

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

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DONATION \$1



Attacks on workers rights and public services have sparked widespread protests across what was once America's industrial heartland, the Rustbelt.

PHOTOS/MIKE ELICSON (TOP), GREG HANSEN (LEFT), JAMES FASSINGER (RIGHT), PHIL EJERCITO, DANE101.COM (BOTTOM)

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AMERICA'S RUSTBELT ERUPTS

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U.S. Rulers Have No Permanent Friends: Only Permanent Interests

EDITORIAL

Over the past several months the world has witnessed dramatic upheavals in the Arab world. Dictators and corrupt regimes have been and are being challenged or overthrown. More startling, the United States and Britain – the powers that installed and protected these corrupt dictatorships – have cautiously come out on the side of the people. They have called for these tyrants to leave or at least respect the democratic rights of the people to protest.

Revolutionaries and tyrants alike have good reason to pause and ask – “What in the world is going on that the United States should turn on those who they hailed as democrats and pillars of stability?” Britain’s Lord Palmerston stated over a century ago, “Nations have no permanent friends or allies, they only have permanent interests.” What is the permanent interest that made us tell our temporary friend, Mubarak of Egypt, to take our \$70,000,000,000 and get lost?

Clearly the permanent interest is OIL. Not simply oil for the U.S., but the control of oil means the control of the development of the nations of the world. It takes more than arms!

The Arab revolution is dealing with an intelligent, experienced, powerful enemy. The American and European imperialists fully understand that the political superstructure – government, police, courts and army – is created to protect and ex-

pand the economic base. During the revolutions against direct colonialism, it became clear that the existing colonial superstructure could no longer protect the economic base. At that point the imperialists helped create “revolutionary” groups that would overthrow the colonial political superstructure in order to protect the base – private property.

The United States supported everyone of the monarcho-fascist regimes that are now under fire. No problem. They have outlived their usefulness to the imperialists. Dump them – support the revolution in order to create a new superstructure that will guarantee capital’s interests!

The wish to do something and actually doing it are different things. These mass uprisings are of great historical importance. They spell the end of one stage of social development and the beginnings of another. The days of out-

right buying up a government are rapidly coming to an end. The demand for the rule of law will not be easily crushed. The ability of the U.S. or any other world power to capture these revolutions is questionable. Who ever gains political power will be faced with the demand for jobs and raising the standard of living. How does a regime create jobs in a world economy dominated by labor replacing electronic production? If the leaders of this stage of the revolution fail to satisfy these demands, a second stage of the rebellion will break out.

On behalf of the American revolutionary movement, we wish the Arab people – and all oppressed of the world – success in this new round of struggle. We know our contribution in this fight is to prevent our ruling class from interfering with and distorting the revolution. We shall continue to do our best!

PEOPLE’S TRIBUNE

The People’s Tribune is devoted to the proposition that an economic system that can’t or won’t feed, clothe and house its people ought to be and will be changed. To that end, this paper is a tribune of the people. It is the voice of millions struggling for survival. It strives to educate politically those millions on the basis of their own experience. It is a tribune to bring them together, to create a vision of a better world, and a strategy to achieve it.

We find ourselves at a historic moment as labor-replacing technology leads us on a path toward the decisive reconstruction of society. Who will win – the capitalists or the growing mass of poor – will depend on winning the hearts and minds of the people to create a society whose fruits benefit all.

We offer our pages as a vehicle for the new ideas rooted in our reality, and to be the voice of those who seek to raise the consciousness of society. Let us gather our collective experience, intelligence and commitment to bring forth a vision that changes America into a society “by the people, of the people, for the people.”

PEOPLE’S TRIBUNE EDITORIAL POLICY:
Articles that are unsigned, such as the cover story and editorials, reflect the views of the editorial board. Bylined articles reflect the views of the authors, and may or may not reflect the views of the editorial board.

Deadlines for articles and art: The deadline for articles, photographs and other art is the first of each month for the issue that comes out at the beginning of the following month. For example, the deadline for the June issue is May 1. Articles should be as short as possible, and no longer than 600 words. We reserve the right to edit articles to conform to space limitations.

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Why Revolutionaries Need A Press

From the Editors

We are sometimes asked “Why do revolutionaries need a press?” The answer has to do with this moment in history. People are struggling just to get the basic necessities of life. Historical forces beyond anyone’s control have set the stage for a new society to be built, but from this point on, how things turn out depends on what people think. This means that those of us who are seeking fundamental change are engaged in a battle of ideas, a struggle to win the hearts and minds of the people. If we don’t raise the consciousness of the people and unite them around a vision of a better world and a strategy to achieve it, then we’ll fail in our effort to build a just and free society. To win the battle of ideas, we need a press.

Visit us on the web at www.peopletribune.org

Wealth Gap Signals Need for New Society

COVER STORY

The polarity of wealth in America—the gap between the rich and the rest of us—is staggering. History has shown that when the wealth of a society is this polarized, that society can't remain stable. It has to transform into something new.

The figures are mind-blowing. In 1980, families in the bottom 90 percent averaged \$30,446 in annual income, while families in the top 0.01 percent averaged \$5.4 million. In 2006, the bottom 90 percent averaged \$30,374 (slightly less than in 1980, in other words), and the top 0.01 percent averaged \$29.6 million in annual income. The top 20 percent of wealthy individuals now own about 85 percent of the wealth, while the bottom 40 percent own very near zero percent. Between 2002 and 2007, 65 percent of all income growth in the United States went to the top 1 percent of the population. In 2009, the top 25 hedge-fund managers were paid, on average, more than \$1 billion each.

The corporations are flush with money, too. In the third quarter of 2010, US firms earned profits at an annual rate of \$1.659 trillion. US corporations are reportedly sitting on some \$2 trillion in cash. This means they have plenty of money to cover government budget gaps!

Meanwhile, as Bob Herbert wrote in the New York Times, nearly 44 million



Protests against the attack on social programs and public service unions in Madison, Wisconsin.

PHOTO/BRETT JELINEK

Sister/Brother, can you spare \$20?

The People's Tribune brings clarity to the growing movement. It unites revolutionaries around a vision of a better world and a strategy to achieve it. It has no paid staff and gets no corporate grants. The paper is financed solely by our readers. We need your support to continue telling the truth.

One-time donations are welcome. If you can spare \$20 a month or more, you'll be a hero. Please make donations payable to People's Tribune and send to P.O. Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654. You can also donate via Paypal at www.peoplestribune.org.

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people were living in official poverty in 2009, which was more than 14 percent of the American population and a jump of four million from the previous year. Some 17 million of the poor are living on incomes of \$11,000 a year or less. That is half of the official poverty line.

More than 15 million children are poor — one of every five kids in the United States. More than a quarter of all Blacks and a similar percentage of Hispanics are poor. And welfare "reform" means public aid helps far fewer people than it used to.

The wealth gap is rooted in the withdrawing of labor power from the production process. As technology has replaced workers, permanent unemployment has grown and wages have fallen for those still working. At the same time, profits have skyrocketed for

the wealthy and the corporations, in part because of increased productivity and in part because of huge investments in speculation. Technology replacing labor means there is less and less profit to be made investing in actual production, so the rich speculate. The creation of derivatives, credit default swaps and all kinds of other exotic financial instruments has allowed the wealthy to make vast sums essentially by gambling. None of this speculative investment produces any useful goods or services, and none of it creates jobs, yet on paper, at least, it makes the rich richer. And the speculation leaves economic destruction in its wake because it devalues money.

As poverty grows, the economy gets worse because few people have money to buy anything. Profits will eventually begin to fall. The corporations will try to

boost profits by replacing more workers with technology—which will only add to the poverty and make things worse.

There is no way out of this vicious cycle under a system based on private property, where a few capitalists and corporations own society's wealth and the tools of production, and the rest of us have to sell them our labor power to live. This kind of system will no longer work in an era when technology is replacing labor. The only way to finally end the crisis is to build a new society where the people own and control the tools of production, and the necessities of life are distributed according to need, not money. We can no longer tolerate a system that is enriching a few and impoverishing millions.

