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UPS firing of Teamster drivers rescinded



By Chris Butters

It started on Feb. 26 when a Teamster Local 804 shop steward challenged UPS management about a violation of the union contract at its giant Maspeth, Queens, New York facility. It led to the mass firing by UPS of 250 Teamster union members when they walked out in solidarity with the brother's firing on trumped up charges.

What unfolded over the next several weeks was a showdown between UPS, one of the largest and most profitable delivery services in the world, and the Teamsters union, behind whom ultimately stood New York City's organized labor. In a big victory on Apr. 9, UPS was forced to rescind its PATCO-style firing. All 250 union drivers were hired back, including the fired worker, Jairo Reyes.

In a big public relations setback for UPS, it agreed "to improve labor-management relations at the company and to handle disciplinary disputes more expeditiously under the new grievance procedure." (Which was the issue raised by union activists in the first place). Since the shifting of U.S. manufacturing overseas, UPS now possesses the largest number of unionized workers of any corporation located in the U.S. The Teamsters strike against UPS in 1997 was very successful.

Workers in interviews stated the job action

was the result of intense speed-up and harassment, and a management that uses minor infractions of work rules to intimidate the workforce.

Countering management allegations this was an "illegal work stoppage," the union pointed to frequent violations of its contract at the facility, and the contractual right of the union to conduct work stoppages when the contract is violated. For both sides, the stakes were tremendous. Labor knew if UPS got away with this, it would send a

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message to workers around the country that union contracts aren't worth much, let alone be a future weapon for workers in their fight for decent wages, a better life, of dignity and respect.

For UPS, it was intended as a warning to all workers who dared to protest the company's in-

UPS' action provoked public outrage.

creasingly ferocious speedup, constant technological surveillance, and “flexible” work schedules.

Driver Tom Oliver, who participated in the walkout, said of the UPS reversal, “It’s a sweet victory that only happened because we stuck together and we got tremendous support. Even with all the stress that came with the walkout and the aftermath, it brought attention to a lot of problems with our facility that I hope can be corrected.” The victory, and the labor-community campaign that paved the way for it, showed how old-fashioned labor solidarity, combined with imaginative methods of reaching out to the communities workers serve, can make the difference.

Newly elected Public Advocate Letitia James pointed to a \$43 million contract with city and state agencies up for renewal, “and if UPS does not do right by the workers in this city, then the city will not do right by UPS.” Teamsters, with the help of elected officials, got out the word about a sweetheart deal with the now departed Bloomberg administration that continues to enable UPS to write off \$20 million in parking tickets each year.

In an attempt to divide workers from the

community they serve, UPS executives claimed that they “owed it to their customers” to fire the workers, because the 90 minute work stoppage “jeopardized our ability to maintain order in our delivery operations. “But rather than UPS’ action winning customer support, it only provoked public outrage. Fired Local 804 drivers encouraged customers to show support, including through the use of iPhone videos. Customers posed with the fired drivers with signs that said, “What Can Brown Do For Me? Not This! Rehire This Guy!” Veterans of the successful 1997 strike showed younger drivers how it was done in the old days.

The Working Families Party, a political party of affiliated unions and community organizations, helped the Teamsters gather 105,000 petition signatures. Over 3,000 calls were placed in one day to UPS CEO Scott Davis, protesting the firings. An MSNBC poll “Gutcheck” poll totaled 90 percent support for reinstatement of the UPS drivers on Apr. 8.



Chris Butters is a contributor to Peoplesworld.org.

Gabriel Garcia Márquez lives on

By W.T. Whitney Jr.

Humanity suffered a great loss when novelist Gabriel García Márquez died on April 17, 2014 in Mexico City. His 1967 novel “One Hundred Years of Solitude” gained him the Nobel Prize in literature in 1982. He authored novels, short stories, and books and articles reporting on Latin American and world affairs. According to an admirer, he “was often compared to Hispanic literature’s other titan, “Don Quixote” author Miguel de Cervantes. Clearly he was a giant of world literature much admired in the U.S.

