

# Join fall protests against war abroad & repression at home!



Tony Savino / Socialist Action



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

By CHRISTINE MARIE

Antiwar groups around the United States have designated the weekend of Oct. 5-7, the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of the U.S. war on Afghanistan, as a time for public demonstrations and major educational events. The United National Antiwar Coalition hosted an Aug. 29 national phone organizing meeting attended by 49 representatives from peace groups wishing to participate in 19 states. The Veterans for Peace national convention, held in mid-August in Florida, ratified the UNAC call.

UNAC-associated actions for which planning is already underway will take place in New York City, Chicago, Minneapolis, San Francisco, and Los Angeles.

In New York City, the effort is being led by the Islamic Leadership Council, the Muslim Peace Coalition, Black is Back, and Desis Rising Up and Moving, all groups especially interested in highlighting the relationship between the war abroad and increasing repression against communities of color at home. In San Francisco, civil liberties are to be the major theme of a large teach-in at Laney College.

Rising violence in Afghanistan, continued civilian casualties from drone attacks in Pakistan, rising expenditures for weapons of war, and fears of U.S./NATO/Israeli attacks on Iran or Syria are motivating activists from one end of the country to another.

A "Keep Space for Peace Week," Oct.

6-13, with activities in Maine, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, England, India, and Sweden, is including demands to End the Afghanistan War, Stop the Drones, and Say No to NATO expansion.

Meanwhile, a Code Pink Peace Delegation, organized out of the First International Drone Summit held in April in Washington, D.C., will be making its way to Pakistan to meet with victims of drone attacks and prepare reports on the humanitarian impact of the unending U.S. war in the region. Despite the low level of mobilization that election years bring, and despite the disorientation that Washington's shift from promoting massive troop deployments to secretive drone warfare and special operations has wrought, the antiwar movement will be visible this fall.

In part, this is because Afghanistan is back in the news, and the unpopular nature of the U.S. occupation has been driven home once again. On Sept. 1, the *Washington Post* reported that the U.S. government is reacting to the recent escalation of "green-on-blue," or "insider," attacks on U.S. troops by Afghan trainees by halting the training of Afghan troops until a new system of background checks can be implemented. On Sept. 2, *The New York Times* reported that U.S. troops have been ordered to carry weapons at all times, including on supposedly secure U.S. bases.

Political columnist Tom Engelhardt noted that the mainstream media re-

sponse to this glitch in the official narrative, the scenario in which the United States hands over most fighting duties to Afghan troops by 2014, has been to begin floating the idea that the U.S. just might not really be able to get out anytime soon.

In this they concur with the assessment of former Afghan member of parliament Malalai Joya, who said at the May 13-14 Chicago People's Summit: "Obama and Karzai claim the war will end in 2014, while on the other hand, they say that U.S. troops will remain in some capacity until 2024. My friends, when 2024 comes closer, they will say they plan to remain in Afghanistan until 2034. The reality is that the U.S. and their NATO allies plan to dominate Afghanistan and the larger region militarily for the next generation..."

As one of the longest running wars in U.S. history, Afghanistan, and the accompanying drone war in Pakistan, are well understood by the movement and will be a focus in the October actions. The level of U.S. involvement in the rest of the region needs to be the subject of continuing and broad education if the movement is to be able to mobilize effective numbers in the street.

Since the U.S. withdrawal of combat troops from Iraq in 2011, antiwar activists have been debating its meaning. Was the redeployment of U.S. troops to regional bases a historic turning point regarding the dominance of U.S. imperi-

(continued on page 11)

## INSIDE SOCIALIST ACTION

Chicago teachers — 2

Fracking, a toxic threat — 3

Youth & economic crisis — 4

Repression against Muslims — 5

Shorten the workweek! — 6

Mexico / Quebec — 8

Canada news — 9

Untaxed trillions / Movies — 10

## S. AFRICA

page 12

# Chicago teachers fight back

By DAVID BERNT

CHICAGO—While around the country teachers unions are accepting concessionary contracts, a strange thing has happened in Chicago. Teachers have decided to fight back against a school board that is seeking to fundamentally undermine their contract and open the door for massive school closings and privatization of the public schools. The Chicago Teachers Union House of Delegates has voted to strike on Sept. 10 if an agreement is not reached with the school board at that time.

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emmanuel, Barack Obama's former chief of staff and close political ally, has made busting unions the cornerstone of his mayoralty. CTU has been number one on his hit list. The mayor, with strong backing from right-wing school "reform" organizations, is attempting to eliminate basic union protections and end seniority-based salary increases. Emmanuel's handpicked school board has proposed that the step-and-lane system, in which teachers receive salary increases based on years of service and levels of education, be replaced by "merit" increases, largely based on students' test scores. Teachers respond that such a system would weaken education as it would push teachers to "teach to the test."

Emmanuel has also pushed for a longer school day, which will be introduced this school year. The mayor won the ability to impose a longer school day through a state law passed last year. The union successfully negotiated an agreement that would not lengthen most teachers' workdays and rehire close to 500 laid-off teachers. However, as some schools opened in late August, many teachers report that schools are already violating the agreement.

The teachers union has proposed modest salary increases proportional to longer hours worked and



(Photos) Chicago teachers rally on Labor Day.

to make up for a cancelled contractually bargained increase in 2011 that was approved by the school board. The union has also proposed more services for students, including more social workers, libraries, nurses, counselors, and other wrap around services that have been severely cut over the past decade in the school district—where most of the students are poor. CTU has also called for smaller class sizes, so teachers can more effectively work with their students, and an end to school closings.

These differing proposals go to the essence of the debate on how to transform troubled public schools. The prevailing wisdom among politicians has been the "blame the teacher" philosophy. CTU has countered with a strategy to improve public schools by providing more services for the largely low-income student population.

In preparation for a possible strike, the CTU has organized support from community and parent organizations across the city. Since its new reform leadership was elected in 2010, the CTU has worked with community groups against proposed school closings and other changes. These ties have made it harder for Emmanuel to use divisions between parents and teachers.

Local opinion polls show more support for the CTU than for Emmanuel. The union has mobilized members for outreach, including neighborhood leafleting and informational pickets outside of schools. The union is organizing a mass rally on Labor Day that has broad support from other unions. The union has also done outreach to other teachers unions across the country.

Chicago is being used as a test case for breaking the teachers union. If Emmanuel is successful in breaking the CTU, we can expect school boards across the country to follow his example and to gut union contracts. All teachers have a big stake in the fight. ■

## A WORKERS' ACTION PROGRAM TO FIGHT THE CRISIS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**SOCIALIST ACTION** Closing news date: Sept. 3, 2012  
Editor: Michael Schreiber Canada Editor: Barry Weisleder

Socialist Action (ISSN 0747-4237) is published monthly by Socialist Action Publishing Association, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610. Postmaster: Send address changes to: Socialist Action, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610. RATES: For one year (12 issues, 1st-class mail): U.S., Canada, Mexico — \$20. All other countries — \$30. Money orders and checks should be in U.S. dollars.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of Socialist Action. These are expressed in editorials. Socialist Action is edited, designed, and laid out entirely by volunteer labor. It is printed by members of Local 583, Allied Printing Trades Council, San Francisco, Calif.



For info about Socialist Action and how to join: Socialist Action National Office, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610, (510) 268-9429, [socialistaction@gmail.com](mailto:socialistaction@gmail.com).

Socialist Action newspaper editorial offices: [socialistactionnews@yahoo.com](mailto:socialistactionnews@yahoo.com)  
Website: [www.socialistaction.org](http://www.socialistaction.org)

## WHERE TO FIND SOCIALIST ACTION

- ASHLAND, Ore.: [damonjure@earthlink.net](mailto:damonjure@earthlink.net)
- BOSTON: [bostsocact@gmail.com](mailto:bostsocact@gmail.com) (781) 630-0250
- CARRBORO, N.C.: (919) 967-2866, [robonica@lycos.com](mailto:robonica@lycos.com)
- CHICAGO: P.O. Box 578428 Chicago, IL 60657, [chisocialistaction@yahoo.com](mailto:chisocialistaction@yahoo.com)
- CONNECTICUT: (860) 478-5300
- DULUTH, MINN.: [wainosunrise@yahoo.com](mailto:wainosunrise@yahoo.com), [www.thenorthernworker.blogspot.com](http://www.thenorthernworker.blogspot.com)
- FLORIDA: [socialistaction\\_tampa@hotmail.com](mailto:socialistaction_tampa@hotmail.com)
- GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.: [Kowalskimike@comcast.net](mailto:Kowalskimike@comcast.net)
- KANSAS CITY: [kcsa@workernet.org](mailto:kcsa@workernet.org) (816) 221-3638
- LOUISVILLE / LEXINGTON, KY: [redlotus51@yahoo.com](mailto:redlotus51@yahoo.com), (502) 451-2193
- MADISON, WIS.: [Northlandiguana@gmail.com](mailto:Northlandiguana@gmail.com)
- MANKATO, MINN.: [Missshbradford@yahoo.com](mailto:Missshbradford@yahoo.com)
- MINNEAPOLIS / ST. PAUL: (612) 802-1482, [socialistaction@visi.com](mailto:socialistaction@visi.com)

- NEW YORK CITY: (212) 781-5157
- PHILADELPHIA: [philly.socialistaction@gmail.com](mailto:philly.socialistaction@gmail.com)
- PORTLAND, ORE.: (503) 233-1629 [gary1917@aol.com](mailto:gary1917@aol.com)
- PROVIDENCE: [ADGAGNERI@GMAIL.COM](mailto:ADGAGNERI@GMAIL.COM) (401) 419-1706
- SALEM, ORE.: [ANNMONTAGUE@COMCAST.NET](mailto:ANNMONTAGUE@COMCAST.NET)
- SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA: P.O. Box 10328, OAKLAND, CA 94610 (510) 268-9429, [sfsocialistaction@gmail.com](mailto:sfsocialistaction@gmail.com)
- WASHINGTON, DC: [christopher.towne@gmail.com](mailto:christopher.towne@gmail.com), (202) 286-5493

**SOCIALIST ACTION CANADA**  
NATIONAL OFFICE  
526 Roxton Road, Toronto, Ont. M6G 3R4, (416) 535-8779  
[www.socialistaction-canada.blogspot.com](http://www.socialistaction-canada.blogspot.com)

## Subscribe to Socialist Action

**New readers: half-price offer until Dec. 1**  
— \$5 for five months — \$10 for 12 months

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

I want to join the Socialist Action Newspaper Supporters Club.  
I enclose an extra contribution of:  \$100  \$200  Other

Clip and mail to: Socialist Action newspaper, P.O. Box 10328, Oakland, CA 94610.

# Fracking threatens health, environment

By JAMES THOMAS

The Occupy Wall Street movement has helped many in the United States to recognize the influence that corporations have over political life. The predatory practices of the major financial institutions, our society's deepening inequality, and the irreconcilable differences between the 99 percent and the 1 percent have all been brought to the fore. One of the areas in which capitalism's contradictions are most glaring is the relationship between a system based on endless profiteering at any cost and the earth on which we all live and rely.

The movement for environmental justice is multifaceted. Struggles against mountain top removal in West Virginia, against the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline, against the use of nuclear energy, and hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") in the United States and abroad have made their way into major news sources. All of these must be considered in relation to the time-sensitive problem of climate change and the absolute need to transition to an economy based on renewable and safe energy. Under capitalism such a transition would be impossible due to the large amounts of money invested in the extraction and selling of finite energy sources.

