamo and free all those held there.

Ray Elling, from Farmington, Conn., suggests, “Put Cheney and Bush in jail instead of the Cuban Five.”

Sebastian Shunmugam, Kempton Park, Gauteng, South Africa, notes, “I trust that justice will prevail and not the shortsighted political agenda of individuals.”

Cecile Meyer, from DeKalb, Ill., adds: “As Martin Luther King points out: justice delayed is justice denied. Justice has been delayed far too long for the Cuban Five.”

Dr. Akira Asada, from Hyogo, Japan, states, “I am not a U.S. citizen. But this is a problem of human rights. So I sign.”

Yancy Gandionco, from the LGBTQI Desk of Bayan USA, affirms: “Mabuhang panaghiusang international!!! Long live international solidarity!!!”

Eric Theis, from Milwaukee, reminds, “Ah, the things we gain from solidarity.”



Fernando González, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández and René González. www.freethethefive.org

Richard Spurgeon, from Madera, Calif., says succinctly, “It’s way past time to change our policy toward Cuba and the Cuban people.”

Chien San Feng, professor in the Department of Journalism, National Cheng Chi University, in Taipei, Taiwan, sends this message: “The U.S. should lift the embargo.”

Adela Brent, counselor at the Zig Zag Young Women’s Resource Centre Inc. in Brisbane, Australia: “As a citizen of the world, I demand the U.S. government to free the five Cubans who have not committed any crime. I also demand the U.S. government to lift the economic embargo against the Cuban people.”

Joan Malerich, from St. Paul, Minn.: “I have written Fernando Gonzáles approximately twice a week since March of 2003. I have learned so much from him. The Five are examples for the world, just as the Cuban Revolution has always been an example for the world. I greatly appreciate your work in supporting the Five, and I know the Five and their families also greatly appreciate your beautiful efforts. Thank you!!!!!!”

Dale Pfeiffer, author of “Eating Fossil Fuels,” writes from Irvine, Ky.: “It is long past time for the U.S. to recognize Cuba’s right to determine its own form of government. In the years to come, U.S. respect for Cuba will be extremely important to the welfare of the U.S. public, as industrialized, U.S.-style agriculture results in a food crisis for which Cuba has pioneered the only possible solution. It is time to honor Cuba, not vilify it. Let this honor begin with the freedom of the Cuban Five.”

David from New York state stresses how biased the trial venue was for the Five: “[The] Five Cubans who were trying to stop the ultra-right terrorist groups in Miami from carrying out violent actions against the people of Cuba. Miami is the one city in the U.S. where the Five certainly could not receive a fair trial.”

David eloquently concludes: “To all justice-loving people in the U.S. and around the world, we appeal to you to join the struggle to free Fernando, René, Antonio, Ramón and Gerardo. Help us in outreach, education and organizing, because once people know the facts of the case, we are sure they will call for their freedom as well.”

Sign on the call at: www.freethethefive.org—look for the rainbow.

For more information about the case of the Cuban Five, also visit freethethefive.org. □

1950s Havana: Imperialist sexploitation

By Leslie Feinberg

For 400 years of Cuba’s history, the social organization and state regulation of the sexes, gender expression and sexualities was—as among all occupied and colonized peoples—in thrall to the brutal systems of exploitation by semi-feudal landlords, capitalist bosses and imperialist finance capitalists.

By the mid-20th century, the impoverishment sweeping the island was the outgrowth of imperialism’s conversion of the economy into sugar and citrus plantations and nickel mines that shackled the rural laboring population to the soil and the earth below it.

Havana exerted a gravitational pull on those who cut cane from sunup to

sundown. By the 1950s, the promise of jobs attracted hundreds of thousands of impoverished peasants of all sexualities, genders and sexes to the urban capital, the largest city on the island.

Many tens of thousands whose sexuality or gender expression had made them publicly vulnerable and without privacy in rural towns and villages found employment in Havana. Capitalist organized crime bosses ran an interlocking directorate of large-scale prostitution, tourism, gambling and drug distribution in the capital city.

In the 1950s, McCarthyite repression in the U.S.—including the Puritanical purges

and state repression carried out under the banner of fighting a “Lavender Menace”—spurred the expansion of this lucrative offshore capitalist sex-drugs-gambling

industry in Havana for the rich and powerful to escape the Cold War climate.

“Not surprisingly, then,” researchers Lourdes Arguelles and B. Ruby Rich stressed, “Cuban homosexuals had preferential hiring treatment in the Havana tourist sector in order to meet the demands” of U.S. businessmen and brass.

