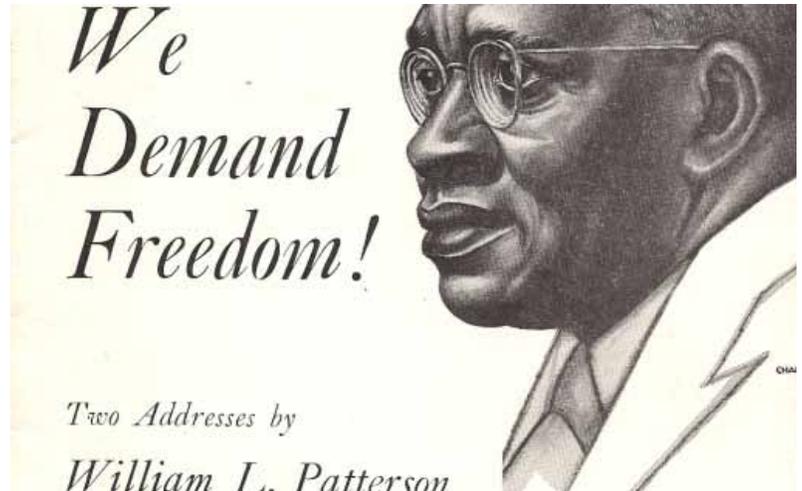


PEOPLE'S WORLD

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Celebrating Black History Month



By Tony Pecinovsky

In honor of African American History Month, the People's World is running a series of articles and commentaries. The following is abridged from www.peoplesworld.org, "Communist Party and African American equality - a focus unequaled in U.S. history," which focuses on four documents from the 1940s, 50s, 60s and 70s written by four different African American leaders. The first two documents are presented here.

The first document is a 1943 pamphlet, "The Negro People and the Communists," by Doxey A. Wilkerson. At this time, Wilkerson was the educational director for the Maryland Communist Party and lecturer at the Jefferson School for Social Sciences.

Before joining the Communist Party, Wilkerson served as chairman of the Department of Secondary Education at Virginia State College; associate professor of education and summer school director at Howard University; research associate of the President's Advisory Committee on Education; editorial staff member of the Journal of Negro Education; member of the National Advisory Committee on WPA Education Programs; and vice president for both the American Federation

of Teachers and the International Labor Defense.

In his pamphlet, Wilkerson wrote, "Communists have always understood this need for Negro-white unity better than any other group in society. It was Karl Marx, father of scientific socialism, who during the Civil War pronounced the famous dictum: Labor with a white skin cannot

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emancipate itself where labor with a black skin is branded."

He continued, "In its struggle for the working class of our country, the Communist Party has always understood that the achievement of Negro rights is fundamental to the welfare of the people as a whole."

However difficult the struggle for democracy was, Patterson was optimistic, and his optimism was based on one fundamental idea, championed by the Communist Party: unity.

Wilkerson clearly understood that the struggle for African American equality and working class solidarity in general are connected; we cannot have one without the other.

He wrote, "The Communist Party has deeply influenced the thinking of hundreds of thousands of white Americans, especially in the ranks of organized labor. It has won increasing numbers of allies for the Negro people."

Undoubtedly, the Communist Party did (and continues to) place unique emphasis on the role of white workers in the struggle against racism.

The second document, from 1951, titled "We Demand Freedom!" reprints two speeches given by Communist Party leader William L. Patterson, who also served as national executive secretary of the Civil Rights Congress, a broad-based civil rights organization that many credit with laying the groundwork, building the infrastructure and training the cadre that would lead to the civil rights movement. Like dozens of other Communist Party leaders, in the early 1950s Patterson was indicted under the infamous Smith Act, which in effect attempted to outlaw the Communist Party. During this period, communists were being rounded up in every state, jailed and denied their constitutional rights. Patterson's pamphlet reflects the fear and

also optimism of the times.

"We face what must become the greatest American crisis in the fight to defend our constitutional liberties and human rights," Patterson wrote in response to the conviction of the first 11 Communist Party leaders imprisoned under the Smith Act.

