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Disabled protest Calif. budget cuts

By Marilyn Bechtel

For the second time in five weeks, dozens of men and women with disabilities and their caregivers camped out for days on a grassy traffic island here last week, protesting Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's plan to slash funding for human services, including the program they say enables them to live at home instead of in nursing homes.

They called their little cluster of tents "Arnieville," after the Hooverville shantytowns built by homeless people during the Great Depression.

"We're here because we're sick and tired of a budget process that treats us as expendable," spokesperson Jean Stewart told a June 24 press conference. "Every year our governor and legislators look for items they can cut from the budget, and every year they single out In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) and Medi-Cal (California's Medicaid) along with other programs that elderly, disabled and poor people depend on, like CalWORKS, Adult Day Health Care and mental health rehab."

California faces a \$19.1 billion budget gap. It's the only state requiring a two-thirds supermajority both to pass a budget and to raise taxes. Democrats in the legislature fall short of that level, and virtually all Republican legislators have signed a no-new-taxes pledge. As in most recent years, the



legislature missed the June 15 budget deadline to pass a budget, and negotiations will likely drag on for many weeks.

Stewart, who uses a wheelchair, spoke of the "terror" she and other users of IHSS services, and the caregivers whose jobs are also at stake, experience every year as the budget process wears on. Calling IHSS "a model program," she described its role in helping low income seniors and the disabled with essential daily activities so they can re-

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main independent in their own homes.

She and others have formed Communities United in Defense of Olmstead (CUIDO), which takes its name from a U.S. Supreme Court decision holding that unnecessary segregation of people with disabilities in institutions constitutes

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discrimination based on disability.

Also speaking was Berkeley City Council member Max Anderson, who told the crowd the state's budget troubles stem from "the way the system is organized. There's not an effort to go to where the money is and get the money to provide resources for those who need them."

Anderson called the cuts and the state's constant raiding of county and city budgets "an unconscionable attack on the quality of life and the very existence of life for many people."

The Berkeley City Council last week resolved to write to Gov. Schwarzenegger strongly opposing the cuts. Organizers called on other city councils to do likewise.

Arnieville protesters also targeted the governor's proposal for unannounced visits to IHSS recipients' homes, supposedly to counter fraud, which IHSS supporters say is virtually nonexistent.

In a conversation after the press conference, Stephanie Miyashiro, a wheelchair user who says her income is "just a bit too high" to qualify for

IHSS, said independent movements run by people with disabilities are vital to uphold their civil rights and ability to live independently. "We outnumber the billionaires," she said. "If we all get together we can take our state back."

Sheela Gunn-Cushman, blind herself, teaches other blind people how to use computers. A registered Republican, she disagrees with the governor's approach. She also has mixed feelings about the Afghanistan war and its cost: "We need to focus on the home front - I think we should solve our problems and not think we can solve everyone else's."

IHSS now serves over 450,000 Californians. The livelihoods of some 350,000 caregivers are also at stake. Organizers warned of the devastating economic consequences of forcing hundreds of thousands into far more costly nursing homes which may not have capacity for them, while further boosting the state's already soaring 12.4 percent unemployment.



Marilyn Bechtel writes for the People's World.

General wrong

By PW Editorial Board

Clearly, McChrystal had to go. He publicly expressed contempt for the president and the Constitution.

President Barack Obama made an important defense of democracy by firing Gen. Stanley McChrystal from his Afghanistan command post, after the general and his top aides lambasted the president and his national security team, including Vice President Joe Biden, for a Rolling Stone article. The president announced McChrystal's boss, Gen. David Petraeus, would take over the Afghan campaign.

Clearly, McChrystal had to go. He publicly expressed contempt for the president and the Constitution, which wisely made a civilian the commander in chief. Part of the battle for democracy in our country is defending that civilian rule against the power of the Pentagon and the military-industrial complex. Score one for democracy with McChrystal's ouster.

The Obama administration needs a new Afghanistan strategy. We have said it before, and we'll say it again. War will not solve Afghanistan's many-layered problems. The U.S. war there will not make either Americans or the Afghan people

more secure. This is a 30-year civil war that was created by U.S. Cold War policies to begin with. And now the violence is spreading to neighboring Pakistan. It can indeed become the Obama administration's "Big Muddy."

The U.S. public is growing increasingly skeptical of this nine-year war and its mounting cost in treasure and lives.

U.S. and NATO military forces have to get out as rapidly as possible, with a clear timetable, as proposed by Sen. Russ Feingold and Rep. Jim McGovern. It has to focus on helping rebuild Afghanistan's shattered economy, on cooperation with regional powers like China, Russia, Iran and India to that end, and on utilizing the extensive resources and expertise of the United Nations.

Such a strategy will mean standing up to more generals, to the war machine and its far-right partners in Congress. This is a critical juncture, for sure, and one where the American people can play a critical role by sending a message to the White House and Congress that the U.S. must bring the troops home.

GOP says no to benefits, groups plan march

By Joe Sims

How do you trim a bill to provide unemployment benefits to laid-off workers in the U.S. Senate? First, you take food out of the mouths of the hungry by cutting food stamps by \$6 billion. Then you reduce health care for the poor by cutting state aid for Medicaid by \$8 billion. And finally you enforce the racial and rural digital divide by refusing funds for broadband projects to the tune of another \$2 billion.

And still it isn't enough for the Republican Party. Sadly, negotiations broke down again Wednesday on the long-delayed effort to extend unemployment compensation. Citing fears of increasing the deficit, GOP senators continue to say no to anything proposed by the Obama administration and the Democratic majority in Congress.

