

# PEOPLE'S WORLD

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## Five steps to get ready for 2012

By Sam Webb

**T**he 2012 elections are casting a long shadow over the nation's politics, economics and public discourse.

For the Republican right, electoral success next year is crucial in order to radically transform the country to the advantage of the most reactionary sections of monopoly capital and their mixed bag of dangerous allies.

No one on their side, including tea baggers, is going to stay home on Election Day 2012. They will all be expected to march to the polls and bring others with them.

For our side of the struggle, the 2012 elections are of paramount importance too. No other struggle has the same possibility to rearrange the political balance of forces in a progressive direction, to put the working class and people's counteroffensive onto a new forward trajectory.

Some on the left disagree, and advocate either staying home or making a "strategic break" with the two-party system. But there are three questions that must be asked:

\* Would staying home or making a "strategic break" enhance the chances of beating the right?

\* Are millions of people and their organizations ready to drop the Democratic Party and form a big, broad, labor/people-based political party in the near term?

\* Are the differences between Republican and



Democratic parties so insignificant that it doesn't matter who wins?

The answer to each of these questions is an emphatic "No."

While millions understandably feel dissatisfied with the Democratic Party, it hasn't risen to the point where they are ready to bolt anytime soon. Nor are they ready to dismiss the differences, say, between House Republican Paul Ryan's budget plan and the plan that President Obama outlined.

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The aggressive role of right-wing extremism in recent months has only reinforced these sentiments.

Politics is a complex and impure process. And as the Rolling Stones sang, "You can't always get

**But here's the rub. Both the left and the Communist Party are too small given the scope of today's challenges.**

what you want." In which case, you try to get what you need with what is available. That's not pragmatism, but political realism. Thus, for now, the only vehicle that can beat the right in elections is the Democratic Party.

So what is to be done?

Here are five things that strike me as critical.

\* The further building of the spirited, hopeful, visionary, labor-led people's coalition and counteroffensive in every neighborhood, city and state, and nationwide, is at the top of the agenda.

This movement is the power base of any progressive turn in our nation's politics. Take it out of the equation and only minor reforms are possible at best.

But neither our nation nor the world can afford another era of right-wing-dominated politics. The price is too steep. The future of humankind and the planet is too fragile.

\* The next task is to deepen the unity of this movement. Only a broad movement that unites all labor and all its possible allies has the political capacity to push the country down a progressive path and safeguard the future.

\* A requirement of any progressive and radi-

cal agenda is an elevated and sustained struggle for racial and gender equality. Both are of strategic importance.

\* There is a burning need for us to engage our adversaries on an ideological level. Our side fights with one hand behind its back when it doesn't bring persuasive arguments and compelling stories into the marketplace of public opinion.

When the broader movement takes part in the battle of ideas, people respond positively. Some ideas already resonate with millions.

The image of socialism as economically just, ecologically sustainable, democratic, peaceful, and part of the American experience can and does resonate as well.

\* Finally, a bigger left and Communist Party is necessary for any sustained and far-reaching political advances. It is a fact that progressive and democratic breakthroughs in our nation's history have been bound up with popular uprisings in which a growing left played a critical role. There is no reason to think it will be any different going forward.



**Sam Webb is the Communist Party National Chair.**

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## **GOP budget would shift the country sharply to the right**

By PW Editorial Board

**P**resident Obama got it right when he said the Republican Party's goal "is less about reducing the deficit than it is about changing the basic social compact in America."

Forged in the great social struggles of the 1930s and 1960s, this social contract upholds the right to organize unions, a minimum standard of living for the elderly, as well as voting, housing and health care rights for victims of historic discrimination.

Undergirding this 20th century social contract is the idea that government has a role to play in regulating excesses in the capitalist economy and assisting the poor, the disabled and the elderly.

This role is now seen as harming the corporate bottom line. The U.S. ruling class and, indeed, the ruling classes of other developed capitalist countries see it as interfering with business "competitiveness."

