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Wayfair walkout shows solidarity with migrants

By Phebe Eckfeldt
Boston

Over 500 Wayfair workers — clerical workers, engineers, product managers, visual artists and information technology workers — walked off their jobs at 1:30 p.m. on June 26 to protest company profits from sales to concentration camps holding im/migrant children at the border. The week before, a worker leaked that Wayfair had fulfilled an order for $200,000 worth of bedroom furniture to a detention camp for 3,000 migrant children in Carrizo Springs, Texas.

The predominantly young Wayfair workers received worldwide support when they walked out and told the employer, "We will not let our labor be used to support concentration camps for migrant children." They walked out in response to exposés of the U.S. Border Patrol's horrendous treatment of children in concentration camps on the U.S.-Mexico border.

Customs and Border Protection holds thousands of children, from infants to teen mothers, in filthy conditions. They don't provide enough food or clean water, clean clothing, diapers, blankets, medical care or other basic needs. The children sleep on the floor in icebox conditions with lights on 24/7. (tinyurl.com/y3mnp3tg) They endure physical and sexual abuse, with no psychological support for trauma and depression.

The detention centers are supplied by contracted vendors. Wayfair's $200,000 order was from government contractor Baptist Children's Family Services, which operates a camp in Tornillo (near El Paso) that holds thousands of migrant children. Wayfair walkout organizers also discovered a previous $86,000 mattress order to another detention camp.

WW PHOTO: MAUREEN SKEHAN

Boston Wayfair workers and supporters, June 26.

The most recent audit of care at the BCFS Tornillo facility by the Department of Health and Human Services showed serious problems, including failure to complete medical exams within the mandated 48 hours; failure to document the family reunification process; and failure to comply with state regulations regarding minimum bedroom space, health and safety standards and background checks on employees. (tinyurl.com/y42a82m9)

Workers reject profit from detention

Wayfair employs 14,000 people around the world, with 7,000 in downtown Boston. They sell home goods online — sofas, lamps, rugs and furniture. In 2018, the company had $6.8 billion in revenue.

Within a day of learning of the sale to BCFS, more than 500 Wayfair workers signed a protest letter. The opening reads: "We, the undersigned, are writing to you from a place of concern and anger about the atrocities being committed at our southern border. The U.S. government and its contractors are responsible for the detention and mistreatment of hundreds of thousands of migrants seeking asylum in our country. We want that to end. We also want to be sure Wayfair has no part in enabling, supporting or profiting from this practice."

Company executives stated, in a letter signed by co-founders Steve Conine and Niraj Shah, the sale would go through and directed workers toward the elections as a way to make change. Not happy with this answer, the workers held a town hall meeting inside the company June 25 with Conine.

A.J., a Wayfair employee and walkout organizer, told Workers World: "[I]t was clear that management had no interest in dialogue, contrary to what they previously

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Queer Liberation March organizers reject NYPD 'apology'

The June 30 Queer Liberation March, held in Manhattan, drew 45,000 people who opposed the "official" Pride with its heavy capitalist presence and contingents of cops. The following is a June 6 statement from the Reclaim Pride Coalition in response to the New York Police Department's "apology" for brutality during the Stonewall Rebellion. More coverage next week.

We are not impressed by Commissioner O'Neill's empty apology, given under pressure during Pride Month. Where has this apology been for the last 50 years? The [New York Police Department] Vice Squad is still in business, busting sex workers and others, while its members run their own brothels. The NYPD is still arresting trans kids of color for walking down the street and arrested a trans woman in the Bronx who was walking home from work, holding her in custody for 24 hours in handcuffs! The NYPD has spent decades entrapping gay men. And the NYPD continues to strike fear in communities of color and other marginalized communities.

Commissioner O'Neill had the nerve to say that this would never happen in 2019, completely ignoring that the NYPD continues to be an oppressive force in our communities even on the day of Pride. For decades, the Christopher Street Piers have been somewhat of a public safe space for LGBTQ+ youth of color who were violently policed out of the space. Every year, Cop Watch activists patrol the piers during Pride because of the amount of violent policing the youth who hang out there experience. Last year the NYPD completely cut off all access to this space, taking away a gay space of community from hundreds of mostly Black and Brown LGBTQ+ people. This is only one example of the continued oppression faced by marginalized members of the LGBTQ+ population, and it happens on Pride Day!

New York Reclaim Pride, June 30. WW PHOTO: BRENDA RYAN

The Reclaim Pride Coalition is a group of individuals and organizations producing a massive Queer Liberation March people's protest for June 30th. No corporations and no uniformed police in our March. From our first meetings in the months prior to the 2018 Pride Parade, the Reclaim Pride Coalition has called for a comprehensive NYPD apology, including for their ongoing brutality against marginalized groups and for a systemic change in their operations. ☐

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Concentration camps for the poor in Pennsylvania

Part 1

By Ted Kelly

Frackville, Pa. — Tensions in Pennsylvania prisons are at an all time high since the statewide lockdown ordered by Gov. Tom Wolf last summer.

The Department of Corrections (DOC) is now using SCI Frackville as a laboratory to test a "violence reduction policy" that, in practice, means staff can immediately shut down entire cell blocks of the prison and order hundreds of prisoners to be confined to their cells for 36 hours at a time.

"Every day I'm in a state of impending lockdown," says Bryant Arroyo, an innocent man at SCI Frackville, serving a life sentence for a crime he did not commit. "We're anxious all the time. The mood is very tense and it's become dangerous for both inmates and staff alike."

According to Arroyo, the facility's posted policy says that a single wing will be placed on temporary lockdown in the event of a brawl or other dangerous incident. But in this period of heightened tensions among prisoners and between inmates and staff, Frackville's superintendent now can order the entire block to be shut down for 36 hours.

Prisoners would be confined to their cells and subject to shakedown — guards come in and rummage through prisoners' personal property looking for "contraband." Access to libraries, common space, even showers is restricted during lockdowns.

"It's gotten to the point where if you see a fight might be about to break out, you grab your towel and head to the shower because you don't know when your next chance will be." The last time Bryant's block was locked down it was due to an incident on an adjacent wing. Bryant, whose cell was turned upside down in a search, was in the chow hall and didn't even know a brawl had broken out.

Lockdown targets prison organizers

"Yet we're being forced to pay the piper for the infractions of others. Not only is this a violation of our 14th Amendment rights, this constitutes punitive actions taken against a collective: a violation of the Geneva Convention."

Prominent organizers within the prison appear to be specifically targeted during these lockdowns, and any hint of mass mobilization brings swift retribution. The statewide lockdown last summer was ordered to disrupt a nationwide prison strike that had been called months in advance.

And now anyone in theory can take an entire block hostage and conveniently shut down the prison when an action is planned. The DOC code of ethics mandates that staff are not allowed to give one inmate power over another, Arroyo explains, and yet this is exactly the effect of this policy.

"Hypothetically, you could orchestrate a lockdown of the whole facility. It's a hostile and volatile environment." He adds, "I'm speaking as a victim. You're not going to keep punishing me with impunity. I hate to categorize myself as a victim, but I'm being victimized by this policy."

Imagine if you were driving down the highway, Arroyo says, and you get pulled over by a state trooper, who asks you to step out of the car and immediately places you in handcuffs. You are not charged with a crime; you are not told why you are being brought to jail. You get no phone call, no lawyer, no recourse. They hold you for 36 hours and then let you go back to your normal life, no explanations given. You are told later that because there was a robbery a few miles away off a nearby exit, police were rounding up everybody on the highway and holding them for a day and a half.

"Welcome to the violence reduction policy. That's now what we face every day."

