

In Defense of Marxism

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Don't Bomb Iraq!

Thousands Oppose Clinton's War Threat

Also, from the Arsenal of Marxism:

Eugene V. Debs:
For a Labor Party — 1925

Tom Kerry:
On Affirmative Action, Unions,
and the Courts — 1975

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A Note from the Managing Editors

This issue is larger than usual because of several feature pieces.

For one, we are reprinting a 1975 article by Tom Kerry on interrelated, often quite tangled issues involving unions, civil and democratic rights, affirmative action, the courts, and what position revolutionaries should take on these complex issues. We hope this will initiate a discussion on how to apply the analysis Kerry makes to the present day — for example, involvement of the courts in the issue of union members' right to elect officers of their own choosing.

We also reprint, or publish for the first time, two works by Eugene V. Debs on the question of a labor party in this country. These documents are introduced by Chris Driscoll, a Labor Party member in Washington, D.C., who located them in the Library of Congress. In addition to historical background, Chris presents his own views on past and present problems faced by labor parties. Special thanks to Lee DeNoyer for typing the often hard-to-read originals of the Debs pieces for *BIDOM*.

In addition, we present Part Two of Paul Le Blanc's comprehensive account of the wide range of views on the 1917 Russian Revolution and its meaning for today, presented at a conference in Paris last November. Of special interest are the views of the Cuban participant in the conference, who favorably cites Ernest Mandel and shows an openness to Trotskyist ideas that is quite encouraging.

Our issue also features Tom Barrett's review essay on Seymour Hersh's controversial book on the Kennedys. As readers will see, many threads from the Kennedy era have continued down to the times we are living in.

Deepening radicalization in the working class is reflected in the reports here on a rail strike in Mexico; a strike at Honeywell; rejection of the Caterpillar contract; and the fight by health professionals against the profit system and for better patient care. Charles Walker continues to enlighten us on developments in the Teamsters union. And labor political action is discussed by Jean Tussey and David Bacon.

Radicalization among African Americans is reflected in the call for a Black Radical Congress in Chicago in June and in Assata Shakur's moving letter to the Pope on his visit to Cuba.

International Issues

Tom Barrett appraises the latest phase in the U.S. ruling class's drive toward renewed war on Iraq. It is significant that the Central Labor Council in San Francisco issued a statement against bombing Iraq. This reflects a trend in the AFL-CIO toward developing a separate foreign policy, more in the interests of the working class — instead of blindly tagging along behind the bipartisan foreign policy of finance capital, as happened in the Meany-Kirkland era. AFL-CIO President Sweeney, on a recent visit to Mexico, spoke up for the Hyundai feeder plant workers in Tijuana who voted for an independent union. The AFL-CIO is also opposing IMF loans to the Indonesian dictator Suharto while Indonesian trade unionists continue to be arrested or held in prison. A UAW regional body has called for an end to the blockade of Cuba. And an unprecedentedly large U.S.-Cuban conference at the Berkeley campus included Labor Party leader Kit Costello as a featured speaker.

Three articles by Fourth Internationalists in this issue look at the disastrous economic developments in Asia. And as we went to press, an emergency appeal for support to the Zapatistas came to our attention. We have included it on our back cover.

Labor Party

We reprint from the *Labor Party Press* the text of the Labor Party electoral committee's report proposing a future electoral strategy. This is preceded by an article commenting on the proposal by Bill Onasch, a member of the committee. Local Labor Party activities are reported in this issue by Paul Le Blanc of the Metro Pittsburgh chapter and Bob Mast of the New Mexico chapter. As the Labor Party convention draws closer we will return to discussion of differing views on how to best build the party and ensure an independent political voice for American workers.

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Jean Tussey

Lisa Weltman

Vera Wigglesworth

International Contributing

Editors (partial list):

Pierre Broué

Rosario Ibarra de Piedra

Livio Maitan

Rosendo Mendoza

Manuel Aguilar Mora

Barry Weisleder

Zhang Kai

Send correspondence and subscriptions to *Bulletin IDOM*, P.O. Box 1317, New York, NY 10009. To subscribe to *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, send \$24 for one year (6 issues) or \$15 for 3 issues to *Bulletin IDOM*, P.O. Box 1317, New York, NY 10009. Back issues are \$3.00 each. Indexed in the Alternative Press Index.

Clinton's Failed Mideast Policy Threatens New Gulf War

by Tom Barrett

Seven years after its victory in the Gulf War, the U.S. government's strategy for domination of the Middle East has unraveled. The alliance of Arab and European countries with the United States against Iraq has crumbled; the U.S.-brokered "agreement" between Israel and the Palestinian leadership has essentially collapsed; and post-Cold War Russia is asserting a new and independent foreign policy, reminiscent of the tsarist competition with Britain for Mideast dominance a century ago.

The Bush-Clinton Middle East strategy, which at one time appeared to be successful beyond Washington's fondest hopes, has become an abject failure. In response, Clinton has threatened aerial warfare against Iraq — but this time without an explicit objective and with no allies except the United Kingdom and Israel, which has become more a liability than an asset to U.S. Mideast policy. American working people can only shake their heads in confusion as Clinton threatens to send young workers off to fight and die; in the meantime Arab working people are dying of mal-

nutrition and disease under the impact of the brutal economic embargo imposed on Iraq by the United States.

At the same time, the "peace process," which was supposed to put an end to fighting between the state of Israel and the Palestinian Arabs, came to a dead stop over a year ago. The right-wing Israeli government, headed by Benjamin Netanyahu, has insisted on the most humiliating conditions for any continuation of peace negotiations with the Palestinian Authority. It has refused to consider giving up the Jewish settlements within the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which Israel has occupied illegally since the Six-Day War of 1967; it has demanded the right to control transportation and water distribution within those same illegally occupied territories; and it has demanded that the Palestinian Authority prevent further acts of individual terrorism by the Islamic nationalist groups, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad — which the Palestinian Authority cannot do without a total repressive clampdown, which in turn would lead to its own overthrow by the

Palestinian people. To the extent that Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has attempted to compromise with the Zionist state, more Arabs, especially young unemployed men, have turned to those groups which have promised to continue to fight.

This government of Netanyahu came to power only when a young Zionist assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. He was so poisoned by racism and hatred that he could consider the leader of the Israeli forces in 1967 a traitor to Israel, something which Rabin was not and never could have been. But the dangerous dynamic of racism, unleashed in the birth process of the Israeli state itself, was not checked even by the murder of one of Zionism's most dedicated leaders, and those who agree with the motivation for Rabin's killing, if not the act itself, took power over two years ago, and have put an effective end to any further compromise by the Israeli state. The Clinton administration, representing big businessmen who need stability above all in the oil-rich Middle East, had been the biggest sponsor of the compromise process. All of the self-congratulatory speeches on the White House lawn in 1994 have proved to be nothing more than empty phrases.

In spite of the threat to Mideast stability, Washington has not reacted to Israel's flouting of United Nations resolutions, nor to its threats against its

No More War Against Iraq

Declaration adopted by the International Executive Committee of the Fourth International, February 21, 1998:

There is one country in the world that has produced more weapons of mass destruction than any other. This same country is also the only one to ever use its weapons of mass destruction against another people—at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

It is the most transparent hypocrisy, therefore, for the government of the United States to claim that it has some moral obligation to act as world policeman as it did during the Gulf war and is again today—under the cover of keeping Saddam Hussein from developing weapons of mass destruction. Whatever such weapons the criminal Iraqi regime does, indeed, have—or whatever capability to develop them—it is only the result of the aid Baghdad received from the U.S. and

European powers when Saddam was seen as an ally in the region against the Iranian revolution and the rise of Islamic Fundamentalism.

Today the U.S., backed by others, is threatening to once again launch military strikes against Iraq. Washington claims that its target is Hussein's failure to comply with U.N. resolutions. But the Clinton administration knows full well that it cannot force compliance through bombs and embargoes.

Working people in Iraq and worldwide have no interest in defending Saddam Hussein, who has committed the worst kind of butchery against his own country's population and denies the right of self-determination for the Kurds. But no

one should have any illusions that Washington can be the liberator of Iraq—and this is the furthest thing from the minds of the Clinton administration. Indeed, as long as the embargo and threat of military retaliation remain it will be that much more difficult for any significant internal Iraqi opposition to develop.

The main victim of the Gulf war and of the present imperialist campaign is the civilian population of Iraq. Already half a million children have died as a direct result of the blockade—for want of basic food and medicine. How many more victims must there be before the world says "enough?"

We say: "No More War Against the People of Iraq!"

End the Embargo Now!

Says Movement Must Stay Mobilized to Combat War Threats

Antiwar Organizer Knocks Down Government Lies

Sara Flounders, coordinator and spokesperson for the International Action Center, has debated pro-government pundits on Iraqi policy. Flounders answers the five most-repeated government lies about its Iraq policy.

Government lie: The people of the United States overwhelmingly support the administration's policy toward Iraq.

Flounders's response: The students at Ohio State University put that lie to rest on Feb. 18. At the IAC we saw it coming when hundreds of groups of people around the country contacted our web site or called to report their antiwar actions or get advice or material.

The people know the top politicians lie — and not only about their private lies. They lie about war, from the sinking of the U.S. battleship Maine 100 years ago to Vietnam's supposed Gulf of Tonkin attack to today's charge of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

Some people may think the last-minute agreement has ended the threat of war. But U.S. and British troops, aircraft carriers and missiles remain in the Gulf, ready to strike. As long as the Pentagon is mobilized for war, as long as sanctions continue, the anti-war movement must stay mobilized to fight to stop that war.

And we at the IAC will expose any lies or provocations Clinton and the Pentagon try to invent to justify a new attack.

Lie: U.S. strategy aims at forcing Saddam Hussein to abide by United Nations resolutions and allow UNSCOM agents "unfettered access" to sites where Iraq can manufacture chemical and biological weapons.

Flounders: First of all, the charge is always put like a lawyer would put it, so you have to look at their words carefully. Iraq is said to have the "capacity" or the "ability" to make weapons. The weapons are "suspected." Or that Iraq has materials that could have a "dual use." They use the charge that such weapons can't be found against Iraq, rather than concluding the obvious, that such weapons don't exist. Former UNSCOM inspector Raymond Zalinskis admitted to National Public Radio that UN inspectors had already seen all reasonable weapons sites and had destroyed whatever potential existed. Only by killing all the Iraqi scientists, he said, could the U.S. do more. So it's all a ruse, used to cloak Washington's real aims in the Persian/Arabian Gulf.

Iraq's territory contains one-tenth of the earth's known oil reserves, some 100 billion barrels. Mobil, Exxon, Texaco and Shell, which are headquartered in the U.S. and Britain, want unfettered access to this oil so they can monopolize the vast profits made from pumping, delivering and refining this natural resource. Washington is merely working on behalf of Big Oil, which wants to replace the Iraqi government with a compliant puppet regime that will open the gates wide to fabulous profit.

In addition, by attacking Iraq the Pentagon sends a message to all oppressed countries — and even to U.S. allies — that it will use its monopoly of military power against anyone who refuses to submit.

A Pentagon "White Paper" the New York Times published on March 8, 1992, described this policy.

Lie: Iraq is dangerous to the world. It possesses, plans to build and is ready to use weapons of mass destruction.

Flounders: The U.S. military has more weapons of mass destruction than the rest of the world combined. It has used nuclear weapons against the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, and carried out devastating bombings of Korea, Vietnam and Iraq. It also bombed Libya and invaded Grenada and Panama.

In the 1991 war against Iraq, the U.S. flew 110,000 aerial sorties and dropped 88,000 tons of explosives in 42 days. This and the ground war killed at least 100,000 Iraqi soldiers and tens of thousands of civilians. Iraq responded with 58 Scud missiles, and U.S. forces lost only 148 personnel, one-third from friendly fire.

Today, Iraq's army is much weaker than it was seven years ago. Can anyone seriously believe the Pentagon considers Iraq a threat?

Lie: The U.S. government cares about the welfare of the Iraqi people.

Flounders: This is probably the most absurd lie of them all.

Let me explain how the U.S. government "takes care" of the Iraqis' welfare: Since 1990, Washington has been the leading world force imposing war and sanctions on the country. In the 1991 war, U.S. air strikes destroyed the electric grid and power plants, water refineries, the

sewage system, pharmaceutical and food-production plants.

Since then, sanctions have murdered 1.5 million Iraqis, including 700,000 children. UN agencies say the sanctions still kill 4,500 Iraqi children each month.

On "60 Minutes" a few years ago, Leslie Stahl asked then-UN Ambassador Madeleine Albright if U.S. policies were worth killing a half-million Iraqi children. Albright answered, "Yes, it is worth it."

That's U.S. humanitarianism in a nutshell.

Now Pentagon generals are talking of targeting "dual-purpose" factories. That means pharmaceutical or fertilizer plants that might possibly produce chemical weapons, or food-processing plants that "might possibly" produce dangerous bacteria. They think this gives them the "right" to bomb Iraq back to the stone age.

Lie: Iraq is a bully and a threat to its neighbors in the Gulf region.

Flounders: Actually, the U.S. is the bully in the region, with its aircraft carriers, military bases, and so on. The U.S. is widely seen to be attempting to recolonize Iraq. With the exception of Kuwait — now completely dependent on the United States — no Gulf regime will publicly back a U.S. attack on Iraq. This refusal is only a pale shadow of the hatred the masses of people in the region have for Pentagon bullying of the Iraqi people.

Even Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak — who is completely dependent on billions of dollars in U.S. aid — warned the U.S. government that if it attacked Iraq this would destabilize other countries in the region by arousing mass protests.

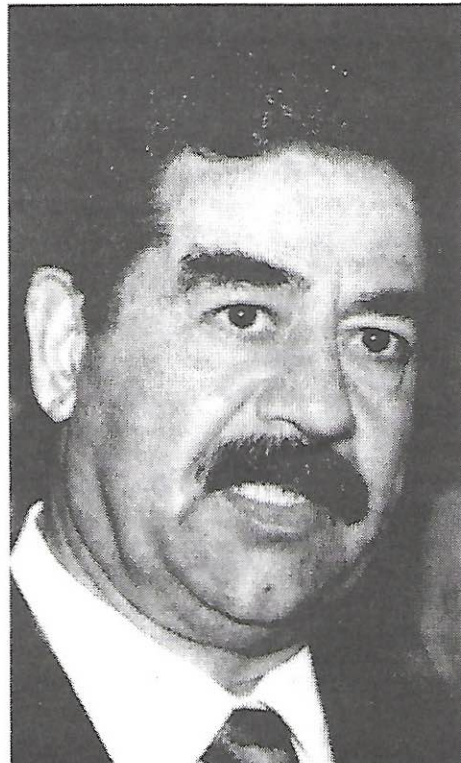
And Iran, which fought Iraq in a war from 1980–1988, has opposed U.S. military moves in the Gulf. That in itself speaks volumes on how the people of the Gulf region see the United States and the Pentagon as the real bullies.

International Action Center
39 West 14th Street #206
New York, New York 10011
email: iacenter@iacenter.org
http://www.iacenter.org
phone: (212) 633-6646
fax: (212) 633-2889



UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan

neighbors, nor to its possession of "weapons of mass destruction" — including nuclear weapons — in the same way that it has to Iraq's. Clearly, the United States has a double standard in its Middle East policy — holding Iraq to far more stringent rules of compliance than apply to Israel, a fact which is not lost on the working people of the Arab countries nor on their political



Saddam Hussein

Text of the United Nations–Iraq Agreement

Following is the text of the agreement signed by the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, Tariq Aziz, and the United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, obtained by The Associated Press:

Memorandum of Understanding between the United Nations and the Republic of Iraq.

1. The Government of Iraq reconfirms its acceptance of all relevant resolutions of the Security Council, including resolutions 687 (1991) and 715 (1991). The Government of Iraq further reiterates its undertaking to cooperate fully with the United Nations Special Commission (Unscm) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (I.A.E.A.).

2. The United Nations reiterates the commitment of all member states to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq.

3. The Government of Iraq undertakes to accord to Unscm and I.A.E.A. immediate, unconditional and unrestricted access in conformity with the resolutions referred to in paragraph 1. In the performance of its mandate under the Security Council resolutions, Unscm undertakes to respect the legitimate concerns of Iraq relating to national security, sovereignty and dignity.

4. The United Nations and the Government of Iraq agree that the following special procedures shall apply to the initial and subsequent entries for the performance of the tasks mandated at the eight presidential sites in Iraq as defined in the annex to the present memorandum:

a) A special group shall be established for this purpose by the Secretary General in consultation with the Executive Chairman of Unscm and the Director General of I.A.E.A. This group shall comprise senior diplomats appointed by the Secretary General and experts drawn from Unscm and I.A.E.A. The group shall be headed by a commissioner appointed by the Secretary General.

b) In carrying out its work, the special group shall operate under the established procedures of Unscm and I.A.E.A., and specific detailed procedures which will be developed given the special nature of the presidential sites, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council.

c) The report of the special group on its activities and findings shall be submitted by the Executive Chairman of Unscm to the Security Council through the Secretary General.

5. The United Nations and the Government of Iraq further agree that all other areas, facilities, equipment, records and means of transportation shall be subject to Unscm procedures hitherto established.

6. Noting the progress achieved by Unscm in various disarmament areas, and the need to intensify efforts in order to complete its mandate, the United Nations and the Government of Iraq agree to improve cooperation, and efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of work, so as to enable Unscm to report to the Council expeditiously under paragraph 22 of resolution 687 (1991). To achieve this goal, the Government of Iraq and Unscm will implement the recommendations directed at them as contained in the report of the emergency session of Unscm held on 21 November 1997.

