Rally in Lansing, Michigan against the governor’s budget and the passage of the Emergency Financial Manager’s bill that gives sweeping new powers to break union contracts, dismiss elected officials, and disincorporate entire municipalities.

PHOTO/DAYMONJHARTLEY.COM

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A thousand mile journey starts with (and develops with) a thirty-inch step. This often quoted adage certainly applies to the development of the political features of fascism in the United States. We took another step with the firing of Vivian Schiller, CEO and President of National Public Radio, because an NPR fundraiser makes remarks attacking the conservatives. Conservatives in Congress then launched a new campaign to stop federal funding of NPR. The media community was frighteningly quiet with each media organization thinking they may be next. As the man said, fail to learn from history and you will repeat it. We are way down that road.

Have we forgotten why America fought a war that left 60 million dead and continents in ruins? Does anyone remember the Four Freedoms which was our battle cry against the fascist powers? During those terrible days the Office of War Information wrote to the American people, “The freedoms we are fighting for, we who are free: the freedom for which the men and women in the concentration camps (and develops with) a thirty-inch step. The President could declare a state of emergency, empowering the head of FEMA to take control of the internal infrastructure of the United States and suspend the constitution. The President could invoke Executive Orders 11000 thru 11004 which would: 1 — Draft all citizens into work forces under government supervision. 2 — Empower the postmaster to register all men, women and children. 3 — Seize all airports and aircraft. 4 — Seize all housing and establish forced relocation (i. e. concentration camps) of citizens. Since the Senate hearings on surveillance in 1975, the steady development of highly specialized surveillance capabilities, combined with the exploding computerized information technologies, have enabled a massive data base of personal information to be developed on millions of unsuspecting American citizens. It is all in place awaiting only a presidential declaration to be enforced by both military and civilian police. The hideous social face of fascism is in place. The racist gangs allied with the outright neo-Nazi groups already represent a formidable threat. The political and social aspects of fascism have not been unleashed because there has been no serious organized resistance. The rapidly deteriorating economic situation will change all that.

The reality is this country is in trouble and that trouble cannot be fixed without fundamental changes in the economic relations. Nothing less than replacing this military-financial oligarchy with a cooperative society can save it. This is our country, the only home we have. We fought the German and Japanese fascists to save it. Do we dare turn our backs on it now?”

Why Revolutionaries Need A Press

From the Editors

We are sometimes asked “Why do revolutionaries need a press?” The answer has to do with this moment in history. People are struggling just to get the basic necessities of life. Historical forces beyond anyone’s control have set the stage for a new society to be built, but from this point on, how things turn out depends on what people think. This means that those of us who are seeking fundamental change are engaged in a battle of ideas, a struggle to win the hearts and minds of the people. If we don’t raise the consciousness of the people and unite them around a vision of a better world and a strategy to achieve it, then we’ll fail in our effort to build a just and free society. To win the battle of ideas, we need a press.

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SOCK IT TO ‘EM: TAX THE RICH

In recent months we have seen massive protests in many cities across the United States, fighting new laws to take away workers’ rights. These demonstrations show that people have power beyond filling out a ballot every year or two. They show that masses of people can become engaged in their communities, broad sections of people uniting to take a stand and take action. The occupation of the Capitol Building in Madison, Wis., has been a tremendous display of solidarity, capturing the attention of the world, projecting the demands of Wisconsin’s working class.

The attacks on workers’ rights are pulling hundreds of thousands of people into action across the country. From the streets of Madison to Michigan to Ohio to Indiana the enthusiasm is palpable, the momentum is growing. Recall campaigns and legal challenges to egregious new laws have gained tremendous momentum. These campaigns mobilize people and can have visible results, yet we must take these demands even further. As historic labor champion Lucy Parsons once said, “Never be deceived that the rich will permit you to vote away their wealth.”

Every corner of this country is under attack: from Michigan to Oregon, from Arizona to Florida to Connecticut. Dozens of states are considering bills that will limit the collective bargaining of public sector unions and other major attacks on the rights of workers. Lawmakers have used the deficits that forty-four states face as the impetus to slash workers’ rights, pay, and benefits. These new laws aim to shift the burden of the economic crisis from extremely wealthy individuals and corporations onto the working class.

Taxpayers have already paid enough, bailing out banks and financial institutions with trillions of dollars, and are now taking to the streets to say, “We will not pay anymore to solve this crisis!” Voices rising from the struggle are demanding, “Tax the rich!” The budget deficits, which most states face, are not due to a lack of money. There is no shortage of money. The rich and the corporations have your money.

Corporate profits are the highest they’ve ever been in the 60 years that the Department of commerce has been keeping records. These profits have been generated through the use of new technologies in automation and robotics, which have contributed to a “jobless recovery.”

Millions of jobs are being permanently eliminated and millions more are on the chopping block. Indeed all sectors of work, from store clerks to car builders, even lawyers, are made vulnerable by cost-efficient automated technologies. This is why we see the corporate assault on the workers — the corporations will no longer provide wages, benefits and services for workers they don’t need.

With labor costs down and productivity up, profits are soaring. Even though corporations are making more money than ever, legal loopholes and tax evasion techniques allow many of America’s corporations and wealthiest individuals to pay little to nothing in taxes. Countless times since the recession began in 2008 we have seen the government adjust itself closer and closer with the corporations. In effect, the corporations and the government have merged, creating the basis for an all out attack on democracy.