Few methods of acquiring energy lay bare the capitalist system's complete disregard for human health and safety more than fracking. This extremely destructive process involves pumping millions of gallons of water, sand, and chemicals deep below the earth's surface to fracture shale rock formations that contain deposits of gas for extraction. Communities, along with the people who work at fracking sites, are at risk as they are exposed to toxic chemicals, extremely loud noises caused by heavy machinery, water, and air contamination, and possible explosions.

Even the mining of sand used in fracking has raised serious health concerns. An enormous increase in the price of sand in recent years has made this an extremely lucrative business. As a result, Southern Minnesota and Wisconsin are experiencing great environmental destruction as chunks of landscape are torn up, air is polluted with silica particles and diesel fume emissions, and water is contaminated. But sand mining is only the initial stage of the process. The part that deals with the actual extraction of gas is just as invasive.

Pennsylvania rests above the Marcellus Shale formation and has been extremely impacted by the process. The enormous amount of water mixed with sand and chemicals and pumped beneath the earth's surface to fracture the shale comes back to the top as an even more toxic soup that poses serious challenges for storage and treatment.

There's no such thing as a clean fracking fluid. According to two Stony Brook University scientists quoted in [protectingourwaters.wordpress.com](http://protectingourwaters.wordpress.com): "Even a benign hydraulic fracturing fluid is contaminated once it comes into contact with the Marcellus Shale. Sodium, chloride, bromide, arsenic, barium and naturally occurring radioactive materials are the kinds of contaminants that occur in fracking well wastewater."

In states like Ohio this toxic mixture is used to deice roads or stored in injection wells deep underground. Truth-out.org reports that Youngstown, Ohio, experienced 12 earthquakes last year due to the migration of subterranean wastewater into an unmapped fault. One of the quakes measured a 4.0 on the Richter scale.

Shale gas is often advertised as a "bridge fuel" to renewable energy. A problem with this portrayal is the fact that fracking produces copious amounts of methane, which traps considerably more heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide. According to an article published by *The Scientific American* last winter, when the toxic soup from the gas well resurfaces it brings with it 40 to 60 percent more methane than is produced in a conventional gas well. This "fugitive methane" is released directly into the atmosphere.

According to data from two Cornell University professors cited in the article, "within the next 20 years,



(Left) Protesters at Albany, N.Y. statehouse on June 20 demand that Gov. Cuomo reject fracking efforts.

as North Jersey and New York.

Since the construction of the pipeline is designed to transport the gas derived from fracking, there has been a considerable attempt on the part of Bloomberg Philanthropies to greenwash the process. The foundation recently awarded a \$6 million grant to the Environmental Defense Fund in hopes of securing stronger regulations on the inherently disastrous process. But the only real solution is an all-out ban on fracking.

It is also falsely claimed that fracking will reduce America's energy dependency. According to a recent article published by the Sierra Club, much of the methane gas that comes from fracking in the U.S. is slated for highly profitable export. The plan is to convert the gas to liquefied natural gas and ship it out to a global market.

With North American methane being the cheapest in the world, estimates show that as much as 40% of methane extracted in this country could be exported. This could cause the price of methane to drastically increase industry and utility bills in an already precarious economy. The whole process would involve mile upon mile of dangerous high-pressure pipelines. In Oregon, state and national forests have been sacrificed in the construction of such facilities.

Indeed, fracking has the potential to become a widespread global catastrophe. It is believed that China has the largest shale gas reserves in the world; China's National Petroleum Corp is in partnership with Shell and is aiming to produce billions of cubic meters of gas by 2015. Poland, the largest reserve in Europe, has already started drilling, though France and Bulgaria have instated a ban on fracking.

In England, much like in Ohio, earthquakes have occurred near drill sites.

In all of this working people are the most drastically affected. In Ohio, the government has sold state land and lake water to the energy companies for use in fracking. Everywhere workers are suffering on the job. According to a chilling press release put out by the organization Protecting Our Waters, a 42-year-old worker from Colorado died of pancreatic and liver cancer after years of washing out fracking waste water tanks and being denied protective safety equipment by his employer.

Workers have described the world of gas drilling as a "culture of fear" as they are expected to haul silica sand, toxic waste water, and operate dangerous equipment without proper training or safety equipment. In this endless race for profits, as is generally the norm in capitalist society, human health and wellbeing take the backseat.

The only real solution to the crisis of fracking and climate change is a transition to a society based on human needs, not profits. Nothing short of a socialist society, a society under the democratic control of the working class, will allow us to establish an economy based on free, clean, and reusable energy for all.

On Thursday, Sept. 20, there will be a protest outside the Philadelphia Convention Center as the Marcellus Shale Coalition, a group of regional representatives of the gas industry and their political allies, hold their annual convention. For more information, visit [shalegas-outrage.org](http://shalegas-outrage.org).

Hear Marxist historian Clifford Conner speak on the subject of his new book —

**Jean Paul Marat**  
Tribune of the French Revolution.

**Sunday, Sept. 30, 1 p.m.**

William Way LGBT Center, 1315 Spruce St., Philadelphia. Sponsored by Socialist Action.

methane will contribute 44 percent of the greenhouse gas load produced by the U.S. Of that portion, 17 percent will come from natural gas operations." They also point out that within this 20-year period hundreds of thousands of wells are scheduled to go into operation worldwide. At the moment fracking accounts for 90% of gas exploration in the United States.

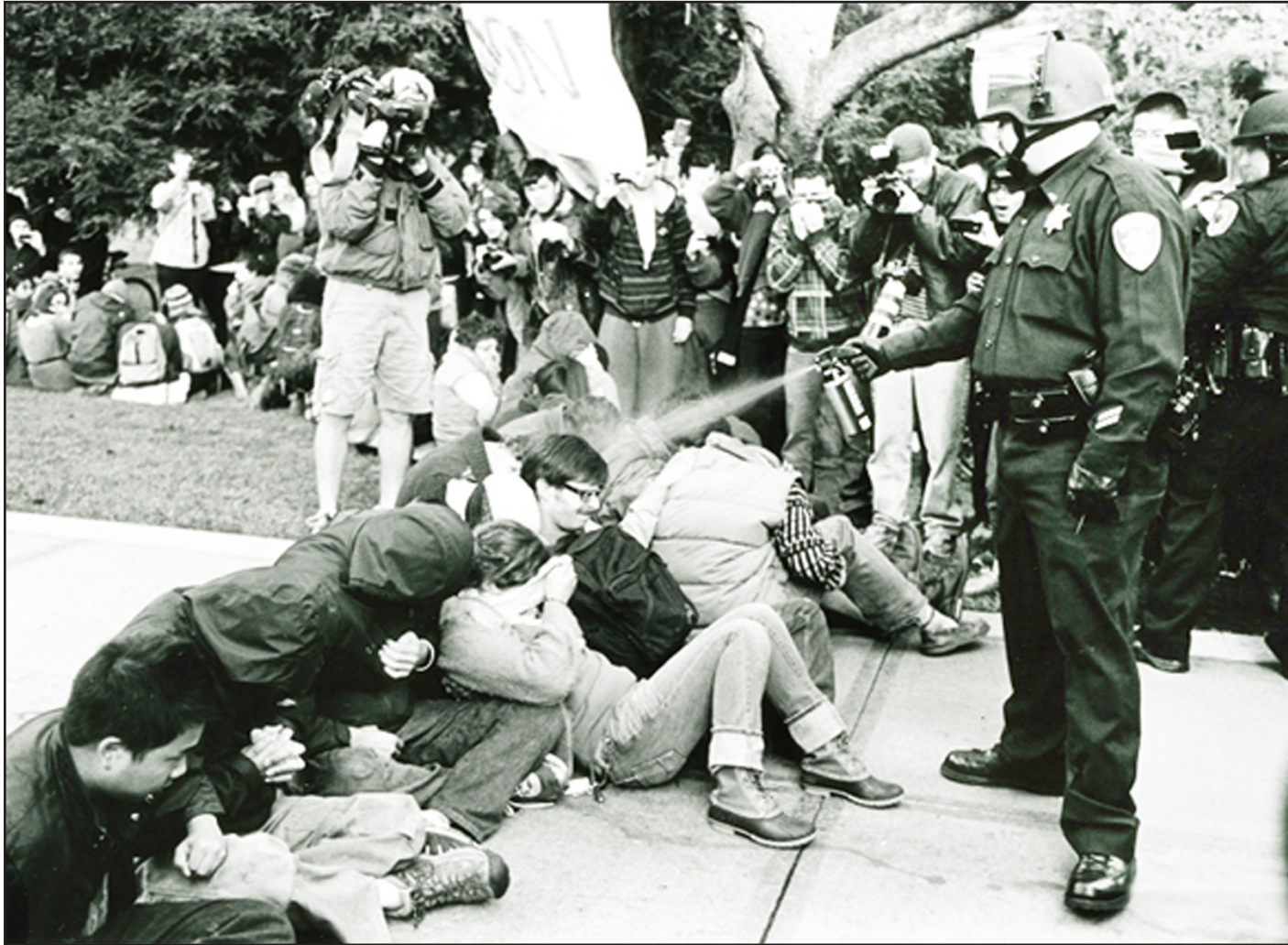
Contaminated water and climate change are only portions of the problem. Heavy machinery and infrastructure development with complete disregard for human safety is also part of the picture.

On March 29 the Lathrop Compressor station in Susquehanna County, Pa., caught fire. A typical compressor used in the fracking process emits known carcinogens into the air and causes people living nearby to experience nausea, severe headaches, and dizziness in addition to other symptoms. Compressors are proliferating throughout Pennsylvania, which makes air contamination and potential explosions a serious risk for residents.

In fact, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection is in the process of issuing approval to the company responsible for the exploding compressor to construct the Central Compressor Station in Susquehanna County. The state has already said that they will not impose regulations on toxins released from the compressor into the air or hold the company responsible for malfunctions due to "poor maintenance or careless operations."

In New York State, where Gov. Cuomo is considering allowing fracking, a major construction project is in the works. According to *The New York Times*, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has given the go-ahead on a controversial natural-gas pipeline that would run beneath the Hudson River connecting New Jersey to the West Village in Manhattan. This new pipeline, which is supported by Mayor Bloomberg, has a \$1.2 billion price tag and is anticipated to transport 800 million cubic feet of gas daily. Some 200 feet underground, it would include about 15 miles of additional pipe through Bayonne and Jersey City and under Staten Island before making its way to Manhattan.

In addition, gas equipment and facilities will be placed in sections of New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. Clearly, Bloomberg, Cuomo, and the project proposer Spectra Energy care little about the enormous risk associated with placing a potentially explosive gas pipeline beneath areas as densely populated



(Left) Police pepper-spray students protesting fee hikes at University of California, Davis on Nov. 16, 2011.

## U.S. youth bear brunt of the economic crisis

By DANIEL XAVIER

For many youth in the U.S. today the “American dream” is very far out of reach. High unemployment rates, massive burdens of student loan debt, and rising costs of living all shape the outlook of young people in America today. Currently, only 54.3 percent of youth (ages 18-24) have a job, the lowest level of employment for this age group since the government began tracking the data in 1948. According to marketwatch.com, only 56 percent of teenagers believe they’ll be financially better off than their parents, a 37 percent drop since 2011.

Students today find themselves graduating from high school and college only to discover that traditionally higher paying jobs such as manufacturing, engineering, and high-tech sector employment are not available to them. Increasingly, these youth turn to work in retail, customer service, administrative support, and other low-paying sectors.

According to a Economic Policy Institute Report entitled, “The Class of 2012: Labor market for young graduates remains grim,” wages for high school graduates declined by 11.1 percent between 2000 and 2011 and dropped 5.4 percent for recent college graduates in the same period.

Predictably, women and people of color are earning

less than their white male counterparts.

