$15 Minimum Wage Attacked by Corporations and Port of Seattle

By Maureen Bo, PSARA Administrative Vice President

We’re not done yet!

Sea Tac’s Proposition 1 passed narrowly, even after a recount forced by opponents. PSARA was asked by the Prop 1 campaign to testify at a Seattle Port Commission meeting to urge the Port to remain neutral in the law suit filed by Alaska Airlines, Washington Restaurant Association and airport food concessionaire Filo Foods in opposition to the wage increase. The Port

Continued on Page 8

Nelson Mandela (1918-2013)

By Mike Andrew

Nelson Mandela was “the last great liberator of the Twentieth Century,” Pres. Obama said at his memorial service.

Looking back at his life, it’s easy to be taken in by what Cornel West called the “Santa Claus-ification” of Nelson Mandela – depicting him as a kindly old man bringing racial harmony in the sack slung over his shoulder.

But let’s be clear what Mandela was about. In a famous speech at his trial for sabotage, he said:

“I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.”

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Help PSARA Grow!

PSARA’s Executive Board has committed to an aggressive goal for growth in 2014. Each of the twenty nine PSARA Executive Board members has committed to enlisting at least five new PSARA members in 2014. They will accomplish this goal by either recruiting new members or giving the gift of membership to someone(s) they know. (This monthly newsletter is a pretty nice gift!)

Now we are asking our PSARA members to help. If each PSARA member recruits or gifts at least one new member this year, our effectiveness in fighting for retirement security for present and future seniors will increase.

Recruiting or gifting one new member is not a daunting task. Just think about it. Who do you know that would appreciate receiving this monthly newsletter? If each of you signed one new member to our rolls, we would greatly increase the number of people getting the information in this newsletter. We would increase the number of people who could act collectively to promote economic and social justice, environmental sustainability, economic security and equal rights and opportunities for retirees and future retirees.

You will be hearing about this campaign and how we are doing as the year progresses. Please help make our membership campaign successful! If you need help recruiting a new member let us know. Call the office or email us at outreachvp@psara.org. Or if you need more membership forms or information, just ask. With your help this will be a great year for PSARA.
February 20 is Senior Lobby Day

By Chuck Richards, co-chair, PSARA Government Relations Committee

The 2014 legislative session begins with an all-too-familiar political landscape. We enter a second year of divided control of the two legislative chambers and a new governor still being tested by the opposition. State government has another year of a budget deficit and it is reluctant to fully fund public education as required by the state supreme court. And health and human services dread the approaching budget cuts.

Into this mix come members of the Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action during Senior Lobby Day on Thursday, February 20, to remind legislators of essential priorities for Washington residents in the years ahead.

Working arm in arm with labor and community allies, we are promoting PSARA’s 2014 Legislative Agenda. (Please read the column on Page 3 of this issue to learn about PSARA’s legislative priorities.)

And, as in years past, PSARA is offering its members transportation to reach Olympia on February 20. We are helping neighbors network within their legislative districts to lobby together most effectively for the things we believe strengthen Washington families.

If you haven’t already signed up at PSARA’s Winter Party on December 19th, then contact us at govrelations@psara.org or the PSARA office at (206) 448-9646.

Thank You Anita and Mary!

Anita Nath and Mary Anderson are leaving the PSARA Executive Board for the time being.

Mary represents PSARA with the Seattle/King County Aging and Disability Advisory Committee as well as actively lobbying elected officials on behalf of PSARA. Not a retiree, Mary’s work has become more demanding and she feels that she needs to devote more time to her business. Mary will be performing some administrative functions in the PSARA office that are necessary to maintain the organization. She also plans to continue her activism in lobbying legislators and other elected officials on behalf of PSARA.

Anita was the youngest member of PSARA’s Executive Board! She is now in law school at Seattle University and holding down a half-time job with the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union (UNITE HERE Local 8). Anita has been a spark plug in talking to young people about why they should care about Social Security and Medicare. She expresses a lot of love for PSARA and will continue as the administrator of PSARA’s facebook page.

We are deeply appreciative of the commitment of these two smart and committed women!

In February, we will introduce our new Executive Board members.