7. The lifting of sanctions is obviously of paramount importance to the people and Government of Iraq and the Secretary General undertook to bring this matter to the full attention of the members of the Security Council.

leaders. Even Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, a staunch U.S. ally, has complained about it. The consequence has been not only support for Iraq among the Arab masses, but a refusal by every Arab government except Kuwait to assist the U.S. war effort in any way.

As the Zionist state reneges on promise after promise, young Arabs are taking to the streets in protest, threatening to revive the *intifadeh* (uprising) of the late 1980s. The one difference is that the

Palestinian Authority exists, with a recognized armed police force of its own. It is easy to see the potential for violence: Arab protesters confront Israeli soldiers ...a stone is thrown...a shot is fired. And if the Palestinian police defend their brother and sister Arabs, the situation could quickly get out of control. The potential for full-scale war between Israel and its Arab neighbors increases each day that Palestinian national aspirations

San Francisco Labor Council Opposes The Bombing Of Iraq

Resolution by San Francisco Central Labor Council, Feb. 23, 1998

Whereas: The U.S. government and military have made extensive preparations to attack and bomb Iraq, and even after the agreement brokered by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, not only is the "vast array of U.S. and British high tech weaponry being kept in place in the Gulf, it is being increased" (BBC, February 23, 1998); and

Whereas: Secretary of State Madeleine Albright issued a statement on February 23, 1998 that the U.S. continued to "reserve the unilateral right to strike militarily against Iraq at any time we feel our interests are threatened," highlighting that the danger of war remains high; and

Whereas: Union members and working people do not endorse the bombing of the Iraqi people and the unnecessary killing and maiming of innocent people that this would mean; and

Whereas: The Iraqi people have already suffered incomparably from seven years of U.S./UN blockade, which according to United Nations figures has caused dire shortages of food and medicine and contributed to the deaths of 1,500,000 Iraqis, including over 700,000 children since the end of the 1991 Gulf War; and

Whereas: The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions issued a statement in Brussels on Feb. 12, 1998, opposing the bombing of Iraq, stating the ICFTU's belief "that the current crisis can only be resolved through diplomatic means...that another armed conflict leading to further loss of civilian lives and suffering of the Iraqi people cannot be regarded as a valid and lasting alterna-

tive," and further that "the ICFTU calls on the UN member countries concerned to show maximum restraint and to use all the appropriate channels to find a negotiated solution..."; and

Whereas: Wasting billions of dollars on the Gulf war buildup translates into cutbacks of essential and job-producing social programs at home, resulting in loss of jobs; therefore be it

Resolved: That the San Francisco Labor Council call on the AFL-CIO and all local unions, international unions, state federations of labor, and central labor bodies to publicly oppose the bombing of Iraq, and demand an immediate halt to the U.S. military build-up in the Gulf, and the lifting of the deadly sanctions against Iraq; and be it further

Resolved: That the Council encourage the trade union movement at all levels to urgently contact congressional representatives and the Clinton Administration to bring this military madness to a halt; and be it further

Resolved: That the Council endorse the national "Stop The War" demonstrations being held on Saturday, February 28, 1998, in San Francisco and New York and ensure a broad labor participation in this national effort to prevent the bombing of Iraq.

Walter Johnson
Secretary-Treasurer
San Francisco Labor Council
1188 Franklin St. Suite 203
San Francisco, CA 94109
Phone (415) 440-4809
Fax (415) 440-9297
Email: 71363.3512@compuserve.com

are denied, even to the limited extent spelled out in the Oslo agreement.

"Operation Desert Thunder," Son of "Desert Storm"

The threat of war has gone beyond potential in the Arab-Persian Gulf region. For the past four months, the Clinton administration has been threatening military action, claiming that Saddam Hussein was hiding "weapons of mass destruction" from UN inspectors. To date, 30,000 troops and two aircraft carriers have taken up positions in the Persian Gulf and on land bases in

Kuwait. The *New York Times* has reported that the administration has decided on an intense four-day, round-the-clock bombing campaign. What is less clear is what the U.S. hopes to accomplish with it or why it has decided to do it now. For, though there are superficial similarities between George Bush's Operation Desert Storm in 1991 and Clinton's Operation Desert Thunder, there are great differences, which have raised doubts even among those normally inclined to support the U.S. government's "right" to intervene in the affairs of other countries.

For one thing, for all the talk of Saddam Hussein's "threatening his neighbors," he has not threatened any military action against anyone, in contrast to the very real invasion and annexation of Kuwait in 1990. Regardless of how and why that invasion happened — and the evidence shows that the U.S. government gave Saddam the impression that it would not oppose his invasion of Kuwait — nevertheless, it led to the formation of a broad alliance of Arab and European countries who not only supported the U.S. invasion but even participated in it.

Today, the only major power standing with the United States is Britain, under the leadership of the disgraceful Tony Blair and his "New Labour Party." Even Iraq's neighbors, those who are supposedly threatened by Saddam's "weapons of mass destruction," are calling on the United States and Britain to stand down from their war footing. Saudi Arabia, the home base for Operation Desert Storm, has refused to allow the United States to station troops or aircraft on its territory; all the aircraft to be employed in the bombing campaign will take off from two carriers in the Persian Gulf. And Iran, whose troops were the victims of Iraqi chemical weapons during the 1980s, and which is exploring the possibility of establishing diplomatic and trade relations with the United States, is supporting Iraq in this present crisis.

What is less clear is what the Clinton administration hopes to accomplish with a bombing attack on Iraq. Members of the administration and the Congress have argued for several possible objectives: (1) the removal of Saddam Hussein from power; (2) the elimination of Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction" and the capability to produce more; and (3) weakening the Iraqi military's capability to "threaten its neighbors." President Clinton, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and Secretary of Defense William Cohen have all acknowledged that the bombing campaign will accomplish none of those ends. In order to accomplish them, a massive ground invasion of Iraq would be required, which evidence shows would be politically unacceptable to the American population.

Some in the Republican leadership, such as Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott of Mississippi, and Senator John

5,000 in NYC Protest Threats to Iraq, Demand End to Sanctions

The following article was posted on the Internet by the International Action Center, an antiwar activist organization associated with Ramsey Clark.

Today over 5,000 rallied in Times Square and then marched across 42nd Street to the United Nations to demand an end to war threats against Iraq and an end to the sanctions that have killed 1.5 million Iraqis over the past seven years.

The speakers included Ramsey Clark, former U.S. Attorney General; Rev. Lucius Walker, IFCO; Dr. Hani Awad, Arab American Civic Organization; Sara Flounders, International Action Center; student groups from Rutgers, U. of Mass, Montclair; and others. The speakers emphasized that despite the diplomatic agreement that stopped the U.S. at the brink of a new bombing attack, anti-war activists in the U.S. were determined to keep up the pressure to stop any future attacks.

The demonstration here was one of 30 held in the United States and in eight other countries to demand an end to sanctions and to end the bombing threat.

In San Francisco, another 2,500 people marched from Dolores Park to the Federal Building to raise the same demands.

The actions in New York and San Francisco were called first by the International Action Center. This call drew together a broad grouping of organizations — the National Emergency Coalition to Stop the War Against Iraq — which attracted support from many progressive, anti-war and

anti-racist organizations across the country.

The IAC has called a “National Planning Conference” for March 21 at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. to “provide a critical analysis of U.S. strategy in the Middle East and a discussion of key strategies and tactics to build on the momentum of this past month.

The demonstrations reflected the wide diversity of opposition that has appeared in the U.S. since youth and students confronted Defense Secretary William Cohen, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and National Security Adviser Sandy Berger at the Ohio State University campus in Columbus, Ohio on Feb. 18. The IAC saw evidence of the upsurge in the 300 demonstrations reported on its website at <http://www.iacenter.org>.

Students from East Coast campuses, workfare workers organizing in New York, Black liberation groups organizing to free political prisoners, religious communities shocked at the mass deaths of Iraqi children, Muslim organizations outraged at the killings and the slander of Middle Eastern peoples joined to make the demonstration a strong statement against U.S. policies.

February 28, 1998

was certainly negotiating with a gun at his head.

Annan delivered everything Clinton wanted. However, Clinton has ordered U.S. forces to remain at their battle stations to force Saddam to “keep his word.” Under the terms of the agreement, Iraq will permit United Nations weapons inspectors unconditional access to any site in Iraq, with no time limit. Iraq agrees to abide by all the UN resolutions voted in the aftermath of the Gulf War, to dismantle chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons, to dismantle missile delivery systems, and not to build more of either one.

There is no corresponding promise by the United States or UN Security Council to end the devastating economic embargo imposed on Iraq, only the recognition that the sanctions are “of paramount importance” and the Secretary-General’s promise to “bring the matter to the full attention of the Security Council.” The only concrete concession to Iraq is the appointment of a special inspection team to visit the disputed sites, composed of senior diplomats and weapons inspectors, all appointed by UN Secretary-General Annan.

In real terms, this makes virtually no difference, though it is a face saver for Saddam Hussein. The Security Council did agree to double the amount of oil that Iraq would be allowed to sell to the world market, but that announcement caused the price of oil futures to drop 87¢ a barrel when commodities markets opened on Monday February 23.

Opponents of the War Confront the Administration

It is possible that Clinton and his advisers actually believe that opposition to this government’s war policies went out with bell-bottom slacks. If so, they got a hard jolt of reality when Madeleine Albright, William Cohen, and National Security Adviser Sandy Berger left Washington to rally support for bombing Iraq from within the general population. At their first stop — Ohio State University in Columbus — they were shouted down by antiwar protesters in the audience. They were met with demonstrators wherever they went, organized on short notice, with few organizational resources (especially money), and before actual war has broken out. It gave them a taste of what

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McCain of Arizona, who will probably run for president in 2000, are calling for military action to remove Saddam Hussein from power. This is probably empty rhetoric, for they as well as Bill Clinton know the cost of such an invasion. Republican President George Bush, who had a far better opportunity for an infantry assault on Baghdad, chose to order a cease-fire after Iraqi forces were expelled from Kuwait and to leave Saddam Hussein in power. As Bush’s invasion of Panama shows, his decision not to remove Saddam by force had nothing to do with any concern for the self-determination of other countries. Bush was aware that the political risks involved with a military campaign to remove this dictator outweighed the benefits, especially since he is no worse than other dictators with whom this country does business on a regular basis.

United Nations Diplomacy

At this writing the entire world is breathing a sigh of relief at the compromise agreement negotiated by United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan. It has not guaranteed peace, and it certainly is far from fair to the Iraqi people, but it has averted U.S. air strikes, at least for the time being.

There is little doubt that the message Annan brought to Baghdad on February 21 was — in spite of all of his and Tariq Aziz’s denials — an ultimatum: agree to these terms or your people will be bombed. Egyptian President Mubarak, in an interview with Cable News Network, said openly that he had conveyed the same message to Saddam Hussein several times during the previous week. With the world’s biggest arsenal of “weapons of mass destruction” only a short distance away, Saddam Hussein

Defending Clinton Is Not Our Job

by Tom Barrett and George Saunders

There are many ramifications to the Bill Clinton sex scandal now dominating the media. It shows greater willingness in society to protest abusive relations between genders, though this is distorted by media sensationalism. The impact of the women's liberation movement is reflected here. (See the discussion of this in the review of *Dark Side of Camelot*, p. 53.)

Another aspect of the scandal is its illustration of the coarse way ruling class individuals treat lesser mortals sexually as well as in other ways. A third aspect is the peculiar vendetta one section of the ruling class has pursued against Clinton literally from the time he was elected. In this article we focus on only two aspects of the matter. (Future issues may take up more.)

One, the media are using this as a diversion. The allegation of a sexual affair between Bill Clinton, the 51-year-old president of these United States, and Monica Lewinsky, a 24-year-old former White House intern, is one of the juiciest stories for the news media ever. Stand-up comedian Jay Leno has introduced his NBC Tonight Show as your Clinton joke headquarters. His CBS rival David Letterman has had similar fun with the scandal-in-training. Cartoonists, including Tom Tomorrow, whose parody of Dr. Seuss's *Green Eggs and Ham* appears below, are also having a wonderful time. There's nothing like sex in a headline to sell newspapers and magazines—witness *Newsweek* (the only publication possessing the Linda Tripp tapes, which has published selected excerpts). It has devoted approximately four times the space to the Lewinsky affair as it has to the threat of war against Iraq.

Whatever Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky may or may not have done in the private study next to the Oval Office will have no impact whatsoever on whether any working person keeps his or her job or whether American military forces are sent into battle in the Middle East. And both opinion polls and anecdotal observation show that working people in this country do not at

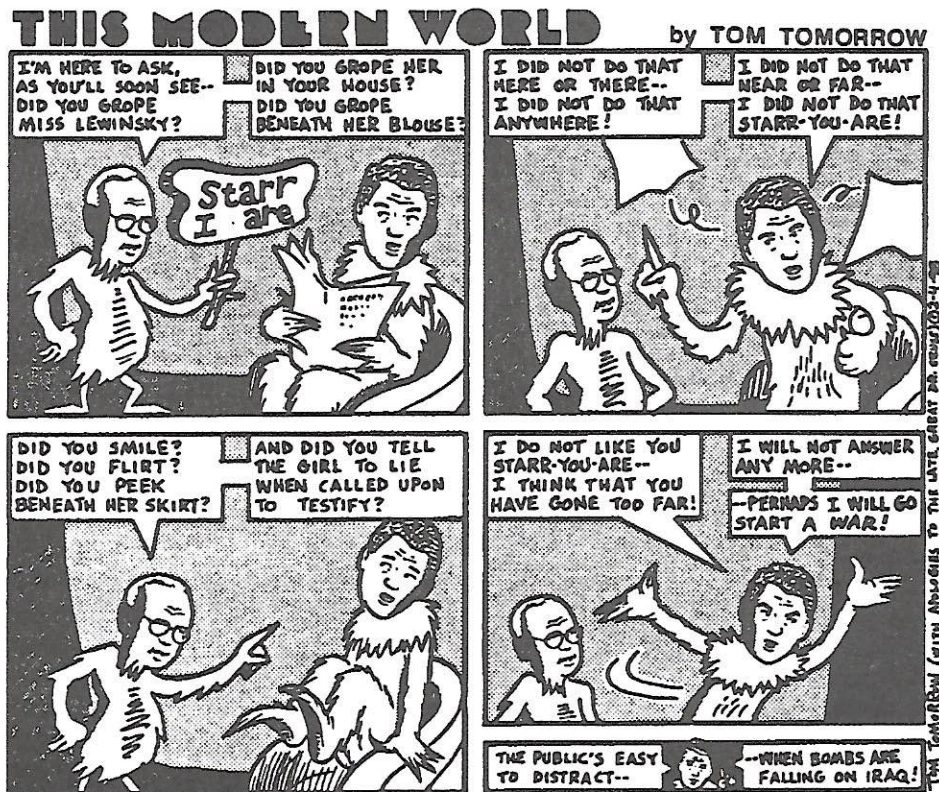
present consider Clinton's behavior to be grounds for his removal from office.

Two, defense of Clinton is not our job. The scandal has led to some confusion in the labor movement. A great many of us, rank-and-file workers and union officials alike, recognize that Kenneth Starr and the others looking to use this or any scandal as a means of removing Clinton from office are among the worst labor-haters in the Republican Party.

There is an instinctive reaction to fight against these anti-labor forces and to come to the defense of Clinton. Ray Markey, for example, a New York trade union leader and former revolutionary socialist, wrote to an Internet newsgroup: Yes, we should wholeheartedly defend the President and Hillary against these attacks. We should apologize to no one for taking this position. Every progressive in this country should be out in the streets doing everything possible to defend the Clintons. They deserve to be defended, for if they can be brought down and dragged through the mud what chance would you or I have?

But to follow Markey's advice would be a mistake. Hillary Clinton charged on NBC's Today show that a vast right-wing conspiracy was out to get her and her husband, the president. An examination of the evidence shows that there is some truth in her allegation. The principal players in the Starr investigation all appear to have connections with reactionary think tanks and foundations, such as the Federalist Society (to which Starr belongs) and the Rutherford Institute, among others, all financed by Pittsburgh billionaire Richard Scaife, an heir to the Mellon fortune and a racist, sexist, labor-hating reactionary.

Let's think this through for a minute: suppose this right-wing conspiracy is completely successful. What might happen? Possibly Al Gore would become president, something which many of our union officials favor happening anyway in the year 2000. Or possibly a right-wing Republican might accede to the White House. It is a frightening possibility. Such a president might send U.S. troops to the Middle East and threaten to bomb Iraq. Or *he* (since they'd hardly



nominate a woman) might conclude a trade agreement that exports our jobs to low-wage countries. Or he might sign legislation to deny welfare benefits to thousands of poor women and their children.

Those possibilities show clearly the difference between the Democratic and Republican parties since Clinton has done all of them!

A line of argument similar to Ray Markey's is promoted in the *People's Weekly World* of the former pro-Moscow Communist Party led by Gus Hall (the CPUSA). With this sex scandal, says Gus Hall, the ultra right (that is, the Republicans) are trying to get Clinton out of the White House. Then if they can get Gore out, too oh horror of horrors, *Gingrich* would be next in line. We've got to defend Clinton, says

the CPUSA, to keep the Gin-Grinch out of the White House.

This is just an elaborate justification for the CP's continued support to the more demagogic, populist party of the bosses. The Democrats actually serve the ruling rich as loyally, and more craftily, than the Republicans. The GOP's avidly pro-business politics are basically no different from the Democrats, only cruder.