Arguelles and Rich published their extensively researched report, entitled “Homosexuality, Homophobia, and

Revolution: Notes Toward an Understanding of the Cuban Lesbian and Gay Male Experience,” in the summer of 1984.

The two researchers added that the illegal prostitution industry was also created for the patriarchs and scions of the Cuban elite, who sought feminine male-bodied youth and adults.

In the towns and villages, sexuality, gender and the organization of the sexes were in the servitude of patriarchal social relations dominated by wealthy landowners. In the urban capital, sex was reduced to the nexus of patriarchal capitalist relations.

Arguelles and Rich explained: “Even in the Havana of the 1950s, everyday life was not easy for the working-class or petty-bourgeois homosexual. Unemployment

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A step forward

General strike in Guinea

By G. Dunkel

With organization, solidarity and heavy sacrifices, the people and workers of Guinea won a victory Jan. 27 at the end of an 18-day general strike.

President Lansana Conté agreed to accept a “consensus prime minister” with full executive powers. And the prices of fuel and rice, an important staple in Guinea, were cut substantially.

Workers’ monthly salaries for January will be paid in full.

Guinea is a small country of 9 million people in French-speaking West Africa, whose capital is Conakry.

Salamatou Diallo, in the online news service *GuineeConakry*, reports that the agreement among the government, the union coalition that led the strike and the bosses prohibiting the exportation of food has been scrupulously followed by custom workers. Thousands of tons of fish denied export permission have appeared on Conakry markets, substantially lowering the price to consumers.

While reports vary—government sources

say the army killed 56 protesters, union sources say over 90 died—it is clear that the government and army tried to break the strike with force. *Jeune Afrique* (no. 2403) reports that some members of Conté’s family tried to organize a pro-government militia, recruiting from their ethnic group by giving out small amounts of money and clubs.

Jan. 22 was a turning point in the strike. The two unions—the National Confederation of Guinean Workers (CNTG) and the Guinean Workers Union (USTG)—are former opponents that had formed a coalition in 2005 to struggle for social change and justice. The unions, together with their allies the National Council of Civil Society Organizations and the Civic Alliance, called for a mass march in Conakry. About 30,000 people came out, mainly from the poorest suburbs of Conakry, even though 20 to 30 people had been killed in earlier protests.

The army and the Contés’ militia attacked the demonstration. At least 34 people were killed. Hundreds were arrested. They included USTG Secretary General Ibrahima Fofana and CNTG Secretary General Rabiadou Serah Diallo, who were beaten before being hauled off.

But the strike still stayed strong. There was no big movement back to work.

The government decided to negotiate but President Conté didn’t attend the meetings Jan. 23, leaving it to his spouse Henriette Conté.

According to Ousmane Souaré of the USTG no reason for President Conté’s absence was given. He is known to suffer from diabetes and heart disease. Fofana and Diallo were released to attend the meetings with a number of cabinet ministers, Supreme Court justices and representatives of the bosses.

As of Feb. 4, according to reports on Guinean web sites, economic activity is beginning to increase in Conakry and

other big cities but it still is not back to normal.

There are a number of reports on the web that indicate not every Guinean is satisfied with the settlement. One person interviewed by AP, standing near some burned-out cars in a suburb that hasn’t had electricity for 20 months, said, “Conté must go.” Other posts on *ConakryGuinea* and *Guinea Forum* put out the same message.

The unions just suspended their strike. But this is the third general strike the USTG and the CNTG have called in the past year. They are quite capable of calling another.

There are opposition parties in Guinea, but the people see them as narrowly based, striving to come out on top, capturing power, but not necessarily governing differently than the current government, according to Mike McGovern, a West Africa expert at Yale.

“[The unions] are talking about people’s life chances, so when they say they are only concerned with people’s well-being, that’s tremendously powerful,” McGovern told the United Nations press service IRIN.

Legacy of colonialism is alive

The first president of Guinea, Sekou Touré, was a union leader. He proclaimed the independence of his country from the union hall in Conakry.

The memory of how the unions contributed to the liberation of Guinea from French colonialism gives their calls for general strikes with demands in the interests of all the working and poor people of Guinea a powerful legitimacy.

While Guinea is the world’s largest producer of bauxite—the ore that is source of aluminum—and a significant producer of gold and diamonds, with tens of thousands of acres of well-water croplands, most Guineans live on less than \$2 a day. Entire neighborhoods in the capital

haven’t had electricity or running water for years. Rabiadou Serah Diallo, who heads the CNTG, lives in a neighborhood that hasn’t had running water for five years. Most of the roads in the country have more potholes than pavement. Wealthy Guineans, like the president, leave the country for medical care.

