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Movement is born to reclaim public education

By John Bachtell

Asserting a new movement is being born to save public education and stop the corporate takeover of schools, thousands of striking teachers rallied in three locations across Chicago Sept. 12.

Parents, students and community groups, whose pent up outrage at school privatization, dictated by Mayor Rahm Emanuel, has been unleashed by the strike, joined teachers on the picket lines. Some 66% of parents of public school students support the strike.

The rallies highlighted the policy's devastating impact at the neighborhood level. One took place at Walter H. Dyett High School in Washington Park, a predominantly African American neighborhood on the South Side. Dyett is one of many schools being closed, phased out or privatized.

"Rahm said this strike was unnecessary. They have deemed many actions unnecessary," said Cristina Richardson, a striking teacher at Morgan Park High School.

"They said a woman's place was in the home and the suffragettes and feminist movements were unnecessary. They said people of color should just wait and the civil rights movement was unnecessary," she said.

"Those unnecessary movements have won for women the right to vote and control over their lives. They gave people of color the right to vote and made segregation illegal. It seems to me unnecessary actions bring about necessary change," she said to cheers.



"We will continue to march," she said until corporate power "loses its grip on the very soul of public education."

Community residents and organizations joined forces with the Chicago Teachers Union members to block the closing and privatization of Dyett and other schools. They say the policies have targeted schools in the African American and Latino communities and resulted in the disproportionate layoffs of teachers of color.

"This is the scene of the crime," said Jitu Brown, a member of the Local School Council

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(LSC) and organizer for Kenwood-Oakland Community Organization (KOCO)."

"Dyett was a school where big improvements

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were being made in test scores and learning. And yet it is now being phased out," Brown said. "In addition, 14 other schools have been closed and 20 other actions were taken.

"The CPS response was to pull the rug out from under the school. They declared it a failing school. So 34 students filed Title 6 violations under the Civil Rights Act against the Department of Education. Next week we have parents from 19 states rolling to D.C. to see [Secretary of Education] Arne Duncan," Brown said.

Richardson taught at Dyett for 5 years before she was displaced and then rehired at Morgan Park. "I watched it be destabilized from the revolving door of administrators to the sabotage and cutting of successful program."

Kitesha Reggs, a member of Dyett's Local School Council, blasted the mayor.

"Mayor Emanuel says it's about the kids. But then they take away the money, close the school, and take away parental rights and teacher rights. We're not going for that," she said.

The Chicago Tribune reported 120 schools are slated for closure next year. It's expected this will

be the next phase of privatizing schools and opening them up as charters. As before, it will result in mass teacher layoffs and is sure to be fought by the CTU and its community allies.

Teachers and communities see winning the right to elect member of the Board of Education as part of that battle. Currently, it is an unelected body appointed by the mayor and seen as a rubber stamp. It's full of corporate heads and the wealthy. A referendum will be on the ballot in November supporting an elected board.

Strikers marched about two miles to Price Elementary School adjacent to Martin Luther King High School. Price is also being closed after half the school's student population was diverted to other schools including a charter school.

"People who do the bidding of corporate America point the finger at you and say you are the problem," Brown told the striking teachers. "Isn't that crazy? We're going to take care of that because community organizations, parents around the city and teachers are united."



John Bachtell is chair of the Illinois PW Bureau.

Time for a new direction in foreign policy

PW Editorial Board

Ceremonies marking the anniversary of the Sept. 11 a few weeks ago are an occasion for reflecting on the need for new directions in foreign policy.

After that horrible day Americans came together to do whatever they were asked to prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again.

The Bush administration and the neoconservatives in power in Washington took advantage of that readiness to build support for a "war on terrorism" that would ultimately encompass two wars, one in Afghanistan and another in Iraq.

It is appropriate as we enter the heat of the election cycle to move in another direction.

In the years since 9/11 it has become clearer than ever that pursuit of wars and unlimited military spending threaten the very security they claim to provide. Pre-emption is seen for what it is - an excuse to pursue any means necessary, including war, to protect the interests of profit-hungry multinational corporations - with oil companies high up on that list.

Real homeland security is a fantasy in an economy where jobs are shipped overseas and a vibrant working class -- the engine of real success for America - is eroded and destroyed.

The Obama administration has taken some important steps in the right direction. It has end-

ed the war in Iraq and set a 2014 date for ending the war in Afghanistan. It has moved toward control of nuclear weapons of mass destruction and, it has rejected the reckless doctrine of unilateral pre-emptive war by resisting calls for military action against Syria and Iran.

However, use of drones that inevitably kill civilians, expansion of military bases and operations in Asia and Africa, and pursuing military intervention in Libya have continued the dangerous policies of intervention and militarism. Alliances with reactionary dictatorships like Saudi Arabia, breeding grounds for terrorists like the 9/11 hijackers, continue.

