

In Defense of Marxism

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The Four Horsemen of the Workplace



The Capitalist Crisis of the 1990s, U.S. Labor, and the Labor Party Movement

by Frank Lovell

Plus: Special Section on the Environment



Anti-Racist Activists Demand:

Stop the Execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal!

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Who We Are

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism is published by an independent collective of U.S. socialists who are in fraternal solidarity with the Fourth International, a worldwide organization of revolutionary socialists.

Supporters of this magazine may be involved in different socialist groups and/or in a broad range of working class struggles and protest movements in the U.S. These include unions and other labor organizations, women's rights groups, antiracist organizations, coalitions opposed to U.S. military intervention, gay and lesbian rights campaigns, civil liberties and human rights efforts. We support similar activities in all countries and participate in the global struggle of working people and their allies. Many of our activities are advanced through collaboration with other supporters of the Fourth International in countries around the world.

What we have in common is our commitment to the Fourth International's critical-minded and revolutionary Marxism, which in the twentieth century is represented by such figures as V.I. Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, and Leon Trotsky. We also identify with the tradition of American Trotskyism represented by James P. Cannon and others. We favor the creation of a revolutionary working-class party, which can only emerge through the conscious efforts of many who are involved in the struggles of working people and the oppressed and who are dedicated to revolutionary socialist perspectives.

Through this magazine we seek to clarify the history, theory and program of the Fourth International and the American Trotskyist tradition, discussing their application to the class struggle internationally and here in the United States. This vital task must be undertaken if we want to forge a political party in this country capable of bringing an end to the domination of the U.S. imperialist ruling class, establishing a working people's democracy and socialist society based on human need instead of private greed, in which the free development of each person becomes possible.

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism is independent of any political organization. Not all U.S. revolutionaries who identify with the Fourth International are in a common organization. Not all of them participate in the publication of this journal. Supporters of this magazine are committed to comradely discussion and debate as well as practical political cooperation which can facilitate eventual organizational unity of all Fourth Internationalists in the United States. At the same time, we want to help promote a broad recomposition of a class-conscious working class movement and, within this, a revolutionary socialist regroupment, in which perspectives of revolutionary Marxism, the Fourth International, and American Trotskyism will play a vital role.

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism will publish materials generally consistent with these perspectives, although it will seek to offer *discussion articles* providing different points of view within the revolutionary socialist spectrum. Signed articles do not necessarily express the views of anyone other than the author.

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Stop the Execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal!

Statement of the Western Pennsylvania Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal

Sisters and Brothers, Supporters of Mumia Abu-Jamal!

On June 1, [Pennsylvania] Governor [Thomas] Ridge signed a death warrant on our brother, Mumia Abu-Jamal. Unless a stay of execution is granted, the State of Pennsylvania will murder Mumia at 10 PM on August 17.

Mumia Abu-Jamal is a journalist, husband, father, and voice of the oppressed. His commitment to report on police corruption and brutality, as well as his support for the MOVE organization and his background in the Black Panther Party, targeted him for retaliation by the City of Philadelphia and FBI counterintelligence programs.

Mumia was sentenced to death in the 1981 fatal shooting of a Philadelphia police officer. Mumia, himself shot and brutally beaten at the scene, has always maintained his innocence.

Tom Ridge is fulfilling his campaign promise to sign death warrants. We are racing against time to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Don't wait until it's too late! Join the Emergency Response Network!

The fight for Mumia's life is a fight for *all* our lives — a call to abolish the death penalty, a cry against the right-wing madness that is sweeping this country, a cry for justice.

We need your support. Call (412) 361-2889 for information. Make checks payable to Western PA Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal and send to P.O. Box 10174, Pittsburgh, PA 15232-0174.

Stop the murder of an innocent man! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal! □

Pittsburgh Activist Demands: Stop the Murder of Mumia Abu-Jamal!

The following is the text of a fax sent to Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge demanding that he stop the execution of African American activist Mumia Abu-Jamal.

I am appalled at your signing of the death warrant for Mumia Abu-Jamal, a Peabody award-winning journalist and internationally known political prisoner, who is recognized as not having received a fair trial.

In your haste to be "politically correct," you are being gravely morally wrong. Where is your sense of justice? Clearly, your political ambition has so distorted your judgment that you are willing calculatedly and cold-bloodedly to order the execution of a man for whom there is serious and reasonable question of his guilt. Since your judgment is so faulty in this situation, why should I have any confidence in your competency to govern at all?

So far, you have calculatingly, cold-bloodedly, and possibly even with malice aforethought ordered the murder of fifteen people in Pennsylvania, some of whom have clearly committed murder themselves, some of whom are innocent.

For those who are murderers, all of us feel outrage and grief for their victims. But I do not see how your committing serial murder will in any way remedy the tragedy of those deaths. Scientifically, study after study shows that capital punishment does not deter murder. Morally, if those who commit murder deserve to be killed, then what about you?

For those who are innocent, what is your justification for killing them? Let's suppose for a moment that it is morally correct to kill those who murder. How does that justify the calculated, cold-blooded killing of those who are innocent? When you come before your maker, how will you justify your having ordered the deaths of people for whom there was reasonable question of their guilt? If undeniable evidence of the innocence of Mumia or any of the other people that you have ordered to be killed turns up after their deaths, will you order capital punishment for yourself? Will you be willing to sign your own death warrant? I suspect not. I would like to hear on what shaky grounds you will exempt yourself from the

judgment and consequences you so self-righteously, arrogantly, and opportunistically place upon other human beings.

As far as I can tell, there is no convincing scientific or moral justification for capital punishment. In the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, there is even significant, troubling evidence that he was framed because of his excellent, hard-hitting reporting about ex-Mayor Frank Rizzo and the Philadelphia police. There is significant and troubling evidence that he did not receive a fair trial. There is significant and troubling evidence that an innocent man is about to be put to death for political reasons in the United States of America, the land of the Bill of Rights, the land of freedom of speech, the land of freedom of the press, and the so-called land of political freedom.

I implore you to reconsider your actions. Rescind the death warrant on Mumia Abu-Jamal. Indeed, rescind the death warrants you have signed thus far. Be honest with the people of Pennsylvania regarding the facts about the ineffectiveness of capital punishment in deterring homicide. Be forthright by informing the citizens of the Commonwealth that all objective evidence shows that the most effective way to stem all crime is rehabilitation, and the most effective way to prevent crime is to provide a decent-paying job for every single person who wants one. Then be politically brave and fight for a full employment economy and a decent standard of living to benefit all the citizens of the state of Pennsylvania. Stand up for the right of every citizen to criticize any aspect or level of government without fear of reprisal, including frame-ups, unfair trials, wrongful conviction, and politically-motivated execution.

In the name of justice, in the name of fairness, rescind the death warrant, commute the death sentence on Mumia Abu-Jamal. Insist on a fair re-trial. *Let Mumia live!*

— Claire M. Cohen, M.D.
June 3, 1995

A Cordial New Hampshire Concord — Beginning of a New Detente?

by Bill Onasch

Newt Gingrich went to New Hampshire to see a moose. Bill Clinton visited the Granite State to inspire a graduation ceremony. While both were coincidentally on location at the scene of the first of next year's presidential primaries someone in the Clinton camp came up with a happy idea — bring them together for a joint appearance. And so they did. The speaker of the House and the president met face-to-face at a senior citizens center — probably neither of them knowing the site was named after a Socialist Party politician of an earlier generation.

Many were expecting sparks to fly. They were disappointed. The *New York Times* reported an "encounter so muted, so polite, and so carefully conciliatory that it was often hard to distinguish the sharp philosophical differences between the two men." They not only shook hands at the beginning, as boxers do, but later clasped again in agreement to establish a "blue-ribbon" commission to tackle campaign financing reform. The two men's press secretaries afterward agreed that there had been neither a winner nor a loser in what some referred to as a "chat" rather than a debate.

"New Democrats" vs. "Real Democrats"

Perhaps these two Southern-raised lads were just on their good behavior in front of their elders? Subsequent developments indicate that a more substantial period of *détente* between them may lie ahead. This new spirit of peaceful coexistence is causing some consternation within the Democratic Party.

The *Wall Street Journal's* top political columnist, Gerald F. Sheib, has been following the conflicts between the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) — Clinton's "New Democrats" — and Jesse Jackson, and others, representing the "Real Democrats." Sheib writes: "It's semi-official: America's two-party system has collapsed." He goes on to say:

By finally offering a plan to balance the budget ... President Clinton pushed Democrats into the identity crisis made utterly inevitable by the Republican election sweep last fall. Mr. Clinton delayed this moment of reckoning by zigging and zagging on taxes and the deficit after that election. But now Democrats are at a crossroads. They can either turn back to protecting



Clinton and Gingrich. Why are these men smiling?

their traditional base of unionists, senior citizens, and minorities, who have a fundamental stake in the existing federal budget. Or they can move onto another road.

Clinton's Choice: Partnership with Republicans

Clinton's choice of roads has become clear. After months of waffling he has become a partner with the Republicans in the holy crusade to balance the budget. He accepts that this will be painful for many. His main difference now with the GOP is over the tempo of inflicting this pain. The seven-year goal of the Republicans is too fast and reckless for him — he thinks it should be done in ten. But he's open to negotiation.

While the Republican Congress tried to get a head start on their seven-year plan by passing a "rescission" bill, canceling many spending programs already approved, Clinton bravely responded with his first veto. The "real Democrats" took heart — but only briefly. Clinton immediately went into negotiations with the Republican leadership — completely bypassing his own party's leaders — and crafted a compromise that he promised to sign.

Many congressional Democrats were furious. They were asked to approve a bill that was little different from what they had earlier rejected and that Clinton had vetoed. They didn't even know all of the details of the summit agreement from which they had been excluded. Many complained bitterly on the floor, some, such as Representative Joseph Kennedy II, strongly denouncing the White House for treachery. In the Senate two liberals launched a mini-filibuster to vent their anger.

A participant in a Democratic leadership strategy meeting became so distracted by the turn of events that he left his notes from the meeting on the counter of a Washington liquor store. Unfortunately for him, this lost property was found by a staff member of the Heritage Foundation, who promptly leaked portions of it to the press. They show the party leaders in disarray, in the midst of an identity crisis, no longer sure of their base.

What Will Democrats' "Base" Do?

Clinton seems to have made an irrevocable choice at the crossroads.

The only question remaining is, Will the "real Democrats" continue to follow him? Will the leaders of the organized labor, civil rights, feminist, senior citizen, and environmentalist movements persevere in their allegiance to an illusion of a party that no longer really exists (in fact never truly existed)? And if these leaders capitulate, will they be able to carry the support of their millions in the face of accelerating class warfare?

This crossroads debate will be fought out in hundreds of different forums over the next year. It is likely to be much more heated than the meeting of the Gentle Giants in New Hampshire. The outcome will determine the prospects for the working class for a long time to come.

Time for Labor to Form Its Own Political Party

The crossroads formulation of Sheib and others is flawed. While it would be possible for the Democrats to focus more on appealing for votes among their traditional base, the party has never really represented the interests of this base. What is desperately needed is to expose the class nature of politics and the futility of trying to use bosses' parties to restrain and civilize the bosses, who have tasted our blood and crave more. Replacing the head of the Democrats with Tom Harkin or Jerry Brown would mean little.

The real crossroads choice is whether the working class will continue to subordinate itself to the parties of the rich or whether we will finally strike out on our own. The coming months should present an unprecedented opportunity for the union movement to launch a Labor Party. And it might gain a lot of support from frustrated "real Democrats." □

Who Will Revitalize Organized Labor, When?

by Charles Walker

The strength of the labor leader is with the rank and file; without it there would be no labor leader.

But without leaders, the rank and file will not be strong at crucial times and places.

When appropriate conditions move the masses... [it] is then that leadership is tested and those men who have been plied with security of routine and soaked with the fear of action fall by the way.

— C. Wright Mills, *The New Men of Power*

At one time, the highest American labor officials had celebrity status. When United Mine Workers leader John L. Lewis spoke or even entered a room he got attention, if not respect. But in a 1993 poll, 97 percent of the respondents could not identify the president of

the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations) — Lane Kirkland. Now Kirkland has said he will step down in August, and today it looks like a pretty good bet that Kirkland's right-hand man, Secretary-Treasurer Tom Donahue, will be voted out in October.

Last February, a minority of 10 international union presidents forced a discussion of Kirkland's future at a Florida meeting of the 33 international union presidents who make up the AFL-CIO Executive Council. At the time, Kirkland and Donahue seemed content to stonewall their critics, dismiss them as well-meaning but lacking in horse sense and supporters. But during the passing months the critics grew more

vocal, and more numerous. At the May meeting of the Executive Council, Kirkland and Donahue tried a coy maneuver: Donahue announced his retirement, leaving the opposition (who earlier had said they would settle for Donahue replacing Kirkland) without a realistic alternative to Kirkland. "If nominated, I will stand. If elected, I will serve," said Kirkland.

Ironically, without Donahue in the picture, the number of insurgent international presidents got larger. So large that by June it appeared that the challengers had a slight majority of the 13.3 million votes to be cast in October's election. It seemed likely that Kirkland would be replaced.

With their backs to the wall, Kirkland and Donahue switched places. Donahue said he

Editors' Note

This issue contains several important features.

Environment

We have a special section (two articles and an interview) discussing the destructive effects of the capitalist system on the environment, the "biosphere" that we all depend on for our very existence. These point toward the socialist alternative — worldwide, democratically controlled planning to guarantee that economic decisions will meet human needs without "fouling the nest."

Labor Politics and Capitalist Politics

A number of articles in this issue take up the election contest that has developed in the AFL-CIO and assess its potential significance for the union movement, for Labor Party Advocates, and, in general, for the struggle for social change in this country — against a background of intensifying class struggle, increasingly volatile moods in the American public, and growing disgust with the Democratic dance being put on by Clinton, Gingrich, & Co.

The article by Frank Lovell, in particular, assesses major changes going on in the world capitalist economy, how those affect the relations between capital and labor in this country, and the political implications. It is our hope that in the coming year our magazine will organize an Educational Conference on questions like those taken up in Frank Lovell's article.

The Black Struggle and Mumia Abu-Jamal

The U.S. government's retreat from the persecution of Malcolm X's daughter marked a victory celebrated by a unique gathering at the Apollo Theater in Harlem on May 6. We have the honor of reprinting an article by Ron

Daniels about that event, and we are carrying the text of the speech made there by Malcolm X's widow, Dr. Betty Shabazz, for the information of our readers. Related information about the African American Leadership Summit in June also appears. An in-depth article on this important development — to be authored by Vera Wigglesworth — is slated for a future issue.

The speech by labor leader Larry Adams at the Black Workers for Justice banquet in April of this year eloquently highlights the links between the struggle of the Black nation in America and that of the working class as a whole.

If the capitalist government pulled back from its attack on Malcolm X's family, it immediately struck elsewhere, in the person of the governor of Pennsylvania, with a death warrant against another representative of the Black nationalist movement — the former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal. We carry a number of articles about his case. And we urge readers to do everything possible to prevent his execution, scheduled for August 17.

The capitalist class is trying to make murder by the state more acceptable. (After all, it is less "costly" than imprisonment.) If it occurs, this would be the first major political execution since the Rosenbergs in the mid-1950s. It is a direct threat to the Black movement, the radical movement, and all forces seeking social change. It cannot be allowed.

No to U.S. and NATO Escalation In Bosnia

This issue also continues our regular coverage of worldwide economic, social, and political trends and struggles (articles on the former USSR, on Mexico, and on Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole). In

our next issue we hope to analyze at greater length the continuing complex events in the former Yugoslavia.

Recently there has been an escalation of Western imperialist intervention, particularly in the war in Bosnia, in an area where 50 years ago capitalism was overthrown by a socialist revolution of the Yugoslav workers and peasants. For now, let us repeat what we have said before: intervention by "the international community" and the United Nations actually means that the imperialist governments (dominated by giant corporations, and by finance capital) will pursue their own interests in these former "socialist" lands. The so-called Great Powers do not care about the needs of the workers, farmers, the ordinary people, the displaced, and the impoverished in the former Yugoslav republics.

The "civilized" Western representatives of capital deal amicably with the former Stalinists and Greater Serbian chauvinists, who are still the dominant military force in the area — while condemning them for "war crimes." They impose a largely ineffective blockade on the Serbian chauvinist war criminals (whose former Stalinist police state remains effectively intact), while very effectively preventing heavy weapons from reaching the Bosnian Muslims and their allies. They thus prevent a more democratic and popular movement from defending itself against fascist-like, police-state elements who have no compunction about the restoration of capital. The gangs around Milosevic and Radovic easily trade off their privileged connections in the Serbian bureaucratic caste for a new status as capitalists or servants of big money. More on that in our next issue.

would stay on and run for president of the federation, and Kirkland, 73, said he would retire in August. Donahue told reporters that "he supported changes that the dissidents seek." Reportedly several unions that were committed to ousting Kirkland have switched camps. "Marshall Hicks, president of the Utility Workers of America, whose union was announced as one of five that recently joined the opposition coalition, said he is supporting Donahue's bid for the presidency. 'Donahue was acceptable to everyone a month ago,' [Hicks] said, adding, 'He's still acceptable to me'" (*Daily Labor Report*).

But the insurgents said Kirkland's retirement and Donahue's candidacy were a dollar short and a day late. "The train has left the station," said Teamster President Ron Carey.

The Candidates

John Sweeney, president of the 1.1-million-member Service Employees International Union (SEIU), has emerged as the challengers' candidate. If elected, he would be only the third president of the AFL-CIO in 40 years.¹

No union at present has a more aggressive organizing program than Sweeney's SEIU, especially among women and minorities. The highly diversified union has made considerable gains among hospital workers and nursing home staff. SEIU is especially proud of its longstanding "Justice for Janitors" campaign, which has put militant street tactics and mass actions to good use. The *Wall Street Journal* reported, "The union's in-your-face tactics anger employers. By publicly attacking employers that hire companies using non-union janitors, the 'Justice for Janitors' campaign has organized 33,000 building-service workers in the past eight years."

United Mine Workers President Richard Trumka is the challengers' candidate for secretary-treasurer, the federation's second highest post. Trumka was a leader in the Miners for Democracy caucus that swept the corrupt murderer, Tony Boyle, out of office. Trumka, like Ron Carey, is one of the few international presidents directly elected by the union's rank and file.

The opposition has said it intends to amend the AFL-CIO constitution to provide for a third top position in the federation — "executive vice president" — and has named Linda Chavez-Thompson as its candidate. Chavez-Thompson, an international vice president of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), would be the first member of a national minority and the first woman to gain a top post in the AFL-CIO. In terms of numbers within the AFL-CIO, AFSCME, with its 1.3 million members, is second only to the Teamsters.

A week after Sweeney, Trumka, and Chavez-Thompson announced their slate, Donahue confirmed that he would oppose Sweeney in October, and to oppose Trumka, he named Barbara Easterling, who is secretary-treasurer of the Communications Workers of America (CWA). Easterling was a CWA representative in Ohio and Michigan for 7 years before going to Washington in 1980 as assistant to the CWA president. Easterling was elected executive vice president of the CWA in 1985, and secretary-treasurer in 1992. The CWA is a leading member of Jobs with Justice, a growing union-community coalition focused on inter-union solidarity campaigns.

With four months to go until the AFL-CIO's New York City convention, there's plenty of time for changes in the line-up of candidates from both camps. No one should be surprised if a compromise is reached and convention delegates are offered a single, joint slate. On the other hand, in mid-June it was reported that should Donahue lose the election, some international unions might leave the federation. (CWA and the United Food and Commercial Workers [UFCW] were named.) Less than two weeks later, the *Daily Labor Report* wrote, "Noting that the labor movement is being split over the leadership contest, she [Easterling] said that if it continues up until the convention, there may be two federations or one federation with some unions outside of it."

Scanty Programs

Neither slate has issued a comprehensive analysis of what ails the labor movement, nor a specific program of what must be done to turn things around. Both sides have been content to hold press conferences and issue press releases. What has reached the public so far are sound bites that don't really mean much from one slate to the other.

The Donahue-Easterling slate announced their goals — to reinforce "solidarity, diversity, and innovation in the labor movement and to provide leadership for working America." Reportedly they plan to recommend that the AFL-CIO put more resources into organizing assistance to individual unions and grassroots legislative and political action.

The Sweeney-Trumka slate says it favors aggressive organizing and a new emphasis on women, minorities, and low-paid youth. It holds up the success of the SEIU as a model of leadership, diversity, and organizing know-how. That's good as far as it goes, but it falls short of what Ron Carey has said of the Sweeney-Trumka slate: "This is about a labor movement that has teeth in this country, working and fighting not just for union people but for all working people."

A Perspective

Seasoned observers of America's union officialdom, as well as labor activists and reformers, will not be holding their collective breath awaiting startling changes from the top of the labor hierarchy. Clearly what's going on is not comparable to the split in the 1930s labor movement, when a sustained militant upsurge led to the rise of the CIO. American workers are not in the streets demanding Kirkland's and Donahue's resignations, but Kirkland, and possibly Donahue as well, will be forced from the federation leadership because so many workers have rejected or ignored labor's political guidance. According to *Business Week*, "Kirkland waited 12 years for a Democratic President who could save the unions, then watched as the Clinton Administration failed to deliver on labor's requests. Now that the GOP runs Congress, Kirkland seems to have no other plan for reviving the movement."

So the wake-up call that should have come earlier in the long decline of union membership and the accompanying decline in workers' real wages and living standards has been triggered in great part by the 1994 Republican trouncing of the Democrats. The labor officials' alliance with and subordination to the Democratic Party has been barely less fundamental to their bureaucratic outlook than the timely collection of dues. Over the years that dependence on the Democratic Party has survived such Democrat-supported, anti-worker measures as the Taft-Hartley Act, the crushing of rail strikes, NAFTA and GATT, failure to adopt the Workplace Fairness Bill banning permanent striker replacements (scabs), and much more. Still, neither slate says that it's going to take up the urgent need to create a credible political alternative to Kirkland's and the federation's dependence on the Democratic Party.

AFL-CIO elections take place every two years. If the opposition to Kirkland and Donahue wins this October's election, but doesn't revitalize the U.S. labor movement, other leaders with the vision to use the federation to lead a mass fight-back need not wait long before presenting their leadership and policies as an alternative. Today a number of international union officers recognize the Democratic Party as a dead end for organized labor and for all working people. These officers are spearheading Labor Party Advocates, an effort to organize a movement for a labor party in the United States. Teamsters President Ron Carey is militantly opposed to concessionary bargaining. These two planks — opposition to concessionary bargaining, and support for a union-based labor party for all workers — may not be in the platform of the next opposition to arise in the AFL-CIO. But they sure would be a good place to start. □

June 22, 1995

1. When the two separate labor federations, the AFL and the CIO, merged into one in 1955, George Meany became the first president of the new federation. He was followed by his right-hand man and picked successor, Lane Kirkland.

The Unusual Contest in the AFL-CIO: Its Historical Background and Implications

by David Jones

The emerging contest over the presidency of the AFL-CIO has elicited wider interest than usual in the doings of the labor federation's top leadership from the news media and even from the 15 million dues-paying subjects of the mandarins of labor who make up the 33 members of the AFL-CIO Executive Council and the 83 presidents of the affiliated national or "international" unions. ("International" union means one which has both U.S. and Canadian membership.)

What began with an announcement by 11 affiliated unions in May that they would try to block the reelection of the federation's 72-year-old president, Lane Kirkland, at its October convention resolved itself into a contest between Tom Donahue, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO, and John Sweeney, president of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), when Kirkland announced in June that he would not be a candidate, but instead would retire. Donahue, who had announced his retirement on May 9, when Kirkland said he would be a candidate for reelection to a ninth two-year term, reversed himself when Kirkland bowed out.

The challengers have put forward a slate that, in addition to proposing Sweeney for AFL-CIO president, names Richard Trumka, president of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), for secretary-treasurer and Linda Chavez-Thompson from the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) for a yet-to-be created third leadership position.

A TV Panel Discussion

Most of the media discussion has taken place in newspapers and magazines, since the issue does not lend itself to 15-second news bites, but there has been some consideration of the matter in public affairs programs in the electronic media as well. For example, a program broadcast on June 15 on public television in Minneapolis-St. Paul solicited comment from a panel including Teamster Vice-President Bill Urman, an official of a Minneapolis Teamster local who was elected to the IBT International Executive Board on the Ron Carey slate; history professor Peter Rachleff, a well-known labor activist and writer; Sandra Peterson, president of the Minnesota Federation of Teachers; and Gladys McKenzie, a representative of AFSCME at the University of Minnesota, where over 5,000 workers have been organized by that union in the last four years.

What did it mean, the moderator wanted to know, that there was competition for the po-

sition of the most powerful labor leader in the United States? Although the perception of the power wielded by the president of the AFL-CIO was exaggerated, the question was undoubtedly posed in many similar forums in the past several weeks.

The essential question posed to these panelists and for speculative discussion in most printed commentary is to explain this unusual and seemingly unprecedented contest for the titular leadership of the American labor movement. Does this represent change, and is it coming from the bottom or the top? the questioners want to know. Does it reflect the widely publicized misfortunes of the U.S. trade union movement, whose membership, at about 12 percent of the U.S. working class, is at a 60-year low?

Why Does This Contest Seem Unusual?

All these are valid and reasonable questions which deserve extensive discussion. However, it seems to me that nobody poses the most obvious question of all — *why doesn't this happen every time there is an election?* After all, isn't the presumable purpose of constitutional democracy, with its attendant bylaws, resolutions, conventions, periodic elections, and similar elements to ensure that policies evolve consistent with changing reality through the method of contending ideas, programs, and candidates? One might even think that lively contests over leadership and perspectives would especially characterize the U.S. union movement.

After all, at least since the end of World War II, the U.S. union movement has been held up as one that is more democratic and therefore better, and American unionism has been counterposed to all labor movements in the world which opposed the objectives of American imperialism and U.S. corporations (or sought to maintain in some way a formal commitment to replacing capitalism with socialism). Through the medium of its International Affairs Department, the AFL-CIO, in collaboration with the U.S. government, has intervened continuously for fifty years in unions throughout the world to ensure that labor organizations certified by superior U.S. standards as "democratic" would replace those which the working classes of many countries had mistakenly chosen to support.

In fact, U.S.-certified "democratic" unionism was so much better than the native varieties that even the methods necessary to implant it — bribery, corruption, low wages, torture, murder,

and military dictatorship — could not tarnish its evident superiority.

Over 100 Years, But Only 4 Presidents

Still, you can hardly blame those observers who find the prospect of a contest for the presidency of the AFL-CIO somewhat novel, and inquire as to the reason for departure from precedent. Since its foundation over 100 years ago the American Federation of Labor and its successor, the AFL-CIO (formed when the Congress of Industrial Organizations, created in the labor upsurge of the 1930s, merged with the AFL in 1955) has had only four presidents. In that time twenty presidents have occupied the White House, and even the English monarchy has had six incumbents on the throne.

There have been very few contested elections seeking to displace a sitting federation president — the last time was in 1894 when founding president Samuel Gompers was set out for one term. So even the superficial observers who detect something significant in the almost 50-50 division over this largely ceremonial post among the affiliated unions are correct.

Divisions in Labor Bureaucracy Rare

It is rare anywhere, anytime, in the U.S. labor movement to see a division of the bureaucracy in almost equal segments over the question of succession to the post of chief arbiter of the "baronial empires," to use Carl Skoglund's¹ expression. The mandarins of labor prefer stability to almost anything else, except when the necessity of self-preservation is starkly posed. A previous outstanding example of this was in 1965, when the executive board of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) divided in nearly equal segments over two candidates for international president, incumbent David McDonald and Secretary-Treasurer I.W. Abel. As a result, due to the provisions of the union's constitution, which formally require a referendum vote of the membership for president, a nationwide contested election took place in the Steelworker's union, and Abel, supported by a majority of the USWA's Executive Board, replaced McDonald.

That type of situation is something the union bureaucrats seek to avoid at all costs. Instead of election by the membership, they much prefer to settle the question of top offices at conventions, and that is the practice in most unions. At such conventions, arm-twisting and bamboozling of delegates, horse-trading of favors and support, and other mundane political methods

1. On Carl Skoglund, see "The Labor Struggles of 1919 — Interview with a Participant" in the December 1994 – January 1995 issue of *BIDOM*.

can be utilized instead of the potentially dangerous course of submitting the future policies and leadership of the organization to the rank and file for discussion and final decision.

AFL-CIO Vote to Be at October Convention

In the case of the AFL-CIO, of course, the election to top offices will take place at the October convention, and certainly not by rank-and-file vote. The subordinate bodies of the federation, such as city-wide central labor unions, only get one vote each, and it is the affiliated "international" unions (or their U.S. components) which decide matters, deploying blocs of votes based on their per capita dues payments to the federation.

Raising Class-Struggle Ideas in the Discussion

But even opening up the question for public dispute tends to diminish the monolithic authority of the bureaucracy, which always prefers to remain united *via-a-vis* the rank and file. Contending candidates, who have to stand for something, tend to legitimize broader discussion of policy and program.

This is why a contest is generally a good thing, and why those who seek to transform the unions into genuine instruments of struggle should avoid abstention, if at all possible. For those who seek such a transformation, the question is, how can this contest advance the possibilities for the development of a future class struggle left wing?

Authentic Workers Organizations — Despite Bureaucracy

One thing should be clear — the bureaucracy, as an institution, is organically incapable of considering any question from any other vantage point than that of its own self-preservation, and, it should go without saying, the preservation and extension of its privileges, emoluments and, hopefully, its immunity from displacement from office.

Nevertheless, in spite of grave distortions, unions remain authentic working class organizations, and the bureaucracy finds it necessary to periodically have its continued tenure in office formally ratified pursuant to the duly established constitutional procedures of the respective organizations. This means, for the most part, that the real business of the bureaucracy is to ensure its reelection every three, four, or five years, depending on the specific requirements; to identify, defeat, or coopt any potential challengers, and to simultaneously seek to avoid any conflicts with the employers. Stability and self-preservation are the two eternal principles.

The Class Struggle Intrudes

Unfortunately, although the bureaucracy tries its best to ignore the class struggle, or deny its existence, it cannot abolish it. The cruel realities of the larger world constantly threaten to intrude on the bureaucracy's generally comfortable world of air-conditioned offices, new cars, suburban homes, salaries well above those of the

rank and file, generous pensions, and gratifying recognition by their social superiors in management and government.

Larger reality, as it is presently manifested in the assault on the wages, working conditions, and social entitlements of working people, has indeed intruded on the world of the unions, and the bureaucracies that rule them. Those who suspect that this is what is at the bottom of the current dispute over succession in the AFL-CIO are correct. The June 24 *New York Times*, in an editorial headed "Bad News for Workers," reported:

The economy has grown steadily for four years. Productivity — output per hour of work — shot up by 2 percent last year and by a gaudy 2.7 percent annual rate at the beginning of this year. Profits are at near record levels and stock prices have surged 15 percent since January. By some measures, these are bountiful times.

"But not for many workers," the *Times* says.

Social Consequences "Explosive"

What the *Times* found especially disturbing, it said, was that "if the wages of those who work continue to lag behind returns [profits] to those who own places of work, the social consequences could be explosive."

A disturbing report released this week by the Labor Department shows that average wages and salaries fell by more than 2 percent, after accounting for inflation, between March, 1994 and March, 1995. Total compensation, which includes fringe benefits like health insurance, fell even more, by about 3 percent. A big factor in the decline was health benefits, which fell 8 percent for unclear reasons. The losses were not caused by workers shifting from high-paying manufacturing to low-paying service jobs.

Long-Term Decline in Wages

In fact, the decline in workers' real wages has been a long one, dating back to the late 1960s, when the postwar capitalist economic boom began to come to an end.

Union Busting

By the beginning of the 1980s the employers were on the offensive, taking advantage of the deep 1981-82 recession to drive forward with open strike breaking and union busting on a scale not seen since before World War II. One of the opening shots, as is well known, was the breaking of the federal air controllers strike in 1981 by the Reagan administration, signalling that strike breaking had the sanction of the most authoritative and influential sections of the ruling class, and would henceforth be backed up by government policy.

The Age Factor

Of course, all conjunctural events are the product of specific circumstances. One factor which clearly opened up the present situation in the AFL-CIO is simply Kirkland's age. At 72, he could be expected to be about at the end of his tenure, and the original jockeying over his successor was a sort of deathwatch among the chiefs. Still, the fact that the question of succession couldn't be settled behind closed doors has

to be taken as a symptom of the pressures being exerted on the unions, and the inability of the top officials to address in a unified manner the evolving crisis in the realm of ideas, organization, struggle, or even personnel.

Still, earlier this year Kirkland didn't seem to be convinced that it was time to step down. Perhaps, in view of the beginning of the promulgation of continentwide standards for labor under the North American Free Trade Agreement, Kirkland was inspired by the example of the head of the official Mexican labor federation, Fidel Velazquez, approaching 100 years of age and in office for over half a century.

Jockeying Around Donahue

Initially, the opponents of Kirkland's continued tenure had indicated they would support secretary-treasurer Donahue for president if Kirkland would step down. SEIU president Sweeney said at the time that he would not run if Kirkland would retire, and would support longtime friend and mentor Donahue. Gerald McEntee, head of million-plus member AFSCME, said the same. This is an indication, among other things, of the extreme limits on any change that the so-called "dissident" bloc has in mind. In what may be one of the most sincere and accurate statements by any of the principals in this affair, Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, said in early May, "I don't see anyone with any new ideas," confirming his support for Kirkland's candidacy. In fact, Shanker warned, challenges to Kirkland's reelection could be "destructive" and "unhealthy."

The "dissidents" who support Sweeney's candidacy would no doubt heartily concur with Shanker's sentiment as a general principle, especially as applied to any possible challenges to their own incumbencies in their respective "internationals," but they have nevertheless decided that things cannot continue as they are.

"Dissidents" Reflect Social Change

It is no accident that the unions challenging Kirkland-Donahue's apostolic succession are, in a significant way, those unions which most directly express important changes in the working class, and in society in general, and which have in some way sought to respond to them.

AFSCME is composed primarily of public employees, whose jobs are directly threatened by the rampant attacks on social entitlements and public services being launched by government bodies at all levels. AFSCME, in comparison to many other unions, has a relatively large and active number of members and officers who are female or members of national and ethnic minorities, especially African American and Hispanic workers, and this composition is reflected to some degree in its leadership bodies. AFSCME has had some significant organizing successes recently, particularly among clerical and other workers at major educational institutions such as Harvard and the University of Minnesota.

SEIU, Sweeney's union, has sought to carry out some aggressive organizing campaigns, including among immigrant workers, especially

through an organization it has fostered in numerous cities, Justice for Janitors.

Teamsters and Miners — Two Fighting Unions

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT), which is part of the coalition supporting Sweeney and Trumka, has as its international president the only genuine insurgent among top union officials, Ron Carey, who was elected in 1991, defeating the old guard candidate backed by the corruptionists of the IBT. Since taking office, Carey has sought to move against the entrenched Teamsters bureaucracy with some success, abolishing the regional conferences in which these parasites nested, and wiping out many of their multiple salaries. Carey also led important strikes last year, the one against United Parcel Service and the 17-day strike against the national motor freight industry, in the face of sabotage by second-level bureaucrats, and has initiated important organizing drives among non-union trucking firms, such as Overnite, which is owned by the giant Union Pacific Railroad.

Trumka, of course, comes from the UMWA, which in 1989-90 waged a tenacious and ultimately successful strike against the Pittston Mining Company, including an occupation of the main plant, and fought another tough battle in 1993. The UMWA's existing national leadership has its roots in the Miners for Democracy movement of the late 1960s, which waged a bitter struggle to displace the UMWA's dictatorial and murderous president, Tony Boyle.

Other unions backing the Sweeney-Trumka slate include the United Autoworkers Union (UAW) and the USWA, basic industrial unions whose origins are in the CIO movement of the 1930s, as well as the International Association of Machinists (IAM), originally an AFL organization of skilled workers, which is today a large industrial union dominating air transport and aviation manufacturing.

A Repeat of the Rise of the CIO?

Some commentators have sought to liken the division in the AFL-CIO Executive Council to the split in the AFL led by John L. Lewis of the UMWA which created the CIO in the mid-1930s. The *Wall Street Journal* in a recent article on Kirkland reported the view of author and labor lawyer Tom Geoghegan that "the deep split in organized labor looks like a replay of the 1930s."

Such analogies are rather far-fetched (not to say ahistorical), and given the long period of relative quiescence in the high councils of labor, can probably be attributed to something similar to the fevered visions of a parched wayfarer in the desert who sees a cool and green oasis ahead. The U.S. labor unions of 1995 are fundamentally different from the AFL of 60 years ago, when Lewis struck the blow heard round the labor world at the Atlantic City convention of the AFL in October 1935, knocking out "Big Bill" Hutchison of the Carpenters Union, an opponent of industrial unionism, and three weeks later announcing the initial formation of the CIO.

A Product of Postwar Stability

The unions of 1995 are a product of the post-World War II era of sustained and prolonged mutual class collaboration, now emphatically coming to an end. At bottom the crisis of the U.S. unions is a function of the fundamental changes now being undertaken in the global order created at the close of the war.

Unions have been legally guaranteed the right to organize and to recognition by the employers since the passage of the National Labor Relations Act in 1935, but the real relationship was put in place during the period from World War II through the end of the Korean War (1953-54), when union membership mushroomed out to 35 percent of the work force through the expansion of war production, and the general acceptance by the employers and the government of unionization in these industries, in exchange for political support.

The expulsion of radicals from union leadership and the passage of anti-labor legislation after the 1945-46 strike wave (which involved more workers than at any time in U.S. history), notably the Taft-Hartley law in 1947, put the limits on further expansion of union jurisdiction. The percentage of the work force represented by unions has declined from 1953 to its present level of about 11-12 percent. The only major exception to this trend was created in 1961, when President Kennedy issued an executive order opening up the possibility of organization of vast numbers of public employees, resulting in a qualitative growth primarily in AFSCME, but in other unions (like SEIU) as well.

Conditions When CIO Began

In 1935, the vast majority of workers in virtually all mass production industries were unorganized — in steel, auto, rubber, meatpacking, transportation (other than rail), oil refining, and so on. African American workers were excluded from most unions by constitutional provisions or other means. The AFL was made up primarily of craft unions such as carpenters, printers, bricklayers, machinists, musicians, and others, mostly skilled workers. Many AFL unions were barely in existence by the end of the 1920s, most holding no enforceable contracts governing wages and hours with the employers, and with inflated membership statistics.

