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Cuban Communist Party to make changes, protect gains



By W. T. Whitney, Jr.

Cuba's Communist Party held its 7th Party Congress in Havana April 16-19. There were 993 delegates and 280 guests. The dates marked the 55 year anniversary of Fidel Castro's declaration of the socialist nature of Cuba's revolution and, within days, of Cuba's military defeat of U. S. - sponsored invaders at the Bay of Pigs.

Presenting a 12,000 - word "Central Report", President Raul Castro indicated that, "The development of the national economy, together with the struggle for peace and ideological resolve, constitute the main missions of the Party.

Delegates took on the task of reviewing and revising hundreds of guidelines authorized by the 6th Congress in 2011 for improving the efficiency and productivity of Cuba's economy.

The Congress dedicated two days to discussing issues grouped under four headings. Delegates joined one of four "Commissions" formed to shape a "proposal" to be submitted for approval by the Congress. The areas for discussion were: (1) the "Project of Conceptualizing the Cuban Social and Economic Model of Socialist Development," (2) the "National Plan of Social and Economic Development until 2030." (3) the "Results of Implementation of the Social

and Economic Guidelines," approved by the 6th Congress, and (4) a report on fulfillment of recommendations put forth by the first party conference in 2012 for improving party work.

In justification, party officials claimed that the guidelines to be discussed at this congress had been formulated and approved at the earlier one. And President Castro emphasized that since then the first two proposals - the most provocative ones - had been discussed by thousands of party

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leaders, academic experts, and other specialists. And they had been revised repeatedly.

As the Congress closed, 274 guidelines remained for future consideration, down from 313 after the 6th Congress. That reduced number even reflected 50 new guidelines, some actually

People working with fervor and dignity can produce the material and cultural wealth that humans need.

new and others the result of revisions and consolidation. In fact, only 21 percent of the guidelines approved at the 6th Congress have been fully implemented.

The third commission, which dealt with implementation of the guidelines and workings of the economy, learned that the Cuban economy over 5 years had grown at an average annual rate of 2.8%, which “doesn’t respond to the dynamic for development that the country needs,” opined Economic Minister Marino Murillo.

The fourth commission, focusing on changes in the work of the party, confronted a drop in party membership from 800,000 in 2011 to 671,344 members in 2015. With an eye toward the aging of current party leaders, speakers stressed recruitment and preparation of potential new leaders.

The delegates, voting secretly, chose 142 members for a new Central Committee - 55 of them being new - who in turn selected 17 members of the Political Bureau, including five new members. The average age of Central Committee members is now 54.5 years; 44.8

percent of them are women and 35.9 percent are African - descended. Henceforth, new Central Committee members must be under 60 years of age, and party leaders less than 70 years old. In a change requiring constitutional modification, government and party officers will be serving no more than two five - year terms.

In his report Castro called for overcoming racial barriers in selecting leaders and for “promotion of our combative females ... to decision-making positions nationwide.” Women represent “66.8% of the best technically and professionally qualified workforce of the country” and are “generally, more mature and better managers than men.”

Speaking briefly on the last day of the Congress, former President Fidel Castro first noted dire threats to human survival and then declared that, “ideas of the Cuban communists will remain as proof that on this planet, [people] working with fervor and dignity can produce the material and cultural wealth that humans need.”



W. T. Whitney, Jr. writes for Peoplesworld.org

Divest from Pentagon, invest in people

Special to Peoplesworld.org

War tax resistance and redirection are conscientious objection and nonviolent direct action to defund endless war.

The tiny house on flatbed wheels skittered around the corner of the impressive new public library. Small and light enough to be pushed from behind and guided by a hand on the front trailer hitch, it made its way to the library steps. At final rest, it faced out at a vacant lot lined with the tents and shopping carts of the dispossessed. Amazed faces stared at the windows that let in the light, and the door fitted out with shiny lock and key.