Student loan debt is another major burden facing many young Americans. In 2012, the total share of student loan debt exceeds \$1 trillion for the first time. Many financial analysts predict that the “student loan bubble” will be the next one to burst, threatening another financial crisis in an already strained economic situation. According to the Department of Education, federal student loan defaults are on the rise, with 8.8 percent defaulting in 2009 in comparison with 7 percent the year before.

With average tuition cost tripling since 1980, it’s not difficult to see why more students are forced to seek out loans to pay for college and end up graduating while tens of thousands of dollars in debt. Many students are now paying \$20,000 or even \$40,000 per year for tuition, room, and board. Black and Latino youth are more likely to exit college with a higher loan burden than white students.

But while the cost of higher education has risen dramatically in the past four decades, the quality has been on the decline. Many university departments face budget cuts, reduction of available courses, layoffs of faculty and staff, and ballooning class sizes. Mike, a recent graduate from the University of Connecticut, told *Socialist Action*, “In my senior year of college, I would often arrive to history class and find there were no

thousands turned out in the streets of London to protest a government proposal aimed at tripling tuition fees. Last year, a student strike at the University of Puerto Rico forced the president of the school to resign. In 2011-12, tens of thousands of students in Chile demanded the end of for-profit education, among other reforms.

This past spring, when the Quebecois government passed Law 78, a measure intended to criminalize the student protest movement in Montreal, hundreds of thousands protested in some of the most massive mobilizations even seen in the Canadian province.

The United States has also seen a series of student protests in the past few years, particularly in California. Thousands of students first came out in 2009 to protest a 32 percent fee hike in the University of California school system. Last year, when the UC Board of Regents proposed another fee hike, students again turned out to fight the hikes. This movement provoked prominent instances of police brutality such as the now-famous image of a cop pepper-spraying students who were seated on the ground in handcuffs. While heroically facing down police assault, these students’ demands for quality and affordable education were not met.

The only way to secure a brighter future for the youth is to build a mass movement to fight for good jobs, quality education and health care, and affordable housing. Such a movement must remain independent of the Democrats and Republicans, who have proven time and again they are only concerned with the interests of the wealthy. Socialist Action supports the student mobilizations that have been occurring on a global scale and urges more regional, national, and international coordination of such movements. ■

## Hot & Crusty locks out workers

By MARTY GOODMAN

NEW YORK—Protesting workers at the Hot & Crusty pastry shop at 63<sup>rd</sup> St. and 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. have created the new sidewalk “Workers Justice Cafe” next to their former employer.

The cafe was a neighborhood hit for the Labor Day holiday, as customers paused to chat with their favorite H&C employees and supporters. They got coffee and donuts but also heard the real deal on how H&C had locked out its immigrant workforce—some having worked there for a dozen years or more.

Workers had legally established a union in May after a hard-fought campaign, and were demanding a mere \$1 an hour increase. Now H&C is trying to do away with the union entirely.

The company gave the Hot and Crusty Workers Association 11 days notice of eviction from the property, informing



employees that Aug. 31 would be their last day. It is expected that the shop at 63<sup>rd</sup> St., the only union shop out of a dozen or so franchise locations, will re-open with a new, non-union workforce.

The workers, with the help of supporters from Occupy Wall Street, have been

walking a round-the-clock picket line. Hot & Crusty was briefly occupied by about 15 people, and about four were arrested by the NYPD.

The Aug. 31 closure will mean the loss of 23 jobs. The workers have filed charges at the National Labor Relations Board

on grounds that the company is closing the 63<sup>rd</sup> St. shop in order to intimidate workers organizing at other Hot and Crusty locations.

Mahoma Lopez, a leader in the campaign who has worked at Hot and Crusty for over seven years, told the press, “I want to send a message that we have to change the way immigrants are treated in this country. We have to show the bosses that we can’t be treated like animals any longer.”

“We need to take radical action like people did in the civil rights movement, so that our voices can be heard. We are so happy to have the community here with us.”

Diego Ibanez, a member of Occupy Wall Street, emphasized the connection between Wall Street and workers, saying “we’re sending a clear message to greedy bosses that we are watching and will not allow our people in the community to be oppressed any longer.” ■

For more information, please contact: Virgilio Aran (347) 394-8350, [virgillio@lwcw.org](mailto:virgillio@lwcw.org); or Nastaran Mohit (914) 557-6408, [nastaran@lwcw.org](mailto:nastaran@lwcw.org).

# Did Obama 'save' the UAW?

By MARTY GOODMAN

On the eve of the Democratic Party Convention, President Obama tried his best to firm up his pro-labor credentials. During a Labor Day campaign gathering of autoworkers and steelworkers in Toledo, Ohio, Obama boasted of his role in handing the big automakers a financial bailout in 2009. That measure, he told his audience, was responsible for saving jobs. But what is the truth?

In 2009, Floyd Norris, a *New York Times* columnist, wrote, "It took a conservative Republican to open relations with the largest Communist country in the world, it took a liberal Democrat to break the UAW." Obama, so-called friend of working families, destroyed one of the powerhouses of U.S. labor, the United Auto Workers union, after only a couple of

months on the job.

After the government takeover of GM and Chrysler, the president's "Auto Task Force," packed with corporate executives, told the UAW to reduce its labor costs to that of non-union manufacturers like Honda, Toyota, and other non-union outfits.

And under the government threat of imposing bankruptcy and voiding out union contracts, the UAW bureaucrats shamelessly—without a fight of any kind—negotiated the terms of surrender.

While the auto companies got billions in bailout dough for making gas-guzzlers (the big auto shareholders were financial corporations like Goldman Sachs), new employee wages were cut in half. That destroyed in one blow the UAW traditions of solidarity. There were thousands of layoffs, despite bosses' promises.



Health benefits were off-loaded onto a union-run Voluntary Employee Benefits Association (VEBA), with limited corporate contributions. Ford motors, which had not asked for a bailout, got the UAW to agree to a deal that echoed the massive concessions at GM and Chrysler, in order to "stay competitive."

In October 2011, after a vigorous fear campaign, auto members approved a

contract that upheld the main features of the previous rout. Included was the continuation of a no-strike pledge and a first time zero pension increase. A side agreement allows the bosses and UAW brass to amend the pension plan without a membership vote.

UAW members have pointed out that the union has adopted concession-laden contracts for 30 years only to see its ranks drop by 50 percent since 2001! In 1979, another Democrat, Jimmy Carter, twisted the UAW's arm to accept concessions as condition for bailing out the Chrysler bosses. In return, autoworkers got mass layoffs.

It makes no sense for union members to vote for the Democrats, who have sold them out repeatedly. Both major parties serve the interests of the wealthy 1%, not working people. Workers need their own party—a Labor Party that can effectively lead the fightback against the bosses and win! ■

By ANDREW POLLACK

# New wave of anti-Muslim repression

The United States in late summer 2012 was awash with anti-Muslim, anti-Sikh violence and rhetoric, perpetrated by racists both in and out of office.

In an Aug. 17 statement, the National Lawyers Guild's Muslim Defense Project (MDP) noted: "Today, merely gathering as a Muslim has become an act of courage in the face of terror. Indeed, the last few weeks have been marked by horrifying instances of hatred around the United States. The day after Wade Michael Page, who had ties to white supremacy groups, brutally attacked members of the Sikh community at their gurdwara in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, a mosque was also burned to the ground in Joplin, Missouri. This mosque had been the subject of persistent attempts at arson. In Morton Grove, Illinois, a man was shot at an Islamic center where 500 Muslims had gathered for Ramadan prayers. And in the suburb of Lombard, a soda bottle filled with household chemicals was thrown at an Islamic school, also during Ramadan prayers."

The MDP countered media attempts to portray each case as unique and inexplicable: "These acts of hatred towards Muslims and others regarded as 'foreigners' to American society are not random or isolated but have been fomented by politicians, law enforcement officials, and sanctioned by judges. The two attacks in Illinois followed the incendiary claim made by local Republican House Representative Joe Walsh ... that there is 'a radical strain of Islam in this country ... trying to kill Americans every week.'"

The MDP itself has been organizing against spying by the New York City police department, which has put every Muslim house of worship, business, and school under surveillance. The Project notes that the department "continues to promote its 'radicalization' theory, connecting all Muslims to terrorism, which it uses to justify the wholesale surveillance of communities, with an army of informants and spies in areas extending far beyond New York City."

On Aug. 21 the latest in a series of stories by the Associated Press exposing NYPD spying focused on a deposition by NYPD Assistant Chief Joseph Galati, head of the department's Intelligence Division, in which he admitted that the department had turned up not a single lead to any crime, much less any terrorist act, despite years of spying on every Muslim organization and establishment in several cities. This news soon went viral on the internet. But the deeper significance of the story was widely underplayed, the fact that Galati admitted their real goal had been achieved: that is, the department had sufficient spies in the Muslim community to listen to political conversations of thousands of community members.

Just speaking Urdu or Bengali, just coming from Lebanon, said Galati, was enough to be worthy of departmental interest. By the same token, a conversation by any Arab, South Asian, or Muslim in any language complaining about anti-Muslim words or deeds was enough to get noted down in NYPD records. Complaining about anti-Muslim hate crimes, about U.S. killing of civilians using drone aircraft, and similar speech supposedly protected under the Constitution made you worthy of surveillance, said Galati. (Galati, by the way, is the same cop who harassed and illegally detained Iranian diplomats in a widely-reported 2007 incident.)

So while they turned up not a single lead, the department was able to cast a net over entire communities in the hopes of intimidating them and discouraging political activity and dissuading them from asserting their rights. And the longer-term danger is that this ubiquitous surveillance puts in place a mapping of the

community that could be used in future wholesale crackdowns involving mass detentions.

And the focus on the alleged "ineffectiveness" of the NYPD spying ignores the entrapment and frame-up that has gone on during this same period. For instance, Michael Williams, who was trying to defend young Palestinian women from a physical and verbal attack by a racist at a Palestine demonstration, faced seven years in jail after his unjust conviction. Fortunately, a vigorous defense by NLG-MDP founder Lamis Deek got the sentence reduced to 90 days; an appeal of the guilty verdict is currently in process.

Deek is also representing another NYPD victim, Ahmed Ferhani, a young, mentally unstable Algerian American, entrapped and framed up by an agent who concocted a fictional scheme against a Jewish house of worship.

Another group central to the movement against police spying in New York, Desis Rising Up & Moving (DRUM), issued a statement after the Wisconsin Gurudwara shootings in which they pointed out that these crimes were "part of a history of targeting of communities of color that all too often goes unchecked and remains rooted in a national climate bolstered by state policies. This climate of racism and intolerance targeting Sikhs, South Asians, Muslims, Arabs, and Middle Easterners, particularly since 9/11, has been fueled by frequent media distortions, governmental policies of racial and religious profiling, and the rise in hate groups. Yet, the media and public discourse mistakenly puts the Sikh and other religions on the hot seat rather than the vast network of organized hate groups.

"Organized white supremacist and hate groups remain largely unchecked. In 2009, when the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) put out a report on the dangers of right-wing extremism in the U.S., it received severe backlash from many conservative policy makers. As a result of the criticism, the DHS dismantled and cut funding for the intelligence team that monitored such threats."

After the shootings, Harsha Walia, a community organizer and writer based in Vancouver, described the logic behind hate crimes, including their roots in economic exploitation and the contribution of racial oppression in stifling a fightback against it: "The crimes of white supremacists are not exceptions and do not and cannot exist in isolation from more systemic forms of racism. People of color face legislated racism from immigration laws to policies governing Indigenous reserves; are discriminated and excluded from equitable access to healthcare, housing, childcare, and education; are disproportionately victims of police killings and child apprehensions; fill the floors of sweatshops and factories; are over-represented in head counts on poverty rates, incarceration rates, unemployment rates, and high school dropout rates. Colonialism has and continues to be shaped by the counters of white men's civilizing missions. The occupation of Afghanistan has been justified on the racist idea of liberating Muslim women from Muslim men."