The CPUSA pretends to be very radical. But with its consistent support for and defense of Democrats it actually steers radicals, and radicalizing workers, down a dead-end path. They end up always backing one of the bosses parties (the lesser evil) instead of working to build an alternative for our class. The real alternative is to focus on building the Labor Party, a union-led organi-

zation that can potentially gather the muscle of all of organized labor behind it to openly and unashamedly speak for the needs of the working class and its natural allies in this society, the poor and the oppressed, women and minorities.

Whatever quarrel some ruling-class individuals like Scaife may have with Bill Clinton, *it is not our quarrel*. Those of us who have to struggle to heat our homes, pay for medical and dental care, and provide a safe and nurturing environment for our children can't rely on either wing of the ruling class to act in our behalf.

No, we will not defend Bill Clinton. We will oppose him, but for the reasons we have always opposed him: because he represents the political interests of the employing class, in the economy, in foreign relations, in criminal justice, in education, and every other area of public concern. □

Clinton's Failed Mideast Policy Threatens New Gulf War

Continued from page 5

they could expect if they actually did carry out bombing attacks against Iraq, and only a small taste of what they could expect if they committed ground forces.

These dedicated activists for peace are not as yet representative of the organized labor movement nor of the working class as a whole. But working people should take to heart what they say, because they are right. Whatever crimes Saddam Hussein may have committed, our government has no right pointing the finger at him. If one looks, for example, at the record of the Ronald Reagan administration one can see attacks against this country's neighbors (Grenada), brutal repression of working people (the Professional Air Traffic Controllers), and a horrific assault on poor people resulting in an explosion of homelessness.

How would American working people react if a foreign government talked about forcibly deposing Reagan? Sup-

pose the European Union organized a naval blockade of our cities, imposed economic sanctions, and sent inspectors to our factories, all the while repeating the refrain that the world would not be safe so long as Reagan remained in power? Most American working people wouldn't like it very well, even though Reagan was a very real threat to world peace, as his successors have been.

Who appointed the United States as the supreme judge of how other countries should behave? Our leaders are guilty of the same crimes as Saddam Hussein, only on a bigger scale.

Just as multinational corporations employ us to make their products and generate their profits, their political representatives recruit us or draft us if they have to fight and die on the battlefield. Their purpose is to force people in other parts of the world to accept their dictates. Unfortunately, our leaders in the organized labor move-

ment have not questioned this aspect of working-class reality, deferring to the politicians who represent the employers, not us to decide when, where, and why to make war on other countries. This makes absolutely no sense, if one thinks about it.

What does make sense is to listen to our brother and sister workers in the Middle East and other parts of the world, instead of to the lies told by Clinton, Albright, Cohen, and Berger. We need to know the truth about the Iraqi people's suffering under the economic sanctions; we need to know the real record of our government's collaboration with Saddam Hussein as well as with other dictators, for example Suharto in Indonesia. If we are to be called on to fight, we have a right to know why, and we have a right ultimately to make the decision. And as we learn the truth about our government's Middle East policies, we will join our voices with those who confronted Clinton's advisers on their Midwest road show: *Don't Bomb Iraq!* □

February 24, 1998

Railroad Workers' Movement Spreads from Sonora to Other States — Ford, GM, GE Plants Affected

by Dan La Botz

The following article is mainly based on the report in the early March issue of *Mexican Labor News and Analysis*, on which see accompanying sidebar.

Wildcat strikes by several thousand railroad workers, beginning in the northern border state of Sonora, paralyzed freight and passenger movements on Mexico's Pacific North railroad line for the last two weeks of February and into March, and affected other railways as well. The wildcat strike movement was a response to the privatization of the government-owned railroad, the failure of the new owners to rehire the railroad workers, the Mexican government's threatened cancellation of the workers'

collective bargaining agreement, and company chiseling on severance pay.

Railroad workers, supported by their families, entire working class communities, students, non-governmental organizations, and local social movement activists, have taken engines and cars out of service and have blockaded or destroyed railroad track in order to keep the trains from moving. The workers' strikes and protests spread from Sonora to several other states, mostly in western and northern Mexico. The

Sonora governor, legislature, and local mayors have been drawn into the conflict, as have the three major national political parties. This could become another major Mexican political crisis.

"Sonora has the best conditions for resisting," Salvador Zarco of the Committee to Defend the Collective Contract, an opposition caucus in the Railroad Workers Union (STFRM) told *Mexican Labor News and Analysis* in a telephone interview. "They have the support of the miners, of the telephone workers, of the social security workers, of the teachers, of peasant organizations, of the Yaqui Indians, who have their own local government, as well as of municipal authorities, the governor, and the state legislature."

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MLNA Staff: Editor, Dan La Botz; Correspondents in Mexico: Bob Briggs, Peter

Gellert, Jess Kincaid, Wendy Patterson, Jorge Robles, Juan-Carlos Romero, Fred Rosen, Don Sherman, Sam Smucker, Linda Stevenson.

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A Break with the Logic of Reform from Above

This railroad strike — involving thousands of workers in several states — represents one of the most important workers' movements in recent Mexican history, certainly since the early 1980s, perhaps since the "workers insurgency" of the 1970s. A movement from below of railroad workers, led by rebellious local union officials, this strike breaks completely with the logic of recent labor movement developments.

While Mexican labor union officials and political activists have been engaged in a struggle between rival "official," reformist, and radical labor federations (the Congress of Labor, Confederation of Mexican Workers, National Union of Workers, and May First Inter-Union Coordinating Committee), suddenly a rank-and-file movement has erupted from below, not only challenging the unions controlled by the ruling party (PRI) but also implicitly

challenging the idea of reform through reorganization from above.

A Grass-Roots Movement

The strike on Pacific North, one of Mexico's principal railroad lines, began on February 16 in Local 8 of the Mexican Railroad Workers Union. Local 8 union leaders in Empalme called a general assembly where workers, most of them men in their mid-40s, decided to shut down the system. Approximately 3,200 railroad workers in the cities of Nogales, Benjamin Hill, Hermosillo, and Empalme then stopped company operations. Empalme is the headquarters of the company's operations, an important railroad center, and has the largest number of Pacific North workers in any single location.

In Empalme, the workers, their families, and the townspeople — thousands of men, women, and children — came out to make sure the trains didn't roll. When one train did try to leave, the crowds forced the train back to the roundhouse.

The workers were soon joined by members of a local group called Broad Front of Social Organizations (FAOS) and by activists from the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) who came out to help shut down the freight and passenger service. Ford Motor company's Hermosillo auto plant was immediately affected by the shutdown.

Strikers' Initial Demands

One of the workers' local leaders, José Guadalupe Esquivel Valenzuela, explained that the railroad workers decided to strike in order to protest the company's failure to make the biweekly payroll and to pay severance pay.

But, he said, they also struck because of a decision to be made by the Board of Conciliation and Arbitration, Number Four, in the Federal District, which was to decide on February 18 whether or not the workers' collective bargaining agreement was to continue in force or be nullified.

Workers argued that under the Federal Labor Law (LFT), Article 41, the new company must continue to abide by the old contract, which remains in force. But the government-owned company claimed that the old collective bargaining agreement would terminate the day

the company passed into the hands of its new owners.

While the collective bargaining agreement was central, it became clear within a few days that the workers' key demand was that the railroad's new owners rehire all railroad workers previously employed by the government-owned company.

Privatization

The strike results from the privatization of the Mexican National Railways (FERRONALES) that began two years ago. On March 7, 1997, a new private company called Mexican Railways (FERROMEX) bought the government's Pacific North railway line for 524 million dollars.

The new company, FERROMEX, is a consortium made up of several Mexican and foreign parties. Jorge Larrea Ortega, the mogul who owns Mexicana de Cananea and Mexicana de Cobre, two of Mexico's largest copper companies, is the principal figure in the Grupo Mexico, which is the major stockholder in FERROMEX. His partners include Associated Civil Engineers (ICA), one of Mexico's biggest construction companies, and Union Pacific, one of the largest railroad companies in the U.S. Together these partners form Grupo Ferrovionario Mexicano (GFM), which in turn owns FERROMEX.

FERROMEX purchased the Pacific North line, a 6,521 kilometer route which runs north along Mexico's Pacific coast, then turns east when it nears the U.S. border. Passing through the western states of Jalisco, Nayarit, Sinaloa, Sonora, the railway turns east through Chihuahua and Coahuila. In addition to the track, stations, and roundhouses, the purchase included 405 locomotives and 12,591 railway cars of various sorts.

At the time of purchase, the line employed approximately 13,000 workers, members of the Mexican Railroad Workers Union (STFRM). Some reports suggested that the company would only recontract 3,500 workers, forcing the other 9,500 into early retirement or unemployment. Local union leaders, union dissidents, and workers had been reporting for weeks that the company was coercing or cajoling workers to sign voluntary retirement or severance agreements.

Victor Flores Morales, the authoritarian head of the Railroad Workers Union, has been an unconditional supporter of the Mexican government's policy of privatization, and a willing partner with the new private owners in carrying out layoffs, rewriting collective bargaining agreements, and disciplining workers who resisted the government or the company. Until recently, a handful of dissident railroad workers have opposed him in the face of sometimes violent repression. Now, however, the federal government, the company, and Flores Morales are faced with a mass movement from below.

Why a Strike in Sonora?

Few strikes are really spontaneous. Organization precedes most activity, and so it was in this case. Two years ago, explained railroad activist Salvador Zarco, a group of dissident railroad workers formed the Committee for the Defense of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, to fight to defend the workers' union, contract, and jobs during the process of privatization. Last November, the group organized a caravan involving as many as 2,000 railroad workers which marched and rode from Nogales, Sonora, to Guadalajara, Jalisco.

The purpose of the caravan was to talk with and distribute information to Sonora's railroad workers about the privatization process. For example, on the North East line, bought by the consortium Transportes Ferrovios Mexicanos (TFM), with the participation of the U.S. corporation Kansas City Industries, the company rehired only 4,500 out of 8,700 workers. The collective bargaining agreement was reduced from 3,045 clauses to 38 clauses; the train crews cut from six to three workers; and the maximum continuous service time lengthened from 12 to 25–40 hours.

After hearing from the caravan's organizers, workers on the Pacific North line could see the handwriting on the wall. Then they learned that their new owners would reportedly rehire only 3,500 out of 13,500 workers. The organization by the opposition group in the union laid the basis for the wildcat strike movement by the local activists.

Industrial Workers with Real Power

The railroad workers have real economic power in this struggle. Northern Mexico, particularly Sonora, has been an important industrial area for more than a hundred years, with thousands of miners, foundry and smelter workers, and railroad workers. But during the last two decades, largely because of the proximity of the U.S. border and investments by U.S. corporations, a whole northern industrial region has been created which includes not only the thousands of maquiladoras on the U.S.-Mexican border but also major auto plants. Many of these plants depend on railroad transportation.

The strike immediately affected operations not only at Ford Motor Company but also at some of Mexico's industrial giants, such as CEMEX (Mexican Cement Company), Gamesa, Aceites del Mayo, Mexicana de Cananea, and Mexicana de Cobre. In addition, thousands of passengers found themselves stranded in Sonora, with local city governments scrambling to find them blankets and food.

The wildcat strike on the Pacific North line has also had an indirect impact on workers on other lines such as Transportes Ferroviarios Mexicanos (TFM) to the east. Trains carrying containers on that line, bound for the General Motors plant in Arizpe, Coahuila, were temporarily sidelined. The strike also reportedly affected the General Electric plant in Silao.

Workers Threatened with Prison

The Mexican government and the employers have forced some railroad workers back, but without effectively breaking the strike. The government brought charges against the workers of Local 8 for the felony of "obstruction of general ways of communication." Those and other pressures led the workers of Empalme to return to work with a local agreement on February 25. But at the same time, workers in Local 40 in Benjamin Hill stopped the trains, with the same result — nothing moved on the Pacific North line.

Mexican authorities reportedly dispatched a military train to the north. No serious violence between the army or police and the strikers was reported.

The Strike Spreads

In Sonora, the strikers won support from local governments. Jesús Avila Godoy, the PRD mayor of Empalme, and Mayor Sara Valle Dessens of Guaymas expressed their solidarity with the strike. Local merchants also supported the railroad workers. The governor of Sonora and the Sonora legislature also came out in support of the workers.

The strike quickly spread far beyond Sonora. The strike in Sonora had the effect of stopping and backing up trains throughout the system, and from other systems as well. Learning of the strike in Sonora, workers in the states of Sinaloa and Jalisco held meetings, engaged in sit-ins, demonstrations, and other forms of protest.

In Aguascalientes, workers demanded to be rehired. Some seventy machinists' helpers said they would fix the machines so they wouldn't work if everyone didn't get their job back. In Ciudad Juarez, workers met in "permanent assembly," while waiting to see that everyone was rehired. They said they want protection for all workers, especially those over 50 years old.

In Mexico City, 200 members of the dissident National Coordinating Committee for Defense of the Collective Contract, marched and demonstrated in support of Local 8. Leaders of the dissident movement, Enrique Oropeza and Francisco Zarco, called for the expulsion from the union of Victor Flores. The alliance between the Committee for Defense of the Contract and the Local 8 strikers represents an important development, giving the worker activists in Sonora a connection to the union's opposition caucus in Mexico City.

Victor Flores Signs New Contract

Three days after the strike began, the Railroad Workers Union leader, Victor Flores Morales, told workers that like it or not, they would have to accept their severance or retirement before they could be rehired by the new company.

Flores also signed a new collective bargaining agreement with the company, in which he claimed to have saved most of the workers' conditions. The contract provided for a 15 percent wage increase, with the possibility of 40 percent in productivity bonuses, life insurance for workers, and scholarships for

railroad workers' children. In terms of conditions, the company wanted a four-man crew, but the new contract calls for a "complete crew" of six, that is, a machinist, assistant machinist, conductor, and three brakemen.

Secretary of Labor Javier Bonilla praised the new contract, "for embodying the concepts of the new labor culture" of employer-union cooperation. Secretary of Communication and Transportation Carlos Ruiz also praised the contract as promoting the development of a safe, efficient, and modern transportation system.

Workers in Local 8 in Sonora, however, rejected the new contract as another betrayal. Carlos Figueroa Ramos, the STFRM Local 8 leader, told the press that the workers' job security, remains "an unfulfilled promise." Local 8 has demanded that the new collective bargaining agreement must protect the jobs of all 13,500 workers. Workers in Local 40 continued the strike.

After two weeks of the workers' wildcat strikes, the Mexican federal legislature and the national parties, particularly the left-of-center Party of the Democratic Revolution and the conservative National Action Party were drawn into attempts to resolve the issues. □

P.S. The following is additional information obtained on the Mexican rail strike.

In the first week of March, an agreement was reached which appeared to protect the workers jobs and their union contract. FERROMEX, the new owners of the Pacific North line, agreed to rehire all of the workers at the Empalme shops, and to keep the old contract in force. At the same time, the maintenance of way workers would be hired by the Tecate-Nacozari shortline, which would ensure both their continued employment and union contract. The Sonora wildcat and then semi-official strike was declared settled.

Nevertheless, freight and passenger traffic did not resume normal movement at once, in part because workers had not been recontracted, and in part because of continued resistance.

In preparation for the privatization process, the Mexican government-owned railroad (FERRONALES) has been downsizing the workforce, usually
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A Brief History of the Mexican Rail Union

Dan La Botz

The Mexican Railroad Workers Union (STFRM) has for many years been a creature of the Mexican state and the ruling party, and more recently of multinational concessionaires, and that has limited its interest in and ability to represent railroad workers.

In the 1920s, Mexico's railroad craft unions joined together to establish a Confederation of Railroad Unions, and during the 1930s the fifteen or so craft unions amalgamated to form an industrial union of railroad workers, then the Mexican Railroad Workers Union (STFRM).

When Lázaro Cárdenas, president of Mexico (1934–1940), completed the nationalization of the Mexican railroads in the late 1930s, he turned the railroads over to the administration of the Mexican Railroad Workers Union, an experiment which lasted from 1937 to 1941. Without authority to raise rates on U.S. mining companies, and without financial resources for modernization, the experiment in union control of the railroads failed.

The Government Imposes Leaders in 1948

The Mexican government and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which has ruled Mexico for seventy years, control most of Mexico's labor unions. This "state-party" exerts strong control over the Mexican Railroad Workers Union (STFRM).

During the late 1940s and 1950s, the Mexican government intervened in the industrial unions, using the violence of the police and gangsters to impose new union leaders. In this violent way on October 14, 1948, Jesús Díaz de León, known as "el charro" (the dude), was imposed on the Mexican Railroad Workers Union (STFRM). His nickname, charro, came to mean any union bureaucrat imposed by the state-party. Under the Díaz de León regime, the state-party took complete control of the union.

Army Breaks 1959 Strike

In 1958 rank-and-file workers, dissatisfied with their wages, organized and pressured the union to convene a commission for a wage increase. But when

Samuel Ortega Hernandez, then head of the union, discovered that the members of the commission opposed his leadership, he called in the army and the police to break up the commission.

Demetrio Vallejo of Local 13 emerged as a leader of the commission, and he and his local created a "Plan of the Southeast" calling for a 350-peso wage increase. This plan won a mass following. Vallejo then called for a series of escalating strikes, which in the summer of 1958 involved tens of thousands of workers. The strikes forced the government to permit new union elections.

Vallejo ran for and won the top office of general secretary of the union, and in December of 1958 put forward a proposal calling for restructuring the railroads, raising rates on U.S. metal mining companies, and raises for workers. The government found this unacceptable, and rejected rate changes or wage increases. On February 25, 1959, Vallejo and the leadership called for a national strike of the railroads, and on March 25, 1959, for a broader general strike of the railroads.