The demonstrations in Wisconsin and elsewhere present the working class with an opportunity to take a decisive stand for its own self-interest. As the economic crisis plays out, more people are seeing the need to rebuild the economy in a way that meets the needs of the many; this is a process that must unfold, with each step along the way marked with the deliberate actions of concerned people, organizers, and activists.

Frederic Douglas famously said, “Power concedes nothing without a demand — it never has and it never will.” Working people across the nation unite to demand, “Tax the rich!”


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CARBRINI GREEN EVICTIONS: SMALL VICTORY!

By Joseph Peery

CHICAGO, IL — Billionaire Warren Buffett, once said, “There is a class war, and my side is winning.” On February 16, 2011, Roberta Rendles, a former Cabrini Green resident, won a year-long Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) eviction case. The mother of two was accused of violating the “Good Conduct” part of her lease when two people were arrested in her home for marijuana possession and trespassing while she was babysitting her nephew at her sister’s apartment in another part of the building. Judge Murray’s ruling centered on the fact that the CHA failed to give Ms. Rendles a copy of the “Good Conduct” part of her lease. She documented that fact when they left the box blank verifying that she got it.

Indeed, countless CHA residents have shown me their leases and all but two had blank verification boxes. None of them have received any part of the twenty-nine page document entitled CHANGE, CHICAGO HOUSING AUTHORITY. FY2009, RESIDENTIAL LEASE AGREEMENT, Board of Commissioners Approved, August 18, 2009, which includes the “Good Conduct” portion. Attorneys, Kingsley Clarke and Ed Voci, representing Ms. Roberta Rendles, say that this ruling may affect thousands of CHA residents who have been kicked out of their homes.

Here is Roberta’s side: While the Chicago Sun Times reports in a February 23, 2011 article entitled “Blank Box Allows CHA Tenant To Keep Her Home,” that a “Cabrini Green resident accused of harboring drug dealers cannot be evicted from her Chicago Housing Authority home because an official forgot to check a box on her lease agreement,” and CHA spokespersons in the same article call it, “an isolated incident brought on by an unfortunate clerical error,” Roberta offers another account. “My auntie was in my apartment cooking, with my door open. The girl came in and the police came in before she got away. They said they saw a drug sale, why didn’t they make an arrest right then and there?” As pertains to the lease, Roberta maintains that nobody gets a copy of the rules and everyone’s lease has blank boxes. Since this has happened, Roberta has become active in the community. About eight or nine people from the old building (1230 N. Burling) are going through eviction. They determine who will live there and who will not. We have no way of knowing how many human beings have been thrown out on the street wrongfully in this process by the CHA, how many of them remained homeless, or even how many of them may have died on the street as a result. However, it can be said with certainty that this is the fate that awaits many of us if we don’t save ourselves.

Public housing is being dismantled and what is being built to replace it is becoming the private property of the Warren Buffets of the world . . .

FIGHTING FORECLOSURES IN FLORIDA

By Rev. Bruce Wright

We live in exciting and perilous times! All over the world, this country, and our community, people are rising up and calling for social and economic justice, peace, housing, and worker’s rights! We are beginning to realize that this is a class struggle between the people and wealthy corporate elites pulling the strings of repressive governments, both domestic and international. People are continuing to lose the rights to organize and unionize, lose their homes to greedy banks and foreclosures, lose their jobs, become homeless, and face a police state.

In Madison, an illegal vote took place to destroy worker rights in Wisconsin. In Michigan, the Governor seized the right to usurp duly elected officials and take control of city councils and mayor’s offices throughout the state. Now it is happening not only throughout the mid-west, but here in Florida as well.

We have heard calls for walk outs, general strikes, and direct action, two at the Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign and the Refuge join these calls for action. The answer for homelessness is housing first, NOT jail annexes disguised as shelters, not government-run tent cities. Let the worker, the unemployed, the homeless, the poor, the ex-con and the oppressed lead and create the answers to these problems.

The wealthy bankers and corporate wheats who have robbed us can no longer be tolerated. The revolutionary movement is a God-given call. As John the Apostle teaches us, “How can the love of God dwell in someone who sees their brother or sister in need and does nothing!” Fake so-called Christians who support the wealthy corporate fascist oligarchy must REPENT! Will we side with the people or with greed?

In mid-February three homeless people and three supporters moved into a blighted, foreclosed property in a previously middle class neighborhood and made improvements to the roof, windows, and landscaping. They got water and electricity running. In the process, they enhanced the values of the surrounding properties, on a block where three other homes are sitting vacant in foreclosure.

A confusing web of financial institutions now “own” this property in an area of St. Petersburg that until the recent housing collapse was a “Beaver Cleaver” neighborhood. Middle class folks worked hard here to try to achieve the American Dream of home ownership.

We had legally established residency, but the St. Petersburg Police, at the direction of a supposed representative of the bank, who never proved who he was, illegally evicted us from our home. They illegally entered our house, questioned my minor son without my permission, refused to let us move, stated that they didn’t care what the law said, and illegally dismissed our attorney, whom they didn’t care what the law said, and illegally dismissed our attorney, whom we had a right to have present.

We lost this battle, but we will continue to look at taking over houses, creating intentional community, and resisting foreclosure. “Woe to you who make unjust laws that deprive the poor of their rights.” Isaiah 10:1.

Rev. Bruce Wright is the director of the Refuge in St. Petersburg, Florida.

PHOTO/NICK HINCKLEY, NEWROOTSNEWS.ORG

Protest in St. Petersburg Florida calling for housing to be a human right.

