

American Federation of Teachers endorses Green New Deal



By Ben Sears

At its recent National Convention the 1.7 million member American Federation of Teachers (AFT) passed a sweeping resolution in support of the Green New Deal. With this action, the AFT becomes the fourth national union in the U.S. to take this step. So far the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the flight attendants (AFA-CWA) and the National Nurses United (NNU) have signed on in support.

The resolution includes powerful language showing consciousness of the long-term effects that climate change and current budget priorities are projected to have on the lives of workers and their families. It resulted from a months-long process that saw the union's Executive Council, responding to the broad sentiment in the union, appoint a Climate Task Force which got input from several AFT locals and composed the resolution that was brought to the Convention.

The resolution calls for cutting the Pentagon budget and for raising taxes on upper income Americans and corporations to help pay for the GND. It also cites the need to support workers and communities impacted by the transition away from fossil fuels. AFT President Randi Weingarten said in a press release, "More than a piece of legislation, the Green New Deal is a blueprint into a better future for us all. It creates the conditions for a more just economy by

prioritizing real people over corporate profits...." The GND resolution was actually one of several progressive resolutions which the delegates passed at this convention, the union's first ever to be held virtually. These included resolutions calling for the continued protection of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals in the US), the institution of a universal affordable healthcare system by 2025, and a resolution opposing police brutality and demanding police accountability. The health care

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resolution emphasized that "the current system is fiscally unsustainable and leaves tens of millions of Americans behind."

The AFT is one of the largest unions in the country representing school employees at all levels of K-12 education as well as university faculty members.

The union is now one of four national unions that have endorsed the GND.

It has shown a consciousness of the importance of healthy well-funded public schools for diverse communities across the US. Its leaders and members have been willing to “walk the walk” participating in demonstrations and facing arrest and jailing when school districts have faced devastating cuts. The union’s stand on the GND is a big step for labor.

It takes on added significance as the issues of climate change, health care policy and economic crisis confront the broader labor movement. When Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Sen. Ed Markey introduced the GND 18 months ago, it got a wide response from organized labor and others.

It is true that the response was not all positive. AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka acknowledged the need to address environmental issues quickly, but stopped short of endorsing the GND. Also, the presidents of ten national unions in the energy sector went on record in opposition to the legislation as it was then written. But when we consider that

Cortez (AOC), a first term Congresswoman with no seniority in the House, gets serious mail from ten national union presidents, it should be clear that her words and proposals are resonating outside the beltway.

Other union members have been more positive. AFT members and many others see the possibility of numerous new job openings (or put another way, the enormous number of workers who will be needed) including in the building trades and the energy sector, should the GND actually become the law of the land.

The AFT convention also considered resolutions submitted by locals calling specifically for cutting the military budget. The resolution that was passed in committee but referred to the Executive Committee for further action, as the convention ran out of time, called for a nearly 50 percent cut.

Why I’m not voting for my favorite candidate this year

By Joe Sims

In 1968 I was persecuted for voting for civil rights activist and comedian Dick Gregory. Well, actually I didn’t vote for him but said I would in a straw poll conducted in my 5th grade class. The teacher objected that Gregory wasn’t Nixon or Humphrey (thank God), but I insisted. Next thing you know I got called to the principal’s office. Seems I loved the underdogs.

Years later I collected signatures on the dusty streets of Compton in Los Angeles to place Gus Hall and Jarvis Tyner on the presidential ballot and then again for Hall and Angela Davis in the next election cycle.

I was thrilled when over a decade later Jesse Jackson was the Rainbow Coalition’s standard bearer. When Jesse stopped running and his campaign manager, Ron Daniels, took up the banner, I enthusiastically supported the hometown favorite. So disdainful of the two-party system in later years, I’d write-in Daniels’ name when provided no other choice. Daniels was an old family friend whom I met as a teenager at his Freedom Inc. Uhuru Center on Youngstown’s South Side.

Truth be told for most of my life, I never met a progressive independent candidate I didn’t like. I

suppose it’s in the blood. Our grandmother, Pauline Taylor, was the first Black woman to run for governor of Ohio in 1948. Back then, she stood with Henry Wallace and the Progressive Party. (So, by the way, did Coretta King.)

Even when Ron wasn’t on the ballot, he’d have my vote. “Ron’s not even running,” friends would object. I’d reply, “I don’t care. That’s my guy.”

Not this year. The stakes are too high. We’ve got Ku Kluxers in the White House and neo-Nazis around its gates. The situation is unmistakable.

In this regard I got taught a hard lesson by my independent and devoutly Christian grandmother. It was a lesson before dying. Grandma and I had this running joke: I would attack Bill Clinton (outraged at his treatment of Lani Guinier and Sista Soulja), and Grandma would reply, “What do you want, Bush?” And I’d say, “But, but,” to which she’d smile and say, “You like Bush.”

One day, Grandma had a stroke. I rushed to the hospital and my sister said, “Grandma, do you know who this is?” She looked up and said, “He loves Bush.” Those were the last words she ever spoke. I’ve taken the lesson. Sorry Ron. (But I still got love for you!)

This year, the stakes are just too high.

In Turkey, unions and women's organizations call for defense of women's rights



By Steve Sweeney

Activists have called for an organized defense of women's rights in Turkey, where at least 15 women have been murdered in the last 10 days. Thirteen were killed by men and two died in suspicious circumstances.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government is trying to take Turkey out of the Istanbul Convention, which obliges signatories to tackle gender-based crime, provide protection and services for women and ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted. In March 2012, Turkey became the first country to ratify the convention. But the government now claims that it is incompatible with "family values," bowing to conservative and Islamist pressure.

