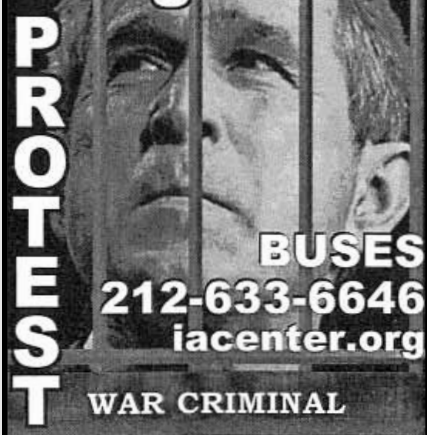


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# Unjust war creates resistance

# GI deaths on Bush's hands

By Leslie Feinberg

These are not the welcoming rose petals showering down on GIs in Iraq that the brass who sent them into war promised. It's ordnance. And as Washington and London frantically pull the strings to create a marionette regime to validate their imperialist pillage, the insurgency is raising the voice of Iraqi sovereignty and self-determination.

In the single deadliest attack on occupation forces since the U.S. invaded Iraq, insurgents struck a mess hall at a Pentagon military base near Mosul with rockets on Dec. 21. The strike killed at least 20 GIs, private mercenaries and Iraqi collaborators, and wounded at least 60 others.

The Pentagon currently has some 8,500 GIs deployed in the Mosul area. The insurgency had flared up and briefly took over this third-largest city in Iraq just two days after the U.S. laid siege to Falluja on Nov. 8.

With this latest strike, insurgents have confirmed to the world that resistance in Mosul has not been crushed.

### Why Blair was in the air

Just hours before the rocket attack on the Pentagon base, British Prime Minister Tony Blair made a surprise, lightning quick visit to Baghdad on Dec. 21. At a news conference, Blair used the opportunity to politically prop up titular "Prime Minister" Iyad Allawi, and to plead for international support for the Jan. 30 elections.

The British head of state had to be flown the short 10-mile distance from Baghdad International Airport to the occupation Green Zone in the downtown capital because the road is controlled by the Iraqi resistance.

The same day, guerrillas fought occupation troops west of Baghdad in the town of Hit, as U.S. planes rained bombs on the town.

Other attacks against U.S. troops in and around Mosul and Baghdad, and in the northern town of Hawija have claimed GI casualties in recent days, as well.

And the resistance is hindering the flow of plunder.

Two explosions damaged oil pipelines on Dec. 18; three hit the evening before. All were around the capital or in north-central Iraq. The damage halted the transfer of crude oil to Baghdad's Daura refinery, and stopped the flow of oil to Turkey's Ceyhan port.

Oil pipelines blazed near Baiji on Dec. 21. These pipes suck the fossil fuel wealth from the Kirkuk oil fields. And this inferno burned near parts of pipelines still damaged by the resistance on Dec. 18—the second week in a row.

### 'Be careful of this election'

A bomb detonated at a police checkpoint in Karbala on Dec. 20, a Shiite holy city.

The day before, a blast at the main bus station in Karbala killed 13 and wounded 33. The same day an explosion in Najaf killed 54 people and wounded nearly 200.

The Najaf bombing detonated about 100 yards from where Gov. al-Zurufi and police chief Ghalib al-Jazaari stood watching a funeral procession for a tribal sheik. Both were unhurt. Al-Jazaari said he believed he and al-Zurufi were the targets. However, the motives of the bombings in Karbala and Najaf and who set them off were not known.

On Dec. 20, Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei accused the U.S. and its allies of being behind the bombings in Iraq and denounced the January elections as a charade.

Former president Saddam Hussein, deposed through the violent U.S.-led "regime change," issued a Dec. 17 statement through Ziad al-Khasawneh, a member of his legal team.

Continued on page 7

## Boston schoolbus drivers under attack



WW PHOTO: LIZA GREEN

Schoolbus drivers march last June on the Boston School Department. Now the boss and the city government are pressuring them. See Page 3



**NATIONAL SECURITY LAW**  
South Koreans fight repression



**COLOMBIA**  
Unions under siege



This week ...

# Gains cut short by 1989 counter-revolution

By Leslie Feinberg

The official gay and lesbian studies research group, formed at Humboldt University in 1984 at the behest of the Berlin city administration, examined the conditions of life for some three-quarters of a million gays and lesbians living in East Germany (GDR).

The following spring, this group issued the following findings. The lack of a clear social policy on homosexuality in the GDR had resulted in a lack of state-sponsored social services for gays and lesbians and contributed to emigration. And discrimination and intolerance led to sexual activity which could exacerbate the AIDS crisis. The study recalled the historic role of German revolutionary workers' parties in supporting the German Homosexual Emancipation Movement's demand to remove 19th-century anti-gay legislation. And it concluded by calling on the Communist Party (SED) to aid in the struggle for gay and lesbian rights.

Researcher Raelynn J. Hillhouse says the Humboldt group proposed that, "The state should help homosexuals to integrate into socialist institutions and should strive to eliminate public prejudice toward homosexuality. These goals, the report held, should be accomplished through legal reform, continued research, the creation of gay and lesbian clubs, expansion of counseling centers and media campaigns. All these proposals were implemented on various government levels." (Slavic Review, Winter 1990)

This recommendation was sent to the party. In 1985, Hillhouse noted, "The Politburo responded to the study with the recommendation that the integration of homosexuals into GDR society should be encouraged."

And when the party responded to this call, it also recalled the history of German Communism's early and strong support in the battle against anti-gay laws.

East Germany issued an electrifying call for an end to all forms of legal and social discrimination against lesbian and gay people that sent shock waves around the world.

In the United States, The Advocate, a gay and lesbian news magazine, reported: "East Germany's official ADN news agency has issued what appears to be an officially approved call for an end to discrimination against gays in all levels of East German society. The news agency asserted that socialist guarantees of proletarian equality extended to gay people and that nongays should assist their gay comrades in casting off the bonds of anonymity, discrimination and disadvantage." (March 4, 1986)

Even if this had been merely lip-service to the struggle for gay and lesbian liberation, it would have been a striking call to raise societal consciousness. But the sweeping progress made within just a few short years showed that the left current of the Communist Party and the workers' state was taking action.

## Walking the talk

The gay and lesbian Sunday Club (Sonntags-Club) won official recognition in 1986, becoming the first state-sponsored gay and lesbian group.

Researcher John Parsons added, "Other parts of the subculture have also come into greater public view, including regularly organized dances in public halls."

(OUT/LOOK, Summer 1989)

In 1987, the Sunday Club affiliated with the House of Culture of Berlin-Mitte. Similar organizations were formed in Dresden, Gera, Leipzig, Magdeburg, Potsdam and Weimar.

"Also in Berlin," Hillhouse wrote, "the Kulturbund (League of Culture) has allowed the Magnus Hirschfeld Arbeitskreis (Magnus Hirschfeld Study Group) to organize under its auspices to promote scientific inquiry about homosexuality. The state-supported Ehe, Familien-, und Sexualberatungsstellen (Marriage, Sex and Family Counseling Centers) began special staff training programs in issues of sexual identity. In addition, other organizations occasionally sponsored educational projects on homosexuality as well as social functions for gays and lesbians."

In 1987, she added, the ministry of health commissioned a volume on homosexuality in the GDR; it appeared in two unusually large editions. "The author, Reiner Werner, urged that lesbian and gay counseling centers be created, allocation of apartments to same-sex couples be expedited, new contact forums for gays and lesbians be established, and legal partnership for nonmarried couples to administer their common property be considered."

A national conference, similar to the "Psycho-Social Aspects of Homosexuality" in 1985, was convened in 1988, "explicitly to include lesbians and gays in East German society." Several speakers at the second conference emphasized the importance of changing family law to ensure state recognition of gay couples and families. (OUT/LOOK)

The Communist Party youth group, the FDJ—a mass organization, not a cadre party organization—produced several programs about homosexual and bisexuality on its radio station. A film and a forum on homosexuality, and a social for gays and lesbians, were components of the May 1989 FDJ Youth Festival. And the FDJ central council directed its local groups to help create gay and lesbian clubs wherever they were needed.

The former first secretary of the central council of the FDJ issued a statement that emphasized the importance of equality for homosexual youth. The statement added, "I can assure you that the FDJ will continue to give great attention toward the complete equality of homosexual youth and other citizens in its diverse forms of political and ideological work." (Slavic Review)

## The process of liberation

When John Parsons, a Canadian researcher, published his 10-page report in 1989 on gays and lesbians in the GDR, he wrote from the vantage point of six previous years of research. "Back in 1983," Parsons recalled, "the lesbian and gay subculture in East Germany was still very much underground, although not illegal."

But, he explained, "By 1989 things have changed dramatically. Public displays of homosexual affection remain rare, but gay liberation has made significant and surprising progress in a short period of time. Not only is the gay subculture in the early stages of coming aboveground, but the process of liberation is now developing with the active support of the Communist Party. Lesbians and gay men, communists and non-communists alike, are exploring anew what sexual liberation means in a socialist society."

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Lesbian • gay • bi  
and trans  
**PRIDE**  
SERIES  
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# Schoolbus drivers fight back against attack

By Bryan G. Pfeifer  
Boston

Boston's unionized school-bus drivers and monitors are fighting back in the face of a series of vicious racist and anti-union attacks by the mayor, the City Council majority and Boston's ruling-class tabloid. These unionists, members of United Steelworkers of America Local USWA 8751, are working with Black leaders, the community and the Boston labor movement to quell this attack.

The attack focuses on the issue of installing Global Positioning System (GPS) devices on the buses. But behind the attack is an effort to undermine school desegregation and break up this multinational union, which has been in the forefront of anti-racist and other progressive struggles in the city.

The anti-union campaign began in early November, only days after an Oct. 28 meeting at which the union rank and file accepted a contract for which they had fought for over a year. Drivers consider the new contract a huge victory. It includes increased wages and a first-ever 100-percent-paid dental and vision plan.

The contract also excludes onerous concessions like using GPS on the buses. GPS is a spying technology demanded originally by the employer, First Student Inc. Headquartered in the United Kingdom, First Student is the second-largest U.S. private bus corporation and the wealthiest.

On Nov. 8, City Councilor John M. Tobin Jr. proposed a law requiring the school buses to be fitted with the spy devices. Tobin has a reputation of being anti-union, and supports a "Neighborhood Walk to Schools Campaign," a campaign to reinstate racial segregation in the schools. Bolstered by this backing from its government agent, the company announced it was ready to renege on the contract and put GPS devices on the city's 720 school buses.

The GPS plan is calculated to show that school bus drivers who deliver the students from home to school and back are somehow placing them in harm's way. The company first proposed GPS in collective bargaining as a wage-cutting and disciplinary tool. Now it is falsely trying to portray its use as a safety issue.

To force the use of GPS, the city would have to abrogate the contract between First Student and USWA Local 8751.

## Drivers expose GPS 'safety' issue

The Nov. 8 City Council education committee hearing on Tobin's GPS proposal was first announced that same morning in the press. There had been no prior notice

to the union. School-bus drivers organized carpools downtown during their lunch break to attend the hearing, and a heated exchange took place.

Tobin and other GPS supporters on the council claimed safety was the main reason for the GPS devices. Local 8751 leaders and members disagreed.

Union President Steve Gillis charged: "You are trying to champion safety by imposing spy devices over real safety devices, including more human monitors and safety personnel, updating the two-way radio system and the aging bus fleet. These GPS devices are anti-labor and have nothing to do with safety."

Tobin gaveled and shouted down driver after driver, using insults and prosecutor tactics. He even turned off the microphone on the union's Black grievance officer after another white councilor ran across the room to verbally and physically assault the union speaker.

Days after this hearing, as the city's tabloid press and anti-busers on the council like James Kelly vilified the drivers as "thugs" and a "nest of scoundrels," the City Council voted to reject funding First Student's new contract agreement with Local 8751, and sent the matter to the Ways and Means Committee. Kelly had made his political career in the 1970s and 1980s leading violent mobs of bigots who attacked children of color on buses bringing them into his predominantly white district.