Donations in Honor of Will Parry

Mason Taylor

Ellen Fawcett
PSARA & the 2014 Legislative Session

By Robby Stern

PSARA has increased its presence in Olympia as we try to influence the direction of state policy and budget decisions. By contracting with PSARA member Pam Crone, a well known and effective lobbyist, we work with allied organizations to push a progressive agenda. But we can anticipate, with the Senate in the control of a very conservative Republican majority, that we will be opening the door for future sessions rather than winning major victories.

Nevertheless, our philosophy is stay on the offensive and also mount the in- evitable sturdy defense. We have three primary policy goals for this session. In addition, we will advocate for several budget items in the supplemental budget.

Policy Item 1: The legislature should pass legislation providing Paid Sick Days for workers statewide. Our family members need to be eligible for paid sick days to care for an elderly parent, a sick child or a spouse. Workers should not have to choose between working sick or losing a day’s pay. They should not have to make the choice of caring for a loved one at the expense of a pay check. Paid sick days are essential for the public health of all Washingtonians.

Policy Item 2: Senator Cantwell was able to insert in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) a health care program known as the Federal Basic Health Option (FBHO), modeled after Washington’s BHP. This program would allow people between 138% % and 200% of federal poverty (single person $15,300 - $22,980; family of two, $20,630-$31,020; family of three, $25,980-$39,060) to purchase affordable health care with significant subsidies. The FBHO would also provide a health care option to documented immigrants who are deemed ineligible for Medicaid.

The vast majority of Washingtonians below 138% of poverty are eligible for the expanded Medicaid (now called Washington Apple Health). However, many eligible Medicaid recipients go up and down the income levels, sometimes earning under 138% and sometimes earning more than 138% in any given twelve month period. The FBHO would allow low-income Washingtonians to maintain access to care and continuity of care since the provi- ders in the Washington Apple Health system would also be providers under the FBHO.

The legislature should pass legislation authorizing Washington to par- ticipate in the FBHO. Until the FBHO is implemented, the legislature should allow people on Washington Apple Health (Medicaid), once they qualify for Medicaid, to remain eligible for twelve months. Presently, children who qualify for Washington Apple Health are eligible for twelve months. But adults must re-qualify monthly. The same qualifying standards should be applied to adults as apply to children until the FBHO is operational in Washington.

Policy Item 3: There is a loophole in the Affordable Care Act that allows the lowest wage large employers to shift the cost of health care coverage for their employees onto the Medicaid system without a penalty for those employers. These workers earn so little from their employers that they qualify for Washington Apple Health. The legis- lation we support would require these large employers to contribute to the cost of Medicaid which would also save money for the General Fund.

In addition, the following are what we want as part of the Supplemental Budget:

- Allocate $400,000 for a Long-Term Care Financing Study that will examine new models for financing long-term care. Many people needing long-term care must impoverish themselves to be Medicaid eligible and thereby get access to the care they need. Additional-ly, the cost of private long-term care insurance is beyond the means of most people. The study would look at public and private options for financing long-term care.

- Restore the Housing Trust Fund to $100 million to assist in the provision of low-income and affordable housing.

- Restore funding for Medicaid funded home care services to offset the impact of the approximately 15% cuts to these services since 2008.

- End corporate tax breaks that fail to produce more revenue to the state than the cost of the tax loophole. Reform the tax break system so all tax breaks have expiration dates and accountability requirements.

- Support restoration of full funding for the Public Guardianship Program.

Should other progressive issues emerge during the legislative debate (like the State Bank), PSARA will support those policy initiatives.

PSARA members will have the opportunity to influence the legislature. Our lobbyist will let us know when it is timely to send emails to our legislators. If we have your email address, we will contact you. In addition, we are setting up meetings with as many legislators as possible prior to the session. We will be participating in Senior Lobby Day on Feb. 20th. All PSARA members are invited to join us when we travel to Olympia and talk directly with our legis- lators about their support for our issues.
We Need Paid Sick Leave!