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CHICAGO MAYORAL ELECTIONS AND CORPORATE POWER

By **Law Rosebaum**

On February 22, 2011, scarcely two hours after the polls closed, Rahm Emanuel was declared the winner of Chicago's mayoral election. He won more than 50% of the vote in a field of six candidates, thus avoiding a run-off. Only 40% of the electorate voted.

Richard M. Daley announced last summer that, after 22 years in office, he would not run again for Mayor. Rahm Emanuel resigned as President Obama's Chief of Staff and entered the race. Mayoral elections in Chicago are one-party, Democrat affairs: no pretense of Republican vs., Democrat ideologies here. Business institutions like the Commercial Club of Chicago control the government through a Democrat stranglehold.

Emanuel quickly pulled into the lead among the contenders. He amassed a war chest in campaign contributions, spending \$8 million. He raised \$12.3 million before January 1, 2011. Most money came from corporations, corporate officials, millionaires, billionaires and out of state rich people. Emanuel ran a campaign ad stating that public workers

have to know that they serve the public, and that he will get the best service for Chicago at the cheapest price possible. In a meeting with union leaders, he declared his intent to review the pension system and cut where necessary.

[Rahm Emanuel] raised \$12.3 million . . . Most money came from corporations, corporate officials, millionaires, billionaires and out of state rich people.

The Chicago Teachers Union took immediate notice. In two years, Rahm Emanuel was paid many times more than any teacher could earn in a lifetime. Rahm worked for the Clinton administration. After he left that job, he received \$18.5 million in compensation for his "work" in an investment firm. His job? Consolidating relationships

acquired in the Clinton administration with the banking industry. He oversaw the merger that created one of the biggest energy companies (Exelon) and eliminated about 3,000 jobs. He also picked up another \$300 grand as an employee of "Freddie Mac" for about nine months.

Rahm Emanuel proposed cutbacks in teachers' wages. When criticized for his call for cutbacks, he said he is not asking any public servant to sacrifice any more than he has. With the "big lie" such as this, financed by five times the money that all his competitors had put together, and with national political clout behind him, Emanuel ran away with the election.

There are lessons to be learned from this election campaign.

- The idea of a "consensus candidate" is a thing of the past. Attempts to create a unified candidate for the Black community failed. Emanuel antagonized the trade unions and still won. Ethnicity and trade union endorsements no longer guarantee a bloc of voters. There needs to be a program and a candidate for the working class.
- The low turnout showed both the

lack of respect that the electorate has for the Chicago political process and probably the belief that the winner was a foregone conclusion. This was not entirely evidence of "voter apathy."

• A vibrant "progressive movement" coalesced especially in the campaign to elect Miguel del Valle. In a celebratory post election party, del Valle pledged NOT to work for the city of Chicago under the current mayor and promised to strengthen the grass roots movement "from the neighborhoods."

Rahm Emanuel is beholden to the corporations. He is a dangerous man, taking office in dangerous times. The system which bankrolls him is a deadly one. Across the Midwest, cities and states declare themselves on the verge of bankruptcy. Chicago has led the nation in privatizing to avoid bankruptcy, enriching its corporate masters. A grass roots – working class – movement can challenge the transfer of public property to corporate control by demanding the nationalization of corporations in the interests of the people and the federal taxation of the rich.

Housing Yes, Jail Annex No!

By **Rev. Bruce Wright**

ST. PETERSBURG, FL. — Recently the City and County Governments, Mayor Foster, Department of Corrections, and law enforcement have been "criminalizing" the homeless here by extorting and enticing them to go the Jail Annex shelter, with the collusion of the Homeless Leadership Network and the Pinellas County Coalition for the Homeless.

Members of the homeless community in St. Petersburg are given three choices: face arrest on ordinances violations and "choose" to go to the Jail Annex, or actually go to jail, or take a one-way bus ticket out of town. And, since, supposedly there is a need to have contact with the justice system to get into the Annex shelter, homeless people actually have to be charged with some crime.

There have already been several problems at the facility. Mixing of the homeless with those coming out of state or county jails is happening, despite promises that it would not. The entire facility is run by DOC workers (Sheriffs Department), funded by DOC, uses jail trustees (inmates) as workers, and serves jail food. In one case, a homeless person's heart medication and psychotropic medication was stolen by a jail trustee and taken back to the jail! That



Human Rights March in St. Petersburg, Florida. Demonstrators say housing is a human right.

PHOTO/NICK HINCKLEY, NEWROOTSNEWS.ORG

homeless individual had a heart attack and went into convulsions and was brought to hospital. A special unit, with the Sheriffs Department, had to go into jail to get the medication back.

All of this underscores why the best plan for really dealing with those without homes is the Federal model of "Housing

First". This plan places people without homes in housing first and then brings in the services after that. It works and has worked all over the country. Currently, St. Petersburg and Pinellas County has hundreds of vacant houses, apartments, churches, etc. that can be used for housing. Why does St. Petersburg continue

to look instead to solve the problems of homelessness by criminalization? Why hasn't vacant land in the Diocese of St. Petersburg been used by Catholic Charities for housing the homeless?

All kinds of alternatives have not been explored. Why hasn't the homeless community been asked to be involved in this process? There are models out there of self-sustaining, inexpensive, self-governed communities of the homeless. Also, "intentional communities" of shared living and economies should be explored. The Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign, the Refuge, the Perma-Culture Community, other Churches, and most importantly members of the homeless community are looking into these solutions right now. Go to www.facebook.com/creatingcommunityandrevolution

In our time, in spite of the "glowing" report of our so-called "economic recovery", we continue to see record foreclosures and high and increasing unemployment. How can our leaders speak of tax breaks for the wealthy, record corporate profits, and Wall Street recovery? What about Main Street? More and more people are ending up homeless. In the Bay Area of Tampa, we have 23,000 homeless!!

POOR PEOPLE'S ADVOCATE TO RUN FOR PHILADELPHIA SHERIFF

Cheri Honkala from the Green Party Announces Candidacy

By John Grant

The 2011 Sheriff race in Philadelphia is shaking out to be an interesting dialogue on the economy and, specifically, home foreclosures and evictions. Along with auctions of foreclosed properties, evictions have traditionally been a core task undertaken by the Office Of Sheriff.



Cheri Honkala.

PHOTO/
HARVEY FINKLE

Sheriff from the Green Party on February 17.

"I'm running for Sheriff because something needs to be done to address the plague of home evictions being faced by too many poor and working families

The voice that will shake up the race is Cheri Honkala, founder of both the Kensington Welfare Rights Union and the nationally-active Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign. Honkala formally announced as a candidate for

in Philadelphia," Honkala said.

The question at the heart of the Honkala For Sheriff campaign is whose interests does the Office Of Sheriff serve in the city of Philadelphia?

In the past, the Sheriff has served the interests of banks in their desire to recover their investments, in this case, the homes being lived in by poor and working families who, for one reason or another, cannot keep current on their mortgage payments.

That will stop under Sheriff Honkala. The tagline for the Honkala campaign is: "Keeping Families In Their Homes."

Honkala was raised the oldest of five kids in a poor family in Minnesota. She is now the mother of two children, one who is the independent Hollywood actor/director Mark Webber. Over the years, she struggled with homelessness several times, surviving on low-paying jobs and welfare.

This experience led her to become an advocate for the poor. She has been arrested and jailed and has spoken at international poor people's conferences. She was included by Philadelphia Magazine in a list the 100 Most Powerful Philadelphians and was named the 1997 Woman Of The Year by Philadelphia Weekly.

One of Honkala's messages over the

years has been how the poor and the struggling working class can "disappear in the richest nation in the world."

"Something needs to be done to address the plague of home evictions being faced by too many poor and working families."

If elected Sheriff, Honkala will re-focus the office's efforts. Instead of working in the interests of the financial class, the office will work in the interests of urban families and homeowners. For Sheriff Honkala, eviction will be the absolutely final step in a long list of options that can be created and utilized to keep families in their homes.

