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A right-wing apologist in sheep's clothing

By Sam Webb

The ideological battle over the role of government promises to figure large in the current election campaign. So much so that it commands nearly daily attention in the mass media. Hardly a news cycle goes by without some reference to it.

Earlier this week David Brooks, a regular contributor to the oped pages of the New York Times and frequent guest on television news shows, jumped into the battle with both feet. Brooks positions himself as an above-the-fray “moderate,” but the reality is otherwise.

Brooks writes that his vision of government and its role can be traced to Alexander Hamilton, one of the nation’s founding fathers and its first secretary of the Treasury. According to Brooks, Hamilton believed that the federal government should be an active force that focuses on “long term structural development, not on providing jobs right now,” and “on dynamism and opportunity more than security, equality, and comfort.”

Thus, a Hamiltonian government, Brooks tells us, would be “energetic without ever becoming gigantic.”

But this vision of an active but narrowly circumscribed role for the federal government, Brooks says, has been largely abandoned over the past century. The abandonment came during three eras of progressive reform - the Progressive era (in the first decade and a half of the last century), the New Deal, and Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society.

In each of these eras, Brooks claims, “a good impulse was taken to excess” as the federal gov-



ernment assumed functions and established rights (unemployment relief, jobs, Social Security, Medicare, food stamps, Medicaid, welfare, education, environmental protection, civil rights, etc.) that went beyond Hamilton’s vision.

Now it may be true that the evolution of the federal government’s role in the 20th century eclipsed what Hamilton had in mind in the late 18th century, but it is also true that it was a necessary evolution given the crises, contradictions, and unfulfilled promises of developing capitalism.

The particular configuration and functions of the government and state are not set in stone. They

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change under the impact of capitalist development and class struggles. Hamilton were he alive would

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probably understand this better than Brooks, who blanches at the very thought of a broadly activist government animated by people's needs.

In fact, if Brooks could have his way, he would like to freeze the role of the federal government to a time when it created favorable conditions for capitalist expansion and accumulation, while at the same time largely ignoring questions of economic security and equality for working and oppressed people.

Think about it - even now when the country is reeling and tens of millions are suffering from the impact of the longest economic crisis since the Great Depression - a crisis that leaves poverty rates at record levels, wages stagnant, cities and communities near collapse, public services underfunded, and inequality, and especially racial inequality, growing - our good "friend" Brooks is more worried about government "excess" than what positive actions (moratorium on home foreclosures, public works jobs, a second stimulus, green development, funds for education and infrastructure) the federal government could take to address the economic mess that capitalism has

wrought.

He may not want to admit it but Brooks' position is not that much different from the right-wing firebrands. On the one hand, he like them, would drastically and immediately scale back those governmental functions and those democratic rights (won in the course of hard struggle) that expand the life possibilities of tens of millions of working and oppressed people.

On the other hand, he, again like them, would tender to the needs of the rich and wealthy. He and his counterparts on the right don't even mind deficits as long as the deficits serve the needs of the 1 percent.

If there are differences between Brooks and his fellow travelers on the right, they are differences of style and manner, not of substance and strategic outlook.

David Brooks isn't Rush Limbaugh. But don't mistake his lack of shrillness and soft demeanor for some "third way" when it comes to the role of government in a modern capitalist society.



Sam Webb is chair of the Communist Party USA.

Traveling the road away from war

By PW Editorial Board

NATO's pledge, to turn over the lead in combat operations to the Afghan National Security Forces by the middle of next year, and end the alliance's combat mission by the close of 2014, sets up a new signpost on the road to ending our country's longest war.

But NATO's stated commitment to "enduring partnership" with Afghanistan, and the new U.S.-Afghan Strategic Partnership Agreement which could stretch out U.S. military involvement long after 2014, should dampen any optimism that the war is really coming to an end.

What NATO's commitment does reflect is the continued and growing opposition to the war among people in the NATO countries, symbolized by new French President Francois Hollande's decision to withdraw French combat troops.

And, the ever-growing opposition here at home, with over two-thirds of the U.S. people now saying it's past time to leave.

