

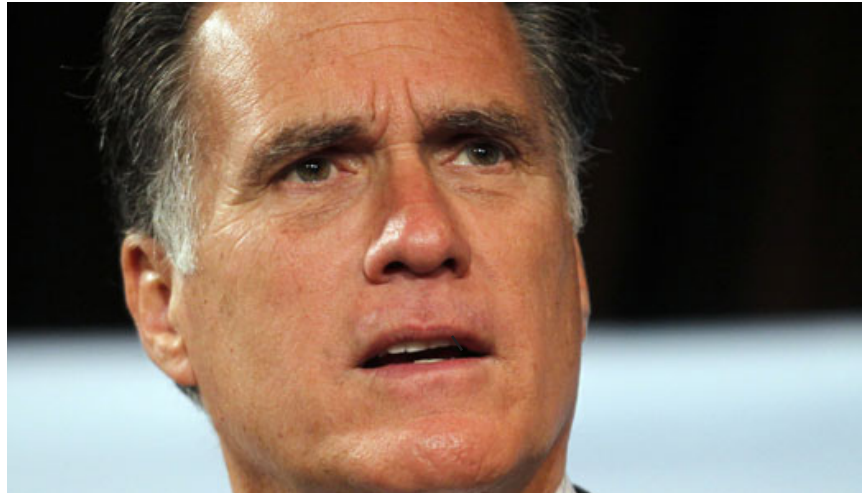
PEOPLE'S WORLD

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Romney comes to Michigan, bashing unions

By Marty Mulcahy



Republican presidential hopeful Mitt Romney came to Michigan the day after Valentine's Day, but he wasn't showing any love for the state's union members.

Romney received national headlines as he kicked off his Michigan campaign. The state, which will hold its primary Feb. 28, is a key link in the GOP election process.

Instead of laying out an optimistic plan for the nation's future, Romney is going negative, and unions and President Obama are his primary targets. "In the eighteen minutes he spoke to supporters here," said MIRS News Service, "Romney spent twelve on red meat rhetoric against Obama and organized labor. The other six were spent making local references to county fairs and pointing out people he went to high school with."

Romney came out swinging at unions and their "bosses," and doubled down on his theory that General Motors and Chrysler would have been better off guiding their financial futures through a managed bankruptcy.

"There's something else that's been very frustrating," Romney told a rally. "I call it crony capitalism. And that's the path that [Obama] has taken. He's gotten hundreds of millions of dollars from labor bosses for his campaign.

"And so he's paying them back in every way he knows how. One way of course was giving General Motors and Chrysler to the [United Auto Workers]. I saw that [UAW President] Bob King said that I don't care about the auto industry. I'm sorry, Mr. King, I care very deeply about the auto industry. I want to make sure we have good jobs not just for a few weeks but for many, many years. I want Michigan to come back in a big way."

The impetus for King's remark that Romney doesn't care about the auto industry came in the form of an article written by the former Massachu-

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setts governor. Just two weeks before Obama was elected president in 2008, an op-ed piece penned by Romney appeared in the New York Times un-

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der the headline, “Let Detroit go bankrupt.”

There is wide agreement among economists that with the ongoing financial chaos at the time on Wall Street, Romney’s plan to utilize private equity money to restructure the automakers was nearly impossible, because the investment cash was simply not available in 2008-2009.

Republican President George Bush and then President Obama took the course of government intervention, making \$81 billion in federal loans available to GM and Chrysler. Many economists said if the two had been allowed to go bankrupt, Ford would likely have followed, and the vast domestic auto supplier network would likely have gone down with them, pushing the entire U.S. economy into a depression. All three domestic automakers enjoyed profitable years in 2011.

Romney, ignoring the saving of thousands of jobs made possible by the federal loans - as well as the saving of Michigan’s economy for years to come - blasted what he called the “bailout” of the UAW, which along with other unions he said has supported Obama with big contributions. “It shouldn’t come as a surprise that the president has received hundreds of millions from unions, and

he’s been doing their bidding ever since,” Romney told 11 business owners before the Kentwood rally, according to politicswires.com. In Romney’s other references to organized labor:

“I’ll fight for right-to-work laws, and I’m going to make sure we don’t force unions on people,” he said, according to the Miami Herald.

“Between the rally speech and previous meeting with business owners, Romney touted his support of right-to-work legislation, opposition to union dues going to political activity and support for ending a practice of federal contract work going to union labor,” The Detroit News reported.

