

FIGHT BACK!

News and Views from the People's Struggle

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50 cents

April/May 2009



Vol. 12 No. 1

Worst Economic Crisis Since Great Depression No End in Sight for Working People

Commentary by the editors of Fight Back!

In the six months since the financial crisis exploded with the collapse of New York investment bank Lehman Brothers, the world economy has been gripped by the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. U.S. and European banks have admitted a trillion dollars in losses, while the banking system of Iceland totally collapsed. Almost all of the major economies of the world, with the exception of China, have started to contract, with millions of workers losing their jobs and businesses going bankrupt right and left. Hardest hit for now are the new capitalist economies of eastern Europe, which are being slammed by their dependence on borrowing from foreign bankers, falling exports and plunging currencies.

Here in the United States, the news is grim. The housing market continues to fall, with prices down more than 20% and new housing starts off a staggering 80% from the peak in January 2006. Monthly job losses continue to climb, with more than four million jobs lost since the recession began, most of those in the last four months. The unemployment rate in January was 7.6%, up from 4.7% before the recession began. A growing number of big corporations like Circuit City have given up the ghost and liquidated, while hundreds and thousands of smaller businesses are going under. State and local governments are raising taxes and cutting services, adding to the woes of working people.

The financial crisis continues despite the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank lending



Fight Back! photo by Kim DeFranco

Demonstrators from the Welfare Rights Committee, the Minnesota Coalition for a People's Bailout and others converged on the Minnesota State Capitol to demand a bailout for poor and working people.

some \$1.5 trillion, and the federal government pumping hundreds of billions more into ailing financial companies. The companies given the most government aid, from insurance giant American International Group (AIG), to the former world's largest bank, Citigroup, have had to come back for a second round of bailout money and will need a third round soon. Bank losses continue to rack up as unemployment and business bankruptcies climb, and may come to \$2 to \$3 trillion more.

As the recession and financial crisis tighten their grip on the economy, the U.S. and other governments are desperately trying to turn the tide. With U.S. interest rates lowered to almost

zero, and trillions of dollars of financial aid to big banks unable to stem the crisis, there is talk of 'nationalization' of some banks, a stunning turnaround for a system wedded to deregulation just two years ago. There are also early signs that the Federal Reserve has had to crank up their electronic printing presses to pump more money into the economy, an act of desperation that could lead to much higher inflation down the road.

A \$790 billion economic stimulus package was signed into law in February. But despite the big numbers, the actual impact will be at best to take the edge off the recession. \$90 billion will go to household making six-digit incomes. Much of the rest of the tax

cuts and new spending will be largely offset by tax increases and budget cuts by state and local governments. Working people will benefit from more money for unemployment benefits, health insurance and schools. But even the optimistic official forecast is for two more years of unemployment even higher than it is today.

Another problem is that the government's attempts to make businesses profitable again can actually hurt the economy. The bank bailout last October let banks collect interest on the money that they stash away with the Federal Reserve. Previously, these 'reserves' paid no interest, giving banks an incentive to *Economy, continued on page 2*

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Alabama Marches for Gaza

By Chapin Gray

Tuscaloosa AL - "Gaza, Gaza, don't you cry - Palestine will never die!" Chants for Palestine rang throughout downtown Tuscaloosa Jan. 14 during the lunch hour.

Dozens of protesters marched from City Hall to the Federal Building to demand the siege on Gaza be lifted. Outside the Federal Building, protesters requested that Representative Artur Davis come outside to listen to their demands.

"The U.S. government is complicit in

the Israeli massacre of over 1000 Palestinian men, women and children because it hands over billions of dollars to Israel every year," said Alex Perry of the Tuscaloosa chapter of Students for a Democratic Society. "The U.S. nods its head towards Israel and gives its full backing to the atrocities committed there. We want support for Israel to end, so that there can be justice for Palestine."



Protest for Gaza at Tuscaloosa, Alabama, Federal Building.

Economic Crisis Deepens

Economy, continued from page 1

lend. But now banks can make a profit by not lending and hundreds of billions of dollars are piling up in banks even as small businesses and working people are starved for credit.

The fundamental problem is that there is a crisis of overproduction. Big businesses can produce more than people can buy. At some point, enough businesses will be closed that the others will become profitable and the economy and profits will start to grow again. Mainstream economists say that this will happen later this year, assuming that no other crisis erupts - and this is a big if! But even if and when the economy begins to grow, there will be little relief for working people.

Take, for example, the auto industry. All around the world, car companies can produce millions more cars than they can sell. The U.S. government has given billions of dollars in loans to General Motors and Chrysler, and is considering more aid for them, their parts suppliers and auto finance companies. But these loans have the goal of a 'viable' industry, which means even more plant closings, layoffs and wage and benefit cuts. When enough plants are closed the companies will be profitable at a lower level of sales. But what about the hun-

dreds of thousands of auto, auto parts and auto dealer workers who have lost their jobs? What about the tens of thousands of retirees whose benefits have been slashed? These jobs and benefits are not coming back.

This is why we need to fight back. We need to follow the example of the Chicago Republic workers who wouldn't let Bank of America shut the company down and lay off all the workers without a fight. In Minnesota, welfare rights, labor, student and other community groups have formed a People's Bailout Coalition to make the rich pay and to protect the interests of working people. In California, high schools students have walked out of class to protest budget cuts.

Looking towards the future, we need to reject capitalism and fight for socialism. Is all that we can hope for is a return to what existed before the crisis? A return to a capitalist economy where millions go without health care even when the economy is growing? An economy where working people's incomes fall in the long run while the rich get richer? An economy where we have to go up to our necks in debt to make ends meet while always having to worry where the next paycheck is coming from? An economy that is drained by one or more wars thousands of miles away to protect the interests of big oil? An economy where more than



Deb Konechne, of the Minnesota Coalition for a People's Bailout, speaks at Jan. 6 rally at the state capitol.

forty years after the civil rights act, African American, Latinos and women still earn less than whites and men? We can do better.

Working and oppressed people need a socialist system where political power is in the hands of the working class and

the economy serves the people.

So as we fight for our needs and rights today, we should educate and organize for a socialist government and economy that will benefit us, and not Wall Street and big business.

Contribute to Fight Back!

Dear readers,

Once a year, we ask you to contribute to *Fight Back!* and to help build the newspaper that builds the people's struggle.

When Republic Windows and Doors workers occupied their plant, *Fight Back!* reporters were inside the factory within hours to give you up to the minute coverage of this key battle of the working class. When Israel launched its criminal attack on Gaza, we carried reports from demonstrations around the country. In Beirut, Lebanon we interviewed Palestinian freedom fighter Leila Khaled, who analyzed some of latest developments in the Gazan struggle.

When workers walk picket lines, the

undocumented stand up for immigrant rights, or students take over buildings, *Fight Back!* is there. Our reporters and editors are determined to let you know what's going on. In fact many of those filing stories for this paper are among those organizing the demonstrations and protests for peace, justice and equality.

So right now we are asking for your help so we can make *Fight Back!* a bigger and better newspaper. Every dollar we get helps us to serve you with up to date stories from the front lines of our struggle against the rich and powerful. Please, contribute today.

Sincerely,

Mick Kelly,
Editor, *Fight Back!*

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WHERE WE STAND

This newspaper exists to build the people's struggle! We provide coverage and analysis of some of the key battles facing working and low-income people.

We are not 'neutral' or 'even-handed' in our coverage. We are opposed to exploitation, discrimination and oppression. We hold that the rich class of people, who run the economy and government of this country, are unfit to rule. We support all movements that challenge their power and privilege.

The writers and staff of *Fight Back!* are activists and organizers - in the trade unions, low-income community, oppressed

nationality movements, on the campuses and in other people's movements. We welcome articles, letters, comments and criticisms. Some of us working to put out this paper are members of Freedom Road Socialist Organization. Articles represent the views of the people and organizations that author them.

For the time being, *Fight Back!* is being published five times a year

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Minnesota People's Bailout Act introduced in legislature

By staff

St. Paul, MN - The Minnesota People's Bailout legislation was introduced in the Minnesota State Senate and House, Feb. 9. Authored by Senator David J. Tomassoni (D-Chisholm), and Representative David Bly (D-Northfield) the Minnesota People's Bailout Act is a legislative attempt to protect the interests of low-income and working Minnesotans from the worst effects of the deepening economic crisis in Minnesota and the nation.

Deb Konechne, a leader of the Minnesota Coalition for a People's Bailout and a member Welfare Rights Committee said, "The introduction of this legislation is an important step in the effort to protect low-income and working Minnesotans from the ever-growing economic crisis. The act will provide protection from most damaging affects of unemployment,

mortgage foreclosures and evictions."

The bill would extend and expand eligibility for unemployment benefits, create a new public works program to put people to work and put a moratorium on the five-year lifetime limit for public assistance. The act would also prevent the legislature from mandating layoffs of state workers, including workers at the University of Minnesota.

The bill calls for a two-year moratorium on housing foreclosures. It also would change Minnesota law so that banks and mortgage companies that have foreclosed on rental property be required to honor the existing tenants' leases.