After the May primary, Honkala will be running against Democrat and Republican candidates for Sheriff in the November election. So far, the Democrats have at least four people running in the primary.

The Office Of Sheriff in Philadel-

phia is currently in turmoil. It has not kept good records and it has lost track of huge sums of money. Currently, there is an audit being taken of the office's financial records. A grand jury is targeting the Sheriff's real estate department.

As "The People's Sheriff," Honkala will reduce Sheriff's office functions to its fundamental tasks, which include transport of inmates to and from city prisons and courthouses, as well as courthouse security. That function will be continued with an emphasis on public safety and security, while also assuring the dignity of Philadelphia inmates in transit and in the courthouses. Good record-keeping and management will be major concerns.

Last year, sheriffs in both Chicago and Detroit stopped evicting families from their homes until the all the confusion can be cleared up that is the legacy of the financial and real estate bubble bursting.

The Cheri Honkala For Sheriff Campaign is just beginning. There is a lot for Philadelphians to learn between now and November. For more information on the Honkala Campaign, go to the website at www.CheriHonkala.com

Oppressive Leases at Cabrini Green Criminalize Tenants

By Joseph Peery

On September 13, 2010, in an article entitled "Follow The Dirty Money," the New York Times International Herald Tribune reported, "In recent years, Union Bank of California, American Express Bank International, Bank Atlantic and Wachovia Bank have all been caught moving huge sums of drug money, but no one went to jail. The banks just admitted criminal conduct and paid the government a cut of their profits." The article went further, "Of course the government did a thorough investigation but could find no individuals responsible."

In the case of public housing residents, on the other hand, no such confession of guilt or even a court conviction is necessary under HUD's 'One Strike' Rule, in order to evict a person and make them homeless. All that is needed is an arrest not of the lease holder or someone else on the lease, but anyone who comes to visit.

The CHA Lease, Section 16 entitled "Termination of the Lease, part (f)," the second paragraph reads as follows:

"The CHA will not be required to prove that the resident knew, or should have known, that the authorized member of the household, guest, or another



Private contractors tearing down public housing units at Cabrini Green Projects in Chicago.

PHOTO/JOSEPH PEERY

person under the resident's control was engaged in the prohibited activity. However, the resident may raise as a defense that the resident did not know, nor should have known, of said criminal activity. The resident must prove such defense by preponderance of the evidence."

It seems we have now gone from a justice system based on the concept of 'Innocent until proven guilty' to one of 'Guilty until proven innocent' at least as pertains to public housing residents. Or as Richard Pryor used to put it, "You go

down to court looking for justice, and that's what you find, 'just us'."

This very issue of treating those of us who live in CHA differently came up during the question and answer part of a forum held at the National Public Housing Museum downtown, on January 11, 2011. Three of the six candidates running for mayor of Chicago were there to share with a packed audience of public housing residents their solutions for public housing. Many questions were asked, but the ones that seemed to stir people's attention were ones pertaining

to evictions and the leases which continually seem to be having things added to them that take away our rights. People living in CHA units in mixed income developments asked what the different candidates would do about the oppressive leases that force them to take drug tests no matter if they have ever had a drug problem or not, prevent the ownership of pets, forbid family gatherings, and don't allow them to organize so they can defend themselves. All this while condo owners who live in the same buildings and many times right next door, suffer under no such restrictions. Most of the candidates didn't even answer these questions and people left that meeting feeling their concerns were not addressed.

What masquerades as some kind of desegregation in the mixed income buildings, actually more resembles a sophisticated Jim Crow or apartheid. The two extremes represented by condo 'owners' and CHA residents are unequals who seldom speak to each other much less interact. They were never meant to. The lease is the source of the unequal protection under the law that we face, as well as the club that beats us down when we raise our voices against it. It is undemocratic, illegal, and must be overturned.

AMERICA'S RUSTBELT ERUPTS . . .

From the Editors

For the last 40 years, workers in America's industrial heartland, those Rust Belt states concentrated along the waters of the Great Lakes, have suffered the effects of labor replacing technology and globalization, resulting in the most concentrated job loss of any region in the United States. These industrial workers were at one time not long ago, the highest paid workers in the world. They are now joining the most destitute, while living amidst the social destruction and decay that global capital leaves in its wake.

With fewer employed workers paying taxes and more unemployed in need of assistance since 2008, state governments have lowered the tax rates on corporations, while they have made substantial cuts to social service programs as they continue to go deeper into debt. More than half of the nation's governors have released their FY 2012 budgets. Most of their proposals contain even deeper cuts to social services at a time when more services are most urgently needed. The strategy of the ruling class is to shift the burden of the economic crisis on to the backs of the American people, not the corporations.

Over the past year, governors (Republicans and Democrats alike) have been singing a similar song about public sector workers, portraying them as over-paid,



Madison protests against budget cuts and attacks on public service unions.

PHOTO/DEREK BRABENDER

lazy, incompetent and not worthy of secure jobs with pension benefits. Across the country, public sector workers and their unions are finding themselves the target of an all-out corporate-government attack. The proposed budget assault on public sector workers and their unions has been most vicious in the Rust Belt region, where tens of thousands of workers and students are simultaneously filling the state capitols of Wisconsin,

Indiana, Ohio and Michigan to protest.

The wage labor system known as capitalism is in its final stages. As an economic system it is being objectively destroyed each time a worker's job is eliminated and replaced by a robot or a computer program. A new economic system is in its early and painful stages of being birthed. Whether it is based on the demands of the workers or the demands of the ruling class of exploiters

will be determined by strategic strength of one over the other to impose its will.

It's far more strategic to fight "for" something that offers a program of solutions to the problem, than just simply fight "against" something proposed. Individual states don't have the ability to solve the global economic crisis, nor the consequent job losses rooted in the labor replacing electronic technologies. But the fact remains that the workers don't have to pay for the budget crises. There is plenty of money to resolve the deficits at both the state and federal level and provide the social safety net our people need. The rich and the corporations have the money. We must make firm demands that both the state and federal governments tax the corporations and the rich, and that the federal government provide emergency aid to the states for expanded social service programs.

The struggle for overall solutions is the first step towards developing a politically independent, working class-based program centered upon the economic self interests of the majority, not the corporations and the privileged capitalist class minority. This fundamental first step is central to creating a new society based on electronic production — an advanced society where the abundant social product created by the marvels of electronic production can be distributed on the basis of human needs.

Wisconsin Budget Cut Battle

First Responders to the Fire

By Todd Price

Called upon to put out the fire set by Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker, a male teacher from Sun Prairie stepped to the microphone, a bit nervous, and laid it on the line.

"I want to let you know my wife is also a teacher . . . this 'repair bill' the governor has so politely sent to the gentleman in [the capitol] behind us will double the impact on our household!!

"I have an eight year-old daughter and a ten year-old son who are going to be victimized by this bill! How many of you share that story? This is an attack on the middle class, it's an attempt to break our unions, and I say kill the bill!"

Corporate America burning down America: Firefighters to the Rescue!

Today in the United States, the Republican-controlled 112th Congress, with their inane and cruel actions, are setting the American dream on fire: women and children are victimized as planned parenthood falls, heating credits for the poor, mercilessly cut . . . these only speak to the surface level attack on the American people and democracy.

The vitriolic rhetoric has escalated too, against 'anti-American' immigrants and 'greedy' workers who dare

to argue for better working conditions. Many caught in the downward spiral, see their wages and benefits dwindle while the corporate profits continue.

But the corporate class and their right wing shock troops have overreached. They have attacked the unions directly.

Although they wouldn't have been affected, firefighters from across the state stood in solidarity with their union brothers and sisters during the third day of a Madison, Wisconsin rally in support of collective bargaining. The chief, a young African-American man dressed in a business suit, stepped to the podium and said:

"When firefighters and police see an emergency, what do we do? We respond. When firefighters see a burning building . . . when everyone is running out where do we go?"