By Marilyn Watkins, Policy Director at the Economic Opportunity Institute and a PSARA Member

A couple weeks ago, as I approached the counter to make a purchase, the sales clerk blew her nose. Gross. The store was in the suburbs, so not covered by the Seattle Paid Sick and Safe Leave law. The young worker probably had to come in even with her obvious cold. Still, if another clerk hadn’t stepped in, I would have left the store without buying anything.

Across Washington, about 1 million workers don’t get a single paid sick day and nearly 90% of workers do not have paid family leave. For them taking off work to get healthy, take an ailing parent to the doctor, or care for a newborn or sick child means loss of badly needed income and sometimes loss of a job.

Access to Paid Sick Days for routine illnesses and doctor’s visits, and to Family and Medical Leave Insurance for more serious conditions or a newborn child is crucial to good health and quality of life. Our rapidly aging population and the ever-accelerating attack on worker pensions make it more important than ever that all workers have paid leave to care for their own health and their families. Aging workers are more vulnerable to serious illness themselves, and are more often called upon to care for a partner or parent with declining health. Paid leave allows workers to cover their bills when a medical crisis strikes, without having to cash in retirement savings or other assets.

By keeping family income stable, reducing staff turnover, and improving customer satisfaction, paid leave also boosts revenue to local businesses, reduces inequality, and helps grow the economy. Seattle’s sick leave law has been in place for over a year now, and business is booming – especially in the restaurant and retail sectors most affected. In 2013, four other cities from Portland, OR, to New York passed sick leave ordinances. And five states have had family and/or disability leave insurance successfully protecting workers and their families for years.

During 2014, the Washington State Legislature will meet for only 60 days. That isn’t much time – and the Senate is unlikely to pass any legislation that empowers working people and elders. But the Washington Work and Family Coalition – which includes PSARA – hopes to set the stage for a better legislature in 2015 and passage of Paid Sick Days and full Family and Medical Leave Insurance, including care for seriously ill parents.

Here’s what you can do to help win paid leave for all Washington workers:

1. Call your representatives in the House and urge them to pass Paid Sick and Safe Leave (H.B. 1313). Last year the bill passed through the committee process and is eligible for immediate passage in the House. Legislative Hotline: 1.800.562.6000
2. Email your Representatives and Senator and tell them why Paid Sick Days (H.B. 1313) and Family and Medical Leave Insurance (H.B 1457) are important to you and other PSARA members.
3. Check out the Work and Family Coalition website to learn more, http://waworkandfamily.org/, and watch for email alerts.

Contact the Washington Work and Family Coalition

Gabriela Quintana: gabriela@eoionline.org | 206-240-8250
Marilyn Watkins: marilyn@eoionline.org | 206-529-6370

http://waworkandfamily.org/ waworkfam
What Kind of Country Do You Want to Live In?

By Mark McDermott, Chair of PSARA’s Education Committee

I hope we shall crush in its birth the aristocracy of our moneyed corporations which dare already to challenge our government to a trial of strength, and bid defiance to the laws of our land.” – Thomas Jefferson, 1816.

“Corporations, which should be the carefully restrained creatures of the law and servants of the people, are fast becoming the people’s masters.” – President Grover Cleveland, 1886 State of the Union Address.

Masters issue ultimatums. Masters threaten severe punishment to their servants.

For more than two centuries we the people have struggled over fundamental questions of corporate power over us and our government. Boeing’s unjust threats of massive job losses and economic devastation brings this issue home once again.

Between 2003 and 2012, Boeing pre-profits totaled $35 billion. They received $1.8 billion in federal income tax rebates (a negative 5% tax rate) and $96 million in state income tax rebates. My wife and I paid 22% in federal taxes in 2012.

In 2013, their stock price is up 73%; fourth quarter dividends up 50%. Boeing has so much spare cash that they are spending $10 billion to buy back stock, further benefiting shareholders. This should be a wonderful time for the company, its dedicated workers and the communities that have supported the company for the past 96 years.

In the midst of this enormous success, Boeing threatens our state, its workers and our communities with massive job losses. They demanded $8.7 billion in tax breaks and that union machinists give up a defined benefit pension and many other hard won gains that build the middle class in our region. Does Boeing really need this money? No! But why not make these demands?