PHOTO/JOSEPH PEEERY

Private contractors tearing down public housing units at Cabrini Green Projects in Chicago.

This column depends on comments from readers. Feel free to contribute. Contact us: c/o Boxholder, P.O. Box 720821, San Jose, California 95172 or by e-mail at spirit@peoplestribune.org.
AMERICA’S RUST BELT ERUPTS

On pages 5 through 8 of this issue, readers will find coverage of the ongoing battle between workers and the corporations which is being fought over the issues of state budget cuts and union busting in the Rust Belt states of Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana and Ohio. The Rust Belt is a harbinger of the future of the rest of the country if we don’t act. — The Editors

Michigan Rallies Protest Bills That Attack Labor

By Waistline

Twenty years after Governor Engler abolished general assistance, began slashing government programs for the poor and destitute, declaring cities bankrupt and stripping them of their assets, the political class loyal to big capital seeks the means to give more tax breaks to the billionaires and make workers foot the bill. The idea that tax breaks to corporations, low wages and placing the burden of the economic crisis on the backs of the workers can grow the economy is insanity.

These laws are nothing less than legalizing a fascist takeover of government by corporations.

Michigan state government passed legislation to strip unions of their collective bargaining rights, setting workers from police officers, firefighters, government workers, teachers and seniors into political protest. First came the February 23 protest of hundreds of government workers, teachers and seniors into political protest. Then came the March 15, protest of more than 1,000 police officers in the Capitol, then the February 23 protest of hundreds of seniors into political protest. First came

pointed emergency financial managers sweeping new powers to break union contracts, dismiss elected officials, and even disincorporate entire municipalities. These laws are nothing less than legalizing a fascist takeover of government by corporations and political henchman of the capitalists. Who voted for these guys?

What is happening in America?

No longer is it just the poor and destitute being thrown under the bus of capitalism’s crisis. Economic revolution, brought on by advanced electronic technologies is eliminating millions of jobs, lowering wages as people compete with computers and robots and low wage producers in the world market. Anyone and everyone can be replaced by a new technology or a lower paid worker seeking to escape destitution.

It is not simply the growth of poverty that is significant today. It is that this destruction has penetrated the vast “middle” in American society. This section of society once embraced the illusion of inclusion, only to find out that no section of the working class is immune to the economic crisis.

Consequently, many of the demands and slogans of March 16 were centered on preserving the “middle class” or “middle America” and “hard working Americans.” In reality, there is no “middle class.” The “middle class” is just the more highly paid section of the working class. Their loyalty to capitalism was bought with high wages and benefits. Today, what was once the more economically well-off “middle” of American society is being crushed down into the lower section of the working class.

The “middle class” is in the process of finding out that the capitalists are not their friends, and that to defend the interests of the working class, they have to defend the bottom of the social ladder also. It is only a matter of time before a new layer of the working class is cast into poverty. Our slogan has to be “one for all and all for one.”

“Where do we draw the line” and “whose side are you on?”

Here are questions all union members must ask themselves and then demand their union stand up for the entire working class.

“One for all and all for One.”

Ohio Union Leader Speaks About the Attack on Labor

By Sandy Reid

The People’s Tribune interviewed Harold Mitchell, First Vice President, AFSCME, Ohio Council 8 about the attack on public employees in Ohio.

People’s Tribune: Harold, are the large protests against the anti-union bill still going on at the Ohio statehouse?

Harold Mitchell: Currently the large demonstrations that were held for a few weeks when the bill was being discussed in the Senate are now moving more to regional and local demonstrations in smaller cities around Ohio, continuously building support in opposition to the bill.

PT: Tell us about the bill.

HM: We have had a pubic employee collective bargaining law in effect for 27 years. They are trying to gut the law in an effort to make unions basically irrelevant in the workplace and in the political arena. One of the differences between the Wisconsin strategy and Ohio’s is that Wisconsin decided that they could get more public support if they exempted police, highway patrol and firemen. Ohio is including everyone. Safety forces currently don’t have a right to strike. The bill would eliminate the right to strike for every public employee. We would have a right to bargain over wages with the legislative body making the final decision if an impasse is reached.

PT: What is labor’s strategy?

HM: The strategy is to build public support against the bill and to prepare for a petition drive leading to a ballot referendum. A referendum is where you would have to get a certain amount of signatures of registered voters based upon the number of people who voted in the last election. If you reach the threshold for the number of registered voters, the issue would go on the ballot and voters would decide. In this case, we need 231,000 signatures. Our goal is to get 500,000 signatures.

PT: What is the consciousness of the people? Is anger growing against the rich who pay little or no taxes?

HM: I’m not sure that the people have reached the consciousness yet that the rich are not paying their fair share. Some of them don’t see it until issues like Senate Bill 5 affect them personally. Forty percent of the unionized state employees voted for this governor — now he is privatizing or outright eliminating their jobs. In Ohio, the cities are already devastated — Cleveland, Youngstown, Dayton, Toledo — they are now facing a 33% cut in local government funding from the state with no way to make it up except to make cuts on the local level.

One thing that has been clear to a lot of people is that the force behind a lot of the attacks is the Tea Party. The chairperson of the Senate Committee chairing this legislation actually made an appeal to the Tea Party to have their activists show up to support the bill. The Tea Party has told Republican legislators that they had better stay on track or they will go after them in the next election.

