

Military Resistance 9L13



AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Michigan Family Reeling From Beloved Marine's Death In Afghanistan

Dec. 7, 2011 By Eric D. Lawrence, Detroit Free Press Staff Writer

Marine Staff Sgt. Vincent Bell didn't make it home as often as he wanted, so his family relished his visit during the first week of October.

Now, his family must cling to memories from that visit. Bell, 28, who grew up in Detroit, died Nov. 30 of injuries from an improvised explosive device while on patrol in Afghanistan's Helmand province.

"We're all so hurt, and we just felt like this wasn't supposed to happen," said London Bell, 34, of Harrison Township, one of his two older sisters. The family knew the risks of combat but is struggling with the brutal results, she said.

"It's been very painful for all of us, we're just feeling a little lost right now," London Bell said.

Vincent Bell joined the Marines in 2001, leaving shortly after graduating from Crockett Technical High School in Detroit. A military news release had said he was from Wayne, but his sister said he was from Detroit.

His sister described him as a Marine warrior with the spirit of a little boy, someone who would order ice cream with sprinkles and someone who loved animals.

His best friend was a sweet-natured pit bull named Nala, and he used to sing to her as a puppy.

Other Marines have called to offer support because they loved Bell like his family, she said, noting that he had that effect on the people he met.

"He had a light in him that he drew people to him," his sister said. "I feel like I've lost one of my soul mates."

Bell was an artilleryman with the 2nd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, based in Camp Pendleton, Calif. He served in Afghanistan and Iraq. In addition to his sister, he is survived by his mother, Pamela Alexander of Clinton Township; his father, James Bell of Salt Lake City, and his other sister, Andrea Roe of Harrison Township.

A wake is to be held 3-7 p.m. Sunday at United Memorial Funeral Home, 75 Dickinson St., in Mt. Clemens. Services are set for 11 a.m. Monday at Renaissance Unity Church, 11200 E. Eleven Mile, in Warren.

**POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT
THE BLOODSHED**

**THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE
WARS**

Great Moments In U.S. Military History: A Bit Of Help For The Opium Trade

December 17, 2011 DPA & Associated Press

Kabul – U.S.-led forces raided the house of a counternarcotics official around 1 a.m. Saturday in Ahmadaba district of Paktia province, Afghanistan, detaining the director and killing a woman, a statement said Saturday.

Coalition force raided the house of a Dr Hafizullah (no first name provided), director of the counternarcotics department of Paktia province Saturday morning, detaining him along with his two sons, a statement of the provincial governor office said.

The governor of Paktia province condemned the raid, the governor's spokesman, Rohullah Samon, said.

He said local authorities, who believe the counternarcotics chief has not committed any crime, have contacted the coalition about getting him released.

After international troops exchanged gunfire with guards at the house, they detained the counternarcotics chief and two of his sons, he said.

An Afghan woman and another member of the counternarcotics chief's family were killed and three other women were injured, Samon said.

Militants Kill A Truck Driver And Burn Seven Tankers Carrying Oil For Foreign Troops In Afghanistan

[Thanks to Felicity Arbuthnot who sent this in. She writes: "And a wretched driver pays the price. Another "allied" victim."]

December 12, 2011 AFP

Militants have killed a truck driver and burnt seven tankers carrying oil for foreign troops in Afghanistan, the second such attack in southwest Pakistan in less than a week.

The convoy was attacked on Monday while returning to the port city Karachi from the Afghan border, which Pakistan shut to supplies for foreign troops in Afghanistan on November 26 after U.S. air attacks killed 24 Pakistani soldiers.

Militants attacked in the town of Dadar in Bolan district, about 90km southwest of Quetta, the provincial capital of Baluchistan, police said.

Around eight approached the convoy on motorcycles in Bolan district, ordered it to stop and started firing on the tankers.

A driver of one of the tankers was also hit by a bullet and was killed instantly. The attackers later put the tankers on fire and escaped.

More Resistance Action

17 December, 2011 PakTribune

KABUL: An attack on a police station in the west of Kabul on Friday ended without casualties, police and the Interior Ministry said.

An attacker threw a hand grenade at the station, ministry spokesman Sediq Sediqqi said on his official Twitter account, and soon afterwards police said they had regained control.

"There were gunfights in Police District Five. There were no casualties. Now everything is under control and we are investigating the case," said Muhammad Zahir, head of the criminal investigation department for Kabul police.

Earlier, a witness heard gunfire and at least two explosions, and a police source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said several bombers had attacked the police station.

**THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO COMPREHENSIBLE
REASON TO BE IN THIS EXTREMELY HIGH RISK
LOCATION AT THIS TIME, EXCEPT THAT THE
PACK OF TRAITORS THAT RUN THE
GOVERNMENT IN D.C. WANT YOU THERE COVER
THEIR ASS:
That is not a good enough reason.**



A U.S. soldier walks outside a police station following an attack in Kabul, Afghanistan, Dec. 16, 2011. Assaultants threw a hand grenade at a police station in the Afghan capital on Friday, triggering an explosion and a gunbattle with police. (AP Photo/Musadeq Sadeq)

**IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE
END THE OCCUPATION**

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Resistance Action



(Graphic: London Financial Times)

Dec 14 (Reuters) & Dec 16 (Reuters)

MOSUL - Insurgents opened fire at an Iraqi army checkpoint and killed a soldier in eastern Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

BAGHDAD - Insurgents in a car wounded a police colonel inside his vehicle in southern Baghdad, police said.

BAGHDAD - Insurgents shot at the convoy of Major General Qassim al-Moussawi, spokesman of Baghdad security operations.

FALLUJA - Two policemen were wounded when insurgents in a speedy car threw a hand grenade at the Iraqi Islamic Party office in the centre of Falluja, 50 km (32 miles) west of Baghdad, local police said.

KIRKUK - A bomb attached to a vehicle of a military academy student seriously wounded him and a passer-by late on Thursday in southern Kirkuk, 250 Km (155 miles) north of Baghdad, police said.

KIRKUK - A roadside bomb went off near the car of an Iraqi army lieutenant colonel, Salih Hussein, seriously wounding him late on Thursday in western Kirkuk, police said.

MOSUL - Insurgents stormed the house of an Iraqi policeman and killed him late on Thursday in western Mosul, 390 km (240 miles) north of Baghdad police said.

MILITARY NEWS

**THIS IS HOW OBAMA BRINGS THEM HOME:
ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE**



NOVEMBER 12: The remains of U.S. Army Pfc. Cody R. Norris, age 20, of Houston, TX, at Dover Air Force Base November 12, 2011 in Dover, Delaware. Norris was killed November 9 when insurgents attacked his unit with small arms fire in Kandahar province, Afghanistan. (Photo by Brendan Hoffman/Getty Images)

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.

“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

“The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppose.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

**I say that when troops cannot be counted on to follow orders because they see the futility and immorality of them THAT is the real key to ending a war.
-- Al Jaccoma, Veterans For Peace**

“The Generals Understood Quite Well That If They Gave The Orders For The Tanks To Bomb Us In Tahrir, You Would Have Gotten A Mutiny Or A Refusal Of Orders”

“You Have The Army Of The Generals”

“You Have The Army Of The Poor Conscripts And The Young Officers Who Share The Same Plight And Hardship As All Other Egyptians’

There is only one lesson, actually: if your movement remains confined to the square than you’re not going to succeed. You have to take this movement from the square to the workplaces and the university campuses.

10 December 2011 Hossam el-Hamalawy interviewed by Ali Mustafa; New Socialist [Excerpts]

Hossam el-Hamalawy is an Egyptian journalist, photographer and socialist activist from Cairo who maintains the widely followed blog 3arabawy.

The talk about the army being the most popular institution among Egyptians is a complete lie.

How can you judge that?

When it's conscription time, do you find hundreds of thousands of Egyptian youth just running and flocking to the camps in order to enroll in the service? No, everybody tries to bribe his way out or dodge the service--that's the barometer, really. When it's conscription time, what's the behavior of Egyptians?

The army has been the ruling institution in this country since 1952. All the presidents have come from military backgrounds. Many of the cabinet ministers also come from army general backgrounds. Many of the governors also come from similar backgrounds.

Many of the public sector CEO's are given those companies to manage as a reward after they retire from military service.

So, the army is entrenched in our civilian life.

They control from 25 to 40 percent of our economy. You can't get any accurate stats about them because there is a big iron curtain that the military have drawn around themselves over these past decades.

SCAF [Supreme Council of the Armed Forces] receives \$1.3 billion every year from U.S. taxpayers, and they are the second largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid after Israel.

The only reason the army did not fire at protesters in Tahrir and elsewhere is that you have two armies: you have the army of the generals, and you have the army of the poor conscripts and the young officers who share the same plight and hardship as all other Egyptians.

The generals understood quite well that if they gave the orders for the tanks to bomb us in Tahrir, this army would have collapsed--you would have gotten a mutiny or a refusal of orders.

You are definitely faced with the biggest strike wave that this country has seen since 1946; this strike wave that's been continuous from December 2006 up until today is the longest, strongest and most sustained strike action wave in our history, since 1946.

Even the 70s were not as strong as we are today.