On November 12th Governor Inslee signed the largest state business tax break in 237 years of American history. The debate lasted three days. The lightning quick response of Governor Inslee and most of the Legislature clearly shows that they believe that Boeing is their and our master.

The union machinists refusal of Boeing’s unjust and unnecessary demands is a profile in courage and a powerful statement that they are a free people and not the servants of Boeing. They stood up for themselves, their families and our communities. They stood for a future in which powerful corporations have real responsibilities to their workers and generations to come.

Having said this, I ask: What kind of country do we want to live in? What kind of future do we want to give to our children and future generations? Have corporations become our masters?

Imagine a foreign country threatening our state and its workers, unions and communities in the following way: “We demand $8+ billion in ransom. Your workers give up much of their financial security for their old age. You must accept a reduced standard of living and less affordable health care. You have 10 days to decide. If you do not submit, we will punish you for many years. Thousand will lose their jobs. Your children’s futures will be diminished. Your communities will be damaged by the loss of jobs, income and stability. We will take away what you have fought for over the past 90 years.

“WE ARE YOUR MASTERS. YOU HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE. DO NOT DEFY US OR WE WILL PUNISH YOU.”

No foreign country would do this. But Boeing would and has. It is considered a good business practice and responsible management by some.

Is this the kind of country you want? A country with very wealthy corporations legally extorting an entire state, workers and communities with impunity. Corporations with no loyalty to those who build their success. Workers and communities more expendable than the machinery. A country of throwaway workers and communities. Growing retirement insecurity amidst fabulous wealth. Is this the best we can do as a people and country?

I ask again, Is this the kind of country we want to live in? I say no! This is our country but we live in fear of our corporate overlords. Enough of this economic tyranny. I challenge all of us to begin to think about what kind of country we want. What is our vision of a better future with greater economic security free from unjust corporate threats? What values anchor our positive vision? How do we build a new future in which we have growing security as we become wealthier as a nation?

We don’t have to accept this type of world. We must dare to dream and begin building a more just and sustainable future. More on this later.
January 1, 2014, marks the 20th Anniversary of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Yes, for 20 years we have been living under NAFTA, in some ways a more powerful NAFTA than when it started as corporations are finding new and clever ways to use the Investor-State chapter to sue countries for more gains.

Just this past year we have seen unprecedented law suits: Mexico forced to pay Cargill $95 million attempting to protect its people from high fructose corn-syrup. Canada sued because of a moratorium the people of Quebec put on fracking to research its impact on its water supplies. Lone Pines an Alberta-based corporation used its office in Delaware to sue Canada for $250 million in investment and potential profits and its right to frack.

Over the last 20 years, NAFTA has become synonymous with privatization, de-regulation and the corporate take-over of trade policy. Communities throughout Canada, the US and Mexico have suffered the loss of millions of living wage jobs and the creation of poverty wage jobs, challenges to environmental protections that support healthy communities, the loss of vital family farms and land that supports life. NAFTA and NAFTA-modeled trade deals are root causes of forced economic migration as people leave their countries and risk their lives to find work because the economic situation in their communities is so bad.

And there is the ongoing state-supported violence that attempts to silence any challenge to this destructive model of global trade.

It is clear NAFTA over the last 20 years has eroded our democracy and made us less well. Which is why it is hard to believe that our lawmakers would be considering an expansion of NAFTA under the TransPacific Partnership (TPP). In 2008, on the campaign trail, Candidate Obama promised us re-negotiation of NAFTA. Yet in 2014 we are facing NAFTA plus 9 other countries.

It is for this reason that our allies in Mexico are organizing NAFTA-20, a week of mobilization, and a Tri-national forum in México City culminating in an Intercontinental Day of Action on January 31. This is a call to learn from the past 20 years and forge a different path for trade.

There will be actions in January throughout WA State, the US and North America. Please get involved.

We can be proud of the work we have done in 2013 to educate and activate against the TPP. This year PSARA and activists around the world have forced the debate on the TPP and challenged our elected leaders to safeguard our democracy, our jobs, and our environment.

The majority of Democrats and some Republicans in the House have pledged to vote no on Fast Track, including Rep. McDermott.

