

# PEOPLE'S WORLD

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## Fed up with “Walmart wages,” Alabama auto parts plant goes union



By John Wojcik

**A**ngry over what they described as their “Walmart wages,” workers at an Alabama auto parts plant voted last week, 89-45, to join the United Auto Workers. The employees at Commercial Vehicle Group Inc. in Piedmont, Ala. voted 89-45 for the union.

The vote is worrisome to auto parts companies all over the South because, in addition to wages, the impetus for the successful union organizing campaign was anger over use of temp positions to fill regular jobs - something happening at parts plants all over the country.

Unionizing at a parts plant scares the companies too because auto parts plants now employ about 75 percent of the nation’s auto workers.

What happens in Las Vegas stays in Las Vegas, says the conventional wisdom. That same wisdom, however, says that what happens in the South, happens next everywhere else.

“In the same way that anti-union laws enacted in the South eventually spread to places like Wisconsin, union organizing success in the South too will spread to other places. The South is a predictor of what happens to the rest of the country,” said Mary B. McMillan to a group of labor journalists meeting in Raleigh on the day the victory at the Alabama plant was announced.

Richard Bensinger, organizing advisor to the

UAW, said, “This shows that workers in the South can organize in spite of right-to-work laws.

“Workers in the South are like workers anywhere: they want a secure future, and more and more are beginning to understand that the way to get this is through working together in a union.”

“Our backs were up against the wall - in just a few years the company gutted our health insurance, took away personal days, and started replacing jobs with temp positions that pay less than

### T H I S   W E E K :

- **Alabama auto parts plant goes union**
- **Right wingers shift: Government to stay open for now**
- **Teamsters and CWA reach tentative pact for workers**
- **EEUU planea golpes de Estado en Latinoamérica**
- **Shell stops drilling in the Arctic**

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Walmart,” said Tiffany Moore, 34, a mother of two children, who is paid \$13.84 an hour at the plant. “I’ve never been part of a union before, but after years of scraping by while the company ignored our concerns, anyone could see the only option we had left was to join together to demand the change

**Workers are beginning to understand that joining unions will help secure their future.**

we need to support ourselves and families.”

The UAW says that 25 percent of the jobs at the plant had become temp positions that start pay at \$9.70 an hour, with no benefits. The most any production worker could earn is \$15.80 an hour.

From that the company takes \$60 per week for health insurance for individuals and \$110 for families. Actual take-home pay for workers receiving the top pay grade and family health insurance is just \$27,000 per year.

“I made the choice to join together with others at the plant because I don’t want the next kid who starts at CVG to have to work more than a decade just to be stuck at \$15 an hour,” said Alan Amos, 50, who was one of the organizers of the campaign to unionize. His pay is now at the \$15.80 per hour level.

“Winning this union is life- changing not just for me and my family,” he said, “but for the next generation of people in Piedmont, Alabama who will work at this factory and now have a real chance at a decent living.”

The victory is significant also because the

plant reflects what is happening in manufacturing jobs all over the country - wage cuts and increased use of temp positions.

Some 25 percent of manufacturing jobs in the country now pay less than \$11.91 an hour, according to the UAW.

“Jobs in the auto industry helped build America’s middle class, but today they are adding to the nation’s low-wage crisis,” said Catherine Ruckelshaus, general counsel at the National Employment Law Project.

“These workers at the CVG are proving that a better way is possible, and that by organizing and winning a voice on the job, workers can make the manufacturing industry a ticket to the middle class again.”

CVG is a worldwide seat manufacturer operating not just in 11 states in the United States, but also in Mexico, China, India, the UK, Belgium, and the Czech Republic.



**John Wojcik is co-editor of Peoplesworld.org**

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## **Right wingers shift strategy: Government to stay open for now**

**By Larry Rubin**

**T**he majority of right-wingers in the House and Senate have retreated, for now, from trying to immediately shut down large parts of the federal government. However, they might soon try again.

Resolutions passed in both houses guarantee that federal agencies will continue receiving their current levels of funding until December 11.

That’s the deadline for passing a budget for the current fiscal year. The “continuing resolutions” were adopted by 277 to 151 in the House and by 78 to 20 in the Senate.

The majority of Republicans in both houses had threatened for weeks to shut down the government if federal funding was continued for Planned Parenthood.

First, they used the threat of a shutdown to try and pass a resolution without funds for Planned Parenthood. When that failed, they tried to kill the continuing resolutions altogether.

That failed in the Senate when they were unable to get enough votes to block a potential fili-

buster by Democrats.

Meanwhile, in the House: last week, Speaker John Boehner failed in his attempt at convincing Republicans to support the strategy of waiting to wreak havoc until budget negotiations commence. Rather than risk the loss of his position in a vote of no confidence, he announced he would resign from Congress at the end of October.

That left him time to put the continuing resolution up for a vote and it left Republicans with no leader to organize a move to oppose it.

The majority of Republicans reluctantly voted to keep the government temporarily going.

However, tea party Republicans in the House now feel emboldened.

They are demanding that Boehner’s heir apparent, Kevin McCarthy, R.-Calif., demonstrate to them that he is their kind of guy.

**Federal agencies will continue receiving current funding until December 11th.**

# Communications Workers, Teamsters reach tentative pact for 15,000 at American Airlines

By Mark Gruenberg

The Communications Workers and the Teamsters reached a tentative first contract for 15,000 passenger services agents at American Airlines.

If ratified by a membership vote, the pact would complete the arduous path agents at American and USAirways took to reach an agreement after the two airlines merged.