But again, these actions are happening largely spontaneously and independent from any activist groups.

The activist groups have some presence in some of the mills, some of the factories, some of the workplaces, and some of the unions, but they are not running the show in any sense. We cannot claim that at all.

So, the labor movement is taking mass leaps forward--they've achieved great victories in terms of successful strikes, getting rid of the old management in many of the factories that were affiliated with the old regime, forming independent unions, dissolving the corrupt unions that they had in some cases--but this is independent of the activist groups.

According to a labor organizer friend of mine, you witnessed at least 1,500 industrial actions in February alone, which is the total amount of all industrial actions in 2010. Now, these actions continued in February through March, and went down a little bit in April, May and June.

But then you had September, which was probably the month that had the biggest hit in terms of strikes, where roughly three quarters of a million Egyptians took part in a strike; they were mainly in the public transport sector, the teachers, the doctors, and the sugar refineries.

Here we are only mentioning the major blocs, but you opened up the newspaper at the time and all these wildcat strikes were happening everywhere.

At the moment there are several important protests taking place, mainly in Alexandria.

Tomorrow in Cairo there will be a protest in front of the State Council in Dokki on Giza Street--it's called Magles Al-Dawla--where workers from two privatized factories are going to show up for a court case to demand the re-nationalization of their companies--which they already won, by the way.

That's the other problem: even when you have a strike that reaches victory it never means that the government is going to fulfill its promises. Just pick and choose the name of any company that's right now on strike and I will tell you that they have been on strike since 2009, or even 2007!

Tahrir Square is for sure the symbol of this revolution but we will not fall into the trap of taking Tahrir as a barometer for how the revolution is progressing or regressing. That's what we've been saying to activists for the past months who have been demoralized.

For example, you call for a "Million Man Protest" in Tahrir to denounce military tribunals and only a few hundred show up, so you get demoralized.

But at the same time, within the same month, you have 750,000 Egyptians going on strike and, in effect, destroying the emergency law.

Even if they didn't show up at your own protest in Tahrir Square, they effectively broke the emergency law.

I've been in situations where I would be with a cab driver and he would be all the way slagging off on the people in Tahrir, but then he drops me off in order to go and join a sit-in by other cab drivers in front of the Finance Ministry here in Nasr City.

Yes, workers would not show up for Tahrir, but they would show up two blocks away at the Cabinet headquarters, blocking the road and defying the military police--even clashing with them on occasions--to demand their own rights.

For me, whatever happens on the university campuses and in the workplaces is even much more important than Tahrir. If you're a Mahalla worker and I see in you in Tahrir, I will tell you, "What the hell are you doing with me in Tahrir? Go back to your own factory and try to purge the NDP [Mubarak's National Democratic Party] and the security officials that you have. Try to take over your own factory and self-manage it!"

Ali Mustafa: Finally, at a time when the global Occupy movement is rapidly growing across North America and Europe, influenced largely by Egypt and the other uprisings across the Arab world, what do you think are the main lessons--positive and negative--activists and ordinary people committed to social change should take away from the experience of the Egyptian revolution?

There is only one lesson, actually: if your movement remains confined to the square than you're not going to succeed.

You have to take this movement from the square to the workplaces and the university campuses.

We did not topple Mubarak in Tahrir.

Yes, Tahrir was a heroic battle, a heroic sit-in, and a heroic occupation, which will definitely go down in history as one of the most fantastic struggles that happened this century, but at the same time, the regime could have held out; Mubarak could have stayed in power for a much longer time if it wasn't for the labour strikes that broke out.

So I'm very proud of our colleagues and brothers and sisters who have taken part in the Occupy movement everywhere, but they have to link their struggle to the workplaces.

If they don't bring in the working class--which is a big challenge, and I'm not saying it's something easy--then this movement is going to die.

“People Are Right When They Say That A New Russian Revolution Is Beginning”

December 14, 2011 Boris Kagarlitsky interviewed by Lee Sustar; Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

Boris Kagarlitsky, a former political prisoner in the ex-USSR, socialist activist and author of numerous books about Russia.

Lee Sustar: Since coming to power in 1999, Putin was able to preside over an economic expansion that created stability based on a kind of social contract--until the economic crisis hit in 2007-08. What has happened since?

The economy did grow strongly from around 2002 to 2007. As a government official said of that period, many people in Russia moved from misery into poverty--as if that were an achievement.

In truth, it was some kind of achievement.

There was real industrial growth in that period. But most growth of industrial output was provided by old, obsolete equipment from the old Soviet period, or by foreign investment in the most protected industries, like auto. The sectors that were most protected were precisely the ones that attracted the most foreign investment, because foreign companies had to build plants in Russia to gain access to the Russian market.

