

GRAY PANTHERS OF SAN FRANCISCO



Mayday! Mayday!

Stop The Attacks On Our Rights



General Membership Meeting Gray Panther Players Presents *The UnPatriot Act*

Tuesday, May 17, 12:30—3:00 PM
Unitarian Universalist Center
1187 Franklin (near Geary)
Bring a snack and your activist stories to share

GRAY PANTHERS COMMITTEE MEETINGS & EVENTS

All meetings and events take place at 1182 Market, Rm. 203, unless otherwise noted.

Board Meeting 12:30 PM
Wednesday, May 4 & June 1

Health Committee 1:00 PM
Tuesday, May 10 & June 14

Newsletter Committee 12:00 Noon
Thursday, May 5 & June 2

Program Committee 1:00 PM
Wednesday, May 11 & June 8

Civil/Human Rights Comm. 12:30 PM
Monday, May 9 & June 13

Book Club 10:30 AM
Monday, May 23 & June 27

Rise Up People Rise Up!

May Meeting



We the people are rising up against the outrageous onslaughts on our lives. Inspired by people across the globe from Egypt to Honduras, we protest, organize, and speak out.

The April 4 We Are One march brought labor unions and community organizations together to target corporations and their contemptible profits. We marched through SF's financial canyons shouting, "San Francisco Is a Union Town!" Teachers in Oakland shut down a Wells Fargo bank, and ILWU shut down ports in Oakland & SF. (See article this page on retaliation of PMA (Pacific Maritime Association against ILWU Local 10).

We Need FAIR Not FOX News



On April 9-10 10,000 people gathered in New York's Union Square and 1,500 marched in SF calling for jobs, pensions, health-

care, housing, and an end to bank bailouts and wars. As more working people become dissatisfied and agitated, our protests and the hundreds taking place around this country are not reported in corporate media. "According to the Nexis news database, the (April 9-10) rally was apparently deemed not remotely newsworthy. The local New York Times didn't cover it--though it did have time for the D.C. Tea Party rally (4/1/11). NPR's Morning Edition (4/1/11) and the PBS News Hour (3/31/11) reported on the Tea Party rally, which was also mentioned a few times on CNN and previewed on NBC's Today show." FAIR Newsletter.

Our rallies and protests continue to bring out more people than "Tea Partiers".

Keep protesting and speaking truth to power. This is what democracy looks like!

May's meeting will feature the Civil Liberties Committee presentation on the Bill of Rights, and the Patriot Act and other official attacks on it. Find out whether you have any personal rights left.

ILWU Needs Our Support

On April 4, in solidarity with Wisconsin workers, the ILWU rank & file voluntarily shut down ports in Oakland and SF. PMA then retaliated initiating a law suit against ILWU Local 10. At a support rally April 25, Clarence Thomas reminded us that unions are the bulwark of democracy. Time has come to move beyond protest to resistance. "The only power we have is to withhold our labor." All workers, public, private, union, non-union as well as retirees, are under attack. Tim Paulson of the SF Labor Council told the crowd what business fears most is the unity of workers. Now is the time to step up resistance; if not now, when—after they take away Medicare, pensions, lay off more teachers, privatize more public schools and give more money for wars and tax breaks to the rich?

Use Our Power to Shut It Down!

Nelson Mandela credits Local 10's shut down of ports as the heart of the anti-apartheid movement in this country. Local 10 has a proud history of resistance. We stand in unity with them.

Stay informed and sign the petition at:

<http://bailoutpeople.org/ilwu>

Landline Phone Users—Beware

TURN—the Utility Reform Network—has sent out an alert on the recent requests to the CPUC (CA Public Utilities Commission). The major phone companies want to:

- Charge for incoming calls as part of basic service
- Reduce standards for reaching local 911 service.
- Stop consumers choice of long distance companies
- Eliminate your right to automatically receive a paper phone book.
- Increase charge for calling 411 directory assistance

Call the CPUC and tell them NO to all of them. Call TURN for further information.

Thank you TURN.

April Meeting—Pensions

This is what we learned from Kay Walker at our April meeting.

There will almost certainly be a City workers pension measure on the November ballot. Before you think—if you do—I don't work for the City or I am retired so it doesn't concern me, remember that what is done to the City workers is a blueprint for what will be attempted to be done to private sector employees and retirees.

How does the City pension plan work? It is a defined benefit plan, meaning that contributions go into a retirement fund that is legally obligated to pay guaranteed pensions on retirement, the amount of those pensions varying according to what the employee made while working. Employees contribute 7.5% of their pay and the City matches that amount. The resulting retirement fund invests its excess money. In the past those investments did so well that the City didn't have to use its own money to match that amount. (Inspired bookkeeping.) But when the Wall Street Great Recession hit, the fund investments lost \$3.5 billion in value, the City had to contribute what it had up until then not been paying and hadn't budgeted for. So do the City Fathers blame Wall Street? No. All of a sudden the greedy workers and their outrageous pension demands with their breaking-the-city budget must be reduced, the retirement age upped, the individual contributions upped 2-4%, the top pensions capped at \$195,000. (Most retired city employees get a pension of \$35,000 or less; the retirement age depends on how many years you worked and what kind of work you did.)

