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President Morales and Bolivian socialists big election win

By W. T. Whitney Jr.

Bolivia's leadership team of President Evo Morales and Vice President Alvaro Garcia Linera won another overwhelming, if this time unsurprising, victory in national elections on October 12. Their Movement toward Socialism (MAS) party took two thirds majorities in both houses of the Bolivia's Legislative Assembly, thus ensuring support for any constitutional amendments to be advanced by the government.

Non-official estimates place Morales' plurality at 60.5 percent. Almost 89 per cent of eligible citizens voted. MAS now controls 24 of 36 Senate seats and 80 of 130 seats in the House of Deputies. Conservative presidential candidates Samuel Doria Media and Jorge Quiroga, a former president, followed in the polls with 25.1 and 9.6 percent of the votes, respectively.

Morales' new term, his second under the Bolivian constitution ratified in 2009, runs from 2015 to 2020. When he won his first presidential election in late 2005, Morales became the first indigenous president of Bolivia, a majority indigenous nation. All his victory margins have been large enough for his MAS party not to have had to deal with second round voting.

The Morales victory extended to eight out of nine Bolivian departments (states), a marked



change since 2009 when a rightwing separatist upsurge, anti-Morales to its core, was flourishing in four eastern departments. This year even Santa Cruz, epicenter of that rebellion, registered support for Morales.

Morales' election victory took place in conjunction with a remarkable increase in resources now available to the Bolivian people as the result of a burgeoning economy. Analysts disagree on the extent to which economic growth accounts for the

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now firm MAS hold on power, but there is consensus that, more than anything else, it derives from the government's nationalization of natural gas and oil production in 2006. Before, transnational corporations controlled 82 percent of production. Now that same amount, more or less, remains in

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state hands.

Extreme poverty fell from 39 percent in 2005 to 18 percent in 2013; the minimum salary rose from \$72 monthly to \$206 per month. Bolivia's unemployment rate is the lowest in Latin America. Total public investment in infrastructure, production development, and social resources has moved from \$600 million in 2005 to \$4.5 billion at present.

Speaking before multitudes of supporters in La Paz after the voting, President Morales reminded Bolivians of his government's plans "to convert Bolivia into an energy center for the region." The government envisions a massive increase in exports of both electricity and hydrocarbon products. A nuclear energy program is contemplated.

Observers say Morales' election victory marks the transition of the MAS party from its roots in traditional left activism to its current make-up primarily of social movements. This metamorphosis involves surprising new affiliations, reports Bolpress.com; "MAS now includes former mem-

bers of fascist movement shock teams and opposition propagandists who now don't lose the opportunity - if they have it - to have photos taken with Morales, whom they refer to as "my president."

In his remarks to supporters, President Morales declared, "Here two models have been debated: privatization and nationalization. Nationalization won. (...) Only we, a united and organized people, can show that, 'Yes, we can!'" He announced that, "In your name this triumph of the Bolivian people is dedicated to all the peoples in Latin America and in the world who struggle against capitalism and against imperialism.

This victory is dedicated to Fidel Castro, to Hugo Chavez, may he rest in peace!"



W. T. Whitney Jr. writes for Peoplesworld.

Walker says minimum wage serves no purpose

By Mike Hall

Walker: fast food, retail and other low-wage workers just have to get better jobs.

Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker (R) doesn't believe the minimum wage "serves a purpose. It should come as no surprise then that Walker also opposes raising the federal minimum wage from the \$7.25-an-hour level where it's been stuck since 2009. For the 700,000 Wisconsin workers who earn less than living wages and would like to be able to support their families, Walker has some sound and sage advice. He says those workers in fast food and retail and other low-wage jobs just have to get better jobs. He suggests welding. Hand me my helmet and spot welder. Then beam yourself up, Scotty. Obviously you're from another planet. Here's proof. Earlier this month, a group of low-wage workers filed a complaint with the state that the \$7.25-an-hour minimum wage actually violates a state law that says the minimum wage must be a living wage.