On Tax Day, April 15th, protesters were staging a press conference with the latest attempt at temporary housing for the homeless, a one-room, full bed-sized frame structure assembled from a kit provided by Amikas of San Diego. In this public redirection of resisted income taxes, the Southern California War Tax Alternative Fund (SCWTAF) divested and redirected \$6,000 from the Pentagon to the people, including \$1,000 for this tiny home to its makers, the Amikas’ “Homeless to Housed” program.

“I pay my taxes, but not to the Department of

Defense. I pay them instead to the people here working to create peace in San Diego,” said event organizer Anne Barron of SCWTAF. “War is violence in the extreme. I cannot pay for the bombs we rain on countries half-way around the world.”

According to member Cathy Deppe, war tax resistance and redirection are conscientious objection and nonviolent direct action to defund endless war. “Once we said, ‘What if they gave a war and nobody came.’ Draft resistance and the larger peace movement helped end the American war in Vietnam. Now, after 15 years of war in Afghanistan, we say, ‘What if they gave a war and nobody paid.’ It is urgent we take direct action to end this addiction to endless war and militarism.”

SCWTAF is a project of Southern California War Tax Resistance, established in 1979. The group of war tax resisters has redirected over \$60,000.00 since its founding, all of it with tax money that would have been used for war and preparations for war.

Labor, progressives warn Congress: Keep ideological agenda out of spending bills



By PAI

A group of 172 progressive lawmakers is warning House leaders - particularly leaders of its GOP-run Appropriations Committee - not to use upcoming legislation to fund federal agencies to enact ideologically-motivated and mischievous “riders.”

If the leaders try that trick, the group warns, they’ll vote against any of the funding bills that come down the pike. And major unions back their stand.

The letter, initiated by Reps. Jan Schakowsky, D-Ill., and Ruben Gallego, D-Ariz., is important to workers because right-wing and Tea Party members of the House GOP often use such “riders” to promote anti-worker causes. Past “riders” have, for example, attempted to repeal the Davis-Bacon Act, which mandates prevailing wages for federally-funded construction projects.

The unions are part of the 100-group Clean Budget Coalition lobbying for rider-less money bills. “Riders from the Republican leadership are a way to manipulate the rules in favor of the wealthy few and big corporations. Working families want Congress to do its job and send President Obama clean spending bills,” Peter Colavito, SEIU’s legislative director, stated.

Lawmakers can also use riders to insert complex

legislation into the money bills. The controversial law that lets financially-endangered multi-employer pension plans cut payments for current retirees and survivors, to keep the plans fiscally viable in the future, was inserted in the 2014 end-of-the-year money bill to keep the government going.

“Divisive partisan policy riders have no place in our appropriations bills,” Schakowsky said. “Last year’s two-year budget agreement should’ve settled the issue and allowed both parties to work together to craft the 2017 appropriations bills.

“However, with the budget process breaking down there is a danger that conservative” lawmakers “may try to break down the appropriations process by including radical policy riders to these bills. These provisions could block gun violence research, gut financial regulations in Dodd-Frank, limit reproductive choice, harm Social Security and Medicare, or prevent the United States from joining international climate agreements,” she added.

Gallego said such “poison-pill” riders could lead to yet another government shutdown, similar to the two-week closure engineered in the recent past by the Tea Party and Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, now a GOP presidential hopeful. “Democrats are united in calling on Speaker Ryan to end this pattern of reckless brinksmanship and pass clean appropriations bills to fully fund the federal government.”

Divisive partisan policy riders have no place in our appropriations bills.

California janitors ready to strike

By Rossana Cambron

Labor leaders gathered to announce their support, should unionized janitors decide to go out on strike. Thousands of area janitors, represented by Service Employees International Union/United Service Workers West (SEIU-USWW), have indicated they are ready to strike and are expected to rally in the streets of Los Angeles as contract negotiations enter their final hours before the deadline.

