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Democrats saddled with support for Bush's war

'Unity behind Kerry' silences anti-war majority

By John Catalinotto

Outside the Democratic National Convention in Boston, combined police agencies have set up concentration camp-like structures of concrete, steel fencing and barbed wire to squeeze protesters into pens.

Inside the DNC, the Democratic Party leadership has constructed an ironclad agenda to squeeze the party's rank-and-file delegates in behind the pro-war, anti-worker program of its national candidates. The party's weapon in this squeeze play is the demand for unity behind John Kerry amidst the strong "anybody but Bush" mood.

The presidential primary candidates who Kerry beat out have been making speeches to the delegates. These speeches have one message: Unite behind Kerry to defeat Bush. There has been no criticism of Kerry's program and no alternative offered.

Howard Dean spoke July 27. "I'm Howard Dean. And I'm voting for John Kerry," the former Vermont governor told the convention. Missouri Rep. Dick Gephardt and former senator Carol Moseley Braun had the same message.

The party leadership is squelching dis-

cussion of same-sex marriage, affirmative action, social-service cutbacks and the attack on union rights. But nowhere is this pressure more apparent than in their control of the most controversial question: the war on and occupation of Iraq.

Kerry voted to support the war when the question was raised in Congress before the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Currently he promises to win support from the German and French governments for the occupation, but says he will also send 40,000 more U.S. troops to Iraq rather than pull out.

On July 28, Al Sharpton and Dennis Kucinich are also set to demand unity. Early in the primary, Kucinich had expressed strong opposition to the war, but he agreed the week before the convention that he would not raise this issue at the DNC.

Even Rep. Barbara Lee, an early opponent of Bush's endless "war on terror," who heroically voted alone to refuse the Bush administration a blank check for aggression in the weeks following Sept. 11, 2001, appeared on PBS during the convention with the message that everyone had to unite behind Kerry to beat Bush.

This beating everyone to the right for alleged "unity" has nothing to do with making the Democratic Party candidate

acceptable to rank-and-file delegates or voters. In a late June CBS-New York Times poll of 1,053 adults, 68 percent of rank-and-file Democrats said they thought the war on Iraq was a mistake, along with 51 percent of "independents." A Boston Globe July 16-21 poll of the DNC delegates found that "Eighty percent of those polled said they opposed the decision to go to war against Iraq at the time it began, and 95 percent say they now oppose the war." (July 26)

Instead, the drive for "unity" means "unity" behind a candidate who will carry out a program acceptable to the billionaires, bankers, oil monopolies and corporate conglomerates that rule the United States. These forces are disgusted with Bush's conduct of the war, but only because it has sparked a determined popular resistance in Iraq. They now are big contributors to Kerry's campaign because they hope he can rally support for U.S. expansionism.

Gen. Wesley Clark, another defeated rival of Kerry, will clarify in his July 29 talk that what is changing is the personality and not the aims of U.S. war policy. "John Kerry is the right guy to be the commander in chief. It is that simple," Clark already told MSNBC. □

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'People of the moonlight' in the dawn of revolution

By Leslie Feinberg

The Bolshevik Party did not merely scrap anti-homosexual tsarist laws. Sexologist Wilhelm Reich, in "The Sexual Revolution," described the intent of the Bolsheviks' political position. They felt it was necessary to tear down the walls that divided homosexuals—also known in Russia as "people of the moonlight"—from the rest of society.

The revolutionaries tried to examine sexuality and gender as they did all social and economic relations—through a scientific lens. Reich explained that the Bolsheviks believed same-sex love harmed no one and that it was wrong to punish anyone because of their sexuality.

And as Lenin and his party won over segments of the middle classes to the goals of the socialist revolution, the young workers' state drew strong support from prominent homosexuals. Russian literary historian Simon Karlinsky, no friend to socialist revolution, admits that, "With remarkable unanimity, all male gay and bisexual writers welcomed the October takeover." That included Mikhail Kuzmin, author of "Wings," and Nikolai Kliusev, considered the unofficial poet laureate of the Russian peasantry.

Historian Dan Healey puts this accomplishment in a larger historical context. "Soviet Russia was by far the most significant power since the French Revolution to decriminalize male same-sex relations, while Britain and Weimar Germany continued to prosecute homosexuals. Soviet health authorities courted the left-leaning sex reform movement headed by Berlin sexologist and homosexual rights campaigner Magnus Hirschfeld.

"Biologists and doctors chiefly sponsored by the Commissariat of Health began to investigate homosexuality as a scientific and medical phenomenon, often from sympathetic perspectives that were in comparative terms markedly advanced."

The weight of material suffering during those years was unbearable. By early 1918, after nearly four years of devastating imperialist war, the urban food ration was four ounces of bread a day—and nothing else. ("Soviet Women")

During the years of "war communism"—the civil war of 1918 to 1921—when the workers' state was surrounded and under siege, internally and externally, there is little record of any "gay life."

The revolution had occurred in the weakest link of the capitalist chain. Russia was semi-feudal and profoundly under-developed technologically, making the task of raising production to meet the needs of all more onerous. And

the workers' state was an island in a sea of raging imperialism, determined to engulf the first successful socialist revolution.

New Economic Policy

In order to rebuild the productive apparatus, Lenin called for a partial and temporary return to a market economy in 1921 with the adoption of the New Economic Policy. His arguments for the NEP included frank warnings of the dangers inherent in reintroducing capitalist relations in a planned economy.

Healey has produced valuable accounts on this period. "Surprisingly, despite the seven-year hiatus of war, revolution, and civil war that concluded in 1921," he writes, "much of the male homosexual underworld that existed before 1914 reconstituted itself in the early years of the New Economic Policy. Street cruising and male prostitution returned to Moscow and Petrograd, with the same toilets, parks, and boulevards providing arenas for the market in both paid and unpaid sex between men." ("Russian Queen")

He emphasizes that the homosexual male "subculture" under tsarism had relied in part on privately owned commercial spaces like bathhouses and restaurants. These small-scale capitalist enterprises were closed down by the reorganization of a planned economy, which impacted on patterns of the "commercialization" of same-sex relations.

"Despite homosexuals' increasing difficulty under Soviet rule in controlling private spaces," Healey adds, "they occasionally managed to use domestic or other semiprivate venues (halls, cabarets) to gather. ... The relative openness of homosexual entertainments tapered off rapidly after the civil war, but a few sources hint at their more discreet continuation. Many of the best records of gatherings come from the Petrograd-Leningrad subculture, where a tradition of popular private homosexual assemblies was well established."

During the NEP, he documents, "Antinoi (Antinous), a private arts circle devoted to the appreciation of 'male beauty' in prose, verse, drama, and music, functioned in Moscow during the early 1920s, staging readings of consciously homosexual poetry, recitals of music by 'our own' composers, and even an all-male ballet. The group made plans to publish an anthology of homosexual verse from ancient to modern times, an attempt to construct an ennobling past."

However, the group seemed to have disbanded after finding it difficult to rent meeting space or publicize its events.

"But it would be misleading to claim that Soviet policies alone 'drove people into the toilets,'" Healey concludes. "Marginal public spaces were well-established sexualized territories, geographic expressions of a lively urban male homosexual subculture. After 1917, male homosexuals and their male sexual partners continued resorting to public lavatories and other civic amenities like parks and boulevards because they were spaces where participants could recognize and meet each other according to familiar rituals."

The position of the Bolsheviks in the 1920s was very clear. They opposed the economic exploitation of women, men and children represented by prostitution, but they were not for penalizing the prostitutes. And they did not believe that sexuality was a matter for state intervention.

Next: 1920s: Scientific, not utopian

Lesbian ♦ gay ♦ bi
and trans
PRIDE
SERIES
PART
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STONE BUTCH BLUES,

by Leslie Feinberg
Winner of the American Library Association Gay & Lesbian Book Award and the Lambda Literary Award

Woman or man? This internationally acclaimed novel looks at the world through the eyes of Jess Goldberg, a masculine girl growing up the "Ozzie and Harriet" McCarthy ear and coming out as a young butch lesbian in the pre-Stonewall gay drag bars of a blue-collar town. This book retails for \$14.95 but a Leftbooks.com it's 15% off, only \$12.95!



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LOS ANGELES

Sat., Aug. 7
IAC office warming party. Featuring music by Will B and Michelle Shocked, including a report about the DNC demonstrations by John Parker. \$10-\$20 donation (no one turned away for lack of funds). From 5:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. At 5274 West Pico Blvd. #203. For info (323) 936-7266.

NEW YORK

Fri., July 30
Workers World Party meeting: The Democratic Convention--Image and Reality. Hear a Marxist analysis by Deirdre Griswold, editor of Workers World newspaper, plus reports and video footage of the protests outside the DNC in Boston. 7 pm. (Dinner at 6:30) At 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

Nov. 13-14
Workers World Party National Conference. Details to come. For info (212) 627-2994.

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As convention hoopla dominates media

Prison population sets new record

By Monica Moorehead

While the majority of people in the U.S. and worldwide are being force-fed the nauseating media spectacle known as the 2004 presidential elections, one has to dig relatively deep to hear about some scandalous facts.

The U.S. Justice Department on July 26 released the alarming results of a study that shows a record number of people in the so-called U.S. correctional system. This study warranted front-page attention nationwide, but didn't get it. Coincidentally, or maybe not, it was made public the same day as the opening of the Democratic National Convention in Boston.

In 2003, almost 6.9 million adults in this country were either incarcerated, on parole or on probation. This number amounts to 3.2 percent of the adult U.S. population and an increase of 130,700 adults since 2002. Put another way, an estimated 1 out of every 32 U.S. adult citizens are caught up in the vicious cycle of the criminal "justice" system.

A further breakdown of these statistics shows that 4,073,987 people were on probation at the end of 2003, an increase of 1.2 percent from the end of 2002, and 774,588 on parole, up 3.1 percent during the same time period. Texas led the country with over 534,000 people on probation or parole, followed by California, with over 485,000.

In total, at the end of last year 691,301 people were in local and county jails and 1,387,269 in state and federal prisons, for a total of 2,078,570—an increase of 3.9 percent in the jail population and 2.3 percent in the prison population.

Forty-one percent of adults on parole last year were Black; 40 percent were white. African-Americans make up about 13 percent of the general U.S. population, while whites comprise more than 70 percent.

Coupled with the reality that there are more Black men between the ages of 20 and 29 in prison than in universities, this study further exposes the institutionalized racist and repressive nature of the courts, prisons and police.