This theme was echoed by radical professor and activist Vijay Prishad, who wrote: "With the political class unwilling to reverse the tide of jobless growth and corporate power, the politicians stigmatize the outsider as the problem of poverty and exploitation. ... Far easier to let the Sikhs and the Latinos, the Mus-



lims and the Africans bear the social cost for economic hopelessness and political powerlessness than to target the real problem: the structures that benefit the 1% and allow them to luxuriate in Richistan."

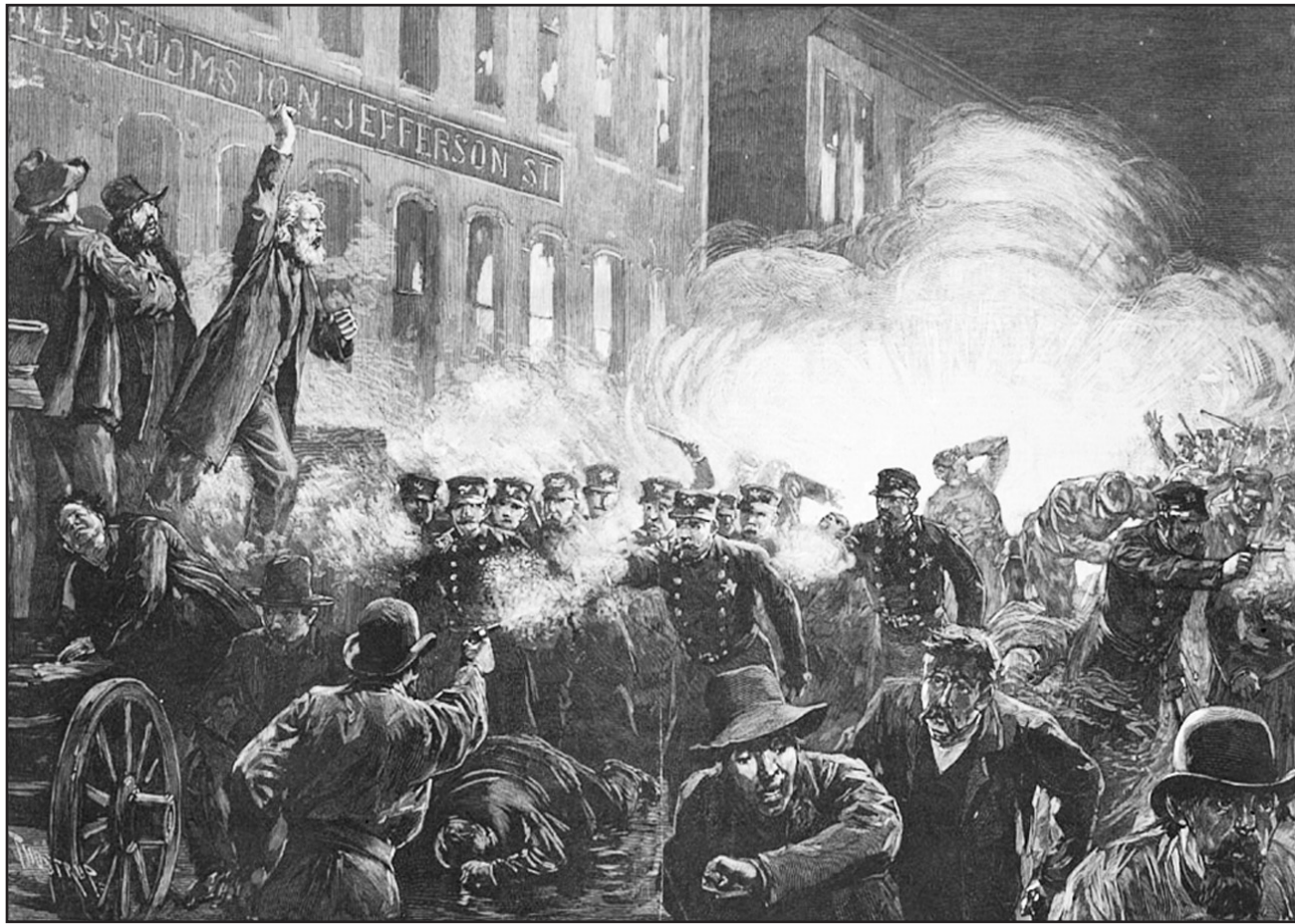
Meanwhile, activists in the antiwar and Occupy movement are increasingly finding themselves targets of state repression as they are framed up on bogus "terrorism" charges (e.g. the NATO 5 and Cleveland 4, coming on top of the FBI/grand jury frame-up of antiwar and solidarity activists whose homes were raided two years ago).

The revelations by the NYPD's Galati came out under questioning by a lawyer seeking to have the department's Demographics Unit dismantled under provisions of the Handschu ruling. That ruling was a result of a lawsuit filed by activists seeking to dismantle the ubiquitous spying of New York cops on social movements of the 1960s and '70s. Handschu was largely eviscerated after 9/11, and efforts to restore it, and expand it, certainly deserve our support.

But the movements at the center of the Handschu case themselves raised even more radical demands against police spying, brutality and repression, demands which are worth reviving today. We must demand the opening of *all* police files, unredacted, so we can see the names of all cops and informers who have violated the rights of the oppressed. We must re-raise demands for community control of the police and their eventual replacement by community self-policing—a demand that will only be won as part of a society-wide movement against the capitalists' state itself.

Getting to that point means joining today the growing movement around individual cases of entrapment, against policies of spying and frame-ups, against verbal and physical attacks on Muslims and all other targeted communities and movements, whether those attacks come from official or unofficial individuals and institutions. ■

# Shorten the workweek with no loss of pay!



(Left) A romanticized *Harpers* magazine depiction of the May 4, 1886, Haymarket massacre in Chicago. The event took place following massive May 1 rallies across the United States for the eight-hour day.

BY ANDREW POLLACK

Sept. 17 marks one year of the Occupy movement, initiated by and drawing the bulk of its activists from what they themselves describe as a “precarariat.” That is, a part of the workforce without jobs or in unstable, low-paid jobs with few or no benefits or protection. In this the Occupiers were in good company with the millions of youth facing catastrophic levels of joblessness throughout the Middle East and in Europe who were at the heart of rebellions against tyrants and the exploitative system they served.

Traditionally, one demand raised by the labor movement worldwide to address unemployment has been a shorter workweek and/or workday. The demand for shorter hours (with no loss in pay) was at the heart of the May 1886 mass rallies that Occupy put such effort into commemorating this year.

In late August several items in *The New York Times* reminded us of the technical possibility of a dramatically shorter workweek. The first was a review of a new book by Robert and Edward Skidelsky, “How Much Is Enough? Money and the Good Life.” They begin by quoting John Maynard Keynes’s 1928 prediction that by 2030 a 15-hour workweek would be the norm—and that already by 2010 it would be down to 20 hours.

Keynes’s predictions about productivity increases that would make such shorter hours possible have been more than met. Yet after falling at a slow but constant rate from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until World War II, since then the U.S. workweek has hovered around 40 hours.

For Marxists the reasons for this are clear: the power wielded by the ruling class and its government to beat back any attempts by labor to win shorter hours; the collaboration of the union bureaucracy with those forces; and the ideological mystification propagated by advertisers and the media to convince us we should work harder and longer to buy more.

The Skidelskys discount the first two causes and focus instead on why the third is so successful. As a result the bulk of their book is a philosophical quest to get to the root of consumers’ supposed “insatiability.”

The second *Times* article was entitled “Skilled Work, Without the Worker.” The author contrasts a Philips Electronics factory on the coast of China in which “hundreds of workers use their hands and specialized tools to assemble electric shavers” with a factory owned by the same company in the Netherlands in which “128 robot arms do the same work with yoga-like flexibility. ... And they do it all without a coffee break—three shifts a day, 365 days a year.

“All told, the factory here has several dozen workers

**Today, the length of the average workweek has stagnated, with some people working overtime or on a second job, in a desperate attempt to make ends meet.**

per shift,” about a tenth as many as the Chinese plant.

This, says *The Times*, is part of a broader trend in which a new wave of robots “are replacing workers around the world in both manufacturing and distribution. Factories like the one here in the Netherlands are a striking counterpoint to those used by Apple and other consumer electronics giants, which employ hundreds of thousands of low-skilled workers.

“Even as Foxconn, Apple’s iPhone manufacturer, continues to build new plants and hire thousands of additional workers to make smartphones, it plans to install more than a million robots within a few years to supplement its work force in China.”

Foxconn, you may remember, is the company whose slave-driving bosses and prison-like housing for employees have driven many of its workers to suicide. Not surprisingly, the same criminal disregard for humanity was on display when Foxconn’s boss, Terry Gou, told *The Times* he was relieved to be able to switch to robots: “Speaking of his more than one million employees worldwide, he said in January: ‘As human beings are also animals, to manage one million animals gives me a headache.’”

“The falling costs and growing sophistication of robots,” says *The Times*, “have touched off a renewed debate among economists and technologists over how quickly jobs will be lost.” MIT economists Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee told the paper they foresee changes “on the scale of the revolution in agricultural technology over the last century, when farming employment in the U.S. fell from 40% of the workforce to about 2% today.

“Such advances in manufacturing are also beginning to transform other sectors that employ millions of workers around the world. One is distribution, where robots that zoom at the speed of the world’s fastest sprinters can store, retrieve, and pack goods for shipment far more efficiently than people. Robots could soon replace workers at companies like C & S Wholesale Grocers, the nation’s largest grocery distributor. ...

“Symbolic’s chief executive compares the new system to a huge parallel computer. The design is efficient because there is no single choke point; the cases of food moving through the robotic warehouse are like the digital bits being processed by the computer.”

*The New York Times* noted that this type of automation, which has gone beyond making things into controlling how they are distributed, “will put automation within range of companies like Federal Express and United Parcel Service that now employ tens of thousands of workers doing such tasks.”

It is not just workers who experience the impact of automation under capitalism. Ironically, the bosses themselves find their profits declining in the long run because of the anarchic nature of their system. First, because laid-off workers consume less. Second, because automation decreases the rate of profit by increasing what Marxists call the organic composition of capital. That is, because surplus value can only come from the labor component of value that goes into each commodity, the rate of profit to be made on each commodity decreases when work is automated. And at a certain point the profits available to capital as a whole make

it unprofitable to keep production going, leading to more layoffs, meaning fewer consumers buying goods, leading to the need for further automation to regain absolute (if not relative) profits, and on and on.

But the nature of capitalist economic anarchy is such that the bosses can’t avoid those unintended consequences; they have no way to stop themselves from dragging each other down, from quickening the very competition which threatens their profits in the first place. And the faster and faster race ends each time with a collective smash-up as all cars hit the wall.

#### Labor’s approach to worktime

Historically, the labor movement when at its best has tried to protect itself against job loss from automation by demanding that the fruits of heightened productivity go into shortening the workweek, and thus spreading the work, without loss in pay. That was labor’s demand on May 1, 1886, when hundreds of thousands joined rallies across the United States; that was the demand of radicals in the most militant days of the Congress of Industrial Organizations—and it needs to be our demand today.

