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Anger, yes, but most Americans support

By Tim Wheeler

Capitol Hill resounded with angry denunciations of the Republican right for holding “hostage” unemployment benefits for millions of jobless workers to force through tax giveaways for billionaires.

“There is a war going on in this country, and I’m not referring to the war in Iraq and Afghanistan,” Sanders thundered. “I’m talking about a war being waged by some of the wealthiest, most powerful people against the working people...”

He called it “religious fervor in terms of greed.”

The tax compromise preserves Bush-era income tax cuts for the rich. It slashes the estate tax from 55 percent to 35 percent. It also keeps in place the 15 percent capital gains tax on dividends.

Sanders charged that these tax giveaways mean that Wall Street financiers will pay lower taxes than “firemen, teachers, nurses, carpenters, and virtually all the other working people in this country. I do not think that is fair. That is wrong!”

Tens of thousands signed a “No Deal” petition supporting Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders’ eight hour filibuster against the tax cut package negotiated by the Republicans and the White House.

Most Americans, and even most Democrats

and liberals, favor the compromise, according to recent polls.

The Senate mustered the 60 supermajority needed to cut off debate, and then passed the package Dec. 14 by a whopping 83-15.



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But in the House, foes of the giveaways to the rich planned to fight for removal of the most outrageous of these giveaways, especially the estate tax rate. Fifty three progressive lawmakers vowed to vote against the deal.

Sanders debunked the Republican argument that tax cuts for the wealthy stimulate the economy.

President Obama urges the approval of the compromises package, while at the same time, disagrees with the extension of tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans.

Sanders debunked the Republican argument that tax cuts for the wealthy stimulate the economy. Wall Street and corporate America, he said, “have \$2 trillion cash on hand” and all time record profits. Yet they refuse to invest in job-creating industries.

The real drag on the economy, Sanders said, is the “middle class simply don’t have the money to purchase the goods and products that make our economy go and create jobs.”

He cited the successes of the Obama stimulus package and urged the federal government to “invest heavily in our infrastructure”

The “horrendous recession,” Sanders charged, “was caused by the greed and recklessness and illegal behavior of Wall Street” and now they want the people to clean up the mess.

Sanders acknowledged that there are major items he agrees with including the 13 month ex-

tension of jobless benefits for some of the unemployed, extension of tax cuts for middle income earners, and extension of the earned income tax credit. There must be “a fight to make sure all of these programs remain in the final package when it is passed,” he said.

There were voices in support of the deal. Robert Greenstein, president of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, said Congress should approve the deal even with all its defects. Economists say the extension of tax cuts for middle income people will reduce their taxes by about \$800 next year, and keep two million people from poverty.

If unemployment compensation is not extended, 7 million unemployed will lose their weekly check. And 600,000 jobs will be lost and economic growth will be reduced by 0.6 percent.

Greenstein said the package contains “surprisingly strong protections for low and middle income working families” and a “stronger than expected boost for the economy and jobs.”



Tim Wheeler writes for the People’s World.

Party of the rich: it’s disgusting

By PW Editorial Board

Republicans long ago lost their connection to Abraham Lincoln and their old nickname, Grand Old Party. For some years now they’ve been trying to pass off the GOP as “God’s Only Party.” But it would be more appropriate to give up “GOP” altogether and start calling them “ROP - Rich Only Party.”

The ROP has stuck its stinking feet in the faces of the American people by holding up unemployment benefits, and all other legislation for that matter, until they get more tax cuts for their filthy-rich supporters.

The ROP has held millions of American workers, and their families, hostage until everyone cries “uncle” and agrees to pay \$60 billion in tax handouts for millionaires.

As of this writing, more than a million jobless American workers have lost their only source of income, and the number will rise to 2 million by Christmastime if the ROP doesn’t get its way.

Some say the White House hasn’t fought hard

enough to end the tax giveaways for the super-rich. That may be so. But who created this problem? The ROP. Who is fighting so hard for the top 2 percent that they don’t care about putting the unemployed and their kids out in the street in the dead of winter, or taking holiday presents out of kids’ stockings? The ROP. Yes, that’s the harsh real-world reality.

The ROP refused to vote for extending the tax cuts for people making under \$250,000 per year. Then they refused to vote for extending the tax cuts for people making under \$1 million per year.

Not one Republican dared to vote for the 98 percent of us, people who make under \$250,000. Not the so-called moderates from Maine, nor the “everyman” from Massachusetts. Nope. Every ROPer was lock-step against the proposal.

It’s absolutely wrong and an outrage to let the richest of the rich continually off the hook in paying taxes. But remember where to direct the outrage!

The ROP has held millions of American workers, and their families, hostage until everyone cries “uncle” and agrees to pay \$60 billion in tax handouts for millionaires.

WikiLeaks spawns OpenLeaks, global whistle-blowing community

By Susan Webb

The biggest story about WikiLeaks may not be the contents of the documents it is releasing but its upending of secrecy, whistle-blowing and journalism as we know it.

One indication is the impending launch of OpenLeaks, announced this week by former WikiLeaks staff members. They say OpenLeaks will provide technology to allow whistle-blowers to anonymously leak data not just to news media but also to “NGOs, labor unions and other interested entities,” BBC News reported.

“We are trying to build a community of various organizations that need or have use for anonymously submitted information,” former WikiLeaks member Herbert Snorrason told the BBC.

