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Layoffs continue as newspaper workers continue fight for fair wages, job security



By Chauncey K. Robinson

Workers at the New York-based publishing company Digital First Media are continuing their campaign for fair wages and job security even in the midst of layoffs and consolidations.

On Jan. 12, DFM workers launched what they described as a “national, coordinated campaign to win fair contracts with wage increases for 1,000 Guild-represented employees of DFM.” The campaign adopted the theme of “News Matters”; leaders say that “the news gatherers, news producers and news deliverers, as well as the advertising and office staff matter too.”

Controlled by the hedge fund Alden Global Capital, DFM is the second-largest U.S. newspaper chain, with a circulation of roughly 67 million readers across 15 states. Yet, despite this wide reach, union leaders at several of DFM papers claim that many workers have gone eight to ten years without a raise in wages.

In a press release, issued in January, DFM workers explained, “We are taking this action because we see no other alternative. Isolated as individual bargaining units, we have faced total shut-out from DFM on raises, even as valued employees leave the papers, week after week, in search of more equitable workplaces.”

Even with this ongoing campaign newspaper

workers have experienced further blows, as the Bay Area News Group [BANG] - owned by DFM- announced March 1 that half a dozen Bay Area newspapers will be folded into two daily publications.

The daily newspapers in the East Bay, Silicon Valley and on the Peninsula will be made into two distinct publications -- the East Bay Times and The Mercury News. This will result in the cutting of roughly 20 percent of the company’s

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200-person newsroom staff.

BANG president and publisher Sharon Ryan attempted to justify the consolidation by placing the responsibility for the decision on the readership.

In a statement to employees, following the

30 people company-wide, ages 60 and over who have been with the papers for over 20 years, will be offered buy-outs.

consolidation announcement, Ryan stated, “Readers have been quite clear with us about how much they like their newspapers and what they want more of, and we’re changing to serve them better. We’ll give them better focused front page stories that cover national and Bay Area news from each region’s point of view.”

Carl Hall, executive officer of the Pacific Media Workers Guild- which serves as the parent local of the East Bay and San Jose units of DFM workers-, had a different opinion when it came to Ryan’s words on what readers wanted. “Management claims the readers asked for this. I have a hard time believing too many people demanded a 20 percent or more reduction in editorial staff from their already devastated newsrooms,” Hall told reporters at the San Francisco Chronicle.

On April 4, the last daily edition of the 150-year-old Oakland Tribune will be published. The two newly formed East Bay Times and Mercury News will launch April 5.

Newsroom employees ages 60 and over, and who have been with the papers for over 20 years,

will be offered buyouts. Reportedly, only 30 people company-wide meet these conditions.

Carl Hall spoke with People’s World regarding the negotiations and road forward. Hall noted, “Format is an open question... Saving print is not the goal. The goal is saving unique and compelling content.” Hall explained that the industry has become “profit sucking,” and in order for there to be improvement, management needed to “invest in the quality” and the “people who produce the content.”

Hall said that the union went into the negotiations demanding a five percent raise in wages, but that the offer was declined by management.

There needs to be a commitment to deepening our understanding of news and what is real.” Hall said he hoped that the DFM workers’ campaign was clear: “People want quality jobs and quality journalism. When people have quality jobs, security, and good wages, they produce quality news.”



Chauncey K. Robinson writes for Peoplesworld.

Lead in Flint water, mold in Detroit schools

By David Bacon

In spite of the growing sense of disbelief and horror surrounding the lead contamination of drinking water in the Michigan city of Flint, at least one thing is clear: that the catastrophic levels of pollution and destruction are a direct result of the extreme policies pursued by the Michigan’s right-wing leadership.

In February 2015, Veolia was hired by Flint to study the water, after the switch in sources had been made. Public health doctors were already warning state and federal authorities that the level of lead in the drinking water pumped from the Flint River was alarmingly high.

Lead is a recognized cause of learning disabilities in children, and the damage to their cognitive development is permanent.

Eventually a state of emergency was declared, and President Barack Obama offered US\$80 million in relief, although replacing the city’s pipes is likely to cost over US\$1 billion.

The main program of all four has been the privatization of Detroit schools. By the end of the

2009-2010 school year, 36 per cent of students (50,139 students) were already attending private charter schools, and another 41 schools (30 per cent of the district serving 16,000 students) were converted into charters.

The Deficit Elimination Plan - agreed between managers and the state of Michigan in a bid to erase DPS’ US\$20.4 million deficit by the end of 2021 - required the district to close a further 70 schools over two years, and raise class sizes to 60 students at high school level.

Last month, the Detroit Federation of Teachers finally filed a lawsuit to force Earley to resign, and to return the schools to control by an elected school board.

Other conditions named in the action include black mold, bacteria, freezing cold or boiling hot classrooms, rats and insects, exposed wiring and falling debris.

At the beginning of this February Earley finally resigned, telling Governor Snyder he’d completed his work of “comprehensive restructuring”.

Lead is a recognized cause of learning disabilities in children.

