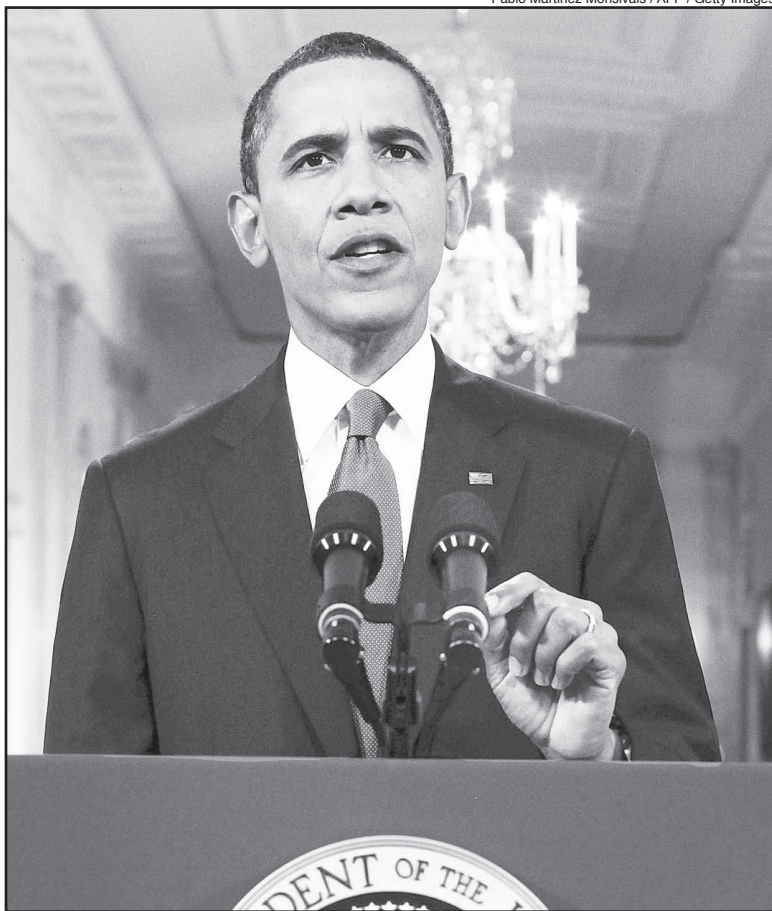


## Obama prepares re-election bid by posing as antiwar candidate



Pablo Martinez Monsivais / AFP / Getty Images



Sal Mastroiano / Socialist Action

BY JEFF MACKLER

“Ladies and gentleman, the horses are arriving at the starting gate,” says the announcer at the Kentucky Derby, the first of three famous races that rivet the attention of racing fans around the country in the spring of every year. The “Sport of Kings,” which Congress funds with \$128 million yearly in tax breaks, is indeed a spectacle to behold, as crowds gather to watch “pure-blooded” three-year-olds, often pumped up with a variety of steroids, run for the money.

The race for the U.S. presidency is only a slightly different matter. Here, poor millionaires run for the money, virtually year round, while their billionaire and approaching trillionaire ruling-class backers stoke their treasuries with ever-increasing campaign contributions. The corporate elite orchestrate this charade with the full force of their kept media, daily promoting their horse for the top post in the “democratically elected” executive committee of the richest ruling families in the country.

The race is on and it matters not if their candidate is a blundering reactionary or racist fool, like most of the present Republican crop of race entrants, or the former Chicago Black community organizer and Harvard graduate, Barack Obama. The rules, as with any good horse race, hold that the people’s choice, the best participant, wins. In both cases, of course, the house wins—the race-track owners when the race is between animals, and the U.S. ruling class when the race is between multiple candidates put up for the sake of appearances.

In U.S. politics, there are some premises aimed at guiding our choices, the main one being that it is intelligent and proper to vote for the “lesser evil.” Lesser-evil politics are based on the notion that capitalism can be reformed, that virtually all the evils attendant to it—racism, poverty, never-ending imperialist wars, and occu-

pations, environmental destruction, global warming, massive unemployment, plant closures, foreclosures, and all the rest—can be changed with the election of the lesser evil. The alternative, it is often argued, is fascism!

Of course, in playing the lesser-evil game it takes some effort to view the Democratic Party as a force for reform of any sort. That’s why, as the June 28 *New York Times* reported, “Despite ‘fat cat’ talk, many bankers still support Obama. ... His bark has been worse than his bite.”

The same article noted the banking community’s approval of Obama’s appointment of former JP Morgan Chase senior executive William Daley as his chief of staff. JP Morgan Chase (the Morgan and Rockefeller interests)

(Top) New Jersey union rally outside state capitol on June 23 against austerity bill requiring state workers to pay more for benefits and pensions. Many Democratic politicians joined Republicans in backing the bill.

(Left) President Obama announces plans to withdraw some troops from Afghanistan, June 22.

are perhaps the richest capitalist families in the world. *The Times*, the ruling class’s newspaper of record and an ardent Obama supporter, neglected to add that Obama bailed out the banks, insurance interests, and related private financial institutions to the tune of \$17 trillion,

(continued on page 5)

## UNAC plans protest at NATO summit

By CHRISTINE MARIE

The illusions of many Americans that Obama would turn out to be an “antiwar president” were definitively shattered early last year when he sent 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan. Since that time, the Obama administration’s attempts to convince the public that the war would soon wind down have proven hollow. Instead, Washington is expanding its war effort onto a much wider front—as the daily bombing missions over Libya show clearly.

On June 27, Obama argued that he was winding down the war in Afghanistan by withdrawing up to 30,000 ground troops over the course of the next year and a half. But all the while the U.S. has been planning to drive forward with a so-called “counter-terrorism” strategy that will put more civilians in the path of drone-fired missiles and covert special operations forces.

On June 8, Mark Mazzetti reported in *The New York Times* that the United States, after a halt of a year due to fallout from civilian casualties, had restarted and intensified a campaign of drone aircraft strikes in Yemen. And on July 1, Mazzetti wrote that the U.S. was expanding the drone war commanded from a base in Yemen to Somalia.

For the last several years, the U.S. efforts to prevent the establishment of a Somali government independent of the White House was primarily a proxy war, funded and directed by the U.S. but carried out by Ethiopia and Uganda. Now, the U.S. government is openly and directly engaged once again.

Counting Somalia, the U.S. is now waging at least seven wars in a nearly contiguous region involving parts of South and Central Asia, the Middle East and Northern Africa, and the Horn of Africa. And while the expansion of the drone wars is supposed to be a

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# Bring the War Dollars Home!

By CHRIS HUTCHINSON

Tony Savino / Socialist Action

The economic crisis continues to strain our city and town budgets. Layoffs, concessions, and budget cuts have become familiar words in many homes. Yet our federal government and President Obama seek to keep the wheels of the war machine grinding on at any cost. Including new wars in Libya and Somalia, our tax dollars fund bloody attacks on workers abroad instead of health care, education, housing, and jobs at home.

How unpopular is war and war spending in the United States? Until recent weeks it was impossible to discern from the corporate media that popular sentiment in the U.S. is opposed to the wars and occupations in the Middle East.

Why then has opposition to U.S. wars seen a revival in the headlines of major media outlets such as MSNBC, The New York Times, and The Los Angeles Times? A recent CNN poll shows that 60 percent of Americans oppose the occupation of Afghanistan, which was at one time considered by many to be the "good war".

Also, on June 20 in Baltimore peace activists from across the U.S. successfully urged a national convention of 1200 mayors to pass a resolution demanding that the federal government bring our war dollars home.

The movement to Bring Our War Dollars Home is rapidly growing. Activists in Maine, Massachusetts, and Connecticut were the first to pass resolutions through city councils. From organized labor in New Jersey to street theater in Cleveland to peace activists



(Above) April 9 antiwar march in New York City sponsored by UNAC.

in Eugene, Ore., Bring Our War Dollars Home activists are working to turn sentiment against the war into action.

In Hartford, Conn., Socialist Action was one of several groups working together to pass a city council resolution that called for an immediate end to the wars. The resolution also supports public-sector workers in their fight against concessions and layoffs. The Hartford campaign to Bring Our War Dollars Home is cur-

rently working to put a referendum on the ballot in the 2011 municipal elections. Connecting the attacks on the livelihood of workers at home with war spending is an important part of our outreach.

As *Socialist Action* goes to print, Connecticut Gov. Dan Malloy is preparing to lay off thousands of state workers. This unbridled attack by the so-called "friend of labor" will smash the unions by privatizing large sectors of public services.

Antiwar activists are making it absolutely clear that the budget crisis in Connecticut is nothing more than a scare tactic to force concessions from working people. There is plenty of money. It exists in the pockets of wealthy tax dodgers and in capital-intensive war production.

People are outraged that President Obama will take 222 million tax dollars this year from Hartford alone to fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. With that money you could provide the following for one year: 8610 Head Start slots for children or 19,369 households with renewable electricity (i.e., solar photovoltaic) or 6874 scholarships for university students or 25,627 children receiving low-income health care.

These figures from [costofwar.com](http://costofwar.com) do not include soldiers' regular pay or the cost of new wars.

A Bring Our War Dollars Home campaign puts forward the "radical" notion that human needs should be funded instead of war. We urge our brothers and sisters to bring that message via resolutions to their unions, labor councils, city councils, school boards, student councils, communities of faith, and so on. Find out what is being coordinated nationally and plug into the larger antiwar movement by working with the United National Antiwar Committee ([UNACpeace.org](http://UNACpeace.org)) and help us build a movement that shuts down the war makers once and for all. ■

## A WORKERS' ACTION PROGRAM TO FIGHT THE CRISIS

We propose an EMERGENCY CONGRESS OF LABOR to discuss and take steps to implement the following demands —

- 1) Bail out the people, not the bankers! Open the account books of the banks to full public inspection. Nationalize the banks to be supervised by workers' committees.
- 2) No foreclosures! No forced evictions! Cancel usurious debt payments, and reduce mortgage payments in proportion to their capitalist-caused decline in value.
- 3) Full employment at union wages! An emergency public works program to employ all jobless workers and youth! Employ people to build what we need — low-cost quality housing, efficient mass transportation, cheap and renewable sources of power, schools, clinics — and to conserve our water, forests, farmland, and open space.
- 4) Immediate and full withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq & Afghanistan! Close all U.S. bases abroad! No money for the military — use funds instead for public works! Convert the war industries to making products for people's needs and to combat global warming.

5) Reduce the workweek to 30 hours with no cut in pay, and cut the retirement age to 55. Provide unemployment and retirement payments at the level of union wages and benefits.

6) To combat inflation: A sliding scale of wages and pensions that matches the rises in consumer prices. To combat high medical costs: A free, universal, public health-care system.

7) Immediate citizenship for all undocumented workers. No job discrimination; equal pay for equal work — regardless of gender, sexual orientation, skin color, or national origin.

8) Nationalize manufacturing, big agribusiness, energy, and transportation corporations and place them under the control of elected committees of workers.

9) To mobilize support for the demands it adopts, the EMERGENCY CONGRESS should organize ACTION COMMITTEES in every workplace and neighborhood threatened by the crisis. These committees can draw up more concrete demands than the ones outlined above.

10) To put all these measures into effect, we need a LABOR PARTY — based on a fighting union movement and all people who are oppressed and exploited. For a workers' government!

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# No recovery in sight for the jobless

Paul Sakuma / AP



Amy Sancetta / AP



By JOHN LESLIE

The jobs and unemployment numbers released on June 3 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) paint a grim picture of the situation facing unemployed workers in the United States. According to some capitalist economists, the “Great Recession” supposedly ended in 2009 but the economy remains weak—with the housing, manufacturing, and construction sectors still flat and job creation at a near standstill.

In May the U.S. economy added only 54,000 jobs, and 30,000 of those were the result of a much-publicized hiring binge by fast-food giant MacDonal’d’s. The economy has to add somewhere between 100,000 and 150,000 jobs per month just to keep pace with new workers entering the workforce. The private sector added 83,000 jobs in May, but this gain was partially offset by the loss of 29,000 public sector jobs.

The offensive against public employees and cutbacks at the federal, state and local levels has meant the loss of a total of 446,000 jobs since September 2008. Layoffs of public school teachers accounted for 40% of the public sector jobs lost in the last year. The period from March 2010 to March 2011 saw the loss of 329,000 public-sector jobs; two-thirds of those jobs were held by women.

Women and oppressed nationalities are hardest hit by this recession. Unemployment percentages for Blacks and Latinos are higher than the average—almost double for Blacks at 16.2 percent, and 12 percent for Latinos. The percentages for youth, especially Black youth, are astronomical. Only one in four (25%) of high school kids seeking a summer job this year will get one—down from 37 percent last year.