"In! Well our house is burning down ladies and gentlemen. So we're here to go in, we're going to lead the charge and go in first."

To a backdrop of pipes, horns, music and cacophony the firefighters did just that, leading tens of thousands of citizens into the burning building in the days ahead, showing support for the rights of working people everywhere to have a say in their workplace.



Rally in Lansing, MI to support Wisconsin and other workers and to protest cuts by their new governor.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

A modest proposal.

Wisconsin did not hesitate; they have made the decision to push back.

They are the first responders, like the Sun Prairie teacher who took the microphone, the third day of the protest:

"Brothers and sisters . . . this is about the rich history of unionized employment and progressive democracy in the great state of Wisconsin. For well over 50 years the managers and workers of Wisconsin have sat side by side and worked together to solve problems together. In one fell swoop the Governor and men and women inside the capitol are threatening to take that rich history and throw it aside.

"The nurses, the day care providers, the police, the state employees, the fire fighters, the correctional officers, the educators and the education support professionals of this state, the private sector employees, the small business owners . . . not just in Wisconsin, folks, but in America . . . our freedoms are under attack. The freedoms that workers in our state have spent over fifty years fighting for . . .

"We can't stand by and let this happen. We just want a voice, a chance to talk, a chance to work together. A chance to negotiate; he wants to legislate. Say it again, Negotiate not legislate!"

Todd Price is an author and educator.

HOMELESS FORCED OFF THE RIVER

By Cathleen Williams

SACRAMENTO — As we go to press in mid-February, 45 tents of the self governing homeless organization, “Safe Ground Sacramento” are being tagged with notices from the County of Sacramento and scheduled for removal or destruction by the authorities in 48 hours. The tents are neatly pitched in a wooded ravine, far from public view, and are maintained with sanitation, disposal of garbage, and a common pledge to keep the camp free of drugs, alcohol or violence.

This is not the first time in recent days that Safe Ground has been forced to fold their tents and load their possessions on to their backs or bicycle carts.

Their previous encampment was on

high ground to avoid the floods – but the encampment was visible from the freeway. Police and park rangers posted notices that the camp was illegal.

At the same time, a local landowner raised about \$25,000 to pay for 32 beds at Salvation Army that would be made available for sixty days, beds that were offered to the campers even though there is an existing waiting list of several hundred for shelter at “Sally.”

More than 100 homeless people confronted local policymakers with their questions and demands on February 11. “Why should we be offered 32 beds – just to make it look like the County has a realistic alternative to living outside – when there are people on the waiting lists who have waited for days, weeks, to qualify,” one said. “And what about

the disabled and the seniors who need shelter desperately?”

The offer of a few dozen beds was part of a strategy by local politicians to mount an attack on homeless people for “choosing” to live outside. One County Supervisor, Phil Serna, claimed in the Sacramento Bee on February 15 that it was “futile” to try to “help.”

Yet just this year, the County shelter program has been eliminated due to budget cuts, and now, instead of actual beds, about a hundred homeless people are bused out to area churches to sleep on the floor. And there are waiting lists of hundreds more who are desperate to get out of the severe weather.

To achieve the vision of establishing safe, self-governing communities of simple cabins, Safe Ground Sacramento

is continuing to mobilize. After over a year of appearing at City Council meetings and speaking out, Safe Ground Sacramento and the Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee is moving to make their demands at the County Board of Supervisors, even as it receives widespread support in the local newspaper and the public as a whole.

“We have nowhere else to go,” says one Safe Ground leader. “All available open land has been fenced and we have been threatened with citation and arrest if we camp anywhere in the City. You can’t arrest your way out of homelessness. There is no housing available to us. The shelters are full with long waiting lists. The rain is coming. We are trying to survive.”

National Day of Action Demands Funding of Housing Programs

By Paul Boden

On Valentines Day, February 14, communities across the country joined together in a collective day of action called by National Alliance of HUD Tenants <http://www.saveourhomes.org/>

From Washington D.C. to Florida and from Maine to California, HUD tenants and foreclosure victims, homeless and poor people and everyone else with a heart held actions, press conferences, and community forums to demand that our federal representatives fully fund vital housing programs — be they

Section 8 housing, Public Housing, Rural Housing as well as the other vital poverty, homeless and health programs. The Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP) helped to organize an action in San Francisco.

Ironically, our national political debate focuses on how much to cut from poor people’s housing — should it be 5% or 21%? — not how much to add. Poor people are never mentioned in political discourse. This is particularly shameful at a time when HUD’s own numbers show a 20% increase of households in dire need.

All of this is happening at a time when State and Local governments across the country are also cutting health care, welfare, education, and public sector pensions and jobs. This myriad of federal, state and local cuts across the country will absolutely mean thousands more people living (and dying) on our country’s streets.

Paul Boden is Executive Director of Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP) <http://www.wrap-home.org>



Valentine’s Day 2011 “Have a Heart, Save Our Homes:” a march and rally at the San Francisco Federal Building against threatened draconian cuts to subsidized and Section 8 housing.

PHOTO/SARAH MENEFFEE

Don’t Just Watch The Government Dispossess Us! Fight!

By Eric Sheptock

WASHINGTON D.C. — On Valentine’s Day in Washington, D.C. people demonstrated at the Russell Senate Building to defend affordable housing with the message “Have a heart; save our homes.” With Congress and the Obama administration looking to cut the deficit on the backs of poor and working people, this protest brought a human face to the cuts. Demonstrators formed a picket line outside the building carrying signs that said, “Don’t balance the budget on the backs of poor people” and “We the people need housing, No cuts to Section 8.” The demonstration was organized by local non-profits Empower D.C. and One D.C. They joined with hundreds of tenants from about two dozen cities for this coordinated day of action.

Because D.C. doesn’t have senators, groups of people who live in Section 8 buildings in the city visited Senate offices, including that of Maryland Sen.

Ben Cardin. While meeting with Hill staffers, protesters demanded that the Senate commit to full funding of HUD, expand funding for 1 million new Section 8 housing assistance vouchers and reduce subsidies to wealthy property owners in order to pay for housing for the most vulnerable. Sen. Cardin’s housing and budget legislative assistant expressed sympathy to the messages and personal stories from people who would be directly affected by budget cuts, but warned that a government shutdown and deep cuts were still a probable reality that communities across the U.S. might face.

In D.C., 5,000-10,000 low-income families who are dependent on HUD housing or public housing are facing the risk of losing their housing assistance if the 21 percent cut to the non-security discretionary spending budget is adopted by Congress. One woman said, “I’m out here today because it took me 10 years to get a Section 8 housing voucher

and I’m not just going to let them snatch it away.” “I live in a senior citizens residential community and these cuts would affect my community,” said an elderly protester.

Nationally, we might lose as many as 750,000 HUD units. The proposed continuing resolution would cut \$5.7 billion from HUD’s affordable housing program, which has a total budget of \$43.5 billion. It would cut \$551 million from a program that subsidizes rent checks for low-income seniors, \$210 million from a similar program for poor Americans with disabilities, and eliminate housing counseling services for families battling foreclosure, making it harder for them to fight the loss of their homes.

The House Republican proposal would go so far as to cut the so-called “preservation” fund for public housing, which pays to keep buildings open while they’re being repaired. Without that fund, public housing in need of repair would be shuttered, forcing residents to

find somewhere else to live. The budget proposal rolled out by the Obama administration on Tuesday would also slash certain key programs at HUD as part of a broad \$1 billion in departmental cuts, including \$172 million for low-income seniors and Americans with disabilities.

We need to build a strong movement that challenges politicians to cut corporate welfare and defense spending, rather than attacking low-income communities and families.

I often tell people that, no matter what the outcome is, we win. If the government saves these and other social programs, then those who receive such services won’t go without. If these needed programs are cut, people are bound to become more socially conscious and might even fight for their right to survive. My guess is the latter scenario is the one that will eventually be played out. So, prepare to fight!