The U.S.-based multinational corporation Alcoa and the Canada-based multinational Alan, not the people who suffer and die early deaths, draw the major profits from all the bauxite Guinea produces. The life expectancy at birth for a Guinean is less than 50 years.

The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have their hooks into Guinea. In 2004 the country’s total long- and medium-term debt was about \$3.3 billion. That is 92 percent of its gross domestic product. There is no way under the present system that Guinea will ever be able to pay this debt off.

The struggle is not over. Ibrahima Fofana and other union leaders visited six protesters, who were at the center of the demonstrations, in the hospital to give comfort and encourage them. Leaving the hospital, Fofana told reporters that “their deeds had to be put in the context of the struggle against poverty and for ... democracy, liberty and the development of the Republic of Guinea.”

He also praised the courage of all those who died for liberty and thanked the Guineans both in the country and outside for standing up together, all ethnic groups joined. Spontaneously he compared “their engagement in the struggle against the misery of the people to the multiple strikes which led to the liberation of Guinea from the colonial yoke.”

Fofana told the press that Guinea’s resolution of this crisis really showed the way for African people to remove themselves from the claws of the imperialist powers which are suffocating them. □

1950 Havana

Continued from page 8

was high and had been steadily increasing throughout the decade. The scarcity of productive occupations demanded a strictly closeted occupational life. For all women, and especially for lesbians, employment almost invariably entailed continual sexual harassment.”

Men who had sex with men and women who had sex with women were caught up in the dragnet of the illegal economy.

Arguelles and Rich noted: “Apart from employment realities, social pressures made thousands of pre-revolutionary homosexuals part of this underworld. Even homosexuals such as students (who were differently placed) were integrated into this subculture through the bars that they frequented: the St. Michel, the Dirty Dick, El Gato Tuerto.” Most of these bars were owned by crime bosses.

The researchers emphasized, “The commodification of homosexual desire in the Havana underworld and in the bourgeois homosexual underground during the pre-revolutionary era, however, did not produce a significant toleration of homosexual life-styles in the larger social arena.”

Homosexual and gender/sex variant Cubans met with violence and harassment in the above-ground industries and within the patriarchal family structure. “If legal sanctions and official harassment were rare,” Arguelles and Rich explained, “this tolerance was due less to social acceptance than to overriding considerations of profit and the economic interests of the underworld that dominated the Cuban political apparatus.”

“The consumer structure of the Havana underworld never spawned a ‘gay culture’ or ‘gay sensibility’ even in strictly commercial terms, due to its isolation from the mainstream of social life and the degree of guilt and self-hatred afflicting its members.”

Arguelles and Rich concluded that Santería—African-Cuban religious beliefs and practices that challenge the colonialist and imperialist sex/gender and sexuality systems—has been a “favored form of gender transcendence for many Cuban homosexual men and lesbians.”

Next: Cuban Revolution defeats imperialist mega-giant.

E-mail: lfeinberg@workers.org

Senegalese protest over elections

From a report by the U.S. section of the Union of African Workers-Senegal (RTA-S)

Senegalese immigrants in New York City protested Feb. 2 before the Senegalese Consulate on 125 Street in Harlem and in front of the United Nations buildings downtown the same day to denounce the Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade’s continual violations of the country’s constitution and especially the electoral code.

The Senegalese immigrants were responding to leaders of opposition parties who were arrested on Jan. 27 when they tried to march in Dakar, Senegal’s capital city. The opposition has criticized the constant postponing of legislative elections and demanded free, transparent and democratic elections in the West Africa State.

On Jan. 27, Senegalese riot police beat opposition leaders with batons and fired tear gas at a crowd of protesters demonstrating against President Wade. Authorities had banned the demonstration a day earlier, although it is a constitutional right for people to march without special permission. This is why protesters in New York took the street to demand that parliamentary and presidential election schedules be respected as planned and to stop human rights abuses, public beatings of political leaders and the use by the police force of electrical batons against peaceful protesters.



PHOTO: RTA-SENEGAL

In Dakar, Senegal, Jan. 27, government arrests opposition leaders protesting the postponement of legislative elections.

Senegal, a former colony of France that won political independence in 1960, had 12 million inhabitants as of a 2006 estimate. Its economy is dominated by policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. Even though Senegal is regarded as a democratic bastion in a region infamous for civil wars and military coups, the central government is currently facing a rebellion in the southern region of Casamance.

The New York protesters ended their march by meeting with the Senegalese Consul Cheikh Niang to request their

national and voting identification that would allow them to participate in the Feb. 25 presidential elections. Some 4,598 registered Senegalese in the U.S. are still waiting to receive their ID cards, which the Senegalese government now claims it has lost.