The union denounced the City Council's action as an attempt to work hand-in-glove with others in the city administration and First Student to implement the GPS and other concessions unilaterally, thus illegally circumventing the collective bargaining process.

African American City Council member Chuck Turner, a staunch supporter of Local 8751, criticized the vote. "While many of the councilors tried to deny they're using the contract issue to punish the union for other activities," he said, "the discussion on the council floor betrayed their argument. Frankly, this is absurd. It's differential treatment. I have never heard of the council having questions over terms of a contract." (www.boston.com)

Union president Gillis denounced the council vote to over 150 drivers and reporters at a news conference Nov. 18 in the Charlestown bus yard: "The Boston School Bus Drivers' Union, whose members are parents and grandparents of Boston children from the Haitian, Cape Verdean, Puerto Rican, African-American, Vietnamese and working class white communities, views the City Council vote as not only an attack on our meager standard of living and our union, but as a racist

affront to the civil rights movement, whose task and goals of equal, quality education we proudly carry out each day."

## Union's anti-racist history

Gillis claims these most recent attacks are political payback for the union's militant, anti-racist history since its founding in 1978. He charged that the union is being punished for its contributions to the 32-member coalition Boston Unions United for Fair Contracts; its role in the July 25, 2004, coalition to protest the Democratic National Convention held in Boston; building the New England Committee for the Million Worker March; being a leading member of the New England Human Rights Coalition for Haiti, and its anti-war work in Boston Labor's ANSWER.

Especially egregious in the eyes of Tobin and other anti-busers was the union's active role in the community/parent organization "Work 4 Quality! Fight 4 Equity!" which this year organized thousands of parents in opposition to the city establishment's re-segregation proposals.

Recently, a city-wide Safety Summit was projected among African-American and other community leaders and elected officials of color. Summit organizers invited Local 8751 to help plan the event for early next year. One of the demands is for real safety devices, like human monitors on the buses to help with childcare, and not GPS spyware. This is recognition that many view the city's anti-union campaign as an attack on the Black community.

On Dec. 7, another act of solidarity took place when the Greater Boston Labor Council (GBLC), representing over 100 affiliates and 90,000 union members in the Greater Boston area, unanimously passed a resolution supporting the union.

After denouncing the GPS as a spy device, the resolution concluded, "[The GBLC] opposes this anti-union attempt by city elected officials to tear up the Boston school bus drivers new contract with First Student Inc. and will utilize every resource at our disposal to defend the sanctity of the Steelworkers private collective bargaining agreement and stop the unilateral imposition after the fact of anti-labor concessions on these fine union sisters and brothers who have served well the parents and children of Boston and the cause of equal, quality, desegregated education for over 30 years."

## Union movement confronts slanderous media campaign

Beginning Dec. 6, the Boston Herald—seen by many as a racist, anti-labor daily tabloid—continued the attacks with a well-timed media campaign in concert with the

mayor's office and others, to vilify and demonize Local 8751. The union is 90-percent workers of color, of whom approximately 85 percent are Haitian. The Herald's front page showed a picture of a bus driver apparently sleeping in his bus, and alleged that six drivers were doing the same.

What the Herald deliberately failed to report was that these buses were on emergency standby for 12 hours daily and that the drivers were on breaks.

The Herald continued this slanderous coverage throughout the week. It quoted Mayor Thomas Menino's threats Dec. 7: "We are going to do it [install GPS] administratively. It's a safety issue and also it's a productivity issue."

On Boston Channel 5, as part of the city's attack campaign, Menino, also president of the United States Conference of Mayors, claimed without any proof, "The only people who don't want to do it [install the GPS] is the leadership of the union."

Not so! On Dec. 9, the GBLC demonstrated its solidarity by sending a high-level labor delegation to a news conference at City Hall chaired by David Ebony Barkley of Boston's Alliance of Black Trade Unionists. The unionists marched in to deliver the resolution to city councilors and the mayor.

Upon entering City Hall the delegation—including GBLC Executive Secretary-Treasurer Richard M. Rogers, AFL-CIO regional representative Sandy Felder, and representatives from AFSCME, SEIU, IBEW, UFCW, Steelworkers, the Women's Fightback Network, and the International Action Center—was immediately surrounded by police and security agents, who threatened arrests for lobbying and leafleting.

After a tense standoff and negotiations, USWA Local 8751 vice president Frantz Mendes and Northeast regional AFL-CIO representative Sandy Felder proceeded to deliver the resolutions. Following the confrontation with the cops, Mendes spoke out. "The reason they want to install GPS is not for safety. It's to cut wages and to instill disciplinary action."

Mendes was joined by Stevan Kirschbaum, Local 8751's chief steward, who charged the City Council with union-busting. "We're watching you and we're going to take action," asserted Kirschbaum. It is clear that USWA Local 8751 and its allies aren't intimidated.

Union supporters can register their feelings by calling Mayor Menino at (617) 635-4500; fax (617) 635-3496 or email: Mayor@ci.boston.ma.us. See [www.bostonschoolbusunion.org](http://www.bostonschoolbusunion.org) for updates and information. □

# Immigrants protest over driving licenses

By John Ramirez  
New York

On Dec. 15, the New York Coalition for Immigrants' Rights to Drivers' Licenses held a demonstration in response to New York Governor George Pataki and the Department of Motor Vehicle's (DMV) policy of denying drivers' licenses based on immigration status.

A crowd of over 100 immigrants with some supporters braved below-freezing temperatures in front of Pataki's Manhattan office on Third Ave. They demanded, "Driving licenses now!" and "Sin licencia no hay trabajo!" ("No work without licenses!") as well as other chants in

Spanish. Most of the crowd were Latin@ immigrants, mainly Mexicans. Koreans chanted in their own language. Arabs and South Asians were also in the crowd, along with other nationalities.

The groups that responded to this call included New York City Participation Project, New York Immigration Coalition, Asociación Mexico-Americana de Trabajadores, Taxi Workers Alliance, Esperanza del Barrio, YKASEC and others.

New York State had already sent letters to thousands of immigrants threatening to suspend their licenses if they were unable to verify their Social Security number. This is a new attack against immigrants. Current law does not require a particular



immigration status for obtaining a license. This new measure will affect over 300,000 immigrant workers having a variety of immigration statuses, and some 6,000 were already involved. The struggle in the streets complements a struggle already started in the courts.

This attack on immigrants appears to be directed from the rightwing at the national

level. It parallels the prominent attacks in California by "Governator" Arnold Schwarzenegger, who repealed a measure allowing drivers' licenses for immigrants. The U.S. Senate has passed legislation mandating the Department of Homeland Security to regulate the documentation needed for obtaining a driver's license, and requiring licenses to be "machine readable."

This last step is part of an apparent move towards a national identification card. It follows the disclosure by Director Tom Ridge in May 2002 that the Bush administration was studying how driving licenses could be used to expose "aliens" who overstay their visas. □

## N.J. electrical workers strike

About 1,350 workers at the Jersey Central Power and Light Co. in Newark, N.J., went on strike Dec. 8 over healthcare costs. It's the same old story: The company wants to jack up the amount that Electrical Workers' members and retirees pay for health insurance. The workers have already rejected the company's offer of a 9-percent wage increase over three years.

## Teachers protest contract offer

Teachers at 10 Roman Catholic high schools called in sick on Dec. 14 to protest the contract offered by the Archdiocese of New York City. The teachers say a hike in the cost of their health insurance will wipe out a small wage increase, resulting in a net loss in take-home pay. Though the church professes to care for the poor and the needy, it would do well to practice what it preaches.

## Immigrant janitors win settlement

Three of California's largest supermarket chains will have to fork over \$22.4 million to 2,100 janitors, mostly immigrants from Mexico, to compensate them for unpaid overtime. On Dec. 6, Albertsons, Ralphs and Vons tentatively settled a class-action suit charging that the immigrants often worked 70 or more hours a week, seven nights a week, from 10 p.m. to 9 a.m. The final settlement will be announced on Jan. 24.

## N.Y. minimum wage rises

New York state legislators, responding to grassroots pressure, overrode Gov. George Pataki's veto to raise the state's minimum hourly wage on Dec. 6. The current minimum will increase from \$5.15 to \$6 on Jan. 1, 2005; \$6.75 on Jan. 1, 2006; and \$7.15 on Jan. 1, 2007. Hourly wages for workers who earn tips, mostly restaurant and bar employees, will rise from \$3.30 to \$4.60 by Jan. 1, 2007.

New York joins 14 other states, including Connecticut, Massachusetts and Vermont, which mandate a higher rate than the federal minimum hourly wage of \$5.15. The fact that the federal minimum hasn't increased since 1995, while the cost of living has risen, is a crime against the poor. Keeping the minimum wage low locks millions of workers, mostly people of color and women, in poverty while the bosses are free to get rich on the profits. No wonder they call capitalism a "free" market!

## Assistants demand equal pay

Teaching and graduate assistants at the State University of New York in New Paltz demonstrated Dec. 1 for a contract that provides financial parity with their peers at SUNY university centers in Albany, Binghamton, Buffalo and Stony Brook.

Assistants at SUNY's 13 colleges make less than their counterparts at the university centers. The average yearly pay for full-time assistants at the universities is over \$9,000; the minimum is \$7,000. The average pay for assistants at the colleges is under \$5,000; there is no minimum.

"I make 5,000 a year, which is simply not enough to pay my bills," Jennifer Smits, a teaching assistant in the English Department at New Paltz, said in a press release issued Nov. 28 by the Graduate Student Employees Union, Local 1104 of the Communications Workers.

"I put in over 20 hours a week teaching my own course, holding office hours and attending mandatory professional workshops. This leaves me with no time to get another job, which is necessary in order to make ends meet," said Smits.

Members of GSEU have been without a contract since June 2003. Representing over 4,000 graduate and teaching assistants throughout the state system, GSEU has demanded pay raises for all its members, but is especially concerned with more than 300 assistants who make well below the average.

## Newspaper staffers push for diversity

Forty Washington Post staffers met with management Dec. 1 to air grievances over diversity issues. The staffers delivered a seven-page memo expressing their dissatisfaction with the Post's treatment of writers of color, ranging from newsroom culture to hiring and wages. They contend that the Post has been all talk and no action when it comes to promoting writers of color into positions of power.

## NYC vs. Wal-Mart

After Wal-Mart announced in early December that it planned to build a 135,000-square-foot store in the Rego Park section of Queens, N.Y., a progressive coalition, including the New York City Central Labor Council, the NAACP, immigrant advocacy groups, religious organizations and even some businesses, was formed on Dec. 16 to oppose the plan.

Brian McLaughlin, president of the labor council, told the Dec. 17 New York Times, "Wal-Mart is a buzzword for indecency." The billion-dollar retailer, the biggest in the world, is notorious for paying poverty wages and not providing health-care coverage. In fact, it pays its workers so little they can't afford private coverage and are forced to use public hospital emergency rooms. Something is very wrong with this picture. □

# Protests hammer SEPTA fare hikes

By Joe Piette  
Philadelphia

Drastic fare increases, service reductions and layoffs were approved Dec. 16 by the board of the South East Pennsylvania Transit Authority (SEPTA), despite the loud opposition of hundreds of workers and transit riders.

SEPTA will increase transit prices from the current \$2 fare to \$2.50 on Jan. 23, and then to \$3 on March 1, making it the highest fare in the country. Tokens will rise from \$1.30 each to \$1.70, then to \$2. Transfers will rise to 75 cents.

Twenty percent of weekday bus, train and trolley service will be eliminated. Saturday service will be reduced to the barebones Sunday schedule. The workforce will suffer layoffs of 500 to 1,400 workers.

Service Employees Local 62 rallied at the Clothespin, across from City Hall, then marched to SEPTA's offices, where several speakers explained why the SEPTA Board should vote "No" on the doomsday proposal.

Only a third of the protesters were allowed to squeeze into the hearing room. The chants of those outside could be heard throughout the hearing.