But in between such periods, i.e., when labor is dominated instead by conservative bureaucrats, such demands have fallen by the wayside and the fruits of automation have gone into the bosses’ pockets and, in periods of systemic crisis, into increasingly unprofitable and unproductive investments (think subprime mortgages).

Meanwhile, the average workweek stagnates, with some workers laboring at levels above that average in a desperate attempt to make ends meet by working massive overtime or a second job, and others relegated to laboring below that average as part of a reserve army of labor made up of the chronically unemployed and those in casual, part-time, and/or temporary (precarious) jobs.

And all this is overlaid with the discriminatory push and pull into and out of the job market of specially-oppressed segments of the labor force—that is, Blacks, Latin@s, women, etc. Thus, for instance, the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century automation of agriculture involved the driving off the land of hundreds of thousands of Southern Black workers, the majority of whom ended up in Northern ghettos serving as a new reserve army of labor, i.e., a segment of the workforce kept unemployed and thus ready for use by the bosses under the most exploitative conditions if, when, and how those bosses needed.

At the moment labor can hardly be said to be “at its best,” and is doing little to address this problem. In

(continued on page 7)



(Above) Traditionally, a key demand of the labor movement has been for a reduced workweek with no loss of pay, to create more jobs. Thirty hours work for 40 hours pay!

(Left) Sept. 17 marks the anniversary of Occupy Wall Street. Young people today, including many Occupiers, increasingly find themselves unable to acquire decent well-paid jobs.

## ... Shorter workweek

(continued from page 6)

February 2004, Bill Onasch wrote in his Kansas City Labor "Week in Review" blog a response to a statement by the AFL-CIO on defending overtime. While agreeing with their opposition to President Bush's plan to weaken premium pay for overtime, Onasch noted: "It is undoubtedly true that 'middle class' life style can generally only be maintained by families with two or more breadwinners working substantial amounts of overtime. But is this the American Dream we should be mobilizing to defend?"

"The labor movement that we know today was largely built initially around the fight for an eight-hour day, 40-hour week—once considered an almost revolutionary demand. Finally, after decades of battle, sometimes bloody, that standard was codified into national law, covering most workers. ...

"But after 1938 the movement for shorter hours virtually disappeared from the agenda of the American mainstream union movement. Despite these incredible increases in productivity, especially since World War II, workers were encouraged by bosses, and often union bureaucrats, to work more hours—golden time-and-a-half, sometimes double-time hours. That's the way to put your kids through college, to buy that third car, or the bass boat, or whatever suits your fancy."

Onasch contrasted this approach to that of the Labor Party founded by Tony Mazzocchi in 1996. The party's program explained: "Compared to the late 1960s, we are now working an average of more than one extra month annually. We work longer hours and have less vacation time than almost all workers in the industrialized world. While many of us cannot find work, factory overtime is now at record levels because it is more profitable to pay overtime than it is to hire new workers."

In response to this state of affairs, the Labor Party called for "amending the federal labor laws to: Define the normal work week to 32 hours without loss of pay or benefits. Provide a minimum of double-time pay for all hours worked over 32 hours a week and 8 hours a day. Forbid compulsory overtime. Mandate one hour off with pay for every two hours of overtime. Require twenty days paid vacation for all workers in addition to the federal holidays. Provide one year of paid educational leave for every seven years worked.

"Taken together these proposals will create millions of new jobs and allow us free time we need to care for our families and to participate in our communities. More family time and more community participation should be the fruit of increased labor productivity."

### The overworked American

Those last points about the connection between shorter hours and family time and community participation are examined in detail in Juliet Schor's landmark 1991 work, "The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure." Schor, whose academic posts have been in both economics and women's studies, addresses the impact of overwork in both the spheres of production and reproduction (i.e., making things and making people respectively) and their mutual interaction.

Schor wrote: "In the last twenty years the amount of time Americans have spent at their jobs has risen steadily. ... When surveyed, Americans report that they have only sixteen and a half hours of leisure a week, after the obligations of job and household are taken care of. Working hours are already longer than they

## After 1938 the drive for shorter hours virtually disappeared from the agenda of the mainstream union movement.

were forty years ago...

"For nearly a hundred years, hours had been declining. When this decline abruptly ended in the late 1940s, it marked the beginning of a new era in work-time. But the change was barely noticed. Equally surprising, but also hardly recognized, has been the deviation from Western Europe. After progressing in tandem for nearly a century, the United States veered off into a trajectory of declining leisure, while in Europe work has been disappearing. ... U.S. manufacturing employees currently work 320 more hours—the equivalent of over two months—than their counterparts in West Germany or France."

The same difference, we would add, can be seen in health care, where the U.S. stands alone without a real national system. And in both cases the single biggest explanatory factor is the absence of mass labor or socialist parties in the U.S. through which workers could push these demands. Unfortunately, the Labor Party quoted above never achieved mass proportions.

But Schor produces figures confirming the realism of the Labor Party's shorter worktime plank: "The decline in Americans' leisure time is in sharp contrast to the potential provided by the growth of productivity. ... Since 1948, the level of productivity of the U.S. worker has more than doubled. In other words, we could now produce our 1948 standard of living ... in less than half the time it took in that year. We actually could have chosen the four-hour day. Or a working year of six months. Or, every worker in the United States could now be taking every other year off from work-with pay."

But crucially, Schor doesn't leave her analysis inside the workplace: "Overwork also has noticeably damaging results off the job: Nationwide, people report their leisure time has declined by as much as one third since the early 1970s. Predictably, they are spending less time on the basics, like sleeping and eating. Parents are devoting less attention to their children. Stress is on the rise, partly owing to the 'balancing act' of reconciling the demands of work and family life. ...

"Half the population now says they have too little time for their families. The problem is particularly acute for women: in one study, half of all employed mothers reported it caused either 'a lot' or an 'extreme' level of stress. The same proportion feel that 'when I'm at home I try to make up to my family for being away at work, and as a result I rarely have any time for myself.' ...

"The most alarming development may be the effect of the work explosion on the care of children. According to economist Sylvia Hewlett, child neglect has become endemic to our society. A major problem is that children are increasingly left alone, to fend for themselves while their parents are at work.

"Even when parents are at home, overwork may leave them with limited time, attention, or energy for their children. ... Hewlett links the 'parenting deficit' to a variety of problems plaguing the country's youth: poor performance in school, mental problems, drug

and alcohol use, and teen suicide. According to another expert, kids are being 'cheated out of childhood. ... There is a sense that adults don't care about them.'"

We would single out for special note from the category "mental problems" the epidemic-level rates of what is alleged to be ADHD—a "clinical" label making it easier for Big Pharma to make billions in profits from drugs, while society ignores the stresses and strains underlying children's behavior.

Just as Schor goes beyond the sphere of production into that of reproduction, she also steps outside the walls of the typical home to examine the impact of overwork on the environment.

In her 2011 interview Schor says: "Since the 1970s the United States has used all of its productivity growth to work more, and to produce more. That means that our ecological impact is expanding and we are putting more pressure on the environment than it can handle. We are seeing the impact on climate, biodiversity, the nitrogen cycle, water scarcity, etc. So if we think about it in the global context where half the world's population does not have access to ecological resources and we will likely have 2 billion more people on the planet, it is clear that the wealthy who are overconsumers of ecological resources need to reduce the pressure they are putting on those resources. For that segment of the population a shift from work time to leisure is key."

Schor writes: "If worktime decreases, people will be able to spend time doing a variety of things with their leisure time that were formerly commoditized in the market economy. The archetypal examples are growing vegetables, or the care of children, the elderly, the sick and the disabled. We are already seeing huge amounts of activity going on outside the market with nonprofessionals being the source of entertainment through home-produced videos, music, writing, software coding, wikis and blogs. People are able to do them because they have time outside their paying jobs, it is called peer production and there is an enormous amount of activity going on in that space. People are producing things for the love of doing it and for the enjoyment of their friends and colleagues."

### Why work?

But how do we get to a society where such activities are part of everyday life and not crammed into scarce off-work hours, where what and how we produce is determined by our needs as creative people, by what is nourishing and stimulating for us and our planet, and not just more crap to replace when broken or "outdated"?

In addition to fighting for shorter hours, we need to fight for higher incomes for all and guaranteed jobs through public works. One important step down the road is the fight for what Schor calls "social goods," i.e., needed consumption items available as a matter of right and not depending on your work situation. In a similar vein the Skidelskys call for a basic income divorced from work to minimize the impact of consumerism. But for them, it's an add-on to ameliorate the worst cultural manifestations of the profit-seeking system.

For Marxists, a guarantee that society as a whole will enjoy the fruits of our labor is at the core of our program—as is the notion that distribution of such goods will be decided democratically, and in a way that integrates the needs and concerns of workers as workers, as reproductive beings, as inhabitants of an increasingly endangered natural world.

At the start of this article we pointed to chronic lev-

(continued on page 9)

# MEXICO: Court disdains evidence of electoral fraud



Pedro Pardo / AFP / Getty Images

(Left) Mexican marine stands guard over ballot boxes during July 4 vote count in Acapulco.

By JAIME GONZALEZ

MEXICO CITY—In a solemn session held on Thursday, Aug. 30, one by one of the seven magistrates of Mexico's Supreme Federal Electoral Court (TRIFE) read out their pronouncements on the most critical evidence they had received as part of a formal request to invalidate last July's presidential election process. One by one, they argued that no substantial proof of large-scale vote buying had been presented, and threw out the case that had been opened by the Movimiento Progresista, the alliance that had launched Andrés Manuel López Obrador as its presidential candidate.

The TRIFE's building, located in the south of Mexico City, had been cordoned off by a heavy deployment of riot police. Thousands of protesters did turn out, especially the next day, Aug. 31, when Enrique Peña Nieto, of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) was handed the official winner's certificate. Although he did have to arrive by helicopter in order to avoid the mostly peaceful, mostly young protesters, the size of the crowd was very far from what was needed to present a challenge to the state machinery that is ready to use the full extent of its power to install the prepackaged candidate of the predominant faction of Mexico's owners.

The first question that comes to mind is: What happened in between the scandals that broke out just after

the elections on July 1—the ensuing indignation shown by hundreds of thousands who marched in the streets of dozens of cities throughout Mexico—and the Aug. 30 decision by the magistrates? The high judges seemed not to notice the widespread perception that something rotten had gone on during the electoral process, and that its legitimacy was widely questioned.

The answer, and explanation, is quite simple. Mexico's political establishment, including the political parties and forces that supported López Obrador, decided to go once again down their well-trodden road of either openly or *de facto* accepting a questionable election. They would like to proceed as fast as circumstances permit to carry out the power-sharing scheme that will ensure vast profits to the huge legal/illegal businesses that finance them, and permit their whole gamut of party operators to enjoy everything from lower government posts up to senate seats and governorships.

López Obrador's forces and allies, for instance, won the Mexico City government, widely considered as the second place of power after the presidency.

Consequently, the Movimiento Progresista did not call for a single important protest; it was mainly the students of the #YoSoy132 movement who took to the streets, and carried out a wide range of initiatives prior to the Supreme Federal Electoral Court's decision.

It is important, however, to consider another fac-

## Quebec's repressive response to student protests

By ERIC KUPKA

As reported here previously, the Liberal provincial government of Quebec is imposing a sharp rise in university and college tuition over the next seven years. This sparked massive demonstrations by students and their supporters throughout the spring and summer, some of which have attracted over 300,000 protesters.

However, Quebec Premier Jean Charest remained unmoved during the protests, and ultimately responded by having the National Assembly pass Bill 78, now Law 12, known in the sanitized language of the legislation as "an act to enable students to receive instruction from the post-secondary institutions they attend."