The May report revealed that little has changed. Job creation is happening too slowly to turn the situation around for the millions of unemployed and underemployed. To recover the jobs lost in this recession in five years, 380,000 jobs would have to be created per month.

According to the Center for Economic Policy and Research ([www.cepr.net](http://www.cepr.net)), “Taking a longer, three-month snapshot, there is not much that is very encouraging. A loss of 5000 jobs in manufacturing brings the average gain over the last three months to 13,000. Construction added 2000 jobs in May, bringing its average gain to 4000. Job growth in retail has averaged 16,700 over the last three months. Health care has added an average of 28,000 jobs since February. The rate in restaurants has been 23,000.

“Construction employment is likely to remain close to flat for the rest of the year. Manufacturing may go back to adding jobs, but probably only at a rate of around 10,000 per month. At that pace, it will take two decades for employment to return to its pre-recession level.”

According to the BLS, the number of unemployed is 13.9 million workers or 9.1 percent of the workforce. An additional 8.5 million workers are working part-time because they cannot find a full-time job, and another 2.2 million are what the BLS refers to as “marginally attached” to the work forces. That’s an official total of

24.6 million who are unemployed or underemployed. If you understand that government figures tend to miss the long-term unemployed and underemployed, the true figure is likely something like 30 million workers.

In spite of the grim jobs outlook, the politicians of both major parties are wasting very little time on the concerns of the unemployed.

In fact, the offensive against public employees and the budget-cutting frenzy at all levels of government are coupled with attacks on programs like food stamps and unemployment compensation, which are the only thing many workers have to fall back on.

The cold calculus of electoral politics enters in here. Republicans are reluctant to do anything to improve the economy in hopes that high unemployment will drive voters to deny Obama a second term. The Democrats, on the other hand, are playing a more subtle game. They emphasize the “progress” made during Obama’s first term while participating in the austerity drive that seeks to balance the cost of recovery on the backs of workers. Obama talks a lot about “shared sacrifice,” but the sacrifices seem only to be made by working people—not the rich and powerful.

It’s important to understand that this crisis is not just the result of greedy bankers and the rich making mistakes. It is the result of the inherent instability of the capitalist system.

The supposed recovery is nothing more than a temporary gain in corporate profits. The continued slack performance of the economy, especially the housing sector, coupled with the debt crisis in Europe, threatens a “double dip” recession. There has been no recovery for the majority of working-class people. We face high unemployment rates, flagging wages, and the continued onslaught against our living standards as the bosses try to increase profits and productivity at our expense.

Politicians and economists speak now of the “new normal,” a situation of permanent high unemployment and insecurity for the majority. Capitalism has created a layer of people whose lives are precarious, living one or two paychecks away from poverty and homelessness. A 20-year wait for the jobs lost in this recession to return is unacceptable. This is an emergency situation and must be treated as such by the labor movement and its allies.

## One-sided class war

The bipartisan offensive against public employees is just the latest battle in the one-sided class war waged against the living standards of workers since the 1970s. Over the past 30-plus years, we have seen industrial jobs moved either to the South or overseas, and the power of industrial unions diminished in the process. This process was marked by union busting and several defensive strikes—for example, by meatpackers in Austin, Minn; at Caterpillar; Staley; and Bridgestone/Firestone in Decatur, Ill.; the Detroit newspaper strike; and the UPS strike of 1997.

More recently, the potential for a working-class fight-back, after years of retreat, was demonstrated by the massive protests following the proposal by Wisconsin Gov. Walker to strip public workers of their right to collective bargaining. The right wing obviously sees an opportunity in the budget crisis to break the power of the unions. Madison was flooded with tens of thousands of protesters and their supporters. Workers took to the

(Above) Cleveland May 26 rally against layoffs of firefighters. (Left) San Francisco rally for jobs.

streets and occupied the capitol building.

The call for a general strike was raised in a serious way for the first time in decades in the U.S., but the union officialdom made no effort to pursue this tactic. Instead, labor bureaucrats and their Democratic Party allies have done what they could to channel working-class activism and energy into petitioning campaigns and “safe” political activities.

The reliance of the union leadership on the Democrats is a major cause of confusion for U.S. workers. The Democrats are half the *problem!* In the name of “bipartisan” cooperation they play “good cop” to the GOP’s “bad cop,” and all the while they are taking the same steps to cut workers’ wages and benefits and showing their subservience to Wall Street.

Democratic governors in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Oregon, California, New York, Illinois, Washington, Hawaii, Minnesota, Maryland, and New Hampshire have joined the offensive against public employees. Democrats, for the most part, are not openly attacking collective bargaining. Instead, they hide behind talk of shared sacrifice and responsibility to taxpayers.

The bipartisan anti-union consensus was demonstrated in June in Trenton, N.J. The Democratic-controlled State Assembly passed a law curtailing collective bargaining rights and “reforming” the nearly insolvent pension system. This law was written by Democrats and was signed into law by Tea Party Governor Chris Christie. One of the biggest ironies is that this anti-worker legislation was co-authored by Senate President Sweeney, who is an Iron Workers Union official!

Talk of saving the New Jersey state worker pensions system rings hollow. Past state legislatures and governors of both parties have failed to make the state’s contribution to the system for years. Instead, they have used the pension money for general funds, and each year the pension system has crept closer to bankruptcy.

## A mass action strategy for a workers’ recovery

Working people need jobs, education and health care, not false promises. We need jobs and justice, not union busting and unemployment. What is needed is a strategy based on mass action and political independence from the two bourgeois parties. The working class and its allies need to relearn the hard lessons learned in the 1930s with the formation of the CIO.

Gains for the working class can only be won through determined struggle. We need to relearn the method of the general strike and factory occupations. The trade-union leadership is not up to the job. They are too comfortable with their positions and their friendships with Democratic Party politicians. The labor tops use our lives and living standards as bargaining chips with the bosses, while the ranks lose. Rank-and-file control of the unions is crucial if we are to fight back.

A strategy based on class struggle should make concrete demands to protect the gains past generations have fought for—Social Security, Medicare, and the right to form unions and to strike. Beyond these demands, we should be demanding immediate action to create millions of jobs at top union wages. All U.S. wars and occupations overseas should cease, with the troops brought home and the money wasted on these wars used to rebuild our cities. ■

# Slutwalks spread to Mexico

By ONA TZINGER

The first “slutwalk” began in Toronto early this year by women who were angered by members of the criminal justice system continually blaming the victims of sexual attacks. Since then, these colorful protests have spread across the world.

While the slutwalks occurring in cities across Europe and the U.S. have faced critique by communities of color for being too ethnically homogenous, a group of militant Mexican feminists organized a June 12 “marcha de las putas” in Mexico City.

Mexican women have growing reason to take to the streets in protest. Recently, the mayor of Navolato, Sinaloa, proposed a ban on mini-skirts in order to tackle high teen pregnancy rates, noting his “political responsibility ... to take a look at the problems that afflict society.” Perhaps the preposterous claim implicit in this suggestion does not warrant an extensive debunking. However, it is important to note the familiar “blame the victim”



mentality operating here, the same logic used by the Toronto cop whose comments triggered the original slutwalk a few months back.

We can assume that the mere presence of 5000 demonstrators who gathered in Mexico City for the slutwalk gave the mayor reason to rethink the direction of

his gaze in examining the root cause of high teen pregnancy rates, which have more to do with a lack of social and economic options than clothing styles.

March organizers and participants explained that they turned out to stand in solidarity with feminists across the globe against sexual violence and victim

blaming, and especially to show their support for a bill to be voted on in coming weeks by the Mexico City legislature on whether or not to categorize femicide as crime. They also demanded that survivors of rape be provided with the option of abortion or morning-after pills without exception.

Marches will continue in Mexican cities including Acapulco, Cancun, Chihuahua, Leon, Morelia, Oaxaca, Orizaba, Tijuana, and Xalapa.

Marches have also spread to cities in Central and South American countries including Argentina, Nicaragua, and Honduras. Further, there will be a highly controversial slutwalk in Delhi, India, at the end of July called the “Besharmi Morcha” or “Shameless Front.” It has been organized by a 19-year-old Indian woman who felt that Delhi, which is known for high rates of violence against women, needed a local campaign.

While the Mexican feminist organizers of “Marcha de Putas D.F.” explained that they gathered to combat a particular breed of sexism—namely, the deeply embedded culture of Mexican machismo—it should be noted that backward police and policy makers in North America regularly provide evidence of the global nature of sexism and subsequently, provide fodder for a global fightback for women’s liberation. ■

## Toronto: Stonewall is reborn

By JOHN WILSON

TORONTO—At least 1000 people gathered in Queen’s Park June 26 to participate in the first Stonewall march to commemorate the 42nd anniversary of the Stonewall Inn riots in New York City, which were a jump-off point for the gay liberation movement. This date had been opportunistically vacated by Pride Toronto, which moved Pride Day to the first weekend in July in search of greater numbers and (you guessed it) more money. The mood was festive and celebratory. There was lots of glitter, no corporate sponsorship, no permit, and no cops were requested although there were a few around. And, since everybody knew why we were there, there were no speeches.

At the beginning of the march to the 519 Church St. Community Centre, Van Bon Bon led with the chant,

“An Army of Lovers Will Never be Defeated.” There were many hand-made signs echoing this.

Well-known singer Faith Nolan performed from a truck at the front of the march. She commented: “This is how Pride started. This is the real Pride. The parade is so corporate. We don’t own it. Now if the profits went to the community, that would be different, but it doesn’t.” Adriana Alarcon, another organizer, declared, “This is my Pride. This is all I need. What an amazing day.”

Leanne Iskander and other young members of Catholic Schools for GSAs (gay-straight alliances) were there in numbers and enthusiasm. Many carried homemade florescent signs, including “Catholic Schools Need GSAs.” Other signs included “Stop Ford Cuts” (referring to Toronto’s reactionary mayor), “Support the Poor, Eat a Conservative,” and Queer

Ontario’s “Our Pride Includes QuAIA (Queers Against Israeli Apartheid) and TNT! Men.” There were other signs in support of QuAIA as well.

Singing, dancing, and chanting included a reference to the G20 police rampage a year ago, “Whose Streets?, Our Streets!”. The march ended at the 519 Community Centre. There, and in surrounding Cawthra Park, a grassroots event took place, “Back To Our Roots, Breaking New Ground,” sponsored by Blackness Yes!, Ontario Rainbow Alliance For The Deaf, Ill Nana, Colour Me Drag, Fruitloopz, Black CAP, Pride Coalition for Free Speech and Proud of Toronto. Queer Ontario and Blackness Yes! hosted a free buffet lunch, which was more than covered by donations.

For years, in reaction to the bureaucratic and corporatized official Pride, there has been talk of organizing an alternative event that reflects Pride’s real political roots. This event lays a solid basis for future years and the re-emergence of an independent, militant queer liberationist current. (All quotes thanks to XTRA magazine.)

## ... Antiwar

(continued from page 1)

trade-off for the use of ground troops, news reporters revealed on July 3 that the U.S. had asked China for aid in the establishment of new and alternative supply routes to Afghanistan.

In response to this buildup in U.S. military attacks on the sovereignty and self-determination of the peoples of this broad area of the globe, U.S. antiwar organizations have begun to create an audacious calendar of education and protest.

On June 18, activists gathered in New York City for a Coordinating Committee meeting of the United National Antiwar Committee. The 69 participants represented 46 organizations, including Veterans for Peace, Voices for Creative Nonviolence, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, WESPAC, Students for Justice in Palestine, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, the Thomas Merton Center, the Bail Out the People Movement, the Muslim Peace Coalition, the Islamic Leadership Council of NY, Project SALAM, New England United, the Committee to Stop FBI Repression, Code Pink, Desis Rising Up and Moving, Black Agenda Report, Pakistan Solidarity Network, and others,

One of the first acts of the Coordinating Committee was the approval of a call for emergency actions in as many cities as possible on June 27, a date marking the beginning of the second 90-day round of U.S./NATO airstrikes on Libya. The resolution said, in part, “There have now been over 10,000 air sorties carried out by NATO in this campaign. In one day

last week the NATO forces carried out 157 bombing attacks, more than three times the previous national average, on Tripoli in one day. It is clear that the U.S./NATO goal in Libya has nothing to do with protecting civilians and is, in fact, the greatest danger to Libyan civilians today.”

Attendees approved a motivation for the emergency actions that characterized the attacks on Libya as part of the effort of Western governments to contain and roll back the Arab Spring, perceiving it as being of a package with the over \$20 billion dollar infusion of “aid” being rushed to Tunisia and Egypt to retard the development of the mass movements.