"Thousands of Minnesota tenants have been made homeless because their landlord was forced into foreclosure. The bank or mortgage company ended the leases of these tenants when

reclaiming the building. This is unfair to tenants who, due to no fault of their own, find themselves suddenly homeless," said Mick Kelly, of the Minnesota Coalition for a People's Bailout.

"Many of the foreclosed properties in Minneapolis and Saint Paul had supplied affordable rents to low-income Minnesotans. These units must be kept open and available. Banks and mortgage companies that give loans to buyers of these rental properties must accept the responsibility of those landlords. Tenants should not be victimized, first by financially failing landlords and then by the banks and mortgage companies that initiate foreclosures," said Kelly.

The Minnesota Coalition for a People's Bailout came together to push for support for the bill in the Minnesota state legislature. The Coalition

includes members of AFSCME Local 3800, the Welfare Rights Committee, the Minnesota Tenants Union and others.

"No one in Minnesota should be cold, hungry or homeless as a result of this economic crisis," said Phyllis Walker, of the Coalition and president of AFSCME Local 3800.

"The banks and corporations are getting billions of dollars to survive the economic crisis. Meanwhile, working people are being laid off in massive numbers. The People's Bailout legislation will take basic steps in the interests of the people of Minnesota," said Walker. "The Minnesota legislature must show that it represents the people of this state by passing this act and taking other concrete steps to protect Minnesotans from the worst effects of this crisis."

Laid Off University of Chicago Workers Fighting Mad

By staff

Chicago, IL - Sherri Taylor-Kennedy was insulted and angry at her employer. "When I got here I was informed that my position had been eliminated. I had 30 minutes to gather my belongings and be escorted off the premises." She spoke out at a protest rally Feb. 10 to 200 co-workers and supporters at the University of Chicago Medical Center (UCMC).

Taylor-Kennedy has worked here for 14 years as a secretary. Management has announced 450 layoffs already, and hundreds more to come. These job cuts are happening even though the hospital hasn't lost any money, nor are there fewer patients. They are getting rid of workers because their stock-based endowment lost 40% of its value. They want to make up for their

bad investments by cutting people.

Richard Berg, president of Teamsters Local 743, was highly critical that these cuts were made despite no financial losses in the operation of the hospital. "They're not General Motors or Ford, where sales are down. This is sheer arrogance," he declared to cheers from the crowd.

Local 743 was joined by Service Employees International Union Local 73, the Students Organized and United for Labor and Southside Together Organized for Power (STOP), a housing group that fights University-promoted gentrification in the Woodlawn neighborhood. STOP speaker Fred Payne supported the workers, telling them they were fighting for themselves and for patients like

him. In addition to cutting jobs, the hospital announced plans to turn away more poor people who come to the emergency room, and instead send them to Cook County Hospital, ten miles away. Most of the 80,000 patients that use the emergency room are African American.

Local 743 represents 1500 service and maintenance and clerical workers. Their union representative at UCMC, J Burger, said that many of the 450 layoffs were workers represented by Local 743. Local 73 represents trades people, including carpenters and painters, 18 of whom were given layoff notices.

Former Teamsters 743 President caught dealing cocaine while union president

By staff

Chicago, IL - On Jan. 22, another federal indictment was brought against Robert Walston, the former Teamster president who in 2001 and 2004 stole elections in Local 743. This time he is charged with trafficking in cocaine. He had been driving from Chicago to Texas in June 2007 when he was picked up with \$135,000 in his car. The Feds had been keeping tabs on him and knew he was going to buy up to 5 kilograms of coke with that money.

At the time he was picked up with all that cash, Walston was still in office. "Apparently he was dealing cocaine while he was union president," exclaimed Richard Berg, the reform President of Local 743. Surprised by the disclosure, Berg said, "When we ran against them, we members didn't know the depths of the corruption, but we knew enough to know we had to get rid of the Walston and Lopez gang."

Two months after Walston was

The threat to these workers is very serious. Taylor-Kennedy announced, "I have \$1500 rent due every month and six children to feed."

Burger said, "We will fight until we win back these jobs and until this employer respects the workers and the residents of the surrounding community." The workers ended their protest chanting, "Yes, we can!" aware that President Obama's home was only a few blocks away from the University, where he had been on the faculty a few years ago.

stopped in Texas, he resigned from office and turned the presidency over to his associate, Richard Lopez. Over the years that they and their predecessors had been running the local, they cut deals with companies where workers won little or no gains in wages and benefits. When workers came together with Berg and the New Leadership Slate to take their union back, Walston and his associates engaged in rigging several elections. Indictments were handed down against Walston, Lopez and four others in 2007 and 2008 for those acts.

"The workers stayed together, we won election, we have cleaned up Local 743 and we are building a fighting union now," said Berg.

Walston's co-conspirator this time is a man named Victor Matos. The indictment mentions others that were involved but doesn't give their names. The feds believe that the criminals were trying to purchase upwards of 80 kilos.



SEIU's Stern 'Trustees' California Local: United Healthcare West rejects martial law

Commentary by Joe Iosbaker

The trade union bureaucrats in SEIU (Service Employees International Union) are moving to crush the California local that refused to sell out.

On Jan. 27, the conflicts in SEIU came to a boil, with the rank-and-file members and the officers of United Healthcare Workers-West (UHW) standing against the officials in Washington, D.C. The SEIU international moved to take power from the fighting leadership of UHW President Sal Roselli and the executive board that wouldn't knuckle under - by installing stooges who

would do what International says to do.

The UHW said they refused to accept the trusteeship. "The only people who are happy about all of this are the employers who want to negotiate back-room deals with [the international]," said John Borsos, Vice President of UHW in press accounts.

Earlier in January, the international executive board had voted to take away 65,000 of the 150,000 members of the large west coast local. Those being ordered to join a new local are workers involved in long-term care of

the elderly and the disabled.

However, 10 out of 56 international e-board members stood against President Andy Stern in a never before seen split vote, with seven voting no outright and three abstaining.

This trusteeship is an attack on democracy and on the best militant tradition of the workers' movement in the U.S. Members in SEIU want the right to choose which local they belong to. Tens of thousands of UHW members have spoken out, rallied and organized against Stern's breaking up their local.

Driving the movement for democratic rights is class struggle. The D.C.-based leadership of SEIU has a program of deal making with employers. In recent years, SEIU has accepted contracts with minimal advances in exchange for the right to organize new shops. Members can see when union leaders are more interested in getting dues from new members than improving the lives of working people. In contrast, the California UHW is a local union with a history of organizing its members to fight. The rank and file of UHW actively supports their local union's militant leadership because they make more gains through fighting management than by collaborating.

President Andy Stern is behind these attacks on UHW and as a dues-paying member with 20 years in the SEIU, I condemn his actions and applaud the spirit of the UHW.

One day after the trusteeship was imposed, leaders of the UHW stated they were forming a new union, the National Union of Healthcare Workers. Furthermore, the plan of the workers in UHW is to decertify SEIU. Tens of thousands of workers in nursing homes and hospitals in California are poised to break from the class collaborationism of Stern and company. This is a very exciting development for the trade union movement.

The workers in SEIU in California are acting like the workers at the Republic Windows and Doors Factory here in Chicago. The Republic Workers sit down was a remarkable advance in the fight against the bosses; similarly, the fight being waged by the UHW represents a tremendous step forward in the struggle to transform the unions into class struggle organizations.

Joe Iosbaker is a clerical worker at the University of Illinois in Chicago. He is chief steward and a member of the executive board of Local 73 SEIU.

Newark, NJ: POP Protests Racist NY Post Cartoon



Cliff Sharon of People's Organization for Progress protests New York Post.

By David Hungerford

Newark, NJ - The People's Organization for Progress held a protest here, Feb. 21 at Broad and Market Streets against a racist cartoon published by the *New York Post*. The cartoon showed two cops with smoking guns standing over a dead ape. One cop is saying, "They'll have to find someone else to write the next stimulus bill."

The reference to President Barack Obama is plain. As well as the ugly racist comparison of black people to apes, the cartoon carries a chilling overtone of incitement to assassination.

Protesters chanted, "Don't read the *Post* - shut 'em down." They called for a boycott and urged passersby to ask vendors in their neighborhoods to stop carrying the *Post*, a right-wing publication with an ugly, flagrant editorial policy of racism.

An upsurge of mass activity was clear.

Protesters included veteran community activists and many unaffiliated people as well. Many young people were present. Along with POP, the New Black Panther Party, International Action Center and Freedom Road Socialist Organization were represented. Bystanders and passersby added their voices. "They write negative things about us all the time," said one.

As the beginning of a boycott campaign POP distributed a leaflet that said, "People's Organization for Progress urges you not to purchase the *New York Post* for their hateful and racist cartoon of President Barack Obama."

Noting that the day was the anniversary of the assassination of Malcolm X, POP Chairman Lawrence Hamm said, "He'd say you're a fool if you buy a newspaper that attacks you. We're making people rich who hate us. There's old-time 1920s stuff in there. King Kong was all about you. They hate you, they hate what you are. Get your sports from another newspaper."