Senate Bill 5 has brought the different elements in the labor movement together. The AFL-CIO affiliates, Change to Win affiliates and non-affiliated unions like the Fraternal Order of Police and the Ohio Education Association are solidly unified to save collective bargaining and the middle class.
THE PEOPLE VERSUS THE CORPORATIONS IN THE RUST BELT

From the Editors

The people of America’s industrial heartland, in the Rust Belt states, are beginning to stand up in larger and larger numbers. They are responding to the 40-year attack on public services, their rights, their jobs and their standard of living that has been going on for 40 years, an assault on their rights, their jobs and their standard of living that has escalated over the last two years with the onset of the financial crisis and the Great Recession. Public sector workers and their unions are the front line of this attack, and their fighting response has galvanized millions others into action. The result is a growing mass of people standing up for wages and benefit cuts, to cut in social services, to privatization, and to restrictions on their democratic right to organize their views.

The corporate assault in the Rust Belt is just the leading edge of a nationwide attack on public services. Over the last two decades the corporations have been lowering the standards of living of a growing number of people through technology and shipping jobs to lower-wage areas. The result is a growing mass of permanently unemployed and underemployed people — workers who are simply no longer needed for production. And the corporations will not provide wages, benefits or services for workers they don’t need. In recent years they have seen this process spread to the most stably employed, high-wage-section of the American workforce — the so-called “middle class” — and they are losing everything. And now, for the first time in its efforts are pressurizing the public sector of the economy.

This process of replacing labor with technology led to the financial crisis and the recession. The latest chapter in the story is that government revenues are falling because the economic crisis, so problems could be easily solved by taxing the corporations and the rich, but the corporations — which for all practical purposes have become the government — are telling the workers “you must pay for the crisis.” The corporations are moving to break the public sector unions and demand wage, benefit and service cuts. The result is a growing mass of people standing up for wages and benefit cuts and the rights of the American working class.

The question only is, will that society the people of the corporations? Right now, our society, including the government, is being restructured by the corporations to guarantee their power and their profits. We, the people, have a simple choice: we can become slaves of the corporations or we can organize and vote to take back the government. The people are saying “No!” to the most recent targets of the attack, and their numbers are growing.

By Diane Bukowski

WISCONSIN FARMERS JOIN LABOR PROTESTS

What follows are excerpts from a speech given at the March 12 rally in Madison, Wisconsin by Donnely, the Minnesota populist, on the fifty-first anniversary of his speech given at the March 12 rally in Madison, Wisconsin as a farmer’s issue because of the crisis. Workers are an old and sacred alliance to work together. It’s a farmer’s issue because we understand, that an injury to one is an injury to all. Solidarity!

By Tony Zaragaza

The Latest In Automation and Robotics

From top left, bottom right: Michigan, PHOTO DIAHONEMAILTLEY.COM; Madison, PHOTO/BRITT JELNICK; Ohio, PHOTO/JPTKPE/WECOMER. AFSOME, IND.; Indiana, PHOTO Greg Hansen, Michigan, PHOTO DaymondJansen.com

Some of us are up wake. We have been working together to destroy the collective bargaining process, every crisis, as a result of this assault on labor, we will not stand by and let the corporations destroy our bargaining rights or help our fellow workers reap the benefits of these corporate attacks. In Wisconsin, as all Wisconsin public workers have agreed to economic give-backs, so this Governor has positioned himself for some other victims.

Coming Soon to a Town Near You!

The People versus the Corporations in the Rust Belt

The corporations are moving to break the public sector unions and demand wage, benefit and service cuts. The result is a growing mass of people standing up for wages and benefit cuts and the rights of the American working class.

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"This budget could not be a clearer manifestation of corporate power and we do not accept it. This is a time in which government workers are our friends and more are going to stand with us. Government workers, and the workers at AT&T, are going to be the power to get the money we need for our programs. This is a time for the workers' unions.

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Beyond Collective Bargaining:
Wisconsin Battle Galvanizes Struggle Against Corporate Rule

“It’s time to reclaim our country. And we will.” — Rose Ann DeMoro, Executive Director, National Nurses United

By Anthony D. Prince

MADISON, WISCONSIN — Six days after a massive March 12 protest involving some 200,000 workers, farmers and students, a Dane County judge issued an injunction blocking implementation of a law to abolish collective bargaining rights for state employees. The ruling was celebrated the next day by thousands who returned to the State Capitol. Led by Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) on the 8th anniversary of the U.S. invasion, marchers in desert fatigues crystallized the significance of the five-week battle to preserve workers’ ability to negotiate the terms of the sale of their labor power. “Veterans are workers and workers’ rights are human rights!” declared IVAW founder Kelly Daugherty.

Although the future of the legislation remains undecided, the significance of the Wisconsin “uprising” is clear. Governor Scott Walker became a symbol of outright corporate rule, the theft of the public treasury and the resultant suffering imposed on the infant, the hungry, disabled, the aged and unemployed. Throughout, the Madison public school employees unselfishly took the lead, exploding the pernicious myth that America does not love its teachers. Having staged a four-day sickout early that America does not love its teachers.

The ruling was celebrated the next day by thousands who returned to the State Capitol. Led by Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) on the 8th anniversary of the U.S. invasion, marchers in desert fatigues crystallized the significance of the five-week battle to preserve workers’ ability to negotiate the terms of the sale of their labor power. “Veterans are workers and workers’ rights are human rights!” declared IVAW founder Kelly Daugherty.