The UNAC CC meeting also called for activists to attend the Thursday, Oct. 6, “Stop the Machine” kickoff of non-violent civil resistance scheduled for Washington, D.C., and urged all UNAC affiliates and grassroots antiwar committees to mark the 10th anniversary of the war on Afghanistan with nationally coordinated local demonstrations and rallies on Sat., Oct. 15. On that day, activists will demand: Withdraw all U.S./NATO military forces, contractors, and bases from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya now! End drone attacks on defenseless populations in Pakistan and Yemen! End U.S. aid to Israel! Hands off Iran! Bring our war dollars home now! Money for jobs and education, not for war and incarceration!

The Oct. 15 actions, it was noted, can be the occasion for antiwar groups to reach out to the unionists who are protesting cutbacks and job loss, to the Muslim American communities suffering increased harassment, to the Palestinian youth organizations energized by the re-



cent efforts to break the blockade of Gaza, and to all community groups that would benefit if the war dollars were brought home and spent on social needs. Every activist won through this outreach will then be invited to attend a large, open, and democratic conference to Bring the Troops and War Dollars Home Now that is scheduled for Nov. 11, 12, and 13.

In 2010, the United National Antiwar Conference in Albany, N.Y., attracted around 800 activists, hosted over 40 workshops with 70 authoritative speakers, and was capped by a one-person/one-vote plenary that called for and spring actions. The UNAC CC is planning

a conference based on the Albany model at which activists from around the country can have direct input into the next year of antiwar campaigning. This year’s conference will have a special responsibility to craft and build a political mobilization in opposition to the combined NATO/G8 summit recently announced by Obama and scheduled for Chicago on May 15-22.

Based on a resolution voted up at the June 18 Coordinating Committee meeting, the United National Antiwar Committee acted immediately when the Chicago location and dates for the summit were set and applied for permits for an opening-day action on Tuesday, May 15, and a massive peaceful, legal march for “Money for Jobs and Education, Not War” on Saturday, May 19.

The representatives of the 46 groups present at the June 18 UNAC CC resolved that UNAC, in conjunction with a broad range of groups and organizations that share general agreement with the major demands adopted at our 2010 Albany, N.Y. national conference, would initiate a mass demonstration at the site of the NATO gathering.

The group also resolved that UNAC would welcome and encourage the participation of all groups interested in mobilizing against war and for social justice in planning a broad range of other NATO meeting protests including teach-ins, alternative conferences, and activities organized on the basis of direct action/civil resistance.

In addition, UNAC began immediately to pave the way for international collaboration on this protest on the occasion of the gathering of the most powerful coalition of war makers on the planet. See www.UNACpeace.org. ■

# ... Obama re-election

(continued from page 1)

putting the previous Bush administration bailouts to shame! *The Times* couldn't help but note, however, that some "deep pocket" banker-fundraisers stayed away for appearances—"optics" was the selected word. "Wall Street is not the only one concerned about optics," the article continued, "The president's re-election campaign has not been actively courting Wall Street's biggest C.E.O.'s to appear at such fundraisers, out of fear that their support could offend his most liberal backers..."

The political horse race requires Democrats and Republicans to take whatever opportunities seem open to them to try to fool the electorate. Accordingly, Commander in Chief Obama, mindful that polls show that a majority of Americans do not support U.S. involvement in any of its current wars, has chosen to play the role once again of a "peace candidate." And thus he told Congress with a straight face that the U.S. is not involved in "hostilities" against Libya!

Obama received some flak over his insistence that the U.S. was not required to seek Congressional approval under the War Powers Act for continued U.S. funding for the Libyan War. The president argued that the definition of war is when the U.S. attacks a nation and they fight back. Given the fact that Libya's air defenses were destroyed, not to mention that significant numbers of Libya's people have been murdered, we are not really at war with that country, the "lesser-evil" president asserted.

Democrats in Congress, although complicit in the president's charade, joined with their Republican colleagues to rap Obama on the knuckles by denying further funding for the war. Then, in another bill, both parties approved continued funding for the Libyan slaughter.

As part of the "peace-candidate" hoax, Obama recently announced an "increased rate of withdrawal" of U.S. troops from Afghanistan. He pledged to withdraw some 30,000 troops by next summer, beginning with 10,000 by the end of 2011. Obama insisted that after America's longest war—11 years and running—a trillion dollars expended, and 1500 U.S. troops lost, yesterday's "terrorist threat" has virtually disappeared.

"The tide of war is receding," said Obama. "It is time to focus on nation-building here at home." Officially, of course, the U.S. government, even under the George W. Bush administration, rejects the concept of "nation-building," that is, smashing unfriendly governments and disbanding historic cultural, religious, economic and cultural norms which U.S. imperialism finds contrary to its interests. But in his haste to re-position himself as a "peace candidate" the president apparently slipped and told the truth about U.S. war aims in Afghanistan.

"Peace candidate" rhetoric aside, more than two-thirds of all U.S. troops, approximately 100,000, will remain in Afghanistan, plus an estimated equal number of mercenaries. Additional, but unspecified numbers of troops are to be withdrawn by 2014, but the loopholes and contingencies in these provisions allow for nothing less than permanent occupation.

Meanwhile, "counterinsurgency" or secret terrorist attacks led by mercenaries and "special forces," better named death squads, on suspected opponents of the U.S.-installed Hamid Karzai government remain central to U.S. Afghan strategy. "Al-Qaeda is under more pressure than at any time since 9/11," said an American commander, who neglected to add that al-Qaeda has been estimated for years to have about 40 fighters in Afghanistan.

A June 24 *New York Times* article reported Obama as stating, "The time to rely on massive military force is over. The need now is to focus on more clandestine operations of the type that the U.S. is conducting in Pakistan, Yemen and elsewhere. When threatened we must respond with force. But when that force can be targeted, we need not deploy large armies overseas." "Targeted" of course, means destroying "enemy" forces via drone airplanes and death squads.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, new CIA director David Petraeus and outgoing Secretary of Defense Robert Gates all accepted Obama's announcement "with reservations," said *The Times*, noting that "the effort to transfer responsibility to Afghan troops has been elusive because these troops are proving to be [after 11 years] unprepared for the job. ... Corruption in the Karzai government continues to be rampant, sapping the confidence of many Afghans."

But the media-savvy Obama insisted, "Over the decades we have spent over a trillion dollars on war at a time of rising debt and hard economic times. Now we must invest in America's greatest resource: our people." Not to be outdone, Obama's Republican "opponents" generally lined up to join the "peace parade." And when the White House stated on July 5 that 10,000 U.S. troops might remain in Iraq beyond the end of the year (breaking earlier promises to withdraw them), Republicans were quick to protest, "Bring the troops home!"

In general, however, the two-party "lesser-evil" electoral game requires the "right" to be as outrageous and reactionary as possible, thus enabling the Democrats to pose as defenders of the people.



## Court rules against WalMart women

On June 20, some 1.5 million female employees who filed a class-action suit against WalMart for discrimination based on sex were faced with the cruel reality of corporate hegemony and sexism when their case was dismissed by the Supreme Court. Their case constituted the most important class-action case in over a decade.

Although there is ample evidence of WalMart's sexist discrimination both in wages and in hiring, the case was thrown out because there is no company-wide written policy of discrimination.

The plaintiffs argued that women are underrepresented among managers and hold only 14% of managerial positions versus over 80% of lower-ranking supervisory jobs that come with an hourly wage.

Regrettably, this decision will affect forthcoming

class-action claims against Costco and other companies. Other major companies, including Goldman-Sachs & Co., Toshiba, and Cigna Healthcare Inc. also face class-action claims from female employees. It is important to note that the court did not rule on whether or not WalMart was discriminatory, just that the plaintiffs could not proceed as a "class."

Despite this tragic blow to the labor movement and to the ongoing struggle for women's rights, WalMart workers angered by the Supreme Court's decision vow to continue a united struggle. Further, they plan to file individual lawsuits against WalMart for sex discrimination. — ONA TZINGER

(Above) Protest against Walmart decision outside Supreme Court building in Washington, June 21.

Republican Tea Party leaders met last month, approving the following debt-cutting proposals for candidates running in some 18 swing states: (1) Balance the budget within 10 years; (2) Cut federal spending to 18 percent of GDP—a \$1.3 trillion budget cut. (3) Reduce the \$14 trillion national debt to no more than 66 percent of GDP (from 100 percent today). (4) Reduce federal spending by at least \$300 billion the first year and at least \$9 trillion over the next 10 years.

These goals, backed by most Republicans, are supposed to be achieved with no new taxes, more privatizations, health-care cutbacks, etc. Within the Tea Party framework of capitalist politics, without cutting military spending and without raising corporate tax rates, no one seriously believes that these proposals can be accomplished. But this is beside the point! All are designed to give the Democrats enough space to meet their "adversaries half way," so to speak—that is, to move the broad bipartisan ruling-class agenda farther to the right.

Obama's rhetoric aside, the "lesser evil" Democrats are in substantial agreement with the Republicans, already reconciling with them on critical issues, like cutting \$200 billion from Medicare and Medicaid. How they achieve this is pure gamesmanship, an annual ritual wherein the few direct representatives of the ruling rich, taking into account their conflicting and coinciding interests, arrange back room deals to settle accounts.

Republicans and Democrats debate tax hikes and whether to renewing the previous time-limited tax breaks for the rich. In the end, however, both agree that workers must pay for the failure of the system itself. The

tax codes are replete with almost totally unknown tax breaks and outright gifts for the rich in every industry, not counting those who have, "under the law" moved their corporate headquarters outside the country to avoid paying taxes at all.

There is no end to evidence demonstrating that voting for and supporting Democrats as a "lesser evil" is a tactic that can never lead to effective social change. The worldwide capitalist crisis today compels Obama and the Democrats to make George Bush look like a liberal by comparison. Any serious challenge to his policies can and must arise from a fundamental break with both capitalist parties as well as so-called third parties like the Greens, which seek a "kinder, gentler" capitalism.

Challenging the evils inherent in all capitalist societies requires the concerted action of the great working-class majority, organized independently of all capitalist institutions and their political representatives. Today, the formation of a mass Labor Party based on a renewed, fighting, and democratic trade-union movement would be a good beginning.

Revolutionary socialists would actively build such a party and seek the adoption of a socialist program aimed at the construction of a new society that for the first time in human history would be based on the rule of the working-class majority in unison with all the oppressed and exploited. Exploitation of workers and despoliation of the environment would be ended. A democratically planned society would raise the quality of life for all. Today's world of perpetual war and ever-increasing misery would be relegated to the dustbin of history. ■

## Philly cops murder another Black man

By YUSEF SHAHADI

PHILADELPHIA—By all accounts, 39-year-old Eric Crawley was a hard-working, dedicated family man. Relatives report that he was dedicated to his four children and fiancée. His sister was a victim of domestic violence. On June 17, during the course of an argument with her boyfriend, she had called on her brother for help. Within an hour after that call, Eric Crawley was dead after being shot by the Philadelphia police.

The police claimed that Crawley pulled his legally registered gun from his holster and aimed it at them. In addition to his job as a city bus driver, Mr. Crawley had a film company. He had a gun, relatives and friends said, because he often carried expensive cameras and related equipment.

Relatives dispute the police version. His mother, who was at the scene and in close proximity to her son, stated that "he never, never pulled his gun." Other wit-

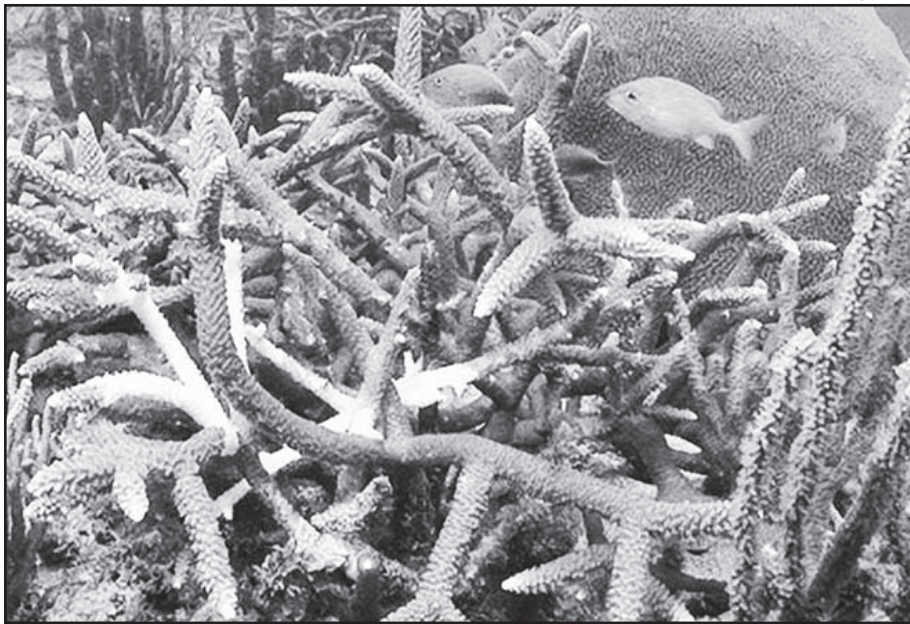
nesses at the scene collaborated the mother's version.