On the other hand, Mitt Romney, Paul Ryan and their backers advocate a complete return to bellicose adventurism.

The necessary U.S. foreign policy is one that builds international respect and cooperation to protect us from any real terrorist acts, but also to promote economic and social justice. It aims at strengthening, not weakening, the UN.

It helps nations (including our own) eradicate disease and poverty rather than develop ever-higher-tech weaponry. It reduces military spending so that we can do the nation building needed here at home and help others at the same time.

It is appropriate as we enter the heat of the election cycle to move in another direction.

GOP willing to sabotage economy to win “last stand” election

By Sam Webb

Mitt Romney and his fellow Republicans are a cynical and calculating bunch. They are extremists the likes of which we have never seen in American politics.

In commenting on the anemic jobs growth in the last quarter - 96,000 jobs - they place the entire blame on the president. Not a hint of criticism was directed at congressional Republicans. But everyone knows that Republican leaders in the House and Senate have attempted to block anything that might remotely reinvigorate the economy and create jobs.

Even small initiatives have been obstructed and then dismissed as examples of the Obama administration's fascination with “big government budget-busting” solutions to problems that can only be solved, so Romney and gang say, by the private sector.

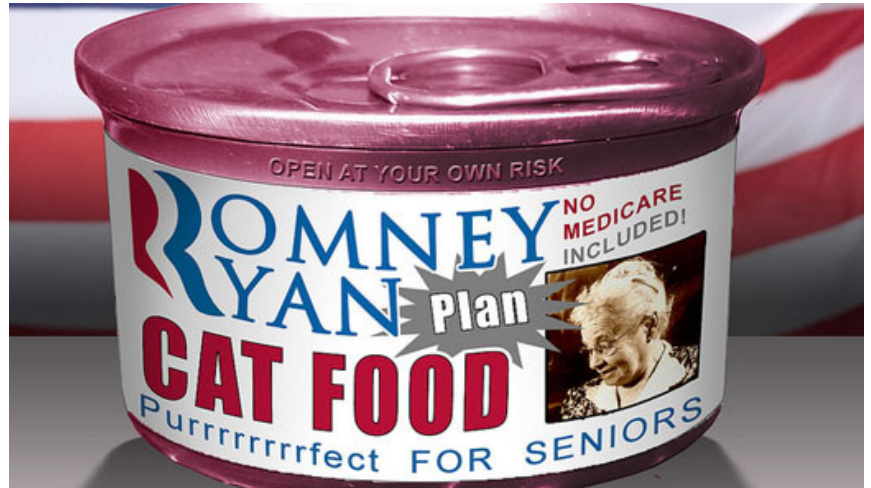
But there is no evidence that entrepreneurial capitalism will set the economy on a dynamic, job-creating growth path. Facts on the ground tell us that while the engine of capitalism is not quite on life support today, it is experiencing, by nearly all measures, a crisis that is more deep-going and protracted than any crisis since the Great Depression.

To entertain the idea that the system will move onto a robust path of development on its own, as a result of entrepreneurial activity, is delusional, as is increasingly evident with each passing quarter of dismal economic reports.

In fact, long-term stagnation is more likely than robust recovery.

Thus waiting for the economy to first jump start itself and then throw itself onto a sustained high-employment growth trajectory is a fool's errand. It just won't happen. Capitalism is not a self-correcting system, especially in current conditions.

But I don't believe that the Republicans even care if the economy rebounds. A sluggish economy in their view is their only path to the White House in this election cycle. If confronted, they will deny it, but if you judge them by their actions in Congress, it seems apparent that sabotage of the president's economic plans is at the top of their agenda.



It is the thin reed on which their return to power and domination rests.

To say that Romney and his fellow Republicans are consciously undermining the economy for the purpose of winning this election is probably hard for many Americans to swallow.

Even with their skepticism of politicians and the political process, many American people still believe that there are bounds beyond which neither party would go to accomplish its aims. That is not the case in this instance in my opinion. No matter what the cost and pain, Romney and the Republicans are hell bent on undermining any recovery of growth rates and jobs in order to emerge triumphant on Election Day.

The extremists who used to be on the fringe are now at the center of the GOP. They formulate policy, they set the agenda, and they frame the message.

Moreover, they have an existential fear that demographic trends - the country is becoming majority minority while the Republican base among older white voters is literally dying out - are going to render them a historical anachronism. For them, that ratchets up the stakes of this election. It becomes their “last stand.” It incites them to do whatever is necessary to win in November - lies, demagoguery, racism, misogyny, immigrant bashing, homophobia, voter suppression and intimidation, and yes, economic sabotage.