Although the future of the legislation remains undecided, the significance of the Wisconsin “uprising” is clear. Governor Scott Walker became a symbol of outright corporate rule, the theft of the public treasury and the resultant suffering imposed on the infant, the hungry, disabled, the aged and unemployed. Throughout, the Madison public school employees unselfishly took the lead, exploding the pernicious myth that America does not love its teachers. Having staged a four-day sickout early in the battle, no group had more to lose. “It’s not a protest anymore, it’s a movement” said retired transportation worker Steven Reid who made nine 250-mile round trips from Eden, Wisconsin to the Capitol.

Indeed, tens of thousands of others similarly persevered, day after day, in freezing weather, sleeping on floors, in some cases risking their jobs, fully aware or at least instinctively sensing that this fight was not just about a piece of reactionary legislation, but about challenging the status quo and moving towards the fundamental reconstruction of America. “The attack on collective bargaining was always part of a larger game,” says Rose Ann DeMoro, Executive Director of National Nurses United which has launched a campaign to “change, once and for all, our priorities” advancing a program that calls for guaranteed living wage jobs, universal health care, shelter and freedom from hunger. Across America, there are hundreds of similar challenges — some highly organized, others with few or no resources; some grounded in the trade union movement in our biggest cities, others scattered in the desperate fight to keep a rural clinic from closing its doors or stop yet another home foreclosure.

Ultimately, the coordination, collective strength and shared vision of all these components across the whole front will be necessary if we are going to transform a defensive fight to “hold on to what we have” into a planned, deliberate class offensive to birth a new and just order. One thing is for sure: our enemies are just as determined as we are and far more organized in pursuing their economic and political interests. We saw this clearly in Wisconsin. The measure to abolish collective bargaining was finally passed in the dead of night, behind locked and police-barricaded doors, in complete disregard of state constitutional procedures. The next day, the capital was locked down, the people forced to pass through three separate layers of security, patted down, wanded, warned, “no bullhorns, no posters, no speeches.” Where hundreds of thousands had earlier chanted, “this is what democracy looks like”, a visitor now lamented, “this is what fascism looks like.” Truly, a system that cannot employ, feed and shelter the people ultimately turns to force.

Thus, what happened in Wisconsin revealed both the dangers and opportunities facing the American working class today. The energy, the determination and purpose shown here demonstrates the potential to make the kind of fundamental, systemic change that is not only possible, but necessary if we are to have a real future.

Anthony Prince is a trade unionist and labor lawyer who traveled to Wisconsin as part of a Teamsters delegation from Chicago. Contact him at anthonyd.prince@yahoo.com.

INDIANA WORKERS FIGHT ANTI-LABOR LEGISLATION

From the Editors

INDIANA — Last month, 20,000 workers occupied the Indianapolis statehouse and capitol grounds protesting the proposed budget cuts of Governor Mitch Daniels and a host of anti-worker legislation. It was the largest demonstration in Indianapolis in decades.

Indiana lawmakers are proposing their own versions of budget cuts and anti-work legislation that’s also being proposed in states across the country. However, the epicenter of this legislative assault is found in the Rust Belt states of Indiana, Wisconsin, Ohio and Michigan.

Indiana’s most severe budget cuts proposals focus on higher education and Medicaid. The legislation includes a list of anti-worker bills such as legislation for a state Right to Work law, making it virtually impossible for workers to organize majority membership in unions. Additionally, they are proposing to enshrine into law a 2005 administrative decree that placed a ban on public employee collective bargaining and allows for wholesale privatization of government operations.

Additionally anti-worker legislation includes a bill that includes merit pay for teachers and places further restrictions on teachers collective bargaining, a school voucher bill that allows families to use state tax dollars to send their children to private school, a bill providing for the expansion of charter schools and a proposal that allows the state to take over schools and turn them over to for-profit “special management teams”.

Other proposed legislation includes a bill that would make it illegal for state, county and local governments to require bidders on public works projects to hire union workers, or discriminate against bidders who refuse to work with union contractors and another bill that eliminates the existing prevailing wage law for public works contracts that requires the payment of a standard wage rate.

The People’s Tribune will have interviews with leaders in this struggle in its May edition.

Why is the Cost of Gas Skyrocketing?

From the Editors

Four dollars a gallon and a threat of going higher! What is driving up the cost of gasoline? The short answer is CAPITALISM. We are struggling to survive within a system that deals the cards according to wealth. No money — no clout. Got money? All the doors are open to make even more.

The first stage of taking the people’s money is to take their minds. To take the people’s minds you have to take the people they trust. People trust the Universities to tell them the truth. Few people know that Big Oil has given the Universities $800 million over the past decade to grind out reports so Big Oil can scare the gas cap off you with smoke and mirror talk about coming shortages and the need to raise prices now.

Oil is a critical weapon in the underground struggle between the U.S. and China for control of the world market.

The more expensive the oil, the higher the cost of production in China. Big Oil doesn’t have to worry since the US taxpayers shell out $4,000,000,000 a year that will make up any short fall due to high prices.

When the individual goes through the shock and awe of filling up the gas tank the first impulse is “Somebody oughta do something!” The Some bodies aren’t going to do anything, because they can’t. Arrayed against them is a government in the hip pocket of the oil industry, a media that lies for them, academics who cover for them, speculators who rob you blind and a police force that will put you in jail if you start causing trouble.

We are at the end of the road. There is a solution to the energy crisis and that is to nationalize energy! The choice now is either we belong to it or it belongs to us! Next time you fill up — think about it.