According to Niang, Senegal’s interior minister has promised to hand deliver by next week replacement cards that will be distributed in New York and across the United States.

The legislative elections were also to be held Feb. 25, but now they have been postponed until June. □

Money for Iraq war?

For the next eight weeks millions of people who want an end to the U.S. war against Iraq and its occupation of that country will focus their attention on the U.S. Congress. With the Iraq Study Group's report fizzling out quickly, the ruling-class debate over the tactics of the Iraq war has moved to Capitol Hill.

First, because the Bush gang on Feb. 5 submitted its budget for the fiscal year 2008 which included a record Pentagon outlay of \$480 billion plus over \$140 billion supplemental funding for the Iraq and Afghanistan occupations. Second, because the Democratic Party won last November's election by criticizing President George Bush's Iraq policy. And its voters want action.

There is no reason to believe the Democrats are suited to lead a struggle to end the war. Democratic politicians presided over World Wars I and II, dropped nuclear weapons on Japan, and started the Korean and Vietnam wars and the 1999 air war against Yugoslavia. Like the Republicans, the Democratic Party has represented the interests of U.S. imperialism with militaristic zeal.

It should come as no surprise then that despite the Democrats' electoral strategy of opposing Bush's war policies and despite their awareness that U.S. plans to conquer Iraq are heading toward disaster, the party's national leadership has proposed only a "symbolic" resolution criticizing Bush. Instead of flat out refusing to vote to fund the war or refusing to fund the "surge" of 21,500 troops, the Democrats will say: "We oppose the

surge." Then they will fund the war.

In the Senate the Republicans opposed even this minor step. The debate stalled a day after it got started.

If the Democratic House leadership has its way, from Feb. 14 to Feb. 16 there will be a debate on a "nonbinding resolution" opposing Bush's policy. They too will attempt to restrict the struggle to mere symbolism, even though they have the constitutional power to cut funds for the war.

In the House there are two bills, HR 508 and HR 455, which go further toward actually cutting off funds. These have a core of supporters. Even the sponsors of these bills felt they must take pains to show they support the troops. It is revolting that even though the criminal Bush administration lied to the troops to send them to conquer Iraq, has kept them there killing and dying under false pretenses, and has failed to care for the injured veterans, it can still pose as a "defender of the troops."

The Democratic leadership will try to keep these more confrontational bills off the floor and out of the media. None of these Democrats want to take the responsibility of winding down the war with a big U.S. military defeat.

Yet a recent poll showed that 64 percent of the people want Congress to be more assertive in challenging Bush over the war. One can expect that even a constrained congressional debate on the war can involve greater sectors of the population, with the potential of spilling over into direct action to demand an end to the U.S. occupation of Iraq. □

YOUTH PAY PRICE OF

By David Hoskins

The Bush administration's proposed 2008 budget calls for an extraordinary \$2.9 trillion in spending.

A reasonable observer might expect that a budget that huge would allocate sufficient resources to fund the types of programs that would benefit young workers and students: universal higher education and the cancellation of existing student loan debt, job training, and public works programs employing young people to construct much-needed mass transit and energy-efficient affordable housing.

Instead, the Bush budget is designed to finance the escalation of conflict in the Middle East. It provides the Pentagon another \$100 billion for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars this year, on top of the \$70 billion already allocated by Congress, plus \$141.7 billion for these wars next year—all to pay for death and destruction meant to crush opposition to the super-exploitation of the area by the major U.S. and British oil companies.

The total 2008 Pentagon budget, which also includes huge expenditures on costly weapons systems and basing troops around the world, would come to \$624.6 billion.

Killing people quickly and slowly

The immediate human impact of the Iraq war is obvious. Over 3,100 U.S. sol-

diers have died in Iraq so far. Iraqi war-related deaths are estimated at more than 655,000. (The Lancet, Oct. 14, 2006). The average age of a dead U.S. soldier in Iraq is less than 27.

The war in Iraq not only affects the young by sapping resources and sending them off to die. It also has dire environmental consequences for those with the longest time left to live on this planet.

The use of depleted uranium (DU), white phosphorus, MK77 Mod 5 napalm and other outlawed incendiary weapons in Iraq has an immediate and devastating effect on the health of soldiers and civilians. The Sierra Club of Canada pointed out as early as 1999 that "the environmental consequences of DU weapons residue will be felt for thousands of years as its decay products continually transform into other hazardous radioactive substances in the uranium decay chain."

