

International Newsletter

New Series Issue No. 14 (383) July 23, 2010 - 0.50 euros

INTERVIEW WITH DON BECHLER

« The simple fact is that the labor movement will have to break with their reliance on the Democratic Party »



Contents :

Pages 1 / 2 : Emergency Workers Conference

interview with Don
Bechler

« The simple fact is that
the labor movement will
have to break with their
reliance on the
Democratic Party »

Pages 3 : Afghanistan: Correspondence

Left Radical of
Afghanistan (LRA)

Peace consultative Jirga
never aimed to bring
peace...

Page 4 : Haiti:

Interview with Yves
Pierre-Louis

Subscription form.

Don Bechler is chair of Single Payer Now, a California-based coalition fighting for single-payer health care. He is also an organizer with the Labor Campaign for Single-Payer Health Care.

Bechler's involvement with the universal health care movement began in the early 1990s while watching with horror the loss of health care benefits for the thousands of his coworkers who lost their jobs upon downsizing of the Westinghouse defense plant in Sunnyvale, Calif. He represented his fellow employees at Westinghouse who were members of International Association of Machinists (IAM) Local 565 as their vice president, chief shop steward, and as a member of the negotiating committee. (Westinghouse was later sold to Northrup Gruman)

In 1997, Bechler was hired as a mechanic with United Airlines. He represented International Association of Machinists Local 1781 as a shop steward and as a delegate to the San Francisco Labor Council. Following 9/11, he was one of the thousands of workers who lost their jobs in the airline industry, and he is currently without health insurance.

Bechler has worked with campaigns for universal health care in Maine, Massachusetts and Oregon and is co-author of several articles on the grassroots approach to achieving universal health care reform. He has also testified in Congress for HR 676.

Contact address

International Newsletter

EIT/ILC

87, rue du Faubourg-Saint-Denis -75010 Paris - France

Ph: (33 1) 48 01 88 28.E-mail: eit.ilc@fr.oleane.com

Question: You will be one of the 18 U.S. delegates traveling to Algeria to attend the Open World Conference. Why is this important to you?

Don Bechler: I want to learn about what the privatizers of health care around the world are doing so that we in the United States can better understand their strategies, and so that we can better combat them, both here and abroad. It is important that we link up with our sisters and brothers internationally in the struggle for universal health care.

Question: The corporate media around the world are extolling the so-called virtues of the U.S. health care system. The dismantling of the single-payer systems in France and Canada, and of the National Health Service in Britain, for example, are all occurring in the name of following the U.S. model. ...

Don Bechler: This is precisely the reason it is important that someone who understands all aspects of the U.S. health care system should be in Algeria to explain how it really works. The fact is that the U.S. health care system, which relies on market mechanisms, does not work.

Question: Tell us about the Obama health care plan. It is being presented as a step forward. Is this the case?

Don Bechler. No, it is not. First of all, the program does not go into effect until 2014. Millions of people are dying today because of lack of health care. They will not be helped by the Obama plan.

Some people will benefit under the plan: 12 million low-income people will have access to some form of health care. This is what everyone is talking about. An additional 20 million people -- by law -- will have to buy private health care insurance. Another 20 million will remain uninsured. It is not a universal health care program. The big winner here is the private health care insurance industry. They will receive \$500 billion from this plan.

The trade-offs in this plan are not acceptable -- just as the trade-off in the recent war appropriations bill in the Congress is unacceptable. The Congress just voted \$33 billion in supplemental funding for the war in Iraq as part of a bill that includes an additional \$16 billion in domestic spending. This, unfortunately, is how the political system works in the United States. It does far more harm than good.

Question: What about the effect of the Obama health care plan on the unions?

Don Bechler: For the first time ever, the higher-end health care plans, most of them union plans, will be taxed. Coverage will be more costly and worse. Many union plans will be dumped onto "health care exchanges." The idea is to allow consumers to compare the different insurance products on the markets. These exchanges will be failures and will only undermine the existing union plans.

What is more, health care will not be taken off the bargaining table.

Question: In your view, what needs to be done now to win single-payer health care?

Don Bechler: We need to build a more massive movement to demand single-payer. We need to build an independent movement. The corporate press has been pushing all the corporate plans. They will not help us put an end to the corporate rule of the private insurance companies.

And the labor movement has to take the lead in this fight, by co-authoring single-payer legislation in the Congress and saying that this is what we want -- nothing less! The AFL-CIO, pressed by our Labor Campaign for Single-Payer Health Care, voted to support single-payer. This was very significant. But no sooner had the labor movement adopted this resolution, they back-tracked under pressure from the Democrats.

The simple fact is that the labor movement will have to break with their reliance on the Democratic Party if it intends to address the needs of working people for health care justice. This reliance discourages labor from drawing a line in the sand that they will adhere to.

Eighty-six Democratic Party members of Congress have come out in support of single payer. But they all caved in under pressure from Obama and the Democratic National Committee and didn't even submit the single-payer bills they had co-authored for a vote in the Congress.

This only underscores the need for the labor and single-payer movements to build an independent movement that can win genuine universal health care.

Interviewed by Alan Benjamin

Peace consultative Jirga never aimed to bring peace

The “peace consultative national Jirga” convened on 2nd June 2010 in Kabul with the participation of around 1600 individuals mainly supporters of Karzai and collaborators of occupation forces in Afghanistan. It was sponsored by invader forces in Afghanistan and it was barely a US/Nato initiative to test a “soft game” in Afghanistan while they have been suffering from unpredictable challenges in the military field in Afghanistan.