Inside, speakers opposed to SEPTA's plan pointed out that 20 percent of Philadelphia's workers use mass transit. Ninety-five thousand seniors use the system daily, as do 9,000 disabled riders. None of the board members would answer a question on how high the cost of student tokens would rise.

Lance Haver, the city's director of Consumer Affairs, pointed out that while SEPTA claims to have a \$62-million deficit, the new fares would raise a whopping \$150 million per year.

### War spending up while transit collapses

Military spending under the Bush administration has grown from \$310.6 billion in fiscal year 2001 to a projected \$420.7 billion for 2005—an increase of \$110.1 billion, or 35 percent. And that's not counting over \$100 billion more for ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, all of Pennsylvania's 40 transit agencies, including 21 rural systems, are experiencing crises and massive cutbacks similar to SEPTA.

Trying to look like he was making a compromise, a SEPTA spokesperson announced that none of the new fares or cutbacks would take place before Jan. 23, and would not happen at all if adequate state funding was approved.

But the State Legislature doesn't come back into session until Jan. 24, except for a Jan. 4 swearing-in ceremony. It would take at least a month after that to implement all the necessary changes. And as speakers pointed out, once fares go up, they never come back down.

After the Board voted 13-2 for the cutbacks and fare increase, Cheryl Honkola of the Kensington Welfare Rights Union announced her group's intentions to organize a fare strike. □

# Commuters, transit workers get mugged

By Stephen Millies  
New York

Eight million commuters were mugged again by Peter J. Kalikow. The billionaire landlord drove through fare increases for subway, bus and suburban railroad riders at a Dec. 16 board meeting of New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), which Kalikow heads. Bridge and tunnel tolls will also be jacked up.

Thirty-day Metrocards will go up from \$70 to \$76. That's nearly what a minimum-wage worker makes in 15 hours, before being gouged by taxes.

Just as cruel is the scheduled closing of 164 token booths. Michael Harris, a wheelchair user, told the MTA board that he's been trapped inside subway stations without token clerks. The board went ahead and voted 10-4 for these fare increases and service cutbacks, which include the canning of 20 bus cleaners.

Peter Kalikow doesn't have to worry about getting into subway stations or riding dirty buses. He can sail to his 12-acre estate in Montauk, L.I., on his \$10-million yacht. Or he can drive one of his nearly 50 classic cars to his Fifth Avenue penthouse. Ferraris are his favorite.

Transit fares are transportation taxes. Workers shouldn't have to pay nearly a thousand dollars a year just to ride the subway. Mike Quill—late founder of the Transport Workers Union (TWU)—once called for the subways to be free.

Transit fares are really a fantastic subsidy to real-estate interests, whose properties would plummet in value without public transportation. It's landlords like Peter Kalikow and the banks who should pay.

The MTA will spend at least \$6 billion on connecting the Long Island Railroad to Grand Central Terminal. One of the biggest beneficiaries will be Peter Kalikow, whose flagship skyscraper at 101 Park Ave. is just two blocks from Grand Central. None of the capitalist media

complain about this corruption. Neither do Democratic politicians like senators Hillary Clinton and Chuck Schumer.

None of the MTA board members were elected. So why can't the people vote on fare hikes?

Over a hundred people came to protest at the MTA hearing. Kalikow wouldn't even allow the MTA board to debate these hikes before voting on them.

The Million Worker March (MWM) protested outside Kalikow's headquarters on Dec. 15. The Association of Mexican American Workers came with its beautiful banner, led by its president, Brian Barraza. So did MWM leaders Brenda Stokely, president of AFSCME District Council 1707, and Chris Silvera, Teamsters Local 808 secretary-treasurer and chair of the Teamsters Black Caucus. Demonstrators chanted, "No hike, no way, make [Mayor Michael] Bloomberg and Kalikow pay!"

The day before, members of TWU Local 100 and the Straphangers Campaign held a press conference to denounce this robbery.

The real function of the MTA is to generate interest for wealthy investors and big banks who feed off its tax-free bonds. Millions of homeowners refinance their mortgages in order to pay less interest. But the MTA stretched out payment on \$14 billion worth of bonds over 30 years in order to shell out \$8.6 billion more in interest.

Just the commissions given to underwriters like Morgan Stanley amounted to \$85 million. Interest payments will double by 2008. Already debt payments gobble up a fifth of MTA revenues.

Last year the MTA hiked a single-ride metrocard 33 percent, to \$2. That's 40 times what it cost to take the subway until July 1, 1947, when the fare increased from a nickel to a dime.

Kalikow actually concealed a \$500-million MTA surplus in order to get this increase. Former Enron boss Kenny Lay must be wondering why he's facing jail. □

## 'Ohio's first poll tax'

# Hearings expose conspiracy in November voting

By Martha Grevatt  
Cleveland

"The last round was marked by significant fraud and that it therefore can't be upheld as a fair result."

What could this statement be referring to? State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher was directing his comments to the recent election in Ukraine. The real fraud took place much closer to home: in Ohio.

Public hearings in Cleveland, Akron, Columbus, Cincinnati and Washington, D.C. have torn off the veil of media and government denial. Hundreds of witnesses have given sworn testimony, pointing to a deliberate and coordinated effort to disenfranchise tens and maybe hundreds of thousands of Ohio voters, primarily African Americans.

The year 2004 saw an unprecedented number of new voter registrations among African Americans, and a record voter turnout was anticipated. The Bush campaign saw this as an obstacle to securing a critical win in Ohio. Thus began the construction of what one witness called "Ohio's first poll tax."

Tens of thousands of new registrations were not entered at all or not entered properly on the rolls. Ohio Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell withheld Help America Vote Act funds needed to maintain a current and accurate database and to train poll workers, whose job was further complicated by a new procedure on provisional ballots.

Provisional ballots are given to registered voters whose names do not appear on the rolls where they showed up to vote. The new rule required that they be submitted at the correct precinct or they would be discarded.

Blackwell, who also chaired the Bush-Cheney campaign in Ohio, didn't act alone. Ahead of the elections, the Ohio Republican Party, in collusion with the Republican National Committee, illegally profiled Black voters, seeking to have tens

of thousands of urban voters disqualified. When that failed they secured a court's permission to have one challenger per precinct, or several at every poll, intimidating voters.

### Racist poll challengers

Statutes permitting partisan challengers have been overlooked for decades. "The Ohio statute, originally codified in 1831, was amended in 1859 to permit challenges based upon a voter's possession of a 'visible admixture of African blood,'" testified Judith Browne, acting co-director of the Advancement Project.

"In 1868, the law was again amended to include questions for challenged voters about their racial identity and the racial composition of their neighborhoods. In 2004, there was serious concern that the discriminatory nature of these statutes would be resurrected."

These concerns proved to be well-founded. In Hamilton County, which includes Cincinnati, only 55 percent of white voters had Republican challengers at their polling places, compared to 89 percent of Black voters. Voters in predominantly Black precincts were eight times more likely to be challenged than voters in predominantly white ones. The challenge rate was three times higher for Black voters in Cuyahoga County, which contains Cleveland.

Another racist tool involved the distribution and condition of voting machines, possibly discussed during a private meeting on Election Day between Bush, Blackwell and Franklin County Board of Elections Director Matt Damschroder.

Damschroder delivered an excess number of voting machines to the suburbs while inadequately supplying the predominantly Black precincts in Columbus. Of those precincts, 59 out of 74 had less than one machine per 300 voters; in the suburbs 58 out of 73 had more than one machine per 300 voters.

In Cuyahoga County fewer machines were available for the November election

than were used in the primaries. All over the state machines were kept in storage while others malfunctioned. This led people to wait in line in driving rain as long as 10 hours. It may never be known how many had to leave without voting, but one poll watcher who testified suggested 8,000 in the Youngstown area alone were disenfranchised this way.

Rep. John Conyers, holding hearings on the issue in Washington, has blasted the Bush team for its "campaign of deception." Prior to the election, voters received bogus letters with Board of Elections letterheads and/or calls from impostors posing as elections officials, directing them to the wrong polls or telling them they couldn't vote. Fliers were spotted stating that only Republicans were voting on Tuesday, Democrats on Wednesday.

Misinformation that convicted felons could not vote was disseminated widely. Absentee voters received letters stating their ballots were no good because they had supposedly given the wrong address.

At the polls both new and longtime voters found their names missing. At least 500 such names were presented before a Cuyahoga County hearing sponsored by the AFL-CIO. Some people were sent from poll to poll, each time waiting in the rain to vote, and some gave up. Confusion reigned supreme when they were offered provisional ballots, not knowing if they were in the correct precinct or not, or if their vote would be counted.

One man was threatened with the charge of voter fraud because he had erroneously filled out a provisional ballot in the wrong precinct and, realizing it wouldn't be counted, was trying to fill out another in the correct precinct.

Adding to all of this were polls opening late or closing for lack of pencils, cars being ticketed or towed, leaflets threatening to arrest voters with outstanding traffic warrants or owing back child support, provisional ballots being trashed, and any number of unreported dirty tricks.

Now tens of thousands of the 155,000

provisional ballots disqualified on technicalities, along with 92,000 "spoiled" ballots, may never be counted. They were not included in the statewide recount completed Dec. 17 (after Bush electors were already sworn in).

In a classic Catch-22 situation, the disregarded ballots were not included in the recount because they were never counted in the first place!

### Machine politics

This report would be incomplete without discussing the voting machines and the people who sell them.

In August 2003, Walden O'Dell, CEO of Diebold Inc., stated that he was "committed to helping Ohio deliver its electoral votes to the president." Ohio-based Diebold manufactures optical scan machines and the touch-screen electronic voting machines that were used in four Ohio counties. They give no paper receipt.

A Johns Hopkins University study reports that Diebold's software contains "stunning flaws" and that results can be altered at the polls or by remote control. Scores of voters were in fact stunned when they voted for Kerry and then saw the screen read a vote for Bush.

ES&S supplied a few Ohio counties with touch-screen machines and manufactures 60 percent of all the voting machines used in the U.S. ES&S began in the 1980s, when brothers Bob and Todd Urosevich founded DataMark with funding from William and Robert Ahmanson. The Ahmanson family has funded the Heritage Foundation; the Discover Institute, whose focus is un-discovering evolution; and the Chalcedon Institute, which advocates the death penalty "for homosexuals and drunkards."

DataMark became American Information Systems, with Republican Sen. Chuck Hagel as chair. It then bought out Business Records Corp., partially owned by Carolyn Hunt of the right-wing Hunt oil family, to become ES&S. With Hagel at its helm, the

*Continued on page 10*

# Airline workers take fight to White House

By a Flight Attendant activist  
at United Airlines

As part of the ongoing battle to preserve contracts, pensions, affordable health care and livable wages for airline workers, United and US Airways flight attendants in AFA-CWA and supporters held a rally just steps away from the White House on Dec. 14.

Hundreds of union activists and members, including several members of the Maritime Workers, Marine Trade and Seafarers unions, were present in solidarity with the flight attendants. They see an attack on the flight attendants' union jobs and benefits as an attack on union workers everywhere.

A large contingent of flight attendants from the unions at American (APFA) and Southwest (TWU) airlines were there also.

Local and national media broadcast remarks by several speakers. CWA Executive Vice President Larry Cohen criticized the failure of the Bush administration and Congress to "enact sound aviation policy while providing tactical approval of management's attack on our contracts." Other speakers included AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, American Airlines

APFA President Tommi Hutto-Blake and Machinists General Vice President Robert Roach Jr.

They all joined Executive Board Chairperson President Greg Davidowitch of United Airlines AFA-CWA and the union's international president, Pat Friend, in calling on this administration to "get to work" to save our pensions, "get to work" on affordable healthcare, "get to work" on providing a living wage, and "get to work" reducing CEO overcompensation.

### 'Sit-in' at JFK

Recently, a group of AFA-CWA flight attendants staged a "sit-in" at United Airlines (UAL) at JFK airport. These workers demanded to speak with the UAL manager to voice their concerns about harassment from supervisors for legal use of earned sick leave. Supervisors whose defined roles in the past were to uphold the contract have instead been on a warpath to fill flight attendant work histories with disciplinary actions containing the threat of job termination.

