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Across the nation, hundreds of thousands join Occupy movement

By Gabe Falsetta

Across the nation yesterday, in all 50 states, hundreds of thousands joined Occupy Wall Street, the labor movement and their allies in demonstrations demanding jobs, taxation of the rich, curbs on the power of big finance and preservation of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

Leaving behind their tents and tarps, the Occupy Wall Street demonstrators brought their message to the people by marching through the nation's financial districts, through the streets of cities and towns coast to coast, and by occupying everything from mass transit hubs to the bridges that span the nation's rivers, canals and lakes.

Coming just two days after protesters were evicted from their headquarters in many city parks and town squares, the mass demonstrations amounted to the largest public outpouring of support for the movement since it began as a picket line in the financial district here on Sept. 17.

Nearly 40,000 people from over one hundred groups jammed Foley Square here, alone. They poured into the square after having demonstrated at numerous other events around the city, including at the opening of the New York Stock Exchange.

Although they came in solidarity with those who were evicted on Tuesday by court order from their Zuccotti Park encampment they, in effect, were launching an Occupy Wall Street movement



far bigger and broader than it had been at any time before the eviction. (story continues below slide show)

Billionaire Mayor Bloomberg had gone to the Appeals Court to overturn a Supreme Court ruling that allowed protesters to remain in Zuccotti Park with their tents and tarps. If there was ever any illusion that the mayor's move would kill the movement, it evaporated at Foley Square.

The tens of thousands gathered in the square heard music and they heard testimony from speakers who, after having lost jobs, homes and hope, were fighting back. Hope for a better America, many said, was in the air.

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Unions were out in force at Foley Square yesterday, as they were at demonstrations across the country.

The day had begun in New York with protesters attempting a march on the New York Stock Exchange.

Michele Keller, speaking for the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, declared, "We are part of the protest that's letting it be known quite clearly that we are the 99 percent. We are part of a union and blessed to have a job; we are linked by our brothers and sisters and our young people. We are being left behind and whatever we can do today and every day we will do."

"We're supporting Occupy Wall Street," said Chris Rzonca of the United Auto Workers, Local 7902, the adjunct union at New York University. "Our union, the UAW, has come out strongly in favor of it. We are here to support these young people to make sure they know we are behind them."

"We have to find out what people need and talk about economic justice. We've been doing the same thing as unions-- we marched on Wall Street many times but these young people put their bodies out there and I think that has made the difference."

Eventually the crowd formed itself into a mas-

sive procession to the Brooklyn Bridge chanting, "We are the 99 percent," "People united will never be defeated," and "Whose streets? Our streets."

In a planned act of civil disobedience, Mary Kay Henry, president of the Service Employees International Union, and several members of the New York City Council were arrested on the bridge.

The crowds were so thick that it took several hours for the typical marcher to get from Foley Square to the Brooklyn side of the bridge. The people roared and cheered every time a passing car honked its support.

The day had begun in New York with protesters attempting a march on the New York Stock Exchange. They were held back by police.

Entrances to many buildings in the financial district were blocked by the seemingly overwhelmed New York Police Department, making it impossible for many workers to get to their jobs.



Gabe Falsetta writes for the People's World.

Military base in Australia: wrong direction

By PW Editorial Board

President Barack Obama announced in Darwin, Australia, U.S. plans to increase its military presence in the East Asia-Pacific area.

Specifically, the president, who was joined in a news conference by Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard, announced the creation of a U.S. Marines base in Darwin, which is on Australia's North coast, close to Southeast Asia.

Some 250 Marines, along with military hardware, will constitute the initial force. Eventually 2,500 Marines will be circulated through the base.

The United States has had a military alliance with Australia since World War II, but this development is a significant new projection of forces.

The U.S. announcement, which also coincided with a get-together of the Association of East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Indonesia, comes in the context of ongoing friction with China on a number of issues including, currency and trade practices, U.S. and NATO intervention in Libya, and South China Sea jurisdiction.