Mine Workers Unique History

The most notable exception to this, of course, was the UMWA, led by John L. Lewis. Unlike almost all other AFL unions, the UMWA was an industrial union. The UMWA, unlike almost all other AFL unions, enrolled African American workers (a significant part of the mining work force throughout its history), and in fact, took in all workers within the mines it organized, including carpenters, millwrights, teamsters, and other skilled workers, as well as those who dug the coal.

The UMWA itself originated in the year 1890 as a fusion between two nearly equal components — a coal miners union chartered as National District Assembly 135 of the Knights of

Labor and another miners' union, the National Progressive Union. The word "United" in the UMWA's name specifically refers to this fusion. The UMWA, unlike the American Federation of Labor as a whole, continued the principles pioneered by the Knights of Labor, the national labor federation which preceded the AFL (founded in the mid-1880s) of incorporating skilled and unskilled workers of all races. This is not to say that the UMWA was a model of democracy or racial justice in 1935, but it is clear that only the UMWA could have initiated from within the AFL the drive to industrial unionism and carried it through, providing most of the financing and much of the leadership for the CIO through the remainder of the 1930s.

The 1930s Radical Movement

Also present in the 1930s was a dynamic and insurgent radical movement seeking the replacement of capitalism by socialism, with deep roots in the working class, at least as compared to the present, and growing rapidly in membership and influence in the midst of an unparalleled economic crisis, with up to 25 percent of the work force unemployed at its peak. The three great strikes of 1934, in Toledo, Minneapolis, and San Francisco, were all led by radicals, all had as their object the formation of industrial-type unions, and all were successful, in spite of ruthless opposition from the employers and government, including direct military intervention.

Most significant in the sense of the implicit pressure placed on the AFL bureaucrats (and the employing class) was the growing U.S. Communist Party, with about 20,000 members and active sympathizers at the beginning of the '30s and tied to the Soviet Union, which seemed to be immune from the worldwide capitalist crisis. The impulse for action was not simply a feeling that "things cannot continue as they are," as is the case in the bureaucracy today, but an urgent concern about being outflanked on the left.

Charles Howard, president of the International Typographical Union (ITU), an organization of skilled printers, argued for support to industrial organization at the 1935 AFL convention as follows:

Now, let us say to you that the workers of this country are going to organize, and if they are not permitted to organize under the banner of the American Federation of Labor, they are going to organize under some other leadership... I submit that [that] would be a far more serious problem for our government, for the people of this country and for the American Federation of Labor than if our organization policies should be so molded that we can organize them and bring them under the leadership of this organization. (Quoted in *Labor's Giant Step* [Pathfinder Press, 1972], pp 41-42.)

And organize they did, with stunning speed and force, through the CIO, through the AFL, and through other independent labor organizations. Even the most superficial consideration of the history of the 1930s reveals how unfounded any attempt must be to equate the present temporary high-level division over the

June 25 Demonstration and Rally in Decatur, Illinois

This article is based on telephone reports from several demonstration participants.

About 5,000 unionists and supporters demonstrated in Decatur, Illinois, on June 25. Three separate feeder marches began at each of the halls of the unions engaged in front-line battle against the bosses — United Paperworkers International Union (UPIU) Local 7837, locked out two years ago by the A.E. Staley company; United Autoworkers Local 751, on strike against Caterpillar, Inc., since about a year ago; and United Rubber Workers (URW) Local 713, which ended its 10-month strike against Bridgestone/Firestone in May — because of company moves for a union decertification election in which scabs would vote but strikers would not, unless they went back to work.

The three feeder marches merged, and then the united march followed a route going past all three plants (Staley, Caterpillar, and Bridgestone/Firestone). It was a hot day, but the march was well planned, with water available for marchers all along the way. Solid support from the people of Decatur was evidenced, with clapping and the honking of automobile horns from passersby. No acts of civil disobedience were attempted. In April a new mayor who is more friendly to labor was voted in, and the police were restrained.

The new mayor was among those who addressed a big rally after the march.

At Rally: Echo of AFL-CIO Election Contest

A surprise appearance at the rally was made by Tom Donahue, the soon-to-be incumbent president of the AFL-CIO (if Lane Kirkland retires in August, as announced). The fact that Donahue felt obliged to show up at the June 25 demonstration and rally in Decatur is an indication of the pressure from the ranks for the AFL-CIO to do something about the decades-long erosion of labor's power.

The strikes and lockout in Decatur are the front line today. The Decatur workers are fighting for all of organized labor and need

the support of the entire AFL-CIO. Unfortunately, most of the union leaderships across the country did not try to mobilize their ranks to be in Decatur for the kind of all-out show of force that would help break the logjam. UAW leaders, even though their own members on strike against Caterpillar are involved in this crucial test of wills in Decatur, called a retreat for their international executive board on the very same weekend as the demonstration in Decatur. In this way they undercut the Decatur action instead of supporting it and mobilizing to be part of it.

Donahue's appearance in Decatur also demonstrates the positive side effects of having two competing slates for the top posts in the AFL-CIO. The Donahue camp apparently felt it had to show support for the struggle in Decatur to help bring in votes (or at least, sensed that failure to show support could cost it votes).

Donahue's support for the Decatur workers was lukewarm. His speech was delivered in a monotone, almost by rote. The audience responded coolly, and there were boos and catcalls. His main purpose in showing up was tipped off by the way he was introduced. This "honor" was performed by Lenore Miller, formerly a top official of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Workers, now an official of the United Food and Commercial Workers.

The audience, she said, was about to hear from "the next president of the AFL-CIO."

Trumka Brings Down the House

Speaking after Donahue was Richard Trumka, head of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) and the opposition slate's candidate for the number two post in the AFL-CIO. The contrast between him and Donahue was striking. For one thing, Trumka had been there before to support the fighting workers of the Illinois "war zone." And so the audience knew him well. On a previous occa-

sion he had been late in arriving to speak at a Decatur rally, but that was because he went right from the airport to the picket line. While there he had a face-to-face confrontation with a "replacement worker," who refused to look him in the eye. Trumka told him: "You can't look me in the eye because you're a scab, and you'll never be a man. I'm a man and I'll never be a scab." Rank-and-file workers in Decatur know this about Trumka.

Unlike Donahue, the Mine Workers leader spoke with fire about the struggle of the working class today. His speech electrified the crowd, had people stamping and chanting. In short, he brought down the house.

Gerald McEntee, head of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), which supports the Sweeney slate, told the rally: "As most of you know, there's a leadership fight going on in the AFL-CIO, and now is not the time or place to go into that. But since Lenore Millier introduced Tom Donahue as the next president of the AFL-CIO, I want to say that Richard Trumka will be its next secretary treasurer." And the whole crowd went wild.

Jesse Jackson Hints at Independent Run

The final and keynote speaker, Jesse Jackson, got a big response, more than some of the labor leaders. He underscored the attempts by employers to scapegoat Blacks for the problems labor faces today, and he urged unity in opposition to this divide-and-conquer tactic. He hinted again that he might run in 1996 as an independent candidate, saying, "We need another line on the ballot." According to news reports, Jackson is making a special effort to pay off his \$150,000 debt from the 1988 campaign, so that he will have a clean slate financially if he decides to run as an independent in 1996.

presidency of the AFL-CIO with the 1935-36 split in the AFL.

Unions Today in Deep Trouble

Yet there is no doubt the institutionalized labor movement is in deep trouble. Considered from the standpoint of the bureaucracy, the shrinking membership and the widening hostility of the employers is the central concern. After all, *their* lifestyles depend on regular per capita dues payments withheld from the workers paychecks by the employers and sent with undisturbed regularity to the bureaucracy for distribution among its apparatus for over five decades. A shrinking membership means a shrinking income, and increases in dues are difficult and politically dangerous things to advocate. And God forbid the employers should cease acting

as the bureaucracy's collection agency! Then they would have to somehow collect monthly dues individually from each member. Yet that is how the unions functioned before World War II.

For all their distortions, the old AFL unions were essentially autonomous organizations which made their own rules, determined their own mutual jurisdictions, and financed themselves through regular collection of dues from their members by stewards and other union activists. The unions of today, although they have in most cases the same names as the unions of 50 or 60 years ago, are fundamentally different, with their huge apparatuses, regulation by law, and direct dependence on dues checkoffs by the employers for financing.

"Lions Led by Asses"

The real problem, considered from the workers point of view, is not the fact that today unions are 12 percent of the work force, and in 1953 they were 35 percent. U.S. unions today have some 15 million members. Taken together with immediate family members, 30 million might be said to be part of the union movement. That is a reasonable estimate, maybe even a conservative one. This is an immense number of human beings, more than live in many countries. They are organized — not especially effectively, it is true — in local, regional, and national unions, city central bodies, and other subordinate bodies all across the United States. They have publications, buildings, full-time staff, organizers, training schools, and so on. They are

Why Few Mourn His Departure

Boston Staley Supporters Meet Lane Kirkland

The incident here described took place before Lane Kirkland's withdrawal from the race for AFL-CIO president and his announced plan to retire. The author is an AFSCME member at Harvard University.

Over 200 AFL-CIO officials and national and local union officials attended a Northeast Regional Conference of the AFL-CIO in Boston on Friday, June 2. This was one of four such regional meetings being held around the country. The featured speaker, Lane Kirkland, the head of the AFL-CIO, was facing a difficult campaign for reelection. Earlier that week workers at the locked-out Staley plant in Decatur had called the Boston Staley workers solidarity committee to make certain we would attend this conference.

Members of the committee immediately went to work. First we got an okay from the AFL-CIO to set up a table. The table carried literature, T-shirts, and a great big donation bucket. Committee members worked the crowd, talking to everybody we could about the Staley UPIU workers struggle. By the end of the evening everyone there knew about Staley. Many wanted to take information back with them; they wrote checks and they bought up almost every T-shirt we had with us.

After the buffet, when most were seated, we watched an AFL-CIO film about labor today and then heard Lane Kirkland speak on the need for solidarity and the need to contact Congress people. Lines formed behind the two microphones as the ranks readied themselves with questions for Kirkland. Bill Almy, a member of the executive board of SEIU 509 and an initiator of the Boston solidarity committee, was fourth in line. He was prepared to raise three points for AFL-CIO solidarity with the Decatur warriors: an appeal to attend the June 25 rally in Decatur; an appeal for funds for the UPIU's food and assistance fund; and an appeal to flood the Pepsi Cola

corporation with calls demanding it cancel orders and stop buying sweeteners from Staley until Staley agrees to a decent contract with UPIU workers.

A Surprise Question

But before Bill could raise these points, boom, the second question, although from someone not on the Decatur support committee, took up the Decatur struggle. While the speaker "God blessed" Kirkland, he also demanded to know why the AFL-CIO hasn't done more to help the Decatur workers. Committee members had hoped to pass a couple of buckets around the room, which was filled with dining tables, each with about a dozen conference attendees. When we heard the question and then Kirkland's response, serious doubt arose as to whether we would be able to pass the buckets, and a possible missed opportunity to get desperately needed funds to Decatur loomed over us.

Kirkland's response was something like, "We help any union that asks for it, I repeat, that asks for it." And then he proceeded to make a disparaging remark about not backing losers. Shock, groans, and sounds of disgust filled the room. Finally he hit the people who have worked long and hard to support our Decatur brothers and sisters by uttering, "And to those people who keep saying send funds to Decatur, we say put your money where your mouth is."

A Moment of Uncertainty

The next person in line talked about the need to address the growing population of immigrant workers in Boston. Through her talk we wondered if the support committee would be

able to recoup an opportunity to raise the three critical points and enable us to pass the buckets.

When the support committee speaker did come to the microphone, he began in a quiet and unassuming manner. "I agree with the need to put our money where our mouths are, and I urge each of you to dig deep to help the struggling workers of Decatur." At this point support committee members began passing two 5-gallon buckets around to all those seated at dinner tables and those crowding around the periphery. Bill Almy continued, presenting and explaining the need for each of the three points, and while he spoke people did dig deep and bills filled the buckets like falling leaves on a windy autumn day.

Although this was the only chance a committee person got to speak, he was not the only one to raise the necessity of supporting the Decatur workers. Someone from IUE 201 (GE workers in Lynn, Mass.) asked what the AFL-CIO was planning to do in support of the June 25 rally in Decatur. The response was a question, "What is your local planning?" The IUE 201 brother said his local was planning to charter a bus for the rally.

After the evening presentations finished, the support committee speaker went up to Lane Kirkland, thanked him for the opportunity to speak, and told him we had raised \$1,800 in donations very much needed by these families. At this point Kirkland dug into his own pocket and handed over a contribution to the food and assistance fund.

— Sandra Rosen
June 5, 1995

located in the richest and most powerful country on the planet. They are, unlike in the '30's, located at the heart of capitalist production in the giant monopoly industries.

Taken all together, this is a stupendous potential social power, whether it is 15 million or 45 million. The problem is, it has no program, and it has no leadership. In John L. Lewis's unforgettable biblical paraphrase, they are "lions led by asses."

Specifically, since World War II the union leadership has been progressively integrated more and more deeply into the state apparatus, both through direct recruitment and participation, and through the continually increasing regulation of all its functions by the government.

Kirkland the Functionary — and "Intelligence Asset"

There is, in fact, no one who more personifies this postwar process than Lane Kirkland himself. Unlike his three predecessors, Samuel

Gompers, William Green, and George Meany (all of whom were authentic leaders of significant union formations), Kirkland, prior to assuming the office of federation president, was never been anything other than a hired functionary of the bureaucracy, and, probably, as labor and socialist historian Paul Buhle suggests in an article in the magazine *New Politics* (Spring 1995), an "intelligence asset" of the CIA and the U.S. State Department. As Buhle says:

The aim of AFL-CIO international programs had always been to promote a loyal labor component to be junior partners of U.S. foreign policy and business arrangements. Any threats to repatriate U.S. corporate holdings or to jump ship from the U.S. clients list signalled an unendurable interference with what is euphemistically called "free trade unionism," setting in motion intelligence operations usually involving, and sometimes highlighting, AFL-CIO affiliates and operatives (as in Guyana in 1962 or Chile in 1973).

A friend of mine, a rank-and-file unionist, was once given an informal tour of the AFL-CIO's Washington, D.C., headquarters by the son of a high-ranking functionary. This was during the mid-1980s, at the height of the U.S. intervention against the Nicaraguan and Salvadoran revolutions. As they were passing through the various sectors of the building, the escort inadvertently opened the wrong door, disclosing a large conference room filled with uniformed high-ranking officers of the different military branches, and others, in civilian clothes, who were obviously union bureaucrats and staff. On the wall was a large map of Central America, with colored pins stuck in at different locations...

Bureaucracy Shaped by Postwar World

The character of the incumbent union bureaucracy was set in place during and in the immedi-

ate aftermath of World War II. As James P. Cannon said in 1952,

Big changes have taken place since the stormy days of the early CIO — and even since the years 1944–46. In the past five or six years of the armaments boom, the class struggle has been muffled, mainly as a result of full employment and comparatively high wages. The upsurge of the late thirties, which flared up again in the late forties, has been followed by a workers' attitude of wait and see. The workers have settled into a relative passivity, and a monolithic conservative bureaucracy has been consolidated with a firm control over the unions.

This new consolidated, conservative bureaucracy is closely tied in with the government and is, in effect, a government agency within the unions. It fully and consciously supports the whole program of American imperialism and hopes to share in the crumbs of the prospective spoils at the expense of the rest of the people of the world. ("What Must Lead to a New Labor Upsurge?" [July 17, 1952], in *Speeches to the Party*, [Pathfinder, 1973], pp. 26–27.)

The political character of the U.S. union bureaucracy has not changed since Cannon spoke 43 years ago, and it should be borne in mind that his description encompassed the bureaucracy as a whole, both its AFL/Meany and Reuther/CIO wings. The bureaucracy has changed since then only in that it has become even more alienated from the rank and file and more dependent on the government and the employers for its status.

Militants Grown Older and Softer

Many of the official leaders of the unions to whom Cannon had reference were individuals, especially in the CIO, who were organically and personally connected to the class struggle and who had participated in and led dynamic workers' battles in the 1930s and earlier. Many of them had received a political education in the radical movement. But, as Cannon said,

The pioneer militants of the CIO are sixteen years older than they were in 1937. They are better off than the ragged and hungry sit-down strikers of 1937; and many of them are sixteen times softer and more conservative. This privileged section of the unions, formerly the backbone of the left wing, is today the main social base of the conservative Reuther bureaucracy. ("Trade Unionists and Revolutionists," *Ibid.*, p. 59.)

The union bureaucracy of today, a generation or two older, has for the most part no personal connection at all with the last period of great labor struggle in this country. Perhaps Moe Biller, the 79-year-old president of the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), who led the great national wildcat strike of 1970 against the U.S. Postal Service and the Nixon administration, is the last one. Virtually their entire lives have been spent within the apparatus of a government and employer-guaranteed labor bureaucracy. They couldn't organize a struggle if they wanted to — couldn't organize a demand

for ice water in hell, as the old timers used to say. In a sense Lane Kirkland, the professional functionary, was their perfect representative.

The Union Bureaucrat, More Than Obtuse

Contrary to the comments of some who are observing this skirmish at the top, there is no basis for hoping that the bureaucracy, or any element of it, is going to finally wake up and put labor back on course. The problem is not that the bureaucracy is a sentient, but obtuse being, which, while not responding to the first or second blow on the head, after six, or eight, or ten, finally responds to the stimulus and acts appropriately. The bureaucratic skull is too well armored for that. The root cause is not intellectual, but material. To cite James P. Cannon again,

[The union bureaucrat] may not know much about the historical, philosophical and theoretical aspects of the "capitalist system," but he has got a damn good hunch about the practical side of the question. What he lacks in knowledge of the law of value and the automatic regulation of prices, he makes up in mother wit and good old-fashioned horse sense; he figures a system which makes it possible for a man to simply open his mouth, lean back on his haunches and bellow at regular intervals that "all is well," and then find an annual check for \$20,000 [in 1940] in his hand — that is a first class system no matter what you call it." ("Union Boy Gets Raise," Dec. 7, 1940, in James P. Cannon: *Notebook of An Agitator*, Pioneer Publishers, 1958.)

A Timeless Indictment

At the 1923 AFL Convention, in Portland, Oregon, William F. Dunne, [the older brother of V.R. Dunne²], a regularly elected delegate from the Silver Bow Trades and Labor Council in Butte, Montana, and a 14-year member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers was unseated as a delegate on the motion of AFL Vice President Phillip Murray. The only charge against Dunne was that he was a member of the Workers (Communist) Party of America. Dunne's speech in his defense is a scathing and timeless indictment of union bureaucracy that ought to be required reading for every union militant.

"Speaking as a Communist," Dunne said,

since the issue has been raised, although I came here as a trade unionist and not as a communist, I understand the real reasons for the effort you are undertaking. You want to prove to the employers that you are more conservative than they are, that you love the wage system even more ardently than they do. You have succeeded in gaining a good deal of immunity for yourselves, but this immunity does not extend to the organizations you are supposed to represent. In that the employers and we Communists think alike. They, too, make a distinction between a high-salaried officialdom and the working class. In six months time these same papers that are now lauding your determined efforts to cast the Communists into the outer darkness will be

denouncing your organization just as bitterly as you now denounce me. Seeking to placate the employers you have bored from within their organizations but you have captured nothing but jewel-studded lodge charms. You may save yourselves, but you cannot save the unions unless you change your policies. ("Wm. F. Dunne's Speech at Portland," *Labor Herald Library No. 9*, Trade Union Educational League, 1923.)

An Intermediate Social Layer

The bureaucracy, as Bill Dunne said, may be able to save itself, but it cannot save the organizations it lives off of. The bureaucracy is not simply an aggregation of incompetents and self-seekers who happened to be elected to leading positions in the labor movement (although, as Dunne said, if one "arrived at that conclusion by what is known as the rule of the preponderance of evidence, he is probably correct"); it is an intermediate social layer between the working class and the employers, and a high paid one at that.

"Your attitude," Dunne said,

is well illustrated by an incident that occurred yesterday, and is a tribute to the success of the most studied attempt I have ever seen at a labor convention to eliminate everything of a working class character. Two workingmen were watching Mr. Gompers climb into his limousine in front of the auditorium. The slave who drives the car held them up and searched them because they looked like workingmen, therefore were suspicious characters. They did not fit into the setting.

But, as Jim Cannon said in the article cited above,

So far, so good. The workers who pay the bill are not stingy; they might as well be broke as the way they are: the fat salaries make the labor leaders happy and may keep them from stealing, so what the hell?

The main hitch is that the 10–20–30-thousand-a-year salaries for the labor leaders provide them with a standard of living far removed from that of the rank and file of the workers. The leaders live like the petty-bourgeoisie, and not so petty at that, and soon cease to think of the poverty-stricken masses who have the dubious blessing of capitalism interpreted to them in the shape of inadequate diet, restricted educational possibilities for their children, unemployment, eviction notices and the policeman's club on the picket line.

Bureaucracy's Goal: Self-Preservation

The bureaucracy places its self-preservation above anything, even the continued existence of the organizations on which it feeds. Some part of the U.S. trade union bureaucracy is apparently coming to the conclusion that their futures may be best served by participating in the extinction of the trade unions as independent organizations of the workers.

The union bureaucracies' accelerating commitment to so-called "worker-management pro-

Continued on page 44

2. Vincent Raymond Dunne (1889–1970), a trade union activist and leader in the American Communist Party in Minnesota, became a founder of the American Trotskyist movement after expulsion from the CP in 1928. He was a central leader of the Minneapolis Teamsters from the 1934 strikes until 1941, when he and 17 other Teamster and Socialist Workers Party leaders were convicted under the thought-control Smith Act. He remained active in the SWP until his death.

Labor Party Advocates' Projected 1996 Convention for the Founding of a Labor Party in the U.S.

by Jerry Gordon

The following article is based on a report given by the author at a meeting of the Workers Unity Network (WUN), held during the Labor Notes Conference in Detroit, April 29, 1995. Many of the issues dealt with here will be taken up at the next WUN meeting, scheduled for August 26, 1995, in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. For more information, write WUN at P.O. Box 24307, Cleveland, Ohio 44124-0307.

It now seems probable that Labor Party Advocates (LPA) will organize a convention in May 1996 to establish a labor party. (In fact, we have received word that the LPA convenors' committee has voted to hold the convention in Cleveland in mid-May.) If such a convention is held, it could be a matter of historic importance and a milestone on the road to working people having our own mass party in opposition to the bosses' two parties.

The history of LPA can be divided into two periods: (1) from its inception in 1991, when the task was to organize, educate, and recruit; and (2) the present period, when the task remains the same, but with a new dimension — preparation for the projected 1996 convention.

What is needed to prepare for that convention? Many of us in Labor Party Advocates, and in the Workers Unity Network, believe there are four main priorities:

1. Build LPA and build the convention.
2. Conduct preconvention discussion and debate open to LPA's membership.
3. Adopt a formula for electing delegates to the convention who will be representative of the working class as a whole and all its oppressed sectors.
4. Decide all questions, both prior to and at the convention itself, in a manner fully consistent with the best traditions of workers democracy.

Build LPA and Build the Convention

With the convention scheduled for about a year from now, it is essential that organizing and recruiting to LPA be stepped up. WUN members [and readers of this magazine] should be among the best builders of LPA. WUN is in a position to make an especially important contribution in expanding LPA in the South.

When the Call to the 1996 convention is issued, it should be taken to every union and to other workers organizations. Endorsements should be sought for the convention, and delegates elected to it. Even where official support cannot be won, the very raising of the subject of a labor party will have positive educational value and will contribute to the long-range goal of winning the entire labor movement over to active engagement in independent working class political action.

"Lesser Evil" Argument Hard to Defend

Those in the workers movement opposing such a perspective will have to defend the alternative — continued reliance on the Democrats as an imaginary "lesser evil," despite the Democratic Party's glaring record of betrayal of workers interests and its ongoing rightward drift, reaching new lows under the Clinton administration: no jobs bill, no law against striker replacement,

no national health system, but plenty of NAFTA and GATT.

[For more on the real face of the rightward-moving, anti-worker Democrats, see the article on the "Clinton-Gingrich's Love Fest" in New Hampshire, on p. 2 of this issue. — Eds.]

Preconvention Discussion and Debate

It is the general practice of international unions preparing for a convention to appoint a resolutions committee to which the international executive board and local unions submit resolutions. The international does not circulate the resolutions prior to the convention. They are taken up only at the convention itself.

LPA can do better than that. What is needed is a preconvention discussion and debate that is open to all LPA members and that is conducted throughout the period leading up to the convention. Specifically we need a preconvention discussion bulletin that contains resolutions and platform proposals submitted by endorsing unions and LPA chapters.

The mechanics can be worked out so that publishing such a bulletin does not place an undue burden on the LPA national office. For example, single copies could be sent to participating unions and LPA chapters, which would then have the responsibility of reproducing and distributing them to their ranks. Preconvention discussion could also be organized at local, state, multi-state, and regional conferences, where resolutions could be debated and voted on.

Some Points for a Labor Party Platform

Resolutions on certain issues are of particular interest to the Workers Unity Network. The following are points we would fight to have adopted as part of the platform of a new labor party.

1. Organize the South. Commit resources, organizers, and money to a major campaign to organize the South; repeal all repressive anti-labor legislation, starting with Taft-Hartley; advance the cause of Black political power, which will be greatly boosted by organizing the South; support independent Black candidates running on a workers program independently of the Democratic or Republican parties; defend majority Black legislative districts; defend and strengthen affirmative action.

Anything that advances the African American liberation movement should be part of the platform of the labor party to be formed.

Sweeney Slate Platform for "New AFL-CIO" Includes Organizing Fund for the South and "Labor Candidates"

The Sweeney slate announced a platform June 28. It includes the following points (as reported in the June 29 *Wall Street Journal*).

- increase AFL-CIO organizing efforts by about \$10 million annually, particularly for "a 'sunbelt organizing fund' for the south and southeast, among poor, low-wage workers";
- create an organizing department to coordinate and support efforts among the 80 or so unions affiliated to the federation, and establish a strategic planning office to develop organizing tactics;
- put 1,000 new organizers into the field in the coming two years, "with a special emphasis on recruiting women and minorities" [italics added];

- create a political training center to train political campaign organizers and campaign managers.

According to the *Journal*, Sweeney also "embraced the idea of campaigning for 'labor candidates.'"

No More "Friendly Ghost"

At a June 28 rally, Linda Chavez-Thompson, the Sweeney slate candidate for executive vice president, said: "We intend to change the AFL-CIO from a Casper the friendly ghost to a Batman kicking *como se llama*." Richard Trumka, the slate's candidate for secretary treasurer, asked the crowd: "Are you ready to kick some *como se llama*?"

2. Break Completely with the Democratic Party. Form a labor party that runs its own independent candidates at all levels and does not abandon the field to either of the two parties of big business. No support for any Democratic or Republican Party candidate. Combat the myth that the Democrats are in any sense the "friends of labor"; they are the deceivers of labor. There needs to be a total and definitive break with the Democratic and Republican parties, and that includes supposedly "good" Democrats. If they are truly pro-labor, they will come along with the labor party.

3. International Workers Solidarity. Support for workers struggles around the world. The answer to the globalization of capital is

global unionism. Fight to bring wages, living standards, working conditions, and labor's rights in all countries up to a higher level, rather than let the transnational corporations drive standards down to the levels of the most exploited nations.

The demand of Cuba's workers for an end to the U.S. blockade of their country should especially be supported by a party representing workers in this country.

4. Formula for Electing Delegates. The base for a labor party must be the organized labor movement. A sizable majority of delegates to the 1996 convention should be trade unionists.

However, the convention should not be confined to representatives from unions. A formula should be devised to assure substantial repre-

sentation from the South, oppressed nationalities, and women. If the existing union movement, with its predominantly white male leadership, is to be a prototype, the resultant labor party will not be a labor party that looks like, talks like, or genuinely reflects the American working class as a whole.

Consideration should be given to representation for women workers organizations; workers groups organized around struggles on particular issues such as jobs, welfare rights, and immigrant rights; non-majority unions; workers centers; community-based workers groups; and Black, Latino, and other worker caucuses of oppressed nationalities. The test in each case is whether the group involved has a real base

Morton Bahr-Jean Tussey Exchange

Union Activist Answers Union President on Vital Issues Facing Labor

The following letter from Morton Bahr, president of the Communication Workers of America (CWA), was received by Jean Tussey, member of a CWA local in Cleveland, Ohio. Bahr sent similar letters to "all the 600,000 members of CWA." Tussey's reply to Bahr follows.

Dear Jean,

As a member of CWA Local 4340, you know the value of your union membership. CWA stands with you to improve your standard of living, to defend your rights as a worker and to secure for you and your family a retirement with dignity and financial independence. But I am deeply concerned about the many changes taking place in our government today. *I am writing to alert you and all the 600,000 members of CWA that the so-called "Contract with America" threatens your economic well-being and undermines your union's ability to negotiate good contracts in the years ahead.*

Against Republican "Contract"

Not one bill in the Republican Party's "Contract with America" will put more money into your paycheck, provide a single day of job security, help send your children to college or protect your retirement security. Nothing in the "Contract" addresses the serious problems facing our nation, such as lagging incomes, health care for retirees, job creation, privatization and sub-contracting, and the growth of the contingent work force. On issues important to your welfare, the "Contract" won't make a dime's worth of difference.

A particular threat is a proposed Republican labor law called the TEAM Act that will allow all employers to set up and control phony worker committees. Jean, if that law passes, there will no longer be collective bargaining as we know it. Another Republican-sponsored bill would overturn President Clinton's Executive Order that bans the use of permanent replacement of strikers by companies who do business with the Federal Government, such as all of the telephone companies. In other far-reaching legislation, the Republicans would require a "cost-effective" study to be made before regulations are issued dealing with safety in the workplace, the water we drink,

the air we breathe and the food we eat. It will come down to how much a life is worth! It should not be a surprise that the lobbyists for big corporations have been writing this legislation for the Republican leadership.

Insidious Attack on Working Families

I have devoted my entire adult life to union service. I do not support a Democratic Party agenda or a Republican Party agenda. I stand for you and your family. I have never seen such an insidious attack on working families as is coming out of this Congress. The "Contract" is an agenda that helps corporations and the wealthy at the expense of the workers and the poor. Each Thursday, a group of business lobbyists called Project Relief meets with the House Republican leadership to plan legislative strategy. They are now at work drafting legislation for the next 100 days and I am very worried about our future. You should be, too.

Jean, I know as a concerned citizen that you worry about crime in Cleveland Hts [sic], gun control, abortion and other social problems. But we cannot permit the emotionalism of these divisive issues to blind us to the serious economic matters that directly impact our lives. Please don't buy into this propaganda. Never before have the lines been so clearly drawn between who is standing up for you and who is not. Enclosed is a brochure that goes into more detail on these issues. Read it carefully. When you do, I'm certain you will agree that we must stand with each other to successfully protect our wages, jobs and retirement security.

In Solidarity,
Morton Bahr
President

P.S.: I am anxious to hear from you on these critical issues. Please, write to me with your views.

Jean Tussey Replies

Dear Brother Bahr:
Your personalized "Dear Jean" letter to alert me

about the dangers in the so-called Contract with America was received May 24. Thank you.

This is in reply to your Postscript, which said: "I am anxious to hear from you on these critical issues. Please, write to me with your views."

Like you, I have devoted my entire adult life to the labor movement, and am most concerned about the problems we face.

Voting for "Lesser Evil" — A Bankrupt Strategy

I do not think we can defeat the corporate campaign to destroy any semblance of a free labor movement by continuing the bankrupt strategy of "lesser evil" politics. Lobbying Democrats is clearly a dead end for our union and for the AFL-CIO.

The millions of union members and other workers, employed and unemployed, who do not vote or contribute to candidates of the Democratic or Republican parties know it is a waste of our time, energy, and money. The only thing we have more of than the corporate and political bosses is numbers.

No to "Contract with Democrats"

The clear alternative to the Republican "Contract with America" is *not* a contract with the Democrats. Big Business owns them too.

Here's my opinion, if you are really interested. **It is time for us to join with the OIL, Chemical and Atomic Workers and other unions in support of Labor Party Advocates!**

[You say you do not support a Democratic Party agenda or a Republican Party agenda. Good. Then why not support a party whose agenda would be for working families.]

Let's organize an independent, democratic Labor Party and give American voters a real alternative program to vote for in the next election.

In Solidarity and Sincerity,

Jean Y. Tussey, member, CWA Local 4340
June 13, 1995

among workers and whether it is committed to the labor party cause.

5. Democratic Decision Making. Facets of the democratic process have been considered above in the call for a pre-convention discussion bulletin open to LPA members and in having a formula for electing delegates to the convention that will make it truly representative.

There is another key factor: all delegates chosen for the convention should be elected in accordance with democratic procedures. No one should

be hand-picked, or be a delegate solely on the basis of having an official position in a union.

Lessons from Other Labor Parties

The positive experiences of labor parties in other countries, such as legislating national health care programs, are evident.

Their failures are also evident. Today the British Labour Party is practically indistinguishable in many basic respects from the Tory Party. A replica of the British Labour Party in this country would do little to meet the needs of America's hard-pressed workers. Nor would a

replica of the Canadian New Democratic Party, which lost its way programmatically, stopped representing the interests of the workers who voted for it, and lacked democratic procedures to ensure rank-and-file control of the party.

Instead, what is needed in this country is a labor party that uncompromisingly fights for the needs of all workers and that champions the interests of all oppressed sectors of society; a party that gives oppressed nationalities and women a leading role; a party that is deeply and thoroughly committed to workers democracy. □

The New Teamsters: Gearing up for a Nationwide Strike

by Charles Walker

Stories are already circulating about how all of us will lose our jobs if there is a strike. I agree that strikes should only be used as a last resort, but I refuse to give up this weapon of collective bargaining.

— George Beam,
rank-and-file Teamster car hauler

Twelve thousand Teamsters in 83 local unions are on a collision course with 28 carhaul corporations. Teamster members voted by 94 percent to strike the carhaul firms that contract with auto manufacturers to deliver new vehicles to car dealerships. At stake is the survival of one of the few, if not the only, remaining industrywide contracts whose major terms are virtually identical for all firms and local unions under the agreement.

Industrywide master contract talks broke off in early June, after months of negotiations. Auto manufacturers are thought to be pushing the carhaul firms to lower costs, or see more business lost to the railroads. In 1994, railroads increased their transportation of autos by over 14 percent and now control 65 percent of the total carhaul market. However, until the railroads invest in state-of-the-art transport technology, Teamsters can halt over 90 percent of domestic and foreign deliveries of autos from the tracks, marshalling yards, and auto plants to the new car showrooms.

After the talks broke off, the employers announced that they were preparing for a strike. Seemingly they are in financial shape to take a strike. The companies are enjoying their two best years of earnings since the mid-1980s. Commercial Carriers, Inc., the industry's largest carrier claimed revenues of over \$260 million between January and June 1995. Some carhaul company executives have raised their own salaries dramatically, including a 37 percent boost for the chief executive officer at

Ryder Systems, who is collecting nearly \$800 per hour.

Carhaul Truckers Not Easy to Replace

Carhaul truckers can't readily be replaced with scabs, however, since driving cars on and off the truck-mounted, sharply angled ramps is perilous both to drivers and to the costly, and oh-so-easy-to-scratch-or-dent paint jobs that adorn the cars, which carry an average price of \$20,000 each. In any event, since the auto industry has a three-month inventory of 1995 models stockpiled, the Teamsters are likely to maneuver to stay on the job and not strike until September, when the 1996 models are rolling off the assembly lines.

The carhaul corporations are demanding a concessionary contract. For starters, they want to institute a two-tier system of wages and medical benefits for new hires. But the company demands that would hollow out the nationwide agreement and end industrywide pattern bargaining are: (1) the right to gang up on individual local unions and whipsaw them into lower wages and mileage rates for experienced drivers; and (2) the right to set up non-union subsidiaries to "compete" for business. Years ago, old-guard Teamster officials turned a blind eye when general freight companies set up non-union subsidiaries, a practice called "double breasting." Today, the Teamsters have 400,000 fewer freight industry members, in part because of double-breasted companies, which continue to drain jobs from the unionized freight sector.

Pattern Bargaining in Jeopardy

Pattern bargaining was a major gain of the post-World War II glory days of organized labor, but it barely exists today. According to labor analyst Kim Moody, major corporations have

sought to decentralize production by using smaller plants, geographically dispersed and located in semi-rural areas where they thought tradition would weigh against unionization... [Consequently there was a] weakening of pattern bargaining. Countless plants paying a variety of wages and benefits could only increase the competitive pressure on union wage and benefit rates in one industry after another.

In the trucking industry, double breasting and deregulation are accomplishing what decentralization achieved in other industries — the erosion of meaningful solidarity within the job market.

Carey Leading Strike Preparations

The Teamsters bargaining committee is headed by International General President Ron Carey, who in early 1994 defied a federal injunction when he called a safety strike against United Parcel Service (UPS). Also in 1994 Carey called out 71,000 truckers and loaders in the first national freight strike since 1979. After 24 days on the picket lines, the strikers ratified a proposed national agreement by a lopsided vote of 67,784 to 15,729.

Carey took office in 1992, and a few months later he organized a rank-and-file effort that broke a lengthy deadlock and won a three-year non-concessionary carhaul industry contract, despite the opposition of diehard old-guard officials who had opposed his election. "These companies are making record profits," said Carey, "but they don't want to share the results of that with our members." Clearly, if there's not a carhaul strike, it will not be because Carey backed down. □

June 14, 1995

Minister Farrakhan, Dr. Betty Shabazz, and the Black Nation

The Healing Begins

by Ron Daniels

The following report is reprinted from the June 7, 1995, issue of *The Final Call*, the newspaper of the Nation of Islam, by permission of the author, a political activist and former presidential candidate (in 1992) of the Campaign for a New Tomorrow. Ron Daniels currently heads the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York City.

History will record that 1995 was a momentous year in the life and times of Blacks in America. This year will be remembered as the year that the Black Nation began to heal the awful wounds opened because of the assassination of Malcolm X 30 years ago. On May 6, 1995, Minister Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, and Dr. Betty Shabazz, the wife of our beloved Shining Black Prince, stood together on the stage of the historic Apollo Theater in Harlem symbolizing the beginning of a new era of reconciliation and unity within the National Black Community.

As the ancestors would have it, this historic moment, this positive occasion in the life of our people grew out of a negative circumstance. The same government that planted and fed the seeds of division within the Nation of Islam and the Black community and orchestrated the murder of Malcolm X 30 years ago had hoped to replicate its performance in 1995. The entrapment of Qubilah Shabazz on charges that she was plotting to hire someone to kill Minister Farrakhan was intended to break open festering wounds in the Black community and fuel division and outright conflict/warfare within the Black Nation.