The local manager "promised" to look into the harassment and the violations of the collective bargaining agreement, say-

ing that changes would be made if needed. It was only then that the flight attendants left the office.

This long-overdue job action was unprecedented. Since UAL entered bankruptcy in December 2002, its management has been working closely with the judge, with JPMorgan Chase and with Citigroup to wipe out years of wages and benefits won by the labor and sacrifices of UAL flight attendants and retirees.

Much like the rally and march in Washington, the "sit-in" at United Airlines was the first step of many to come. Thousands of workers whose daily sacrifice and commitment keep the airlines running are uniting to stop unfair treatment. Meanwhile management draws obscene, bloated salaries, bonuses and stock options.

At the conclusion of the rally the demonstrators all marched in front of the White House and for several blocks on the way to Freedom Plaza, shouting "CHAOS! CHAOS!" The acronym stands for Create Havoc Around Our System. A discussion is floating around among the members over whether to call a one-day strike, a shorter one, or delay a scheduled flight of

UAL, which would disrupt the airline's interconnected operations for that day. The flight attendants have successfully applied CHAOS in the past.

At the protest, the chants included "Enough is enough" and "We are the union, the mighty, mighty union." Cars honked to support the workers' cause. Washington police were forced to hold up traffic during rush hour as the hundreds of marchers crossed several intersections to the Plaza.

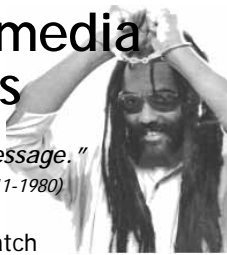
The rally at Freedom Plaza concluded with a commitment to come back to Washington again and again with hundreds and thousands from the labor community to get the issues heard. This fight won't be won in the bankruptcy courts, who collude with the banks and management to destroy the results of decades of hard work and sacrifices of union workers.

Airline workers must now take a stand to demand a stop to the Walmartization of airline careers, just as loud and boldly as the greedy bosses demand cuts. It is time to take the message to the streets, in a show of force and solidarity. The Dec. 15 protest in front of the White House proved there is strength in numbers. □

By Mumia Abu Jamal from death row

## When the media manages us

"The medium is the message."  
— Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980)



Everyday, when we watch the day's news, listen to the hourly update, or read the nearest scandal sheet, we are being managed by the nation's powerful media machines.

Some of us, who believe we are well-informed, will doubtless dispute that claim, and point, perhaps, to the number of papers we read, or the number of news shows we watch, as proof that we consume a wide range of news, and therefore are able to escape the claws of the news managers.

Perhaps they are right. Let us see. I'll bet that it is rare for most of us to see, or hear, or read of the continuing Iraq War as an "occupation." We also rarely hear about Iraqi fighters against this occupation as anything but "terrorists," or perhaps, "insurgents."

Indeed, the very words "Iraq War" are rarely used, at least in the present tense, for, according to the bought-and-sold voices in the corporate press, the war is over, for hasn't the Grand Lord Emperor, George W., so decreed it? And, lo and behold, like the meanest serf in feudal Saxony, like scribes to ancient princes—voilà!—so be it. It is fact. It matters little that, if deaths, of either Iraqis or even Americans count, the war, a guerrilla war, rages in a dozen cities in Iraq.

The media manages us with words; like "coalition forces," like "terrorist," and finally, and perhaps most fatally, like "democracy."

Not since the Vietnam War have we seen such myth-making by the media, for did they not then try to spin the web of "democracy" over the eyes and minds of millions? Did they not then proffer assorted imported toadies to act as presidents and prime ministers, that the Vietnamese people regarded as strangers and, worse, traitors?

Only in the rare, underground and radical press could those truths be spoken, for the major dailies, the three big networks (back then, there were only three), and corporate radio told the government's side of the story. And that story was a lie.

Americans weren't told that it was a People's War; that everyone from children in the villages, to prostitutes in the hootches, to guerrillas in the jungles, to intellectuals in the cities, was waging a war against the Yankee foreigners, as they had waged against the French colonialists a generation before, and the imperial Chinese centuries before. They were people who fought for their own country against the U.S., and those the U.S. imposed. They were fighting for the right to decide for themselves what kind of government would rule.

The Big Secret today is that, increasingly, the same thing is happening in Iraq. It's not exactly the same. It never is.

They know that the "freedom" promised by the Americans and the British isn't their freedom. And they know, all too well, that Americans don't give a hot damn about them; they have seen the pictures from Abu Ghraib (and perhaps, hundreds more that the U.S. government and American press hasn't allowed you to see!). They know, in their guts, that the Anglo-American objective is the black crude that courses below their dry earth.

They know that the [Ahmed] Chalabis, and the [Ghazi] Al-Yawers have sold themselves to the CIA or MI6, and are there to sell the wealth of the nation. But most Americans don't know, and don't want to know.

"Americans are fighting for freedom." Uh-huh...

It is their corporate, sell-out media that is responsible for these public illusions. They have betrayed their craft as journalists, and signed on, to the highest bidder, like slaves, who sell their faces and their words, to power.

Luckily, as in the '60s, there exists a growing alternative media, that is performing its function, and driving the big TV and cable networks into irrelevancy. May it only grow.

Column written Dec. 5, 2004.

# It's getting harder to find volunteer soldiers

By Dustin Langley

As extended deployments, "stop loss" orders and the stress of combat stretch the U.S. military to the breaking point, both the National Guard and the Army Reserve have announced that they are struggling with recruiting problems.

The National Guard has failed for two straight months to meet its recruiting quotas, falling short by about 30 percent. In November, the Guard fell about 1,000 recruits short of its goal of 3,925.

On Dec. 20, Lt. Gen. James Helmly, the Army Reserve's top general, said that recruiting was in "precipitous decline." He warned that the decline could lead to discussion of a return to a military draft.

The Pentagon has relied heavily on National Guard and Army Reserve members, who signed up to be part-time soldiers. Normally, they train for one weekend a month and two weeks during the summer. About 40 percent of the 148,000 U.S. troops in Iraq are Guard and Reserve soldiers, many deployed for more than a year.

In an attempt to attract new recruits, the National Guard has increased enlistment and re-enlistment bonuses to as much as \$15,000 and is adding 1,400 new recruiters. The Army Reserves plan to offer similar increases in enlistment bonuses.

The regular Army is also forced to spend more for its recruiting efforts. The Department of Defense's budget for recruiting reached a record \$4 billion for the fiscal year 2003, according to a Government Accounting Office report. The advertising cost per new enlisted recruit has nearly tripled, from \$640 in 1990 to almost \$1,900 last year.

Meanwhile, holding on to those soldiers already in uniform is becoming a challenge. According to a poll in "Stars and Stripes" newspaper, 49 percent of the troops polled in Iraq have no plans to re-enlist.

According to some soldiers, the Army has resorted to outright threats in order to force them to re-enlist.

Members of the 3rd Brigade Combat

Team at Fort Carson, Colo., called media and members of Congress in September to report these threats. At a series of assemblies at Fort Carson, Army recruiters had threatened the troops with transfers to Iraq-bound units unless they re-enlisted. The recruiters presented them with a re-enlistment form and said those who refused to sign it would be transferred out of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team to the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, which was going to Iraq for a year.

"Not one person who's been in Iraq wants to go back," said a Fort Carson soldier. "I did my time. I did more than my job over there. We all know people who lost friends over there." (Rocky Mountain News, Nov. 22)

Some Army reservists had already sued the Pentagon to try to stop it from sending them to Iraq after the normal expiration of their contract. They lost. But it doesn't mean they stopped resenting that the recruiter never called their attention to the stop-loss clause in the contract.

### Already PTSD & homelessness

Iraq veterans who are coming home face a host of problems, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and homelessness. A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine found that one out of six soldiers surveyed may be struggling with PTSD, and that study was done early in the conflict.

"If there's increased threat, if they're more exposed, then there'll be higher rates," said Robert Ursano, director of the Center for Traumatic Stress and chief psychiatrist at the military's own medical school. (ABC News, Dec. 15)

"They're more at risk and they feel that risk in an ongoing way," Ursano said. "There's not an area of safety. It's all relative safety. In other wars, one has been able to have spots where, in fact, safety could be relatively ensured. That's less true in Iraq."

In an article titled "Mother's view of the war: Battle fatigue on the home front," Teri Wills Allison, a mother of a GI in Iraq, wrote, "One young man who was

involved in heavy fighting during the invasion is now so debilitated by post-traumatic stress disorder that he routinely has flashbacks in which he smells burning flesh. He can't close his eyes without seeing people's heads squashed like frogs in the middle of the road, or dead and dying women and children, burned, bleeding and dismembered.

"Sometimes he hears the sounds of battle raging around him, and he has been hospitalized twice for suicidal tendencies. When he was home on leave, this 27-year-old man would crawl into his mother's room at night and sob in her lap for hours.

"Instead of getting treatment for PTSD, he has just received a 'less than honorable' discharge from the Army. The rest of his unit redeploys to Iraq in February." (San Francisco Chronicle, Nov. 21)

Veterans from this war are already showing up at homeless shelters around the country. "When we already have people from Iraq on the streets, my God," said Linda Boone, executive director of the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans. "I have talked to enough (shelters) to know we are getting them. It is happening and this nation is not prepared for that."

There are 300,000 veterans homeless on any given night, half of them veterans from the Vietnam era, according to the Homeless Veterans coalition. A large number of veterans live with the long-term effects of PTSD and substance abuse, according to the coalition.

Some homeless-veteran advocates fear that similar combat experiences in Vietnam and Iraq mean that these first few homeless veterans from Iraq are the crest of a wave.

"This is what happened with the Vietnam vets. I went to Vietnam," said John Keaveney, chief operating officer of New Directions, a shelter and drug-and-alcohol treatment program for veterans in Los Angeles. "It is like watching history being repeated."

Langley is an organizer of the anti-war GI support group, SNAFU.

## War resister Paredes turns self in

By Bob McCubbin  
San Diego

On Dec. 19, Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Pablo Paredes turned himself in to authorities at the 32nd Street Naval Station in San Diego. Accompanying him was his brother Victor Paredes, his lawyer Jeremy Warren, and members of the San Diego Military Counseling Project.

Paredes had refused to board his ship, bound for Iraq, on Dec. 6. He said in explanation, "I can't sleep at night knowing that's what I do for a living." He was then declared a deserter, and is now demanding Conscientious Objector status.

Later in the day, a support rally was held for him at the USS Midway Museum at the foot of Broadway. The highlight of the rally was a recorded message from Paredes. "I wanted to let people hear a voice from the inside that says this is criminal," he said, referring to his stand against the U.S. occupation of Iraq. Victor Paredes spoke and urged the



crowd to continue their efforts to build support for Pablo and in opposition to U.S. military aggression.

For more information on his case and how you can show your support, visit [SwiftSmartVeterans.com](http://SwiftSmartVeterans.com). □

WWPHOTO: GLORIA VERDIEU

Pablo Paredes' brother Victor Paredes speaks at support rally for his brother Dec. 19.

# Anti-war protest set for March 19-20, 2005

By LeiLani Dowell  
New York

As the resistance in Iraq increases, activists in the United States are preparing to step up the struggle to end the occupation and bring the troops home.

The International Action Center, along with a number of other antiwar organizations, is organizing buses and transportation from across the country to line Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., when George Bush is inaugurated into office on Jan. 20, 2005. Activists are urged to be at Pennsylvania Avenue no later than 9 a.m. that morning for a militant demonstration against war and occupation, poverty, racism and bigotry.

Solidarity actions are also being held throughout the country that day for people who cannot attend the demonstration in D.C. The ANSWER Coalition has applied for permits for Pennsylvania Avenue.

