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Chicago urges immigration reform

By John Bachtell

The sky didn't fall when I won my legal status during the last immigration reform of 1986 and the sky will not fall when we pass this immigration reform," said Victor Herrera. "In fact, it will be a sunny day."

Herrera was speaking at a rally July 1 in front of the Chicago office of Rep. Dan Lipinski, D-Ill., called by Organizing for Action (OFA). A similar action was held at the Springfield office of Rep. Aaron Schock, R-Ill., on July 2. With passage of legislation in the U.S. Senate, supporters of immigration reform have turned their attention to the House of Representatives where the fight promises to be much harder.

"This is way overdue. The Senate gave hope, but I'm more pessimistic about the House," Chicago Alderman Proco Joseph Moreno, III, told the People's World. "We're talking about a right-wing fringe controlling the Republican Party. Pressure needs to build in those districts where representatives are holding it back."

While immigration reform supporters are not happy with aspects of the Senate legislation, including the militarization of the border, the long wait for citizenship and onerous work requirements, it still offers the nation's 11.5 million un-



documented residents legal status, a path to citizenship and a chance to keep families together.

According to OFA the reform legislation will bolster the economy, reduce the federal deficit by \$1 trillion over 20 years, reduce state deficits and create 3.2 million new jobs.

Lipinski, a conservative Democrat who recently voted in favor of the restrictive abortion bill authored by Republicans in the House of Representatives, has been vague on his position toward

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immigration reform. This troubles many of his constituents because his district is made up of a substantial population of Latino, Polish and other immigrant residents.

Marnee Ostoa, a self described "Dreamer," offered testimony of what reform would mean for

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her and others like her.

"I came to the U.S. from Mexico at the age of 5 years old," she said. "All my life I wanted to be something big. One day I heard the Disney Channel was having an audition. My father told me even if I were accepted I wouldn't be able to do it because I was undocumented." Ostoa went anyway and won an audition in Los Angeles. But then they asked for her legal documents and her dream was crushed. Ostoa lost hope, knowing that no matter what she accomplished it was meaningless because she didn't have legal status. She dropped out of school despite getting honors.

Last year Ostoa heard about President Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and signed up. She was accepted and got her GED.

"From having no hope I now have hope and will be going to college in the fall and have a job," said Ostoa. "I believe just like it changed my life it will change other's lives. I really hope this passes."

Today Victor Herrera works for the Chicago Public Schools at Roosevelt High School and every day sees the barriers erected against undocumented youth. He's confident immigration reform will

bring people out of the shadows and allow millions to become part of the economic and social fabric of the nation. Herrera also described a recent documentary he saw about sexual abuse and rape that women immigrant workers have been enduring in fields and factories.

"If they come forward to complain they risk being deported. They are putting up with this abuse because they are fearful," said Herrera. "Comprehensive immigration reform will give these women a voice to stop the abuse."

"It is important that Rep. Lipinski, John Boehner and the folks that represent Illinois in Congress support comprehensive reform," Herrera said. Alderman Moreno said his grandfather, Proco Joseph Moreno, came here illegally from Mexico and at age 19 fought in World War II. He parachuted into during D-Day and earned two Purple Hearts.

"Even after getting an honorable discharge, his papers were still stamped 'non-citizen'. He was good enough to fight for the country but not to be a citizen. It's not right."



John Bachtell writes for Peoplesworld.org.

Labor is talking: Is the left listening?

By PW Editorial

There is a broad left current in the U.S. labor movement today. Many veterans of the rank-and-file struggles of the '60s, '70s, and '80s are now leaders of local unions, regional union bodies, and central labor councils. Some are now in national leadership positions. Further, in the mid '90s, as labor began to shed old vestiges of "business unionism," many younger rank and file activists moved into leadership positions. In the last 10 years or so, as labor takes a more class struggle stance, a whole new crop of even younger workers are moving to the fore.

This is important background to consider as the AFL-CIO prepares for its convention this September. The federation is boldly reaching out to rank and file workers including non-union workers. They have invited and helped organize "listening sessions" for many social justice communities and for movement allies. They are asking all to participate in these sessions.

The AFL-CIO highlights three main area of

discussion they would like to discuss: 1) Changing the labor movement to speak for working people now and in the future through growth, innovation and political action; 2) Creating a voice for all in the global economy; and 3) Building genuine, durable community partnerships and effective grassroots power.

Now to the main point of this article. Sessions around the country are already bearing fruit. Participants report free-flowing good discussion and good ideas. Each session prepares a reportback to the AFL-CIO with concrete suggestions and proposals.

The problem is that too many on the left are not organizing or participating in these sessions. There is too much cynicism from afar, rather than engagement on the ground. We on the left should be in the thick of these events. To be fully successful, mobilization from below, from the rank and file and grassroots, is essential. Can we get our local unions, our retirees' organizations, our churches, and our community organizations to host a session?

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Striking workers rally in Oakland

By Marilyn Bechtel

A massive noontime rally at Oakland's City Hall July 1 brought together striking Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) workers and Oakland city workers protesting what they said were management's refusal to increase wages, and demands for givebacks, despite rising revenues.

Some 2,400 striking BART workers struck the system that serves riders in San Francisco and surrounding cities after their contract expired at midnight June 30. Leaders of some 2,500 unionized city workers said further stoppages could follow their one-day strike unless negotiations progress.