PHOTO/ANTHONY D. PRINCE

Tens of thousands of workers, farmers and students protested in Madison, Wisconsin in March against the budget cuts and a law to abolish collective bargaining rights for state employees.
Non-Profit For the Money

By Sheridan Talbott

All across Southern Illinois over recent years, private investors have been buying up publicly owned hospitals and turning them into “non-profit” facilities. I guess the same has happened all across the country. Why would private investors do that? It sounds almost altruistic. Well, the reason is it’s more profitable. These investors really are strategic thinkers and know how to turn a buck.

It’s all pretty simple really. If you have a non-profit status, as opposed to a for-profit one, you save a bundle on state and local property taxes, as well as corporate income taxes. Never mind that this undermines the community’s and the state’s revenue base, the bottom line on the ledger is what counts.

Now, they’re open for business and making money, but what to do with it. That’s easy, expand and develop. It’s a neat trick. They buy up properties adjacent to or near the hospital and build more buildings or parking lots, with the same tax exempt status. They invest in expensive technology to expand their medical services, making even more money.

All of this meaningfully increases the value of their initial investment.

It’s commonly thought doctors schedule unnecessary tests to protect them from malpractice cases. While there’s some truth to this, it also true that every time a test is run at a hospital, the hospital makes money.

Then there’s the hospital’s non-profit foundation. If you choose, you can get at the money without threatening the hospital’s non-profit status through a foundation. Salaries, fees for services rendered, etc., who knows how many ways they have of getting at their profit. None of this serves the community very well, but it serves the investors’ bank accounts well indeed.

There’s nothing philanthropic about it. In most cases, maintaining a tax exempt status requires the treatment of a relatively small number of charity patients. But this treatment can mean, and often does, simple information and various forms of support, that really cost the hospital nothing. Certainly strains the meaning of treatment.

Think there’s not serious money to be made through a non-profit status? Ever wonder why the National Football League is a non-profit operation? But something’s seriously wrong when the healthcare of a community and a nation is organized almost solely to make someone money rather than take care of the health needs of its people. Publicly owned hospitals use to truly serve people, at least to some extent. Today it’s all about the money.

Over and over again we’ve all heard how “the health care system is broken.” It hasn’t been broken. The health care system in the US, by design, has been a very efficient money machine for corporations and private investors. Health care reform changed nothing. Pockets have been and continue to be richly lined by super profits made off of illness and suffering. Privately owned hospitals are key cogs in that wheel. Something’s very wrong and immoral about making money, big money, off of people’s illnesses and suffering.

led to a polarized political climate.

We know what it’s like to be attacked and made afraid of each other. We’ve seen a 35 percent increase in hate crimes against Latinos. And in the lead-up to the passage of SB 1070 in Arizona, we saw the racist signs that anti-immigrant activists used. We were disgusted by the rhetoric that demonized and dehumanized immigrants and Latinos.

Meanwhile, we have record deportations and the continuous expansion of the 287g program, which empowers local and state law enforcement agencies to enforce federal immigration law and tear apart families.

As a nation, we should instead be focusing on solving the immigration crisis, not expanding the problem with solutions that create fear in our communities.

Laws like SB 1070 in Arizona, the copycat bills being filed in state legislatures all over the country, as well as the debate about states overturning the 14th Amendment, which provides U.S. citizenship to anyone born in this nation, are an immoral sideshow. They serve only to polarize one community against another and line the pockets of groups that are perpetuating this charade.

People are looking for answers, for ways to sort through this tragedy. In addition to saying a prayer — in whatever way you choose — for the victims and for those still fighting for their lives, please take a moment to pass this message on.

The only way we will get through this and build a better country is if we empower our communities and stand strong together as one. Thank you and ¡adelante! —Joaquin, Laurie, Favianna, and the rest of the Presente.org team.

DONATE TO THE PEOPLE’S TRIBUNE!

The People’s Tribune is a key weapon in our struggle for a better world. Please send a donation today. Here is what some of our contributors have to say about the paper:

“Paper is great. Our distributions are going great! Soon we will stand on the street corner selling. It’s just that popular. People look forward to each issue.”

— Rev. Edward Pinkney

“We have to start organizing teams locally to be ready for protests. We will need more papers.”

— Claire McClinton

“We are running down the street at the row houses asking for papers. I’m asking others to distribute.”

— Joe Peery

“I finally got permission to put the papers in the D.C. Public library. I think I can get out an additional 100.”

— Eric Sheptock

We rely on our readers for all of our financial support. Order bundles at 30 cents each. Won’t you send a donation today?

Mail your donation today to the People’s Tribune at PO Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654-3524.
Bail Out Students, Not Banks!

By Steven Miller

In an “Open Letter to UC Berkeley Students”, Ricardo Gomez wrote, “As students we are asked to take out more loans that force us into jobs we don’t like, to pay off debt we can’t afford for the privilege of getting a lower quality education.”

Student debt today is $830 billion, exceeding the total US debt on credit cards and it is growing at $90 billion a year.

The Student Debt Bubble is a huge speculation market, which is about as justifiable as the junk mortgages that their parents were sold. Both are “securitized” where they are turned into “financial instruments” that can be either bought or sold to turn a profit. The average student debt has more than doubled from 1994 to 2008. Only about 40% is being repaid.

The education market today is all about investment, speculation and profitability now, not the quality of education.

By Lenette Evans

We all live day by day and yet so many people are not seeing how we are living in the end times right here and now! When you go to Wal-Mart you can see entire shelves completely gone of dried beans, rice and there is hardly any bread left on the shelves. People walk around the stores wondering if they can afford what they are buying... and prices keep going up!!! People are cutting back and are facing hard decisions of crucial priorities right now when they go shopping.