No stone should be left unturned to ensure the decisive defeat of right-wing extremism.

Capitalism is not a self-correcting system, especially in current conditions.

Bain victims set up protest camp

By John Wojcik

Workers about to be outsourced by Mitt Romney's Bain Capital are gathering today in "Bainport," an encampment they are building across the road from the Sensata factory in Freeport, Ill.

Having just received their official 60-day pink slips, they are protesting Bain's decision to ship their jobs overseas and are demanding that former CEO Romney, who they note is still profiting directly from Sensata, help save their jobs.

"Romney has so far ignored us but we will camp out here until he comes to Freeport to meet with us," said Tom Gaulrapp, a long-time worker at the Sensata plant.

"But that's not the only purpose of this encampment," said Gaulrapp. "Every day that we are here we will dramatize and make clear to everyone in this town and to people all across America what Romney's plan for our country will really look like."

As he worked on putting together a stage in the center of "Bainport" Gaulrapp said that the workers have no worries about being thrown out of their new encampment because both the mayor and the town council have assured them they can stay on the town fairgrounds opposite the Sensata plant for all long as they want.

Over the past few months Sensata workers have tried to contact Romney with a 35,000 signature campaign, frequent protests outside the plant, and trips to Romney campaign offices.

In July the Freeport City Council unanimously passed a resolution calling upon Romney to come meet with the workers and use his influence at Bain to intervene on their behalf.

Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn echoed their call during a trip to Freeport that month and the issue has become front and center in the congressional race in Illinois' 17th District.

Candidato Romney en Convención de Cámara de Comercio Hispana

By Prensa Latina

El candidato presidencial republicano, Mitt Romney, hablará hoy en la 33 Convención Anual de la Cámara de Comercio Hispana de Estados Unidos, que se reúne en la ciudad de Los Ángeles.

El exgobernador de Massachusetts se referirá a la importancia de las pequeñas empresas en el fomento de la economía estadounidense.

Según un comunicado de prensa difundido por la campaña política de Romney, el candidato dirigirá sus palabras a los propietarios de negocios hispanos, ejecutivos de empresas, líderes de cámaras y funcionarios públicos en la asistencia.

Romney está concentrando sus esfuerzos en captar el voto hispano, de cara a las elecciones del próximo 6 de noviembre, a pesar del rechazo mostrado por las políticas antiinmigrantes del Partido Republicano.

Datos de la Oficina del Censo advierten que hasta el 2011 el 16,7 por ciento de la población de Estados Unidos es de origen hispano o latino.

La Cámara de Comercio Hispana de Estados Unidos

fue fundada en 1979 y promueve el desarrollo y crecimiento económico de empresarios hispanos, representando los intereses de más de tres millones de empresas en la Unión que combinadas generan más de 465 mil millones de dólares anualmente.

La 33 Convención Nacional Anual se celebra del 16 al 18 de septiembre en Los Ángeles e incluye entrega de premios, recepciones de contactos de negocios y talleres de desarrollo de negocios.

Ese evento reúne a más de cinco mil dueños de negocios, ejecutivos de corporaciones, líderes de cámaras y funcionarios públicos hispanos.

En otras noticias, el presidente estadounidense, Barack Obama, aventaja a su rival republicano Mitt Romney por tres puntos porcentuales a nivel nacional en cuanto a intenciones de votos con vistas a las elecciones de noviembre, reveló hoy una encuesta.

Según la pesquisa conjunta realizada por el diario The New York Times y la cadena CBS, el 49 por ciento de los votantes apoyan a Obama y el 46 por ciento a Romney.

Las encuestas se han mantenido estáticas durante varios meses, pero las tendencias favorecen a Obama después de la Convención Nacional Demócrata que tuvo lugar en Charlotte, Carolina del Norte, a principios del presente mes.

En cuanto a los estados claves para los comicios del 6 de noviembre, Obama supera a Romney 50 a 45 por ciento en cuanto a intenciones de voto en Ohio, mientras en Florida y Virginia el mandatario aventaja a su rival 49 a 44.

El jefe de la Casa Blanca alcanzó estos índices pese a las críticas que recibe por las dificultades económicas que enfrenta el país, con solo 96 mil nuevos puestos de trabajo en agosto -de un total de 150 mil previstos- y una tasa de más del ocho por ciento de desempleados.

El mandatario demócrata ganó las elecciones en Ohio, Florida y Virginia en 2008, y en 2004 el entonces presidente republicano George W. Bush fue reelecto tras ganar en esos estados.

Las próximas elecciones en Estados Unidos dependerán de los resultados de campaña en nueve estados indecisos que podrían definir los destinos inmediatos de Barack Obama y Mitt Romney.

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