

PEOPLE'S WORLD

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December 4, 2009

Jobs not bombs

By PW Editorial Board

President Obama's decision to send 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan has generated skepticism and dismay among his supporters. And rightly so. We've said it before, and we say it again, joining a wide spectrum of Americans: there is no military solution to the Afghanistan crisis.

The president has inherited a huge problem from the Bush-Cheney warhawks. As Obama correctly implied in his Dec. 1 West Point speech, the Bush administration was so obsessed with grabbing control of Iraq that, after invading Afghanistan and implanting a U.S. occupation and warlord-based client government there, it basically walked away, allowing chaos and suffering to build.

But we know the problem didn't start then. It was U.S. Cold War anti-communism that promoted and bankrolled the rise of Osama bin-Laden and al Qaeda, just as that same policy suppressed democratic, secular and progressive people's governments and movements around the world, helping to fuel reactionary religious extremism and terrorism itself.

War and militarism have been the tools of that Cold War policy, and an entrenched military establishment continues to wield enormous power in Washington. Obama has shown courage in seeking to turn that around, in his efforts, however halting, to promote diplomacy in the Middle East and with Iran, and his important push for global nuclear disarmament, which he mentioned in his speech. In fact, those initiatives have a bearing on resolving the Afghanistan crisis, and they need to be much more strongly pursued.

Obama briefly and indirectly alluded to the ugly Cold War history in his speech, but the fact is, people in the affected regions are well aware of this history, and rightly distrustful of U.S. military actions, and that will include this latest troop surge.

It's good that Obama linked his surge to an exit plan, saying, "After 18 months [i.e., July 2011], our troops will begin to come home." But he gave no end date. He promised to be open and honest about the cost, which he put at \$30 billion for one year, but did not give specifics about how it would be paid for. This, at a time of mounting federal debt, with Americans looking for massive federal spending to restore jobs and vital public services, fund universal and affordable health care and green our economy. Those are national security needs of vast importance, and failure to meet them will endanger the entire progressive agenda that



Obama was elected to carry out. As the body count rises from the Afghanistan war, prioritizing guns over butter could spell political defeat for the administration in 2010 and beyond, with far-right extremists riding public discontent back to control of Congress and even the White House. And that's an even bigger national security danger for our country, and the world.

Obama was short on specifics about the dynamics of the Afghanistan situation. Who exactly will those additional troops be fighting? It's not clear what "al Qaeda" actually is at this point. How will U.S. troops distinguish Taliban leaders from farmers or jobless Afghans helping the Taliban out of fear, despair over their dismal conditions, or anger over foreign occupation? And who are our allies in Afghanistan? The highly questionable Karzai government? Another set of corrupt warlords?

It is significant that even leading moderate Democrats are raising these questions with administration officials now testifying before the Senate. But, as Obama himself has reminded us so often, it's up to us, the people, to bring about the change we need.

Now more than ever, progressive Americans face the challenge of protecting, expanding and deepening the unity of the broad labor-centered people's movement, to fight for a "butter, not guns" policy, at home and abroad. We cannot allow Afghanistan to become the far right's road back to power.

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THIS WEEK:

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Labor leaders bring ideas to jobs summit

By John Wojcik

AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka went on cable television last night after attending the White House summit and said he was "encouraged" by the gathering called by the president. "I think it worked really well," Trumka said. "The president understands the urgency of job creation. He said it on numerous occasions: jobs, jobs, jobs. I think his staff and Cabinet understand the importance of job creation. A lot of good ideas came out that are usable."

The president begins an effort to take some of those ideas out across the country when he speaks today in Allentown, Pa.

Although the summit was attended by many labor leaders calling for strong govern-

ment action, there were also many business leaders present, from companies both big and small, who the president called upon to come forward with job creation proposals.

Trumka reported that he told the president about the AFL-CIO's five-point plan for job creation, which includes aid to state and local governments to prevent layoffs and maintain vital services and creating jobs through funding projects like repairing and building infrastructure.