Despite its name, the law is much more about silencing and repressing protesters than enabling students to attend class. It prohibits any gatherings in school buildings and on school grounds, and within 50 meters of the outer limits of school grounds, which "could result" in denying students access to classes. It also requires all organizers of demonstrations involving 10 or more people to give advance notice to local police of the demonstration's date, time, venue, route, and duration,

and allows the police to unilaterally order a change in venue and route. A violation of these provisions could result in a \$1000 to \$35,000 fine for individuals, or a \$25,000 to \$125,000 fine for organizations.

Bill 78 has been criticized by the Quebec Bar Association and the Canadian Association of University Teachers, among others. A law professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal called it the "worst law" that she has seen since the invocation of the War Measures Act in 1970, which brought Canadian troops onto the streets of Montreal.

Student associations brought a legal challenge against Bill 78, on the basis that it infringes on constitutionally protected rights such as freedom of expression. An early attempt at an interim injunction against implementing the law failed, although the case remains before the courts.

Quebec has long been admired for its so-called "social-democratic" character—unique in North America and exemplified by its low post-secondary tuition rates. With the Liberals now attempting to shift the province closer to the continent's neoliberal mainstream through its tuition hike plan, outsiders have been inspired to see the Que-



Rogério Barbosa / Agence France-Presse

Student protester at May 4 Liberal convention in Victoriaville, Quebec.

becois rise en masse to defend their progressive gains—conquests of the nationalist movement in the 1960s.

Socialists stand with the students and workers of Quebec and demand an immediate repeal of Law 12, and cancellation of the planned tuition hikes. We back the call of the leftist Québec Solidaire party to eliminate all university and college tuition fees. ■

## Church OKs Israeli boycott

The general council of the United Church of Canada, the country's largest Protestant denomination, voted in mid-August to support a boycott of goods produced in Israeli settlements on the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The 350 delegates to the United Church council, representing nearly three million Canadians who identify with the church, spent six hours debating the boycott recommended by an internal report that named the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory as a major obstacle to a two-state settlement of the conflict.

Increasingly, a one-state solution is seen as the only just and effective path by Palestinian, labour, and human rights bodies. But the boycott idea itself is enough to raise the ire of pro-occupation forces and to expose the growing isolation of the Zionist apartheid state.

In the months preceding the council vote, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs and a group of nine Canadian Liberal and Conservative senators heavily lobbied U.C. members against "taking sides." But after hearing many views, the church council voted to take a side—against the occupation.

— BARRY WEISLEDER



By BRUCE ALLEN

Just prior to the start of the 2012 Canadian Auto Workers union (CAW) Collective Bargaining and Constitutional Convention, held in Toronto Aug. 20-24, the Chrysler Corporation sent the CAW a clear and unequivocal message concerning this year's contract negotiations with the Detroit 3 (which includes Ford and General Motors). Chrysler tabled the demand that the CAW give up "30 and out." This means that Chrysler demands that the CAW give up autoworkers' right to retire with a full pension regardless of their age after 30 years of credited service.

This is particularly significant because nothing better exemplifies the historic gains achieved by North American autoworkers over the last century than this contractual right. Chrysler's position attests to its audacity and boldness going into this year's negotiations. It shows the aggressive stance being taken by the Detroit 3 towards the CAW.

Prior to 2012 none of the Detroit 3 would have dared to table such a demand. Furthermore, the tabling of it illustrates the self-confidence of the auto bosses and their sense of a new-found ability to attack workers' pensions. Clearly, Chrysler has noted the recent successes of Vale Inco and U.S. Steel in rolling back pensions in their collective agreements with the United Steelworkers' union and wants to follow suit.

Regardless of whether Chrysler actually succeeds in eliminating "30 and out," the very attempt to do so constitutes a watershed development. But should Chrysler actually have any success in this regard it would give added momentum to the onslaught against pensions, not only at companies like Vale Inco and U.S. Steel but also by the Stephen Harper Conservative federal government's move to raise the eligibility age for Old Age Security from 65 to 67.

Thus it is imperative that the CAW beat back the demand to end "30 and out" by any means necessary, including by industry-wide strike action. Moreover, such action by the CAW should be coupled with a serious campaign of mass action to halt the Harper government's raising of the age of eligibility for OAS, since it will hit autoworkers especially hard. This is because the supplements to their pensions, which are integral to their retirement income, end at age 65, since the current eligibility age for Old Age Security is 65.

Raising the eligibility age to 67 would cost retired autoworkers thousands of dollars in lost income between the ages of 65 and 67.

These developments put the proceedings of the Collective Bargaining Convention into perspective. The convention was bathed in militant rhetoric and good policy papers detailing the breadth and depth of the attacks CAW members are facing. But the proceedings were detached from the everyday realities faced by CAW members who are being relentlessly

(Right) Sept. 3 Labour Day march in Toronto.

# Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada

## CAW needs action plan to stop concessions to Detroit Big 3

attacked with no clear prospect of a serious fight-back in response. Indeed, the deliberations at the convention marked no significant shift in direction for a union that has been in retreat for many years, particularly in the all-important auto industry.

The CAW has allowed the auto bosses to set the trajectory of contract negotiations by permitting them to impose concessions in exchange for promises of new investment. As long as this approach continues, autoworkers will endure the effects of taking ever more contract concessions.

The top CAW leadership stubbornly refuses to acknowledge this trajectory, never mind put a halt to it. The outcome of the convention effectively reinforced this recipe for continuing retreat.

Finally, the CAW's planned merger with the Com-

munications, Energy and Paper Workers, sealed by unanimous vote of the nearly 1000 delegates, promises more of the same. It will produce a larger, better-resourced labour organization. But those advantages will be of little consequence unless there is a decisive shift to the left in both the collective bargaining and political strategies of the CAW. Neither is on offer with this merger.

The very few critical voices on the left in the CAW are consequently tasked with relentlessly making the case that more of the same is not acceptable and will lead to even greater retreats. ■

*Bruce Allen is vice president of CAW Local 199, and vice president of the Niagara Regional Labour Council (writing in a personal capacity).*

Photo: Socialist Action



By EVAN ENGERING

## Zellers workers on Target for their rights

Scores of labour activists converged on a quiet business park in Mississauga (west of Toronto) on Aug. 22 to deliver a message to Target Stores CEO Gregg Steinhafel. The American retail giant recently bought out more than 100 former Zellers stores in a takeover deal, leaving at least 12,000 jobless.

The Stephen Harper Conservative federal government approved the takeover this year without ensuring that any of those workers would keep

their jobs, much less retain their hard-earned benefits and seniority.

"What they're saying to you is this is going to be the fate of all workers in this country and this province in the years to come," said Ontario Federation of Labour President Sid Ryan. "This is what we can expect, unless of course, the labour movement gets its act together." Ryan's dire warning could not be more pertinent. This predatory

takeover, just like the flight of a Caterpillar diesel engine plant from London, Ontario to union-busting Indiana earlier this year, is a reminder of the increasingly precarious nature of work in the capitalist system.

The United Food and Commercial Workers union is challenging the dismissal of the few unionized workers in this sector, trying to invoke "successor rights" as Target takes control of

the Zellers chain. But employers' more frequent use of strike-breaking legislation and other anti-union laws are making the legal system less and less a recourse for pursuing any justice for workers.

Militant talk must be matched by more militant action, including mass pickets that shut down anti-worker enterprises. Only then will workers realize their power. ■

## ... Shorten workweek

(continued from page 7)

els of high unemployment as a key issue behind revolts from Tahrir Square to Occupy Wall Street. The Occupy movement, however, has not yet put forward any demands around worktime or jobs (not even on the May Day anniversary). At the moment the campaign getting most attention in OWS circles is its "Strike Debt" effort, an attempt to organize mass repudiation of individual debt. And for its one-year anniversary action on Sept. 17, OWS is planning another mass action targeting Wall Street—but again, with no specific demands around jobs, hours, income, or services.

In discussions leading up to the joint OWS/union/community group May Day actions this year, when some activists raised the need for jobs and public works, a common response from anarchists was "we don't want to work—work sucks!" These same activists argued for creating a society without alienation and without exploitation—but with no suggestion of how to get there, of how to make work shorter, less alienating, of how to

re-integrate work into a rational life for a new humanity.

Certainly, Marxists share these anarchists' resentment of our alienation from our productive capacities, from our loved ones, from nature. Such a radical stance is hardly news: Marx already in the "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844" was writing of the need of humanity, as individuals and as a species, to overcome estrangement from itself, from what it does and makes, and from nature. And Marx had already pinpointed the origin of that estrangement in workers' separation from their means of production and reproduction, and their resulting dependence for survival on the ability to work for others, specifically for the ruling class.

This hatred of alienation shared by socialist and anarchists is also visible in our common literary heritage, for instance the portraits of society's potential so wonderfully painted in the fiction of William Morris, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Marge Piercy and others. And the withering scorn of Paul Lafargue's 1880 "The Right to be Lazy" shows that Marxists will take a back seat to no one in our disdain for bourgeois society's work ethic—and in our ability to chuckle along with Lafargue at the follies of working people when we mindlessly pay hom-

age to that ideology.

What distinguishes Marxists is that we have a program, a strategy, a set of tactics for trying to turn such utopian visions into reality. Marxists support the fight against debt, but also recognize that debt is a symptom, not a cause, of exploitation. We start instead from the root of capital's profits—production and reproduction—and propose a program to workers that will allow them to build on current struggles for fewer hours, more jobs, better pay, and benefits to the point where they can see the connection with the fight for a radically transformed society. Such struggles are, in fact, at the core of the activities of the OWS Labor Alliance and its components.

We will be participating in the one-year anniversary demonstrations of Occupy Wall Street against the bankers and corporate moguls who keep us enslaved on and off the jobs. And on that day and going forward, we will deepen the discussion of how to spread the worldwide uprising fighting for a society in which the duration, character, and fruits of labor are determined by those doing the work, not by the anarchic laws of the existing system or by those who profit from it without working themselves. ■

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

"Compliance," a dramatic film based on true events, written and directed by Craig Sobel. With Ann Dowd, Dreema Walker, Philip Ettinger, and Pat Healy.

The shocking, cringe-worthy film, "Compliance," has the look of a *cinema verité* documentary. It takes place in a strip-mall fast-food restaurant; there are problems of spoiled food due to employee negligence and a shortage of workers.

Sandra (Ann Dowd), the manager, a stressed-out, middle-age woman, gets a phone call from a man saying that he is "Police Officer Daniels" (Pat Healy), who unfortunately can't take the time to go out there in person because he's very busy. He tells her that one of her customers complained that an employee, Becky (Dreema Walker), stole money out of her purse an hour ago; she's with Daniels now along with Sandra's boss, the franchise owner.

The mostly young staff is on edge as it is; Sandra has warned them that a company "secret shopper" is coming in to rate the place.

When Daniels asks Sandra to take Becky into the break room and search her purse, you know something is not kosher. From merely rummaging through her purse, the search escalates



## Unspeakable acts

incrementally, orchestrated by Daniels as the rest of the oblivious staff continues serving the steady stream of customers out front. He crows and intimidates Sandra, flatters her so that she'll do anything he asks.

The fact that the entire film is based on telephone dialogue neither constricts nor undermines the suspense and pace. Plus, the camera breaks it up with shots of customers chowing down in booths; rusted, greasy equipment, dirty dishwasher, piles of discarded car-

tons and wrappers, and a parking lot rimmed with melting snowdrifts. And it often segues to scenes of a bland-looking, early fortyish man in sweater and slacks, sitting in front of a littered desk, or making a sandwich, with a phone to his ear.