This time, however, the Black Nation was not deceived. The fingerprints of a COINTELPRO-style operation were all over the scene. This time a Black Nation that has suffered massive damage from wounds inflicted by the FBI and other government intelligence agencies knew what the government had in mind. Black people from all walks of life rallied to the defense of Qubilah Shabazz, denounced the government plot and demanded that the charges be dropped. The most significant response, however, came from Minister Louis Farrakhan, the alleged target of this fake assassination scheme.

Seizing the moral high ground, Minister Farrakhan rose to the level of extraordinary statesmanship as he came to the defense of Qubilah Shabazz. Speaking of her as he would his own daughter, Min, Farrakhan warmly recounted how he had held Qubilah on his knee when she was a little girl. Dismissing the allegations against Qubilah, the Minister leveled a blistering attack against the government for its attempt to exploit the pain and suffering of the Shabazz family to foment discontent within the Black community. Leaving the courtroom in Minneapolis after the arraignment of her daughter, Dr. Betty Shabazz publicly acknowledged the humanity of Farrakhan's attitude and actions in this moment of crisis. Later she expressed appreciation for the kindness of his gestures. Minister Farrakhan's states-

African American Summit Meets in Houston

Votes to Build Million Man March, Defend Abu-Jamal

The National African American Leadership Summit (NAALS) met at Texas Southern University in Houston the weekend of June 9-11, 1995. One of its main purposes, according to its national convenor, Rev. Ben Chavis, was to make the NAALS an ongoing organization by approving a constitution and bylaws and establishing rules for membership. (Chavis was fired as executive director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [NAACP] in August 1994. For more on that event, see "Ben Chavis, the NAACP, and African American Leadership" by Vera Wigglesworth, in the November 1994 *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*.)

Since his dismissal Chavis has convened two other National African American Leadership Summits, one in Baltimore just after he was fired, the other in Chicago in December 1994. The intention at Houston, according to the June 1 *Boston Globe*, was to make the NAALS a permanent organization, "to carry out the quasinationalist agenda [Chavis] had espoused...at the NAACP."

Support for Million Man March

"One of the new group's first objectives is to mobilize black men for the Million Man March on Washington, to be held Oct. 16," reported the *Boston Globe*. (For more on that march, see the articles by Joe Auciello in the May-June 1995 *BIDOM*.) During the summit, Minister Louis Farrakhan of the Na-

tion of Islam, initiator of the march, spoke at a rally of nearly a thousand to build for October 16.

Ben Chavis, who was selected national director of the march, declared: "The National African American Leadership Summit intends to work with the Nation of Islam in mobilizing one million Black men to march on Washington. We are straightening up our backs to take responsibility for raising our families,...for ending the drugs and violence that plague our communities, and to move forward." He added, "The destiny of Black people is not in Newt Gingrich's hands. The destiny of Black people, African people, is not in the hands of the Congress, and it's not in the government's hands, it's in our hands."

Talking about the NAALS, Dr. Conrad Worrell, director of the National Black United Front, said: "What we want to do for the first time is to successfully merge the various tendencies of the Black movement in this country across various individual, organizational, and leadership goals and objectives."

Other goals of the NAALS include Black economic and political empowerment, a fight to preserve affirmative action programs, and U.S. aid to Africa.

The NAALS also voted to go on a campaign footing against the scheduled execution of framed-up African American journalist and freedom fighter Mumia Abu-Jamal.

manship and Sister Betty's warm response totally confounded the government. More importantly the attitude and behavior of these two leaders set the stage for the momentous event on May 6.

As I noted in a previous article, a mature people or nation must find principled ways of resolving disputes and settling conflicts. On all sides, it was clear that there was a desire to heal the wounds that had lingered for 30 years. According to Haki Madhubuti, who played a pivotal role in arranging the May 6 event, Minister Farrakhan and Dr. Shabazz met secretly six weeks prior to the occasion at the Apollo to begin to clear the air. Before the meeting concluded, Minister Farrakhan offered to place the full weight of the

Nation of Islam behind an effort to raise a minimum of \$250,000 for a Shabazz Family Fund to provide for Qubilah's legal defense and security for the family of Malcolm X.

With Leonard Muhammad, chief of staff of the Nation of Islam, and Haki Madhubuti closely collaborating on this vital project, Minister Farrakhan went public with the Nation's offer to sponsor a fundraising event for Qubilah. Dr. Shabazz graciously accepted the offer and agreed to appear on the program. The moment that the Black Nation had been hoping for was at hand. The eyes and ears of the Black Nation would be focused on a historic theater in the heart of Harlem on May 6, 1995.

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Speech of Dr. Betty Shabazz, Widow of Malcolm X, at the Apollo Theater, Harlem, New York, May 6, 1995

*Dr. Shabazz's remarks are taken from an audiotape of the May 6 event, which was attended by over 1,400 people and viewed by thousands more via satellite hookup. Many thousands of dollars were raised for the Shabazz family, to meet expenses related to the U.S. government's entrapment and prosecution of Qubilah Shabazz. (For details on the defense of Qubilah Shabazz, see the February, March, April, and May-June issues of **Bulletin in Defense of Marxism** for this year.)*

*Minister Louis Farrakhan spoke after Betty Shabazz. In his remarks he spoke of "the sacred life of Malcolm X" and acknowledged the errors of the Nation of Islam in allowing the U.S. government to use them in carrying out the assassination of Malcolm. The text of his remarks may be found in **The Final Call** of May 24, 1995.*

Farrakhan admitted once again that he had helped create a climate for Malcolm's assassination, but denied having any part in the murder. He demanded that the government, which he said had agents among Muslims and among Malcolm's followers, must release all files related to the death of Malcolm X.

The conspiracy for Malcolm's assassination, said Farrakhan, "started with the government of the United States because of its hatred of the movement that Malcolm X and the Honorable Elijah Muhammad had generated and the effect that these two men were having on Black America. J. Edgar Hoover was determined that no Black Messiah would rise to unite our people in their quest for justice and true liberation."

Farrakhan added: "We didn't voluntarily split from each other. There was manipulation, there was stimulation of our own pettiness and weaknesses by outside forces, and the government is that outside force."

Farrakhan continued: "We want the files on Malcolm X to be opened so that the world may know the real truth... And let the truth condemn whomever truth will condemn. But the people must go free, and we in the Nation of Islam as well as those outside of the Nation of Islam need to know all of the truth as it relates to the assassination of Brother Malcolm X."

Farrakhan noted that an earlier conversation with Betty Shabazz had made him realize that neither he nor she knew everything about Malcolm's murder. But the government knows all, he said. He condemned the Clinton administration for claiming that today the FBI needs greater power to spy on groups.

Attorney William Kunstler also spoke at the Apollo Theater. He agreed that government mischief was afoot 30 years ago and resurfaced with the indictment of Qubilah Shabazz this year. Kunstler said the government feared unity among Black people and "tried to stop it through dirty tricks, Cointelpro, murders, discreditations, and expatriations."

*Dr. Shabazz's remarks were transcribed for **BIDOM** by Lee DeNoyer.*

In the name of the God of our forefathers and foremothers, the beneficent, the merciful, it is my privilege to stand before you. And it is, and it has been, awesome. I never expected whatever it was that I've experienced here today.

One of the things that Malcolm always said to me is, "Don't be bitter. Remember Lot's wife. When they kill me, and they surely will, you have to remember to do what it is you have to do." And I've tried very hard to do that. And I did it because I had to do it. I defied my parents and married [Malcolm], so I couldn't go home. If I did go home, my mother would have reminded me every day. So I knew that I had to do what I had to do.

Malcolm Took Away Fear

But I was never fearful. Please understand it. Malcolm took the fear out of my heart, out of my mind, and out of my existence. Whatever will be, will be, but I'm not gonna waste my time being frightened about it. You can conjure up images in your own mind, and a lot of times people will try to put you into that trap, so that you constantly have to look over your shoulders. And perhaps throw a little salt. So I have tried to do what it was that I had to do.

Another thing he [Malcolm] said was, "Be bright and smart and all of that, but always try to be humble. If not 24 hours a day, at least a portion of the 24 hours a day." A friend of mine was saying that the world rotates every 24 hours. And she said, "God have mercy on the soul that thinks they're sitting on top of the world as the world rotates every 24 hours, because you might find yourself mashed."

To Mrs. Khadijah Farrakhan [wife of Minister Louis Farrakhan], to the dais guests, to the honorable brothers and sisters, to the viewers connected by satellite from the landmark theater that we call the Apollo Theater, I am delighted to have this opportunity this day, May 6, 1995, eight days from Mother's Day. It's a wonderful Mother's Day gift. It's one that I will remember for the rest of my life — sitting in the Apollo Theater.

On the Apollo Theater

The man [who renovated this theater] had a vision when he saw the Apollo Theater boarded up with trash in front of it and people sleeping under cover of the Apollo Theater. Whatever money his family thought he was gonna leave he put [instead] into the Apollo Theater, to bring it out of bankruptcy. And after that happened not one penny of that money [was left] — and there was a lot of it. After that happened he had to then try to find paint and architects... And the chandeliers that you see hanging back there, that was also part of his vision.

But today we are sitting in the Apollo Theater, and when it was further putting distance between him and whatever little money he had, I understand that Congressman Rangel took over the honors. Give them both a hand.

People with a purpose, with an agenda, with determination can do what everyone else around this globe is doing. So that we applaud ourselves.

Thanks for Aid in the Cause of Justice

And let me say to you that it is a specific, unique, intense, and focused pleasure to have the opportunity of this experience in quest of justice. To thank so many people whose bottom line agenda was equity and justice.

God says it, and [it is] legislated by man. What could be more honorable than that? My Methodist mother frequently said, "Find the good and praise it." Sometimes I wonder if we have forgotten [that]. Because I'm sure if my mother said it [to me], your mother must have said it to you.

My purpose this night is to try to thank some of the people for reaching out to me. I would therefore like to thank the heads of organizations, civil rights leaders, sorority and fraternity members, service organization members, some of the elected officials, members of religious organizations, members of professional organizations, and the good brothers and sisters who just keep the sky from crushing all of us.

Malcolm a Veteran Who Served in U.S. Streets

I would like to thank the veterans who kept the enemies at bay, and after coming home still fight for equity and justice. Let me just say that I had a father who fought in the war. I had a brother who was killed in action in Korea. I had a brother who served in Nam. And I had a husband who — *served in the streets of America!* And their justice is and was equal.

We have to be vigilant and we have to be focused. We have to remember the Constitution of the United States, and we have to constantly review the 13th, the 14th, and the 15th amendments [freeing Blacks from slavery and giving them the right to vote] to get our direction as to who we are — supposedly a free people — and the fact that we can determine part, at least, of our lives. And we cannot leave it to someone else. If our representatives are not taking good care of us, the constituents, we need to change them.

You Have to Fight for Justice

To one of our lawyers in Minnesota I was saying one day — I was just full of anxiety — and I said, “Where is the justice?” And he said, “You’ve got to fight for it.” And I say to you that if our lives are not the way we think they should be as human beings, as free people — we are free — we’ve got to fight for it. Remember what Carter G. Woodson said. Some of us behave in such a way (and that was about the scenario about the back door) that [even though] we no longer have to go to the back door, some of us continue to go to the back door. And he said, “If there is no back door, we’ll make one.”

We must look at ourselves and how we carry out our own lifespan and understand that we have to do more than what we have done in the past, because nobody else is gonna do it for us.

A lot of folks are waiting for some white folks, good white folks, to come in and straighten our lives out. [If you think that,] you have not read the papers or watched the news. CNN is a good example. Destabilization is all over the world. It’s not just striking our people; it is striking world people. So that if we want change, we have to do it ourselves.

Thanks to the Legal Team

Let me kind of hurry up. Satellite time is going down, gotta hurry up! I would like to thank select individuals who have reached out to me, but I’d like [especially] to thank the legal team

...Part of the defense team was Dan F. Scott. I’d like to thank him. A real dynamo was Larry Levanthal. He jumps up like a jumping jack. He didn’t walk to give Counselor Mr. Sutton notes — he would do power walking! I’d like to thank Mr. William Kunstler. He is a credit to the American justice system.

Last but surely not least, I’d like to thank Mr. [Percy] Sutton — this brilliant man, who encouraged the legal team, who helped the legal team become totally focused, a man who has helped me and my family. I really should not say “a man,” because Mr. Sutton never does anything by himself, whether he says so or not. It is always his family. And he says his father, who was his high school principal, and three of his sisters taught him, and he was the youngest of fifteen children. I don’t know what I would have done without the Sutton family. Because it has not been easy.

Thanks to Minister Farrakhan

Finally, I would like to thank Mr. Farrakhan — you know him as Minister Louis Farrakhan — for his original gentle words of assurance for my daughter and myself and her sisters, and for his suggestion of support as he said, “We will have to help Brother Malcolm’s family.”

I liked the way he said that, and I hope that he continues to see my husband as “Brother Malcolm.” [Malcolm was] a man born of a Grenadian mother and a Southern Black preacher father. [His father] was a Garveyite, a man who built every house he ever lived in, a man who was a family man. Malcolm was six years old when his father was found under a streetcar in Detroit, Michigan. Boy, boy, boy.

Malcolm’s Work and Legacy

Let me just say that I know that Malcolm was a good man. Now, if you don’t think so, obviously you’ve been hearing something that you should not have been hearing. Malcolm went into that movement [the Nation of Islam] out of prison with four mosques full of senior citizens. And

before he was expelled from that movement there was a mosque in every major city in the United States — and outside of the United States.

For God’s sake, don’t take away his work and his legacy! He spent time away from his family when he should have been with his family, and now don’t reduce his work to nothing.

Whatever discipline I have, which is not much, came from Malcolm, not my mother. Whatever strength I have came from Malcolm, not my mother. Whatever tolerance [I have] and love of my people came from Malcolm. I was reared like most folks, going through public schools with not much respect for myself or Black people. So that I have Malcolm to thank.

How could I have six kids and go to graduate school when every other month they’re gonna foreclose on my house, and my kids in school and the car loan and the this and the that and the other, how could I do that if I didn’t have some of his [Malcolm’s] wisdom? How could I have nothing and still consider it a responsibility to help others?

I can remember Mr. Sutton and his brother who called me into his office and said, “Why didn’t you tell us that they were gonna foreclose on your house and take your house? Why didn’t you tell us? Well, we have decided,” he said, “that we’re gonna help you.” And I started crying and he said, “Why are you crying?” And I said, “Because you all are so kind.” He says — he really is a business man, those tears dried up — he said, “My dear, we’re not helping you out of kindness, but it is much easier to help you rather than to have to take care of you.”

May Your Conceptual Framework Keep Broadening

Minister Farrakhan, may the God of our forefathers forever guide you on your journey. May your conceptual framework keep broadening, and may you take up the mantle and do God’s work. May the God of our forefathers always guide us. Thank you. □

The Healing Begins

Continued from page 14

When Dr. Betty Shabazz rose to speak she defended the legacy of her husband and cautioned that the work of Malcolm must not be reduced to nothing by the Nation of Islam. She expressed the hope that Minister Farrakhan would always see El Hajj Malik el-Shabazz as “Brother Malcolm.” She concluded by asking the God of our ancestors to guide Minister Farrakhan as he pursues his mission on behalf of Black people.

When Minister Farrakhan spoke, he admitted that many within the Nation had been caught up in the web of conspiracy spun by the U.S.

government. He acknowledged that members of the Nation had participated in the assassination of Malcolm. However, Minister Farrakhan demanded that all the files on the assassination be opened so that all the world could see the extent of the government’s orchestration and involvement.

Repeating his assertion that he was not involved in the plot to kill Malcolm, Farrakhan appealed for reconciliation and a healing of the wounds. He indicated a willingness to acknowledge any errors and mistakes that he made during the fateful period 30 years ago or since in the interest of moving the race forward.

May 6, 1995, was a remarkable day in the history of Blacks in America and the world. The process of healing the wounds that have plagued the Black Nation over the assassination of Malcolm X is underway. The healing process may be long and painful. No matter the pain, however, what is of most importance is that on May 6, 1995, thanks to Minister Louis Farrakhan and Dr. Betty Shabazz, the Black Nation edged a little closer to maturity. □

The Workers Struggle in Russia and the "Specter" of Trotskyism

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

The following article is based on a presentation made by the author as part of a panel on "The Non-Stalinist Left in Russia" at the Socialist Scholars Conference in New York City, April 6-9, 1995. Other panelists were Alexander Buzgalin, an economist and political activist at Moscow State University; Oleg Smolin, a deputy in the upper house of the Russian Parliament, who, together with Buzgalin, was a founding member of the Russian Party of Labor; and Hillel Ticktin, a reader at Glasgow University and editor of Critique magazine.

The Non-Stalinist Left in Russia

The terms "left" and "right" originated in the seating patterns of deputies in the governing bodies of France during the revolutionary period in the 18th century. They have been carried over for many years and have become less meaningful, like "progressive," or "democratic" or "democratic left." This is true whether in Russia or in the United States.

Even some who consider themselves Marxists get disoriented by this terminology, seeing their task as trying to "regroup" the "left" or the "progressive" forces into some kind of significant political force. Of course, all the "left" and "progressive" forces put together would not by themselves be a large enough force to resolve the enormous tasks we face today.

As the economic crisis, the crisis of capitalism on a world scale deepens, it is ever more obvious that reliance on such "regroupment" to resist the harsh attacks against the working class — employed and unemployed — is insufficient. The attacks are manifestations of the class struggle — one side of it, the bosses' offensive against the workers. Only the organized working class can resist this in a way that the capitalists can't ignore.

Unfortunately, the organized workers movement has not yet mobilized an effective resistance, either in Russia or in the United States, despite some militant skirmishes. The trade union movement in the United States, for example, is weaker than at any time since the rise of the CIO.

Labor Bureaucracy, Russia and U.S.

In the U.S., the leadership of the unions in most cases is disabled by its reliance on business unionism and class-collaborationist policies instead of class-struggle politics. It is tied to the capitalist bosses and their politicians in the two parties in a thousand ways and has been quite comfortable that way for decades.

The union officials make salaries two or three times what their members make and don't risk mobilizing the ranks unless there is strong pressure to do this from the ranks. The labor bureaucrats fear that mobilization might unleash forces beyond their control. Transforming trade unions so they will fight to defend the interests of the workers and organize ever more workers into unions are the biggest tasks facing the working class today, whether in Russia or America.

Those who believe that capitalism can be tinkered with so that it can be made to meet workers needs are politically incapable of leading struggles against the current attacks by the capitalists that are happening on an international, national, state, and local level. The economic attacks call for a political response. It is Marxism that offers to workers "the tools to understand their place in the world and substitute science for dreams," as Lenin put it. Nothing better has come along.

What Has Stalinism Got to Do With Marxism?

Stalinism is the antithesis of Marxism. It is the ideology of the system of bureaucratic rule that consolidated its power in the USSR in the 1920s and '30s through a bloody terror against the workers, the peasantry, and the intelligentsia that cost millions of lives. It is the fruit of a dictatorship of the bureaucracy over the workers that discredited Marxism in the eyes of millions all over the world. Stalinism also devastated Marxism internationally by repeated betrayals of revolutionary opportunities. All of this helped world capitalism prolong its life.

The Stalinist bureaucracy waged a vicious campaign against genuine Marxism — theoretically, politically, and in practical activity. Stalinist agents physically annihilated Marxists not only inside the USSR but internationally. The most outstanding instance was the fight against Trotsky and Trotskyism. Leon Trotsky and Vladimir Lenin were the twin leaders of the Russian Revolution. After Lenin's death, Trotsky was the foremost Marxist opponent of the bureaucratic degeneration led by Joseph Stalin (who until the mid-1920s had been a minor figure in the leadership of the revolution). Not only was Trotsky forcibly deported from the USSR in 1929, then murdered by Stalin in 1940, but his vast contributions to the revolution were falsified. His monumental writings explaining the worldwide struggle for socialist revolution and the reactionary significance of Stalinism in relation to that struggle were made inaccessible to the Soviet people.

The Struggle Against "Trotskyism"

In fact, Stalin's bloody purges, which took the lives of tens of millions, were carried out in the name of the struggle against "Trotskyism." It was really a struggle against workers resistance, against Marxism.

There can be no effective resistance to capital in the capitalist world or in the former Soviet Union without a seasoned and organized Marxist working-class leadership, what Marx called "the party of the overthrow." Unless the lessons of the past — absorbed and explained by Trotsky in his writings, and in the writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin — have been studied and digested, it is impossible to go forward. The impotence of the working-class movements both in the United States and in Russia today is largely due to the absence of such an organized Marxist working class leadership that has gone through this school.

What's "Left" in Russia?

While the phrase "the non-Stalinist left in Russia" may be applicable to some notable political developments and some organizations worth studying, to limit the discussion to that category is to leave out, by default, some questions that are of the most critical concern today.

How are workers in Russia organizing to defend themselves against the destructive policies of international capital, spearheaded by the International Monetary Fund and implemented by the section of the Stalinist bureaucracy still in power, headed by Boris Yeltsin? Who is involved in the organizational efforts of Russian labor? What kind of politics do these forces have? Is anyone offering a real way out of the crisis?

Since, for some, the groups formed from the former Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) may immediately come to mind, if one starts to speak about the "left" in Russia, their orientation is a good place to start.

What's "Left" of the CPSU?

Since the CPSU was banned in 1991, a small section of its former 19 million members have tried to organize genuine political parties as distinct from the CPSU, which was an organization dedicated to preserving the status quo, to maintaining the privileged position of the bureaucratic ruling caste. The Communist Party of the Russian Federation, the All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik), the Russian Communist Workers Party, the Union of Communists, the Russian Party of Communists, and the Socialist Party of Toilers are the most prominent. None of them has developed a perspective much different from what the previous Stalinist order had offered at one phase or another from 1924 to 1991.

In other words, they all want to return to the social, economic, and political order that existed before 1991, which gave rise to the crisis in the first place. That order provided a much larger "social wage" for workers than exists under capitalism or certainly than exists in Russia today. However, because the social benefits granted the workers were accompanied by grossly disproportionate privileges for the bureaucrats, and the stifling of workers democracy through repression and totalitarian domination of all institutions, including the mass media, the perspective of returning to the pre-1991 system can hardly inspire workers to struggle.

I discussed the question "What's Left of the CPSU?" in some detail last year in an article printed in *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. There may have been some realignments since then, particularly since the Russian government began its war on Chechnya. However, it is doubtful that the political essence of these regrouped remnants — whose combined membership numbers no more than a million or so — has significantly changed.

None of them has recognized the deepgoing crisis of international working class leadership that resulted from Stalinist betrayals, purges, and policies: like replacing internationalism with socialism in one country and Russian patriotism, and the conversion of the Third International into a diplomatic arm of the Kremlin; like the mechanical application of the two-stage theory of development (capitalist development must be allowed to take its course before there can be talk of establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat) as opposed to the theory of permanent revolution, which recognized the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat to fully implement even the bourgeois "democratic" phase of development in Third World countries; this was one of the most important lessons of the Russian revolution. Or lessons like the class betrayals of the popular front (class-collaborationist) policies that characterize both the Communist parties and their twin, the Social Democracy, versus the united front advocated by Lenin — formations of action coalitions of workers organizations to defend and advance specific demands and needs.

None of these remnants of the CPSU has admitted the deepgoing damage that has been done to the world workers movement because the democratic part of democratic centralism — the method for organizing revolutionary parties — was replaced with and identified with bureaucratic, authoritarian centralization under a repressive and abusive power elite, the bureaucratic caste in a degenerated workers state.

The new formations that emerged from the CPSU continue to adhere to old Stalinist policies. For example, they call for the reconstitution of the USSR, which pits them against the strong sentiments among the non-Russian populations for independence from Kremlin domination. This Stalinist "patriotic" orientation is what made possible the "red-brown" and "rose-beige" alliances between former Communist party groupings and Russian chauvinists

and even anti-Semites. That the "left" and "right" can politically unite this way shows that these terms are no longer meaningful.

Groupings Not From the CPSU

A number of political formations emerged since 1987 in Russia that explicitly repudiated and rejected any section of the former Communist Party and its apparatus. Many of these were to one degree or another rooted in the working class. Most of them and their publications have been described in the the four *Bulletins* of the U.S.-Soviet Workers Information Committee.

All these groups, however, mistakenly accepted Stalinism's claim that its authoritarianism was "Leninism." As a result they tended to repudiate "politics" and the struggle for political power and the need for workers political organization. They retreated into economism, raising only economic demands, as if the solution to the crisis was simply "workers self-management" of their enterprises, factories, etc. They offered no political or economic alternative to the Kremlin's program. In fact, their proposals seemed in harmony with the regime's own "self-accounting" and "worker ownership" schemes. Such currents either overtly or inadvertently become virtual syndicalists. The trade union "Independence" in Leningrad and the Social-Political Association "Worker" in the Urals, and a grouping called "Zabastovka" (Strike) in the Volga region are three examples of this trend.

Many such groups have suffered serious setbacks because of the closing of plants where they had a base. Also, the drastic decline of living standards has deprived them of their scant operating funds.

A range of explicitly anarchist groupings have developed, some with roots in the pre-Gorbachev period. I assume that other speakers will describe their work because it found expression to one degree or another in broader initiatives, such as the Solidarity newspaper of the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions, the Party of Labor, and the anti-nuclear movements. Most of these would be classified as "left."

Trotskyist Groups

The most important new groups in the former Soviet Union are those composed of activists who have undertaken to study and understand the ideas of the Left Opposition formed in the 1920s, of Leon Trotsky and of the Fourth International he established in 1938. Not surprisingly, these groups are very small and suffer from a variety of material and political problems. Two of them are the Committee for Workers Democracy and International Socialism, centered in Moscow, which has printed a regular bimonthly newspaper since 1991 called *Workers Democracy*; and the Socialist Workers Alliance, which is a propaganda circle that issues its own newsletter and occasionally a journal. Some of these young Trotskyists are workers who have been involved in trade union and workers struggles as well as larger political struggles against the regime.

Since the Gorbachev political reforms that allowed opposition writings to be published and discussed, some of Trotsky's writings have actually been published in book form — totalling slightly more than 1.3 million copies. (By 1976, 174 million volumes of works by Lenin had been printed and 525 million volumes by Stalin). However, many of these 1.3 million books contain Trotsky's literary writings, not his key political works, and are prefaced by hostile introductions. A new layer of historians who recognize how vital Trotsky's writings are to understanding the origins of the present crisis helped organize the first conference on Trotsky in Russia in November 1994 in Moscow. Alexander Buzgalin collaborated on that effort. The conference set up a committee to promote the publication of Trotsky's works.

Russian Unions' Day of Protest, April 12

I want to close by referring to a recent report from Renfrey Clarke dated April 5 that the 50-million member Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FITUR) has called for workers across Russia to protest on April 12. (His article, "Russian Unions Call Day of Protest," can be found on the Internet conference called lab.r.cis, an abbreviation meaning "labor in the Commonwealth of Independent States.") This report addresses the issue of what the workers (not just "the left") are doing in Russia today.

The FITUR is the successor in Russia of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions, the giant, bureaucratically dominated trade union federation of the former USSR. The economic and political problems workers in Russia face today are grave. They suffer under an unprecedented broadside against their standard of living, which the regime calls "market reforms." Russian workers, like U.S. workers, also suffer from a bankrupt union leadership and from not having a political party of their own.

The policies of the FITUR leadership offer no alternative to the regime's market reforms and privatization and no way for workers to defend themselves from the results of these reforms. The FITUR officials have accommodated themselves to the privatization program, trying to rely on back-room negotiations and agreements with factory directors and the government to defend workers social welfare. Their policies are very similar to those of the AFL-CIO officials themselves, even though the AFL-CIO officials are hostile to the FITUR and organize against it.

Meanwhile, production in Russia has declined to 45 percent of what it was in 1990. Prices have skyrocketed and wages have not. The number of unemployed has increased considerably and those who still have jobs are often not paid for months at a time. In January, one-third of the Russian population was receiving less than the "survival minimum"!

According to one FITUR leader, Yevgeny Reshetnikov, after an earlier protest, the "fail-

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Interview with Comandantes Tacho and Trinidad

EZLN Leaders Discuss Talks with the Government, Women's Rights, and the Plebiscite

The following article describing current talks between the Zapatistas and the Mexican government delegation appeared in the June 13 issue of the Mexico City publication La Jornada. Posted on the Internet, it was written by correspondent Hermann Bellinghausen in San Andrés Larrainzar, Chiapas (site of the negotiations), and translated by Cindy Arnold of the National Center for Democracy, Justice, and Liberty, which is affiliated with the El Paso-based National Commission for Democracy in Mexico, USA.

At about midnight Sunday Comandante Tacho, accompanied by the rest of the Zapatista delegation, talked with a curious mixture of local, national, foreign, commercial, and alternative press representatives and a few television reporters.

Difficulties with Negotiations

Tacho talked about the difficulties with the negotiations, in a tone that was a little less hopeful than the one he used the following day while talking in the Plaza de San Andrés and later during another interview with international agencies. The final evaluation of the Zapatistas was positive at the end of Sunday morning's negotiations, but Saturday night there were more doubts.

"When we presented our proposal for the general agenda, we were asked about the 34 points for which the EZLN fought which were not included, and they asked us if they were no longer part of our demands. We told them, no, but that this was not the time to discuss them. We insisted upon the national themes, and said that the law did not allow them to be discussed in this dialogue. They said that if there was some national theme that was agreed upon at the negotiation table, they would send it to the Congress of the Union. They spoke to us in words that we could not quickly understand.

"They wanted to discuss the demands with us, now, but we said that it wasn't the right time." Hours later, at the end of the third round of San Andrés, Comandante Tacho himself said: "The agenda is the principal part of the dialogue, and that is where we made progress, but the government does acknowledge it because it wanted to discuss other things that should be looked at later on, like the themes of health, land, and housing. The government wants to begin there, but the procedure, which is the most important thing, still has to be discussed."

The differences still are many, but according to the Tojolabal leader: "The government wants the proposal that it is making to us to win," he said Saturday night. "It wants us to adhere to their proposals, and we cannot do that."

"We Want a Better Life for Women"

Tacho stated that the government representatives do not take the Zapatista proposals

seriously, such as the work session to discuss the situation of women in Mexico: "They said that it was not a point that should be discussed separately. They said why isn't there a work session about young people, children, or the elderly? They began to make fun of it."

He said that the proposals of the EZLN and the government do not concur; later, after the agreements about the agenda had been developed, it would seem that they were "few, but they are important advances because they refer to the agenda, which is one of the most difficult parts of the dialogue." ...[In regard to] the discussion about the theme of women, which was of growing importance to the Zapatista delegation, no agreement could be reached. Regarding this point Comandante Trinidad spoke, to say what the women in the villages think.

"We think that we want a better life for women. Most of us are in the Lacandón jungle. Our husbands sometimes are drunks. We want women to be free, to not be kept as servants, to not be pinned down. The government does not take us into account. It says, for the most part women don't count. We the Comandantes think that a work session on women [is important], but the government does not want to give it any attention."

A little bit earlier Tacho said: "In Mexico women have not had their rightful place, let alone roles in public life. They exist only to obey, to take care of their children. A life deprived of rights and freedoms.

"In the majority of the Mexican families the man always rules," he added, and then continued, "Among the Zapatista troops women have a place, they can lead." "Women are very valuable," continued Trinidad. "We work all day long, from 4 in the morning until night. We don't earn a salary, and we don't have the right to make a profit. When we get paid, it is because we are working with our husbands, our sons. The man [thinks he] should deal with the money, but the woman gets nothing."

Regarding the invitation to join the discussions that the Zapatistas are extending to the political parties, Comandante Tacho clarified: "We are inviting the political parties of the left, the social organizations, the National Democratic Convention, the National Con-

vention of Women. We are calling all of them to form a working group. We cannot invite the party of the State, because that is what we are fighting. They defend the interests of their party, the interests of capital, exploitation, imposition."

About the [government's] recent military movements Tacho said: "What they want to do is intimidate us. That's the reason for their patrols, their flyovers, to try to force us to say that their proposal is good."

On the Plebiscite

About the national plebiscite that the EZLN is convening he stated: "We are waiting for the results of the plebiscite to see whether there really is agreement with the people of Mexico and the world. If the government does not accept a national dialogue, we are going to ask the people of Mexico whether there should be national themes."

At that moment in the middle of the night the sound of a motor was heard. Tacho commented: "See. Point the microphone toward the plane." It was 11:30 pm. He continued: "What we understand about the discussions is that it is possible to come to an agreement. When something comes up that they don't like, they stall, they don't have anything else to say. For us, if we don't come to an agreement on one of the points, we go on to another and look for something we can agree on."

Regarding his thoughts about the presence of an army general in the government's delegation, and the power that he has, he said: "The aide, the general who is at the table, is in charge of the maps. In the beginning he wanted to give us lessons on geography; he wanted to tell us where things were located, but we live where the actions have occurred. They don't even know where the army is. They don't know or they don't want to treat us with respect," and he added: "In reality the delegation that represents the government is not those who are in control, that's what we perceive."

Deceived "in Plain View"

Caught between the government's proposal for a reciprocal reduction of tensions, and the Zapatistas' proposal for a stable and enduring truce, the delegations met in private. "The government's delegation asked to talk; they told us they felt alone and that they were

taking a hard line because we did not trust them." The Zapatistas are afraid they are being deceived "in plain view."

In the interview after the end of the dialogue, Tacho revealed: "For the government, the agreements that were reached were very few; however, they were the ones that they asked us to accept, as a favor. We are not going to do it as a favor, but rather because we really could come to an agreement. They were asking for something, anything, to be agreed upon, but now it seems like only a little to them."

"Show How to Organize in New Ways"

Regarding what the Zapatistas hope for from their dialogue with civil society, Tacho expressed the following thoughts: "We would have met to dialogue earlier, when there weren't so many divisions. In action, they [civil society] are accustomed to being divided, each one wants to be proud, to say they are the best. But that's not what it's about. It's about being a good fighter, willing to move the struggle forward. Before it used to be that the talker was always the leader, not anymore. Words no longer matter, the deputies can no

longer stand to make declarations and then leave.

"They have this vice of wanting to be the chief. Here a *companero* has to demonstrate his leadership through his actions. A leader has to show how to organize again in new ways, because Mexican society is not organized the right way now. We say to them, Let's organize a brand new movement, a modern one, where we feel like brothers and sisters, like Mexicans. Something new has to be made; we can't fall back on the same old tactics." □

Zapatista Document

EZLN Calls for "Plebiscite"

Following is the text of a communiqué issued in June by the Clandestine Indigenous Revolutionary Committee — General Command of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (of Mexico). The document, translated by Cecilia Rodriguez of the El Paso-based organization National Commission for Democracy in Mexico (phone: (915) 532-8382; Internet address: moonlight@igc.apc.org), has been edited somewhat for style and clarity.

June of 1995

To the People of Mexico

To the Peoples and Governments of the World

To the National and International Press

Brothers [and sisters],

A year ago, in the month of June 1994, we responded "No" to the government proposal for the signing of a fake peace. A year ago, after the supreme government responded to our demands, for democracy, liberty, and justice for all Mexicans, with a stack of papers, with the offering of "generous" alms, and with an arrogance that led the country into the worst crisis in its history, the dignified voice of the Zapatistas was heard, the "No" which indicated we were not willing to exchange our dignity for money and promises.

A year ago the Zapatista Army of National Liberation took the initiative of speaking to the Mexican nation to demand a national dialogue with all the people, groups, and organizations who found common cause in the struggle for democracy, liberty, and justice.

Founding of Convención Nacional Democrática

Acknowledging that a great social force had manifested itself in the beginning of the year 1994, first to stop the war and next to propel a dialogue, the EZLN acknowledges the power and voice of that social force, civil and peaceful, and called it to dialogue in order to seek and raise a banner, the national banner, and to struggle together for a transition to democracy in Mexico. This call we made in our "Second Declaration of the Lacandón Rain Forest," and we called this first encoun-

ter of the national dialogue "The National Democratic Convention."

Two months later, the aspirations of broad sectors of the country to achieve the peaceful transition to democracy led to the birth of the Convención Nacional Democrática (National Democratic Convention) on August 9, 1994, in territory held in rebellion against the bad government.

In the Convention, different organized efforts converged, citizens' groups, intellectuals and honest artists, political organizations of the center and the left, and a great number of citizens without a party. We recognized one another before a common enemy, the state-party system, and in the call of the faceless men and women of the EZLN, and agreed on the demand for democracy, liberty, and justice for all Mexicans. We agreed, but we did not unite. The lack of a program and a plan of common action allowed the electoral horizon to be converted into an obstacle to the development of the National Democratic Convention.

The dialogue among different forces was and has been difficult. There have been many obstacles and points of stagnation. But the fundamental platform of the National Democratic Convention continues to be viable: the peaceful civil struggle against the party system of the state.

Economic Collapse and Continued War

Once the electoral fraud of August 21 was past and the ceremony of neoliberalism continued in our country [with the inauguration of the new PRI regime under Ernesto Zedillo] on December 1, 1994, the economy burst into

crisis, the treacherous war masked in legality continued, as did the obsessive government resistance to a democratic opening and a profound reform of the state, as well as the shameful sale of national sovereignty and the repressive blows against the popular movements. In the cities and in the Mexican countryside, the popular demands found the same response: lies, jail, death. Contrary to what was expected and desired by the bad government, the post-electoral miasma was overcome, and to each new blow, the democratic forces responded with rapidity, creativity, and decisiveness.

New forms of organization have developed since then: popular fronts, coordinated groupings, civil associations, citizen's committees, organizational alliances.

Nevertheless, the various initiatives are limited, and waste away against the horizon that produced them. For each blow, an organized response develops. For each organized response, the system prepares another blow.

New Initiative Needed

We think that an initiative with a national character is lacking which unites and makes cohesive all the organizational forms which until now have remained diffuse. We believed, we pointed out, in our "Third Declaration of the Lacandón Rain Forest," that a National Liberation Movement was necessary which would unite all the forces, all the citizens and organizations which struggle against the state-party system. A movement which finds a unifying point among all the democratic forces. A movement which develops a common program of struggle. A movement which proposes a national plan of

action, of struggle for democracy, liberty, and justice for all Mexicans and for the defense of national sovereignty.

The discussion about the characteristics of this great national opposition movement postponed its creation. The National Democratic Convention, called upon to head this broad opposition front, gave in to discussion about whether the front should be based on class or should be broad-based. As though these concepts were mutually exclusive, as though the formation of a broad multi-class movement impeded the generation of a class movement, the National Democratic Convention avoided making a decision in this regard.