Nobel Prize winner and economist Paul Krugman told the president now is not the time to cut the federal deficit and that without spending money to create jobs immediately, the nation will slip into deeper recession. He

said that the corporations did not hesitate to ask for help and that workers deserve no less.

Change To Win Chair Anna Burger proposed taxing Wall Street transactions to help pay for rescuing Main Street. She also backed House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's proposal to use the remaining \$200 billion in TARP funds to increase credit for small businesses.

A third idea put forward by Burger would expand home energy retrofitting, which began under the stimulus law, and extend it to schools and public buildings, while creating a "Green Bank" to use public money to leverage private investment in building energy-efficient and renewable-energy products.

Union goes on the offensive with charter schools

By Lance Cohen

Hugo Hernandez is a key person in a unique labor organizing initiative here. On June 18, teachers at three Chicago charter schools voted to form a union in order to improve their working conditions. Over 70 percent of the teachers chose ACTS, Alliance of Charter Teachers and Staff, to represent them.

They withstood challenges by the charter schools' management, Civitas, which claimed the teachers had no right to form a union. Negotiations began the following month and led to across the board gains in salary, benefits, class size as well as curriculum and professional development. According to one of the teacher negotiators, Emily Mueller, "both sides acted in good faith, students and teachers came out the clear winners." This union victory was put into perspective by Hernandez, the national representative for the American Federation of Teachers and the project director of Chicago ACTS:

"In July of 2000, the AFT convention passed a resolution supporting charter school teachers. Former AFT President Al Shanker originally promoted innovative lab schools to develop new ideas to help public schools. It was hijacked by corporate America."

I first got involved in 2006 as AFT national representative in Florida. I was assigned to Pembroke Pines Charter Schools which had 350 teachers. We succeeded in organizing seven schools into a union in a 'right-to-work state.' This first historic victory was the spark for a national organizing drive.

"Teachers were calling from all over the country for help. Chicago was chosen because it was considered ground zero due since it has one of the largest number of charter schools in the country. The Civitas teachers had been trying to organize for almost a year, and they had been asking for help."



Local 1 President Marilyn Stewart asked for help. ACTS became the charter school bargaining union because Illinois state law forbids the Chicago Teachers Union [AFT, Local 1] from organizing charter school employees.

The Alliance of Charter School Teachers and Staff is a joint venture sponsored by the AFT, CTU and the Illinois Federation of Teachers.

"This is just the beginning. Our public school teachers and organized charter school teachers will play a vital role in future organizing drives. Solidarity is the key to success. We have just started a rank and file charter school advisory committee. This includes teachers from all over the country who have been organized or are having contract battles."

To volunteer go to www.chicagoacts.org.

Our public school teachers and organized charter school teachers will play a vital role in future organizing drive.

LOCAL NEWS

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Worrying about Afghan surge's impact

By John Rummel

With all the problems people here are struggling with, trying to stop the escalation of the Afghanistan war was not one they wanted or needed to add to their to-do list. But the 100-plus people who marched in the rain here recently connected the dots between rough times at home and needed funds wasted on an Afghan troop buildup.

Kim Siegel, a junior at Wayne State University, didn't have to stop and think. "Students and education" would be a more productive place to spend the nation's money and resources, she said. "Tuition will be going up from \$9,000 to \$14,000 over the next five years" and students lost \$4,000 over four years from cuts to state scholarships.

Lydia Wylie-Kellermann moved back to Detroit to do community organizing and is helping with an urban farming project. "Anything else, other than war, would be a great way to spend \$30 billion."

Al Fishman, Detroit Area Peace and Justice Network coordinator, said if he had the opportunity to speak with the president he would ask, "How is an invasion of Afghanistan going to deal a blow to the al-Qaeda network when the network is scattered throughout the world?"

It needs to be treated "as an international conspiracy, because Al-Qaeda is now in Indonesia, many countries in Europe, Somalia, so an international effort of policing is needed," he said.