The Democratic Party of WA State passed a resolution calling for a complete withdrawal from the TPP, the WA State Labor Council passed four resolutions against the TPP in 2013 and there have been numerous actions and media devoted to shining light on the TPP.

We start 2014 with new opportunities to advocate for trade justice. Let us join together to make sure that we remember 2014 not for being the 20th anniversary of NAFTA, but as the year we stopped the TPP and forged a new model for global trade based on our common values.
2014 PSARA Senior Lobby Day

7th Annual PSARA Senior Lobby Day
In Olympia
Thursday, Feb. 20th

Join others from your Legislative District to visit your legislators. RSVP now to join PSARA on Senior Lobby Day.

PSARA carpools leaving Seattle at 7:30 am!
For RSVPs and carpool information contact
govrelations@psara.org
or call PSARA at (206) 448-9646

Morning Updates: 9 to 11:30 am
Box Lunch provided: 12 noon
Afternoon legislative visits for our 4 issues:

• Pass legislation providing statewide Paid Sick Days.
• Adopt the Federal Basic Health Option (FBHO) to promote continuity of care for low-income families.
• Require shared employer responsibility in order to protect Washington Apple Health (Medicaid).
• Support several important Budget items

Let’s be heard in Olympia in the 2014 session!
$15 minimum wage attacked

Continued from Page 1

maintained neutrality during the ballot campaign, but was apparently pushed by the corporations to join in the suit on the theory that its jurisdiction might somehow be diminished by Prop 1.

The law suit claims that Prop 1 “is unenforceable because it exceeds the small city’s initiative power and legislative authority, noting that the airport falls under the Port of Seattle’s control.” (Seattle Weekly) Many supporters of Prop 1 from the union, faith, and civic groups testified, urging the Port to stay out of the suit. Jeff Johnson, President of the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, wrote that the suit would leave workers in a legal “no man’s land” at airports across the state. Dave Freiboth, Executive Secretary of the Martin Luther King County Labor Council testified that if the Port’s concern was about diminishing their jurisdiction, there were other ways to clarify their turf that were better than quashing the workers’ wage increase and the ballot initiative.

As PSARA Administrative Vice President, my comments to the Port Commissioners strongly urged them to stay out of the suit. Below are excerpts from my comments to the Commission:

“PSARA represents over 1100 retirees and workers in this area, workers who hope to retire some day in safety and dignity.

– We believe that economic justice must extend to all workers and retirees.

– We believe that employers who force workers to work while sick, because they won’t pay sick leave, and workers who are so low paid they can’t afford to stay home sick for a day without pay, endanger all of us in the community—especially seniors who may be more vulnerable to who is coughing on our hamburgers.

– We believe that PSARA supports the Sea-Tac initiative because it will improve the lives of workers, improve public health, improve the economy in the Sea-Tac area (because workers spend their extra money locally for things they need rather than put it in the Cayman Islands or Swiss bank accounts). And it will ensure economic justice.

– We believe that this is Our Public Port and it should not join with corporations whose aim is to keep workers at poverty wages in order to enhance corporate profits.

– We see a threat to workers and the democratic initiative process if airports are declared a legal “no mans land” as this suit may cause; and we see a grave misuse of Our tax dollars if the Port joins the case as it drags through court.

We ask you not to support Alaska Airlines suit and remain neutral—and let justice and democracy prevail for workers.”

So much for the public and Our Public Port and Our Tax dollars. The Port, while announcing neutrality, filed a brief essentially joining the corporation suit.

But we are not done. We will take further actions on behalf of the workers at Sea-Tac and Seattle. More workers, cities and national political leaders are demanding higher wages to help diminish the highest income inequality in nearly 100 years. John Burbank, Economic Opportunity Institute Director, and a PSARA member, wrote recently in Real Change “If the minimum wage had grown proportionally with the increase in productivity in the past 30 years, it would be at $17 an hour now.”

