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Corporate America - you didn't build that

By Scott Marshall

Remember during the 2012 elections when President Obama said, "You didn't build that." He was talking to big corporate America. He made the point that billions of tax dollars go into building infrastructure critical to the success for all kinds of businesses. You know, things like highways so that goods can be transported, or communications, research and development. That's not to mention the billions of public capital spent on education and training to prepare workers with the skills to actually build things.

After he said that, they had a fit in the corporate boardrooms and on Fox News! "Oh," they cried, "not only did we build our businesses, but we too pay taxes."

But the truth is (not even counting the billions of public dollars spent to support business), you still didn't build that!

It reminds me of Michael Moore's great program, TV Nation. They had a segment called CEO Challenge. Where CEOs were asked to do something with the product "they" make. For example the CEO of IBM didn't know how to format a computer disk. It was obvious he didn't build that.

Very few CEOs have any idea of the real work that goes into building the products that they sell. Very few owners and CEOs of big corporations



have a clue as to exactly how their products are designed, tested, and built. Only in the smallest of companies do the owners spend real time in the workplace seeing or participating in actually building a product. So no, you really didn't build that.

What the owners really do, for the most part, is provide capital. Sometimes they actually have a good idea that they then get others to bring to life and then get others to figure out how to build.

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Other times they take good ideas from people who really do the work. So, no matter how you look at it, teams of workers who organize, design, and actually do the physical work, build most things.

The other thing that owners do is take the bulk of the profits from the things that others

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build and from the work that others perform. Everyone who works making things or providing services for a corporation instinctively knows that the money made off of the goods and services they produce are higher than the actual costs of wages, machinery, services, and other overhead. Or profit wouldn't be made. But owners (who think that they made that) claim all the profits.

You don't have to be a socialist to see that they didn't actually build that. Further you don't have to be a socialist to understand that real democracy should mean that as a part of the team that actually built that, you should have some say in how that profit is distributed and spent.

Let's call that social capital, as opposed to private capital. We need a much wider discussion of the idea of democracy and social capital in the modern world. It's not only a question of higher corporate and wealth taxes that can be used for the common good of society. It's also understanding that those higher taxes don't only come out of the pocket of the corporation and the rich that didn't build that, they also come out of the hard

work of those who actually did build that. Not to mention that workers also pay taxes, often more than their employers.

Workers pay into social capital not only through their own taxes but also through their hard work that produces a large part of the actual capital that owners pay in taxes. It is only democratic that we have a greater say in how social funds are used.

Actually, Abraham Lincoln, said it: "Labor is prior to, and independent of, capital. Capital is only the fruit of labor, and could never have existed if labor had not first existed. Labor is the superior of capital, and deserves much the higher consideration."

What a great, short argument for social capital! And that should mean more spending, not less, on education, housing, health care, and other human needs. It should mean more social capital for the common good.



Scott Marshall writes for Peoplesworld.org.

Protest online privacy bill

By PW Editorial Board

The Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act, also known as CIPSA, would allow corporations to share your online data with the government in real time. Is anyone else experiencing déjà vu with CIPSA? If you have been paying attention to privacy laws, you may have noticed CIPSA back in 2011 when it was first introduced by Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Mich., and 111 co-sponsors. Rep. Dutch Ruppersberger, D-Md., and Rogers re-introduced the bill in February, after it failed to pass Congress last year.

CIPSA has been met with strong opposition. In response, 30,000-plus websites, including Reddit and Craig's List, are part of a week of action this week. Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the World Wide Web, opposes the bill saying CIPSA threatens "the rights of people in America, and effectively rights everywhere, because what happens in America tends to affect people all over the world."

Berners-Lee then refers to the massive online campaigns last year that stopped Congress from passing SOPA (Stop Online Privacy Act) and PIPA (Preventing Real Online Threats to Economic Creativity and Theft of Intellectual Property Act). At the time, President Barack Obama expressed opposition to the bill saying that if passed he would veto it. "Even though the SOPA and PIPA acts were stopped by huge public outcry, it's staggering how quickly the U.S. government has come back with a new, different, threat to the rights of its citizens," he said. CIPSA isn't just coming out of the blue, but is partially a response to a series of cyber attacks on U.S. government and U.S.-based corporate networks.

The bill does have supporters, like AT&T, Facebook and Verizon to name a few. Many who oppose CIPSA say something needs to be done to make the Internet a more secure and safe place, but sacrificing the online privacy of American citizens will not provide a viable solution. They are right.

CISPA has been met with strong opposition.

Bus tour solicits New Yorkers' priorities for schools

By Estevan Nembhard

After more than a decade of Mayor Michael Bloomberg's corporate restructuring of public education, a coalition of community groups hit the streets to ask New Yorkers, especially parents, what their priorities really were.

"When there is more collaboration, our school system is that much better," said New York City Comptroller John Liu, a progressive candidate for the 2013 mayor's race, during a recent press conference launch of the PS 2013 A+ Bus tour.

The press conference and bus tour were organized by A+ NYC, a diverse coalition.

The bus went to all five boroughs and made over 25 stops speaking to parents like Minerva Morales of the Bronx who said, "Co-location at my son's school means that his class has lunch at 10:30 in the morning. That might make sense to a businessman but not a mother."