Commentary: The Murder of Oscar Grant III and the Black Liberation Struggle

By George McKinney

Oakland, CA - 2009 began with an important reminder for young African-American males: Your life cannot be taken for granted.

Transit police murdered Oscar Grant on New Year's Day in Oakland, California. There is no disputing the video recordings and dozens of wit-

nesses: He was killed in cold-blood. Lying flat on his stomach, he was unaware of what was about to happen to him. Mr. Grant was a son, a father, a co-worker and a friend. Yet, on that day, he became a new symbol for the struggle for Black freedom in America.

Most African American men have had encounters with the police. It is a fact of life - just ask any group of Black men. For generations, our brethren have died at the hands of the sheriff, been lynched by mobs of white people and killed in wars that made 'the man' - in other words,

the American empire, stronger. In the 1600s, the police were responsible for catching African slaves. Today, trained in many techniques of submission, the three BART officers quickly subdued Mr. Grant. When police officer Johannes Mehserle shot Mr. Grant in the back, all of us recognized that evil pattern. We lament that on the

eve of having an African-American in the White House, little has changed for the masses of Black people in America.

Over 40 years ago in Oakland, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense declared, "We want an immediate end to police brutality and murder of black people." For their bold stand against police violence, dozens of Black Panther leaders across the U.S. were hunted down and killed.

In this day and age we continue the struggle for national liberation and human equality.

Oscar Grant...you, too, will not die in vain.



Oscar Grant III, murdered by police in Oakland, California.

North Carolina: HK on J Protest Draws Thousands ‘Don’t balance the budget on the backs of the poor!’



Over 4000 people marched in downtown Raleigh, Feb. 14, in a show of force organized by the North Carolina NAACP.

By Kosta Harlan

Raleigh, NC - Over 4000 people, the majority African American, marched in downtown Raleigh, Feb. 14, in a show of force organized by the North Carolina NAACP. This is the third year

that “HK on J” (Historic Thousands on Jones Street) has taken place, bringing together over 85 grassroots organizations, trade unions, coalitions and churches around a 14-point program for change. The 14-point program is centered around addressing the

needs of the African American community, low-income people, immigrants rights and ending the war.

“We are gathering to continue to remind our state legislators and other elected officials that our

14-point agenda and more than 80 action items are still relevant. The people of this state who turned out in record numbers to vote last November want to see real change,” said North Carolina NAACP President Dr. William Barber. “And further, we are coming to further say, in the midst of this current financial crisis, ‘Do not balance this budget on the backs of the poor.’”

Hundreds of students and trade unionists from across North Carolina mobilized for the protest. The program also featured speeches from workers who won union recognition at the Smithfield processing plant and UE union members who occupied their factory in Chicago.

Dr. Barber and other leaders of the HK on J movement urged the thousands

in attendance to keep building the grassroots movements for change. In particular, the speakers emphasized the importance of building as broad a movement as possible to oppose massive cuts to social services and people’s needs.



Rally of Southern California Immigration Coalition in Los Angeles.

California: Protest demands full legalization, end to raids and deportations

By Carlos Montes

Los Angeles, CA - On Jan. 21, the Southern California Immigration Coalition held a rally in front of the Los Angeles Federal Building to send a message to President Obama demanding legalization for 10 million immigrants and an end to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids and deportations.

The new Southern California Immigration Coalition is made up of teachers, students, anti-war and immigrant rights groups based

in southern California. The Coalition was formed to build unity in the struggle against the increased repression against immigrants - especially against Mexican immigrants. The Coalition will continue the fight to win full legalization from the new administration. The Southern California Immigration Coalition will lead a march on March 28 to build toward the May 1 demonstration for immigrant rights in downtown Los Angeles.

The web site is www.immigrationcoalition.org

Protesters Picket Israeli Dance Troop Performance

By staff

Chicago, IL - “The blood of Gaza is on your hands!” was the chant that rang out in front of the Auditorium Theater here, Feb. 8. The 60 protesters called for boycotting the performance of the Israeli Batsheba Dance Company. The dance troop is touring the U.S. as goodwill ambassadors for the Zionist state. The invasion of

Gaza, in which over 1300 Palestinians were killed, including over 300 children, has put the eyes of the world on Israel. Picketers also challenged the concert-goers, saying, “Don’t dance on Gaza’s graves!” The organizers, including the International Solidarity Movement and the Palestine Solidarity Group, vowed to continue and expand the “Boycott/Divest/Sanction” campaign.



60 protesters called for boycotting the performance of the Israeli Batsheba Dance Company.

FROM AFGHANISTAN TO PALESTINE: END THE OCCUP

U.S. Occupation Faltering in Afghanistan

By Kosta Harlan

2009 started off poorly for U.S. and NATO forces occupying Afghanistan. Shortly after the U.S. military invaded and occupied Afghanistan in October 2001, *Fight Back!* reported, "No one wants their country occupied by foreign powers. So, the people of Afghanistan will mount a resistance. Its scope and power remain to be seen, but it will certainly be a factor." (*Afghanistan Occupied, New Targets Ahead, Fight Back!* Winter 2002)

It is now safe to say that the resistance to the occupation has become the decisive factor in the Afghanistan war. A powerful resistance movement, with broad support from the people of Afghanistan, controls 72% of Afghanistan and carries out heavy or substantial activity in 93% of the country (*The Struggle for Kabul: The Taliban Advance*, International Council on Security and Development, December 2008). U.S. and NATO troops no longer control events in the country. It is resistance forces that decide when, where and how to engage in combat with the occupier.

Supply route cut

At the end of December 2008, U.S. and Pakistani security forces mounted a major operation to secure the Khyber Pass, a critical transit point that runs between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Khyber Pass is the source of 80% of supplies used by U.S. and NATO forces and the Afghan resistance has indicated that one of its strategic objectives is to cut off occupying forces from this supply route. Just days before the operation began, Afghan insurgents stormed a supply depot in Peshawar, Pakistan, where the transit route through the Kyber Pass begins. Without firing a single shot, they overpowered the security forces and destroyed around 300 cargo trucks, Humvees, and other military equipment destined for the occupier's use.

Within days of the operation beginning, more than 70 people had been arrested by the Pakistani security forces, while two children and a woman were killed by an artillery shell launched by the Pakistani army. In addition, 45 homes were destroyed by Pakistani troops on "orders to dynamite or bulldoze homes belonging to men suspected of harboring or supporting Taliban militants or carrying out other illegal activities," (*Pakistan Briefly Reopens Key NATO Supply Route*, *New York Times*, 1/03/09). Four weeks later, the security operation was still ongoing. On Jan. 18, the Pakistani army and "paramilitary troops, backed by artillery, tanks and helicopter gunships" were reported to have killed 60 fighters for the Taliban in Mohmand Agency, a department near the Khyber Pass (*U.S. Secures New Supply Routes to Afghanistan*, *New*

York Times, 1/21/09). There was no report of casualties suffered by Pakistani or NATO forces.

On Jan. 19, General David Petraeus, now responsible for U.S. Central Command, announced that NATO had secured agreements with Russia and neighboring Central Asian countries to supply arms, fuel and supplies to occupying forces from the northern borders of Afghanistan - the southern and eastern provinces of the country now being completely under the control of guerrilla forces (*U.S. to Be Allowed New Routes To Supply Troops in Afghanistan*, *Washington Post*, 1/21/09).

Corruption in Puppet Government

The deteriorating state of security for the occupation forces is made much worse by high levels of corruption in the Afghan state. Dexter Filkins, a journalist for the *New York Times*, gave the following description of the current state of affairs:

"Kept afloat by billions of dollars in American and other foreign aid, the government of Afghanistan is shot through with corruption and graft. From the lowliest traffic policeman to the family of President Hamid Karzai himself, the state built on the ruins of the Taliban government seven years ago now often seems to exist for little more than the enrichment of those who run it." (*Bribes Corrode Afghans' Trust in Government*, *New York Times*, 1/01/09).

In the same article, Ashraf Ghani, the former finance minister of Afghanistan who quit in 2004 in protest of the rampant corruption, is quoted as saying, "This government has lost the capacity to govern because a shadow government has taken over. [...] The narco-mafia state is now completely consolidated."

In fact, opium production is at an all-time high, more than triple what it was while the Taliban ruled Afghanistan. While it is commonly asserted that the opium trade is the main income for the insurgency, the above mentioned quotations from the former finance minister illustrate the reality of government involvement in, and massive profiteering from, opium production. As even President Hamid Karzai was forced to acknowledge in late 2008, "All the politicians in this country have acquired everything - money, lots of money. God knows, it is beyond the limit. The banks of the world are full of the money of our statesmen." (*Bribes Corrode Afghans' Trust in Government*, *New York Times*, 1/01/09).

Resistance Intensifies

The resistance to the occupation of Afghanistan is intensifying. 2008 was the deadliest year for U.S. and

NATO forces and it seems certain that 2009 will be even worse. 293 soldiers were killed in Afghanistan last year, among them 155 U.S. soldiers, which is an increase from 237 in 2007.