Ironically, prisoners are better off if they are directly involved in incidents that cause a lockdown, because they are brought to the restricted housing unit, incident reports are filed, and prisoners have access to the law library and can appeal the decisions made by prison staff. If you're an unsuspecting prisoner on the block just trying to live your life and do your time, you don't get that due process.

Bryant Arroyo has filed multiple grievances against Frackville staff and the DOC regarding this "violence reduction policy," but as of this writing they have not responded. ☐

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Join us in the fight for socialism!

Workers World Party is a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party inside the belly of the imperialist beast. We are a multinational, multigenerational and multigendered organization that not only aims to abolish capitalism, but to build a socialist society because it's the only way forward!

Capitalism and imperialism threaten the peoples of the world and the planet itself in the neverending quest for ever-greater profits.

Capitalism means war and austerity, racism and repression, attacks on im/migrants, misogyny, LGBTQ oppression and mistreatment of people with disabilities. It means joblessness, increasing homelessness and impoverishment and lack of hope for the future. No social problems can be solved under capitalism.

The U.S. is the richest country in the world, yet no one has a guaranteed right to shelter, food, water, health care, education or anything else — unless they can pay for it. Wages are lower than ever, and youth are saddled with seemingly insurmountable student debt, if they even make it to college. Black, Brown and Indigenous youth and trans people are gunned down by cops and bigots on a regular basis.

The ruthless ruling class today seeks to wipe out decades of gains and benefits won by hard-fought struggles by people's movements. The super-rich and their political representatives have intensified their attacks on the multinational, multigender and multigenerational working class. It is time to point the blame at — and challenge — the capitalist system.

WWP fights for socialism because the working class produces all wealth in society, and this wealth should remain in their hands, not be stolen in the form of capitalist profits. The wealth workers create should be socially owned and its distribution planned to satisfy and guarantee basic human needs.

Since 1959, Workers World Party has been out in the streets defending the workers and oppressed here and worldwide. If you're interested in Marxism, socialism and fighting for a socialist future, please contact a WWP branch near you. ☐

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Eastern North Carolina union organizing blitz plugs 'Medicare for All'

By Dante Strobino
Durham, N.C.

From June 9 to 14, over 40 union activists from United Electrical Workers (UE) and Unifor Canada gathered in rural eastern North Carolina for an organizing blitz. The workers targeted 10 workplaces for reaching out to non-union workers about joining the union. This was part of a North Carolina Public Service Workers Union, UE Local 150, campaign to build a statewide movement of city workers to fight for a Municipal Workers Bill of Rights. The blitz was centered in Wilson, but also targeted city workers in Goldsboro and Rocky Mount, and reached out deeper where the union already has chapters, including to city workers in Raleigh, four state-operated mental health facilities and two auto parts plants.

This was part of the North American Solidarity Project between UE and our close ally in Canada, Unifor. Three Unifor members came to participate in the blitz and learn about the struggles of Southern workers and the social-movement union approach of Local 150.

Throughout the week, participants circulated over 1,800 fliers to non-union workers and collected over 300 names of workers interested in joining the union; 134 workers attended union-interest meetings.

"This blitz was really excellent at bringing more attention to eastern N.C. for our Municipal Workers Bill of Rights campaign," stated Bryce Carter, president of UE150 and a street maintenance worker in Greensboro. "By bringing our union message to these three new cities, we can now really say that we have a statewide movement! This is a big advance in building workers' power."

In surveying the workers, we discovered that without a union many of the municipal workers suffered from dangerous working conditions, including no required breaks during excessive summer heat. After the tragic heat-related death of a solid waste laborer, Anthony Milledge, in Charlotte in the summer of 2017, Local 150 fought for and won mandatory hourly breaks when the heat index is over 90 degrees in Greensboro, Durham and Raleigh. This is all part of the statewide Municipal Workers Bill of Rights campaign to establish basic guaranteed standards for all city workers in the state and Southern region.

Workers also identified low wages, unaffordable health insurance, workplace racism and unfair management as some of the top issues to organize around in the future.

City workers in Rocky Mount have to pay $200 every two weeks in health insurance premiums. Additionally, many have utility bills around $400 every month. Paying these bills is impossible to sustain on their wages of about $11 or $12 an hour.

Many of the eastern North Carolina cities, such as Wilson and Rocky Mount, set up their own publicly owned municipal power systems, generating power locally for residents. Nineteen of these cities formed an alliance to share power among themselves, and all contributed to building five power plants at the cost of $3.5 billion. However, in 2015 these cities sold the power plants to privately owned Duke Energy for only $1.5 billion, letting the difference in the bill fall on local residents who now collectively pay over $10 million a year in interest!

Public workers in North Carolina are banned from collectively bargaining a union contract. Local 150 is a direct-join, direct-action union where workers can sign up as members and not have to wait for an onerous labor board election. This new style of unionism is picking up across the South and throughout the country.

As part of the outreach, blitzers talked to workers about their health care costs and invited workers to attend a Town Hall forum in Wilson to support Medicare for All. The June 13 event was attended by many workers and community supporters, including State Reps. Jean Farmer-Butterfield and Raymond Smith. Workers spoke out about their struggles with health care costs. To give workers a vision about what we are fighting for, Unifor members described Canada's single-payer health care system.

"It was powerful to see the strength in numbers," stated Jess Sims, blitz participant and UE Local 123 Young Activist from Staunton, Va. "If you stand alone you will fail. But everyone coming together for a common cause can make real changes."

Southern Workers Assembly launches Southern Workers Medicare for All campaign

Directly after the organizing blitz, over the weekend of June 15-16, Southern workers from the UE, National Nurses United and International Longshoremen's Association Local 1422 attended a Workers School and met to launch the Southern Workers Medicare for All campaign.

Leading up to the 2020 elections, the Southern Workers Assembly (SWA) is encouraging all workers' organizations to raise up the demand for affordable health care, specifically for passage of bills in the U.S. Congress for expanded and improved Medicare for All (HR 1384/S 1129). Many presidential candidates are divided about different plans for fixing the broken U.S. health care system.

By having a clearly defined, unifying demand, we can advance our struggles during this electoral period, regardless of who wins the election. The SWA believes that by building a workers-led Southern movement for Medicare for All it can draw non-union workers into our movement and build union-workplace organization across the South.

A major part of this campaign is doing workplace-based worker education. Given that most workers still primarily receive health insurance through their employer, outreach to non-union workplaces will include educational leaflets about the campaign. Improved Medicare for All would reduce workers' reliance on employers by providing full access to quality health care whether you are employed or not. It would also take health care, which unions are now forced to spend a great deal of time and resources on, off the bargaining table. Instead, this energy could be spent bargaining for better wages, paid time off, safety protocols and more.

The SWA hopes to organize citywide committees, led by workplace organizations, to do broad workplace and community outreach, eventually hosting town hall meetings with the aim of passing city and county council resolutions across the South. Already at least three cities—St. Petersburg, Fla.; Durham, N.C.; and Carrboro, N.C.—have passed resolutions supporting Medicare for All.

National Nurses United has written a hard-hitting sample city council resolution, pointing out that "the United States spends nearly twice as much per capita on health care as all other comparable countries," yet 30 million people are uninsured and millions more underinsured. To find out more about city council resolutions, visit medicare4allresolutions.org.

To join this campaign, email Southern Workers Assembly at info@southernworker.org.

Strobino is a field organizer with the United Electrical Workers (UE) based in North Carolina and serves on the steering committees of the Southern Workers Assembly and the Durham Workers Assembly.

