San José, CA - The United States is now in its longest recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s. At the end of April, the recession that officially began in December of 2007 reached 17 months in length, passing the deep 1981-82 and 1974-75 recessions. The economy has lost almost 6 million jobs, or 4.1% of total jobs at the beginning of the recession, the worst downturn since the recession of 1948. Unemployment in the African American community hit a depression-level 15% in April, while unemployment for Asian Americans has risen the fastest, more than doubling over the last year. While the pace of layoffs has slowed from earlier in the year, the unemployed are finding it harder and harder to land new jobs. The average time out of work continues to rise, hitting more than 5 months in April. The number of workers collecting unemployment insurance benefits set a new record in April, at 8.5 million, almost three times the level of a year earlier. The number of people on the Federal Food Stamp program is also at a record high, with more than 32 million, or 10.6%, of the population getting food aid.

While jobs and income losses mount, home prices continue to fall. As of February, the price of homes has fallen 30% since the peak in mid-2006. This drop in price has led to more than one-quarter of homeowners being ‘underwater,’ with mortgages greater than the value of their home during the first three months of 2009. One of the worst hit areas is in California’s central valley, where housing prices in Modesto and Stockton have fallen an eye-popping 50%. Many banks had temporarily stopped foreclosure proceedings through March but are now ramping up their foreclosure efforts. These foreclosures are not only hitting neighborhoods that are mainly oppressed nationality, but also more and more renters, who are being evicted when their landlords are foreclosed. Even apartment renters are being hit as former homeowners are competing for a place to live, keeping rents up.

This situation is bound to increase the number of homeless people - as a record number of homes stand empty. During the first three months of 2009, 15% of houses were vacant, or more than 19 million homes. The situation has gotten so bad that one bank in Victorville, a city near Los Angeles, California, demolished new homes that it had foreclosed on rather than trying to sell them. In the past, many households could borrow against their homes to tide them over rough economic times. But with unemployment up and housing prices in their deepest fall since the Great Depression, household bankruptcies are soaring. In April, more than 125,000 individuals filed for bankruptcy, up 36% from a year ago. There could be as many as 1.6 million bankruptcy filings this year, almost three times the number of 2006, when filings plunged due to the bank-backed law that made declaring bankruptcy much harder. State and local governments are also being squeezed by the economic crisis. 47 of 50 states have budget deficits, totaling more than $100 billion for fiscal year 2009, which comes to more than 15% of their budgets. Despite raising taxes and cutting spending, California and many other states face growing deficits as the economy continues to deteriorate.

These budget cuts and tax increases are hitting working people both directly and indirectly. Here in California, state employees (except for prison guards, who make up two-thirds of state workers) were forced to take two days a month off without pay, which is almost a 10% cut in pay. States across the country are cutting health care spending for low-income families, even as more and more people are losing their health insurance due to job losses. Medicaid and the State Children’s Health Insurance Program or SCHIP are both under the gun, along with Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF, or welfare) and other social service programs.

Local governments and schools are at the beginning of belt-tightening as property tax revenues fall along with housing prices and cuts in state aid. In March, some 25,000 public school teachers in California received early notification of possible layoffs for the fall. State universities and colleges are raising fees and cutting admissions to cope with budget cuts. Despite the rising unemployment and bankruptcies along with falling home prices, Wall Street,
High Unemployment Likely to Continue

Recession, continued from page 1

the corporate-controlled media and many politicians are saying that the economy is bottoming out. They say that since the economy is getting worse at a slower pace, a turnaround is in the near future.

One problem with this rosy view is that corporations, weighed down with huge amounts of debt, are in trouble. Business bankruptcies are on the rise. More than 43,000 businesses declared bankruptcy in 2008, 54% more than in 2007. In April, Chrysler Corporation filed for bankruptcy, as the economic downturn, financial crisis and mismanagement finally sunk one of Detroit’s Big Three despite billions of dollars of federal government aid. As auto manufacturers close plants and shed jobs, there is a multiplier effect on parts suppliers and dealers.

Others back their optimism on the huge government stimulus package. But while the Obama administration program does provide some help for the unemployed, schools and transportation, a far larger amount has been spent on bailing out banks and other financial institutions. These same banks continue to cut back on lending that households and businesses need. In contrast, the federal government’s aid to General Motors and Chrysler even as these companies are in the midst of a liquidation process. The government is conditioned on even more factory and dealer closings that will cut - not create - jobs.

Even if the end of the recession is not far off, it will be marked by growth in the economy and corporate profits, not jobs. Many jobs in auto are gone for good as plants and dealers shut down. With millions of empty homes, construction jobs will not reach the peaks of the last housing boom. The FIRE (Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate) industries were among the fastest growing before the recession when the economy was piling on more and more debt, but no more. In the last two recessions in 2001 and 1991, job losses continued for up to two years after those recessions ended.

But the people’s fight back against the crisis is growing. Workers and progressive people across the country rallied to support the Chicago Republic Window Workers and their union, United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers (UE) Local 1110 in their struggle against the shutdown of their plant by Bank of America. In Minneapolis, Minnesota, the People’s Bailout Coalition is fighting foreclosures and pushing for a people’s bailout bill in the state legislature by uniting labor, community and student organizations. In North Carolina, students, campus workers and faculty protested the budget cuts at the University of North Carolina’s Board of Trustee meetings - just one of a growing number of fight backs against cuts in public education.