The Mexican government called out the army and broke the strike. The government-owned railroad company fired 10,000 workers; 3,000 workers were arrested, though over 2,000 were soon released; 800 workers were held for longer periods of time. Some 150 were charged with being Communist agitators. Five hundred workers were put on trial. Many received prison sentences. The top leaders received sentences of 11 years. (Vallejo, released in 1968, joined the student demonstrations of that year, and was imprisoned again.)

Since 1959, the Mexican government has kept a firm grip on the Mexican Railroad Workers Union.

Victor Flores Morales

The current top officer (general secretary) of the railroad workers union is Victor Flores Morales. He also served recently as president of the Congress of Labor (CT), the umbrella organization to which all the "official" unions belong. He is also a congressman (diputado) of the PRI.

Victor Flores has been a strong supporter of the government and the companies in the privatization process. He has supported the companies' actions in forcing early retirement and in layoffs, and he has collaborated in rewriting the new, very weak union contracts.

When rank and file workers and retirees organized their own groups within the union which spoke out against the way privatization hurt employment, the contract, and working conditions, Victor Flores sent his 100-man goon squad to break up meetings and threaten workers. He has also had opponents expelled from the union, which usually also means losing employment.

In congress, when congressmen of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and the National Action Party (PAN) met in a congressional committee to discuss the privatization process, Congressman Victor Flores brought his 100-man goon squad to the congress and his thugs threatened to beat and kill the opposition congressmen.

The Committee to Defend the Collective Bargaining Agreement

A group of rank-and-file workers created the Committee to Defend the Collective Bargaining Agreement in 1996. They organized meetings and protests against the privatization process in which they criticized the government, the state-owned railroad company, the new private owners — and their own union leadership for failing to represent the members. The Committee has always behaved as loyal union members who want protection for their fellow workers.

The Committee maintains close relations with other labor organizations, such as the independent federation, Authentic Labor Front (FAT). The Committee has also had assistance from the Roman Catholic (Jesuit) labor organization, Committee for Labor Reflection and Action (CEREAL). The Committee maintains close relations with the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), which recently elected Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas to mayor of Mexico City, and

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Teamsters Strike Honeywell

Rank and File Organize to Win

Reprint from *Convoy Dispatch*

The following article and sidebar appeared in the March issue of *Convoy Dispatch*, the monthly paper of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU).

For two weeks in February, the Honeywell Corporation was paralyzed by a rank-and-file rebellion that had all the earmarks of last summer's United Parcel Service strike.

Some 2,500 Teamsters struck the multinational corporation, which sought to implement a regressive, two-tier, union-busting benefits package for new hires. Strikers picketed and rallied, winning widespread public support as they took their case to the community through the media.

Members mobilized, holding two large rallies that drew in other unions and prominent public officials; a barbecue was held on the picket line; a daily strike bulletin was published that lashed out at Honeywell and kept members informed; and a strike hotline was

installed with daily updates. It was totally a rank-and-file effort.

What was missing was top Local 1145 officials, who appeared to be as shocked by the strike as Honeywell itself. Rather than lead the walkout, they stood on the sidelines.

The walkout ended almost as suddenly as it had begun. Two weeks into the strike, Honeywell capitulated on one of the rank and file's four main demands, and Local 1145 officials put the proposal to a vote. It passed on February 15 by eight votes, 1,024 to 1,016.

A huge protest ensued by rank and filers, who felt the voting procedures were haphazard and highly irregular, a critical factor when the vote was so close. Because there was no sign-in system at the meeting, there was no way to ensure

that only members in good standing could vote, or to prevent people from voting more than once.

Vice President Tom Gilmartin wrote Local 1145 President Jim Holte, recommending that the contract not be executed until the complaints about the balloting could be investigated. The International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) is sending in a representative to investigate.

Members Say No to Two Tier

Headquartered in Minneapolis, Honeywell is one of the biggest local companies. It is the nation's largest manufacturer of control devices. Twin Cities factories that make home heating and aeronautical controls were shut down by the walkout.

In the weeks before the walkout, members distributed leaflets in a rank-and-file contract campaign that got members excited about the issues. Some of the leaflets pointed out that Honeywell had a record \$8 billion in sales last year. So, when members arrived at the contract meeting on February 1 expecting to make major gains, they were appalled to learn that the Local 1145 leadership and most of the negotiating

Getting Prepared for a Strike (So Hopefully You Won't Need One)

An often overlooked part of a contract campaign is strike preparation. As we see from the example at Honeywell, lack of preparation is not insurmountable, but not desirable. The key is to tap into the power of the rank and file.

Of course, everyone hopes to avoid a strike. But using member-to-member organizing, corporate campaigns, and other smart strategies, it's often possible to win without a strike. Still, being prepared is critical — in order to be ready to go in case a strike occurs, to let the company know you're serious.

The following are some tips to help in advance preparation. We invite local officers and rank-and-file leaders to give us examples of what's worked in your area, and we'll print them in a future issue of *Convoy Dispatch*.

• **Develop an up-to-date membership phone list and phone tree.** This is indispensable when you are on strike and can't reach anyone because they are not at the workplace anymore.

- **Explore the idea of putting out a rank-and-file strike bulletin.**
- **Research your employer's clients.** Develop a listing, using shipping records or whatever documentation you can find. You may want to visit these clients during a strike, or send them a letter, to keep them informed of your employer's bad faith bargaining. Get fax numbers, too.
- **Make a master list of all delivery companies that service your employer.** Try to get their addresses. Determine which ones are union — and what locals they are from. Get the local's phone number, address, the name of the principal officer, and, if possible, the steward for the company. Be prepared to call them if their members cross your picket line.
- **Put together a media hit list.** Include talk radio programs and local TV stations, as well as reporters for local papers. Get fax numbers, phone numbers, and addresses.
- **Contact and get involved in local solidarity groups like Jobs with Justice**

and labor/religious coalitions. Find out if there are any pro-labor politicians in your area. Be ready to reach out to these groups if a strike happens.

- **Cover your bases on medical benefits.** If your benefits are provided by a union fund, have the union trustees commit to continue coverage during the strike. Otherwise, members will be extremely anxious about their benefits coverage. Likewise, try to begin your strike early in the month (but after at least one day has been worked in the month) so members will have coverage at least for that month. Finally, get the facts on COBRA, a federal law that allows employees to make self payments on insurance premiums up to 60 days after you go on strike.
- **Assign picket captains and set up shifts for members.**
- **Be prepared to start an emergency strike fund and a food drive.** A call should be sent out to Teamster locals, other unions, and solidarity groups.

committee were recommending a concession-laden contract that included a proposal for a two-tier medical package and a two-tier pension. Members blasted the offer and voted down the proposal 1,138 to 825, putting the union on strike.

Honeywell has long been a company where generations of members have worked. The thought that our own children would work on a lower scale than us riled the members, who told reporters: "This is a strike for our children and grandchildren who are yet to be hired here," and "Two-tier benefits will pit member against member and wreck our union." The idea that strikers were fighting for future generations got wide public support.

Rank and File Organize to Win

A group of long-time activists in the local who had worked to fuel the contract campaign swung into action, printing 150 "No Two Tier" picket signs, plus another 100 picket signs that spelled out members' need for higher pensions and a better wage offer. By week's end, we called a formal meeting of the key activists to create a Strike Solidarity Committee.

Two support rallies, drawing 300 and 400 people, were held at Honeywell's largest plants in Golden Valley and Minneapolis. Speakers included Billie Davenport, a Northwest flight attendant and newly elected president of Teamsters Local 2000, the presidents of the local bus drivers union, airport machinists, the Minneapolis police federation, and two of the most prominent candidates for governor this year. Collections

raised hundreds of dollars to help cover expenses.

The committee published 10 issues of a daily newsletter, the *Rank and File Strike Bulletin*. They contained articles promoting rallies, strike activities, and union meetings, and helped to keep morale high. Articles included a story about the \$3.7 million the CEO made in 1996, a story quoting members about the downsides of two-tier benefits, articles on bargaining sessions, a picket line cookout, and pictures of strikers.

Hundreds of each issue were printed, and strikers organized to hand them out on each four-hour shift at the gates, as well as at rallies and union meetings.

Each bulletin had a main message for that day, like an upcoming event. The bulletin was aimed toward building support for the strike. It did not criticize the leadership, but reported on suggestions to broaden the fight. It became the voice of the strike.

In addition to the bulletin, the committee started up a strike hotline. We installed an extra home phone line with an answering machine that provided taped daily updates on the strike. Also, members of the Minnesota chapter of Teamsters for a Democratic Union pitched in to help the strikers in many ways, from joining the picket lines and rallies to helping distribute the strike bulletin.

None of our organizing efforts happened overnight. We were able to build strike support because we built a campaign for reform that began in Local 1145 many years ago, pressing for issues of reform and solidarity. It began to take shape during the campaign for Ron Carey in 1991. But during the walk-

out we underscored the importance of unity, setting aside our differences and working together to win.

We Could Have Won More

Feeling the squeeze, the company came out with a second proposal that dropped the two-tier medical package, but retained the two-tier pension, with no improvements in wages or the standard pension. Our officials recommended acceptance, although, again, a minority of the bargaining committee voted no. The eight-vote margin that passed the proposal is now under protest. Many members continue to feel they could have won more.

In a post-strike interview in the local paper, Honeywell CEO Michael Bon-signore acknowledged that the company was surprised by the walkout. He added, "It never entered my mind it [Honeywell's proposals] would serve as a wedge to divide the union. Why should I want to? We've been working well with them for many years."

As a local columnist observed, Bon-signore's comment "only verifies what many Honeywell Teamsters already believe; their leadership has not been reflecting worker values at the bargaining table." Nominations for office are about to be held in Local 1145. It promises to be a spirited election.

What we did didn't come easy, and there's no magic formula. The rank and file helped to show what was possible, and what leadership can do to affect a battle. We could have won more, but our single achievement — knocking out two-tier medical benefits — was won because the membership decided to fight. □

A Brief History of the Mexican Rail Union

Continued from page 11

at present the Committee works out of the PRD's office of labor affairs (*asuntos laborales*).

In November 1997, after the experience of the privatization of the Northeast Line, the Committee to Defend the Collective Bargaining Agreement

organized a caravan of 2,000 workers who traveled throughout the northern and western states, including Sonora, discussing the privatization experience and distributing information.

When the February 16, 1998, strike occurred, the Committee to Defend the Collective Bargaining Agreement

linked up with the strikers and coordinated its activity with them, organizing protests and demonstrations in Mexico City and also acting as spokespersons for the movement. The most prominent leader of the committee has been railroad worker Salvador Zarco. □

Caterpillar Workers Reject Proposed Contract

by Barry Sheppard

The following article was posted on the Internet in early March.

Workers at Caterpillar, the company that produces agricultural and heavy construction equipment, have been fighting for a fair contract since November 1991, when Caterpillar forced a strike by the United Automobile Workers. In February 1998, UAW members overwhelmingly rejected — by a vote of 58 to 42 percent — the company's latest offer, in spite of the UAW leadership's support of the give-back contract proposal.

In 1991, Caterpillar refused to accept "pattern bargaining", that is, to accept contract terms the UAW had reached with the big auto companies. The result was a five-month strike, during which Caterpillar vowed to break the union and hire permanent replacement workers.

The workers mobilized to stop the scabs, but were told by UAW officials to "obey the law" and let the scabs through. Unable to win in these circumstances, the UAW tops ordered the workers back to work without an agreement. The company imposed its contract in the plants, and threatened to replace any worker who did not go back to work. Workers were harassed and even fired for doing things like wearing union T-shirts or buttons, or "talking disrespectfully" to scabs, under this reign of terror. This gave rise to hundreds of charges of unfair labor practices by the union.

Thousands Gather to Support Ohio Strikers

There is a growing radicalization among workers, a deepening impatience with the status quo, a willingness to act. We saw it in the UPS strike, and now at Honeywell and in the rejection of the Caterpillar contract.

Another sign of this was when an estimated 5,000 people turned out for a rally in Marietta, Ohio, on March 15 to support about 70 striking employees at Magnetic Specialty Inc. (MSI), according to an Associated Press report.

"It's unprecedented in recent history that so many people would take this organizing effort to heart and make it their own struggle," said Howard Scott, a spokesperson for the United Steelworkers of America (USWA).

The workers, who are USWA members, walked off the job last year after MSI refused to grant them union recognition. The company is continuing to operate with scabs.

AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka, the rally's main speaker, told the crowd that workers across the nation are becoming frustrated with the slowness of companies to recognize unions. Scott said more than \$40,000 was raised for the striking workers during the March 15 rally.

Another strike over these unfair labor practices began in June 1994 and lasted 17 months, with the company keeping its operations going and profitable through the use of scabs. UAW officials again ordered the members back to work under the same conditions, even though the workers had again voted down the company's proposal.

The new proposal would have the union drop its unfair labor practices charges, give amnesty to the scabs while not giving amnesty to and rehiring all the workers fired during the strikes. It would also

have introduced two-tier wages between current workers and new hires, who would get sharply lower wages. Another provision would allow Caterpillar to freely hire and fire low-paid and ambiguously described "temporary" workers.

The *New York Times* noted that "the agreement stands in sharp contrast to the triumph scored by United Parcel Service strikers" last summer. The *Wall Street Journal* stated that the proposal gave Caterpillar everything it wanted in 1991.

Cameron Austin, a worker at Caterpillar's Decatur, Illinois, plant, where the workers voted down the latest offer by 91 percent, was interviewed in the *Socialist Organizer* newspaper after the vote. He is a writer for a rank-and-file newsletter called *Kick the Cat*.

Austin said about the latest company proposal, "For more than six years we have been fighting for our rights, for a decent contract. The UAW leadership itself acknowledged all this time that Cat's offer was unacceptable. And then they changed their tune, telling us we had no choice but to surrender. It was business unionism at its best.

"The UAW leadership unanimously
Continued on page 65

A Comment from the Internet

On the Voting Down of the CAT Contract

I was talking to a comrade of mine, Rusty Gilbert. He said the interesting thing about this vote-down was the reason given. On a trip through the War Zone across Illinois, he stopped in Peoria and Decatur, and talked with militants there. What he told me is that this contract was refused because it violated their principles, their dignity.

This came up in a discussion about whether or not there is the beginning of a

labor upsurge in America. He recommended a book about the beginning of the 1930s movement, "Things Are Happening in Strange Places." Both Rusty and I are cautiously optimistic. Despite the crushing of the various strikes through the Illinois heartland, the fire is still there. Indeed, things *are* happening in strange places. [Sounds like working-class radicalization will "play in Peoria"?]

— Marc ("the Chegitz") Luzietti

Bad Medicine Is Good Business: The Crisis in U.S. Health Care

by Joe Auciello

Standing on board a replica of the Boston Tea Party ship on December 3, 1997, a group of doctors, nurses, and medical students, wearing their white coats and scrubs, staged a dramatic public protest by flinging financial statements of “for-profit” hospitals and health maintenance organizations (HMOs) into Boston Harbor.

By dumping overboard these symbols of “health care capitalism,” this group of medical professionals, organized as the Ad Hoc Committee to Defend Health Care, deliberately reenacted the famous protest of the American Revolution, which started in Boston some 223 years ago.

The Ad Hoc Committee squarely condemned the increasing dominance of corporate values — the drive for greater and greater revenue — within the medical profession. The growing corporate takeover in medicine, they say, undermines the quality of health care because doctors and nurses are forced to treat “patients as profit centers.” One internist stated bluntly, “Our patients’ care is being sacrificed on the altar of profit.”

Following the protest at Boston Harbor, a meeting was held at Faneuil Hall to speak out against worsening working conditions for medical staff and expose the corporate policies which cause an erosion of patient care. As patient loads increase for doctors and nurses so that hospitals can save money, unsafe, harmful practices are on the rise and are becoming routine in even the best of hospitals. Dr. Timothy McCall, an Ad Hoc Committee member, said, “There’s less and less room to practice good medicine and good nursing care. Considerations of the bottom line are again and again getting in the way of providing care.”

Dr. David U. Himmelstein, one of the founders of the Ad Hoc Committee, stated: “The soul of our profession is being taken away from us and our patients. This is not a system that Americans decided on. It was imposed by the wealthiest and most powerful forces.”

Dr. Himmelstein decried the health maintenance organizations that financially penalize physicians while paying executives lavishly for cutting unprofitable services. He noted that the problem of putting money before medicine extended beyond the for-profit HMOs and hospitals. Nonprofit hospitals and health plans, which still predominate in Massachusetts, are also being forced to cut costs by the same market forces. Dr. Himmelstein added, “I call it the vampire effect. If you don’t act like a for-profit, you die.”

A month before this protest a nursing administrators’ conference was held in Boston. The information and analysis presented at that convention confirms the criticisms made by the Ad Hoc Committee. A *Boston Globe* report summarized the keynote speech by Leah Curtin, editor of *Nursing Management* magazine, who “said experienced nurses who could fill specialized jobs are leaving the field in droves, unhappy with the long hours, reduced wages, and

heavy administrative demands that have come with managed care.” Ms. Curtin went on to note: “The hospitals are effectively telling these people, ‘The more experience you have the less we want you.’”

The *Boston Globe* article pointed out that the consequences of these management schemes were most acutely felt in California, which has fewer nurses relative to the population than the U.S. average. Two months later the California Nurses Association called a two-day strike against health care giant Kaiser Permanente, leading 7,500 nurses out of 54 medical facilities in northern California. Because nurses have been forced to work without a contract for a full year, they have previously called brief walkouts. The main issue in dispute between Kaiser Permanente and the CNA is staffing — the cost-cutting measures that force too much work upon too few nurses, thereby damaging the quality of patient care while reducing costs for the corporate giant. The CNA claims that Kaiser has cut almost 1,600 jobs of registered nurses.