Police attack on teenagers draws protest

By Martha Grevatt
Euclid, Ohio

Several dozen concerned community members attended the Euclid City Council meeting on June 17 to protest the recent racist conduct of Euclid police. Euclid borders the East Side of Cleveland, where the city's African-American community has historically been concentrated. The suburb's Black population has grown in recent decades to 60 percent.

On June 12 the police used pepper spray and pepper-ball guns on hundreds of Black teenagers waiting to get into a roller-skating rink. The city then filed a nuisance complaint against Black-owned Mig's Pla-Mor, with the intention of closing it down.

Owner Miguel Sanders, who bought the rink a little less than a year ago, explained to the news media the circumstances leading up to the incident. He was told by the city that he would have to apply for a permit to hold a youth-oriented, "end-of-school-year" skating party. Sanders paid the permit application fee and arranged to hire two required Euclid police officers.

The two cops did not show up at 9 p.m., the scheduled start of the party. Around 9:30 a team of officers, in riot gear and armed with rifles, appeared.

Police "went in looking like a militant group with rifles on their back," according to Sanders. (WKYC, June 13)

About 250 youths had already been admitted and hundreds more were lined up outside. The building's legal capacity is 440.

After supposedly doing a head count inside, police announced to the teenagers outside that only 100 of them would be allowed in. At this point some individuals in line began pushing and shoving one another. Police ordered the crowd to disperse.

The problem was that most of the young people, who were below driving age, had been dropped off and had no way to leave and nowhere to go. When the youth did not immediately disperse, cops fired pepper spray and pepper balls. A pepper-ball gun resembles a paintball gun but fires pellets that break apart on contact, exposing victims to a powder that burns like pepper spray.

"Now, I got all these kids spitting up, throwing up, coughing and eyes watering," Sanders told WKYC. "It was frightful to me, let alone we are talking about 13-, 14-, 15-year-old kids." Sanders is now being scapegoated for what police are wrongly calling "the riot."

City blasted for racism

The public comment period at the June 17 City Council meeting lasted more than two hours as city residents, skaters, relatives of the young victims and others spoke out about the specific incident and against racism in Euclid. Witnesses described being harassed, intimidated with guns and shoved by police.

Skaters of all generations spoke against closing the rink. Young men explained how skating has given them a positive outlet and an alternative to "running the streets."

One speaker pointed out that Euclid's police department is more than 95 percent white and the fire department is all white. The entire city administration, with the exception of City Councilmember Brian T. Moore, is white.

A previous protest against racist police brutality in Euclid.

The Pla-Mor incident is by no means unusual. In 2017 Euclid police killed 23-year-old Luke Stewart and later called the SWAT unit on protesters who packed a City Council meeting in response to the killing. Last year an inmate died in Euclid's county-run jail.

Officer Michael Amiott, fired for the 2017 beating of a Black man during a traffic stop, was rehired a year later after an arbitrator ruled in his favor. Additional beatings and Taser assaults by Euclid police are the subjects of multiple lawsuits.

Speaker after speaker called on the city to cancel plans to close Pla-Mor. Among the final speakers were Miguel Sanders and his son, who also works at the rink. The younger Sanders wiped away tears as he described the impact that Pla-Mor's closing would have on the family and the community.

The outrage expressed at the City Council indicates that the movement against racism is growing, in Euclid and throughout Greater Cleveland. ☐

On the picket line

By Alex Bolchi and Sue Davis

Muslim Jenni-O workers' walkout

In protest of the boss's racism and Islamophobia, 35 to 40 Muslim workers at the Jennie-O turkey processing plant in Melrose, Minn., marched into the parking lot instead of clocking in for their 1 p.m. shift on June 10.

A worker there since 2015 told Workday Minnesota that problems started after the plant moved to a new facility and management changed the policy regarding daily prayers. The company dictated new prayer times rather than the appropriate number and hours for daily prayer mandated by Islam. (June 10) In a letter shared June 11 with the St. Cloud Times, workers raised how when they met with management, the manager "took off his shirt and threw it at the workers, threatened discipline and asked them to leave the plant."

For now the workers' heroic action is winning coverage, and they rightly believe the law is on their side: Changes to prayer time violate Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which guarantees the right to religious accommodations in a nonhostile work environment.

Mexican farmworkers strike in Northwest

Mexican farmworkers, working through the H-2A-visa guestworker program at King Fuji farm in Mattawa, Wash., went on strike June 13 to protest abusive conditions and retaliation. (The Stand, June 13) The Public News service reports the bosses were intimidating the workers if they didn't meet what the workers knew were unrealistic production quotas. (June 13)

The workers are being represented by the Indigenous-led farmworker union Familias Unidas por la Justicia, affiliated with the state's AFL-CIO labor council. According to reports, management is constantly threatening workers with deportation or blacklisting.

A June 18 entry on the Community 2 Community Facebook page noted the workers were back in the field with "verbal commitments from the company that there will be no blacklisting or retaliations. We have that win but there is no signed paper for the demands of the workers." Familias Unidas por la Justicia encourages supporters to call 509-628-1619 or email nathan@kingfuji.com and demand that King Fuji sign a legally binding agreement.

Move federal workers out of contaminated workplace!

Chanting "Federal lives matter," members of Locals 1136, 3354, 2192 and 96 of the American Federation of Government Employees rallied outside the St. Louis Federal Center on June 6 demanding to be moved because tests, as far back as 2016, show the complex contained 83 hazardous substances. Federal officials knew years ago about that, but did not correct the situation or inform the 2,400 workers at the Social Security Administration, Agriculture Department, General Services Administration and Veterans Affairs. AFGE is calling for their "immediate transfer."

"This is my career that I love doing," said Darryl Leatherberry, a Marine veteran with the VA for 13 years. "But I should be able to do it in a safe environment." AFGE is calling for immediate testing of all current and past employees for all contaminates, as well as a congressional investigation into whistleblower retaliation.

Asbestos and lead have been removed, and the GSA insists the building is now "within guidelines." But Local 2192 President Will Grant asserts people would never buy a house with "acceptable levels of contamination." He noted many cases of cancer, respiratory issues and loss of taste and smell. (Labor Tribune, June 17) Workers' health and safety is a human right!

Women truck drivers join #MeToo

A new group of women workers have joined the #MeToo Movement — long-distance truck drivers. The Des Moines Register reported June 5 that 300 drivers filed a class-action lawsuit against CRST (Cedar Rapids Steel Transport), alleging that not only were drivers sexually harassed and assaulted, but others were raped. If the women protested, they were sidelined or forced off the job.

The irony is that the drivers often transport Fortune 500 brands that are marketed mostly to women, such as the Gap, Kohl's, Hobby Lobby, Macy's, JCPenney and Victoria's Secret. The workers charge that by using CRST, national retail companies are effectively underwriting the abuse of women workers. Shipping firms like CRST are major conduits in today's online-sales economy.

"Most people don't even know that women drive trucks," said Anne Balay, Haverford College professor and author of "Semi Queer," a collection of true stories by queer truckers. Desiree Wood, founder of REAL Women in Trucking in 2012, said, "They talk about their supply chain, human trafficking, fair trade, but do they even know what's going on in their domestic supply chain?" (realwomenintrucking.org) □

More struggle ahead as W.Va. education workers face setback

By Workers World West Virginia bureau

After two years of intense struggle against right-wing state officials, education employees in West Virginia faced a temporary setback June 19.

The state Senate held a special legislative session in early June where they passed SB 1039—the mislabeled "Student Success Act."

The bill was introduced as revenge for the triumphant education worker strikes during the last two legislative sessions. The "Student Success Act" is similar to the Omnibus bill defeated last February—defeated as a result of the second walkout—that tied a much-needed pay raise with for-profit charter schools, the elimination of seniority rights and increased class size. The Senate also introduced additional language to punish participants of a future work stoppage.

