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U.S. official quits Afghanistan job over war

By Susan Webb

Vice President Joe Biden's foreign policy adviser will meet this week with a highly respected U.S. Foreign Service officer who quit his job in Afghanistan last month because he lost faith in the purpose of the war, according to a report in the Washington Post. The action by Matthew Hoh, 36, a former Marine captain with a stellar career in combat in Iraq, and then at the Pentagon and in civilian State Department roles, was reported by the Post in an extensive Oct. 27 article by Karen DeYoung.

Hoh was the top U.S. civilian official in Afghanistan's Zabul province, considered a Taliban hotbed.

Citing "doubts and reservations about our current strategy and planned future strategy," Hoh wrote in a Sept. 10 letter to the head of the Foreign Service, Nancy Powell, "My resignation is based not upon how we are pursuing this war, but why and to what end."

To put it simply, he wrote, "I fail to see the value or the worth in continued U.S. casualties or expenditures of resources in support of the Afghan government in what is truly a 35-year civil war."

The U.S. and NATO military presence greatly fuels the Afghan insurgency, he said.



"If the history of Afghanistan is one great stage play, the United States is no more than a supporting actor, among several previously, in a tragedy that not only pits tribes, valleys, clans, villages and families against one another, but, from at least the end of King Zahir Shah's reign, has

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violently and savagely pitted the urban, secular, educated and modern of Afghanistan against the rural, religious, illiterate and traditional. It is this latter group that composes and supports the Pash-tun insurgency," Hoh wrote.

"I have observed that the bulk of the insurgency fights not for the white banner of the Tal-

“Our forces, devoted and faithful, have been committed to conflict in an indefinite and unplanned manner.”

iban, but rather against the presence of foreign soldiers and taxes imposed by an unrepresentative government in Kabul.”

Hoh lambasted the current Afghan government for its corruption, saying its failings “appear legion and metastatic.”

“Our forces, devoted and faithful, have been committed to conflict in an indefinite and unplanned manner that has become a cavalier, politically expedient and Pollyannaish misadventure ... shaped more by the political climate in Washington, D.C. than in Afghan cities, villages, mountains and valleys,” he wrote.

Hoh received a citation for bravery for his Iraq service, and suffered post-traumatic stress disorder after being unable to save four fellow Marines after a 2006 helicopter crash in Anbar.

Hoh is the first U.S. official known to resign in protest over the Afghan war, according to the Post.

He is considered an outstanding officer and he is being taken seriously by the White House.

After he sent his letter, U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry offered him a senior embassy position in Kabul, and he also was flown to Washington to meet in person with President Obama’s special envoy to the region, Richard Holbrooke.

“We took his letter very seriously, because he was a good officer,” Holbrooke told the Post. “We all thought that given how serious his letter was, how much commitment there was, and his prior track record, we should pay close attention to him.” Holbrooke offered him a job which he first accepted but then turned down.

The killing of 8 U.S. troops by roadside bombs on Tuesday brought the number of U.S. casualties in Afghanistan in October to 55, making this the deadliest month so far in the eight-year war. The U.S. currently has 66,000 troops in Afghanistan, in addition to NATO forces.



Susan Webb is Assistant Editor of the *People’s World*.

Keep pushing

By PW Editorial Board

Assurances from Washington that a health care reform bill, which includes a public option, will reach the Senate floor are a welcome sign that the tide in this country has turned in favor of substantial change. The people are not buying the false notion that so-called “free market” is the answer to all their problems.

The fight for a public option could not have survived in the halls of a Congress where corporate health insurance lobbyists wield enormous power, however, without a mass movement that singled out the insurance companies as the profit-hungry culprit whose role it is to make money, not to make people healthy.

The response of the mass, and we should point out, labor-led, movement to the corporate-funded tea parties at town hall meetings in August was a steady stream of street demonstrations, Internet campaigns, phone banks, TV and radio ads, and lobbying in congressional offices – including in the offices of many financially beholden to those very insurance companies. A les-

son here: grassroots, mass political pressure can make a difference. So much for all the naysayers who proclaimed the public option was “dead.”

But this mass movement isn’t going to rest on its laurels – and knows it can’t. There are a few versions of the public option in the Senate bill, so pressure for the best, most democratic and robust public option has to be continued.

Health care reform should be paid for by taxing the rich, not workers who currently have employer-based health insurance. The public option must be available to everyone. That’s the only way it will be able to offer meaningful competition to the profit hungry insurance companies. A meager, weak “public option” could be a set up for failure, thereby giving fuel to the anti-government arsonists.

The will of the majority – affordable health care for every person living in this country – will be achieved only if the movement that has kept the public option alive keeps united and keeps on pushing.



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International Day of Climate Action: A big success

By Marc Brodine

Recently 350.org, founded by author and activist Bill McKibben, sponsored over 5,200 events in 181 countries on Oct. 24. The purpose of the actions was to publicize the call of many scientists to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to no more than 350 parts per million.

Already the level of carbon in the atmosphere is over 380 parts per million. Scientists such as NASA's James Hansen point to the dangers to the world if we do not reduce the levels of carbon dioxide to at least 350 ppm. Otherwise, temperatures will increase more than six degrees Fahrenheit.

At many demonstrations around the world, people gathered to form giant human chains displaying the number 350. People on every continent used the occasion to apply pressure for more serious action on the upcoming Copenhagen climate change negotiations in December that will agree on a framework for international agreements to tackle climate change following the expiration of the Kyoto Accords in 2012.