Business has come to an ideological and political consensus: "We can no longer afford it." These concepts have risen to the level of policy in

the Republican Party budget, passed by the U.S. House of Representatives last week. It would end Medicare and Medicaid, cut Head Start and Pell grants and slash food stamps by over 20 percent.

The GOP majority in the House has declared open class war on the American people.

This assault, combined with the union-busting and budget-cutting measures of Republican governors, is a sign of what will be in store if the ruling-class extremists win in 2012.

Some Democrats, including the president, now seem to be taking a more assertive posture. Politics, however, does not begin at the top and, as recent events have clearly shown, cannot be left there. A massive fightback from below is required to deal the right-wing extremists a severe blow. Only this will allow friendly but wavering politicians to do the right thing.

Republican Paul Ryan called the GOP budget "a defining moment." The congressional GOP's unanimous vote cast the die.

The battle for the soul of America has begun.

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# Overturning child labor laws: top priority for the GOP

By Joe Sims

Republican operatives recently opened up a new front: rolling back child labor laws. In Maine and Missouri, bills have been introduced into state legislatures to overturn legislation first introduced in the 19th century to prevent the exploitation of children.

In Maine, Republican state senators have introduced LD 1345, which would allow a sub-minimum youth “training” wage and significantly increase the number of hours teenagers are permitted to work while in school.

Maine was one of the first states to pass child protection laws in 1847.

The Maine bill, according to AlterNet, would “allow employers to pay anyone under 20 a six-month ‘training wage’ that falls more than \$2 per hour below the minimum wage, eliminate rules establishing a maximum number of hours kids 16 and over can work during school days, allow those under 16 to work up to four hours per school day, allow home-schooled kids to work during school hours and eliminate any limit on how many hours kids of any age can work in agriculture (with a signature from their parents or legal guardians).”

A companion bill, LD 516, would permit teenagers to work up to 11 p.m.

The National Law Employment Project, along with the Maine Peoples Alliance, has taken out a statewide ad in Maine, calling on far-right Gov. Paul LePage not to support the move.

In Missouri, the proposals are even more drastic. The bill, SB 222, was introduced by state Sen. Jane Cunningham, and, under its provisions, “children under the age of 14 would no longer be barred from employment. They’d also be able to work all hours of the day, no longer need a work permit from their school and be able to work at motels and resorts so long as they’re given a place to lay their weary heads each night. Moreover,



businesses that employ children would no longer be subject to inspections from the Division of Labor Standards.”

Even some Republicans in Maine are alarmed about the bill there. “This bill,” writes Maine Republican Mark Bulmer in an op-ed for the Portland Press Herald, “will allow employers to hire fewer people currently in the unemployment line, while maximizing young people’s working hours and pocketing more profit.”

While Maine and Missouri are on the front line of the drive to exploit children, a broader effort is at work, as many in the extreme right Republican Party believe that federal protections on child labor are unconstitutional. Among them are Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, GOP presidential hopeful Gary Johnson and Clarence Thomas.

For Maine’s Republican politicians, however, the issue seems to be strictly business: “Nobody objects when a kid gets on the bus at 2 p.m. and doesn’t get home until 11 o’clock at night, nine hours later, because he or she is off playing a sport—some of those kids are working way more hours than 20,” says Sen. Debra Plowman, a Hampden Republican.

Plowman is a sponsor of the bill.

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## We are one on May Day

By Joelle Fishman

**I**nternational Worker's Day has come home. Out of the depths of the raging class war against public workers, their unions and all working people, has arisen a call by the labor movement from Wisconsin to Connecticut to rally on May Day.

The resurgence in our country of May Day, International Workers Day, sparked by the mega marches for immigrant rights five years ago, reflects a growing understanding of the power and necessity of worker solidarity.

In Connecticut, a full day of marches, rallies and activities will be capped off with the annual People's World Newsmaker Awards in New Haven, honoring state workers, their unions and the services they provide.

At 1 p.m. on May 1 in Hartford's Bushnell Park, thousands of workers are expected to gather for a massive labor rally. State elected officials and members of Congress are scheduled to be on hand.