SB 1039 was passed on June 3.

W. Va. House attacks educators

The House of Delegates convened June 17 to vote on the anti-education bill introduced by the Senate. They were met by thousands of red-clad education workers and supporters, including students and parents. People filled the galleries, while others held a rally outside. Leaders of the West Virginia Education Association, American Federation of Teachers-WV and the West Virginia School Service Personnel Association gave speeches, along with United Mineworkers President Cecil Roberts. There were also a handful of multinational and multigendered high school students who spoke in solidarity with their teachers and service personnel.

Also in attendance — on the opposite side of the class struggle — were paid lobbyists for the Koch-brothers-funded "Americans for Prosperity" and the Libertarian-influenced "Institute for Justice." There were also bigoted evangelical representatives of the so-called home-school movement. The right-wing lobbyists received "boos" from the crowd and were visibly uncomfortable.

House Speaker Roger Hanshaw, an attorney for Big Oil by trade, threatened his fellow Republicans with being "stripped of committee responsibilities" if they voted against the "Student Success Act." The reason for Hanshaw's blatant blackmail is because a few House Republicans voted to suspend the Omnibus bill and settle the walkout in February.

Soon after the House met June 17, they made some changes. One of the major ones was the removal of the amendment that would have penalized participants of future walkouts with the threat of termination. Another change was to reduce the authorization of 10 charter schools to three, starting in the 2021-22 school year. The House "Student Success Act" was changed from SB 1039 to HB 206.

According to education workers who spoke with Workers World, the changes are in no way acceptable because "strikes are already illegal in West Virginia" and it still permits the opening of charter schools.

On the morning of June 19, a public forum was held where people were limited to one minute to speak. Eighty percent of those who spoke were opposed to the bill. While they thanked and complimented those who were supportive of the bill, the Republican leadership rudely interrupted several people who spoke out against the bill—including one person who attempted to raise awareness of the day being Juneteenth.

That evening the House passed HB 206, 50 votes to 47, despite the fact that education workers filled the galleries late into the evening while other people stood outside the House floor chanting. At one point, the notoriously homophobic Delegate Eric Porterfield — a person who made national headlines for vile comments this past February — complained to the House Speaker that he was "offended" by the loud chants outside the House chambers. The school voucher bill, SB 1040, did not move that day.

Jim Justice, the coal baron governor, publicly announced he would sign the bill with the House changes, despite false promises to the unions just weeks prior. Justice coincidentally "changed his mind" after a tweet from the bigot-in-chief himself, Donald Trump, as well as after having several conference calls with people from Trump's cabinet, including Betsy DeVos. Some Senate Republicans have stated they don't feel the House version of the bill is retaliatory enough.

Dark money and far-right 'roots' in the state

One of the groups most invested in busting unions and privatizing public education is the American Legislative Exchange Council. ALEC was co-founded by an arch-segregationist with fascist sympathies named Paul Weyrich, who also co-founded the Heritage Foundation. Weyrich was inspired to create the Heritage Foundation after witnessing what is now known as the "Kanawha County Textbook War" in West Virginia. Weyrich is also credited with garnering the evangelical votes for U.S. Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan.

The textbook battle occurred in 1974 when the English Language Arts Textbook Committee of Kanawha County recommended 325 books to school curriculum, including titles by Angela Davis and George Jackson. A Kanawha County School Board member, Alice Moore, instigated the right-wing mobilization by reaching out to Christian evangelicals, encouraging them to burn books and boycott schools until the reading list was removed. The terrorist Ku Klux Klan got involved and planted dynamite in one of the elementary schools, on two school buses and in several homes of students who defied the bigoted "boycott."

According to retired teacher and labor activist Mark Swiger, who has done extensive research on the textbook struggle, "Paul Weyrich physically attended some of the anti-textbook rallies in Kanawha County." The evangelical bigots behind the reactionary movement also targeted the National Education Association and its state affiliate.

ALEC and the Heritage Foundation are two of the main groups behind the legislation against public education throughout the U.S. today. Another organization responsible for busting public sector unions and privatizing education is Americans for Prosperity, led by Charles and David Koch, whose father Fred worked closely with Weyrich through the anti-Semitic and anti-Communist John Birch Society.

What's next?

The nine-day school worker walkout of 2018 inspired education and public employees across the world. The labor action set off a strike wave that had not existed since the 1980s. On June 20, people who spoke with Workers World felt sad and disgruntled. The reactionary ruling-class finally got their way, at least for now.

The Senate reconvened June 24 and voted 18-16 for the bill. The governor has promised to sign it. It is unlikely that people who were willing to break the law by defying "anti-strike" laws two years in a row will back down now. Ultimate power will always remain in the hands of the rank and file. □

After nearly 41 years

MOVE 9's Eddie Africa released

Eddie Africa, on the right seated, his arm around Ramona Africa. WW PHOTO: TED KELLY

By Ted Kelly
Philadelphia

June 27 — Edward Goodman Africa, released earlier this month after four decades of wrongful imprisonment, spoke this morning to dozens of supporters and members of the press gathered at the Philadelphia Student Union. Janet Africa and Janine Africa were with him, making this the first public appearance of the three members of the MOVE 9 since the arrest of these political prisoners in August 1978.

"The time, while it was hard, does not seem that way when I saw them," said Eddie, gesturing to both Janet and Janine beside him. "It did not feel like it had been that long. It felt like the next day from when we got arrested.

"It's good to be with family."

Addressing reporters, Africa continued, "I'm telling you now, as I told them then: I'm innocent. I did not — we did not — kill Ramp."

James Ramp died during the 1978 police assault on the MOVE house in Powelton Village, likely struck by one of the tens of thousands of rounds fired by his fellow officers that day. Nine MOVE members were all convicted of firing the same bullet.

"They know we didn't do it. I've had parole agents tell me they know we didn't kill that cop. But somebody had to pay. So they chose us."

MOVE Minister of Confrontation Pam Africa opened the press conference by playing a prerecorded statement by journalist and activist-on-the-inside Mumia Abu-Jamal congratulating Eddie on his release.

"My brother, Mu," said Eddie in response. "That made my day."

The MOVE members emphasized that Mumia's clear-eyed and unbiased reporting about their organization's activity is what made him a target of the Philadelphia police and the city's racist Mayor Frank Rizzo in the 1980s.

Shortly after their conviction, Mumia called in to a radio talk show to question Judge Edward Malmed, who presided over the MOVE 9 case. He asked whether the judge truly believed they were the ones who shot Ramp.

"I haven't the faintest idea," Malmed replied. And yet he sentenced each to 30 to 100 years in prison.

"The next thing we heard about Mumia right after that was that he had been shot and was in the hospital fighting for his life," said Ramona Africa, MOVE member and sole adult survivor of the May 1985 police bombing of the MOVE house on Osage Avenue. And since his near-fatal shooting by police in 1981, Mumia Abu-Jamal has been in prison, also framed for the murder of a cop.

Two surviving MOVE 9 members, Chuck Africa and Delbert Africa, are still behind bars. When bringing up Delbert's name at the start of his statement, Eddie got choked up and buried his face in his hands. After being in prison for so long together and surviving together through all kinds of state-inflicted violence, getting released while Delbert remained locked behind bars was as difficult as leaving behind a spouse or a sibling, Eddie said.

The human toll of the brutal war waged on the freedom fighters of MOVE must not and cannot be forgotten. Phil Africa and Merle Africa were killed during their imprisonment under circumstances that even prison officials confess were "suspicious." Guards notoriously and repeatedly attacked incarcerated MOVE members, with batons and baseball bats, ice picks and water cannons.