While most struggles are small and locally based, there is a growing anger at big bankers and big business who brought about the crisis. To add insult to injury, many of them are being rewarded with obscene bonuses, high salaries and tax cuts while the suffering of working people, and in particular in oppressed nationalities such as African Americans and Latinos, deepens. Time will tell that there is no recovery in sight for working people and that our real hope lies in organization and struggle, not in the Democrats or Republicans in Washington D.C.

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Dear Readers,

This latest issue of Fight Back! is full of news about the deepening economic crisis and the growing fight against its effects. From Chicago to Florida, working people are on the move.

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Sincerely,

Mick Kelly,
Editor, Fight Back!

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UIC: Patient access workers stop speedup

By Joe Iosbaker

Chicago, IL - Meetings of the workers from the Patient Access call center at UIC Medical Center look like the waiting room of an orthopedics clinic. Many of the workers are wearing carpel tunnel braces on their wrists or show the scars of surgery.

In a recent survey conducted of employees there, two out of three respondents stated they were either being treated for carpel tunnel, had complained of pain from repetitive motion or had a previous condition that was aggravated from the working conditions in the department. Workers complained of a lack of ergonomic equipment.

But workers also complained of the pace of work. In March, management announced that the work load was being increased by almost double, from five completed registrations and insurance verifications per hour to eight.

Workers fought back against the increase. They held meetings to speak out against it. Union representatives were called and a meeting was demanded to express opposition to management. To emphasize quality for patients and safety in their work, workers had a t-shirt day and a ‘purple day’ (the color of SEIU).

And last week, the workers won. The old registration rate, or ‘reg rate,’ was restored.

Five workers who wished to remain anonymous to avoid retaliation by management reported that in their performance evaluations, managers stated that the goal in the department is: Five registrations per hour.

In addition, the assistant director, Paula Lagioia, reported in a staff meeting that no one is making the reg rate of eight, and five out of six employees are at the old rate.

With no fanfare or official notice, the speedup has been called off.

Health and Safety Committee Elected

Buoyed by this victory, workers are going ahead with an effort to finally deal with the health and safety issues in their workplace. Three union workers - Cynthia Halsey, Trillia Richards and Leti Rios - were elected to serve on a Health and Safety Committee to meet with management.

The need for this committee was made more urgent because of a gas leak in the building early in April. Three workers were sent to the hospital and the People’s Gas added..

In a recent meeting of the company’s board of directors, the workers were representatives of three other Teamsters locals and workers from SEIU (Service Employees International Union) Local 73.

Workers rally and say, ‘It’s about respect’

By staff

Gary, IN - Edgewater Systems for Balanced Living is a social service agency here whose services cover children with developmental disorders as well as adults with chronic mental illness. The 180 housekeepers, maintenance workers, their union and teachers are members of Teamsters Local 743.

These workers care for their clients, often giving out of their own pockets to buy things for them. However, their wages are below industry standards and staffing levels are worse than the state average in jobs where staff are threatened by violence and where working conditions are difficult. Workers for a new contract came around this year, management offered raises of only 1%, 1.5% and 1% over three years.

It was too much disrespect for workers who are already sick and tired, so they took a stand. On April 15, 50 workers and their supporters rallied outside a meeting of the company’s board of directors. Joining the workers were representatives of three other Teamsters locals and workers from SEIU (Service Employees International Union) Local 73.

Wages, safe staffing levels and seniority rights for layoff and recall have been important issues in the negotiations, but as worker Gilbert Washington says, “It’s about respect.”

Alfredo Gomez, the Local 743 representative for the workers, explained the setting of this conflict: “The CEO is making $238,000 and is building a new house in a swankier part of Indiana, outside of Gary, while the janitors here make $7.50 an hour.”

Management canceled their directors’ meeting to avoid the protest, but according to Gomez, “Management saw the members stood strong. They got the message.”

Hospital workers at the University of Illinois - Chicago stopped a speed-up safety.

Florida: Workers Rally Against Union Busters

By Fernando Figueroa

Jacksonville, FL - On May 17, 150 union members from around north Florida and southern Georgia gathered outside the Hyatt Regency Riverfront Hotel here to expose a top-secret meeting of CUE, the Committee for a Union-Free Environment. Corporate bosses are trying to stop the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) from passing in Congress, an event that one union buster referred to as “Armageddon.” Unions like the Teamsters, Boilermakers, Electricians, Metalworkers, Carpenters, Plumbers and community and student supporters attended.

After a march through downtown Jacksonville, the workers and their families crowded around the entrance to the Hyatt Regency, demanding that the union busters come out and face people they were trying to suppress. The demonstrators had come to Jacksonville to support the Employee Free Choice Act. The protest exposed the secret anti-union meeting for what it really was: A disgusting example of how corporate America’s interests are in stark opposition to the interests of the majority.

Local press arrived on the scene to film and interview the workers’ disruption of the secret meeting. Dustin Ponder, recently fired for organizing a union at a restaurant in Gainesville, asked one of the union busters, “Have your kids ever had to work a minimum wage job?” The union bust was speechless.

The rally succeeded in exposing the otherwise hidden agenda of the corporate big shots attending the meeting and was met by the employees of the non-union Hyatt Regency with enthusiastic fists in the air and shouts of solidarity. It was clear that they, too, wanted the right to organize for better wages, health care, paid vacations and dignity at work. As participant Ben Dictor of Gainesville told the corporate fat cats, “We teach your children, we cook your food, we build your houses and we’ll dig your graves.”

Washington says, “It’s about respect.”
Rock Island, IL - On June 2, United Electrical (UE) members at Quad Cities Die Casting, along with other members of the community, served Wells Fargo with a notice of default on the bank’s obligations to the U.S. working people. Wells Fargo is liquidating their factory and throwing 100 people out of work after 60 years of business.