Furthermore, family members wanted to clarify what they say was a coerced statement from Crawley's sister, Danielle. Danielle, they said, was intimidated and threatened into making a statement to the police indicating that Eric had pulled a gun. His family indicated that they plan a lawsuit against the city.

This is just one incident of the police violence that is all too common in the city of Philadelphia. Less than a week prior to Crawley's death, on June 11, a protest was held at the prominent intersection of Broad & Olney in Philadelphia to protest the previous police murder of 22-year-old Eric Radcliff. He was shot and killed by the police on May 21.

Police murders of Black males have been a persistent issue around the country. That is why it is essential to support the upcoming Black is Back protest against the "Other Wars." This demonstration is scheduled for Aug. 20 in Harlem and is endorsed by the United National Antiwar Committee (UNAC). ■

# Ocean on the verge of mass extinctions



NOAA/AP

By CHRISTINE FRANK

Two consequences of fossil-fuel combustion and the release of vast amounts of greenhouse gases since the onset of the Industrial Revolution are a warming ocean and the acidification of seawater with too much atmospheric carbon dioxide being absorbed by it. Both of these factors are now causing increased hypoxia or oxygen depletion, which initially began with nutrient overloading from agricultural run-off.

Paleoclimatic studies have shown that these three factors—warming, acidification and hypoxia—which are symptomatic of a disturbance of Earth's carbon cycle, led to five previous mass extinctions on the planet. Today's ocean is headed in the same direction if drastic measures are not taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions immediately. This is the message coming from a consortium of 27 scientists, who met in Oxford in April under the sponsorship of the International Program on the State of the Ocean (IPSO).

The warming of the ocean has led to numerous coral bleaching events around the globe. When the polyps that secrete the coral reefs become heat-stressed, the algae that give them their bright colors and provide their food through photosynthesis abandon their hosts. As a result, the corals die off. Some recover, but more and more are failing to do so. Over the last half-century, 40 percent (some say 90 percent) of the world's coral reefs have disappeared along with many of the associated fish species. This is particularly alarming since they are the most diverse ecosystem on the planet and provide habitat for millions of marine organisms.

Global warming has led to huge shifts as marine life attempts to escape hot zones for cooler ones so they can live in the most favorable temperatures. This creates problems in food supply and predation, upsetting the dynamic equilibrium of marine ecosystems. Phytoplankton in the Arctic now peak 50 days earlier as a result of decreased sea ice, which reached a record low in 2007 and has not recovered. The sequential harvest of phytoplankton by zooplankton, who are in turn fed upon by larger creatures, is programmed into the reproductive cycles of marine species, meaning food may not be available when required. This could unravel the complex tapestry of the food web.

Thus far, the ocean has acted as a buffer by taking up our excess carbon dioxide, but it is paying the price for capitalism's pollution with dire consequences. As more anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> (now at 392 ppm atmospheric concentration) is absorbed by the ocean, seawater's natural alkaline pH has dropped by .1, or an

## Capitalist exploitation and climate change have produced a deadly threat to marine life.

algorithmic decline of 30 percent. This acidification of seawater makes it increasingly difficult for calcium-carbonate secreting organisms such as corals and shellfish to produce their exoskeletons, which will literally dissolve under more acidic conditions. It is particularly threatening to tiny microorganisms that build plates of calcite to armor themselves. Their inability to do so affects the foundation of the marine food web.

Also, the undersaturation of aragonite in seawater—the form of calcium carbonate required by sea life—affects marine creatures' ability to navigate and sense their environment by hearing. (Because cold water absorbs more CO<sub>2</sub>, coldwater species are the most at risk.

We are all too familiar with the Dead Zone at the mouth of the Mississippi River in the Gulf of Mexico, which is caused by vast amounts of chemical fertilizers and manure from factory farming running off into streams and rivers. The excessive nutrients give rise to bacteria that break down organic matter. The resulting feeding frenzy depletes the oxygen in the water, creating anoxic conditions that kill off by suffocation all life unable to flee the area. There is a growing oxygen crisis, with 762 dead zones mapped by NASA. Human-caused eutrophication is also leading to ever more toxic algal blooms that are deadly to fish and people.

Global warming too is playing its role in depleting the ocean of oxygen. Just as warmer water holds less carbon dioxide, it also holds less oxygen. The ocean gets its oxygen at the interface of the atmosphere and the water. It comes either directly from the air or through the photosynthesis of algae floating at the top, then it mixes through the water column into the depths. Global warming reduces this mixing by making the surface water lighter as freshwater ice masses melt and make it less dense and saline in content.

The extra heat makes the surface waters expand, further lightening them. This lighter water does not sink and mix, depriving the depths of needed oxygen. More oxygen will remain at the surface to be used by pelagic (open water) organisms, who will have the advantage over benthic (ocean bottom) ones. A lack of oxygen constrains sea-life growth, with many organisms left gasping for breath. Fish populations are sure to decline as a result.



Brian J. Skerry

There are many other harmful impacts affecting the health of the ocean. Overfishing is a major one. Industrial fishing that uses bottom trawlers, which destroy huge areas of seabed, as well as enormous purseine nets and long hooks, results in a tremendous by-catch of "unwanted" fish and other animals, including dolphins and sea turtles, that are cruelly ground up and thrown back into the sea. Shark finning for soup is another wasteful and heinous practice.

Overharvesting of many fish populations has led to the collapse of fisheries, such as the cod off Newfoundland's Grand Banks, and the depletion of big fish that take years to mature and reach reproductive age. The demise of the bluefin tuna appears imminent, yet authorities have refused to take action to protect the species from further human predation.

This loss of keystone species in the form of top predators means there is nothing to keep other marine populations in check and is leading to gross imbalances. As a result, there is an oversimplification of ecosystems occurring, with the proliferation of less nutritious jellies and squirts that are coming to dominate some regions. Sixty-three percent of fish stocks are overexploited or depleted, with many near extinction. Consequently, an important source of protein upon which millions of people depend is being undermined by industrialized greed and corruption while local fisherfolk are finding it harder to make a living.

Oil spills and chemical pollution are another major problem. As we know from the Exxon Valdez and BP oil spills, marine and coastal ecosystems have been severely poisoned by hydrocarbons and chemical dispersants and will take generations to recover. In addition, the microbial breakdown of the petroleum contributes to hypoxic conditions that asphyxiate sea life.

All of the chemicals that we now find part of the human body burden—PCBs, DDT, dioxins, flame retardants, plasticizers, and heavy metals—are making their way into the ocean. They are even migrating to the polar regions, where they are bio-accumulating up the food chain with heavy concentrations in the human breast milk of indigenous women. Many of these compounds are endocrine disruptors that are altering early development and undermining the immune and nervous systems of sea creatures, who are thus losing their resilience. The toxic cocktail to which marine life is being exposed reduces its ability to withstand disease and other stresses by 40 percent.

Our garbage—the stuff that capitalist

(Above) Thresher shark trapped in net. (Left) Staghorn coral in Caribbean has declined 97% due to human activity, higher water temperatures, acidification.

industry refuses to recycle—has made its way into huge oceanic gyres. Plastics are a major part of this colossal mess. They are eaten by birds, which starve for lack of real sustenance. Plastic bags are confused for jellyfish and are fatally swallowed by sea turtles. Other creatures get caught up and are strangled by the junk. As plastics break down into microscopic particles, they enter the tissues and cells of marine organisms. With the increased surface area of the smaller particles, they become efficient delivery systems for the numerous chemical contaminants contained in seawater.

Melting ice masses are now the largest contributor to sea-level rise a rate of 2.1 millimeters per year. When the thermal expansion of the water is added in, it is even more. Rising sea levels threaten to inundate not only coral reefs but also shallow-water ecosystems such as salt marshes, estuaries, and mangrove swamps, which provide habitat and nurseries for other species.

There is a huge pool of freshwater that now lies within the Arctic Circle as a result of flow from Arctic rivers and melting ice masses. So far, wind patterns and ocean currents have kept this water within the region, but changes could cause its release into the Atlantic, where it could freshen and slow the Gulf Stream that gives Europe its temperate climate. Other seas, such as the Baltic, one of the largest brackish ecosystems, could have its salinity levels dramatically lowered, negatively impacting its species.

According to the report issued by the international earth system workshop on the ocean, the impact of these multiple stressors is "often negatively synergistic meaning that the combination of the two magnifies the negative impacts of each one occurring alone." In other words, "the whole of marine degradation is greater than the sum of its parts." This degradation is now occurring at an accelerating rate.\*

The ocean comprises 70 percent of the planet and makes up its heart and lifeblood. Since everything is interconnected from the water we drink and food we eat to the air we breathe, human beings cannot survive on a world with a dead ocean. As the Science Director for IPSO, Dr. Alex Rogers, points out, "If the ocean goes down, it's game over." Therefore, we must take drastic measures to end

(continued on page 8)

By ANDREAS KLOKE

*This article describes the significant rise in mobilizations in Greece in early June. It was written on June 13, two days before the first attempt to encircle the Greek Parliament—which was violently attacked by police. On June 28, Greek workers undertook a two-day general strike. Nevertheless, parliament, led by the “socialist” PASOK party of Premier George Papandreou, approved the EU/IMF-backed “Memorandum.” The new austerity legislation authorizes drastic cutbacks in social services, wages, and pensions; tax hikes; mass lay-offs; and the privatization of many state-owned enterprises.*

ATHENS—The social resistance against the policy of the “Memorandum” in Greece, which has been imposed on the country since the beginning of last year by the “Troika”—a kind of committee of the ruling classes of the major countries of the EU and the USA, represented by the Brussels Commission, the ECB and the IMF in conjunction with the “socialist” PASOK government—has now entered a new and potentially decisive phase. The Memorandum has only one meaning: the ruthless plundering of the working population and its unprecedented degradation in favor of saving the exorbitant profits of Greek, German, French, and other banks—with young people, working women, and all other socially disadvantaged groups as particular victims.

This is, however, presented by the governments and the mass media as a “rescue of Greece” through the “generous granting of credits.” At the same time, it is evident that the disastrous bankruptcy of the global banking and credit system in 2008, which was “bailed out” by the governments of North America and Western Europe with \$15 trillion U.S. (a worldwide and historically unprecedented redistribution of wealth from tax revenues to corporate coffers) led to the national debt crisis of the countries of the European periphery: Iceland, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and especially Greece.

At stake is the stability and even the existence of the euro, along with the functioning of the financial mechanisms in the EU, and consequently the dollar as well, which currently depends on the overvaluation of the euro.

It is not surprising therefore that at his recent meeting with German Chancellor Merkel, President Obama paid particular attention to the dangers of a possible Greek “national bankruptcy.” This would mean that Greece might be unable, or possibly refuse (!) to pay off its foreign debt. Obama stressed, no doubt rightly, the special role of Germany in the European-international “aid to the initiation of a forward process” that is designed to enable Greece “to grow and to better manage its debt problem.”

The difficulty, though, is that granting international rescue packages to maintain the solvency of Greece is diametrically opposed to maintaining a reasonably decent life for the workers and the huge mass of the Greek population. In other words, the conditions of the troika lead to a relentless bloodletting at the expense of about 85% of the Greek population and a dramatic decline in general living conditions. They do not open up any prospect for the situation in the coming years and decades to improve again. Greece will never be able to repay the interest and compound interest on the loans obtained.

Recognizing that, in fact, they have hardly anything to lose anymore, inspired by the successful first stage of the Egyptian revolution, the events in Tahrir square in Cairo, and finally the occupation of central squares of Madrid and Barcelona by rebellious young people, the massive resistance in Greece has reached a new level with the continuous occupation of Syntagma Square in Athens, directly in front of the Parliament, along with central locations in Thessaloniki and many other Greek cities. There have been multiple attempts to stop the policies of the Memorandum in the last 18 months, including a series of general strikes and many persistent strikes in affected areas, such as public transport. The result is that the reputation of the government trends towards zero.

Harbingers of a new mass radicalization have included months of an outright rebellion in Keratea, a small town southeast of Athens, against the establishment of a landfill site. This rebellion could not be broken even by the mass deployment of special police commandos and their brutal behavior toward the protesters. A successful hunger strike of 300 “illegal” immigrants from North Africa in March and April, even if it remained quite marginalized, was also important since it demonstrated that action is possible

# GREECE IN REVOLT



Kostas Tsironis / AP

## EU/IMF austerity package challenged by general strikes.

even against the dictates of the Memorandum.

It is characteristic of this new form of mass resistance that hundreds of thousands of people who previously were not willing to participate in combat now support the occupations, actively demonstrating their determination to stop the policy of the Memorandum and to force the government to retreat.