The U.S. economy was long ago deliberately structured to be dependent on oil by an agreement among the oil, rubber and automobile companies to stifle quality mass transit. (Eric Schlosser's "Fast Food Nation" gives the details.) According to the Energy Information Association, U.S. petroleum consumption now exceeds 20.8 million barrels a day. It's a perfect example of how, under capitalism, short-term economic growth prevails over long-term sustainability because of the drive for profits.

The world struggle is boiling

There is a mighty heroism in all of us. There is a force within every human being that is powerful. It is part of us that wants to fight back. It is the voice in the back of our heads that tells us that, yes, we deserve better than this. It is a voice that tells us another world is possible, if we are willing to drive it into being with the strength of history.

This is the force that tells the Iraqis, the men, the women and the children, to fight back. Everyday Iraqis are being slaughtered by the United States in its criminal war of aggression. The life of Iraqis is getting perpetually worse.

But what do the Iraqis do? Do they submit? Do they surrender to the will of the mighty imperialist empire?

No! They are fighting back. The brutal bombing campaigns of the Gulf War did not stop them. The inhumane and genocidal sanctions that killed millions of Iraqis did not stop them. This invasion has not stopped them. The gallows lynching of their former president did not stop them. They continue to fight back because of the beautiful part of our humanity: the inner instinct of slaves that drives them to fight not to be slaves anymore.

Hugo Chávez represents the aspirations of the millions of workers who live in Venezuela. He is everyday fighting to make real what millions in South America have only dreamed of. He is fighting for socialism, a society where the means of production are in the hands of the workers; a society without a class of exploiters; a society without the horrors of poverty and all the misery that goes along with that.

Everyday Hugo Chávez is proving that socialism as an economic system did not fail. Doctors from socialist Cuba are going to Venezuela and perform-

ing eye surgery, and now thousands of Venezuelans, who out of their condition of poverty went blind, have regained their sight.

Chávez is setting up healthcare clinics where anyone can go and see a doctor when they are sick. He is redistributing land to the peasants and giving them a new beginning. He is now in the process of taking the telephone companies, and many other appendages of the imperial stranglehold on Venezuela's economy, and making them the property of the Venezuelan people, managed not by a corrupt bureaucracy, but by the Venezuelans themselves.

Isn't it crazy to look back? In 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed, they told us that socialism and communism was dead. They told us that now American capitalism would reign supreme. They told us that we should give up on our dreams of a better world, but they were dead wrong.

The message of Marxism-Leninism is that the world does not have to be this way. There is no need for anyone to be poor. There is no need for anyone to be enslaved. There is no need for any child to be sold into prostitution. There is no need for gay people to be discriminated against and abused. There is no need for racism to run rampant.

There is a way out. There is a path called socialism, and there is an ideology called Marxism-Leninism. We fight for the workers to seize the mills, the factories, the giant farms, and we call for the exploiters to be overthrown. We call for a society where the people are in power, and can determine their own destiny.

— Caleb T. Maupin
Baldwin-Wallace College
FIST chapter Cleveland



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CAPITALISM'S ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION

Most workers across the United States have no access to reliable public transportation and must have cars to get to work, to shop, to have a social life. This takes a toll on the young worker's pocket-book as gasoline prices remain above \$2 a gallon. The environment also suffers as increased travel eats up almost 9.2 million barrels of oil a day.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) met in Paris at the beginning of February and issued a long-awaited report that finally confirmed, with much scientific data, that human activity is the main factor behind global warming. The IPCC predicted that temperatures will continue to rise by as much as 7.2 degrees Fahrenheit by the end of the century.

Global warming is caused when the concentration of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO₂) rises and they begin to form a heat-trapping blanket around the Earth. More than half of the CO₂ now in the atmosphere comes from the burning of fossil fuels—oil, coal and natural gas. Deforestation is another main contributor to CO₂ because trees take in CO₂ and put out oxygen.

Environmental degradation and profits

The history of capitalism is replete with examples of disregard for the environment and the lives of young workers. The industrial revolution saw the creation of marvelous new technologies and laid the material basis for capitalism's ascendancy around the world. Since the capitalists used these technologies to maximize their profits, widespread pollution resulted.

Manchester, England, in the 19th century was an example of how capitalism's implementation of technology was ruinous from the beginning. There was no space in this industrial town for gardens or green spaces. The sky was filled with thick smoke that polluted the lungs, clothing and homes of the workers forced to live in the city.

Fifty-seven percent of working-class children there died before they reached the age of five. The average life expectancy for the poor was just 17 years. A government report issued in 1842 left no doubt that many of these deaths were the consequence of severe environmental degradation. The co-founder of scientific socialism, Frederick Engels, wrote about this assault on the workers and the environment in his 1845 book "The Condition

of the Working Class in England."

