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Path to victory in 2012

By Sam Webb



It's easy to underestimate the election chances of the Republican Party this fall. Its antics in recent months make people wonder if the GOP has a secret death wish.

A recent article in the New Yorker is subtitled, "Can the GOP save itself?" A fair question for a party that seems to be shooting itself in the foot at every opportunity.

Its opposition to a working-class payroll tax cut played poorly in Main Street America, so poorly in fact that Republican Party leaders in the Senate and House did an about face.

Its war on the labor movement alienated the GOP from millions of working families.

Its hostility to the use of contraceptives turned off large sections of women irrespective of party affiliation.

Its muted reactions to the misogynistic comments of radio host Rush Limbaugh directed at college student Sandra Fluke left people of various political persuasions upset and anger.

Its unconcealed appeals to racist sentiments among white voters met a chorus of criticism.

Its closing of space between the religious and secular spheres didn't sit well with many Americans - nor does its eagerness to go to war against Iran.

And its presidential hopefuls have turned the

Republican primary into a political circus, leaving tens of millions - Republican, Independent and Democrat alike - shaking their heads in disbelief.

No candidate, including Mitt Romney, has been able to win anything close to a majority, and with each state primary - and we still have many to go - each candidate seems to grow smaller in stature.

I could go on, but I think that I have made my point: The GOP, through its own doing, has hurt its chances in the November elections.

And yet it would be a mistake to think that a

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route of the Republican right is all but guaranteed.

First, money can't necessarily buy an election, but it can make a difference in the outcome.

And yet it would be a mistake to think that a rout of the Republican right is all but guaranteed.

And the Republicans are well endowed. The New York Times reported that Republican super political action committees are out raising Democratic super PACs by a wide margin.

American Crossroads, the Republican super PAC took in \$51 million and plans to raise \$240 million this year. Charles and David Koch, the billionaire conservative oilmen, the article goes on to say, expect to raise an additional \$200 million for other groups opposing President Obama.

Meanwhile the Democratic super PACS, Priorities USA and a related group, raised only \$6.1 million through the end of 2011.

Second, it is unclear how voters will react to the fusillade of negative campaigning that will come from the the Republicans and their PACS.

Lacking a positive political message, the GOP will employ large doses of racism, male supremacy and other backward ideas in the hope of winning white workers to their column in November.

Third, the Republican Party hopes to disenfranchise enough voters, especially youth, people of color and seniors to turn the election in its favor. Its campaign, which must be resisted, is hitting full stride.

Finally, the trajectory of the economy as well the unfolding of events in the Middle East introduces a large element of uncertainty into the elections. If the positive trends in economic growth and employment continue, then President Obama and the Democrats' election prospects improve considerably; a sweep becomes possible.

If on the other hand, the upward advance peters out then it's anybody's election.

As for Iran, the situation remains volatile with considerable pressure on the president to take military action. So far he has wisely resisted as well as counseled Israel's Netanyahu government to do the same.

If war breaks out, however, all bets on the outcome of the fall election are off.

So no one who hopes to move the country in a progressive direction should relax until the polls close on Election Day. The Republican right will not bow out of politics without a struggle.

The American people can win in November, but only if we take nothing for granted.



Sam Webb is chair of the Communist Party.

It's time to nationalize the oil industry

By PW Editorial Board

Millions of Americans take sharp notice of gas prices since, due to the paucity of public transport there is no other way except the internal combustion automobile to get to work get the kids, get the groceries, get supplies - to live!

Now - that is not exactly true in the scientific or technical sense since its been possible for 60 years to build a car that gets 60 miles per gallon of diesel fuel and lasts for 20 years. But - the business model of auto corporations won't allow that: they can't maximize profits unless they produce goods that fall apart in five years, or less.

One thing is for sure -- all kinds of folks who normally do not like to think at all about politics get very political when gas rises. It is, of course, the equivalent of a direct pay cut, and there is nothing like a pay cut to make you want to find out who to blame!