For different and at least partially understandable reasons, these layers have not been influenced much by the different parties or alliance formations of the reformist (KKE, SYN/SYRIZA) or anti-capitalist/revolutionary left (mainly ANTARSYA) and, in spite of everything, have taken a rather cautious attitude. The main slogans of the new movement are the replacement of the prevailing pseudo-democracy, or fraudulent democracy, by a true, direct democracy, where the majority of the affected population can put forward and implement their demands and needs.

This distinguishes itself sharply from the practice of the prevailing political model, where power is exercised on behalf of the people but without their consent or participation—not to mention the fact that the polls for the ruling PASOK, but also the right-wing bourgeois New Democracy (ND), always continue to trend downward. Thus, the existing partial legitimacy of bourgeois democracy and its main supporters has collapsed. The so-far limited but unambiguous content of the demands is expressed in the formula, “We owe nothing; we do not sell; we do not pay!”

The movement began with the occupation of Syntagma Square on May 25 and reached its first peak on June 5 with the participation of an estimated 500,000 protesters. The breadth of the movement inevitably creates, at least for the time being, a heterogeneous spectrum of ideological and political views. The participants from the start rejected the appearance of parties, political organizations, and trade unions, insisting on the principle that everyone represents only himself or herself.

This includes a strong mistrust of the party leaderships, including of the two left parties, also of the still-prevailing sectarianism of the left-wing organizations, along with a clear rejection of the hopeless bureaucracy of most trade unions (led in particular by PASOK officials). Some protesters on the “upper” part of the square carry Greek national flags and try, in this way, to express their view of national sovereignty. The upper part is generally the less “politicized,” least affected by the left, and where most protesters obviously participate in such actions for the first time.

The politically “harder core” of the movement has permanently established itself with tents on the lower part of the square and is the real engine of the protests. Every night around 9 o’clock “public meetings”



Kostas Tsironis / AFP / Getty Images

(Above) Young people rally in front of Parliament.

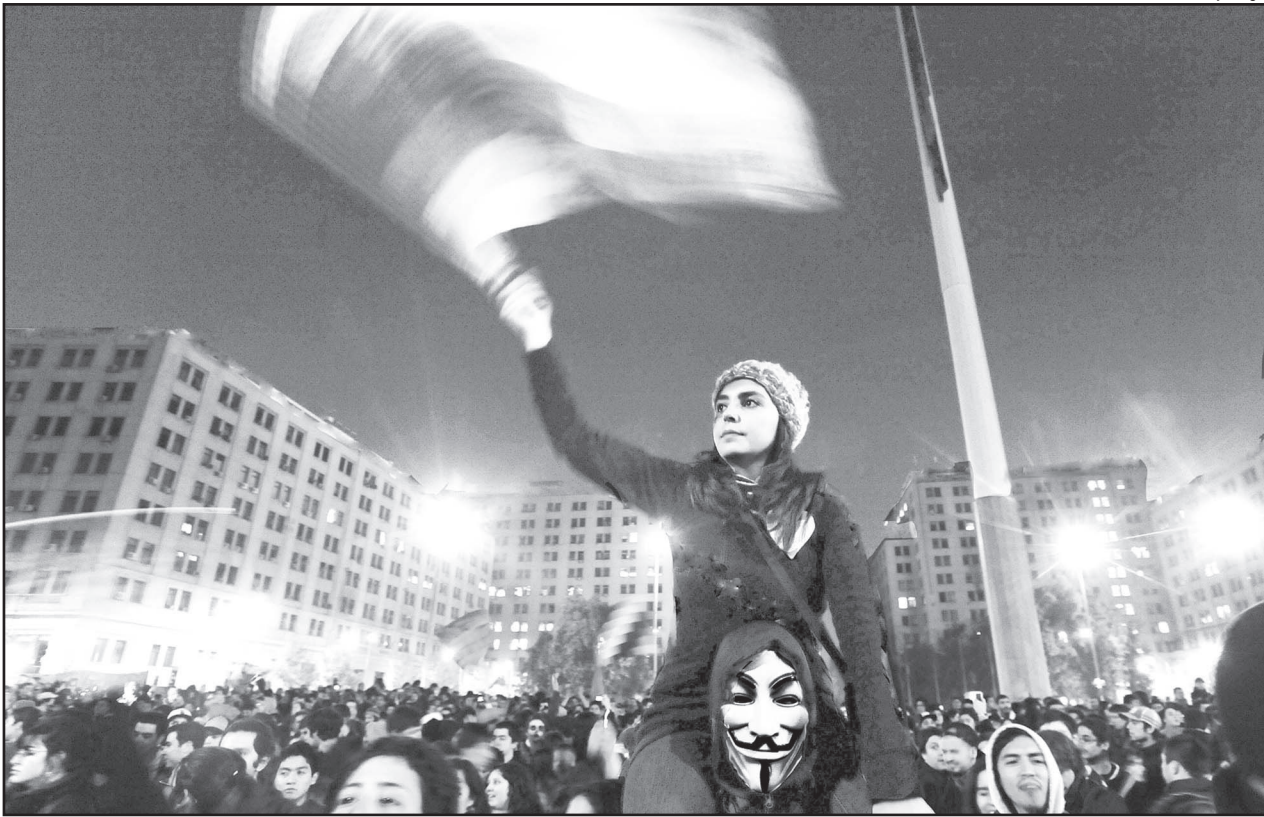
(Below) Marchers against rollback of pension benefits.

take place. All important issues, claims, content and organizational suggestions, opinions and views are discussed and partially approved by voting. All decisions are posted on a special website. Some 3000 young people, most of them probably students, take part in these meetings. This form of organization is supported both by working groups on various topics—such as unemployment, education, schools and culture—and by public forums and panel discussions as on the debt crisis and possible ways out of it.

There is a general consensus that this is a unique historical opportunity to deal a serious, possibly fatal blow to the policy of the Memorandum, the government, and the terror of the ruling classes. There is also agreement that Greece is close to a social explosion. If we measure this using the criterion formulated by a revolutionary of the last century when he noted that “the rulers cannot govern as before, and the ruled refuse to be governed in the normal way,” then this is an accurate description of the situation that has now arisen in Greece.

Nevertheless, one cannot ignore that the movement has to go through a few more stages if it is to reach its full potential. The fight must be taken into all key areas of social life: into the factories, the offices of public administration, hospitals, schools and universities, which will be most affected by the vile “Midterm Program.” The systematic destruction of jobs, the abolition of collectively-bargained contracts, the cancellation of the gains resulting from a century of struggles conducted by the workers movement, the privatization mania, and the selling off of state property must be stopped.

Primarily, a clear statement of the content and programmatic goals of the movement is needed, which will be possible only in the context of a transitional program designed to overcome the domination of finance and big business. Here the claim for expropriation of the banks under workers control without compensation has to play a key role. All this can emerge only through a combination of the new movement and the rank-and-file trade union movement of the previous 18 months. This combined movement needs a clear anti-capitalist perspective and a strategy to ensure victory. ■



(Left) On May 20, in the midst of the student upsurge, people protested in front of the Moneda Palace against hydro-electric dams in Patagonia.

## Massive student upsurge in Chile

BY ANA NOLI

On June 16 a wave of students, workers, and teachers covering more than 20 blocks of Alameda Avenue in Santiago, Chile, flooded towards La Moneda presidential palace; they demanded the reconstruction of the Chilean public education system and an end to education policies based on profit. To fund public education, the students call for the re-nationalization of the copper industry. The magnitude of the movement—approximately 100,000 in Santiago alone—swept Chile by surprise; no one would have predicted that this day of protests would turn out to be worthy of the title “the penguin revolution 2.0.”

One of the most surprised by the mass protests was right-wing President Sebastian Piñera, who has faced increasing opposition to his free-market policies by environmentalists, workers, and especially students.

June 16 was one of a series of student strikes that began on April 28 and continued to grow in magnitude and size since. The main forces involved are university and high school students, but teachers’ unions, state employees and even school principals have joined in the action. The marches are initiated by calls from the Confederation of Chilean University Students (Confech), the Coordinating Assembly of Secondary Students (ACES), and the Metropolitan Federation of High School Students (FEMES.)

To date, there have been student strikes and occupations in 500 school establishments accompanying the mobilizations. Popular educational forums and wide-ranging political discussions are frequent as students grapple with the best ways to move forward. Student songs and street theater acts critique and lament the crisis of their educational system. One student dressed and painted as a zombie held a sign around her neck referring to the lifelong debt students face: “Died owing 17,250,530 Chilean pesos” (equivalent of \$36, 733 U.S.).

Despite unity in action between the high school and university students, there seem to be differences in the demands they raise. Both student organizations call for free public transportation all year round, a restructuring of the college entrance exam (PSU) that would make it free, a voice in education policies, and more state resources. But the demands raised additionally by the high school students seem to be more militant. For example, high school students demand *immediate* free, quality public education that includes health services and meals; whereas the Confech calls for increased state funding in higher education with free education as a future goal at an undetermined date.

According to former Minister of Education Martin Zilic, quoted in the radical Chilean magazine, *Primera Piedra*, “Chile is the most privatized country in the planet, not only in college education, but in elementary and middle school education as well.” The average proportion of resources that come from the state is a mere 15%, leaving the brunt of costs on the families (Chilean education, according to the World Bank, is some of the most expensive in the world\*). Many families end up indebted to private banks to pay for their children’s education. But it wasn’t always this way.

From the 1960s until the coup d’état of 1973, the Chilean state underwent huge improvements in public education. This period saw expansion in state funding of education at the high school and university level, including the improvement of teachers’ working conditions and contracts.

However, with the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet came privatization and attacks on public services and unionized sectors (while carrying out a campaign of

torture and murder against leftists); public education in Chile—among other things—was decimated. Pinochet transformed education by replacing the central role of the state with that of the marketplace. The process of decentralization that also took place led to municipalized schools and smashed the single national agreement of the teacher’s union. The introduction of the vouchers and government loans furthered the privatization process. Pinochet signed and sealed these reforms in the Organic Constitutional Law on Education (LOCE) a day before stepping down from power in 1990.

The coalition of center-left parties known as Concertación, which governed after Pinochet and until Piñera was elected, did little to change Pinochet’s wretched 1980 Constitution; which is inherently undemocratic (e.g. the binomial system) and favors the right-wing. The Concertación parties, including the Socialist Party, have always preferred sharing political power with capitalist parties over pursuing distinctly working-class politics. They have consistently sold out the demands of social movements through negotiations in order to maintain the status quo.

The third president of the Concertación, Ricardo Lagos, furthered the free-market agenda in regard to education by opening student loans to banks, deepening the transformation of education into a profitable business for the benefit of a few.

More recently, in 2006, Concertación and the Socialist Party (SP) once again showed their lack of commitment and support for the students. That was the year of the “revolution of the penguins,” a grassroots movement primarily led by high school students that gathered a million people in the streets denouncing market-based education and demanding an end to the LOCE. This movement symbolized a significant rupture from the remnants of post-dictatorial society. The “pingüinos” forced the government of SP member and Concertación President Michelle Bachelet, to place the issue of education at the forefront of the political debate. The students demanded an end to Pinochet’s law!

After weeks of massive protests, which captured the attention of the world, the students were handed a mere re-packaging of the hated LOCE. The General Law on Education (LGE) issued by Bachelet, despite providing some grants for the PSU and offering public transportation fare to a large section of the poorest students, ulti-

mately fell short of meeting the original demands of the “pingüinos.” It failed to address the fundamental axes: the role of the state and the profit motive. Bachelet’s backhanded deal sold out the true demands of the students; fundamental changes were not gained. It was a matter of time before Chilean students would rise again.

The current struggle for better education in Chile looks like it will continue to intensify; both the students and the government have dug in their heels. When Minister of Education Lavín offered the students a deal that did not address their fundamental demands it was rejected in the high schools and universities. In what is seen as a desperate attempt to demoralize and disband the student movement, Lavín responded by calling for an early start to winter break.

One of the high school students’ spokeswomen, Paloma Muñoz, upped the ante when she said, “We have analyzed it in the National Assembly of High School Students, we are ready to miss the entire year if it’s necessary, because we have to fulfill our end goal.”

Half a million participants took to the streets throughout Chile in response to united calls by both high school and university students on June 30. In Santiago, the march gathered approximately 200,000 protesters; double the numbers of the historic June 16 march. The Council of Educational Workers (an entity of the Central Union of Workers, with a membership of 300,000), the Teachers Union, parents, school principals, and private school students supported and joined the mobilizations.

The students are reaching out to different layers of the Chilean society and are receiving increasing support. Workers in educational institutions have experienced first hand the consequences of market-based education, as they also face high interest loans and debt just to educate their children. Alliances between students and workers are of paramount importance, especially since students propose the re-nationalization of the copper industry to fund public services. (The copper industry was nationalized under Allende and was privatized and handed to multinational companies under Pinochet.)