As capitalism in some countries advanced into modern imperialism, with its territorial division of the world among capitalist powers, modern and frequent warfare also arose.

The first and second world wars saw the redrawing of maps in Africa, the Middle East and Asia by the colonial/imperialist powers. The U.S. later waged ruthless wars against national liberation movements in Vietnam and Korea that were led by communists. And the first Gulf War proved itself just a precursor to the current occupation of Iraq.

The U.S. military says that 617,000 U.S. soldiers died in combat in the 20th century. Most of these soldiers were young and recruited from the working class; many were also from the nationally oppressed.

One of the biggest environmental threats arose out of World War II with the development and use of nuclear weapons by the U.S. government. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki led to the deaths of an estimated 215,000 Japanese civilians. Black rain fell in some areas following the blast, bringing down radioactive material and creating a secondary source of exposure. Radiation-induced cancers and leukemia resulted along with widespread birth deformities and stillbirths.

The United States' historical use of nuclear weapons and the recent threats of perpetual warfare under the Bush doctrine have made it necessary for countries such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to develop nuclear technology for self-defense purposes.

U.S. imperialism's current refusal to tackle the root causes of global warming is just the most recent example of the misuse of modern technology by the ruling class.

Capitalism's derelict stewardship of the environment points to the necessity for workers and oppressed to control the means of production so that technology can be redirected to meet people's needs.

Socialism: A sustainable model

There is nothing inherently bad for the environment about the scientific and technological advances made since the industrial revolution. In fact, socialist Cuba shines a bright light on how workers' control can lead to a more sustainable implementation of modern inventions.

Cuba has fought its way to the forefront of conservation and sustainable development against the backdrop of a brutal U.S.-led blockade of the country. The island

has made incredible advances in farming techniques, housing construction and energy conservation.

One of Cuba's most impressive achievements is the development of organic agriculture, beginning in the early 1990s. It successfully combines organically produced fertilizer and crop rotation techniques with modern bio-pesticides that use non-toxic microbial formulations to control pests and increase soil nutrition.

Neighborhood vegetable gardens in cities have reduced the amount of transportation necessary to feed urban areas. Havana, for example, has developed 50,000 community gardens to help feed the city.

Cuba reduced its reliance on oil in transportation by fitting public buses with bike racks and distributing over one million Chinese-made bicycles to the Cuban people. Experimentation with more natural building materials, such as bamboo, for the construction of modern-style homes was developed in response to concerns over the amount of greenhouse gas emissions from traditional construction methods.

Cuba has also integrated environmental education as part of its national curriculum while implementing special conservation programs for mountainous areas.

The way forward

Young people and students in the United States have been in the vanguard of environmental preservation. It is not unusual that young workers with their

whole life ahead of them, many of whom face the question of when or whether to begin raising a family, would look to the future dangers posed by pollution with a sense of moral outrage.

Students played a key role in the establishment of the first Earth Day in 1970 and young people today are involved in a variety of environmental causes. But a key ingredient is often missing. That ingredient is class-consciousness.

Environmental degradation occurs because the capitalists are in charge of technology. Not surprisingly the multinational working class suffers the most from the environmental damage that results.

It is important that militant environmental action not be separated from the broader revolutionary movement for working class power. The campaign for things like clean air, fresh drinking water and sustainable coastal areas should be linked to the workers' broader economic demands for affordable housing, education, healthcare and living-wage jobs.

The only way for workers to secure these demands for themselves is to organize a political movement to take the power, which is denied them under the plutocracy that the capitalists call democracy. Young workers and students must strive to position themselves at the forefront of this revolutionary working class movement for environmental and social justice.

The writer is an organizer of FIST-Fight Imperialism, Stand Together-youth group. Contact fist@workers.org

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EL LÍBANO

¿Una 'Operación Cóndor' en el Medio Oriente?

Por Bill Cecil

¿Está el régimen de Bush pagándole a escuadrones de muerte para asesinar a manifestantes en el Líbano? Por lo menos 6 libaneses murieron en enero durante ataques de pandillas derechistas contra estudiantes en la Universidad Árabe de Beirut y contra trabajadores en huelga.

¿Es esta la respuesta de Washington al movimiento de masa popular y democrático que ha movilizado a millones de libaneses en contra del régimen —respaldado por Estados Unidos— del Primer Ministro Fuad Siniora?