From 1955 on, García Márquez, widely known as “Gabo,” lived in exile from his native Colombia. El Espectador newspaper that year, having learned that dictator Rojas Pinilla’s government objected to his reporting, assigned him to a story in Switzerland for safety reasons. Subsequently García Márquez lived and worked in Europe, Venezuela, and Mexico. Leery of imprisonment under Colombian President Julio Cesar Turbay’s Security Stat-

ute, García Márquez in 1981 settled permanently in Mexico City with his family. In addition to being a novelist, García Márquez was a journalist. In particular, he founded, wrote for, and helped fund the Colombian Magazine “Alternativa,” published in Bogota from 1974 through 1980. A recent commentator regards it as “one of the most innovative, modern, and revolutionary publications of the left in Colombian history ... Gabo contributed not only his credibility as a writer, but also his work as reporter, the beautiful craft he never wanted to give up, and as permanent advisor to the editorial team. He did stories and interviews on “Chile under fascism, socialist Cuba, Vietnam triumphant over U.S. imperialism, de-colonizing Africa, and Portugal boiling over.” Gabriel García Márquez was also a hero for the left. A world figure Márquez assumed a universal stature as well. He led a committed, partisan life, one well worth emulating. His legacy lives on.

The great novelist’s legacy is well worth study and emulation.

UAW drops appeal of election loss at VW plant

By Mark Gruenberg

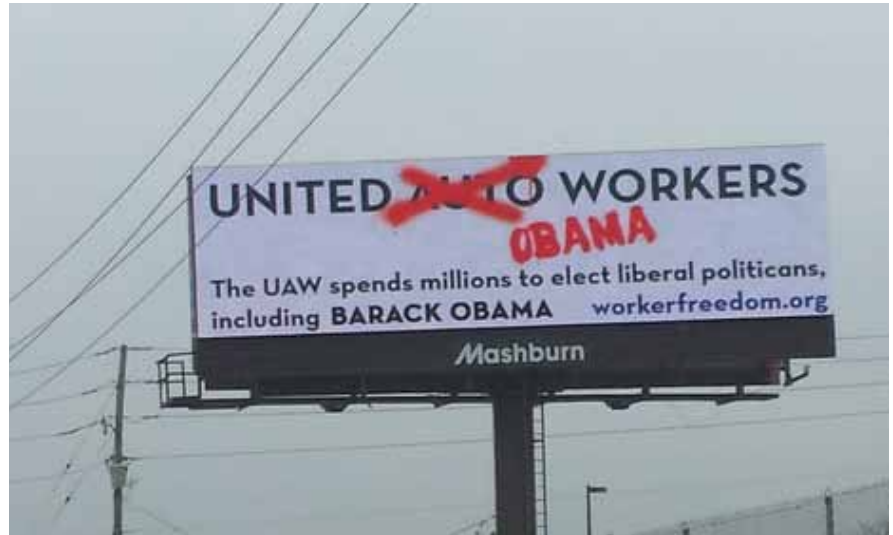
The United Auto Workers are dropping their federal appeal of their narrow recognition election loss at Volkswagen's Chattanooga, Tenn., plant. Instead, union President Bob King says, they will concentrate on a probe by congressional Democrats of political interference that led to the Valentine's Day defeat.

The union added it will also concentrate on ensuring that a new sport utility vehicle assembly line comes to Chattanooga. The top two Republican pols who interfered, Gov. Bill Haslam and Sen. Bob Corker, promised that - if, the two said, the workers rejected the union.

The union lost the vote 712-628 after threats by both politicians and other ruling Tennessee Republicans to yank tax breaks and other state aid from VW in Chattanooga if the workers went union. The Chattanooga drive was a key part of the UAW's effort to enter non-union foreign auto firm "transplants" in the anti-union South, as well as part of labor's overall effort to increase union density in that region.

Besides the interference from Corker and Haslam, outside Radical Right groups also pumped millions of dollars worth of anti-labor anti-union advertising into the Chattanooga area, with billboards and ads linking the UAW to President Obama and saying the union would take away peoples' guns.

King's April 21 announcement said raising the issue of the political interference made the union's point, even without the National Labor Relations Board administrative law judge's hearing on the case, scheduled for this week. King added the NLRB hearing was hampered by refusal



of the two pols to appear.

The UAW "based its decision on the belief that the NLRB's historically dysfunctional and complex process potentially could drag on for months or even years. Additionally, the UAW cited refusals by Haslam and Corker to participate in a transparent legal discovery process, which undermines public trust and confidence," the union said in a statement.

"The unprecedented political interference by Haslam, Corker and others was a distraction for Volkswagen employees and a detour from achieving Tennessee's economic priorities," King said. "The UAW is ready to put February's tainted election in the rearview mirror and instead focus on advocating for new jobs and economic investment in Chattanooga."