What first initiated as a student movement for education has transformed into a broader people’s movement that is questioning the political system and rejecting the market-driven economic policies. To show their negation of the current political parties, students of the University of Chile occupied the offices of the Independent Democratic Union Party (UDI) and demonstrated outside of the Socialist Party offices. Loreto Fernández, one of the students involved, explained that “we are a movement that is political and has ideology, but that is not with any of the political parties.”

The student movement is not just exposing the “crisis in representation” of the political system, as many analysts have said. The increasing social discontent in what is widely regarded as the most politically stable country in Latin America is exposing a deeper crisis; that of the neoliberal economic system implemented by Pinochet’s regime and the Concertación.

In order to make real gains, the student movement must continue to broaden its base and engage more worker unions. A broadened base must also ensure they have a militant leadership that will remain unwavering in their demands. The main crisis confronting all social movements in Chile is the lack of a mass working-class party with its own action program and independent of the capitalist parties in power, be they under the cover-up of Concertación or the blatant right-wing.

The high school students understand the importance of engaging workers as part of their struggle, a struggle that essentially calls for the over-throw of neo-liberal policies. By calling for the re-nationalization of the copper industry as a way to fund education, students are making important connections between the lack of resources for public services and the privatization of Chilean economy. Adelante! ■

## ... Ocean extinctions

(continued from page 6)

the capitalist exploitation of marine ecosystems by ending overfishing and establishing a system of protected marine reserves, taking only sustainable catches to allow fish populations to recover. The complete elimination of agricultural chemicals and moving toward a more plant-based diet with organically grown foods will also help along with benign substitutes for non-agricultural chemicals.

Climate change has already caused an enormous drop in the primary productivity of the ocean, with phytoplankton populations having declined by 40 percent since 1950 because of warmer sea surface temperatures. To enable marine ecosystems to survive, we must reduce greenhouse gas emissions from all sources to zero in order to bring down carbon dioxide concentrations to a safe 300-325 ppm (300 ppm CO<sub>2</sub> is the limit to prevent further ocean acidification, according to climatologist James Hansen).

This requires that we ban offshore drilling and leave all fossil fuels in the ground while converting to clean, renewable energy and retooling all industry for green production that is based solely on ecological and human needs rather than private profits. Since plastics are petroleum-based, that will put an end to them. These are the only sensible ways to cool down the planet and prevent catastrophic climate change and the collapse of not only our marine ecosystems but terrestrial ones as well.

Time is running out for the ocean and humanity. The capitalist class cannot be allowed to engage in the willful destruction of 70 percent of the planet or any of Mother Earth’s other matrices. The ruthless exploitation of the world’s natural resources can be stopped by the action of the majority of humankind, acting in unity to create an eco-socialist society that exists in harmony with nature. We need to get to work on that before it’s too late. ■

\*Rogers, A.D. & Laffoley, D.d’A.: International Earth System Expert Workshop on Ocean Stresses and Impacts. Summary Report. IPSO Oxford, 2011, 18 pp.



By BARRY WEISLEDER

What began as a tightly orchestrated tribute to Leader Jack Layton and his electoral machine turned into a battleground over socialist policies and principles. In the end, officials of the labour-based New Democratic Party failed to convince a majority of the 1572 delegates to the June 17-19 NDP Federal Convention in Vancouver, British Columbia to approve a shift to the right.

Led by the high-profile Socialist Caucus (S.C.), NDP leftists stopped cold a bid by the establishment to "sanitize" the party constitution by removing a reference to "democratic socialist principles" from its preamble.

What's in a phrase? Since the NDP embraced capitalism following its founding 50 years ago, does it matter? Evidently, it does. The labour-based party remains a lightning rod for working-class protest, independent of the business class, and against the dysfunctional system.

In the key debate, MP Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre) referred to socialism as "an anchor" weighing down the party. He urged delegates to take an ax to the socialist link. But Martin was rebuked by the ovation for the counter-argument that "socialism is a rocket." Crisis-wracked capitalism is what deserves our scorn, say many NDP and union members across the country.

"NDP to stay socialist for now" proclaimed a *Toronto Star* headline on June 20. Though putting a strain on poetic licence, these words do capture the sentiment of the party grassroots.

Feeding off post-May 2 election euphoria, NDP officials did their level best to make the convention a leadership love-in. They tried hard to clamp down on serious policy debate, and to marginalize controversy. However, they did not entirely succeed:

Socialist Caucus motions on public ownership of industry, party democracy, Libya, Palestine, NATO, Quebec national rights, tar sands oil, cannabis and free college education filled the resolutions book. They were valuable resources, cited in many debates. Nearly 40 per cent of the delegates present for the opening plenary backed an S.C.-initiated motion to add one hour to the time allocated for policy discussion. Despite claims by party apparatchiks that such an addition was simply not possible, time was added nonetheless due to late starts and technical glitches.

Faced with the prospect that the bid to remove socialism from the preamble would fail, NDP federal president-elect Brian Topp performed a face-saving maneuver. He moved to refer the anti-socialist amendment to the federal executive for further review and to conduct a membership-wide discussion. By a 3-2 margin delegates approved the referral, including the Quebec section that felt left out of the issue.

If a broad discussion is pursued, which is doubtful, it will keep the spotlight on "socialism" until the 2013 federal convention. Like the defeat suffered by the ruling faction when it tried to change the party name to 'Democratic Party' in 2009 in Halifax, this latest setback will give the establishment pause to reflect.

Also on Sunday morning, 464 of 1100 delegates present voted, in principle, to exclude any talk of merger with the big business-backed Liberal Party. As a Fightback group supporter put it, "We will have a choice to make—are we going to be Liberals and stand against the workers because it's easier for us as leadership, or are we going to stand with the people?"

While the convention majority leaned towards "tactical flexibility," pro-merger sentiment was quite isolated. Merger was dismissed even by visiting former Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion. Brian Topps' party president acceptance speech was booed when he revealed a longing for coalition, and confessed his sadness that Stéphane Dion failed to become Prime Minister in 2009. Ensuing chants of "No Coalition! No Coalition!" nearly drowned his words.

On Friday morning delegates at the foreign policy priorities panel succeeded in moving the Canadian Boat to Gaza resolution from very low on the list up to #2 position. But minutes before we could vote on approval of the content of the resolution, party officials herded 30 to 40 MPs and staff into the room to vote it down. It was a Pyrrhic victory for the tops as the aid flotilla remained the hottest topic in the corridors.

The Vancouver safe injection InSite clinic won convention approval, but only after a motion to suspend the rules to ensure debate on it Sunday morning. The chair ruled the motion out of order, but was over-ruled by convention vote, following a bitter challenge.

Convention unanimously adopted an emergency resolution to support the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, including a commitment that "Canada's New Democrats will do everything within their power to prevent any attempts by the Conservative Government to restrict Postal Workers' rights ... to free collective bargaining, such as back to work legislation or otherwise limiting the right to strike, to organize or to participate in a union."

Many delegates wondered whether this would include NDP support for *defiance of back to work legislation*. (In late June, following an NDP filibuster, the Con-

## Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

# NDP ranks reject turn to right



Over 100 delegates attended NDP Socialist Caucus forums.

servative majority in Parliament passed odious back to work legislation that sends most issues in dispute to an appointed arbitrator for "final offer selection," but sets wages lower than what postal management offered.)

In many ways VanCon 2011 was a watershed event. It demonstrated a greater than usual diversity for an NDP federal convention. In addition to being 50 per cent female, the gathering was more francophone, more Black, brown, aboriginal and Asian than ever. Youth had a high profile. Proceedings and ceremonial functions were conducted from the front podium in French and English in nearly equal measure.

The new Quebec MPs displayed poise, competence and skill, putting the lie to widespread media ridicule of the "inexperienced" young, francophone, and female NDP MPs elected on May 2.

Although a tepid welcome greeted Canadian Labour Congress President Ken Georgetti, it was due mainly to his milquetoast reputation. Delegates confirmed and celebrated NDP ties to labour. The CLC co-founded the New Party with the CCF in 1961. The convention official magazine was filled with ads from the United Steel Workers' Union, United Food and Commercial Workers, Public Service Alliance, Canadian Auto Workers' Union, International Association of Machinists, Canadian Union of Public Employees, National Union of Public and General Employees, Service Employees' International Union, Communications, Energy and Paperworkers' Union, Canadian Office and Professional Employees, International Association of Firefighters, NABET, IATSE, as well as the CLC and provincial federations of labour. All of these organizations had voting delegates on the floor, many of whom spoke at the mikes.

Policies adopted at VanCon 2011 hewed close to the pro-capitalist doctrine of the NDP leadership: Regulation instead of nationalization. Cap-in-trade instead of eco-socialist conversion. Trust in NATO, rather than bring the troops home now and break with militarism.

Convention chairpersons repeatedly ruled out of order motions of referral to inject socialist content into resolutions. S.C. resolutions were relegated by the brass to the bottom of each topic list. MPs and party staff stacked the mikes to filibuster, just to ensure there'd be no time to debate radical policies coming from the grassroots.

To forestall debates on Libya, Gaza and NATO, the foreign policy panel moved up two resolutions on military and RCMP veterans' affairs, plus "motherhood" motions on accessible medicines and conflict minerals. To the dismay of many, party icon Stephen Lewis gave a rhapsodic introduction to the foreign policy selections, during which he bestowed his blessing on the murderous NATO bombing of Libya, purportedly as an antidote to alleged mass rapes attributed to forces of the Ghadaffi regime.

Top-down-endorsed resolutions on jobs, poverty, mining, water, trade, taxation and other important issues steered away from any notion of democratic economic planning and fundamental re-distribution of wealth and power in today's increasingly polarized class society.

But this did not prevent many lively exchanges, especially at the CON mikes. There, leftist delegates hammered the establishment and scored loud ovations. That is how hundreds on the floor showed their support for clear calls to curtail, not just freeze, escalating university fees; to eliminate, not just reduce, regressive sales taxes; and to praise, not criticize, the rebellious former Senate page Brigitte DePape who urges Canadians to "Stop Harper."

Many delegates expressed frustration and anger at efforts by party controllers to silence new voices and

to prevent open discussion of controversial issues, like NDP endorsement of the NATO war on Libya, including its recent three month extension by House of Commons vote.

Delegates, alternates and observers looking for radical solutions to our economic and environmental problems found a bit of a void. Generational change, the departure, or co-optation of former NDP dissidents, and regional re-alignments (especially the inflow of scores of activists from Quebec) made for a situation of discontinuity and flux on the left. *The Socialist Caucus only began to fill that void*. High visibility on the convention floor, and even higher public visibility via the mass media before, during and after the convention, propelled it into prominence.

Interviews with this writer, and frequent references to the S.C. appeared in the print media (*Toronto Star*, *Globe and Mail*, *National Post*, *Vancouver Sun*), on radio (CBC's "The Current"), and on television (CBC, GlobalTV, CTV, SunMedia TV, CHCH-TV, C-PAC). Internet coverage, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter postings multiplied the attention to the S.C. beyond estimation.

Hundreds of thousands of people across the Canadian state, and beyond, learned of the existence of the Socialist Caucus, learned that there is an organized left wing in the only mass, labour-based political party in North America, and saw that a militant openly-socialist force fights to advance a Workers' Agenda there.

Socialist Caucus open forums, held during meal breaks, attracted over 100 delegates. Over 60 attended the panel discussion "Solidarity with Palestine and the Boycott of Israeli Apartheid", featuring Karen DeVito, a Vancouver participant on *Tahrir*, the Canadian boat in the flotilla to Gaza; Hanna Kawas, chair of the Canada-Palestine Association; and Tom Baker, an S.C. steering committee member and delegate from Hamilton Centre NDP. Due to scheduling conflicts, fewer turned out for the session "What Does Quebec Want?", with MP Philip Toone (Gaspésie), plus this writer, and for the forum "Unions Challenge Harper's Agenda", with Vancouver CUPW militant Mike Palecek, and OPSEU Local 532 Vice President Julius Arscott, who is also a Danforth NDP delegate, and S.C. steering committee member.

All the panel discussions were lively and fruitful. At the session on unions, another Quebec MP stepped forward to declare his adherence to the S.C. On the convention floor, dozens of delegates signed up to join the NDP socialists, including a Manitoba NDP government cabinet minister. Delegates snapped up over 1000 copies of a special 28-page edition of the S.C. magazine *Turn Left*. S.C. supporters collected over \$225 in donations, forum collections and "S.C. Manifesto" sales.