Keith Scribner, a 19-year employee and president of UE Local 1174, said it simply in front of the Wells Fargo doors where the workers posted their demands, “Keep the financing going instead of closing.” Workers like Deb Johann, who has worked at Quad City Die Casting for 31 years, told the large crowd, “Keeping the money is shameless,” referring to the $22 billion of federal bailout funds sent in to Wells Fargo for just these kinds of cases. The rally included other union workers from AFSCME Council 31, the sheet metal workers and the Quad City Federation of Labor. Every media outlet in town covered the militant action.

Many of the workers spoke about the inspiration that they have gotten from the Republic Windows and Doors victories. In fact, on June 11 Quad Cities Die Casting workers from Moline will join their fellow UE Republic Windows workers at a rally in Chicago. They also see their fight very much connected to the folks at Hartmarx, a Chicago-based suit maker that owns Seahard Clothing in Rock Island. They are also fighting for Wells Fargo to do the right thing on a bigger scale.

The Quad City Die Casting workers have been given notice of the plant closing on July 12. They have watched countless companies close around them and the terrible effect it has had on their city. These same Quad Cities Die Casting workers fought just a few years ago in a pitched lockout battle. The company has loyal customers that can help get the company profitable again.

Everybody in the country stands to gain from the efforts of these brave workers. And Quad Cities Die Casting workers, like Helen Ptacek, Keith Scribner and Deb Johann are inviting even more people to back them up.

Durham City Workers Fight Economic Crises: ‘Don’t Balance the Budget on the Backs of City Workers!’

By Krista Harlan

Durham, NC - Fifty city workers and their supporters gathered outside City Hall here, May 18, to protest a decision by the city council to lay off 35 workers and eliminate 113 more positions that are currently unfilled. The result will put a huge strain on the backs of workers who are already understaffed, underpaid and overworked. The job losses will also lead to a deterioration in critical services that these workers provide to the public.

The economic crisis has hit Durham hard, with the city projecting a $24-40 million budget shortfall for the coming year due to lower revenues from sales tax and fewer development permits. This is the excuse that City Manager Tom Bonfield is using to lay off workers and eliminate jobs.

However, organizers with UE 150, the North Carolina Public Service Workers union, point out that the city could spend just 3% of its rainy day fund, worth $10 million, and not have to lay anyone off.

“We are not going to sit by and let this happen,” said Nathannette Mayo, secretary for UE 150’s Durham chapter, and an organizer of the protest. “These are hard times. If workers have to take out bankers and corporations while we...
Interview with rank-and-file leader Gregg Shotwell

The economic crisis and the auto industry

By staff

Fight Back! interviewed Gregg Shotwell, a worker from the Delphi auto parts plant in Coopersville, Michigan, and a founder of Soldiers of Solidarity, an organization of rank-and-file members of the United Auto Workers (UAW). This interview deals with a number of critical issues, including the role of the UAW leadership and the need for a united resistance on the part rank and file workers.

Fight Back!: For months we’ve heard about the economic and financial crisis and how it’s playing out in the auto industry. The corporate media doesn’t report on what it means for workers.

Gregg Shotwell: I’m retired since November, 2008 but I’m in contact with workers. The peculiar situation now is the average worker has come to realize they are not just fighting the company; they are fighting the union and they are fighting the government. They really feel like everything is stacked up against them.

It’s become increasingly clear that the union has blocked the rank and file out of negotiations. So workers and retirees feel abandoned. They’re up against a three-headed dog: the union, the company and the government.

Most critically, in the last labor agreement that came out with Chrysler, workers didn’t have any information on the contract they were going to vote on until the day they were to vote on it, but they were told this: If you don’t pass this contract, the company will file for bankruptcy and then everything will be in jeopardy. So the workers were voting with a gun to their head.

In the contract, certain plants were guaranteed to stay open. As soon as the contract was ratified, Chrysler went into bankruptcy, and announced additional plant closings. After all the concessions they made, they still didn’t get any security.

But the worst thing and this is the most important part of what happened in this last set of negotiations, the union agreed that in 2011, when this contract expires, if they can’t settle the next contract, they agree to non-binding arbitration, want? Free Choice! When do we want it? Now!” The bosses at the WMC wouldn’t speak to the media, but passed out literature that opposed the EFCA.

The Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce is also opposing a measure that would make Milwaukee the third U.S. city to win paid sick days. The paid sick days ballot initiative passed in November with an astounding 69% mandate and would give all workers in Milwaukee nine paid sick days each year, a huge victory for all workers.

Milwaukee: Workers slam Karl Rove, Back Employee Free Choice Act

Sold Out, continued from page 4

budget increase. As a result of these efforts, Governor Quinn announced that earlier 2.5% cut to UIC’s budget was being restored, and this year’s budget would also have a small increase.

Union members were in Springfield where University of Illinois President Joe White addressed them in a rally, saying, “Thank you for your voice.” Meanwhile, UIC’s Vice Chancellor for Human Resources, John Loya, was drawing up a list of 35 workers whose positions were to be eliminated; who would be ‘bumped’ from their current positions; and finally 35 to then be laid off. When the coalition members marched from the Board of Trustees meeting to join the picket line, they shouted at the trustees and other top administrators, “You got bailed out, we got sold out!”

The picketers, including many who were threatened with layoff, responded that there is an alternative to cutting crucial support staff. They chanted, “Chop from the top!”

Members of Milwaukee Students for a Democratic Society and labor activists march in solidarity for workers rights.