Thousands of Boston public school students walk out to protest budget cuts

By Nick Giannone



Thousands of Boston public school students walked out of school Monday morning to protest budget cuts and to demand more funding for education. The students gathered on Boston Common before marching to the State House and Faneuil Hall.

A newsletter published by the Boston Teachers Union estimated that 7000 students participated in the walk out and protest.

After rallying at Faneuil Hall, where Mayor Walsh and Governor Charlie Baker were promoting an upcoming “Forbes Under 30” summit, many students returned to the State House to testify before the Joint Committee on Education regarding funding.

Boston public schools are facing a budget shortfall ranging somewhere between \$10 million and \$50 million, depending on whether you ask Mayor Marty Walsh or Superintendent Tommy Chang.

The resulting cuts are expected to affect teaching positions, music and art classes, librarians, language programs, extracurricular activities, and classes for students with autism.

Students and their supporters put some of the blame for the deficit on charter schools. Over \$18 million of the budget deficit comes from the school system being forced to pay for students who attend charter schools.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is required to reimburse the city for these costs but last year the school district received less than 50% of charter school expenses from the state.

The recent tax break offered to General Electric for moving their headquarters to Boston also came under fire at the protest. G.E. is expected to receive approximately \$151 million in incentives from the city and state. Included in that number is a \$25 million in property tax breaks from the city of Boston.

This handout to G.E., a massive corporation with total assets of nearly \$500 billion, could go a long way towards filling the public education budget gap.

Monday’s walk out and protest was self-organized by students and received broad support from teachers, parents, and other allies in the community. Leaflets were distributed in the schools and student organizers educated their fellow students about the extent of the budget cuts and the need to take a stand for quality public education.

This call to action is apparently resonating with public school students and the massive numbers who walked out yesterday indicate that this already powerful movement is just beginning.

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What is genocide?

By Albert Bender

The United Nations General Assembly's Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide defines genocide in Article 2 as follows: "...any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- a) Killing members of the group;
- b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group ;
- c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its destruction in whole or in part;
- d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

South Dakota has been committing blatant genocide against the Sioux people in violation of subsection (e) by transferring Indian children to white homes, and also of subsection (b) amid allegations of sexual abuse and drugging of Native children in DSS foster care. This is one version of what the world has come to know as ethnic cleansing.

part 2 of this story will be continued in next week's print.

Foro rechaza arremetida de EEUU contra Venezuela

Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela

El Grupo de Trabajo del Foro de Sao Paulo emitió un resolutorio donde rechaza por unanimidad la ratificación del Decreto del presidente de los Estados Unidos Barack Obama que señala a Venezuela como una amenaza.

Rodrigo Cabezas, vicepresidente del PSUV para Asuntos Internacionales, declaró que para el Foro de Sao Paulo esta ratificación constituye una agresión política contra Venezuela y un acto violatorio del Derecho Internacional Público.

Asimismo, informó que el Foro asume la convocatoria en América Latina y el Caribe de la tercera Jornada de Solidaridad "Los Pueblos del Mundo Unidos con Venezuela" que se realizará el próximo 19 de abril.

El dirigente nacional del PSUV explicó que los partidos políticos progresistas y de izquierda de Europa acordaron que en la mencionada fecha se hará la jornada en solidaridad con la nación venezolana en Madrid, París, Bruselas, Berlín, Lisboa y Moscú.

"El Grupo de Trabajo del Foro de Sao Paulo, reunido en la Ciudad de México, el 13 de marzo de dos mil dieciséis, acuerda rechazar de la manera más categórica, la ratificación del Decreto del Presidente de los Estados Unidos, Barack Obama, en el cual declara a Venezuela como una "amenaza inusual y extraordinaria", lo que constituye una nueva agresión política y un acto violatorio de los más elementales principios del Derecho Internacional Público.

"Este acto de injerencia del imperalismo norteamericano contra la patria de Simón Bolívar y Hugo Chávez, es una política irrespetuosa de la convivencia pacífica entre las naciones, y atentatoria contra los sagrados principios de soberanía, autodeterminación de los pueblos, y una peligrosa amenaza a la estabilidad de la democracia venezolana.

Todas las organizaciones de la izquierda latinoamericana y caribeña que formamos parte del Foro de Sao Paulo, nos comprometemos a denunciar en todas las instancias y ante nuestros pueblos, esta nueva arremetida contra la revolución bolivariana y, por lo tanto, hacemos nuestros los pronunciamientos de solidaridad de importantes instituciones de la integración, como la CELAC, la UNASUR, la ALBA-TCP, el Grupo de los 77 más China y los Países no alineados.

"Asimismo, manifestamos nuestro respaldo a la diplomacia de paz, que adelanta el gobierno del Presidente Nicolás Maduro Moros y sus enormes esfuerzos por desarrollar la integración latinoamericana y caribeña, la cooperación, la unidad y la multipolaridad.

El Foro de Sao Paulo, a través de su Grupo de Trabajo, se compromete a desplegar un conjunto de acciones solidarias con la nación venezolana y, en tal sentido convoca a la tercera Jornada de Solidaridad Mundial: "Los pueblos del Mundo Unidos con Venezuela", que se realizará –a escala planetaria- el 19 de abril."