El 10 de enero, el "British Daily Telegraph", reveló que la CIA "ha sido autorizada para tomar acción encubierta en contra de Hizbolá como parte de un plan secreto de George Bush para ayudar al gobierno libanés." Los "hallazgos" de Bush dirigen a la "CIA y a otras agencias de inteligencia estadounidense a financiar a grupos contra Hizbolá en el Líbano y pagar a activistas que apoyan al gobierno de Siniora."

Se reportó que el plan fue formulado en Washington antes de las Navidades luego de conversaciones entre el consejero diputado de seguridad nacional Elliot Abrams y el príncipe de Arabia Saudita, Bandar Ibn Sultan. Esto sucedió después de que dos millones de personas—casi la mitad de la población del Líbano—protestaran en Beirut el 10 de diciembre para exigir más derechos de pronunciamiento para los partidos opositores al gobierno.

Abrams fue asistente al secretario de estado para asuntos interamericanos bajo Reagan, en la década de los años ochenta cuando escuadrones de muerte entrenados por los Estados Unidos asesinaron a miles en El Salvador, Honduras y Guatemala. Abrams también dispuso el financiamiento saudita para operaciones terroristas en contra de Nicaragua después de que la Enmienda Boland cortara la ayuda directa de los Estados Unidos para los contras.

¿'Democracia' o gobierno secreto?

Detalles de la existencia del plan para el Líbano son "conocidos solamente por un pequeño círculo de oficiales de la Casa Blanca, oficiales de inteligencia y miembros del Congreso." Reportó Telegraph. Vaya la democracia en los Estados Unidos, "El hecho de que los resultados sean secretos significa que el involucramiento de los Estados Unidos en esas actividades puede ser negado oficialmente."

En diciembre el diario "Toronto Globe and Mail", reportó que Estados Unidos estaba secretamente reforzando las Fuerzas Internas de Seguridad (FIS) del Líbano, una fuerza paramilitar controlada directamente por

Siniora. Las armas adquiridas en Europa Oriental estaban siendo enviadas al Líbano vía los Emiratos Árabes Unidos. El Pentágono está también enviando equipos directamente a las FIS.

En su reporte sobre el Estado de la Unión del 23 de enero, Bush acusó a los "terroristas de Hizbolá quienes están respaldados por Irán y Siria" de "buscar la manera de socavar al gobierno legítimamente electo del Líbano." Bush no es más honesto sobre el Líbano que lo que fue sobre Irak.

Hizbolá frustró la invasión israelita

Hizbolá no es una organización terrorista. Es un partido político que goza del apoyo amplio no sólo de chiítas, el grupo más grande y más pobre del Líbano, sino de much@s cristian@s, drus@s y sunitas también. Dirigió la lucha para la liberación contra la ocupación brutal de Israel financiada por los Estados Unidos, sacándoles del Sur del Líbano en el año 2000.

En julio de 2006 fuerzas lideradas por Hizbolá repelieron el intento de Israel, ayudado por los EEUU, de reconquistar el Sur de Líbano. Más de 1000 civiles libaneses —mujeres, niños y hombres— murieron y miles más quedaron mutilad@s por municiones hechas en los EEUU durante el ataque israelí el verano pasado.

La infancia libanesa aún sigue muriendo o siendo mutilada por los 1,4 millones fragmentos de bombas de racimo que todavía están esparcidos en el suelo del sur del Líbano. El 29 de enero, el régimen de Bush admitió al Congreso que el uso por Israel de esas bombas de racimo "puede haber violado las reglas de los EEUU". El mismo día, el periódico "Jerusalem Post" reportó que Israel planea comprar miles de "bombas inteligentes" —Municiones de Ataque Conjunto Directo— a la corporación Boeing.

En un discurso el 7 de diciembre, el Secretario General de Hizbolá Sayid Hassan Nasrallah reveló evidencia de que oficiales en el gobierno de Siniora habían pedido a los EEUU que le diera permiso a Israel para atacar el sur del Líbano, donde la mayoría abrumadora del pueblo apoya la oposición. En un episodio escandaloso, el ISF del Líbano le sirvió té a las tropas

invasoras israelíes.

El trabajo de Hizbolá no es solamente militar. Construye hospitales, clínicas, escuelas y bibliotecas y proporciona servicios sociales para los sectores más pobres y más oprimidos del Líbano. Ha proporcionado fondos de asistencia a cientos de miles de hogares libaneses que fueron destrozados por bombas y cohetes israelitas.

