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1,000 demand “Good Jobs Now” at Progressive Caucus speakout

By Tim Wheeler

People lined up at microphones at a July 23 “speak out” in Seattle to demand that Congress stop kowtowing to the corporations and do what voters elected them to do: create good jobs at a living wage.

More than 1,000 people, men and women, young and old, of many races and nationalities, packed the Brockey Center on the campus of South Seattle Community College for the “Speak Out for Good Jobs Now.” It is one of a series of hearings across the nation sponsored by the 81-member House Progressive Caucus.

Listening to the often angry testimony was Rep. Jim McDermott, D-Wash., a leading member of the Progressive Caucus who told the crowd, “What is needed is citizen action....You have the power to organize,” he said.

Deborah Osborn, wearing her purple SEIU T-shirt told the hearing she has two college degrees and is a certified nursing assistant. Her husband, also a college graduate, has been unemployed for a year. Yet the longstanding “social contract” promises that a college degree is the path to “financial success.”

She added, “The wage I am currently receiving is a little more than the minimum wage. Every waking moment we worry about every dollar and every mortgage payment. We kept our part of the contract. Where are the good jobs?”



Jonathan Bernal Garcia, a senior at Chief Sealth High School decried the lack of good jobs for youth when they graduate from high school or college. “Please stand with us by enacting laws that are just, humane, and fair,” said Garcia, a member of “One America.” The crowd erupted in applause.

Jazmin Santacruz, Eastern Washington organizer of “One America,” filled a bus with 53 immigrant workers from Yakima, Walla Walla, and Pasco, Washington, to attend the speakout.

“Stop passing anti-immigrant laws that punish immigrant workers,” she declared. “All these

T H I S W E E K :

- 1,000 demand “Good Jobs Now” at speakout
- Editorial: Cuts when Democrats are in charge
- It’s our turn: Campaign to repeal Senate Bill 5 takes off
- Chicago rally: Hands off Social Security
- Contratista militar por acciones antisindicales

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workers want to do is support their families and in the process they bring money into the economy.” She urged enactment of the Dream Act to allow

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undocumented immigrant youth to attend college in the U.S. She led the crowd in chanting “si se puede.”

Khayah Brookes, a senior physics student at the University of Washington, a member of the Academic Student Employees organized by the United Auto Workers said she was forced twice to drop out of school because she ran out of money.

“Without ‘Husky Promise’ a program which covers our tuition and fees for low income students, I would be forced to drop out again,” she said. Many other low-income students are forced to work “four or five little part time minimum wage jobs” to pay for college

Meanwhile, the Washington State University system just rammed through a 20 percent tuition hike and the Republican majority House has passed a federal budget with draconian cuts in student aid programs.

“This will put a college education out of reach for many low income youth,” she said. “We need an increase in Pell Grants and subsidized loans for low income students.”

Michael Woo, a veteran Chinese American labor and community organizer, who chaired the meeting urged the crowd to take time to fill out

the Progressive Caucus postcard addressed to lawmakers headlined, “Get Congress on Track... Rebuild the American Dream.”

“We have 1,000 people in this room and we want to get the message back to Washington, D.C.” he said. “We want to tell Congress to rebuild the American dream. We need good jobs.”

Martin Luther King County Executive Dow Constantine thanked the crowd for the testimony. “This is so powerful,” he said. “It is hard to listen to the stories told today. We need to get the message to Congress that they were elected to create an economy that serves the people, not the corporations and the wealthy.”

Mia Franklin, a caregiver for her disabled daughter and an employee of ARC of King County, a non-profit that serves developmentally disabled people, drew cheers, telling the crowd, “I don’t believe there is a budget crisis. They find the money for whatever the banks and corporations want but when it comes to the people’s needs, they have no money. But it is our money. Use our money to create jobs. I love to fight. It’s my second, unpaid job: fighting. I’m proud to have all you people here to fight with me!”



Tim Wheeler writes for the People’s World.

Grappling with cuts when Democrats are in charge

By PW Editorial Board

California is one of the states where Democrats lead the government, which has just made large cuts to social programs. The dilemma facing states with Democrats in control has similar characteristics and challenges.