On Dec. 31, 2008, Taliban fighters attacked the office of Abdul Salam, a former resistance commander who defected to the side of the occupation and became a local political leader in the western town of Musa Qala. 32 Afghan police were killed in the attack, along with two Taliban fighters. One week later, on Jan. 9 and 10, five U.S. soldiers and several Afghan policemen were killed in a series of bombing attacks by Afghan insurgents. That same weekend, a huge cross-border raid took place, with hundreds of Afghan guerrilla fighters crossing over into Pakistan to attack a paramilitary base used for counter-insurgency warfare. It was reported that 40 guerrillas and six Pakistani soldiers were killed in the fighting (*46 Die in Taliban Attack on Pakistani Troops*, *New York Times*, 1/11/09).

On Jan. 15, General Fazel Ahmad Sayar was killed, along with twelve other military personnel when their helicopter crashed in the western province of Herat. The general was one of Afghanistan's most senior military officials. The Taliban claim to have shot down the helicopter, while the U.S.-backed government in Kabul says it crashed due to bad weather.

The next day, a series of attacks targeted U.S. forces across the country. In Kabul, a suicide bomber killed one American soldier and several civilians in a heavily guarded diplomatic zone of the capital. 26 others were wounded, including six U.S. service members. (*Suicide Blast Kills 5 in Afghanistan*, *New York Times*, 1/17/09). Another U.S. soldier died when insurgents shot down a helicopter in the northeast of the country. The Taliban also carried out another suicide bombing against a joint Afghan police-U.S. military convoy. The bombing injured several Afghan policemen and killed one Afghan policeman. Two days later, on Jan. 18, the Afghan resistance carried out three bombing attacks against police and military targets in the eastern town of Khost, near the border with Pakistan (*Three Attacks Hit Eastern Afghan Town*, *New York Times*, 1/19/09).

In light of the intensified levels of attacks against U.S. forces, Defense Secretary Robert Gates ordered Jan. 27 that the number of helicopters assigned to medical evacuation be increased by a factor of 25%.

Occupation faltering

All the above is but a small sample of what is taking place on a daily basis in occupied Afghanistan. It is clear that the U.S. occupation is faltering.

As the *New York Times* reported on Jan. 21:

"The commanders here call the current situation 'stalemate,' meaning they can hold what they have but cannot do much else. Of the 20,000 British, American and other troops here, only roughly 300 - a group of British Royal Marines - can be moved around the region to strike the Taliban. All the other units must stay where they are, lest the area they hold slip from their grasp." (*Taliban Fill NATO's Big Gaps in Afghan South*, *New York Times*, 1/21/09).

To fight a guerrilla war successfully, the insurgents have to stay close to the people. There is no other way to overpower a militarily superior force. This is precisely what the Taliban and other Afghan resistance groups have succeeded in doing.

Afghans who still have a favorable view of the occupying forces find it increasingly difficult to uphold the occupation, when every week brings news of more civilians massacred by U.S. and NATO forces. For example, on Jan. 25, several hundred Afghans protested in Laghman Province over the deaths of 16 civilians - among them two women and three children - at the hands of the U.S. military. The U.S.-backed president of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, denounced the nighttime raid and demanded that U.S. forces coordinate their activities with local Afghan security forces. Even the speaker of the Senate, Sebahatullah Mojadeddi, was reported to have warned that "if more care was not taken, the nation could rise up against the foreign troop presence here." (*From Hospital, Afghans Rebut U.S. Account*, *New York Times*, 1/25/09).

Lutfullah Mashal, a U.S.-backed governor of the province where the massacre occurred, summed up the situation perfectly: "The people are angry with us. Unless the international community, and especially military forces, coordinate with us, we are not going to win this war, because to win the war is to win the hearts and minds of the people, and then you can beat the enemy."

The fact is, no occupation can ever win over the 'hearts and minds' of an occupied people, and only those who dream of empire would think otherwise. Each massacre of Afghan civilians will provoke more Afghans to join the fight against the occupying forces, while the puppet government put in place to help pacify the population is crumbling under the astonishing levels of corruption and negligence.

The U.S. invaded and occupied Afghanistan for its natural resources and its strategic location. The U.S. army is not fighting a just cause, while the Afghan people are waging a heroic fight for independence and liberation. The U.S. likes to pretend that it is defending the Afghan people from the backwards Taliban. It is true that there are problems in Afghan society. But only the people of Afghanistan know how to solve them and move their society forward. The best solution is for the United States and NATO forces to leave Afghanistan to its people and to end the occupation now.

OPERATIONS



Fight Back! photo

Across the U.S., protests erupted against the Israeli attack on Gaza, including this one where 500 marched in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The Gaza War: Victory for the Palestinian People

By Hatem Abudayyeh

Israel's 22-day assault on the Palestinian people in Gaza, starting Dec. 27, 2008, ended when Israel acknowledged defeat - declaring a unilateral 'ceasefire' Jan. 17. Israel's political and military goals were not met and, as in the summer of 2006, when the Lebanese resistance defeated Israel's military, the Palestinians and their resistance emerged victorious.

Israel's propaganda machine could not disguise the fact that the assault was meant to crush the Palestinian resistance. Targeting the whole of the Palestinian people, approximately 1350 Palestinians, including over 300 children, were killed in the attacks, with over 5000 more injured. Over half of the injured were women and children.

Millions of people across the world rose in protest against Israel's massacres and war crimes. The Israelis were left scrambling to defend their atrocities, but were not able to, even with the continued military, diplomatic and political support of the U.S.

The mass Arab and international popular movements united around the world, including hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Americans here, taking to the streets in passionate support for the Palestinian people. The governments of Bolivia and Venezuela cut diplomatic ties with Israel, expelling Israel's ambassadors from their respective capitals.

The Palestinian Front and Resistance

As analyzed in *Fight Back!* News Service in February of 2006, Hamas won the majority of seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections of January 2006. Soon after, Israel, the U.S. and the European Union refused to acknowledge the victory

and imposed a political blockade on Hamas and its appointed Palestinian prime minister, who, according to Palestinian law, was empowered to form a unity government arrangement with elected Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas.

Later, in June 2007, after an internal battle between Hamas and Abbas's Fatah movement supporters, Hamas took power in Gaza, prompting Israel to immediately impose a military siege on the Gaza Strip, closing the borders and restricting the entry of food, medicine, medical supplies, fuel, electricity and other essential items needed for the Gazans' survival.

Both the blockade and Israel's breaking the ceasefire with the Palestinians on Nov. 4, 2008 are acts of war. The Palestinian resistance to Israel's offensive is a legitimate response to an illegal military occupation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank that has continued unabated since 1967. Israel's unilateral declaration of the current 'ceasefire' is a sham, as elements of its ground forces remain in Gaza and the siege has not ended; nor have the border crossings, particularly at the Rafah border with Egypt, been opened. Tons of humanitarian goods have been sent back by the Israelis and Egyptians, most notably a delivery from Iran and a ship from Lebanon that also carried former U.S. Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney.

Israel's unilateral 'ceasefire' also signifies that its military was not able to defeat the Palestinian resistance, which was strong and

unified and included all the organizations that constitute the Palestinian national liberation movement - Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Islamic Jihad, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), Fatah and others. It also signifies that Israel's political goals of fostering internal Palestinian division - to impose an acceptance of Israeli apartheid and occupation on the Palestinian people - was defeated as well.

This unity in resistance must translate into a political unity. So, although there are Egyptian-mediated talks between Hamas and Fatah planned, neither organization can lead the Palestinian people alone and their battle for control of the Palestinian polity can only weaken the Palestinian cause.

The Palestinian people insist that its representative should be a national unity formation, one that truly represents all of the Palestinian social sectors and resistance forces, led by a reformed and reconstituted Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

The Arab Front and 'Normalization'

The summit of Sharm el-Sheikh (an Egyptian resort town) in late January, attended by Europeans and some Arab regimes, represents a threat to the entire Arab people and is an attempt to revive colonialism in the Arab world. There, the discussion of European 'monitoring' of the Egyptian-Palestinian border proves that there is no sovereignty either in Egypt or in Gaza and that these European imperialist powers are trying to impose their hegemony on the Arab peoples.

Mouin Rabbani, a contributing editor to the *Middle East Report* magazine, dismissed the significance of the summit, according to Aljazeera English. He said the leaders talked about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza as if it had been caused by an earthquake, adding, "I'm speechless, that you can, in 2009, have a major international gathering to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and have a whole series of keynote addresses, in which the word 'occupation' isn't mentioned even once."

In addition, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak is talking about a "new Middle East" - one, for all intents and purposes, that does not challenge his and the other reactionary Arab leaders' attempts to 'normalize' relations with Israel. As Mubarak explained to the Egypt State Information Service, normalization "simply means that there will be no restrictions whatsoever on cooperation in any area."