CHICAGO DISPLACED TEACHER FORUM

By Rosita Chatonda

Cutbacks in education have been devastating. Schools with “achievement” issues are designated “Turn Around” schools. Fired and displaced teachers are the scapegoats for years of administrative neglect and underfunding. Displaced or out of work teachers are now suffering extreme financial hardship including home foreclosure and bankruptcy. They have organized themselves into a forum where they regularly meet, discuss issues, and support others’ job searches. What follows are some of their stories and voices.

Rosita Chatonda, a teacher at Daniel Hale Williams Elementary, was introduced to the term “Displaced Teacher” in April of 2001 when 70 employees of Chicago Public Schools stormed her school located in the Dearborn Housing Complex. With four prison buses waiting outside, parents, teachers and students got the message that anyone protesting this takeover and school closing would be jailed.

“We set up meetings to discuss the problems of those fired.” Chatonda noted that African American Teachers had been fired at a rate of 1.7%, nearly 3,000 positions, while White teachers lost 25 positions annually since Renaissance 2010 began, resulting in a loss of almost 3,000 positions. Student loss was reported at 1.3 - 1.5% annually or 30,000 African American students since the on-



Chicago school closing protests.

PHOTO /SOUTHWEST YOUTH COLLABORATIVE

set of REN 2010. Data also revealed African American students were 100 times more likely to be expelled from Chicago Public Schools.

A 12 year veteran of Chicago Public Schools was displaced last summer and frequents the forum. She states that “the forum is informative” and that she felt “comforted that she was not alone and that others were going through the same thing.” She also added that the “support from the Chicago Teachers Union

was incredible” and the empathy and understanding she received as a result of the forum has allowed her to “re-focus herself and re-invent herself as a teacher.” Dawn Dawson feels the illegal termination was a “disgrace” to her as a teacher and “to the teaching profession.” Dawn states, that “she was a teacher with 26 years of experience with a Masters in Reading, Curriculum and Instruction, and Administration and Supervision”. She has found herself out of work while novice inexperienced teachers from Teach for America and other alternative certification programs who are uncertified are taking jobs of veteran teachers. She states that

“The Displaced Forum gives pertinent information.” She also said, It helps her “in terms of moral support and even financially through phone banking and resources available through agencies to support unemployment income.”

Illegally terminated teacher Pat Gerad awaits the outcome of a lawsuit filed by the Chicago Teachers Union. Pat says that the Displaced Teacher Forum “gives support to teachers.” She

added, “teachers who have not attended the forum are lost and don’t know what is going on”. On the other hand, she stated that “teachers have support and have bonded. They have the support of the Chicago Teachers Union and they benefit from having the information needed and they do not feel isolated.” Pat acknowledged that isolation from teachers and students has been discomfoting.

Some displaced teachers have won their jobs back and frequent the forum to help inspire hope for those who are still waiting. Yolanda Thompson and Rosemary King both won their jobs back and frequent the forum to support teachers. Others like Cynthia Thompson have offered help to homeless teachers by offering a place to stay for a teacher who lost his home. Educational Support Personnel like Carmella Miller and parents Ronald Jackson, LSC member from Tilden High School, April Whitaker, Pact Chair of the South Shore School of the Arts, and Michael Finney LSC member of Goodlow Elementary and 15th Ward Aldermanic candidate, often join the forum to support the teachers.

The message is clear. In these times of great wealth to the few and misery to the many, we all must organize. We, the little people must organize, support each other and take our destiny into our own hands.

Activists confer across U.S. to plan the fight against FBI repression

By Chris Mahin

CHICAGO — The Committee to Stop FBI Repression sponsored four regional conferences last month to defend 23 anti-war and progressive union activists falsely targeted for providing “material support” for terrorism.

At the February 12 Conference at Chicago’s Teamster City, anti-war activists Jess Sundin and Tracy Molm described what it was like to have their homes raided by FBI agents. Jim Fennerty of the National Lawyers Guild and Christina Abraham of the Council on Islamic American Relations provided legal perspective. (For more information, go to www.stopfbi.net.)

The People’s Tribune interviewed conference participant Anthony Prince, an attorney representing Chicago Teamsters Local 705 Chicago.

People’s Tribune: Why is Local 705 here?

Anthony Prince: We were one of the first unions to condemn these raids. Some of those targeted by the FBI are themselves Teamsters or have walked picket lines with us.

More importantly, however, the laws that the U.S. Attorney is using to justify this witch-hunt represent a major threat

to workers, both union and unorganized.

PT: Why is that?

Mr. Prince: These laws, including the “material support to terrorism” law (18 U.S.C. Section 2339B), are so broadly written that they could be misused against an American unionist who might meet with groups fighting for labor rights in a foreign country. For example, many U.S. labor delegations have visited Colombia, South Korea and Mexico to meet with embattled unionists. Workers in these countries are often employed by the same U.S. multinational corporations that we face every day here in America. And because these workers necessarily oppose the corrupt, repressive, anti-union governments which have created such lucrative, super-exploitative business conditions for the multi-nationals, these workers are often labeled “terrorists” and communications with them could be deemed “material support.” It’s hardly a stretch that American unionists involved in international fact-finding and solidarity efforts might well be the next ones hauled before a grand jury.

PT: How has the excuse of “fighting terrorism” affected labor?

Mr. Prince: Some of the most im-



Conference participant Anthony Prince, an attorney representing Teamsters Local 705, Chicago.

PHOTO /LARRY REDMOND

portant rights enjoyed by workers in this country — both union and unorganized — have been stripped, with the justification that these rights stand in the way of fighting terrorism.

For example, under longstanding decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court and the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), any worker—union or unorganized—had the right to have a co-worker witness in any work-related investigatory interview. But three years after the 9/11 attacks, the NLRB issued its IBM Corporation decision, ruling that the so-

called Weingarten rights no longer applied to non-union workers. The board expressly declared that “new security concerns raised by terrorist attacks on our country” justified the removal of these industrial due process protections. So you see, we are in the same line of fire. It’s not just about the injustice of this grand-jury fishing expedition, it’s about a broader campaign to use a phony “war against terror” to conduct a real war against our rights in the workplace.

PT: What’s the next step?

Mr. Prince: Already three of the biggest unions in Chicago — SEIU, Chicago Teachers Union, and my local, Teamsters 705 — have called on U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald to dissolve this grand jury and lift the unjust cloud of suspicion from these unionists and peace activists. The grand jury is supposed to be a safeguard against unjust prosecutions; it’s become the very opposite in this case. Not only that, it’s a complete waste of taxpayer money. Where are the grand juries for the home foreclosures, for the banks who defrauded working people in this country? For the corporations who robbed our pensions? That’s the kind of justice we need.

The Latest in Automation and Robotics

By Tony Zaragoza

This column will periodically report on the latest developments in automation and robotics around the world from nano-robotics to large-scale industrial automation focusing on the impacts these technologies have on the economy and society such as labor replacement, war, and how society operates.

Owners of corporations are clear about reasons for installing the latest automation and robotics technologies in their firms. One report on robots.com gives five reasons to automate: 1) Combat Offshoring, 2) Prepare for Skilled Worker Shortage, 3) Compete Locally and Globally, 4) Take Advantage of Tax

Incentives, and 5) Strengthen the Country. While another report by Dick Johnson entitled "Can Automation Save our Manufacturing" offers five more reasons: 1) Increased Productivity, 2) Ability to perform secondary operations, 3) Improved Ergonomics, 4) Increased Quality, and 5) Eliminate Fixtures. Johnson tells his readers "You must automate to produce more on your existing assets, improve your quality, and increase your competitiveness."

There are a wide variety of reasons for capitalists to automate. For capitalists to compete and increase profit, they must implement the latest technologies to have an advantage over the competition. If they don't, they get left behind

and other capitalists who do, succeed in making profit. Automation is offered as the solution to save U.S. manufacturing jobs, but it won't save U.S. (or any country's) jobs. Manufacturing jobs are disappearing for good, and other segments of the economy are also using the latest technologies to produce more goods, services, and information using fewer people.