At a rally in support of Prop 1 on the day of the hearing at King County Regional Court in Kent, PSARA Executive Board member Jim Grayson publicly cut his Alaska Airlines frequent travel card and pledged not to fly Alaska again. Stay tuned for more actions on this issue. No doubt we will have the opportunity to remember the actions of the Commissioners of the Port of Seattle in the next election!

"What do we want? $15! When do we want it: NOW!"

PSARA members joined about 100 energetic “fast food” workers, supporters and friends, marched from Tukwila arriving at Seattle Chinatown-International District’s Hing Hei Park 20-30 minutes ahead of schedule. They dispersed to warm up, huddled in the bus that accompanied them, or visited some of the ID shops for coffee and snacks. About 20 minutes later they were joined by another 50 in the blistering cold to complete the final leg of the march to Seattle City Hall for a rally.

"Even when we’re struggling uphill, we’re still having fun.” While we lagged way behind the rest of the marchers, we made it to City Hall before the bus did.

(Photo: Garet Munger)
The Cure for America's Ailing Healthcare

By Bernie Sanders, Reprinted from the Guardian UK

I start my approach to healthcare from two very basic premises. First, healthcare must be recognized as a right, not a privilege. Every man, woman and child in our country should be able to access the healthcare they need regardless of their income. Second, we must create a national healthcare system that provides quality healthcare for all in the most cost-effective way possible.

Tragically, the United States is failing in both areas.

It is unconscionable that in one of the most advanced nations in the world, there are nearly 50 million people who lack health insurance and millions more who have burdensome co-payments and deductibles. In fact, some 45,000 Americans die each year because they do not get to a doctor when they should. In terms of life expectancy, infant mortality and other health outcomes, the United States lags behind almost every other advanced country.

Despite this unimpressive record, the US spends almost twice as much per person on healthcare as any other nation. As a result of an incredibly wasteful, bureaucratic, profit-making and complicated system, the US spends 17% of its gross domestic product - approximately $2.7 trillion annually - on healthcare. While insurance companies, drug companies, private hospitals and medical equipment suppliers make huge profits, Americans spend more and get less for their healthcare dollars.

What should the US be doing to improve this abysmal situation?

President Obama’s Affordable Care Act is a start. It prevents insurance companies from denying patients coverage for pre-existing conditions, allows people up to age 26 to stay on their parents’ insurance, sets minimum standards for what insurance must cover and helps lower-income Americans afford health insurance.

Twenty million Americans will receive health insurance. This is a modest step forward. But if we are serious about providing quality care for all, much more needs to be done.

The only long-term solution to America’s healthcare crisis is a single-payer national healthcare program.

The good news is that, in fact, a large-scale single-payer system already exists in the United States and its enrollees love it. It is called Medicare. Open to all Americans over 65 years of age, the program has been a resounding success since its introduction 48 years ago. Medicare should be expanded to cover all Americans.

Such a single-payer system would address one of the major deficiencies in the current system: the huge amount of money wasted on billing and administration. Hospitals and independent medical practices routinely employ more billing specialists than doctors - and that’s not the end of it. Patients and their families spend an enormous amount of time and effort arguing with insurance companies and bill collectors over what is covered and what they owe. Drug companies and hospitals spend billions advertising their products and services.

Creating a simple system with one payer, covering all Americans, would result in an enormous reduction in administrative expenses. We would be spending our money on healthcare and disease prevention, not on paper-pushing and debt collection.

Further, a single-payer system will expand employment opportunities and lift a financial weight off of businesses encumbered by employee health expenses. Many Americans remain at their current jobs because of the decent health insurance provided by their employer. Without the worry of losing benefits, those Americans will be free to explore other, more productive opportunities as they desire. For business owners, lifting the burden of employee healthcare expenditures will free them to invest in growing their businesses.

Congressman Jim McDermott and I have introduced the American Health Security Act.

Our bill will provide every American with healthcare coverage and services through a state-administered, single-payer program, including dental and mental health coverage and low-cost prescription drugs. It would require the government to develop national policies and guidelines, as well as minimum national criteria, while giving each state the flexibility to adapt the program as needed. It would also completely overhaul the health coverage system, creating a single federal payer of state-administered health plans.