By Jacob Flom

Milwaukee, WI - Angry labor unionists and their supporters protested here, May 19, against Republican hat man Karl Rove. The conservative lobbying group, Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce (WMC) invited former Bush aide Karl Rove to speak against the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA). EFCA promises to make it easier for workers to form unions with less interference and dirty tricks from bosses. Unions and workers are demanding this new amendment to the National Labor Relations Act that will make forming a union a simple democratic choice.

The Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce conference was closed to the public and the press, but 150 workers showed up at 8:00 a.m. outside to make their voices heard. Workers held signs in favor of the Employee Free Choice Act and chanted, “What do we want? Free Choice! When do we want it? Now!” The bosses at the WMC would not speak to the media, but passed out literature that opposed the EFCA.

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Chop from the Top

But now everybody is impacted and there’s not a safety net for anyone, because if it’s not your pension it’s your 401k, or it’s that your house isn’t worth anything any more; or you’re forced to relocate but you can’t afford to uproot, or you’re losing your job or your pay is being cut; and it doesn’t matter if you’re a knowledge worker or a salaried worker, or a laborer, everybody is in this position. Everybody’s angry and threatened and recognizing that these mechanisms and these organizations that were supposed to secure your life are no longer valid. All the rules have changed, it’s a real possibility that we can have a much more united resistance because everyone is under attack, not just one industry or one union.
May Day 2009:
Tens of Thousands Rally for Immigrant Rights

By staff

On Friday, May 1, tens of thousands marched for immigrant rights in demonstrations across the country. The marches and rallies called for legalization of the undocumented, an end to the raids and deportations and maintaining family unity. Although smaller in number than in previous years, the marches drew a broad cross-section of the Latino communities, including many families. There were also significant numbers of trade unionists and members of Asian American communities.

Perhaps the largest single march was in Chicago, Wisconsin, where more than 20,000 people came out on May 1. The march was organized by Voces de la Frontera (Voices of the Frontier), a broad immigrant rights group. In addition to a large turnout from the Latino community with Mexican and American flags, the march included union workers and students from the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) chapter carried a banner reading “Solidarity with all immigrants - No human being is illegal!”

In Chicago, marchers were clear that immigrant rights and labor rights go together.

In Los Angeles, nearly 10,000 hit the streets on May 1. Although there was not a single unified march as in other cities, each protest drew thousands of Chicano, Mexicanos and Central Americans. There were also contingents from labor unions, Asian American communities and college campuses. There was a contingent of Salvadorans who support the leftist FMLN, whose candidate was just elected president of El Salvador. Many of the marchers had signs from the Southern California Immigration Coalition, one of the march organizers, reading “Obama, escucha,” (Obama, listen) that called on the president to stop the ICE raids, to legalize all the undocumented, oppose a guest worker program and support the right to organize.

The Chicago May 1 march drew more than 5000 despite the rain and a high level of concern about the new H1N1 flu virus. The demonstration was organized by the Centro Sin Fronteras and the March 10 Coalition and led off with a banner calling for legalization. The march included workers from the Republic Windows factory and a large contingent from Teamsters 743. Armando Robles, president of UE local 1110, representing the Republic Windows workers, said, “We go out to demand not only immigration reform with full equality for all the immigrants, but we also march for the whole working class.”

In Minneapolis, hundreds took part in a march led by the Minnesota Immigrant Rights Action Coalition. In addition to demands to stop the raids and deportations and for legalization, marchers also called for state drivers licenses to be granted to the undocumented and supported the Employee Free Choice Act or EFCA. Mary Lou Middleton, vice-president of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 3800 urged everyone to support the EFCA. “So that all workers are protected from exploitation by their employer.” The Minneapolis marchers were refused a permit by the city, but they fought for an endorsement from the city council and went ahead with the protest.

In addition to the marches, thousands more watched and supported the protests. In Minneapolis, Alejandro Flores stepped out of her workplace to watch. “I’m so happy,” she said, “I’m sad that I have to be at work and can’t join. ¡Viva los inmigrantes!”

Minnesota:
Immigrant rights activists declare civil disobedience at ICE headquarters a success

By staff

Bloomington, MN - 30 community members were arrested here, May 8 while committing civil disobedience to shut down the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) headquarters and stop deportations for undocumented persons. The action was organized by the Minnesota Immigrant Rights Action coalition (MIRAc).

An ICE official stated that the action did not disrupt any of the naturalization ceremonies, but failed to comment on whether or not the goal of stopping deportations for the day was accomplished.

According to Nick Espinosa, who participated in the civil disobedience, “Our civil disobedience protest was successful in calling attention to the ongoing crisis and tragedy of immigration raids and deportations. We got out the message that there is a simple, immediate solution: President Obama can and must sign an executive order declaring a moratorium on raids and deportations.”

U.S. Representative Keith Ellison echoed the message of the protestors: “ICE raids should come to an end. They’re disruptive and they create fear. It’s critical that it not go off national consciousness.”

A strong community support rally that lasted from 7:00 a.m. until the final arrestee was released around 8:00 p.m. kept the participants in high spirits. However, cases of harassment and mistreatment by the Bloomington police department were reported by those arrested.

The activists were well prepared for the action, thanks to several training sessions, and were fully aware that the only information they were required to give the police was on their drivers licenses. But the police repeatedly misled those being held, claiming that that they could not be processed and released until disclosing their place of birth and social security number. An arrestee noted, “These questions were designed to identify potential undocumented immigrants to report to ICE, so we didn’t want to participate in that system.”