"UAW wants to help create quality jobs and build world-class products for American consumers," the union's southern regional director, Gary Casteel, added. "With this in mind, we urge Haslam to immediately extend the incentives that previously were offered to Volkswagen for this new SUV line, and do so unconditionally."

Instead of pursuing the NLRB's legal process, the union is banking on Congress to continue to shine the spotlight on the political interference with the vote.

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LOCAL NEWS

LOCAL CONTACT

contact@peoplesworld.org

Okla. governor bars cities from setting minimum wage

By Christopher Looper

In what many here are calling an attack on workers' rights and democracy, Oklahoma Republican Gov. Mary Fallin has signed a bill prohibiting cities, counties, and their citizens the right to set a mandatory minimum wage and employee benefits such as paid sick leave.

Her action came in response to workers and advocates in Oklahoma City who are working toward raising the city's minimum wage to \$10.10. By signing the bill, they say, Fallin has effectively taken away local workers' right to vote on their own cities' minimum wage and worker benefits.

The bill was introduced in the House by Rep. Randy Grau, R-Edmond. He claimed that the bill "provides a level playing field for all municipalities in Oklahoma. An artificial raise in the minimum wage could derail local economies in a matter of months. This is a fair measure for consumers, workers and small business owners."

Fallin argued that "Most minimum-wage workers are young, single people working part-time or entry-level jobs. Many are high school or college students living with their parents in middle-class families."

But the Economic Policy Institute points out that 88 percent of workers who would directly benefit from a raise in minimum wage are over the age of 20, and approximately 35 percent are over the age of 40.

García Márquez: Sus letras no serán olvidadas

Por Telesur

Mientras que el presidente de Ecuador, Rafael Correa, manifestó a través de su cuenta en Twitter su pesar por el fallecimiento de García Márquez y recordó que dejó un gran legado:

Se nos fue el Gabo, tendremos años de soledad, pero quedan sus obras y amor por la Patria Grande. ¡Hasta la victoria siempre, Gabo querido!

También el mandatario colombiano, Juan Manuel Santos se pronunció al conocer la triste noticia, "Los gigantes nunca mueren":

Mil años de soledad y tristeza por la muerte del más grande colombiano de todos los tiempos! Solidaridad y condolencias a la Gaba y familia.

De igual forma, la peridista colombiana, María Jimena Duzán manifestó su agradecimiento al Gabo por su literatura inmortal:

Se nos fue nuestro Gabo. Amigo, maestro y genio literario.

El expresidente de Chile, Sebastian Piñera destacó la personalidad del Nobel de Literatura y recordó sus obras:

100 años de soledad. El amor en los tiempos del colera. Cronica de una muerte anunciada, además de sus excentricidades son parte de su herencia

Además el cantante puertorriqueño, René Pérez (Residente), también lamentó la muerte del insigne escritor colombiano:

La muerte nunca nos venció por que todo lo que muere es por que alguna vez nació... QDP Gabriel García

Marquez.

El expresidente colombiano, Andrés Pastrana, expresó que su duelo por la partida de García Márquez:

El mundo de las letras está de luto. ¡Adiós amigo Gabo!

Asimismo, la cantante colombiana Shakira, dijo un sentido Adiós al Gabo:

Querido Gabo, alguna vez dijiste que la vida no es la que uno vivió, sino la que uno recuerda...

Querido Gabo, alguna vez dijiste que la vida no es la que uno vivió, sino la que uno recuerda...

La ministra de Cultura de Colombia, Mariana Garcés, rememoró la obra de García Márquez a quien homenajeará eternamente:

La obra de Gabo marca un antes y un después en la literatura hispanoamericana. Homenaje.

El interprete colombiano Carlos Vives, dijo que el Gabo es merecedor del cielo, señaló que su obra le abrió las puertas del cielo:

Tendrá un lugar privilegiado entre los juglares y junto a San Pedro será Armando Zabaleta quien lo reciba en las puertas del cielo. Millones de mexicanos rendirán un sincero y majestuoso homenaje a Gabriel García Márquez, este lunes en el emblemático Palacio de Bellas Artes de la capital, donde México despidió a sus grandes íconos culturales. En la ceremonia se espera la presencia del presidente Enrique Peña Nieto y de su homólogo colombiano, Juan Manuel Santos.

NATIONAL CONTACT

Editorial: (773) 446-9920 Business: (212) 924-2523
3339 S. Halsted Chicago, IL 60625
Email: contact@peoplesworld.org