The study indicates that among parolees, the proportion of women rose to 13 percent last year, up from 10 percent at the end of 1995. Women make up the fastest-rising part of the prison population. This is a direct reflection of the elimination of welfare by the Clinton administration in 1996, plus other deteriorating social conditions and sexist laws.

Why is it that among those ex-prisoners who finished their parole in 2003, 38 percent were returned to prison? The Justice Department cites practical reasons such as the failing of drug urine tests or "three strikes and you're out" laws, like the one in California. But these are just the outgrowths of a much deeper crisis.

Living under capitalism is the real crime. This is a system that puts profit-making by big business way ahead of meeting people's needs. This is a system that encourages local, state and federal governments as well as corporations to invest billions of dollars into building jails and prisons. And it's all to repress and control the masses, not to correct people's behavior. Real correction would have to be based on a rational plan to make jobs, job training, drug rehabilitation programs and health care available to everyone.

The growth of the "correctional" population will certainly have an impact on the upcoming elections, as it did in 2000. Many are fearful that Florida Gov. Jeb Bush will make a repeat performance of "legally" maneuvering to deny former

felons the right to vote to help his brother get re-selected. Meanwhile, John Kerry has gone on record saying he wants no mention in his campaign of how Bush stole the presidency through disenfranchisement—mainly of Black voters. □

Palestinian activist dies soon after release

By Jesse Heiwa

Farouk Abdel-Muhti, a long-time activist for Palestinian liberation and against the detention of immigrants, died from a heart attack on July 21, 2004, after giving a talk at a "Detentions and Torture: Building Resistance" forum in Philadelphia.

Farouk worked with many organizations, including the Free the Detainees campaign, which he was representing.

He was arrested in the post 9/11 anti-immigrant hysteria on April 26, 2002, after becoming a producer on Palestinian issues for Pacifica Radio's WBAI in New York.

Farouk was not freed until April 12, 2004, after a successful campaign of grassroots activism and also legal support provided by the Center for Constitutional Rights. While inside the prison walls he continued to organize on behalf of all those who were detained under the frenzy of the "war on terrorism."

Farouk was beaten while detained and was kept in solitary confinement for eight months. His medication was also with-



Farouk Abdel-Muhti

held. Many believe that the deterioration of his health was a result of these abusive conditions.

Our sympathies go out to his friends, family and comrades and we vow to continue his work for Palestinian liberation, freeing the detainees and for a world of peace and justice.

Farouk Abdel-Muhti, Presente!
Jesse Heiwa, of *OutFM.org* and *QueerJustice.org*, worked with Farouk Abdel-Muhti at WBAI-FM.

Right-wing electoral offensive fails in Ga.

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

The results of the primary election in the state of Georgia are in.

On July 20 Cynthia McKinney won more than 51 percent of the vote in the Democratic Party primary. She had more than twice as many votes as her closest opponent in the field of six candidates. McKinney is the outspoken five-term African-American congresswoman who had lost her seat in 2002 after being targeted by pro-war and Zionist forces.

By handily defeating Liane Levitan, the former DeKalb County Democratic chairperson, and Cathy Woolard, who resigned as Atlanta City Council president to run for the 4th Congressional seat, McKinney surprised the political pundits of the Atlanta establishment who had predicted a run-off. Headlines in the major newspaper, the Atlanta Journal Constitution, declared she had won a "stealth" victory by conducting a campaign "below the radar."

McKinney's campaign did not spend huge amounts of money on television ads. Instead, an army of volunteers, including some from around the country, galvanized her mass base of support by going door-to-door. She carried precincts she had lost in the last election, swept the predominantly African-American neighborhoods of south DeKalb and received a substantial number of votes in majority white areas.

In the 2002 election, her criticism of the Bush administration concerning information about the 9/11 attacks and the reasons given for war on Iraq were distorted by

right-wing talk show hosts. She was lampooned as a "loonie" by other Georgia elected officials, such as Sen. Zell Miller, and was repeatedly called "divisive" and "controversial" in the media. In the 2002 race, won by Denise Majette, thousands of Republican Party members voted in the Democratic primary to ensure her defeat.

Now, with more than 900 U.S. troops dead in Iraq, no weapons of mass destruction found, and evidence of massive cost overruns by Halliburton, McKinney's concerns about what was behind the drive to war are echoed across the country.

Her campaign organized a rally and news conference following a showing of "Fahrenheit 9/11" at a multi-plex theater to underscore McKinney's public stance against the war and occupation.

Patricia Roberts, the mother of Jamaal Addison, the first Georgia soldier to die in the 2003 invasion of Iraq, often accompanied McKinney as she campaigned. Roberts, who has spoken out against the war, always calls for the troops to be brought home now.

McKinney will face a Republican opponent in the November election, but there is little doubt she will win back her seat in Congress.

African American judge wins by landslide

In another defeat for right-wing politics, a number of women judges, most of them African American, were re-elected despite an intense effort by backers of the Republican governor, Sonny Perdue. These elections are supposedly "non-partisan," but this year's campaigns were



WW PHOTO: DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

Cynthia McKinney speaks against the Iraq war at a Jan. 18, 2003, ANSWER rally.

marked with extremely misleading, inflammatory ads and rhetoric.

In particular, Perdue had called for the ouster of Georgia Supreme Court Justice Leah Ward Sears in a speech before the Christian Coalition. Her opponent charged that she was an "activist" judge who supported gay marriage. The Georgia legislature very narrowly voted to include an amendment to the state constitution prohibiting equal marriage on this November's ballot. Using this issue to attack Sears was seen by some as a way to gauge its effectiveness in rallying right-wing voters.

Sears easily won re-election statewide with over 60 percent of the vote. She is in

line to become the first African American woman to be chief judge of the Georgia Supreme Court.

Civil rights groups, women's organizations, trade unions and many other community leaders worked in support of Judge Sears and the other women judges in pushing back the agenda of the religious and political right-wing.

Elections under capitalism do not offer the masses of people a genuine way to change the system, much less get rid of it, but they can provide an indication of the willingness of working and poor people to struggle for real solutions to end poverty, war and all forms of discrimination. □

Capitalism riddled with contradiction and crisis

Stormy days lie ahead for labor

By Milt Neidenberg

Will the reassuring remarks of Alan Greenspan, chairperson of the Federal Reserve Board (FRB), calm the jumpy nerves of Wall Street, Washington and Corporate America following the board's decision to raise interest rates to 1.25 percent?

Greenspan's recent semi-annual testimony to Congress described how expansion of the economy is "self-sustaining" and has become "broad-based," while "the recent softness in consumer spending ... should be short-lived." (Wall Street Journal, July 21)

Nevertheless, the stock markets are jumpy. Recently the Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped below the 10,000 level. Standard and Poor's 500 and the NASDAQ lost ground. They are all perilously close to lows for the year, a sign that the markets are on a bumpy ride.

During a go-round at the Senate Banking Committee session, Greenspan was asked to comment on a remark he had made about a "neutral" interest rate that neither provokes inflation nor slows down the economy. Greenspan responded, "You can tell whether you're below or above, but until you're there, you're not quite sure you are there. ... When we arrive at neutral, we will know it."

Greenspan needs a course in Marxism 101. In reality there is no such phenomenon as a "neutral" interest rate that neither provokes inflation nor slows down the economy. A "neutral" interest rate implies stability, balance and the ability of the Federal Reserve Bank to fine-tune the economy. Nothing could be further from the truth.

There is not even a way to measure the trillions and trillions worth of paper money in different forms—cash, bonds, promissory notes, etc.—that is utilized in the global daily exchange of commodities.

Capitalism: anything but stable

Interest rates are a form of loan capital endemic to a debt-fueled capitalist system. These interest rates set the price for borrowing money, and they fluctuate constantly.

Capitalists need to borrow in the chaotic, brutal competitive global war to find buyers for their products at home and abroad. Anarchy of production reigns supreme.

Under monopoly capitalism, price inflation is a symptom of instability. And currency manipulation—what the FRB is doing in raising interest rates—is a symptom of the inherent instability in the capitalist system as a whole.

When the cost of borrowing money goes up, the prices of commodities follow, creating profits for the giant banks and corporate monopolies. The general inflation grows directly out of the unchecked price hikes of the monopolies and military spending.

This is exactly what is going on now, as U.S. trade deficits grow to historic levels.

The FRB speaks for the biggest banks and for Corporate America. It is the central bank and the key functionary of monetary policy that manipulates interest rates to serve its capitalist masters. Vagueness and gobbledygook are not what they want to hear from the FRB chairperson. Neither do the millions of investors who trade trillions of dollars in the various markets—stock, bond, currency and commodity.

With prices rising on milk, rent, transportation, medicine and other necessities, and credit card debt increasing, the conditions of workers and the oppressed are reaching crisis proportions.

SEIU President Andy Stern says Kerry and the Democratic Party have declined to address what he calls 'the Wal-Mart economy.'

It can only make them more nervous that the FRB doesn't know how to respond to this inflationary period. According to a headline in the July 21 New York Times, "Greenspan Says Rates Could Rise Quickly." How high they will go, no one knows.

This is bad news for the workers and in particular the oppressed—Black, Latin@, the unorganized and undocumented.

The lead front-page article in the July 18 New York Times spelled this out in its headline: "Hourly Pay in U.S. Not Keeping Pace With Price Rises." The article explained that "hourly earnings of production workers—non-management workers ranging from nurses and teachers to hamburger flippers and assembly line workers—fell 1.1 percent in June after accounting for inflation. ... Coming on top of a 13-minute drop in the average work week, the decline in the hourly rate last month cut deeply into workers' pay."

With prices rising on milk, rent, transportation, medicine and other necessities, and credit card debt increasing, the conditions of workers and the oppressed are reaching crisis proportions.

Robber barons hoard profits

Even Greenspan noted in his testimony before Congress that "corporate profits have been so high that businesses have ample room to offer higher wages without raising prices to consumers."

The non-financial companies listed in the Standard and Poors 500 stock index are sitting on \$550 billion in cash and short-term securities. "U.S. companies have more cash on hand today than they have had since World War II," wrote one financial analyst. (New York Times, July 22)

General Motors reported second-quarter earnings of \$1.3 billion, up 49 percent from a year earlier. The corporation made a payout of \$7 a share to its top shareholders.

General Electric confirmed that it had \$138.3 billion in cash and marketable securities like Treasury bills, as well as stocks that could easily be turned into cash.

Microsoft's decision to pay out \$32 billion in bonuses and dividends to its high-income shareholders is a bonanza that is by far the largest payout in corporate history, abetted by Bush's tax relief on dividends.

The CEOs and board members of these corporations have become bankers, hoarding immeasurable cash flows in hedge funds and other forms of speculation that are totally unregulated. They are in competition with banks like Citigroup, J.P. Morgan Chase and other financial institutions that invest and speculate in the markets.