He went on to write, "The continued existence of the Smith Act as an organic part of the law of the land spells the death knell of the democratic principles for which we have fought and bled. It must go in the name of democracy."

However difficult the struggle for democracy was, Patterson was optimistic, and his optimism was based on one fundamental idea, championed by the Communist Party: unity. "The fight to restore the Bill of Rights can and must be mounted," he wrote. "The American people are not indifferent to the needs of the moment. Unity in struggle is the guarantee of victory. White men, women and youth must understand that the key to the unity of progressive America lies in the unity of black and white."



Tony Pecinovsky writes for the Peoples World.

Don't let Republicans say no to help and hope

By PW Editorial Board

Republicans say: Wall Street yes, Main Street no! American people say: Extend unemployment insurance benefits! Jobs for all!

On Dec. 16, 2009, the House passed the Jobs For Main Street Act of 2010 (HR 2847). The emphasis of the bill is on job creation and extended emergency relief for the unemployed. The bill would be funded with unspent TARP funds that had been set aside for the Wall Street bailout. The vote was 217 to 212 with not a single Republican vote in favor.

In his State of the Union speech, President Obama stated that 2010 would be the year of help and compassion. Senate Democrats are expected to bring the bill to the Senate floor in February, and Senate Republicans are signaling they will broaden their mantra of "No to change" to include

"No to help, no to compassion and no to hope."

The lesson of the past year's fight for health care reform is that without a strong people's movement, change is difficult. Such movements, like brick walls built one brick and a bit of mortar at a time, are built by the accumulation of many small actions. Now is the time for one of those actions.

Contact your senators and let them hear the anger and frustration President Obama spoke of. Demand they include the same extension for unemployment benefits that is in the House bill. On Feb. 12, unemployment insurance offices around the country will be closing down the program. Without this extension millions of unemployed workers and families will be dropped from the rolls, falling deeper into poverty and hopelessness. Let's start laying brick!



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Suburbs: new centers of poverty

By Joe Sims

Suburbs have become new centers of poverty, according to a new study by the Brookings Institution. Over one-third of America's poor are now living outside of urban centers according to the survey released last week, entitled "The Suburbanization of Poverty: Trends in Metropolitan America, 2000 to 2008."

Startlingly, the study points out that over one-third of all Americans live below 200 percent of the federal poverty level: "In 2008, 91.6 million people - more than 30 percent of the nation's population - fell below 200 percent of the federal poverty level," the report says.

Suburbs saw their poor populations grow by a whopping 25 percent during this period, which does not include 2009, the height of the Great Recession. The suburban working-class vote is a major source of voter discontent as seen in the recent Massachusetts senatorial election. Currently the Senate is considering important legislation that could provide 200,000 to 300,000 new hires. Economist Paul Krugman points out however, that 10 million jobs are needed.

The Brookings study indicates the greatest poverty growth continues to be in the Midwest, with some exceptions. For example, the greater Youngtown, Ohio, and Hartford, Conn., areas are tied for first place with poverty rates of 33.5 percent. Grand Rapids, Mich., is over 30 percent.

"Chicago ranks fourth in the nation among cities that have seen a large shift of poor to the suburbs, according to the study released last week," writes the Chicago Tribune. "Nearly half of the Chicago area's poor live in the suburbs, the study shows."



In the current recession, the Sun Belt has become a new center of suburban poverty as well. The Brookings report suggests that "Western cities and Florida suburbs were among the first to see the effects of the "Great Recession," indicated by "significant increases in poverty between 2007 and 2008."

The Brookings report will come as no surprise to working-class families in Ohio. Already in 2008 the Warren Tribune pointed out that "a third of Trumbull County's population is on some sort of public assistance, and they're not just living in the cities anymore, says the head of the Job and Family Services department."

