

Crazy Arnie's 2009 'Great California Fire Sale'

by Harley Schlanger

Sept. 1—In case you missed it on eBay and craigslist, the “Great California Garage Sale” moved to a warehouse in Sacramento last weekend, as California’s fascist Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger unveiled another one of his crazy plans to allegedly address the continuing budget crisis in the state.

In a combined auction and flea market, now frequently referred to as the “Great Fire Sale,” the state offered for auction part of its transportation fleet, office furniture and supplies, computers, cameras, and jewelry and other odds-and-ends seized by state police. To promote the sale, Schwarzenegger autographed visors on the cars, and issued a public service announcement that received wide circulation: “By posting items online,” he barked, “Californians and people from other states and around the world can participate in the Great California Garage Sale. This is a win-win for the state and shoppers. Together we are eliminating waste and providing great deals in this tough economy. I encourage everyone to log on or attend this great event.”

The results fell far short of expectations, as only approximately \$1 million was reported from online orders and the first day of the “garage” sale. This will not do much to cover the still-growing deficit, which may hit an additional \$10 billion before this fiscal year ends next June 30.

A Method to His Madness

While pundits had a field day, asking questions like, “What’s next—marketing autographed Governor

bobble-head dolls produced in the state prisons?”, what Schwarzenegger has done to the state is no laughing matter. More than \$60 billion in spending has been cut from the 2009-10 budget, as revenues have continued to plummet, and the latest spending cuts are just beginning to wreak deadly havoc. Unless a last-minute deal can be reached by legislators to save the Healthy Families public health insurance program, more than 900,000 children from low-income families will lose state-funded insurance and access to health care.

The round of cuts in the July budget deal was already life-threatening to poor children, the elderly, the adult poor, and the disabled. Funds were slashed from Medi-Cal, from welfare-to-work programs—which benefit primarily children in single-parent families—and dental care; many hospitals, clinics, and special care programs will be closed, as a result of Schwarzenegger’s brutal austerity. Doctors and health-care officials have said, repeatedly, that lives will be shortened because of these cuts.

But then, Schwarzenegger gleefully added to their misery, using his power of line-item veto, to make nearly \$500 million in additional cuts. Besides another chunk gouged out of the Healthy Families program, he removed \$50 million from services for developmentally delayed children under 3; cut \$52.2 million from the Office of AIDS Prevention, which went for treatment of newly diagnosed cases; slashed funding for home-based services to those gravely ill with HIV; and cut funds for programs such as the Alzheimer’s Day

Care Resource Centers, meaning that 57 sites will no longer be able to aid more than 3,200 seniors and their families.

When asked by a reporter from the *New York Times Magazine* if he is wracked by guilt from the effects of the “tough choices” he said he had to make, Schwarzenegger reverted to his clownish side, bragging with a smirk, “I will sit down in my Jacuzzi tonight. I’m going to lay back with a stogie.”

‘Slaying the Beast’

Beyond the nasty, mocking tone of that comment is a deeper truth: Schwarzenegger was put in office by George Shultz and Wall Street, precisely because he would act with complete disregard for the devastation wrought by his actions. When running for governor, he repeatedly declared government to be the enemy, calling it the “beast” which he had to slay. Whether he was threatening to “blow up the boxes” of government agencies, or ridiculing those who opposed his cuts on humanitarian grounds as “girlie men,” he made it clear that his intention was to dismantle government, to clear the way for unlimited profits for the corporate cartels which have funded his campaigns so generously.

Though he often presents this buffoonish side, to deflect from that intent—for example, when he uses Hollywood imagery to make his point, as when he recently described the battle over the budget as “like a suspense movie”—the results of his actions prove that he is fully committed to laying waste to this once-productive state.

This is nowhere more evident than in the long-term effects of the manipulations to achieve a “balanced” budget. For example, the state “borrowed” (read, snatched) \$4 billion from county and city governments, which is scheduled to be repaid in 2013. The local governments are suing the state, as they are already in emergency mode, having cut their own budgets to the bone.