In California, in the recently-concluded battle over how to close the state budget deficit, Republican legislators voted as a block against the Democrats’ plan because it didn’t cut deeply enough and excluded public employee pensions from the chopping block. Meanwhile, the governor’s plan to ease the pain of cuts went up in smoke.

In order to restore a good chunk of budget cuts, the governor tried to place a measure on the ballot to extend a now-expired set of mostly regressive taxes and fees falling most heavily on working-class families. Even if passed, it would still have left a gaping hole in the budget.

Gov. Brown had effectively painted himself and the state into a corner once Republican legislators, holding fast to their no-tax increases pledge, refused even to let voters decide the issue.

Given the set of choices, Democratic legislators were between a rock and a hard place. California mandates balanced yearly budgets.

California labor, which was pivotal to Brown’s victory and the statewide Democratic sweep last November, is now moving to lead the public debate over budget deficits and taxes.

Labor is taking early initiative to reframe the debate over the tax and budget deficit dilemma to favor the people as the nation and state prepare to enter the contentious 2012 election cycle.

That too has been heartening. But, as the old adage says, “United we rise, divided we fall.” A united fight against cuts to “safety-net” social programs and jobs is needed more than ever, as the anemic economic “recovery” falters.

So is a national, united, multi-organizational, grassroots-based campaign for massive job creation being promoted by the AFL-CIO.

Today’s struggles will go a long way in setting the stage for an election victory against the Republicans next year, provided unity prevails - in the spirit of the One Nation rally, and the 2010 labor-led electoral campaign in California.

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It's our turn: Campaign to repeal Senate Bill 5 takes off

By Rick Nagin

More than 600 union leaders from throughout Ohio stood and cheered July 21 as state AFL-CIO President Tim Burga announced in Columbus that the measure to repeal union-busting Senate Bill 5 had just been certified for the Nov. 8 ballot.

"Labor is more energized than I have seen it before," Burga said, referring to the record 1.3 million signatures collected by over 10,000 volunteers to place the measure on the ballot. Secretary of State John Husted determined that over 915,000 signatures were valid - four times the number needed. In addition, the requirement that at least 3 percent of voters sign in half of Ohio's counties was reached in all 88 counties.

"This is an unprecedented achievement," Burga told the meeting, convened at the Plumbers and Pipefitters Hall here to kick off the next phase of the fight to repeal SB 5. The law, passed in March, strips public employees of the right to bargain collectively.

It was a standing-room-only crowd gathered in sweltering heat to hear Burga, national AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka and other officials rally the troops and map plans to mobilize 1.7 million voters in union households as well as all of labor's allies for a successful grassroots campaign.

Voters back repeal of SB 5 by a margin of 56 percent to 32 percent and disapprove of Republican Gov. John Kasich 50 percent to 35 percent.

"You will take this fight over the finish line," Trumka said. "You will restore the rights of 365,000 public employees!"

"The corporations bought politicians. They thought they could knock us down and knock us out. They gave us their best shot and we're still standing," he said. "Now it's our turn."

"This will affect the entire labor movement across America," Trumka said. "Either way, the



outcome of this fight will be a game-changer. The right wing sees this as an opportunity to defeat all working people and you are going to put an end to it right here."

Twenty-five million are desperately looking for work, Trumka said.

Evidence of the growing fightback was demonstrated that evening as 70,000 Ohioans took part in a telephone town hall meeting with Trumka, Burga, Alliance of Retired Americans President Barbara Easterling and former state AFL-CIO President Joe Rugola. For over an hour the leaders took calls from rank-and-file workers and retirees discussing the threat of SB 5 to education, public safety and community services and how to win the repeal campaign in November.

"We are going to canvass labor-to-labor and labor-to-neighbor," Trumka responded. "We are going to distribute worksite leaflets, make phone calls, run radio and TV ads. We are going to reach out to our allies in the religious community, to the NAACP, to students and retirees.

"We are going to stop these right-wing extremists who are scapegoating workers and public employees and doing nothing to create jobs."

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Chicago rally: Hands off Social Security

By Bea Lumpkin

It was 101 degrees in the shade July 21 in Chicago, and the humidity made it feel much worse. But that did not stop 200 white-haired retirees, disabled people in wheelchairs and younger supporters from rallying against cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

Standing in front of the Social Security Offices in downtown Chicago, their shouts could be heard across the street.