The economic and repressive blows of February, March, and April this year [1995], the widespread popular discontent, the lack of organizational alternatives, and the awakening of the workers in the republic — all made it clear that it was an error to have postponed the call which the people of Mexico were waiting for. Nevertheless, new actors and new organizational forms began to point anew to the urgency and necessity of an initiative the nature of which could be a Movement for National Liberation. Today we think it continues to be necessary to form this broad opposition front to the politics of the government.

Beginning of a New Effort

Today we find ourselves at the beginning of a new effort at a dialogue with the supreme government. Today we renew our demands for democracy, liberty, and justice for all Mexicans.

Today we offer, as we did 18 months ago, our blood, our voice so that all may speak, our cry so that all may cry, our demands so that all may demand.

Today we demand: Everything for Everyone!

Today we demand a national dialogue between those who are opposed to democratic change and those who struggle to make it a reality. Between the government, on one side, and all the democratic forces on the other.

[We demand a] national dialogue in order to [advance a] dialogue with the government.

We Zapatistas see this as necessary. We do not want to make decisions without listening to all those who have helped us so much in the search for a peace with justice and dignity. We cannot do what the bad government does, that is, make decisions without asking those who, supposedly, support them.

Zapatistas Know How to Listen

Brothers [and sisters],

We have demonstrated before, every time that war seemed to engulf our lands, that we know how to listen. Today we want to demonstrate [this] anew and reorient our path.

That is why we are directing ourselves to the people of Mexico, to the Democratic National Convention, to the different independent social organizations, to the political

parties of the opposition, to the citizens' organizations, to the non-governmental organizations, to the unions, to the students, to the squatters, to the workers of the fields and the cities, to the indigenous Mexicans, to the housewives, to the intellectuals and artists, to the religious community, to the elderly, to the women, to the men and the children. And we are also calling upon the solidarity committees in the international community, to our brothers and sisters of North America, of Europe, of Asia, of South America.

We call upon everyone, legal and clandestine, armed and peaceful, civil and military, to all those who struggle, in all forms, on all levels and in all parts for democracy, liberty, and justice in the world.

For us, for the Zapatistas, the voice of civil society is important. The voice of all of you has value and power for the Zapatistas. We want to hear your word and know your thoughts in order to continue ahead.

For a Mass Plebiscite on 5 Questions

We address ourselves to all our brothers [and sisters] to propose a national and international consultation [plebiscite] which will give direction to all of us in order to find the steps we should take and the direction we should follow in this historic moment. We therefore propose the organization of a Great National Consultation [plebiscite] to address the following questions:

1. Do you agree that the principal demands of the Mexican people are: land, housing, jobs, food, health, education, culture, information, independence, democracy, liberty, justice, and peace?
2. Should the different democratizing forces unite in a broad-based opposition front to struggle for these 13 principal demands?
3. Should a profound political reform be made in terms which guarantee: equity, citizen participation, including non-partisan and non-governmental, respect for the vote, reliable voter registration of all the national political, regional, and local forces?
4. Should the EZLN be converted into a new and independent political force?
5. Should the EZLN unite with other forces and organizations and form a new political organization?

There are five questions to be answered "Yes," "No," or "I don't know." These are five questions which we need answered in order to continue ahead.

Organizations Asked to Help

Brothers [and sisters]:

We make a respectful request to the brothers [and sisters] of the National Civic Alliance to contribute to this peaceful and civic effort in the struggle for democracy, providing their experience in the organization of such citizen consultations.

We urgently call upon those different groups who make up the Democratic National Convention to suspend their internal disputes and take into their hands the organization and implementation of this large national consultation.

We call upon the National Convention of Workers to organize the consultation in unions, labor centers, and workers' organizations.

We call upon the National Convention of Indigenous Peoples to organize the consultation in the indigenous and peasant communities of the nation, and in the independent organizations of indigenous people and peasants.

We call upon the National Student Convention to organize the consultation in the middle and upper educational centers of the country.

We call upon the National Women's Convention to organize a consultation in the independent organizations of women, in the neighborhoods, and among the housewives.

We call upon the National Convention of Artists to organize a consultation among cultural workers and to assist, with their labor and production, in the implementation of this consultation throughout the country.

We call upon the solidarity organizations which sympathize with the just cause of the EZLN in the United States, Spain, Italy, France, Germany, Greece, Japan, Chile, Holland, Sweden, Norway, England, Argentina, Venezuela, Switzerland, Belgium, Austria, Russia, and in all the world to organize this consultation in their respective countries.

Results Called for in August

Brothers [and sisters]:

This is our word. We ask that we organize ourselves in order to ask, that we organize ourselves in order to respond, that we organize ourselves in order to act. We propose that the results of the consultation be announced at the latest by August 8, 1995, first anniversary of the beginning of the national dialogue for a transition to democracy.

The EZLN confirms, with this proposal for a great citizens' consultation, its commitment to "command by obeying." It gives a demonstration of its seriousness and its true commitment in the search for a political solution to the war, and calls for a new national dialogue among the democratic forces of the country.

Democracy!

Liberty!

Justice!

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast,

[signatures] Comandante Tacho, Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, Comandante David

Clandestine Indigenous Revolutionary Committee — General Command of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation — Mexico □

The Evolution of the Economic, Social, and Political Situation of Latin America and the Caribbean

Presentation by the Communist Party of Cuba's Delegation to the Fifth Meeting of the São Paulo Forum (May 1995, Montevideo, Uruguay)

Brothers and Sisters,

1. In order to outline the evolution, or more appropriately [unreadable word] the economic, social, and political situation of Latin America and the Caribbean which has transpired between the fourth and this fifth meeting of the São Paulo Forum, we are obliged to refer to certain phenomena and processes that for reasons of time we will not be able to analyze in depth. For this reason, it is indispensable that we place inside this context our previously discussed perspectives.
2. To broach the problems of our region, it is necessary to confront two misconceptions. The first misconception is that the subcontinent is progressing toward economic development and social justice. The other misconception affirms that the continent is moving toward the consolidation of democracy.
3. With so much at stake, it is important to have a clear understanding of the decade of the 1980s. The drainage of net financial resources and the transference of Latin American and Caribbean goods and services to the export sector created recession, hyperinflation, stagnation in employment and per capita consumption, a decline in production and the weakening of broad sectors of production, financial speculation, and the concentration of property and revenue in the hands of the few. These phenomena led to an increase in poverty and marginalization as never before.
4. The financial collapse and fragility of the governments facilitated the transfer of ownership of the means of production to the creditors. They honored transnational dominion above their countries' economies and they amplified foreign influence over domestic politics. Special mention deserves to be given to the "Brady Plan," a mechanism designed to save North American banks from the devaluation of their loans and "to capture" the most profitable productive sectors of Latin America and the Caribbean. Little by little this plan contributed to the growing regional foreign debt, which by the end of 1994 reached \$534 billion (U.S.). This aggravated the situations of the debtor nations, which couldn't count on financial activities to back up the present "mortgage."
5. Paralleling this was indiscriminate commercial opening and deregulation, which fed the appetites of the international financial situation. The result of this was hundreds of billions of dollars withdrawn from local businesses and production and put at the disposal of more speculative gambles to obtain easier profits.
6. Mediating this arithmetical magic of macroeconomic incantations was the realization of what was called in Latin America and the Caribbean the "Lost Decade." This created a situation in which two-thirds of the regions' inhabitants fell into classifications like "unviable," a strange subhuman status.
7. The reality of the subcontinent is that the financial "boom" was destined to mean that resources were to be sent outside the region. This has created a fictitious process which contributed to international monetary reserves and which was financed in our region by deficit commercial and fiscal activities. This was artificially sustained by imports, resulting in the loss of our ability to control inflation and stimulating local bourgeoisies into hyper-consumerism by means of credit channels, which produced a model of supposed economic growth financed by speculation.
8. The result of sponsoring speculative creations is expressed in growing economic deformation. The impulse for privatization and marginalization of economies has accentuated unemployment and curtailed real growth. It has enhanced the impulse toward marginalization of [unreadable words], annulled the competitive capacity of the national productive capacity, accelerated deindustrialization, increased the foreign debt, augmented the commercial deficit, degraded the conditions of life for the majority, deepened the concentration of property in the hands of a few, and in all but a few cases, eliminated all possibility of technical progress and development for our countries.
9. Combined with the socio-economic phenomena already mentioned is the question of whether Latin America and the Caribbean can effectively encounter a process of consolidation of democracy. Is democracy able to coexist with inequality and injustice? Are we able to have democracy in countries that are every day more dependent and less sovereign?
10. In order to be able to answer this question, it is important to separate ourselves from a logic imposed on us which says that we must accept a subordinate role within the new system of international relations.
11. The principal elements that conform to this "New World Order" are the implantation of a code of values and conduct destined to impose on all the nations a political model that facilitates foreign domination and guarantees limited sovereignty and the right of intervention. They justify intervention in international questions and broaden coercive mechanisms which impose the interests of the powerful and amplify sanctions against those who do not obey.
12. The proponents of the "New World Order" would like to legitimize these norms of behavior in the same way that international financial organizations would like to impose restrictions in the economic and social sphere. The combination of both make up pincers that restrict the sovereignty of our nations. In this manner they produce a dual process, one part of which is that they weaken those elements in our governments that are opposed to transnational capital, while at the same time they aid and abet the repressive elements in those governments against the sectors most affected by the crisis.
13. In the case of our continent, with the motive of heightening social and political crisis and promoting violence in various places, the United States and the dominant elites in Latin America and the Caribbean worked hand in hand throughout the past decade in the creation of new mechanisms for preserving their interests, and especially to stop the reform and revitalization of the Organization of American States.
14. In a similar process, the "Latin America Summit," celebrated in Miami in December 1994, constituted the culmination of the first step in the restructuring of the system of hemispheric relations, whose objectives have been: to consolidate and rearticulate a new design in the economic relations of the continent; to define a new collective security system; and to deepen the campaign to isolate the Cuban Revolution. Within this context, they produced the United States military intervention in Haiti, which constitutes a defining example of the new concept of "hemispheric security."
15. However, what is the relation between sovereignty and democracy? And how can they tout the claim that they are strengthening democracy while at the same time accentuating the process of the loss of sovereignty?
16. It is certainly not possible to compare the real political situation in Latin America and the Caribbean with the period of military dictatorships. Also, it would be erroneous to generalize about the political systems of all the countries of the region. It is a reality that the popular forces approve of the demo-

- cratic spaces which exist for gathering forces and competing in conditions relatively less disadvantageous within the system.
17. Nevertheless, what has become dominant is a regional political panorama characterized by such practices as the elimination of a real choice among candidates, expensive electoral campaigns, manipulation of the mass media of communication, existence of "permanent authorities," unchallengeable elections, interference of the United States in the internal affairs of other nations, and influence of the armed forces in political life.
 18. Far from advancing democracy, neo-liberalism contributes to unemployment and a decline in the level and quality of life for two-thirds of the population of our subcontinent. It forces popular sectors to accept calls for social pacts and other similar formulas which restrict the gains and democratic spaces achieved during years of struggle.
 19. The limitations of this political model and the effects of the socio-economic and political crisis are also defined by the dependent character of the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean, especially in this period of the loss of national sovereignty. A new form of permanent authority is coming to the fore, situated in the central banks, the economic ministries, and other governmental institutions, whose political preconditions — through conventions and mediated agreements and in large part through "elected" government — is not subject to change and whose functionaries share the viewpoint of major commercial and financial institutions.
 20. Now, if the political system has become a dead weight, if the difficulty of the socio-economic crisis is more than can be dealt with, and if the fundamental decisions that affect the subcontinent are predetermined by foreign interests, we must ask what real weight in fundamental decisions do voters have that affect the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean? What margin remains for the exercise of democracy?
 21. The answer is that we must support, on the one hand, the demand for universal suffrage, direct elections, and the secret ballot, as well as for real and effective democracy, on the other. This duality can have an echo in an apparently democratic political system whose real function is to facilitate the subordination of the subcontinent to new mechanisms of global domination. What we need to support is the idea that such fundamental decisions should be made democratically by the people.
 22. Within this small opening, how do we evaluate the activities of the parties and the political movements between the fourth and fifth meetings of the São Paulo Forum? How do we evaluate the electoral results obtained so far? What is the perspective for the popular struggles in our subcontinent?
 23. Within the climate of deepening social and political crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean, we see a reanimation of popular forces continually involved in a process that is intermingled with fractioning and tensions. In these debates, we are looking for alternatives, regroupments, and the recomposition of alliances.
 24. We must take into account the effects of the crisis. The popular struggles against the phenomena of growing corruption on the continent are without precedent. They have interrupted the mandates of three presidents, presented charges against various ex-presidents and corrupt politicians, initiated judicial proceedings against senators, deputies, and other elected officials in numerous countries. One of the highest tendencies within the activity of social movements in Latin America and the Caribbean is that which begins with a restoration of struggles within this narrow framework. With each struggle the people gain a better understanding of the structural character of the crisis.
 25. Within the political spectrum of the São Paulo Forum, we have seen the following gains on the electoral plane. The triumph of the Revolutionary Democratic Party in the Panamanian presidential elections, as well as participation of other parties in governmental coalitions which have won [unreadable figure] deputies, 57 senators, and 10 governorships. At the same time, hundreds of mayoral victories have been attained with more than 29 million votes, constituting 24.01 percent of the votes cast in the present electoral cycle. It speaks to the class character of those excluded from the system that the organizations represented in the Forum have obtained a quarter of these recent votes. Without doubt, the majority of our parties and political movements have not had an equal experience. Consequently, our general electoral results have sparked a deep and constructive debate, as we have seen reflected in this meeting.
 26. Furthermore, because of the discrimination suffered, the left has not yet developed articulate political and economic programs capable of attracting the majority of the population. Therefore our level of unity is precarious and insufficient for confronting the formidable waste of all types of resources that characterizes the dominant classes. Our parties and political movements have faced immense challenges in the struggle of our people to better understand the causes and the nature of the crisis that affects our continent, to create an indispensable consciousness for "change," and to educate about the urgent necessity of the economic and political integration of Latin America.
 27. Finally, permit us to make a very brief reference to Cuba. The Cuban Revolution is a historical process in development, summarized by a permanent climate of blockade, hostility, and intense isolation, which some would now call "the project of the Helms-Burton Law." Throughout this process, the Revolution has been and remains in constant evolution and correction. These certain modifications correspond with the aspirations and needs of our people and with the conditions and possibilities at each moment. It is true that the changes occurring in the international scene place Cuba in a particularly difficult situation, which dictates the necessity of introducing certain modifications in social, economic, and political areas. However, the characteristics and rhythms of the present and future evolution of the Cuban political and economic project will be determined solely by the aspirations and potentialities of our own people, without external impositions or conditions.
 28. In conclusion, during the period between the fourth and fifth meetings of the São Paulo Forum, the situation in Latin America and the Caribbean was characterized by the deepening of the socio-political crisis, the advances of the United States in the process of rearticulating hemispheric relations, and the demonstrated capacity of the dominant political system to roll back the electoral gains of the left. However, the evident signs of the rebirth of the popular movement could not be hidden.
 29. At this time, the challenges facing the popular forces of the continent are formidable. What do we do to broaden the democratic space inside our societies while so much external pressure acts to fortify antidemocratic tendencies? How do we avoid proposing to the masses what seems unattainable at the moment, while at the same time we avoid attempting less than the hopes of our peoples? It is an illusion to pretend that we already have the answers. Also, it would be absurd that a forum as broad and diverse as this would be able to elaborate acceptable recipes that would be applicable for everyone.
 30. Without doubt, it is evident that the hemispheric pact signed at the Miami Summit was designed to stop the advance of popular sectors in Latin America and the Caribbean. For this reason, to be able to develop a continental strategy in response, it is indispensable to strengthen the São Paulo Forum, with the objective that we will be able to initiate a struggle against neo-liberalism and against the loss of sovereignty of our nations, because without sovereignty there can be no real democracy. □

— Translated by John Daniel

For a World Free from Exploitation and Oppression

by Larry Adams

Larry Adams is president of Local 300, National Postal Mailhandlers Union. He delivered this speech at the Twelfth Annual Martin Luther King Support for Labor Banquet, sponsored by the Black Workers for Justice and held in Raleigh, North Carolina, April 1, 1995.

To the Black Workers for Justice, their supporters and allies, honored guests, and assembled dignitaries (that's about everyone here!), I bring warm greetings of solidarity with your efforts to organize the South, to pursue social justice for workers in the Black Belt. I bring these greetings on behalf of my union, the National Postal Mailhandlers Union, Local 300, representing 9,000 mailhandlers in the U.S. Postal Service in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut (one of four national exclusive bargaining agents for the people who move the mail).

I will also take the liberty to extend greetings of solidarity on behalf of Workers for One Postal Union, a developing formation of activists from these four unions, with which I work — who strive to overcome the organizational disunity presented by the existence of four separate unions. We strive to overcome that disunity on the basis of the unity of purpose and common interests of all postal workers. I take this unauthorized liberty (because I wasn't sent by the Steering Committee to do this) because I believe that we, like you, recognize the ever-present responsibility to develop and increase the consciousness and organization of working people. I think that no one would hold it against me for speaking in the name of Workers for One Postal Union without authorization, because we have a common purpose with the forces in Black Workers for Justice, the supporters and various formations that have gravitated around that excellent leadership.

In everything we do we must see the responsibility to increase the consciousness and organization of working people in order that we better recognize what our interests are, who are our friends, who are our enemies, and organize ourselves to defend our interests, because very clearly they are constantly under attack.

The sisters and brothers who have preceded me at the mike have talked about some of the details of this in their particular workplaces and areas of community work. Constantly, the wealth that we produce, that could improve the quality of our lives is being taken away. Constantly we are being driven down to a level that only enables us to get back to work — if we have a job. Increasingly, numbers of people are being kept out of the work force, concretely to put pressure on those of us that are on the job. To make sure that there's someone out there who's a little bit worse off than you — to keep your mouth shut.

Solidarity

This points in the direction of a strategy that says we are all working class people whether we're working on a job or not, that we are different strata of the same class, that we make up the majority of society, we produce the wealth of society. And I think everyone that has come forward today has said that the task that confronts us is to organize ourselves so that we take back that which we produce. [Applause.] So that we control the political power that determines what the society is for and in whose interests it functions, that we operate the levers of government, that we staff the organizations that make the decisions about what goes on.

The solidarity that I speak of is not just a good idea, it is a vital necessity. It must be a conscious objective of our organizing. It is a solidarity based in the common interest of strengthening friends who are friends because we are allies in struggle, who need each other to win.

It's particularly important to me, coming from the North, that I've learned we must develop the organizational and personal relationships that enable us to share resources, human and material, and sum up experiences from which we learn lessons to advance the struggle of the working class and the oppressed nations within this country.

That solidarity which is forged in struggle can become a material force that will enable the oppressed, exploited working people of this country and the world to realize our strategic vision of a world free of all the forms of oppression — racial, national, gender — and the exploitation that has been human history.

We're on the verge of turning that around. And that prize — to rid society of all forms of exploitation and oppression — is the prize on which we must keep our eyes.

We must constantly examine how and what we do on a daily basis and whether it contributes to that process of improving society or whether it detracts. That becomes the basis of our morality. That which moves us forward is that which is good. That which holds us back is that which is bad, and we must reject it. [Speak! Speak!]

For workers and organizations of the working class outside the South, building solidarity with the struggles of Southern workers is of particular importance. The historic base of chattel slavery, the region has seen some of the most oppressive and exploitative living and working conditions suffered by labor anywhere. Though

the struggle has somewhat alleviated those conditions, there are all too many remnants of slavery that persist. If one credo of organized labor, "An injury to one is an injury to all," means anything — it must impart to us workers who are outside the South the class responsibility to participate in and advance organizing that will finally eradicate that legacy of slavery and the abominable social, economic, and political conditions rooted therein.

The historic failure of organized labor in this country to successfully meet that responsibility haunts labor everywhere today. It has come back to bite us in the butt. You can very truly make a chain only as strong as its weakest link. We allowed those conditions to persist — Sister Theresa El-Amin has already told us, about recent attempts to turn areas of New England into "right to work" areas. That which we thought was confined to the South has come back to the North. That's because we allowed it to persist in the South. Shops run away to preserves of cheap labor and resources. That comes back to haunt us, because we allowed that preserve to remain. The anti-worker political conditions of the South have spilled over in the form of "right to work" movements in the rest of the country. That historical obligation [to organize the South] wasn't just a good thing to do for some other people who were in bad shape. It's that you have to protect all of your flanks, North and South, East and West. It's how we are all linked indelibly together.

The pernicious ideological weed of white supremacy historically rooted in chattel slavery persists throughout the country. It fomented discrimination, oppression, and divisions among workers that hold back our struggle. They love it when we fight each other over artificial, socially created concepts. They win, we lose, it's that simple.

At the same time the intensity of that oppression has spawned the historic tradition of resistance that has played a leading role in propelling this society forward... which brings me to how I see the significance of the occasion.

The Twelfth Annual MLK Support for Labor Banquet

It is an honor to be a part of this activity because it is fitting and proper to honor the contribution of Dr. King to the liberation struggle of the African American people by way of his leadership role in the modern civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, which in turn inspired

subsequent social movements for justice — including the anti-Vietnam-War movement, the women's movement, the Black Liberation struggle and other oppressed nationality movements, the environmental protection movement, and the movement against oppression for sexual orientation. (When the train started moving everybody hopped on board, and America has been better for it.)

Dr. King's advocacy of unity and the commonality of interests between organized labor and the struggle for justice for African Americans points us to the mutual dependence and the necessary strategic alliance between the movements for working class liberation and African American national liberation, both of which are ravaged by capital.

Dr King's life of selfless devotion to the struggle of the oppressed; his willingness to constantly study, struggle, study more, to learn and be open to develop, to sum up lessons to reapply to ongoing social practice of struggle against injustice, provides a noble example for all of us to emulate — all of us who would struggle to be free.

But a most outstanding characteristic of his leadership was his capacity to combine the moral authority and tactical leadership to rouse into political action the masses of people in the hundreds, then thousands, and then tens of thousands, to have confidence in themselves to change the world and thereby shape their own destiny. That leadership brought forth its true heroes, the true makers of history — the masses of people in motion. That's the indomitable force that once we tap into, we're on the road. That's the source of power.

It is appropriate that this banquet to celebrate Southern labor be named for Martin Luther King. For let us never forget that Dr. King's life was taken in the struggle for union rights of the sanitation workers of Memphis. It was when his individual skills, talents, leadership ability, moral strength, charisma, analysis, and attention focused on the international situation, attacking the U.S. imperialist war in Vietnam, that the ruling class fell out with Dr. King. And it was when those energies were directed more clearly on the class struggle between workers in this country and capital and its government, in the pursuit of economic justice, that was when he was assassinated.

From his life and struggle we must learn the fundamental nature of that class contradiction in shaping everything that goes on in this society. That we take those lessons from him and move forward to continue his legacy.

Honor our Heroes and Sheroes

It is most appropriate that we here today celebrate our past and honor our contemporary heroes and sheroes — who, inspired, continue the legacy of Dr. King, Malcolm X, Fanny Lou Hamer, Harriet Tubman, and the countless more and lesser known warriors for justice, who have preceded us.

I speak concretely of the folks who have played a role in the preceding part of this program, the heroes and sheroes of:

1. The North Carolina Public Service Workers Assembly;
2. The Rocky Mount Undergarment Workers Union;
3. The Unity Committee at Consolidated Diesel; and,
4. The number of other Workplace Committees and Union Drives, organizing efforts for Workplace Justice and Workers Power.
5. The important efforts of the United Electrical Workers union (UE) to overcome the historic neglect of the region by organized labor; and,
6. All the efforts to manifest Black political power throughout the South in communities large and small.

It is most appropriate that we celebrate our own heroes and sheroes, because nobody else is going to do it. [Applause.] It's important that we take time out to acknowledge the sisters and brothers who day to day slug it out in the trenches, who learn through the course of their experience that "Yes, we can," and "For how long? Not long, because we ain't gonna stop." It is important that we have occasions like this, where we celebrate that work.

I particularly wish to honor the Black Workers for Justice for spearheading political education and organizing in the South, of having the tremendous impact that they have had, both on me personally and on comrades with whom I associate on a regular basis, and on the entire labor movement of this country. And I wish everyone would give the BWFJ leadership and staff, and ground workers and "grunts" a big round for the service they do for our class and the liberation of African American people. [Applause.]

If this is the twelfth annual banquet, it is also a testament to the consistency and longevity of the BWFJ's commitment and work. Witness their successful efforts at the building of people's institutions for struggle. Also, the existence of *Justice Speaks* newspaper has provided a way to link these various activities and share the lessons in order to advance our struggle.

It's necessary to celebrate and honor, because that's part of what recharges the batteries. Because the current situation is looking mighty rough for the home squad. So let's celebrate tonight and get ready to get back out there tomorrow.

A Danger and an Opportunity

The current situation is fraught with much danger and it would be very easy to decide, "Well, the bad guys won. Let's pack our tent and move down the beach."

But we have to view this situation as one that is rife with opportunity. The enemies of the people have a flag around which they are rallying. They call it a "Contract with America." It in fact is a contract, as in hit-man contract, on the working people of this country. It's a contract for the rich of this country. I mean it's so

tough they've even cut down strata of the rich and made them poor, so the ones at the very top can get even richer. It's rough. But at the same time they ought to make so many enemies that those of us who would organize the struggle for freedom just need to go out there and scoop them up. They've got something in the game for everybody — old folks, young folks, with jobs, without jobs, who have a home, who don't have a home.

We'd be crazy if we blew this opportunity to unite the many against the few.

The Contract on America

Let me give a few facts on the Contract on America. In general its aimed to undo all the progressive social legislation since the New Deal. Everything that folks have struggled for — from unemployment insurance and social security to Aid to Dependent Children — is on the chopping block. They have concretely and consciously decided to undo progressive legislation, from the New Deal through the Great Society, undo everything that the civil rights movement achieved, everything that the women's movement achieved. All of this in a major effort to transfer wealth — as if they don't have enough already; it's really obscene! — to transfer the social wealth further up out of the hands of the masses of people. They've determined that there is no role for government except to make the rich richer. It's criminal.

Part of the Contract is preparing for the resistance. You've had years and years of ideological preparation to make you think that the worst thing going on in this country is the crime rate. So that our money would then be used to buy the prisons in which they are going to lock us up when we oppose them throwing us out of work. In fact, if you read the stats, the crime rate has remained the same. They've just promoted that it's bigger and that it's worse.

They're using the same old games that they've used historically. All of a sudden "state's rights" is real important. And everybody in the South ought to remember what "state's rights" is associated with. The reason the programs were established at the federal level from the git-go was because you couldn't trust the states to take care of those in need, whether you gave them the money or not.

Poverty will increase. The suffering of the masses will increase. What they're doing is like a Blitzkrieg. They're meeting in the middle of the night. People didn't even know what the Contract was and they already had half of it enacted.

It's not just an issue of this particular legislation. It's also a redefinition of the role of government, of what kind of society this country will have. They've got the main ten planks of the Contract, but they've also got a whole truckload of various forms of legislation.

It behooves us all to spread the word that the Contract is a rich man's war on the poor, that it is absolutely anti-worker, and to do all that we can to organize the opposition. It is an opportu-

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The Capitalist Crisis of the 1990s, U.S. Labor, and the Labor Party Movement

by Frank Lovell

The Economy

Almost daily we are reminded of the worldwide crisis of capitalism. The current manifestations of this cold fact are the trade talks between the U.S. and Japan about auto production and market sharing, and the meetings of the Group of Seven (G-7)* in Halifax about how to stabilize currency exchange and prevent the collapse of national currencies, as happened in the case of the Mexican peso earlier this year.

What is behind the maneuvering and posturing of these heads of state? Their problems are compounded by the limits of their search for solutions. They all hope to find some way to prop up the crumbling monetary system. They seem to think that propping it up is (or can be) the cure to the ailing economy.

In Halifax the G-7 could not agree on how to coordinate trade and currencies. U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert E. Rubin told a *New York Times* reporter (June 15, 1995) that “coordination proved to be like many other things in economics: something that sounds nice and simple and is anything but simple. It ran into the complexities of economic life.”

What are these “complexities of economic life”? The *Times* reported some complexities related to currency exchange and the international monetary system (as seen at the G-7 summit):

In the background of the economic discussions is an enormous increase in international financial transactions, which has accentuated the vulnerability of markets to shocks like the one from the peso devaluation. To prevent the collapse of the Mexican economy, the United States and the International Monetary Fund pumped nearly \$40 billion into support for the peso.

Over the last decade, bond issues have tripled, securities transactions have increased more than tenfold, and foreign exchange transactions have quadrupled to \$1 trillion a day, according to the International Monetary Fund, the Washington-based institution that tries to help countries in financial trouble.

This is only part of the problem. The other part is what financiers do not want to see, i.e., the productive process. Capitalism remains a commodity-producing system. The financial superstructure of this system was initially designed to facilitate the production and exchange of commodities. But in the twentieth century the financial superstructure has at certain junctures begun to exercise an inordinate influence within the system. In recent years this has been noted and written about by Ernest Mandel and other Marxist economists.

About a year ago the editors of *Monthly Review* undertook to address this problem. In a letter to their subscribers (May 1, 1994) they started out with a 1936 quote from economist John Maynard Keynes:

Speculators may do no harm as bubbles on a steady stream of enterprise. But the situation is serious when enterprise becomes the bubble on a whirlwind of speculation. When the capital develop-

ment of a country becomes a by-product of the activities of a casino, the job is likely to be ill-done.

The *Monthly Review* editors went on to say:

Financial capital, cut loose from its original moorings in a real economy of production to meet human needs, inevitably becomes speculative capital geared solely to its own self-expansion. In earlier times no one ever dreamed that speculative capital, a phenomenon as old as capitalism itself, could grow to dominate a national economy, let alone the whole world. But it has.

Monthly Review subsequently ran articles expanding on this observation.

The speculative fever has risen during the past year to such an extent that some politicians are now aware of it and see it as a dangerous symptom. “We cannot simply expect those famous currency speculators to shut off their computer terminals, hang up their red suspenders and get a life,” said Prime Minister Jean Chrétien of Canada (at the G-7 conference). “But what we can do — what we must do — is take effective, concrete action to minimize the vulnerability of national economies” (*New York Times*, June 16, 1995). Chrétien did not specify what “concrete action” he would propose, and the conference did nothing to resolve this problem.

Underlying the monetary crisis (and all the speculation that fuels it) is the crisis in production. Great strides in cybernetics continue to raise productivity of workers (and create more unemployment). And this is now a worldwide phenomenon. Commodity production is an integrated world system. It produces more commodities than can be sold. The result is “trade talks” which do not (and cannot) create new markets. The world market is shrinking, not expanding, in comparison to increasing productivity and expanding production.

The only way the capitalist market can expand significantly is through an increase in purchasing power. But rising unemployment and lower wages do not contribute to this solution of the problem. Today’s business news is that “a settlement of the automobile trade [conflict] between the U.S. and Japan has begun to emerge” (*New York Times*, June 19, 1995). Each side hopes to cut into the market of the other, but they may have to agree to curtail production. And this “solution” is likely to have both economic and political consequences.

The distorted relationship between finance capital and commodity production and the consequent international trade rivalry among the leading industrial nations cannot escape the attention of the big bankers directly affected. In an article by Felix Rohatyn (*New York Review of Books*, July 14, 1994) we learn that this is not a new problem for them. At that time Rohatyn, himself a banker, chose to address the question, “World Capital: The Need and the Risks.” Here is the way he saw the problem:

*The wealthiest capitalist powers — the U.S., Canada, Japan, Britain, France, Germany, and Italy.

What Is the Meaning of the Sweeping Changes in the World Today?

Frank Lovell's Article Opens a Discussion Pointing Toward an Educational Conference

We hope that the accompanying article by Frank Lovell, founding editor of this magazine, will stimulate further discussion on the meaning of the worldwide crisis of capitalism at the close of the 20th century. Not only is humanity's most tumultuous and bloody century ending but the global order established at the close of World War II is being fundamentally restructured, a process that accelerated with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. As Lovell says, "... the economic and social dislocations of the past two decades, begin-

ning in the mid-1970s with the realization on the part of a decisive sector of the ruling class that U.S. interests in the world market could no longer tolerate the social contract between capital and labor of the preceding post-World War II years, have now reached the point where a more fundamental decision must be made."

What is the meaning of these and other sweeping changes for the workers of the world, and indeed for the human race? And what can be done about all this? The editors of this magazine con-

tinue to believe that the analytical tools of Marxism and the strategy and tactics of revolutionary socialism are necessary in order to answer these vital questions. But for Marxism to remain relevant it must be applied to the present reality.

The pages of *BIDOM* are open to contributions to this discussion, with the perspective that our magazine will sponsor an Educational Conference in early 1996 to give further consideration to these questions.

Some clues to the recent weakness of the [financial] markets can be found in the international controversies of the last seven years or so. In October 1987, the U.S. Government publicly criticized Germany for maintaining what the U.S. considered artificially high interest rates. Some investors feared that the longstanding German-American relationship was about to come apart and that this would have unfortunate consequences for financial stability generally. Two days later the Dow-Jones Industrial averages fell by over 500 points, and the financial system itself seemed in danger. While other factors were undoubtedly involved in this collapse, the quarrel between the U.S. and Germany appears to have been critical. What also soon became clear as well is that technical innovations such as "computerized program trading" and "portfolio insurance" could result in sudden sales of enormous numbers of shares and turn downward markets pressures into panic.

In February 1994, the talks between the U.S. and Japan, which were intended to resolve differences on trade issues, broke down acrimoniously.

The acrimony continues. Today's headlines report: "U.S. Threatens Aviation Curbs Against Japan" (*New York Times*, June 20, 1995).

Politics

The U.S. electorate appears to be more or less apathetic, indifferent, or hostile to foreign relations, uninterested in the doings of Congress or the maneuvering of politicians in the Democratic and Republican parties to ensure reelection in 1996. But among all political observers and commentators (nearly all of whom are in the services of the employing class) a consensus exists that masses of people in the country are dissatisfied, discouraged, and dubious about the future. Nowhere is found a sense of good times coming. All the publicity about future prospects is downhill. The message repeatedly stated is that people in the United States today should expect that the economy (and their condition of life) will get worse before it gets better.

For much longer than anyone can remember, U.S. politics has been routine four-year elections in which about half of all eligible voters go to the polls and dutifully vote for politicians equally divided between Republicans and Democrats. (Rarely is a candidate uncontested, and third party candidates are so obscure that their votes are carelessly counted and officially reported only as an afterthought.) And the outcome of these elections is usually reported to be "close." Election-eve speculation is routinely "too close to call" or "upsets expected."

If one candidate or the candidates of one party get more than 55 percent of the vote it is called a "landslide." This is repeated every

two years in by-elections, when members of the U.S. House of Representatives are elected for two-year terms, one-third of the members of the Senate are elected for six-year terms, and other public officials (state and local) are also elected. It has all become very routine.

After the elections, the voters expect the duly elected officials to take care of the problems of government. And the officials proceed to do so to the best of their ability and with the advice of their financial supporters, speaking now in the name of "all the people," having been elected in most cases by less than 30 percent of eligible voters.

It has long been known that this electoral process is nothing more than a façade, a way of rendering an appearance of "people's participation" in government (democracy), while the real business of government is directed by others who control and manipulate the professional politicians within the two-party system. In times of economic and social crisis this system comes under closer scrutiny and begins to be questioned. Who really rules America?

Who Really Rules?

Back in 1967 William Domhoff, a professor at the University of California at Santa Cruz, wrote a book titled *Who Rules America?* It is a very good book, explaining that there is a ruling class in this country consisting of a few very rich families and their retainers, who own industry and banking and control major channels of mass information and levers of popular government. In some respects this is a sequel to Ferdinand Lundberg's *America's Sixty Families*, more popularly presented.

It's too bad that radicals haven't made better use of Domhoff's book (as pre-World-War-II radicals did the Lundberg book) to argue convincingly that an established ruling class lives and breathes (not always in this country, but somewhere in their private estates around the world) and controls the politics of this country. It's all right to say that the employing class runs the country and that there is no essential difference between the Democratic and Republican parties, but it is better to be able to argue convincingly with facts on hand that this is the case and has been for generations.

Two-Party System Being Shaken

The deepening crisis of capitalism worldwide is beginning to shake up some of the social institutions of this system here in the U.S., including the two-party structure. Politicians over the years have been accustomed to switching from one party to the other. But in recent years, especially since the 1994 by-elections, there has been a more noticeable crossing over from Democratic Party

ranks to the Republicans. And now we are seeing attempts to merge the two parties more closely along ideological lines, if not as separate entities in their own circumscribed political arena.

After the Clinton-Gingrich love fest in Clairmont, New Hampshire, on a not-too-bright Sunday afternoon, June 11, 1995, most professional commentators found ways to describe this as political maneuvering on both sides for the purpose of improving the individual image of the participants. But there must have been more to it than that.

Given what we know about the class structure of society and the crisis of capitalist economy, it is reasonable to suspect that Gingrich and Clinton were prompted to get their act together and limit the debate between the Republican and Democratic parties over social welfare (the entitlement programs, welfare payments, social security, states' rights and responsibilities, federal supervision, Big Government, bureaucratic overreach, civil liberties, the right to bear arms, and all the rest of this politically disorienting rigmarole) to such practical questions as how to reduce domestic spending that assists only poor people, how to balance the federal budget without taxing the rich, how to check the drift toward economic depression, etc.

These are all urgent matters that the Democratic and Republican parties basically agree on. So why not take care of all this in a businesslike way, as the Congress was long accustomed to doing? The rancor on the part of the Republicans since they gained a majority in both houses of Congress in the 1994 by-elections has been unseemly from the point of view of the ruling rich. It is likely to stir up popular indignation. The differences between the Republicans and the Democrats are now clearly defined as matters of degree and tempo, how much assistance to the poor and how fast to reduce it. In the meantime, the Congress can discuss these minor differences in a gentlemanly fashion and reach satisfactory compromises, as tradition dictates.

A Political Struggle over Redistribution of Wealth

This is what the ruling class might hope for. But the economic and social dislocations of the past two decades, beginning in the mid-1970s with the realization on the part of a decisive sector of the ruling class that U.S. interests in the world market could no longer tolerate the social contract between capital and labor of the preceding post-World War II years, have now reached the point where a more fundamental decision must be made. Politics in the U.S. now turns on the struggle for redistribution of the wealth in this society, the outcome to be determined by the relationship of class forces that can be mobilized on either side. This may be better understood by some politicians who now identify with the Republican Party, but Clinton and the gang around him are not dummies, either. This is why Gingrich and Clinton have agreed to tone down the partisan rhetoric temporarily in order to adjust to the problems that lie ahead.