In the last year, GM, Ford and GE have made most of their profits from the finan-

cial arms of their industrial empires.

Overproduction, due to the unprecedented increase in productivity, speedup and technology, has glutted world markets. Twenty-five percent of U.S. industrial capacity lies idle. The industrial tycoons are being forced to merge their corporations or pull back on investing in plants and other means of production.

These corporations are at great risk. Marxism calls this concentrated form of buying and selling securities, shares of stock and other instruments of money capital "fictitious capital." During crises and other upheavals like imperialist wars and recessions, fictitious capital depreciates with catastrophic speed.

The parasites of high finance are ignoring these dangers. They are sucking the equity from the corporations through obscene executive salaries, bloated bonuses and stock options while they downsize the workforce and wages, pensions and health care.

They have no intention of rehiring laid-off workers or adding workers to the payrolls.

Capitalist exploitation intensifies

Technological innovation, restructuring, sub-contracting, prison labor and outsourcing to non-union sweatshops here and abroad have forced workers out of higher-paying manufacturing jobs and into lower-paying jobs or onto the streets. Particularly affected are members of oppressed nationalities, the unorganized and the undocumented. They can no longer buy back the necessities and pleasures of life that they produce, especially in an inflationary period.

In a July 22 New York Times Op-Ed article, Stephen S. Roach, chief economist for the Wall Street behemoth Morgan Stanley, confirms with facts and figures that jobs have moved toward the lower end of the spectrum. "By industry, the sources of hiring turn out to be restaurants, temporary hiring agencies, and building services ... Hiring has also accelerated at clothing stores, courier services, hotels, grocery stores, trucking businesses, hospitals, social work agencies and providers of personal and laundry services ... [there are] sharp declines in the number of production workers who mainly toil in manufacturing plants."

The composition of the workforce has fundamentally shifted to the lower-paid, service-oriented workers who represent many nationalities and are overwhelmingly immigrants. Many are women.

The critical issue of the day

This will require a dramatic restructuring of the 13-million-member AFL-CIO and a fight-back strategy.

Changes are beginning to take place.

The recent merger of the 180,000 members of UNITE—the Union of

Needletrades, Industrial and Technical Employees—with the 260,000 members of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees to form UNITE HERE points in the right direction.

Working in concert with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the largest union in the AFL-CIO with over 1,600,000 members, they have formed an alliance called the New Unity Partnership (NUP). That alliance also includes the Laborers International Union of North America and the United Brotherhood of Carpenters, which is no longer a member of the AFL-CIO.

Andy Stern, SEIU president, is the most outspoken leader of NUP. Stern has called for a broad-based organizing drive to take on Wal-Mart.

At the same time, the call for a Million Worker March on Washington, set for Oct. 17, is spreading and drawing in sections of the workers, the communities and the anti-war movement.

Can the changes percolating in the AFL-CIO and the MWM find common cause? This is the critical issue of the day.

Will the shrill demagoguery of the capitalist parties and their presidential candidates, George W. Bush and John Kerry, deafen the dialogue among these progressive currents?

An interview with Andy Stern in the July 26 Washington Post indicates differences are arising within the organized union movement over John Kerry's economic program. Stern raised substantial criticism of Kerry and the Democratic Party.

Of course, Stern is in a contradictory position. On the one hand, "The SEIU has put about \$65 million in union resources into efforts to elect Kerry," the article notes.

On the other hand, the timing of Stern's criticism—during the Democratic National Convention, when the Democratic Party is exerting tremendous pressure along with the AFL-CIO leadership for unity behind Kerry's campaign—shows that he may be moving in the direction of independent action. The Post wrote, "He said he is convinced from his experience in the civil rights movement that 'pressure is needed' to bring about real change."

Stern says Kerry and the Democratic Party have declined to address what he calls "the Wal-Mart economy."

Stern is correct in this assessment of the Democratic presidential candidate. Kerry has taken the labor movement for granted and made his campaign pitch to the upper-middle class.

And Kerry has regrouped with the Clinton forces. During the years of the Clinton administration, the implementation of NAFTA, the abolition of welfare and the gutting of other social programs hurt labor. Unions lost many organizing drives as employers grew more aggressive and hostile during that Democratic administration.

Kerry's economic program is to subsidize employers to get them to give concessions on health care and outsourcing. It's the same old trickle-down theory that has failed the labor movement time and again.

But now a movement is beginning from below, among the workers and oppressed nationalities, to build independent class-wide resistance to capitalist exploitation at home and endless wars abroad.

This development widens the opening for new and creative struggles to surface. □

DNC protesters show solidarity with Million Worker March

By Bryan G. Pfeifer
Boston

Setting the tone for the week of protests at the Democratic National Convention here, Million Worker March organizers issued an uncompromising message at a rally on the Boston Common July 25: "We are not only building for the Oct. 17 MWM, we are building an independent class-wide movement."

MWM organizers were invited to speak at the rally and march called by the Coalition to Protest the DNC.

"There is a war at home as well as the war abroad. The reason for the Million Worker March is that we are organizing this march in our own name because of the fact that the only time that working people gain any concessions from the system is when we organize independently from the Democratic and Republican parties," declared Clarence Thomas, executive board member of International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 and MWM co-convenor. Thomas is known internationally for his union's militant stance against apartheid and the Iraq war, as well as supporting a new trial for political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal.

"The war on Iraq and the war on working people in America are connected. It's very important that we come together, the anti-war and the labor movement, to oppose the war, bring the troops home now and push for a workers' agenda," said Thomas.

Sharing the stage with Thomas were Brenda Stokely, president of AFSCME District Council 1707 and a MWM co-convenor; Steve Gillis, president of Steelworkers Local 8751, the Boston school bus drivers' and monitors' union; and Ralph Schoenman, co-producer of the Pacifica Radio program "Taking Aim." A beautiful banner called on the crowd to join with the MWM. Many buttons reading "Oct. 17, 2004, Washington D.C.: Organizing in our own name," were sold at the rally.

The MWM organizers made it clear that organized labor must break with the two capitalist parties to forge an independent workers' movement, and put special emphasis on the anti-worker history of both John Kerry and John Edwards.

This history includes Kerry voting for NAFTA, the so-called "free trade" agreement that has been a colossal disaster for all workers, especially the oppressed; his opposition to same-sex marriage rights; and his failure to return to the Senate from the campaign trail to vote on a recent bill to extend unemployment benefits for workers. The bill needed just one more vote to pass.

Kerry's partner-in-crime Edwards, hailing from the notorious "right to work" or scab state of North Carolina, voted for NAFTA as well. Both support Israel's oppression of the Palestinians, voted for the Patriot Act and the bill authorizing the use of military force against Iraq, and are for internationalizing the Iraq war as well as sending more U.S. troops and resources to that occupied country and worldwide.

Brenda Stokely, president of New York's District Council 1707 of AFSCME, which represents 23,000 workers, mainly women and people of color who work in the home health care and day care sectors, gave a rousing, militant speech about the contempt and disrespect for workers of ruling class figures like billionaire New York mayor Michael Bloomberg. "The Million Worker March is all about what Malcolm X said, 'Break the chains off of your mind' ... fight for your interests."

Stokely added, "Why do we have to beg the U.S., the richest country on earth, for healthcare when Cuba, after all the years of being embargoed, can provide free healthcare?" She ended her talk with this warning to the ruling class, "Get off my back, get off my mind and get off my foot." Stokely, along with other progressive and anti-war delegates, helped get a resolution passed at the recent AFSCME national convention to end the occupation of Iraq



WW PHOTO: LIZA GREEN

Clarence Thomas, at podium, with MWM delegation at July 25 rally.

and bring the troops home now.

After the rally, MWM organizers joined the front of the march to the Fleet Center, site of the Democratic National Convention. The MWM banner was carried alongside the lead banner, which read "Bring the troops home now: End occupation from Palestine to Iraq to Haiti. Money for jobs, education and healthcare, not war." MWM organizers and other trade unionists marched shoulder-to-shoulder with thousands of their progressive allies.

The AFL-CIO national leadership has sent out a letter discouraging organized labor from supporting the MWM. Instead it orders unions to devote their resources to supporting the Democratic Party ticket of Kerry and Edwards. Nevertheless, this independent workers' struggle is gathering momentum and a national character.

MWM organizers have already spoken to scores of labor and community organizations to build for what promises to be an historic event. Kickoff rallies took place in San Francisco on May 22, Washington, D.C., on July 14, and New York City on July 15. Leaders of Local 10 attended, along with unionists from the Service Employees, the Teamsters, Food and Commercial

Workers, the Newspaper Guild of the Communications Workers and AFSCME. Chris Silvera, secretary-treasurer of Teamsters Joint Council 808, president of the Black Caucus of the Teamsters and co-convenor of the MWM, spoke at the D.C. rally. Jobs with Justice, the International Action Center and ANSWER also attended.

Endorsers of MWM thus far include all West Coast ILWU locals, the 2.7-million member National Education Association, International Action Center, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, South Carolina State AFL-CIO, South Carolina International Longshoremen's Association, California State Association of Letter Carriers, Coalition of University Employees Local 3, the Labor Council of Albany, N.Y., and the Harlem Unemployment League. Also endorsing are the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union of Britain and the Doro Chiba Railroad Workers of Japan. Individual endorsers include Danny Glover, Dick Gregory, Howard Zinn, Casey Kasem, Michael Franti, Noam Chomsky and Utah Phillips.

For more information and to support the Million Worker March, see www.millionworker.org. □

The irrationality of capitalism

Freight backed up but railroad won't hire

By G. Dunkel

In this era of outsourcing and automation, when the drive to reduce the number of workers in the production and distribution of goods has been relentless, even the Wall Street Journal is forced to admit that workers and their skills are essential to the functioning of the economy.

The lead story in the July 22 Journal was headlined, "Woes at Union Pacific Create a Bottleneck for the Economy." UP is the largest railroad in the country, moving about 13 percent of all the freight by volume.

This is not even the peak season for railroads. Grain harvests are not yet ready to move, demand for the coal used in electric generation is low, and goods for the holiday season are just reaching U.S. shores. The Journal says the main problem facing the UP is that the "railroad has found itself without adequate staffing to handle the extra freight" generated by the "unexpected" growth in the U.S. economy.

It is not until the last third of the article that it quotes unnamed spokespeople from the Brotherhood of Locomotive

Engineers and Trainmen and the United Transportation Union as saying "the company's problems stem from not hiring enough conductors and engineers."