Morales is a member of Coalition for Educational Justice and likes the direction the movement is headed in. "The PS 2013 Bus tour gave a chance for parents to say what's important to them and be connected to people and organizations that are fighting for it."

Although to some it may seem like a laundry list of concerns Morales contends they are "common sense approaches" with overwhelming support in Black, Latino and working-class communi-



natives to suspensions, curriculum that includes sports, arts creativity. It's not rocket science!"

A+ NYC was formed this past fall and began a series of "visioning" workshops. Eric Perez, a youth leader at Make the Road New York, described the process, "A+ New York set out to do something that has never been done before or at least not done often enough, which is to simply ask people what they want from their schools?"

With parent and student leaders alongside community allies, A+NYC coalition is poised to be a leading voice for working families in the 2013 mayoral elections, where the question of public education will be high on voter's lists. A May conference is being planned as the next action for the coalition.

Until then don't expect to see parent Natasha Capers waiting for Bloomberg to solicit her opinion. "The DOE says there is no parent involvement: that is untrue! There are parents involved. Parent voices are out there and we want to be heard."

The bus went to all five boroughs and made over 25 stops.

Sequester cuts to have big impact, says AFGE

By Tony Pecinovsky

Over 250 AFGE members and supporters, rallied outside Republican U.S. Senator Roy Blunt's office in St. Louis recently to protest the \$85 billion in across-the-board cuts to vital social services and the military, known as sequestration.

While Blunt has supported amending sequestration to protect meat and poultry inspectors from furloughs, this is largely seen as an attempt to placate agribusiness as there are 148 meat and poultry facilities in rural Missouri.

AFGE wants Blunt to support repealing sequestration, and raise taxes on the wealthy and corporations to help pay-down the federal budget deficit, not furlough federal employees, especially in this weak economy.

AFGE represents about 700,000 federal employees nationwide, and according to Cox "about 500,000 of them are subject to furloughs," including about 10,000 in the St. Louis area.

According to Cox, sequestration will impact "planes on the runway, air traffic controllers, sanitation and inspection workers and our veterans. This isn't just about us."

"If federal employees are furloughed without pay, if offices and plants are shut down, if vacancies aren't filled because of these across-the-board budget cuts, then federal employees won't be able to do the work that the American public expects them to do," Cox added.

As union members and their supporters rallied, they chanted, "Sequestration has got to go! We don't want no furlough!"

Martin Rafanan said, "Sequestration will impact the entire community by cutting essential services. People rely on these vital services. The least among us will suffer the most.

¡Llegó la hora!: Unidos todo se puede

Por Victor Sánchez

Hace unas pocas semanas me encontraba junto a 240 personas que se reunieron en un local sindical de Seattle para apoyar una reforma migratoria con una vía a la ciudadanía. Fue entonces que, inspirado en esta energía colectiva y única, comencé a reflexionar sobre mi experiencia como uno de los coordinadores de la campaña nacional para apoyar una reforma migratoria que está realizando la AFL-CIO. Me di cuenta que ahora es el momento clave en esta lucha para alcanzar justicia para todas las familias que aspiran a ser ciudadanos estadounidense. Que ahora sí vamos a ganar.

La gente presente y su pasión me transportaron al 2006, año cuando me encontraba en mi último año de secundaria en Los Ángeles, Calif. Pensé que el pulso de la gente era similar al que sentía en esos momentos en Seattle. ¡Hoy Marchamos, Mañana Votamos! gritaba la comunidad. ¡Escucha, escucha, estamos en la lucha! cantaban los vecinos. Marchar por las calles no solo significó una de mis primeras experiencias políticas sino también el momento en que finalmente pude asumir la historia de mis padres como inmigrantes a este país, identificándome con los millones de personas cuyas historias personales se asemejaban a la mía y a la de mi familia.

Para mí, es un verdadero privilegio poder trabajar y continuar en esta lucha que nuestra comunidad comenzó hace años. Hemos llegado a un

punto donde, gracias a nuestra participación en las elecciones presidenciales este noviembre pasado, podemos decir con confianza que llegó la hora!

Ser parte de la organización de eventos de la AFL-CIO en ciudades como Atlanta, Denver, Portland, Anaheim y San Francisco, me ha dado más fuerzas para seguir luchando por una reforma migratoria justa y funcional para nuestras familias. A pesar de encontrarnos a siete años de las manifestaciones en Los Ángeles, hoy en día seguimos adelante a través de la nación con energía, pasión, y el enfoque en la igualdad y los derechos del migrante.

Esta energía y búsqueda por una reforma justa continuará mientras sigamos participando en eventos o foros educativos, y en marchas o juntas legislativas. Las semanas entrantes nos darán la oportunidad de subrayar la importancia de la reforma ante miembros del Congreso cuando regresen de su descanso a finales de marzo y principios de abril.

Este momento nunca se repetirá. Tenemos la oportunidad de cambiar a esta nación, de incluir nuestras historias en la historia estadounidense, pero todo depende de nosotros. No podemos detenernos aquí y es nuestro deber seguir avanzando. Lo más importante es organizarnos, unirnos, hablar y actuar. Hay que mantener los ojos bien abiertos y caminar hacia la justicia. Juntos, como comunidad migrante, unidos con la AFL-CIO, todo se puede.

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