Despite their clarity on reasons and their concrete needs to introduce new technologies, what the corporations and ruling class are not talking about is who will buy the products when fewer and fewer human beings are working for a wage. They are not talking about how these technologies fully and totally

change the very nature of the economic system we have known for centuries. As the economy is transformed, everything that has supported that economic system must change too. The system needs new laws and new forms of government to protect private property while fewer and fewer people are working. To make people accept this, corporations will and are resorting to the brutal force of law to protect the increasing inequality. If we don't begin to organize to use the new technologies to benefit all of humanity, we will be left out of the economy entirely.

Activists Protest Billionaires' Strategy Meeting – 25 arrested

By Kristen Ess Schurr
CODEPINK, Los Angeles

Largely considered the Tea Party's wallet, the Koch Brothers are among the most devastating perpetrators and beneficiaries of corporate personhood in the US. It is well documented that they spend billions buying elections, denying climate change, undermining health care reform, and attempting to undo Social Security and public education, yet until now the Kochs have remained largely in the shadows.

The guest lists to their twice-yearly strategy and fund-raising meetings are largely secret, although known attendees have included Supreme Court Justices Scalia and Thomas. At the end of January this year, the Kochs and their invitees descended on the Rancho Las Palmas Resort in southern California's Rancho Mirage in what was considered by protesters to be a gear up to the purchase of the 2012 US presidential elections.

A major coalition including some 2,000 activists from Common Cause, the Courage Campaign, the Ruckus Society, the Other 98% and CODEPINK, came together on January 30 to uncloak what had until now been shrouded in secrecy.

Banners read, "Real Patriots Don't Do Koch" and "Keep Corporations Out of Our Elections" under three feet high "Quarantine the Kochs" tape that flew overhead.

Activists donned haz-mat suits and headed for the gates of the resort where riot police had massed. Throngs wearing "People's Center for Disease Control" t-shirts and calling to inoculate the US political system from "influenza corporatitit" followed. Twenty-five people were arrested for trespassing and were released eight hours later with a promise to appear in court.

In this time of overwhelming corporate un-accountability, the question remains if global offenders such as the Kochs will ever be taken to court for

their laundry lists of offenses. David Koch and his wife were photographed watching the demonstration from a resort balcony, but no comment was made.

Koch Industries is the "kingpin of climate science denial" according to Greenpeace, while Center for Public Integrity founder Charles Lewis dubbed it, "The Standard Oil of our times," referring to a "pattern of lawbreaking, political manipulation, and obfuscation."

Into early Sunday evening protesters shouted, "Arrest the Kochs!" As for now they continue to walk free with billions of dollars, that history suggests, are slated to buy the next round of elections.



A coalition including some 2,000 activists came together to protest a billionaire's strategy meeting. Protesters shouted, "Arrest the Kochs," two brothers who spend billions buying elections, denying climate change, undermining health care reform, and attempting to undo Social Security and public education.

PHOTO /CODEPINK

No Reason For Homeless Adults And Children Living On The Streets Of America

By Lenette Evans



The Emergency Shelter Services of Benton Harbor, Michigan had counted 594 homeless people in Berrien County who are all living in extreme unsafe conditions and temporary housing. In 2008 there were about 257 homeless people. But here as of January 2011 it has dramatically jumped to 594 people.

There are 158 homeless men, 75 homeless women and 363 homeless children of school age living on the streets where ever they can find a place to live. It can be under bridges, an abandoned building, a dumpster, old garage or a vehicle.

The largest concentration of homeless men is in Benton Harbor and homeless women are mostly in the Watervliet and Coloma areas. As for homeless children the highest concentration areas were in Buchanan Community Schools with about 60 children and New Buffalo area schools where there are 43 and Eau Claire Public Schools where there are 38.

The agency further counted homeless adults in Niles/Buchanan area, St. Joseph/Stevensville area and the Berrien Springs/Sodus/Eau Claire areas. Only Three Oaks/New Buffalo area had a zero count of homeless adults. "The Homeless Resource Network", led by the Benton Harbor-based agency for homeless people counted more homeless people in Berrien County this year then it has in previous years when it began in 2007.

There is no excuse for homeless people in our communities. Our government needs to seriously help our people so we can take and place homeless adults and children in proper housing so they are getting warm clothes and are fed nutritious meals. But, instead our government is cutting back on social programs and helping the rich and their corporations.

Imagine if this was your family or your children. What would you do to help get them off the streets? What would you do to feed them and give them a warm place to sleep? Some people have desensitized themselves in loving and caring for others. It is an "all about me, myself and I" type of world.

Jesus is there in our lives through the good times and the bad times and is a constant giver to each of us all the time on a daily basis. We need to be more like

Jesus to be constant givers not takers.

"Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality." - ROMANS 12:10,11,& 13

This isn't just about people in the community but also about churches in the community doing their part in loving and caring for people in need. God does not want people thinking of themselves and doing nothing. If people want to get out of the Spirit Of Poverty, then start giving abundantly to others and be a blessing to someone and get blessed.

Lenette Evans, Saving Souls Ministry St. Joseph, MI, 269-876-1848, Savingsouls1@yahoo.com.

Detroit Diesel Retirees May Go Without Healthcare

By Al Gladys

Editor's note: 1100 Detroit Diesel workers, now retired, are having to spend thousands of dollars out of their own pocket for healthcare. Jimmie Parker, for example, had to pay \$1,256 a month for his healthcare. He couldn't do it. He had to turn it down. The following article explains what has happened to the retiree's healthcare.

The agreement in the beginning was that Detroit Diesel would pay the healthcare benefits of the workers. This was part of a union contract. When times were good, one of the ways to keep people placated was to agree to negotiate for retiree's benefits and legally the law saw that as OK, as long as both the company and the union agreed. But if one side says no, nothing can be done because retirees are not legally employees of the company. That is the legal position that the retirees are in. That is, that the company doesn't have to bargain. The court said there are only three entities responsible — the company, the Voluntary Employee Benefit Association (VEBA) [Editor's note: which was supposed to act as an insurance policy for the workers] or you. The courts said, "We find that you are responsible." The court upheld the capped amount that the company paid and ruled that the retirees would have to pay the rest since the VEBA was broke.

What happened?

In 1992, the financial accounting



Demonstration for National Health Care (HR 676) at U.S. Senator Debbi Stabenow's office in downtown Detroit on Oct 11, 2010.

PHOTO/DONATED

standards board passed a rule that said that any company trading publicly had to carry their full retiree health care benefits on an accrual basis as a liability on their books. In my mind, the problem started with that rule. Diesel argued that it created a \$100 million liability on their books and that it was bigger than the value of their assets, so they had to get

rid of that liability. So in '93 they bargained a cap on retiree benefits and for VEBA to pay the difference between that cap and what the insurance costs. In 1994 they raised the cap and changed the contribution system to VEBA.

Then they told the employees that they had to pay individually any cost above the cap. That meant that their costs went up dramatically. One half of the insurance became a co-insurance to those retirees. So one worker with a family insurance policy could cost say \$16,000 if under 65. The cap was 7900. The employee was responsible for the rest of it.

Then at the end of 2005, the VEBA went broke. Come 2006, the company said you are responsible for your part of the uncapped part of the insurance. Three of the retirees filed a class action suit in federal court. In January the court

issued a temporary injunction against Detroit Diesel, saying they have to pay the uncapped part. That was upheld by the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. The company appealed again. In June of 2010, the Appeals Court issued a ruling that Detroit Diesel was not responsible for the uncapped part.

This was a concerted attack on retirees to get rid of the expense of retiree's medical insurance. Detroit Diesel's cost is capped at the 1994 rate which is \$3600 for 65 and over and \$7800 for retirees under age 65. Group insurance, however, particularly family plans, have gone up 140% in the last decade. The cost for Detroit Diesel hasn't gone up. That capped amount represents a smaller and smaller percentage of the total bill so they will see higher and higher coinsurance over the years. The cost for retirees will go up and up.