A fascinating drama took place in the U.S. House of Representatives recently as the Republican leadership refused to allow a vote on an amendment to the 2013 Defense Authorization Act.

The bipartisan amendment, introduced by Rep. James McGovern, D-Mass. and Walter

Jones, R-N.C., would require President Obama to stick to his pledge to end all military and security operations by the end of 2014.

The vote the Republican leadership scheduled held its own drama. The amendment first introduced two years ago by Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Calif., to limit spending on the war to that needed for the safe and orderly withdrawal of all U.S. troops and contractors, predictably failed. But for the first time a majority of House Democrats voted for it, by a margin of 101-79.

As the enormous costs in money and lives continue to soar, it is more urgent than ever to end a war which is only making conditions worse for the Afghan people.

The only way forward lies in bringing all the U.S. troops and contractors home, negotiations involving all parties to the conflict and all countries in the region, and international aid to help Afghans rebuild their country and achieve a viable economy.

It's now the job of everyone among the two-thirds of the American people opposed to the Afghanistan war, to roll up our sleeves for a complete end to the conflict.

The determination and commitment to ending the war that's being shown by the demonstrators in Chicago recently points the way.

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Spanish Civil War vets' legacy continues

By Marilyn Bechtel

The Spanish Civil War ended over 70 years ago. But families and supporters of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade - Americans who fought alongside Spanish patriots and thousands of international volunteers before finally losing to Spanish fascists in 1939 - have never stopped their fight to end wars and crimes against humanity.

The May 27 celebration of the Brigade's 76th anniversary, by the Abraham Lincoln Brigades Archives (ALBA), honored Delmer Berg of Columbia, Calif., one of the four "Lincoln vets" who remain from some 2,800 who went to Spain.

Also honored was Kate Doyle, the National Security Archive's senior analyst of U.S. policy in Latin America and co-recipient of the second annual Award for Human Rights Activism, conferred by ALBA and the Puffin Foundation.

She shares the \$100,000 award with Fredy Peccerelli, who heads the Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Foundation.

The two have worked together for 20 years to expose the evidence of human rights violations in Guatemala during the 1960-1996 "internal conflict," during which an estimated 200,000 people were killed and 40-50,000 people "disappeared".

Doyle told the crowd the award will be used to further their work.

Doyle has researched formerly secret documents from the Pentagon and other national security agencies under the Freedom of Information Act, while Peccerelli has exhumed over a thousand bodies, working to identify victims buried as "XX" or "unknown," gathering evidence for use in court and helping family members gain closure.

Through linking documents and DNA from family members, she said, the researchers have identified five previously unidentified victims and are on the verge of identifying a sixth.

In a conversation after the program, Doyle credited Guatemalan Attorney General Claudia Paz y Paz, appointed in 2010, with permitting "extraordinary work" by evidence gatherers, and



"leading the process of turning evidence into trials and convictions."

Among the results, she cited the 2011 conviction of five soldiers in the massacre of 201 people at Dos Erres in December 1982, with each sentenced to over 6,000 years in prison.

Doyle also cited the indictment earlier this year of Gen. José Efraín Ríos Montt, who ruled Guatemala for nine months in 1982, the year during which nearly half the conflict's human rights violations occurred. Among other crimes, she said, Ríos Montt is linked to orders to massacre Mayan Quiché farmers northwest of Guatemala City, the capital.

For over seven decades, Abraham Lincoln Brigade members, their families and supporters have kept up their struggle, from protesting Franco's Spain and serving in World War II to participating in all the peace and civil rights struggles that have followed.

The Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives maintains a year-round schedule of activities, including seminars for teachers who return to their classrooms and teach about the Spanish Civil War, and a contest for the best student essay on the meaning of that war.

The Human Rights Project, initiated last year, connects the veterans' legacy with today's defense of international human rights.

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Protesters force retreat on plan to dismantle schools

By Ben Sears

A robust coalition of parent, community, student and labor groups brought their message to the Philadelphia School Reform Commission May 31 and received extensive media coverage of their efforts. Hundreds of demonstrators rallied outside School District headquarters and then filled the SRC meeting to overflowing while the commission attempted to conduct the business of voting on a “bare bones” budget for next year.