Over the past 15 years since the failed Oslo Peace Accords, this 'cooperation' has manifested itself in Egyptian, Jordanian and Saudi pressure on the Palestinian Authority to liquidate the armed Palestinian resistance by arresting resistance leaders in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and engaging in 'security talks and coordination with the Mossad (Israel's intelligence and special operations agency) and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

The Israeli Front

In Israel the ultra-right-wing is definitely on the rise. As this analysis goes to press, Israeli President Shimon Peres has asked Likud Party leader Benjamin Netanyahu to form the next Israeli unity government, after the recent Israeli elections saw the rightist Likud and the center-right Kadima Party neck in neck in Knesset (Parliament) seats won.

But since neither party was close to the 61 seats needed to secure the position of Israeli Prime Minister, both were falling all over themselves to unite with the virulently racist and anti-Arab Yisrael Beiteinu Party, which won 15 seats and is led by Avigdor Lieberman. Lieberman is a former member of the outlawed Kach Party, whose founder, Meir Kahane, advocated the forcible expulsion of all Palestinians from all of historical Palestine.

Now, Kadima's leader, Tzipi Livni, claims that she is uninterested in joining any government that she does not lead, stating she "would not serve as a fig leaf for a government of paralysis." But before Peres chose Netanyahu over her to form the new government, she "boasted of her close ties with Lieberman and their long acquaintanceship, presenting him as a legitimate politician and desirable partner in a future coalition led by her," according to the editorial page of Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*.

Haaretz also reports that Netanyahu has promised to initiate legislation to deprive Palestinians of their citizenship and other rights in the 1948 territories, in support of Lieberman's stance that all Palestinians who live there must sign a loyalty oath to Israel.

Netanyahu must also bring Shas, the ultra-Orthodox Sephardic party, and several smaller religious parties (that all also have anti-Arab platforms), into his coalition government to secure the 65 seats that he guaranteed in his negotiations with Peres. These developments indict the oxymoronic 'Jewish democratic' state of Israel.

Palestinian-Israeli 'Peace' and the Lessons of Gaza

Finally, the recent elections in Israel and the Gaza War have proven the utter futility of the PA's 'peace negotiations' with Israel, which have continued under the auspices of, and under pressure from reactionary Arab regimes and the 'quartet' (U.S., Russia, European Union and the United Nations). Most of the Palestinian resistance forces have rejected these negotiations, stating that peace is a mirage while Israel continues its military occupation of the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem and the West Bank, and while Israel detains over 11,000 Palestinian political prisoners and expands illegal Jewish-only settlements.

The Gaza War has established that Israel is not indomitable. The Palestinian armed resistance is still alive and well. The vast majority of the Palestinian people support the resistance as a means to end the occupation, to secure the Right of Return for all Palestinian refugees and their descendants and to achieve freedom, independence and a lasting peace for all the people in the region.

EDITORIALS

May Day 2009: Fighting the Crisis

By Freedom Road Socialist Organization

On May 1, International Workers Day, millions upon millions will be marching against the capitalist economic crisis that has engulfed most of the world. Working people in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and North America will hit the streets to protest the soaring unemployment, shorter hours and cuts in pay that are sweeping the world.

Here in the U.S. May 1 has become a day of mass protest as Chicanos, Mexicanos, Central Americans and their allies demand a stop to raids and deportations and for legalization of the undocumented. The Chicano nation is moving to break the chains of racism, inequality and national oppression and a movement is growing for liberation and self-determination.

On May 1 we celebrate the spirit of internationalism, of solidarity with the struggles of oppressed countries, nations and peoples against imperialism in general and the U.S. empire in particular. Over the last year we have seen the heroic resistance of the Palestinian people against a murderous onslaught of the Zionist planes and tanks, which had the full backing of the U.S. government. The U.S.-backed puppet government in Afghanistan is sinking deeper in crisis and the United States is rushing tens of thousands more troops to try to prop it up. The worldwide economic crisis is weakening the hold of the United States over its empire as more and more countries are challenging U.S. domination around the world.

For the first time since the Great Depression of the 1930s the U.S. econ-

omy is being crushed between a severe recession and a full-blown financial crisis. Nationwide, millions of homes stand vacant and cannot be rented or sold. Millions of unsold cars sit on dealers lots. A crisis of overproduction has overwhelmed the economy as businesses cut down or shut down, throwing millions of workers into the street.

Wall Street firms, from investment bank Lehman Brothers to insurance giant American International Group (AIG), mortgage lenders Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and banks such as Washington Mutual, Wachovia and Citibank have gone bankrupt, been sold out, or are depending on government bailouts.

While the government has pumped some \$2 trillion into the financial system, the money has gone to pay obscene bonuses, take over other banks, pay dividends to shareholders or it has been just stashed away. With mortgage delinquencies marching ever higher even as home prices continue to fall, working people have been outraged at the bailout that benefits the banks and billionaire investors.

But workers are also fighting back. Working people across the country were inspired by the struggle of the Republic Window workers in

Chicago, who exposed Bank of America's role in shutting down their company. The Republic Window workers are carrying on the long tradition of struggle of workers in Chicago. On May 1, 1886, U.S. work-

ers went on strike for an eight-hour day. In Chicago's Haymarket Square, striking workers clashed with police. This led to the execution of four working class leaders, three of whom were immigrants. May 1 was declared International Workers Day to commemorate this struggle and the injustice done by the government.

Working people are getting organized to fight the crisis. In Minnesota, a People's Bailout Coalition has formed. As a coalition of grassroots organizations from the urban poor, labor, student, immigrant rights and anti-war movements, they have been able to introduce legislation that would defend working people and make the rich pay.

Under eight years of Republican rule, the rich got richer and the poor poorer. The government allowed Wall Street to run amok and cleared the way for the financial crisis that exploded last year.

They invaded not one, but two countries in their attempt to take control of the Middle East and Central Asia, along with the area's vast supply of oil. The Bush administration also stepped up the raids and deportations, trying to spread fear and terror in the Chicano, Mexicano and Central American communities. The devastation of New Orleans and Mississippi and the ethnic cleansing of African American communities was not a natural disaster, it was a man-made disaster rooted in the deep racism, and the systematic oppression of the Black nation.

Growing outrage at Bush and the right wing led tens of thousands to protest at the Republican National Convention in September and millions more to vote out the Bush-McCain regime. With the Democrats now in power there has been some help to working people in the form of extended unemployment and health insurance. But the Democrats are still a party of Wall Street and big business. It was the Democrats who rallied the votes for the bank bailout last October, and who passed the second round of bank bailouts this year. The problem was not just Bush and the Republicans, nor is the solution more Democrats in congress.

Only a stronger people's movement can challenge the hold of Wall Street and big business over economic policy. Only a more massive anti-war movement can oppose the U.S. troop escalation in Afghanistan and U.S. plans to expand the war to Pakistan. Only a revived immigrant rights movement can stop the raids and deportations and win legalization for the undocumented. Only the rising up of African American, Chicano/Latino and other oppressed nationalities can stop the plague of police killings in our communities and advance the struggle for equality, liberation and self determination.

In the final analysis, the economic crisis, anti-immigrant movements and imperialist war are part and parcel of monopoly capitalism. It is the tiny minority of billionaires who own the big banks and corporations who profit, while working people lose their jobs, their homes, their communities and their lives. More and more it is clear that we must replace capitalism with a system where production is for people's needs, not billionaires' profits: socialism.

Long live International Workers Day!

Legalization, not raids and deportations!

Equality, liberation, and self determination for all oppressed nations!

Jobs and funding for schools and services; stop foreclosures; and make the rich pay!

Troops out of Afghanistan; withdraw all troops from Iraq now!



Poster from the first May Day, Haymarket Square Chicago. Workers, led by immigrant workers, protested working conditions and for the eight-hour day.

Fight Foreclosures! Stop the Evictions!

By Fight Back! editors

February 2009

In January, both Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac will stop evicting tenants in foreclosed homes. Instead tenants will be able to stay on as renters. Both Fannie and Freddie were taken over by the government last year and have changed some policies to help slow the tidal wave of foreclosures and evictions. By allowing tenants to stay on, the blight of abandoned foreclosed homes will be lessened, and families who rent will not be uprooted from their schools and communities.

But Fannie and Freddie only have about one-fifth of late mortgages. The other 80% are in the hands of big banks and investors. We need state governments and congress to act!

1. State legislatures should pass an immediate ban on foreclosure evictions for both owner occupied homes and tenants. This ban should

last until Congress changes the law to protect tenants and owners who live in their homes.

2. State legislatures and Congress must pass a law banning evictions of tenants when their landlords go into foreclosure. Tenants should be allowed to stay under their previous contract (whether by lease or month-to-month).

3. Congress must change the bankruptcy law to allow residents to modify their mortgages. Bankruptcy judges should be empowered to reduce the principal amount of loans for owner-occupied homes to 80% of the home's current market value and require the lender to offer a 30-year, fixed interest rate loan.

4. Congress must also change the law to allow a 'right-to-rent' for home buyers who can't pay their mortgages and don't want to go through bankruptcy. This would allow the homebuyer to stay in their home and pay the market rent. It would also be an incen-

tive for lenders to modify the mortgage.