Internationally, the antiwar movement is also gearing up for the weekend of March 19-20, 2005, the second anniversary of the war on Iraq. In New York, an initial meeting was held Dec. 20 to strategize around the "Out now!" call for a rally at Central Park, demanding the unconditional and immediate return of U.S. troops as well as solidarity with struggles against U.S. imperialism throughout the globe.

Thirty organizations, including groups representing immigrant rights, tenants'

rights, artists, youth, political prisoners, and solidarity with Cuba, Venezuela, El Salvador, Korea and Palestine all participated in discussions and planning focused on making the event one that encompasses the broadest unity. It will link struggles and liberation movements worldwide with the struggles being waged by immigrants, people of color, the poor and others on the streets of New York and throughout the United States.

Central Park holds special significance as a rallying site because in August of this year Mayor Michael Bloomberg's administration denied antiwar and anti-Bush groups the right to gather in the park during their protest of the Republican National Convention. This time the

Protest the inauguration of George Bush on Jan. 20, 2005.

Activists are urged to be at Pennsylvania Avenue no later than 9 a.m. that morning for a militant demonstration against war and occupation, poverty, racism and bigotry. Solidarity actions are also being held throughout the country that day

organizations calling the protest are committed to fighting any political and legal battle that may arise around rallying in Central Park.

Anyone wishing to endorse the "Out now!" call may visit the site [peoplejudgebush.org](http://peoplejudgebush.org). □

## GI deaths on Bush's hands

Continued from page 1

"President Saddam recommended to the Iraqi people to be careful of this election, which will lead to dividing the Iraqi people and their land."

Saddam Hussein characterized the elections as "aimed at splitting Iraq into sectarian and religious division and weakening the nation," reported Bushra Khalil, another member of the defense team.

In his first meeting with his lawyers, Hussein reportedly urged Iraqis to boycott the sham elections and to unite against the Pentagon-led occupation of Iraq. "The President sent recommendations to the Iraqi people to remain united and not fall in the trap of America's slogans. He said Kurds, Arabs, Shiites, Sunnis and Christians are all Iraqis who all have to stand united against the American plot."

Where is the conference that's planning Iraq's January elections being held? Canada.

President George W. Bush is thought to have asked the Canadian government to host the hush-hush event when he visited Ottawa at the beginning of December. "But the closed-door event is so secret," reports BBC News from Toronto, "organizers will not even reveal the identity and number of the delegates."

### Best laid plans going astray

One of the reasons editors of Time Magazine say they chose President George W. Bush as their cover story "Person of the Year" is "for sharpening the debate until the choices bled ..."

But it is Iraqis and GIs who are bleeding. And recent polls reveal the growing anger against this war smoldering in the U.S. population.

At his end-of-the-year news conference on Dec. 20, Bush conceded that U.S. attempts to create an Iraqi state force have failed so far. "When the heat got on, they left the battlefield."

As a result, the Pentagon is beefing up its own troops in Iraq by 12,000 by mid-January, extending tours of some units yet again.

Bush admitted that the elections are only "the beginning of a long process" which he warned he doesn't expect to be "trouble free."

That's an understatement. As soon as election offices are set up, they come under siege. And even Washington has



Insurgents use small arms and mortars to attack U.S. troops in Falluja, Nov. 8.

warned that resistance attacks may escalate before the elections.

Dozens of resistance fighters hurling hand grenades and firing weapons briefly took over Haifa Street—the site of many battles between insurgents and occupation troops—in the heart of Baghdad on Dec. 19. They stopped a car carrying five officials of the "Iraqi Electoral Commission" and executed three of them.

### Will Rumsfeld walk the plank?

Bush, on the defensive, is publicly standing behind Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, for now.

Nick Childs, BBC correspondent at the Pentagon, notes that the political barrage against Rumsfeld reflects "renewed worries in Washington about the effectiveness of the overall U.S. policy in Iraq."

"Rummy" has been taking heat for a fortnight after he faced angry Iraq-bound GIs in Kuwait. The media chose to focus more on the soldier who asked why the forces were ill-equipped than on those who asked when they could go home. And reports spotlighted Rumsfeld's response that governments have to go to war with

the army they have, "not the army you might want or wish to have at a later time."

This may well reflect anger at the summits of the Army brass, who may share the complaint about being ill-equipped, as well as outrage at Rumsfeld's answer—albeit from a very different perspective than the troops.

On Dec. 17, David Hackworth, a retired U.S. army colonel, made public that Rumsfeld used a machine to print his signature on condolence letters to families of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Rumsfeld is also facing "friendly fire" from leading Republican senators who, according to the BBC, "have openly questioned President George W. Bush's decision to keep Mr. Rumsfeld at the Pentagon." (Dec. 20)

Neocons seem ready to make Rumsfeld walk the plank, too. William Kristol, reported the Dec. 20 Guardian Unlimited, "the editor of the conservative Weekly Standard and one of the biggest supporters and architects of the neoconservative

foreign policy followed by the Bush White House, questioned whether Mr. Rumsfeld was the right man for the job." (Dec. 20)

Adm. Bob Inman—who served under both Republicans and Democrats as director of the National Security Agency, vice director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, director of Naval Intelligence and deputy director of the

CIA—said that it was Vice President Dick Cheney, not the Bush family, who sponsored Rumsfeld to be secretary of defense.

In an interview posted online Dec. 16, Inman relayed, "If Rumsfeld were to be there for the next four years there will be a lot of my military colleagues who will be very unenthusiastic about it. But as much as they dislike Rumsfeld, they would not want to see a change in this immediate period. With the run-up to the Jan. 30 election in Iraq, you don't want to disrupt the chain of command." (Slate, "Listen to the Admiral," A.L. Bardach)

Asked why neocon architects of the Iraq War like Paul Wolfowitz have "virtually disappeared," Inman replied, "They don't want to take the blame. ... [T]hey were willing to take credit for things earlier; they don't want to take blame."

"Who is going to take the blame?" he was asked.

"I think we'd better stop there," he concluded. □



Residents of Baghdad's Sadr City wait in line to purchase gasoline Dec 22.



Ansar al-Sunna Army, above, claimed the the attack on the U.S. military base in Mosul, above right.



## To the alarm of Washington & Wall Street

# Russia breaks U.S. grip on oil company

By Deirdre Griswold

The dreams of U.S. petro-billionaires to gain control of a large part of Russia's oil and gas production went up in smoke on Dec. 19. Despite a last-minute attempt by a federal court in Houston to block it, the Russian government sold a large part of Yukos Oil, the country's second-largest oil company.

The winning bidder in the forced auction was a previously unknown Russian company called Baikal Finance Group. Western and Moscow business sources call it a front for Gazprom, Russia's largest energy company, which is partly owned by the government. Baikal agreed to pay \$9.3 billion for Yuganskneftegaz, the core production unit of Yukos.

From Wall Street's point of view, this is a major challenge to what they feel they won through the Cold War: undisputed control over the vast wealth of the former Soviet Union. During the counter-revolution carried through by their protégé, Boris Yeltsin, the socialist economic structure inherited from the USSR was broken up. The productive apparatus and natural resources that had belonged to the Soviet people as a whole began to be sold to individual owners. Over the next few years, as capitalism took hold and poverty grew for the workers, a choice few from the elite became rich owners of this property, either through widespread theft and corruption and/or by becoming conduits for foreign capital.

One such person was Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who became the richest man in Russia after he started the Menatep bank and then took over as CEO of Yukos Oil in 1996.

### Looting Russia in collusion with imperialism

Khodorkovsky's name came up in 1999 in the United States during a federal investigation of money laundering by the Bank of New York and officials of Menatep. (See "NY bank scandal tip of iceberg: Looting Russia fuels Wall Street boom" by Fred Goldstein, *Workers World*, Sept. 23, 1999.) The amount under investigation was \$10 billion, but that was only the tip of the iceberg as far as the widespread capitalist looting of Russia was concerned. Russia's Interior Ministry estimated at that time that "anywhere from \$50 billion to \$250 billion was transferred out of the country illegally from 1994 to 1998." (*New York Times*, Sept. 5, 1999)

A little over a year ago, Khodorkovsky

was jailed by the Russian government of Vladimir Putin, charged with fraud and evading \$20 billion in taxes. Energy giants in the U.S. like the Carlyle Group went into panic mode because Khodorkovsky, not content with becoming a billionaire almost overnight, had been preparing to sell ExxonMobil a \$20-billion stake in Yukos.

The Bush administration, including officials of the National Security Council and the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, put heavy pressure on Moscow to release Khodorkovsky. (*Wall St. Journal*, Oct. 31, 2003)

But the head of Yukos remained in jail, making Russia the only country in the world to keep the richest of all its citizens behind bars. While some in the West try to present Khodorkovsky as a martyr, his jailing is extremely popular among Russian workers.

The Russian government froze the company's assets and continued with its plan to auction off most of Yukos, presumably so that it could collect the unpaid taxes.

What happened next made it very clear to the world what this struggle was all about. The highest level of Yukos's management was taken over by two U.S. executives, CEO Steven M. Theede and CFO Bruce K. Misamore.

### Houston court tries to block auction

The day before the auction was to take place, a federal judge in Houston upheld a temporary injunction sought by Misamore that was supposed to halt the Moscow auction. It was the height of imperialist arrogance, but it didn't work. The auction happened the next day. But the threat of U.S. economic sanctions against whoever bought the company was enough to cause Deutsche Bank and three other European banks to freeze between \$10 billion and \$13 billion—money they had pledged to loan Gazprom to make its bid.

An AP report of Dec. 19 said that, "With a big presence in the United States, the banks could potentially face legal action if they violated the court order."

Gazprom had retained a U.S. lawyer, Michael Goldberg, for the Houston proceeding. Goldberg told the media that Gazprom would not appeal the ruling, because "There is no jurisdiction in this case, and this is not the type of case that a Texas court should be deciding about Russian assets."

So the next day, in Moscow, it was not Gazprom that made the winning bid for Yukos, but a previously unknown com-

pany—Baikal Finances Group. The Russians had beaten the U.S. sharks at their own game.

How many U.S. billionaires have set up dummy offshore corporations in order to conceal their earnings? How many landlords have created management companies inside other management companies so tenants won't know where to go with their complaints? How many corporations have filed bankruptcy and reorganized under a new name in order to break union contracts and walk away from pension and healthcare obligations?

Creating dummy corporations is an old trick that U.S. companies know all too well. Nevertheless, they are waxing indignant that Russia would do such a thing.

The AP dispatch raised an even deeper fear gripping Wall Street: "Yukos management and outside observers say the back taxes and the jailing of its former CEO Mikhail Khodorkovsky on fraud and tax evasion charges are aimed at neutralizing Khodorkovsky's political activities and reasserting state control over Russia's economically crucial oil industry."

### Counter-revolution imploded the economy

The restoration of capitalism in the former Soviet Union imploded production there. Workers World analyst Sam Marcy at the time compared what had happened to the cutting up of a huge ocean liner into little rowboats. What had been a highly integrated economy guided by a national

plan was quickly broken up into small units competing with one another for markets and profits. Many factories and other workplaces closed for good.

The effect on the workers was catastrophic. The very survival of Russia, even as a capitalist country, was called into question as foreign capital wormed its way in to pick up the pieces.

The Putin capitalist government may have decided that it has no choice but to exert more state control over Russia's natural resources. However, nationalization by a bourgeois government does not equal socialism, not by a long shot. Nevertheless, the reaction of Wall Street and the Bush administration is likely to be harsh.

The day after the auction, Putin went to U.S. capital's old rival, Germany, where he gave a press conference defending his government's sale of Yukos as legal and constitutional. He also indicated that Russia and China would be cooperating on building an oil pipeline. This is not new; even under Khodorkovsky, Yukos was in discussions with the China National Petroleum Corp. on a major oil pipeline from Eastern Siberia to China.

At that time the governments of Russia and China probably both worried about handing such a strategic project to a company so obviously in the pocket of the U.S. Now the worries will be coming from Washington.

For more background to this story, search for "Yukos" at [www.workers.org](http://www.workers.org).