Facing a deficit of over \$200 million, the district leaders say they are looking for ways to balance the budget without cutting classroom programs and teaching staff any more than they already have over the last two years. The cuts threatened for next year involve primarily support staff and services.

The demonstrators were not persuaded. The large pre-meeting rally outside district headquarters heard speakers from school employee unions and the AFL-CIO, as well as from parent and community groups. Jerry Mondesire of the Philadelphia NAACP told the crowd, “Our allies are every union in this district. This privatization has got to stop. This will not be the last time we have to come out here, and we’re in this all the way.”

James Whitehead of SEIU Local 32BJ said he had received a layoff notice after 29 years with the school district. He called on the school district to “do what is right for the children, the teachers, and the taxpayers of Philadelphia.”

Liz McElroy, political director of the Philadelphia AFL-CIO, noted that Samuel Gompers, more, than 100 years ago, had placed as one of labor’s first priorities “more schools and less jails,” and that the AFL-CIO would be in this struggle for another 100 years if necessary.

Censo de 2010 no contó a 1,5 millones de minorías en EEUU

Por Hope Yen

El censo de 2010 en Estados Unidos no contó a más de 1,5 millones de personas pertenecientes a minorías raciales, especialmente negros e latinos, habitantes que alquilan sus viviendas y jóvenes, aunque mayormente sus cifras fueron precisas.

La Oficina del Censo difundió una extensa valoración de su recuento de la población estadounidense, que se repite cada década. Los analistas gubernamentales fueron motivo de desavenencias políticas en otras ocasiones por el uso de “ajustes estadísticos” para compensar las personas no contadas según fórmulas computarizadas, generalmente entre las minorías raciales que suelen votar por el Partido Demócrata.

Según esas conclusiones, el censo de 2010 se excedió en la población total estadounidense en 36.000 personas, un 0,01%, debido principalmente a la repetición en el recuento de personas blancas acaudaladas con más de un domicilio. Fue una mejora frente al censo del 2000, cuando el excedente alcanzó el 0,5%.

Empero, el censo no contó al 2,1% de los negros y el 1,5% de los hispanos, que juntos suman 1,5 millones de personas no contabilizadas. Esa proporción es estadísticamente comparable a la del 2000, pese a las sumas gastadas en publicidad en 2010, 15.000 millones de dólares.

Igualmente no fueron debidamente contados el 5% de los indios estadounidenses que viven en reservas y casi el 25% de las minoría que se consideraron “de otra raza”.

“Aunque la cobertura general del censo fue ejemplar, el recuento de grupos tradicionalmente difíciles de

contar como las personas que alquilan sus viviendas fue el que menos figuró” en la suma total, dijo el director de la Oficina del Censo Robert Groves. “Ya que las etnias raciales minoritarias viven desproporcionadamente en circunstancias de difícil recuento, también escaparon al conteo general en comparación a la población mayoritaria”.

“Creemos que sin el esfuerzo publicitario, nuestras cifras habrían sido mucho, mucho peores”.

El sur del país, encabezado por el Distrito de Columbia, Texas, Georgia, Virginia, Carolina del Norte y la Florida, fueron los estados más afectados por esas deficiencias numéricas. El centro y noreste del país fueron los menos.

La Oficina del Censo, que recientemente rechazó el pedido de Nueva York para revisar el conteo municipal, dijo que el último análisis no afectará el total oficial de 308,7 millones de personas afincadas en Estados Unidos ni la distribución de más de 400.000 millones de dólares en fondos federales para carreteras, escuelas y programas sociales.

La demanda fue presentada ante un tribunal civil de Los Angeles por el Fondo Mexicoamericano para la Defensa Legal y Educación, a nombre de los lavacoches. Alega violaciones laborales de parte de los negocios Lincoln Millenium Car Wash Inc., Silver Wash Inc. y Gold Wash, perteneciente a Bijan, Edna y Kambiz Dimavandi, respectivamente.

En general, la querrela alega nueve violaciones laborales, incluyendo incumplimiento del pago de salario mínimo, y pide una compensación por daños y perjuicios.