So in many ways, things were doing better economically up to 2008. But things deteriorated very rapidly after the collapse of oil prices. Industrial output declined, unemployment increased, and a social crisis erupted.

All of a sudden, people discovered that in the period of Putin, the remaining parts of the welfare state from the USSR had been undone, or were coming under attack. So we gradually started losing, one by one, elements of welfare state that we retained after the "reforms" of the 1990s.

Now there is a systematic attack on education, health care and some elements of social provisions. We have austerity, as in Europe. It's comparable to what you see around the rest of the capitalist world.

So over the last three years, the economy was deteriorating, anger was growing, and yet nothing was happening.

Lee Sustar: Why the delayed response in terms of protest?

People were hoping that things would get better. Putin and his entourage retained some popularity for their record for the first part of the decade. It was, of course, not all their success, but it was associated with them.

Also, opposition forces in Russia were almost nonexistent. Liberals--not the kind of liberals you have in the West; really, they're neoliberals--are much worse than Putin on economic questions. But their criticism on such a right-wing basis was unpopular. Then there are the clowns, like the official Communist Party or (the fascist) Vladimir Zhirinovskiy or the fake social democratic party called Just Russia. These are not any kind of political alternative.

Also, the left failed to build a political organization. It had little access to the media. It was marginal, sectarian and split into different groups. In that sense, there was very little political activity that could be presented as a political pole of attraction.

That was the situation for the last three years. There was little public activity.

But Putin's popularity collapsed, and what happened in the December elections was, in a way, his punishment. People either didn't vote, or they voted for anybody but United Russia, the pro-government party. That resulted in an absolutely catastrophic collapse for United Russia.

The original plan of the government was to get about 55 percent of the vote, and prepare for the next presidential elections, in which Putin was going to be the candidate.

Instead, people didn't vote.

And those who did, ironically, voted against United Russia. The real vote of for United Russia--which was proved by exit polls and by counts of polling stations under the control of independent observers, went down to 20 to 25 percent.

That is what some people in United Russia also told me.

In fact, United Russia knew it was going to lose in the big cities. But it was sure that the small towns and remote areas would compensate for this. Instead, the vote collapsed everywhere.

So at about 4 p.m. Moscow time, there was a sudden decision by the government to rig the elections.

I guarantee that there was no preliminary agreement to carry out such a fraud.

Some level of fraud is routine in Russia, to make things look a little better. This time, there was an order to carry out massive fraud. The situation for the government was deteriorating hour by hour.

That's why the situation became so scandalous. If they had planned election fraud beforehand, they would have been able to rig it more smoothly.

They did everything wrong. They were caught in hundreds of cases.

The figures became absurd.

At least three provinces ended up with a voter turnout that was more than 100 percent. In Rostov, the voter turnout was reported at 140 percent. They had all kinds of techniques for vote-rigging that were completely ineffective. United Russia organized a massive vote fraud--and still failed to get 50 percent of the vote.

The liberal intelligentsia in Moscow was completely frustrated.

But there was a spontaneous protest in Moscow of 10,000, and one of similar size in St. Petersburg. In Petersburg, the left actually organized a few boycotts of the vote on Election Day.

In Petersburg, the protest was very much hegemonized by left and progressive forces.

In Moscow, it was a mixed bag. The right-wing liberals are fighting hard to hegemonize the movement, but the nationalists also joined in the protests.

The December 5 protest continued into the next day. There were quite a few clashes between students and police.

The European University in St. Petersburg had to cancel classes in the sociology department because most of the students were under arrest. So you can get an idea of how massive the protest was.

During these protests, there was a spontaneous coalition of different forces. This was to be followed by a rally on December 10, which was to take place on Revolution Square.

It was initiated by the Left Front, a coalition of different leftist groups.

But then the liberals made an agreement with the government--without consulting their partners in the Left Front--to hold a legal demonstration elsewhere.

It was moved to Bolotny Square, and Bolotny means swamp. So there were a lot of jokes about going from the revolution into the swamp.

The aim of the liberals was to take over the protest movement, and to a certain extent, they succeeded.

Finally, there was an agreement that the left would still gather around Revolution Square and then march to Bolotny.

It was an important achievement--it established the freedom to march on the streets, which has been denied for years.

But at the rally, the liberals controlled the stage, the message and the media. The left is getting increasingly marginalized. But the liberals are leading the movement nowhere. They have called another rally on December 17, another on December 24, then another on the New Year.

But the movement is gradually losing steam. The government will not cancel the election or revise the election law, which was a major demand of the protest.