With costs from the walkout estimated at \$10 million a day, Kaiser flew in almost three hundred nurse managers and other personnel from southern California and out of state. Kaiser management also launched a press campaign



condemning the nurses for a supposed “hypocrisy” that “puts patients at risk.”

As negotiations resume, CNA leaders are not optimistic about prospects for a favorable contract settlement any time soon, charging that Kaiser Permanente “is stepping up efforts to wage a long-term war on the nurses’ professional association that could drag out the current dispute for many months to come.”

(The California Nurses Association maintains an excellent web site with press releases, news, and a superb booklet, “For-Profit, Not-for-Profit, or Not for Patients?” This site should be consulted for the most up-to-date information on their negotiations, job actions, and related issues. Their address is: www.califnurses.org.)

Doctors, too, are affected by the way Kaiser does business. Kaiser, the largest HMO in the United States, has its physicians on salary, which has especially reduced their professional autonomy. Dr. Andrew Poritz, medical director of the Worcester Surgical Center, noted, “These organizations have the power to dictate every aspect of health care doctors provide to their patients.” Dr. Bernard Lown, who accepted the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, has described the corporatization of health care as “a triumph — at least temporarily — of those who believe these services to be mere commodities and regard human suffering as investment opportunities.”

The growing trend by health planners in different parts of the country is to duplicate the “California model” pioneered by Kaiser Permanente. For instance, Worcester County in central Massachusetts claimed fourteen hospitals eight years ago — now there are just two. The spreading and deepening of these trends — the hospital as marketplace — has prompted, in the words of Steffi Woolhandler and David Himmelstein, “a broad base for a movement in medicine rejecting market values in medicine.”

The Ad Hoc Committee to Defend Health Care is one example of that broad-based movement. The Ad Hoc Committee is a statewide group in Massachusetts that represents 3,000 doctors

and nurses. More than 10 percent of the doctors and 700 nurses in the state have endorsed the Committee’s founding statement. That statement articulates five principles: (1) Medicine and nursing must not be diverted from their primary tasks: the relief of suffering, the prevention and treatment of illness, and the promotion of health. (2) Pursuit of corporate profit and personal fortune have no place in caregiving. (3) Potent financial incentives that reward over-care or undercare should be prohibited, as should business arrangements that allow corporations and employers to control the care of patients. (4) A patient’s right to clinician of choice must not be curtailed. (5) Access to health care must be the right of all.

In an article entitled “For Our Patients, Not for Profits,” the Ad Hoc Committee’s founding statement appeared in the December 3 *Journal of the American Medical Association* with the signatures of 2,300 doctors and nurses. It has already been endorsed by physicians from Rhode Island to New Mexico. (The statement is coincidentally reprinted in the February 1998 issue of our fellow Fourth Internationalist U.S. newspaper, *Socialist Action*, together with a supportive editorial column. Subscriptions to *SA* are \$8 per year; write 3425 Cesar Chavez St., San Francisco CA 94110.)

Nurses have long viewed themselves as workers and have formed unions in defense of their interests. What is new is that doctors now, too, realize they are becoming “health care workers” employed by a corporation, or a hospital complex that acts like one. As a result, they are also organizing together and making alliances with others in defense of common concerns. Recently, in New Jersey, a doctors’ union was not granted legal recognition when the courts ruled that doctors are essentially “independent contractors.”

Doctors, like labor organizations before them, will have an uphill fight for the right to exist as a union, but “the degradation of work” — to borrow Harry Braverman’s well-known phrase, the theme of his *Labor and Monopoly Capital* — and the necessity for capitalism to find more avenues to obtain

greater rates of profit, will compel doctors to band together, as workers before them have had to do. This is a new development in the class struggle in North America and a healthy one, too. The organizing efforts of health care professionals are a sign that the labor movement is preparing itself for even greater struggles still to come.

[Source material for this article includes: *Boston Globe*, Nov. 4, Dec. 1, 2, 3, 25, 27, 1997, Jan. 8, Feb. 1, 2, 8, 1998, and *The Nation*, Dec. 22, 1997. Kaiser Permanente press releases were obtained from the internet, as were reports from UPI and Reuters. The web-site address for the California Nurses Association is given in the article. The Harry Braverman reference is to his *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (Monthly Review Press, 1974), which documents and analyzes the eradication of skills required of the individual by impersonal giant corporate money machines.

[A note on Dr. David Himmelstein (quoted in our article): The September 1997 issue of *Labor Party Press* carries an interview with Himmelstein. (*Labor Party Press*, incidentally, can be found on the internet at the Labor Party’s web page: www.labornet.org/lpa/. Go to “Past Issues of Labor Party Press” and find Chris Townsend’s column, which contains the Himmelstein interview.) Readers’ will find the entire September 1997 *Labor Party Press* issue of interest, since it focuses on health care questions. Also important is the section on health care included in the Labor Party’s Program, “A Call for Economic Justice.”

[The current issue of *Labor Party Press*, for March 1998, likewise carries a health care article, “HMOs: Not for patients.” It describes the CNA’s pamphlet series, *Corporate Healthcare*. For copies contact the California Nurses Association, 1145 Market St., Suite 1100, San Francisco, CA 94103; phone, (415) 864-4141; website (to repeat): <http://www.califnurses.org>.

[To subscribe to *Labor Party Press*, and simultaneously join the Labor Party, send \$20 for one year to Labor Party, P.O. Box 53177, Washington, D.C. 20009.] □

February 9, 1998

How Ohio Labor Won the 1997 Election

by Jean Tussey

The United Auto Workers, like the AFL-CIO, hailed last November's defeat of Issue 2, a corporate revision of the state workers compensation law, as a "stunning election victory" for Ohio workers. And it was.

"THEY HAD THE MONEY, WE HAD THE PEOPLE: Ohio Labor Stops Corporate Assault on Injured Workers." That headline in the UAW's monthly magazine *Solidarity* for November 1997 summed it up well.

Big Business spent \$7.6 million campaigning for a "Yes" vote on Issue 2. Labor supporters spent \$2.5 for a "No" vote. Of the 3,128,446 registered voters who went to the polls, a 57 percent majority rejected the measure.

A review of how Ohio workers won on this referendum question in the 1997 election shows that, critics and cynics notwithstanding, the organized labor movement is alive and well and is still the only force capable of leading the fightback against overt attacks on the working class.

Labor Turns to Voters

When the legislature passed the 1997 "reform" of Ohio's state workplace injury insurance plan, the labor movement turned from state house lobbying to working class voting to abort the regressive law before it could be put into effect.

As soon as Governor George Voinovich signed Senate Bill 45 (SB 45) last April, the UAW and AFL-CIO joined in a Committee to Stop Corporate Attacks on Injured Workers. Together with a broad Coalition for Workplace Safety, they launched a statewide petition drive to place the issue on the November ballot.

On May 20, Governor Voinovich added fuel to the flame when he signed into law a bill excluding school construction from the prevailing-wage law, which requires payment of union wages on public construction projects exceeding \$50,000.

David J. Williams, president of the 90,000-member Ohio State Building and Construction Trades Council, and

William Burga, president of the 850,000-member Ohio AFL-CIO, joined in denouncing Voinovich as "a foe of working Ohioans."

Awakening a Sleeping Giant

Williams "warned that state-house Republicans were awakening a 'sleeping giant' by uniting factions of organized labor..."

"Indeed, leaders of two teachers unions — the Ohio Federation of Teachers and the Ohio Education Association — that joined the construction workers in opposing the exclusion of school projects from the prevailing wage law, agreed that labor may seek revenge at the polls," reported the Cleveland *Plain Dealer* of May 21, 1997.

By the July deadline, 414,934 petition signatures, twice the number required to stop implementation of the new anti-worker compensation law, were deposited with the Ohio secretary of state. Senate Bill 45 was officially certified for the ballot as Issue 2 on August 12.

For the next three months the "Vote No on Issue 2" campaign united the working class of Ohio and all its allies and sympathizers. The UAW, the AFL-CIO, the Building and Construction Trades, the Teamsters, and independent unions joined in a campaign to mobilize their members and friends to reach every possible voter with the facts about how the new law would hurt injured workers — union and non-union — and their families.

"Vote NO on Issue 2"

Hundreds of thousands of attractive leaflets were printed and distributed by the Committee to Stop Corporate Attacks on Injured Workers (co-chairs: Bill Burga, president, Ohio AFL-CIO; and Warren Davis, director, UAW Region 2) and by union political action committees, central labor bodies, local unions, and retiree groups.

"Vote NO on Issue 2" leaflets were mailed to union members and voter lists; posted on workplace, campus, and

church bulletin boards; distributed at union meetings, shopping malls, rallies, community meetings, house to house in working class neighborhoods, and finally, at polling places on election day.

Veteran union activists recalled the 1958 election — also, coincidentally, a "Vote NO on Issue 2" campaign — that overwhelmingly defeated an Ohio "right to work" (without a union) law. Then, too, the entire state labor movement — the AFL and the CIO (not yet merged in Ohio at that time), the UAW, the Teamsters, the Mechanics Education Society, and other independent unions — had joined in a massive independent political campaign to defeat the anti-labor law.

In the forty years since then, the civil rights and feminist movements added large contingents of working women, African Americans and other people of color, and public employees to the organized labor movement and allied organizations.

The Coalition of Labor Union Women, the A. Phillip Randolph Institute, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, and the new union-based Labor Party were all able to reach out to members and friends in working-class community groups for support of labor's 1997 "Vote NO" campaign.

Ohio NAACP Says "Vote NO"

The Ohio Conference of NAACP Branches (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) passed a resolution declaring that "the changes in workers' compensation will have a negative effect on citizens who suffer injuries and disease as a consequence of their employment." The Conference urged defeat of Issue 2.

The Ohio Council of Senior Citizens, Consumers League of Ohio, Fraternal Order of Police, Professional Firefighters, public health nurses, and others participated in the Vote No coalition. Cleveland chapters of Hard Hatted Women, Women for Racial and Economic Equality, and Women Speak Out for Peace and Justice presented speakers

on Issue 2 and helped distribute campaign materials.

The September 20 founding convention of the Ohio State Labor Party was addressed by AFL-CIO President Burga on the Vote No campaign. The delegates voted unanimously to make the campaign their top political priority through the November election. Labor Party members had participated in the petition gathering to place the issue on the ballot and gained valuable electoral experience by joining in all the campaign activities.

The Ohio Academy of Trial Lawyers, which includes union attorneys and lawyers for injured workers, had been among the first to publicly attack Senate Bill 45 when it was introduced in the state legislature.

On February 26, 1997, Dawn Detelich, director of government affairs for the trial lawyers association, spoke on the bill at a Cleveland-area public meeting held in the Lakewood Office on Aging. She was presented by Lillian P. Morisky, chairperson of the Teamsters Women's Committee, Cleveland 9 to 5 Working Women. (Morisky was also active in building support for the Teamsters 1997 UPS strike.)

Corporate Campaign Attacks Workers, Lawyers

The trial lawyers, and nameless, faceless workers accused of faking cheating, lying, and fraud, were the special targets of the multimillion-dollar corporate "Keep Ohio Working" campaign for a "Yes" vote on Issue 2.

Labor could not match the quantity of high-priced corporate TV commercials, but they countered the smear attack on injured workers with TV responses by real, live victims who identified themselves and the workplace injuries and illnesses for which they received compensation.

Roger Geiger, state director for the National Federation of Independent Business, also charged that the trial attorneys, not the labor movement, were "really financing this ["Vote NO"] campaign" (*Plain Dealer*, July 22, 1997).

The Ohio Academy of Trial Lawyers was an important part of the labor-led Coalition for Workplace Safety that launched the campaign against SB 45. But as Detelich explained, the trial lawyers alone could not have led the petition drive to overturn the law "because

of the daunting task of compiling the signatures" and the "financial hurdle of educating the public" (*Plain Dealer*, April 26, 1997).

Only the organized labor movement had the motivated, educated, and experienced forces, and the financial resources, capable of carrying through a successful campaign in the interests of all Ohio workers, non-union as well as union.

On the other side, private profit-motivated corporate capital could only respond by calling on its constituency in big business to increase its war chest for a media blitz for a "Yes" vote. Their spokesmen in monopoly newspaper editorials and high-priced TV commercials attacked workers and their supporters and insulted their intelligence.

According to the UAW's *Solidarity* magazine, "Governor Voinovich said the issue was 'too complicated' for voters to grasp. Andrew Doherel, president of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce claimed voters were 'confused.'" UAW Regional Director Warren Davis countered, "Ohio workers understood this was a takeaway bill launched by multinational corporations against injured workers."

Labor Mobilized Against Corporate Attack

The successful campaign to defeat Issue 2 on election day couldn't have happened without organized labor.

Union members collected the more than 400,000 signatures of registered voters on petitions to place Issue 2 on the ballot. Union members funded, distributed, and helped with mailings of the hundreds of thousands of "Vote NO" leaflets and letters. They placed lawn signs on busy streets, posters in front windows of homes and neighborhood stores. They staffed phone banks and spoke at community meetings, and to their families and friends.

In October, Toledo union members staged a skit in which a man in a gorilla suit labeled "Conrad" (referring to James Conrad, head of the Ohio Bureau of Workers Compensation) was twisting the arm off an injured worker.

The October 9 *Plain Dealer's* snide comment was, "Workers' comp battle threatens to be ugly...The battle has all the earmarks of becoming one of the more bitter issue campaigns in years. With hundreds of millions of dollars at

stake for businesses, and with organized labor seizing on the issue as a way to prove its relevance, the fight has attracted national attention."

The paper quoted Roger Geiger, treasurer for the big business proponents of Issue 2: "This all started when the opposition filed their political action committee with the name 'Committee to Stop Corporate Attacks on Injured Workers.' Unfortunately, that didn't set a healthy tone."

Actually the name "Stop Corporate Attacks on Injured Workers" set exactly the right tone. It told the truth, what was really going on, and provided the rallying cry to unite the working class to mobilize, educate, demonstrate, and vote in its own interest, against the bosses.

Workers were singing and shouting again. At regional rallies like the October 16 Cleveland-area mass meeting at the UAW Local 1250 hall (across from the Ford Motor plant) they sang new words to traditional labor songs, like "Vote No on 20" to the tune of "Too Old to Work." They heard union leaders and coalition partners speak from the same platform for a common cause. And young and old stood up to close the meeting with labor's historical anthem, "Solidarity Forever."

In the last month of the campaign, Democratic politicians got on board. On October 7, Cleveland Mayor Michael White, no friend of the labor movement, spoke out against Issue 2 at a press conference arranged by Loree Soggs, executive secretary of the Cleveland Building and Construction Trades Council. TV commercials featured Senator John Glenn and Congressman Louis Stokes urging a No vote on Issue 2. Both are retiring from office at the expiration of their current terms.

Labor Wins Battle, War Continues

On election day, Ohio workers celebrated two victories: the defeat of Issue 2 and the national failure of President Clinton's latest bid for authorization of "fast track" international trade agreements in the interest of big business. One jubilant Cleveland woman campaigner exclaimed: "What are we going to do with all these victories?"

The first response of some trade union leaders, like Cleveland AFL-CIO

Continued on page 43

Right-Wing Initiative Attacks Right of Unions to Participate in Politics

by David Bacon

The following article was posted from Oakland, California, on the "labr.party" discussion conference on the Internet.

Anti-education conservatives, based in Orange County, have placed on the California ballot in June an initiative, Proposition 226, which could change the face of the state's politics for years by drastically limiting unions' political activity. The California initiative is only the opening gun of a national campaign of similar efforts which already has spread to over 10 states.

The measure is the product of James Righeimer, Mark Bucher, and Frank Ury, a trio of extreme Republicans whose political umbrella, the Education Alliance, is dedicated to the election of far-right Christian conservatives to school boards in Orange County. Although the initial trio of sponsors are small players on the statewide political scene, their idea has been seized by the conservative elite on both the state and national levels. Governor Pete Wilson is the honorary chairperson of their campaign, and personally appealed to voters to sign petitions to get the measure on the ballot.

Grover Norquist, head of Americans for Tax Reform, a right-wing group dedicated to eliminating income taxes, unions, social security, and Medicare, has announced that he will raise \$10 million for similar initiatives in other states. Norquist is very close to House Speaker Newt Gingrich.

J. Patrick Rooney, CEO of the Golden Rule Insurance Corp. and another Gingrich associate, is also a prominent financial backer. Rooney has proposed replacing Medicare with medical savings accounts, a form of private insurance pioneered by Golden Rule. Both Rooney and Norquist have donated just under \$50,000 to the California initiative campaign, a sum just under the threshold requiring them to be listed as sponsors.

Proposition 226's three Orange County sponsors heavily backed the state's school voucher initiative,

Unions Win Ohio Court Ruling on Political Action

In a political victory for organized labor on March 12, key portions of Ohio's 1995 campaign finance law were thrown out by the Franklin County Court of Appeals, according to an Ohio paper, the *Dispatch Statehouse Reporter*.

The campaign finance revisions, contained in Ohio Senate Bill 8, were passed in the first year of a Republican-controlled legislature over the bitter objections of union leaders and many Democrats.

The 3-0 ruling declared that large sections of the 3-year-old law violated the Ohio Constitution.

