

PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

JANUARY 2012, VOLUME 39, NO. 1

DONATION \$1



San Diego police haul off Occupy San Diego protesters as they remove tents and structures from the Civic Center Plaza in San Diego.

PHOTO/ GREGORY BULL, ASSOCIATED PRESS

INSIDE:

Breaking Corporate Grip	2
Detroit Under Siege	4
Ohio Repeals Anti-labor Law	4
Occupy Wall Street	6-7
West Coast Port Shutdown	8
Santa Clara Immigration Victory	10
Benton Harbor School District Takeover	12

DEMOCRACY UNDER ATTACK BY CORPORATE POWER

[Read Story on Page 3](#)



Breaking the Corporate Hold on America

EDITORIAL

The American people are beginning to fight the corporate takeover of our country. And they are getting fed up with just about every professional politician and both "major" political parties. The government and both parties are more and more exposed as instruments of the corporations and of a capitalist class that doesn't give a damn about the people's needs and is unfit to run this country. Something new is developing in America.

Congress and the president collaborate on a plan to cut trillions of dollars in federal spending on programs that the people depend on. Similar cuts are taking place at the state and local level. At the same time, over the past decade the federal government has spent trillions of dollars in public

money handing tax cuts to the rich and bailing out the banks and other corporations. The people are asking, where is our bailout?

Labor-replacing electronic technology (the computer and the robot) is eliminating jobs and wiping out the economic foundation of the capitalist system. This is the root of the crisis, and the basis of the dissatisfaction that is sweeping the country. Over half of voters say a third party is needed.

What is most significant is that more and more Americans have no reason to be loyal to a capitalist system that cannot feed or house them. The economic bond that holds the capitalists and the working class together is being shattered by falling wages, rising unemployment and spreading poverty. This, combined with the government's obvious willingness to serve the corporations at the expense of the people, is forcing workers to begin breaking the

ideological and political bonds that hold them to the capitalists. By a margin of about three to one, Americans feel the country is on the wrong track. Other polls show that eight out of ten Americans mistrust the government, and a plurality call themselves political independents.

In the near future, we will see one or more new "third" parties arise as alternatives to the Democrats and Republicans. However, some of these parties will in reality be bankrolled by the wealthy as efforts to maintain the ties between workers and capitalists and mislead the people. Revolutionaries should nonetheless see them as an indispensable step along the path toward freedom. Nothing can be accomplished without breaking the bonds that tie the workers to the capitalists through the Democratic and Republican parties. A third party will help develop people's understanding that the

people and the corporations have separate interests.

If the conscious revolutionaries play their role as teachers and point the way forward, sooner or later an independent party of the workers will be formed that will represent the interests of the workers versus the corporations. At each step in the process, we have to act with the understanding that we are fighting for the political power to build a new society.

Either we take over the corporations and run them in the interest of society, or they take over society and run it in their interest. If they win, we will be living in poverty under corporate fascism. We are not fighting for more scraps from the table. We are not fighting to reform the corporations. We are fighting for a new world where we, the people, have the power to say what will happen. The future is up to us.

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.peoplestribune.org

An economic system that doesn't feed, clothe and house its people must be and will be overturned and replaced with a system that meets the needs of the people. To that end, this paper is a tribune of those struggling to create such a new economic system. It is a vehicle to bring the movement together, to create a vision of a better world and a strategy to achieve it.

Labor-replacing electronic technology is permanently eliminating jobs and destroying the foundation of the capitalist system. The people's needs can only be met by building a cooperative society where the socially necessary means of production are owned by society, not by the corporations.

We welcome articles and artwork from those who are engaged in the struggle to build a new society that is of, by and for the people. We rely on readers and contributors to fund and distribute this paper.

The People's Tribune, formerly published by the League of Revolutionaries for a New America, is now an independent newspaper with an editorial board based in Chicago.

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.

People's Tribune Editor: Bob Lee

Editorial Staff: Bob Brown, Brett Jelinek, Shamako Noble, Chuck Parker, Nelson Peery, Sandra Reid

People's Tribune, P.O. Box 3524 Chicago, Illinois, 60654
e-mail: info@peoplestribune.org
Phone: 773-486-3551
Toll Free: 800-691-6888
Fax: 773-486-3552
Web: www.peoplestribune.org

Publisher: People's Tribune
ISSN# 1081-4787

Reach us at:

Chicago 773-486-3551

Ann Arbor, MI
zettir@gmail.com

Atlanta, GA
atlanta@peoplestribune.org

Carbondale, IL
carbondale@peoplestribune.org

Detroit, MI
313-438-6115

Houston, TX
P O Box 231281, Houston, TX 77223-1281

Los Angeles, CA
310-548-6491

Oakland, CA
oakland@peoplestribune.org

DEMOCRACY UNDER ATTACK BY CORPORATE POWER

COVER STORY

American democracy is under the most serious attack since the Civil War. This may seem a bold statement given the history of violent, anti democratic forces in our country. There has also been the shameful role of all three branches of government in the unending assault against democracy.

Throughout our history the popular democratic forces have always beaten back the forces of slavery, reaction and fascism. Precisely because we have always preserved some element of democracy, there is a dangerous complacency toward the qualitatively different, dangerous attack now launched by corporate power against the people.

Historically, democracy has been an elusive and ill-defined concept. It has been the political cover for slavery, for disfranchisement of minorities, for the exclusion of women. The concept of majority rule has been used to justify the most violent attacks against the minority. Recognizing the contradiction between abstract concepts of democracy and the reality of our social-economic order, politicians coyly refer to "our way of life."

We are taught about the democratic splendor of ancient Greece and the glory of Rome without mention that their "democracy" stood on the blood-soaked backs of slaves. Somehow or another American historians have been able to glorify the rise of our democracy with barely mentioning the slaughter of 35 million indigenous peoples, the horror of the African slave trade, the auction block, the whips and branding irons that made that democracy possible.

What is democracy and what is its foundation? It is much more than the right to choose which bandit will rob you. It is the free and equal participation in the political process of determining the goals and functioning of government.

Freedom of participation depends on the individual controlling the necessities of his or her existence. If someone controls the essentials of your life you are



Occupy Wall Street protester arrested by NY police. We, the people, must utilize every aspect of democracy left to defend ourselves and advance our cause.