Demands of the BART workers, members of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1555 and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1021, include passenger and worker safety, and a pay raise after five years without one and significant givebacks four years ago. Workers also reject demands that they pay or pay more for health care and pensions. The unions point to BART's record ridership and resulting operating surplus.

ATU 1555 President Antonette Bryant asked rally participants to hold up four quarters. "Yesterday, that's what BART offered our employees - a dollar a year," she said. "Don't be fooled by the press saying 8 percent [over four years], it



was \$1." Bryant also focused on safety, citing increased assaults on passengers and workers, and "equipment that causes us to be injured."

Before the rally, bargaining committee member James Riddle, a BART transit vehicle mechanic for nearly 23 years, backed Bryant's concerns about safety, noting that two workers have been struck by trains in the past year, and over 1,000 passengers and workers have been assaulted during that time.

The Oakland city workers are represented by Local 1021 and by the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers Local 21.

At the rally, SEIU International Secretary-Treasurer Eliseo Medina was flanked by national and state SEIU leaders as he put the strike in a national context: "You are part of a struggle that is going on in this country. Workers are saying it's time for the greedy bankers, the developers and the corporations to pay their fair share of maintaining vital public services."

The city unions say their action is an unfair labor practices strike because city leaders won't provide vital information about why they are demanding concessions amounting to 10 percent of workers' wages.

2,400 striking BART workers struck in in San Francisco and surrounding cities after their contract expired at midnight June 30.

Dallas rally says “Restore the Fourth”

By Jim Lane

More than 100 people celebrated the 4th of July in Dallas by demanding an end to U.S. government spying on its citizens. The Dallas action was an all-day event in the new Klyde Warren Park uptown. Nearly all the participants were 20-something-year-olds who had never been on a street action in their lives before. One of the signs, which drew a lot of noisy responses, said, “Honk if your phone is tapped!”

One of the Dallas organizers, Michael, who did not give his last name, appeared on KNON radio’s “Workers Beat” program on the 6th. He said “Restore the Fourth doesn’t refer to” Independence Day, but rather to the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which is supposed to protect U.S. citizens from unreasonable search and seizure. Millions of felonies are being committed by government agents who record data on phone calls, e-mails, and every letter that passes through the U.S. Post Office, Michael said.

Several callers asked, “What’s all the fuss about?” because, they said, Americans, especially African Americans, have been painfully aware of government spying since the days of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Michael responded that no one knew the incredible extent of government spying before the Snowden revelations, and that an informed and active populace can end government excesses and restore the Fourth Amendment.

Secuestro de Evo Morales sienta un mal precedente

Por Prensa Latina

El secuestro del presidente boliviano, Evo Morales, en Europa constituye un hecho condenable y sienta un mal precedente, aseguró el senador por el Movimiento Al Socialismo (MAS) René Martínez.

El otrora presidente de la Cámara alta, advirtió que “lo ocurrido es un hecho condenable, un mal precedente, que, además, tiene trazas evidentes de criminalidad”.

Si el avión presidencial hubiese estado con limitaciones de combustible, esto podía haber generado un riesgo de consecuencias funestas en la vida de nuestro presidente, Evo Morales, destacó. Al mismo tiempo, insistió que la prohibición al avión presidencial de sobrevolar el espacio aéreo de varios países europeos y realizar operaciones “constituye una violación flagrante a las normas de la diplomacia internacional, como son la Convención de Chicago y la Convención de Viena”.

“Creo que no puede ponerse en riesgo la vida de un presidente, solamente por un comentario que a estas alturas resulta ser una mentira de justificación que tiene nombre y apellido y es responsabilidad del gobierno estadounidense, lamentablemente con la complicidad de Portugal, España, Italia y Francia”, añadió el congresista. Martínez criticó la posición de los gobiernos de los referidos países y aseguró que “lamentablemente, los colonizadores de ayer son los colonizados hoy, obedeciendo y subordinados a los intereses norteamericanos, que ha permitido esta flagrante violación de normativas internacionales”.

“Seguramente todo esto va a tener un alto costo político, porque a estas alturas es un hecho criminal el negar el uso del espacio aéreo a una misión oficial que, con absoluta normalidad y el derecho que nos asiste a todos los ciudadanos en el mundo, se trasladaba de un evento internacional hacia su propio país”, resaltó el senador.

El presidente de la Comisión de Seguridad del Estado, Fuerzas Armadas y Policía Boliviana en la Cámara alta destacó además que “lo acontecido con Morales permitirá discutir, como países de América Latina, la necesidad de garantizar la seguridad de nuestros Estados”.

“Deberíamos discutir lo de las bases militares en la región, lo de Guantánamo, el problema de Las Malvinas, y lo ocurrido a nuestro presidente, porque no recuerdo que en los últimos años, por lo menos acá, sucediera un hecho similar, en el cual un mandatario constitucionalmente establecido haya sido confinado políticamente”, insistió. Por otra parte, el senador destacó la reacción de la Cámara de Senadores y su posición unánime de crítica y condena hacia la posición de los referidos países contra el mandatario boliviano.

“Ha habido una reacción unánime, movilizada, minuto a minuto desde que se conocieron estos hechos”, recaló.

También se refirió a la “manifestación espontánea a las puertas de la Embajada de Francia, por parte de los sectores sociales y no solamente de la representación legislativa, sino, sobre todo, de la sociedad civil que ha estado atenta hasta horas de la madrugada”.

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