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Six crucial tasks for the left and progressive community

By Sam Webb

Since Ronald Reagan was elected president more than three decades ago, right-wing extremists gathered in the Republican Party have been attempting to restructure the role and functions of government to the advantage of the top layers of the capitalist class.

One of their main aims has been to dismantle the bundle of social programs and rights (Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and voting, civil, disability, women's and labor rights, and much more) that were legislated over the past eight decades. These progressive breakthroughs are anathema to them. Instead of triumphs, the right wing sees them as sorry episodes in American history.

Looking back over the past 30 years it is fair to say that the right wing has been successful in redistributing income, by way of taxes, to the wealthiest corporations and families. It has been much less successful in dismantling social entitlements and rights.

That speaks to the popularity of this social compact with the American people.

Nevertheless, the rightists keep trying to do away with it, including in the recent debt ceiling talks. And they will try again when the supercommittee of 12 senators and representatives convenes this fall and deliberates on the future of these programs and rights.



No longer are a safety net for older people, a health care bottom line, and basic equality and democratic guarantees considered a part of the birthright of every American.

What will it take to save these core components of our social compact? The same thing that it took to win them - sustained mass struggle of a broad-based labor-led multiracial movement. Without such a movement it is hard to see how these social protections will be maintained - not to mention improved upon.

Yes, in the White House and Congress there

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are supporters of social entitlements and rights (and that too is necessary for a winning struggle) but it's not sufficient. They don't have the social

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power to stand up to a right-wing-driven offensive that includes nearly every section of the capitalist class. That social power resides with the masses of people who put elected officials into office.

In these circumstances, the left and progressive community has a crucial role. Here's what it can, and must, do:

1) Bring to light the linkages between capitalism's inner dynamics, the capitalist economic crisis and the current onslaught on people's living standards and rights. In particular, remind everyone that unregulated "free enterprise" that got us into this mess won't get us out.

2) Make the case that job creation is the nation's immediate and overarching priority. In fact, austerity measures at this moment are harmful for working people, for the economy and for our fiscal health. Indeed, chipping away core social programs would be a dagger to the heart of working people, especially people of color, and exactly the wrong medicine for an economy that limps along due to lack of consumer spending.

3) Put together a strategy that singles out the main obstacle to positive change - right-wing ex-

tremism - as well as the main social groups that have to be assembled to preserve America's social compact and expand it.

4) Elevate the struggle against racism - an ideological and social practice that feeds the corporate bottom line, interweaves with the political project of the far right, and gravely weakens the struggle to defend past gains and win future victories. Qualitative turns in a progressive and radical direction are organically bound up with growing anti-racist thinking and action on the part of white people, especially white workers.

5) Find the forms to unite the broadest possible movement in defense of these programs and rights. The task is not to propose the most radical solutions to every problem, but, in the first place, to organize struggles around the demands that millions are ready to fight on.

6) Connect every struggle against the right to the coming national elections.

Not for a long time has the left and progressive community been so badly needed to play its historic role. Let's do it.



Sam Webb is chair of the Communist Party USA.

Time to act for jobs is now, no excuses

By PW Editorial Board

President Obama gave a forceful speech and proposal for jobs Sept. 8 before a joint session of Congress. It may well have been a turning point moment in his administration.

Faced with a persistent economic crisis and growing grassroots call for action to address it, the president proposed the \$450 billion American Jobs Act, which has the potential to unite broad sections of the U.S. public. Obama's jobs bill begins to address the unemployment crisis by spending on roads, schools and summer youth jobs, extension of unemployment compensation and tax breaks for businesses.

It is a bill that puts the welfare of the country before party.

Because it partially draws on previous Republican proposals, and the bill promises to not add to the deficit, the GOP and its tea party attack dogs will be hard pressed to explain the reason for their unanimous opposition.

Some have argued Obama's bold job proposal faces dim prospects in the GOP-dominated House of Representatives.

The bill's chances for passage however de-

pends not so much what happens in Congress, but what occurs outside of it.

The president has called on the American people to join him in calling for the legislation's passage.

Over the coming weeks, rallies, vigils, flash mobs, letter-writing campaigns, phone banks, even work place job actions directed at Congress will have to occur on an unprecedented scale to demand action in support of the president's proposal.

The president has called for youth summer jobs program and rebuilding public schools. Young people and students have an important stake in this legislation passage. Their creativity, energy, ideas and fighting spirit will add an essential ingredient.

Millions of signatures must be gathered on the AFL-CIO's and other jobs petitions.

Obama made it clear that he stands four square in favor of jobs, collective bargaining, along with Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare.

The call has been made. No excuses. The time to act is now.

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Veto of “voter ID” law upheld in New Hampshire

By Dan Margolis

Poorer people and students scored a voting rights victory in New Hampshire as a veto by Democratic Gov. John Lynch of a controversial voter ID law was upheld.

Republicans in the State Senate attempted to override the veto, but Lynch's move was sustained by a 17-7 margin. Senate Republicans were divided over the measure, which was passed 14-9 in June. Senate President Peter Bragdon and Majority Leader Jeb Bradley, Republicans, were among those in the GOP voting to sustain the Democratic governor's veto.

The state's Senate is composed of 19 Republicans and five Democrats. The House is slightly more Democratic, with 297 Republicans and 103 Democrats.

If the bill had become law, voters would have been forced to present photo identification from either a New Hampshire or a federal government agency when they went to the polls. If they could not do so, they would then have had to have cast a provisional ballot and return within 2.5 days with proper identification. If they did not do so, their ballot would have been discarded.

