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Ailí Labañino in Australia talks about the Cuban Five

By W. T. Whitney Jr.

Ramón Labañino is in prison in the United States, in Kentucky. Ailí Labañino, his oldest daughter, was in Australia in August. Sponsored by labor unions and Cuba solidarity groups there, she toured six cities. She talked about her father and the impact of his imprisonment on her family.

She was talking too about the Cuban Five political prisoners. Ramón is one of them; others are Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández., Rene Gonzalez, and Fernando Gonzalez. She told Australians about the injustice done to them and asked for solidarity. Earlier in Adelaide, Communist Party Secretary General Bob Briton interviewed Ailí.

The Cuban Five, arrested by the FBI in Miami on September 12, 1998, were political prisoners; three still are. Convicted on lesser charges, Rene and Fernando have left prison and are in Cuba.

After their trial and sentencing Cuban President Fidel Castro told the Cuban people the Five would only go free “When the enormous injustice committed against them is known throughout the whole world.” For years, Ailí and other family members of the Five have traveled the world, teaching and informing.

In Australia, Ailí reported on outlandish sentences. She indicated the Five had been in



Florida at the behest of the Cuban government to monitor private paramilitary thugs responsible for terror, murder and mayhem in Cuba. The U.S. government deepened community bias through pay-offs to Miami-area journalists who produced prejudicial stories before and during the trial of the Five.

Bob Briton asked Ailí, “What has it been like to have your father imprisoned in such unjust circumstances?” Ailí replied, “More than half of

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my life, as well as that of my sisters, has been spent in this battle for the return of my father. We are very proud to know what they did was not only for their families but for all Cubans. Anyway, it's very painful not to have them, for instance at birthday parties, on Valentine's Day, on Fathers'

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Day and also the fact that we had to wait for a U.S. visa in order to be able to visit him in prison. The experience we had during our adolescence was that of prison.

Briton asked about "solidarity of the Cuban people with the Cuban Five." "From the very beginning," Ailí responded, "our leaders as well as the Cuban people have been the main protagonists in this campaign ... You can see throughout the whole of Cuba posters of the Cuban Five and different activities carried out in support of them. ... This battle is very sensitive in Cuba because the Five are considered as family by all Cubans.

Asked about international solidarity, she indicated that, "Cuba's efforts are reaching the world through the efforts of our friends in the world. If the mass media in the U.S. has been able to raise a wall of silence about the injustice, international solidarity has been able to open doors in alternative media to let the case be known.

Ailí answered a question about Cuban youth:

"The fact that the youth are proud of what the Five are doing and that they want to be part of this battle is a big support to us. In every university in Cuba there are committees in support of the Five. In our universities ... there are a large number of foreign students studying alongside their Cuban counterparts. This has the advantage that, once the international students return home, they take the message about the Cuban Five to their respective countries."

She concluded by pointing out that, "The main problem is that the mass media have silenced the case. That is why we have to knock on every door we can to take the message to every person. I can tell you the friends we have found here are sincere. The things they have undertaken to do, for example to write letters and postcards to the Obama Administration for the freedom of the Five.



W. T. Whitney Jr. writes for People's World.

U.S. taxpayers eat the new Whopper

By Clyde Weiss

Next time you consider chomping into a Burger King Whopper, you might think about the bite this fast food giant is trying to take out of the American taxpayer.

The company announced it will purchase beloved Canadian coffee and donut shop chain Tim Hortons. That purchase could help it dodge its U.S. tax obligations, shifting its burden to the rest of us American taxpayers.

While the prospect of avoiding taxes and raking in higher profits may sound appealing to the company's top brass, the rest of us know we'll have to make up the difference, or do with less public service as the tax revenue pool shrinks.

Burger King is pursuing the purchase as a process called a tax inversion. That is, when a U.S.-based firm buys a company in another country, and relocates its corporate headquarters. Even if most of the company's managers and employees remain in the United States, the firm can take ad-

vantage of the other country's lower tax brackets.

It's a decision that Walgreens recently mulled but dropped after American taxpayers came together in protest of the move. But since 1983, approximately 75 corporations abandoned America through inversion, and at least 10 more corporate inversions are currently underway.

AFSCME opposes these corporate tax evasion schemes. We are urging members of Congress to enact the "Stop Corporate Inversions Act of 2014" (S.2360), introduced by Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich. The measure would prevent U.S. corporations from claiming to be foreign companies unless they meet specified conditions.

We also support the Bring Jobs Home Act, introduced by Sens. John Walsh, D-Mo., and Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.). The legislation would eliminate some tax incentives that corporate CEOs use to increase their profits by sending our jobs overseas.

AFSCME opposes these corporate tax evasion schemes.

Peaceful immigration protesters target White House, get arrested

By Mark Gruenburg



When it comes to campaigning for comprehensive immigration reform, Communications Workers President Larry Cohen is making a habit of supporting reform by getting arrested in peaceful protests. For the second time - at least - this year, the CWA chief was handcuffed and taken to a lockup after a peaceful sit-down on the issue, this time on Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House just before Labor Day. His prior arrest was near the U.S. Capitol, when Cohen and his colleagues campaigned to get the GOP-run House to vote on and approve comprehensive immigration reform. It didn't. House leaders didn't even listen.