And at the December 10 demonstration, there was a bloc between the liberals and the far right. The liberals allowed the right to come into the square with their imperial banners, and let them to speak.

For the first time, we had a neo-Nazi speaking to such a large crowd--a scandalous situation that demoralized quite a few people. Thus, the movement is being demoralized, and will probably be defeated in its current form.

But people are right when they say that a new Russian Revolution is beginning.

There were rallies all over the country on December 10.

Unlike Moscow, these protests were dominated by people who spoke on social issues, and who were critical of the social and economic system.

So the split between the liberals and the left is a good thing. The left is participating in protests with liberals, but there is a feeling that they represent a different agenda, and so the left should be separate.

So now the task for the left is to organize separately, even though we can support the general democratic demands.

What the liberals are doing is a dead end.

We have to organize at the enterprise level, at the university and in the schools, and develop more radical forms protest, like those used by the anti-globalization forces in the West. We have to develop social movements at the grassroots level.

But the left is not united. Some segments of the left are becoming the left wing of the liberals. A lot of people are happy to go to these rallies and support general democratic demands. They argue that nothing else should be declared, because it will push away the crowd.

My point is exactly the opposite.

The liberals are losing grounds because they don't speak about the issues in which their own mass base is interested--health care, for example.

On these issues, the liberals have no differences with the government. The left needs to develop its own agenda that is more radical--and one that is in conflict with the liberals.

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN MILITARY SERVICE?

Forward Military Resistance along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly.

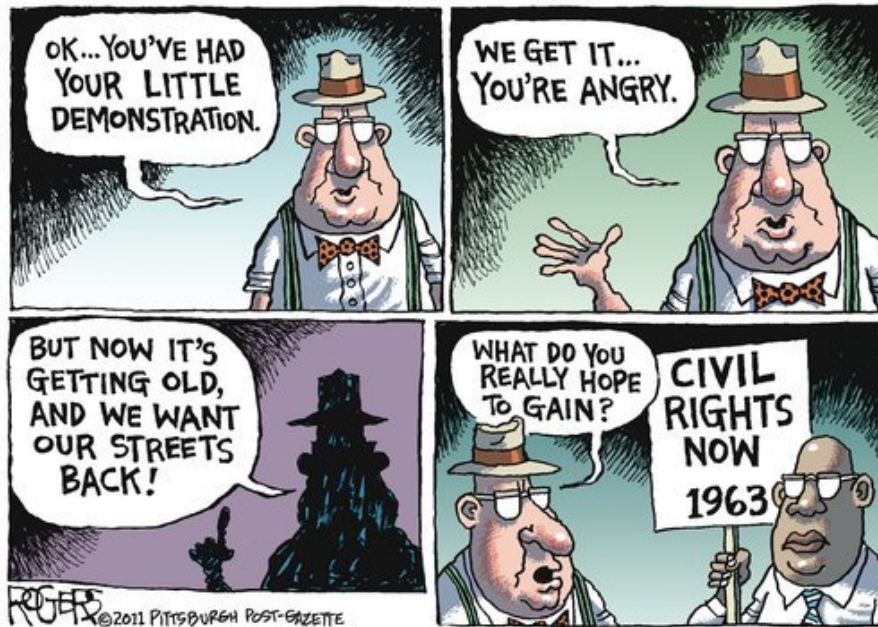
Whether in Afghanistan, Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the wars and economic injustice, inside the armed services and at home.

Send email requests to address up top or write to: The Military Resistance, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657. Phone: 888.711.2550

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



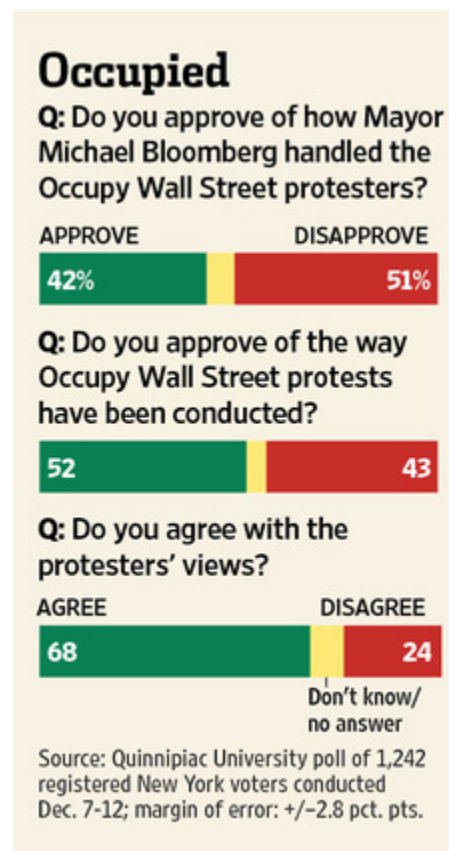
CLASS WAR REPORTS



Huge Majority Of New Yorkers Agree With Occupy Wall Street Protesters’

Views:

Huge Majority Of New Yorkers “Believe It Is Government’s Responsibility To Ensure That Workers Are Paid A Decent Wage”



DECEMBER 15, 2011 By MICHAEL HOWARD SAUL, Wall Street Journal [Excerpts]

New York City voters disapprove of Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s handling of the Occupy Wall Street protest by a margin of 51% to 42%, a poll released Wednesday showed.