In St. Joseph, Michigan when I was at the Marathon gas station an attendant was putting white plastic bags over the gas nozzles because they had completely run out of gas. A gas station in Watervliet, Michigan had run out of gas the same day. There are grocery stores, health food stores, and as well as family businesses that have closed down across America because of our economy. About 90 percent of the K-Mart stores have closed and are sitting on empty abandoned lots. There are thousands without a job and a lot of young people coming out of college with bachelors and masters degrees cannot find a job and are forced on welfare and food stamps and others with a degree work at Burger King or Wendy’s.

Unemployment of the economy has also forced major chain stores to close their doors. Elderly people and others who have disabilities and who are on medications cannot get them if these stores continue to close. They are forced to either find someone to take them to the store or to do without. Many of the homeless I know in Benton Harbor are diabetic and many have gone without their medications because they do not have transportation and the nearest pharmacy is about five miles away.

I can remember not that long ago looking in the Sunday “Chicago Tribune” newspaper and the unemployment section was filled with so many jobs. But now... that same Sunday paper has only a few short pages of job possibilities. Many of our newspapers have gone out of business and they say the St. Joseph Post Office is going to shut down. Many of the workers have been there over 17 years and are concerned whether they will have a job or not.

With this in mind, I pray this penetrates the minds of every person who reads this. But our disgusting rotten stinking government is doing absolutely nothing to help our families out there who need help. Families and children are on the streets and living in abandoned buildings, vehicles, or a dumpster. The government does not care because the politicians live in nice homes while they fill their pockets with our tax money.

DO NOT Hold Your Breath Waiting For The Government To Do Something. NO.... In these tough times people need to come together and start helping one another while also trying to force the government to do something. Neighbors, churches, and communities need to help each other and look for opportunities to find people in desperate need they can help in making a difference and WE CAN ALL STAND UP AND DO SOMETHING. GET MOVING! This is also a time to start embracing the word of God in your home and in your children’s lives. PRAISE is what we ALL need. But where is your faithfulness to God? EMBRACE JESUS CHRIST IN EVERY AREA OF YOUR LIFE. 

Lenette Evans, Saving Souls Ministry St. Joseph, MI, 269-876-1848, Savingsouls1@yahoo.com.
Mother Of A Baby Born Into Homelessness Testifies Before DC Councilman

By Eric Shephock

WASHINGTON, D.C.—On Friday, March 11th, 2011 DC Councilman Jim Graham held what would turn out to be one of the most heart-wrenching Human Services budget oversight hearings that I’ve ever attended. Stories were told of homeless mothers and their very young children being turned away from shelter with nowhere to go. One woman sat in the hearing with her month-old baby who has never slept in a crib or had a place to call home. This is happening in the capital of the wealthiest country on earth, as our government spends billions bailing out Wall Street and fighting unjust wars!

Those testifying included homeless and formerly homeless people as well as service providers. People gave testimonies of how certain programs have helped them and imploried the councilman to ensure continued funding for these programs. Others exposed problems with the system. A lawyer from the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless (WLCH) suggested that, since DC Government’s Dept. of Human Services devises a winter plan each year and the purpose of that plan is to prevent weather-related deaths, they should also keep records of weather-related deaths as a way of gauging their level of success or failure.

One woman sat in the hearing with her month-old baby who has never slept in a crib or had a place to call home. This is happening in the capital of the wealthiest country on earth... As is the case with government all too often, what was once presented as a solution has now become the problem. In response to complaints about the DC Village Family Shelter, the administration of former DC mayor Adrian Fenty closed the shelter and instituted the System Transformation Initiative (STI), a program which housed about 170 families. Now the government claims that it doesn’t have enough money to keep funding STI and is “transforming” the System Transformation Initiative into STEAP (Short-Term Exit Assistance Program).

Whereas STI previously had no time limit, STEAP will pay all of a homeless family’s rent for the first month and then incrementally over the course of a year, decrease the percentage of rent that they pay. The program will cease to pay the family’s rent after a year. Families are screened for the program and may only receive its services if it’s highly probable they will become fully self-sufficient within a year. However, it is not very likely that a family’s monthly income will increase by more than $1,000 over the course of a year, which means that most participants are being set up to fail.

Four young mothers with children ranging from one month to five years old came under the direction of lawyers from the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless. They gave heart-felt accounts of how they and their children were turned away by the shelter system with nowhere to go. One mother cried as she explained how she, with her 3 children -- ages 5, 3 and less than a year-old -- in tow, was told by an employee of the Virginia Williams Family Intake Center that there were no shelter spaces for them and that she was given bus tokens so she could ride the city bus all night with her children in order to stay warm. Other mothers testified that they also were given bus tokens so they could use the bus as a de facto shelter. (DC Law states that, if there is no shelter space available for a homeless family with small children, then they must be put into a motel room)

All of this just goes to show that the State is not genuinely concerned about its poor and dispossessed. They are giving tax breaks to the wealthy while cutting the budgets for much-needed social services. The silver lining in this dark cloud is that more of the dispossessed are becoming socially conscious and angry at the system which is failing them.

The Future Is Up To Us

Workers of the World
And Soon-To-Be-Out-Of-Workers of the World,
Unite and fight!
You have only everything to lose.

You are worth something to society.
You work to make commodities
In factories all over the globe.
You work to provide services
In restaurants, shops, and stadiums.
You work
For pennies of the real value
That you produce.