The Bloomington police ultimately released all of those arrested on Wednesday, even though most of the arrestees refused to give their social security numbers, effectively exposing the contradictory statements made by the police. Some were detained for nearly ten hours without food.

When questioned why they required this information, several officers implied it would be used to verify the citizenship status of those arrested. Furthermore, the officers suggested that they regularly turn over undocumented persons to ICE.
Gay Marriage Foes Knocked Down

By Meredith Aby and Anne Keirstead

Anti-queer discrimination received a heavy blow when the Iowa Supreme Court legalized gay marriage April 3. Four days later the Vermont state legislature overrode their governor’s veto and became the first non-judicial body to legalize same-sex marriage. Lesbian gay bisexual transgender (LGBT) people around the country were ecstatic about this one-two punch, but even more reason for celebration followed. On May 6, the governor of Minnesota reversed his previous opposition to gay marriage and signed a bill legalizing it. By doing this, these three states joined Massachusetts and Connecticut in granting gays and lesbians legal recognition of their partnerships.

The victories in Iowa, Vermont and Maine come on the heels of a difficult fall for the LGBT community. Last November the queer rights movement took a hit with the passage of Proposition 8 in California, a ballot initiative that overturned the California Supreme Court’s decision to legalize gay marriage. The right wing used queer rights again as a rallying cry for their conservative agenda around the country and won a victory in California. In recent developments, the California Supreme Court ruled that they did not have the power to overturn the constitutional amendment. However, they found that the 1800 gay marriages performed in the window where they were legal are still valid. These California defeats make the comeback this spring that much sweeter.

More victories are expected. Washington D.C. passed a gay marriage bill on May 5. Congress and the president have 30 days to decide whether or not to override the District’s decision. The next day, New Hampshire’s state legislature passed a gay marriage bill that is now undergoing revision to earn the governor’s approval. In an unprecedented move to recognize same sex partnerships at the federal level, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recently authored a memo granting state department employee’s same sex partners the same benefits and protections previously granted only to heterosexual spouses.

According to the Los Angeles Times, it is expected that New York and New Jersey will also legalize gay marriage within a year. A new Washington Post-ABC News poll showed “a sharp shift in public opinion on same-sex marriage. 49% said it should be legal for gay people to marry.” This demonstrates an eleven-point shift from a similar poll conducted by the Washington Post just three years ago.

Public opinion is shifting because of the hard work of the LGBT rights movement. More than ever, queer people have come out of the closet and gone public with their sexual orientation. LGBT people and our allies are organizing and demonstrating for these victories. This fight needs to be waged in the streets, not merely in the courtrooms and legislatures.

Even as we fight for the right to marry, it is important to recognize that it is only one of the battles ahead. No one, queer or straight, should have to be married to have health care. All forms of family should have social and economic acceptance in our society, not just married couples. As we mark the 40th anniversary of Stonewall this summer, it is important to recognize how far we have come, while we continue to struggle for true equality and human rights for all.

Minneapolis: Don’t enlist, resist

By Meredith Aby and Katrina Plotz

Minneapolis, MN - Minnesota saw a wave of dramatic anti-war protests at military recruitment centers, April 23. The call of the Twin Cities based Anti-War Committee for April 23 to be Zero Recruitment Day was taken up by a host of anti-war groups that joined together, visibly opposing the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, exposing recruiter lies and preventing military recruiting that day.

Despite Obama’s promise to end the war on Iraq, he has committed to keeping 50,000 troops there through 2011. Meanwhile he plans to greatly expand the U.S. occupation in Afghanistan and send an additional 17,000 troops. These plans add on new recruits for the armed forces. The current economic crisis makes it easier for recruiters to prey on poor and working class youth. The news of zeros promises causes many to question the credibility of recruiters who use lies, innuendo and false promises to get young people to fight, kill and die in wars that have little or nothing to do with democracy, national security or the welfare of our citizens.”

Six Zero Recruitment Day actions occurred at military recruiting stations throughout Minnesota, five in the Twin Cities metro area and one at the Minneapolis State University in Mankato. In Brooklyn Center, four activists locked themselves to a station, disrupting business for over half the day. Police were forced to cut the door handles in order to arrest the protesters.

Three members of the Grandmothers Peace Brigade were arrested after claiming to want to enlist in place of young people in Saint Louis Park. Afterwards, supporters continued to disrupt business. Arrestee Sarah Martin explained their action. “When we went into the Knollwood Plaza recruiting office, the Grandmas Peace Brigade wore t-shirts which said ‘What would grandma do? Pack for Iraq and send the children back.’ We were there to protect our grandchildren from the deadly demands of U.S. imperialism.”

The Anti-War Committee held an all day picket of an Army Career Center in Minneapolis, which culminated in a redecoration of the recruiting station with anti-recruitment posters and foreclosure signs. This led Minneapolis police to cordon off the station as a crime scene and call in the fire department. Three fire engines came to check whether the glue was a ‘hazardous material’ and blocked traffic at the Lake and Lyndale intersection for close to an hour.

AWC member Jess Sundin reports, “It’s ironic that the Minneapolis police declared the recruiting office a crime scene. Our message was that sending young people off to war in Afghanistan and Iraq is a crime. Clearly the police agreed with us.”

Across the river, The Twin Cities Peace Campaign and Allian Action picketed at a recruitment center in West Saint Paul. Their day-long protest included educational outreach through flyers on cars in the parking lots of surrounding big box stores. At the University of Minnesota, a lengthy rally organized by Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) closed the recruiting station and waved bat -tling College Republican counter-protesters - physically and vocally - for space and the loudest chants.