The United States has been ostentatiously supporting the claims of its ASEAN ally, the Philippines, over the waters, which not only are militarily and geopolitically important, but also contain petroleum reserves.

The U.S. is boosting its military presence in the Philippines also. Other countries in the area, including socialist Vietnam, also challenge some of the Chinese claims over the waters.

Although President Obama stated in Darwin that the new U.S. deployment is not aimed at China, several days earlier U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that the U.S. plans a more robust presence in the area specifically to counter Chinese influence, and its economic rise. Part of this may involve a rapprochement with Burma (Myanmar), in an effort to reduce Chinese influence on that country.

U.S. military might has too often been used to protect corporate profits and control strategic regions of the world for their narrow interests. While the president has said the U.S. "welcome[s] a rising, peaceful China," many in U.S. ruling circles see China as a competitor.

More U.S. military force in the Asia-Pacific area is provocative and unnecessary. Instead of building more military bases, we should be closing them. The money dedicated to this new military buildup would be far better utilized in creating jobs and protecting the social safety net.

Asian-Pacific nations are perfectly capable of reaching negotiated settlements of their regional disputes without U.S. interference.

More U.S. military force in the Asia-Pacific area is provocative and unnecessary.

Racism: pollutant that serves GOP, Wall St interests

By Sam Webb

To win victories requires unity. Communists understand that well, but so do corporate America and the far right. Thus they work to divide the movement.

Racism is the most persistent and pernicious form of division in our country. It creates a fault line in the labor and people's struggles that, if not overcome, irredeemably weakens them.

Racism appears in structural and ideological forms. It is more than prejudice or attitude. It rests on the systematic elaboration of the notion of white superiority.

This notion has its origins in, and is sustained by, racist practices and structures that confine people of color to a subordinate status relative to white people in nearly every area of life.

By every social measure people of color find themselves in inferior conditions. A quick glance at unemployment rates or life expectancy rates or wealth accumulation rates or incarceration rates or poverty rates offers ample proof of this fact.

Nor has racism in its ideological form abated. Perhaps its contemporary expression is different, but its essence hasn't changed.

Pat Buchanan wrote, "Can Western civilization survive the passing of the European peoples whose ancestors created it and their replacement by Third World immigrants? Probably not."

Buchanan is not a lone voice in the wilderness however. Since his election President Obama has been the object of racist vilification.

"He's not a citizen," "he's in over his head," "he's Hitler in a black face," "he's a tribesman," "he's a dick," "he's your boy," and on and on.

All of these vile expressions of racism pollute our political culture, rationalize the harsh conditions in which people of color live, fatten the corporate bottom line, and sustain the rule of the most reactionary sectors of our society.

It is also the ticket of the party of white su-



premac - the Republican Party - to return to the White House next year. They attempt to convince white working people that they share common cause with the reactionary right.

But there is no evidence for this claim. While the program of the extreme right falls especially hard on people of color, it also negatively impacts on white working people.

This is the common thread that binds the multi-racial working class together. And this is especially so if the democratic demands of people of color and other oppressed people combine with the overall demands of the working class and people as a whole.

Thus, what is urgently needed is a broad, sustained struggle for economic justice and equality.

Such a struggle constitutes the strategy of a winning struggle in the elections next year.

I emphasize this question because there is a tendency to lose sight of the special oppression those sections of the working class experience, and the democratic demands associated with that oppression. This is a mistake at any time, but particularly now when such grave dangers are facing our country and the world.

What is urgently needed is a broad, sustained struggle for economic justice and equality.

Red Cross strikers win new contract

By Joelle Fishman

Just days after striking workers at Red Cross in Farmington, Conn., received a solidarity boost on their picket line with union sisters and brothers from around the state at a Rally for Justice, they won a tentative agreement on a new collective bargaining agreement.

The 225 members of AFSCME Local 3145, who represent blood collection workers at the Connecticut Blood Services Region of the American Red Cross, launched an unfair labor practice strike on November 3, after negotiating for nearly three years without a contract.

The strike lasted nearly two weeks. Members will vote shortly on the contract which the negotiation team recommends for approval.