The American people understand that our current healthcare system is not working. But the time is long overdue for them to understand that there is something fundamentally wrong when the US remains the only country in the industrialized world that does not guarantee healthcare to all its people.

Healthcare is a right and we must ensure provision of that right for Americans. A single-payer system will be good for the average American, good for businesses, good for workers and good for our overall economy.
Nelson Mandela
Continued from Page 1

He was, first of all, a man determined to liberate his country by any means necessary. His unique contribution to the struggle was to recognize that sometimes non-violent means might be as necessary as violent ones.

Mandela harbored no illusions about the kind of system he was up against. He knew that on its side, the apartheid regime was willing to use any means necessary to enforce white rule on the African majority.

In South Africa, less than 20% of the population was white, but 80% of the land and almost all the mineral wealth of the country was in their hands. Real power rested with an even smaller white minority called “Afrikaners” – descendants of Seventeenth Century Dutch settlers.

The African majority was strictly segregated into so-called tribal “homelands” or squalid townships on the outskirts of South Africa’s cities. Africans who got out of line were regularly imprisoned, tortured, or killed by South African police or Afrikaner vigilantes.

After South African police massacred 69 peaceful African demonstrators at Sharpeville, Mandela helped to found the armed guerrilla group Umkhonto we Siswe (“The Spear of the Nation”), known as MK in South Africa.

“The time comes in the life of any nation when there remain only two choices – submit or fight,” Mandela wrote at the time. “That time has now come to South Africa. We shall not submit and we have no choice but to hit back by all means in our power in defense of our people, our future, and our freedom.”

Mandela and the ANC (African National Congress, South Africa’s leading liberation organization) also had to take on the apartheid system’s foreign backers, notably Britain and the United States.

The South African Communist Party (SACP) was an ally of the ANC, and in the context of the cold war, successive US administrations were determined to stand by the apartheid regime.

In fact, when Mandela was arrested in 1962, it was the CIA that tipped South African authorities to his whereabouts. He spent the next 27 years in prison – more than one-quarter of his very long life.

Throughout his prison term, Mandela never wavered in his commitment to use all available means to bring about democracy. When the government offered him freedom on the condition that he renounce armed struggle, he turned them down flat.

It is a tribute to Mandela’s leadership and the discipline of the ANC that, looking back, the eventual triumph of South African democracy seems inevitable.

In 1990, when he was released from prison, it seemed anything but. Although the Afrikaner leaders saw that they could no longer govern in the same old way, they still tried to stall transition to a democratic political order. Armed gangs of ultra-right wing Afrikaners carried out terrorist strikes, assassinating ANC leaders. Among the victims was SACP General Secretary Chris Hani.

Had MK retaliated against Afrikaners, had ANC led African farmers to seize land, had they occupied white-owned mines and factories – any one of these actions might have touched off a racial civil war and possible foreign intervention to “restore order.”

Mandela realized that the ANC first of all had to consolidate the transition to majority rule, even if it meant deferring the transition to socialism promised in the ANC program. If they failed to win the political transition to majority rule, the economic transition to socialism would never be on the table.

Mandela knew he had to convince the majority of South African whites that an African-led government was not a threat to them. Even so, he didn’t sit down and sing Kumbayah with the Afrikaners. Far from it.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission set up when he became President was designed to destroy the political basis for apartheid by documenting in agonizing detail how brutal and ugly the old system had been, and what horrific crimes were committed to sustain it. After the commission issued its findings, no one could look back on apartheid as “the good old days.”

In the 20 years since Mandela became president of South Africa, many whites have left the country. But they did not rebel against majority rule and they did not invite foreign intervention.

Mandela succeeded in securing political democracy. Now his successors must tackle the problem of economic democracy.
Thirty Years of Advocacy

By Mike Andrew

Readers who keep an eye on details might have noticed that with this January issue, we've made the transition to Volume XXX of the Retiree Advocate.

That means that the Advocate has been around for 30 years. That's a remarkable achievement for any independent publication, but even more remarkable for one like the Advocate that relies solely on subscriptions and doesn't accept advertising of any kind.

We owe our success primarily to you, our readers, who have supported us for 30 years. But we also need to acknowledge two outstanding working class journalists who guided the Advocate through its formative years and shaped it into the publication we know today.