In 1985 police bombed the house on Osage Avenue, murdering children — Tree, Netta, Delitia, Phil, Tomasa — and assassinated members Rhonda, Frank, CP, Conrad, as well as MOVE's founder, Coordinator John Africa. Life Africa, a mere infant, was crushed to death by police in a separate attack.

The MOVE 9's fight will not be over until Delbert, Chuck and Mumia are released — indeed, until all prisoners are free and the institutions of white supremacy are abolished once and for all.

What's the call? Free 'em all! ❑

The 15th annual Trans Day of Action

The 15th annual Trans Day of Action for Social and Economic Justice, organized by TransJustice and the Audre Lorde Project, drew close to 1,000 people in Washington Square Park in New York City on June 28. As organizers explained in a June 12 press release: "We live in a time when oppressed peoples, including people of color, immigrants, youth and elders, people with disabilities, women, Trans & Gender Non-Conforming people, and poor people are underserved, face higher levels of discrimination, are under heightened surveillance and experience increased violence at the hands of the state." We must unite and work together toward dismantling the transphobia, racism, classism, sexism, ageism, ableism, homophobia, and xenophobia that permeates our movements for social justice." For more information, go to alp.org.

New York. WW PHOTO: TONI ARENSTEIN

In Seattle, nearly 5,000 people marched down Broadway to Cal Anderson Park for a rally and festival on June 28 at Seattle Trans Pride. Marchers chanted, "Trans rights are human rights," interspersed with "Black Lives Matter." Sign messages included "Cops Out of Pride" and "Dignity, not detention."

— Report by New York City Workers World bureau and Jim McMahan in Seattle.

Seattle. PHOTO: ELLIOT STOLLER

Wayfair strike shows solidarity with migrants

Continued from page 1

stated. Steve talked down to us and shamed us for considering a walkout. He refused to budge and committed to going through with the sale, despite the room being so packed by employees demanding an answer that the crowd extended out the doors. It was, at best, a PR move and we all understood that, once the meeting was over.

"They don't want the workers to be able to monitor their ethics and cut into their profit. Walking out was the only way we could show management we were committed to preventing Wayfair from doing business with organizations like these in the future."

Workers demand Wayfair donate the profit from the challenged sale to specific organizations doing work at the border to help migrants and account for the harm the sale caused. Shortly before the walkout, Wayfair stated they would donate $100,000 to the American Red Cross, which was not on the organizers' recommended list.

Workers walk out in solidarity

A loud, enthusiastic crowd of 1,000 supporters from the progressive movement and local unions cheered the Wayfair walkout as the workers joined them in Copley Square June 26. Union support included delegations from UNITE/HERE Local 26, Uber Guild drivers, Service Employees Local 32BJ and Harvard Graduate Student Union-United Auto Workers.

Many Wayfair workers who stayed inside watched the rally on live stream.

"Before the walkout, what I saw through the media made me feel as though we had the support of most of the public. There was no better confirmation than walking out of our office and into the arms of a crowd that had amassed in solidarity," said A.J.

Workers made signs from materials at hand: copy paper, cardboard and packing material. Some of the signs read: "A prison with a bed is still a prison," "A cage is not a home," "End biz with concentration camps" and "Solidarity with migrant families."

Many workers were visibly tense about speaking at the microphone, as losing their jobs was a real possibility. Wayfair workers do not have a union to provide any protection for work actions, and most had never spoken publicly. But one by one, encouraged by the emcee and by the roaring crowd, young workers stepped forward to speak. The theme that echoed throughout was "No profit from detention camps."

A political strike to defend migrants

When asked about the importance of showing solidarity, A.J. replied, "We hope that taking action like this might set a precedent and push other workers to demand their employers stop servicing contracts or selling supplies to ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] and similar agencies. We also refuse to work for an organization that generates profits off the violence done to migrant families."

Wayfair organizers plan to send another letter to management restating their demands, one of which is to create a code of ethics to prevent sales like those to detention camps. They ask supporters to continue pressuring the company.

The walkout shows that political consciousness among workers is on the rise. Wayfair workers transformed that consciousness into concrete solidarity and defense of the international working class. Lacking the protection of a union, they risked being fired, harassed or retaliated against. The walkout became their weapon.

This was a political strike, reflecting growing class consciousness and the realization that workers can exercise power for the good of their class.

Despite the many walls put up to divide workers, these walls can be broken down and a hand of solidarity extended. ❑

WORKERS WORLD

editorial

Worker self-defense at the border

The heartbreaking image went viral: Oscar Ramirez and his daughter Valeria, 23 months old, both dead, facedown in the waters of the Rio Grande — Salvadoran migrants, drowned attempting to cross into the U.S.

Reports had come in, almost simultaneously, from legal and medical observers that migrant children were suffering brutal concentration camp conditions in U.S. detention at the Southern border.

A wave of revulsion surged through the U.S. population, breaking through the big-business media chatter that minimizes the depth of the im/migrant crisis. The humanitarian group Border Angels estimates that since 1994 about 10,000 people have died attempting to cross the Southern border, many but not all reflected in the official statistics.

But what's mostly been visible on TV are the current presidential campaign debates and talk-show comments on "How did the Democrats do with immigration?" Republican Trump's goal to "Make America White Again" and the Democratic Party's failure to mount an aggressive, anti-racist fightback were on display on June 27.

That's when the Democratic-majority House of Representatives acquiesced to a Senate-initiated "humanitarian" bill that included millions of dollars to keep the Pentagon active in border surveillance and enforcement and included more millions for Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Border Patrol.

Conspicuously absent were added protections for the jailed im/migrant children. Proposed had been three provisions: a 90-day limit on the time children would be allowed to spend in temporary intake facilities, funding of legal services for detained children, and mandatory notification of lawmakers within 24 hours after the death of a child in government custody. None of those measures made it into the final bill.

It is no accident that racist Trump has been declaring a crisis at the Southern border since his election campaign. What's almost never stated in the corporate media is that this "crisis" is rooted in home-grown, ruling-class-fomented white supremacy.

The so-called "border crisis" is over 400 years old, starting with the massacres of Indigenous peoples and theft of their lands and the kidnapping of African people into slavery. It was made official in the first U.S. immigration law, the Naturalization Act of 1790, which offered citizenship only to a "free white person." It continued through the racist nativist Know Nothing Party of the 1840s, the second wave of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1900s, the White Citizen Councils of the 1960s, the up-to-the-minute neo-fascists who assaulted protesters, murdering one, in Charlottesville, Va., in 2017.

The racist definition of which people really "belong" in the U.S. was voiced by Fox talk-show host Brian Kilmeade, speaking of im/migrant children separated from their parents by Trump's decree in 2018. Kilmeade said: "These aren't our kids. ... [I]t's not like [Trump] is doing this to the people of Idaho or Texas. These are people from another country."

Meanwhile, Indigenous, Black and Brown children and their families suffer state brutality in Idaho, Texas and everywhere else in the U.S., while people from "other countries" try to cross the Southern border for life-and-death reasons.

They are fleeing both economic desperation and violence directly connected to right-wing governments that owe their existence to U.S. overt and covert interventions. For almost a century, U.S. big business has reaped huge profits in Central America through a "favorable business climate" created by corrupt regimes that repress workers and peasants.

This is especially true of El Salvador, the country Oscar Ramirez emigrated from. During a civil war in that small nation in the 1980s, U.S.-trained and armed military brass ordered the massacre of tens of thousands of workers and peasant farmers — closing off any chances they had for a better life in their own country.

Now, both the racist right wing and the apologists for "immigration reform" would disqualify Oscar Ramirez as a candidate for "legal immigration" into the U.S. because as a worker he was seeking not "asylum" — but a better life for himself and his family.