¿Qué líneas aéreas, hoteles, y agencias de coches de alquiler se están ecologizando a un costo

By Paul Kaczocha

Querido DiálogoEcológico: Soy un agente de viajes y nuestra empresa tiene varios clientes que quieren contratar vendedores "verdes", incluyendo para el viaje (la línea aérea o el coche de alquiler) y alojos. Nuestra compañía apoya esta idea y por tanto querría saber qué líneas aéreas, hoteles, y agencias de coches de alquiler se están ecologizando a un costo razonable? Carol, a través de email

Como en toda industria, la visión ecológica ha llegado a ser un mantra entre las líneas aéreas, las compañías de alquiler de coches e incluso las cadenas hoteleras. La crisis de combustible hace algunos años forzó a todas las líneas aéreas a apretarse el cinturón y los resultados - consumo más bajo de combustible y menos emisiones - son buenas noticias para el ambiente.

Boeing, uno de los fabricantes más importantes de aviones del mundo, está cumpliendo con su deber: Su nuevo 787 es 20 por ciento más eficiente en combustible que otros aviones grandes de pasajeros. Pero además de ahorrar combustible - que también reduce emisiones - las líneas aéreas están instituyendo rutinas de reciclaje en los vuelos mismos, integrando biocombustibles sin carbón, y eliminando el papel para reducir los desechos. Continental, British Airways, Singapore Air, American Airlines, JetBlue, Southwest y Virgin están entre los

líderes de la industria en el esfuerzo de ecologización, pero la mayoría de las líneas aéreas han dado zancadas inmensas en los últimos años para reducir sus huellas de carbón en general.

Con respecto a los alojos, la moda ecológica no es solo para albergues juveniles y colonias de vacaciones. En una inspección reciente, más de dos tercios de los hoteles de EEUU indicaron que tenían luces eficientes en energía y que habían aplicado programas de reuso de toallas y lino - un incremento de un tercio con respecto a solo la mitad cinco años atrás. Según la revista Budget Travel, Accor/Motel6, Intercontinental, Marriott, Starwood, Hilton, Hyatt, Best Western y Wyndham/Super8 todos han dado grandes zancadas en la conservación de energía y agua, reciclaje y diseño ecológico en los últimos pocos años. Aparte de las cadenas, muchos hoteles independientes han tomado también la batuta verde; es muy probable que usted encuentre uno o más en su destino a través del sitio web de la Green Hotels Association [Asociación Hotelera Ecológica].

En cuanto a las compañías de coche de alquiler, casi todas ofrecen estos días selecciones grandes de carros eficientes en combustible, si por ninguna otra razón que satisfacer las demandas de clientes tanto de negocios como turistas que no desean gastar demasiado en gasolina. Hertz, Avis, Budget y En-

terprise cada una tiene flotas grandes de carros híbridos y/o flex-fuel (etanol) para alquilar en cientos de ubicaciones de aeropuerto y en ciudades por toda norteamérica.

Advantage Rent-a-Car por su parte ha prometido convertir un 100 por ciento de su flota al protocolo ecológico para 2010. Por ahora, alquilar un híbrido todavía cuesta típicamente \$5-15 más por día que un carro convencional equivalente, pero cuando las compañías de coche de alquiler pongan más de estos vehículos en línea, los precios deberán comenzar a alcanzar paridad. Y si usted maneja un montón de kilómetros en el carro, es posible que acabe eliminando la diferencia a causa de los ahorros en combustible. Los viajeros al Bay Area deben tener presente que el Aeropuerto internacional de San Francisco ofrece un crédito de \$15 para alquilar un híbrido de cualquiera de las compañías de coche de alquiler que operan allí.

Viajar por cualquier medio que no sea a pie, por bicicleta o a remo siempre impone un costo al ambiente, pero los que están conscientes de sus huellas de carbón - y están al tanto de que proveedores de servicios ofrecen los cursos de acción más "verdes" - pueden mantener sus impactos a un mínimo. Visite a menudo sitios web como Go Green Travel Green para las últimas informaciones sobre lo que las líneas aéreas, hoteles, compañías de alquiler de coches y otros negocios relacionados con viajes están haciendo para "ecologizar" sus industrias.

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