Becky, who now sits naked, covered only by an apron, ends up allowing Sandra, her assistant, Marti (Ashley Atkinson), as well as Sandra's balding, sheepish, beer-drinking fiancé, Van (Bill Camp), to carry out Daniels' phone

directed, step-by-step searches tantamount to those perpetrated on prisoners suspected of concealing contraband in bodily orifices. Daniels rewards Van for conducting the most egregious search with a sex act by Becky.

You ask yourself why Sandra and the others allowed this to happen. People are conditioned through religion, education, and government to obey the law and not to question authority.

The man spoke convincingly, repeatedly stating that he was an officer of the law, asking, "Don't you want to do the right thing?" "Help me out here," and "The sooner you do this, the sooner it'll all be over," interspersed with threats.

Can we use the message of the film to explain how tyrannical, imperialistic governments gain control of their citizens? How hundreds of thousands of people are coerced into leaving their homes and boarding freight cars that will take them to their deaths? How millions of innocent people are driven from their lands, herded into reservations or concentration camps—as were Japanese American citizens in California? Can it explain the exploitation of women? Minorities? The undocumented, and so on?

Although this film takes place in a restaurant, it's not claustrophobic. The acting feels natural; you sense that these are real hardworking people asked to carry out unspeakable acts on an innocent person. ■

# The un-taxed \$21 trillion

By BARRY WEISLEDER

This article is drawn from information at [www.taxjustice.net](http://www.taxjustice.net).

The world's richest people are hiding \$21 trillion in offshore tax havens worldwide. Actually, it may be as much as \$32 trillion.

While governments slash spending and lay off workers, citing a need for "austerity" due to the recession/depression, the ultra-rich—fewer than 10 million of the seven billion people on Earth—have stashed away an amount equal to the entire U.S. and Japanese economies—beyond the reach of the tax man. This is according to a new report by the Tax Justice Network, an independent organization of economists, accountants, lawyers, and other professionals launched in the British Parliament in 2003.

The lost tax revenue from offshore tax shelters, the report notes, "is large enough to make a significant difference to all of our conventional measures of inequality. Since most of the missing financial wealth belongs to a tiny elite, the impact is staggering."

James S. Henry was former Chief Economist for McKinsey & Co. He is the author of the book, "The Blood Bankers," as well as articles for publications including *The Nation* and *The New York Times*. Henry obtained information from the Bank for International Settlements, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the United Nations, central banks, and private sector analysts and found the outlines of the giant pool of cash floating in that nebulous space known as "offshore."

Keep in mind that this refers to money only—the report omits real estate, yachts, race horses, art, and other forms of wealth the super-rich are hiding, untaxed, in offshore tax havens. Henry refers to it as a "black hole" in the world economy and notes that "despite taking pains to err on the conservative side, the results are astonishing."

### Meet the top .001%

"By our estimates, at least a third of all private financial wealth, and nearly half of all offshore wealth, is now owned by world's richest 91,000 people—just 0.001% of the world's population," the report says. Those top 91,000 have about \$9.8 trillion of the total estimated in this report, and fewer than ten million people account for the whole mountain of cash.

Who are those people? The report mentions "30-year-old Chinese real estate speculators and Silicon Valley software tycoons," and those whose wealth comes from oil, and from the drug trade. Drug lords, understandably, need to hide their ill-gotten gains, but plenty of the other ultra-rich are simply avoiding paying taxes by constructing complicated trusts and other investments just to shave a few more points off the bill they owe in their home country.

"Offshore," according to Henry, isn't a physical loca-



(Above) Occupy Seattle protest on Tax Day, April 17.

tion anymore—though plenty of places like Singapore and Switzerland, he notes, still specialize in providing "secure, low-tax physical residences" to the world's rich.

But today, "offshore" wealth is virtual. Henry describes "nominal, hyper-portable, multi-jurisdictional, often quite temporary locations of networks of legal and quasi-legal entities and arrangements." A company may be located in one jurisdiction, but it is owned by a trust located elsewhere, and administered by trustees in a third location. "Ultimately, then, the term 'offshore' refers to a set of capabilities," rather than to a place or multiple places.

It's also important, the report notes, to distinguish between the "intermediary havens"—the places most people think of when they think of tax havens, like Mitt Romney's Cayman Islands, Bermuda, or Switzerland—and the "destination havens," which include the U.S., UK, and even Germany. Those destinations are desirable because they provide "relatively efficient, regulated securities markets, banks backstopped by large populations of taxpayers, and insurance companies; well-developed legal codes, competent attorneys, independent judiciaries, and the rule of law."

Thus, the people who avoid paying taxes by moving their money around are taking advantage of taxpayer-funded services to do so.

### Big bailed-out banks run this business

Just who is facilitating this process? Goldman Sachs, UBS, and Credit Suisse are the top three, with Bank of America, Wells Fargo, and JP Morgan Chase all in the top 10. "We can now add this to their list of distinctions: they are key players in many havens around the globe, and key enablers of the global tax injustice system," the report notes.

By the end of 2010, the top 50 private banks alone were managing some \$12.1 trillion in "cross-border in-

vested" assets for their clients. That's more than twice what it was in 2005, representing an average annual growth rate of over 16 percent.

"From banks to accountancy firms and corporate lawyers, some of the biggest businesses in the world are part of the fabric of global tax avoidance," writes financial researcher (and former Goldman Sachs trader) Lydia Prieg in *The Guardian*. "These companies are not moral entities that we can shame into paying their fair share; they exist to maximize their profits and those of their clients."

"Until the late 2000s," Henry notes, "the conventional wisdom among flight capitalists was 'What could be safer than 'too big to fail' U.S., Swiss and UK banks?'" Without the bailouts that followed the 2008 financial crisis, he adds, many of the banks that are stashing cash for the ultra-rich wouldn't exist anymore. The assumption of government backing is the very reason why those uber-rich are banking with the big guys from the start.

Inequality has already been skyrocketing around the world, by all the conventional measures. If the top 1 percent in the United States own not just 35.6 percent of the wealth, for instance, but a much larger portion that's hidden, what does that mean for the rest of the population? An incredibly shrinking share of the wealth!

In any case, as the report argues, "inequality is a political choice." (Or it is the consequence of the capitalist system of production. - BW) The amount of inequality is what the rich can get away with, and what society will tolerate. Many North Americans are grossly misinformed about the present level of inequality. The report shows that even the 'experts' massively underestimated the problem.

### "Indebted" countries not really in debt

Henry's report breaks out a subgroup of 139 countries, mostly lower or middle-income ones, for further study, noting that by most calculations, those 139 countries had a combined debt of over \$4 trillion at the end of 2010. But if you take into account all that money being held offshore, those countries actually had negative \$10 trillion in debt—or as Henry writes, "[O]nce we take these hidden offshore assets and the earnings they produce into account, many erstwhile 'debtor' countries are in fact revealed to be wealthy. But the problem is, their wealth is now offshore, in the hands of their own elites and their private bankers."

Henry further notes that the developing world as a whole turns out to be a creditor of the developed world, rather than a borrower. "That means this is really a tax justice problem, not simply a 'debt' problem." But those debts, as we've noted, fall on the shoulders of the ordinary working people of those countries, those who can't take advantage of sophisticated tax shelters.

If the unreported \$21 trillion earned a rate of return of 3 percent, and that income was taxed at 30 percent, that alone would generate income tax revenues of around \$190 billion. If the total amount of money in tax havens is closer to Henry's higher estimate, \$32 trillion, it would bring in closer to \$280 billion—which is about twice the amount OECD countries spend on development assistance. And that's just income taxes. Capital gains taxes,

(continued on page 11)

# ... Fall protests

(continued from page 1)

alism in the Middle East?

Certainly, the U.S. was thwarted in its plans to maintain huge military bases on Iraqi soil as part of its greater efforts to retain control over access to strategic energy resources vital to its international economic competitors, including China. Yet redeployment has not seriously impeded the suppression of the oil workers, the privatization of Iraqi oil, or its exploitation by British Petroleum, Exxon, Chevron, Shell, and other U.S. and European companies. According to Greg Muttitt, author of "What Ever Happened to Iraqi Oil?", Iraq's output now places it in the number-two position in OPEC, a position previously held by Iran, whose oil exports have been cut in half by U.S.-ordered sanctions.

The U.S. government's momentary preference for "light-footprint warfare"—raids by special operations forces, drone assassinations, proxy militias, cyberwarfare, etc.—are the options available to an imperial power that has no real military competitors in most regions of the globe. This shift, however, does not correlate to a slowing of military intervention in terms of geography or dollars. The latest Congressional Research Service annual arms sales report was widely commented on by the antiwar community because it documented the fact that in just one year, 2011, the Obama administration boosted export arms sales by \$42 billion. In the recent period, the U.S. government has facilitated a jump in arms sales to the *developing world* from the \$9 billion level of the Bush administration years to \$56 billion in 2011.

A stunning proportion of those sales have gone to U.S. allies in the Middle East. John Rees of the Stop the Wars Coalition UK recently wrote, "Between 1950 and 2006 Saudi Arabia purchased \$63 billion worth of weapons and equipment through the Pentagon's Foreign Military Sales programme. In 2010 it announced a similar amount of military purchases—but in just 15 years, not half a century."

Proxy warfare, however, is not the only game plan. The U.S. has been upgrading or building new bases in Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and Jordan. In Kuwait, 15,000 troops are stationed in Camp Arifjan alone.

In addition, the U.S. buildup for war with Iran is indisputable. Prof. Vijay Prashad recently described the U.S. naval deployment in the Persian Gulf, a deployment just boosted by the floating base known as the *USS Ponce*, as a "traffic jam of American power in the Persian Gulf." The *Ponce* joins *USS Enterprise* and *USS Lincoln*, both first-class warships that are supported by a considerable battle group, as well as the various marine and amphibious task forces of the U.S. Fifth Fleet based at the Naval Support Activity station in Manama, Bahrain.

The softening up of Iran via sanctions, assassinations, and covert ops continues with the new sanctions designed to lower Iran's ability to export oil below the current level, which is already only 40% of their previous exports. The British *Guardian* has reported that the sanctions against the regime were already having a huge impact on the population, leading to the quadrupling of food prices and dramatic shortages of medicine, including for hemophiliac children.

Clearly, the U.S. is not running from the Middle East with its tail between its legs. In short, Washington's inability to establish a puppet Iraqi regime effective enough to make massive and permanent basing a reality was a setback but has not in any way forced the U.S. to contemplate giving up its military and imperial hegemony in the region.

The reason is that the world capitalist economic crisis is intensifying inter-imperialist rivalry and moving the U.S. capitalist class to undertake a significant expansion in terms of dollars spent and in terms of the geographic swath of the planet on which they hope to exert military hegemony. Mass responses to the economic crisis by events like the Arab Spring and the Greek general strikes have alerted the big powers to the fact that their current method of economic rule, be it through despots or social democracy, is not guaranteed.

Thus, not only the United States but every major power is striving to increase its military arsenal. Those who were formerly dependent on the U.S. military to protect their interests now understand that either they develop their own military capacities or they will be shunted aside in the intensifying race for resources and profits. The U.S.-led NATO war against Libya served as a perfect example, when the U.S., England, France, and Italy jockeyed for position regarding whose military forces would predominate in the destruction of that nation and which would secure the largest percentage of the oil booty.

The already severe sanctions and covert operations against Iran and Syria and the increasing threats to implement a "no-fly zone" in Syria (which could only



## Socialist Action holds National Convention

More than 100 members, supporters, and friends of Socialist Action (U.S.) attended the Aug. 16-19 National Convention, Educational Conference, and public civil liberties rally in Minneapolis. Special guests included members and supporters of the Fourth International from Greece, Ireland, and Canada.