# General strike in

By G. Dunkel  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

On Dec. 14 United Nations "peacekeeping" forces in Haiti moved from words to deeds. Hundreds of Brazilian, Jordanian and Sri Lankan soldiers, backed up by Chilean armored personnel carriers and helicopters and accompanied by Chinese police, invaded Cité Soleil, said Damian Onses-Cardona, a spokesperson for the over 6,000-member UN mission now occupying Haiti. The troops came in firing.

Some 500,000 not very well armed people live in Cité Soleil, one of the poorest sections of Port-au-Prince and a stronghold of supporters of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. According to Reuters, the UN forces had to fight their way in. Four people, including a UN soldier, were injured in the fighting. Popular forces report that at least one baby was injured by the firing.

A journalist from the weekly newspaper *Haiti-Progress* reported that firing around the newspaper's office in the Belair neighborhood was so heavy that she had to leave. She also had reports from Aristide supporters in Cité Soleil that casualties were heavy, but the UN denied this report. Two weeks earlier, a journalist from *Haiti-Progress* had been killed in crossfire.

Two days after the UN incursion into Cité Soleil, there was a general strike in Port-au-Prince. According to the official Haitian Press Agency, "business was completely paralyzed in Port-au-Prince to commemorate the 14th anniversary of the first election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide to the presidency.

"The big stores were shut tight, while street vendors were in slow motion. Only some commercial bank branches were open. Road traffic was likewise affected." Schools closed a few days early for the end-of-year vacations.

The same day in Cap-Haitien, 10,000 people marched to "denounce the lawlessness which rages in the country, the impunity from prosecution for certain individuals, the cost of living which rises daily and the mass firing of Lavalas supporters from public employment." The demonstration in Cap-Haitien and a smaller one in Belair also strongly supported the return of Aristide, Haiti's democratically elected president.

U.S. officials, with the collusion of the French and support from the Canadian government, maneuvered a coup that overthrew Aristide last Feb. 29. Now these powers have managed to replace most of their troops with the UN force, made up mainly of troops from countries that are themselves oppressed.

The diplomatic maneuvers by the United States, Canadian and Brazilian as well as the Chilean governments have been intense. On Dec. 1, Secretary of State Colin Powell met with the U.S.-imposed government of Gérard Latortue and UN representatives in Port-au-Prince. His message, according to numerous press reports of the meetings, was that the UN had to undertake more vigorous repression of Aristide's supporters.

The next day, Gen. Augusto Heleno Ribeiro Pereira told a Brazilian parliamentary committee, "We are under extreme pressure from the international commu-

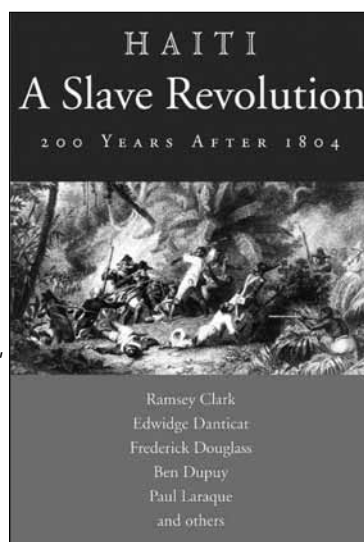
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## SOUTH KOREA

# Worldwide campaign demands repeal of Nat'l Security Law

By Monica Moorehead

Korean political organizers and human rights activists worldwide have launched a campaign to abolish one of the most repressive, anti-democratic edicts ever, the South Korean National Security Law. The NSL, a fascist law steeped in deep-seated anti-communism, played a vicious role in Korean history.

In 1948, the once united Korean peninsula was officially divided into two countries, the socialist north and the capitalist south. This criminal act was impossible without the U.S. government and military's blatant interference in Korean affairs, a clear violation of Korea's right to sovereignty and independence.

Less than four months after this partition, the first president of South Korea, Syngman Rhee, oversaw the signing of the National Security Law. Rhee, a pro-imperialist puppet, was an oppressive dictator who sanctioned the massacres of thousands of Korean workers and peasants as well as numerous assassinations of political opponents until he was kicked out of office in 1960.

Rhee was a willing accomplice of the White House during the 1950-1953 Korean War, in which the U.S. military slaughtered close to 4 million Koreans with the aid of South Korean puppet troops.

In essence, the law legalizes extremely long prison sentences, torture and the death penalty for South Koreans who dare to struggle for or call in any way for the just

reunification of their country.

It also targets any South Korean who possesses, distributes or publishes any literature that is viewed as sympathetic toward the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, or north Korea). The NSL also punishes traveling from South Korea to North Korea to visit one's family and loved ones.

The NSL uses code words such as "enemy-benefiting," "anti-state" and "espionage" to both demonize the DPRK and to justify repression against pro-democratic and/or pro-socialist forces in South Korea.

Due to the resilience of the DPRK, along with the growing strength of the mass struggle in South Korea, including a powerful trade union movement, a worldwide campaign was launched in early December to abolish the NSL once and for all.

The "People's Solidarity for NSL Abolition" coalition is gathering signatures from progressives, revolutionaries and freedom-loving people everywhere for an anti-NSL letter.

This letter reads in part, "We, the undersigned, urge the government of South Korea to immediately abolish the National Security Law (NSL). We submit this statement in solidarity with the millions of Koreans who have been waging a determined campaign to eliminate this draconian tool of authoritarian control. We can no longer stand by and allow the NSL to be used to silence people whose only crime has been to exercise their basic rights to freedom of expression and association.

"From its very inception, the NSL has been a political weapon used by those in authority to consolidate their power and suppress dissent. Most South Koreans no longer view North Korea as the 'enemy' and a law based on this premise severely undermines reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula." (For full text, see [iactcenter.org](http://iactcenter.org).)

So far, hundreds of individuals and organizations from over 17 different countries on the continents of Asia, Latin America, Africa, North America and Europe have signed on to the campaign.

Signers include the Federation of Korean Trade Unionists; famed Egyptian writer Nawal al Saddawi; former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark; Workers Party of Brazil; Sara Flounders, International Action Center co-director; Code Pink's Medea Benjamin; and anti-war activist Brian Willson.

Yoomi Jeong, deputy general secretary of the Korean Truth Commission, is one of the main initiators of the worldwide campaign. The commission has been instrumental in organizing international tribunals to help expose U.S. war crimes against the Korean people.

Jeong told Workers World, "In response to the 2002 election of South Korean president Roh Moo-hyun, and liberal and left-leaning politicians in the South Korean parliament, reactionary forces are organizing an all-out offensive against progressive legislation, including the repeal of the NSL.

"The Korean people are determined to

repeal this law once and for all. Recently 10,000 people rallied in Seoul, which is important since in the past, anti-NSL protests have not attracted large crowds due to more than a half a century of repression. With hard-fought political 'openness,' people feel freer to express and assert their democratic rights."

Jeong also said that 1,000 Koreans are presently on a hunger strike against the NSL that began on Dec. 9. Some have had to be hospitalized due to the cold and hunger. A march of these hunger strikers and their supporters is set for Dec. 22 in Seoul, South Korea's capital.

Those participating in the indefinite hunger strike include newlyweds, students and an 85-year-old former political prisoner. South Korea has kept political prisoners behind bars for a longer length of time than other countries, solely for their political beliefs. In some instances, these activists have stayed in prison, mainly in solitary confinement, for as long as 44 years, but have refused to allow their spirits to be broken.

Anti-NSL candlelight vigils are scheduled for Dec. 23 and 29 in Seoul as well as Japan and throughout Europe.

For more information about the anti-NSL campaign and to endorse, email [abolish\\_NSL@yahoo.com](mailto:abolish_NSL@yahoo.com).

*The writer was a delegate to the International Conference for Reunification on the Korean Peninsula held in Pyongyang, DPRK, August 2003.*

# Haiti capital answers UN repression



WW PHOTOS: G. DUNKEL

Pat Chin (left) expresses solidarity of International Action Center to Haitians. Fanmi Lavalas' National Communication Director Mario Dupuy (above center) and Alina Sixto (above right). Brooklyn, N.Y., Dec. 18.

nity to use violence," especially from the U.S., Canada and France. He claimed he would not carry out this repressive mission, and that it would take 100,000 troops. At that time, about 6,200 UN troops were in the country.

## Brazilians question role

Brazil's Foreign Minister Celso Amorim, who visited Port-au-Prince on Dec. 20, has also spoken out against this repressive role.

Nevertheless, on Dec. 8, Juan Gabriel Valdés, the civilian head of the UN peacekeeping mission and a Chilean, declared that the UN did indeed now have enough troops to carry out the mission assigned to

it. Six days later, UN troops went guns blazing into Cité Soleil and raided Belair.

A few days after Valdés' statement, Canada put together a founding meeting of the International Congress of Haitians in Montreal. Latortue flew to Montreal to take part in it. Hundreds of Haitians from Montreal and as far away as New York and Toronto gathered in front of the meeting hall to shout "Latortue's a murderer, Martin is his accomplice."

Paul Martin is Canada's prime minister, who has proclaimed that "Canada has a special role to play in Haiti." Right now Canada's role includes building new prisons and courthouses, and supplying logistics for the UN.

Washington is openly saying it wants Aristide's party, Fanmi Lavalas (FL), to participate in upcoming elections in Haiti, but without Aristide having any role. Although Dr. Jean-Claude Desgranges, Aristide's chief of staff, had met with Powell in Port-au-Prince, Fanmi Lavalas has issued a formal statement that Desgranges speaks only for himself and that it did not as an organization meet with Powell.

## Meeting in Brooklyn emphasizes unity

Fanmi Lavalas answered this attempt to split it and to destroy its unity at a meeting in Brooklyn, N.Y., on Dec. 18. Mario

Dupuy, the National Communication director of FL, and Alina Sixto, a New York-based activist, both stressed that Fanmi Lavalas was united and in solidarity with the peaceful, nonviolent struggle to return democracy and Aristide to Haiti.

Pat Chin spoke for the International Action Center at the meeting. She emphasized that the IAC would do everything it possibly could to build solidarity with the Haitian people's struggle against U.S. imperialism, just as it builds solidarity with the Iraqi and Palestinian peoples' struggles.

Father Gerard Jean-Juste, recently released from prison in Haiti due to pressure from progressive people worldwide, also spoke at the Brooklyn meeting. □

# Racist healthcare kills

People in the U.S. and worldwide are painfully aware of the devastating war and occupation that U.S. imperialism and its "coalition" allies are imposing on the once-sovereign country of Iraq. At least 100,000 Iraqis and over 1,300 U.S. GIs have been killed since the war officially began on March 20, 2003. This follows 12 years of U.S.-imposed sanctions that killed 1.5 million Iraqis.

This war abroad is accompanied by a brutal, racist war at home.

From 1991 to 2000, racism and capitalist inequality in the U.S. health-care system killed 886,000 African Americans out of a population of 35 million. If they had had accessible health care comparable to whites, these deaths could have been avoided. This is according to an article in the December issue of the American Journal of Public Health.

With all of the technological advances that were made in creating a higher quality of drugs, procedures and devices, only 177,000 lives were saved within the same decade.

Steven H. Woolf, lead author of the study, commented, "Five times as many lives can be saved by correcting the disparities [in care between whites and Blacks] than in developing new treatments." (Washington Post, Dec. 21)

What is needed is a national health-care plan in which every person, citizen or non-citizen, is guaranteed the most comprehensible medical coverage from the cradle to the grave. Right now an estimated 47 million people in the U.S. are without any kind of health-care coverage. In the richest, most powerful imperialist country, there has never been a national health plan.

There is no universal health care in the U.S. because, like everything else under capitalism, health care is run like a business—to make profits for insurance companies, pharmaceutical monopolies and private hospital chains, not to save the lives of workers and the poor. When racism is added to this mix, it deepens the catastrophe with the alarming statistics reported in this study.

Due to the deepening health crisis in the U.S., there are now higher rates of heart disease, diabetes, strokes, cancers, obesity, HIV/AIDS and much more impacting the general population. But for African Americans, Latin@s and Native Americans, these preventable diseases take on even more genocidal proportions.