This is where we as communists must draw our battle line. We must defend Oscar Ramirez in the name of international workers' solidarity. When people migrate because of the impact of class war, that truly is "seeking asylum." The global "immigration crisis" is happening because millions of immigrant workers and oppressed people are having to flee from destabilization and imperialist wars and climate disasters put in motion by capitalism.

They are being attacked in a class war — and they are trying to find a way through.

We must pledge to welcome and defend these immigrants in every way possible — through our unions, through informal job actions such as the Wayfair workers' walkout in Boston, through our community networks against their deportation. In every way possible.

We are one class, and we will only grow stronger when we say: "We won't be divided by the bosses! No borders in workers' struggles!"

Solidarity with immigrants, especially at the Southern border, is worker self-defense. □

War opposition grows as

Protests say, 'U.S. hands off Iran!'

By G. Dunkel

June 29 — Anti-war organizations in the U.S. have responded to the Trump administration's aggressive moves toward Iran with immediate protests and plans to hold larger actions on July 11-15 amid growing evidence that a large majority of the population opposes any new U.S. wars.

With U.S. crimes against migrants on the Southern border still fresh and with grumbling and hesitation by U.S. imperialist allies/competitors about U.S. threats against Iran before the G20 summit June 28-29, President Donald Trump called off the illegal attack he had ordered on Iran on June 20 — and soon stepped up violations of migrants' rights.

Trump's decision, reportedly made just 10 minutes before the attack was to be launched, left his anti-Iran gang in place. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and National Security Advisor John Bolton, whose public positions are ferociously hostile to the Iranian government, kept their jobs.

More U.S. troops flying a dozen combat jets were sent to the Persian Gulf June 27. Aircraft carriers, sent to the area earlier in an attempt to intimidate Iran, will remain deployed. The U.S. cyber warfare command is boasting about their attacks on Iran's computer systems.

These war provocations spurred immediate protests inside the U.S. the last week of June, along with plans for future protests.

Ted Kelly speaking at protest, June 25, Philadelphia. Inset: Yahné Ndgo. WW PHOTOS: JOE PIETTE

In Boston, there was a demonstration June 22 involving the National Iranian American Council, Massachusetts Peace Action, the Coalition to Stop the Genocide in Yemen, New Democracy Coalition and the Green Party.

In Washington, D.C., on June 23, CODEPINK, Popular Resistance and Answer Coalition, along with members of other secular and faith-based groups, protested in front of the White House. In San Francisco June 25, at a demonstration called by Answer, placards read, "No war or sanctions on Iran" and "Sanctions are war."

A June 26 protest outside Philadelphia City Hall demanded: "No war on migrants! No war on Iran!" Workers World Party organizers of the action reported that a significant number at the protest were individuals passing by who stopped to listen and stayed to the end.

In Atlanta, there was a street visibility protest June 26 demanding, "No War on Iran! End the Sanctions" called by the Georgia Peace and Justice Coalition. Cars driving by kept up a steady stream of honking in support.

In Bloomington, Ind., at a June 26 emergency protest, Indiana University College Democrats' President Jack Parke said, "The goal of the protest is to talk about the issues of [U.S.] American militarization and also to lend our voices to say we will not support another disastrous war." (Indiana Daily Student, June 26)

Mid-July: Coordinated national actions

The United National Antiwar Coalition puts the struggle against the impending war on Iran in a broader context. UNAC is calling for coordinated national actions from July 11 through 15, adding, "Hands Off Venezuela" as well as "Hands Off Iran" and opposing attacks on migrants, calling that part of the administration's war at home.

There will be protests, meetings or other actions during this time in Albany, N.Y.; Atlanta; Boston; Chicago; Columbus, Ohio; Milwaukee; Minneapolis; Newark, N.J.; Philadelphia; Tulsa, Okla.; Washington, D.C.; and other places. A coalition is organizing the July 15 protest in New York City called for 5 p.m. at Herald Square, 34th Street and 6th Avenue.

For more information, visit www.unacpeace.org. □

Houston warmly welcomes caravan to Cuba

By Gloria Rubac
Houston

The Houston Cuba Solidarity Committee hosted the 30th Friendshipment Caravan on June 21 and welcomed spokesperson John Waller to the S.H.A.P.E. Community Center.

"The Cuba Caravan is always welcome at S.H.A.P.E.," said the center's director, Deloyd Parker. "We have hosted the caravan for decades. We will always welcome you as this is your Houston home."

The evening was dedicated to one of the Solidarity Committee founders, Ayanna Ade, who died in 2013.

Pacifica radio programmer Aka Holt and former Black Panther Bunchy Crear spoke about Sister Ayanna as a larger-than-life photo of her sat at the head table.

"It was exciting to hear Ayanna talk about her trip to Cuba with Pastors for Peace. She loved it and was animated each time she spoke of another aspect of things that were happening in Cuba," said Holt.

"Ayanna began her political life as a Panther and while in Oakland organized the Panther School for our children. She was a leader for the Panthers," said Crear. "Her love for serving the people continued after she returned to Houston, becoming a midwife and delivering over 2,000 babies in this community. Working to build solidarity with the Cuban revolution was a priority for her."

WW PHOTO: GLORIA RUBAC

Speaking for the Friendshipment Caravan to Cuba, John Waller tells the Houston crowd on June 21, "We must end the U.S. blockade!"

As the room filled with activists of all nationalities and ages, from teens to someone 87 years old, each person introduced themselves and gave one reason why they were attending the event.

"I love Cuba and have been several times," said activist Gordon Anderson, who helped paint the yellow school bus that Houston organizers bought, refurbished and sent to Cuba a few years ago. "I want to keep up with what's happening in Cuba despite the blockade and Trump's new restrictions."

"My grandfather loved Cuba, and now that he is gone, I want to learn more about what he loved. I want to go to Cuba and see it for myself," said Siva Kone, a high school senior.

Local Indigenous activist Bryan Parras brought special guests from the northwest U.S. and Alaska. They were in Houston to raise awareness about potential oil and gas drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and homelands of the Gwich'in Nation — peoples who have lived in northern Alaska and Canada forever.

Waller presented information about the history of the Cuba Friendshipment Caravan, including why it travels to Cuba without a license in defiance of U.S. laws: "People in the U.S. can travel anywhere in the world. People around the world can travel to Cuba, which gains a lot of its revenue from tourism. But only [the U.S.] denies people living here the right to go to Cuba.

"We must end the blockade. We cannot let our ability to see Cuba be left up to the whim of whoever is president. This cruel and harmful blockade must be ended now!" Waller told the crowd.

After the program, many people stayed for almost two more hours to talk with Waller and each other. The common topic of discussion was their desire to go to Cuba themselves on the very next Friendshipment Caravan! ☐

Guatemala elections

Social democrats win, progressive parties grow

By Sam Ordóñez

June 29 — After over a week of demonstrations and fraud allegations from many of the parties participating in the election, the electoral authority has agreed to revise the records of the count, but claims that is unlikely to result in significant change in the results.

Elections took place in Guatemala on June 16 with a few surprising outcomes. The elections included the first round of presidential candidates as well as congressional and municipal candidates. The second round of presidential elections will be in August when the top two candidates face off.

Pending final results, the runoff will be between Sandra Torres (National Unity of Hope, UNE), with 25.74 percent of the vote, and Alejandro Giammattei (Vamos) with 13.89 percent. Edmond Mulet of the Humanist party, a candidate linked to both traditional politics and the United Nations (which do not always align in Guatemala), was in third place with 11.14 percent.

