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CWA: “We’ve had no choice but to fight”

By Teresa Albano



Carolyn Wade didn't go looking for a fight, but she's in the middle of a big one. Some call it a war on workers.

“We've had no choice but to fight,” Wade said.

Wade, a former social worker for the state of New Jersey, is on the front line of a fightback against the right-wing and corporate-led attack on collective bargaining and worker rights.

“We are going to win this war,” she pledged. “We're going to lose some battles, but we will win this war.”

Wade is a local and national leader of the Communications Workers of America, and was just elected to the union's international executive board at the CWA convention here July 11. “We need a fighter that's tenacious, intelligent and militant” and can go up against the Scott Walkers and Chris Christies, said one of the delegates who spoke for her nomination.

“Fight back” is the indisputable theme during this convention of the 700,000-member union.

Speeches yesterday by CWA President Larry Cohen and Rep. George Miller, D.-Calif. (the only non-CWA speaker at the convention) showed a union that will not go quietly into the corporate-designed night, a union that works with labor and community allies to build a strong fightback on behalf of working people.

“Movement building means capturing the emotions of our nation as we fight back,” Cohen said in the convention's opening session. “We will need new tactics and approaches. Governors like Walker and Kasich [Ohio] and Daniels [Indiana] and Christie make up new rules to crush us.”

Delegates gave a rousing ovation to the report that CWA was a part of a broad labor and community movement, Stand Up Ohio, that collected 1.3 million signatures to repeal union-busting SB 5.

Cohen called on all CWA members to capture the “spirit” of Wisconsin and Ohio, as well as Egypt, Tunisia and Italy, where people united

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and peacefully stood up for democracy and worker rights.

He also gave a quick lesson on political econ-

**CWA President
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omy. According to his graphs, real wages rose until around 1973, when they began to stagnate and then decline. The decline in wages followed the decline in collective bargaining, with union membership peaking at almost 36 percent of the workforce around 1953.

In the early 1970s, productivity also continued to rise, and at the same time wages began to drop in relationship to the amount of goods and services produced. If wages had been tied to productivity, workers would be making on average \$500 more per week.

Cohen praised President Barack Obama, but he didn't extend the praise to all Democrats, expressing disappointment at the shortfall between expectations and results.

The 2008 elections ushered in results that were much better than the alternative if the GOP had won, he said.

"But they do not approach the changes we need to improve our standard of living or to reverse the decline in bargaining rights," he said, echoing a similar approach outlined by AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka in May.

Faced with a few Democrats who "carried wa-

ter" and voted for Republican Chris Christie's plan to gut union rights and pensions for New Jersey public workers, Wade said the union movement in that state is thinking "strategically" on how to hold those elected officials accountable.

"We don't want to hand the Republicans the state Assembly in November," she said. "But those who voted against workers' interests will not get our endorsement and [financial] support."

Local presidents, political action teams and others at CWA's grassroots are responding to the call. "We are in the fight of our lives right now and we have to get out in the streets because they are trying to turn clocks back 70 years," said CWA Local 7777 President Lisa Bolton of Colorado. Bolton is a 30-year employee with Qwest (now merged with Centurylink) and is currently a customer data technician

Bolton said there was definite depression among her members after the Employee Free Choice Act was blocked from passage in 2009, but then "you have to move to the next thing."



Teresa Albano is reporting from Las Vegas.

Social Security on the line

By PW Editorial Board

The White House let it be known it may offer cuts in Social Security in exchange for getting Republicans to agree to raise taxes on the rich to resolve the federal debt crisis.

First, let us emphasize that this "crisis" is solely of the Republicans' making.

They are demanding huge cuts in social spending and preservation of tax-breaks for the super-rich and oil interests. If they don't get that, they say they will shut down the United States government, sending it into default on its debts.

As many have pointed out, the country is not broke. The money is there, but the Republicans, fronting for right-wing corporate interests, including the oil industry and the military-industrial complex, don't want to yield a cent of their ill-gotten riches.

Social Security does not add a cent to the national debt. It was set up to have its own dedicated source of revenue, through a specific payroll tax that workers see on their paystubs as FICA.

Millions of Americans, young as well as old,

rely on it. Attempts to weaken Social Security have been referred to as the "third rail" of American politics. Why would the White House now leak the idea that it may concede to the Republicans by cutting this program - specifically cutting cost-of-living increases for Social Security recipients? Is it a gambit to spur a mass public outcry that will enable such cuts to be blocked? That's a dangerous game with the all-important 2012 elections on the horizon. Americans are looking to this president and congressional Democrats to protect and bolster their dwindling economic security. If instead these leaders become advocates for cutting Social Security, they risk discouraging and demobilizing some of the most vital components of their own base. And a Republican victory in 2012 would be an unmitigated disaster

What to do? Get involved. Organize. Join with your union, groups like Alliance for Retired Americans, and others in building that mass outcry. Flood the halls of Congress and the White House with phone calls, emails, letters: NO cuts in the Social Security lifeline!

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Europe and the U.S. have the same problem: capitalism

By Sam Webb

The struggle against austerity is sweeping the U.S. and Europe. Not for decades have we seen such a surge of struggle in this part of the world. Moreover, the protest actions are massive and likely to increase in intensity and scope as time passes.

Prompting the surge is the economic crisis in general and the debt crisis in particular. Ruling circles on both sides of the Atlantic are attempting to offload government and private indebtedness onto the working class and its allies.

The refrain out of the mouths of the ruling elites irrespective of country is: the country is broke and there is no option but to cut wages of public sector workers, abrogate collective bargaining rights, and shed social programs that were won in earlier periods.