Romney declared: “I think what you’re seeing with the president is extra-constitutional action, where he is taking his friends and putting them in positions of power. I think perhaps the most egregious example of that is what has happened with the National Labor Relations Board. [Obama] is basically paying back organized union labor, by taking union stooges and putting them in the National Labor Relations Board so they will do his bidding and follow his policies.”



Marty Mulcahy writes for the People’s World.

Bring the troops home from Afghanistan

By PW Editorial Board

Events in Afghanistan and here at home since the inadvertent burning of Korans on a U.S. Army base show that the majority of Americans are right on target in their support for bringing the troops home.

As news comes out of Afghanistan about angry mobs and the killing of Americans, Afghans, and others, the GOP response has been to stoke the flames of more racism and anti-Muslim attitudes by portraying the president as a weak-kneed apologist to “dangerous, out-of-control terrorists.”

By implication, Republicans also feed into the Islamophobic lie about the president being a “secret Muslim.” Republican presidential candidates and their surrogates, like Franklin Graham, make such racial and religious bigotry part of their regular messaging.

They further hope to undermine the president by using the Koran-burning crisis to condemn his strategy of setting a timetable for withdrawal.

We don’t think the American people are going to fall for these arguments. We believe there is a deep understanding on the part of most people that the real problem is the deeply flawed Afghanistan strategy the U.S. has had from the very beginning.

The flawed strategy is based on the incorrect premise that the United States can send in troops and occupy a nation in order to fight terrorism, when in reality military occupation increases terrorism. Plus, there are the one percent’s geopolitical and economic motivations at work in occupying Afghanistan.

Some have argued that pulling out from Afghanistan will endanger Pakistan, turning that country over to “terrorists.” Those who argue that position, however, have given us not a single plausible explanation of how U.S. troops in Afghanistan can possibly have anything to do with keeping Pakistan “safe.” If anything, things in Pakistan grew worse after the arrival of U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

The Republican argument that the reason for the trouble in Afghanistan is that the president, by announcing a withdrawal date, “gave away” our strategy is equally absurd. Afghanistan has been a disaster for us ever since we got involved there. It is a disaster now, and will continue to be a disaster for as long as we stay.

The American people know that to stop the killing in Afghanistan and to stop the loss of U.S. lives there is only one option. Get all the U.S. troops out of there and get them out now.

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Trumka champions quest for immigration reform

By Juan Lopez

Day laborers from 14 states journeyed by car, at times through states and communities where police double up as deportation agents, to participate in the 6th National Assembly of the National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON) in Los Angeles Feb. 19-23.

Many, undocumented, risked arrest and possible deportation. But they would not be deterred in their quest for “Humane and Fair Immigration Reform for All, Now,” as a conference banner proclaimed in Spanish and English.

In a fiery speech Feb 21., AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said the national labor federation and its affiliates stand “shoulder to shoulder” with immigrant workers.

“There is power in our union, power big enough to transform this country,” Trumka declared. “You are critical to the future of the American labor movement.”

Later in the day, Trumka also spoke at a victory rally of carwash workers, members of the United Steelworkers union, who recently won contracts with Vermont Carwash and Nava’s Carwash. Three union carwashes in the country are now covered by a labor agreement, with Santa Monica’s Bonus Carwash becoming the first.

At the conference, Trumka hailed the 2006 partnership agreement between the AFL-CIO and NDLON that paved the way for AFL-CIO bodies and NDLON’s day laborer worker centers to cooperate on issues ranging from workplace rights to immigration reform to health and safety and other job-related concerns.

NDLON Executive Director Pablo Alvarado singled out several recent victories protecting workers against wage theft particularly affecting immigrant workers. He also pointed to the defeat of the Redondo Beach, Calif., ordinance barring day laborers from gathering on busy street corners to solicit work from passing drivers.



In a significant victory, the U.S. Supreme Court this week turned down the city’s appeal seeking reinstatement of the ordinance, after the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals struck it down on free-speech grounds.

In response to widespread criticism, the Obama administration is phasing out a program known as 287(g) that deputized local police officers to act as immigration agents.

Once involving 60 local agencies under former President George W. Bush, it now involves eight.

Under a separate program, however, in response to a wave of protests a number of states are reconsidering their participation in Secure Communities, a program aimed at identifying and deporting undocumented immigrants convicted of serious crimes.

Statistics show many of those deported under the program had never been convicted of a crime or were guilty only of minor offenses.

Day laborers at the conference were also joined by representatives of the faith-based community, civil rights groups, academicians and other NDLON allies - a microcosm of the social movements that have come to the defense of day laborers.