PHOTO/PALINOPSIA FILMS

ultimately their slave. How many American workers control access to their food, shelter and clothing? Democracy can never be less than political independence based on economic independence.

The rise of American democracy rested on the spread of ownership of the family farm, small business and the home. America became a model for the rest of the world despite its slavery, as millions achieved economic independence, compelling government by consensus.

As wealth and property became more concentrated in the hands of the capitalist elite, an unending assault on democracy began. Why? Privately owned economic power

simply will never submit to the will of a propertyless mass.

Does this mean that there is no future for democracy? No. It means that if democracy is to live it must be based in the common, social ownership of socially necessary means of production and exchange. This would prevent any one group from controlling the economic and ultimately, political life of others.

As the country slips deeper into an economic and social revolution, polarization of wealth and poverty becomes more pronounced. As the crisis deepens, the political awakening of the people becomes inevitable. The people will use whatever democ-

racy remains to secure their existence at the expense of this elite. The elite intends to prevent this. The battle lines are drawn along this front. Today, the struggle for economic well-being swirls around the attack against and the defense of democracy.

The situation today is grave. The Occupy Wall Street movement has shown the revolutionary potential of the people as well as the fascist police state reality. Regardless of differences, the revolutionaries must not allow one more democracy destroying law to pass. At the same time we must utilize every aspect of democracy to defend ourselves and advance our cause.

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.

**People's Tribune
Editorial Board**

SUBSCRIBE TO THE PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE! ORDER BUNDLES

- Please send me a one-year individual subscription [\$20]
- Please send me a one-year institutional subscription [\$25]
- Please send me a bundle of _____ PTs [at 30 cents per paper]

Enclosed is my donation of:

- \$20 \$50 \$75 \$100 \$Other _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone/Email: _____

My check or money order made payable to "People's Tribune" is enclosed. Mail this coupon to: People's Tribune, P.O. Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654-3524

VOICES FROM AMERICA'S "RUST BELT"

MICHIGAN UNDER SIEGE

By Darryl "Waistline" Mitchell

Detroit, MI — Michigan Governor Rick Snyder is one of a nationwide gang of loyal servants of corporate America. Capitalist politicians seek to impose the "Emergency Manager" system throughout our state. In March of this year, the Michigan legislature passed the Local Government and School District Financial Responsibility Act (Public Act 4). This legislation gives the governor the power to take over cities, counties and town governments and replace elected officials with appointed corporate managers. These appointed managers can revoke and declare null and void any existing contracts, including those with labor unions.

They can dissolve school districts, sell assets, and privatize public functions and services. They have the legal authority to dissolve incorporations of cities and towns (some incorporations date back centuries) and reincorporate them by annexation or redistricting, thereby dissolving entire units of government. The authorities moved quickly and less than one month after passage of the law, it was applied to Benton

Harbor, the site of fierce struggle between the local government and the corporations.

A petition drive is underway to repeal Public Act 4. Thus far 160,000 signatures have been collected indicating the Act will be repealed.

The Detroit 2010 census claims 721,000 residents. Some 235,000 of those residents collected unemployment checks at the end of October—one in three. Due to its large destitute population, Detroit is highlighted as the most impoverished area of the state. Smaller cities and communities everywhere have actually been hit harder by the economic crisis.

Snyder was elected on a program of economic recovery for the state of Michigan. Snyder's "economic recovery" plan includes a new tax on pensions. A pensioner receiving \$1500 a month will be taxed roughly \$840 a year, which is \$840 to fund tax breaks for corporations. Retired autoworkers receiving pensions of \$2600 a month will be taxed \$1100 a year. Less money will go for medicine, food or heat, which increases layoff and unemployment in the robotic economy.

Snyder has loyal counterparts in Detroit's Mayor Dave Bing and

City Council. The Mayor is demanding cuts to city services and layoffs. And the City Council has demanded even more city workers be laid-off than the 1,000 Mayor Bing wants pink slipped, suggesting more than 2300 lay-offs!

Both sides claim democracy and political liberty will be destroyed if these cuts are not enacted, because Public Act 4 would be imposed on the city. Each side is evil, asking city workers to balance the budget by agreeing to voluntary poverty. Retired city workers are told that they must "share the pain" by allowing their pension checks to be reduced, and their payments for health care increased. Under this program City workers will have salaries so low that it will qualify them for Food Stamps.

Our country is very wealthy. The American worker is more productive than ever. We live in a new robotic economy that needs to be reorganized to distribute socially necessary means of life, based on need and not profits.

America is entering a revolution in thinking. What kind of society do we choose: Wall Street or Your Street? Cut pensions or tax corporations? Will society control



Occupy Detroit protests Bank of American and Michigan governor's expanded "Emergency Manager" law which empowers the governor to replace elected officials with appointed corporate managers. PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

the corporations or will the corporations control society? Will we have health care for all or profits to insurance companies?

The Revolution of 1776 broke America away from English imperial rule. The Second Revolution of 1860-65 overthrew the system

of slavery. Revolution 2.5 was the modern Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Some years from now, perhaps we can say the "Occupy Movement" and fight against the Emergency Management System inaugurated the Third American Revolution.

Ohio Voters Repeal Anti-Worker Legislation *The Struggle Continues*



Victory celebration in downtown Columbus after voters repealed Ohio's vicious anti-labor law. PHOTO/DONATED

By Robert A. Davis

On Tuesday, November 8, Ohio voters went to the polls and sent a strong message to Governor John Kasich and the extreme right-wing members of the Ohio legislature by overwhelmingly defeating Issue 2 by a 61 percent to 39 percent margin.

Issue 2 was the referendum on Senate Bill 5, the anti-collective bargaining bill that was rushed

through the Ohio legislature last spring. During that time, thousands of Ohio workers rallied at the Statehouse in protest; on one occasion being locked out in an effort to stop their voice from being heard. But this did not stop hundreds of individuals from circulating petitions and garner 1.3 million signatures to place the repeal of Senate Bill 5 on the ballot. Volunteers made 4.4 million phone calls and knocked on more than

2.1 million doors to speak with voters about the unfairness of this legislation. This unprecedented effort led to Issue 2 being voted down in 84 of Ohio's 88 counties, with record margins of victory in the state's urban areas.

