

# PEOPLE'S WORLD

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## The specter of “big government” Get real!

By Sam Webb

**Y**ears ago Grover Norquist, a Washington insider of right wing pedigree, quipped: “I don’t want to abolish government. I simply want to reduce it to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub.”

We hear similar sound bites now, as pundits and politicians of the right bewail the size and growth of government. Shrink government, they say, and everything will be fine!

The framing of the debate along these lines - big versus small government - is misleading. It cleverly conceals what’s at the core of the present controversy that has divided Congress and the country: the role and responsibilities of government.

For nearly a half century, the role and responsibilities of government included a measure of class compromise, societal obligations (Social Security, unemployment insurance, Medicare and Medicaid), union rights, formal equality, and expansive macroeconomic policies that favored broadly shared prosperity.

But all that changed with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. And for the next three decades right wing extremism in its various iterations dominated U.S. politics and its discourse.

Every institution of government - legislative bodies, agencies, courts, the military, and the executive branch - was turned into a super charged



instrument of class warfare from above.

Markets were deregulated. Unions were busted. Industries were hollowed out. The social safety net was shredded. Entitlements and public goods like education, retirement security, health care, and so forth were attacked. The Constitution was shredded. Immigrants were turned into crimi-

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nals. Racist and patriarchal ideology and practices multiplied. Working people’s income either fell or stagnated. And individualism, selfishness, and greed morphed from private vices into public virtues.

In other words, the state/government apparatus in the hands of right wing extremists was anything but a downsized, emaciated, and neutral social institution standing above society, as they claimed. It was, instead, a battering ram leaving in its path battered people and communities at home

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**Sam Webb**

and abroad. And to whose advantage?

Not ordinary people who bought into the notion that East Coast elites, Hollywood, liberals, unions, feminists, immigrants, gay people, and, above all, people of color and especially African American people were the cause of America's political, economic and moral decline.

Not the teabaggers who gathered in Washington last weekend to excoriate the nation's first Black president.

The main beneficiaries were the captains and owners of finance and industry and the luminaries of the extreme right in politics, the media, and the pulpit. Never before has income shifted so quickly and massively to the top one percent of the population. But the jig could well be up.

The president and the coalition that elected him have the power within their hands to reconfigure the role and responsibilities of government in the interests of working people and their allies for the first time in decades.

And it is this possibility that is sending the spokespeople of right wing extremism into a rage.

Invoking the "specter of big government" - not to mention the "specter of an African Ameri-

can in the White House, a Latina woman on the Supreme Court, gay people a part of the fabric of everyday life, and creeping socialism" - the demagogues of the right are whipping up their grassroots constituency into a frenzy of hate, racism, misogyny, homophobia, false patriotism, immigrant and union bashing, and violence.

The American people, however, have more common sense than to buy this bill of goods. Too much has happened and too many hearts broken over the past 30 years for them to climb on the right-wing, anti-government bandwagon.

The way forward may not be completely clear, but the road offered by the new president and the coalition that elected him is still one that millions are ready to fight for.



**Sam Webb is chairman of the Communist Party.**

## Out of Afghanistan

By PW Editorial Board

**P**resident Obama is conducting a "strategic assessment" of the Afghanistan war. He is expected to announce his conclusions in late October. He is right to take his time. With an uptick in casualties, what appears to be increased Taliban momentum, the problematic Afghan elections, and continued violence, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, Gen. Stanley McChrystal is pressing for more troops. There is talk of anywhere from 10,000 to 40,000— some project even more — on top of the approximately 68,000 already slated. McChrystal is reportedly warning that the U.S. risks "failure" if more troops are not sent.

Retired Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt suggests that Obama ask Americans to "endure years of sacrifice" to pursue the military campaign. Obama faces tough decisions. If he decides to buck the generals, and then something catastrophic happens in Afghanistan, it could jeopardize the vital Democratic congressional majority, in next fall's midterm elections. And what happens in Afghanistan could spill over into neighboring nuclear-

armed Pakistan. .

If there is one lesson that a wide swath of political and military experts have drawn from that history, and from the Vietnam War disaster, it is that there is no military solution. Continuing to pour in troops and military hardware, and dressing it up with "new" old strategies like "counterinsurgency," leads to nothing good, either for the U.S. or those supposedly being "defended." That awareness is reflected in the growing chorus of voices in Congress calling for a clear exit strategy and timeline. With every bomb dropped and every civilian and military death," says United for Peace and Justice, "we are no closer to helping the Afghan people and the region to grapple with their problems. In fact, the U.S. presence is the biggest obstacle to doing so."

Oct. 7 — the anniversary of the invasion— is an opportunity to organize teach-ins, , rallies, phone call and letter writing campaigns and delegations to congressional offices pressing for a halt to eight years of death and dying.



**The anniversary of the war is a time to organize teach ins, phone calls, and letter writing campaigns and delegations to congressional offices pressing to halt the war.**

# We're back!

By PW Editorial Board

**Y**es, like the little engine that could, the People's World is a daily again, in a bigger, better and more powerful format, reaching tens of thousands of readers through the ever-widening medium of the Internet.