Opposition politicians and women's organizations have warned that the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) is using rape and femicide as a weapon. Turkey has been rocked by a number of high-profile femicides such as the murder of Kurdish student Pinar Gultekin, which triggered mass protests across major cities in July.

The recent suicide of Kurdish teenager Ipek Er, who was allegedly repeatedly raped by Turkish soldier Musa Orhan, has increased scrutiny of the state's protection of alleged attackers after the sergeant was released from custody less than a week.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu led the charge to defend Orhan, accusing women of protesting over the issue to divert attention away from problems within the Peoples' Democratic Party and Kurdis-

tan Workers' Party. Today, Baris Altay, a Workers' Party of Turkey MP, was assaulted after Soylu inferred that the parliamentarian was a rapist. Altay had been calling on Soylu to have Orhan rearrested.

Emine Aksahin, chairwoman of the Egitim-Sen teaching union's Diyarbakir branch, warned that violence against women was being perpetrated by those in uniform. "Murders are being made a part of our lives. We women do not accept this," she said. Aksahin said that women from all walks of life were uniting across Turkey in resisting femicide.

Free Women's Movement activist Beritan Oner said that women were being murdered as a direct result of the government's attacks on the Istanbul Convention. "These men say, 'whatever I do, I will not be punished.' In other words they say, 'men murder, the state protects,'" she said.

Women's organizations and individuals have been targeted by security services with at least 54 detained in raids last month. Democratic Regions Party co-chair Sebahat Tuncel, who is currently in jail, called for unity today against assaults on women. "We know that women's struggle for equality and freedom is a difficult and long-lasting one, and the way for this struggle to succeed is by organized women's power," she said.

The Istanbul Convention and other legal protections were gained through women's fight against the "male-dominated capitalist system," Tuncel insisted, as she urged people to strengthen women's networks across the world.

Activists have called for an organized defense of women's rights in Turkey, where at least 15 women have been murdered in the last 10 days.

India: Communists demand government back off on school curriculum changes

By Emile Schepers

The Communist Party of India (CPI) has joined other progressive forces in that country including the Communist Party of India (Marxist), in denouncing the imposition of a new school curriculum by the right-wing government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Both communist parties point out that the government violated the law by imposing the new system without going through the process of parliamentary approval.

The CPI statement also denounces the failure to take the federal nature of India's governing institutions into account, thereby creating an excessive level of centralization. The plan is also dangerous because it focuses everything on satisfying the capitalist market demand for labor. Privatization is encouraged, teaching jobs will not be permanent, and the promise of high-quality education for all citizens will be undermined.

The CPI demands that the government back off this unilateral measure and subject its proposals to a proper parliamentary debate.

Promueven Vietnam y Cuba cooperación en medicina

La Agencia de Noticias de Vietnam

El viceministro de Defensa de Vietnam y jefe de la Dirección de la cartera para la prevención y el control del COVID-19, Tran Don, recibió agosto 18 a un grupo de expertos de Cuba.

Tran Don afirmó que durante las últimas seis décadas, particularmente en los momentos más difíciles, la cooperación bilateral evidenció la solidaridad y la confianza entre ambos pueblos hermanos.

Al apreciar los regalos que ofreció Cuba a Vietnam incluso en momentos en que la Isla enfrenta grandes dificultades económicas, reiteró que la visita de los expertos patentiza las relaciones amistosas excepcionales entre los dos países en general, y entre las unidades de defensa en particular, al tiempo que abre nuevas oportunidades para la cooperación en la medicina militar.

Propuso que la brigada cubana y la Universidad de Medicina Militar de Vietnam (UMMV) continúen intercambiando experiencias, particularmente en el uso de los medicamentos producidos por La Habana para curar el COVID-19 y otras enfermedades infecciosas.

Además, sugirió que Cuba respalde a Hanoi en la formación del personal en el ámbito de biología molecular, y aseguró la disposición de ofrecer a expertos del país caribeño cursos de formación sobre la medicina tradicional y la acupuntura de Vietnam.

La embajadora de la nación latinoamericana en Vietnam, Lianys Torres Rivera, reiteró la disposición de La Habana de intercambiar experiencias y transferir tecnologías a Hanoi, así como de apoyar al país indochino en la formación del personal médico.

Propuso que ambas partes continúen considerando la posibilidad de trabajar de conjunto en la formación, el tratamiento, la investigación científica y la transferencia de tecnología.

Los expertos cubanos evaluaron que las similitudes que comparten los sectores de medicina militar de los dos países constituyen la base para la cooperación en la investigación y la enseñanza de esas ámbito de las ciencias.

De acuerdo con Hoang Van Luong, subdirector de la UMMV, incluso en medio del período de cuarentena requerido tras su entrada en Vietnam, los especialistas cubanos sostuvieron conferencias virtuales con la Dirección antiepidémica del Ministerio de Defensa y expertos de ese centro de educación superior.

Las reuniones se centraron en la prevención y el control de la pandemia en ambos países, los medicamentos para prevenir y curar el COVID-19 desarrollados por Cuba, y el sistema de diagnóstico en la Isla, precisó.

Tras cumplir el período de cuarentena el pasado día 11, los expertos cubanos visitaron la Universidad de Medicina Militar e intercambiaron con representantes de ese centro opiniones sobre la posible cooperación en la transferencia de tecnologías, añadió.

Agregó que los especialistas de la Mayor de las Antillas dialogaron con el jefe del Departamento de Medicina Militar del Ministerio de Defensa, Nguyen Xuan Kien, y visitaron establecimientos productores de medicamentos del ejército vietnamita./.

NATIONAL CONTACT

Editorial: (773) 446-9920 Business: (212) 924-2523
Email: contact@peoplesworld.org