The most significant portion of the ruling overturned a ban on the use of union members' dues for campaign contribu-

tions: "*The prohibition on direct partisan political expression by labor organizations strikes at the core of the electoral process and constitutional freedom of speech,*" the court declared. (Emphasis added.)

The judges rejected state attorneys' arguments that the ban was needed to protect union members who oppose the views and candidates backed by the union.

Union lawyers noted members are allowed annually to file an objection over the political use of their dues.

The lawsuit challenging the law was brought by the state United Auto Workers and Ohio Education Association, along with various locals and chapters of each union.

defeated in 1993. They drafted the present proposal as a form of revenge against teachers' unions, the key force in the vouchers' defeat. It will appear on the state ballot along with another measure, Proposition 227, which would abolish bilingual education. Both are wedge issues, expected to draw conservative voters to the polls.

Proposition 226, portrayed as a campaign finance reform measure, would force unions to obtain an annual authorization from each member before any dues money deducted by an employer could be used to make any political contribution or for any other political purpose.

In Washington-state, where a similar measure directed against public employees passed in 1992, the number of teachers union members contributing to political campaigns fell from 48,000 to 8,000. Republican representation in the state increased substantially.

That seems clearly the intention in California as well. If the ballot initiative passes in June, any union money collected before July could not be used for political purposes. The bureaucratic process set up by the initiative for new contributions could not possibly be in place by November, and would therefore bar California labor contributions in that election, with far-reaching consequences.

The next California governor, who will be elected in November, will be in office during the census of the year 2000. He or she will preside over the reapportionment process, redistributing all the political offices, and redrawing all the district boundaries, in the state.

Republican control of reapportionment would ensure that the party continues to occupy the statehouse. Republicans would get the chance to retake the State Assembly, lost after a two-year reign last year, and take the State Senate for

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Teamsters to Vote on New Freight Contract

by Charles Walker

Gains in this contract are due to membership unity and to renewed Teamster strength. — *TDU Freight Bulletin*

A tentative national freight agreement covering three-quarters of the 120,000 Teamsters in the trucking industry is being unanimously recommended by Teamster negotiators. At this writing only a summary of the accord has been made public. A mail ballot with contract details will be sent to freight Teamsters sometime in March.

Union sources say the union's bargaining committee was balanced between Carey officials and backers of the 1996 Hoffa slate and predict that the proposed contract will be overwhelmingly ratified by the ranks. No statement from Hoffa concerning the contract is available. The Teamsters for a Democratic Union says, "An important and exceptional feature of the contract is that there are no concessions in language and conditions." The Teamsters union must still reach an agreement with those remaining freight firms whose contracts also expire March 31.

The highlight of the proposed five-year pact is a 33 percent increase in employer contributions that are expected to allow freight workers to retire with pensions equal to pensions won by UPS workers after their 15-day strike in August 1997. In the Midwest, for example, freight drivers, loaders, and clerks will be able to retire with \$3,000 a month at any age, after 30 years on the job. In a November survey, 71 percent of responding freight workers put better pensions and improved job security at the top of their demands.

Teamster negotiators say that freight Teamsters have gained new job security provisions that force the companies to hire workers laid off from other signatory companies, before hiring workers off the street. Further, "Companies are prohibited from diverting work to double-breasted operations." (A non-union firm set up by a unionized company in the same industry is said to be a "double-breasted" operation.)

Another provision bars the companies from using non-union subcontractors

when freight is taken to or from railroads. The companies are also prohibited from relocating any work or terminals to Mexico.

Wages are frozen during the first year, but rise by 35 cents an hour in each of the following four years, topping out at \$19.86 per hour. A first-year bonus of \$750, plus badly needed raises in the long-standing two-tier wage progression, were also won. Temporary workers' wages, however, remain capped at 85 percent of the top scale.

Overtime Cap Eliminated

In 1994, the Teamsters won a clause providing that laid-off loaders were to be recalled to work before other workers were allowed to work more than 40 hours, effectively putting a cap on overtime income. This "share the work" provision proved immensely unpopular with the loaders, and may have helped the Hoffa forces gain freight votes in the Teamsters 1996 election.

The companies' distorted implementation of that provision only added to the unpopularity of the overtime cap. Union sources cite the elimination of the controversial clause, plus the pension increases, as the main reasons the proposed contract will probably be ratified easily.

The new pact allows the union to strike to enforce rulings either by union-company grievance panels or by arbitrators. However, the right to strike over grievances that are deadlocked at grievance panels was not regained in the new agreement. The Teamsters lost that contractual right in the 1994 negotiations, even though the Teamsters struck the freight industry for 24 days, the only nationwide freight strike in 18 years.

Union Handicapped by Drained Treasury

The union negotiators were handicapped by the severe drain on the union's treasury by the UPS strike of 180,000 workers and by the enormous costs of the government's intervention in the union. A governmental administrative and semi-judicial bureaucracy

now parallels the international union's structure.

Top government functionaries draw down as much as \$450 an hour, while \$150 an hour paid to others is not uncommon. Each federal bureaucrat commands a staff of assistants, some of whom also have assistants. And all this is paid for from Teamsters' dues money, under the terms of the consent decree signed by the old guard union officials in 1989, before the Carey reform movement came into office.

The government's agents have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars each year since 1989 on office rent alone. All that, plus phone bills, travel, and expense accounts have sucked up millions of dues dollars since the old guard leaders signed the infamous consent decree — and no end is in sight.

Recent news accounts cited unnamed international union officials as saying that the union may soon be forced to lay off some of its staff and cut back on all but the most essential membership services.

Carey Might Have Won More

It's only speculation, but chances are the negotiations might have been more fruitful had Teamsters President Ron Carey been leading the union's team. For if Carey dared the freight companies to take a strike, they would have no reason to think he was bluffing, despite the union's financial weakness.

A strike was the last thing the freight companies wanted. The 1994 strike cost them profitable business and resulted in cutthroat competition, driving some firms to the wall. The companies not only wanted a settlement; they wanted an early settlement, as their customers were already showing signs of moving their freight to non-union carriers. No wonder, then, that the companies pressed for preliminary talks six months prior to the current contract's expiration.

Two Troubling Provisions

At least two provisions of the proposed settlement are reportedly troubling

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The Government vs. Teamsters: Some Leftists Still Don't Get It!

by Charles Walker

The campaign to disallow Carey from running amounts to a right-wing witch-hunt, an assault on Teamsters' right to elect their leaders, and a threat to the future of the entire labor movement.

— Dan La Botz, *The Fight at UPS*

Since the government barred Teamsters President Ron Carey from the court-ordered rerun of the union's 1996 election, some socialists, progressives, and liberals who are supportive of the Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) and who once backed Carey are venting their anger, not against the government — but against Carey!

Most of these critics on “the left” have bought the government's line that Carey is guilty of stealing union members' money to finance his election campaign. One socialist writer's certainty of Carey's guilt is so strong that she argues that Carey is responsible for the embezzlement of the members' money, *even if he didn't know of the money-laundering scheme.*

Many of these critics also fault Carey's approach to trade union leadership. One of them concludes that Carey believes that the Teamsters “should function as an effective service organization that mobilized its membership [only] when that proved tactically necessary.” Others assert that Carey sought “to govern the union as he saw fit, without accountability to the ranks.”

It is also claimed that it was Carey's so-called service unionist outlook that led to his hiring former Democratic Party operatives who brought with them “the sleaze of mainstream politics” and apparently assured Carey's downfall.

Critics Blind to Stepped-up Government Intervention

On the other hand, the critics pay little or no attention to Carey's refutation of the government's allegations, and they seemingly are myopic as to the anti-democratic escalation of the government's intervention into the Teamsters union — that is, the barring of rank-and-file Teamsters from choosing their own leaders.

The disqualification of Carey is virtually without precedent, even under the Consent Decree. Since 1991, the election officers have monitored at least 1,000 convention delegate elections and two unionwide elections of international officers.

In only one case, when it was impossible to hold a rerun election without postponing the international's nominating convention, did the election officer order that the protesting candidates not be given a rerun election. Instead, given the facts of the case, the protesting candidates from a pro-Carey slate were allowed to represent their local at the nominating convention.

Until now, government-appointed election officers have adopted the normal practice of the Labor Department, which when it orders a rerun election does not bar properly nominated candidates, such as Carey, from the election.

Tainted Charges Against Carey

Of course it matters whether or not Carey was part of the money-laundering scheme. But to this date most of the “evidence” against Carey that's known to rank-and-file Teamsters is the largely uncorroborated allegations of Carey's former campaign manager, Jere Nash.

Even some of Carey's critics recognize that Nash's testimony is “dubious, since if the government deems him to have become an uncooperative witness, Nash will face a heavier sentence.” As noted by Judge Conboy, who ruled Carey off the ballot, Nash's current version of the events was obtained after Nash pleaded guilty to felonies “and agreed to cooperate with the United States Attorney's Office.”

On that point, Carey's lawyer said, “The law recognizes that an individual facing sentencing with a prospect for leniency in exchange for testimony has a powerful incentive to lie. This proposition is so well established that it is incorporated into jury instructions throughout the country.”

Not only is the case against Carey obviously tainted, but so were the rules

that governed Judge Conboy's hearings: Carey was not permitted the basic right to face his accusers, a right that is required in labor arbitrations, public courtrooms, even traffic ticket hearings.

Feeley Passes Judgment

Dianne Feeley, a leader of Solidarity, a U.S. socialist grouping, asserts that Carey “is nonetheless politically responsible for the actions of his campaign staffers” — *even if Carey didn't know what the campaign staff was up to.*

In truth, Feeley believes that Carey had a hand in the scandalous scheme. That's revealed in her report that some delegates at the TDU's recent convention surprised newspaper reporters with their support of Carey. “Unlike the reporters, they [the delegates] hadn't read the judge's 70-page decision or carefully considered the now-available evidence.”

She tries to explain why the delegates didn't share her summary judgment against Carey. “These are people who campaigned with Carey from the beginning. They know what his militant leadership has meant and they gave him the benefit of the doubt.” (Feeley's statements, giving Carey no benefit of the doubt, appear in an article by her in the February issue of *International Viewpoint*, monthly publication of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.)

Apparently, Feeley believes that Judge Conboy's findings against Carey are so convincing that morally she can't give Carey that benefit of the doubt. One wonders if she knows that before Jere Nash pleaded guilty to charges of diverting union money, Nash told authorities that he kept knowledge of the scheme from Carey, because Carey would not have approved it.

After Nash reached a leniency deal with the government, he changed his story, and said that Carey didn't know the details of the scam, but had a “general” idea of the scheme. Nash claims to have shown Carey charts detailing the fundraising. Now Nash says that he destroyed the charts, even removed them from his computer. Nash also hasn't produced a single person to confirm that the charts ever existed. Clearly, Conboy's case against Carey would be less weak if Nash had stuck to one story — and if Nash could produce the charts, or even a single eyewitness who saw the charts.

Teamsters Notebook

New Testimony Weakens Feds' Case Against Carey

The *New York Times* reported January 25 that two Teamsters office workers gave testimony that refuted an affidavit by a Teamsters staff worker (Monie Simpkins), who claimed that Carey approved \$735,000 in IBT donations that later were swapped for donations to Carey's reelection campaign.

Simpkin's allegation "was undercut by another secretary in Mr. Carey's office and by a mail clerk who testified that Ms. Simpkins broke down sobbing one day and told them that she had signed Mr. Carey's initials to approve the donations without getting his approval."

The government has relied on Simpkins's affidavit to back up accusation by Jere Nash that Carey knew of the donations swap scheme. The *New York Times* adds, "Mr. Carey's effort to clear his name has become a test of his word against the word of his [former] campaign manager, Jere Nash."

Before Nash pled guilty to bilking the Teamsters dues money, he said that Carey was kept in the dark because Carey would not have approved the scheme. Then Nash, who faces up to ten years behind bars, changed his story and implicated Carey, in hopes of gaining leniency.

The two office workers testified in January at a Washington hearing of the Independent Review Board (IRB), which has the power to expel Carey for life from the union.

Carey Faces Catch-22

The *Washington Post* of January 28 said that Carey was "faced with a legal Catch-22 before a government-created tribunal that in effect is able to serve as judge, jury and executioner in determining his future in the union...The Teamsters leader has been charged by the review board [IRB] with bringing 'reproach' upon the union for two distinct acts: embezzling money from the union and not exercising his fiduciary responsibility...No matter how he answers the charges, Carey appears to be trapped. If he says he knew about the money being siphoned into his campaign, he's guilty of one charge. If he says he didn't know anything about it, he's guilty of the other one. Either way he's out of the union..."

"Alice in Wonderland" Hearings

The *Washington Post* continued: "Lawyers following the case have noted the 'Alice in

Wonderland' quality of the hearings, but they don't want to talk about it on the record for fear of retribution.

"The makeup of the board also has come under question from participants in the process. Under the board charter, one member was to be selected by the union, another by the government and the third jointly by the two sides. But it never happened that way. After the union and the government each picked its candidate, they found themselves at an impasse over the third member.

"The government's candidate was former FBI director William Webster, but the union was not comfortable with him. When agreement couldn't be reached, the court overseeing the union appointed Webster to the third spot anyway, questioning why the union would have any objections to a former director of the FBI. Ever since, the government has been seen by those in the union as having two votes on the board."

Carey Goes to Court

Carey asked the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit to overturn the ruling that bars him from the rerun of the 1996 election. An earlier appeal to Judge David Edelstein of the Federal District Court in Manhattan was denied on December 30. One of Carey's lawyers said, "The latest ruling continues to deny him the opportunity to confront his accusers or present evidence that establishes his innocence."

Dates for Teamsters Rerun Election

Michael Cherkasky, the court-appointed election officer, proposed in February that ballots for the court-ordered rerun of the 1996 Teamsters election be mailed to the Teamsters membership on July 27, with counting to start on August 25. The plan, subject to approval by Judge Edelstein, also would allow the 1996 slates to add new candidates, and new slates to be formed.

Newsday of February 25 commented that Cherkasky's proposal "reopens the process, and could lead to maneuvering that could reshuffle the opposing forces in the upcoming election."

The election officer also said that his investigation into Hoffa's campaign finances would be completed in early March and his report to Judge Edelstein would be ready by early April.

New Pamphlet on Teamsters Available

A new pamphlet by Dan La Botz is entitled *The Fight at UPS: The Teamsters' Victory and the Future of the New Labor Movement*. Despite the title this pamphlet has a lot of historical background on the Teamsters union and on the rank-and-file caucus TDU (Teamsters for a Democratic Union). It also discusses the current attack by federal authorities on Ron Carey.

La Botz rightly states: "The campaign to disallow Carey from running amounts to a right-wing witchhunt, an assault on Teamsters' right to elect their leaders, and a threat to the future of the entire labor movement."

La Botz wrote *Rank and File Rebellion*, an authoritative account of TDU's origins and its development to 1990. (La Botz's new pamphlet, 24 pages, price \$1.00, can be ordered from Solidarity, 7012 Michigan Ave., Detroit, MI 48210.)

Teamsters Freight '98 Contract Campaign

In January, all freight local unions have been encouraged to join in a nationwide petition drive to get thousands of signatures from freight Teamsters to show support for the union's contract proposals and to turn up the heat on the bosses. The Teamsters national freight director reported, "A record number of Teamsters filled out contract surveys, and tens of thousands of members have taken part in Teamster Unity Days." The contract expires March 31 and covers 120,000 drivers, loading dock workers, and clerical workers.

Legal Defense Fund for Carey

Members of New York Teamsters Local 804 are appealing for money to meet Ron Carey's legal expenses. The chairman of the fund says, "I want you to know that I have known Ron Carey, as a member and Union Officer of Local 804, for over 30 years. He has always fought hard for our members against difficult odds. His record of honesty and integrity is impeccable. We cannot afford to sit back and have it tarnished." *Every donation, no matter how large or small, will be deeply appreciated. Make checks payable to Legal Defense Fund, P.O. Box 1068, Long Island, New York 11101.*

[Nash has now admitted, under cross-examination before the IRB in early March the first time in almost a year that Carey has been able to confront his accusers that his claim that Carey knew about the swap scheme hinges on a single brief phone conversation. Nash admitted that Carey could have misunderstood Nash's alleged statement during that brief phone conversation that the pro-Democratic campaign contributions Carey was being asked to authorize might help Carey's own campaign. See sidebar on this point.]

Carey's Supposed Original Sin
Feeley suggests, as do others I'll cite, that Carey's original sin was to hire Democratic professional political operatives. But shortly, after his [1991] election, Feeley says, Carey brought into the union several political consultants with close ties to the Democratic Party. These would be placed in charge of his 1996 campaign and prove to be his undoing.

But Feeley's criticism on this point is irrelevant because it doesn't help us evaluate the government's allegations against Carey.

It would be good if Carey shared the general socialist anathema of the Democrats. But he didn't in 1989 when TDU first backed him, and he doesn't now, though there's always hope.

More to the point is that there's no evidence, during Nash's five-year relationship with the IBT, that Carey had grounds to suspect that Nash was larcenous. Nor is there evidence that others that Carey hired from the United Mine Workers Union, the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, the Service Employees International Union, and TDU had grounds to suspect Nash. Nor is there evidence that they objected to Carey's hiring of the Democrats, or if they did, that they informed Carey.

As a matter of fact, Jim Larkin, who was on hand when Carey formed his 1992 transition team, indicates in the January issue of *Progressive* magazine that when Carey hired Nash to coordinate the transition team, Carey had the backing of his campaign manager, Eddie Burke (an ex-staffer with the United Mine Workers), who led the famous 1989 takeover of the Pittston coal mine.