It also would be the second joint big win for the Teamsters and CWA. Those two unions and others announced members had ratified a nationwide pact covering thousands of workers at the American Red Cross.

Collins said the pact with American “makes major improvements in wages and benefits,” including an immediate three percent wage hike to match the pay at New Delta - the non-union Delta Airlines, which devoured wall-to-wall union Northwest several years ago. Wages will also rise another 9 percent over the pact’s five years, Collins said.

“There will be no furlough during the life of the agreement. The company will eliminate all of the red-coat contractors at the ticket counters throughout the current American Airlines system,” Collins said.

He added that American “was determined to out-source stations with five or fewer mainline flights per day, but we were able to save all of those



stations thanks in large part to member mobilization.

“Under the tentative agreement, all Passenger Service Employees on payroll on the date of signing will not have their jobs outsourced.” And current health care plans will stay in place, while other benefits improve, he added.

The Teamsters disclosed the Red Cross agreement ratification, which covers 4,200 workers in 24 states, members of the Teamsters, CWA, AFSCME, Teachers - including their Oregon nurses -- Steelworkers, Auto Workers, UFCW and SEIU.

“It was very important that our local unions came together and helped educate members about the importance of this contract, which resulted in over 80 percent approving it,” said Teamsters President Jim Hoffa. “Now it is time to move forward at the American Red Cross so that the unionized workforce can continue to be an asset to the organization.”

“Now that this contract has been ratified, Red Cross will be in a better position to improve its operations and overall financial condition, while organized labor will enhance its ability to effectively address concerns across the country of current and future union members,” said Michael Filler, Director of the Teamsters Public Services Division.

**4200 Red Cross workers also ratify nationwide pact.**

## Shell stops drilling in the Arctic

By Blake Deppe

**A**fter intense opposition from environmentalists, including kay-activists who blocked oil rigs in Seattle and Portland, Shell has announced it is suspending its oil exploration in the Arctic.

The corporation cited “disappointing results” in the Chukchi Sea - specifically, insufficient amounts of oil and gas to warrant further activity there.

The oil giant has wasted over \$7 billion there since the drilling endeavor began. Notably, Shell also mentioned “the unpredictable federal regulatory environment in offshore Alaska,” which activists believe is a subtle reference to the environmental, anti-oil drilling movement that emerged there. Shell likely feared that the opposition could create enough pressure to encourage the federal government to implement new regulations on offshore oil drilling, further curtailing the company’s already blunder-ridden efforts.

The demise of Shell’s plans marks a victory for the activists who spent so much time and effort on this fight, intercepting oil rigs aboard kayaks and assailing the corporatists with fierce cries of “Shell No!”

In an interview on MSNBC, one such activist on the Puget Sound summarized the people’s victory thusly: “First they ignore you, then they make fun of you, then they fight you, then you win.”

## EEUU planea golpes de Estado en Latinoamérica

Prensa web YVKE

**L**a web de filtraciones Wikileaks revela que la política exterior de Estados Unidos (EE.UU.) contempla un plan que incluye golpes de Estados y magnicidios para mantener el dogma neoliberal.

Según los documentos filtrados por Wikileaks y publicados el viernes por el portal de la agencia rusa de noticias RT, el establecimiento de cualquier gobierno no neoliberal, así como cualquier movimiento opuesto a la instauración de esa ideología en cualquier parte del mundo, serán condenados al derrocamiento.

Los documentos, estudiados por Alexander Main y Dan Beeton, del Centro para la Investigación Económica y Política, con sede en Washington Estados Unidos (EE.UU.), demuestran además que el país norteamericano ha aplicado la misma estrategia en Sudamérica, al menos durante los últimos 15 años.

Añaden que no solo en América Latina, sino también en otros países, Washington ha seguido una estrategia de “disidencia estatal”.

En su libro WikiLeaks: el mundo según el Imperio estadounidense, Main y Beeton explican cómo Washington logró difundir en Sudamérica la austeridad presupuestaria, la desregulación, el “libre comercio”, la privatización y la destrucción del sector público desde mediados de 1980, a través de la coacción ejercida por los ‘Chicago Boys’ —jóvenes economistas latinoamericanos que regresan a sus países después de estudiar en Estados Unidos.

Los intentos de EE.UU. para desestabilizar Bolivia

De acuerdo con un informe publicado en 2007, la Agencia de Estados Unidos para el Desarrollo Internacional (USAID) destinó un total de 4.066.131 dólares para promover unas 101 subversiones contra el Gobierno del presidente de Bolivia, Evo Morales, primer presidente indígena del país, electo en 2006.

Este intento de golpe de Estado, no obstante, fracasó bajo la presión del conjunto de presidentes de América del Sur que emitieron una declaración conjunta de apoyo al Gobierno constitucional de Bolivia.

Ante esa situación, adelantan los referidos expertos estadounidenses, Washington no se rindió y siguió manteniendo comunicación constante con los líderes del movimiento separatista Nación Camba.

Cabe recordar que la asambleísta ecuatoriana María Augusta Calle, en declaraciones concedidas el pasado 3 de julio a la Radio del Sur, denunció que Estados Unidos ha destinado 2 mil millones de dólares a la desestabilización de países de América Latina.

Los gobiernos antineoliberales electos en Venezuela, Brasil, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, El Salvador, Ecuador y Nicaragua llaman a la resistencia ante la política exterior de Washington llevando a la práctica sus promesas electorales de redistribución social y reducción de la pobreza.