Overall the number of people living in poverty in the state of Ohio has jumped nearly 40 percent over the last decade. Phil Cole, executive director of the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies, says this points to the need for jobs and job training programs. "Now people will say that we still cannot afford it," Cole said. "But can we afford to continue to pay Medicaid and unemployment instead?"

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Mexican labor leader tours U.S.

By Gail Ryall

Humberto Montes de Oca, interior secretary of the Mexican Electricians' Union (Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas - SME), was on his way to Washington. His mission: to lodge a complaint with NAFTA authorities against the Mexican government for labor violations.

He said he would also be asking the AFL-CIO for solidarity actions and monetary support. Several central labor councils and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) have already agreed to help the Mexican union.

Montes de Oca spoke here to an audience of mainly Latino union and community activists.

Standing in front of a banner reading "Derecho de no emigrar" (Right not to emigrate) and speaking in Spanish with a translator, Montes de Oca said that Mexico's President Felipe Calderon is trying to exterminate the SME union, privatize the electrical industry, and control the media.

He described how Mexico's federal police and army had attacked the union-built and nationally owned electrical facility and violently removed union workers on October 10, 2009.

Subsequently 44,000 workers were fired and replaced with non-union employees. SME filed a lawsuit over the illegal attack and decree, but a Mexican court rejected it.

Meanwhile, 18,000 workers continue to resist the decree, although they have not been paid in 100 days.

Las guerras bananeras y el fraude de libre comercio

(parte 1)

Por Emile Schepers

El anuncio en diciembre de un acuerdo que debe poner fin a las "guerras bananeras" no es una cosa completamente buena. De hecho, debe servir para educarnos acerca de la verdadera naturaleza del llamado "libre comercio".

Las "guerras bananeras" comenzaron en 1993 cuando la Unión Europea (UE) acordó con un grupo de países de África, el Océano Pacífico y el Caribe (APC), todos ellos antiguas colonias de países europeos, de permitir que los plátanos cultivados en esos países fueran admitidos al mercado europeo sin aranceles.

Los países que recibieron este beneficio incluyeron Camerún, Costa de Marfil y Ghana en África occidental, y la República Dominicana, Belice, Jamaica, Suriname y las islas del sur de las Antillas en la región caribeña, además de las colonias francesas, Guadalupe y Martinique.

Los países que quedaron fuera del arreglo y fueron excluidos del mercado europeo por los altos aranceles incluyeron Colombia, Honduras, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Panamá y otros en centro y Sudamérica.

En varios de estos últimos países, la producción del plátano se encuentra dominada por grandes monopolios basados en los Estados Unidos, como Chiquita, Del Monte y Dole. Estas grandes corporaciones tienen tremendos latifundios, mientras que en muchos casos los países incluidos en el acuerdo UE-APC cultivan el plátano

por medio de granjas más pequeñas y cultivadores independientes.

Los monopolios bananeros, con el respaldo de la administración norteamericana de Bill Clinton, demandaron a la UE bajo los términos del Acuerdo General Sobre Aranceles y Comercio (GATT en inglés), y luego la demanda pasó a la jurisdicción de la Organización Mundial del Comercio. Esta es la demanda que supuestamente se ha arreglado bajo el acuerdo que se acaba de anunciar, por lo cual los plátanos de los países APC seguirán entrando al mercado europeo sin aranceles, pero los de los países no perteneciente al APC (mayormente latinoamericanos) van a pagar aranceles menores (reducidos durante un plazo de 7 años de \$256 por tonelada a \$116. A los países de APC se les van a compensar con un programa de ayuda financiera por el comercio se cree que van a perder.

Algunos reporteros y comentaristas han atribuido el precio más bajo del plátano en los países no-APC a eficiencias de escala, pues las entidades de producción son mayores en los países donde los monopolios controlan la producción. Pero esto no es toda la historia.

Compañías como la "United Fruit" (antecesor de Chiquita Brands International) adquirieron sus enormes latifundios y sus monopolios de producción por métodos que a veces empleaban la violencia para romper los sindicatos y huelgas de los trabajadores bananeros.