A 15-Second Conversation, Easily Misunderstood

Carey Accuser Cross-Examined, Absurdly Weak Case Exposed

Teamsters President Ron Carey and his lawyers for the first time after nearly a year were able to confront Carey's main accuser, and the accuser's charges seemed to dissolve into thin air under questioning.

Jere Nash, Carey's former campaign manager, has claimed for months that Carey knew about the illegal swap scheme that Nash engineered, in which Teamster political campaign contributions in the fall of 1996 "triggered" donations to Carey's own campaign for Teamsters president. The IBT contributions went to Citizen Action and some other liberal groups. Nash was questioned by Carey's lawyers before the U.S. government-appointed Independent Review Board on March 11.

Under cross-examination Nash admitted that the only time he allegedly hinted to Carey about the swap scheme was during a very brief phone conversation, as little as 15-seconds long.

Much of the government's case against Carey hinges on this brief conversation.

When Carey's lawyer suggested that Carey might have misunderstood what Nash claims he was saying in this conversation, Nash responded, "That's fair."

Here is an account of this key part of the cross-examination, as reported by Reuters:

Under cross-examination by Carey attorney Mark Hulkower, Nash said the telephone conversation in which he told Carey that the Citizen Action contribution could help his campaign fund raising may have lasted only 15 seconds and that he never referred to it as an illegal swap scheme.

"You didn't tell him that there was anything improper about this?" asked Hulkower.

"No, sir," replied Nash.

"You didn't say, 'This is something you've got to keep under your hat, Ron?'"

"No," answered Nash.

Hulkower tried to get Nash to acknowledge that, given the lack of detail in his brief explanation to Carey of the importance of contributing to Citizen Action, Carey conceivably could have assumed that the contribution could have legally benefited him by enhancing his standing with liberal donors.

"That's fair," said Nash.

"Given the reputation of these organizations, there would be nothing sinister about the IBT giving money to them?" Hulkower asked.

"That's right," replied Nash.

Larkin, by the way, shares many of Feeley's objections to Carey's purported outlook on union leaders and the role of the membership.

"Against the Current" Editors Slam Carey

The January issue of *Against the Current*, a socialist magazine, contains an analysis of the Teamsters election crisis signed by four members of the journal's editorial board; so obviously the Teamsters crisis is important to the magazine. The authors baldly pronounce judgment against Carey. They charge that he illegally allowed union funds to support his own election campaign.

It is hard, they say, to see how Carey could have failed to understand that the purpose of the series of major political contributions which the Teamsters made to various liberal and labor organizations near the end of the campaign was to illegally secure funding

from these organizations for his own reelection.

Actually, at their 1996 convention the Teamsters resolved that the International will use its resources and encourage its members to replace the current Congress with one more responsive to the needs of our members. IBT Director of Government Affairs William Hamilton anticipated \$1.1 million in direct general treasury expenditure for the 1996 national elections however misguided we may feel was the Teamster leadership's conception of a more responsive Congress. Why should Carey not have believed that the contributions he authorized were being used for the purposes stipulated by the IBT convention?

The authors of the article in *Against the Current* also say that even if Carey did not technically know about the wide-ranging conspiracy...he should have made it his business to find out about them. However, they fail to say

how Carey could have known about the conspiracy sooner than he did.

After all, the point of a conspiracy is to keep the victim from knowing what's going on.

The *Against the Current* editors do not explain why no one in the Teamsters chain of command charged with fiduciary oversight went to Carey to challenge or question the campaign contributions.

Nor do they point out that when Carey learned about the conspirators' swapping of dues money for contributions to his campaign committee, he immediately told the Teamsters lawyers to notify the authorities that the union would fully cooperate with all investigations.

Accountability to the Ranks

The four socialists echo Feeley's charges in claiming that this diversion of funds emerged naturally from the top-down kind of campaign that Carey himself had chosen to run.

They write: Carey's top-down approach to reelection did not come out of the blue he sought to build a personal following of old-guard unionists that would provide a political base which, because dependent on him, would allow him to govern the union as he saw fit without accountability to the rank and file.

That's a new charge. But make no mistake about it. No Teamsters president has ever been more accountable to the ranks than Ron Carey.

Carey was elected twice by the ranks and has never negotiated a contract that was not overwhelmingly ratified by the ranks. In fact, what the *ATC* editors seem to mean by accountability to the ranks is *accountability to TDU*.

They say that Carey has not been committed to the construction of a rank-and-file organization within the Teamsters *which is independent from*

himself and to which he could be *called accountable*.

Taken all together, what they are saying not only defames Carey. It equally defames TDU, which has never criticized Carey because he was not part of TDU, nor demanded that Carey be accountable to anyone other than the Teamsters membership.

TDU has never suggested that any Teamster officer should be accountable to TDU. The many TDU members who are Teamster officers understand that union members expect them to be accountable to the Teamster membership. If Teamster members were to believe that TDU thought otherwise, TDU would quickly be history.

The Olive Branch Policy

I believe it's true that Carey's so-called olive branch policy of attempting to win over officers who opposed him in 1991 was flawed. Not because it wasn't smart to divide his opponents in the officialdom, nor because officers shouldn't be encouraged to act differently once the top of the union was freed from the grip of the old guard.

The flaw was that Carey did not at the same time seek to arouse and lead an *organized* opposition by the ranks against the old guard. That one-sided policy weakened his hand in dealing with the bureaucracy.

But the error was not his alone. Even TDU never proposed that Carey alter or drop his olive branch policy.

What Is the Burning Issue Today?

But the live issue today is not Carey's olive branch policy, which he announced at least as early as his 1992 inauguration. The urgent question is, Can the government exclude him from the election, thus clearing the way for

the old guard to make a comeback? Criticisms of the olive branch policy do not help clarify the facts of the campaign funding controversy, nor loosen the government's tightening muzzle on the ranks' right to democratically elect any member to any post.

At TDU's recent convention, serious differences arose over what Carey should do next. At least a large minority wanted Carey, with TDU's backing, to fight the government over the keystone issue of the members' right to choose their own leaders.

Fortunately there are groups and publications on the left that are working to give Carey a helping hand. These include *BIDOM* and especially *Socialist Action*, which reprinted Carey's appeal of his disqualification in a special issue in mid-December. This reprint is virtually the only way at present that most Teamsters will learn the main facts of Carey's defense and the hollowness of the government's case.

Up to this point too many voices from organized labor and its allies have been silent on how they view the power of the government over the Teamsters union. Unfortunately, silence all too often implies assent.

But the ranks should not be left guessing; leaders should speak out and speak clearly. The Teamsters union and its supporters urgently need the support of a broad united front of labor to fend off the union's corporate and government enemies.

While there should never, ever be an objection to constructive criticism from within labor's ranks, the critics mentioned here have to know they are giving encouragement to all enemies of union democracy inside and outside of the Teamsters union. □

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Railroad Workers' Movement Spreads from Sonora to Other States

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by pushing Mexican railroad workers into early retirement. In 1988, Mexico employed 100,000 railroad workers, but by 1996 it employed only about 43,000.

On December 5, 1996, the Mexican government sold the Northeast Railway

to Mexican Railway Transportation (TFM), a consortium which included Kansas City Southern Industries, for \$1.4 billion. This was the sale of a 50-year concession of 80 percent of the stock, with KCSI holding 49 percent of the stock. The old government-owned

company and the new TFM railroad management terminated the old collective bargaining agreement and rewrote the contract, reducing it to a minimum. Workers had to accept their severance pay and be recontracted. Many hundreds of the Northeast Railway workers lost their jobs.

“Speak Out Against Human Rights Violations and the Social Reality in the U.S.”

by Assata Shakur

The following letter was sent to the Pope by political refugee Assata Shakur from Havana, Cuba, on January 22, 1998, in connection with the Pope's visit to Cuba. We reprint it from the Internet, with subheads added.

Your Holiness,

I hope this letter finds you in good health, in good disposition, and enveloped in the spirit of goodness. I must confess that it had never occurred to me before to write to you and I find myself overwhelmed and moved to have this opportunity.

Although circumstances have compelled me to reach out to you, I am glad to have this occasion to try and cross the boundaries that would otherwise tend to separate us.

I understand that the New Jersey State Police have written to you and asked you to intervene and to help facilitate my extradition back to the United States. I believe that their request is unprecedented in history. Since they have refused to make their letter to you public, although they have not hesitated to publicize their request, I am completely uninformed as to the accusations they are making against me. Why, I wonder, do I warrant such attention? What do I represent that is such a threat?

About Myself

Please let me take a moment to tell you about myself. My name is Assata Shakur and I was born and raised in the United States. I am a descendant of Africans who were kidnapped and brought to the Americas as slaves. I spent my early childhood in the racist segregated South. I later moved to the northern part of the country, where I realized that Black people were equally victimized by racism and oppression.

I grew up and became a political activist, participating in students' struggles, the anti-war movement, and, most of all, in the movement for the liberation of African Americans in the United States. I later joined the Black Panther Party, an organization that was targeted by COINTELPRO, a program that was

set up by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to eliminate all political opposition to the U.S. government's policies, to destroy the Black Liberation Movement in the U.S., to discredit activists, and to eliminate potential leaders.

The COINTELPRO Program

Under the COINTELPRO program, many political activists were harassed, imprisoned, murdered, or otherwise neutralized. As a result of being targeted by COINTELPRO, I, like many other young people, was faced with the threat of prison, underground, exile, or death.

At this point, I think that it is important to make one thing very clear. I have advocated and I still advocate revolutionary changes in the structure and in the principles that govern the U.S. I advocate an end to capitalist exploitation, the abolition of racist policies, the eradication of sexism, and the elimination of political repression. If that is a crime, then I am totally guilty.

To make a long story short, I was captured in New Jersey in 1973, after being shot with both arms held up in the air, and then shot again from the back. I was left on the ground to die and when I did not, I was taken to a local hospital where I was threatened, beaten, and tortured. In 1977 I was convicted in a trial that can only be described as a legal lynching.

In 1979 I was able to escape with the aid of some of my comrades. I saw this as a necessary step, not only because I was innocent of the charges against me, but because I knew that in the racist legal system in the United States I would receive no justice. I was also afraid that I would be murdered in prison. I later arrived in Cuba where I am currently living in exile as a political refugee.

The Issue Is Justice for My People

Let me emphasize that justice for me is not the issue here; it is justice for my people that is at stake. When my people receive justice, I am sure that I will receive it, too. I know that your holiness will reach your own conclusions, but I feel compelled to present the circumstances surrounding the application of justice in New Jersey.

New Jersey System of "Justice"

I am not the first nor the last person to be victimized by the New Jersey system of justice. The New Jersey State police are infamous for their racism and brutality. Many legal actions have been filed against them, and just recently, in a class action legal proceeding, the New Jersey State Police were found guilty of having an officially sanctioned, de-facto policy of targeting minorities for investigation and arrest.

Although New Jersey's population is more than 78 percent white, more than 75 percent of the prison population is made up of Blacks and Latinos. Eighty percent of women in New Jersey prisons are women of color. There are 15 people on death row in the state and seven of them are Black. A 1987 study found that New Jersey prosecutors sought the death penalty in 50 percent of cases involving a Black defendant and a white victim, but in only 28 percent of cases involving a Black defendant and a Black victim.

New Jersey Not Unique

Unfortunately, the situation in New Jersey is not unique, but reflects the racism that permeates the entire country. The United States has the highest rate of incarceration in the world. There are more than 1.7 million people in U.S. prisons. This number does not include

the more than 500,000 people in city and county jails, nor does it include the alarming number of children in juvenile institutions. The vast majority of those behind bars are people of color and virtually all of those behind bars are poor.

The result of this reality is devastating. One third of Black men between the ages of 20 and 29 are either in prison or under the jurisdiction of the criminal justice system.

Prisons are big business in the United States and the building, running, and supplying of prisons has become the fastest growing industry in the country. Factories are being moved into the prisons and prisoners are being forced to work for slave wages. This super-exploitation of human beings has meant the institutionalization of a new form of slavery. Those who cannot find work on the streets are forced to work in prison.

Not only are prisons being used as instruments of economic exploitation, they also serve as instruments of political repression. There are more than 100 political prisoners in the U.S. They are African Americans, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, Native Americans, Asians, and progressive white people who oppose the policies of the United States government. Many of those targeted by the COINTELPRO program have been in prison since the early 1970s.

Human Rights Violations in U.S.

Although the situation in the prisons is an indication of human rights violations inside the United States, there are other, more deadly indicators. There are currently 3,365 people now on death row and more than 50 percent of those awaiting death are people of color. Black people make up only 13 percent of the population, but we make up 41.01 percent of persons who have received the death penalty. The number of state assassinations has increased drastically. In 1997 alone 71 people were executed.

A special reporter assigned by the United Nations Organization found serious human rights violations in the U.S., especially those related to the death penalty. According to these findings, people who were mentally ill were sentenced to death, people with severe mental and learning disabilities, as well as minors under age 18. Serious racial bias was found on the part of judges and prosecutors.

Specifically mentioned in the report was the case of *Mumia Abu-Jamal*, the only political prisoner on death row, who was sentenced to death because of his political beliefs and because of his work as a journalist, exposing police brutality in the city of Philadelphia. [Emphasis added.]

Police brutality is a daily occurrence in our communities. The police have a virtual license to kill and they do kill children, grandmothers, anyone they perceive to be the enemy. They shoot first and ask questions later. Inside the jails and prisons there is at least as much brutality as there was on slave plantations. An ever-increasing number of prisoners are found hanging in their cells.

A Land Hostile to Blacks and People of Color

The United States is becoming more and more a land hostile to Black people and other people of color. Racism is running rampant and xenophobia is on the rise. This has been especially true in the sphere of domestic policy. Politicians are attempting to blame social problems on Black people and other people of color.

Attacks on Affirmative Action and Social Programs

There have been attacks on essentially all affirmative action programs designed to help correct the accumulated results of hundred of years of slavery and discrimination. In addition, the government seems determined to eliminate all social programs that provide assistance to the poor, resulting in a situation where millions of people do not have access to basic health care, decent housing or quality education.

It was with great happiness that I read the Christmas message that your holiness delivered. I applaud you for taking up the cause of the poor, the homeless, the unemployed. The fact that you are addressing the issues of today unemployment, homelessness, child abuse, and the drug problem is important to people all over the world. One third of Black people in the United States live in poverty, and our communities are inundated with drugs. We have every reason to believe that the CIA and other government agencies are involved in drug trafficking. Although we live in one of the richest, most technically advanced countries in the world, our reality is

similar to an undeveloped, Third World country. We are a people who are truly seeking freedom and harmony.

All my life I have been a spiritual person. I first learned of the struggle and the sacrifice of Jesus in the segregated churches of the South. I converted to Catholicism as a young girl. In my adult life I have become a student of religion and have studied Christianity, Islam, Asian religions and the African religions of my ancestors. I have come to believe that God is universal in nature, although called different names and with different faces. I believe that some people spell God with one o while others spell it with two. What we call God is unimportant, as long as we do God's work.

There are those who want to see God's wrath fall on the oppressed and not on the oppressors. I believe that the time has ended when slavery, colonialism, and oppression can be carried out in the name of religion. It was in the dungeons of prison that I felt the presence of God up close, and it has been my belief in God, and in the goodness of human beings, that has helped me to survive. I am not ashamed of having been in prison, and I am certainly not ashamed of having been a political prisoner.

Jesus, Too, Was a Political Prisoner, Fought Evils of Empire

I believe that Jesus was a political prisoner who was executed because he fought against the evils of the Roman Empire, because he fought the greed of the money changers in the temple, because he fought against the sins and injustices of his time. As a true child of God, Jesus spoke up for the poor, the meek, the sick, and the oppressed. The early Christians were thrown into lions dens. I will try and follow the example of so many who have stood up in the face of overwhelming oppression.

I am not writing to ask you to intercede on my behalf. I ask nothing for myself. I only ask you to examine the social reality of the United States and to speak out against the human rights violations that are taking place.

On this day, the birthday of Martin Luther King, I am reminded of all those who gave their lives for freedom. Most of the people who live on this planet are still not free. I ask only that you con-

tinue to work and pray to end oppression and political repression. It is my heart-felt belief that all the people on this earth deserve justice — social justice, political justice, and economic justice. I

believe it is the only way that we will ever achieve peace and prosperity on earth.

I hope that you enjoy your visit to Cuba. This is not a country that is rich in

material wealth, but it is a country that is rich in human wealth, spiritual wealth, and moral wealth.

Respectfully yours,
Assata Shakur

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Call for Black Radical Congress in Chicago, June 19–21

The Struggle Continues: Setting a Black Liberation Agenda for the 21st Century

The text of this call was posted on the Internet in early March.

Black people face a deep crisis. Finding a way out of this mess requires new thinking, new vision, and a new spirit of resistance. We need a new movement of Black radicalism.

We know that America's capitalist economy has completely failed us. Every day more of us are unemployed and imprisoned, homeless and hungry. Police brutality, violence, and the international drug trade threaten our children with the greatest dangers since slavery. The politicians build more prisons, but cut budgets for public schools, day care, and health care. They slash welfare, yet hire more cops. The government says working people must pay more taxes and receive fewer services, while the rich and the corporations grow fat. Black people and other oppressed people have the power to change the way things are today. But first we must unite against the real enemy.

Now is the time for a revival of the militant spirit of resistance that our people have always possessed, from the Abolitionist Movement to outlaw slavery to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s, from Black Power to the anti-apartheid campaign of the 1980s. Now is the time to rebuild a strong, uncompromising movement for human rights, full employment, and self-determination. Now is the time for a new Black radicalism.