Who is working on the ballot measure? As of this writing, three different groups are involved, generally called the Hellman group, the mayor, and Adachi. The Hellman group was brought together by SF moneyman Warren Hellman and includes the PEC—the public employees committee—made up of representatives of 43 unions. The mayor speaks more or less for the local business establishment. Public defender office head Jeff Adachi sponsored the defeated pension bill on last November's ballot, and is reputedly financed by Silicon Valley financier Moritz. All three blame the employees for the City budget problems and back the demands listed above and seemingly vary only in

degree. The PEC seems to have been co-opted into accepting the cuts and limiting the damage as much as possible.

Our speaker, Gray Panther Kay Walker, represents City Employee Retirees. When they went to work for the City, they traded then present job demands for future guarantees including pensions. The pension clause included future pension increases determined by cost of living adjustments (COLA). The COLAs were based on investment fund earnings and the consumer price index. All the ballot proposals take away the COLAS from present retirees as well as future ones. The present retirees have been excluded from all current negotiations.

Does this remind you of the excuses the right uses in blaming Social Security for the national deficit?

Speaking of Pensions

PG&E's CEO, Peter Darbee, announced he will retire on April 30. When he retires, he will get a \$34.8 million retirement package.

Wells Fargo CFO Howard Atkins resigned in February and formally retires in August. He will be eligible to receive more than \$22 million.



CalPERS not the Culprit

(from the Letters to the Editor, Chronicle, 3/23/11)
Despite the relentless drumbeat in the media, public pensions aren't to blame for California's budget problems or the general economic collapse.

Large banks and corporate greed drove California over the economic cliff. Before that, CalPERS was nearly fully funded and completely sustainable. CalPERS has regained nearly \$70 billion in assets, and its near 80-year success record speaks for itself. The average CalPERS pension is about \$30,000 per year. 78% of pensioners receive retirement of \$36,000 a year or less.

The abuse of pension systems by the few makes sensational headlines but threatens the reasonable benefits of the vast majority of rank and file employees.
Pete Kalvass, Mendocino

People Rise Up Across The Middle East and North Africa (The article focuses on six Persian Gulf states that are in the GCC)



Cooperative Council in the Arab States of the (Persian) Gulf (GCC) is trade bloc to foster industry, may join the EU but may not include the US. Peninsula Shield Force is GCC's military arm, used in 1st Iraq war and 2003 and invaded Bahrain, in April, 2011.

Kuwait (Al Kuwayt)

Federation of 7 states, ruled by hereditary sheiks. Constitutional monarchy with ruling family dating to 1756. King selects parliament. Hub of trade with huge oil fields. World's 11th richest country, non-NATO ally of US.

Bahrain (Cap. Manamah)

Bahrain first member state to call on GCC, mainly Saudi & UAE troops, to control protesters. President Saleh coming down hard & ugly, won't leave. US Fifth Fleet based in Bahrain. GCC's 1st deployment in response to internal threat.

Oman

Sultan Qaboos rules from capital, Muscat. Protesters demand political freedom, jobs, internet access, but get security clashes with live ammunition, beatings in hospitals, three have died. Negotiates for US with Iran to free 3 US "spy" hikers. So far no demands for the resignation of Qaboos.

Qatar (Cap. Ad Dawhah)

Peninsula jutting off Gulf coast of Saudi Arabia hosts US Air Force, Royal Air Force, Qatari Air Force, Royal Australian Air Force, was launching place for attacks on Iraq. In 1999, Sheikh Hamed said he would welcome 10K US servicemen, so hosts USAF Central Command. Qatar supports Libya rebels, for Arab nationalism.

Saudi Arabia

Absolute monarchy with no parliament, did not want Mubarak to fall. Protesters, new to Saudi Arabia, include teachers, unemployed graduates, prisoners held without bail, who protest Saudi Arabia's lead in the use of GCC's Peninsula Shield Force to enter Bahrain

UAE

Divided into 7 emirates, Dubai the most populous. Saudis did not want an air base on Arabian Peninsula, with its sacred sites of Mecca and Medina, so UAE let the US establish Air Base al-Dhafra just west of capital Abu Dhabi. The base is about refueling, including in-flight planes of Operation Southern watch.

Single Payer Charging Forward

State Senator Mark Leno has again sponsored the Single Payer Healthcare Bill as SB 810. Expectations are high that it will pass the legislature and be signed by Gov Brown.

So what happens then? SB 810 is an enabling act. It says: California approves of Single Payer and can proceed to set up a system to administer it. But it provides no money. So once it is approved, a second bill will be introduced to finance its operation. The long fight to get SB 810 passed will seem like a cakewalk compared to what enacting a money bill will be. And however that goes, it will almost certainly be followed by competing propositions on the statewide ballot and for sure one side will be awash with insurance company money. Leaders of the pro-single-payer movement are meeting to determine future strategy.

