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UAW delegates vow to build a mass movement

By John Rummel

The United Auto Workers Special Bargaining Convention, held here last week, was like nothing this reporter has attended before. The March 22-24 event was three days of preparing the union to do battle with, and defeat, extremist Republicans and Wall Street. The goal of building broad unity within the working class movement and with all its allies to fight to save our nation was front and center.

That was reflected in the union's invitation to Phaedra Ellis-Lamkins, head of Green for All, to address the convention. Introducing her, UAW President Bob King said the union is now a "proud member" of the labor-environmental Blue-Green Alliance.

In an earlier era, the UAW had sided with U.S. auto corporations in opposing higher fuel-efficiency requirements for cars and trucks, with the idea that any curb on the companies would hurt autoworkers. But that outlook has changed.

Ellis-Lamkins quickly won over the 1,200 delegates and guests here, saying, "We both fight for good clean jobs. There is no better movement to be a part of." And she brought the house down when she declared, "This room is filled with heroes and heroines. People who believe this country is for all."

To deafening applause she continued, "When



you return home after the convention and people ask what you were doing, answer: 'I was saving our country.' This is a revolution to keep our country. You are not alone. Organizations like ours are with you."

A presentation on nonviolent direct action by activist Lisa Fithian was an indication that union leaders are looking at a variety of tactics to meet today's challenges. Recalling the 1936-37 Flint, Mich., sit-down strikers, King said, "This is how the UAW was won. If we don't build a mass street

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movement, we will hand our children a world that is not as good."

Delegates rose to their feet again and again during a talk by actor and activist Danny Glover. Receiving the UAW's social justice award, Glover

Developing global solidarity is increasingly seen as important to the survival of every union.

said, "The economic paradigm has failed us. We need a new vision of humanity. Whatever we call it, it is being built by workers in Wisconsin and Indiana."

Developing global solidarity is increasingly seen as important to the survival of this union - and every other union. The UAW is moving quickly on this front.

UAW Secretary-Treasurer Dennis Williams said the union has established a Global Organizing Institute. The goal is to focus on one transnational company's disrespect for global human rights in this country and abroad. Williams said interns from other countries have been in the U.S., talking to workers at unorganized "transplant" companies here, and learning the tools to organize autoworkers in their respective countries.

The interns have come from India, Australia, South Korea, Japan, China and other countries. Interestingly, while talking to workers here, they were surprised to learn the steep challenges U.S. workers face in organizing unions.

Chidambaram Sai Prasad, from India, told

delegates, "This is not the idea of America that we had. We thought that America is a free country and that people had rights."

Another focus at the conference was solidarity with public sector workers. American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten gave a moving defense of public workers under attack by Republicans here in Michigan and in other states.

Weingarten warned that Republicans are "hoping people will be so demoralized they won't go to the polls" in 2012.

That happened in November 2010, said Lew Moyer, a retired Chrysler worker who is president of the St. Louis chapter of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. But now, he said, "Everybody is ready for the 2012 elections. Now is the time. We lost some members in 2010 to the Republicans. We've started the process to bring them back home."



John Rummel leads the Michigan Communist Party.

Mergers harm democracy

By PW Editorial Board

AT&T is set to buy T-Mobile from Deutsche Telekom for \$39 billion, \$25 billion in cash. It's hard for us mere Main Street mortals to imagine paying \$25 billion in cash!

Mergers tend to create higher prices because less and less companies compete, and the few that remain can - and have, although it's supposed to be illegal - conspire to keep prices artificially high. T-Mobile customers usually pay less than AT&T's. Don't count on that after this merger.

There has been a longstanding struggle to limit this tendency in capitalism toward monopolization, but with the Reagan Revolution, antimonopoly regulations and enforcement were among the casualties of "no government except to help the super-rich and corporations" ideology.

By the time George W. Bush took office the Department of Justice - which is tasked with anti-monopoly law enforcement - became a handmaiden for corporate mergers, helping mega-corps

get around any of the remaining laws and regulations.

Now we have the U.S. Supreme Court Citizens United ruling that has increased mega-corporations' influence in elections and the legislative arena.

Mega-corporations put billions of dollars into anti-Democratic attack ads and campaigns during the 2010-midterm elections. They are now getting their payback with anti-worker and anti-civil rights bills and actions sweeping GOP-ruled states.

These mega-corps and their mega-bucks have a negative impact on the country's democracy that leads to more and more extreme attacks on rights and freedoms.

As advocates of socialism, the corporations that command the economic heights need to be democratized and run fully in the public's interest. Capitalism cannot guarantee such democracy and as such, we'd say no to the merger.

The corporations that command the economic heights need to be democratized and run fully in the public interest.

“Hello, Communist Party calling”

By John Bachtell

You really made my day,” said the voice on the other end of the phone, from Austin, Texas. “I’m so happy to hear from you guys.” He was on his way to the South by Southwest music festival, but paused long enough to talk to a phonebanker in Saint Louis.

That was a typical response from the coast-to-coast call to 1,500 new members of the Communist Party USA and Young Communist League on March 19. All had joined the CPUSA or YCL online recently, and some were getting their first contact.

“It was a great reception. People really want to be a part of the Communist Party,” said Jonathan, one of the phone bankers.

“The positive response from so many was very uplifting,” said Zenobia Thompson. “I look forward to doing this regularly.”

The calls were made using a predictive dialer system typically used in election campaigns. Members were asked if they wanted to renew their membership, update their contact info, sign up for the CPUSA’s or its press’s email lists and pay membership dues or make a financial contribution.

