

# PEOPLE'S WORLD

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## Change is a ragged process

By Sam Webb

Slightly over a year ago, the American people elected a young African American to the presidency and increased the Democratic majorities in the Congress. President Obama's victory represented a repudiation of the right-wing ideology, politics and economics. It constituted a serious setback for neoliberalism in both its conservative and liberal skin.

This swing in the political pendulum in the direction of economic justice, equality and peace ushered in the possibility of a new era. After 30 years of right-wing dominance, the balance of class and social forces is tilting once again in a progressive direction, but not to the degree that a people's agenda is simply rolled out and easily enacted.

That would be wishful thinking and we shouldn't engage in such thinking, as tempting as it is. The struggle ahead, much like the struggle over the past three decades, will be fierce. There will be no easy victories. But political advantage has shifted to our side and that's no small accomplishment. To turn this advantage into a new New Deal will take many things, but two I consider fundamental: a proper strategy and a sense of process.



Some may wonder why I don't mention tactics. They are shaped by strategy and process, so they are a dependent variable in this equation.

A proper strategy envisions the main class and social groupings and personalities that have to be assembled and united to transform the pos-

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sibility of this moment into a concrete, lived reality for millions of people.

The strategic thrust of last year - to defeat the ultra right, especially as expressed by the Republican Party, at the polls - doesn't quite fill the bill any longer. Right wing extremism is still a factor, as demonstrated by the health care battle, but as a

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result of the election's outcome, it is on the defensive, no longer able to set the agenda and frame the debate to its desire.

At the same time a pure anti-corporate strategy doesn't quite fit either, given the configuration of forces coming out of the elections and the political agenda going forward.

The coalition to deepen and consolidate the promise of our time, in my view, stretches (for now) from President Obama to the core forces of the people's movement: labor, African American, Latino, and other the racially oppressed people, women, and youth. It also includes those who sat out last year's election, small and medium sized businesses, dissatisfied grassroots supporters of the right wing, sections of the Democratic Party and even corporate capital - depending on the issue at hand.

So the task is to activate and maximize the unity of this very diverse, multi-class, and fluid coalition in the course of concrete struggles.

There will be competing views. Not everyone

will be on board on every issue; the lineup and mix will change as the agenda and struggle changes. Some participants will be dependable and clear headed - the core forces - while others will be unreliable and temporary. The notion of the capitalist class on the one side and the working class on the other may sound "radical," but it is neither Marxist, nor found in life and politics. Pure forms exist in high theory, but nowhere else. It would be a profound mistake to distance the core forces of this coalition from others who are temporary and unreliable at this and subsequent stag.

It is imperative to have a sense of the ebbs and flows of mass struggle - the contradictions and the dialectics - plus the near constant reconfiguration of this broad, multi-class coalition. Progress (and process) is never a straight line forward nor neatly packaged. It is usually ragged.



**Snm Webb is chairman of the Communist Party USA.**

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## Mixed results in off-year election

By PW Editorial Board

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**T**he bad news for Democrats early on election night, the loss of the gubernatorial races in Virginia and New Jersey, was offset by the news in special congressional races.

In the high profile election in upstate New York, Democrat Bill Owens won a seat in Congress that had been held since 1872 by the Republicans. More significantly, he won after every well known national leader of the GOP's ultra-right wing showed up in the district to campaign for Bill Hoffman, the Conservative Party candidate. Sarah Palin and the others said the Republican candidate, Dede Scozzafava, was not right wing enough for them. By pushing their extremism too far they effectively forced the "moderate" Republican out of the race and into an alliance with the Democrat.

Shortly after that news was announced, Democrat John Garamendi, who campaigned as an outspoken backer of single-payer health care reform won a huge victory in the race to fill an open congressional seat in northern California. Gara-

mendi had defeated the candidate of the party's establishment in a primary by drawing attention to his opponent's ties to the health insurance industry. The person he defeated in that primary, Ellen Tauscher, was one of only a handful of California reps who belonged to the conservative Blue Dog Caucus.

The majority in the House that favors health care reform is now larger than it was before the election, no small victory for progressive forces that have been under attack from the right on this issue for many months.

Some of the saddest news of the evening came with the narrow, but heartbreaking defeat in Maine of a massive effort to preserve gay marriage rights. However, all across this nation same-sex couples and their families now openly share their stories and their lives with others in a conversation that is transforming the country. The days when the right wing is able to win a hate campaign at the ballot box are numbered.



# Ford workers reject givebacks

By John Wojcik

**B**y late yesterday it was clear Ford workers have overwhelmingly rejected contractual givebacks that their union had negotiated with the company.

General Baker, a member of the United Auto Workers, Local 600, which represents workers at Ford's Rouge plant in Michigan, told the World that "people just wouldn't accept that they should make all the sacrifices while the top executives don't give up a dime."

Ford CEO Alan Mulally made \$17.7 million last year.

"The workers were so angry, they wouldn't even accept the usual sop that's thrown into a concessionary contract, a one-time \$1,000 bonus payable in March," Baker said. "And now that everyone has heard about the big profits Ford is making, you can forget about any chance that this contract will ever be renegotiated."

Ford waited until the contract voting was almost totally completed yesterday to announce that it had earned \$1 billion in profits last quarter. "It knocks out their argument that they've been at a competitive disadvantage with GM and Chrysler," Baker said.