This is the letter the SFGP network sent to Sen. Leno reaffirming our support for SB 810:

The San Francisco Gray Panthers, and Gray Panthers Networks all over the nation, are committed to gaining healthcare that is equal, high quality, comprehensive, accessible, affordable, and cost-effective, and which covers every single person, regardless of income, health, employment, or citizenship status. Single-Payer was the first priority at the Gray Panthers 2008 National Convention.

Currently, seven million Californians, 20% of the State's population, are uninsured. Millions more cannot afford to use their insurance, or go bankrupt if they are forced to use their insurance, because of double-digit premium increases and ruinous deductibles and co-payments. Meanwhile, the State is cutting or eliminating desperately-needed services for seniors, children, youth, poor people, and people with disabilities, which will only grow worse as billions of dollars are squandered on private health insurers. Single-Payer healthcare would save the State of California billions of dollars yearly. Single-Payer Healthcare is the only way out of California's disastrous situation.

San Francisco Gray Panthers strongly urges "AYE" votes on SB 810 at every stage, and will work to assure its passage.

Taxes are Still on the Agenda

April, tax month, is over but taxes are ongoing. Raising taxes on the rich and corporations will not solve all our economic problems, but it will surely help in the short run if the resulting funds are used for jobs, housing, repairing the infrastructure, and renewable energy (of course the federal government could do that whether taxes are raised or not, but that is a whole other economic subject).



Why are you paying
more taxes than GE?

To remind us of a few bitter facts: federal income tax rates on the richest 1-2% of the population were 91% post world war II.; 77% in 1954; 50% in 1980; 35% in 2003; 17% in 2007. According to the Bay Guardian, corporate income tax revenues in 2000 were \$249 billion, in 2008 were \$230 billion, and in 2010, \$191 billion—a decline of 23% since the year 2000—even though corporate profits were up by almost 12% in 2008 (the last figures available) over 2000. Robert Reich says that if the very rich were taxed at the same rate today that they were 50 years ago, they would pay \$350 billion more this year alone.

In California the top income tax rate is 9.3%. In 1991, it was 11%. but the proposals to balance the budget are all about cutting services and state employment and wages.

There are many proposals on how to make taxes fair. We offer here three suggestions that we don't hear much about.

War Profits Tax: the US had such a tax during the Civil War, WW I, WW II, and the Korean War. How about such a state tax on Bechtel?

Public Citizen proposes a speculation tax, 0.25% on short term financial transactions such as buying and selling stocks and bonds, possibly raising \$100 billion annually.

In California, tax the super rich. Slap an additional 10% tax on the 150,000 California taxpayers whose average adjusted gross income is \$1.8 Million. That would bring in \$27 billion and wipe out the state deficit.

If only.

Gray Panthers of SF

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We believe ALL people are entitled to certain fundamental rights:

- meaningful employment
- economic security
- decent and affordable housing
- quality health care
- a life of dignity from birth to death free from fear and abuse
- a world in peace



Age and Youth in Action

Call the office for membership information.

Labor Donated

MAY 2011

Actions and Events

Tuesday, May 3, 11:30 AM—3:30 PM

Protest Wells Fargo Bank annual stockholders meeting. “Jail the Bankers” “Too Big to Fail = Too Big to Exist” Meet @ Justin Herman Plaza, march to Merchandise Exchange Building, 465 Calif. ACCE, SEIU, US Uncut, many others.

Wednesday, May 4, 6:00 PM

Adam Hochschild talks about his new book *To End All Wars*. Main Library, Koret Auditorium. Co-sponsored by *Mother Jones*.

Monday, May 9—Thursday, May 13

Converge on the State Capitol and stay until the budget is ours. Tax Fairness Revolt. March from Vallejo to Sacramento May 2-9. P&F Party, Veterans for Peace, CodePink, Cindy Sheehan, etc. Info: www.strikemay2011ca.org.

Tuesday, May 10, 5:00—7:00 PM

Celebrate the 20th Anniversary of SF Children’s Fund! Community Celebration, appetizers, Performances. Children especially welcome. North Light Court, SF City Hall, Free.

Tuesday, May 10, 7:00 PM.

Will Potter author, speaks on *Green is the New Red, an Insiders Guide to a Social Movement Under Siege*. City Lights Bookstore, 261 Columbus.

Thursday, May 12, 9:00 AM—NOON

SAN Monthly Meeting, Unitarian Universalist Center, 1187 Franklin/Geary. Lunch \$200.

Friday, May 13, 6:00 PM—9:00 PM

Saturday, May 14, 9:00 AM—9:00 PM

Sunday, 9:00 AM—3:00 PM

Deep Green Resistance Weekend Workshop with Aric McBay, Lierre Keith, & Derrick Jensen Living Wage Coalition, 2940 16th Street info: 847-773-7478.