Although the outcome of the vote on Issue 2 was a victory for the working-class, we cannot believe for a moment that because of our victory on Issue 2, those same individuals will stop pushing their anti-worker agenda, they will not. They realize that they will lose some of the support they received in the 2010 elections. We now see legislation designed to suppress the vote of those who do not traditionally support the right-wing agenda. In Ohio, House Bill 194 was passed last summer that would among other things eliminate Sunday voting and cut the early voting period in half. In Ohio we are seeing legislation to redraw congressional and legislative districts to consolidate power for generations and even legislation to repeal the requirement that voters be sent notification of their legislative and congressional district.

It is evident through these actions that these individuals have a sense of urgency to undo what generations of workers fought to gain. A living wage, afford-

able healthcare and a voice in the workplace are some of our rights these individuals are targeting. Their idea of moving this country forward is not to create jobs and opportunities for individuals, but to simply shift more of the burden to those who already carry the greatest share. We see legislation across the country designed to keep the tax breaks and loopholes for wealthy individuals and corporations in place all while state and local governments struggle to maintain services for its citizens and throw thousands of employees out of work.

How can they expect this type of strategy to work? The Occupy Wall Street Movement has become the counterweight to the Tea Party Movement; growing out of the frustration of the continued economic disparity in this country. But marching and occupying will only go so far. True change will ultimately be brought about at the ballot box; by electing those individuals who endorse an agenda that supports workers and not one that blames them for our economic woes.

Have those same voters who supported Tea Party and other extreme right-wing candidates for office in November of 2010 finally awakened to see the real agenda of

Fallen Comrade: Chuck Wooten

One of the fighters in the League of Revolutionary Black Workers of the 1960s and early 1970s, and a member of the more recent, League of Revolutionaries for a New America, passed away recently in Detroit. There will be a celebration of his life in Detroit in the near future, and an article about his life and contributions in the People's Tribune in February, 2012.

those they elected? One can only hope. But here in Ohio, where labor was joined by religious, civic and community groups in repealing Senate Bill 5, it is evident that a dramatic shift can take place when voters are educated on an issue or candidate and not by 30-second television and radio ads.

In 2012 let us continue what we have started in this election, coming together not just to fight attacks on the working-class, but to create the change we so desperately need.

Robert A. Davis is Political and Legislative Director for AFSCME Ohio Council 8, AFL-CIO

The once heavily industrialized cities and towns in the midwest — now called America's Rust Belt — are a harbinger of the future for all of America if people do not act. Send your story to People's Tribune, PO Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654-3524.

Auto Retiree's Health Care in Jeopardy—The Sky is Falling?

By Al Gladys

Now I'm not one to panic easily, but the "UAW Statement on retirees and 2011 Big Three Negotiations," scares the hell out of me and should scare the hell out of you. And you don't even have to be a UAW retiree.

According to the Wall Street Journal article entitled "Pension Trusts Strapped" published on November 7, 2011, the Voluntary Employee Benefit Association (VEBA) -- a retirement fund that was supposed to act as a health insurance policy for the workers against company bankruptcy-- is in deep trouble. It is almost \$20 billion in the hole after less than 2 years. The GM VEBA is over \$11 billion short while the Ford and Chrysler VEBAs combined are \$8 billion short.

Was all of this inevitable? No. In 2006, the UAW 34th Constitutional Convention passed a National Health Care resolution supporting Congressman John Conyers, Jr. legislation entitled "The United States National Health Insurance Act" or "Expanded and Improved



Resurrection March, Detroit.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

Medicare for All". The last sentence in the resolution was:

"The question isn't whether we can afford to have universal, single payer health care; the question is, can we afford not to?"

This endorsement of Medicare for All (HR 676) came after the disaster at Detroit Diesel in 2004 where the fund went broke

and workers had to spend thousands of dollars out of their own pocket for healthcare. So our experience was the basis of the 2006 resolution on National Health Care.

So what happened in 2007? GM, Ford and Chrysler simply said they were not going to fund UAW retiree health care. So, we fought for a VEBA at those com-

panies. We knew that VEBAs could be only a short-term solution to retiree healthcare. We knew that only Medicare for All (HR 676) was the real solution.

We then threw our support behind Democratic Party candidate Barack Obama, who was talking about universal healthcare as part of his program.

In 2008, speculation in mortgages led to a financial crisis followed by the near bankruptcy of Ford and the actual bankruptcy of GM and Chrysler.

President Obama's administration hired Steven Rattner to be the "Auto Czar" and his committee adjusted the VEBAs before Chrysler and GM went into bankruptcy. The companies' cash contribution was cut in half. The other half would be paid in stock in the case of Ford, and outright ownership in the case of Chrysler and GM, resulting in the VEBAs being dependent on the stock market.

In March of 2010, Congress passed and the President signed into law the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA).

At the UAW 35th Constitu-

tional Convention in 2010, we had gone to a completely defensive strategy. What was the UAW call for National Health Care four years earlier, turned into complete support for PPACA and lip service to universal health care, with no mention of Medicare for All (HR 676).

We again reaffirmed our commitment to PPACA in the 2011 UAW Special Convention on Collective Bargaining and brought that to the table in 2011 Big Three negotiations.

So here we are--the VEBAs appear to be doomed and PPACA will make everyone buy access to new lower healthcare standards, making the medical insurance corporations even richer.

We need to go on the offensive. Congressman Conyers has reintroduced Medicare for All (HR 676) in the current Congress. As of this writing he has 72 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives.

Universal healthcare must become the core in our fight for National Health Care. Medicare for All (HR 676) is the bill in Congress we must again take up and fight for.

Sad Day For A Proud City

Michigan Governor Dispatches Emergency Manager to Flint, MI

By Claire McClinton

Flint, MI — Governor Rick Snyder, emboldened by a failed Recall petition drive, has named an Emergency Manager to take over Flint under Public Act 4, otherwise known as the "Dictatorship Bill". The legislation seeks to impose corporate attacks on the working class by robbing us of our democracy while dismantling unions by allowing a 'manager' to go to a local city, township, or school district. Once there, the manager assumes the authority of the local elected officials, thus silencing the voice of the people. Furthermore, the law allows for the total takeover of all revenues and spending, including selling off of public assets, disbanding of the city charter, even revoking a city with the Governor's approval. If that weren't enough, the law allows the manager to set aside union contracts and to privatize city services without either bargaining or gaining approval of the Council or the citizens. (In this respect, this law is a Michigan version of Senate Bill 5 in Ohio, which overhauled collective bargaining rights until the citizens overturned it.)