Even in an era in which locomotives—at least those in freight yards—can be remote controlled, they need more workers.

According to railroad management, it officially takes at least 14 weeks to train a conductor or a brake person and six months to train an experienced conductor to become an engineer. However, they do acknowledge that it takes much longer to prepare "train and engine employees." Even after taking the training classes, railroad worker Steve Millies told Workers World, the employee needs additional time on the job to "post" jobs and get qualified on the "physical characteristics" of track—memorize the location of signals, speed, restrictions, etc.

The railroad companies themselves admit that it takes five years in most jobs to become fully qualified. So, even if they started hiring today, it would be years before they had a fully qualified workforce.

The Union Pacific started shedding

highly qualified workers under the reign of Drew Lewis, who was the company's CEO until 1996. Lewis set the general outlines of UP's employment practices. As Ronald Reagan's secretary of transportation before that, this scab herder broke the PATCO strike of air traffic controllers in 1981.

Labor creates all wealth

UP reduced its work force by 11 percent from 1999 to 2004. Most of its cuts were in its operating staff.

But it's not only UP that has this staffing problem. According to the July 14 St. Louis Dispatch, "Rail employment among the five biggest operators totaled nearly 177,000 in March 1999 and stood at about 147,000 in March 2004, reflecting a 17 percent reduction."

The railroads point to derailments and bridge collapses as another cause of the bottlenecks created in the movement of goods. But certainly if the railroads hired people to maintain tracks and bridges, this source of slowdowns would be at least reduced.

The slowdown on the rails has other

effects.

The West Coast docks, especially San Diego and Los Angeles, are also jammed. In Los Angeles, during the week of July 10, 58 ships were unloading, 17 were at anchor waiting for dock space, and 37 ships were expected within a few days.

Part of the congestion comes from the fact that the railroads and the trucking industry—which is having trouble finding drivers—can't clear the containers. The longshore companies want to hire at least 2,000 more workers. But the bosses want to hire "casuals," who get paid \$10 to \$14 an hour less than enrolled longshore workers. In general, only about 60 casuals a week can be trained.

It is the labor of workers that creates profits. But the instability of the capitalist economy, with its ups and downs, inhibits the bosses from putting on more workers when they need them. If the bosses, in their drive to increase profits and in disdain for planning and the overall economy, cut too many, their decisions have dire consequences. This is what the Journal, a capitalist tool if there ever was one, has documented. □

Thousands in Boston put Kerry on notice

DNC is target of anti-war protest

By John Catalinotto
Boston

Thousands of demonstrators protested the occupation of Iraq on July 25, marching from Boston Common to the Fleet Center, site of the Democratic National Convention. They chanted anti-war slogans as they passed through a gauntlet of state cops in body armor, National Guard troops, rooftop rifle bearers and military police. The marchers paused to denounce the concrete barricades, razor-wire fence and concentration-camp-like pens surrounding the convention hall.

The protesters to a person were hostile to George Bush and his administration. But they showed that a significant sector of the anti-war movement also has no confidence in the Democratic Party and its national candidates. As many speakers at the rallies on the Common made clear, this movement will continue to mobilize against the occupation of Iraq.

A growing number of people in the U.S. now consider the Bush administration to be a dangerous ruling clique that must be stopped. Among them a smaller number see that the entire capitalist establishment, including the national Democratic Party leadership, is also responsible for the war drive and the attack on workers' interests. The July 25 protest's political importance was that it created a pole of attraction for those who refuse to submerge their determined opposition to Bush into support for candidate John Kerry.

The marchers' most prominent demand was that Washington end its occupation of Iraq and bring the troops home. They also demanded an end to the occupations of Afghanistan, Haiti and Korea and to the Israeli occupation of Palestine. On the domestic front, they stood for combating racism and defending the rights of workers. Very prominent at the protest were Boston school-bus drivers, who have been working without a contract.

From both the speakers' platform and the audience, people said they had no confidence in John Kerry. They called his program pro-war and pro-occupation and noted his wealth and his hostility to working-class interests.

ANSWER and the Boston-based Coalition to Protest the DNC organized the demonstration. It had strong support from a sector of organized labor—unions in the Boston area as well as those forces mobilizing for the Million Worker March, to be held Oct. 17 in Washington. This solidarity marked a meaningful step forward in building an alliance between organized workers and the anti-war movement.

'End the occupation, bring the troops home now'

Three days earlier the organizers had won a court battle for a legal permit to march on Causeway Street past the Fleet



WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

Center, something the police organizations had tried to repress. Enthusiasm powered the chanting of "Whose streets? Our streets" and the favorite slogan of the day, "End the occupation, bring the troops home now!"

There were many other slogans. As marchers neared an office of the Fox media monopoly, they shouted, "Fox lies, GIs and Iraqis die." And when police on bicycles pedaled near the sound truck on the march, the demonstrators started with: "Brick by brick, wall by wall, we're gonna free Mumia Abu-Jamal."

Plainclothes police, who claimed later to be acting under orders from the Secret Service, at one point grabbed, handcuffed and led away a bearded young man of color in the crowd. Demonstrators started chanting "Let him go!" and legal observers immediately assembled witnesses while trying to find out where he had been taken. Later the young man, Vijay Singh of Cambridge, joined the crowd back at Boston Common and quietly explained to people there what had happened.

Singh said he was interrogated for about 45 minutes before being released. His captors told him he had been "looking around suspiciously" at the many police, barri-

ades, wire pens and other security devices near the Fleet Center. Evidently, plainclothes cops had been following him for some time. The demonstrators, many of whom had been eyeballing the same things Singh had, without being grabbed, agreed this was yet another case of racial profiling.

With many reporters and camera crews here for the DNC, the protest march received extensive coverage. This contrasted with the months before the Bush administration launched the war on Iraq, when national protests ANSWER called, even those that brought hundreds of thousands of demonstrators to Washington and San Francisco, received much less media coverage. At that time, the monopoly media's owners—as well as Democratic Party leaders—thought Bush's drive to conquer Iraq would be successful.

All ANSWER rallies have addressed a broad array of issues, with speakers from all communities that are in struggle with imperialist exploitation, oppression and occupation. This one was no exception. The program included messages from Mumia Abu-Jamal, calls to free Leonard Peltier and the Cuban 5, demands for ending state discrimination against same-sex

marriage rights and protecting abortion rights, calls for solidarity with the workers of Colombia and the embattled Hugo Chavez government in Venezuela, exposure of Bill Clinton's destruction of welfare by homeless and welfare organizations, demands for rights of the disabled, and appeals from and to the youth of the U.S. to take a leading role in the movement.

But foremost was the demand for an end to the occupation of Iraq and the immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops. Dissent from current and former U.S. soldiers and their families was addressed by John Kim from Veterans for Peace; Gloria Pacis, mother of Marine war resister Stephen Funk; and Fernando Suarez, whose son Jesus Suarez was killed in Iraq.

Two Arab speakers condemned Israel's occupation of Palestine, as did others.

The Boston protest broke new ground for the anti-war movement in two areas: the alliance with the Haitian community and growing mutual solidarity with some sectors of organized labor.

Two Haitian speakers—singer Farah Juste and former Secretary of Commerce Mario Dupuy—condemned the U.S. overthrow of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and demanded an end to the U.S.-French occupation of Haiti. Dupuy said, "We don't forget the occupation of Iraq, Palestine and Haiti. This is a concern for all who believe in freedom. And the restoration of democracy in Haiti is also your fight."

USWA Local 8751, Boston School Bus Drivers, whose membership is mostly Haitian and which has a progressive, activist leadership, was a link to the Haitian community and also helped forge the march's solidarity with the upcoming Million Worker March.

Growing solidarity from these workers was apparent three days before the march, when Boston police tried to commandeer school buses from the Readville yard and retrofit them to carry demonstrators they expected to arrest at the protests. Local 8751 unionists and volunteer organizers of the July 25 protest set up an instant picket line that for three hours stopped civilian city workers from driving the buses away.

Organized labor and Million Worker March

Progressive unionists were represented at the rally by Clarence Thomas, executive board member of the 10,500-strong Longshore Workers Local 10 on the West Coast; Brenda Stokely, president of District Council 1707 of the American Federation of State, County, Municipal Employees in New York; and Steve Gillis, president of USWA Local 8751.

They and other speakers asked the demonstrators to join in building the Million Worker March, set for Oct. 17 in Washington. The MWM is a challenge to the AFL-CIO leadership to put organized labor's resources behind independent working-class demands for jobs, health care, education, better wages and benefits, and an end to the occupation of Iraq, instead of into the Democratic Party election campaign. Rally co-chair Larry Holmes encouraged support for the MWM at both the beginning and ending rallies.

Stokely had recently helped win support for a resolution demanding "Bring the troops home now" at the AFSCME national convention of 3,000 delegates in Anaheim, Calif. Pointing to this resolution, she told the people on the Commons, "Our posi-

Continued on page 10

KICK OFF THE WEEK OF RNC RESISTANCE!

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Top: Marchers approach Fleet Center. Right: Haitians call for Aristide's return. Bottom: Homeless group protests evictions.

How protesters challenged march ban—and won

By Dustin Langley
Boston

In the days before the Democratic National Convention, a war of nerves took place between protest organizers and the various federal agencies working under the umbrella of the Joint Terrorism Task Force.

"We will win our battle in the courts or we will win it in the streets," Steven Kirschbaum of Steelworkers Local 8751, an organizer with the Coalition to Protest the DNC, told a media conference. The coalition, which had called a July 25 protest, challenged and eventually defeated attempts by the City of Boston and the JTTF to prevent protesters from marching down Causeway Street in front of the Fleet Center in Boston, site of the convention.

Maureen Skehan, an organizer for ANSWER Boston, which initiated the coalition, said, "We will not allow our rights to be taken away so that the Democratic Party can have unrestricted access to our city for their posh parties and convention, which are costing almost \$100 million. We will bring the message to this convention loud and clear: Bring the troops home now!"

The coalition filed suit on July 19 in federal court against the City of Boston's refusal to allow protests at the site of the DNC. Its legal team included lead counsel John Pavlos and attorneys from the American Civil Liberties Union and National Lawyers Guild. Two days later, Judge Douglas P. Woodlock ruled that the city had no legal or constitutional basis for preventing the march. He issued an injunction ordering the city to grant a permit.

"It's our hope that what happened today will begin pushing back the efforts



March refused to enter the state's 'protest pens.'

by the government to restrict free speech, right of assembly and the right to march," said Peter Gilbert, an activist from North Carolina who traveled to Boston to help organize the march on the DNC. "The police commissioner and the mayor of New York City should be condemned for denying those organizing the big protest at the Republican convention in late August the right to rally in an acceptable place. We hope that what happened today shames the New York City government for violating the rights of protesters."