We are proud, and unique among news media, to trace our heritage of progressive, working class, noncommercial journalism back to 1924. Over the past 85 years we've made many transitions - changing our frequency, our formats, our appearance, our size and style - to meet the challenges of the times and the limits of our finances.

Throughout all the ups and downs, we've kept on publishing and stuck to our roots and our principles - journalism of, by and for America's working class and people.

In January 1958, when our predecessor The Daily Worker stopped daily publication, it pledged: "We'll be back! Fighting for peace, democracy and socialism."

And we did come back, continuing as a weekly, then a semiweekly, then again a daily, then back to a weekly for the past 18 years.

Today, we are thrilled to make a bold new transition to our state-of-the-art People's World web site - [peoplesworld.org](http://peoplesworld.org).

We'll be adding initiatives and improvements as we go. Top among them will be a focus on harnessing the power of ever-changing communications tools to reach America's workers, young and old, on the job or out of work, struggling to get by and to make a better world for themselves, their families, their communities and their world.

You can be part of it in so many ways:

- Sign up for our twice-a-week e-mails.
- Read an article you like? Don't just appreciate it - e-mail it to friends, co-workers, family members, activists in your community. Repost it (with a link to the original, of course) at web sites you follow. Print it and post it on a work or neighborhood bulletin board. These are vital ways to build our readership and network of support.



- Let us know what you think about an article or topic - post a comment online.

- Send us a short report and photo about something happening in your area. For how-tos, contact us at [pw@peoplesworld.org](mailto:pw@peoplesworld.org).

- Make a donation to carry it forward - no amount is too big or too small.

It takes plain old American gumption, grit and determination to take this big, bold step. We know there will be bumps along the way - when has that ever not been the case in the people's movement? But with your help, we'll keep marching down that road we stepped out on 85 years ago.

Yes, we're back! Fighting for peace, democracy and socialism.

**Yes like the little engine that could the Peoples World is a daily again in a bigger better and more powerful format.**



The PW Editorial Board can be contacted at [contact@peoplesworld.org](mailto:contact@peoplesworld.org)

## Anger toward insurance companies grows

By Pepe Lozano

**W**e're going to win health care reform in this country. And we're not going to let giant insurance companies get in the way," said reform advocate John Gaudette at a rally in front of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois here Sept. 22, one of 200 rallies that took place nationwide.

Anger is rising towards Big Insurance.

Gaudette said insurance companies spend \$640,000 a day opposing health care reform.

Rally organizers Health Care For America Now and Citizen Action charge that insurance CEOs took home \$690 million last year. Premiums have skyrocketed four times faster than wages. Health insurance profits have quadrupled in seven years to \$12.7 billion in 2007.

Karen Nelson Rogers said she pays \$2,747 a month for her family of four's health care expenses. "That's obscene," she said.

"We need a public health care option now," Rogers said. "One that has everybody in and nobody out."

The current fight for a public option is in the Senate, which has dueling bills, one from the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee with a public option, and the other from the Finance Committee without one. The House of Representatives is expected to pass a bill with a strong public option.

In Chicago, it was an "exit" bonus totaling \$26 million for two Blue Cross executives that really angered people.

"That party stops here," no more "obscene profits," said Jonathan VanderBrug from Campaign for Better Health Care.

plozano@pww.org

# Nuevo liderazgo sindical

By John Wojcick

**L**os delegados a la convención de la AFL-CIO eligió una histórica nueva directiva.

Richard Trumka, ex secretario tesoroero fue electo presidente mientras que Liz Shuler tomó el puesto ahora vacante de secretaria tesoroera. Arlene Holt Baker mantuvo su puesto de vicepresidenta ejecutiva. Esta es la primera vez que la federación cuenta con una mayoría femenina en su liderazgo más alto.

Shuler, con 39 años de edad, es la líder más joven.

Antes de entrar en la alta directiva de la AFL-CIO, Trumka era presidente de los mineros.

"Aunque la faz del movimiento laboral es diferente, una cosa es segura ahora como lo era anterior – la manera más segura para que los trabajadores entren en la clase media es con la fuerza que solo viene con un convenio laboral", dijo Trumka. "Esa realidad no ha sido menos crítica que ahora porque no están poniendo a las clase media norteamericana en aprietos, sino que nos están aplastando", siguió Trumka.

Trumka dijo que aunque no fue el movimiento sindical que creó el problema económico, será el movimiento sindical que dirigirá a la nación para la salida de la crisis.

"No estamos solo preocupados con la familia sindical. Nuestra lucha es para asegurar la vida, libertad y la búsqueda de la felicidad para todas las familias", dijo Holt Baker, agregan-

do, "Yo creo con todo mi corazón que nuestro movimiento tiene que seguir asegurando que los millones de trabajadores en este país vivan con dignidad y el respeto que merecen. Esto significa buenos salarios, seguro médico asequible y entrenamiento vocacional continuo. Si no luchamos por esto, ¿quién lo hará?"