The only real solution is national healthcare. The decade of the VEBA is over. Some people say you need to negotiate more and better VEBAS, others say this is all the courts fault, and that we need Democratic judges that would have found in favor of workers. Well Detroit Diesel is for Detroit Diesel and belongs to both parties. We have to learn to be for ourselves. The only thing that will change the situation for UAW local 163 retirees is a national healthcare program.

Visit Retirees for Single Payer Health Care Website at <http://www.retireesfor-sphc.org>.

California Budget Cuts

"Bipartisan Tango", the New Dance Craze

By Peter Brown

So, a guy walks up and puts a gun to your head; "I don't wanna scare you by describing how big this gun is, but give me your money." Meanwhile, a "stranger" "happens" to show up, and says "wow, that's a really big gun, you'd better give that guy your money!!!"

That's what the new budget plan feels like.

California Gov. Jerry Brown rode to election victory on the support of organized labor's chorus of "...but Meg Whitman would be sooooo much worse!!!" He's been touting his new budget proposal as "the first honest budget in years," after campaigning on a slogan of "we have to live within our means." His plan will cut \$12.5 billion from the deficit IF another \$12.5 billion in revenues can be raised; he wants California workers to vote for \$12.5 billion in extensions to so-called "temporary" taxes on income, retail and vehicles, already in place.

Well, here's the plan....IF the tax extensions pass.

- \$1.5 billion from CalWORKS, funds for the most destitute, unemployed families
- \$1.7 billion from Medi-Cal services for the most destitute, uninsured families
- \$750 million from services for developmentally disabled people
- \$1 billion from University of California and California State Universities
- \$400 million from California Community Colleges
- \$100 million in CCC student fee increases
- \$308 million pay cut for non-unionized public employees
- Turning over funding responsibility for Redevelopment programs to cities and counties (because they have sooo much money)
- Supposedly "no cuts to K-12 this year," but schools are planning for cuts up to \$330 per student per day in attendance funds

But if tax extensions are defeated, there would be another \$13.5 billion in

cuts to public services including nearly \$4 billion from education. In early February, Brown was saying "we don't want to scare voters into voting for tax extensions by telling them how bad the cuts will be." On the 15th, a report by the Legislative Analyst's Office was "leaked" to the media, detailing additional possible cuts.

A bipartisan majority will likely pass the cuts, and Democrats generously want to let the voters decide whether they should bear more taxes, while Republicans just want more cuts, but no one's mentioned any of the following additional sources of revenue;

1. Closing corporate loopholes and just making them pay the taxes they owe.
2. Impose an extraction tax on every barrel of our state's oil these profitable corporations take out of the ground.
3. An extraction tax on every gallon of our state's water the giant private water corporations take out of our ground to bottle and sell back to us at 1,000 % markup.
4. Impose a 1% sales tax on every

corporate-to-corporate security or stock sale that's made, just like we pay sales tax.

5. Allow every one of California's 87 billionaires to keep \$1 billion, and take the rest in taxes; you can't earn that much money, it comes from corporate profits stolen from our state.

6. Impose serious, crippling penalties for every environmental disaster created by money-grubbing decisions made dictatorially behind closed boardroom doors. Seize their charters and make them public.

Any one of these would eliminate the deficit.

Corporations and the government they now control will bleed our state dry, some cheering for the "free market", others saying "we don't like this, but we have no choice." Of course they have a choice. Fourteen Wisconsin Democrats left the state rather than destroy workers' lives.

Time to fight like Wiscaahnsans!

Peter Brown is a public educator in Oakland, California.

Southern Illinois: ENOUGH ALREADY!

By Cathy Talbott

“Well, thank God those LIBERALS were defeated in the midterm elections!” This was a comment made to me by a person living on SSI. I had to ask him, “What liberals and what do we do now?” The corporate plunder and take over of our America is nearly complete. The assault on the people has only just begun.

So now that Obama doesn't have those “liberals” to contend with, what does the administration do but propose more draconian cuts to programs that benefit low-income Americans. Life-saving programs that are on the sacrificial altar are the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), community service block grants, Ameri-Corp, and food stamps. These programs have been a life preserver for many communities in Southern Illinois, where I live. (I came here after losing a job in 1980, becoming virtually homeless for six weeks until friends offered my family a place to live.)

LIHEAP will lose \$2.5 billion, down from 2009's \$5.1 billion. 8.9 million households are expected to need help this year. The cuts will eliminate 3.5 million households from assistance this year. How many will be affected here is not known by this author at this time, but even a few are too many!

The White House intends to reduce community block grants by half, from \$700 million to \$350 million. According to David Bradley, director of the National Community Action Foundation, “Once the Obama administration throws a poverty program in the water, it starts a feeding frenzy.” The Republicans will now ask for this cut to be \$405 million.

Following \$11.9 billion in cuts to the food stamp program, an additional \$2.2 billion in cuts will pay for the child-nutrition bill that Michelle Obama championed. According to the Food Research and Action Center, this will mean that a family of four will receive \$59 less per month starting in 2013. At the times I had to rely on the food stamp program, they never covered the entire month and I am a very frugal shopper and fed my children simple meals. This would have meant my family would go without some other necessity to buy food.

According to Arthur Delaney, reporter for the Huffington Post, although more than 100 Democrats protested and promised to block the child nutrition bill due to these cuts, they were persuaded by the White House to back down and fall in line.

A total of \$43 billion will be taken from domestic and international programs (including \$544 million in inter-

national food aid). However, military spending will be increased by \$8 billion.

With the cooperation of both Democrats and Republicans, billions of dollars were added to the deficit with an extension of tax cuts to the wealthiest 2% of Americans. Obviously, deficit reduction will not come from the pockets of the super rich. The poorer you are, the more vulnerable you become and the more you'll pay for the burdens of deficit reduction.

We need to ask ourselves, “Where is the Party that represents us?” Why aren't the Democrats pushing for tax increases on the wealthy and rich corporations that have more than enough to pay for these shortfalls? We should be demanding, “No more sacrifices from the working class! We demand that the social wealth created from our blood, sweat and tears over generations be used to secure the future for us and our families!”



Top Left to Right: Cathy Talbott; Detroit Teachers, photo credit Daymonjhartley.com; women at U.S.Social Forum, Atlanta.

PHOTO/DONATED

Triangle Fire Centennial Brings New Challenges:

“... a Phoenix must arise from these ashes”

By Anthony D. Prince

This month marks the 100th anniversary of one of the worst, unpunished industrial homicides ever committed. On March 25, 1911, fire roared through the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory on New York's lower east side. In its deadly wake, 146 mostly female workers trapped behind locked doors paid with their lives to satisfy the profit lust of owners. The outrage that followed led directly to a revived labor movement and the recognition in the United States of International Women's Day, now celebrated each March 8 around the world.

One hundred years after the Triangle disaster, the sweatshop, the firetrap, the life-threatening American workplace remains a reality for millions. Every year in the U.S., 5,000 workers are killed

on the job and hundreds of thousands more suffer and die from occupational diseases like black lung, silicosis, asbestos-related cancer and toxic workplace poisoning. And, just as it was at Triangle, the terrifying threat of being burned alive continues to hang like a sword of Damocles over those who mine the coal, drill for oil, sweat the industrial furnaces and pour the molten metals that make commerce and fortunes flow to the wealthiest one percent of our society. What is the legacy of these fallen workers? What kind of phoenix will arise from these ashes? That is the question we face 100 years after Triangle.

Today, our government is relentlessly turning back the clock on the meager protections that exist for American workers. The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, which elevated a safe and healthy workplace to the status of a legal entitlement, has been legislatively gutted. The vast majority of employers are now permitted to “self-report” rather than be subjected to on-site inspections. The Department of Labor has thrown proposed regulations to curb the epidemic of crippling musculo-skeletal injuries and other safety and

health standards onto the scrap heap and buried them beneath the pro-corporate rhetoric of “creating incentives to business” and “removing obstacles to profitability.” In 1911, the “obstacle to profitability” at the Triangle factory was the problem of workers who might want to escape the suffocating atmosphere of that sweatshop by opening a door. The cost for “eliminating” that obstacle—in the form of a padlock—was paid with the blood of 146 human beings. Today, our challenge is to rip that price tag from the American workplace and pose the fundamental question: is it necessary to kill people in order to produce the necessities of life? Must we continue to countenance industrial slaughter to insure the maximum profit for energy industry capitalists, for agri-business, for multi-national sweatshop operators? Because it doesn't have to be this way.