Daniel Domscheit-Berg, who was second in command to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, said OpenLeaks “aims to provide the technological means to organizations and other entities around the world to be able to accept anonymous submissions in the forms of documents or other information.” Sources’ identities would be protected along with the documents themselves.

OpenLeaks will begin testing the project with a group of organizations in early 2011, he said, and aims to stay out of the spotlight.

Domscheit-Berg called his project “the next evolutionary step” from WikiLeaks.

WikiLeaks leaped to fame in April this year when it published a videotape of U.S. helicopter gunners shooting down Iraqi civilians. That tape was part of a massive leak of U.S. government documents that include military battlefield reports



from Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the 250,000 State Department cables that have been grabbing headlines for the past few weeks. The U.S. has jailed a disaffected 23-year-old Army intelligence analyst, Pfc. Bradley Manning, charging him with leaking the files.

WikiLeaks started by publishing documents on its own website. But it moved in a new direction this summer when it turned over the Iraq and Afghanistan files to top mainstream newspapers in the U.S., UK, France and Germany, allowing them to publish news and analysis of the documents. It followed a similar practice with the State Department files. To date it has only published a tiny fraction of these documents on its own site.

New York Times media reporter David Carr sees the WikiLeaks phenomenon as “a new form of hybrid journalism emerging in the space between so-called hacktivists and mainstream media outlets.” He calls it “a fruitful collaboration.”

At the same time U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder is considering whether or not to file criminal charges against Assange for publishing the leaked U.S. documents. The House Judiciary Committee plans to hold a hearing on the issue.

The biggest story about WikiLeaks may not be the contents of the documents it is releasing but its upending of secrecy, whistle-blowing and journalism as we know it.

Protests continue over FBI raids

By John Bachtell

Alarmed by the blatant fishing expedition and government intimidation of antiwar activists, more than 100 protesters held an emergency picket line at the Dirksen Federal Building here on Dec. 6. The picket line was called after three more peace and justice activists were subpoenaed to appear before a grand jury seeking evidence of "material support for terrorism."

According to the recent Supreme Court ruling, "material support" could include giving legal advice or other nonviolent and lawful services.

The Center for Constitutional Rights has condemned the laws and says "these material support provisions violate the First Amendment as they criminalize activities like distribution of literature, engaging in political advocacy, participating in peace conferences, training in human rights advocacy and donating cash and humanitarian assistance, even when this type of support is intended only to promote lawful and nonviolent activities."

Attorney James Fennerty said, "These people go and visit Non Governmental Organizations who are funded by the United Nations and some countries in Europe. What's the crime in that?"

Fennerty warned the subpoenas are a threat to the First Amendment and freedom of speech and association.

Delegations have visited members of Congress, some who are outraged by the raids and subpoenas. Readers can call Attorney General Eric Holder and U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald and condemn the use of the grand jury to repress antiwar and solidarity movements. Fitzgerald's telephone number is 312-353-5300.

Huelga general en Portugal

Por Emile Schepers

Una huelga masiva general de un día paralizó a Portugal el 24 de noviembre, como respuesta a la llamada de las principales federaciones sindicales a unirse para denunciar las medidas de austeridad impuestas por el Primer Ministro Jose Socrates, del Partido Socialista.

Reportaron los medios de comunicación cierres completos en muchas áreas a las líneas aéreas, transporte público, las oficinas de la administración pública y escuelas y centros de salud a través de Portugal y en los territorios autónomos, las islas de Azores y Madeira. Aunque la columna vertebral de la huelga consistió de los trabajadores del gobierno, también hubieron reportajes de cierres de bancos y fábricas. Entre un millón y medio y tres millones de trabajadores podrían haber permanecido en casa en este país de apenas 10 millones de habitantes.

Portugal es la "P" en el tal llamado grupo "PIIGS" de las naciones más pobres de Europa Occidental que son miembros de la Unión Europea y comparten la moneda "euro". Los otros son Irlanda, Italia, Grecia y España. Todos estos países se han visto afectados por la crisis de la deuda, con un déficit presupuestario más allá de lo que la normativa de la Unión

Europea permite, que quiere decir que la deuda nacional está cerca o excede el Producto Interno Bruto (en Portugal, más del 80 por ciento). Esto está dando lugar a fuertes aumentos en el costo de los préstamos. A pesar de las diferencias en la composición política de sus gobiernos actuales, todos ellos han respondido con medidas de austeridad, designadas a tranquilizar los mercados financieros que han golpeado fuerte sobre todo a los trabajadores y a los pobres en especial. El Sr. Socrates dice que Portugal no necesitará tal rescate, aunque esto es lo que el gobierno irlandés decía hace una semana, justo antes de que se vio obligado a ir con el sombrero en la mano en busca de tal ayuda.

Portugal ya vio protestas masivas contra las medidas de austeridad en mayo. Ahora el gobierno que todavía enfrenta grandes déficits presupuestarios ha decidido imponer un programa de austeridad, incluyendo un aumento de un punto porcentual en el valor regresivo IVA (del 20 al 21 por ciento), un aumento de los impuestos sobre la renta, y recortes de hasta 5 por ciento anual en las pensiones y los salarios de los funcionarios públicos en general. Una votación sobre estas medidas tuvo lugar en el Parlamento portugués el 26 de noviembre.

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