The poll also showed widespread support for so-called "living wage" legislation in the City Council that would require wages of at least \$10 per hour on projects that receive significant public subsidies.

Mr. Bloomberg opposes the legislation, and Council Speaker Christine Quinn has yet to take a position.

On the living wage bill, 74% of city voters said they thought it was a good idea to mandate higher wages for projects that receive taxpayer subsidies.

More than 80% of voters said they believe it is government's responsibility to ensure that workers are paid a decent wage.

The fate of the bill rests in the hands of Ms. Quinn, a close ally of Mr. Bloomberg and a potential candidate for mayor in 2013.

On The March After The Royal Dictatorship In Bahrain Kills A Democracy Activist



Anti-government protesters begin marching Friday, Dec. 16, 2011, from Abu Saiba village west of the capital of Manama, Bahrain, up to a main highway to attempt a sit-in along the road for the second straight day. Thousands had gathered in the village for the funeral of Sayed Ali al-Qassab, seen in two different images in signs carried by protesters, who was killed during a protest the day before. Delays in releasing the body prompted many mourners to instead march toward the highway until forced back by riot police. Writing at top is words from prayers. (AP Photo/Hasan Jamali)

**“If You Had Any Doubt That We Are At The Dawn Of New Movements For Social Justice In This Country, Consider That High School Students Organized This Walkout In One Day”
“It Was Later Estimated That Over 500 Garfield Students Had Participated”**



Teacher Jesse Hagopian escorted from a state legislature hearing after attempting a citizen's arrest of lawmakers. Socialist Worker

December 12, 2011 By Jesse Hagopian, a member of Social Equality Educators, Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

AS I was escorted by the Thurston County sheriff into my jail cell, sporting the tattered plastic sandals they exchanged for my shoes, wearing my yellow "I AM A TEACHER" T-shirt, I worried that one of the other inmates may have had a bad experience with their high school history teacher and might want to take it out on me.

But mostly, I was fretting that after going to all the trouble to raise my voice for education funding in a state legislature gone deaf, my only reward would be a cold bench, a criminal record and hundreds of dollars in fines.

I knew I hadn't done anything wrong--the police had let the real criminals who broke our economy go free--but at that moment, I doubted the wisdom of my attempt to school the Washington State Ways and Means Committee on its constitutional duty to fund education. Isolated from my colleagues, I questioned whether my actions were innovative or below standard pedagogy.

All I could think about was whether I was going to be released in time to make it back to my Garfield High School classroom the next morning, or if not, would they let me have another phone call to get a substitute.

By the time my squad car pulled away from the Capitol, with me cuffed in the back, all the adrenaline had faded, and I was much less confident of my actions. It was my first arrest experience, yet I was unsure if my symbolic act would have any effect.

Further, I worried how my students and their parents would react.

The next morning, I pulled into the parking lot of Seattle's Garfield High School. As I got out of my car, a student from across the way yelled, "Free Mr. Hagopian!"

Oh no, I thought, my students know. Of course they know! What do they think? What will their parents think? As I passed the giant mural of the school mascot bulldog, it seemed to be coming after me.

But as I walked through the halls, every fist bump and "right on" made it clear the Garfield Bulldogs were going to stand by me. I almost lost my cool (I could feel my lip quiver) when one student told me had helped set up a Facebook page called "Free Mr. Hagopian," and hundreds of students had joined it that first day.

"Did you hear? We are going to walk out."

One of my former students had a determined look on his face as he announced his intentions to me that afternoon. I asked him why they were going to walkout, and he shoved a pamphlet in my hand that outlined the impact of the budget cuts:

"Students who want full schedules have been denied them due to a lack of teachers. Many seniors were denied a science class due to a complete lack of state science funding.

"Other academic courses, such as advanced math classes, have been repeatedly cut from our school.

"The removal of summer school and night school has removed resources that allowed many students to graduate on time, therefore effectively increasing the amount the state must spend on those students.

"Join the movement. Spread the word. Get active."