With a procedural vote scheduled for Thursday, supporters of working-class families seem two votes shy. The Washington Post writes: "Senate Majority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.) set the procedural wheels in motion for a climactic vote on the legislation as soon as Thursday. Despite days of talks, a senior Democratic aide said Reid had been unable to persuade any Republicans to support the measure, leaving him at least two votes short of the 60 needed to overcome a GOP filibuster."

The AFL-CIO and civil rights groups have pushed for support of the bill. The trade union federation said, "It's time to tell Republican senators we've had it with their jobless aid blockade. So far this month, their refusal to extend unemployment insurance has caused nearly 1 million jobless workers to lose the little they have to survive on."

Labor is urging phone calls to 1-877-442-6801 to demand the Senate pass the bill.

The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights



has also joined the fight. It is urging the Senate to support the legislation and extend jobless benefits through the end of the year, stating that doing so "will help the economy recover while providing badly needed assistance in today's historic economic crisis."

The civil rights leaders go on to point out that over 1.2 million workers have lost benefits by the end of last week.

Will the GOP listen? Only if forced to.

Frustrated by the ongoing stalemate in Congress, civil rights and labor groups have called for a national march for jobs and justice in Washington on Oct. 2. The march will be held under the theme of One Nation, One Dream.

The march has the support of the NAACP, SEIU, the United Auto Workers and the AFL-CIO.

George Gresham, president of 1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, said "It's very annoying to see the tea party folks on television all the time as if they're speaking for working people, while all they're doing is divide working people and push our agenda back, both racially and economically."

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Sacramento votes to boycott Arizona

By Gail Ryall

California's capital city last week joined a growing movement to boycott Arizona until its anti-immigrant law SB 1070 is repealed. The City Council here voted 6-1 June 15 to join the boycott.

The council auditorium was full during the session. When Mayor Kevin Johnson asked boycott supporters to stand, fully 80 percent of the audience rose.

At the two meetings where the council discussed the resolution, residents of many races, religions and nationalities testified. Sacramento has been called the "most diverse city in the U.S."

Among the supporters was former Sacramento Police Chief Arturo Venegas Jr., who called the Arizona law the civil rights issue of today. "Will a boycott hurt Arizona?" Venegas asked the council. "Absolutely - that is the intent. However, the true intent is to repeal the racist law of Arizona."

Another supporter of the boycott was Marc Grossman, long-time spokesman for the United Farm Workers. He pointed out that UFW founder Cesar Chavez, whose family members were respected Arizona citizens for generations, would be a suspect under SB 1070, and required to show his papers. "As Cesar said in a somewhat different context, 'Boycott the hell out of them,'" Grossman concluded.

Representatives of the Sacramento Labor Council, the Japanese-American Citizens Council, the NAACP, the California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the Democratic Party and many other organizations added their voices to the call.

AFL-CIO que suenan la llamada para las derechas inmigrantes

Por Rick Nagin

En una declaración política de primer orden en el Club de la Ciudad de Cleveland pronunciado el 18 de junio, Rich Trumka, Presidente Nacional de la AFL-CIO, dijo que la continua negación de los derechos más básicos a millones de trabajadores indocumentados amenaza el bienestar y los valores democráticos de todos los norteamericanos.

Denunciando a la derecha por su "política de odio, de chivos expiatorios y de puntar el dedo" y por la recién aprobada ley de Arizona de perfiles raciales, dijo Trumka que la crisis que enfrentan los trabajadores norteamericanos es resultado de fallidas políticas comerciales y la avaria corporativa, y no de la inmigración.

"Cuando escucho esa forma de hablar, tengo ganas de decir, ¿acaso movió algún inmigrante su fábrica al extranjero? ¿Acaso fue un inmigrante él que le quitó su pensión, o recortó su cuidado de salud? ¿Fue un inmigrante él que destruyó el derecho de los trabajadores norteamericanos a organizarse? ¿O qué estropeaba el sistema financiero? ¿Acaso son los trabajadores inmigrantes los que redactaban las leyes comerciales que han hecho tanto daño a Ohio?

El Tratado de Libre Comercio, dijo, socava los derechos de los trabajadores tanto en EEUU que en México y ha resultado en una triplicación de

la taza de inmigración ilegal.

"Los fracasos de nuestras relaciones con México", dijo, "no se pueden resolver con armas y soldados y murallas. Tienen que ser resueltas a través de una estrategia económica por la prosperidad compartida basada en un aumento de salarios en ambos países."

Pero, dijo, hay "un hecho desagradable" del cuál ni se habla, pero que se encuentra al corazón de la política migratoria norteamericana.

Es que para demasiados empleadores en EEUU, la realidad es que les gusta el sistema migratoria así como está: un sistema bajo el cual los inmigrantes son abundantes e indocumentados, a la vez temerosos y disponibles. A demasiados patrones les encanta un sistema bajo el cual nuestras fronteras quedan cerradas y abiertas a la misma vez; cerradas lo suficientemente como para convertirles a inmigrantes en ciudadanos de segunda, y suficientemente abiertas como para garantizar un suministro inagotable de mano de obra socialmente y legalmente barata sin poder ninguno".

"Esa es la razón por la que la AFL-CIO está luchando para componer este sistema de inmigración como elemento crucial de nuestra más amplia agenda económica. Porque defendemos el sueño norteamericano, para que todos puedan trabajar en nuestro país".

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