Although Judge Woodlock ruled in favor of the permit to march in front of the Fleet Center, he demonstrated his contempt for free speech by ruling, in a separate case, that a "protest pen" would be allowed to stand. The city, in anticipation of angry protests at the DNC, had constructed what many described as "internment pens" to contain demonstrators. This area is under an abandoned elevated train line, surrounded by a double row of chain-link fences covered with thick mesh and topped with rolls of razor wire.

Organizers with ANSWER Boston denounced the pen in a public statement

on July 21, saying, "We refuse to be penned in, in any way. The City of Boston and the Department of Homeland Security have no right to decree that the First Amendment only applies in a cage. We will exercise our right to free speech anywhere in the city we choose, especially on Causeway Street, at the site of the DNC, throughout the entire duration of the convention."

The judge himself admitted that the pen was "corrosive of democratic values" and said, "There is nothing more that could be added to the pens that would be more of an affront to free speech." Despite this, he ruled that the pens would be allowed to stand.

ANSWER Boston responded to this decision at a press conference calling on protesters to "boycott the pens" and join the mass march on the DNC on July 25. Thousands responded to the call, marching past the DNC and the empty pens, bringing their anti-war, pro-worker message to the streets. They and thousands more will continue their march—onward to the Republican National Convention in New York and then to the Million Worker March in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 17. □

Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row

Vote? For whom?

Following are excerpts from an audio message by Mumia Abu-Jamal played at the July 25 rally in Boston on the eve of the Democratic National Convention.

Ultimately, it is virtually assured that many Americans, perhaps over 50 percent, in other words, a majority, will not participate in this year's upcoming election, as they did not in 2000.

It is a testament of the decline of democracy that so many Americans feel that a vote is a waste of time, and an empty exercise at the dawn of the 21st Century. Millions of such people, predominantly young, and working class, seem to feel that elections are little more than a lost cause.

What is surprising about the current election campaign is the similarities between both major candidates.

Both are men of means, from well-to-do families. Both are Yalies. Both are members of the secret society, Skull & Bones.

I have seen an amusing cartoon-graphic of a sarcastic bumper sticker printed in a libertarian-type magazine, which reads:

BUSH

[graphic of U.S. flag with skull & bones]

KERRY '04

REPUBLICRAT

One vote, one party, NO choice

In the bottom, right-hand corner, in Olde English-style letters, is written "Skull and Bones" and "Yale University."

It gets a grin out of me every time that I see it, for bumper stickers, which are a kind of witty shorthand of oversimplification, tend to do this, if they're good.

It says a lot about the perceptions of millions of voting-age Americans, who really see these things that way, and as a consequence, refrain from even the pretense of voting for what increasingly looks like a single party, with two heads.

It also encapsulates rather nicely the gist of the now-flagging independent presidential campaign of consumer advocate, Ralph Nader.

To be honest, both men have varying styles, and different tones to their presentation. That given, Senator Kerry can by no means be seen as an anti-war candidate. On a recent news program, the Democratic candidate spoke about "staying the course" in Iraq; a use of terms that flashed back to the genocidal Nixon years, who said virtually the same thing when he wanted to shore up flagging support for the ruinous Vietnam War. I know that there are many people, perhaps millions, especially those most likely to hear, or read, these words, who feel, in their guts, that Senator Kerry is the best possible choice. This arises from the growing ABB crowd (Anybody But Bush).

The Senator Kerry of today isn't the anti-war activist of yesteryear. He is, by his own words, a "tough-minded ... internationalist," who wishes to "stay the course" in Iraq, preferably with European allies to split the cost in blood and treasure.

Who to vote for? That's your choice ... but I thought you'd like to know. □

ALAMEDA, CALIF.

Tenants win battle to keep Section 8 housing

By Shane Hoff
San Francisco

Whoever said "You can't fight City Hall" never met the people of Alameda, Calif.

In early June, 238 tenants received notices in the mail that they and their families were being dropped from the city's Section 8 program. Without that program, the largest source of subsidized housing for poor people, most tenants faced homelessness. But they didn't accept that fate. For a month they waged an unprecedented struggle to get Section 8 housing funds restored.

And on July 20 they won. Gathered at the steps of City Hall with their children, tenants were jubilant when they heard the Alameda Housing Authority had reinstated every single housing voucher.

"One month ago I stood here crying my eyes out," said Kenija Henry. "The Housing Authority told us there was nothing we could do. But we went to their houses and shook up their meetings."

The battle began when tenants and their supporters showed up at an Alameda City Council meeting in June, although the issue of Section 8 wasn't on the agenda. After listening to a long discussion about a parking lot, the tenants disrupted the meeting and demanded that the council discuss the housing crisis.

In response, the director of the Alameda Housing Authority, Michael Pucci, met with the tenants in an effort to quell their protests. Pucci told them "nothing could be done" since the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development had cut funding for Alameda's Section 8 program.

The tenants wouldn't accept that. They rallied outside the Alameda Housing Authority. And then about 40 tenants and supporters occupied Mayor Beverly Johnson's office demanding a meeting with her. Ignored by the mayor, they held a picket outside her home, as well as Pucci's.



WW PHOTO: SHANE HOFF

Tenant Malika Nassirruddin addresses the rally on the steps of City Hall after tenants won their demands.

A few days later they led a march to City Hall. The city and Housing Authority relented with a special City Council meeting where officials worked out one month of relief for the tenants. The victories were piecemeal as the city and Housing Authority tried to see how little they could get away with. But the tenants were determined that not one person would be evicted.

Pucci trekked to Washington, D.C., where he met with HUD officials. Somehow the agency found \$600,000 for Alameda. So half of the city's tenants got their Section 8 vouchers back. But that

still left 108 people facing evictions.

So the Section 8 Tenants Union and Campaign for Renters Rights held a rally July 20 at City Hall where the City Council was to discuss the tenants left behind. When the tenants showed up they got a surprise. Pucci had issued a media release that day announcing that everyone's vouchers would be restored.

Organizers said Alameda was the first Housing Authority in the country that tried to put people on the streets. But it may not be the last. Pucci's release noted that about 25 percent of housing authorities across the country—between 800 and

900—have funding shortfalls. The San Francisco Bay Guardian reported that the federal government has proposed cutting Section 8 funding by another \$1.6 billion in 2005, which would put 268,000 households at risk for homelessness in 2005.

"This is going to be happening around the country," tenant Malika Nassirruddin told the crowd. "We have to show the people how to fight."

Speakers at the rally stood in front of a big sign declaring "Save Our Homes." During the rally Nassirruddin painted another message in red across the sign: "We saved our homes." □

A soldier's story from inside Iraq

By S. Farquhar
Pontiac, Mich.

My co-worker, U.S. Army Reserve Sgt. Marques Gaines, found himself deployed for active duty in Iraq last year. Gaines, a father of two and a mental healthcare worker in Auburn Hills, Mich., explains, "I had joined the Army Reserves for the economic opportunities promised to those enlisting."

Like the majority of people in his unit, who according to Gaines also joined for financial reasons, he had hoped to attend college, with his tuition paid through his eight years of assigned service. His plans to go to college were put on hold in April 2003, however, when his division was deployed to Iraq.

He was only given four days to prepare himself and his family for departure, and no official rationale for the deployment. "We received the same information everyone else here did about the reasons for the invasion, from the media."

Sgt. Gaines arrived in Iraq, unprepared for the hostile terrain and conditions that make up the country today, under U.S. occupation. Dwelling in cramped tents or in unsafe buildings that had been partially

destroyed by U.S. bombs, Marques lived elbow to elbow with his fellow soldiers for most of his tour in Iraq, in temperatures that often exceeded 100 degrees.

Gaines's initial impression of the Iraqi people was that they seemed "free to me." He observed a multi-ethnic society of people who lived tolerably well together while enjoying a relatively high standard of living—one that deteriorated significantly as the war progressed.

He adds that regardless of what individual Iraqis thought of Saddam Hussein, and in spite of the Pentagon propaganda, the people of Iraq overwhelmingly "did not want us there."

These feelings were further enhanced for Sgt. Gaines and his division when reports began to circulate among them that "no weapons of mass destruction" were found. Marques recounts that "the majority" of soldiers in his unit—composed primarily of "Black and white, women and men"—began to suspect that they had been duped into fighting in Iraq.

Sgt. Gaines, who is African American, said that he began to view the destruction and occupation of Iraq in the same way "that British and European powers had colonized Africa" a century before for eco-

nomie resources and political subjugation.

Occupation: 'premised on oil and greed'

Equally suspect were the military operations Sgt. Gaines's division sometimes found themselves ordered to participate in. Trained specifically as construction engineers, Sgt. Gaines's battalion was nonetheless "unnecessarily placed in harm's way" after being given the task of locating "IED's" or "Improvised Explosive Devices" on foot. These IED's, which were planted along the road by guerrilla forces, were responsible for several casualties among the U.S. troops.

While Marques witnessed no abuses of Iraqi prisoners like those committed at the Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad, he said Iraqi civilians—including children—were summarily "picked up by U.S. soldiers and detained simply for making obscene gestures at soldiers" without due process.

Resistance to U.S. occupation grew consistently during his tour in Iraq. Gaines, a non-commissioned soldier on the front lines, recalled that the stress amounted to "being in a constant state of terror."

Adding insult to probable injury and potential death, commissioned officers were given priority when receiving authorization for customary two-week "mid-tour" leaves to the U.S. to escape the mounting stress.

In the final analysis, Gaines said, he "doesn't see any end to the conflict" as long as the U.S. remains there.

Increasingly demoralized, most of the soldiers in his unit came to view the occupation as one premised on "oil and greed."

Regarding the anti-war movement, Marques says, "The greater the number of people protesting and petitioning against the war, the better."

Gaines also feels that it is in everyone's best interest—U.S. and Iraqi—that the "troops should come home." Gaines is home now, but he doesn't know—like many others—whether he'll be told to redeploy again.

As of this writing President Bush has ordered the redeployment of an additional 5,600 reservists to Iraq.

Editor's note: For information on discharges and other types of GI counseling, contact SNAFU—the Support Network for an Armed Forces Union—at info@join-snafu.org.

Torture scandal in Afghanistan

Making a killing: the business of war

By Minnie Bruce Pratt

A torture scandal in Afghanistan is once again putting the spotlight on private mercenaries and the billionaire corporations behind them.

Three U.S. men were charged in an Afghan court on July 18 with running an illegal jail in Kabul, where they tortured prisoners by hooding, beating and kicking them, as well as pouring scalding water on them and pushing their heads repeatedly into buckets of water.