Once upon a time in America, there were defenders of another system for the production of goods. These defenders also claimed that without the specific production system in existence at that time — with all its attendant human misery involving four million men, women and children in chains — ships would remain idle for lack of sails and the world would go naked for lack of cotton cloth. But in fact, those goods survived the destruction of southern chattel slavery despite the slavers' claim that human misery

was an indispensable cost of production.

One hundred years after the Triangle fire, the vision arising from the ashes is not a mythical bird, but a real, practical and historically inevitable movement towards a new social order of which the battle for safety and health on the job is a necessary part.

Anthony D. Prince is a labor lawyer who served as Union Safety and Health Chairman for Steelworkers Local 65 in Chicago.

WOMEN AND THE VISION OF A NEW SOCIETY

From the Editors

Women's History Month 2011 finds the economic position of women declining in the world. Yet at the same time, global corporate profits are soaring.

In the U.S., some women have worked their way up the corporate ladder and are enjoying these profits. But for the majority of women, poverty is growing by leaps and bounds. What is new is that this poverty is increasing among sections of America that have up to now not suffered from economic deprivation. The poor in America's suburbs, for example, have grown by 37 percent. Many of these people are in households headed by single women where 32.5% of families are poor and 14.8% are living in deep poverty.

Today, as computers and robots and globalization eliminate industrial jobs, women are forced into joblessness or into backbreaking jobs that do not pay enough for basic family needs. Women are fighting for their lives and the lives of their children against a capitalist system that is depriving them of their rights and life.

Women are the numerical majority in society, the majority in the working class and the majority of the destitute here and globally. Consequently, women's position makes them key to social change. Yet, there can be no further progress for women — or for any worker — until the fight for those who have the least is at the cutting edge of our struggle, and until the movement grasps a vision of a new society.

Our vision is of complete societal transformation — of a cooperative society where the abundance created today by the new labor replacing technology will be distributed according to need for the benefit of all. In such a society, private property and the giant corporations will be a thing of the past, as will the inequalities between women and men. Women will have their rights — as will all humanity.

VOICES FROM BENTON HARBOR, MI

The People of Benton Harbor Can Kiss Benton Harbor Goodbye

By George Moon

The take over of Benton Harbor by the state of Michigan is almost final. The people of Benton Harbor can kiss the city, fire and police departments goodbye. They are also trying to change the name of the city to Harbor Shores. We must stand up and fight like the Egyptian people did!



Protest against Whirlpool's land grab.

PHOTO CREDIT/BRETT JELINEK

Benton Harbor is being run by an emergency financial manager. Michigan has seven emergency financial managers. The new state government stated that there will be more financial managers and that Act # 72 will need modification, possibly giving the State more control. Under Act #72 the governor can declare a financial emergency in local government, and appoint emergency financial managers. In Highland Park Michigan, the emergency financial managers turned the city into a corporate wasteland. Citizens lost their voice and elected officials were silenced.

Other communities in the state of Michigan are also getting financial managers. What are we becoming? A state of emergency financial managers?

The Benton Harbor commissioners

have the right to question the emergency financial managers. They should be involved with the emergency financial managers in any decision that determines the direction the city is going. A resolution was passed Sept 17, 2010 that reads: "The city of Benton Harbor, Mayor and commissioners desire to work in collaboration with the state of Michigan appointed emergency financial manager as per Public Act 72." But the Benton Harbor emergency financial manager has refused to do it.

New emergency financial managers for Michigan will be trained. Joseph Harris, Benton Harbor's current emergency financial manager, who was accused of going too far with his cuts, will be one of the trainers. Can you believe that?

Act # 72 is just a bunch of words. Government controls the words. If it does not satisfy their needs they just change the words and call it Law. The new administration is already saying Act #72 needs modification and clarification. I hope that we do not overlook what happened in Tunisia and in Egypt. When you attempt to silence the voice of the people this can happen anywhere in the world.

George Moon is a Benton Harbor resident.

Misdiagnosis and Death At Lakeland Hospital

By Libby Hunter and Rev. Pinkney

The focus was on Lakeland Hospital at a recent Benton Harbor NAACP meeting called by Rev. Edward Pinkney. About 100 people attended, including two doctors and five City Commissioners. Complaints and concerns were overwhelming. Racism, mistreatment,

and misdiagnosis are what Benton Harbor residents experience at the St. Joseph hospital. It is believed that Benton Harbor residents have the highest infant mortality rate in the state of Michigan at Lakeland Hospital.

The nurses in the hospital ER were all white in the stories below.

- One woman was told by a doctor that her family must leave the waiting room because white people were uncomfortable.

- Another reported that a nurse told her colleague in front of the patient that she couldn't wait to scrub herself since she'd touched the patient; they both talked about how disgusting she was.

- A woman said that after her miscarriage, nurses placed the stillborn baby between her legs for over 30 minutes; a doctor entered and, in anger, said he's never seen anything like it in his years of practice.

- In another stillborn case, nurses repeatedly called the baby "it", laughing about it in front of the woman who just went through labor.

- A man's 70-year-old mother died after being sent home right away after a difficult and serious surgery.

- One woman with blood in her mouth was told by Dr. Stephens to go home, there were no rooms for her. The ambulance brought her back in an hour in worsened condition. She was put on life support — the doctor told the family to pull the plug.

- Another woman's sister could barely breathe; a tube was shoved too far down her throat, then put on life support. The doctor asked the family to pull the plug. Dr. Hilpell was especially rude.

- A woman's mother waited to be treated for 12 hours in the ER and then died in the hospital.

And this is only a sampling from the meeting.

- Some African-American employees are mistreated. One with claustrophobia was forced to take the elevator, then fired. (See article in next column).

Please contact Vice President Norma Tirado with your concerns at ntirado@lakelandregional.org, call 269-983-8549, or fax 269-982-4855. Whirlpool Corp. and Rep. Fred Upton control Berrien County. The hospital has the same agenda as the court: eliminate Benton Harbor African-Americans by any means necessary for redevelopment of the land. A culture of extreme racism and bigotry has been manufactured by the above forces. Lakeland has been referred to as the "killer" hospital for years by the community. Call Rev. Pinkney anytime 269-925-0001.

HOSPITAL INTERVIEW

The People's Tribune interviewed Norma Tirado, Vice President of Lakeland Hospital. Lakeland owns all three hospitals in the area. Tirado said that 8 1/2% of RNs and 24% of LPN's are Black. She said that she needed names to investigate the charges (she has since been provided names.)

There will be a demonstration at Lakeland Hospital, 1234 Napier, St Joseph, MI on March 9, 11am-2pm. Call Rev. Pinkney for information at 269-925-0001.

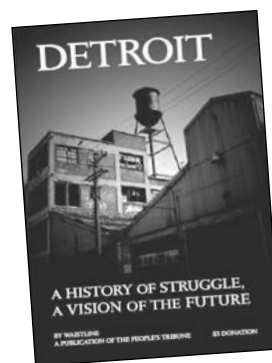
TERMINATED EMPLOYEE

"I worked at Lakeland for four years. When I first got hired I let them know that I am claustrophobic (since childhood) and couldn't do elevators. One job in the kitchen required the elevator. A couple of months before they terminated me, I got stuck in the elevator for 3 1/2 hours; this made matters worse. I got a doctors excuse. They said they didn't have to accept it. They said I should do my job or find another. No sympathy. They kept scheduling me for the elevator and I couldn't do it. There were five other jobs I could have done without getting on the elevator. They terminated me."

— Sheilah Duncan, Benton Harbor

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