Partisans of Socialist Action sold over 200 'Stop Harper' buttons, over 120 copies of SA newspaper, and dozens of Marxist books and booklets, including a new one published in French and in English just in time for the convention, titled "Quebec, Acadia and Aboriginal Peoples: The National Question in the Canadian State," by Robbie Mahood. S.A. buttons, press and literature sales generated over \$430 during the weekend, which included sales at a public forum jointly sponsored by S.A. and the group Socialist Solidarity in Vancouver on the Saturday evening.

Over 60 delegates sought sign-up sheets on the convention floor, or at the open forums, and joined the Socialist Caucus. In the Vancouver area alone, 23 NDPers signed up, signalling the basis for a new and vibrant S.C. branch on the west coast. Requests from across the country for participation in the S.C. continue to arrive at the web site: [www.ndpsocialists.ca](http://www.ndpsocialists.ca).

Jack Layton's leadership was strongly endorsed in a secret ballot by 97.9 per cent. In terms of contentious issues, Layton deftly remained aloof, leaving the nasty work to his point men Brian Topp and Brad Lavigne. Clearly, his team is firmly in control of the party apparatus. But it was unable to move the party political goal posts to the right.

The NDP left is very much alive. It is beginning to organize itself on a class-struggle basis to confront the challenges posed by the capitalist system in crisis.

The key points for consolidating the gains of May 2 certainly remain: Resist the Tory attack on workers, unions, jobs and pensions. Stand up for Quebec and aboriginal rights. Mobilize to end the wars of occupation and plunder. Harper's mandate is paper thin. He can be defeated, but only if we act now, rather than wait four years to do it. ■

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

"The Last Mountain," a documentary film directed by Bill Haney, featuring Robert Kennedy, Jr.

As I walked into the theater to see "The Last Mountain," the ticket taker said, "Enjoy the movie!" then added, "Oh, well, I guess that's not the right thing to say about this film." You don't go to a movie about the possible destruction of the planet by the coal industry with the idea of enjoying it. You go in to find out how this can happen and what can be done about it. The film is heavy on disheartening facts, yet it focuses on ways to stop relying on coal for energy and to end mountaintop removal.

The title of director Bill Haney's arresting, beautifully shot film is based on Coal River Mountain in West Virginia, the last mountain range in that region that hasn't had its top blasted off. "The Last Mountain" hones in on the inhabitants of Coal River Valley, a toy-like village nestled at the foot of the mountain, who are fighting coal giant Massey, who aims to do just that.

The film's stunningly beautiful aerial shots illustrate how Massey has blasted much of the vast, undulating, emerald-green Appalachians into moonscapes, showing thousands of acres of hard rock, rubble and dust, gouged out and tracked with labyrinthine roads traveled on by heavy machinery only diminished in size by the scale of the ruins.

According to Haney, an unbelievable 2500 blasts the size of the Hiroshima bombing occur two or three times a day, putting people on edge. He includes shots of the monstrous, deafening, earth-shattering explosions, which send up mushroom clouds of toxic smoke and debris that pollutes the air and water.

The cancer rate in the region is comparatively higher than other villages of similar populations, with cancer clusters and deaths occurring in the same neighborhood. And respiratory illnesses are prevalent. In April 2010, a Massey mine explosion at Upper Big Branch killed 29 miners, the worst mine

## Mass(ey) Destruction



Brad Davis / AP

disaster since 1970; Massey is currently being tried in court.

Debris from blasts is dumped off the mountain, blocking creeks and rivers, killing everything, and polluting well water. In a well house, a woman from the local water board displays a pristine, white replacement filter. "These," she explains to Haney, "are supposed to last at least six months." She then removes a gunky, rust-red filter from a pipe leading to a well. "This one," she says, holding it up, "has been used for only two weeks."

William Sadler narrates this true horror story, which affects the lives of people like Maria Gunnoe. She wanted to do something to stop the desecration of the mountains, never thinking she'd be an activist. Haney interviewed her and others like her whose families have lived in the area for hundreds of years. When no one in authority would listen when the people needed help fighting Massey, they approached known environmental activist celebrity, Robert Kennedy Jr. He flew over the area, saw the damage, listened to the complaints, and became

(Above) June 11 rally in Blair, West Virginia. Over 1000 hiked to the top of Blair Mountain to protest mountaintop removal by Big Coal.

their spokesman.

In the film, Massey spokesmen warn the townsfolk at meetings that without coal, they'll have electricity only a couple of hours a day; life-saving machines in hospitals will fail; backup generators won't be of any use; people who rely on them will die. In one effective scene in a coffee shop, Kennedy meets a Massey representative who launches into a coal equals electricity refrain, adding that people will lose jobs, etc. Kennedy responds with relevant information about the destruction of the land, the pollution, and the illnesses Massey's mining has caused. The man holds up his hand: "Wait a minute! You Northern guys talk too fast."

Kennedy tells him that the concept of coal's creating jobs is a fallacy; that when Massey turned mining into blasting, miners lost jobs to heavy equipment operators and demolition ex-

perts. He goes on to explain how the wind-turbine industry employs as many people as coal. Haney's film also shows how coal giants, particularly Don Blankenship, former head of Massey Coal, set out to destroy unions.

Massey representatives assure the villagers that they "restore" mountains to their previous state. Filmmaker Haney accompanies Kennedy and an environmentalist to Massey's idea of a completely restored mountain: the rubble that had been blasted from it is dumped on top, and covered over with patches of weeds and a scattering of dried-out wildflowers.

Massey also promised creek restoration. Again, we travel to a rock-filled slash on a mountainside passing as a riverbed. When it rains, the environmentalist explains, it cascades down the "restored" creek, turning the narrow river flow-

ing through the valley into a raging torrent that breaches its banks, destroying everything in its path.

Then there's sludge. Coal mining requires massive amounts of water, which when mixed with coal dust, creates thick, black sludge. Held in huge lakes, it continuously seeps through earthen containment walls into waterways and aquifers. Often, the pressure of the sludge breaks through. In his film, Haney includes a nightmarish clip showing black sludge surging through the Appalachian hollows and valleys, engorging entire communities, rendering areas uninhabitable for years.

One segment of Haney's film shows peaceful protesters, among them, a wheelchair-bound 90-year-old woman, man-handled and hauled into vans by armed police. The film also includes clips of pro-coal demonstrators, cheered on by Blankenship, wearing American flag-themed outfits, shouting ugly epithets at peaceful anti-coal protesters.

(continued on page 11)

## Tribunal: 'No evidence' of police complicity in murder of Rosemary Nelson



(Left) Rosemary Nelson in 1999.

Demands were levied for an independent investigation, but now 12 years later, the report of the tribunal says that though the police and the state failed to take "reasonable and proportionate" steps to provide safety to Rosemary, there was no evidence that the security forces had a part in her death.

In 2006, the *Irish Times* published a series of articles on an uncovered secret report called "Subversion in the UDR," the regiment of the military in Northern Ireland from the 1970s to the early '90s. The report spells out how the British government, all the way up to Downing Street, knew about complicity in the North.

Citing UDR officers' guns going "missing" while they were watching an Orangemen parade, and UDR armories being ransacked of weapons with no shots fired, a document in the report states that "since the beginning of the current campaign the best single source of weapons, and the only significant source of modern weapons, for Protestant extremist groups has been the UDR."

The report also states that 5 to 15 percent of officers in the UDR were linked to loyalist paramilitaries. *The Times* also states that a soldier cited in the report, who was a member of the UDA, a loyalist paramilitary group, later became a member of the RUC. Though the government knew about this subversion in the UDR, nothing was done to terminate it.

In light of the attitude of the government and military leaders about earlier subversion in the UDR exposed by this report, should we not see a continued pattern in their attitude today towards the same issues in the police force that was well known to be heavy handed with the nationalist community? With the exception of providing arms, which was replaced instead with providing intelligence, the report by the Rosemary Nelson Tribunal lists the same issues inside the RUC force.

In fact, the *Irish Times* cites the report of the tribunal as saying, "We believe there was some leakage of intelligence which we believe found its way outside the RUC. Whether the intelligence was correct or not, the leakage increased the danger to Rosemary Nelson's life." Does not providing intelligence indicate collusion? Does not

roughing up an attorney who was defending her clients at the site of an Orange Order march—thus legitimizing her as a target—indicate collusion?

In a press release about the report, the Pat Finucane Centre, an advocacy group for victims of injustice in the North, frames the question of what is collusion in the eyes of the state: "The report says: 'The combined effect of these omissions by the RUC and NIO was that the state failed to take reasonable and proportionate steps to safeguard the life of Rosemary Nelson.' This amounts, in the view of the PFC, to conclusive evidence of state collusion in the death of Rosemary Nelson."

Rosemary Nelson was murdered during my senior year of high school, and her death provided the eye-opening moment that led me into activism. While I was volunteering in Ireland I attended a memorial in her honor in Belfast, organized by some of her former colleagues. I learned there that Rosemary was not just a champion for nationalists but courageously represented women in cases of domestic violence, travelers, and immigrants—often for free. She was a woman to be greatly admired, and this injustice is a crime against her memory.

What does a state say to working people—no matter their religion or politics—when it refuses to see illegal and threatening actions by the police, and refuses to recognize the turning of a blind eye by the government as collusion? This does not just speak to what the concern for safety and the right to due process was back in 1999, but tells the tale of the current Northern Ireland administration's concern for people's rights today.

The *Irish Times* revealed recently that some of the RUC senior officers and government civil servants who are cited as having had a part to play in Rosemary Nelson's death, whether by action or inaction, might be working today in the Department of Justice at Stormont

This report's attempt to deny any blame of government or police administration and to continue a policy disregarding the rights of people in Northern Ireland should not be met with silence or with shootings of cops and bombings of their family homes. It should be met with political discussion and mass actions to demand that the state own up to its criminal acts and ensure a more just future for the people of the North. ■

By BETH DYER

On May 23, a tribunal in Northern Ireland absolved the state security forces of any collusion in the murder of Rosemary Nelson. Nelson was a solicitor who was killed in 1999 by a car bomb planted under her car by loyalists. She represented Irish nationalists, including the Garvaghy Road Residents, who fought a bitter battle against the infamous Orange Order parades through their streets each year. She also defended the family of Robert Hamill, a young Portadown man who was beaten to death by loyalists while police sat only yards away.

As a result of this work, Nelson faced harassment and death threats from both loyalists and the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC, the police force in Northern Ireland at the time) while interviewing her clients. She took this harassment seriously and brought her treatment by the cops and loyalist groups to the international community, even testifying before the U.S. Congress. Only months later, though, she was murdered yards from her home.

Reports by neighbors of increased helicopter presence over Rosemary's home in the days before her murder and the constant threats she had received made it obvious to most that the police were involved in her death.

# A fresh look at a basic tactic of the labor movement

By BILL ONASCH

Joe Burns, "Reviving the Strike: How Working People Can Regain Power and Transform America," Ig Publishing (May 31, 2011), 224 pp.

Mainstream union officials in what remains the world's richest country believe the strike is a quaint relic of bygone times, ineffective and even dangerous today. This reinforces their attempts to forge "partnership" with the employers.

Some even seek to convince the bosses that unions can provide "value added" to the corporate bottom line. Others more adversarial are also wary of the risks of major strikes in today's climate and search for action substitutes such as one-day shutdowns, work-to-rule, and corporate campaigns.

In his new book, Joe Burns offers a refreshing counterpoint, advocating a revival of the strike as a centerpiece for resurgence of the now shrinking and disoriented union movement. It has quickly captured the attention of many, and class-conscious readers will find it useful.

Joe Burns is a union activist who went on to complete law school and has since served as a union attorney and negotiator. He set out to write a book about labor law, what he calls the "system of labor control," and that is an important component of his new work. Key to this system is breaking down solidarity. He convincingly argues that even the 1935 Wagner Act—hailed as labor's Magna Carta by those who perpetuate myths about a pro-labor New Deal era—actually defused successful organizing of industries through strikes for recognition.

The courts soon acted to clip Wagner's wings. Wagner said workers could not be fired for engaging in legal collective action. In 1938 the Supreme Court reversed an NLRB ruling ordering Mackay Radio to reinstate strikers they had fired. The High Court established that employers could "permanently replace" employees engaged in an economic strike.

Perhaps the most effective strike tactic of all was the sit-down, occupying the workplace to prevent its operation during a dispute. The most famous was the 1936-37 occupation of General Motors plants in Flint, Mich., which led to recognition of the UAW by the then number-one automaker. Between 1934 and 1939 there were several hundred sit-downs in virtually every industry, mostly successful. But, again overruling an NLRB decision, the Supreme Court



(Left) A public worker in Bristol, England, points to the general strikes in Greece as a model to follow. On June 30, British public workers staged a nationwide strike against cuts in their pensions.

pected—the vaunted "middle class" living standards once enjoyed by organized workers were won during a period of frequent and lengthy strikes and were surrendered during times of a historic low-point of strikes. There are, of course, numerous factors involved in the decline of U.S. working-class power, and Burns at least touches on some of these. He doesn't claim to have all the answers and we don't have space in this review to even pose all the questions.