This has caused some discomfort and requires some readjustment within the ruling-class parties. The Congressional Black Caucus,

for example, is very unhappy with Clinton's announcement that he endorses "welfare reform," claiming that this undermines the credibility of the Democratic Party as "defender of the poor." And within the Republican Party the religious right grumbles that Gingrich has betrayed his commitment to "family values." But this will pass.

Peace within and between these parties will prevail for now. The two-party system will survive this early test because the ruling class needs it as a deceptive device and will continue to use it as long as it endures. And the professional politicians, all of whom live by the perquisites of this insidious system, will use all their acquired guile to perpetuate it. But in its present form it will eventually give way to the inexorable pressure of class politics, as has happened in all other industrial nations.

Class Politics

Politics (including capitalist politics and the deceptive U.S. political façade) is not confined to the politicians that presently constitute both generals and troops in the Democratic and Republican "armies." Many who have long been deceived by the sham battles of partisan politics are disillusioned, no longer interested in playing the game. They see most politicians as crooks, and they resent the pressure of government regulations (red tape) upon them. They are constantly frustrated by the runaround one encounters in almost every government agency. So they are angry with government. This is true not only of reactionary groups like the armed militias and Christian sects, but of welfare recipients and laid-off workers as well.

The wide extent of anger throughout the population is often deplored by political pundits who invariably fail to mention that this anger is the result of the faltering economy, the declining standard of living, and the false promise of "the American dream." Much of this anger is vented in diatribes against politicians and government for having failed to keep implied promises that all the needs of the "common man" (and woman) will be provided for. More and more people are discovering, to their sorrow and resentment, that this is not true. And they are beginning to realize that if their needs are ever to be satisfied, they must find ways to bring this about themselves. This is part of the changing social and political consciousness of the popular masses in this country. It is a process that will be conditioned and directed by education and political organization.

Unionism

During World War II and in the early postwar years, the union movement that had developed in the great CIO battles of the 1930s was tamed through intimidation and bribery by the government and became institutionalized. The 1947 Taft-Hartley amendments to the National Labor Relations Act recognized, circumscribed, and regulated unions under law as established collective bargaining institutions, with rights, privileges, and social obligations. The expansion of U.S. industry and steadily rising standard of living in the postwar years (1945-1965) brought along, as if a natural by-product of the

productive process, rapid expansion of the union movement.

During World War II unions grew as a result of labor-management committees that were established in most plants to stimulate output and reduce absenteeism, and in exchange for cooperation in this effort, unions were officially recognized and benefited numerically and financially from the dues-checkoff system. The UAW, for example, had 1,052,000 dues-paying members in 1945. It was then the largest union. As war production came to a halt there was a slight decline in union membership during the transition period to civilian production. In 1947 the combined membership of the Railroad Brotherhoods, the AFL, and the CIO stood at around 10 million, double the total union membership in 1939. At the time of the AFL-CIO merger in December 1955 the total membership of the new organization was reported at "around 16 million." And the labor movement continued to prosper, numerically and financially, for another decade.

During this period of numerical growth and organizational expansion (1942-1965) union treasuries grew and bought heavily in government bonds (and other investments), big union offices were built near the site of every new industrial plant, and the legions of union officials and staff grew accordingly. This was a time of union-management cooperation, when strikes (some of long duration) were settled amicably, when contract negotiators announced settlements in which both parties won. Prominent union officials were accorded respect as "labor statesmen" and "social planners." (Some were social climbers as well!) They were said to be influential in the councils of the Democratic Party, and some were courted by the Republican Party. But all this came to an end rather formally in July 1978.

1978: Collapse of "Labor-Management Group"

At that time there was an established Labor-Management Group, a nongovernmental body consisting of eight major corporate executives and eight top-ranking union officials. This group had been meeting regularly under the chairmanship of Professor John Dunlop, a former secretary of labor. The stated purpose of these meetings was "to arrive at cooperative approaches to substantive issues, such as energy problems, inflation, unemployment, rising health care costs, and others." The group fell apart, and their worthy efforts ended over a dispute on pending legislation in Congress, the Labor Law Reform bill, which would amend section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley law and make union organizing easier in states that had enacted "right to work" laws under protection of the existing federal statute.

President Carter had indicated that he would sign the reform bill. Opposition to the bill in the Congress was led by Senator Orrin Hatch (Republican of Utah). Labor officials at the Labor-Management Group had expected that body to adopt a neutral stance on the contested legislation. But instead the industrial leaders stead-

fastly opposed the legislation and financed a vicious publicity campaign against it.

Douglas Fraser, then UAW president, resigned from the Labor-Management Group and issued a press release on July 19 explaining what had happened. He was fully aware that a new labor policy on management's part was in effect, that the easy times of labor-management cooperation were gone. Some excerpts from his press release describe quite well what had happened:

I believe leaders of the business community, with few exceptions, have chosen to wage a one-sided class war today in this country — a war against working people, the unemployed, the poor, the minorities, the very young and the very old, and even many in the middle class of our society. The leaders of industry, commerce, and finance in the United States have broken and discarded the fragile, unwritten compact previously existing during the past period of growth and progress.

For a considerable time, the leaders of business and labor have sat at the Labor-Management Group's table — recognizing differences, but seeking consensus where it existed. That worked because the business community in the U.S. succeeded in advocating a general loyalty to an allegedly benign capitalism that emphasized private property, independence, and self-regulation along with an allegiance to free democratic politics.

Fraser went on to give his interpretation of preceding events, somewhat twisted but not totally inaccurate:

That system has worked best, of course, for the "haves" in our society rather than the "have-nots." Yet it survived in part because of an unspoken foundation: that when things got bad enough for a segment of society, the business elite "gave" a little bit — enabling government or interest groups to better conditions somewhat for that segment. That give usually came only after sustained struggle, such as that waged by the labor movement in the 1930s and the civil rights movement in the 1960s.

Fraser had a sense of what was in store for organized labor, what unions are confronting now. He said:

The new flexing of business muscle can be seen in many other areas. The rise of multinational corporations that know neither patriotism nor morality but only self-interest, has made accountability almost non-existent. At virtually every level, I discern a demand by business for docile government and unrestrained corporate individualism. Where industry once yearned for subservient unions, it now wants no unions at all.

Fraser cited an example of corporate labor policy and issued a warning:

General Motors Corp. is a specific case in point. GM, the largest manufacturing corporation in the world, has received responsibility, productivity, and cooperation from the UAW and its members. In return, GM has given us a Southern strategy, designed to set up a non-union network that threatens the hard-fought gains won by the UAW. We have given stability and have been rewarded with hostility. Overseas, it is the same. General Motors not only invests heavily in South Africa, it refuses to recognize the black unions there.

My message should be very clear: if corporations like General Motors want confrontation,

they cannot expect cooperation in return from labor.

George Meany: "We'll Give 'Em Class War!"

The other seven labor officials in the Labor-Management Group followed Fraser out the door, having no choice, since management had decided to dissolve the group. George Meany was then president of the AFL-CIO and one of the departing guests. He thundered, "If management wants class war, we'll give 'em class war!" This, of course, was idle bombast. Even if Meany had seriously intended to mobilize the latent power of the union movement, he would have soon discovered that he was powerless to marshal the ranks of the complacent union bureaucracy in those times.

The union movement had by then undergone a complete transformation from its early fighting days. It was fat and lazy, and steeped in labor-management ideology, sotted with the illusion that labor and capital are partners. It might have been helped by a heavy dose of serious educational campaigning to at least warn the millions of union members that their future was in jeopardy. Instead, the demise of the Labor-Management Group was hushed up, forgotten. Fraser's letter of resignation went into the files. There was no further mention of "class war." The labor bureaucracy settled back comfortably into the daily routine of class collaboration, oblivious to the changing character of the productive process and the shifting relationship of class forces. Slowly they became dimly aware of new political trends that would render them inconsequential and unwanted within the capitalist two-party system.

Reality of Union Movement Today

Seventeen years later a great deal has been written about the "decline of the union movement," but not much is said about the reasons for this decline nor the extent of it. I have the impression that among a lot of ex-radicals that I meet the uninformed belief is that the union movement as it presently exists doesn't amount to much, that it is hardly more than a shell of its once vibrant self. It seems to me that some activists in the unions, including those who are trying to organize local opposition groups to the entrenched leaders, harbor this misunderstanding. *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* is one of the very few radical publications (it may be unique in this respect) that has consistently tried to explain the potential power of the union movement and the changes it is undergoing.

Among the writers for our magazine are activists in several unions and in influential opposition groups such as Teamsters for a Democratic Union, who have brought a sense of what the union movement is and how it functions. David Jones and Charles Walker have contributed most regularly to this better understanding of their unions' battles with the employers and the government, and the struggles within those unions against the bureaucracy. I believe there is a very big transformation occurring within the union movement right now.

This can be seen in what is transpiring among the very top echelons of the bureaucracy. This fall (October) the AFL-CIO convention will be held in New York City. It happens once every two years and is usually a pretty dull affair. But this year the figurehead president, Lane Kirkland, has been pressured by his colleagues on the 33-member Executive Council to retire, leaving open a contest within the Council for a replacement at the AFL-CIO convention this year.

I haven't had a chance to discuss this much with others in radical groups, but I expect they are inclined to dismiss this development as nothing more than a scramble among the misleaders of labor for top spots in the hierarchy. I think much more is involved. This is the first time in AFL-CIO history that an open struggle over policy has occurred. (Previous differences have been resolved by expulsions in the case of the rackets-ridden Teamsters, or resignation, as happened when Walter Reuther took the UAW out of the federation.)

The Current Contest in the AFL-CIO

The contest that is shaping up now is different. Former Council secretary-treasurer Thomas Donahue (Kirkland's long-time associate and soon to be his replacement until the convention elects new officers) is a symbol of past AFL-CIO policy. John Sweeney, president of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and a Council member for several years, is calling for "change" and has assembled a slate of candidates to take command of the Federation. They promise to change the policy and restructure the organization in some ways (not yet clearly defined). The Sweeney slate includes United Mine Workers president Richard Trumka for secretary-treasurer and Linda Chavez-Thompson, a Council member and AF-SCME vice president, for the yet-to-be-created post of executive vice president.

When announcing his candidacy for the AFL-CIO presidency, Sweeney said, "When we began this change process more than six months ago, we resolved to reinvigorate the labor movement at every level." He said he believes "passionately in the ability of unions to improve the lives of workers and their families."

Whatever happens at the AFL-CIO convention this year, the economic insecurity and political attacks felt by all workers has already brought changes in the unions. Unions are beginning to become more combative. An example is the successful fight of the UAW local in Flint, Michigan, that forced GM to cut back on overtime work, hire more full-time workers, and curtail some of its contracts with non-union manufacturers of auto parts.

Unorganized workers (drywall tapers earlier this year and now house framers in Los Angeles) have successfully shut down building projects and have forced the building trades unions to lend support. (In the case of the drywall crews, they have joined the painters union; the framers can be expected to join the carpenters union, if that has not already happened.)

New Militancy Below Reflected at the Top

The developing social and political consciousness in the working class and new militancy among many sectors is what has generated changing attitudes within the union bureaucracy. However distorted the views of most union officials may be, they are beginning to see their relationship with the employers on one side and union members on the other differently than a few years ago, when they thought of themselves as negotiators for fair wages and fringe benefits and arbitrators in workplace struggles over overtime and work rules. The arrogant and unyielding attitude of the employers has forced greater changes in the social consciousness of the working class than is generally recognized, and this is reflected even in the top ranks of the union bureaucracy. This is what accounts for the muted struggle in the AFL-CIO Executive Council, and the rumblings there are shaking the entire structure, creating new cracks in local labor councils and encouraging opposition struggles in some international unions.

I don't think anyone can contend that the union movement is revitalized, but enough is happening now to convince many activists that the unions are not moribund institutions, as has often been said. We should remind ourselves that the union movement represents 13.5 million workers and is capable of mobilizing these millions in massive class actions. We are getting a small foretaste of this at the June 25 "solidarity demonstration" in the Decatur, Illinois, "war zone," where top-ranking union officials will denounce A.E. Staley Manufacturing, Caterpillar, Inc., and Bridgestone/Firestone. Among the scheduled speakers are UPIU (paperworkers) President Wayne Glenn, UAW Regional Director Paul Korman, Mineworkers President Trumka, OCAW President Bob Wages, and Glass Molders & Pottery Workers President James Hatfield. Aspiring politicians will share the speakers' platform: Jesse Jackson and Rep. David Bonior (D-Mich). The demonstration and speakers' list were reported in the June 19 *AFL-CIO News*.

Everything here is different from a short time back, when a delegation of Staley workers was shunned at a quarterly meeting of the AFL-CIO Executive Council in Florida in February of this year. Few then would have thought that the Council's newspaper would be publicizing a mass rally in support of these victimized workers, or that such prominent union officials would be speaking on their behalf. It is also surprising (and a sign of the changing times) that professional politicians would want to identify themselves in the present political climate with the cause of organized labor.

Labor Party

For the first time in decades the labor party question is on the agenda of the labor movement. Not since the early days of the CIO has any serious consideration been given to such a vast and formidable undertaking. The May issue of *Labor Party Advocate*, the official publication of the organization advocating and

trying to build a labor party based on the union movement, confidently announced the birth of a labor party in 1996, the founding convention to be held in the Midwest (see "Labor Party Advocates' Projected 1996 Convention for the Founding of a Labor Party," by Jerry Gordon, on page 00 of this issue). This prediction is based on organizational successes to date and the expectation that labor party sentiment and official endorsement and solid financial support from the union movement will continue to grow in the months ahead.

Labor Party Advocates, launched more than four years ago by the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers union (OCAW), has carefully tested rank-and-file union sentiment for a labor party and discovered through reliable surveys that the majority of union members and officials favor a labor party over the Democrats and Republicans, and that among union officials pro-labor party sentiment is stronger in the lower ranks than at the top.

Four or five years ago hardly any top union bureaucrats had anything favorable to say about the labor party idea, and those who did said it was impractical. But OCAW officials persisted and chose Tony Mazzocchi (a longtime top leader in that union) to direct the organization of LPA nationally. He induced other unions to conduct surveys of their members, and they all discovered the same pro-labor party sentiment as in OCAW. Mazzocchi appeared before unions and other interested organizations to explain what the ranks of organized labor were thinking and what they would like to see happen. Unions were urged to publicize these factors. A symposium consisting of union representatives and liberals (some favoring a labor party and others opposed) conducted public discussions in several cities, the purpose being to test and arouse labor party sentiment in Black communities and in the women's movement, which was then discussing the need for a break from the Democratic Party and whether to organize a women's party.

Growth of LPA Chapters

Chapters and clubs of Labor Party Advocates began to be organized in some cities, most successfully in Cleveland and Detroit. These two chapters collaborated in the organization of an LPA educational conference in Detroit in 1992 (after the presidential campaign that year, December 5-6) and attracted more than 200 union activists from around the country, mostly from the Midwest, who wanted nothing more to do with Democrats and Republicans.

Two years later (December 10-11, 1994) these chapters helped organize another LPA educational conference in Toledo, Ohio. This time more than 350 union members and supporters attended. These conferences prompted LPA to urge the formation of chapters in many other cities around the country.

The chapter in New York City was formed in 1993 and attracted a rather large number of members, mostly ex-radicals and some younger union activists. More recently it has begun to attract attention and some support from a widening circle of progressive union officials. At a

public forum on June 27 in a UAW hall near Union Square in Manhattan, featured speakers were UPIU Local 7837 president Dave Watts for the Staley strikers in Decatur, Illinois, and Arthur Cheliotas, president of CWA Local 1180 in Manhattan. Several union officials in New York City support the LPA chapter and are backing its efforts to raise financial support for the embattled strikers in Decatur. This serves to promote the spirit of solidarity among unionists and demonstrate the advantage to the union movement of an expanding labor party apparatus.

OCAW Leadership's Careful Strategy

The labor party movement has not yet begun the broad popular sweep through the unions that is expected. But LPA has brought the movement to its present point of development, almost entirely due to the carefully planned strategy of the OCAW initiators, and were it not for this preparatory work, there would be no organizational structure for the calling of a convention and the launching of a mass-based labor party any time in the foreseeable future. As matters now stand this possibility seems to be within reach.

The leadership of LPA (OCAW President Bob Wages, Mazzocchi, and recruits from other unions) understands that the task ahead remains basically one of education and organization. The working class badly needs its own independent political party, and the political vacuum ensures its future. To help bring this about, OCAW has prepared a set of two manuals to encourage and direct LPA activists to reach into the union movement and explain the advantages of a labor-based political party, a party of the working class (not a third capitalist party). These manuals are a red one "for Labor Party Advocates and A Working People's Agenda," and a blue one "for Labor Party Advocates Activists, a speakers' training workbook." Both are valuable, very well prepared. Anyone interested in helping to promote the labor party movement can benefit from them. They can be ordered from OCAW Research & Education Department, P.O. Box 281200, Lakewood, CO 80228. The total cost is \$5.00.

It is necessary to begin to think about what will be the relationship of the labor party to the unions, what the labor party will do, what it will look like, what its goals should be. The *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* (its staff, political periphery, and readership) can be helpful. I hope *BIDOM* will eventually become recognized as the authentic voice of a broad class-struggle current in the labor party movement. This is quite possible if we concentrate all our attention and efforts on trying to explain what the working class and the union movement needs for self-protection in the present social and economic crisis and how it can organize the necessary political defense system.

Transitional Demands

We have talked for a long time about transitional demands that the unions ought to advance in order to protect past gains and reverse the anti-union sentiment fostered by capitalist propaganda. What are these transitional demands, and

how have we tried to explain them? And why have no unions adopted them and tried to fight for them as practical answers to some of their most pressing problems?

In retrospect it may be useful to think about these questions and review our recent history. It is not entirely true that union leaderships have not known about transitional demands. Most of the demands for fringe benefits (escalator clause to keep wages abreast of rising prices, severance pay, pensions, retirement benefits, guaranteed annual wages, health insurance, shorter work week with no reduction in pay — “30 for 40,” etc.) were adaptations of demands that can be found in the 1938 Transitional Program drafted by Trotsky. But by the time these demands reached labor-management negotiating tables in the 1940s and ’50s they had been stripped of their social and class character. Instead of negotiating for the needs of the working class, union officials negotiated only for the needs of “their” members in each isolated craft and industry. The result was that fringe benefits for union members differed drastically from union to union and industry to industry. And the unorganized were left out. Part of the reason for this (not the decisive part) was the failure of the U.S. working class to create its own party after World War II.

We have now come full circle. Everything seems to be reversed. The employing class for the past several years has been demanding “givebacks,” stripping away many of the fringe benefits once enjoyed by union members. And imposing new hiring rules (for temporary employment) and new conditions of employment (without benefit of work rules or union protection of any kind), all of which has taken its toll. This has all happened over a brief period of only a few years, conducted by the employing class on the grounds of declining profits, increased international competition, and the need for “belt tightening” in the interest of the social good and to preserve the American way of life.

“Bountiful Times,” But Not for Wage Workers

It now turns out (according to a *New York Times* editorial of June 24, 1995) that for the past four years the economy has been growing steadily. “Productivity — output per hour of work — shot up 2 percent last year and by a gaudy 2.7 percent annual rate at the beginning of this year. Profits are near record levels, and stock prices have surged 15 percent since January. By some measures, these are bountiful times.”

What worries the *Times* editorial writers is not that the capitalists are doing so well, but that poor people are doing so poorly and may become unruly. “If wages of those who work continue to lag behind returns to those who own places of work, the social consequences could be explosive,” says the *Times*. Such a social catastrophe can be avoided, the *Times* warns, only if the difference between Republicans and Democrats over the size and shape of the federal budget can be resolved in favor of proposals

offered by the Clinton administration. This goes “beyond politics,” says the *Times* editorial, ignoring the fact that it is the political monopoly of the employing class, exercised through its control of the two-party system, that has brought society (and the government) to this impasse. The solution is political, requiring the intervention of the working class.

I think it is safe to predict that the working class (or at least large segments of the class, perhaps in different ways) will intervene in the U.S. political process one way or another, and fairly soon. But the majority of the working class will not benefit, nor will the present political trend be reversed, until a viable labor party based on the union movement is organized.

Build Labor Party Advocates!

We can help make this happen if we devote all our attention and energies to this end. This means that all activists, sympathizers, and readers of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* should be urged to join and help build Labor Party Advocates. We can do this by analyzing and trying to explain current economic and social crises (as I have tried to indicate), and also suggesting LPA activities that will lead to the organization and founding of the kind of labor party that can succeed in the struggle for governmental power.

We do not have a plan for the labor party that should be built, and we cannot predict with certainty that the foundation that has been started by LPA will be completed. But all indications are that this is a good start. Wherever possible we should try and help to establish new LPA chapters (the rules for setting up a chapter are publicized in *Labor Party Advocate* and can be obtained from the LPA national office in Washington, D.C., P.O. Box 52177, Zip 20009-3177).

In order to set up an LPA chapter, union sponsorship is necessary. If you are a union member, the local business agent can sometimes authorize sponsorship if he or she is an LPA supporter and has strong membership backing. Otherwise, it is often easy to get the members of a local union to vote to endorse and help organize an LPA chapter. Doing this will bring us in direct contact with union members we never before knew, and once it is done we will need to help decide what the tasks and activity of the chapter should be. (Comrades and friends of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* who are starting LPA chapters or helping to organize LPA activities have been surprised at the former friends and political associates now active in the unions whom they meet, including former members of the Socialist Workers Party.)

In the New York City LPA chapter, I have been urging (almost since the beginning) that the chapter organize a regular Friday Night Labor Party Forum. This means the chapter must elect a competent forum committee which will find a union hall easily accessible to the general public and get the cooperation of one or more unions that will underwrite the cost of publicity (which should not be much) and after

that line up competent speakers from the schools and universities, unions, church groups, organizations of the oppressed nationalities, women’s committees, community organizations, political parties, local governments, school boards, etc., the idea being that here is a forum and meeting place for everyone interested in politics who wants to learn more and believes that the working class needs its own political party independent of the Democrats and Republicans. (And for those who are not yet believers, the forum will teach; debates and symposia can be organized for this purpose.)

Among the many subjects such a forum would discuss (probably often) is what a labor party would be like and what it should (and can) do. This should provoke lively discussion among union members and others, and we should encourage it to be as wide-ranging as possible. Most of us probably believe that it will be a party unlike the capitalist parties, that it will have active chapters that organize daily for the needs of working people, that its membership will consist of politically alert citizens who watch every move of the representatives they have elected to office.

This is, of course, the basic distinction between the Labor Party and capitalist parties: the labor party is a membership organization, controlled by its members, not simply an electoral vote-catching machine controlled by professional politicians. This difference is what will make it possible for the Labor Party to turn out almost 100 percent of the eligible voters, whereas the capitalist parties with all their sham battles and false publicity turn out scarcely half that.

These are all suggestions most of us have heard many times before, but now we have a chance for the first time to put them into practice and see how they operate to generate new ideas and more activity.

Another good (and necessary) use of the LPA forum is to get a wide-ranging discussion started about what the constitution of the Labor Party should look like when drafted at the founding convention. Most will probably agree that it should be brief. I think that those who are interested in this matter can learn something from reading through the constitution of the Socialist Workers Party adopted at its 1938 founding convention. (I am not suggesting that this be copied as a model for the labor party constitution in 1996.)

I hope some of the ideas I have rephrased here will be the subject of further discussion among us. In recent discussions with a colleague in the New York LPA chapter, she said to me that if we do everything I want to do in LPA we won’t have time for any other political commitments and obligations. I had to admit that she probably was right. But I could have said that our political commitments and activities (whatever they are) should not be neglected but subsumed in the promotion and building of LPA. □

June 25, 1995

Capitalism and Ecocide

by Michael Livingston

What ever befalls the earth, befalls the people of the earth.

— *Lakota (Sioux) saying*

Capitalist production therefore only develops the techniques and combinations of the social process of production, by simultaneously undermining the source of all wealth, i.e., the earth and the worker.

— *Karl Marx*¹

The capitalist mode of production slowly kills the biosphere, that part of the earth that sustains and makes possible life as we know it. While predictions of impending doom may be premature, it is unlikely that the capitalist mode of production can continue for another 100 years without destroying so much of the planet that life will be a living hell for the vast majority and the material wealth necessary for a just, socialist society will be undermined. The massive destruction or “killing” of the biosphere is known as ecocide.

Environmental destruction is not unique to capitalism. Since the advent of civilization, many societies with varying modes of production have produced some sort of environmental destruction, from deforestation to soil depletion. Historically, this environmental destruction has led to one of two outcomes. The most common outcome has been that environmental destruction contributed to the decline and fall of a society.

The best-known examples of this are the Sumerian and Roman civilizations. Sumeria developed along the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in what is now Iraq. This civilization, which lasted for almost 2,000 years (from 4000 BCE to 2000 BCE) declined as a result of destruction of topsoil.² Roman civilization declined as a result of deforestation, topsoil erosion, and desertification. Both Sumeria and Rome were characterized by a mode of production known as tributary societies. Decline due to environmental destruction has been a common feature of such societies.

A second possible outcome of environmental destruction is more dramatic — a die-off. A die-off is a sudden breakdown in society leading to a sharp drop in population. Die-offs are not historically unique. They have occurred on a local scale throughout history. The most well-

known examples being the collapse of the Easter Island culture due to environmental destruction, and the almost overnight collapse of the Mayan civilization around 800 CE.

From the point of view of environmental destruction, three aspects of the capitalist mode of production distinguish it from previous modes of production.

First, the geographic area covered by the system is greater than any previous mode of production. Presently, capitalism covers the entire planet; no area of the earth is unaffected by it. Previous societies destroyed the environment only in limited geographical areas. Second, the kinds of ecological damage done by capitalism is more extensive than any previous mode of production. While many ancient modes of production resulted in deforestation, topsoil loss, and extinction of some indigenous species, capitalism has added nuclear wastes, pesticides, toxic waste, ozone depletion, and air and water pollution.

Third, the capitalist mode of production has produced more intensive environmental destruction than any previous mode of production. Because of the environmental destruction intrinsic to the capitalist mode of production, humanity faces enormous dangers. According to Worldwatch Institute, if the major environmental problems are not solved by 2030 CE, the damage to the planet's biosphere will be massive and irreversible. In a word, we would have ecocide.

In this essay I will try to demonstrate how environmental destruction is intrinsic to capitalism, how capitalism cannot be reformed to a “green capitalism” that preserves the earth and its peoples, and how only a socialist revolution can save the earth and its peoples from one of two fates that await us under capitalism: a slow, lingering descent into an environmental hell from which our species will never escape or a die-off of monstrous proportions.

The Capitalist Mode of Production

The capitalist mode of production is characterized by production for profit and the private ownership (and consequently control) of the means of production by a small class of individuals (the capitalists). The environmental de-

struction brought about by capitalism stems from these basic facts. This is not to say, however, that capitalism has always produced the same type of environmental destruction. Rather the type and extent of environmental destruction has changed with changes in the capitalist system.

Production for profit by capitalists remains, obviously, a constant feature of the mode of production. Mercantile capitalism, the first historical period of capitalism, was characterized by the the extinction or near extinction of many animal species, massive deforestation, the creation of a worldwide cash-crop system (which depended on slave labor), and declining soil productivity.

Industrial capitalism, the second historic period, added new kinds of environmental destruction, including air pollution and water pollution from the “dark satanic mills” of Marx and Engels's time, while intensifying the previous types of environmental destruction.

Monopoly capitalism, the current phase,³ added still more types of environmental destruction, including nuclear waste, pesticides, toxic waste of various kinds, the depletion of ozone, and production of the greenhouse gases leading to global warming. At the same time the previous types of environmental destruction have intensified.

Many of these recent problems result from the technologies of production. As Barry Commoner observes:

In sum, there have been sweeping changes in the technologies of production since World War II. Natural products — soap, cotton, wool, wood, paper, and leather — have been displaced by synthetic petrochemical products: detergents, synthetic fibers, and plastics. In agriculture, natural fertilizers... have been displaced by chemical fertilizers; and natural methods of pest control... have been displaced by synthetic pesticides. In transportation, small cars have been replaced by much larger ones, trolley cars by buses, and rail freight by truck freight. In commerce, reusable goods have been replaced by throwaways. These changes have turned the nation's [and the world's] farms, factories, vehicles and shops into seedbeds of pollution.

According to Commoner, the cause of all of these changes is the pursuit of profit and market share by capitalists. Indeed, as Commoner, John Bellamy Foster, and others have shown, virtually all aspects of the environmental crisis are caused by capitalism. While population growth and economic growth may in some cases contribute to the environmental crisis, they are sec-

1. Citations to specific quotes and factual statements in this essay are available from the author, who can be contacted care of *Bulletin IDOM*. The ideas expressed in this essay are not original with the author. Instead they represent a summary and synthesis of recent arguments put forward by a number of socialist-environmentalists. In particular, I have relied on two foundational works in this area: *Making Peace with the Planet* by Barry Commoner (New York: The New Press, 1992), and *The Vulnerable Planet: A Short Economic History of the Environment* by John Bellamy Foster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1994). One of this essay's many weaknesses is that little attention is devoted to the environmental destruction of the colonial and semi-colonial sector of the world. A work I would recommend that deals with this facet of the issue is Daniel Faber's *Environment Under Fire: Imperialism and the Ecological Crisis in Central America* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1993).

2. Throughout this essay I use the notations BCE (before the common era) and CE (common era) instead of the more religiously biased notations BC (before Christ) and AD (Latin for “year of our Lord”).

3. It can be argued that we are entering or have entered a new phase, that of transnational capitalism. The merits of this argument are beyond the scope of this essay. For my purposes the classification of the current phase of capitalism as that of monopoly capitalism is adequate.

ondary causes. Indeed, strong evidence exists that the population "explosion" is a consequence of the permanent underdevelopment of the periphery by the core, an underdevelopment that slows the demographic transition in a state of high birth rates and low death rates (relative to the birth rates).⁴

The Failure of Reform

The root of the environmental movement is class struggle — that is, it originates out of the real class differences between those who own and control the means of production and those who do not, and the systematic destruction of the environment by those who own the means of production. It is no coincidence that the first modern-day responses to environmental destruction and the start of the present-day environmental movement coincided with both the development of industrial capitalism at the start of the 19th century *and* the birth of the modern labor movement, peace and antiwar movement, and women's movement. Nor is it a coincidence that with each major change in the type of destruction brought about by capitalism, the environmental movement has changed.

Presently in the U.S., the environmental movement has been shaped by and developed from both the changes in capitalist production in the 1950s and the reformist leadership of the environmental movement.

The reformist leadership of the environmental movement is embodied in the "Group of Ten" environmental organizations, a group that includes the Sierra Club, National Wildlife Federation, the Audubon Society, the National Resource Defense Council, and the Wilderness Society. These groups emphasize lobbying, accept corporate funds, and seek to regulate both pollution and polluters within the framework of capitalism.

The reformist approach to the environmental crisis has actually been tried for the last 30 years. While this approach has achieved a few successes (the concentrations of lead, DDT, and PCB [polychlorinated biphenyl] in the environment have decreased), in all other areas reform has failed. Thus after 30 years of effort at regulating capitalism, with over a trillion dollars spent by government and industry (according to Commoner), all other types of pollution are worse now than before, some critically so. The basic flaw in this effort is that in order to protect the basic features of capitalism, reforms emphasize control of pollution after the fact rather than prevention. Prevention would challenge the basic features of the capitalist system: production for profit by individual capitalists who own and control the means of production.

Some reformist environmentalists might argue that the situation would be far worse without environmental regulation. While that is difficult to determine, it is clear that even the limited environmental gains that may have been

achieved with these reforms are under attack. Since the start of the Reagan presidency, environmental protection has been steadily undermined. Capitalists, in their drive to increase profits under conditions of increased global competition and a falling rate of profit, have sought to cut production costs. After labor costs, environmental regulation is perhaps the prime area where capitalists seek to realize savings. As a solution to the environmental crisis, reformist attempts at regulation have been a failure. Moreover, the capitalists are no longer willing to pay for even such inadequate regulation.

In response to the increasing degradations of the environment under capitalism and the failings of the reformist leadership, two overlapping developments have taken place. The first is the emergence of direct action organizations such as Greenpeace and Earth First! (the exclamation point is part of their name). Some who champion direct action also espouse a so-called radical ecology which places the blame for environmental destruction on population and technology. This form of "radical" ecology, common in Earth First! for instance, is not so much radical as it is wrong-headed and anti-human.

The second development is the emergence of a grassroots environmental movement consisting of workers struggles around health and safety issues and community struggles against environmental racism and for environmental justice. The principal concern of this grassroots environmental movement, according to John Bellamy Foster, is: "the relationship between environmental degradation and social and economic injustice, particularly in relation to race, gender, and class oppression."

This grassroots environmental movement raises fundamental questions about capitalism and is inherently (and genuinely) radical. At the present historical moment, the mainstream reformist environmental movement appears in retreat and semi-disarray, under attack from the capitalist class and without viable or realistic solutions to the problems facing us. Simultaneously, the grassroots movement for environmental justice continues to grow, slowly at present, but with enormous potential.

The Only Solution: A Worldwide Socialist Revolution

Reforms have failed and the intensive and extensive capitalist destruction of the planet continues. Given the preceding analysis, the only alternative remaining is a socialist revolution on a world scale, one that places the world economy under democratic control

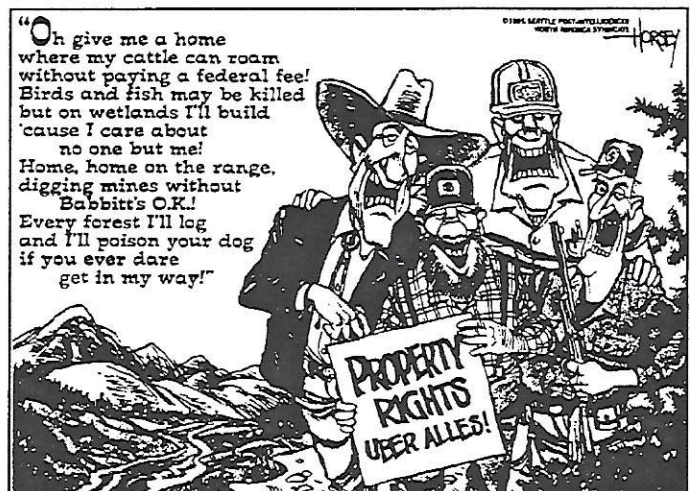
and sets out to transform systematically the means of production so that all humans can have a full, rich life while at the same time preserving and protecting the earth.

Given the imperative forced upon us by capitalism, the imperative of socialist revolution or ecocide, what must we do? I believe there are four immediate tasks: first, active and permanent involvement of revolutionary Marxists in the grassroots environmental movement; second, the achievement of leadership roles in the movement by revolutionary Marxists; third, the development of a revolutionary program (including transitional demands) for the environmental crisis; fourth, the building of a Leninist international with sections in all countries, including the U.S., capable of fighting for a worldwide socialist revolution.

Of these four tasks, the third is the closest to being realized. Leftist analysis of the environmental crisis is both plentiful and profound. While work still needs to be done, especially regarding the question of transitional demands, the experiences and struggles of the grassroots environmental movement combined with the left analysis of the crisis has given us most of what is needed. The other three tasks appear far from realized, or even realizable under present conditions, and are aspects of the crisis of revolutionary leadership.

While there are revolutionary Marxists active in the environmental movement, more need to be active and permanent participants. These active and permanent participants must have a revolutionary program for the movement as they work to earn the leadership of the movement. Finally, these activists must be part of a Leninist international. The environmental crisis cannot be solved in one country, but must be solved on a world scale. Nor can the crisis be solved by reformist means. Our freedom will come from our willingness to embrace this reality: Socialist Revolution or Ecocide! □

June 27, 1995



4. Capitalist exploitation of the periphery has not frozen the demographic transition. Birth rates in the periphery have been falling slowly as a consequence of increased labor force participation by women and women's efforts to achieve greater equality.

The Contradiction Between Capitalism and Environmental Protection — in Central America, the U.S., and the World

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For subscriptions to *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, write: CNS, Guilford Publications, Journals Dept., 72 Spring Street, New York, NY, 10012.

The interview was conducted and transcribed by Joe Auciello.

Q.: Your book examines environmental and political issues in Central America. In fact, you link them. What first drew you to these issues, and what led you to this kind of political analysis? It's not the usual result of an academic education.

A.: I was an activist first. I was raised in Tennessee and Kentucky. My family was displaced Yankees in the South, and my dad was doing a lot of school desegregation work, which politicized us at a young age. Doing that type of work and growing up in the South in the 1960s can open your eyes to a lot of issues.

My sister worked for a time with a legal-aid organization in Appalachia. Coal companies were stripping the mountains and leaving the residue there, so when the rains came they would cause an avalanche of soil and rocks that would wipe out a community. She was representing poor folk in Appalachia fighting the coal companies. My whole family has a political background.

I was involved in both social and environmental issues. In 1983, I, along with others, founded an organization called The Environmental Project in Central America (EPOCA). We founded the organization because it became apparent to us that the social justice movements and the environmental movement were separate, and they needed to be linked. After the Nicaraguan revolution, it came to our attention that the Sandinistas were adopting some of the most innovative programs of any country in the world. Here was a country that was fusing social justice and environmental justice. So we thought it would be critical that we try to organize the environmental movement in the U.S. to support Nicaragua's environmental initiatives, which were truly "revolutionary in nature."

We founded this project to help rally and educate the environmental movement in support of Nicaragua's environmental programs, to hopefully challenge U.S. policy to take a more constructive role in the region, and also to work with the solidarity movement to en-

lighten it as well regarding the importance of environmental issues, particularly in Central America and the rest of the Third World, where they are life and death issues. We wanted to highlight the importance of environmentalism for the revolutionary transformation of Nicaragua.

We were quite successful during the seven years that EPOCA existed in bringing together the environmental and solidarity movements in a number of ventures — supporting Nicaragua's environmental programs and expanding opposition to U.S. policy in general in Central America, and to enlist the environmental movement in that cause.

Very often in the past the environmental movement has seen poor people, poor peasants in the Third World, as the cause of the problems of ecological destruction (particularly in the debate about "overpopulation"). One of our goals was to present an analysis which showed that the poor people of the Third World are the primary allies in the cause of environmental justice. I think to a large degree we were very successful in transforming the views of a large number of environmentalists in the United States in that regard.