The Governor's review team had been in Flint for several weeks before issuing its decision on November 8, Election Day, essentially setting aside our Mayoral election.

This is a new low for a city in crisis but with a rich labor and social justice history. Flint has many firsts. It was first to win union recognition from G.M. First to pass Open Housing Ordinance through public vote. First to seat a Black Mayor of a major city. Now we are the first and the largest city to be straddled with a manager/dictator by this Governor. (Other cities, along with the Detroit Public Schools, have Emergency Managers, but were put in place by previous governors). One would think that with our past, that city officials would fight this to the bitter end. Not so. Sadly, when a motion was made at the city council meeting to call for a hearing to oppose the decision (as allowed by law), seven of the nine members voted NO, including two UAW council members.

Michael Brown, a Flint native, has been named the manager here. He has served on the County Commission and as interim Mayor in the past. He has very strong ties to the Regional Chamber of Commerce. This doesn't give much hope that he won't use the so-called "tools" that the law affords him to turn back the clock on the social contract that we have earned. (His salary is \$170,000.00 that the city will pay and is nearly double what the Mayor made).

The Flint takeover has enraged

more and more forces. A ballot initiative to get rid of this martial law Act has been well under way. Michigan Forward launched the campaign and is turning up the heat for the final signatures. Stand up for Democracy, a grass roots community group has vowed to

step up the signature campaign to put P.A. 4 on the ballot for repeal. Grass roots union members are stepping up to the plate. Labor organizations are closing ranks for a more effective united front. Occupy Flint along with other Occupy movements in other Michigan

cities are joining the cause. The recent recall of State Representative Paul Scott of Grand Blanc just south of Flint (the first in 28 years) was another sign of a response to politicians trying to advance the Governors corporate agenda. The struggle continues . . .



An Emergency Manager will take over the city of Flint, ushering in corporate attacks on the working class. People are robbed of their democracy while a 'manager' has the authority to dismantle unions, sell off public assets, revoke the city charter, and more. PHOTO/OCCUPY FLINT

VOICES OF OCCUPY WALL STREET

On
for
epo



CHICAGO

“This is an irresponsible budget that will be balanced on the backs of those most in need... We are not interested in excuses or explanations. It’s a song we’ve heard before ... this treachery has not gone unnoticed.”

— Excerpted from the text of the “mic check” after Alderman Joe Moore, and all the other aldermen, voted for a city budget that cut mental health services to the poor, Rogers Park Occupy in the 49th Ward, Chicago

Police arrested 175 Occupy Chicago activists on the October 15 global day of action.

PHOTO/BRETT JELINEK



OAKLAND

“At Occupy Oakland we have problems that come from there being so many people involved. Varying backgrounds, ideologies, and styles. This is a very good problem. If your movement doesn’t have this problem, you don’t have much of a chance. Every movement in history has had serious differences within its ranks... Our whole is so many times greater than the sum of our parts. Right now we must be unified.”

— Boots Riley, Oakland rapper and musician

FLORIDA

“As long as people continue to defend property over people and value property to that level it will hinder the Revolution. Those who come from Religious Prophetic traditions must also speak out. Jesus was in fact a Revolutionary who resisted the Wall Street of his day in turning over the money changers in the Temple. People must always take precedence over both property and profit.”

— Rev. Bruce Wright



Occupy protest in Detroit, MI.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

SAN FRANCISCO

“Everyone’s realizing we are the same, we are all suffering, it’s a global consciousness. People realize we’re all together. It’s a new consciousness of the human race, standing together all over the world—a positive globalization.”

— Casey Dominguez



Occupy San Francisco encampment.

PHOTO/FRANCO FOLINI

WASHINGTON, DC

“The Occupy Wall Street Movement has forced society to have meaningful dialogue about the problems created by capitalism. The occupiers have called the one percent out concerning their exploitation of the ninety-nine percent. We can use the state’s reaction to the protests to show that they’d much rather squash dissenters and marginalized people than afford us our basic human needs. This realization can serve to unite the ninety-nine percent into one class with one cause.”

— Eric Sheptock, a homeless, homeless organizer

OAKLAND

“Successes of the Oakland commune include: feeding and clothing hundreds of people in front of City Hall despite numerous evictions in Oct./ Nov. 2011, carrying out the first city-wide general strike in this country since 1946 with tens of thousands participating, marches in solidarity with labor and Egyptian protestors, and standing with Occupy SF and Occupy Cal in support of rallies and eviction actions.”

— Myles Boisen, member, Occupy Oakland

These pages are voices and photos from the Occupy Wall Street movement. The demand of OWS for a democratic America where corporations are placed under the rule of law is a reflection of this crucial moment in history and points the way forward. Let us build a powerful movement to take over the banks and other giant corporations and run them in the public's interests. — The Editors

Send the People's Tribune your stories at info@peoplestribune.org. Order bundles of papers to distribute. Call 800-691-6888.



NEW YORK

“The banks got bailed out, but our families across America are getting kicked out. Millions of Americans lost their homes in the Wall Street recession and one in four homeowners are currently underwater on their mortgages. The 99% is bearing the brunt of a crisis caused by Wall Street and big banks. The Occupy movement actions, including eviction defense at foreclosed properties and reclaiming vacant bank-owned properties, will take place in more than 20 cities across the country.”

— occupywallstreet.org

Occupy Wall Street protests against evictions of foreclosed properties. Protests, which took place in 20 cities, reclaimed vacant bank-owned properties.

PHOTO/JOE LUSTRI



Student strike on the UC Berkeley campus.

PHOTO/MYLES BOISEN

NEW YORK

“The Occupy Student Debt campaign is calling for several reforms of higher education, including free public colleges, no-interest loans, greater transparency at private and for-profit colleges and complete forgiveness of all existing student debt. “For students faced with debt, this campaign is important because it will help provide them with a collective organizing vehicle.”

— *Ashley Dawson, an associate professor at the City University of New York (via The New American)*

LOS ANGELES

“Perhaps individual police officers are members of the 99%, but their job is to serve and protect the 1%. They are the force of the state. The state, which is now characterized by the merger of corporations and government, is trying to scare us to stop our movement. We will be back next Sunday.”