According to the Walker administration, \$7.25 an hour is a living wage. Who knew? This

is what the state's Department of Workforce Development said in rejecting the workers' claim of poverty wages: The department has determined that there is no reasonable cause to believe that the wages paid to the complainants are not a living wage. You can't make this stuff up.

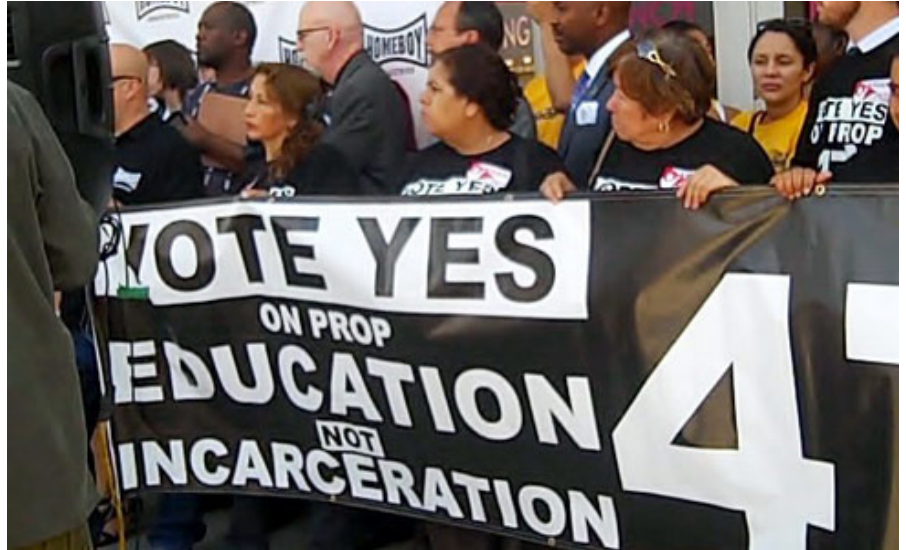
The group Wisconsin Jobs Now said after that decision that Walker's "political stance against raising minimum wage is one thing. "But for the governor to brazenly say to the working families of Wisconsin that \$7.25 an hour is enough to sustain themselves is not only misguided, it is incredibly ignorant and willfully obtuse.

We agree. So does Mary Burke who is running to unseat Walker. Burke, who supports increasing the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour, said the wage law does indeed serve a purpose.

"It's important that people who are working full-time are able to support themselves without government assistance," she said. That's just sort of common sense.

Trumka backs measure to limit crimes classified as felonies

By Cathy Deppe



Mass incarceration of people of color is not a result of a higher crime rate, but of laws that criminalize a whole class of people, Richard Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO, said on Oct. 10 at an event in support of Proposition 47: The Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act of 2014. The Act is an initiative on the November California ballot that would limit the types of crimes classified as felonies. Trumka pledged to do everything in his power to confront and fight mass incarceration, which he said destroys communities, creates a second-class America based on race, and has resulted in a third of black men serving time - a rate twice what it was in the 1970s and five times higher than that of whites.

Mass incarceration is big business, Trumka said. It has not lowered the crime rate. Lengthy incarceration costs \$80 billion a year. He said we need to end mandatory sentencing, end privatization of the prison industry, support re-entry programs and drug treatment services as a public health issue, and restore full citizenship and voting rights. He stressed that we need to replace mass incarceration with mass employment.

Trumka was joined by Maria Elena Durazo, Secretary-Treasurer of the Los Angeles County Fed-

eration of Labor and the Apprenticeship Director of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. Trumka was clear about the task ahead for the labor movement he leads. "We are taking on racism head-on," he said, "and we intend to be at the front of the parade for justice for every American out there."

Labor is holding town hall meetings all across the country to talk about the broken justice system, to talk, listen, and face both the overt racism that makes the news and more hidden economic consequences of racism that are so pernicious. The theme of mass incarceration was taken up powerfully at the national AFL-CIO convention in 2013.

Labor cares, Trumka told the crowd, because mass incarceration hurts everyone. Prisoners are forced to labor for pennies, pushing down labor standards. Families crumble when there is no job for the returning person labeled a felon. Millions are barred from the polling booths and cannot advocate for better lives. Tax money that pays for privately run prisons is funding the high profits that come from overcrowded and unsafe prisons.