“This is a historic event for us,” Roberta Wood, CPUSA Secretary-Treasurer, said.

The national call is one of several initiatives the CPUSA is taking to bolster contact with its membership. Lack of contact was in fact the biggest complaint of the new members. Many live in areas that are isolated or don’t have a party organization. Getting a call meant a lot.

“What people are concerned about most is how to get involved and we can help,” said Tony Pecinovsky, CPUSA organizer for the Missouri-



Kansas district. “People were a little concerned about not being contacted as quickly as we would like.”

“I spoke with a lot of young people who had signed up on the CPUSA website and were really excited to be having their first conversation with an actual member,” said Noah Toler. “Mainly people were interested in what the Party was thinking about this or that issue.”

Many were already active; a lot expressed enthusiasm for developments in Wisconsin, Indiana and Ohio and the protest wave sweeping the country.

Janet Edburg, another phonebanker, said “One member was so excited about what was happening in Wisconsin I thought he was going to jump out of the phone!”

The new members joining are one of several indicators of Party and YCL growth. It’s all part of the explosion in activism and rapidly changing thinking among the American people. A recent Rasmussen Poll shows 11 percent of adults think communism is a better system than capitalism. That’s roughly 15 million Americans.”

A coast-to-coast call to 1,500 new members of the Communist Party USA and Young Communist League.

Nation's largest college offers free tuition

By Dan Margolis

In a move that bucks national trends and is sure to change the education affordability debate, Miami Dade College, the largest public institution of higher learning in the country, will offer free admission starting next semester to all qualifying local high school graduates.

The cost of admission will be paid for by the American Dream Scholarship, which will cover 60 credits - enough to attain an Associate's Degree.

Victor Sanchez, vice-president of the United States Students Association, was enthusiastic. "Ultimately," Sanchez said via telephone, "we hope that school is free for everybody, but this is a first step to make education free and to make education a right."

MDC communications director Juan Mendieta said the college has a long history of cooperation with the White House, "regardless of the president in office." Because of the college's size, it often serves as an education lab, and can set trends nationwide.

With a Hispanic population of nearly 70 percent and the highest proportion of immigrants of any large city in the world, Miami is to the issues facing immigrants. Many wonder what this means for undocumented students?

Undocumented students who can prove that they reside in the county are eligible to have the school pay for the entire in-state portion of their tuition.

"Any move or any situation where you have a blatant approach to increasing access is a good thing," Sanchez said. "Rewarding folks that have played by the rules that have done their best to try and achieve education and success is good; they should be rewarded."

Afganistán: ¡Ya es hora de retirarnos!

Por Marilyn Bechtel

Ya opinan casi tres de cada cuatro norteamericanos que hace falta un pronto fin a la guerra de Afganistán. Ya es la hora de presionarle al presidente Obama y a nuestros legisladores a que establezcan un plan de salida con un horario rápido de retirada.

Esta ya es, por bastante, la guerra más prolongada que nunca ha librado nuestro país. En Afganistán han caído más de 1.200 tropas norteamericanas, con decenas de miles de heridos. Solo en el año pasado fueron muertos más de 2.500 civiles no combatientes, con más de 3.200 heridos en situaciones relacionadas con el conflicto.

Ocurrió el 1 de marzo un ejemplo horrendo de la cuota de vidas civiles que ha cobrado esta guerra cuando nueve muchachitos de 9 a 15 años de edad fueron matados a balas por helicópteros de NATO cuando estaban recogiendo leña para sus familias en una zona desesperadamente pobre de las sierras altas de ese país.

En puros términos monetarios la guerra nos cuesta dos mil millones de dólares por semana, o cien mil millones por año, eso en un momento cuando líderes de ambos partidos andan sumamente preocupados por la deficit y los Republicanos de la cámara baja están tratando de destripar programas sociales a todos lados bajo el pretexto de la necesidad de recortar la deficit. Líderes políticos de ambos partidos están aumentando sus llamadas por un pronto fin a la guerra. El 26 de febrero el Comité Nacional Demócrata (DNC, por sus siglas en inglés) aprobó una resolución en su reunion anual declarando que el Partido Demócrata "apoya como pri-

oridad la creación de trabajos y una retirada rápida a las fuerzas armadas estadounidenses y a sus contratistas militares en Afganistán," con un recorte "significante y apreciable" para julio de 2011 a más tardar.

La resolución también dice que el Partido Demócrata reconoce el "enorme estrés" que han impuesto las guerras en Irak y Afganistán a las tropas y a sus familias, y que "están siempre comprometidos" a asegurar que tengan las tropas el apoyo necesario mientras estén desplegados, y el cuidado que estos y sus familias "necesitan y merecen" cuando vuelvan a casa.

La acción del DNC sigue a varias otras iniciativas ofrecidas por congresistas.

Y el 25 de febrero, el Secretario de Defensa, Robert Gates, conminó a cadetes de West Point que el ejercito de EEUU no debe ser "transformado a un constabulario de la época de la reina Victoria, construyendo naciones, designado a perseguir guerrilleros, construir escuelas o tomar té".

Toda esta legislación merece nuestro apoyo total. Ha llegado la hora de llamar, escribir, o mandar un correo electrónico a sus congresistas y senadores, urgiéndolos a inscribirse como copatrocinadores a las varias resoluciones y propuestas de ley. Y es el momento de comunicar a la Casa Blanca que queremos un pronto fin a la guerra, con la retirada complete de todo el personal militar norteamericano y relacionados, y una reconstrucción dirigida por el mismo pueblo afgano, con la ayuda de organizaciones internacionales.

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