— *Professor Kimberly King speaking after police harassed parents, teachers and children at an OWS educational*



Occupy protesters link arms as the LAPD moves into the encampment at City Hall.

PHOTO/JERRY WASZCZUK

WHY POLICE VIOLENCE AGAINST THE PEOPLE?

From the Editors

Americans are outraged to see riot police punch seventy year old professors with batons, kick pregnant mothers in the stomach, and spray red hot liquid pepper down throats that are speaking out against foreclosures, unemployment, and cuts in education and medical care. But not the United States Senate. They voted for the Defense Authorization Act that gives the President the power to use the Army to imprison American protesters as “war combatants!”

How is it possible that the Congress could so blatantly attack the constitutional rights of the American people? You could say it's because they are part of the 1% of the US population that owns 40% of the wealth. About 46% of the members of the House are millionaires, and 56% of Senators are millionaires. The twenty richest Congress members are worth over \$38 million—the richest is Rep. Darrell Issa of California, weighing in at \$303 million.

But this is only the tip of the iceberg. With each Senate seat costing \$8 million to win, even these rich one per-centers can't afford to run without generous corporate support. As a result they sell out the American people to their corporate patrons. They have sold huge chunks of the American government to the corporations. For example, Lockheed monitors air traffic. The Department of Homeland Security pays private companies \$200 billion a year to perform “security functions” which include surveillance, private prisons, and militarized police. The bottom line is that capitalism is a system that profits from exploitation and war. At the heart of the economy is the military industrial complex, and it cannot be voted out. No wonder the corporatized government is ready and willing to meet any resistance on the part of the people with a violent fascist response.

Throwing the bums out of office will not change the situation. The entire governmental apparatus, on a multitude of levels, is in the hands of the corporations. The only solution is to root out the entire exploitative system and replace it with a cooperative economy where people's needs are met and where corporate private property becomes public property. We must build a powerful movement to take over the corporations and create a truly democratic America on that basis.

#Occupy Strikes Back! The West Coast Port Shutdown

By Steve Miller

OAKLAND, CA — On December 12, a coordinated effort by dozens of #Occupies and thousands of people launched “A Day Without Goldman-Sachs” by shutting down terminals across the West Coast. Terminals were blocked in Oakland, Portland, Seattle, Long Beach, Longview Washington, Anchorage Alaska, and Victoria BC. Occupiers were also active in Los Angeles, San Diego, Hawaii, Houston, the Doro-Chiba Railway workers in Japan and Auckland, New Zealand.

The Shutdown was called for three main reasons. #Occupations retaliated against a coordinated effort to evict them across the nation by making these attacks economically unfeasible. The Shutdowns were also in sympathy with Longshoremen at Longview, WA, in their battle with the giant grain transporter, EGT. The corporation built a grain silo with non-union labor after promising jobs to the ILWU. On September 8, Longshoremen blocked the first train that was bringing in grain. That night, unknown persons cut the trains’ brake lines, spilling grain all over the tracks.

SSA Marine, Inc., is owned 51% by Goldman-Sachs and runs 11 terminals on the West Coast and 150 worldwide. The terminals viciously exploit container truckers by declaring them “independent operators” in order to block their efforts to unionize. Truckers have no benefits, must cover all expenses, and often make less than \$50 a day. The original call for the Shut Down came from truck-

ers in Los Angeles.

Occupiers in Oakland called for the shutdown because the Port of Oakland (the Port of Silicon Valley!) was built with public taxes and generates billions of dollars a year for the 1%. However, it is legally separate from the city and never returns a single penny to the people. Meanwhile the city is discussing closing 30 schools because it can’t afford them. What the Port does deliver is giant amounts of diesel fumes, giving Oakland students one of the highest rates of asthma in the country.

The Shutdown was the second nationally coordinated action called by the #Occupations. The first, the week before, was a day of action to occupy foreclosed homes that took place in 20 cities.

Since the economic crisis hit in 2008, the capitalist class has been crowing that the old rules don’t apply any more: no pensions, no jobs, no labor rights, student debt slavery, and no money for anything but corporations. The #Occupation response is they’re right!

Unions only represent 11% of workers nationally and they are directly under attack. Legally they cannot go outside of the confines of labor law. But #Occupations can operate without these restrictions. The Shutdowns threaten to invalidate restrictive anti-labor laws by shutting down the ports without a “strike”. With coordinated national efforts, the #Occupations are trying to spark a new working class movement.

The massive occupation of the capitol in Madison, Wisconsin,



Protesters ride on the back of a truck as thousands of Occupy Oakland protesters march to the Port of Oakland. The protest was retaliation for the shut down of OWS sites nationwide.

PHOTO/PAN AFRICAN NEWS WIRE

sin, last February by thousands of workers protesting anti-labor actions, opened the door. While the state basically had a general strike for more than a week, the AFL leaders immediately jumped on anyone who used the words “general strike”. They refused to let Michael Moore even speak from their stage.

After the port shutdowns this fall in Oakland in November and coast-wide in December, the ideas of “general strike” and “occupation” are becoming living tactics once again.

The fundamental thing that is driving the economic crisis is something that capitalism cannot stop. Electronic production

inexorably replaces human labor. Neither corporations nor politicians can provide jobs under this economic system.

The destruction of our society and our planet will not halt until people create a new cooperative economic system where communities are funded to create “jobs” that address every human need.

Change is a Comin’ Building “Occupy” Momentum

By Elisabeth Weiman

OAKLAND, CA — The Occupy movement has been sweeping across the US and world; in only a few months there are now over 70 occupied cities nationally, and over 900 worldwide. This work has also been influenced, supported and guided by current people’s revolutions going on around the world, such as in Egypt and Tunisia, and also from the long history of people’s movements in the US. The Occupy movement, although mostly consisting of young people, is one that reaches across ages, races, genders, orientations, and includes those from an array of backgrounds: employed and unemployed workers, students, parents, children.

On November 2, 2011, the day of the General Strike in Oakland, California, Angela Davis spoke about needing to be cautious in our next steps, so that we do not replicate hierarchies that exist. This is also a call to action to be careful in not reproducing an oppressive system; one that is (has been) de-

structive of many people’s lives, particularly through the past and current forms of economic exploitation. We, who are the 99%, experience the oppression of capitalism, but we also recognize we are different people coming to do this work. People are angry and frustrated, but these emotions are con-

solidated through collective, non-violent actions. Solidarity is being built across so many differences and issues, and with that brings the power of this movement.