There is no one single tactic that will guarantee working-class transformation of society. American workers time and again have demonstrated creative innovation in

devising new methods of struggle and modifying old ones to suit the relationship of class forces. Unions also have a proud history of being allies, even leaders, of a wide range of justice movements including the unemployed—crucial in the strike victories during the Great Depression—civil rights, and women's rights. Today some unions play a generally positive role in the immigrant rights movement and even support opposition to shooting wars in progress. This too builds solidarity.

There are crucial challenges that go beyond the scope of our unions. The most militant strikes can do little to address the most contentious issues in collective bargaining today—health care, retirement, and job security. Even if battles here and there succeed in defying repressive labor laws those laws need to be eliminated. Such issues are political. The working class urgently needs a mass party of our own to oust the bosses from control of government. As our only existing mass organizations the unions are the logical launching pad for such a game-changing labor party.

Such a perspective complements, and will thrive on, the success of reviving the strike tactic. We commend Joe Burns for rekindling interest in this neglected asset of our side of the class struggle. ■

in the 1939 Fansteel case held the sit-down to be a violation of private property rights—leaving the sit-downers open to arrest for trespassing and discharge by their employer.

In 1947, in response to the greatest strike wave ever seen in this country, immediately following the end of the Second World War, the Wagner Act was supplanted by the Taft-Hartley Act. It sought to curb labor solidarity as never before. It outlawed mass picketing to block workplace entrances; hot cargo clauses that allowed transportation workers to embargo all goods entering or leaving companies on strike; and secondary boycotts used against suppliers and merchants continuing to do business with struck outfits. It also authorized states to outlaw union-shop agreements, and allowed the president to impose an 80-day "cooling off" period before or during a strike. One section, ultimately thrown out by the courts, required all union officials to sign a sworn affidavit that they were not members of the Communist Party.

As Burns prepared his book on labor law, his delving into labor history not only confirmed his notion that strikes had been the central focus of the development of this body of law in the USA. He was also struck by how far today's labor movement's skittish aversion to strikes strays from the basic principles around which unions were built for more than a century. He reckons that even the most conservative craft unionists of old, such as Samuel Gompers, would be shocked and puzzled by the timidity of contemporary labor statespersons when it comes to shutting down the source of the bosses' profits.

Burns writes, "To traditional trade unionists, the point of a strike was to stop production or otherwise inflict sufficient economic harm to force an employer to agree to union demands. That simple, common-sense notion formed the basis of labor economics for the first 150-odd years of American trade unionism. By the 1980s, however, conventional wisdom had reversed, and stopping production had become a fringe idea. That, more than anything else, explains the weakness of the modern union movement."

Burns deflates the exaggerated "common knowledge" that a social compact between the mainstream union bureaucracy and the top layers of the ruling class at the beginning of the Cold War ushered in a long period of labor peace that led to the flourishing of the "middle class." Informal deals were indeed struck. The newly consolidated union bureaucracy kept their part of the

bargain by giving uncritical support to American foreign policy, driving militants out of the unions, and quashing incipient movements for a Labor Party.

But while the bosses seldom tried to break established unions with scabs and strikebreakers during the Fifties and Sixties, they were hardly generous in negotiations. The great "middle class" wages and benefits that have now mostly been surrendered were initially pried out of very tight boss fists, often through long strikes. Even the Cold War bureaucrats still had to "deliver the goods" to their members and they understood at least an occasional strike was the way to do this. When Truman launched the Korean War in 1950 he got the patriotic political backing of the labor bureaucrats—but not the no-strike pledge that had marked World War II.

One of the statistical examples cited by Burns is strike figures for 1952—during the height of the Korean War, on the eve of McCarthyism. There were 470 major strikes involving 2,746,000 workers. Time lost to these strikes represented .38 percent of all work time in the U.S. that year. He contrasts this to the numbers for 2008: there were only 15 major strikes, involving 72,000 workers, with a barely measurable time loss of 0.01 percent.

These figures verify what Burns sus-



(Left) Activists in Gaza, July 6, wave Palestinian and Italian flags in solidarity with the flotilla.

deepening of the working-class fight-back against the global economic crisis—in Greece and elsewhere in Europe, and in Egypt, Syria, the rest of the Arab countries, and far beyond. In its own unique way, the fight of Palestinian workers and farmers to reclaim their right to live and work in peace and equality against the Israeli colonial-settler state that expelled them is part of the struggle of all working people worldwide.

Let the boats sail! Let the refugees return! ■

## ... Destruction

(continued from page 10)

Haney interviewed Pacific Northwest-based environmental activists, tree sitters, who show up in the Valley to lend support. Welcomed by locals, they rigged up platforms in the trees on the targeted mountain. Massey gave up after nine days when its loud music and sound cannons failed to unseat them.

In the film, President Obama talks to Robert Kennedy Jr. about new guidelines to strengthen the EPA. However, since this film was made, Obama is looking at drilling for oil in Alaska and the Gulf. And ignoring the Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear disaster, he is pushing for nuclear energy.

It's up to us to do everything in our power not only to stop mountain-top removal, but also to end the fossil fuel industry completely. Wind power and other clean energy sources will render fossil fuel just that—a fossil, i.e. an outdated thing of the past. ■

## ... Palestine

(continued from page 12)

mass incarcerations, the brutal beatings, and the frequent murders of protesters that occurred during the first Intifada despite the almost total participation of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza. And the Israeli regime's use of violence by Zionist settlers in the West Bank will likely be turned up several notches.

But the momentum is on the side of the Palestinians and their allies. And as they try to increase that momentum in the coming months, their efforts will no doubt be bolstered by a

# From Perama to Palestine: Solidarity across the waters



Petros Karadjia / AP

By ANDREW POLLACK

The Greek government has acted to extend Israel's blockade of Gaza all the way to its own shores by blocking the departure of boats in Freedom Flotilla 2 from the ports of Perama and Piraeus. In this, the Greek ruling class and its "Socialist" Prime Minister George Papandreou demonstrate their class solidarity with the rulers of Israel and the United States.

Papandreou obviously feels it's impossible to refuse their bidding, given the pressure that Athens is under from global capital, which is demanding the most extreme austerity measures in exchange for not forcing the country into bankruptcy. Greece's complicity in halting the flotilla has also been reinforced by Israel's efforts to curry favor with Athens during the past year. Israel swung closer to Greece after its relations with Greece's rival Turkey had deteriorated following the murderous attack by Israeli commandos on the Turkish-flag *Mavi Marmara* during last year's flotilla.

Greece issued a blanket ban on any boat sailing from its ports to Gaza. One boat, the *Audacity of Hope* from the United States, attempted to defy the ban, and was turned back only after masked Greek commandos on two Coast Guard cutters pointed their guns at flotilla participants. Upon returning to shore, the boat's captain (a U.S. citizen) was arrested on felony charges of interfering with sea-going traffic (which is what the Greek coast guard was doing!).

Many dozens of emergency protests have been held around the world. As we go to press all boats are still under armed guard in Greece—but looking for an opportunity to try again. Eight *Audacity of Hope* activists began a hunger strike to demand their boat be released. On July 4, a Canadian boat tried to leave port, and was confronted by armed Greek commandos and towed back to port. When a commando demanded to know who the captain was, all 30 aboard replied, "I am the captain!"

Meanwhile, the Greek government "offered" to transport the flotilla's goods to Gaza on Greek ships that would operate under UN supervision. Naturally, Israel accepted the offer, but the flotilla activists rejected it since the whole point of the flotillas is to demand that the siege be lifted, and to challenge the right of the Israelis or any other government to control Palestinian territory, airspace, and shores."

The solidarity between the Greek and Israeli governments has its mirror opposite in the bonds being tightened between Greek and Palestinian workers. We say tightened rather than forged because Greek workers have on repeated occasions shown their solidarity with their Palestinian sisters and brothers, from mass demonstrations, to dockworkers refusing to load boats with arms bound for Israel in January 2009, to the decision of unions to exempt dockworkers needed to work on Freedom Flotilla boats from the general strike held as the boats were loading this past week.

And this solidarity is the logical outcome of common suffering caused by the global economic crisis and the resulting worldwide offensive of capital. The austerity that the IMF, EU, and the U.S. hope to impose on Greek and other European workers is on a par with that imposed on Arab workers throughout the region from the 1970s on. That process unfolded as one Middle Eastern regime after another opened wide the doors to global capital after a period of pseudo-socialist economic policies (in reality, the nationalization of a handful of industries for the benefit of the Arab countries' ruling classes, from which some crumbs were



Mahmud Hams / AFP / Getty Images

**Washington called the flotilla a 'provocation,' thus increasing the likelihood that Israel would try to use violence against activists on the boats.**

(Above) Palestinian women at Erez border crossing between Gaza and Israel call for release of their relatives from Israeli jails.

(Left) Gaza flotilla activists rally outside Ministry of Public Order in Athens, July 3.

used to pacify working-class discontent).

The combination of that austerity, increasing inequality, and the outbreak of the world economic crisis in 2007 helped fan the flames of popular revolts against dictatorships friendly to global capital from Tripoli to Cairo to Damascus (and, considering the Middle East more broadly, to Tehran). These revolts have given breathing room and new hope to Palestinians seeking to revive their own struggle against colonialism.

The effort by Freedom Flotilla participants to ask their Greek allies once again for aid occurs in a favorable situation since the Greek masses are already mobilized. (For example, activists in the mass meetings taking place in Syntagma Square in Athens, nerve center of the Greek revolt, voted to march to the ports on July 3 in solidarity with the flotilla.)

What's more, such an appeal has in its favor the ever-deeper disdain in which Israel is held by billions around the globe, as its U.S.-funded crimes gain ever more exposure. The heroic Marches for Return of refugees to the borders of historic Palestine on May 15 and June 5 increased Israel's isolation and helped bolster international recognition of the simple but profound justice of Palestinian demands. Tens of thousands of Palestinians took part in the marches, which were both attacked with murderous violence by the Zionist government.

Washington, of course, called this violence an act of "self-defense" on the part of Israel, despite years of hypocritical lecturing by the U.S. (and its liberal dupes in the media) for the Palestinians to do exactly what the marchers had done—to mobilize peacefully for their cause. And Washington gave its blessing ahead of time to any murders that Tel Aviv might feel compelled to commit against Freedom Flotilla 2 participants, replicating their murders of nine activists on board the *Mavi Marmara* last year (murders that Washington also called self-defense).

What's more, the United States increased the likelihood of such murders occurring by repeatedly calling the flotilla a "provocation" (a common accusation made against civil rights activists in the U.S. South in the 1950s and '60s), and responding to pleas for support and protection from its own citizens on board the *Audacity of Hope* by telling them they were on their own. The Obama administration even threatened flotilla participants with prosecution under "material support" laws—which are used to frame up activists

who have any kind of interaction, even educational, with groups on Washington's terrorist list.

Palestine solidarity activists state that Israel has already sabotaged two boats, damaging their propellers in a way that would ensure they broke and punctured the boats' hulls when they were far offshore. Israel also got Zionist activists to file spurious complaints of the boats' being unseaworthy, and to issue threats to insurers.

Nonetheless, even if the flotilla never leaves Greece, a big propaganda victory has been won. The flotilla has drawn attention of huge numbers of people to the Palestinians' cause; many have been already riveted by the border marches, and sickened by Israel's violence against them. They have been sickened too by the sight of a country willing to commit murder and disregard international law in its attempts to continue to exist as a racially exclusive, inherently discriminatory state.

The propaganda victory of the boaters comes as Washington and Tel Aviv work together to sabotage a projected September vote at the UN on "recognition" of Palestine. While the move for such a vote is just the latest maneuver by the leadership of the Palestinian Authority to avoid a real struggle to win liberation, the vote itself will be used as a rallying point by the Palestinian masses.

This contradiction between the PA's maneuvers and the needs of the masses is the main motivation behind the campaign of the U.S. Palestinian Community Network to call Palestinian Movement Assemblies. These assemblies, being held this summer, will allow Palestinians living in exile in the United States to come together to assert their right to participate in long overdue elections for the leading bodies of the movement—first and foremost the Palestinian National Council.

In the U.S., discussion has begun about a September march on the UN building in New York, which could draw the attention of people whose eyes have been newly opened by the return marches and the flotilla to longstanding movement demands for an end to all U.S. aid to Israel and for the right of return of refugees. We can be sure the vote will be the occasion for mass outpourings in historic Palestine itself. In fact, Zionist officials are already predicting that if their government and the U.S. succeed in getting recognition rejected (or nullified by a U.S. veto), angry masses will turn out in numbers so large that they might have a hard time repressing them.

This is not to say that they won't try to do their worst. Certainly we will see a repeat of the tear-gassings, the

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