

# PEOPLE'S WORLD

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## Unionists, greens start “Repair America” drive

By Mark Gruenberg



Unionists and green groups, seeking to both create well-paying union jobs and improve the environment, are embarking on a “Repair America” campaign they hope will resonate with voters concerned about low incomes, citizens worried about climate change and lawmakers who will respond to pressure on both.

The campaign, discussed at the Good Jobs Green Jobs conference in D.C. on Feb. 9-11, got its congressional kickoff with an indoor Capitol Hill rally jammed with Steelworkers, led by union President Leo Gerard, and lawmakers headed by House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.

Its objective: To convince citizens and Congress to back massive funding for repairing and rebuilding the creaky, crumbling U.S. infrastructure of unsound bridges, leaky water pipes, energy-inefficient schools, homes and hospitals, crumbling highways and rails split by extreme heat and cold.

Unions and greens both face the problem of reaching a wider public that is apathetic or cynical about politics and policy, concerned about jobs, concentrating on kitchen table issues and worried about paying the mortgage, sending kids to college and retiring securely.

Greens have failed to show how their move-

ment could help people achieve those goals. Business, the radical right and its Republican lackeys vilify unions as job destroyers whose members earn too much and whose pensions are too high.

But they have one big positive, Gerard told the packed house in a U.S. Senate hearing room: Strength in numbers. The BlueGreen Alliance, which USW and the Sierra Club co-founded, has unions and greens with 14 million members, combined.

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“We’re the ones campaigning for good jobs and to create the jobs of the future,” he said.

To get to those jobs of the future, however, the unions and greens need to concentrate on jobs now, in a time when unemployment is still at 6.6% and the number of long-term jobless remains at or

**The conference called for a National Infrastructure Bank that would use public dollars to leverage private investment in rebuilding America.**

near record highs.

That led to the emphasis on infrastructure, especially “shovel-ready” repairs.

“We have a D+ infrastructure,” Gerard declared, comparing the state of U.S. bridges, roads and railways to India or “a South American country that never invested.

“You can’t have a competitive economy when you have bridges that fall down as you try to get to work, water systems leaking 15% of their contents before they ever get to your kitchen sink, and buildings that lose twice as much heat” as comparable structures in other countries, Gerard stated.

And consumers in West Virginia, hit by leaky toxic chemicals in their water in the Charleston area, “were told they couldn’t turn their water off, because if they took the pressure off, the pipes will collapse.” Fixing those problems is the point of the repair campaign that unions and greens are launching. Its centerpiece is creation of a National Infrastructure Bank to use public dollars to leverage private investment in such repair and replacement projects. The campaign also emphasizes using the money for “green” repairs that save

energy - and create U.S. jobs in everything from high-quality pipe to windmills for electric power.

“If we invested enough money to get to a grade of ‘B’ on infrastructure, we’d have 11 million more jobs and put those Americans back to work,” Gerard declared.

Lawmakers, all Democrats, enthusiastically endorsed the repair campaign. And they added their own demand, which USW drafted with them: Strong language mandating materials for the projects must be U.S.-made.

“It’s as easy as A-B-C,” Pelosi said. “(A) Make it in America, (B) Build the infrastructure of America with products made in America and (C) For community: Corporate America must make decisions that respect all stakeholders” in America, “not just shareholders.”

Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., said. “There they go again, spending money,” said DeLauro, author of the infrastructure bank bill. “You let them know this is not a partisan issue, but one that involves our long-term prosperity.



Mark Gruenberg edits Press Associates Inc.

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## MLK condemned genocide against Native Americans

By PW Editorial Board

**D**espite the yearly celebrations of Martin Luther King Day and African American History Month, it is probably little known what the great freedom fighter had to say about the horrific mistreatment of Native Americans by the U.S. In his 1963 book, “Why We Can’t Wait,” writing about the origins of racism in this country, King strongly condemned the historic injustices inflicted on Native people: “Our nation was born in genocide when it embraced the doctrine that the original American, the Indian, was an inferior race. Even before there were large numbers of Negroes on our shores, the scar of racial hatred had already disfigured colonial society. From the sixteenth century forward, blood flowed in battles of racial supremacy. We are perhaps the only nation which tried as a matter of national policy to wipe out its Indigenous population. Moreover, we elevated that tragic experience into a noble crusade. Indeed, even today we have not permitted ourselves to reject or feel

remorse for this shameful episode.” Woefully, Dr. King’s words still ring true. But King’s poignant words on the tragic history of Native Americans are largely unknown in mainstream society. Although King played the leading role on the cutting edge of the African American liberation struggle for social justice and equality, he was a fighter for all of the oppressed of this land. Native people in south Alabama in the late 1950s. It must be seen that both the civil rights movement and the Native American rights movement have had a major impact on the U.S. and the world at large. Dr. King played an immeasurable role in these movements that roiled the status quo and marked a new stage of struggles that are ongoing to this day.

Today the Idlenomore uprising is helping to reignite a broad social movement. Unity with the movements to raise the minimum wage, the struggle for marriage equality, the voting rights campaigns, and immigration reform will make real change impossible to stop.

**The civil rights movement and the Native American rights movement have had a major impact on the U.S. and the world at large.**

## West Virginia hit by another chemical spill

By Blake Deppe



**E**ven as the state of West Virginia is still reeling from its massive Jan. 9 chemical spill, it now has to contend with another. About 108,000 gallons of waste from a coal processing facility leaked into a tributary of the Kanawha River on Feb. 11, polluting 6 miles of Fields Creek. The waste includes all manner of toxic chemicals and metals, and is another blow to the people of the state as they attempt to piece their lives and health back together after the first disaster.