A critique made of the Occupy movement is that it is unfocused. However, through the changes in income distribution over time

and with the dismantling of public and social programs, what the movement is doing seems pretty clear to me. Looking at the years between 1979 and 2007, incomes of the top 1% of Americans have grown about 275%, whereas, there was only around 40% increase for the 60% of people who fall into the middle class. Currently, the top 1% of the population has control over about 40% of the total wealth in the nation, and the top 10% controls about 70%. As the wealth-poverty gap is ever widening with the privatization of public goods and services, and austerity measures that hurt those who are already struggling, there is a visible marker of what people are demanding change for. The US is a country of contradictions built on these disparities, like how does it make sense to have homelessness in a nation that has numerous empty (foreclosed) homes and also more and more houses being built to sell? This is not just a movement of action with no analysis. How we reach what needs to come

is an ongoing question being addressed by many people involved in the movement.

One of the re-emergents from this movement is the importance of community; there is care and concern for one another and the lives that we all live. This can be seen in the actions following the day after the General Strike, where a number of those from the encampment assisted in the cleanup of the city. Additionally, there are many other community acts that the Occupy movement are engaging, such as proving food and tent space to anyone who comes to the encampment, and offering spaces to have open dialogues (at the General Assemblies and in other forums). People may not know what a new world can look like, but they can imagine, and it is not any more scary than the one in which we already inhabit. Remember to hold dear that we are the hope and change we want to be and see in the world, so let’s continue to work together to keep this movement’s momentum ongoing!



UC Davis “Rally on the Quad” to protest the pepper spraying. There were a few thousand people there.

PHOTO/CYNTHIA A. LINVILLE, SACRAMENTO

Waging War Against the Poor in Fresno

By Mike Rhodes

Fresno, CA — Resistance to attacks against the poor in Fresno, California increased as city crews moved in to bulldoze well-established homeless encampments. About 150 homeless people and their allies slowed down the assault and turned back city crews as they began destroying the tents and shelters homeless people call home.

The homeless encampments, which had been established to provide safety, security, and protection from the rain, were some of the most unique structures in the country. Some shelters had framed walls, pitched roofs, and one structure had a second story. All shelters were on public land in areas not otherwise used for commercial or residential purposes.

On October 27 city crews dismantled and destroyed the first of four encampments. With disregard for a Federal Court order that directed them to store homeless peoples property for 90 days, the city came with bulldozers and garbage trucks to destroy the encampments.

In 2007, the City of Fresno was forced to pay \$2.3 million to settle a lawsuit in Federal Court. It ordered the city to stop taking and immediately destroying homeless peoples' property. There have been several minor violations of the court order, but the scale of destruction that took place in October and November 2011 was without precedent.

As the day of the first assault progressed, the City of Fresno was able to proceed with bulldozing the first encampment. The homeless and their allies could not defend the encampment against all of the forces the city threw against them. When a team formed a line on one end of the encampment to stop the

bulldozers, the city would send another crew two blocks away to start at another location, then the city would start destroying property in the center of the camp. It was clear that the total destruction of the camp would take place.

Over the next two weeks the scene was repeated over and over until every shelter and tent was either destroyed or removed. Some of the homeless joined the Occupy Fresno movement and are demanding a safe and legal place where they can sleep at night.

Two days after these "clean-ups," Rose and her daughter were trying to find someplace where they could sleep. When I found them, they were under a bridge (the site of the first assault), being told by three Fresno police officers to move on. Rose said "move where?" One officer replied that they need to move somewhere out of sight. "We tried that the last several nights and you idiots wake us up every two hours and tell us to move on." Rose went down a list of places they had been chased out of. The officers shuffled their feet, looked at the ground and said, almost apologetically, that they had orders to keep Rose and other homeless people from returning to any of the encampments the city had just destroyed.

The struggle in Fresno is likely to move in two directions—a group is working on a plan that will provide a safe and legal place for homeless people to live. These locations will provide, at a minimum, drinking water, a place to go to the bathroom, and trash pick up—all services the City of Fresno has refused to provide for the homeless. The second direction is litigation to protect homeless peoples' legal rights.

To insure homeless people are



Homeless people and their supporters were able to temporarily stop the City of Fresno from destroying the Santa Fe encampment.

PHOTO/MIKE RHODES, COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

treated with dignity and respect, an alliance has formed between the homeless and progressive community in Fresno that is fighting for their legal rights, as well as decent and affordable housing.

Mike Rhodes is the editor of the Community Alliance newspaper. Contact him at editor@fresnoalliance.com. To see photos, video, and articles about homelessness in Fresno over the past nine years, visit <http://fresnoalliance.com/wordpress/?p=1313>.

"laws"

they make laws
to demonize the children
who will take this earth from the jaws
of destruction
and build paradise on it

—Sarah Menefee

BROTHER CAN YOU SPARE A DIME?

"And he will answer, 'I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.'" Matthew 25:45

By Mary Anne Morrow Barbour



During the Great Depression this became the theme song of the times. The first stanza is: "They used to tell me I was building a dream, and so I followed the mob. When there was earth to plow, or guns to bear, I was always there right on the job. They used to tell me I was building a dream, with peace, and glory ahead. Why should I be standing in line, just waiting for bread?" (Lyrics by Yip Harburg)

At the height of the Great Depression 25 percent of the population was unemployed. The men and women that served in World War I, worked so diligently, and in many times under extremely harsh conditions, to build our Great Nation became unemployed and homeless.

Today we use the word hobo interchangeably with "bum", "drifter", or "homeless". The world is a much larger place than it used to be and people are afraid of someone knocking at their door, asking for work or food.

According to one article that I read, 46.2 million Americans are living below the official poverty

line. This is the highest recorded number in the last 52 years or since 1959.

The 2010 Census stated that the number of homeless people is 1.6 million people. In 2010, 17.2 million households, (approximately one in seven), were food insecure. This was the highest number ever recorded in the United States. According to one web site that I visited 36.3 million people, including 13 million children experience hunger every day.

"Hunger" according to the Oxford Dictionary is: "the uneasy or painful sensation caused by want of food". I ask you why, in this Great Nation of ours, should even one child have to go hungry?