Stephanie Taylor, a University of Minnesota SDS organizer, explained, “Even in the face of overt racism from the College Republicans, students that read ‘Free waterboarding tickets,’ stu -dents proved to be successful in shutting down the recruitment center and maintaining their political line, chanting, ‘Recruiters lie, students die.’”

Minnesota anti-war groups who came together to organize protests around the Republican National Convention are continuing to learn how to build a movement of opposition to U.S. imperialism. Zero Recruitment Day maintained strong equal in using a variety of tactics, including civil disobedience and direct action to get the message across: “Don’t enlist. Resist.”

Chicago, IL - 900 people marched down Halsted street here, May 26, fighting for equal rights for the LGBT community, including marriage equality. Protests took place in more than 100 cities across the U.S. Activists expressed their anger at the California Supreme Court’s decision to uphold that state’s anti-gay Proposition 8.

Chicago Police were forced to cut the door handling business for over half the day. Locked themselves to a station, disrupting business for over half the day. Police were forced to cut the door handles in order to arrest the protesters. 

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Students Protest Virgil Goode and Youth for Western Civilization

Six arrested while speaking out against racism

By Kosta Harlan

Chapel Hill, NC - On April 23, about 100 students gathered for the second time in two weeks to oppose white supremacists organizing on the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill’s campus. Just one week after the racist Tom Tancredo was driven off campus by turbulent protests, the Youth for Western Civilization (YWC), a white supremacist organization, brought former Virginia congressman Virgil Goode to speak about affirmative action and immigration.

60 students gathered in the Pit for a speak-out against racism. A broad united-front of political and cultural organizations on campus organized the event. 200 students stopped to listen and debate with demonstrators, while students gave speeches denouncing the white supremacist views of Tom Tancredo, Youth for Western Civilization and Virgil Goode.

“We called on students to boycott the Virgil Goode event. The media makes them out to be the victim, but we understand that YWC is a national organization funded by white supremacists,” said Ariana Lucido, a first-year student at UNC and a member of Students for a Democratic Society and Alianza. “Our protest serves to give a voice that had been silenced by Goode and YWC’s hate speech. We will continue to speak out anywhere white supremacists and racist bigots try to oppress people.”

Inside the event, dozens of protesters greeted Virgil Goode with booing and hisses. Six activists were arrested when they held signs denouncing white supremacy and raised their voices against racism. Students were quick to point out the blatant hypocrisy of the administration in cracking down on the protesters.

“Chancellor Thorp has publicly apologized for the supposed violation of Tancredo’s right to speak hate,” said Carlyn Cowen, a UNC undergraduate.

“He has been noticeably silent on the issue of the right of UNC students to speak freely against him and protest on their own campus. He seems more eager to protect the right of politicians to promote their racist agendas here than securing the safety and well-being of his own students.”

UNC Chapel Hill students demonstrate against the racist Youth for Western Civilization.

By Freedom Road Socialist Organization

Speaking at a news conference on May 5, Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said, “The main effort in our strategic focus from a military perspective must now shift to Afghanistan.”

With these words, Mullen has condemned the people of Afghanistan to suffer more misery, oppression and poverty - as if eight long years of occupation were not enough.

The implications are serious. Focusing U.S. guns and military power squarely on Afghanistan means the people of Pakistan will face more violations of their sovereignty and territorial integrity. It means Afghanistan and the countryside. Military analysts estimate that the resistance now controls 70% of the country.

In response, President Obama is rushing 17,000 troops to prop up the failing occupation and prevent major cities from falling to the insurgency. But this is a hopeless effort. The Afghan people have a proud history of defeating every past invader. There is no reason to think things will be different this time around. In any case, it is their country, and sooner or later the U.S. must leave.

Afghans have the right to organize their resistance as they see fit. We should be clear that the real obstacle to social liberation is not the Taliban, it is the U.S. occupation with its narco-mafia state led by Hamid Karzai. Only when the occupiers are driven out can Afghan society develop freely.

In the same May 5 press conference, Admiral Mullen said the advances of the Afghan resistance “directly threaten the ‘interests’ of U.S. imperialism.

The tide of history is with the oppressed. The time to support Afghanistan’s liberation struggle is now. Recognizing that, we should do everything in our power to end the occupation.
Israel’s new government, the ugly face of racism

Commentary by Hatem Abudayyeh

Israeli right-winger Benjamin Netanyahu, who stated that Israel did not “go far enough” in its 22-day invasion and massacre of 1,400 Palestinians in Gaza earlier this year and who has never accepted even the possibility of an independent, democratic state for the Palestinians, is now the new prime minister. He was sworn in on April 1, after being asked in February by President Shimon Peres to form a coalition government.

Netanyahu’s government includes Shlomo Barak, who as Defense Minister in the previous Labor Party government masteredmind the war on Gaza. The Israeli Labor Party, which is supposedly a left-leaning party, is about as right-leaning as it gets in Israeli politics. Since the 1967 chiếm, the Labor Party has never been as indistinguishable from the Likud Party, which is now led by Netanyahu. The party now includes the Jachad and the Kadima, both of which are formed from the merger of the Labor Party and other Labor-affiliated parties.

Although this new government has leaders who are terrorists, war criminals, ultra-right wing racists, it is Zionism and the entire conceptualization of the state of Israel that should be indicted and condemned. A state for Jews only, that was formed by expelling hundreds of thousands of people, a state that makes laws to uphold the supremacy of Jews over other religious groups, a state that envisaged as they became a Jewish state in 1948, establishing a state for Jews only, that has no democratic foundations, is a state that has no rule of law, is a state that has no respect for human rights, that has no respect for democracy, is a state that has no respect for the rule of the international community, is a state that has no respect for the rule of international humanitarian law. A state that has no respect for the rule of the law, a state that has no respect for the rule of the international community, is a state that has no respect for the rule of international humanitarian law.