The looting of local treasuries is now threatening the public safety, as can be seen in the role local fire stations play in the battle against the wildfires that are threatening major urban areas, particularly Los Angeles. Half the fire engines, and 1,400 local firefighters, who have joined the state firefighters in a desperate effort to contain the fires, are from local stations. They



When asked by a reporter if it bothers him that his budget cuts were threatening the lives of California’s families, including 900,000 children, Schwarzenegger smirked, “I will sit down in my Jacuzzi tonight. I’m going to lay back with a stogie.”

are deployed under the California Emergency Management Agency Master Mutual Aid Agreement. This agreement is threatened by Schwarzenegger’s decision to confiscate local funds. An official in the firefighters union said that half the firehouses may have to withdraw from the Mutual Aid agreement, due to lack of funds. Already, numerous fire stations are shut down certain days of the week, due to funding shortfalls.

Another area targeted by Schwarzenegger is pension funds. He wants to set up a two-tier system, in which the pension benefits of currently employed workers would be maintained, but pensions would be lower for those hired in the future. He dismisses opposition to this with a wave of his hand, saying that the state can no longer afford to pay so much for retired workers. This, from the man who has reduced the pay of state workers by 15%, through his mandatory furlough policy, of three days a month of unpaid days off. Union leaders point out that it will be increasingly difficult to recruit qualified people to take jobs with the state, which is precisely Arnie’s intent, as he proceeds with his plan to destroy representative government.

The Guvernator Must Go

From the beginning, when Arnie was first installed in office, by a coup run by the old corporate fascist George Shultz and the washed-up former Republican Gov. Pete Wilson, Lyndon LaRouche has been rallying California Democrats, and sane Republicans and Independents, to recognize that a simple two-step process is necessary to save the state. First, Schwarzenegger must go, and the fascist policies pushed by Shultz et al. must be rejected. Even at this late date in the Guvernator's tenure, this first step is indispensable.

Secondly, the people of California must recognize that the state has been destroyed not just by the recent effects of the Shultz/Schwarzenegger coup, but by the imposition nationally, over the last four decades, of post-industrial, free-market policies. Under these policies of "globalization," the state, and the rest of the nation, have seen a net decline in physical production, per capita and per square mile, year after year. The physical economy of the nation has been looted, while favored corporations—including banks and financial institutions, insurance companies, pharmaceuticals, and the oil and grain cartels—have been given a license to steal. Industry and manufacturing have collapsed, the agricultural sector has been consolidated under corporate control, and infrastructure has been allowed to decay.

Productive activities have been replaced by financial speculation, resulting in a series of bubbles. When the housing bubble popped in the Summer of 2007, Lyndon LaRouche put forward an alternative, centered around the Homeowners and Bank Protection Act (HBPA), which had widespread support among local elected officials in California. When Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, moved in to prevent Congressional passage of the HBPA, threatening those House members who were responding to pressure from their constituents, supporters of the legislation in California did *not* fight for it. They capitulated to Pelosi, just as they have to Schwarzenegger, with deadly results.

And Crazy Arnie just sits back in his Jacuzzi, puffing on his victory stogie, musing about how his years in office would make a good sequel to "Conan the Barbarian."

It's the National Problem

While Schwarzenegger may be the governor with the most egregious attitude, he is joined by 48 others, in



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Arnie always enjoys himself, as here with his Hollywood pal Mickey Mouse, while condemning millions of Californians to penury. His cuts have even hampered the ability of firefighters to respond to the raging inferno now engulfing the Los Angeles area.

making devastating budget cuts, and defending their indefensible behavior.

For example, Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley gave a speech at the end of August, in which he actually bragged that the \$650 million in drastic cuts which were put through in his state, weren't so bad, because other states were worse.

As quoted in the *Washington Post*, O'Malley told a group, "We will not be proposing the release of violent prisoners early, as they have in California. . . . We won't be taking away health care from tens of thousands . . . as they are in Minnesota. We will not be selling off our House and Senate office buildings, as Arizona is considering. And we will not be cutting hundreds of children off from Head Start, as they are in Rhode Island. Nor will we be jacking up college tuition by double digits every year for the foreseeable future, as they are in many other states, including Florida." O'Malley, who is facing re-election next year, concluded, "There's no stronger ship in the nation than the good ship Maryland!"

All of which was too much for local Assembly Delegate Murray Levy, who quipped, "Maryland saying we're not as bad off as other states is kind of like saying we have the best room on the *Titanic*!"