Q.: The thesis of your book, *Environment Under Fire*, is that the social and economic crisis of Central America is the result of specific policies promoted for many years by the United States. Could you briefly explain the reasoning behind your analysis?

A.: In the book I was trying to demonstrate that the primary source of poverty and the environmental crisis in Central America is a problem of inequality. It is particularly a problem of the monopolization of the vast majority of land and resources — the best land, the richest natural resources — in the hands of the landed elite grounded in the capitalist export sector. U.S. policy, particularly since the Alliance for Progress, has promoted the expansion of capitalist export agriculture and industry, the idea being that economic growth would help create political

stability because the wealth would supposedly "trickle down" to the masses.

But what actually occurred in Central America was that the landed elites, a numerically small class, monopolized their hold on more and more land and natural resources at the expense of the majority of Central Americans rather than for their benefit. This is the story throughout much of the Third World today.

Therefore, a majority of the small farmers in Central America have been pushed onto land which is unsuitable for agriculture. They have been forced to overexploit that land because it is their only means to survival. This land is now in a state of ecological collapse, resulting in an explosive growth of poverty and human misery. This crisis of poverty and ecological destruction has a common root. U.S. policies promote the production of export agriculture in order to provide cheap raw materials to U.S. capital at the expense of the majority of Central American people. So, in this sense the ecological crisis in Central America is grounded in a general crisis of democracy, of repression, of social injustice, and in the role of U.S. imperialism.

Q.: Your book was published in 1993. How would you add to or revise the findings of your research?

A.: The situation in Central America has not changed enormously since 1993 in some important respects. Most of the contradictions which gave birth to the revolutions of the late 1970s and early 1980s have not been resolved, especially the primary contradiction of increased inequality. What I try and document in my book is that the process of capitalist development in that region over the last thirty years has resulted in the ecological collapse of the subsistence sector, where the majority of Central Americans make their living, small family farmers in particular. Not much has happened over the last five years to restore the viability of that subsistence sector.

Also, much of the export sector itself has collapsed ecologically. So there are very few means by which the majority of Central Ameri-

cans can support themselves despite U.S. policies designed to promote crop diversification, and so forth. Even though the U.S. has promoted these policies and has engineered these U.N.-brokered peace agreements, most of these contradictions still persist. The quality of life for most Central Americans continues to deteriorate. Much has changed on the surface, but when you go beneath the surface you will find that not much has changed at all.

Q.: So the means of reversing this ecological collapse will not be found primarily in improving the methods of farming? You're pointing to political solutions?

A.: Right. What was going on in Nicaragua that was so exciting was that they integrated environmental concerns, or a program for what we called revolutionary ecology, into the larger program of social transformation. It had three major ends. One was promoting the type of environmental programs that would lessen Nicaragua's dependency on the world economy. Also, they created the kinds of environmental programs that would improve the quality of health and well-being for the popular majority. The third goal was to create the types of environmental programs that would allow the country to pursue a program of sustainable development.

So the types of solution that were needed to achieve those ends required, first and fundamentally, agrarian reform and redistribution of land to poor families, so that they are no longer forced to move into the rain forests because they lack access to other lands. You have to have a comprehensive program for agrarian reform that has to be accompanied by other programs for economic reform, so that once you redistribute land you give communities and small farmers the resources they need to use that land in a productive but also sustainable fashion. They need to be able to appropriate the benefits of that production for themselves. And this required the political defeat of the landed elite, which was made possible by the Sandinista revolution.

Q.: Agrarian reform has been called for in Central and South America by the U.S. government since the Kennedy era. What's prevented agrarian reform from actually taking root?

A.: The political power of the landed elites in Central America cannot be overstated. In El Salvador about 2 percent of the population owns 60 percent of the land. They are often referred to as the Fourteen Families. The oligarchs of this class, a legacy of the Spanish Conquest, have enormous control of the state and particularly the repressive power of the state. So the primary obstacle to any reform is political. In El Salvador the death squads assassinated even U.S. government workers who were promoting agrarian reform. So the primary obstacle has been the lack of democracy, the hold of the landed elites over the state.

Whenever there have been movements trying to achieve democratic transformation in the region they have been met with brutal repression, which has ultimately been backed up by the United States. So in many respects the obstacle to change is the repressive power of the landed elites, but also the willingness of the United States to back these oligarchs with military aid, which has prevented true agrarian reform and which squashed the Sandinista revolution. Likewise, during the 1980s El Salvador was the second largest recipient of U.S. military aid of any country in the world.

Q.: So the Sandinista revolution created the necessary preconditions to effect a new relationship to the environment?

A.: Absolutely. Many of their programs were model programs for much of the Third World. When the Sandinistas instituted the agrarian reform, which ultimately impacted three out of every four rural families in the country, Nicaragua went from having the highest rate of deforestation in Central America to the lowest in about three years. At that point much of the international tropical rain forest preservation movement stood up and took notice because that was an amazing achievement. It was brought about by the agrarian reform.

In the area of pesticides, Nicaragua adopted what are called "Integrated Pest Management" techniques. During the 1970s Nicaragua was paying more for pesticides and fertilizers than it was earning from the sale of its crops in the world market, crops that were grown with the aid of those chemicals. Therefore, achieving economic independence and self-sufficiency required them to develop alternative technologies that would free them from this heavy dependency on international capital for these chemicals.

Furthermore, these chemicals were highly destructive of human health. Nicaraguans had some of the highest levels of DDT and other organo-chlorine chemicals found in human tissue of any population in the world. The Nicaraguan people were literally being poisoned to death. So in order to achieve economic independence and to improve the health of the people, they adopted these "IPM" techniques which were based upon using natural predators and using biological controls.

Cuba is a leader in the world in developing such technologies. Instead of using chemicals manufactured by multinational capital, you develop new agricultural techniques which free you from a dependency on chemicals — a new type of eco-socialist technology.

Q.: What has happened to Nicaragua's environmental policy since the Chamorro regime has come to power? Have these policies been maintained, curtailed, or ended?

A.: With some important exceptions, most of these programs have either been cut off or have

died a slow painful death. That is because many of the programs that constituted revolutionary ecology in Nicaragua depended on the political mobilization of the popular classes. The Chamorro government, which is desperate for foreign aid, is trying to hold up Nicaragua as a model of sustainable development in order to attract international capital, but for the most part many of these programs have really gone by the wayside.

Q.: In the United States, the 25th anniversary of Earth Day was celebrated in April of this year, in part by a demonstration of 125,000 in Washington, D.C. What was your reaction to the Earth Day anniversary?

A.: There is a lot of ambiguity and contradiction around the issue of environmentalism in the United States today. On the one hand, the environmental movement has been enormously successful with regard to raising environmental consciousness. In almost every poll you look at, the vast majority of the American people consider themselves to be pro-environment. Even if it means more of their incomes going for environmental programs — a loss of income — most Americans are highly supportive of environmental policies. On the other hand, there is also a crisis of environmentalism, because the movement is losing influence and becoming increasingly ineffective, given the current political climate in Washington, D.C. In the past the movement has not been inclusive enough of racial minorities, the poor, and working people. It's been well demonstrated that communities which lack the resources to defend themselves — the working class and communities of color — bear a greater proportion of the environmental crisis than other segments of the American people. Two out of every three Black communities in the United States has a legal toxic waste dump.

So the environmental movement has a long way to go. It has to become more inclusive. It has to become more broad-based. The Earth Day celebrations that occurred in D.C. and elsewhere are still fairly restrictive in the sense that they are not a reflection of the truly broad-based popular movement which the environmental movement must become in order to address and transform the ecological crisis of American capitalism.

There is also a real corporate counterattack against the environmental movement in the United States. It takes a number of different approaches. One approach is to argue that there really is no environmental crisis or that it's greatly overstated. A second approach is to argue that the primary solution to the environmental crisis is the free market and corporate-sponsored policies. Third, corporate America is trying to redefine environmental issues in terms of individual causes and solutions.

So you find heavy corporate involvement in the Earth Day celebrations. They try to

present corporate America as the solution, not as the cause of environmental problems. They try to explain the cause of the problem as the individual. They claim that individuals consume too much, "people who give a hoot, don't pollute," the solution is recycling, and with the aid of corporate America, new products will be produced in an environmentally benign fashion. So corporate America tries to individualize both the cause and the solution to the environmental crisis.

I'm not saying individuals don't have a responsibility, but there's a limit to how much individuals can do. There's a trend called "greenwashing" - a tremendous attempt by corporate America to downplay the environmental crisis and to hold themselves up as the source of the solution. Much of that is reflected in the Earth Day celebrations in terms of the role that corporate America has played in sponsoring them.

Q: Gregg Easterbrook, author of *A Moment on the Earth: The Coming Age of Environmental Optimism*, has written: "Nearly every ecological trend in the United States is positive." He is critical of what he calls the "retrograde anti-environmentalism in Washington," but he claims that "these anti-environmental initiatives have been made possible partly by the fashionable environmental doom-saying of the left" (*New York Times*, April 21, 1995). How do you regard Easterbrook's argument?

A.: This is a very common critique that is being proposed. Easterbrook is actually one of the moderates in this debate. A number of works have been coming out from The Free Press, American Enterprise Institute, Pacific Institute, and the Wise Use movement attacking the idea that there is an environmental crisis in the U.S. They attack the notion that the environmental problems that do exist are radical in nature, and therefore require radical solutions. Rather, they argue that more "reasonable," more moderate reforms are required; they particularly emphasize the role of the market place in finding solutions.

Easterbrook is part of this corporate counterattack on the environmental movement in general. In many ways the types of examples which he gives to indicate that there is no environmental crisis or that the environmental crisis is overstated, are highly suspect.

The main point is that the evidence shows that the environmental crisis is actually growing worse, despite the corporate rhetoric. There have been some important victories. For example, lead has been reduced. DDT levels have gone down. But if you look at the overall state of the environment, you will find that environmental quality in the U.S. continues to deteriorate. Toxic waste production is doubling every five years. The American Academy of Sciences estimates that 131 pounds of toxic wastes are produced every day for every man, woman, and child in the

United States. But if you look at 1970 or 1971, the average was one pound of toxic waste produced per person; today it's over a hundred pounds per day. There's enough toxic waste discarded in the environment every day to fill up Yankee Stadium five times over. The government says there's about 350-450,000 illegal toxic waste dumps in the United States.

Toxic waste is just one indicator. We could go on and look at other areas. But it is clear that the environmental crisis is growing worse. There are 19 types of cancers in the United States that are growing worse. There's a cancer epidemic in the U.S. that is unparalleled in history. More species of wildlife are going extinct. Habitats are being destroyed. Almost any indicator you want to look at shows that the global environmental crisis is growing worse, not better.

Despite some gains made by environmental policies in some areas, the great legacy of the "environmental decades" of the 1970s and 1980s is that the movement has not been able to address this problem in any fundamental fashion. So the evidence is greatly against Easterbrook in this regard.

Q: Given all that you've said, what would you want to see happen next in the environmental movement? How can it best respond to this growing crisis?

A.: Well, the environmental movement has got to do several things, in my view. It has to become more inclusive; it has got to begin working on issues of importance to the working class and to communities of color. There is a very important environmental justice movement which has been challenging the mainstream environmental movement to become more inclusive, to begin paying attention to issues of environmental racism and of environmental classism. Much of the mainstream environmental movement is beginning to respond to these challenges. That's very important. In order for the environmental movement to become a truly popular, mass-based movement, it must begin incorporating into the movement those segments of the population which bear the greatest burden of the ecological crisis.

Secondly, it's got to become more internationalist in perspective, particularly in this era of the globalization of capital. One of the impacts that's occurring now is that with the globalization of capital, different regions of the world (and also different states within the U.S.) are increasingly being pitted against one another to attract investment. The result of this trend has been a tremendous downward pressure on wages and on working conditions. The unions are falling apart as a consequence. Also, in the area of environmental protection and environmental regulation: states and countries are very quick to dismantle environmental regulations because they are a barrier to attracting investment.

Q: Having lived in Louisiana, I find what you are describing is very familiar. Ripping up environmental protection laws was a local sport. Companies realized that the fines for dumping chemicals in the Mississippi river were significantly lower in cost than any other means of disposal.

A.: Right. Of course, the result of that practice has been one of the most profound clusters of high cancer rates ever found anywhere in the world. In fact, from Baton Rouge to New Orleans is known as "cancer alley," affecting mostly communities of color.

Much of the toxic waste that is dumped in the U.S. is dumped in poor, Black communities or poor, working class communities that do not have the resources to defend themselves and often are not represented by mainstream environmental organizations. Here in Massachusetts, Woburn, a working class community, is one of the worst dump sites in the country.

But to go back to your previous question, what is definitely required is some type of internationalism in terms of environmental policy, but also in the environmental movement as a way of creating a more level playing field, as a way of counteracting the power of capital mobility. That's one of the primary reasons we helped form EPOCA, to build this type of internationalism between the U.S. environmental movement and the popular movements in Central America.

We must remember that the labor movement had to transform itself from a craft-based to a broader-based industrial union movement, just as the environmental movement had to transform itself, particularly in the 1950s, from a conservation/preservation movement into a broader-based environmental movement, just to keep pace with capital and the changes in the economy. Both those movements today must become truly international in order to deal with capital in this "new world order" of globalized production.

There are some signs that this is occurring. In Brazil, together with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, there was a parallel conference which took place at the same time, called Global Forum. Thirty thousand activists from all over the world representing the true grassroots popular movements participated in the Global Forum. It was designed to build the bridges necessary to create a truly mass-based movement that incorporates social justice into its framework. I think we are seeing this process just beginning to occur. We have a long road ahead, but the signs are very encouraging.

Further, there has to be a more comprehensive notion, a rethinking of what is required to address the environmental crisis. Particularly, we need more of a willingness to take the offensive in terms of environmental programs and to begin analyzing the political and

economic sources of environmental problems. That means looking at the process of capital accumulation itself and developing a critique of capitalism.

Much of the environmental movement is moving in this direction. Barry Commoner wrote a book called *Making Peace with the Planet*, which argues that once a toxic chemical is produced, it is almost impossible to keep it out of the environment. You can only keep it out of the environment at extraordinary cost. Therefore, it makes much greater sense not to produce that chemical in the first place, rather than try to regulate its use after it has been produced. He calls that "source reduction." It means reorienting the economy toward prevention of these chemicals, toxic wastes, and pollutants at the source, rather than trying to regulate them after they have been produced.

This call for source reduction has been taken up, among others, by Greenpeace and by the Jobs and the Environment Campaign. Other organizations have taken up this call for source reduction and what's called "social governance of the means of production." Barry Commoner, being a good leftie, has advocated sort of a socialist politics, at least economic democracy. Much of the environmental movement is now taking up this theme, this issue of economic democracy. It's being debated in these high-level retreats and policy seminars. They are asking how the environmental movement can take up the cause of economic democracy and begin forming coalitions with the labor movement and other social movements as a way of forming a new type of politics in American society.

That's the fundamental prerequisite for really challenging the roots of the ecological crisis in the United States, and in the world as well. There are encouraging signs in that respect.

The counterattack that corporate America and capital has launched on the environmental movement has had a very sobering effect on many of these organizations. Even the Environmental Policy Institute and Friends of the Earth (FOE), which have merged now under the umbrella of FOE, are now going on the offensive. For example, the federal budget is contradictory in that you have one agency using the budget to promote preservation of a forest here, but yet another agency at the same time is approaching the budget to destroy the forest. Different agencies in the government work in direct contrast to one another. There's a willingness now in the environmental movement to look at ways that the American people can be mobilized to democratize the budget, to democratize the state, and to challenge the control of the state by capital. The movement is thinking of ways to try and overcome this contradictory manner in which the state is organized.

This approach has radical potential. And these are not merely some peripheral organi-

zations; these are mainstream environmental organizations that are starting to explore these types of coalitions and new forms of radical politics. The left has a very important role in helping to support these initiatives within the environmental movement.

That's exactly what we did with EPOCA. We were successful in getting Friends of the Earth, the Environmental Policy Institute, Greenpeace, Earth First! and a number of other organizations to come out and call for an end to U.S. policy in Central America on both human rights and environmental grounds. We built support for Nicaragua's environmental programs because of their truly radical, emancipatory potential.

The environmental movement is a very diverse movement, so the left can play an important role in helping to give it a more radical content and a more radical direction.

Q: Finally, how do you evaluate the impact of NAFTA and GATT on the environment?

A.: A big part of the corporate attack on the environment is in these free trade agreements. What's not well known is that NAFTA and GATT set a ceiling rather than a floor in terms of environmental policy, meaning that environmental policy at the lowest common denominator is what applies to all nations. A country like Mexico uses DDT, which is prohibited in the United States because of its dangerous impact on the environment and on consumers. Yet the produce on which DDT is used in Mexico is then imported into the United States. Even if these crops are found to have DDT levels that are considered unhealthy under U.S. law, those imports — because of NAFTA — cannot be restricted from the United States. The health and safety laws of the U.S. may not restrict imports and cannot be used as a barrier to free trade.

NAFTA and GATT are a tremendous attack on many of the achievements of the U.S. environmental movement during the past twenty or thirty years. Now, many of these laws can be struck down on the grounds that they "restrict free trade." These agreements are designed to facilitate the globalization of capital, and the concentration of control by multinational capital over the world economy. These agreements also severely weaken U.S. laws, such as those on environmental policy, which cut into the profits and the flexibility of capital. These agreements are a major assault on the American people, and they are bipartisan. It's Bush and Clinton.

Q.: In the last election the Democrats, particularly Al Gore, ran as environmental candidates. I take it that you're not especially impressed by their program and achievements?

A.: Al Gore ran as "the environmental vice president" as a way of trying to resolve a

contradiction that always exists under capitalism, between profitability and environmental protection. This contradiction in capitalism operates in the sense that pollution control equipment and investments in environmental protection are what's called "non-productive expenditures," which are a drain on profits. In periods of economic recession, or contraction of the global market, capital must cut costs most dramatically. That leads to downsizing, or cuts in the labor force. In Europe now there is 20 percent unemployment, which is quite high. Economic recession also leads to cuts in environmental protection as capital seeks way to cut production costs.

Al Gore ran, as I say, with the aim of resolving this contradiction. He advocated new technologies that would be *both* more profitable *and* less environmentally destructive. He wanted to use the federal government to promote investment in universities and corporations that do the type of research to develop such new technologies. Many people, including Gregg Easterbrook, believe that this kind of "green capitalism" is possible, that it's evolving. Gore thought he could use the federal budget to help promote a "green capitalism." That idea was part of the one hundred billion dollar public works bill that got nowhere in Clinton's first year and was later dropped. Gore has pretty much disappeared from the public limelight, as have most of the environmental issues which this administration was supposedly championing.

All the evidence shows that the contradiction between capitalism ["profitability"] and environmental protection is growing more intense. The evidence for the creation of a "green capitalism" is just not there, particularly if you look at capitalism on a global scale. Forty thousand kids around the world die every day of preventable diseases and malnutrition. Forty thousand kids die of causes that are preventable. If you look at the Third World, the ecological crisis there is truly a life and death issue. It's growing worse every day. Africa and Central America are complete ecological disasters. Even in the U.S. it's growing worse. The Harvard School of Public Health just did a study which shows that 60,000 Americans die every year just from polluted air alone. Just polluted air. More than 100,000 workers die every year because of exposure to occupational hazards, particularly chemicals. You can magnify that number twentyfold in the Third World. So, all the evidence is against the notion of "green capitalism."

The ecological crisis is increasingly becoming the issue for the next century. Therefore, it is critical that the left become involved in environmental politics. □

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Marxism, Feminism, and the Population Debate

by Linda Thompson Lancz

Thomas Robert Malthus first proposed his famous theory of population in 1798, during the epoch of the French Revolution. In it he postulated that humanity's capacity to multiply would outstrip the earth's capacity to provide. Half a century later his law of population was challenged by Karl Marx. Marx claimed that Malthus was an advocate and an apologist for the status quo by advancing the idea that poverty was a natural condition and misery a positive check on surplus population growth. Marx showed that Malthus's population theories provided ideological justification for a capitalist ruling class which had the capacity to meet human need but which chose to make profits instead.

The theory and critique began a controversy which rages to this day. The neo-Malthusians argue that the final solution to misery and poverty is population control — and they propose this solution within the context of existing imperialist social relations. Marxists, on the other hand, have traditionally argued that population control policies will not eliminate poverty and, when utilized in the hands of imperialist powers in the colonial and neocolonial world, actually pave the way for genocide.

Marxists have also traditionally favored birth control and abortion — to free women from unwanted pregnancy, not as a population control measure. The Soviet Union, in 1920, was the first country to legalize abortion on the request of the woman. This set the context for the debate between population control advocates versus feminists and nationalists.

At the turn of the century and in the early 1960s the question of the earth's capacity to sustain explosive population growth was framed in the context of the earth's ability to feed and provide for the population. The question of the earth's ecological capacity to sustain expanding population growth was not really posed that clearly until the growth of the environmental movement. It is this question which must be examined in the light of new information. I will return to this point later. First it is necessary to address the Malthusian and neo-Malthusian position on poverty and hunger.

The News American *Parade Magazine* expressed the neo-Malthusian position in an article "One Person Too Many" in 1984:

Short of nuclear annihilation, the greatest threat to humanity is, ironically, its own sheer mass. Global population grows inexorably and at a rate so prodigious that by the year 2000 — only 16 years from now — the world, with its added billions, will be unable to provide adequate food and energy, let alone jobs, housing, education, and health care.... Overpopulation on the scale

currently taking shape will result in new and greater famines, perhaps wars, civil strife, and deep social distortions as well as massive malnutrition and disease, vast migrations, and a sharp drop in living standards everywhere, including this country.

The arguments of the neo-Malthusians are cleverly deceptive, however. Upon investigation it becomes clear that the advanced industrialized nations are experiencing declining fertility rates as a result of "demographic transition,"¹ whereas the underdeveloped world is experiencing increasing fertility levels and escalating population growth. Thus it can be seen that the neo-Malthusian advocates of zero population growth are racially motivated. This has prompted legitimate fears on the part of oppressed national minorities and oppressed nations that population control advocates have genocide in mind.

Malthus and His Theory of Population

In the last decade of the 18th century, revolutionary change was sweeping Europe and culminated in the victory of the French Revolution. The ruling classes in other countries who feared radical social change sought an ideologist who could help stem the tide of revolutionary advocacy. In 1798 the Reverend Robert Malthus of England came to their aid with his *Essay on the Principle of Population, as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society*.

The main argument set forth by him is as follows:

The power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man. Population, when unchecked, increases in a geometric ratio. Subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ratio. A slight acquaintance with numbers will show the immensity of the first power in comparison of the second. By that law of our nature which makes food necessary to the life of man, the effects of these two unequal powers must be kept equal. This implies a strong and constantly operating check on population from the difficulty of subsistence. This difficulty must fall somewhere and must necessarily be severely felt by a large portion of mankind.... This natural inequality of the two powers of population and of production in the earth, and that great law of our nature which must constantly keep their effects equal, form the great difficulty that to me seems insurmountable in the way to the perfectibility of mankind.

His argument was founded on the two key propositions mentioned above: that population increases geometrically while subsistence in-

creases arithmetically. Based on these projections, he predicted that the world population would double every generation and that food production would not.

If his propositions were correct, a topic that will be covered later, then it would follow that at some point population growth must be checked. Only two things could accomplish this goal — declining fertility or increased mortality. Malthus rules out the former and advocates the latter. Malthus was a lovely guy — he only approved what he called "positive and preventative" checks to population growth. Since he considered homosexuality, contraception, and abortion evil, the only preventative check which he approved of was what he called "moral restraint" and abstinence from marriage and sexual intercourse.

However, since he considered sexual abstinence unrealistic, he preferred the alternatives of war, famine, and disease as "positive checks" to "vice." He postulated that any technical improvement can only relieve misery for a while and will set the stage for increased population, which will then enable more people than ever before to live in misery and poverty. It is clear why he has been called the prophet of doom.

Given the obvious weakness in his ratio arguments, his followers attempted to buttress his case with the law of diminishing returns. This law, simply stated, is that "the produce of the land increases in a diminishing ratio to the increase of the laborers employed." However, this argument with its corollary, that the soil is continually depleted as well as the yield diminished, is again weak, and will be examined in the next section.

Marx's Critique of Malthus

The original critique of Malthus was put forward by Marx. In spite of his criticisms, Marx admired Malthus for his honesty and his straightforward presentation of the contradictions and disharmonies of capitalism. His admiration ended there, however. Marx was aware of the tremendous impact and influence that Malthus's theories of population were having during the first half of the 19th century in the economic sphere and beyond. Seeing in them a threat to the poor and working class, Marx sought to counter them through careful analysis. Marx and Engels were collaborating on economic theories at the time, and many of his criticisms were formulated by Engels as well.

Malthusianism had a broad audience because it attempted to describe the fairly new phenomenon of poverty in the industrial working class. Engels wrote that the "eternal law of nature,

1. The "demographic transition" is a model of population change which depicts the change from relatively uncontrolled high fertility and mortality to relatively controlled low fertility and mortality that took place in industrializing nations in their period of economic expansion and growth.

such as Malthus's principle of population, has an obvious appeal for political reactionaries, since it diverts attention from the part played in the creation of this misery by class exploitation under capitalism."

Marx and Engels examined the fallacy inherent in Malthus's theory of population. First, they argued that the pressure of population was really against the means of employment rather than against the means of subsistence. In other words, they argued that capitalism had a tendency to overproduce and to enter periods of cyclical recession and depression, which threw large sections of the working class out of jobs. They stated that it was this phenomenon which created a relatively redundant surplus population and not the means of subsistence. They noted the tendency for industrialization and automation to accelerate this process and form what Marx described as the "industrial reserve army of the unemployed," which expands and contracts with the fluctuations in the economy.

They further explained that the law of diminishing returns in agricultural production is likewise fallacious. Lenin, a disciple of Marx, criticizes this law in his book *The Agrarian Question and the Critics of Marx*. He writes that

the labor power to be employed on this area increases together with the population; and even if we assume that the increase of output associated with this increase of labor is not always proportionate to the latter, there still remains a third element — which the economists, however, never consider as important — namely science, the progress of which is just as limitless and at least as rapid as that of population.

The law of diminishing returns does not apply at all to cases in which technique is progressing and methods of production are changing; it has only an extremely relative and limited application to cases in which technique remains unchanged.

Marxists cannot ignore the population explosion nor dismiss its importance. Even if the crimes of Stalinism were eradicated in China and a healthy workers state was established, the new workers democracy would have to continue to come to grips with population expansion. However, it is imperative for Marxists to continue to point out that unemployment, hunger, and most ecological disasters result not from overpopulation but from the imperialist system, which has distorted colonial economies.

The Debate Today

The debate between the Malthusians and the Marxists continues today and, as we can see, has become relevant already in the context of the women's and the environmental movement. It becomes necessary to see if Malthusian projections have been borne out or not regarding hunger and poverty. In *Population, Demography, and Policy*, Weller and Bouvier point out:

On the global level food production has kept ahead of population growth since World War II because large gains in population have been offset by large gains in total food production. This means that per capita food production did not decline. But a somewhat different impression is obtained when data are examined for

specific regions...In the industrialized nations...per capita production gained an average of 1.7 percent a year. However, in the developing countries a food production increase of 2.85 percent a year was largely offset by a population increase of 2.6 percent a year....Per capita production increased in the developed countries but not in the developing ones.

It appears that in the developed countries the Malthusian theory of geometric population growth and arithmetic food production growth has been disproved. Fertility rates have dropped while food production has expanded due to increased technology. However, the neo-Malthusians argue that the problem has merely shifted to the Third World and proves Malthus correct.

Weller and Bouvier point out:

Planet earth is beset with countless problems: the threat of nuclear war, famine and malnutrition in some parts of the world, an unequal distribution of income...discrimination, assorted types of crime (on the street, in big business, and in politics), the potential exhaustion of nonrenewable resources, and deterioration of the environment. Some people claim that a population explosion has created these problems and that the way to solve them is simply to stop population growth, but this vastly oversimplifies the matter.

There is a compelling reason why the Malthusian arguments are being advanced again. Just as Marx and Engels pointed out that it was necessary for the ruling class in the early industrializing countries to find an ideological justification for poverty and injustice, it has again become necessary for new ideologists to justify continuing domination and exploitation of the neocolonial world. Neo-Malthusians such as Paul Ehrlich in *The Population Bomb* have formulated new arguments to buttress their case. They maintain that overpopulation has caused the above-mentioned problems.

Steve Weissman makes the point, in his foreword to Roland L. Meeks's book, *Marx and Engels on the Population Bomb*:

Like most development economics, the emphasis on population growth is a schuck. Per capita numbers tell us nothing about which groups in the population get how much, or about what part of the social surplus goes to build schools and hospitals rather than into Swiss bank accounts and the New York Stock Exchange. Reduce the number of people and, likely as not, those who control the processes of production and distribution will simply reduce the share which they let trickle down to the poor.

Emphasis on population control diverts attention from the important economic problems which are harder to solve. Tad Szulc's article in *Parade Magazine* points out that excessive dependence on foreign assistance discourages local food production and that fewer and fewer Third World farmers can afford fertilizers at today's prices. This indicates that colonial economies have been distorted by foreign domination and that it is this phenomenon that creates problems in the developing nations, probably more so than "overpopulation."

It is for this reason that colonial people view attempts at population control with suspicion since they are often an official string attached to American aid for "economic development." Given the fact that in poor communities large families can be a form of social insurance for old age and in agricultural communities provide needed extra hands, removing this support network without providing economic security or new roles for women will not motivate people to have smaller families. Whether women in the underdeveloped nations are denied access to abortion and birth control by laws and lack of medical facilities or by economic coercion and lack of job opportunities matters little. The fact is that they are still denied the right to choose to limit their families.

As Marx and Engels foresaw, the colonialists brought modern technology to the backward countries, thereby lowering the mortality rate, but they did not simultaneously provide employment for the majority of the indigenous populations. The pressure of population is still not against subsistence but against employment. Obviously it is considered cheaper, within the context of imperialist relations, to control population and the number of the poor rather than to clean up the environment and provide jobs and housing to meet people's needs.

Thus the earlier Marxists argued that the two major propositions that Malthus based his law of population on have proven to be false. On them and them alone his argument stands or falls. However, Marx and Engels pointed out that one cannot speak of population laws which are immutable and lasting for all time. Being advocates of historical materialism, they argued that there are no eternal categories and that laws must be studied within the context of the historical period and mode of production. Marx and Engels denied that "the law of population is the same at all times and at all places." On the contrary, they maintained that "every stage of development has its own law of population."

Population and Ecology

Is it necessary, in light of scientific revelations in the field of ecology, to revise the original Marxian analysis that led to the position that population growth could be accommodated by revolutionary change in the redistribution of wealth, and scientific and technological advances? The question must be posed in two parts: (1) Is it possible for the earth to accommodate the current rate of population growth for long without seriously damaging the ecosystem? and (2) Even if possible, is it desirable?

Looking at the historical growth of the world's population will give a better idea of the problem. In 8000 B.C. there may have been some 8 million people alive. With the domestication of animals and the rise of agriculture during that period, the first leaps in population took place. By 1 A.D. there were some 250 to 300 million people alive. Thereafter the population continued to grow slowly until it had

doubled by the year 1650. High death rates still canceled out high birth rates.

Only 200 years were required for the population to double to 1 billion by 1850, during Marx's lifetime, and then only 80 years to double again to 2 billion by 1930. The accelerated growth was caused mainly by lower death rates resulting from industrialization and an improved standard of living. At the current rate of population growth the "doubling time" is down to approximately 39 years. That means that the 1980 population of close to 5 billion (now more than that) will have doubled by the year 2020 to approximately 8 billion people. It is doubtful that Marx and Engels could have envisioned such projections when they initially addressed this problem.

Since it is reasonable to believe, as has been demonstrated, that revolutionary change and technology could feed and house this population, could the ecological system of the earth bear this burden for long? There is mounting evidence that it could not. While further study is needed, it appears to me that humans cannot indefinitely encroach on wetlands, open plains, the rain forests — and all forests — and indiscriminately eliminate other species without seriously disrupting the ecosphere that is necessary for human survival. The population debate cannot proceed irrespective of the sensitive needs of the earth's complex natural cycles. Paul and Anne Ehrlich point out:

All organisms are working parts of ecosystems that provide indispensable and mostly irreplaceable free "services" that support the human economy. These services include controlling the mixture of gases in the atmosphere, generating and maintaining soils, recycling nutrients critical to agriculture, supplying fresh water, controlling nearly all crop pests, providing food from the sea and the land, pollinating many crops, and maintaining a vast genetic library.

These cycles are becoming seriously disrupted not only by toxins and the spread of pollution but by the taking over of virgin territory for development. A more optimistic picture for the conversion to solar and renewable sources of energy would make it possible to eliminate the burning of fossil fuels and coal that cause carbon dioxide emissions. Even if it were possible to provide energy cheaply and cleanly for all human needs, it still leaves the question of what kind of future socialist world is envisioned — a world with wall-to-wall people, devoid of natural territories and other species?

This suggests that the issue of the population explosion must be confronted and cannot be dismissed so readily. How can this be done based upon a Marxist understanding? Is there a difference between forced population control measures within the context of imperialist social and economic relations and education on family planning within the context of a woman's right to choose and revolutionary change? The environmental movement must continue to be

dissociated from the former while becoming more closely identified with the latter.

Women's Liberation — The Solution to the Population Explosion

A key aspect of the debate which has been ignored by the neo-Malthusian capitalist apologists, the Stalinist leaderships in the workers states, and the environmentalists is how these policies will affect that half of the human population which bears the future generations, the women of the world. Ignoring a woman's right to self-determination and control over her body, the controversy proceeds as if she does not exist. Women in bourgeois demography are reduced to fertility equations.

The Bolshevik revolution guaranteed a woman's right to control her own body. However, since 1935 that right has been restricted and eroded by the Stalinists in a series of population measures within the USSR and Eastern Europe. Zero-population-growth advocates never address a woman's right to choose. Women, therefore, continue to be manipulated by population planners under capitalism and Stalinism for the advancement of a particular class or national policy.

It has been demonstrated that when countries develop economically, fertility rates drop. While many factors work together to create this phenomenon, class and labor force participation play the key roles. Differences in family size are determined by decisive variables that include social, economic, psychological, and biological factors. They include income, education, occupational level, female labor force participation, rural and urban residence, and race and religion. Since fertility has declined in the developed nations and not in the underdeveloped world, it is useful to demonstrate why in order to suggest solutions.

When we divide the world into the three main political sectors — the advanced capitalist countries, the workers states, and the underdeveloped capitalist countries — it is possible to gain a clear picture of fertility. Taking figures from the 1983 *World Population Data Sheet* of the Population Reference Bureau, Inc., it can be seen that fertility rates have dropped in the advanced capitalist countries and in the developed workers states. It is in the underdeveloped capitalist world that fertility rates have escalated.

The lowest birth rates, averaging 12.5,² are found in Northern and Western Europe. Birth rates in North America, Eastern Europe, and the USSR average about 18, and the highest rates are to be found in Third World countries that have experienced imperialist domination. Birth rates in Africa, Asia, and Middle and South America average 32. China is unique in that it is part of the Third World but has undergone industrialization since the revolution. However, it began this process with the largest population in the world. While it has brought fertility down

to 23, far lower than the rest of the Third World, it still lags far behind advanced countries. Higher levels of female education, occupation, and income are associated with low fertility. Obviously, women in the advanced countries have attained higher levels of all three than their sisters in the less developed nations. Weller and Bouvier point out:

Differences in family size are also related to the participation of females in the paid labor force. Studies conducted in the developed countries have usually shown that the greater the participation of women in the labor force, the lower the fertility. Moreover, the higher the wage a female worker can obtain, the lower her fertility....In the developing countries...the probability of observing a decline in fertility with employment is greater (1) in urban areas than in rural areas, (2) if the wife works for pay rather than as an unpaid or self-employed worker, (3) if she works away from home rather than at home, and (4) if she has a white-collar occupation rather than some other occupation.

In other words, when the working conditions in the developing countries approximate working conditions in the developed countries similar drops in fertility are experienced. Here we see class and female labor force participation combining to lower population growth.

Population planners have attempted to manipulate fertility in all three areas of the world from time to time with greater or lesser success. Abortion laws and contraceptive policy were the most liberal in the world following the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. Since then, the workers states in the USSR and Eastern Europe abandoned antinatalist policies and adopted pronatalist policies to reverse low fertility levels. However, in spite of more restrictive, pronatalist policies, such as in Hungary, the fertility levels have continued to drop after increases following the new laws. It seems logical to assume that higher rates of labor force participation by women in the so-called socialist countries than in the West were responsible for this phenomenon and were more influential than the policies.

Fertility dropped significantly in the U.S. after abortion was legalized due to the efforts of the women's movement in the 1970s. However, in spite of the fact that pronatalist "pro-life" forces restricted Medicaid funding for abortions to women receiving medical assistance, the fertility levels of American women in this group continued to fall again, suggesting that labor force participation coupled with legalized abortion is more decisive than funding. (Although poor women continue to get abortions, this represents an economic hardship, and we must continue the fight for funding.) Most of the women in this group must work to support their families and supplement welfare checks.

The population debate cannot proceed irrespective of the need for women to determine their own future and to retain the right to control their own bodies. The female half of the population has been cynically manipulated by male

2. The crude birth rate being used indicates the number of live births that occur in a given year per 1,000 population.

power structures and male population planners without taking their rights and desires into account. At times governments have adopted pronatalist policies when their labor power has not been needed and antinatalist programs when additional labor has been needed. When women enter the labor force, thereby increasing their economic independence, they tend to opt for the independence, power, and satisfaction that working affords over the role of fecund mother trapped within the family structure and dependent on a male for survival.

Women in the Third World

Many more women in the underdeveloped world are entering the labor force. However, their situation is not analogous to women in developed countries. Their experiences are closer to the women who entered factories during the rise of industrialization.

The multinationals are employing women in ever increasing numbers because their wages are considered to supplement the male's income. However, in many cases the woman may be the only family member with a job. As Marx

and Engels pointed out over a century ago, when multinationals go into the colonial areas they provide work for only a small minority of the population, due to the high-tech nature of these businesses. Thus, high profits are reaped and little is done to improve the standard of living of the majority. Fuentes and Ehrenreich quote a highly-placed Third World woman within the United Nations as saying:

The multinationals like to say that they're contributing to development, but they come into our countries for one thing — cheap labor. If the labor stops being so cheap they move on. So how can you call that development? It depends on the people being poor and staying poor.