Many state and local governments have made cuts to their staff. In addition there have been deep budget cuts for social pro-

grams. Both of these actions are more than likely to move economically fragile families closer to poverty.

There are three families in my neighborhood that have to make extremely difficult decisions. One is an elderly woman; one is a couple with minimum wage jobs and a couple, without jobs, and two children. Based on their incomes they are deciding between food, rent, utilities and medicine.

All my neighbors continue to have hope and pray daily that their circumstances will soon change. Despite these desperate times, they continue to have great faith.

Next time you contemplate going to a movie, buying something you don't really need, or out to eat, I challenge you to skip these activities and spend the money to feed, clothe or shelter those in

great need. In light of all the hunger, poverty and financial need in our country, how many mountains of things do we need?

Please consider using some of your money to support a local charity. Or, if you know of a family in need, give them the money (better yet give the money anonymously).

Many of us are blessed and have more than ample money for food, clothing, and other necessities. What can you do for the needy in your own home town?

So dear readers, I challenge all of you to cut your random spending in half this year. There is great need everywhere you look. Start your New Year out right and make the conscious decision to help others.

I ask you once again, brothers and sisters, can you spare a dime?



A police officer and others with the broken bodies of Triangle fire victims at their feet, look up in shock at workers poised to jump from the upper floors of the burning Asch Building March 25, 1911.

PHOTO/BROWN BROTHERS

Coalition Seeks Designs for Memorial Commemorating the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of 1911

By Andi Sosin & Joel Sosinsky
Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition

New York, NY — The Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition (RTFC), a national organization comprised of more than 250 participating organizations devoted to commemorating and memorializing the Triangle fire as a tragic moment in American labor history, has announced a national design competition for a permanent public art memorial. The Triangle shirtwaist factory fire, often called “the fire that changed America,” took place on March 25, 1911. The fire burned through the 8th, 9th and 10th floors of the Asch Building, located on the corner of Washington Place and Greene Street in New York City’s Greenwich Village, just one block east of Washington Square Park. People on the street watched in horror as workers, who were unable to be reached by the fire department ladders that extended only to the 6th floor, jumped out the 9th floor windows. One hundred forty-six (146) mostly young immigrant women workers from Eastern Europe and Italy perished in the fire. There was a trial for manslaughter, but the owners, long known for leading opposition to unions and to safety regulations, were acquitted because it could not be proved that they knew a stairwell door was locked, and a later insurance settlement paid only \$75 per claimant. The fire galvanized union activism, and became a rallying cry for safety advocates and the international labor movement.

The Triangle memorial will offer a long awaited tribute to the fire’s victims, who went to work on Saturday March 25, 1911, but did not

come home. Prior to the fire, Triangle Waist Company workers had participated in the Uprising of the 20,000 in 1909 and other strikes for better working conditions and wages. Following the fire, citizen outrage resulted in passage of numerous worker safety laws in New York and other states, and federal laws were passed during the New Deal that ended child labor, created a minimum wage, authorized workers to form unions, and established Social Security, among other reforms. The memorial will also remind viewers of present day struggles for dignity and safety in the workplace all over the world. Mary Anne Trasciatti, Director of the Remember the Triangle Fire Coalition, said, “A century after this most historic and tragic event, the nation will at last have a permanent memorial to honor and recognize.”

New York University (NYU), which owns the site of the fire, known now as the Brown Building, will participate in the design search along with the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE), the New York City Fire Museum (FDNY), Cornell University’s Kheel Center, Workers United (successor to the ILGWU, now an SEIU affiliate), the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, civic leaders, and family members of the victims. When agreement on the design is reached, the RTFC will bring it forward for approval from the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission and the neighborhood’s Community Board. Details of the Request for Proposals will soon be available on the RTFC website, <http://rememberthetrianglefire.org>.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY VOTES TO END COLLABORATION WITH IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOM ENFORCEMENT (ICE)

By Silicon Valley Debug

In what has been heralded as the most progressive policy in the nation, Santa Clara County, California, on October 18 voted in a new set of guidelines for civil immigration detainers, which in effect ends the county’s collaboration with Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE). Supervisor George Shirakawa, who championed the policy, told an audience of supporters after the County Board of Supervisors’ vote, “Today is historic. We now have the most progressive policy in this field, and the whole nation will be looking at us as Santa Clara County makes it official: we don’t do ICE’s job.” Civil immigration detainers are requests from ICE to the county to detain jailed individuals after the completion of their sentence from a criminal charge in order to get them picked up for immigration detention and deportation proceedings.

For immigrant advocates and county officials, the new policy—which will only honor a detainer request if, “there is a written agreement with the federal government by which all costs incurred by the County in complying with the ICE detainer will be reimbursed”—is a way to exert local control in the face of a controversial federal ICE program called Secure Communities. Rolled out in 2008, Secure Communities uses fingerprints gathered at jails to notify ICE agents of the immigration status of individuals to then initiate detainer requests. The program has received pushback from counties and states who say Secure Communities violates targeted individuals’ constitutional protections, places financial hardships on cash-strapped counties, and jeopardizes public safety by making immigrant communities fearful of law enforcement.

ICE initially told counties that they had the option to opt out of Secure Communities only to rescind that offer after counties at-



Immigration march in Detroit, Michigan.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

tempted to do so in 2010. Santa Clara County was one of the first in the country to attempt the opt-out. Santa Clara County formed a taskforce of law enforcement agencies, informed by County Counsel, to craft a policy around the principle operating mechanism of Secured Communities—the detainer request—given ICE’s shifting information regarding the program.

On October 5 the taskforce came up with a policy that would limit the county to only honor detainers after conviction (through Secure Communities, even those who had not been found guilty of the crime that placed them in jail were still vulnerable to a detainer hold), would not honor detainer requests for juveniles, and would only honor requests for a specific list of “serious” and “violent” felo-

nies. Yet, as the taskforce recommendation moved along to the full County Board of Supervisors for a final vote, Supervisor Shirakawa added an amendment to only consider detainer requests when given a written agreement for reimbursement by the federal government, and stating that except for particular circumstances, “ICE agents shall not be given access to individuals or be allowed to use County facilities for investigative interviews or other purposes, and County personnel shall not expend County time or resources responding to ICE inquiries or communicating with ICE regarding individuals’ incarceration or release date.” In explaining the amendment to the rest of the Board, he said, “ICE has lied to us in the past with Secure Communities. We need to say enough is enough.”