Peggy Buchanan, president of the Hartford Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO, gave unqualified support.

Local 3145 members work on blood drives and make sure the blood supply is safe and sound.

On August 29 an administrative law judge ruled that the Connecticut Blood Services Region broke the law by engaging in unfair labor practices. Union members say the company is still trying to eliminate their right to bargain over health care, along with many other punishing proposals.

Across the country, Red Cross Blood workers are fighting for safe staffing levels to protect blood donors and the blood supply. They have established a Facebook page "Keep Blood Drives Safe."

An important issue to workers in Connecticut was the cut back of the presence of nurses and trained medical personnel at blood drives. Christine Holschlag, a phlebotomist and member of the union negotiating team says she has watched the number of RN's and LPN's shrink from 30 to 12, and the number of supervisors increase from 4 to 20 since she began working at Red Cross in 2006.

Republicanos: Más importa asaltar a trabajadores que crear trabajos

Por Blake Deppe

Pocos días antes del Día de Elecciones 2011 un agrupamiento nacional dedicado a los derechos laborales ha emitido un reporte denunciando las intenciones republicanas hacia los trabajadores. No contentos con quitarles los derechos a la negociación colectiva, una medida que los gobernadores estatales republicanos han buscado indescansablemente, durante todo el año 2011 los legisladores ultraderechistas antitrabajadores han seguido atacando a la mesa Nacional de Relaciones Laborales (NLRB, por sus siglas en inglés) y a la ley laboral en EEUU, según el grupo American Rights at Work [Derechos Norteamericanos en el Trabajo].

Dijo el presidente de la AFL-CIO, Richard Trumka, que una propuesta de ley republicana introducida luego de una queja por parte de la NLRB de que la corporación gigantesca de aviación Boeing les estaba castigando a sus trabajadores por alvalarse de sus derechos legales "sería una legislación de gran escala que haría destripar la Ley Nacional de Relaciones Laborales y que tendría como resultado una serie de cambios dañosos a los trabajos y a los derechos laborales de los trabajadores por todo el país".

Las quejas de la NLRB relacionados a Boeing tienen que ver con el hecho de que la compañía hizo cambiar producción fuera de sus facilidades del estado de Washington en una represalia contra trabajadores que estaban ejerciendo su derecho a la huelga. Hacer esto a los trabajadores es claramente ilegal.

Pero la nueva propuesta republicana, H.R. 2587, le quitaría a la NLRB cualquier autoridad para componer o tomar acción remedial contra con-

ducta ilegal como la que se le acusa a Boeing de haber realizado. Con transferir, subcontratar o enviar trabajos al exterior, quedarían impunes las corporaciones libres para tomar represalias contra sus trabajadores a su antojo.

"Si un grupo de trabajadores va a la calle debido a condiciones laborales inseguras," dijo Trumka, "la compañía podría decidir a cambiar el trabajo y los empleos a otra parte en vez de componer el problema y la NLRB quedaría impotente para protegerles a los trabajadores y sus trabajos".

Anotaba anteriormente este año el congresista George Miller, Demócrata por California, en una rueda de prensa, que si la propuesta le quitaría a la NLRB su poder de pedirles cuenta a las corporaciones por sus acciones, eso provocaría "una desastrosa carrera hacia el fondo para los derechos, salarios y beneficios y las condiciones laborales de los trabajadores norteamericanos".

Declara el grupo "American Rights at Work" que la meta republicana es claramente la de destruir al movimiento sindical.

En el reporte más reciente del grupo, Zoe Bridges-Curry hace resumen a la serie de asaltos contra los trabajadores y sus sindicatos realizados por legisladores republicanos.

Si indica algo la calificación del precandidato republicano a la presidencia Mitt Romney a la NLRB como "lacayos laborales," parecería que Bridges-Curry tiene razón en evaluar el intento de la ultraderecha.

De hecho, Romney ya ha introducido su supuesta "política laboral" en Carolina del Sur a comienzos de septiembre, prestando su pleno apoyo a la propuesta republicana anti NLRB.