West Virginia American Water, the company that manages the Kanawha Valley Water Treatment Plant, stated that the latest leak would not affect the water supply further. But that remains to be seen. Emergency and environmental officials and investigators are calling the spill a “significant” one, despite assurances to the contrary by the companies involved. And a small amount of the waste that poisoned Fields Creek made it into the Kanawha River itself.

The facility from which the waste leaked is owned by none other than Patriot Coal, the company spun off of Peabody Energy and Arch Coal - the country’s biggest coal corporations - to rob union members of their pensions and health benefits. Patriot Coal has also been responsible for mountaintop removal, an environmentally destructive process of retrieving coal, though it ceased those types of operations in 2012.

“This has had a significant, adverse environmental impact to Fields Creek and an unknown

amount of impact to the Kanawha River,” said Secretary Randy Huffman of the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection. “This is a big deal, this is a significant spill. When this much coal slurry goes into the stream, it wipes the stream out.” Moreover, added Huffman, Patriot Coal did not do its job: The spill occurred - and was detected - when a valve broke sometime between 2:30 and 5:30 a.m., but Patriot did not call the DEP to alert them of the accident until 7:40 a.m. Companies are required by law to immediately report any spills to the department.

The Patriot facility also had a faulty alarm installed. It was supposed to immediately alert someone if a valve broke, but it failed to do so, so pumps continued to send the chemicals through the system.

The toxic slurry was pushed on and on, until it broke the outer containment area that surrounded the busted valve, causing it to get into Fields Creek. “Had the alarms gone off and warned the operator,” said Huffman, “the shutdown could have been done in time for the secondary containment area to contain the material that leaked.”

It would seem that Patriot has exhibited the same lack of oversight and inspection that Freedom Industries did in the case of the earlier - and far more disastrous - chemical spill.

**Lack of oversight and inspection seems to be the cause of the spill.**

## TV station under fire for anti-immigrant slur

By Christopher Looper

**R**ecently, the official Facebook page for Tulsa-based KOTV - The News On 6 has come under fire for a post it made in regard to the undocumented population of Oklahoma. The post reads as follows:

“Oklahoma has the fastest rise in people living in the US without legal status. Some bring drugs and crime along with them.

“Why has the Sooner State become so popular? We’re working on this story and will have the finished report tonight at 10:00 on News On 6.”

The post, which has a video attached previewing the news report, charges undocumented workers with being a primary source of an influx of crime, drugs and guns in Oklahoma. This is despite the fact that crime, drugs and guns have been a problem in Oklahoma long before any recent increases in the undocumented population. It’s also a problem that goes unresolved for the general population today.

This fact elicited a reaction from members of Dream Act Oklahoma, popularly tagged as #DAOK in their recent social media campaign. The campaign, which has been raising awareness about how undocumented workers contribute to Oklahoma, and blasts KOTV for its discriminatory report, has gained some traction since the original post. Posts about the campaign have been tagged as #DAOK and #IAMOKLAHOMA, the latter helping represent how undocumented workers are an integral part of Oklahoma’s economy and general population.

## El pueblo venezolano sale a las calles por la paz

Prensa Latina

**E**l pueblo venezolano está en las calles y plazas de esta capital por la paz y contra la violencia que grupos opositores desataron en los últimos días en este país.

La céntrica Plaza Venezuela, ubicada al final del concurrido bulevar de Sabana Grande desde tempranas horas de este martes, se ha colmado de personas que junto a trabajadores petroleros convocados para entregar al presidente Nicolás Maduro un nuevo contrato colectivo, marcharán hasta el Palacio de Miraflores.

Consignas como Si a la paz; Cese la violencia; Maduro, seguro a los yanquis dale duro y carteles con las imágenes del fallecido presidente, Hugo Chávez, y de Maduro, presiden la concentración.

Se espera que en la tarde la marcha sea recibida por el jefe de Estado que la víspera escribió a través de las redes sociales que hoy se dedicará a trabajar por implementar las acciones del Plan Nacional de Paz y Convivencia, recibirá a la marcha y continuará “gobernando y protegiendo la paz de los ataques del fascismo”.

Mientras que esto ocurre en el centro de esta ciudad, sectores de la derecha anunciaron que el prófugo de la justicia, Leopoldo López, convocó a sus seguidores para ir desde la Plaza Chacaíto hasta el Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Justicia y Paz.

Desde ayer las autoridades del

municipio Libertador de Caracas y del gobierno central, dijeron que no permitirán entradas de marchas opositoras a ese territorio que como la del pasado 12 de febrero, sumieron en el caos y el vandalismo sus espacios.

El vicepresidente del Parlamento Latinoamericano (Parlatino), Roy Daza, expresó hoy que la oposición venezolana dinamitó el diálogo nacional abierto por el presidente Nicolás Maduro en un gesto de paz y concordia con todos los sectores sociales y políticos.

Durante una entrevista concedida a Venezolana de Televisión, Daza descartó éxito a la oposición en su intentona, más allá de los destrozos provocados a su paso en las acciones de los últimos días, por parte de quienes tildó de grupos aventureros con planes desestabilizadores del proceso bolivariano. El parlamentario calificó de amenazas las advertencias del gobierno de Estados Unidos, y refutó su actitud de colocarse al lado de quien condujo los hechos, el opositor Leopoldo López, dirigente de la agrupación de derecha Voluntad Popular, y de quienes han participado directamente en los actos de violencia.

Daza rechazó la injerencia estadounidense en los asuntos internos de Venezuela y la declaración del secretario de Estado, John Kerry, las cuales señaló, “pasaran a la historia como una de las grandes mentiras de la diplomacia norteamericana”.

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