So why are world crude oil prices rising? Because, 1.) demand is rising faster than supply; and 2.) the conflict with (and sanctions on) Iran -- the worlds second biggest supplier of highest grade oil is stimulating market speculation and hedging. Long-term, there is no solution to the rising cost of oil.

National energy and transportation policy

must more aggressively develop alternatives, as well as green economic development programs that sharply reduce wasteful and inefficient consumption. Short term, lowering the temperature in the Middle East would provide some relief. But the disaster of Iraq, the utter failure to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, and the confrontational policy towards Iran - all make this a very difficult challenge.

A big - perhaps the biggest - factor blocking both long- and short-term progress is the oil lobby - Exxon, BP, Chevron, etc - who are spending millions upon millions to obstruct any loss of privilege and power, and to divert any energy diversification efforts away from initiatives solely under their private control. In the last presidential cycle the oil and gas industries (not counting coal and nuclear power) spent \$212 million on contributions and lobbying efforts and promise to spend even more in the current cycle.

It is high time to nationalize the oil industry and bring their actions under strict public control - like almost all states have done with public utilities. This included outlawing their criminal corruption on the political process. In other words, the ability of today's oil barons to buy their way through Congress.

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Senate approved transportation bill would create 200,000 jobs

By Blake Deppe

The Senate, on March 14, passed a two-year bipartisan transportation bill by a vote of 77 to 22. The bill would provide \$100 billion worth of funding to build and repair highways, roads, bridges, and transit systems, and is seen as an alternative to legislation previously put forward by the House, which would decimate jobs, the AFL-CIO reports.

The Senate bill, unlike its failed partisan counterpart, would actually create about 200,000 jobs.

Current funding to maintain and develop the nation's roads, bridges, and transportation systems - which many feel are deteriorating - runs out on March 31.

As for the House GOP's partisan alternative - even though the H.R. 7 bill was killed, it could make a comeback, sources say. That piece of legislation would crush labor across the nation; it would fire 2,000 Amtrak food service workers, slash \$308 million from Amtrak operating funds, do away with health protections for workers handling hazardous materials, and force outsourcing of DOT engineering jobs.

H.R. 7 "goes down a partisan path that will destroy thousands of jobs," said the AFL-CIO in a letter to representatives. It will "undercut our nation's commitment to mass transit."

The Senate-approved bill now heads to the House, where unions hope it will get passed.

Edward Wytkind, president of the AFL-CIO Transportation Trades Department, said it will "give public transportation systems and their workers new tools to survive economic downturns."

"Competition in the 21st century requires America to renew the bipartisan consensus in supporting reliable, modern infrastructure," said AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka.

Last week, the Laborers International Union



launched a multimedia campaign in order to outline the growing public safety issues caused by crumbling roads and bridges, and transit systems that desperately need improvement. The campaign asks voters to call on Congress Republicans to approve this legislation.

"With this campaign, we're letting Congress know that while they're busy playing politics, Americans are being forced to risk their safety every time they cross a deficient or obsolete bridge," said LIUNA President Terry O'Sullivan.

Those bridges, O'Sullivan noted, have an average lifespan of 45 years, and we are now rapidly approaching the 50-year mark on many of them.

The campaign includes a tongue-in-cheek manual called How to Survive a Bridge Collapse, which it mails to voters in Ohio and Kentucky, the home states of House Speaker John Boehner and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell.

LIUNA spokeswoman Jaelyn Houser said those two Republicans are targets of the campaign because "as party leaders, they should be able to bring a bipartisan bill to the floor."

"The Senate has sent a strong message that the needs of our transportation system can trump business-as-usual party politics," Wytkind concluded. "It is time for the House to embrace the same approach and do the right thing for our country."

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MN. GOP pushes constitutional amendments

By Michael Moore

Right-wing Minnesota politicians, taking part in the national war on workers, have turned towards putting two controversial state constitutional amendments on the Minnesota ballot this fall; organized labor has already begun to battle both.

One of the far-reaching proposals would write so-called "voter ID" laws into the state's basic charter, making it harder for minorities, the poor, college students, the elderly, those without drivers' licenses, and others to register and vote.