The UAW and Ford agreed to the contract changes last month, but Ford workers needed to ratify them. Ford has 41,000 UAW-represented workers.

The fate of the contract was actually clear already last Friday when two large locals in Kentucky and Ford's home city of Dearborn, Mich., rejected it overwhelmingly. Those two locals represent over 13,000 workers.

Ignoring the fact that it was raking in a huge profit, Ford sought the deal anyway, saying it had not received additional concessions given to Chrysler and General Motors. Those companies won extra concessions from the union as they headed into bankruptcy.

Ricky Comito, president of UAW Local 862



in Louisville, Ky., said, "Workers are being asked to sacrifice what they feel is a lot more than the people who run the company are sacrificing. They want to see management giving a little more at the upper levels."

Ford tried to get workers to accept frozen entry-level pay and severe limits on the right to strike, in exchange for the \$1,000 bonuses.

The no votes came even as Canadian Ford workers went along with the concessions negotiated by the company and the union.

"That is why, although this is a victory for the workers, I'm not starting a full celebration yet," said Baker. "We will have to fight hard if the company decides now that it will send work slated for U.S. plants to Canadian plants instead because workers there approved the contract changes."

In a statement, UAW President Ron Gettelfinger and Bob King, chief of the union's Ford unit, said that the union plans to abide by the decision of the workers.



**John Wojcik is labor editor of the Peoples World.**

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## Transit workers on strike for pay and benefits

By Ben Sears

**T**he 4,700 members of Transport Workers, Local 234 struck the Southeastern, Pa. Transportation Authority (SEPTA) at 3 a.m. on the morning of Nov. 3 over pay and pension related issues.

Commuters in the city are facing long lines of gridlocked traffic on streets all over the city, with no city buses or subways running.

The workers on the agency's regional rail system, which serves the suburbs, are not members of Local 234 and were not on strike. Those trains were operating, but with delays reported of up to 45 minutes.

SEPTA carries nearly one million passengers on its city routes (not including the suburban routes) on a typical weekday.

The situation is expected to become more complicated today as Philadelphia's public school students return after a day off for faculty staff development yesterday. Some 50,000 students normally use SEPTA to travel to and from school.

No new talks have yet been scheduled.

The union had waited until Game 5 of the World Series was completed before going on strike. More than 8,000 passengers typically travel to the stadium using SEPTA's Broad Street Subway. The union has pointed out that SEPTA has received federal stimulus funds and that ridership has increased 30 percent during the recent period.

Readers wishing to express support for the striking workers can sign an on line petition circulated by the Bread and Roses Community Fund at <http://tiny.cc/supportworkers>.

# Una vez más, la Asamblea General de la ONU condena bloqueo

Por Emile Schepers

**P**or la décima octava vez, la Asamblea General de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas votó el miércoles a favor de una resolución para condenar al bloqueo que el gobierno de los Estados Unidos ha mantenido en contra de Cuba socialista, desde un poco después de la revolución cubana de 1959.

El gobierno estadounidense usa la palabra "embargo" pero los cubanos lo llaman "el bloqueo, pues no se confina a prohibir el comercio norteamericano con Cuba, sino también pretende bloquear el comercio de otros países con la isla.

Este año se registró el mayor voto a favor de la resolución que condenó el bloqueo, con 187 votos a favor, 3 en contra (Estados Unidos, Israel y la pequeña nación de Palau en el Océano Pacífico), más dos abstenciones (Islas Marshall y Micronesia, también en el Pacífico, que al igual que Palau dependen mucho de la ayuda económica estadounidense).

El voto afirmativo incluyó a dos países que no han votado así en años pasados: El Salvador, que este año eligió un gobierno centroizquierda tras muchos años de haber servido como una base para la subversión de la CIA en contra de Cuba, y el gobierno proestadounidense de Irak. Además, sin excepción, los aliados de los Estados Unidos en la OTAN votaron para condenar al bloqueo.

En el periodo antes del voto, la

delegación cubana proporcionó a la Asamblea General información detallada sobre la manera en que el bloqueo perjudica al pueblo cubano obligándolo a pagar más para mercancías importadas y negándole acceso a medicamentos y aparatos médicos. Delegados de varias naciones hicieron uso de la palabra para denunciar al bloqueo.

Durante el debate, la embajadora de los Estados Unidos ante la ONU, Susan Rice, mencionó unas acciones de parte de la administración de Obama que tienen el fin de lograr una distensión entre los Estados Unidos y Cuba. Pero Rice defendió al bloqueo como un mecanismo de presionar a Cuba para hacer cambios internos. En cuanto al voto, Rice comentó que, "es difícil dejar las viejas costumbres". Respondiendo al comentario del canciller cubano Bruno Rodríguez en el sentido de que el bloqueo es un "acto inculdo de arrogancia", Rice acusó a Rodríguez de expresar una actitud de la guerra fría. Pero por sus votos, es obvio que los integrantes de la Asamblea General perciban al bloqueo como una política caduca.

Rodríguez señaló, también, como ha hecho el gobierno cubano en diversas ocasiones, que la administración de Obama tiene una oportunidad excepcional para cambiar esta política.