Thelma Cabrera (Movement for the Liberation of the Peoples, MLP) came in fourth place with 10.42 percent, significantly outperforming predictions. This is a strong blow to the power of the oligarchy, which had denied that an Indigenous (Maya Mam) woman rooted in peasant struggles could present a serious political threat.

None of the remaining 15 candidates received more than 6 percent.

In a political system dominated by an entrenched oligarchy, the electoral process gives very few possibilities to win real change, and even fewer in Guatemala with its high level of corruption.

However, analyzing electoral results can give insight into the level of political consciousness among the masses. Here, the most important conclusion is that, despite not advancing to the runoff, the peasant and Indigenous movement represented by Thelma Cabrera and the MLP has established itself as a political force that cannot be ignored.

Congressional results

UNE will have 61 seats in the new legislature, short of the 81 needed for a majority but well ahead of any other party. The second largest party was Vamos with 19 seats.

A coalition between UNE and various center-right and right-wing parties will likely be pursued in order to govern, likely weakening the already limited social-democratic policies promoted by UNE.

Various progressive and anti-corruption parties won a total of 19 seats. The biggest single party, the Seed Movement with 8 seats, was recently formed to represent relatively progressive sectors of urban professionals.

Overall, the results mean traditional politicians continue to control the state institutions, and the "Pact of the Corrupt" will remain in power, now led by its social-democratic wing.

Both UNE and Vamos have stated that they will not renew the CICIG (International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala) mandate. That U.N.-backed commission, which carried out anti-corruption investigations, will cease operation this fall. The progressive struggle against corruption will have to be prosecuted in the streets, in opposition to state power.

Fraud and abstentions

On June 17, Thelma Cabrera publicly stated she did not recognize the results of the election due to fraud originating with the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE). She called for mass mobilizations and a transparent vote count, with records available for review. MLP's statement asserts: "On the national level, there is evidence of vote buying by the traditional parties…"

In several municipalities there were busing of voters by the traditional parties, irregularities in the vote count, and violent disturbances related to ballot transportation. In Panzós, Alta Verapaz department, Alejandro Coc Poou died from gunshot wounds when he and other members of the community were attacked by UNE members while waiting for the vote count results. (tinyurl.com/yxmadvrz) Most of these incidents have been linked to municipal elections.

Whatever the extent of electoral fraud, there was a drop in election participation from 70 percent in 2015 to 60 percent this year.

According to official figures released after 94 percent of voting tables had been counted, 9 percent of the votes were blank, and another 4 percent were invalid.

Clashes between civilians and police, reported irregularities and high levels of abstentions are evidence of the flawed character of the electoral process.

There are multiple reports of demonstrations and protesters blocking major roads in several departments and cities, including the capital, that explicitly rejected the election results. TSE maintains that no fraud occurred and is refusing to turn over the records.

Conclusions about the popular struggle

Support for the far right, which has governed the country in recent years, seems to have been deflated. FCN-Nacion, the current president's party formed by ex-military and big business interests, did not win even 5 percent of the presidential vote. PAN-Podemos, the other far-right party, asserting it would make the runoff, came in fifth and only won 2 seats in Congress.

On the other hand, the center-right, mainly represented by Vamos and Unión del Cambio Nacionalista, UCN — now the second and third largest parties in Congress — made significant gains. This was despite the fact that UCN presidential candidate and leader Mario Estrada was arrested in Miami on drug trafficking charges in April.

Given the possibility of electoral fraud by the oligarchal parties, the fact that a Maya Mam woman, and even more so one whose roots are in the peasant struggle, won three departments and came in second in seven others is possibly the most important result.

This symbolic victory resulted from the growing strength of the peasant and Indigenous movement that refuses to make corrupt deals with traditional politicians and which responds to perceived fraud with mass mobilizations.

Combining the results achieved by the five parties that can be characterized as progressive — MLP, Winaq, URNG Maiz, Libre and Convergencia — 19.56 percent of the presidential vote went to progressive candidates. That result would have advanced a single candidate to second place and the runoff.

Two important conclusions can be drawn. The first is that the progressive social movement is growing, with an opportunity to open a period of serious struggle. The second is that to win that struggle, these parties and the social movements they represent need to present a single front against conservatism and neoliberalism.

The oligarchy is trembling at the rise of Thelma Cabrera and the movement she leads, but the fight to root out corruption and dismantle the traditional political structures is only beginning. Transformation of Guatemalan society won't come from Congress or the presidency but from popular organization.

These results prove this consolidation is a real threat to the powers that be. ☐

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WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Manifestación en Filadelfia contra ICE, 24 de junio.

Irán se mantiene firme mientras EE.UU. amenaza con atacar

Por Deirdre Griswold

18 de junio — ¿Han terminado los días en que Washington sacido su gran garrote y el resto del mundo imperialista se alineaba de inmediato?

La pandilla de conspiradores Pompeo-Bolton-Trump en Washington parece estar teniendo dificultades para alinear a sus socios/rivales imperialistas detrás de un ataque contra Irán. Su intento de crear una crisis global por el daño infligido el 13 de junio a dos petroleros en el Estrecho de Ormuz, que no sufrieron pérdidas de vidas y no corrieron peligro de hundirse, recibió gran escepticismo, no solo del público en general. Si no de los jefes de estado de Europa occidental.

Incluso estos compañeros imperialistas son muy conscientes de que los preparativos de los Estados Unidos para un asalto a Irán se basan en un paquete de mentiras, y seguirlos pondría en juego sus propios intereses.

La llamada "prueba" ofrecida por Washington de que Irán estaba detrás de los ataques ha sido ampliamente rechazada, incluso por el propietario de al menos uno de los petroleros.

Ese barco, el Kakura Courageous, es propiedad de una compañía japonesa. Fue atacado mientras el primer ministro de Japón, Shinzo Abe, estaba haciendo una visita de estado a Irán, a pesar de las sanciones de los Estados Unidos.

La idea de que Irán elija ese momento para atacar a un barco japonés es ridícula, por decir lo menos.

Sin embargo, tan débiles como son los argumentos de Estados Unidos para atacar a Irán, Washington ha estado avanzando, intentando alinear el apoyo de al menos algunas de las potencias imperialistas europeas para un movimiento agresivo contra el país rico en petróleo. Y el 17 de junio, Trump envio a otros 1.000 soldados estadounidenses al Medio Oriente.

Las amenazas de guerra no han funcionado

Irán ha desafiado la presión. El mismo día, Irán anunció que tiene la intención de reanudar su producción de combustible nuclear, que acordó suspender en 2015 a cambio de levantar severas sanciones económicas.

La movida de Irán no debería ser una sorpresa. La administración Trump ya había anunciado, hace un año, que se retiraba del acuerdo de 2015. Desde entonces, se ha duplicado las sanciones, tratando de hacer que los iraníes se sometan a la sumisión.

Entonces, ¿por qué debería Irán continuar honrando el acuerdo cuando los Estados Unidos ya lo habían matado?

En el momento en que Washington se retiró del acuerdo, los gobiernos alemán, francés y británico dijeron en una declaración conjunta que la decisión de EE.UU. de volver a imponer sanciones a Irán era "profundamente lamentable". Era una señal temprana de que la clase dominante de EE.UU. ya no podía simplemente chasquear sus dedos y recoger a sus aliados imperialistas, que también son rivales, y sellar asi cada acto de agresión.

Sin embargo, el peligro de la guerra se mantiene. El Pentágono está moviendo más tropas al área, y la administración Trump está incrementando sus amenazas contra Irán.

Es deber de las fuerzas antibélicas en nuestro país ver esto seriamente y salir a las calles para resistir esta agresión flagrante.

¿Dónde está el Congreso?