Who will do it cheaper
Than you
Puts you closer to unemployment.
Debt, starvation, and death.
As a worker.
You are becoming obsolete.
As a consumer,
You currently watch as your funds deplete.
What good is someone
Who isn’t a worker
And can’t afford to be a consumer
To a capitalist society?

You are worth nothing to a capitalist society.
A capitalist world
Filled with men and women
World leaders
And bankers
Who fill their wallets
Line their pockets
And trust their funds
And have absolutely no reason to care
About anyone they can’t have work for them
Or buy from them
In other words,
People who can’t make them more money.
There will be no good-natured sacrifice
For the tired and huddling masses
To halt progress and productivity.
In the eyes of the capitalist
You are not worth more than a machine.
You never could be.

You are a human being.
Who needs
Food
Clothing
Shelter.
Who will proclaim
That you are worth something to society?
You will.
You will have to.

The minority of you may find your place
Working at a machine
Or building a new machine.
Building a damn of mud,
Arrogance
And naivete
To stop the flood
Of progress and productivity.

The majority of you will end up displaced.
Persons without
Food
Clothing
Shelter.

Your future is up to you.
Workers of the World
And Soon-To-Be-Out-Of-Workers of the World,
The Future is Up to Us.

— David A. Romero
By Rev. Edward Pinkney

A demonstration was held to protest the PGA's decision to move its 2012 Senior PGA Championship to Benton Harbor. The PGA's decision to move the event was met with protests from local residents who argued that the move would be disruptive and disrespectful to the community. The event was held to raise awareness about the potential impact of the move on the local community.

Protest of PGA in Benton Harbor

By Marcus Muhammad

Mayor Pro Temp

As Governor Rick Snyder is poised to sign this draconian Bill into law, I reflect on the words of Thomas Jefferson “I tremble for my country when I reflect that GOD is a just GOD. And his justice will not sleep forever.”

This legislation will cripple the administration of Governor Snyder because it goes against the oath that he recited to assume the office. It will be a pyrrhic victory for the Republican Party. To nullify local charters and violate the State/Federal Constitution in the name of fiscal responsibility is a miscarriage of justice. This bill will divide the state of Michigan and ruin the already failing economy. Due to the “Hot Bed” that this legislation will provoke, businesses and economic development will suffer. The political blindness of the Republican Party will sink the state into a financial abyss as a result of their self-righteousness and partisan politics.

I write this communication as a final warning. Whatever you abuse you will lose. Governor Snyder and the Republican Party are undermining their own authority as legislators. I am afraid that events will take a turn that they least expect. As a final thought, I quote from the Declaration of Independence. “Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their power from consent of the governed.” When the cardinal principle established by the founding fathers are mocked, political, social and economic disaster will follow.

Warning to Gov. Snyder

By Rev. Edward Pinkney

PROTEST GROUP PAYS NO TAXES.

We are calling for a mass demonstration on May 22-27, 2012. We will set up camping grounds for everybody. Plan to be in Benton Harbor for the mass demonstration. Remember you only get what you are organized to take it is time for the residents to not be cowards and stand up and fight for justice for all.

March 18 was Day 5 of the eviction defense of the Lennon-Griffin family from 9 Ravenwood Ave. in Rochester, NY. First on Monday, then on Tuesday, the City Marshal was scheduled to execute the eviction of the family for Fannie Mae (Federal National Mortgage Association), but the combination of protesters, an eviction blockade, strong community support, and a news media presence was enough for the Marshal and the bank-hired movers to cancel their visits. Organized protest and resistance clearly made the difference.

Close to 75 neighbors and community members mobilized to defend the Lennon-Griffin family from eviction on Monday, including a blockade of the main entrance in case of an eviction. On the same day, protesters from Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign marched on the northeast corporate headquarters of Fannie Mae in Philadelphia, PA, demanding that Fannie Mae immediately withdraw the eviction. Fannie Mae has already evicted the family and now Fannie Mae is seeking to evict a family of 11 (including 7 children ages 2 to 11) on Monday.

The Lennon-Griffin family and Take Back the Land Rochester are calling on Fannie Mae to immediately suspend the eviction and renegotiate a reasonable settlement where the longtime residents can stay in their home and prevent the disintegration of an entire family to homelessness. After reclaiming the house, the family has aspirations to put the house into community land trust. Housing is a human right and a family's right to quality housing is more basic than a corporation's right to make a profit.

From Wednesday through Friday the family, neighbors, and Take Back the Land Rochester organized an Eviction Watch Encampment from 9 to 5 — the hours an eviction can be carried out in New York. This watch includes a video camera, looks out for any marshal or police activity and is ready to notify the community for an emergency mobilization if necessary. And now it's been 5 days and the family is still in their home! The Eviction Watch Encampment will continue.

If anybody has any contacts with Fannie Mae or any suggestions about establishing meaningful contact with them please send them our way.

Contact us to follow the ongoing events: Take Back the Land Rochester at TakeBackRoc@RiseUp.net or (585) 653-8362. Subscribe to our Eviction Watch Listserv: lists.rocus.org/listinfo/evictionwatch_Website: takebackroc.org Facebook: facebook.com/takebackroc

DONATE TO KEEP REV PINKNEY OUT OF PRISON

Rev Pinkney must pay $5,000 in court costs and fines, the consequence of a year long illegal prison term. BANCO donations are tax deductible. Send to BANCO, 1940 Union St., Benton Harbor, MI 49022

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Send $3 for the Detroit pamphlet and $3 for The Battle of Benton Harbor to Speakers For a New America, PO Box 3524, Chicago, IL 60654

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