Thus, there is little incentive, compared to the more advanced countries, for women to remain in the work force and lower fertility. Since so few women are able to actually land a job, the majority of women are forced to remain in backward rural areas where high fertility is considered social insurance for old age, and children can help with the agricultural labor. In fact, in many underdeveloped nations, women who remain on the land actually have more rights and

economic power than their sisters who enter the cities. Many African women keep their children after a divorce. Having a family actually puts the woman in a stronger economic position.

Thus, a possible solution to the population debate is suggested. As an alternative to the Malthusian solution of war, famine, and disease, and the neo-Malthusian solution of forced population control, it can be seen that revolutionary change in the Third World and a radical redistribution of wealth and resources can encourage women to play a productive role in society. Denying women employment and preventing them from controlling their own bodies has served to keep them in their place.

When women are free to choose what kind of families they desire and are provided with the opportunity of gainful employment, the better part of the population dilemma will have been solved. While revolutionary change and the liberation of women may not be the complete solution to the population explosion, a meaningful reduction in fertility cannot be accomplished without it. □

For a World Free from Exploitation and Oppression

Continued from page 25

nity for us to unite the various, disparate forces under a common banner. It's not hard to have the general principle of unity — that we oppose *that* whole program while we struggle to formulate our own. And to develop the necessary organizational formations and political parties.

I would agree with Ashaki Binta's earlier point, that it's real clear that the Democrats and Republicans are Tweedledee and Tweedledum, are two wings of one party, a political organization that represents and articulates the interests of a class. That's what a political party is. It's not when you play the music, it's not whether you sing and dance on the Donkey or on the Elephant. It's an organization that articulates and represents and organizes people around the interests of a class. [Speak, Man!] Now you can have five, ten, fifteen versions of it, but that's the bottom line.

And if we learn anything, it's that the Contract's coming through. It's spearheaded by the Republicans — with the conscious acquiescence of, or no firm opposition by, the Democrats. And they're talking about taking people's lives!

Here's what they're talking about:

- 200,000 children being expelled from Head Start.
- Another 200,000 may not receive day care.
- 7.5 million children may go without school lunches.
- Food and milk from the Women and Infants' Care program (WIC) may be taken away from 2 million pregnant women and their infant children.
- Up to 6.5 million more children will lose health care.

If that's efficiency, we don't need it. We don't need efficiency if it's going to kill our kids. If

it's going to victimize the most vulnerable in our society, we've got to find another way. And we all know the money's there. There's obviously a zillion dollars that they use to make war on the world and a portion of it to make war on us. It's a matter of what politicians are going to be accountable to take it and use it for us.

There have got to be the necessary independent political formations, a working people's political party. Local formations may develop. The Workers Unity Network is going to try and hammer out a platform and a program that will be brought forward within the struggles in Labor Party Advocates or the New Party or whatever. It is necessary that there be an organized presence of Black workers coming up out of the Workers Unity Network, or the congress of a Black workers unity movement that was talked about earlier.

All of that is necessary and all of us have a role in it. Because it's through those efforts that an alternative program is created that can become the program for society — when we set clearly for ourselves the goal that we are struggling for political power, that we're going to run the show.

The opposition to this Contract will help us recognize what has to be part of the people's program that becomes the agenda for society. Obviously we're not talking about an overnight deal. We're talking about being in this for the long haul. But you tell me, do we have a choice? Not at all. If we don't fight back, they'll roll right over us.

Whack the Bad Guys

More and more sectors are coming into motion against the Contract. There were 30,000 health care workers in New York City in the streets at the beginning of March. There were 4,000 at a

rally calling specifically for opposition to the Contract. There were 20,000 students in front of City Hall in New York City just before I left. The opposition is mounting. We need to pull it together, focus it, determine we have many more friends than we have enemies. And whack the bad guys.

Whack the bad guys, because they're trying to steal our future. They're trying to kill our children. They're trying to take the tires off the bus that takes your cousin for dialysis. They're going to make sure your grandmother doesn't get to the nursing home that will not accept her because she has no health care insurance. We're talking serious life-and-death issues. We're confronted with a fundamental challenge. And that is to mount a people's fightback.

And to create the necessary organizational forms that will make that fight efficient. The National People's Campaign has called for May 6 to be a national day of protest against the Contract on America. Hopefully you can unite with a local manifestation of the May 6 activity or initiate one.

But the law won't be changed without a struggle. Even if in the first 100 days they run through the tip of their spear aimed at the hearts of the people, it all can be overcome. At one time we were slaves by law — until there was war. They may try to take everything they can from us now — until we take it back.

The last message I would leave you with, as advocated by the Fruit of Labor (when they sang earlier), is:

Organize, Organize, Organize!

All out for May 6!

Defeat the Contract on America!

Defeat the Rich Man's War on the Poor! □

Trotsky's Fight Against Stalinism

by Jim Miles

*The following was presented to the Milwaukee Solidarity Trotsky Educational on March 26, 1995 as part of a Solidarity national educational series on Marxism covering basic writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, and others. The syllabus for this part of the series was developed by Paul Le Blanc. The selections from Trotsky's writings for this class include the 1932 lecture "In Defense of the Russian Revolution" and selections from the anthology *The Age of Permanent Revolution* and from the 1938 founding document of the Fourth International "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International," reprinted in *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution* (Pathfinder, 1973)*

Introduction

I would like to state as the thesis of this presentation that Leon Trotsky was quite simply the greatest Marxist revolutionary of the 20th century. Issac Deutscher's famous biography of Trotsky refers to Trotsky as "the prophet." Now Deutscher was a Marxist and an atheist and was not attributing any mystical or cult-like characteristics to Trotsky but was pointing out that like a prophet who is able to foretell the future, Trotsky, using the method of scientific socialism was able to predict in broad outlines the path that working class revolutions would have to pursue to be successful in the 20th century. I would also argue that Trotsky, utilizing the scientific tools of Marxist politics and economics predicted with startling clarity the collapse of the Soviet Union. More importantly, he did not simply predict but *explained WHY*, the Soviet workers' state would collapse if certain conditions were not met, namely the victory of socialist revolutions in the most advanced capitalist countries.

He also *explained WHY*, utilizing theories of political economy and the state and pioneered by Marx and Lenin, socialist revolutions in the U.S. and Western Europe were necessary for the Russian revolution to survive and be reborn after it had been betrayed by the reactionary state bureaucracy led by Joseph Stalin.

Well, so what? Does all of this have any relevance to the revolutionary socialists sitting in this room here today? Yes it does. As revolutionary socialist politicians we are all committed to helping working people build a massive political movement that will put an end to the political and economic power of the capitalists who run this country and the world. We want to replace that power with the democratic rule of an empowered, self-confident, and educated working class that will create a society where the full development of each human being will be not just the goal but a vital necessity for the entire society. As revolutionary socialists we believe that only working people have no ultimate stake in the capitalist system and that they will be the best fighters for and leaders of a future socialist society.

But the reality of the history of the 20th century is one where most working class and socialist revolutions have gone down to defeat. Most of those defeats could have been avoided had serious mistakes not been made and re-

peated. Worldwide, hundreds of millions of people lost their lives because of the wars and victorious counter-revolutions that resulted from those mistakes, sometimes made by well-intentioned socialists.

If we are to avoid repeating the mistakes of the 20th century in the 21st, then we need to help the working class learn from the history of its biggest single victory and many defeats. Studying Trotsky, who with Lenin led the first big working class victory of the 20th century, the Russian revolution, is vital. As Trotsky remarks in the first reading of this class, "Theory is in general valuable only insofar as it helps to foresee the course of development and influence it purposefully."

Trotsky not only generalized the lessons of the victory of the Russian revolution into a theory but analyzed its defeat and the repeated mistakes that led to defeats for many other revolutions. Studying Trotsky is thus an absolute necessity for responsible revolutionary socialist politicians at the close of the 20th century.

But how do we even know that Trotsky's analysis of the defeats of the first four decades of the 20th century is useful to study today? I would argue that Trotsky made an especially "prophetic" application of Marxist theory in regard to the question of the collapse of the Soviet Union, which we witnessed in 1991 and which Trotsky outlined between 1934 and 1940, particularly in his 1935 book *Revolution Betrayed*. I would argue that 55 years after his death, Trotsky's track record holds up rather well in the 20th century as someone from whom we can profitably study and learn.

The five selected readings from Trotsky's writings and speeches for this class series are excellent introductions to Trotsky's application of the Marxist method in the 20th century. The three groupings of articles actually form a unity. This is because Trotsky's fight against Stalinism, his defense of the Russian revolution, and his struggle to build a new international party of socialist revolution, the Fourth International, all formed aspects of a single struggle for world socialism.

I. In Defense of the Russian Revolution

Trotsky is most often noted for his celebrated theory of permanent revolution, first developed during the failed Russian revolution of 1905.

But central to Trotsky's fight against Stalinism was his defense of this theory and a fight for a return to its implementation as a central strategy of the Communist parties throughout the world. In 1924 Stalin began his political counterrevolution by counterposing to the theory of permanent revolution his own theory of completing the building of a socialist society in a single country. Trotsky called Stalin's theory of socialism in one country "the only theory that consistently and to the very end opposed the theory of the permanent revolution."

Just what is the theory of permanent revolution?

Prior to the first Russian revolution in 1905, all Russian Marxists agreed that the coming revolution in Russia would be a bourgeois revolution in its fundamental tasks. That is, the main tasks of the revolution would be the same as those revolutions led by the capitalist class in the 17th and 18th centuries in England and France. These boiled down to two things: the overthrow of the monarchy (the Russian tsar) and the establishment of a parliamentary republic, and the seizure and dividing up of the land of the semi-feudal nobility by the peasantry.

Revolutionary socialists at the time responded to this prognosis in three different ways.

One grouping, the Mensheviks, concluded that because the tasks of the Russian revolution were fundamentally the same as earlier revolutions led by the capitalists, or bourgeoisie, that the Russian revolution would also have to be led by the bourgeoisie, whom the working class would support in the hope that the capitalists would create a democratic bourgeois state where the working class could fight for reforms and organize for socialism someday in the far future.

A second grouping, the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, concluded that even though the tasks of the Russian revolution were bourgeois, the capitalists could not lead it because they were afraid of the tiny but very militant Russian working class, which was much more politically advanced than its ancestors in the English and French revolutions. Therefore, according to Lenin, the only classes that had a consistent interest in overthrowing the tsarist monarchy, creating a republic, and guaranteeing land reform for the peasants were the working class and the peasantry. But since the Russian working class was too small and Russia so undeveloped, workers would be unable to set up a socialist republic. Russia would require an extended period of capitalist development. Workers would therefore have to limit themselves to supporting the peasant majority against a tsarist counterrevolution in the new republic and some reforms like the 8-hour day.

But the republic that they created would be of necessity a bourgeois state since, Lenin reasoned, the majority of peasants, once they became landowners, would tend to behave like small capitalists. When socialist revolutions won in Western Europe, the new Russian republic would be secure from tsarist counterrevolution. But the Russian working class would then have to wage a fight for socialism against its former peasant allies inside the new bourgeois

state. Lenin called this future bourgeois state the "revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry." It was to be intermediary between the tsarist state and the future socialist republic.

The third response came from Trotsky, who agreed with Lenin and the Mensheviks about the bourgeois tasks of the Russian revolution and agreed with Lenin that only the workers and peasants could carry out those tasks completely. But Trotsky disagreed with Lenin that the working class would be able to limit itself to simply supporting the peasantry once the revolution began. Rather, it was the workers who would lead the peasants and guarantee peasant land seizures once the working class was in power. Once in power the workers would not simply create a republic but begin to take over the factories from the capitalists and begin to implement socialism. The workers in political power, even if a minority of the population, would signify the beginning of the socialist revolution. But a socialist revolution in backward Russia would only be successful if it was supported by workers carrying out socialist revolutions in the advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe and the U.S. This is the essence of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution as applied to Russia, and it was proved correct by the actual course of the Russian revolution led by Lenin's own actions in 1917.

Trotsky's theory thus *combined* the peasant revolution of the era of bourgeois revolutions two or more centuries previously with the workers socialist revolution of the 20th century. This was possible because of the *uneven* development of world capitalism as a whole, particularly in Russia where the latest factories stood alongside impoverished peasant huts.

With the onset of the Chinese revolution in 1926-27 and its defeat, Trotsky eventually generalized and applied his theory to the colonial and semi-colonial world, stating that the bourgeois tasks of any national democratic revolution could only be led to a fully successful conclusion by the working class in power. And I think that the course of most of the peasant revolutions in the 20th century, whether distorted by Stalinism or not, bears that out. The successful ones, such as China, Vietnam, Yugoslavia, and Cuba required working class parties, either revolutionary ones or Stalinists pushed farther than they wanted to initially go, to implement socialist revolutions to secure even basic land reform.

II. The Degeneration of the Russian Revolution

Stalinism was the theory and practice of the reactionary rule of a privileged, chauvinistic, and conservative bureaucracy over the revolutionary workers and peasants in the Soviet Union. From 1923 until his assassination in 1940, Trotsky waged a continual struggle against Stalinism both within Russia and internationally. He fought to return the Soviet workers to political power in their own state and win the world Communist movement in the 1920s and

'30s back to the revolutionary internationalism of Lenin's policies during 1917-23.

Stalin's theory of completing the building of socialism in a single country was really nothing more than a rejection of a policy of aiding world revolution. This theory fostered by Stalin in 1924 was the reaction of a privileged bureaucratic layer in the Russian workers state to the initial defeats of the European revolution from 1917 to 1924. In time it quickly became the means of turning the Communist parties of the Third International into foreign policy tools of the Kremlin. And the theory of subordinating the interests of the working class abroad to complete the building of socialism in a single country became the main cause of defeats of world revolution from 1924 until 1991.

Prior to 1924 no one in the Marxist movement believed that socialism could be completely built in a single country any more than capitalism had. Trotsky points out in the first article in this class series that the productivity of human labor is the basic criterion for evaluating human progress. Capitalism raised the productivity of human labor over that of feudalism only by conquering the world and utilizing world resources. Socialism could be started in one country, but like capitalism it could only win if it was victorious worldwide. One country could not maintain itself indefinitely in capitalist encirclement. It would either be militarily subdued by capitalist invasion or collapse internally from the pressure of the capitalist world market.

The agent of its collapse internally would be the bureaucracy that Trotsky called "the *first phase* of bourgeois restoration." By the 1930s in the Soviet Union, this bureaucracy had already politically expropriated the workers from political power in their own state. Trotsky considered this bureaucracy, in fact any bureaucracy in a workers state, to be bourgeois. Ultimately this bourgeois bureaucracy would become completely counter revolutionary if it was not "withered away" by the workers taking over the functions of the state. If the bureaucracy thereby succeeded in consolidating itself and the workers were not able to overthrow this bureaucracy through a political revolution, the bureaucracy would eventually economically expropriate the workers by overthrowing the economic conquest of the socialist revolution, the planned economy, thereby restoring capitalism.

The planned economy was an important survival of the Russian revolution and, although badly administered, represented a real advance over the anarchic capitalist market. This is what Trotsky thought had to be saved by the workers through the overthrow of the bureaucracy.

Even though the bureaucracy had politically expropriated and terrorized the workers, Trotsky did not consider the bureaucracy to be a class like the capitalists. Its privileges and power flowed from administering the collective property established by the workers. For this reason, Trotsky referred to it as a bureaucratic *caste*, a privileged layer that aspired to be like the bourgeoisie and was a transmission belt for imperialism inside the workers state.

Since the planned economy established by the revolution still survived and had not been replaced by anarchic capitalist production, Trotsky considered the Stalinist Soviet Union to be a degenerated workers state, i.e., one that had degenerated from the healthy political revolutionary norms of 1917.

Only a workers political revolution, one that overthrew the bureaucracy without overthrowing the planned economy, could restore the workers to power and renew the advance toward socialism. But Trotsky linked this revolution to success of socialist revolutions abroad, particularly in Western Europe or the U.S., the most powerful centers of capitalism.

One last word on the degeneration of the Russian workers state. The theoretical basis of Trotsky's theory of the Soviet Union as a degenerated workers state flows entirely from his evaluation that it possessed a *dual class* nature. Developing a theory of which was first advanced by Lenin, Trotsky considered that *every workers state had a dual class character* to it, working class insofar as it defended planned economy and bourgeois insofar as it defended inequality in the distribution of goods. Every bureaucracy in every workers state has a bourgeois character, even the revolutionary bureaucracy under Lenin and Trotsky. The point is that the working class needs only a state which "withers away" and the bureaucracy along with it.

To sum up a key aspect of permanent revolution: Revolution must spread to advanced capitalist countries or the greater *productivity of labor* of those capitalist countries will overthrow the revolution through invasion or pressure of the world market.

III. The Transitional Program

Ironically, Trotsky began his political career opposing Lenin's theory of a revolutionary combat party based on the principle of "full freedom of discussion, complete unity in action." But from 1917 until the end of his life, Trotsky was the strongest advocate of this type of party to help lead and give guidance to the struggle of the working class. In fact it was Lenin's revolutionary combat party being won in practice, by Lenin, to the strategy of permanent revolution that made the victory of the Russian revolution in 1917 possible.

But Stalinism destroyed Lenin's party, drowning it in blood. By 1938, Stalin had killed or rid himself of all other Central Committee members of the Bolshevik party of 1917 besides himself. Two years later he had the exiled Trotsky killed. Applying the revolutionary Marxist method successfully to living struggles is not simply a matter of applying memorized formulas from books. Rather it requires the active participation in democratic discussion of living human beings who have educated and trained themselves in the Marxist method. Such schools of unfettered thought and decisive action are called revolutionary combat parties. It was Stalin who cut short both the discussion and the life of the Communist parties internationally, at

first through intimidation and corruption, later through mass terror, repression and assassination, attempting to destroy both the historical memory of the working class and its revolutionary continuity.

Trotsky considered the supreme embodiment of his fight against Stalinism to be his struggle to re-establish the continuity of "freedom of discussion and unity in practice" in a new Fourth International.

Exactly 60 years ago, in a diary entry dated March 25, 1935, Trotsky summed up his perspective on the question of revolutionary continuity in the wake of the destruction of the Bolshevik party.

I think that the work in which I am engaged now, despite its extremely insufficient and fragmentary nature, is the most important work of my life — more important than 1917, more important than the period of the Civil War or any other...my work is indispensable in the full sense of the word. There is no arrogance in this claim at all. The collapse of the two Internationals has posed a problem which none of the leaders of these Internationals is at all equipped to solve. The vicissitudes of my personal fate have confronted me with this problem and armed me with important experience in dealing

with it. There is now no one except me to carry out the mission of arming a new generation with the revolutionary method over the heads of the leaders of the Second and Third International...I need at least about five more years of uninterrupted work to ensure the succession.

Five years was all Trotsky had but it was not uninterrupted as he was hounded from country to country by fascists and Stalinists.

But by 1938, Trotsky had succeeded in calling a founding conference of the Fourth International which, though small, put forth an important summary of the methodology of the best days of the Bolshevik party and the revolutionary Communist International.

The necessity of a new transitional program had been posed by Lenin as early as 1919. But transitional between what and what?

The transitional program posed the question of how small revolutionary combat parties could grow by recruiting from the living mass struggles of the working class. Its transitional character flows from linking the struggle for urgently needed reforms by the masses to pointing toward a fight for political power. Its comprehensive character, though not exhaustive, attempted to generalize on the basis of the ex-

perience of the previous 20 years, covering such things as the fight for workers control of industry, exposing capitalist chicanery in the factory, nationalization, the need for a labor party in the U.S., the slogan "a workers and farmers government," workers self-defense, a sliding scale of wages and hours to end unemployment, etc.

Most of these demands were utilized by revolutionaries in situations of mass struggle at the end of the Great Depression and prior to World War II. They can be studied and used profitably today if creatively applied in similar situations of mass struggle.

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, I would argue that there is today still a vital necessity for the sort of mass party that exercises "full freedom of discussion, unity in action" which Trotsky set out to build with Lenin in 1917. Such a party does not yet exist in the United States, but I am confident that the comrades of *Solidarity* will one day form a vital part of that future party. Trotsky's fight against Stalinism was one and the same as his fight for world socialism. And the fight for world socialism will continue into the 21st century. □

The Unusual Contest in the AFL-CIO: Its Historical Background and Implications

Continued from page 10

grams," which substitute the employers' demands for speed-up and increased productivity for workers' grievances, and replace elected shop floor representatives with company appointed cooperation facilitators; the increasing imposition of so-called "district locals" with no democracy or rank-and-file control at all, along with the recommendations of the Commission on the Future of Worker-Management Relations to open the door to employer-dominated "company unions," all suggest that the bureaucrats may see a future as administrators of government and employer-mandated labor battalions, just as their brothers under the skin in the bureaucracies which rested on the former workers states in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe participated in the liquidation of nationalized property with the hope that they could become the junior capitalist partners of world imperialism.

Rising Opposition

Such a process cannot happen without a struggle, indeed it is already under way, with the rising opposition to "worker-management cooperation" and various rank-and-file movements for union reform. This, to some extent, does find a reflection in divisions at the top of the U.S. union hierarchy, and even in the current contest for AFL-CIO president.

But fundamentally, both sides in the present contest for AFL-CIO posts seek self-preservation. The contest over the presidency reflects their uncertainty over whether their future lies in the liquidation of the unions as genuine organizations of the workers, or in the possibility of reaching some new historic accommodation with the employing class — or some combination.

An Opening for Wider Discussion

The importance of this division for the rank and file of the unions, and especially for those who actively seek to transform the unions into genuine instruments of struggle is that it opens up a wider discussion of the future of the labor movement, and provides an opportunity to drive the wedge a little deeper into the bureaucratic monolith, creating better possibilities for the development of rank-and-file intervention.

As always, the *class independence* of the unions is the first principle. This question is now being posed literally in the struggle over "worker-management cooperation" and more theoretically in the modest but developing labor party movement in the U.S. unions. And ultimately, the unions must confront the question of *program* if they are to survive and function as class struggle instruments.

Bourgeois ideology, exultant over the demise of the Soviet Union and what it sees as the historic defeat of Marxism, now triumphantly proclaims that no other form of society is possible than capitalism, and that there will not be enough to go around in the future. Unlike at the beginning of the 20th century, when the authoritative representatives of the two great social classes, in the form of bourgeois progressivism and social democracy, both essentially held out the prospect of a future society of abundance, capitalism today brands that prospect a reactionary utopia. Every struggle over higher wages, over adequate health care and jobs, has in the background this contention: that there is not enough to go around. Workers feel this social and economic pressure in their pores.

Labor Must Put Forward Its Own Vision

Ever since the beginning of the modern labor movement 150 years ago, with the Chartist movement in Great Britain, labor has had to either accept the dog-eat-dog world of the employers or put forward a vision of a different, and better, world of its own. This programmatic challenge to the working class movement is inescapable in the long run, regardless of the proclamations about the end of ideology.

... Including Internationalism

Here in the United States, the heartland of labor pragmatism, this question is posed anew, especially with the dispersal of U.S. capitalist production to all four corners of the earth. The "international" labor unions of North America, the least international of any on earth, are going to have to address the question of working class internationalism in a new context, if they are to survive.

Broader Discussion Possible with Critical Support to Sweeney Slate

All these questions are posed, implicitly or directly in the top-level division over the AFL-CIO presidency. It seems obvious that for those who seek genuine change in the unions, critical support for the Sweeney candidacy enhances possibilities for pursuing discussion of the real problems of the unions and their solutions. While the opportunities are no doubt modest and limited, and no confidence should be placed in the capacity of either side to make any meaningful changes, the contest has opened a door and the possibilities should be pursued as far as they can be. □

Discussion

The Dual Task of Trotskyism Today

by Paul Le Blanc

From its very beginnings, the revolutionary science of Marxism has grown and developed through polemics that clarify differences, confront inadequacies, and move forward the thinking of revolutionary activists on the problems and tasks facing us. There are Marx's *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Engels's *Anti-Dühring*, Luxemburg's *Reform or Revolution* and *Mass Strike*, Lenin's *State and Revolution* and *Left-Wing Communism*, Trotsky's *Permanent Revolution* and *In Defense of Marxism*, Cannon's *American Stalinism and Anti-Stalinism*, and many other such works, in which disagreements are sharply expressed in a manner which illuminates reality and teaches important lessons. Today, more than ever before, it is vitally necessary for us to probe deeply and speak frankly in order to address complex realities and the crisis of the revolutionary movement. Even a poorly conceived polemic can be helpful for serious activists who — in considering the arguments of the polemicist — review and think through the issues raised.

Marilyn Vogt-Downey's polemic is certainly helpful in this way. Her belated "Critique of the 1992 Manifesto of the Fourth International," published in the May-June 1995 issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, raises in a sharp manner the classical question of Leninism: What Is to Be Done? Unlike Lenin, however, this comrade seems to have little that is concrete, specific, practical to say on what we should actually do. Intimately related to this, she has no clear notion of what the Fourth International actually is and what it can actually become. Specifically and concretely, how does one build the Trotskyist movement? How does one build a mass revolutionary workers movement in one's own country? What is the relation of this to building the Fourth International? These are the questions — the questions about which Marilyn has little to say — which will concern us in this article.

Transcending Sectarianism

It may be considered unfair to focus on what this comrade *doesn't* discuss rather than on what she has to say. But what she has to say against the 1992 Manifesto of the Fourth International, *Socialism or Barbarism on the Eve of the 21st Century*, is for the most part refuted by the actual text of that document. Rather than attempting a point-by-point refutation, I would

simply urge those interested to read the Manifesto. That it is, in fact, a Trotskyist document should come as no surprise, given the fact that a primary author was Ernest Mandel and that a number of good comrades in our world movement, including two Editorial Board members of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* (Steve Bloom and Carol McAllister) also contributed to its development. It offers a profound analysis, utilizing the theoretical tools of revolutionary Marxism.

In my opinion, the primary weakness of the Manifesto is that it does not make explicit the fact that its analyses flow unambiguously from an application of the historic program of the Trotskyist movement to the realities of our time. The failure to make this crystal clear is rooted not simply in a sense of modesty and good manners. There are some comrades within the Fourth International who would view the expression of such points in the Manifesto as creating a sectarian barrier to connecting with non-Trotskyist theorists and activists on the left, and there are also some comrades who want to transcend what they view as old dogmas. All of this indicates, in my view, a need for serious discussion and debate in our world movement. Nonetheless, the significance of the Manifesto is that — even without an explicit reaffirmation of the historic revolutionary Marxist program of the Fourth International — its actual analytic and programmatic content essentially constitutes such a reaffirmation.

Marilyn does not see this. Of course, it is certainly possible to discover fatal flaws in anything — especially if that is what you are determined to see. One can also compose a scathing polemic with no clear, practical plan of action — trashing a document like the Manifesto and flinging its authors onto the junkheap of history. But offering no real alternative, such a polemicist leaves us with nothing but trash and a junkheap.¹ It is important to be more disciplined, more patient, more careful, more thoughtful in approaching a document such as the 1992 Manifesto. Instead, Marilyn denounces alleged deficiencies of the Manifesto's analyses, counterposing to them analyses which strike me as either similar to or inferior to what the Manifesto actually says.

For example, the Manifesto notes that capitalism's ideological "victory over socialism" is widely proclaimed today and that there is, in fact, "a crisis of credibility of socialism as an

international perspective in the eyes of the masses" (p. 3). Marilyn responds: "The fact that Stalinism and social democracy have proven bankrupt is not a crisis for socialism but a crisis for Stalinism and reformism." She berates the Manifesto authors' for their "distorted estimation of reality." In the same breath, however, she herself acknowledges that there really is a more general crisis, but she explains that "the Stalinists and Social Democrats, and petty bourgeois populists with their bankrupt class-collaborationist and reformist ideologies have unfortunately been able to mislead mass workers movements into defeat after defeat," and that it is *this* which has created the crisis of "credibility of socialism in the eyes of the masses." This is precisely the same point the Manifesto makes: "It is a result of the mass awareness that Stalinism/post-Stalinism, social democracy, and populist nationalism in the 'Third World' have proven bankrupt" (p. 3). The Manifesto — unlike Marilyn's critique — goes on to offer a practical orientation for rebuilding the workers movement, utilizing insights similar to those advanced by George Breitman in the 1960s and early '70s (pp. 22-24):

Gradually, the workers movement will reestablish itself on a new foundation, in all probability based on a growing convergence by more combative sectors of the mass movement, fighters for women's rights, the most visionary layers of the youth, and groups of workers who are today outside organized labor — combined with radicalizing sectors of the new social movements.

The essential task for revolutionary socialists is not only to participate in this radicalization, to stimulate and help organize it, but also to overcome its fragmentation and its still occasional character, to generalize it, and to help the workers' fightback rediscover the road to and the values of generalized solidarity, to deepen it by prioritizing the defense of the most vulnerable sectors of the class: women, immigrant workers, oppressed nationalities, youth, unemployed, old-age pensioners, the sick and disabled. The necessity is posed of reorganizing permanent structures and new networks of struggle....

Marilyn is critical of this lengthy passage of the Manifesto. She appears to view the stress on social movements — against sexism, racism, pollution, etc. — as constituting a "distraction from the organized working-class struggles," which she seems to see primarily in narrow trade union terms. She tells us the Manifesto's authors have "simply abandoned" Marxism!

This echoes here 1993 criticisms of many on the left, including Trotskyists, who in the 1960s and '70s "turned our attention elsewhere [than on the union movement] in search of productive political work — the struggles of students, women's movements, African Americans, and other peoples of color for their rights, support to revolutions in the neocolonial world, environmental protection, etc." She felt that this

1. In contrast, when Trotsky consigned the Menshevik Martov to "the dustbin of history" he had a very real, living, practical alternative in the form of the Bolshevik-led mass workers revolution of 1917 and the creation of political rule by vibrant workers councils, the soviets, as well as the genuine possibility of socialist revolutions in other countries, in the midst of the devastation of World War I and in the light of Russia's revolutionary example.

may have been “a very serious mistake.” (See Marilyn Vogt-Downey, “Which Side Are You On?” *BIDOM*, June 1993, p. 36, and her letter in *BIDOM*, September 1993.)

Years before, however, George Breitman argued (persuasively, I think) that it is a very serious mistake to view such political work as being separate from the struggle of the working class:

The radicalization of the worker can begin off the job as well as on. It can begin from the fact that the worker is a woman as well as a man; that the worker is Black or Chicano or a member of some other oppressed minority as well as white; that the worker is a father or mother whose son can be drafted [to fight in an imperialist war]; that the worker is young as well as miggled-aged or about to retire. If we grasp the fact that the working class is stratified and divided in many ways — the capitalists prefer it that way — then we will be better able to understand how the radicalization will develop among workers and how to intervene more effectively. Those who haven't already learned important lessons from the radicalization of oppressed minorities, youth and women had better hurry up and learn them, because most of the people involved in these radicalizations are workers or come from working-class families. [George Breitman, “The Current Radicalization Compared with Those of the Past,” in *Towards an American Socialist Revolution: A Strategy for the 1970s* (New York: Pathfinder Press), 1971, p. 101.]

The authors of *Socialism or Barbarism on the Eve of the 21st Century* not only continue to adhere to this perspective but also believe that there are greater opportunities than ever before to build a revolutionary alternative to Stalinism and Social Democracy.

In the difficult but exalting uphill historical struggle of reformulating the socialist perspective and making it credible again in the eyes of a large vanguard and broader mass movement, revolutionary socialists start today with some advantages which their grandparents did not enjoy. The hold of the traditional bureaucratic apparatuses on the class is weaker than in the twenties, thirties and forties. The barbaric, inhuman character of imperialism/capitalism and its so-called “values” is much more widely recognized....

A victory is not at all assured, and it will require “much hard work, imagination, and sacrifice,” but the Manifesto insists “it is both possible and necessary to undertake the struggle.” As Trotsky emphasized in 1938, revolutionaries — then as now — must resolve the historical crisis in leadership of the working class. But Marilyn walks away from the 1992 Manifesto complaining: “The authors of this document offer no solutions to this problem.” Her scornful tone implies the need to break with the authors, and perhaps with the International as such. But practically speaking, it is not clear what Marilyn really means. Even if her criticisms of the Manifesto were somewhat closer

to the target, it seems to me that we must value those who are our comrades and not be so quick to denounce and dismiss them. Rather, our focus should be on the serious and practical work that we must do, and if a document produced by our comrades seems to come up short, one should discuss these shortcomings in a serious and practical manner.

Before turning my attention to the more substantive issues facing Trotskyists today, I want to offer a few more thoughts on the danger of sectarianism which I believe is reflected in the approach of this deeply committed revolutionary comrade. My perception is that Marilyn's polemic is an expression of honest frustration over the crisis and disintegration of the Trotskyist movement in the United States. Nor is the crisis confined to one country. The Fourth International itself has been weakened in more ways than one over the course of the past fifteen years. Marilyn was once part of a revolutionary party — the Socialist Workers Party — which was destroyed (in a process discussed below); the group that she then helped build, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, was able to hold together for eight years before internal and external pressures brought an end to its existence. These things make her angry. And she is impatient over the delays in the recomposition of a revolutionary organization worthy of the name.

Frustration, anger, and impatience are poor guides for developing a political analysis and practical orientation. They can badly distort one's vision and judgment of what is and of what is possible. They can lead a comrade into fighting false battles, into seeing actual or potential comrades as opponents and betrayers, into tilting at windmills, into undercutting what one actually wants to advance. If such things do become part of one's political practice for too long, then politics will increasingly become posturing, shadow-boxing, and fantasizing. We see this in all-too-many groups that undermine the cause of Marxism as they seek to advance that very cause.

This frame of mind affects individuals as much as groups. everything can become a principled political issue to divide us into those who are politically correct and those who are not. everything, from a perceived personal slight to an honest disagreement, can be inflated into all manner of politically sinful things that justify a political break from those who are sinful. Lenin once made a comment about “better fewer but better” — and it might be concluded that “nobody but me” is the best of all!

This hardly describes the many positive qualities of Marilyn Vogt-Downey, whose contributions to the revolutionary movement and to innumerable struggles of the oppressed are simply beyond question. But the tendency toward sectarianism described here also unquestionably exists, it threatens the highly fragmented Trotskyist movement, it has at various times

exercised a pull on each of us, and it crops up in Marilyn's article. It is something that she — and all of us — must transcend if we are to build a revolutionary party, and a revolutionary international worthy of the name.

We cannot afford the dynamic of “revolutionary” one-upmanship and sterile individualistic competitiveness. Instead we must develop a collective process of working together, discussing, disagreeing, testing differences in practice — assuming responsibility for what we say and do, and also being prepared to assume responsibility for one another (comradely trust) and for the collective process as a whole (mutual influence, not mutual ostracism). This is the method from which a genuinely revolutionary organization can emerge — it is the method of Lenin and Trotsky.

Facing the Realities of Our Time

When the Fourth International was formally established in 1938, there was a large, well-organized, fairly class-conscious working-class movement throughout the world, bereft of a revolutionary program and saddled with a leadership mired in Social Democratic reformism or in Stalinism; in this context, the task of Trotskyists was to participate in the struggles of that movement in a way that could help win sectors of the workers movement to the revolutionary program and enable Trotskyist militants to provide effective leadership.

Reality changed, changed again, and continues to change. The situation we face is qualitatively different from that faced by the founders of the Fourth International.² Trotskyists today have a dual task, which flows from the relative disintegration of all major components of the workers movement — a fact which alters the priorities and possibilities before us: (a) audacious regroupment efforts to create a socialist pole of activists and cadres that help advance important aspects of the struggle and political organization of the working class; and (b) an uncompromising struggle to maintain and advance revolutionary Marxist perspectives identified historically with the Trotskyist movement and the Fourth International. Here I want to explore the relationship between two aspects of our task.

As we have noted, the organized Trotskyist movement in the United States has disintegrated. The decisive moment in this disintegration was the betrayal, by the new “leadership team” of the Socialist Workers Party, of Leninist norms and Trotskyist perspectives in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This betrayal had deep roots in the economic, political, and cultural developments of the post-World War II world, in a changed social composition of the SWP, and in a political and organizational weakening of that organization that had taken place over the course of two decades. The remnants of U.S. Trotskyism are a scattering of individuals and small groups many of whom bear the marks (in con-

2. Some of these changes have been discussed in “Notes on Building a Revolutionary Party in the United States,” *BIDOM*, Nos. 107 and 108 (June and July-August 1993) and in “Marxism and the Triple Revolution on the Eve of the Year 2000,” *BIDOM*, No. 112 (January 1994).

trast to the revolutionary orientation of Trotsky, Cannon, and their co-thinkers) of skepticism and weariness or sectarianism and stridency.

This tragedy in the United States is the result of global pressures that have borne down on our entire world movement. Consequently, the Fourth International is in the throes of an organizational and programmatic crisis from which it may or may not recover. The question is posed whether, by the end of this century, it could even wish to be called "Trotskyist" except in reference to its origins and what it "used to be."

Among sectarians there is a tendency to view "the Fourth International" and/or its leadership body "the United Secretariat" as some great abstraction — a compact, cohesive, efficient unit guided by Ernest Mandel and his followers for good or ill. ("For ill!" the sectarians assure us.) This is not the reality. Of course, Ernest Mandel has played an important intellectual role from the late 1940s down to the present, and has made many valuable contributions to Marxism. But he does not have the great power attributed to him, there are many other personalities and dynamics involved, and the Fourth International is hardly some well-oiled machine. At present, it can be described as a collection of relatively small revolutionary socialist groups in various countries, in tenuous contact with each other, and sharing a more or less tenuous contact with the revolutionary Marxist theoretical tradition of Bolshevik-Leninism and the Left Opposition.

At times there was a greater strength (some might suggest it bordered on rigidity) in the adherence to that tradition. But in the 1960s and '70s the influx of militants shaped by the youth radicalization brought new influences into our world movement, and Bolshevik-Leninism was blended for some with elements of Castroism, Guevarism, Maoism, etc. — a heady mix which did not survive the disappointments of the 1980s. Those Fourth Internationalist comrades who question our traditions are not bad people; some of them do an immense amount of serious political work and make significant contributions to the struggles of the workers and the oppressed, carry on valuable Marxist research, and do what they can to build a revolutionary socialist movement.

There are yet other comrades in our world movement who also do such work but feel a much stronger attachment to the Trotskyist tradition, recognizing its importance not only in the history of the workers movement but also in the struggles of our own time. A reflection of this is the adoption of the 1992 Manifesto, *Socialism or Barbarism on the Eve of the 21st Century*.