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Tulsa workers win fight with creative strategy

By J. Shepherd

The unionized Tulsa municipal workers of AFSCME Local 1180 chose to fight back against privatization by taking over their department in a very unusual way.

In June 2011, city operations and maintenance workers were threatened with privatization. These workers handle electrical, mechanical, plumbing and carpentry duties for the municipality. Not only could privatization of these jobs reduce quality of services and workplace safety, but also private contractors often cut jobs to lower costs, giving the appearance of greater efficiency. In reality, such cuts only intensify the exploitation of workers, making the work more taxing, dangerous and lower quality.

Union organizers and workers were confident that the employees themselves knew more about how best to run their department than their bosses, so they prepared a plan of their own outlining ways to improve services, reduce costs and save the taxpayers money.

They went directly to the city government and presented their findings and proposals. They would eliminate unnecessary expenses, relinquish two vehicles that were not regularly used, and upgrade their technology to use more efficient software and web-based solutions wherever possible. Not only did their plan save the people of Tulsa money while maintaining quality services, they included a "gain sharing" program in which unionized operations and maintenance workers would be rewarded for their extra effort.

Mayor Dewey Bartlett The mayor announced that the workers' extra initiative not only saved their jobs from privatization, but saved the city \$224,000 since July 2011.

Latinos favorecen la conservación

Por Nguyen Ngoc

Una nueva encuesta revela que los votantes latinos en seis estados del oeste interior tienen fuertes opiniones a favor de la conservación.

La encuesta sobre el Estado de la Conservación del Occidente de las Montañas Rocosas del Colorado College de 2012 encontró que los votantes latinos en la región casi por unanimidad - 94 por ciento - opinan que los parques nacionales, bosques, monumentos y áreas de vida silvestre son una parte esencial de la economía de su estado.

La encuesta bipartidista, dada a conocer 30 de enero, encuestó a 2.400 votantes de Arizona, Colorado, Montana, Nuevo México, Utah y Wyoming, y fue realizada por Lori Weigel de Public Opinion Strategies y Dave Metz de Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates. La encuesta fue financiada por la Fundación Hewlett.

El encuestador David Metz dijo que la encuesta disipa la idea de que las comunidades étnicas, especialmente afectadas por la crisis económica, están "más dispuestos que otros a dejar al medio ambiente en un segundo plano a la economía".

De los votantes latinos encuestados, el 87 por ciento dijeron que creen que es posible proteger la tierra y el agua y tener una economía fuerte con buenos puestos de trabajo al mismo tiempo, en comparación con el 78 por ciento de la población en general.

La encuesta también muestra que los votantes latinos en la región quieren más "inversión pública" en los esfuerzos de conservación, dijo Metz.

"Una gran mayoría de los latinos, incluso frente a los problemas del presupuesto estatal, [quieren que el estado] invierta en la tierra, el agua y los parques estatales", dijo.

"Los latinos creen que esos recur-

sos hacen importantes contribuciones a la economía del estado".

En general, los votantes latinos estaban más preocupados sobre los recortes a la financiación de los parques estatales.

Maite Arce, Directora Ejecutiva de la Fundación Hispana de Acceso con sede en Washington, DC, dijo que no estaba sorprendida por las fuertes opiniones a favor de las conservación de los votantes latinos, y dice que está de acuerdo con sus valores culturales.

"Para los latinos, la familia es realmente importante, la salud es realmente importante", dijo. "Hay una fuerte conexión en nuestro patrimonio cultural a la naturaleza, la vida silvestre, la tierra, el aire. Creo que la experiencia de los abuelos y abuelas en los países de origen ... están sin duda todavía arraigados en lo que somos. [Es] la conexión con la tierra".

Los votantes latinos también expresaron una profunda preocupación por la contaminación del aire y del agua, incluyendo el impacto de la extracción de petróleo y gas en el medio ambiente, en comparación con el público en general. Los sentimientos ayudan a explicar los altos niveles de apoyo entre los latinos de la protección federal y el desarrollo de las energías renovables.

Todos los encuestados mostraron un fuerte apoyo para las protecciones del aire limpio bajo la Agencia de Protección Ambiental de los Estados Unidos, pero el apoyo entre los votantes latinos fue aún más fuerte (81 por ciento frente al 70 por ciento del público en general).

El 80 por ciento de los latinos desean que Estados Unidos deje de depender de carbón, petróleo y gas, y que amplíe el uso de energías renovables.

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