I couldn't believe it--that is, until hundreds of students came streaming by my room with signs that read, "Fund our future!" and "No more cuts!"

When there were only a few kids in my final class of the day, I realized the students had organized a mass walkout in a single day.

It was later estimated that over 500 Garfield students had participated.

The next day, the whole school was buzzing.

The story of the student walkout had made all the local news networks, Seattle Times and Keith Olbermann's Countdown. "We marched to City Hall, and the mayor came out and told us we were right, and to keep up the good work," one student told me.

By the weekend, the students had published an op-ed in the Seattle Times, and a picture of their rally appeared in the A section of the New York Times.

If you had any doubt that we are at the dawn of new movements for social justice in this country, consider that high school students organized this walkout in one day and have now formed an organization called Students of Washington for Change (SWaC) to help coordinate the struggle across the city and the state--including an all-city walkout against the budget cuts on Wednesday, December 14.

I have often hoped that my students would one day learn the lessons of history I had taught them--from the struggles of the abolitionists and women's rights advocates in antebellum America, to student movements against the Vietnam War and the freedom riders of the civil rights movement.

Last year, many of my students did very well on the AP U.S. history exam, but I am happy to say that now, they have actually passed the test.

Troops Invited:

Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or email contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe.

An Open Letter From America's Port Truck Drivers On Occupy The Ports:

**“We Are Fighting Like Mad To
Overcome Our Exploitation, So
Please, Stick By Us Long After
December 12”**

“When We Try To Blow The Whistle About Skipped Inspections, Faulty Equipment, Or Falsified Logs, Then We Are ‘Starved Out’”



December 12, 2011 Coalition For Clean & Safe Ports

We are the front-line workers who haul container rigs full of imported and exported goods to and from the docks and warehouses every day.

We have been elected by committees of our co-workers at the Ports of Los Angeles, Long Beach, Oakland, Seattle, Tacoma, New York and New Jersey to tell our collective story.

We have accepted the honor to speak up for our brothers and sisters about our working conditions despite the risk of retaliation we face.

One of us is a mother, the rest of us fathers. Between the five of us we have 11 children and one more baby on the way. We have a combined 46 years of experience driving cargo from our shores for America's stores.

We are inspired that a non-violent democratic movement that insists on basic economic fairness is capturing the hearts and minds of so many working people. Thank you "99 Percenters" for hearing our call for justice. We are humbled and overwhelmed by recent attention. Normally we are invisible.

Today's demonstrations will impact us.

While we cannot officially speak for every worker who shares our occupation, we can use this opportunity to reveal what it's like to walk a day in our shoes for the 110,000 of us in America whose job it is to be a port truck driver.

It may be tempting for media to ask questions about whether we support a shutdown, but there are no easy answers.

Instead, we ask you, are you willing to listen and learn why a one-word response is impossible?

We love being behind the wheel. We are proud of the work we do to keep America's economy moving.

But we feel humiliated when we receive paychecks that suggest we work part time at a fast-food counter.

Especially when we work an average of 60 or more hours a week, away from our families.

There is so much at stake in our industry. It is one of the nation's most dangerous occupations. We don't think truck driving should be a dead-end road in America. It should be a good job with a middle-class paycheck like it used to be decades ago.

We desperately want to drive clean and safe vehicles. Rigs that do not fill our lungs with deadly toxins, or dirty the air in the communities we haul in.

Poverty and pollution are like a plague at the ports. Our economic conditions are what led to the environmental crisis.

You, the public, have paid a severe price along with us.

Why?

Just like Wall Street doesn't have to abide by rules, our industry isn't bound to regulation. So the market is run by con artists.

The companies we work for call us independent contractors, as if we were our own bosses, but they boss us around.

We receive Third World wages and drive sweatshops on wheels.

We cannot negotiate our rates. (Usually we are not allowed to even see them.) We are paid by the load, not by the hour. So when we sit in those long lines at the terminals, or if we are stuck in traffic, we become volunteers who basically donate our time to the trucking and shipping companies.

That's the nice way to put it.

We have all heard the words "modern-day slaves" at the lunch stops.

There are no restrooms for drivers.

We keep empty bottles in our cabs. Plastic bags too. We feel like dogs.

An Oakland driver was recently banned from the terminal because he was spied relieving himself behind a container.

Neither the port, nor the terminal operators or anyone in the industry thinks it is their responsibility to provide humane and hygienic facilities for us.

It is absolutely horrible for drivers who are women, who risk infection when they try to hold it until they can find a place to go.

The companies demand we cut corners to compete. It makes our roads less safe.

When we try to blow the whistle about skipped inspections, faulty equipment, or falsified logs, then we are “starved out.”