Genocide is intimately connected with institutionalized racism—not only in health care, but also inadequate housing and education, high rates of imprisonment, malnutrition, joblessness and more.

Those who fight against that war abroad should join that struggle to end the one at home. Wrest the funds used for war on Iraqis—now over \$151 billion and rising every second (costofwar.com)—and use it for the needs of the people here, especially people of color and the poor who have been denied the most basic rights.

Immediate steps must be taken to build an independent, powerful mass movement to fight against the burgeoning war budget—a budget that attempts to re-colonize countries like Iraq and Haiti while at the same time denying workers here the right to jobs, education, housing and health care, and even killing them. □



WWW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

## 'Ohio's first poll tax'

Continued from page 5

company provided 80 percent of the voting machines used when Hagel first won the Nebraska Senate race.

Founder Todd Urosevich remains a top executive at ES&S, but not so his brother—Bob Urosevich now heads up Diebold Election Systems!

Diebold technicians were involved in questionable "servicing" of optical scanners in Toledo prior to the recount.

According to sworn testimony by the Hocking County Board of Elections deputy director, a technician from TriAd illegally tampered with computers and instructed her on how to create a "cheat sheet" to make sure the recount matches the official results. TriAd manufactured the punch card machines used in 41 of Ohio's 88 counties. Its founder, Tod Rapp, is a long-time contributor to Republican and right-wing causes.

### Where's Kerry?

One would think Sen. John Kerry and the Democratic Party would be on the front lines of challenging this deliberate undermining of basic democratic procedures. Exit polls, which University of Illinois statistician Ron Baiman testified have a 55,000,000-to-1 chance of being wrong, showed Kerry the victor in Ohio. But in fact, the recount only took place after the Green and Libertarian parties challenged the official results.

Kerry has yet to speak at any of the rallies or hearings, but is halfheartedly backing the legal challenges, now that the Rev. Jesse Jackson and Rep. John Conyers put the Ohio election in the national spotlight.

## Late 1980s East Germany

Continued from page 2

He stressed, "The public discussion of homosexuality now being promoted by the Communist Party is one in which homosexuality is finally recognized as a natural aspect of sexuality and society."

The lesbian and gay movement in the GDR debated whether to develop an autonomous community or integrate into society. The leading view of the movement and the state, Parsons reported, "is one in which autonomy is not set in conflict with integration. Lesbians and gay men have a need to meet together for personal, cultural, and political reasons. Their ability to collectively discuss and decide their views on their oppression and needs is an important step in enabling the society as a whole to address the issues.

"Integration, however, is also seen as a positive goal—not an integration in which lesbians and gays hide their identity, but one in which their unique identity contributes to and changes the whole."

Parsons reported these gains without glossing over the problems that still existed, bringing great sensitivity and objectivity to his observations.

He noted for example, "The Communist Party itself is not a monolithic institution. There are millions of members with various views on sexuality and sexual politics, and it is no surprise that different views should win sway at different times.

"But," he added, "what is striking is that the Party has moved so quickly from a position of, at best, benign neglect to one of clear advocacy for a reasoned, humanistic and in many ways radically progressive position."

### Counter-revolution

During the late 1980s, as the more compliant Gorbachev leadership was weaken-

Kerry, Bush and their respective parties are both part of the same anti-democratic capitalist system. They both support the war against Iraq, and their positions on same-sex marriage, an issue instrumental in securing the Bush vote in Ohio, are almost identical. They both recognize that racism, including the denial of suffrage, is indispensable to maintaining capital's power over labor.

Kerry, like Gore in 2004, would sooner hold back the seething anger than mount a real challenge to centuries of racist oppression.

Despite Kerry's vacillation, none of these violations has gone unchallenged.

Packed hearings have brought to light the damning statistics but also the raw emotions around this horrible act of profiling. Hundreds of people from around the country volunteered and contributed over \$100,000 for the recount.

A rally at the State House in November featuring the Rev. Jesse Jackson drew 900 outraged people. Activists continue to demonstrate, and have set up a tent city outside Secretary of State Blackwell's office.

Jackson was back in Columbus Dec. 13, while the Bush electors were being sworn in, for the filing of one of many lawsuits seeking to decertify the "official" Ohio election results.

The fight for the basic right of suffrage, to complete the unfinished revolution cut short by the defeat of Reconstruction, is a just fight deserving the utmost solidarity. Its best hope is to link up the fight over the Bush (s)election with the fight to overturn the whole Bush (and Kerry) program of war, bigotry and exploitation. □

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## COLOMBIA

# Unsafe for union organizers

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

Labor unionists around the world know that Colombia is the most dangerous country for union leaders. A recent visit to the United States by Francisco Ramírez Cuéllar, president of the Colombian mineworkers' union, set this fact into clear focus.

Early in the afternoon last Oct. 10, as Ramírez Cuéllar walked from his home to have lunch with two nieces, two men on a motorcycle approached him. The man on the rear was holding a gun and looked straight into the union leader's eyes. Ramírez Cuéllar was able to take cover behind a pole. Luckily, the traffic light changed, drivers honked impatiently, and the motorcyclists were forced to continue on their way. That was the seventh time there has been an attempt on his life.

This latest incident followed surveillance by the police, intimidation and harassment of Ramírez Cuéllar and other union representatives. Other incidents included the explosion of two bombs in the union's office on May 2, one day after police cars were seen in front of the office.

These episodes have happened during a struggle by the union, Sintraminercol, against an attempt by the government of Álvaro Uribe—on behalf of transnational banks and corporations, primarily from the U.S.—to destroy Minercol, the national mining enterprise.

Groups of lawyers representing transnational mining interests work incessantly to change Colombia's mining laws in order to allow the annihilation of both the state mining company and the peasant, mining, Indigenous and Afrocolombian communities that reside in the mineral-rich territories and present an obstacle to the indiscriminate exploitation of their resources.

Ramírez Cuéllar, like many Colombian union leaders, has been a very visible and outspoken representative for his union, both nationally and internationally. He has written a book with the help of his union and other organizations entitled

"The Profits of Extermination: How U.S. Corporate Power is Destroying Colombia." A must-read to fully understand the rapacious U.S. imperialist thirst for Colombia, it will be available in English in February.

### Follow the oil pipeline

What makes U.S. corporations so nervous? In a talk in New York City, Ramírez Cuéllar exposed some of the facts. The following summarizes some of the points he raised.

First of all, everything should be placed in the context of the armed conflict in Colombia. For 50 years the gap between rich and poor has initiated and maintained the longest current and continuous civil war on the continent, in which two armed entities have been in conflict—the guerrilla movements and the state. To these, other actors have been involved, on one side the popular sector and on the other, support for the military, particularly from the U.S.

Seven years of research by Sintraminercol and other organizations has focused on several points for detailed investigation: the laws and the international treaties between the Colombian government and transnational financial institutions; foreign military aid to Colombia and its final destination; the protection given to transnational institutions; and the effect of all these policies on the civilian population.

They found that treaties the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank signed with the Colombian government restricted the rights of workers, Indigenous and Afrodescendants. They also have restricted the enforcing of clean environment accords like Kyoto, and others in the areas of mineral exploitation.

To facilitate this systematic affront, disputes between the Colombian state and the transnational companies were taken out of the country's legal jurisdiction and transferred to private arbitration tribunals outside of Colombia.

Another set of findings concerned facts surrounding U.S. military aid under Plan Colombia. The researchers discovered that a priority was given to military actions in regions where transnational companies—mainly from the U.S., but also from Britain and other countries—operated. This is true in Putumayo to the south, bordering Ecuador and Perú, where Harken Energy Co. has the largest gas reserve in the world. President George W. Bush's family has interests in Harken. It also applies in the north, in both Norte de Santander, which borders Venezuela, and in Sur de Bolívar, where Harken is exploring for oil and where the largest gold mine in the Americas is located.

Other places also have military deployment, but nowhere is Plan Colombia's money as concentrated as in the Arauca region, also on the border with Venezuela. The U.S.'s Occidental Petroleum operates the oil pipeline Caño Limón Coveñas in this region. Occidental lobbied hard for Plan Colombia. Some \$180 million of the plan is earmarked for the sole purpose of creating an exclusive "oil battalion"—the 18th Brigade, part of the Colombian Army. Its exclusive mission is to guard the pipeline. This brigade is infamous for its systematic violation of human rights. Its members recently killed three union leaders in Arauca.

How have the changes in the laws, designed by the U.S. for the transnational companies' benefit, affected the population? Several provinces were declared exempt from rules regarding human rights, among them Arauca, Norte de Santander, Bolívar and Sucre—all regions the oil pipeline passes through. Since then, human rights violations have increased 220 percent. And in only one year 267 people were assassinated in Arauca near the pipeline zone.

Ramírez Cuéllar explained the connections between drug trafficking, paramilitaries and the Colombian government, on the one hand, and the CIA, U.S. government and Israeli secret service (Mossad).

For 50 years the gap between rich and poor in Colombia has provoked the longest current and continuous civil war in South America.

They cooperate to destroy opposition to this savage reaping of resources by finance capital. Nowhere in Latin America is militarization for the purpose of destroying the social movements increasing more than in Colombia.

But the more that transnational finance capital tightens its rope around the progressive movement with massive detentions, threats, tortures, assassinations and massacres, the more vibrant and militant the masses become.

On Human Rights Day, defiant social organizations in Arauca sent a message to the world under the heading of "Resistance, Autonomy, Sovereignty and Action." It read in part: "We, those kept hostage by the government, find ourselves in U.S. captivity right here in Colombia, ... we call on you Colombians who are aware of the need of an alternative, a change, we urge you to mobilize and defend the most beautiful essence of humans, life, dignity and freedom.

"Let us convert this struggle into a permanent social mobilization that is able to transform the current government scheme imposed by the United States.

"And above all, let us continue showing that in spite of institutional terrorism, the policy of national security or preemptive war, the people are still mobilizing, singing, struggling. And that the people are expressing our ideals, many times behind jail bars; and beyond the threat of death, liberty and social justice will continue in our minds, our hearts and in the ideals of every one of our children." □

## PUERTO RICO

# Water workers vote to continue strike

By Arturo J. Pérez Saad

The government-run Aqueduct and Sewage Authority (AAA) of Puerto Rico, in collusion with the state, has increased its attacks on the workers of the Authentic Independent Union (UIA), in order to break the national strike which began Oct. 4 over changes to the workers' medical plan.

The bosses have sent letters to union leaders and the workers giving them an ultimatum: either return to work by Dec. 27 or face expulsion and replacement. (El Nuevo Día, Dec. 10)

The escalation in the daily repression on picketers and protesters has demonstrated to the workers the fear and vulnerability of the bosses. These tactics have become more hostile as the workers prolong their strike to demand "a fair contract." As a consequence, on Dec. 13 the union membership of over 4,300 voted overwhelmingly in favor of continuing their strike and rejected the AAA's latest paltry offer.

The AAA bosses are attempting to uti-

lize and impose the repressive U.S. federal anti-labor Taft-Hartley law on Puerto Rico. This exposes the island's current true relation as a colony of the U.S.

The Independent National Hostosiano Movement (MINH) objected that the Taft-Hartley law is "a law contrary to our Constitution," in a letter addressed to the preliminary winner of the recent election for governor, Anibal Acevedo Vilá. The letter asked Vilá to step in and stop these attacks by the AAA.

Federico Torres Montalvo, secretary general of the Coordinator of State Workers (CUTE) and member of the Puerto Rican Workers Federation (CPT), is awaiting confirmation of meeting dates with Acevedo Vilá and with outgoing governor Sila Calderón. On Dec. 18, three legislators publicly repudiated the AAA's ultimatum.

The president of the UIA, Héctor René Lugo, at a news conference on Dec. 20 affirmed that the union members understand that this scare tactic is "illegal and retrograde" and that "this action would violate our most rudimentary collective

bargaining principles and our constitutional right to strike." (El Nuevo Día)

José Rodríguez Báez, president of the Workers Federation, has called this latest attack on the workers "illegal" and made a call to the labor movement on the island to unite behind the UIA, which is a mem-

ber of the CPT.