“From the start, this fight back in Century City over 25 years ago when they were brutally beaten, to the strike in 2000 when they fought to close the gap between rich and the poor, now we find ourselves in 2016, again fighting for the dignity and justice they very much deserve,” stated David Huerta, president of SEIU-USWW.

Janitors will protest what they say are the unlawful practices committed during their fight for better working conditions, demand on-the-job protections from sexual assault of immigrant women janitors, and call for wages that meet the basic needs.

Last Saturday, over 20,000 janitors statewide authorized their bargaining committee to call for a strike against unfair labor practices by janitorial companies such as ABM, ABLE, DMS, and others who contract with some of the state’s most high-priced real estate owners and businesses in the tech industry.

Among the attendees at the press conference were Rusty Hicks Executive Secretary-Treasurer, L.A. County Federation of Labor; Javier Bonales, Vice President, Teamsters 396; Paul Edwards, UFCW local 770; Xochitl Cobarrubias, United Steelworkers Union 675 and many of the janitors who are ready to strike against unfair labor practices.

EPA Da un Paso Más Hacia la Prohibición Total del Pesticida Tóxico Clorpirifos

Earthjustice.org

La Agencia Federal del Protección al Medio Ambiente (EPA, por sus siglas en inglés) va a convocar a un Panel de Asesoría Científica para revisar los límites en materia de salud para el peligroso y ampliamente usado pesticida clorpirifos. Esta decisión viene tras años de trabajo de cabildeo por parte de trabajadores agrícolas, grupos de salud ambiental y de conservación, que han estado pidiendo a la EPA que prohíba el clorpirifos por el daño que causa en el desarrollo neuronal de los niños.

El panel va a evaluar la propuesta por parte de la EPA de establecer un límite que ayudaría a prevenir daño cerebral a los menores.

“Este es un paso importante en la dirección correcta,” dijo Virginia Ruiz del grupo Farmworker Justice. “Pero es solamente un paso.

Cada mes y cada año, los trabajadores agrícolas y sus familias están expuestos a niveles ilegales y peligrosos del nocivo clorpirifos tan dañino para el cerebro. La EPA debe proteger a los trabajadores agrícolas y sus hijos—de manera inmediata.”

“Este es un paso largamente esperado por parte de la EPA para lograr lo que la ciencia y la ley demandan—declarar ilegal el clorpirifos para prevenir daños más extensos al cerebro de los niños,” dijo la Abogada de Earthjustice Patti Goldman, a nombre de una coalición de grupos ambientalistas.

“Es impactante que el daño que se ha causado a toda una generación de nuestros hijos ha sido ignorado y permitido,” dijo Erik Nicholson del grupo United Farm Workers.

“Pero nos alienta que la EPA se esté moviendo para ofrecer protección a la siguiente generación y garantizar que no sufran los mismos efectos devastadores del clorpirifos que ningún padre ni ningún hijo deberían temer. Todos tenemos el derecho a una vida saludable—este anuncio nos acerca a que esta visión sea un paso más cercano a la realidad.”

Earthjustice y una amplia coalición de aliados han estado luchando por años para convencer a la Agencia Federal de Protección al Medio Ambiente (EPA, por sus siglas en inglés) que prohíba estos pesticidas. Clorpirifos es un organofosfato (OP), el cual causa envenenamiento agudo en cuanto la gente tiene contacto con el pesticida.

Los organofosfatos suprimen una enzima que regula los impulsos nerviosos por todo el cuerpo. Cuando esta enzima – colinesterasa – se inhibe, la gente puede experimentar una gama de síntomas desde náusea, vómito, dolores de cabeza y mareos hasta convulsiones, parálisis e incluso muerte en algunos casos.

Estos pesticidas no tan sólo ponen a los trabajadores agrícolas de nuestra nación en riesgo de intoxicación por pesticidas, sino que también contaminan la comida y el agua potable y exponen a los niños y a otros al rocío tóxico.

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