

Pacific Media Workers Guild representing journalists in California and Hawaii passes resolution to support journalist Julian Assange and whistleblower Chelsea Manning

by Davey Heller, 30th June 2019

In the face of opposition from elements of the union bureaucracy, the sub-committee of the Pacific Media Workers Guild (The NewsGuild-Communications Workers of America Local 39521) has passed a motion, reproduced in full below, calling for the freedom of the journalist Julian Assange and the whistleblower Chelsea Manning.

The motion was originally submitted by members Steve Zeltzer and John Holmes in April, so that it could be passed in time to be submitted to the NewsGuild and Communication Workers of America (CWA) Conventions which will occur in July 2019. Despite stalling efforts by union bureaucrats, which prevented the motion being put to a vote at a meeting of the rank and file, the motion was eventually passed at a sub-committee meeting.

The Pacific Media Workers Guild represents more than 1,000 newspaper, language and communications workers across Northern California, the Central Valley and Hawaii, along with freelance and new media journalists, interpreters,

typographical workers and video ASL interpreters. The membership includes newsroom workers at the San Francisco Chronicle, San Jose Mercury News, Sacramento Bee, the Press Democrat of Santa Rosa and the Monterey Herald. The CWA, to which the Guild is affiliated, represented over 700,000 workers.

The passing of this motion flows on from the passing of a [motion in support](#) by the San Francisco Labor Council. The resolution passed also refers to the [opposition of the Australian media Union](#), of which Assange is a member (MEAA), and the [International Federation of Journalists \(IFJ\)](#) to Assange's extradition.

The harsh political reality is that the media unions are only passing such motions under intense pressure from rank and file journalists and for fear of being exposed as complicit in the full frontal assault on journalism embodied in the US prosecution of Assange for espionage.

The campaign to build a real defence of Assange in the working class, particularly in workplaces, and the labour movement will involve other workers following the lead of rank and file members in the Pacifica Media Workers Guild who are fighting to move motions in the face of the opposition of union bureaucracies. Whether workers are in a union, or organised in a committee of workers, organised independently and in opposition to the union, the goal should be to mobilise support amongst the broadest layers of workers through the passing of such motions. Students and youth can also pass similar motions in schools and universities. The ultimate aim is the mobilisation of workers and youth in a political struggle in defence of Assange and Manning.

Workers will increasingly be thrust into political struggles to advance not just their most basic industrial rights, but democratic rights more generally. Such a political struggle must also be armed with a socialist perspective: that the interests of the working class can only be fought for through a united international struggle against the capitalist system itself.

RESOLUTION

Pacific Media Workers Guild (The NewsGuild-Communications Workers of America Local 39521) Resolution to Support Journalist Julian Assange and Whistleblower Chelsea Manning

Whereas journalist Julian Assange is the founder of WikiLeaks, which has laid bare the role of the United States and other governments in war crimes and other violations of international law; and

Whereas Julian Assange and WikiLeaks have exposed corporate and political corruption, including the John Podesta emails that showed collusion among government officials, politicians, corporate owners and other wealthy special interests; and

Whereas Chelsea Manning – while serving in a United States Army intelligence unit in Iraq – provided information to WikiLeaks revealing the United States Military's role in war

crimes including aerial bombardments of Baghdad, Iraq, and Granai, Afghanistan; and

Whereas there is a systematic effort by the United States government to muzzle and imprison reporters and whistleblowers who expose corruption and criminal activity by government officials; and

Whereas the Australian Media, Arts and Entertainment Alliance (MEAA), of which Julian Assange has been a member of since 2011, opposes the extradition of Julian Assange to the United States and supports his free return to Australia; and

Whereas the International Federation of Journalists, with which our parent union, The NewsGuild, is affiliated, is calling for the defense of Julian Assange and opposes his extradition to the United States; and

Whereas highly esteemed organizations and individuals including the Committee to Protect Journalists, the Freedom of the Press Foundation, Daniel Ellsberg, John Pilger, Glenn Greenwald, Oliver Stone, Peter B. Collins and James Risen are calling for Julian Assange's freedom; and

Whereas, the San Francisco Labor Council opposes the United States' effort to prosecute Julian Assange for his activity as a journalist; and

Whereas, the United States government's effort to extradite Julian Assange to the United States sends a chilling message to journalists and whistleblowers around the globe; and

Whereas, a charge of espionage by the United States government against any journalist or publisher threatens the First Amendment rights of all journalists and publishers that expose government or corporate wrongdoing;

Therefore be it resolved that the Pacific Media Workers Guild (The NewsGuild-Communications Workers of America Local 39521) opposes the extradition of Julian Assange to the United States and calls for his freedom, and opposes further imprisonment of Chelsea Manning, whose sentence President Barack Obama commuted; and

That this Local will submit this resolution for concurrence at the NewsGuild and CWA Conventions in July 2019, and will convey this resolution to Congressional representatives from the Local's primary service areas in Northern California, Hawaii and Nevada.