A broadly sponsored rally initiated by Socialist Action in defense of civil liberties and democratic rights included speakers from nearly a dozen organizations that have been victims of government persecution and are organizing broad defense efforts. (See photo above.)

Socialist Action's convention was preceded by a three-month pre-convention discussion period

that saw members from branches and at-large units across the country discuss and debate a range of key political issues. Some 170 written contributions were circulated through SA's e-mail discussion bulletin. The convention adopted a comprehensive Political Resolution plus several addenda on the Cuban Revolution and the fight for women's liberation and LGBT rights.

A panel of international guests and a representative of Socialist Action's Political Committee presented their critical views on developments in the Fourth International, the world party with which SA maintains fraternal relations. A complete report will follow in the October issue of *Socialist Action* newspaper.

begin to be implemented after the massive bombing of strategic air bases with adjacent civilian areas) have but one objective, to re-integrate these nations into the economic and military framework of the great powers and to stymie competition from trade blocs led by China as they relate to energy resources, pipelines, and markets.

The heroic democratic upsurge of the Syrian people to depose Assad has to overcome not only the normal obstacles faced by a people without a well-organized working-class or revolutionary party but also U.S. intervention with arms via the Saudi and Gulf Coast monarchies, CIA operatives on the ground, and U.S.-backed NGOs advising from neighboring countries—all designed to prevent the taking of power by genuinely democratic and anti-imperialist groupings based on the Local Coordinating Councils. And soon, perhaps, the Syrian masses will have to face a Libya-style NATO intervention.

Simultaneously, Israel and the US are theatrically playing hard cop / soft cop regarding a military assault on Iran's nuclear facilities. Both countries are also creating the kind of propaganda that will allow them to justify an assault on Hezbollah in Lebanon as a military escalation occurs. Palestinian activists fear a scenario in which a regional conflagration will allow Israel to take over the entire West Bank once and for all.

The expansion of the U.S. military on the African continent, a continent already wracked by the most destructive interventions—proxy imperialist wars over mineral resources, dramatic land grabs that are destroying subsistence agriculture, and other tools of the new scramble for Africa—now includes a "war on terror" game plan whose operatives are sited in continuous swaths from Algeria to Mali to Nigeria to Uganda and Somalia beyond. Glen Ford recently pointed out that the U.S. has pushed for renewed sanctions on Eritrea, one of only four countries on the African continent that have refused to work directly with the U.S. military command, Africom. By 2013, the U.S. plans to have a new 3000-soldier-strong roving unit of rangers, housed in safe spaces in Africom friendly nations, available for dramatic strikes anywhere on the continent.

The so-called military "pivot to Asia" that is accompanying the efforts of the U.S. to challenge Asian-centric trading blocs via the Trans Pacific Partnership and other measures is not mere propaganda. The new U.S. base on Jeju island is designed to hold Aegis war ships, 38 of which make up President Obama's U.S. missile-defense system. Secretary of Defense Leon

Panetta announced in June that by 2020 the greater part of American naval forces—including six aircraft carrier battle groups as well as a majority of the navy's cruisers, destroyers, Littoral Combat ships, and submarines—would be stationed in the Asian Pacific.

The Americas are not exempted. Washington is greatly expanding the so-called "drug war" in the Americas, with U.S. troops recently killing fisherman in the part of Honduras that is home to the most radical elements of the ongoing fight for land and sovereignty.

In short, the global crisis guarantees that while the imperialists' strategy and tactics may change—less counter-insurgency but more counter-terrorism, fewer troops but more drones and special ops, a "Presidential Kill List," etc.—imperialist wars are not on the wane but on the upswing and will be a permanent feature of the political landscape. The efforts by the United National Antiwar Coalition and many other peace groups to use the Oct. 5, 6, and 7 weekend to educate new activists and regroup the veterans is a modest but important step toward deepening consciousness and sustaining an antiwar infrastructure. To find an organizing effort mounting activity for the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary dates, visit <http://october7actions.net/wordpress/>. See the UNAC site at [www.unacpeace.org](http://www.unacpeace.org). ■

## ... Untaxed trillions

(continued from page 10)

inheritance taxes, and other taxes would bring in even more.

The problem with seeking a tax solution to systemic inequality is clear. The super-rich control governments, armies and states—which are dedicated to preserving their power and wealth. They have shown great capacity and a ruthless will to crush any serious challenge to their accumulated privileges.

Even the most radical tax reforms can be reversed—by electoral fraud, a capital strike, a military coup, etc. So, if fighters for social justice are in for a penny, we may as well be in for a pound. It's the system that must be replaced. Thus, if lasting social justice and genuine economic democracy is your goal, it's important to prepare to expropriate the bourgeoisie and build the institutions of workers' power, from the bottom up. ■

# Massacre reveals true face of South Africa after apartheid

Stephane De Sakutin / Agence France-Presse



By DANIEL XAVIER

On Aug. 16, South African police opened fire with live ammunition on 3000 striking workers at the Lonmin corporation's platinum mine at Marikana in the country's Northwest Province. This brutal incident of state repression, reminiscent of the apartheid era, left at least 34 workers dead, nearly 80 wounded, and many more missing.

The victims have been on strike for higher wages and a decent standard of living; most of them reportedly earn about \$500 a month. Working conditions on the job are horrendous, requiring the miners to stand in swirling dust for hours on end while drilling the rock. After work, they and their families are confined to a squalid settlement of one-room shacks, without fresh drinking water and with 50 people often sharing a latrine. Leaking sewage from the platinum mine has polluted the surrounding farmland and groundwater.

On Aug. 24, a report surfaced of police assaults and torture of some of the 270 miners who were held in jail after the massacre. The National Prosecuting Authority, employing the apartheid-era doctrine of "common purpose," charged the prisoners with responsibility for the deaths of their own comrades—an indictment that has now been "temporarily" suspended.

In the meantime, government officials, though crying crocodile tears for the slain workers and their grieving families, have defended the actions of the police and are pressing the people to remain patient while the state conducts an investigation.

Similarly, the pro-government trade-union leadership embodied in the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) put out a statement echoing the sentiments of the government and the police: "Now is not the time to go into this detailed assessment, nor to play the blame game. We must await the findings of the [government-appointed] Commission of Enquiry, which we hope will establish exactly what happened on that tragic day."

The striking Marikana workers are represented by the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU), affiliated with the National Council of South African Trade Unions (NACTU). The union was initiated in 1998 after its current president, Joseph Mathunjwa, had been expelled from the COSATU-affiliated National Union of Mineworkers for leading a militant worker protest.

COSATU issued a report several days after the Marikana massacre that contained obvious accusations against AMCU. The statement denounced "what we have identified as a coordinated political strategy to use intimidation and violence, manipulated by former union leaders ... to create breakaway unions and divide and weaken the trade-union movement."

The international media was quick to blame the striking workers for the violence, alleging that they were brandishing weapons, that they were on strike "illegally," and that the workers charged the police line, prompting them to open fire. For instance, *The New York Times* wrote on Aug. 16: "For the past three days, workers with machetes, sticks and wooden cudgels occupied an outcropping of rock near the mine, chanting and dancing, pledging their readiness to die if their demands were not met."

The article continued: "Just before 4 p.m. on Thursday, after repeated warnings to the crowd of about



***The ANC government has bent over backwards to satisfy its imperialist partners, while its policies have marginalized the poor.***

3,000 miners to disarm and disperse, the police began firing tear gas and water cannons to try to get them to leave, witnesses said. In video captured by several news organizations, the police appeared to fire upon a group of workers who charged toward them."

A look at the news footage on YouTube, however, raises grave questions about the chain of events. We see the police shoot tear gas into an enclosure ringed with razor wire into which the strikers had been herded. We then see a group of miners (perhaps a few dozen) run out of the enclosure, apparently fleeing the gas and possibly bullets. The police then mow them down with automatic rifles, shooting hundreds of rounds at the workers until ordered to "cease fire!"

There is no evidence in the footage that the police were forced to defend themselves by force of arms. They clearly outnumbered the group of strikers who ran in their direction. And why would the strikers have charged a superior number of heavily armed police?

For the next half hour, moreover, some news reporters observed police on horseback and in armored cars and helicopters gunning down additional fleeing (or surrendering) workers. These later police assaults appear to have been responsible for most of the casualties. According to the *Johannesburg Star*, autopsies have shown that most of the strikers were shot in the back. It is thus out of the question that the massacre could be construed as the action of police officers defending themselves against an armed provocation.

The Marikana massacre poses additional questions that the mainstream press, police, and politicians all wish to avoid. Why were the police deployed to the isolated area of Marikana in the first place? Why did they have live ammunition? And, most importantly, why is the government intervening in a labor dispute on behalf of the employer? Only truthful answers to these questions can show us who is to blame for this tragic incident.

History can shed light on the situation, particularly the history of the African National Congress (ANC), their politics, their rise to power in the historic 1994 elections, and their track record since then. During the 1980s, demonstrations, boycotts, and strikes encompassed millions of people who were demanding civil rights for the Black population, economic justice, and the end to minority white government. The ANC, which had been formed years earlier as an organization fighting apartheid and for a "non-racial" South Africa, became the leading force in the movement.

As the mass movement began to reach potentially revolutionary proportions, President F.W. de Klerk began to grant concessions in hopes of calming the situ-

(Above) Mineworkers hold Aug. 27 mass meeting outside the platinum mine at Marikana.

(Left) Funeral for some of the workers killed by South African police at Marikana on Aug. 16.

ation and paving the way for a "peaceful transition" that would give Blacks the right to vote but protect the economic dominance and minority rights for the ruling whites. Through these concessions, the legal ban on the ANC was lifted, Nelson Mandela was freed from prison, aspects of apartheid legislation were repealed, and negotiations began for a transition government. This led to the elections of 1994, in which the entire South African population was allowed to vote for the first time.

The ANC ran in the elections on a platform of land redistribution (87% of the population, specifically Black people, only owned 13% of land while whites controlled the rest), modest nationalizations, and socio-economic justice. Nelson Mandela was elected president by a landslide, and the ANC scored 252 seats in the National Assembly.

However, upon coming to power, the ANC disavowed its supporters and instead backed the interests of international and local capitalists, as well as partnering with the imperialist powers. Major planks of the ANC program, such as redistribution of the land, were discarded as South Africa's new rulers assured business elites that their property and profit margins were safe.

For nearly two decades, the ANC has been in bed with the employer class and imperialism. A narrow crust of Black political leaders has been elevated to the boards of major white-dominated corporations. The new millionaire stratum includes Cyril Ramaphosa, ANC leader and former head of the National Union of Mineworkers, who now sits on the board of Lohmin PLC—the British-based conglomerate that owns the Marikana platinum mine.

The ANC government has bent over backwards to satisfy its imperialist overlords, while its neoliberal policies have increasingly marginalized the poor and discontented that the ANC supposedly represents. The official unemployment rate borders on 25 percent; the mining industry has lost 131,000 jobs in recent years.

Those who dare to speak out for a better South Africa have often faced police violence and even massacres. Last year, police murdered Andries Tatane, a young worker, during a service delivery protest. Other trade unionists and strikers have also been killed by the government since 1994. In this sense, the Marikana massacre is not an aberration but the logical result of a government that supports the interests of the one percent against those of the 99 percent.

The workers of South Africa need to break with the ANC and the movement mis-leaders who support it (such as the COSATU trade-union bureaucracy), and build their own independent party to lead the struggle of the workers and rural peoples. Only when the South African people, led by the majority Black working class, seize control of the economy and administer it collectively and democratically in the interests of meeting human needs instead of the profits of the rich will there truly be justice in South Africa. ■