Hoy Hizbolá está aliado a organizaciones mayormente cristianas como los partidos Movimiento Cristiano Libre Patriota y el Marada, con el Partido Demócrata, basado en la comunidad drusa y el Movimiento para la Unidad y fuerzas izquierdistas como el Movimiento del Pueblo, el Movimiento Popular Nasserista, el Partido Democrático Popular y el Partido Comunista Libanés. Juntos, conforman un movimiento amplio para demandar reforma política y elecciones democráticas tempranas.

Este movimiento ha unido a libaneses cortando las líneas sectarias en una campaña de protesta que hace recordar el movimiento a favor de los derechos civiles en los Estados Unidos.

Las clases dominantes en los EEUU, Gran Bretaña, y Francia, por otro lado, se han unido a las monarquías absolutistas de Jordania, Arabia Saudita, y el Golfo, al Presidente-por-vida Mubarak de Egipto y al régimen de apartheid en Tel Aviv para aplastar este movimiento.

En un discurso en el Instituto Herzliya de Israel el 22 de enero, el aspirante presidencial Demócrata, John Edwards, hizo eco de las amenazas bélicas de Bush en contra de Hizbolá, Siria, e Irán.

Huelga general en contra de Siniora

El mismo día en que Bush presentó su discurso sobre el estado de la unión, la mayoría de la fuerza trabajadora del Líbano participó en una huelga general apoyada por la oposición que paralizó al país. Estaban protestando el plan de Siniora patrocinado por Wall Street para privatizar el cuidado de salud, electricidad y telecomunicaciones, imponer un impuesto de ventas enorme y acabar con subvenciones para el combustible.

Pistoleros de la abiertamente fascista Fuerzas Libanesas de Samir Geagea, el Movimiento Futuro del multimillonario especulador en bienes raíces Saad Hariri, y el mal llamado Partido Socialista Progresista de Walid Jumblatt abrieron fuego contra huelguistas que bloqueaban los caminos en Beirut, en el Shouf y en el norte del Líbano. Murieron tres personas y cientos fueron heridas, pero

la huelga no se rompió. En una rueda de prensa, el líder del Movimiento Patriótico Libre, Michel Aoun, mostró fotos de pistoleros enmascarados atacando a huelguistas en el norte del Líbano.

El 25 de enero una conferencia de "donantes internacionales" convocada en París bajo el auspicio estadounidense y francés, recaudó \$7 mil millones para afianzar el régimen endeudado de Siniora. El mismo día pandillas de seguidores de Siniora invadieron el campus de la Universidad Árabe de Beirut y asesinaron a dos estudiantes. Un hombre chiíta andando en bicicleta por el barrio también fue matado a balazos por terroristas pagados del PSP de Jumblatt.

Partidarios de la oposición se apresuraron a llegar al campus y corrieron a los terroristas antes de que el ejército interviniera para despejar las calles. La Televisora Al Manar, la cuál el régimen de Bush ha prohibido en los Estados Unidos, diseminó imágenes de francotiradores en los techos disparando contra los manifestantes.

Lo que está en juego en el Líbano va más allá del deseo de Washington de apoyar un régimen amigo de banqueros en un país con una deuda de \$45 mil millones. Para la Casa Blanca y el Pentágono, el Líbano es un instrumento en sus planes para una guerra más amplia en la región.

El régimen de Bush espera que la ley nueva de hidrocarburos de Irak, diseñada por contratistas estadounidenses, dé a las corporaciones de petróleo control sobre las enormes reservas de petróleo de Irak. Si Estados Unidos bombardea los yacimientos petrolíferos de Irán, el valor del petróleo de Irak podría doblarse. Pero para hacer que éste llegue al mercado en el oeste, ese petróleo requiere la reactivación del viejo oleoducto que pasa por Siria y el Líbano antes de llegar al Mediterráneo.

Es improbable que la Resistencia Iraquí permita a las corporaciones estadounidenses despachar petróleo por el puerto sureño de Basra. Para saquear Irak, el Gran Petróleo necesita imponer regímenes subordinados en Siria y el Líbano. Como muestra el movimiento popular que se ha alzado en el Líbano, no es muy probable que eso ocurra.

En un discurso el 30 de enero a cientos de miles de musulmanes reunid@s en el sur de Beirut para celebrar el festival chiíta de Ashura, Nasrallah advirtió que un objetivo de los Estados Unidos es incitar guerra civil sectaria en el Líbano, Palestina e Irak.

"George Bush quiere castigarles porque han triunfado y, en la época estadounidense, no está permitido levantar la cabeza." Pero añadió "Somos un pueblo que rechaza la humillación y la desgracia. El Líbano ha sido y será siempre el pantón de los invasores."

Bill Cecil estuvo en el Líbano en noviembre y diciembre reportando sobre el creciente movimiento popular.