The leader of the group, Jonathan Keith "Jack" Idema, a former member of the U.S. Special Forces, known as the "Green Berets," claimed that he was working for a counterterrorist unit of the Pentagon and was in direct contact with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's office. He asserted that U.S. authorities "absolutely condoned" his activities. (The Guardian [UK], July 22)

During the 2001 war on Afghanistan, Idema was one of a number of former U.S. military members who worked with the Northern Alliance against the Taliban. During that time, Special Forces were participating in the slaughter of prisoners at Mazar-i-Sharif, and were hiring and training Afghan mercenaries to form the Afghan Militia Forces.

In 2003 National Public Radio interviewed Idema as the "former Green Beret"

who captured videotapes of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan—tapes used to justify the continued U.S. military presence in the country. "CBS 60 Minutes II" aired the tapes in January 2002 and presented Idema as a war hero. Idema collaborated with Robin Moore on the New York Times bestseller "The Hunt for Bin Laden," and claimed that his life as a U.S. intelligence operative was the basis for the 1997 movie, "The Peacemaker," starring George Clooney.

Idema previously ran a company selling military clothing and equipment. In 1994 he was convicted of defrauding 60 companies out of \$200,000, and was sentenced to three years in federal prison. Timothy Connolly, an assistant secretary of defense at the Pentagon at the time, appeared as a character witness for him. (Independent [UK], July 10)

However, U.S. authorities are now denying any knowledge of Idema, or connection to his activities.

Bounty hunters of big business

The U.S. corporate media has generally presented Idema as one of an influx of extra-legal "bounty hunters" into Afghanistan, there because of the \$25 million price offered for bin Laden, "alive or dead."

Another possibility is that Idema was

there as a "private military contractor"—an arrangement that gives the U.S. military the ability to order brutal acts and then deny responsibility for them, as happened in the Abu Ghraib prison of Iraq.

Undoubtedly, Idema's presence reflects the money to be had in the growing privatization of war. But whatever business he made out of torture and jailing was small potatoes compared to the money-making schemes of big business.

A 2003 study by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) states that at least 90 private military companies (PMCs) provide "services normally performed by national armies" in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia. These services are usually military training, logistical support for military operations and removal of mines, but also include "active combat."

These companies close to the Pentagon have found a new gold mine in the Iraqi and Afghan wars.

In Afghanistan, the security guards that surround Hamid Karzai, the U.S.-dictated president of Afghanistan, are from DynCorp, a PMC that backed Bush's election campaign with substantial contributions.

The corporation employs 25,000 people worldwide, from Colombia to the former Yugoslavia. Many are former U.S. military, working in jobs from "security"

to aircraft maintenance. DynCorp personnel contracted to the United Nations were reportedly implicated in the buying and selling of women in the Balkans within an international sex industry network. (The Guardian, Nov. 29, 2002)

KBR (formerly Kellogg, Brown & Root), a subsidiary of Texas-based oil colossus Halliburton, has sent the U.S. government a bill for more than \$1.2 billion for military support activities in Iraq and Afghanistan. U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney was CEO of Halliburton until he left to join the Republican ticket with George W. Bush.

Halliburton is currently defending itself in congressional hearings against charges of waste, overcharging and mishandling of more than \$8 billion in Pentagon contracts. (New York Times, July 23)

Meanwhile, in Iraq, Nesreen Berwari, minister of municipalities and public works, says that the amount of potable water originally expected from 90 planned water projects will be cut in half because of cost overruns and delays. This in a country, devastated by U.S. war and sanctions, that can now meet only 60 to 80 percent of its water demand.

The reason given? In large part, the high-paid contracts and skyrocketing expenses of private security companies hired by the giant construction companies. (New York Times, July 26) □

Decades after massacres of students

Mexican ex-president eludes genocide indictment

By Adrian Garcia
Los Angeles

An attempt to indict a former president of Mexico on charges of genocide has stalled.

Two days after Special Prosecutor Ignacio Carrillo asked a federal court to indict former Mexican President Luis Echeverria on criminal charges of genocide, stemming from a 1971 massacre of students in Mexico City while Echeverria was head of state, the request was denied on grounds that a 30-year statute of limitations had expired.

This was the first time in Mexican history that a president had faced criminal charges. Carrillo, appointed special prosecutor by President Vicente Fox to investigate state abuses against leftists and adversaries of the then-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) during the 1970s and 1980s, presented documents from a two-year-long investigation to a court on July 22. Carrillo stated that "dozens" of students were killed after government goons called the "Falcons" attacked a peaceful student demonstration in Mexico City on June 10, 1971.

Carrillo used a 1967 Mexican law as the basis for his charge of genocide against Echeverria and other former government heads, including former Interior Secretary Mario Moya and former Attorney General Julio Sanchez Vargas. Because the victims were "a national group of political dissidents" who were "partially destroyed through the illegal use of physical force," the law permitted the charge of genocide to be leveled

against the accused, claimed Carrillo.

Echeverria has denied taking part in the planning or execution of the deadly repression in 1971. Judge Julio Cesar Flores has refused to issue arrest warrants against Echeverria and other members of his government, concurring with the contention of Echeverria's lawyer that a 30-year statute of limitations expired in 2001.

Special Prosecutor Carrillo argued that the statute of limitations did not apply, and has vowed to appeal the court's decision. The appeal is based on Mexico's signing of an international pact in 1966 that forbids any time limits being placed on the prosecution of individuals responsible for genocide.

"Sooner or later they will pay for their actions," reproached Roberto Garcia Flores, brother of Juan Garcia, one of the slain students of the Corpus Christi Massacre of June 10, 1971. Juan Garcia was among 10,000 demonstrators marching near the National Polytechnic Institute in Mexico City demanding education reform before they were brutally repressed. Up to 280 people are reported to have died or disappeared.

Echeverria is also implicated in yet another, more infamous, student massacre in Mexico. On Oct. 2, 1968, days before Mexico City was to host the Olympic Games, thousands of student demonstrators protesting in the Plaza de Tlatelolco were fired upon by federal troops. It has been reported that hundreds perished and hundreds more were arrested and imprisoned. Echeverria, then serving as Interior Secretary under the Diaz Ordaz government, claimed he



Scene in the Plaza de Tlatelolco, Mexico City, after October 1968 massacre of students.

sent troops to the demonstration to maintain order and referred to those arrested as common criminals. "Not one was arrested for writing a novel or a poem or for his way of thinking," Echeverria said contemptuously.

An inquiry conducted to investigate the 1968 massacre released its findings last October. It revealed evidence that some of the snipers used the apartment of Echeverria's sister-in-law as a shortcut to get to the demonstrators in the Plaza de Tlatelolco. No criminal charges have been filed against Echeverria in this massacre of student demonstrators, although the Fox administration insists it has been investigating this and other incidents of repression against dissidents.

Vicente Fox is no friend of the left. He is from the conservative National Action Party, which unseated the seven-decades rule of the Institutional Revolutionary Party in 2000 with promises of transparency and rule of law. The U.S. has been an ardent supporter of Fox's policies, "believing that it furthers both countries' social and economic integration,"

reported the July 23 Los Angeles Times. This integration is providing U.S. corporations with a market for their goods and with low-paid labor.

Fox is reported to have opted for a special prosecutor instead of a Truth Commission to investigate government crimes against dissidents, such as the Tlatelolco Massacre, because he realized an investigation takes years to conduct, "giving him time to pursue cooperation from the PRI for his legislative program." (Los Angeles Times, July 25) He is shrewdly using popular anger over these unpunished crimes as a lever in his struggle with his bourgeois political rivals.

Mexico's efforts to eradicate leftists and revolutionaries should be analyzed in a historical political context, says columnist Ramon Rodriguez. He wrote that 1968 "was the year that student and union radicalism was engulfing the world, from France where the government was almost toppled, to the U.S. when President Lyndon B. Johnson was forced to refuse reelection" because of a massive anti-war movement. (La Opinion, Jan. 12) □



On to the RNC

The best antidote to the imperialist politics of both George W. Bush and John Kerry will be if masses of workers, oppressed peoples and everyone fed up with war, racism, exploitation and injustice surround the Republican National Convention in New York with an angry sea of protest.

Bush and his gang of criminal warmakers—especially Rumsfeld, Cheney, Wolfowitz, Rice and the other right-wing ideologues committed to empire building and “preemptive” war—need to feel just as uncomfortable among the people of New York City as they would in the cities they have destroyed in Iraq and Afghanistan. Their abduction of the sovereign Haitian government needs to be laid at their doorstep. Their complicity in Israel’s attempts to destroy the Palestinian nation needs to be thrown back in their faces.

Closer to home, they need to feel the hot breath of a population that is sickened by their conspiracy to use the government to transfer immense wealth from the workers and poor to the already obscenely rich, especially the parasitic corporations that specialize in selling the instruments of war and repression.

Many labor unions should be marching there, letting the arrogant gang at the top know that even billionaires are helpless without the vast working class. Youth should be lambasting them for the despoiled world they are leaving to future generations, and telling those who still harbor ambitions of sitting astride the world that the young will not fight their imperialist wars.

Everyone who suffers the whip of oppression—whether from racism, sexism, homophobia or maltreatment of immigrant populations—has abundant reason to bring their issues and demands to Madison Square Garden and the conservative, privileged crowd that will be gathered there.

But the joy of being with a sea of others who won’t stand for another four years of these monsters should not obscure a very basic truth. As the hand-made sign of a Haitian man in the July 25 protest at the Democratic National Convention read: “The problem isn’t Bush, it’s capitalism.”

The crowd will undoubtedly demand Bush’s defeat in the election. But the defeat of what Bush stands for—an imperialist system, run by the giant banks and corporations that need exploitation and oppression to survive—won’t be won at the ballot box. Kerry, like Bush, is campaigning to be the next emperor. That becomes clearer every day as he outlines policies so close to those of Bush that Kerry has come to be known as “Bush-lite.”

It is not that the Republicans and the Democrats are identical—they’re not Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Their styles and the images they cultivate can be very different. But, at the end of the day, both parties are beholden to big business and are vying to administer the same capitalist economic system, with its vicious dog-eat-dog social relations of oppression and injustice.

Everyone who knows that the elections are just a temporary distraction and that the progressive movements must continue to organize and build for the fight should be in the demonstrations. This is when the people who have been through the process of disillusionment with the capitalist parties need to tactfully transfer their gained wisdom to anyone who will listen.