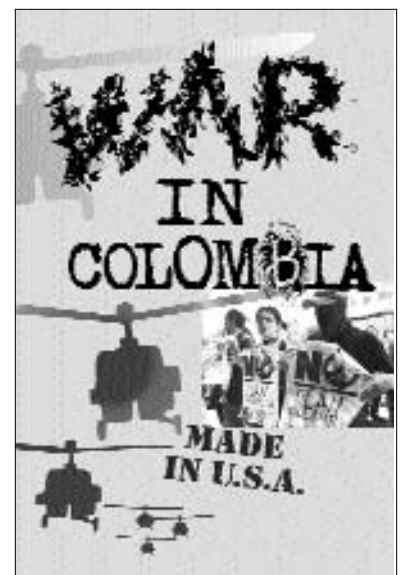
An emergency meeting of the labor movement is scheduled for Dec. 22 in order "to discuss tangible and concrete solutions" in response to the latest attacks, according to Jorge Farinacci, lawyer for the Teamsters union. □

## WAR IN COLOMBIA MADE IN U.S.A.

A book from the International Action Center covers the struggle in Colombia from the perspective of trade unionists, human rights activists, and the FARC and ELN insurgencies.

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## Sindicalistas cubanos se reúnen con trabajadores de México y los EEUU

Por Sako Sefiani  
Tijuana, México

Después de ser rechazadas sus visas en repetidas ocasiones, cinco líderes de la Confederación de Trabajadores Cubanos (CTC) viajaron a Tijuana, al sur de la frontera de México con California, para reunirse con sindicalistas de los Estados Unidos y México desde el 10 al 12 de diciembre. Hablaron sobre cuestiones que afectan a l@s trabajador@s de todas las Américas, como inmigración, el Acuerdo de Libre Comercio de las Américas (ALCA) y las relaciones entre los EEUU y Cuba.

Sindicalistas y activistas comunitari@s mexican@s y estadounidenses pudieron escuchar de primera mano a sindicalistas cuban@s y pudieron discutir cuestiones que afectan a l@s trabajador@s en ambos lados de la frontera México-EEUU, como las maquiladoras y las políticas de migración.

Leonel González González, jefe de la delegación cubana, proporcionó información sobre cómo el ALCA y las políticas neoliberales han contribuido a la pobreza de Latinoamérica mientras aceleran la transferencia de riquezas del sur hacia el norte —\$29.000 millones sólo en el 2003. Cuatro millonarios en los EEUU tienen ahora una fortuna igual al presupuesto anual de 42 naciones combinadas, con una población agregada de 600 millones de personas, dijo.

Aunque el 70 por ciento de las ventas de Coca Cola y más de un 50 por ciento de los 23.000 restaurantes McDonald están fuera de los EEUU, las empresas estadounidenses necesitan aún más mercados para sus productos. México, para usar sólo un ejemplo, se ha vuelto de exportador de maíz a importador de maíz estadounidense. ¿Puede alguien creer, preguntó González, que los EEUU abrirán las puertas a productos de Latinoamérica?

Pero las políticas neoliberales perjudican también a l@s trabajador@s estadounidenses, advirtió. Cuando las corporaciones transnacionales de los EEUU establecen maquiladoras en zonas especiales en la zona fronteriza para aprovecharse de la mano de obra barata, l@s trabajador@s en los EEUU pierden sus empleos. Cuba, dijo, ha estado jugando un papel sumamente importante en la lucha contra las políticas neoliberales.

José Antonio Almazán González del Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (SME) hizo un resumen de los resultados del Tratado de Libre Comercio de Norteamérica (TLC) luego de 10 años de implantado: pobreza para el 50 por ciento de los habitantes de Latinoamérica, con un 25 por ciento en pobreza extrema y un 90 por ciento viviendo con menos de \$8 al día. La agricultura ha sido arruinada, dijo. La deuda externa alcanza \$276.000 millones, sólo en intereses se pagan anualmente \$28.000 millones. El SME es central a la lucha actual para detener la privatización de la electricidad y el petróleo y los cambios peligrosos a la ley mexicana laboral propuestos por el gobierno de Vicente Fox.

“Esto es el imperialismo”, dijo.

“Tenemos que hablar de una alternativa para América Latina para contrarrestar esta devastación. Tenemos que lograr lo que los venezolanos han logrado”.

Manuel Montero Bistilleiro, director del Departamento de Relaciones Exteriores de la CTC, contó cómo el embargo económico y el bloqueo naval de los EEUU han afectado a la economía cubana y al pueblo. Cuba no puede obtener materias primas para sus industrias, suministros médicos, ninguno de la nueva generación de antibióticos, medicamentos para leucemia, marcapasos, repuestos para máquinas de diálisis para niños, o tratamientos para el cáncer producidos en los EEUU. En 1980, añadió Montero, la CIA, como parte de su guerra bacteriológica contra Cuba fue responsable por la propagación del virus del dengue hemorrágico y luego impidió que Cuba recibiera los medicamentos necesarios para su cura. Como resultado, 150 personas murieron.

En 2003, dijo Montero, el gobierno de los EEUU dedicó \$59 millones para la desestabilización del gobierno de Cuba. Otros \$23 millones fueron otorgados a organizaciones no gubernamentales para el mismo propósito. Pero cuando Cuba reaccionó arrestando a los mercenarios, EEUU se quejó de que era una violación.

Montero advirtió a l@s líderes sindicales de EEUU, específicamente a la AFL-CIO que no debe alinearse con los capitalistas en prejuicio de los trabajadores de Cuba y Venezuela.

Él le recordó a l@s asistentes que aunque el gobierno del Presidente Hugo Chávez de Venezuela ha sido validado por siete elecciones, la administración en Washington aún habla de falta de democracia en Venezuela. Están apuntando contra Venezuela porque es el quinto productor más grande de petróleo en el mundo y está ubicada en la región amazónica de importancia estratégica y también porque rehúsa someterse a los mandatos de Washington. El gobierno de Chávez está utilizando los ingresos de la venta del petróleo para solucionar los problemas de pobreza. Ha promulgado leyes garantizando salarios decentes, educación y viviendas y está proponiendo nuevas leyes defensoras del derecho de la mujer al aborto y defensoras de los derechos de homosexuales y venezolan@s afrodescendientes.

### Apoyo para los Cinco Cubanos Presos en los EEUU

La conferencia unánimemente hizo un llamado por la libertad de los Cinco Héroes Cubanos encarcelados en las pri-

siones de los EEUU. María del Carmen Machado, jefa del Departamento de Educación, Comunicación y Cultura de la CTC, explicó que los Cinco no estaban intentando desestabilizar al gobierno de los EEUU a beneficio de un poder extranjero imperialista, como los mercenarios en Cuba estaban intentando hacer; ni participando en actos de terrorismo, como los mercenarios apoyados por la CIA han hecho. Estaban en Miami recogiendo información con el propósito de prevenir actos terroristas por parte de grupos derechistas cubanos.

René González, uno de los Cinco Cubanos, envió una carta a la conferencia contrastando dos mundos: uno basado en la avaricia y en la búsqueda insaciable de ganancias, el otro basado en proveer las necesidades humanas. Gloria La Riva del Comité Nacional para Liberar a los Cinco exaltó el valor y la disciplina de los Cinco al haber fingido ser desertores en beneficio a la defensa de la Revolución Cubana. También avisó que se espera pronto una decisión judicial sobre su apelación y anunció planes para una gira nacional de publicidad. Cartas y tarjetas de apoyo a los Cinco y demandando visas para sus familiares circularon entre la audiencia.

Andrés Gómez, líder de la Brigada Antonio Maceo en los EEUU habló sobre la política migratoria de Washington frente a Cuba. Una nueva ley permite a l@s cuban@s que viven en los EEUU visitar solamente a miembros cercanos de su familia en la isla y sólo una vez cada tres años. También habló de la Ley de Ajuste Cubano, la cual otorga un trato especial a inmigrantes cuban@s, alentando así que l@s cuban@s arriesguen su vida para llegar a los EEUU.

Clarence Thomas, el co-presidente de la Marcha del Millón de Trabajador@s y miembro del sindicato de trabajadores portuarios ILWU Local 10 de San Francisco, habló sobre la necesidad de forjar un movimiento independiente de trabajador@s que hable a nombre de l@s trabajador@s de los EEUU, en vez de poner sus esperanzas en el Partido Demócrata que no hace nada para l@s trabajador@s y todo para las corporaciones multinacionales.

John Parker, del Centro de Acción Internacional habló sobre el genocidio que ocurre en Irak así como las atrocidades en Afganistán, Haití y Palestina. También destacó el papel jugado por los EEUU en el terrorismo contra Venezuela, donde Danilo Anderson, el fiscal encargado de la investigación de los mercenarios empleados por la CIA que promovieron el golpe de estado, fue recientemente asesinado.

Parker dijo que el gobierno de los EEUU teme dejar que la gente vea a Cuba. “Pero todas las acciones tienen su reacción y se perjudicarán ellos mismos,” dijo, refiriéndose a la decisión reciente del gobierno cubano de no permitir más transacciones con dólares.

Tenemos que crear unidad entre el movimiento sindical y el movimiento en contra de la guerra. Tenemos que

dejar por un lado nuestras pequeñas diferencias y unirnos para que avance el movimiento”, urgió Parker. Llamó a l@s participantes a apoyar las acciones en contra de la guerra del 19 y 20 de marzo.

Juan José Gutiérrez del Movimiento Latino USA dijo que el capital no tiene fronteras, y por eso tenemos que internacionalizar la lucha. “El capital crea fronteras para dividirnos y debilitarnos”, dijo, proponiendo a Tijuana como la ciudad donde nuestras luchas serán unificadas.

Líderes de la Unión Nacional de Trabajadores de México, UNT, de la federación de electricistas y del sindicato de trabajadores de aluminio y de la Fuerza Unida de Maestros de México también hablaron, urgiendo unidad y lucha. Las luchas de l@s trabajador@s no sindicalizad@s estuvieron incluidas con la participación de representantes de la comunidad Maclovia Rojas de Tijuana y veteran@s del programa Bracero, el programa de “trabajadores invitados”.

Cristina Vázquez, directora regional de UNITE HERE, sindicato que representa casi medio millón de trabajador@s en los Estados Unidos habló sobre la historia de la difícil batalla que su sindicato libra contra las cadenas hoteleras.

La conferencia terminó adoptando resoluciones que en resumen son las siguientes:

- Enviar cartas a las autoridades demandando visas para los familiares de los Cinco Cubanos para que pueden visitar a sus seres queridos en las cárceles de los EEUU
- Apoyar el desafío a viajar a Cuba en julio de 2005.
- Enviar una delegación a la Cuarta Conferencia Hemisférica sobre la Globalización Neoliberal y el ALCA que será celebrada en la Habana, Cuba los días 26–30 de abril.
- Amnistía general para l@s trabajador@s indocumentad@s. Endosar una Marcha Nacional en Washington para demandar amnistía para tod@s l@s inmigrantes en una fecha por anunciar.
- Demandar que los EEUU termine su ocupación militar de Irak, que las tropas regresen ya. Endosar las manifestaciones programadas para el 20 de enero contra la inauguración de George W. Bush. Endosar los días internacionales de acción unificada del 19 y 20 de marzo contra la guerra en Irak llamada por la Marcha del Millón de Trabajador@s.
- Demandar una compensación justa para l@s que trabajaron en los EEUU entre 1942 y 1964 en el “Programa de Trabajadores Invitados” y que tuvieron un 10 por ciento de sus salarios retenidos, pero nunca recibieron los pagos prometidos.
- Apoyar el esfuerzo para restablecer la tradición de las manifestaciones del primero de mayo como el día de l@s trabajador@s en los EEUU.
- Demandar el fin de la ocupación por todas las tropas extranjeras de Haití.
- Apoyar el gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela. □