May Day has been sidelined by red-baiting and anti-Communism in our country since the anti-labor political repression of the 1950s. But in the 1930s, May Day marches brought working women and men together across trade, profession, race, nationality and age lines. The songs, banners and unity raised sights and gave strength for the battles ahead.

The significance of labor's embrace of May Day as an occasion to rally for workers' rights and immigrant rights is accentuated by the union-led We Are One rallies held on April 4, the date Martin Luther King was assassinated while in Memphis to support striking sanitation workers.

This joining together of the labor movement with the civil rights, immigrant rights and international worker movements is essential to stop the destruction of every gain ever won in the past century.

## Crece quejas por tácticas de la Migra en Detroit

Por John Rummel

**S**igue creciendo la ira popular aquí por un incidente pasado el 31 de marzo cuando la primaria Academia Hope [esperanza] de Detroit fue rodeada por agentes de Aduanas e Inmigración (ICE, por sus siglas en inglés) en seis vehículos tipo SUV con vidrios oscuros, aterrorizando a alumnos, padres de familia y empleados.

La noche de este lunes, el congresista por Illinois, Luis Gutiérrez, encabezó una reunión de más de mil personas aquí en la sala del Local 600 de los United Auto Workers [el sindicato unido de trabajadores del auto, UAW por sus siglas en inglés] para protestar la redada en la escuela y otros abusos recientes por parte de la oficina local de ICE. Entre los incidentes más recientes que han causado protestas son la negación a una mujer embarazada de su medicamento de receta cuando estaba detenida y numerosos cateos extrajudiciales ilegales que han aterrorizados a la gran población latina del suroeste de Detroit, cerca de Dearborne y a las oficinas del Local 600.

La reunión fue patrocinada por la Alianza pro Derechos Inmigrantes, y Reforma de Michigan. Asistían al evento los congresistas demócratas Hansen Clark y John Conyers, los representantes estatales George Darany y Harvey Santana, la vicepresidente internacional de la UAW, Cindy Estrada, y un representante de la oficina de la representante estatal Rashida Tlaib. Gutiérrez, que recurre actualmente a 20 ciudades para buscar una reforma migratoria, llamaba enfáticamente por fijar la responsabilidad de los oficiales de la ICE por sus acciones indebidas e ilegales. "Cuando los encargados de la aplicación de la

ley tomen la ley en sus propias manos, están en peligro todas nuestras libertades civiles," dijo.

"Cada acción de la ICE, cada deportación, y cada nuevo abuso trae consigo toda una vida de consecuencias para las familias," declaró Gutiérrez. "El impacto sobre las comunidades inmigrantes por todo el país ha sido inmenso, y las historias que estoy escuchando resultan angustiosas y horribles."

Ángela Reyes, directora de la Corporación por el Desarrollo Hispano de Detroit, dijo que el comportamiento de los oficiales de la ICE en Detroit revela un patrono de abusos. "Hemos documentado numerosos ejemplos de las violaciones más descaradas," dijo. "La oficina local de ICE en Detroit viola rutinariamente tanto sus propias políticas que los derechos civiles de los inmigrantes y los ciudadanos norteamericanos. Esto no es obra de unos pocos agentes que hacen lo suyo, pero más bien un patrono de comportamiento. El liderazgo de la ICE tiene que tomar control de sus propios oficiales".

La parada de Gutierrez en Detroit fue parte de su recorrida por 20 ciudades, "El cambio exige valentía". Su recorrida llega en un momento crítico. Fue deportado un número récord de 393.000 inmigrantes durante el año pasado, atrayendo críticas entre comunidades inmigrantes y latinas. Gutierrez y otros activistas migratorios esperan motivarle al presidente Obama a dirigirse a la cuestión antes de las elecciones cruciales de 2012.

Gutiérrez dijo, "Solo le pedimos que use la discreción que posee por implemente la ley para que puedan seguir unidas las familias de ciudadanas norteamericanas".

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