Of course the big banks and wealthy investors will argue that this will be bad for them, which will mean that they will lend less, which will hurt homebuyers. But they are the ones who helped to cause the crisis with their fraudulent lending! They should pay! And they are not lending anyway! The banks are sitting on \$800 billion in cash, despite getting hundreds of billions from the Bush bank bailout!

But the people should not just pressure their legislatures and congress. When African Americans were denied their rights under Jim Crow segregation laws, they used civil disobedience and direct action to desegregate businesses and public facilities. Working people need to confront unjust and unfair evictions where ever and whenever they can. The evildoers need to be exposed and their agents in the government need to be protested.

NYU President Sexton attacks Bobcats The New York University Student Occupation

By Doug Michel

New York, NY - The student movement has continued to push forward, taking New York University by storm with an occupation of around 80 students in the Kimmel Center. After two years of preparation, the coalition Take Back NYU! occupied the building for two days, Feb. 18. Students outwitted police to the very end, with a couple dozen moving out to the Kimmel balcony when police raided their space. Student leaders now face suspension, but they have vowed to continue the struggle.

NYU occupier Maria Lewis described the reason for the occupation in *Let Them Talk*: "Students came together...really feeling like we wanted a more transparent and accountable democratic university. There's very little transparency at NYU." The Take Back NYU! Coalition started as a way to unify over 20 student organizations on the issues of democracy, accessible education, divestment from Israel and opposing U.S. wars and occupations. After two years of writing letters and lobbying the administration through the student senate, the occupation began.

The list of demands from Take Back NYU! includes full compensation for all employees whose jobs were disrupted during the course of the occupation, public release of NYU's investments, labor rights for student workers and all NYU employees, a Socially Responsible Finance Committee, annual scholarships for 13 Palestinian students, a NYU donation to rebuild the University of Gaza and tuition stabilization for all students. The most pressing demand was the immediate



"Students came together...really feeling like we wanted a more transparent and accountable democratic university. There's very little transparency at NYU."

investigation of university war profiteering, particularly in the case of the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

Students barricaded themselves into the third floor area while 500 supporters cheered outside in solidarity. Students used the balcony to proclaim their occupation and list their demands. The entire Kimmel Center building was shut down for two days.

During the occupation, solidarity letters poured in from across the nation. Chapters of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), whose

national media working group facilitated media work during the occupation, vigorously supported the takeover. "We support the demands by Take Back NYU! and SDS in their effort to oppose U.S. imperialism and the military-academic complex," one statement from the University of North Carolina-Asheville SDS reads.

On Feb. 20, students announced from

the balcony that they received word from NYU President Sexton that they were ready to negotiate face to face. For two days Sexton and the university administration continued to be silent to their demands. In an act of ugly deceit by President Sexton, 25 riot cops burst into the Kimmel Center and cornered the remaining students. 18 students were suspended for a week. The university is barring them from campus and participating in student organizations. They also imposed a period of disciplinary probation for the remainder of the semester. A recent Take Back NYU! statements declares, "We might be suspended for the moment, but NYU's actions have made even more clear the necessity for democracy, transparency, accountability and respect for human rights."

This latest student occupation came after two other successful occupations by the Radical Student Union at New School University and SDS at the University of Rochester. Internationally, there has been a flurry of occupations in Britain and throughout Europe in the past two months since the U.S.-backed Israeli invasion of Gaza. Student activist groups like Take Back NYU! and SDS continue to press forward the struggle to democratize universities and oppose U.S. wars and occupations.

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Hundreds Rally for Palestine

By Daniel Ginsberg-Jaeckle

Milwaukee, WI - It snowed, yet hundreds gathered outside the Milwaukee Federal Building here, in the late afternoon, Jan. 6, for the "Stop Israeli Invasion of Gaza!" rally.

Initiated by student anti-war and solidarity activists at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the protest gave voice to people who want an end to U.S. support of Israel's assault on Palestinians.

Rally organizers estimate at least 300 people were present, the result of good networking between the student anti-war and solidarity movement, the peace movement and the Muslim communities of Milwaukee.

"While it is a tragic occasion that brought us together, it has been an honor to work with brave Palestinians," commented Rachel Metteson of Milwaukee Students for a Democratic Society.

The rally began with more bad news from Gaza from the morning news: Reports of more than 500 Palestinians dead, an Israeli bombing of a UN school and of Israel censoring journalists in the area.



Hundreds gathered outside the Milwaukee Federal Building for the "Stop Israeli Invasion of Gaza!" rally. One speaker called Gaza "the worlds largest open air prison."

At one point, the protesters gathered to hear speeches from various community leaders, including Julie Enslow, the 2008 Lifetime Peacemaker Award winner and Othman Atta, the President of the Milwaukee Islamic Center.

Two days before, Atta, in reading a

statement of latest events to an audience of over 500 at an Islamic community center, condemned Israel's invasion. Atta called Gaza "the largest open air prison in the world" and later stated, "Israel's problem with Hamas is not its military ability, its rockets or its ideology. Hamas's crime lies in

its continued unwillingness to kowtow to Israeli demands." This statement came to the roaring approval of the audience.

A counter-demonstration was announced to the employees of 12-story, block-long Federal building. This brought legal observers, white arm banded 'peace makers' and more police to the scene, however not a single counter-demonstrator arrived. Those who deserved attention the most - the people fighting for justice in Palestine - received all the media attention.

Co-sponsoring organizations of the rally included Jews for Justice, Progressive Students of Milwaukee, American Muslims for Palestine, Milwaukee Students for a Democratic Society, Peace Action Wisconsin, Greater Milwaukee Green Party, Muslim Student Association at UWM and MAS Freedom Foundation.

Student Organizers from American Muslims for Palestine, Milwaukee Students for a Democratic Society and Jews for Justice have already discussed more possibilities of protest in the near future.



Deb Konechne de la Coalición para el Rescate del Pueblo de Minnesota habla el 6 de enero en el capitolio de Minnesota

Crisis económica

Economía, continúa de página 12

dinero. Pero ahora los bancos pueden obtener ganancias cuando no prestan dinero, y cientos de billones de dólares están estancados en los bancos mientras los negocios pequeños y los trabajadores no tienen acceso al crédito.

El problema fundamental es que hay una crisis de sobreproducción. Compañías grandes pueden producir más de lo que la gente puede comprar. Va a llegar un momento en que cierren tantas compañías que las que se quedan van a poder ganar dinero de nuevo y la economía y las ganancias empezaran a crecer de nuevo. Economistas capitalistas dicen que eso pasará antes del fin de este año, si no surge otra crisis (¡y eso no es muy cierto!). Pero aun cuando la economía empieza a crecer de nuevo, habrá poca ayuda para los trabajadores.

Por ejemplo veamos la industria de autos. Alrededor del mundo, compañías de autos pueden producir millones mas de carros que los que pueden vender. El gobierno estadounidense ha dado billones de dólares en préstamos a General Motors y Chrysler, y está considerando la posibilidad de darles mas ayuda a ellos, a las compañías que les producen partes para fabricar los carros, y a las compañías que dan financiamiento para los carros. Pero estos préstamos tienen como objetivo la transformación de la industria para ser "viable", que quiere decir el cierre de más fábricas, más despidos, y recortes de salarios y beneficios para los trabajadores. Cuando ya han cerrado suficientes fábricas, las compañías van a poder tener ganancias de nuevo pero a un nivel mas bajo de ventas. ¿Pero que tal los cientos de miles de trabajadores que trabajan en las fabricas de carros, que fabrican las partes para los carros, y que trabajan en venta de carros que pierden sus trabajos en este proceso? ¿Y los decenas de miles de trabajadores jubilados cuyos beneficios han sido cortados? Estos trabajos y beneficios no regresarán.

Es por eso que tenemos que luchar y resistir. Tenemos que seguir el ejemplo de los trabajadores de Chicago de la

compañía Republic Windows and Doors que no permitieron que el Bank of America cerrara la compañía y despidiera todos los trabajadores sin una lucha. En Minneapolis, Minnesota, se ha formado la Coalición por un Rescate del Pueblo con participación de sindicatos, organizaciones para el derecho de asistencia pública, grupos estudiantiles y otros grupos de la comunidad. Esta coalición existe para luchar para que paguen los ricos y para proteger los intereses de los trabajadores. En California los estudiantes han salido de sus escuelas en protesta a los recortes presupuestarios a las escuelas.

Viendo hacia el futuro, necesitamos el socialismo. El socialismo no va a llegar y regalar trabajos y casas la semana que viene o el año que viene. ¿Pero solo podemos esperar el regreso a lo que existía antes de la crisis actual? ¿Realmente queremos regresar a una economía capitalista donde millones de personas no tienen seguro medico aun cuando la economía esta en crecimiento? ¿Una economía en que los salarios de los trabajadores siguen bajando en el largo plazo mientras los ricos siguen enriqueciéndose? ¿Una economía donde tenemos que acumular un montón de deuda solo para poder sobrevivir mientras pasamos todos los días en preocupación por donde vamos a sacar el próximo cheque? ¿Una economía que gasta dinero sin fin en uno o más guerras al otro lado del mundo para proteger los intereses de las corporaciones grandes petroleras? ¿Una economía en que mas que 40 años después de que el congreso aprobó el Acto de Ley pro-Derechos Civiles, los afroamericanos, latinos y todas mujeres todavía ganan menos dinero que los blancos y hombres?