Lynch sided with those who saw this as an attempt by Republicans to disenfranchise voters, saying that “seniors, students, those who are disabled or do not drive, and those who do not already have a state-issued or federal issued” identification might not have been able to attain one in time to vote.

He added in June, when the Senate passed the measure, that acquiring acceptable identification would be particularly difficult for people without good transportation. New Hampshire, he pointed out, has state offices that are only opened a few days a week. Additionally, many local Registry of Motor Vehicles offices had been closed and consolidated into regional centers, meaning that a



trip to the RMV might take a long time - especially for someone who has no license and therefore cannot drive.

Supporters of the vetoed bill say that it would have reduced voter fraud. But across the country, critics charge, Republicans have been pushing voter ID programs to disenfranchise those who would likely vote Democratic, especially African Americans and Latinos.

In New Hampshire, however, there are relatively few members of either group. Opponents say the law was aimed at keeping students, another traditionally Democratic-leaning demographic, away from the polls.

According to their detractors, New Hampshire Republican leaders are part of what is called a corporate-driven Republican national agenda. The American Legislative Exchange Council, which, according to the American Association for Justice, operates as “the ultimate smoke-filled back room,” is seen to have its hands in New Hampshire politics.

The voter ID drive in New Hampshire is itself far from dead, however. Republicans in the state's House of Representatives plan to enter a new bill.

Republicans have been pushing voter ID programs to disenfranchise those who would likely vote Democratic.

NYC celebrates labor movement

By Gabe Falsetta

On September 10, New York's main thoroughfare, Fifth Avenue, was filled for 30 blocks with thousands of union families celebrating the labor movement.

Although smaller than Labor Day marches here in the past, this one had a much more focused and militant feeling than others. Spurring it was anger as the assault on private sector labor over the past 30 years by corporate America has now shifted to public workers.

"Join New York working families celebrating a proud, strong and united labor movement," was the message from the NYC Central Labor Council.

In the crowd, Curtis Tate of Transport Workers Local 100 said, "I listened to the president's speech the other night," Tate said. "I think it was a good beginning, solid beginning."

"I can thank the union for everything I have today," he concluded.

This is a contract year for TWU Local 100. City transport worker Joseph DePaula noted, "We are fighting to keep the benefits we have."

Randi Weingarten, head of American Federation of Teachers, was at the head of the city's United Federation of Teachers contingent. New York City Comptroller John Liu greeted people along the route.

In the march, World War II veteran Mitch Berkowitz said, "I'm a strong union member. It makes me tear up to watch unions come alive."

Not everyone in the march was a union member. Peter, who works at FedEx which is non union, said "I think unions are great. I liked the president's speech. It's a good idea getting people back to work. He's got to get Congress to agree".

Many other city unions were also represented.

Azota recesión a Latinos

Por Pepe Lozano

Mientras por toda la nación luchan millones de desempleados para sobrevivir en medio de la más dura recesión desde tiempos de la Gran Depresión, anotan dirigentes sindicales y pro derechos civiles que son los Latinos y las comunidades de color los que siguen sufriendo más en la crisis económica actual.

Se enfrentan Latinos a una tasa oficial de desempleo de 11 por ciento en comparación con una tasa nacional global de 9 por ciento, una tasa de ejecuciones hipotecarias de casi 8 por ciento comparado con una tasa de 4,5 por ciento entre dueños de casas anglosajones, y un nivel de pobreza de 25 por ciento en comparación con la tasa global nacional de 14 por ciento.

Dicen críticas que la economía ha afectado significativamente a los mercados laborales, financieros y de viviendas durante los últimos años, afectando a las familias latinas de manera especial.

Entre 2005 y 2009, cayó por un 66 por ciento el nivel promedio de recursos de los hogares latinos comparado con un 16 por ciento entre hogares anglosajones, abriendo como resultado una brecha de recursos de casi 17 a 1 entre los hogares hispanos (con un promedio de \$6.325 de recursos) y anglosajones (con \$113.149 de recursos).

En el 2009, llegó la tasa de pobreza infantil latina al 33 por ciento, su nivel más alta desde 1997.

"Si eres Latino y de clase media, no es ningún secreto de que son difíciles las posibilidades de que vayas a poder quedarte allí," dijo Janet Murguía, presidenta y ejecutiva en jefe del

Consejo Nacional de La Raza, en un blog en el sitio de Web del grupo.

Escribe Murguía que, con un solo vacante para cada cuatro desempleados, a lo mejor si ahora estás fuera del trabajo no puedes encontrar empleo.

Con casi 13 millones de familias en peligro de la ejecución hipotecaria, y con bancos que muchas veces no cumplen con los reglamentos, dice ella que demasiados norteamericanos ya no van a poder mantener sus hogares. Y con aumentos en el costo del cuidado de salud, muchos han pasado un chequeo médico general o han ido sin medicamentos de receta porque no alcanzan a pagarlos.

Para mejorar las posibilidades, se tienen que poner en efecto políticas que les beneficien y protegen a los trabajadores, a los dueños de hogares y a las familias que trabajan duro para perseguir el Sueño Norteamericano, dice Murguía.

El mes pasado la Secretaria Federal del Trabajo, Hilda Solís, escribió en el Huffington Post que los Latinos han hecho avances significativos en todos los aspectos de la vida en la sociedad norteamericana.

En el curso de los años los Latinos han alcanzado posiciones de poder e influencia por toda la nación.

"Es nuestra responsabilidad bajar la escalera y ayudarles a nuestros hermanos y hermanas a subir," escribió ella.

Solís, hija de inmigrantes latinos, es la primera Secretaria del Trabajo latina. Aprecia ella la magnitud de los avances que ha logrado la comunidad hispana, y "lo lejos que todavía tenemos que ir".

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