Given Congress' dysfunction, Cohen and 2,000 other people gathered in Lafayette Park to put pressure on President Obama to openly make good on his statement during the summer that he would do all he can, administratively, to change the status of millions of undocumented people now within the U.S. They also want Obama to halt the 1,000 daily deportations of undocumented family members.

Obama hasn't acted. The day of the protest, August 28, news reports surfaced that he might delay a decision again, until after the November election.

That didn't sit well with Cohen, AFL-CIO Exec-

utive Vice President Tefere Gebre, other activists in D.C. or colleagues in similar demonstrations, town halls and teach-ins nationwide. Others who showed their commitment by getting arrested in D.C. included CWA Vice President Bill Bates, CWA Chief Of Staff Ron Collins and Gustavo Torres, executive director of Casa de Maryland, a union shop whose workers help Spanish-speaking D.C.-area residents.

The D.C. demonstration was one of dozens nationwide - from Los Angeles to Chicago to Boston to New York to Fort Lauderdale - in a National Day to Fight for Families. In demonstrations, town hall meetings and other events, unions, religious groups, civil rights groups and community groups called for comprehensive reform and for Obama to act.

The GOP-run House has responded with punitive legislation and demands for more deportations, which the Democratic-led Senate has deep-sixed.

"The Republicans lied to the entire country: They said they wanted to accomplish immigration reform, but their recent actions - votes to tear families apart and side with far-right tea partiers - prove they were never serious.

We are taking action to demand President Obama comes through with immediate, comprehensive action to keep our families together.

Our families are separated as we speak and we can no longer wait.

Court clears union leader Gomez Urrutia

by PAI

The Steelworkers are cheering a Mexican court ruling clearing independent union leader Napoleon Gomez Urrutia of all remaining corruption and fraud charges, paving the way for him to return to on-site daily presidency of his union, Los Mineros.

The unanimous Mexican appeals court said on August 28 that the charge “was baseless and unconstitutional” that Gomez Urrutia, president of the Miners and Metalworkers Union, took money from a Los Mineros trust fund.

Since the fracas started almost a decade ago, Gomez Urrutia, supported and sponsored by USW, has had to run the union from long distance, while living in exile in Vancouver, B.C. His members elected him to new terms. Canada gave him asylum last year. Now he plans to return to Mexico and resume bargaining with the giant Mexican mining firms that convinced the Mexican government to bring the charges in the first place, in order to oust him and install a pliable union leadership.

The wealthy mining firms told the Wall Street Journal, however, that they will refuse to bargain with Los Mineros.

The ruling is “a triumph for the USW-Los Mineros alliance and for the international union solidarity campaign” for Gomez Urrutia and independent Mexican unions.

Plebiscito sobre cambios político

Prensa Latina

La celebración de un plebiscito para impulsar cambios políticos a través de una Asamblea Constituyente aparece hoy entre las propuestas de la presidenta brasileña, Dilma Rousseff, quien busca su reelección en octubre próximo.

La consulta popular es el único mecanismo capaz de brindar la fuerza suficiente para emprender reformas profundas de las normas políticas vigentes, resaltó Rousseff, candidata del Partido de los Trabajadores (PT).

De ganar las elecciones del próximo 5 de octubre convocaré a un referéndum popular con el propósito de llevar adelante una Constituyente que implemente amplias transformaciones en el sistema brasileño, subrayó.

La mandataria reconoció que necesita por ello del respaldo de la población, de movimientos sociales y de otros tipos para lograr la fuerza indispensable para la celebración del plebiscito.

A juicio de la jefa de Estado, urge cambiar las reglas de financiación de las campañas políticas para acabar con los aportes privados a los postulantes, se necesitan nuevas normas para mejorar la transparencia y frenar la corrupción, y el Congreso nacional debe mejorar su representatividad popular.

En este sentido, coordinadores de la campaña de reelección de la dignataria y del PT en los estados y municipios realizan una cruzada por todo el país con el propósito de explicar esta iniciativa y recoger firmas que respalden la celebración del referéndum.

Esto necesariamente significaría la actualización y modernización de las estructuras políticas y la participación de la ciudadanía para cambiar el país, aseveró.

La propuesta de cambio cuenta con el respaldo de 450 organizaciones de la sociedad y la intención es reunir 10 millones de firmas, aunque solo se necesitan un millón y medio para solicitar la convocatoria a la consulta. Se trata de una iniciativa exclusiva de Rousseff, pues ninguno del resto de los 10 aspirantes a la jefatura del Estado desea reformas políticas. Sólo la pretendiente socialista Marina Silva propuso impulsar una nueva política, pero con viejas figuras de la derecha brasileña.

La presidenta Rousseff defendió las relaciones de Brasil con los países latinoamericanos en los que pretenden el 80% de las exportaciones del país.

”Nadie puede minimizar la importancia de América Latina en Brasil, el mayor país de la región, ni puede darse el lujo de dar la espalda a esta región”, dijo Rousseff en declaraciones a los periodistas en el palacio presidencial, la residencia oficial.

Explicó que cualquier intento de ignorar o minimizar el papel de este país en la región es una “temeridad”.

”Imagínese la influencia [del Banco] en términos de inversión”, dijo al criticar las propuestas de otros candidatos a la presidencia, interesados en fortalecer las relaciones con los Estados Unidos y Europa.

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