Max Roffman (1910-2003) edited the Advocate even before it was the Advocate. He came to Seattle in 1984 from Hawaii, where he'd spent 21 years organizing the United Public Workers Union (UPW), and another 10 working for the Center for Labor Education and Research at the University of Hawaii.

Max also produced the "Rice and Roses" labor program on Hawaiian public television from 1975 to 1981.

When he came to Seattle, Max became a leader of the Puget Sound Council of Senior Citizens (PSCSC), and was the first editor of Senior News – the predecessor of the Retiree Advocate.

It was the middle of the Reagan years, and there was plenty to write about, although the basic issues were the same as the ones we tackle today - preserving and strengthening social security, guaranteeing health care for all Americans, ensuring that workers got a bigger share of the wealth we create.

In 1994, Max retired as editor, although he continued to write for the publication, and Will Parry (1920-2013) took on his editorial responsibilities.

Will had been a writer for The New World and People's World, until 1956, when the McCarthy persecutions deprived him of his ability to make a living as a journalist. Will then went to work for a box-making company and became a leader of Western Pulp and Paper Workers (AWPPW) Local 817.

Will went on to edit the AFT-WA newsletter, and when he retired, became involved in the PSCSC and Senior News. He became editor in 1994. In those days, the publication was only a four-pager that came out every other month, and was written mainly by Max and Will.

In 1998, the Senior News became a monthly and expanded to six pages.

The National Council of Senior Citizens was relaunched as the Alliance for Retired Americans (ARA) in 2001, and Senior News became the Retiree Advocate in 2002.

Will retired as editor in February 2013, and died the following May 13, having seen the Advocate through a period of sustained growth.

The Advocate as it exists today is a tribute to Will's leadership. When he retired, I told him that if I followed his example I'd work on the publication for the next 30 years – by which time I thought I'd be pretty good at it.

The Advocate hasn't come this far without the constant support of our readers. Many of you have written for the publication, and all of you have generously given time and money to keep us in print.

If we want to continue publishing for another 30 years – and why not? – we still need your help. Please renew your subscriptions if they're due to expire. You can also give a subscription to a friend or neighbor, and help expand the circle of readers that's been growing for the past 30 years.

To subscribe or renew visit http://psara.org/become-a-member-of-psara
Meetings and Events

PSARA Education Committee:
10:00 a.m. – noon, Wednesday, Jan. 8, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Ave, Rm. 226. The Committee is planning an educational program where multiple organizational representatives will be invited. We hope to encourage cross-organizational dialogue that leads to working together based on a common progressive vision for our future.

PSARA Government Relations Committee: 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 8, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Avenue, Rm. 226. The Committee will be making further plans for the 2014 legislative session and Senior Lobby Day.

PSARA Environment Committee: 10:00 a.m. – noon, Wednesday, Jan. 8, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Ave, Rm. 226. The Committee is planning an educational program where multiple organizational representatives will be invited. We hope to encourage cross-organizational dialogue that leads to working together based on a common progressive vision for our future.

PSARA Executive Board Meeting: 12:30 p.m. – 3 p.m., Thursday, January 16, Central Area Senior Center, 500 30th Avenue S., Seattle. All PSARA members are welcome.

PSARA Environment Committee: 2 p.m. – 3:30 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 9, office of the Washington State Labor Council, 314 First Ave West (note change of location for this meeting). The committee is continuing to define PSARA’s work on climate change and the creation of good family wage jobs.

PSARA Government Relations Committee: 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 5, Seattle Labor Temple, 2800 First Avenue, Rm. 226. The Committee will be finalizing the plans for PSARA’s participation in the 2014 Senior Lobby Day.

Senior Lobby Day: Thursday, Feb. 20, 8 a.m. registration, 9 a.m. program begins, United Churches, 110 11th Ave. SE, Olympia WA. Join with PSARA members and others from across the state to make our priorities known to our legislators. PSARA will be organizing car pools for our members. Please contact Chuck Richards, legaffairs@psara.org or call the PSARA office if you can drive or if you need a ride.