THE STRUGGLE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

From the Editors

Every compassionate American watches in horror as more and more laws are passed that terrorizes immigrants and their families. In Alabama, schools must now verify the citizenship of students and let police arrest people who don’t have identification. This is morally wrong!

We cannot allow the Ameri-

can people to be divided, which is the goal of the capitalists. The rulers of this country want to get one section of the people to support eliminating the civil liberties of immigrants, and in the process eliminate everyone’s rights.

Today, the global corporations cannot provide jobs. Poverty is increasing for all workers, and people are beginning to question the system that is producing

that poverty. The danger facing the rulers is that the people will unite, regardless of nationality, and demand a society that serves their needs, not corporate profit. Thus we are witnessing an effort to isolate the immigrant as part of a drive toward outright fascism.

This is not simply a fight for immigrant rights, as important as that is. It is a fight for the human rights of every person on this earth.

if...

If hope was a color
it would be brown
like the corrugated billboards
that occupy Zuccotti Park

if hope had an odor
it would smell like peppers
saturating the midnight air

if hope had a taste
it would taste like the milk
running from my eyes
and down my cheeks

if hope made a noise
we would hear bongos beating
behind the wail of the elderly
and the screams of the suppressed
that lay beaten in the street

if hope was a feeling
it would be the tightening
of plastic cable ties
around innocent wrists
and blows from batons
that rain down
upon the rib cages
of professors and students
who won't bite their tongues
any longer

if hope had a heart
it would be enclosed
in the chest cavity
of an eagle soaring
above the smoke filled streets
lined with debt and unemployment

-Jake St. John
11/18/11

Jake St. John writes out of New London, CT, where he also coordinates poetry readings in and around the New England area. He is the co-editor of Flying Fish and the editor of Elephant.

BENTON HARBOR SCHOOL SYSTEM WILL NO LONGER EXIST

By Rev. Edward Pinkney



Benton Harbor, MI — We have talked about the 1% who own much of society's wealth. We have talked about City Hall that works in favor of the 1%. We have talked about Occupy Wall Street. We have even talked about "Occupy Everything."

We must now talk about the corporate class's most vicious attack on the public school system in the history of America. The ruling class no longer needs to educate the people since the jobs are non-existent. So it is setting out to destroy the public school system.

The rulers think and act as a class. They meet any challenge to their profits and power. They take the disruptions of society into account and adjust. They organize ideological campaigns to guarantee that the response of the people remains scattered and disunited. They aim to divert the struggle away from the people who are fighting to hold the government accountable.

Michigan Governor Rick, "The Rickta-

tor Synder," and State officials estimate that dozens of local governments and school districts in the state will soon be taken over by non-elected Emergency Managers. Benton Harbor School system will be taken over by an Emergency Financial Manager.

The Board voted to close two more buildings, move some students and raze several buildings. This sets the stage for Whirlpool to move the High School, which is surrounded by lakefront property to Benton Township, where the land is contaminated and away from the 1%—away from Harbor Shores and their rich residents. They are going to change the name of Benton Harbor to Harbor Shores. The board also voted to demolish six district buildings. Two school board members spoke and voted against the closures, which will temporarily move the middle school students to Benton Harbor high School. This is not the solution. You have to go back to the root of the problem.

What is the cause of the problems in public education? The problem is the chronic underfunding of schools, social services and the rising poverty among our students' families and communities. What can we do to address the problems in Benton Harbor and around the country?

We must first increase the funding of public education, health and human services to address the issues of poverty. We must restore taxes on the rich and the large corporations to provide the necessary funding for education. We must raise the minimum wage to increase family viability and function. We must make the government responsible to provide a quality education for each and every child. We must increase the level of hope in the community.

The world is changing. It is changing into the age of robotic factories. A good education is not only a part of each family's progress. It is vital for the well being of every individual and of every city, state and country.

Protest the corporations and bankers at the Senior PGA Championship tournament at the Benton Harbor golf tournament May 23-27, 2012. We are the 99% and the 1% will be there. Michael Moore has been invited to speak on May 26. Call Rev. Pinkney, President, BANCO at 269-925-0001 for information.

Just Cause for Eviction Ordinance Passes in Merced

By Salvador Sandoval, MD

Merced, CA — Merced became the first city in the California Central Valley to pass the Just Cause for Eviction Ordinance to protect renters. Spearheaded by Tenants Together, a statewide advocacy group championing renters, the measure narrowly passed at the November 7 Merced city council meeting. Despite stiff opposition from realtors, appraisers, and their attorneys, the ordinance passed on the second reading of November 21.

There are currently 15 other cities in California that have similar ordinances in place. This measure protects renters when banks move to evict the tenants who have continued to pay their rent, despite the landlord having lost the property for failure to pay on the mortgage. In Merced, where one out of every 200 homes is in foreclosure, close to half of foreclosed homes involve renters.

Claiming that the ordinance is a violation of "private property rights," that it would

lead to increased litigation, that it violates the tenant/renter covenant, favors freeloaders, discourages investment, and is being promoted by "outsiders," opponents and their hired guns sought to kill the ordinance, or at the very least, to delay a decision until the composition of the city council changed.

One by one, the objections were addressed by legal aid and Tenants Together attorneys. Resident after resident told horror stories of their travails when they and their families were foreclosed upon. Their testimonies directly contradicted those of realtors who claimed that adequate notification and compensation were offered. Citing the high local unemployment and growing homelessness problem, local Merced residents de-

manded a decision favorable to them.

The motion for continuance defeated, each member of the council was forced to make a decision. Some cited property rights and a stable business environment as reasons to oppose. An eloquent statement came from one who cited a moral obligation to protect the weakest who were in the final analysis displaced with nowhere to go.

Chalk one small victory up for working people. Just as the Occupy Wall Street movements, which have mushroomed throughout the country have made very clear, the battle lines are being drawn. It's time to become educated on the issues and plant your feet firmly on the side of the vast majority of humanity.

People's Tribune
P.O. Box 3524
Chicago, Illinois 60654-3524
Return service requested

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CHICAGO, IL
PERMIT NO. 874