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Continua la lucha de los inmigrantes

Edgewater Systems for Balanced Living es una agencia de servicio personal y derechos de antigüedad que trata a niños con desordenes mentales crónicas. La gente trabajadora en todo el país fue inspirada por la lucha de los trabajadores que tomaron una postura. El 15 de abril, trabajadores quienes ya están hartos, así como adultos con enfermedades mentales crónicas: Los 180 intendentes, trabajadores de mantenimiento, terapistas y maestros, son miembros del Local 743 de los Teamsters. Estos trabajadores se interesan por sus clientes, seguido compran materiales con dinero de sus propios bolsillos.

Bajo ocho años del reino republicano, los ricos se hicieron más ricos y los pobres llegaron a ser más pobres. El gobierno dejó que Wall Street hiciera lo que quería y así hizo el camino hacia la crisis financiera que inició el año pasado. El gobierno invadió a no sólo uno, sino a dos países intentando tomar el control del Medio Oriente y Asia Central con sus enormes cantidades de petróleo. La administración de Bush también aumentó las redadas y deportaciones, exigiendo respeto y salario justo por debajo del código. A pesar de que los trabajadores de la compañía. Los trabajadores del Local 743 de los Teamsters y trabajadores del sindicato de trabajadores del sector de los auto-determinación para todas las naciones oprimidas! — Tres trabajadores del sindicato — Cynthia Halsey, Trillia Richards y Leni Rios — fueron seleccionadas para participar en el Comité de la Salud y la Seguridad y reunirse con la gerencia. La necesidad de este comité se hizo más urgente porque hubo una fuga de gas en el edificio a principios de abril. Tres trabajadores fueron evacuados al hospital, y el empleado de People's Gas que vino a la escena obligó a la Universidad a firmar una prerrogativa de autoridad para los trabajadores del sindicato. La gerencia canceló su junta de cierres tras esto, pero de acuerdo a Gomez, “La gerenciavio que los miembros se mantuvieron fuertes. Ellos entendieron el mensaje.”

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El desempleo probablemente aumentará

Economía, continúa de página 12

 quienes son dos tercios de los traba-
 jadores estatales) fueron forzados a
tomar dos días libres de trabajo sin goce de
sueldo mensualmente lo que repre-
senta un recorte de salario de casi 10%.
Los estados en todo el país están cor-
tando la cantidad que ganan en salud
para las familias de bajo ingresos, mientras muchas más personas están
perdiendo su seguro médico debido a
perdida de trabajos. Los programas de
Medicaid y el State Children’s Health
Insurance Program (SCHIP) están bajo
fuego, junto con el programa Temporary
Assistance to Needy Families (TANF, asistencia pública o ‘welfare’)
y otros programas de servicio social.

Los gobiernos locales y las escuelas
están al principio de reducir gastos por
que los ingresos que reciben de los
impuestos de propiedades caen juntos
con los precios de las casas, los cortes de
impuestos de propiedad caen juntos
y otros programas de servicio social.

Mientras el desempleo y las bancarro-
tes despidos en el otoño.

¡LUCHA Y RESISTE! JULIO/AGOSTO 2009 PÁGINA 11

(TANF, asistencia pública o ‘welfare’)
Temporary Aid to Needy Families
participantes dijeron que estaban sien-

saticaz de cirugías.

Los trabajadores paran la aceleración laboral

UI-CHICAGO
Los trabajadores paran la aceleración laboral

Trabajadores del hospital frenan la aceleración laboral que amenazó la calidad y seguridad de los pacientes en la Universidad de Illinois - Chicago .

Por Joe Iossbaker

Las reuniones de los trabajadores de la central telefónica de Patient Access del centro médico de la UIC parecen un

recibidor de una clínica ortopédica. Muchos de los trabajadores usan

muñequeras o sus coyunturas muestran cicatrices de cirugías.

En una reciente encuesta conducida entre los trabajadores, 2 de 3 de los participantes dijeron que estaban si-

iendo atendidos por el síndrome del túnel
carpiano, se habían quejado de dolen-
cias debido a la moción repetitiva del
trabajo o tenían una condición previa
que se agravó debido a las condiciones
en el departamento de trabajo. Los tra-
 trabajadores se quejaron de la falta

ergonomía y equipo adecuado.

Pero los trabajadores también se que-

jaron sobre el ritmo del trabajo. En

una encuesta reciente de la gerencia,
carga de trabajo se estaría incremen-
tando por casi el doble, de cinco a ocho

registros completos por hora.

Los trabajadores lucharon contra el

aumento. Ellos sostuvieron reuniones para

protestar en contra de esto. Se

llamo a representantes del sindi-
cato y se expresó una reunión para

expresar oposición a la gerencia. Para

enfatizar sobre atención de calidad

para los pacientes y la seguridad en

su trabajo, los trabajadores se organi-

zaron para vestir un día de uniforme

y otro día de morado (el color de su

sindicato, SEIU).

Y la semana pasada, los trabajadores

ganan. Se reanudó el ritmo anterior.

Cinco trabajadores quienes quieren

mantener el ritmo anotaron para evitar represalias por parte de la gerencia

reportaron que en sus evaluaciones de

rendimiento, los administradores indi-
caron que la meta en el departamento
e...cinco registros por hora.