There were many creative demonstrations, including an underwater meeting of the Maldives cabinet, illustrating what will happen to their country as sea levels rise, including a demonstration on the shores of the Dead Sea where Israelis made a giant "3," Palestinians made a giant "5," and Jordanians made a giant "0." In Abu Dhabi, people made a large "350" standing in front of what is currently the world's largest solar panel array.

While there are disputes about whether 1998 or 2005 was the hottest year on record, there is no dispute that the last ten years have been the hottest ever recorded, and certainly the hottest in the last 11,000 years, the entire period of human agricultural development.

One of the less understood aspects of global warming is that the warming is not evenly spread around the world, but is affecting some regions much more heavily. This is especially true of the



Arctic, where summer ice is drastically reduced. There are extra dangers for the world because as the Arctic heats up, the permafrost which covers a wide band of the northern earth is starting to defrost, which will lead to the releasing of massive amounts of greenhouse gases that have been frozen for millennia. Unless we limit temperature increases due to human carbon dioxide and methane emissions, this could lead to runaway global warming, beyond human control. We need to act before we reach such a crisis, while we still have the opportunity through human action to change the direction of global climate change.

The Oct. 24 actions, involving tens of thousands, demonstrate that people all over the world are ready to take action, and understand the need to urge political leaders to take action to reduce carbon dioxide emissions faster than current plans envision.

Go to 350.org for many photos of the international actions and to sign up for future activities.



Marc Brodine is a contributor to the *Peoples World*.

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Health care advocates support Dodd

By Joelle Fishman

Health care, union and religious activists came together outside the Stamford Place Hilton recently to welcome President Obama to Connecticut and rally in favor of a strong public option with no taxation of health-care benefits. Obama was in Connecticut for a fundraiser for Senator Chris Dodd. Across the street, Dump Dodd “teabaggers” carried signs demonizing President Obama and Senator Dodd, government healthcare and environmental protection.

In the traffic came many honks of support for healthcare reform, but the biggest cheers came from school buses with children pressed against the windows shouting, “Obama, Obama!”

The multi-racial healthcare reform supporters were a stark contrast to the all-white Dump Dodd crowd. Several families from Stamford who had never participated in a demonstration before came out to support the public option, joining with long-time activists who had taken part in the national call-in day to Congress on October 20.

The Dump Dodd group has attempted to create hysteria in Connecticut by scapegoating Dodd for the Wall Street financial scandals. Seizing on this opportunity, the national Republican Party has named Dodd their number one target in 2010 in their attempt to re-take the Senate majority.

Dodd, with a lifetime pro-worker voting record over 90 percent has the strong support of organized labor. Picking up from where Sen. Kennedy left off, Dodd has the lead in committee negotiations on healthcare, and has pledged to stand firm for inclusion of a public option.

Los padres organizan para los traductores Español-Ingleses en escuelas

Por Claudia Bosch & Megan Fountain

Eduquemos a Nuestros Hijos (TOC, por sus siglas en inglés) se presentó ayer ante la Junta de Educación para protestar por la falta de traductores en las reuniones orientativas obligatorias para padres. El Dr. Reginald Mayo, superintendente de New Haven, prometió a TOC en una reunión el 5 de agosto de 2009 que proveería traductores de español para las orientaciones de padres en cada escuela, empezando el curso 2009-2010. Esa promesa no se cumplió. Al menos nueve escuelas no tuvieron traductores en la orientación, según una encuesta preliminar realizada por TOC.

Treinta y cuatro padres-miembros de TOC-y sus hijos se presentaron en la junta, y 12 aliados de la comunidad les acompañaron. Para poner de manifiesto de modo visual el problema de la falta de comunicación, TOC entró a la Junta de Educación con la boca tapada.

Alberto Nieves, un padre líder de TOC que estuvo en la reunión con el Dr. Mayo, asistió a la orientación sin traducción de la escuela Bishop Woods. “Me siento defraudado”, dice Nieves, “El Dr. Mayo prometió un traductor, pero no hubo ninguno. El director de la escuela distribuyó un manual con información básica sobre la normativa de la escuela. Era sólo en inglés”. En la escuela Bishop Woods, el 17,3% de los estudiantes proviene de hogares hispanohablantes.

La falta de traductores debería preocupar a todos los padres, según Claudia Bosch, una madre líder de TOC. “El 26,2 percent de los estudiantes de New Haven proviene de hogares hispanohablantes”, dijo Bosch. “Miles de niños están perdiendo oportunidades educativas, porque sus padres no pueden comunicarse con la escuela. ¿Cómo va a convertirse New Haven en el mejor distrito urbano de la nación, si una cuarta parte de los padres está siendo excluida por no proporcionar la traducción necesaria?”

Nieves, que también es hispanohablante y asiste a todas las reuniones de padres, está de acuerdo. “Cuando contemplo la diferencia de logros académicos que existe entre los estudiantes hispanos y no hispanos de New Haven, me enojo, porque nuestras escuelas pueden hacerlo mejor”, dice Nieves. “Hay muchos padres como yo, que quieren participar, que quieren informarse por sí mismos, y que quieren la mejor educación para sus hijos. Si hubiera traductores, todo el mundo saldría beneficiado”.

“Es desafortunado que tengamos que protestar para hacer que se oigan nuestras voces, pero ya intentamos todas las otras vías”, dice Nilda Apon-te, Líder de TOC. Los padres de TOC hablaron con varios administradores sobre la falta de traductores.