At least two of the many events scheduled during the convention will have an anti-imperialist focus. The People’s War Crimes Tribunal on Iraq, coordinated by the International Action Center and set for Thursday, Aug. 26, will kick off the Week of Resistance. The Free Palestine Alliance, a member organization of the ANSWER steering committee, is setting up tents in public spaces and carrying out hunger strikes to protest the Apartheid Wall on Aug. 28-29. (info@freepalestinealliance.org)

Workers World newspaper urges progressive people to join all the protests at the RNC. But not to endorse the “anyone but Bush” sentiment, which just leads back into the swamp of the big business parties. Healthy debate is already beginning in some mass organizations to break away from their grip and build an independent struggle of the workers and the oppressed. It should be encouraged in the streets around Madison Square Garden. □

DNC is target of anti-war protest

Continued from page 6

tion is not a fringe position but is shared by millions of workers.”

Before the rally began, Clarence Thomas told Workers World that the MWM had won support from actor Danny Glover, from different regional ANSWER centers, and from Larry Holmes of the International Action Center. “Boston is a convergence of struggle this week. Steve Gillis invited us here to participate in the protest, and we also attended the Boston Social Forum and met with Danny Glover there. At the MWM we will fight to end the war on Iraq but also to stop the transfer of wealth to the rich and the corporate elite. It is time for workers and anti-war forces to come together under our own agenda.”

Who came, who was watching?

The protest drew those anti-imperialist groups that condemn both big capitalist parties. It also attracted those whose experience protesting the war on Iraq has made them distrustful of all capitalist politicians. And it drew at least some of those from the Boston Social Forum, which took place the same weekend. Many of them have not yet abandoned the system, but know that Kerry’s program has made him what some called “Bush-lite.” Some marchers wore T-shirts supporting Dennis Kucinich, who has abandoned his campaign for the Democratic nomination and gone over to Kerry.

Elena Everett, youth activist and state chairperson of the North Carolina Green Party, slammed the role of John Edwards, Kerry’s running mate: “When John Edwards voted for the war, we occupied his office in North Carolina. We didn’t give him a pass then and we’re not going to do it now.”

Dave Schechter, who staffed the Workers World literature table, described the contradiction facing some of those at the protest. “A lot of the people who came here, took a paper or bought a book, said they couldn’t stand Kerry, but still said they would vote for him in November. They fear Bush and still don’t see that an independent course is possible.”

John Parker, an organizer of the International Action Center in Los Angeles, who is also the presidential candidate of Workers World Party, spoke at the rally, sharply attacking Kerry over Iraq. “Why doesn’t Kerry get it?” asked Parker. “Not because he’s stupid. There are strings tied to his heart in the hands of monopoly capital that demands continual expansion.”

Many speakers urged the crowd to also turn out in New York for the protests at the Republican National Convention, and in Washington to protest the inauguration of whoever wins the presidential election. Sara Flounders of the International Action Center also raised the International War Crimes Tribunal in New York on Aug. 26, that will indict Bush and his cohorts as people begin to gather for the RNC protests.

Much community support in Boston

A lot of people were paying attention to this march. The day before the rally, local volunteers handed out 20,000 leaflets throughout greater Boston. Ed Childs, chief shop steward of Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Local 26 in Cambridge, distributed at the Forest Hills transit station.

“It was hard to distribute,” Childs told an organizers’ meeting, “because everyone wanted to get into a discussion with you. Two GIs were on leave from Iraq, and they told me they wanted us to keep on protesting. The people were concerned with their economic hardships and worried about what would happen next.”

The protest tapped into a process that includes disillusionment with the Bush administration, with capitalist politicians and perhaps with the system. It was telling that one of the youth organizers of the protest had himself been a youth delegate to the 2000 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles. Change happens.

Among the speakers not already mentioned above were a wide variety of anti-war and community organizers, including: Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner; Ahmed Awash of the Palestine National Congress, Boston; Brian Becker, representing national ANSWER; Rebeca Toledo of the National Committee to Free the Cuban 5; LeiLani Dowell, a lesbian activist and candidate for Congress on California’s Peace and Freedom Party ticket; transgender author/ activist Leslie Feinberg; Fabio Arias Giraldo, second vice president of the United Workers Central in Colombia; Yoomi Jeong of the Korea Truth Commission; John Kim of Veterans for Peace; Peta Lindsey of National Youth & Student ANSWER; Stephanie Nichols, Youth & Student Organizer with ANSWER Boston; Ralph Schoenman, a radio producer and MWM organizer; Brian Shea of Disabled Peoples Liberation Front; Ruth Velez of San Diego ANSWER; as well as political musical performances by Pam Parker of Washington, D.C., Marta Rodriguez and Movement in Motion, a New York-based hip-hop collective.



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Anti-Korea bill passes House

U.S. on track to yet another aggression

By Deirdre Griswold

It is 51 years since the Korean War ended, not in a peace agreement but merely a truce. In all these years, the U.S. government has refused to sign a peace treaty, instead keeping tens of thousands of troops in South Korea and enforcing the division of the Korean peninsula that has torn apart millions of families.

Last year, the Pentagon announced it was going to spend \$11 billion on advanced weaponry for its Korean occupation, while downsizing the number of troops it stations there.

The U.S. is now shifting thousands of its soldiers from South Korea to Iraq. However, its threats against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the north continue and are growing even louder. Massive military exercises are a frequent occurrence, and threats to launch a preemptive strike on the DPRK's nuclear power facilities are being voiced by politicians of both capitalist parties.

If anything, Democrats like John Kerry sound even more hawkish than the Republicans when it comes to Korea. They accuse Bush of being so focused on Iraq that he has neglected the "nuclear threat" from the DPRK. They are being rivaled in their rhetoric, however, by a coalition of Christian evangelicals and Cold War anti-communists loyal to the Bush regime who have been pushing a bill in Congress that would escalate the pressure on the DPRK

in the name of "human rights."

That bill passed the House on July 21. The bipartisan vote was unanimous. If it passes the Senate, the U.S. will allocate \$24 million each year to stepped-up propaganda aimed at North Korea. The aim is to encourage an exodus from the country by promising a fast track to U.S. citizenship for Koreans who seek asylum in the U.S.

The bill even allocates funds for U.S. agents to seek out North Koreans living in China. This euphemistically named "North Korea Human Rights Act" was sponsored by Rep. Jim Leach of Iowa, chair of the House Subcommittee on East Asia and the Pacific and a "born-again" Christian. Besides fitting their ideological bent, the bill opens the door to contracting out the work on "human rights" propaganda to right-wing Christian evangelicals who have been lobbying hard for it.

The bill's sponsors in Congress claim its aim is only to improve the "human rights" situation in North Korea. But its real intention can be read in an article on the Christian News Service website CNSNews.com headlined "Campaigners Strategize on Toppling North Korean Regime." It reports on a conference held in Seoul that featured Michael Horowitz, a long-time Cold Warrior from the Hudson Institute, infamous for its advocacy of "preemptive" nuclear war against the Soviet Union. Horowitz is now a champion of "human rights."

This offensive by the U.S. appears aimed at least in part at turning back the growing movement in South Korea for reunification of the divided country. Since the historic visit in 2000 of South Korea's last president, Kim Dae-jung, to Pyongyang, capital of the DPRK, the government in the south has been pursuing a "sunshine policy" of increased contacts with the north. There is overwhelming support for reunification among the Koreans in the south, as well as in the north.

Ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union and its socialist partners, the DPRK has been struggling with economic problems, especially a shortage of energy. It turned to nuclear power and started building a reactor, only to run into stiff opposition from the U.S. In 1994, an "Agreed Framework" signed with the Clinton administration promised assistance from Washington and South Korea if the DPRK scrapped the work it had done and built a different kind of nuclear power plant that could not produce plutonium, an element in nuclear weapons production.

The promised assistance—oil and nuclear technology—didn't happen. Oil shipments were inadequate and arrived late, often after North Korea's severe winters. The new nuclear power plants were never built. Finally, the DPRK announced it would no longer abide by the broken agreement and resumed work on its original nuclear program.

This is now being used as a pretext for

the heightened threats and hostility from the U.S., which of course is the world's largest nuclear superpower and has nothing to fear from the DPRK as long as the Pentagon doesn't launch an attack on that country.

But that's the rub. As long as there's only an armistice in place, it means the U.S. is still in a state of war with the DPRK. North Korea has been trying for years to get Washington to sit down and negotiate a peace treaty. It refuses to do so. That leaves the door wide open for whoever sits in the White House to embroil this country in another war in Korea at any time.

It's a horrible prospect. Millions of Koreans died in the 1950-53 war, and so did over 50,000 U.S. troops.

South Koreans are alarmed that the new bill just passed by the House can further destabilize the situation on the Korean peninsula. Some lawmakers in the governing Uri Party have been pushing a resolution criticizing the U.S. bill as "a scheme aimed at suffocating North Korea." (Chosun Ilbo, July 23) Demonstrations continue almost every day against the U.S. occupation troops in the south and against the government's decision to send Korean troops to Iraq. Pilots, mechanics and other airline workers have refused to work on planes transporting troops.

In the north, the emphasis is on strengthening its military defenses as a deterrent to a possible U.S. attack. □

La Marcha de Un Millón de Obreros demuestra la labor organizada está en movimiento

Continuación de página 12

ización del conflicto y enviar más tropas y recursos a la ocupación que ya ha causado gigantescas cifras de caídos y el desvío de grandes cantidades de dinero de los servicios sociales al Pentágono. Esto solo logrará prolongar la muerte y destrucción del pueblo iraquí. Kerry votó en pro de la guerra contra Irak y recientemente el Senado votó 98 a 0 para expandir el presupuesto del Pentágono a más de \$400 mil millones.

Sería bueno que la AFL-CIO se distanciara de la posición de los Demócratas sobre la guerra y exigiera: Un fin a la ocupación y retirar a las tropas ya. El sindicato de Service Employees International Union, el más extenso afiliado de la AFL-CIO, votó abrumadoramente por la resolución contra la guerra en su convención del mes de junio. Para forjar un movimiento independiente de clase, es indispensable romper con los dos partidos capitalistas. La AFL-CIO debe romper las cadenas que la ata a Kerry y al Partido Demócrata.

El récord laboral de Kerry debe ser expuesto y no ocultado. Han pasado 10 años desde que el Tratado de Libre Comercio Norteamericano fue aceptado con su bendición, y hasta la fecha él ha apoyado al Tratado como un modelo ejemplar para todos los acuerdos de comercio imperialista. El Tratado ha sido un desastre tremendo para los trabajadores, los oprimidos y empobrecidos. En los Estados Unidos han sido cerradas, miles de empleos se han perdido a los trabajos

de baja paga y sin sindicatos de otros países como México, dejando pueblos abandonados en muchos estados.