The US/nato invaders forces on one hand escalating new troops to Afghanistan as well as expand the war from Afghanistan to Pakistan, on the other side organizing peace gathering to hunt the opportunist segments of the resistance who have been in dealing with them since the occupation of Afghanistan. Part of them has been enjoying important seats in the government of Afghanistan. The second aim of such fashionable gathering is to show up themselves to the world as angels of peace, not nightmare or slaughters of the people of Afghanistan.

After abortive ending of peace Jirga, the consequences proved that all the expectation from the Jirga led to disappointment and the government of Karzai along with their foreign masters lost their game in the political arena too: non of the opposition fractions in the resistance even the collaborators did not participated in Jirga and did not support the resolution of the Jirga. A day after the end of Jirga and its call for peace, the US forces attacked a village in Logar province and killed some of civilians and detained the remaining members of a family.

There were no a single representative of the anti occupation resistance and all of them boycotted such under US/nato Jirgas for peace or negotiations. Because the Jirga were playing a symbolic role with no authority to ensure the realization of their decision in practice. According to Balqis a senator and participant of the Jirga, majority of the participants were chosen by the Afghan government and they were ordered to keep to the line of government and US/Nato interests. She said to a local TV that most of the “independent” participants insisted on corruption and foreign troops withdrawal issues but no one listened to their viewpoints. She added that she requested twice the organizing committee to let her for a short speech from the stage of the Jirga but threatened to be silent. So, it was a Jirga for peace which itself was seriously suffering from horror environment!

The Jirga was suspended several times to adopt its goals and agenda with full consensus of US, thus the president Karzai was summoned to US to stick to the line of US and their dictates in Afghanistan.

Some of very optimistic people expected the Jirga might talk over the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan or at least demand a schedule, but counter to their anticipation, the invited participants of the Jirga insisted on the need and presence of US/nato forces in Afghanistan and thanked their barbarous mission. The non representative participants of the Jirga noted some points in the “benefit” of armed opposition such as the release of opponent prisoners from the jails under US or the government of Afghanistan. But according to Waheed Mujda a local annalist: “in fact there is no empty space in the prisons of the government of Afghanistan as well as in the prisons of foreigner to keep them for unknown period.”

The people of Afghanistan understand the real meaning of foreign troops mission in Afghanistan that confronted them with daily bombardments, detention and torturing, home searching, humiliation, corruption, poverty and displacement. But their military presence means for neighboring countries as a direct threat to their national interests and national sovereignty. So, both the internal factors a long side the external ones will determine the inevitable defeat for US/NATO in Afghanistan as they have been seriously experiencing it since 2002.

Now it is time for US and its tail governments in Afghan tragedy to recognize the anti occupation resistance as a legitimize opposition and ignore their faked anti terrorism campaign towards their physically elimination inside their own home. It is time for them to announce their unconditional withdrawal from Afghanistan to pave the ground for real peace and development. It will be in the benefit of both Afghan as well as American and European people.

Interview with Yves Pierre-Louis

Yves Pierre Louis is correspondent for Haiti Liberty and a member of the GLOBS organisation.

You have agreed to be present at the “Open World Conference against War and Exploitation” to take place in Algiers on the 26th, 27th and 28th November 2010. What is the significance of this for your organisation ?

Our country Haiti, as you already know, has been occupied by UN foreign forces for years now; it is also dominated, exploited by the main imperialist powers. The trade union GLOBS, to which I belong, takes an active part in the struggle against this occupation and for the liberation of Haiti from Imperialist powers. For us here in Haiti, exploitation and war are directly related to the interests of these big powers. It is in this sense that the Open World Conference against War and Exploitation is of direct interest to us. You know very well that Haitian society is largely built on slavery, discrimination and exploitation for the unique purpose of making maximum profits for capitalist companies.

Your organisation, the GLOBS, alongside others in Haiti, takes an active part in the struggle to get the occupying forces out of the country. Could you tell us, why you personally, think this Conference is important for the workers and the people of Haiti and how you see the issue of setting up a global riposte to capitalist companies and governments at their beck and call ?

At this moment a wide section of the Haitian population is mobilised against military occupation, Haiti's being under tutelage and against reactionary forces here and elsewhere : workers take part in this regularly alongside the people... In order to get rid of the occupying forces, to liberate the Haitian people from the Imperialist yoke and to succeed in building a democratic society based on equal opportunities for all the country's sons. We need the solidarity of all true friends of the Haitian people. That is why , the setting up of a global riposte to capitalist companies and governments which serve their interests, is at the present time of capital importance, so that the struggle against global capitalist domination can progress.

In to-day's situation, the World Conference against War and Exploitation will be of great importance to the workers and the people of Haiti who are fighting for authentic social change within Haitian society.

Interviewed by Robert Favert

Subscription form

10 issues : 10 € ; 20 issues : 20 € ; 30 issues : 30 € ; 40 issues : 40 € ; 50 issues : 50 €
 Subscription rate includes support to international circulation .
 Support 1 year : 100 € • 10 issues : 16 Switz Francs ; 7 pounds ; 10 dollars ; etc.

Name :

First name :

Address :

Country :

E.mail :

Cheques to be made payable to CMO
 10278 06076 00020050701 30

IBAN : FR76 1027 8060 7600 0200 5070 130 - CMCIFR2A

Contact address

International Newsletter

EIT/ILC

87, rue du Faubourg-Saint-Denis
 75010 - Paris - France

Ph : (33 1) 48 01 88 28
 Fax : (33 1) 48 01 88 36
 E-mail eit.ilc@fr.oleane.com