¿Dónde está el Congreso de los Estados Unidos en todo esto? Esta es la temporada en la que supuestamente todos los ojos están enfocados en las elecciones del próximo año tanto para la presidencia como para el Congreso, como si eso determinara lo que sucederá en el futuro.

La Constitución de los Estados Unidos es absolutamente clara: solo el Congreso puede declarar la guerra. Pero la última vez que ocurrió fue en 1942, en medio de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, cuando los Estados Unidos declararon la guerra a Hungría ocupada por los nazis, a Rumanía y Bulgaria. En los 77 años transcurridos desde entonces, los presidentes de los Estados Unidos han enviado a jóvenes a matar, morir o ser mutilados permanentemente en docenas de guerras no declaradas.

Todos los que sostienen el sistema político de los Estados Unidos como un modelo de "democracia" deben ser considerados como responsables de esta usurpación de poder por parte del ejecutivo. De todas las ramas de gobierno en este país, la Cámara de Representantes de los Estados Unidos es presumiblemente la más democrática. Pero, de hecho, ambas cámaras del Congreso han por mucho tiempo dado su sello de aceptación a las agresiones militares exigidas por la clase rapaz multimillonaria, que ha molido los cuerpos de tantos, aquí y en el extranjero, en su insaciable busca de super ganancias.

Guerra y crisis económica

Esta amenaza de guerra se está desarrollando en un momento en que la mayoría de los gobiernos se están preparando para una desaceleración importante en la economía capitalista global. Esta disminución ya ha comenzado en áreas importantes de producción y en la profundización de las guerras comerciales, pero aún no se ha reflejado en los principales mercados de valores.

El precio de los futuros del petróleo crudo Brent, que alcanzó un mínimo de cinco meses de menos de 60 dólares por barril el día anterior a los ataques, tuvo un breve pero brusco aumento el 13 de junio, cuando parecía una guerra de Estados Unidos contra el petróleo. La producción de Irán era inminente. Cuando disminuyeron las perspectivas de ello, cuando otros países imperialistas occidentales se abstuvieron de respaldar las afirmaciones de Washington, el precio del petróleo volvió a hundirse al día siguiente.

Nada hace que los especuladores saliven más que una intervención militar jugosa. Por ahora, eso no ha sucedido, y los mercados a partir del 15 de junio lo reflejaron. Pero no hay garantías de que la imprudente camarilla en Washington se retire de sus amenazas contra Irán.

A $60 por barril, las empresas estadounidenses que producen petróleo a través del costoso método de extracción de fracking, costoso y ambientalmente horrendo, no pueden competir con el petróleo extraído de pozos. Estas empresas quieren precios más altos, y los quieren ahora.

Pero la caida de los precios de las materias primas es una SEÑAL de sobreproducción capitalista a escala global, y la sobreproducción intensifica la feroz competencia inter-capitalista por los mercados. Una caída en el precio del petróleo también puede reflejar pesimismo sobre la actividad económica futura.

Ganancias antes que el medio ambiente

Incluso hoy en día, cuando se ha demostrado que la quema de combustibles fósiles está calentando el planeta y causando cada vez más extremos climáticos, la lucha por las ganancias del petróleo sigue siendo un motor importante de la competencia capitalista y antagonismos nacionales.

Es impactante pensar que se podría iniciar otra guerra para controlar los beneficios de un recurso que es peligroso para el futuro del mundo entero. Pero, ¿debería alguien esperar que los gobernantes capitalistas sean sensibles y se preocupen por el calentamiento global a largo plazo, cuando su sistema es impulsado por la lucha diaria con fines de lucro perro-come-perro y están dispuestos a crear enormes catástrofes humanas y ambientales con sus guerras?

EE.UU. con mira hacia naciones petroleras

No es una coincidencia de que la gran mayoría de los países sometidos a ataques militares de los Estados Unidos durante las últimas décadas hayan sido naciones productoras de petróleo. Solo piense en lo que han estado haciendo el Pentágono y la CIA: 1991, ataque con bombas e invasión parcial de Irak; 1998, ataque con misiles de crucero en Sudán; 2003, invasión y ocupación de Irak; 2011, el bombardeo de Libia y el asesinato de Muammar Gaddafi; 2012, inicio de la guerra contra Siria; 2014, ataques aéreos en Irak y Siria.

Y no hablar de los esfuerzos en curso de Estados Unidos para derribar al gobierno venezolano con sanciones e intentos de golpe de estado.

Todos son países productores de petróleo. Pero no solo eso.

Son todos los países que habían sido oprimidos y explotados por las potencias coloniales europeas. Habían alcanzado cierta medida de soberanía después de que una ola de luchas de liberación provocara la descolonización.

Y precisamente porque son productores de petróleo, tenían los medios para construir con éxito sus economías nacionales.

Sin embargo, debido a las intervenciones imperialistas en el Medio Oriente, lideradas por los EE. UU. si no que también participaron por las potencias europeas de la OTAN, muchos de estos países están hoy destrozados, sus economías destruidas por la guerra y su gente traumatizada hasta tal punto que no hay futuro y están huyendo por millones.

Esta es la causa de la crisis de inmigración/migración que enfrenta gran parte de Europa hoy, y ese es un factor en la resistencia de estos países imperialistas a ser arrastrados a otra guerra.

El pasado torturado de Irán

Las últimas amenazas contra Irán no son nada nuevo. Los gobiernos imperialistas de los Estados Unidos, tanto republicanos como demócratas, han tenido al país en su punto de mira desde 1951, cuando un movimiento por la soberanía nacional liderado por Mohammad Mossadegh nacionalizó lo que había sido la Compañía de Petróleo Anglo-Persa.

Dos años más tarde, un golpe de estado de la CIA dirigido por Kermit Roosevelt Jr. derrocó al gobierno nacionalista e instaló al Shah, que permitió que las compañías estadounidenses y británicas se hicieran cargo del petróleo nuevamente. El mismo Roosevelt pronto se convirtió en un ejecutivo de Gulf Oil. La sangrienta represión bajo el odiado Shah eventualmente llevó a un levantamiento masivo en 1979 que derrocó a este títere de la compañía petrolera. Una lucha entre varias fuerzas de clase en ese levantamiento resultó en el gobierno islámico de hoy.

Aunque conservador en algunas áreas, este gobierno re nacionalizó el petróleo y ha utilizado gran parte de los ingresos para elevar el nivel de vida del pueblo iraní. Al mismo tiempo, los Estados Unidos han tratado de frenar el desarrollo de Irán imponiendo sanciones económicas, comerciales, científicas y militares a Irán, de vez en cuando, desde la revolución de 1979.

Como una medida importante de su progreso, hoy en día las mujeres constituyen la mayoría de los estudiantes universitarios en Irán y se pueden encontrar en trabajos calificados en todos los niveles. Comparemos eso con las condiciones en Arabia Saudita, que está gobernada por la familias multimillonarias de la casa de Saúd y tiene las leyes anti-mujeres más draconianas del planeta.

Los monarcas de Arabia Saudita reciben una bienvenida real en Washington, mientras que uno de los primeros viajes de Donald Trump al extranjero después de convertirse en presidente fue visitar al Rey Salman en la lujosa Corte Real de Arabia Saudita en Riyadh. Arabia Saudita, donde los disidentes son asesinados y los inmigrantes hacen todo el trabajo sucio mientras son tratados como esclavos, está en apuros con el "líder del mundo libre".

Más razones para que las fuerzas antibélicas se movilicen aquí y manifiesten claramente ante el mundo: dinero para empleos, educación y atención médica, ¡no guerra! ¡Poner fin a las sanciones sobre Irán! ¡No hay sangre por las ganancias del petróleo!. □