Los trabajadores y los pueblos oprimidos necesitamos un sistema socialista en que el poder político esta en manos de la clase trabajadora y en que la economía sirve a los intereses del pueblo.

Mientras hoy luchamos por nuestras necesidades y derechos, también tenemos que educar y organizar por un gobierno y economía socialista que beneficiará al pueblo y no a las corporaciones grandes y Wall Street.

Victoria en ocupación estudiantil de la Univ. de Rochester en solidaridad con Palestina

Por redacción

Rochester, NY - Los estudiantes de la Universidad de Rochester declararon una victoria y dieron por terminada la ocupación luego de que la administración de la universidad aprobara varias de sus demandas. El 6 de febrero, más de 75 estudiantes ocuparon el auditorio del edificio Goergen biomédica e ingeniería, como muestra de solidaridad con el pueblo Palestino en Gaza. Los Estudiantes por una Sociedad Democrática (SDS) en la Universidad de Rochester organizaron la toma para aumentar la presión en la administración para que accediera a sus demandas.

Los manifestantes demandaron que la universidad dejase de estar involucrada con empresas que reciben beneficios de la guerra, la iniciación de un fondo de ayuda humanitaria para Gaza, el envío de materiales para la devastada Universidad de Gaza y proveer por los menos de mínimo cinco becas para estudiantes Palestinos cada año.

Los Palestinos en Gaza están todavía en un hilo desde la brutal ocupación de tres semanas por parte del ejército Israelita, financiado por el gobierno de los Estados Unidos, matado mas de 1335 Palestinos y dejando miles de heridos.

La ocupación del edificio vino en medio de una onda de ocupaciones similares de las universidades que barrió Gran Bretaña en las últimas dos semanas. "Las 16 ocupaciones de universidades en Inglaterra nos inspiraron a que hiciéramos algo similar aquí en solidaridad con la gente en

Gaza," Eugene Brud, joven de la Universidad de Rochester y organizador de la protesta.

Apenas nueve horas después de que la protesta comenzara, los estudiantes declararon victoria después que el decano de los estudiantes firmó una declaración que aceptó varias de las demandas de los estudiantes. "La ocupación del edificio terminó con una declaración de los estudiantes y en conjunto con el decano de estudiantes, en que la administración de la universidad se comprometió a mandar ayuda humanitaria y académica y también unas becas para la población de Palestina," Brud dijo.

"En cuanto nuestra demanda para el desposeimiento de los fondos de la universidad de la guerra, conseguimos un acuerdo para un foro público sobre el tema con la administración. Éste es, por supuesto, mucho menos que la demanda para el desposeimiento de fabricantes de armas," Brud continuo. "Pero lo que logramos se puede ver como éxito, por que nos da un foro para seguir luchando, y si organizamos con esfuerzo, podemos seguir adelante con más fuerza y claridad." Además de los Estudiantes para una Sociedad Democrática (SDS), la ocupación de la universidad tenía una participación amplia de organizaciones de la comunidad y del campus, incluyendo los Veteranos de Iraq Contra la Guerra (IVAW), Rochester Contra Guerra y la Red Antiguerra del Campus (CAN).

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No somos neutrales en nuestro informe. Estamos opuestos a la explotación, discriminación, y opresión. Sostenemos que la clase de la gente rica, que manejan la economía y el gobierno de este país, no están calificados para gobernarnos. Apoyamos a todos los movimientos que denuncian su poder y privilegio.

Los escritores y empleados de *¡Lucha y Resiste!* son activistas y organizadores en sindicatos, en comunidades de

bajos ingresos, movimientos de nacionalidades oprimidas, en Universidades, y en otros movimientos populares. Esperamos recibir sus artículos, cartas comentarios, y críticas. Algunos de los que trabajamos para mantener este periódico somos miembros de Freedom Road Socialist Organization. Los artículos representan las perspectivas de la gente y organizaciones que los escriben. Por el momento, *¡Lucha y Resiste!* es publicado cinco veces al año.

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Trabajadores despedidos de la Universidad de Chicago luchan fuertemente



¡No más reposiciones! ¡No más desalojos!

Editorial de ¡Lucha y Resiste!

En enero, ambas corporaciones Fannie Mae y Freddie Mac dejaron de desalojar a los ocupantes en casas reposesadas. Los ocupantes ahora pueden quedarse como arrendatarios. El gobierno tomó posesión de Fannie y Freddie el año pasado y han cambiado algunas políticas para tratar de calmar la ola de reposiciones y desalojos. Dejaron que se queden los ocupantes, ahora habrán menos casas reposesadas y las familias que alquilan sus hogares no serán echadas de sus comunidades.

Pero las corporaciones Fannie y Freddie sólo tienen una quinta parte de los pagos de las hipotecas retardadas. Los otros 80% están en manos de los grandes bancos e inversionistas. ¡Los gobiernos estatales y el Congreso tienen que hacer algo!

1. Los legisladores estatales deben pasar un ALTO inmediato de reposiciones para todos los ocupantes de casas, sean dueños o arrendatarios. Este alto debe seguir en efecto hasta que el Congreso cambie las leyes para proteger a los ocupantes de casas.

2. Los legisladores estatales y el Congreso tienen que pasar una ley que prohíba los desalojos de arrendatarios cuando sus propietarios entran en reposiciones. Los arrendatarios deben poder quedarse bajo su contrato anterior (sea por contrato extendido o mes por mes).

3. El Congreso tiene que cambiar las leyes de la bancarrota para permitir que los dueños puedan modificar sus pagos de hipoteca. Los jueces de la bancarrota deben tener el poder de reducir el monto principal del presta-

mo para los dueños de casas a 80% del valor actual de la casa en el mercado y requerir que los prestamistas ofrezcan un préstamo de 30 años con una tasa de interés fija.

4. El Congreso también tiene que cambiar la ley para permitir que los dueños de casas que no alcanzan a pagar sus pagos de hipoteca tengan el derecho de alquilar para no tener que declararse en la bancarrota. Esto permitiría que el dueño pueda quedarse en su casa y pagar la renta al valor del mercado. También sería un incentivo a los prestamistas para modificar los pagos de la hipoteca.

Es seguro que los grandes bancos y los inversionistas ricos dirán que estos cambios les afectarán negativamente, así que podrían prestar menos y esto les afectará negativamente a los que quieren comprar una casa. Pero son los grandes bancos que ayudaron a causar esta crisis con sus préstamos fraudulentos. ¡Ellos deben pagar en vez de buscar cualquier razón para no prestar! Los bancos están sentados en \$800 mil millones en efectivo, a pesar de conseguir cientos de miles de millones del rescate de Bush.

Pero el pueblo debe hacer más que sólo presionar a sus legisladores y congresistas. Cuando les negaron sus derechos a los Afro americanos bajo las leyes de segregación de Jim Crow, ellos utilizaron la desobediencia civil y la acción directa para desegregar a los negocios y lugares públicos. El pueblo trabajador tiene que confrontar los desalojos injustos donde y cuando puedan. Hay que exponer a los ladrones de cuello blanco y desenmascarar a sus aliados en el gobierno.

Por redacción

Sherri Taylor-Kennedy se sentía insultada y furiosa con su empleador. "Cuando llegué me informaron que mi puesto había sido eliminado. Tenía 30 minutos para juntar mis pertenencias y ser escoltada fuera del establecimiento." Ella dijo en un mitin el 10 de febrero a 200 trabajadores y aliados en el Centro Médico de la Universidad de Chicago.

Ms. Taylor-Kennedy ha trabajado como secretaria por 14 años. La administración ha ya anunciado 450 despidos, y cientos por venir. Estos recortes están sucediendo a pesar de que el hospital no ha perdido dinero, como tampoco hay menos pacientes. Ellos se están deshaciendo de trabajadores porque su cuenta de donativos basada en la bolsa perdió 40% de su valor. Ellos quieren compensar sus malas inversiones al despedir gente.

Richard Berg, el presidente del Local 743 de los Teamsters, criticó duramente todos estos recortes que fueron hechos a pesar de que no hubo pérdidas financieras en las operaciones del hospital. "Ellos no son General Motors o Ford, donde las ventas están bajas. Esto es pura arrogancia," declaró frente a la ovación de la multitud.

Se unieron al Local 743 el Local 73 de Service Employees International Union, la organización Students Organized and United for Labor and Southside Together Organized for Power (STOP), un grupo que lucha contra el desplazamiento, fomentado

Se le añade una nueva acusación al antiguo presidente de los Teamsters del Local 743 "Traficando cocaína mientras fungía como presidente del sindicato"

Por redacción

Chicago, IL - El 22 de enero, otra acusación federal fue presentada en contra de Robert Walston, el antiguo presidente de los Teamsters quien en 2001 y 2004 robó las elecciones del Local 743. En esta ocasión es acusado de traficar con cocaína. El había estado manejando de Chicago a Texas en junio de 2007 cuando fue arrestado con \$135,000.00 en su carro. El FBI había estado observando sus movimientos y sabía que iba a comprar hasta 5 kilos de cocaína con ese dinero.