The Fourth International — with all of its limitations — remains an essential network of serious organizations in a number of countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and North and South America that contain sincere, dedicated, experienced revolutionary militants. Are there complaints that the Fourth International does not contain enough of such people, that some members of the Fourth International are deficient in

one way or another? Is it possible to envision a much, much better and stronger international organization of revolutionaries? All well and good. The fact remains that there is nothing like this — no actual network of real organizations of serious activists influenced by the revolutionary Marxist program — in the world today except the Fourth International.

It remains a serious problem, however, that a pervasive agnosticism and pragmatism affects many in the Fourth International, which may prevent it from being an effective continuation of the Bolshevik-Leninist tradition. This is a problem because the revolutionary Marxist theoretical tradition is the product of innumerable struggles and sacrifices, stirring triumphs and bloody defeats, of many hundreds, thousands, and millions of people, and it represents a body of hard-won thought and experience which continues to be valid. By using it, refining it, and further contributing to it, we can move forward toward a socialist world. There do not appear to be any alternate orientations that are superior. And yet, at the present time the membership of the Fourth International is in decline, and an increasing number of those who remain continue to drift from essential aspects of the historic program of the Trotskyist movement.

This crisis of international Trotskyism is part of a general process of decomposition within the entire left — the great collapse of Stalinism, the further bankruptcy of Social Democracy, the exhaustion of 1960s "new left" radicalism — which is taking place within the context of a dramatic restructuring of the global political economy. That restructuring, ironically, is at the same time contributing to a deepening ferment and radicalization process among the working classes and oppressed layers of many countries. The possibility exists to renew and rebuild the left, through militant struggles of the workers and the oppressed, and through the creation of social movements and mass working-class parties that will contain and yet transcend numerous fragments of previous left-wing organizations. This is a time for united fronts, alliances, coalitions, and regroupments — and, if revolutionary Marxism is to regain mass influence, then it is a time for bold initiatives on the part of revolutionaries.

No less important for revolutionary Marxism gaining mass influence is seeing to it that there are means for preserving, refining, and developing revolutionary Marxist ideas — especially given the drift of many erstwhile militants away from those ideas. Institutions, publications, and organizations associated with the Fourth International could play such a role. The problem of agnosticism and skepticism within the Fourth International can and must be counteracted through a persistent ideological discussion and — sometimes — frank, comradely debate that can perform the service of helping to clarify and advance the revolutionary Marxist program.

The organization of political tendencies within the Fourth International, and also the maintenance of revolutionary Marxist educational ef-

forts and publications, are the vitally necessary accompaniment of the bold united front and regroupment initiatives that are called for at this time. Through this dynamic combination, it will be possible to win new layers to a political orientation which can advance us toward the goal of workers democracy and socialism.

Such a view as sketched here can become a harmful abstraction, however, unless we shift our focus to a more localized terrain. Without real and active member organizations in various countries, the Fourth International is an abstraction, suspended in air, with no connection to the real world. When one discusses building the Fourth International, it is most important to talk about building it in one's own country. We must focus our attention on the United States, on what we can and should do here.

It is, of course, possible to create a new little group to compete with all of the other little groups considering themselves to be truly revolutionary. But it will be much more difficult to do better than that. To be blunt, in the United States there is no possibility, at this moment, of creating a revolutionary party worthy of the name, nor is it possible at present to create even a modest organization capable of unifying all or most of those who are revolutionary socialists. Such organizations are necessary, however, and the work that we are able to do now should be seen as helping to create the possibility for their creation. A balance must be struck between premature attempts to create a revolutionary organization, which would generate a sect, and permanent postponement of such an attempt, which would constitute an organizational and eventually a programmatic liquidation.

This brings us back to our dual task: (a) audacious regroupment efforts to create a socialist pole of activists and cadres that help advance a conscious workers struggle; and (b) maintaining and advancing the revolutionary Marxist perspectives identified historically with the Trotskyist movement and the Fourth International.

Our Historic Program

Given the centrality of the historic program of the Trotskyist movement to the perspective being advanced here, it is important to indicate more precisely what that program is. We can then conclude with a brief discussion of what is to be done — and what are specifics of the "dual task" to be taken on — by those who adhere to this program.

The revolutionary Marxist program — which deals with the realities we face, the goals we seek, and an orientation on how to achieve those goals — is grounded in the utilization of dialectics, historical materialism, and a multifaceted analysis of capitalism. It includes the strategic "line of march" outlined in the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels: the need for workers to join together in trade unions, the need to push for social and economic reforms through legislation, the need to build a labor party that will "win the battle of democracy" and bring the working class to political power,

after which the socialist reconstruction of society can be achieved — “by degrees,” to be sure, but in conjunction with the struggles of workers in all countries.

The Bolshevik-Leninist and Left Oppositionist traditions developed and elaborated on this basic orientation in important ways. The principle of working-class political independence was correctly explained as involving an understanding that class-conscious workers must champion the struggles of all the oppressed — women, oppressed nationalities, persecuted racial and religious minorities, student and intellectual dissidents, the downtrodden peasantry, etc. — and that the struggle of the working class to “win the battle of democracy” would necessarily incorporate the interests of all of these social layers. Connected to this was an understanding that such democratic struggles could be fully realized and won only through working-class hegemony, that is, if blended with the struggle for the working class to become an increasingly mighty political force, a force that would finally take state power.

In comprehending the struggle for such a working-class revolution, several additional factors were emphasized. One is that the struggle for reforms — for partial gains that would make life under capitalism better for workers and the oppressed — is absolutely essential, not as a means to gradually reform the evils of capitalism out of existence, but as a means to strengthen the working class and to give more and more workers an understanding that collective action around common problems can bring positive results. More than this, a steadfast commitment to democratic demands, the most radical democratism, is essential to pushing forward the class struggle and to preparing the working class to bring about the socialist future. At the same time, in the context of real mass struggles, it is essential to put forward transitional demands (the heart of what Trotsky called the Transitional Program), demands which make sense to the oppressed and insurgent masses of workers, but which would undermine capitalism if implemented.

Even though the class struggle is always concrete and specific, it is also global, assuming many forms in a variety of cultures around the world. Capitalism is a global system and can only be fought effectively — and replaced by socialism — on a global scale. The economic expansionism inherent in capitalism has in the modern era taken the form of imperialism — with financial-industrial corporate conglomerates, intertwined with state power in various countries, seeking to subordinate the resources, the labor, and markets of all regions to the profit-seeking needs of the various and often competing sectors of Big Business. Victories and defeats of workers and the oppressed in any one country reverberate throughout all other countries. An understanding of the problems and dynamics of capitalism, and an understanding of the possibilities and needs of the workers struggles can only be effectively developed on an international level, in collaboration with class-conscious

workers and revolutionary militants throughout the world. This is why the most uncompromising anti-imperialism, worldwide working-class solidarity, and revolutionary internationalism are fundamental to the Trotskyist program.

The transition from capitalism to socialism must result from “the most thoroughgoing democratism,” as Lenin put it, and this culminated in revolutionary Russia with the triumph of democratic councils of the workers and the oppressed — soviets. More than this, after political power is taken by the working class, the transition to socialism cannot be achieved in one super-revolutionary giant step but must be effected — as the *Communist Manifesto* put it — “by degrees,” making “despotic inroads” on the capitalist economy, not trying to abolish it before workers democracy can actually organize the economy better. Another aspect of the transition to socialism involves the necessity of working-class revolutions taking place in a number of other countries, including more advanced industrial countries, so that a world capitalist economy can actually begin to change into a world socialist economy.

Elements of the revolutionary Marxist program summarized here are combined in the theory of permanent revolution: (1) struggles to advance the immediate needs and democratic aspirations of workers and the oppressed can only be realized under working-class leadership, the logical conclusion of which is proletarian revolution, the working class coming to power; (2) the coming to power of the working class opens up a dynamic, complex, and sometimes tumultuous transitional period from capitalism to socialism; (3) the transition from capitalism to socialism can be started on a national scale, but national efforts to bring socialism are doomed unless socialist revolutions spread to other countries so that the transition may be completed on a world scale.

Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution, along with his articulation of the Transitional Program, are two of his most important elaborations of the revolutionary Marxist program. Like the other great Marxists of the 20th century, he was able to build on the work of others in developing these crucial contributions, which is also the case with his third contribution: his perspective on bureaucratic degeneration within the workers movement (both Social Democratic and Stalinist), and on the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet Russian workers state, against which he counterposed the ongoing struggle for workers democracy.

While we have been making reference to “the Trotskyist program,” it is in fact much more than that. It is the strategic orientation of revolutionary Marxism, which means that it is the strategic orientation of Lenin. One of Lenin’s essential contributions, for him inseparable from the entire political orientation outlined here, involves *the way that revolutionary socialists must organize themselves* to do the work that must be done to translate these programmatic principles into living reality. By 1917 Trotsky came to embrace this organiza-

tional orientation, and in later years made his own contributions to it. But it was Lenin who first gave the most profound expression to them.

Comrades of a revolutionary socialist organization must be committed to the fundamentals of the Marxist program, must be committed to engaging in activity to apply that program, must work together within the revolutionary organization to do this. There must be as much democracy as possible (sometimes government repression imposes limits on open discussion and functioning), full freedom of discussion, the right to disagree and propose alternatives; there must be considerable local autonomy; but there must also be a genuine (and democratic) centralism — democratic decisions must be carried out, majority decisions must be tested in practice by the organization as a whole, comrades must function in a serious, disciplined manner, working collectively in an atmosphere of mutual comradely trust and mutual comradely responsibility. (For an extensive description and discussion of this, see *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party* [Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1990].)

Such Leninist organizational principles — no less a part of the Trotskyist program than the theory of permanent revolution — were further supplemented, by Lenin and Trotsky among others, in the early 1920s, after the triumph of the Bolshevik Revolution and the founding of the Communist International. One of the most important additions, regarding the party’s role, was the stress on the importance of building united fronts between revolutionary and non-revolutionary organizations. The united front was an important tactic to create unity, and greater effectiveness, in the immediate and also the democratic struggles of the workers and oppressed; in the united front, the revolutionary organization would also have an opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of its political perspectives (there would be the right of political criticism among united front partners) and the effectiveness of its own cadres — ultimately winning more people to the revolutionary banner.

What We Should Do

These are basics of the revolutionary Marxist program of Lenin and Trotsky. All of this continues to have value. It must be utilized, further developed, and popularized by all who agree with it. More than this, there is a rich history of the American Trotskyist movement which has special importance because it represents a blending together of the programmatic orientation just summarized with the history, experience, and achievements of the U.S. working class. The first American Trotskyists were deeply rooted in that history — going back to the Knights of Labor, the Socialist Labor Party, the early AFL, the Socialist Party of America, the Industrial Workers of the World, the early Communist Party — and they made their own contributions from the late 1920s onward. This is an invaluable resource, and we have a responsibility to understand this history as deeply as we can, for the purpose of continuing it.

Discussion

On Paul Le Blanc's Response to My "Critique of the 1992 Manifesto of the Fourth International"

When I wrote the critique, I did not know specifically who the authors of the Manifesto were. I criticized contents, not individuals. It was not a "polemic" but a contribution to political discussion. I was not obliged, as Le Blanc admits, to answer the question: What Is to Be Done? That is what the Manifesto was supposed to do. In my view, it failed.

What I propose is no secret. (See, for example, my speech at the Socialist Scholars Conference, elsewhere in this issue.) And it is implicit in my critique. Least there be any misunderstanding: I propose that Trotskyists should be organized *now* in cadre organizations — whether as propaganda circles, tendencies, the nuclei of a party, or parties — educating, studying, and organizing to *recruit members* and build movements while active in united fronts to promote transitional demands, functioning internally on the basis of democratic centralism.

Le Blanc disagrees with me, and he can't refute what I say theoretically or politically, so he resorts to other, meaner methods.

He charges — there can be no evidence for this — that I have no clear notion of what the Fourth International actually is or what it can actually become, etc. I have as clear a notion as he. The fact is, I attended the recent World Congress of the Fourth International (June 1995) — at considerable personal expense — and interacted with many good comrades there (the opposite of "turning my back" on them). I circulated our Fourth Internationalist magazine, *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, at that Congress and have written a report about the Congress, which I hope will appear in a future issue of *BIDOM*.

Le Blanc implies that my assessments are tainted by untoward emotions such as "frustration, anger, impatience," etc., which, he says, are "poor guides for developing a political analysis."

He implies that I equated the Manifesto with such words as "trash" or "junkheap," or the "dustbin of history," when no such words appeared in my text.

He distorts what I said:

1. In discussing my documentation of the faulty estimation of reality of the Manifesto's authors when they speak of the

"crisis of credibility of socialism," he conveniently leaves out of the quotation their key phrase which I was focusing on — the authors' claim that this crisis "has been developing at *least since the beginning of the 1980s*!" My point is that this crisis of credibility began *long before the 1980s*; it began during the decades of misleadership by the Stalinists, Social Democrats, etc. I could understand Stalinists or bourgeois scholars saying that a crisis of socialism began in the 1980s, but not Trotskyists.

2. Le Blanc claims I describe the Manifesto's authors' "stress on social movements — against sexism, racism, pollution, etc. — as constituting a 'distraction from the organized working-class struggles.'" That is false. I didn't put those two elements together in the same sentence, even the same paragraph; Le Blanc did that. What I said was totally different: "The distraction of the authors from the organized working-class struggles and the rejection of dialectical materialism are twin weaknesses of this document."

He accuses: "Marilyn walks away from... the Manifesto complaining...." I did not. I scrupulously analyzed and criticized it, and my criticisms were serious and practical. But I would be a poor Marxist indeed — a poor practitioner of scientific socialism — if I were to do what Le Blanc suggests: refrain from criticism altogether out of a sense of personal loyalty to the document's authors. That would, in fact, be reprehensible.

Le Blanc's cheap efforts to equate with sectarianism Marxist criticism of his ideas and the ideas of his "good comrades" is well known to anyone who has read his material. That he attempts to do this in his response to me comes as no surprise. Incidentally, readers should not be misled by the gratuitous flattery about me with which he sprinkles his text. These are no more than polemical sweeteners to make more palatable his haughty and distorted assertions and insinuations against me.

I reiterate, as I documented in my review: this Manifesto "doesn't communicate any of

the political lessons that served as the basis for the founding of the Fourth International," i.e., not the centrality of the class struggle or importance of the permanent revolution or internationalism or the vanguard party or the transitional program or the dictatorship of the proletariat; and it has abandoned Trotsky's scientific analysis of the causes and meaning of the degeneration of the Russian revolution with all that entails for understanding the class struggle in this century and understanding Stalinism. The Manifesto is not a Trotskyist document.

Le Blanc essentially admits this when he says: "the primary weakness of the Manifesto is that it does not make explicit the fact that its analyses flow unambiguously from an application of the historic program of the Trotskyist movement to the realities of our time. The failure to make this crystal clear is rooted not simply in a sense of modesty and good manners. There are some comrades within the Fourth International who would *view the expression of such points in the Manifesto as creating a sectarian barrier to connecting with non-Trotskyist theorists and activists on the left* and there are also some comrades who want to transcend what they view as old dogmas." (Emphasis added.)

Q.E.D. It is exactly as I maintained in my review: "Political clarity has been sacrificed for the sake of organizational unity," for the sake of "connecting with non-Trotskyist theorists and activists on the left."

Le Blanc supports this method. He himself has a scheme, elaborated upon in his response to my "Critique." He is advancing this scheme to try to compensate for the dispersion of Trotskyist forces which he already helped orchestrate in the United States. If his scheme is to work, political criticism must be muted. Political clarity must stand aside. It might stand in the way of the "regroupment" with "good comrades" he envisions. So he wants to discredit my opinions by discrediting me.

As political experience has shown, this is a recipe not only for the liquidation of Trotskyism; it is a recipe for defeat.

— Marilyn Vogt-Downey
June 29, 1995

At the present time there is not an organization through which we can simply continue that tradition of American Trotskyism. We must build such an organization — but we must build it in a manner that is true to the tradition which we wish to continue. One aspect of this is to be able discuss and debate with each other in a manner that helps us learn from each other — clarifying common ground, clarifying real dif-

ferences, and moving forward with as many people as we can (which means as many people who are in basic programmatic agreement). A part of this involves reaching out and testing others who claim some identification with the Trotskyist tradition; in this testing, there must be a stress on practical work and serious political functioning.

There may be a temptation to quickly, prema-

tirely whip together some kind of "Trotskyist" organization — but that will mean creating another sect. Instead, we must be creating preconditions for organizational unity of serious, critical-minded Trotskyist activists who are absolutely not interested in being a sect, but who instead are interested in reaching out to many more people for the purpose of building a mass workers party that will be capable of winning.

This brings us to aspects of the other prong of our dual task. Serious Trotskyists should be engaging in real struggles, as effectively as they can, promoting as broad a participation as possible, for the purpose of advancing:

- democratic, militant and socially-conscious trade unionism;
- democratic organizations and struggles in working-class communities;
- struggles, organizations, and movements around women's rights, in opposition to racism, against the cutback assaults of the "Contract on America," in defense of the environment, against imperialism and war, for gay rights, for free speech, in solidarity with liberation struggles of other countries, in defense of Cuba, against hate crimes, etc.;
- important class-conscious currents in the labor movement — Jobs with Justice, Workers Unity Network, Black Workers for Justice, and most especially helping to circulate *Labor Notes* and to promote its activities;
- Labor Party Advocates, and in some cases other organizations (such as Campaign for a New Tomorrow) designed to promote independent working-class political action;
- actual independent electoral campaigns which help to advance a working-class break from the capitalist political parties and pave the way for an actual labor party.

In addition to all of this, there is important socialist educational work to be done, as well as the development of research and analyses that will shed light on the realities that we are facing at the end of the 20th century. Such educational and intellectual work can contribute greatly to the broader struggles just listed, as well as helping to spread socialist consciousness more widely.

It should be obvious that it is not possible for one person or even a few persons to do all of these things. We must not exhaust ourselves, but must conserve some energy and resources for "the long haul," prioritizing, pacing ourselves, and working with others as much as possible (even with those who are not in full agreement with us on important questions) to see that essential things are done.

Related to this is the fact that there are some relatively broad formations of socialists — the most significant being Solidarity and Committees of Correspondence (CoC) — as well as more modest formations such as the New York Marxist School. But specific labels are not as important as what any particular organization in any particular locality actually does. Neither CoC nor Solidarity are the historic culmination of anything in particular, nor are they likely to be permanent fixtures on the American Left — they are transitional. And in fact, neither of these organizations has any pretensions to being "the" organization of the U.S. left or the revolutionary vanguard of the working class. Both groups, however, contain serious activists who are involved in real struggles and who attempt — through discussion and education — to reach out to non-socialists, involve more people in

broad political struggles, and spread socialist consciousness. Both groups contain a number of people whose politics is badly deficient, from a Trotskyist perspective. The fact remains that within both organizations it is possible to do good political work, to have fruitful discussions, and to promote valuable educational work consistent with the revolutionary Marxist programmatic perspective outlined here.

Serious Trotskyists will seek to work with Solidarity and CoC and other groupings, in part because some of their members may be drawn to, and can contribute to, the revolutionary Marxist program, and because many of their members will be making important contributions to various positive struggles, including the creation of a mass workers party of the future. The existence of such organizations contributes to the creation of a socialist pole of activists and cadres that could help advance important aspects of the struggle and political organization of the working class. Some Trotskyists may choose to function in one or another of these organizations. Others may choose to seek close working relations, or perhaps united fronts.

The question of united fronts among left-wing groups — unity in action with forces to what one sees as one's "left" and one's "right" — is certainly a precondition for building the broad social struggles and the broad socialist educational work that are a precondition for the creation of a mass workers party. What is key, however, is not "all people on the left getting together," but rather people working together who agree on the importance of certain practical work. Unity in and of itself is not a revolution-

ary principle — but unity that helps advance the cause of the working class is. If some people who identify as Trotskyists find that they are in basic agreement on what to do in carrying out practical work (work designed to advance the struggles of the workers and the oppressed, and to facilitate the creation of a mass workers party whose existence can give greater practical political relevance to revolutionary Marxist perspectives), then it will make sense for them to unify in a single Trotskyist organization. (The relation between building a Trotskyist organization and building a broader labor party is discussed in "Labor Party and Marxism in the United States," *BIDOM*, No. 123, March 1995.)

To the extent that such efforts discussed here are successful, of course, they will contribute mightily to the strengthening of the Fourth International.

At the present time, unfortunately, the only organized framework for those who adhere to this general orientation in the United States is the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, a magazine with a proud tradition yet limited resources (and, as Marilyn's polemic suggests, some tensions among its adherents). But the discussions which *BIDOM* promotes are vitally important for the dual task outlined here. The supporters of the magazine had hoped to organize an educational conference this past spring — a task which proved to be beyond our abilities. Perhaps in the coming year such a conference will be organized that is able to facilitate discussion among those who embrace the revolutionary Marxist program, further advancing the process that can strengthen our movement in the United States. □

Corrections to Interview with Genora Johnson Dollinger

[As we reported in our issue for May-June 1995, some errors appeared in the interview "The Role of Women...in the First Sit-Down Strikes," which occurred in our March issue. Because of time factors in producing that issue we suspended our normal procedure of having the person interviewed review the transcript and introductory materials. It was our misunderstanding that this cutting of corners had been okayed by Comrade Genora. She has sent us the following letter, which we are happy to publish. The errors, though small, could create confusion, and we are interested in forestalling any possible repetition of these inaccuracies by others — Eds.]

To the Editors:

Due to a misunderstanding I did not see a copy of Kathleen O'Nan's interview with me before it was submitted to you for the March 1995 issue. Unfortunately, a number of errors appeared which deserve correction since these events are related in other publications.

1. Sol Dollinger worked at the Chevrolet Assembly Plant in Flint, Michigan, but he was not in the sit-down strikes of 1937, as was stated in O'Nan's introduction to the interview.

2. John Menton, the first Socialist mayor of Flint, was elected in 1911. The interview reports his election in 1913.

3. The spelling is "Brookwood Labor College" (not "Bookwood").

4. Tucker Smith was president of the Mechanics Educational Society of America and was not a leader of the UAW [United Auto Workers].

5. After the "Battle of Bulls Run," Kermit Johnson and I, my brother, and several others celebrated the victory by composing songs that were parodies of popular melodies of the day. We did not do this during the shooting battle, as was stated in the interview.

6. The reference to the chamber pot brought into the plant did occur. It happened when my husband, Sol, was working at the [unionized] Chevrolet Assembly Plant. Before the union was established, no worker would have dared to do this, even in jest.

All of the above would have normally been corrected if I had had the chance to go over the draft. I would appreciate your making note of these corrections and thank you for doing this.

Sincerely,
Genora Dollinger

An Unsatisfactory Biography of Lenin

Lenin: A New Biography by Dmitri Volkogonov, translated and edited by Harold Shukman. New York, New York: The Free Press, 1994, \$30.

Reviewed by Joe Auciello.

What is there left to say about Lenin that would justify yet another biography? There is no lack of information about the founder of the Bolshevik party and main architect of the Soviet Union. Lenin's *Collected Works* run to fifty-five volumes; innumerable essays and books have been printed about him in the seventy years since his death, including a thorough biography by Ronald Clark published as recently as 1988.

The potential interest of this new work is the author's access to previously closed files and the material from them that is published in his book. Volkogonov liberally quotes memos, telegrams, etc. stored in the Russian Centre for the Preservation and Study of Recent Historical Documentation. He tells us that there are 3,724 unpublished documents by Lenin, in addition to those of other party leaders.

Nonetheless, despite its potential interest, the book is a failure on several counts. Most of the unpublished writings of Lenin are of minor concern, adding details, at best. Generally, these cables and telegrams, primarily from the civil war era, complement what informed readers already knew. No one will be surprised to discover that Lenin issued harsh, even merciless directives against counterrevolutionaries, deserters, black marketers, and the like. The archives underscore information already available in Lenin's *Collected Works*. Trotsky, as commander of the Red Army, issued similar orders and quotes these in full in his autobiography. Frankly, at this point in history, there is little that could possibly emerge from the archives of the Communist Party that would substantially alter the factual record and fundamentally influence the various, conflicting interpretations of Lenin.

Further, Volkogonov's *Lenin* is less a biography than an essay, a polemic that ranges from topic to topic, full of tangents, skipping decades in history, following the spiral of a theme and losing the main thread of its narrative.

But the major criticism of the book concerns not its jumbled organization but its jumbled argument. Volkogonov argues that Leninism and Stalinism are essentially identical. The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly in January 1918 led to Leninist dictatorship which, in turn, gave rise to the even more brutal regime of Stalin, who "true to his mentor's teaching... saw human lives as no more than statistical units." To make such an argument one must lift Lenin and the Russian revolution out of their

time and weigh them on the scales of moral abstractions:

Lenin and his successors assumed that in the name of the happiness of future generations, everything was permitted and moral: the export of revolution, civil war, unbridled violence, social experimentation... But having acquired the opportunity to abolish these evils, the Leninists established a new, barely disguised form of exploitation... in place of class unfreedom came total unfreedom. (page xxxi)

Obviously, then, Volkogonov asserts that Lenin paved the way for Stalin, that Stalin's crimes were, with some exceptions, continuing the tradition which Lenin himself established. "Lenin is the source of the totalitarian ideology of intolerance." This is the major point of the book.

Not surprisingly, this new volume of old ideas has received accolades from Western academics. Adam B. Ulam concludes, in the October 1994 issue of *Commentary*, that Volkogonov "is a very interesting man who has written a most instructive book." Other reviewers have been more effusive in their praise. Robert Conquest, himself the author of a tendentious volume on Lenin, writing in the June 8 *New York Review of Books* sums up Volkogonov's work in a statement that is bound to reappear as the front-cover blurb for the paperback edition: "it is the most striking contribution to our understanding of Lenin to have appeared for many years." Despite some quibbling that Volkogonov's *Lenin* does not account for the Soviet leader's personal influence, Steven Merritt Miner pronounces the book "a milestone" and favorably compares the author to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. (*The New York Times Book Review*, May 14, 1995).

The purpose of Volkogonov's book and the reason for its overly generous reception in the West is to buttress previous hostile interpretations of Lenin with the credibility given by a Russian, a former Soviet general who experienced a "revelation" as he conducted his research in long-sealed archives. This point is made explicit by Robert Legvold in the Nov./Dec. 1994 issue of *Foreign Affairs*: "The book's real value for a Western audience is... the additional weight he gives to interpretations that see Lenin as the forerunner of Stalinism, not as the author of a revolution betrayed by Stalin."

The essential flaw in Volkogonov's argument is that the Soviet Union never possessed the powers he claims for it, especially during the civil war, when Lenin's dictatorial methods supposedly took root. In fact, the Russian revolution could hardly "abolish" the social evils that beset humanity; it was, instead, besieged on all sides by counterrevolution and foreign intervention. The revolution lit-

erally fought for its life — defeat would mean certain death. If the White armies had triumphed they would have continued their own terror; a bloodbath would have resulted with Bolsheviks, their supporters, and the working class as victims. The Bolshevik leaders were well aware of the Paris Commune and the fate of the defeated Communards. Bourgeois reaction had, in Lenin's words, "drowned the proletariat of Paris in blood." A similar fate awaited the Soviets. It should be no surprise then, that Lenin urged victory, even at terrible cost.

Not every decision of Lenin's is to be taken as gospel; it is certainly possible to criticize and learn from the Bolshevik experience. Samuel Farber has written a controversial critique of Lenin: *Before Stalinism — The Rise and Fall of Soviet Democracy* that faults the Bolsheviks for failing to appreciate the necessity of democratic institutions in the socialist revolution (in response, see, for instance, Steve Bloom's lengthy review in the March 1992 *BIDOM*). But Farber's work is indisputably within the revolutionary socialist framework. A more balanced criticism of Lenin and Trotsky was advanced by Ernest Mandel some years ago in *Revolutionary Marxism Today*:

in order to defend soviet power in extremely difficult and dangerous conditions, they took decisions — with an iron determination that we can only approve of — which led them to introduce measures that broke in practice with soviet democracy... These measures were recognized, at least implicitly, as representing deformations, not general rules...

However, there was also a... more dangerous aspect... This was their attempt to give some of these measures a general theoretical foundation that is quite unacceptable...

I think that the Bolsheviks were wrong in 1921... The measures taken at that time assisted and developed that process [of bureaucratization]. We should have the courage to recognize that this was an error and that the Opposition slogan of 1923 "Extend rather than reduce soviet democracy" was valid from 1921 onwards. (pp. 30-32)

In the biography's concluding chapter, "The Mausoleum of Leninism," Volkogonov sums up the thesis of his project:

As Brezhnev declared on 20 June 1968, "the main thing is that we must always, at all stages, defend Leninism from any attack, any assault... Leninism must be defended and we will defend it consistently and implacably... As you know, we have built our life and all our work according to Lenin. This is no empty phrase, it is our real life, it is our real work."

It would be hard to disagree: everything done in Soviet Russia after Lenin's death was done according to his blueprint, his precepts and his principles: the totalitarian state, the bureaucratic society, the dominance of a single ideology, militant atheism, the planned economy, the incredible exploitation of la-

bor, the endless militarization of the country, the tireless search for new enemies. (page 450)

Official Soviet ideologues have always claimed a direct lineage to Lenin. For them, and the bureaucracy they represented, deceit was a necessity which complemented and covered up terror, the liquidation of Lenin's life work. The murderers of Lenin's comrades — and many thousands of party members as well — portrayed themselves as Lenin's heirs. Later generations of party leaders had every reason to maintain the fiction and from it derive the credibility granted by continuity with the October Revolution.

Volkogonov believes the official line, as he believed it all along. The only difference is that now he sees this supposed link to Lenin

as a vice instead of a virtue. The Stalinist bureaucrats and the capitalist intelligentsia had long established a curious symmetry in viewing Lenin as the fount of all that followed in the USSR. They differed only in the conclusion, or judgment, derived from a common premise. For all the original thinking based on original research that Volkogonov claims for himself and his biography, his findings are the traditional ideas of traditional anti-Marxists. The stale ideas repeated *ad nauseam* by conservative academics in the West — Wolfe, Ulam, Schapiro, Pipes, for instance — can present itself as new thinking for a new era in Russia only to the ignorant and unwary.

This biography represents a farcical account of a tragedy which the author has never been able to comprehend. The counter-revo-

lution which is Stalinism does not appear in this book. Socialism in one country, revolution by stages, the Moscow Trials, the creation of a totalitarian state — these are the creations of Stalin and the privileged layer he represented. Volkogonov is unable to formulate an analysis of Stalinism or even recognize it as such; he can only count ahistorical similarities to Lenin. That Stalinism goes unrecognized is its posthumous triumph. The author unwittingly perpetuates the Stalinist tradition, all the while claiming to have transcended it.

Volkogonov's *Lenin* is a disappointing, insignificant work; it is destined for the remainder table of literature. □

The Workers Struggle in Russia and the "Specter" of Trotskyism

Continued from page 18

ure of the unions to act decisively in the face of inflation and unemployment 'was one of the reasons we were having a drop in our membership.'" (For an article based on an interview with Reshetnikov, see the conference labr.cis on the Internet, an entry dated January 8, 1995, and titled "Trade unions in Russia." This entry is said to be "from the January 7, 1995 *People's Weekly World*." That is the newspaper of the American Communist Party headed by Gus Hall. For some reason it uses the French spelling of the FITUR leader's name — "Rechetnikov.") Since 1992, according to Reshetnikov, the FITUR has lost at least 14 million members.

Under pressure of worker discontent, the FITUR had finally organized a protest in October 1994 involving some 8 million of its 50-million members. But its demands were meek indeed: for workers to receive their back pay and for a program for the unemployed. Reshetnikov explained that "the demand that the unions take action came from the people, from the workers themselves. They said, 'Do something or forfeit your leadership. You meet with the prime minister and the ministry of labor every other day, but where are the results?'"

"In retrospect, Reshetnikov thinks it was a mistake to play down political demands at the time of the October 1994 protests, and the FITUR proposal that there be none was rejected in several cities where workers put forward demands that the government resign or, at least, that presidential elections take place before 1996." Renfrey Clarke reports that 60 of the 78 regional organizations of the FITUR had so far expressed support for the April 12 initiative. [See the May-June *BIDOM*, for a summation by Renfrey Clarke of the actual events on April 12, "Russian Union Day of Action Makes an Impact." — Eds.]

But what are the demands being raised by the FITUR leadership? The two main demands appear to be payment of more back

wages — some owed since last year! — and guaranteed employment. However, this time, there are reports that "in almost all the regions that will take part, workers and their unions will be concentrating on political slogans," including calls for early elections and the resignation of the government. Who will replace those who resign? That is a crucial problem.

Renfrey Clarke reports that the FITUR leadership plans to form a "left-center coalition" — even perhaps in an alliance with an association of factory directors — for the parliamentary elections in December 1995. Such a coalition with factory directors would mean compromising workers interests, and this would soon discredit the workers representatives in the coalition and the coalition itself. Anyway, the parliament has no power. All power resides in the Yeltsin's Security Council, which is nothing but a few hand-picked individuals who will follow the IMF's leadership. Focusing on the elections offers no solution to workers problems. As Clarke states, only "an organized, active movement of millions of politicized workers" can challenge the government and the IMF policies and win workers demands.

However, such mobilizations are not the perspective offered by the FITUR officialdom. Renfrey Clarke states that "while calling on unions to mobilize their ranks on April 12, officials of the FITUR have undercut this process by insisting that the day of action is only one of the mechanisms being employed by the federation — and a lesser one at that. 'As before, we consider our main tool to be the process of negotiations,'" a FITUR official stated.

The politics of the "left-center coalition" that the FITUR leaders refer to are no more inspiring than the rest of their program: "resist destructive experiments on our Russia, and onslaughts by radicals and extremists of the right and left."

As before, the privileged officials on top — which is what the labor officialdom is in

both the United States and in Russia — can offer nothing to workers but organized retreat. They not only have no vision that can mobilize the masses of workers but they fear that masses of mobilized workers might mean an end to the status quo the officials enjoy so much.

Retreats mean further weakening the numbers of organized workers and hurt the class as a whole. What is needed is an organized and disciplined cadre of Marxist workers in the workers movement who have read and absorbed the lessons of the past and are not afraid to discuss differences and work out solutions to answer the critical question: What to do next.

A Specter of Trotskyism Is Haunting Russia

According to Reshetnikov, the FITUR leaders "went out of their way to discourage political demands in [October 1994] in order to prevent Trotskyites and extremists from 'spoiling' the activity." Considering how small the Trotskyist groups are, they could hardly pose a direct challenge from the ranks, although their literature raising a transitional program for struggle could reach considerable numbers of workers and get them thinking.

Evidently what Reshetnikov is referring to is the deepgoing hostility among workers to bureaucratic domination. This was labeled "Trotskyism" during the Stalinist purges too, as mentioned above. It still exists and still poses a threat to bureaucratic domination. That appears to be what the FITUR bureaucrats are afraid of.

The point is to tap that strength and direct it into a political movement to overthrow bureaucratic rule and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat over the bureaucracy to replace the dictatorship of the bureaucracy over the workers.

That is the real "left," those who are organizing for revolution. □

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The Manifesto of the Fourth International

Socialism or Barbarism on the Eve of the Twenty-First Century

This document was adopted by a meeting of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (FI) in 1992. It is the product of months of discussion within that world organization and an extensive process of rewriting and revision from an original draft proposed before the FI's World Congress in 1991.

The FI is an international organization of revolutionary Marxist parties and groups from dozens of countries throughout the world. It was founded in 1938 under the leadership of Leon Trotsky, dedicated to a consistent and forthright struggle for the common interests of working people and the oppressed in all nations — to their mobilization in struggle against capitalist exploitation, colonialism, and bureaucratic dictatorship, and against all forms of racial and sexual discrimination.

It should be clear, from the perspectives presented here, that the FI remains true to that purpose today. This, in itself, stands as a major accomplishment in a world where many former leftists and radical activists are rushing to embrace the "new realism" of a capitalism that has supposedly "triumphed over socialism" during the cold war.

But reality is a far cry from the "new world order" proclaimed by U.S. President George Bush after his victory against Iraq in 1991. It is, as the Manifesto points out, a world of increasing disorder — of insecurity, crisis, preventable hunger, poverty, and disease. These things are more the rule than the exception for most of the billions of people on this planet.

In short, we are living in a world that cries out for a renewed commitment to the fight for social change, for a more just and humane political and economic system. Just such a commitment, and a perspective on how those needed changes can be brought about, will be found in the pages of this pamphlet.

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This book consists of selected documents mostly produced by a political tendency that was organized in the Socialist Workers Party to defend and advance the revolutionary perspectives of Trotskyism. This tendency, which began to develop in the party in 1979, waged a struggle inside the Socialist Workers Party until the expulsion of its adherents in 1984, when they established a new group called the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. Also represented here are oppositionists who became prominent in other groups — Socialist Action and the Fourth International Caucus of Solidarity. Included are materials produced by two of the oldest and most prestigious veterans in the SWP, Tom Kerry and George Breitman. A substantial introductory essay by Frank Lovell, "The Meaning of the Struggle Inside the Socialist Workers Party," provides valuable back-

ground information and places the volume in a larger historical perspective.

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This book focuses on the waves of expulsions which hit the Socialist Workers Party from 1981 through 1984. It provides an inspiring record — and reaffirmation — of the revolutionary ideas and commitments of those who were being forced out of the organization to which many had given "the whole of their lives." also included are: substantial pieces by SWP leaders Jack Barnes and Larry Seigle defending the expulsions; a critique by representatives of the Fourth International; letters and a talk by pioneer Trotskyist James P. Cannon, originally published under the title *Don't Strangle the Party*. A substantial introductory essay by Paul Le Blanc, "Leninism in the United States and the Decline of the Socialist Workers Party," relates the 1981–84 experience to

broader questions of "the vanguard party" and Leninism, the history and character of American Trotskyism, the development of the U.S. working class, and the realities of world politics in the 20th century.

Volume Three:

Rebuilding the Revolutionary Party

edited by Paul Le Blanc, 148 pages (1990) — \$9.00

This book consists of eight documents. The longest, written in 1983 by Paul Le Blanc and Dianne Feeley, is entitled "In Defense of Revolutionary Continuity" — a response to SWP leader Jack Barnes's attack on Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. Also included is the founding platform of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, a lengthy 1988 analysis of the SWP by Frank Lovell and Paul Le Blanc, and two major documents produced by the FIT when the Socialist Workers Party formally broke from the Fourth International in 1990. The volume concludes with three documents dealing with the need for unity among revolutionary socialists in the United States.