If Prop 47 passes, it will become a model that can spread across the country.

Mass incarceration is an \$80 billion a year business which has not lowered the crime rate.

Colombia's flowers: Thorny issues

By Howard Kling

What does a beautiful flower have to do with the ugly side of free trade and globalization? For Josefa Gomez, providing bouquets for U.S. vases means increasing hours, falling pay, and health problems. Gomez, a flower worker for 15 years is now an organizer with the Colombian flower workers' organization, Cactus. She spoke in Minneapolis Oct. 10, sponsored by Witness for Peace and the Minnesota Fair Trade Coalition.

Women make up 69 percent of Colombian flower workers. The repetitive work done with no breaks, "typically hunched over in uncomfortable positions, causes injuries," Gomez said. "The pesticides cause skin illnesses, blood illnesses, miscarriages, even cancer." Although many of the 130,000 workers escape poverty in the countryside, the pressures of free trade continually worsen their situation. Forming a union is dangerous in Colombia, which leads the world in murders of unionists, but Gomez and other workers did it. The organized workers faced guards with dogs and were locked out, she said.

Colombia is the second largest recipient of U.S. military dollars, after Israel. Colombia nets \$1.2 billion a year in profits for flowers exports. Sixty-seven percent of those exports go to the U.S. but most profit from U.S. flower sales stay in this country.

Cumbre sobre la epidemia del ébola

Por ALBA

Los países miembros de la Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América-Tratado de Comercio de los Pueblos (ALBA-TCP), reunidos en La Habana, el 20 de octubre de 2014, en ocasión de la Cumbre Extraordinaria para enfrentar la epidemia del ébola.

Profundamente preocupados por la catástrofe humanitaria en África Occidental causada por el Ébola, que ha sido considerada por la Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS) como «emergencia de salud pública» de preocupación internacional en relación con la amenaza que representa la propagación a otros países y regiones del mundo.

Conscientes de la urgencia de que la comunidad internacional en su conjunto, en plena cooperación con la Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS), la Organización Panamericana de la Salud (OPS) y la Misión de las Naciones Unidas para el Enfrentamiento de Emergencia al Ébola (UNMEER), acometan acciones para enfrentar este flagelo con todos los recursos necesarios.

Constatando con preocupación que los recursos internacionales requeridos para acometer acciones rápidas y eficaces para enfrentar la epidemia del ébola continúan siendo insuficientes para enfrentar lo que puede convertirse en una de las pandemias más graves en la historia de la humanidad.

Reafirmando que el ALBA-TCP se sustenta en principios de solidaridad, cooperación genuina y complementariedad entre nuestros países, y el compromiso con los pueblos más

vulnerables y con la preservación de la vida en el planeta.

Convencidos de que es imprescindible la adopción de medidas de cooperación eficaces y urgentes que, a través de acciones coordinadas del sector de la salud y otros sectores, contribuyan a impedir que la epidemia del ébola se extienda a los países de nuestro hemisferio.

Recordando lo establecido en el Reglamento Sanitario Internacional (2005) y la Hoja de Ruta de Respuesta al Ébola de la OMS, del 28 de agosto de 2014, que tiene por objeto detener la transmisión de la enfermedad del Ébola a escala global, y encarar las consecuencias de cualquier nueva propagación internacional.

Tomando nota de los protocolos de la OMS para prevenir la transmisión de la enfermedad del ébola entre personas, organizaciones y grupos de población.

Subrayando que es posible contener el brote del Ébola, en particular mediante la aplicación de las acciones establecidas en materia de seguridad y salud, y otras medidas preventivas que han demostrado su eficacia:

El plan de acción contra el ébola acordado este lunes está constituido por 23 puntos que aportarán a combatir el virus que ha dejado más de 4 mil muertos en África Occidental.

La ALBA está integrada por Antigua y Barbuda, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Santa Lucía, San Vicente y las Granadinas y Venezuela, en tanto que Haití es invitado permanente del bloque.

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