Adicionalmente, la asistente ejecuti-
viva, Paula Lagostia, reportó en una

reunión de personal que nadie esta

haciendo el ritmo regular de ocho reg-

istros, y que cinco de seis empleados

están al ritmo anterior.

Sin fanfarrías o aviso oficial, el acel-

eramiento ha sido suspendido.

Elección del comité

de la salud y la seguridad

UIC, continúa en página 10

¡Lucha y Resiste! ¡QUIÉNES SOMOS

Este periódico existe para construir la corriente del pueblo! Reportamos y damos análisis sobre unas de las

centrales militares en las que se

concentra la gente trabajadora

y los estudiantes. En Carolina del Norte estudiantes, trabajadores de la Universidad y profesores protes-
taron en contra de los recortes pre-

supuestarios en la reunión de los direc-
tores de la Universidad de Carolina del Norte. Se tocó fondo. Nos dicen que la economía

se va a mejorar dentro de poco,

pero está creciendo la lucha del pueblo!

Reportamos y expresamos oposición a la gerencia. Para encontrar la gente trabajadora y de

la lucha del pueblo! Reportamos y

apoyamos a todos los movimientos

que denuncian su poder y privilegio.

Los escritores y empleados de

Lucha y Resistir! son activistas y

organizadores en sindicatos, en

Comunidades de bajos ingresos,

movimientos de nacionalidades

oprimidas, en Universidades, y en

otros movimientos populares.

Estamos orgullosos de recibir sus artículos, car-

tas comentarios, y críticas. Algunos

dellos que trabajamos para mantener este periódico somos miembros de Freedom Road Socialist Organization. Los artículos repre-

sentan los puntos de vista de las personas que escriben. Por el momento, Lucha y Resistir! es publicado cinco veces al año.

Para contactarnos, escriban:

Fight Back!/Lucha y Resistir! P.O. Box 582564

Minneapolis, MN 55458

www.luchayresiste.org

Por Joe Iossbaker
El número de personas en el programa Federal Food Stamp (que da ayuda económica para comprar comida) también ha aumentado, pero ahora están aumentado sus esfuerzos de ejecuciones hipotecarias. Estas no solo están golpeando a vecindarios de gente de nacionalidades oprimidas, sino también a más y más a los que alquilan sus casas porque no pueden encontrar trabajo y su hipoteca sigue aumentando. Hasta la gente que alquila apartamentos está afectada porque muchas personas que han perdido sus casas están comprando un lugar para vivir, lo que mantiene el costo de renta alto aunque no han aumentado

Mientras las pérdidas de trabajos e ingresos siguen, los precios de las casas siguen bajando. En Febrero el precio de casas había bajado un 30% desde su subida a mediados del 2006. Esta caída de precios significa que más de 25% de los dueños de casas están ‘bajo agua’ con el valor de su hipoteca más grande que el valor de su casa. Durante los primeros tres meses del 2009, Uno de los lugares más golpeados es el en el centro de California, donde el precio de las casas en Modesto y Stockton ha caído un increíble 50%.

Muchos bancos han parado de forma temporal los casos de ejecuciones hipotecarias pero ahora está aumentando sus técnicas de ejecuciones hipotecarias. Aquí en los Estados Unidos el gobierno ha dejado sin nadie que los comience a la quinta en su calle perdida a una ejecución hipotecaria. La nueva ley de la ejecución hipotecaria y eso causaría una crisis, dejando muchos propietarios sin hogar, mientras muchos propietarios desaparecen. Rosemary Williams ha cuidado de su casa, pero los nuevos planes de la banca decidieron destruir las casas nuevas que había tenido que declarar bancarrota en Victorville, una ciudad cerca de Los Ángeles, California, en lugar de intentar vender estas casas.

En el pasado, muchas personas podían prestar dinero utilizando el valor de sus casas durante tiempos económicos difíciles. Pero con el aumento del desempleo y el valor de las casas en su baja más profunda desde la Gran Depresión de los años 1930, la cifra de familias en bancarrota ha subido de forma alarmante. En Abril más de 125,000 individuos declararon la bancarrota, un aumento de 36% del año pasado. Podrían ser hasta 1,6 millones de declaraciones de bancarrota este año, que sería tres veces más que la cantidad del año 2006 cuando la cantidad de declaraciones de bancarrota cayó mucho debido a una nueva ley promovida por los bancos que lo hizo mucho más difícil para los individuos declararse en bancarrota.

Los gobiernos a nivel estatal y local están siendo golpeados por la crisis económica, 47 de 50 estados tienen un déficit presupuestario, con un total de más que $100 billones en el año fiscal 2009, lo que significa un 15% de sus presupuestos. Aunque aumentaron impuestos y recortaron los gastos, California y otros estados enfrentan una dureza creciente mientras la economía sigue empeorando. Estos recortes presupuestarios y aumentos de impuestos están golpeando a los trabajadores directamente e indirectamente. Aquí en California, trabajadores del estado (con la excep ción de guardias de las cárceles, los trabajadores del estado (con la excep ción de guardias de la cárcel) tienen sus ingresos aumentados, aumentos de impuestos están golpeando a los trabajadores directamente e indirectamente. Aquí en California, trabajadores del estado (con la excepción de guardias de las cárceles, trabajadores del estado (con la excepción de guardias de las cárceles, recaudaron $1,600,000 de las 65,000 declaraciones de bancarrota este año, que sería tres veces más que la cantidad del año 2006 cuando la cantidad de declaraciones de bancarrota cayó mucho debido a una nueva ley promovida por los bancos que lo hizo mucho más difícil para los individuos declararse en bancarrota.

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