Al momento en que fue arrestado con todo ese dinero, Walston fungía como presidente. "Aparentemente estaba traficando con cocaína mientras era presidente del sindicato," exclamó Richard Berg, el presidente reformador del Local 743. Sorprendido por la publicación, Berg dijo, "Cuando corrimos contra ellos, nosotros los miembros no sabíamos la profundidad de la corrupción, pero sabíamos lo suficiente para saber que teníamos que deshacernos de la pandilla de Walston y López."

Dos meses después que Walston fue

por la Universidad, en el barrio de Woodland. El vocero de STOP Fred Payne apoyó a los trabajadores, dijo que ellos estaban luchando por ellos mismos y por pacientes como él. Además de recortar trabajos, el hospital anunció sus planes de rechar a más gente pobre quienes vienen a la sala de emergencia, y mandarlos al hospital del Condado de Cook, a diez millas de distancia. La mayoría de los 80,000 pacientes que usan la sala de emergencia son afro-americanos.

El Local 743 representa a 1500 oficinas y trabajadores de limpieza. Su representante en el Centro Médico, J Burger, dijo que muchos de los 450 despidos fueron trabajadores representados por el Local 743. El Local 73 representa a trabajadores capacitados, incluyendo a carpinteros y pintores, 18 de los cuales fueron despedidos sin aviso previo.

La amenaza para estos trabajadores es muy seria. Taylor-Kennedy declaró, "Yo tengo que pagar una renta mensual de \$1500 y tengo seis hijos que mantener."

Burger declaró: "Vamos a luchar hasta que recuperemos estos trabajos y hasta que este patrón respete a los trabajadores y a los residentes de las áreas circunvecinas." Los trabajadores terminaron su mitin con la consigna, "¡Si se puede!" concientes de que la casa del Presidente Obama está situada a unas cuadras de distancia de la Universidad, donde él había sido parte del cuerpo docente por algunos años.

detenido en Texas, el renunció a la presidencia y entregó la presidencia a su colega, Richard López. Al paso de los años que ellos y sus predecesores habían estado arruinando el local, ellos hacían tratos con las compañías donde los trabajadores ganaban poco o nada en aumentos salariales y beneficios. Cuando los trabajadores se unieron con Berg y el bloque del Nuevo Liderazgo para recuperar su sindicato, Walston y sus colegas se ocuparon de amañar las elecciones. Acusaciones fueron entregadas en contra de Walston, López y otros cuatro en 2007 y 2008 por esas acciones.

"Los trabajadores se mantuvieron unidos, ganamos las elecciones, hemos limpiado el Local 743 y ahora estamos construyendo un sindicato de lucha," declaró Berg.

En esta ocasión el conspirador de Walston es un hombre llamado Víctor Matos. Las acusaciones mencionan a otros que estuvieron involucrados pero no dieron sus nombres. Los Federales creen que los criminales estaban tratando de comprar más de 80 kilos.

¡LUCHA Y RESISTE!

Noticias y Perspectivas de la Lucha del Pueblo

50 centavos

ABRIL/MAYO 2009



Vol. 12, No. 1

PARECE QUE NO HAY FIN

Depresión económica más profunda desde la Gran Depresión

Comentario por los editores de ¡Lucha y Resiste!

En los seis meses desde que empezó la crisis financiera con el colapso del banco de inversiones Lehman Brothers en Nueva York, la economía mundial ha entrado a la crisis económica más grande desde la Gran Depresión de los años 1930. Los bancos estadounidenses y europeos han admitido pérdidas de un trillón de dólares, mientras el sistema de bancos en el país de Islandia colapsó completamente. Casi todas las economías principales del mundo (con la excepción de China) han empezado a reducirse, con millones de trabajadores perdiendo sus trabajos y muchos negocios llegando a la bancarrota en todos lados. Las economías más fuertemente golpeadas son las nuevas economías capitalistas de Europa de Este, quienes están siendo golpeadas fuertemente debido a su dependencia de préstamos de bancos extranjeros, la constricción de exportaciones, y la caída del valor de dinero.

Aquí en Estados Unidos, las noticias son malas también. El mercado de viviendas sigue cayendo, con precios reducidos más de 20% y construcción de nuevas casas 80% más abajo que el alto en enero 2006. Pérdidas de trabajos mes tras mes siguen creciendo, con más de cuatro millones de trabajos perdidos desde que empezó la recesión, la mayoría de estos en los últimos cuatro meses. La cifra de desempleo en enero



¡LyR! foto por Kim Defranco

Miembros del Comité para el Derecho de Asistencia Pública, la Coalición de Minnesota para el Rescate del Pueblo y otras personas congregan en el capitolio de Minnesota para exigir un rescate de los pobres y trabajadores no de los billonarios.

fue 7.6%, en comparación con la cifra de 4.7% antes de que empezó la recesión. Un número creciente de corporaciones grandes como Circuit City han cerrado, mientras cientos y miles de negocios más pequeños también están cerrando. Los gobiernos estatales y locales están aumentando impuestos y cortando servicios, agregando dolor a la situación para los trabajadores. La crisis financiera sigue a pesar de préstamos de un trillón y medio de dólares del banco de reserva federal estadounidense y cientos de billones de dólares del gobierno federal regalados a las compañías financieras. Las compañías que han recibido más ayuda financiera, desde la compañía

gigante de seguro American International Group (AIG), hasta el banco que antes era el mas grande del mundo, Citigroup, han tenido que regresar al gobierno para más dinero de rescate, y necesitarán una tercera infusión de dinero del gobierno pronto. Las pérdidas de los bancos siguen creciendo mientras el desempleo y bancarrotas de negocios también siguen creciendo. Las pérdidas de los bancos podrían crecer hasta dos o tres trillones de dólares más. Mientras la recesión y la crisis financiera siguen dañando más a la economía, los Estados Unidos y otros gobiernos están desesperados para cambiar la situación. No han podido frenar la

crisis con medidas fuertes como la bajada de la tasa de interés estadounidense a casi cero y con trillones de dólares de ayuda financiera a los bancos grandes. En este contexto algunos políticos están hablando de la "nacionalización" de algunos bancos, un vuelco político increíble para un sistema dedicado completamente a una política de desregulación desde hace solamente dos años. También hay posibilidades de que la Reserva Federal haya tenido que imprimir mas dinero, un acto de desesperación que podría causar inflación económica mucho más alta.

En febrero el gobierno aprobó un paquete de estímulo económico de 790 billones de dólares. Pero a pesar de esta cantidad grande de dinero, el impacto real solo va a ser de reducir el impacto de la recesión un poquito. 90 billones de dólares van a ser dirigido a familias con ingresos arriba de \$100,000. Mucho del resto de los recortes de impuestos y los nuevos gastos van a ser balanceado por aumentos de los impuestos y recortes presupuestarios por los gobiernos estatales y locales. Los trabajadores van a sentir el efecto del aumento de dinero para beneficios para la gente desempleada, seguro medico y las escuelas. Pero hasta la gente mas optimista predice que el nivel de desempleo va a seguir aumentando por lo menos dos años más.

Otro problema que enfrenta el gobierno es que los mismos esfuerzos que hace para intentar restaurar las ganancias a los negocios pueden tener el efecto de hacer daño a la economía. El rescate de los bancos el octubre pasado permitió que los bancos recolectaran intereses en el dinero que ahorran en la Reserva Federal. Antes estas "reservas" no pagaban intereses, que daba incentivo a los bancos para prestar

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CALIFORNIA

Exigen legalización completa y un fin a las redadas y deportaciones

Por Carlos Montes

Los Ángeles, CA - El 21 de enero, la Coalición Pro-inmigrante del sur de California organizó una manifestación frente al Edificio Federal en Los Ángeles para mandar un mensaje al presidente Obama exigiendo la legalización de más de 10 millones de inmigrantes y un fin a las redadas y deportaciones que está haciendo la oficina de inmigración.

La nueva Coalición Pro-inmigrante del sur de California está compuesta de profesores, estudiantes, grupos en contra de la guerra y grupos por los derechos de los inmigrantes en el sur de California. La coalición se formó para crear unidad en la lucha que se está haciendo para oponerse a la represión en contra de los inmigrantes - especialmente en contra de los inmigrantes latinos. La coalición seguirá la lucha para ganar la legalización completa bajo la nueva administración. La Coalición Pro-inmigrante del sur de California

organizará una marcha el 28 de marzo para construir unidad como una preparación para la manifestación que se llevará a cabo el 1 de mayo en el

centro de Los Ángeles.

Visita el sitio web en www.immigrationcoalition.org



Protesta en Los Angeles de la Coalición Pro-inmigrante del sur de California

ADENTRO

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