El gobierno mexicano estima que entre 800.000 y 2,5 millones de niños trabajan en vez de ir a la escuela. Serias violaciones de salud y seguridad son comunes en los sitios de trabajo y peligros ambientales amenazan a las comunidades que rodean a las fábricas. Las corporaciones estadounidenses se ponen de acuerdo con los gerentes locales. Los banqueros de Wall Street y los empresarios acumulan ganancias enormes al privatizar grandes terrenos valiosos en los países subdesarrollados.

Kerry se ha rodeado con estos banqueros y empresarios. El ha seleccionado al Senador John Edwards de Carolina del Norte como su compañero de campaña, donde los trabajadores y en particular los de las industrias textiles, han sufrido baja el TLC. Carolina del Norte es un estado "con derecho a trabajar" -o sea el derecho a tener rompuehuelas. Las leyes que existen allá y en otros 20 estados ha deshecho todos los logros hecho por la labor organizada, incluyendo el derecho a organizar sindicatos.

El equipo Kerry/Edwards es un insulto a los 13 millones de trabajadores organizados, como los es también para los millones más que desean pertenecer a los sindicatos.

Kerry apoya la miseria de aumento en el salario mínimo, de \$5.15 a \$7 dólares en el curso de dos años que mantendría a los obreros y sus familias en la pobreza. El fue responsable por la derrota de la propuesta

para aumentar los pagos de desempleo. Kerry apoya el programa de servicio público que Clinton dejó, el cual ha creado otra clase de obreros más pobres y ha eliminado empleos con salario de sindicato, privando a los trabajadores oprimidos y en especial a muchas mujeres de color y madres solteras del cuidado de sus niños, viviendas decentes y oportunidades de educación.

Kerry no tiene planes para una creación masiva de trabajos para aliviar las condiciones de millones de trabajadores desempleados. El ha apoyado las redadas masivas que ha llevado a cabo el Servicio de Inmigración y Naturalización -ahora parte del tal Departamento de Seguridad de la Patria- contra los indocumentados. Y él no ha dicho nada contra el Acta Patriótica o apoyado el matrimonio entre personas del mismo sexo.

¿Cómo puede el presidente de la AFL-CIO, John Sweeney, con su línea de "cualquiera que no sea Bush," ignorar todo esto?

La AFL-CIO está llena de problemas y tensiones internas. Su liderazgo necesita apoyar y no atacar a un movimiento independiente de la lucha de clases que junto con las nacionalidades oprimidas forjará una unidad que es tan necesaria y a buen tiempo. Es muy peligroso que la AFL-CIO inste a sus filas y sus sindicatos locales a que voten por las esperanzas puestas en Kerry y Edwards.

Los líderes de la Marcha de Un Millón de Obreros han respondido inteligentemente a la oposición de Sweeney para la construcción de un movimiento independiente de nuestra clase. Este movimiento no desaparecerá, no importa las dificultades y obstáculos que se interpongan. El movimiento laboral y sus aliados tienen una alternativa para no votar por el candidato capitalista "menos dañino" -una estrategia de pérdida para los trabajadores y las nacionalidades oprimidas.

La alternativa es: Forjar la Marcha de Un Millón de Obreros en Washington el 17 de Octubre. □

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¡PROLETARIOS Y OPRIMIDOS DE TODOS LOS PAÍSES, UNÍOS!

MUNDO OBRERO

Bush es una amenaza, pero Kerry no es la solución

Marcha de Un Millón de Obreros demuestra la labor organizada está en movimiento

Por Milt Neidenberg

Calcular el momento perfecto para tomar la lucha y avanzar la causa de los obreros y oprimidos es casi siempre algo crítico. Un programa político es muy importante para avanzar la lucha de clases. En ambos puntos, la propuesta para una Marcha de Un Millón de Obreros (MMO) en Washington para el 17 de octubre recibe altas notas. Y aunque el tiempo es corto y los recursos son pocos, el cumplimiento de este objetivo sentará las bases para forjar un movimiento independiente dentro del mundo obrero.

El 26 de febrero, cuando la retórica de las elecciones de los partidos capitalistas comenzó a acalorarse, el sindicato Local 10 de la International Longshore Warehouse Union, ILWU, (el sindicato de estibadores) en San Francisco propuso esta iniciativa.

Ellos aprobaron la resolución de instar a los "sindicatos, consejos laborales y organizaciones obreras, al igual que otras organizaciones a los que los obreros pertenezcan, organizados o no, para que organizaran acciones similares para organizar esta marcha tan pronto sea posible."

La Marcha de Un Millón de Obreros nació.

Este sindicato muy militante es nacionalmente reconocido por su papel líder en la lucha contra la guerra en Irak y la ofensiva anti laboral aquí en este país. El 7 de abril del 2003, la Local ILWU 10 fue partícipe en una de las manifestaciones contra la guerra en Irak. Ellos respetaron una línea de protesta frente a las terminales Oakland de la compañía Stevedoring Services of América (SSA), uno de los grandes contratistas escogido por el Departamento de la Defensa para reconstruir el puerto marítimo más grande en Irak. La protesta cerró a la SSA.

Tal acción llevó a que la policía de Oakland atacara brutalmente. El boletín del sindicato ILWU, Dispatch, de abril describe este evento: "Ellos desataron una ola de terror con lluvia de balas letales de goma, granadas de concusión y bolsas llenas de pedacitos de metal y de madera, para romper la protesta. Decenas fueron heridos, muchos fueron enviados al hospital con heridas graves. Veinticuatro manifestantes y un agente del ILWU fueron arrestados."

Marcando el primer año del aniversario el 7 de abril del 2004, cientos de manifestantes tuvieron una protesta frente al edificio de la corte judicial en el Condado de Alameda, marcharon a una terminal de la SSA y cerraron totalmente el segundo turno. Dos semanas después el fiscal del distrito del Condado de Alameda, suspendió todos los cargos contra los manifestantes.

Hora de una lucha independiente

Después de la victoria, el 22 de mayo, se dio un mitin de la MMO. Este envió un mensaje que dice que ya es hora de tomar el camino hacia una lucha de clases independiente y romper con los lazos tradicionales del movimiento laboral organizado de escoger al "candidato menos dañino"-el Partido Demócrata.

Clarence Thomas, miembro ejecutivo de la Local 10 del sindicato ILWU y nacionalmente conocido como líder laboral, hizo un llamado. "Este es un llamado a todos los obreros a que se unan y movilicen con nuestra agenda. En la última década hemos sido sujetos de ataques por los empresarios. Este es el momento, este es el momento en que debemos avanzar nuestras demandas, nuestras necesidades y de proclamar una agenda política en nuestros intereses vitales."



PHOTO: BILL HACKWELL

Thomas y Trent Willis, otro líder, fueron declarados colideres para la Marcha de un Millón de Obreros.

Más de 250 personas participaron en el mitin, representando a sindicalistas laborales, activistas comunitarios y opositores a la guerra de todo el país. Chris Silvera, secretario del tesoro de la Local 808 del sindicato de tronquistas en Long Island City, en Nueva York y presidente del Consejo Nacional de Africano-americanos del Sindicato de Tronquistas (Teamsters), se unió al sentimiento del mitin. "Ahora se pueden sentar y esperar a que Kerry haga algo. Pero nosotros vamos a Washington a estremecer la Casa Blanca. Necesitamos retomar nuestro país, nuestros derechos y romper el Acta Patriota."

Endosantes individuales incluyeron a organizadores de la comunidad, representantes del movimiento contra la guerra y luchadores por los derechos civiles como Dick Gregory, Danny Glover y Casey Kasem. Los indocumentados fueron representados por el Programa Jornaleros de San Francisco. En un instante toda la División del ILWU endosó la Marcha, a pesar del endose del ILWU Internacional por John Kerry.

Brenda Stokely hizo un llamado apasionado para forjar la Marcha. Ella es presidente del Consejo 1707 del Distrito de la Federación Americana de los Empleados del Estado, Condado y Municipios en Nueva York y una mujer africana-americana reconocida nacionalmente como líder en el frente laboral y fuerte opositora a la guerra en Irak.

Durante una convención reciente del sindicato AFSCME de más de 3.000 delegados sucedido en Anaheim, California, Stokely estuvo entre los delegados más progresistas y contra la guerra quienes presentaron una resolución para dar fin a la ocupación y traer las tropas a sus casas. Esta fue aceptada abrumadoramente a pesar de un esfuerzo por el presidente del sindicato al nivel nacional, Gerald McEntee de diluirlo.

Bajo el liderazgo de Stokely, la Local 1707 propuso una resolución para apoyar la Marcha. La resolución fue hecha a un lado, pero la constitución de la AFSCME (sindicato de trabajadores gubernamentales) provee vías para que la lucha continúe. La Coalición de Sindicalistas de Raza Negra, la AFL-CIO del estado de Carolina del Sur y varias otras locales y consejos se han unido a la iniciativa.

La Asociación para la Educación Nacional (NEA por las siglas en inglés), con 2,7 millones de miembros anunció su apoyo a la Marcha. La NEA tiene afiliados en todos los estados que trabajan en la educación-desde los programas de kindergarten hasta la universidad. Sus afiliados están en más de 13.000 comunidades en todos los Estados Unidos.

La Marcha de un Millón de Obreros está creciendo en influencia y cifras.

Hay que romper con los partidos de las grandes empresas

Con temor de que este evento pueda socavar la campaña de "cualquier otro que no sea Bush" el liderazgo de la AFL-CIO ha comenzado un ataque contra la Marcha.

El 23 de junio, el presidente de la AFL-CIO, John Sweeney, por medio del director del Departamento de la Movilización, envió un memorando a todas las Federaciones Estatales y a la Central de Consejos Laboral de la AFL-CIO. Este decía en parte, "La AFL-CIO no es co-endosante de este esfuerzo y no proveerá sus recursos o energía hacia manifestaciones en el otoño. Nosotros creemos que es absolutamente crucial que comprometamos los esfuerzos de nuestro movimiento laboral a la remoción de George W. Bush de su oficina."

En una columna noticiosa titulada "Reclamar a América," Sweeney halaga al récord de Kerry a nombre del movimiento laboral organizado. "Las políticas fracasadas del Presidente Bush y los planes para crear buenos empleos del Senador John Kerry, asegura los beneficios de la salud y restaura el orgullo y el momentum a una nación manchada por las humillantes políticas domésticas y la incompetencia internacional de la administración de Bush." (América at Work, junio/julio 2004).

Los demócratas y Kerry optan por la internacional-
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