That means we are either fired outright, or more likely, we never get dispatched to haul a load again.

It may be difficult to comprehend the complex issues and nature of our employment.

For us too.

When businesses disguise workers like us as contractors, the Department of Labor calls it misclassification.

We call it illegal. Those who profit from global trade and goods movement are getting away with it because everyone is doing it. One journalist took the time to talk to us this week and she explains it very well to outsiders. We hope you will read the enclosed article “How Goldman Sachs and Other Companies Exploit Port Truck Drivers.”
[www.alternet.org/economy/153393/how_goldman_sachs_and_other_companies_exploit_port_truck_drivers_%E2%80%94_occupy_protesters_plan_to_shut_down_west_coast_ports_in_protest/]

But the short answer to the question: Why are companies like SSA Marine, the Seattle-based global terminal operator that runs one of the West Coast’s major trucking carriers, Shippers’ Transport Express, doing this?

Why would mega-rich Maersk, a huge Danish shipping and trucking conglomerate that wants to drill for more oil with Exxon Mobil in the Gulf Coast conduct business this way too?

To cheat on taxes, drive down business costs, and deny us the right to belong to a union, that’s why.

The typical arrangement works like this: Everything comes out of our pockets or is deducted from our paychecks.

The truck or lease, fuel, insurance, registration, you name it. Our employers do not have to pay the costs of meeting emissions-compliant regulations; that is our financial burden to bear. Clean trucks cost about four to five times more than what we take home in a year. A few of us haul our company's trucks for a tiny fraction of what the shippers pay per load instead of an hourly wage. They still call us independent owner-operators and give us a 1099 rather than a W-2.

We have never recovered from losing our basic rights as employees in America.

Every year it literally goes from bad to worse to the unimaginable. We were ground zero for the government's first major experiment into letting big business call the shots. Since it worked so well for the CEOs in transportation, why not the mortgage and banking industry too?

Even the few of us who are hired as legitimate employees are routinely denied our legal rights under this system.

Just ask our co-workers who haul clothing brands like Guess?, Under Armour, and Ralph Lauren's Polo.

The carrier they work for in Los Angeles is called Toll Group and is headquartered in Australia. At the busiest time of the holiday shopping season, 26 drivers were axed after wearing Teamster T-shirts to work.

They were protesting the lack of access to clean, indoor restrooms with running water.

The company hired an anti-union consultant to intimidate the drivers. Down Under, the same company bargains with 12,000 of our counterparts in good faith.

Despite our great hardships, many of us cannot — or refuse to, as some of the most well-intentioned suggest — “just quit.”

First, we want to work and do not have a safety net. Many of us are tied to one-sided leases. But more importantly, why should we have to leave? Truck driving is what we do, and we do it well.

We are the skilled, specially-licensed professionals who guarantee that Target, Best Buy, and Wal-Mart are all stocked with just-in-time delivery for consumers. Take a look at all the stuff in your house. The things you see advertised on TV. Chances are a port truck driver brought that special holiday gift to the store you bought it.

We would rather stick together and transform our industry from within. We deserve to be fairly rewarded and valued.

That is why we have united to stage convoys, park our trucks, marched on the boss, and even shut down these ports.

It's like our hero Dutch Prior, a Shipper's/SSA Marine driver, told CBS Early Morning this month: “If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything.”

The more underwater we are, the more our restlessness grows. We are being thoughtful about how best to organize ourselves and do what is needed to win dignity, respect, and justice.

Nowadays greedy corporations are treated as “people” while the politicians they bankroll cast union members who try to improve their workplaces as “thugs.”

But we believe in the power and potential behind a truly united 99%. We admire the strength and perseverance of the longshoremen. We are fighting like mad to overcome our exploitation, so please, stick by us long after December 12.

Our friends in the Coalition for Clean & Safe Ports created a pledge you can sign to support us here.

[<https://secure3.convio.net/ctw/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=255>]

We drivers have a saying, “We may not have a union yet, but no one can stop us from acting like one.”

The brothers and sisters of the Teamsters have our backs. They help us make our voices heard. But we need your help too so we can achieve the day where we raise our fists and together declare: “No one could stop us from forming a union.”

Thank you.

In solidarity,

Leonardo Mejia
SSA Marine/Shippers Transport Express
Port of Long Beach
10-year driver

Yemane Berhane
Ports of Seattle & Tacoma
6-year port driver

Xiomara Perez
Toll Group
Port of Los Angeles
8-year driver

Abdul Khan
Port of Oakland
7-year port driver

Ramiro Gotay
Ports of New York & New Jersey
15-year port driver

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Tim Goodrich, Iraq Veterans Against The War

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