The other scheme would insert a so-called "right to work" law into the constitution, banning unions from collecting dues or equivalent fees from non-members covered by union contracts.

Right to work sounds innocent enough in name, but in reality it is yet another corporate attack on middle class families, union contracts, and workplace safety, unionists point out.

"These laws are nothing more than another attack on the middle class," Bobby Kasper, president of the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation, wrote in the St. Paul Union Advocate.

"We cannot sit back," he declared. "We cannot wait and see whether state lawmakers, looking to repay the corporations and wealthy donors who put them in office, will put a right to work constitutional amendment on the ballot next fall. We need to get the word out now: right to work is wrong for Minnesota."

The other idea the right wing is pushing is to strip people of the right to vote - and thus deprive them of a key lever in the fight against corporate domination of politics.

New restrictions might be justified, opponents said, if fraud were a problem. But according to audits of the state's elections, voter fraud is virtually non-existent.

¿Renacimiento nuclear?

Por Alberto Ampuero

Aun año del tsunami que causó el desastre nuclear de Fukushima hoy constatamos que no todo el mundo ha extraído alguna enseñanza de Fukushima. Lo peor es que la alarma generada por el accidente nipón no haya frenado completamente la expansión o renacimiento de la industria atómica de algunos países.

Estados Unidos se apresta a introducir la energía nuclear, a pesar de los inmensos riesgos económicos y ambientales que implica.

El gobierno autorizó el pasado 9 de febrero, por primera vez en más de treinta años, la construcción de sus dos primeros reactores en la central nuclear Vogtle en Waynesboro, Georgia.

El secretario de Energía de EEUU, Steven Chu, declaró: "La energía nuclear juega un papel importante en la cesta energética de EEUU. Con más de 100 reactores nucleares en operación, la energía nuclear produce un 20% de la electricidad del país. El papel de la energía nuclear con fines pacíficos crece en el mundo al afrontar el cambio climático y la creciente demanda de energía".

La energía nuclear en Estados Unidos recibió un golpe de gracia con la fusión parcial del núcleo del reactor de la central de Three Mile Island en Pensilvania en 1979, que causó que los costes de construcción de las centrales se disparase y se paralizaran los proyectos abiertos para construir nuevas centrales.

Varios grupos presentaron una demanda contra la Comisión Reguladora de Energía Nuclear el mes pasado. La Comisión otorgó la aprobación a la empresa Southern Company para la construcción de los nuevos reac-

tores en la planta de Vogtle a pesar de que el presidente de ese organismo, Gregory Jaczko, votó en contra. Jaczko se opuso al otorgamiento de la licencia por falta de garantías para aplicar las recomendaciones realizadas tras el desastre en Japón.

"No puedo apoyar otorgar esta autorización como si Fukushima no hubiese ocurrido jamás", se defendió.

Al margen de los factores de seguridad y de opinión pública, hay aspectos económicos que también hay que examinar partiendo de una cuestión fundamental: cuánto dinero hace falta y quién lo pondría.

Se sabe que en los países que habían apostado hasta la fecha por la energía nuclear la decisión había sido financiada, de un modo u otro, por el Estado, ya que los inversores privados simplemente no quieren tocarlo.

En Estados Unidos pasa lo mismo. Stephen Smith, director ejecutivo de la Alianza del Sur para la Energía Limpia, explicó que "La energía nuclear no sería viable si no fuera por todas las subvenciones y el financiamiento que tiene y el gobierno federal desempeña un papel fundamental en ello".

Los dos reactores que la empresa Southern Company van a construir son del modelo Toshiba AP1000 y tienen un coste estimado de 14,000 millones de dólares.

Eso no es todo. Los dos reactores nucleares que construye EEUU y los dos que está a punto de aprobar irán a Estados del sur del país con un mercado regulado. Es decir, que la Westinghouse Eléctrica (propiedad de la multinacional japonesa Toshiba) que los opera, tiene garantizada la retribución de cada kilovatio hora que produzca.

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