A message from Eleanor Roosevelt was read to the crowd by a look-alike dressed to fit the part. She scolded the heartless Congressmembers and Senators who want to cut the deficit on the backs of seniors, disabled and children. Without Social Security, she said, they would be plunged into deep poverty.

“Tax corporations and the rich” was the rally’s answer to the phony budget crisis. “It’s not a budget crisis,” a speaker pointed out. “It’s a revenue crisis.” Make Wall Street and the banks pay,” the protestors added.

The rally flyer stated that 43 percent of Americans use Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. The average Social Security benefit is only \$1,158, but the CEO of Morgan Chase was paid \$21 million last year.

The coalition that organized the rally is planning their next event. Members include the Jane Adams Senior Caucus; Illinois Association for Retired Americans; Access Illinois; SEIU health care workers; Citizen Action of Illinois; Lakeview Action Coalition; Northside People Organized to Work, Educate and Restore; and Southsiders Organizing for Unity and Liberation.

If you’re in Illinois, organizers ask that you call your senators and tell them not to allow cuts to programs that benefit working people.

Demanda sindicato a contratista militar por acciones antisindicales

Por Jim Lane

El Local 317 de los United Auto Workers [Trabajadores Automovilísticos Unidos, o UAW por sus siglas en inglés] ha puesto una demanda legal contra el gigantesco contratista militar Bell Helicopter por “intentar de debilitar y eliminar a la unión”. La compañía provocó la ira de la unión cuando hizo trasladar a otros 100 trabajos sindicalizados a su facilidad esquirol en Amarillo, Texas.

Es un capítulo más en una más larga tragedia. Hace un par de décadas los trabajadores sindicalizados de Bell Helicopter se comprometían a un esfuerzo nacional de cabildeo por convencerle al gobierno federal a comprar su flamante avión de diseño radical, el V-22 Osprey. Fue diseñado para llevar soldados con despegue vertical y un vuelo horizontal medio rápido. Aun cuando se estrellaban los Osprey matando a los pasajeros la compañía y el sindicato seguían trabajando por lograr la aprobación de las fuerzas armadas. Y, cuando por fin la consiguieron, mostraban los patrones su gratitud abriendo una nueva facilidad no sindicalizada en Amarillo y cambiando gran parte del trabajo para allá. Fracasaban los esfuerzos del sindicato por organizar un nuevo local en una de las áreas más reaccionarias de Texas.

La mayor parte de los 3.000 trabajadores de producción ya son integrantes del Local 218 de la UAW, pero algunos de los trabajadores asalariados de oficina pertenecen al mucho más pequeño Local 317. Operan am-

bos locales desde el nuevo edificio en el Bulevar Hurst que pertenece al local 218. De costumbre trabajan muy de cerca, pero la huelga muy larga y dura del verano pasado pueda haber provocado estrés en las relaciones entre los dos Locales. Usualmente, el contrato del Local 317 se vence poco después de él del Local 218. Si el 218 va a la huelga, casi siempre lo sigue el 317. Pero el año pasado no.

Aunque hizo el Local 218 una lucha larga y valiente, no estaba muy feliz con el resultado final, y algunos miembros le culpaban al Local 317. En las elecciones sindicales subsecuentes, sufrían ambos Locales sindicales una “barreada limpia” reemplazando a casi todos los oficiales de los dos Locales.

Acusan los sindicatos a Bell Helicopter de intentar de quebrar las uniones. El precedente legal por esta acción vino en meses recientes cuando el Ejecutivo en Jefe de la compañía (CEO, por sus siglas en inglés) declaró públicamente que estaban trasladando el trabajo fuera del estado de Washington a una nueva facilidad no sindicalizada en Carolina del Sur a propósito para dañar al sindicato. La Mesa Nacional de Relaciones Laborales (National Labor Relations Board) determinó que Boeing había violado las leyes laborales, y hasta la fecha su decisión ha sido sostenida en los tribunales.

Si el Local 317 alcanza ganar esta victoria legal, será un gigantesco “plus” para todos los trabajadores.

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