This crisis is not a crisis of state finances. There is plenty of money if you look in the right places - the banks accounts of the investor class and, in the U.S. in particular, the budget of the Pentagon. This is a crisis of capitalism.

Indeed, the choreographers of the capitalist system on both sides of the Atlantic are attempting to shift onto the working class the costs of the reproduction of labor power, by which I mean everything necessary to guarantee a fresh supply of labor for ongoing capitalist exploitation.

This is not a new feature of capitalism's mode of operation. It dates back to its beginnings. It is at the core of class and democratic struggles since capitalism emerged as a social system.

But what is unique about the current moment is that the major sections of capital in the U.S. and Europe believe that the debt crisis provides them with a golden opportunity to permanently and completely shift the costs of the reproduction of labor power to working people as well as to lacerate their fighting spirit.



But in shifting these costs there is an unintended consequence: it undermines the conditions for the reproduction of the system as a whole.

Why? Because a deeply impoverished working class and a hollowed out social safety net will severely restrain the already insufficient consumer demand for good and services, and thus block any recovery, even a weak one.

The role of the left here and elsewhere is to extend, deepen and, above all, unite the movement against the draconian plans of the ruling elites.

Such a task is as much practical as it is ideological. It is going to take tough nuts-and-bolts organizing and concrete initiatives along with efforts to bring clarity to tens of millions about the causes of and solutions to the economic crisis.

A core element of this struggle is the fight against racism and immigrant-bashing. Both are obstacles unity. Both have the potency to ideologically and practically derail the building of a powerful movement. White and native-born people in general, and workers in particular, must step to the forefront of the anti-racist and immigrant rights struggles, and in doing so create the conditions to roll back the austerity drive.

This is a crisis of capitalism.

St. Louis rally opposes cuts

By Tony Pecinovsky

Over 200 community activists, union members and students rallied outside of right-wing Republican Senator Roy Blunt's office here July 7 demanding "no cuts" to Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security.

While President Obama and many Democrats state they are seeking a "balanced approach" to the national budget deficit - one that increases revenue, and maintains vital social safety-net programs - the Republicans want to continue Bush-era tax breaks for the rich and enormously profitable corporations, initiate huge cuts to Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security, and increase lay-offs of public workers.

Recently, Sen. Blunt made clear his opinion on increasing taxes on the wealthy: He said, "If the president wanted increased taxes, he should have done it when he had huge majorities. Not only would I not be for it, but it's a waste of time conversation."

As the nation nears its debt ceiling, right-wing republicans like Senator Blunt are holding social programs hostage to continued tax-breaks for millionaires. Rabbi Susan Talve, from Central Reform Congregation and Missouri Health Care for All, said, "We want to make sure our legislatures know we do not support cuts that will cause more suffering to the most venerable, because we've already had those cuts!"

Rev. Emery Washington urged the wealthy to not "turn a deaf ear" on those who are "dependent on Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security."

The rally was organized by the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), Missouri Health Care for All, Jobs with Justice, Missouri Pro-Vote and GRO-Grassroots Organizing.

Salud mental de los niños y la guerra

Por Thomas Riggins

Recientes estudios científicos muestran que no es solamente el gobierno el que está dispuesto a sacrificar miles de veteranos en el altar del deseo de querer más y del expansionismo a través de las guerras, si no que los niños también se encuentran involucrados.

Science Daily reporta que los hijos de los soldados que son mandados en Operación Libertad Iraquí y la Operación Libertad Duradera (Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom) (¿Porque la militar siempre nombra sus acciones lo contrario de lo que son?) por más tiempo fueron más propensos de adquirir problemas mentales que aquellos niños que sus padres no fueron mandados o enviados.

Hemos sabido por mucho tiempo que los hijos de soldados enviados a nuestras guerras imperiales son más propensos que otros niños a tener problemas mentales, pero este estudio nos trae los conflictos más recientes que hay. Los autores dicen "Así como las tropas enfrentan desarrolladas amenazas (e.j. un conjunto de avanzados sistemas explosivos) mas es la necesidad de prever las consecuencias psicológicas para los niños y el ofrecimiento de la intervención a tiempo se convierte en algo verdaderamente importante".

Alyssa J. Mansfield, con doctorado del Centro Nacional para el Trastorno de Estrés Post-Traumático (National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) y estudiantes de la

misma, llevaron a cabo el estudio, la cual estuvieron involucrados 307,520 niños de 5 a 17 años de edad. 51,355 niños fueron detectados con problemas mentales " la mayoría de ellos fueron por estrés, depresión, problemas de comportamiento y problemas de sueño".

Para los niños con al menos un padre enviado a Iraq o Afganistán, el estudio encontró que entre más largo sea el tiempo de envío de sus padres, es más probable que una enfermedad mental se encuentre en el infante.

El estudio se convirtió en 6,579 niños de padres que fueron enviados a Iraq, quienes fueron diagnosticados de "estrés agudo, problemas de adaptación, depresión, y comportamiento".

"Hallazgos similares fueron encontrados en las esposas de los militares" dice el reporte "El envío prolongado parece estar afectando la salud mental en los niños".

Hay claramente un problema, pero con una simple solución: No enviar a los soldados que tienen hijos para combatir en zonas o no permitir gente con niños a unirse a los servicios armados en primer lugar. ¿Qué es más importante? ¿Matar personas de ultramar o ser matado por ellos, o ser feliz, con buena salud en el hogar?

Temo que todos sabemos la respuesta de esto.

NATIONAL CONTACT

Editorial: (773) 446-9920 Business: (212) 924-2523
Email: contact@peoplesworld.org