If you believe in the politics of Black liberation, join us in Chicago in 1998 at the Black Radical Congress. If you hate what capitalism has done to our community — widespread joblessness, drugs, violence, and poverty — come to the Congress. If you are fed up with the corruption of the two-party system and want to develop a plan for real political change, come to the Congress. If you want to struggle against class exploitation, racism, sexism and homophobia, come to the Congress. The Black Radical Congress is for everyone ready to fight back: trade unionists and workers, youth and students, women, welfare recipients, lesbians and gays, public housing tenants and the homeless, the elderly and people on fixed incomes, veterans, cultural workers and immigrants. You!

Sisters and Brothers, we stand at the edge of a new century. The moment for a new militancy and a new commitment to the liberation of all Black people, at home and abroad, has arrived. Let us build a national campaign toward the Black Radical Congress, setting in motion a renewed struggle to claim our historic role as the real voice of democracy in this country. Spread the word: "Without struggle, there is no progress!" Now's the time!

Endorsers of the Call

Larry Adams (President, Mailhandlers Local 300)

Royce Adams (Local 1291, International Longshoremen's Association, New Jersey)

Akbar Muhammad Ahmed (Instructor of African American history and political science, Cuyahoga Community College, Cleveland)

Abdul Alkalimat (League of Revolutionaries for a New America)

Makungu Akinyela (Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, Atlanta)

Lisa Anderson, Ph.D. (Lafayette, Indiana)

Sam Anderson (Network of Black Organizers, New York City)

Marlene Archer (National Co-chair, National Conference of Black Lawyers)

Taisha Ash (Southern International Education Committee)

Ogundara Ayoka (Tampa, Florida)

General Baker (Auto worker, Detroit)

Amina Baraka (Communist Party, USA)

Amiri Baraka (Unity & Struggle newspaper)

Debbie Bell (Communist Party, USA)

Jean Carey Bond

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Economic Meltdown in Asia

by Sonny Melencio and Reihana Mohideen

*This article was scheduled for the March 1998 issue of **International Viewpoint**, monthly magazine of the Fourth International.*

The scenario of the 1930s depression, or worse, is looming over Southeast Asia. Capitalist governments still have no solution to the continuing economic crisis in the region.

The economic upheaval in 1997 can be transformed into a political upheaval in 1998. This can happen if the people in general, the different sectors and the various political groups, unite to carry out a fierce campaign against the perpetrators of the economic crisis — the big foreign banks, the multinational corporations, and the local governments which collude with them in the name of the almighty dollar. They, and not the people, should be made to pay for the crisis of their capitalist system.

What Is the Nature of the Crisis?

The government and the monetary authorities have been blaming currency speculation for the crash. But behind the currency crisis is the unrestricted outward flow of foreign capital in the form of portfolio investments (around \$12 billion out of South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines in 1997), which put pressure on local currencies, leading to the crash.

Portfolio investments are loans used for short-term lending, and are usually traded in the form of stocks, shares, bonds, and treasury bills that bring high yields to the investor.

It is pooled capital coming from vast amounts of personal savings, pension funds, government funds, corporate savings, and other funds deposited in banks and investment houses. This capital is usually managed by fund managers experienced in spotting investment opportunities combining high yields with a quick turnaround time. Portfolio investments differ from foreign direct investments (FDI), which are long-term capital investments used for industrial

expansion. Portfolio investments are pure speculative capital.

Almost 80 percent of the total capital that entered Southeast Asia in the 1990s took the form of portfolio investments. Fifty percent of this came from the United States. The bulk of this capital (in the form of treasury bonds and shares) is denominated in dollars.

Why Did Portfolio Investments Flow to Southeast Asia?

This capital has been on the constant lookout for profitable investment. In the early 1990s, according to an Asian Development Bank report, “the declining returns in the stock markets of industrial countries and the low real interest rates compelled investors to seek higher returns on their capital elsewhere.” They found Southeast Asian economies as ready markets for their operations.

Governments in Southeast Asia have evolved a three-pronged strategy to attract portfolio capital. These are financial liberalization, high interest rates, and a “fixed” exchange rate system. These strategies originated from the structural adjustment plans designed by the International Monetary Fund.

The liberalization of financial markets is a security measure for foreign investors, allowing for the free inflow and outflow of their capital. It includes the elimination of restrictions on foreign exchange and use of foreign currency; the opening up of the banking sector to foreign banks; and the opening up of all sectors of the finance industry to foreign participation — i.e., the money market, the stock exchange, and even the insurance industry. The Philippines has one of the most liberalized financial markets in the region, as it opened up the banking sector to foreign banks with Republic Act 7721 in 1995. It is estimated that

20 banks and financial institutions in the country have foreign equities.

The maintenance of high interest rates is designed to attract foreign capital through assurance of higher profits. Investors earn the difference of, say, 5–6 percent interest rates in the U.S. and the 12–15 percent average interest rates in Southeast Asia. In the Philippines the high interest rate is a policy pursued by the central bank.

Fixing the exchange rate between the local currency and the dollar is a guarantee for investors against risks stemming from fluctuations in the value of the highly elastic local currency. Fixing the rate was not a formal policy; it was done through what is called a “dirty float” — i.e., allowing the local currency to float within a narrow band (e.g., between 25.25 and 25.75 pesos to the dollar). Movement outside of this band would be countered by the central bank selling or buying dollars to keep the exchange rate within the band.

Impact of Portfolio Investments

Portfolio investments, as short-term loans, financed the expansion of speculative activity. Most of it was channelled into various short-term investments, especially property and real estate development, which commands quick profits in Asian countries.

Thirty to fifty percent of Thailand’s GDP growth, for instance, came from activities related to real estate speculation. By 1995, there was already a real estate glut in that country, with vacant properties estimated at some \$20 billion. The financial crisis in Thailand was signaled by two major finance companies, with high exposure on real estate loans, defaulting on their interest payments to the banks.

The entry of portfolio investments explains the high growth rates in the region. But massive borrowings or private debts fueled these growth rates. The increasing growth rates in Southeast Asia were propped up by an ever increasing pile of debts. Compounding the problem is the fact that most of the debts are short-term or due for payment within this year.

The short-term debt of the Philippines accounts for 19 percent of the total foreign debt of \$46 billion.

Flight of Portfolio Investment

Massive pullout of portfolio investments took the form of extensive selling by the investment houses of their bonds and stocks to convert the local currency into dollars. The fund managers can easily do this since this capital is basically for short-term loans.

It was estimated that around \$24 billion of "hot money" from portfolio inflows left Bangkok in 1996. It brought down the value of stocks and share prices by about 65 percent. The rush to convert the baht into dollars led to the local currency's devaluation.

Foreign equity inflows from the Philippine banks during the first quarter of 1997 fell by 97 percent compared to 1996. Foreign investors started to be bothered by the ongoing property crisis, the rising pile-up of private debts, and the falling stock markets. They began to demand dollars for their pesos to move out.

Who Are the Speculators?

Financial speculators geared up their activity when there was already an outward movement of foreign capital. The speculation was based on the expected devaluation of the local currency. Speculators earn more through the timely buying and selling of the dollar and the local currency.

The speculators are mostly big international banks that have vast amounts of money capital for trading. In the case of the Philippines, the July 11 currency crash was brought about by the foreign exchange speculation of the six "universal banks" and investment houses: Citibank, J.P. Morgan, Salomon Brothers, Merrill Lynch, ING Barings, and Morgan Stanley.

Extent of the Crisis in Southeast Asia

The crash is leading to escalating inflation and massive unemployment in the region. Half a million workers lost their jobs in Thailand, two million were thrown out of the factories in Indonesia, hundreds of thousands of workers will be laid off in the Philippines in the next three months.

But even more puzzling is the persistence of higher interest rates in the region, which discourage further local investment. This translates into a full economic meltdown — a halt to indus-

The Philippine organization Sankalas has responded to the crisis with this set of immediate and transitional demands:

- For an immediate debt moratorium on public and private debts. The government should not use its resources — the people's money — to bail out ailing companies. Instead, it should use the debt repayment money to support displaced workers and to create employment.
- The IMF rescue package should be rejected.
- Immediate lowering of interest rates for industrial loans.
- A halt to trade liberalization, privatization, and deregulation of the economy.

- Ailing private enterprises should open their books to the public, so we know the real score, as branches of foreign banks and multinational corporations usually report capital transfer as corporate debts.

- Nationalize the finance and banking industry. State control of these industries is the only way to stop speculative activity and to direct investment into productive economic activity.

A campaign on these demands should aim to build a broad anti-imperialist people's movement that challenges the entire neo-liberal policies of the governments of the region.

trial expansion and closure of more and more local enterprises. Maintaining high interest rates (doubling from 15 to 30 percent in the Philippines) constitutes a foolish attempt on the part of Asian governments to keep speculative capital from leaving.

Can the Crisis Be Solved by the IMF Bailout?

The IMF bailout only means additional debts for Southeast Asian economies. The bailout is ridden with conditionalities which only give an opportunity to advanced capitalist countries, the U.S. in particular, to enter the economies of Southeast Asia, and for big foreign banks to take over the local financial sector.

In the Philippines, the \$3 billion IMF fund is the 24th structural adjustment program to be managed by that agency. Part of the loan conditionalities is the passage of an oil deregulation bill that will allow the three foreign oil monopolies in the country (Shell, Caltex, Petron) to jack up their gasoline prices without limit.

The IMF is also using the bailout to ensure that the external loans contracted from international banks be repaid in full — with the government assuming responsibility for the private sector's foreign loans if need be. The IMF's role in Asia is increasingly seen as chief debt collector for international banks.

While favoring international banks and multinational corporations, the IMF bailout and its conditionalities can only aggravate the Southeast Asian crisis. The IMF conditionalities will be a big

burden to the people, will exterminate local industries, and will cause an even deeper economic mess.

The Real Cause of the Crisis

The crisis of the Southeast Asian economies is related to the overall economic crisis of overproduction that is endemic to international capitalism since the early 1970s that heralded the long wave of capitalist economic decline.

The economic slowdown of the Japanese economy is crucial to understanding the Southeast Asian crisis. In the 1980s, Japanese foreign direct investments (FDI) played a major role in the partial industrialization of Asia. In 1985–1990, \$15 billion worth of Japan's FDI flowed into Southeast Asia. The investment strategy of Japan has not only targeted Southeast Asia as an export platform for third countries, but also increasingly as prosperous middle-class consumer markets.

In the early part of the 1990s Japan started to pull out its FDI from the region. In 1990–93, Japan's investment in Thailand dropped by over 50 percent. Japanese investments also contracted in Malaysia. The pullout is related to the deep recession occurring in Japan, which has been dubbed "the never ending recession."

Japan's growth rate dramatically declined from 3.0 percent in 1996 down to 1.9 percent in 1997. Most economists expect Japan to show around zero growth or even a contraction in fiscal 1998.

Unemployment is predicted to reach 5 percent or worse — giving Japan its
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Asia: Four Crises in One

by Maxime Durand

*The following article, to appear in the March issue of **International Viewpoint**, was first published in the weekly newspaper **Rouge** (Paris). It has been slightly abridged.*

The Asian crisis is not homogeneous. In fact we have to distinguish between Japan, “the Tigers,” Korea, and China, and look back a bit in time.

Japan

One of the most striking phenomena of this decade is indeed the Japanese model’s running out of steam. With a growth rate of roughly 4 percent until 1991, Japan was the best performer of the G-7 [the seven wealthiest powers — the U.S., Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Italy, and Canada]. Since 1992 Japan has been dragging along at about 1 percent a year, and is doing less well on average than the European Union.

For a while it was possible to think that this was a cyclical downturn, and 1996 seemed to signal a new takeoff, but slow growth is back on the agenda. The main external reason is the slowdown in exports, which amounted to 9.3 percent of GDP in 1996, i.e., less than the 10.2 percent in 1986. But the crisis of growth also results from an incapacity to make up for this through an additional increase of internal demand. The limit here is profitability, and the novelty of the current cycle is a particularly noteworthy fall in the profit margins of enterprises.

At the same time, the rate of return on capital — a good indicator of the effects of the increase in the organic composition of capital on the rate of profit — is going down regularly by two points a year. The endemic financial crisis has

neutralized the effects of countercyclical fiscal policy, which the authorities are now having to abandon.

The Tigers

The second crisis is the crisis of “the Asian Tigers” (Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia), which exploded in July 1997, first in the form of a speculative attack on their currencies, then as a stock market crisis. This crisis is the crisis of the neoliberal model of openness to exports. It is characteristic of dependent countries that have inserted themselves only in a rickety way in the international division of labor, exporting more but importing even more.

This uneven development ended in a crack-up because of a trade deficit that got out of hand. This is the same scenario that Mexico went through in 1994, and that countries like Brazil, Poland, and Argentina are in danger of going through. The outcome is a severe purging and an injection of capital under IMF control. What happens next depends on the dynamism of the main clients, which explains the new takeoff we are seeing in Mexico.

South Korea

The third crisis is the South Korean crisis, which has to do with a specific model that in many ways differed from the IMF model. South Korea stood out notably because of the high degree of government intervention in industrial

policy. For the rest, what we are reading in the papers is mostly false. There they invoke, pell-mell, corruption, the weight of monopolies, and debt; and some make absurd comparisons with bureaucratic socialism.

Korea in fact made a prodigious breakthrough on the world market: you can get an idea of it from the fact that its exports rose between 1980 and 1997 from \$17 billion to \$130 billion (while France’s rose from \$110 billion to \$269 billion). Since the early 1990s Korea has had a dizzying growth rate led by exports, and the degree of openness of its economy made a true leap forward, going from 33 percent to 47 percent from 1992 to 1997. To talk of protectionism or a bureaucratic economy in these conditions is ridiculous.

The most remarkable point, and one that distinguishes Korea from the Tigers, is that there has not been any drag on the imports side, at least as far as volume goes. What threw everything out of whack as early as 1996 — i.e., before the crisis broke out in Thailand in July 1997 — was a terrible fall in export prices in dollars (15 percent in 1996, about 12 percent in 1997). During these two years the volume of exports increased by 37 percent, which is enormous, but this brought in only 5 percent of additional revenue in dollars, while import prices continued to skyrocket.

This draining away of a quarter of export revenues is out of proportion to the debt payments, which only constitute 6 percent of exports, even if the crisis broke through on the debt side. A loss of revenues on this scale made a big dent in the balance of payments and caused a crisis at the treasury, which echoed the difficulties of neighboring countries, although in a different context. One cannot blame the crisis on Korea’s exchange rate policies either, which supposedly leaned toward an overvaluation of the won.

Without falling into conspiracy-mongering, this crisis does have its uses. The IMF showed its true colors, in any event, by demanding, among the preconditions for its bailout plan, dismantling of the big conglomerates (chaebols) and their opening to foreign investment. The goal is thus to break a model that is too statist for the IMF and

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China Going More Capitalist

by Zhang Kai

The following article was written for the Hong Kong-based, Fourth Internationalist publication *October Review*, Vol. 24, No. 5/6, December 31, 1997.

Jiang Zemin's report to the 15th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) offered a general breakthrough in theoretical terms for China to go capitalist politically and economically. "Deng Xiaoping Theory" is now officially paralleled to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism and written into the Party Constitution, to serve as the guideline for party policies.

Going Capitalist

The crux of "Deng Theory" is "to develop the market economy under socialist conditions, so that the market will play a fundamental role in the allocation of resources under the state's macro regulation." The economic system is "to have the public ownership system as the main pillar, with diverse ownership systems developing simultaneously."

However, under present conditions in China, the so-called public ownership system includes not only state enterprises and collectively-owned enterprises, but also those under "mixed" ownership in which there are some elements of state or collective property, even if the latter two constitute only a minority. As for collectively-owned enterprises, those under private ownership, such as shareholding cooperative systems, are also included. The misnomer is intended to exaggerate the strength of the public ownership systems — but in name only.

The 1988 Constitution stipulated that "privately owned enterprises are a supplement to the publicly-owned socialist enterprises." The revision this time is to designate non-publicly-owned enterprises, such as those owned by individuals or foreign capital, as "important constituent sections of China's socialist market economy." The previous formulation of the state "channeling, monitoring, and managing the privately-owned economy" is now revised to read "to



Zhu Rongji, new premier of People's Republic of China

continue to encourage and channel it so that it will develop healthily."

Jiang Zemin asserts that the implementation of the shareholding system will become the most important policy for the reform of state-owned enterprises. While the reform is hastened in mainland China, Hong Kong will play an important role in capital formation. As for small state-owned enterprises, they will be amalgamated with larger ones, or will be sold or leased out. "Inevitably, there will be temporary layoffs and interim difficulties for the workers."

In appealing for innovative measures to be taken to activate the economy, pretexts abound for privatization or co-optation of enterprises. There is also no stipulation as to the maximum proportion of private shareholding for different types of enterprises. With much arbitrariness, shares of state-owned enterprises are falling into private hands.

The Beijing municipal authorities recently announced that for small state-owned enterprises that have suffered losses for three consecutive years and whose products lack market competitiveness, the enterprises' employees are entitled to purchase the shares, with a 30 percent discount for those paying in one

lump sum. Different ways are employed to sell enterprises that are running deficits. If the employees do not want to become unemployed, they are forced to buy the shares. If the enterprises continue to do badly, they may end up without a job anyway — and without their savings.

Unemployment Increasing

Official figures on unemployment have always been untruthful and variable. The usual picture presented is that the unemployment rate does not exceed 3 percent. Recently, the State Statistical Bureau gave a figure of 8 million temporary layoffs for the first nine months of this year, with an unemployment rate of between 3 and 4 percent.

An official magazine, *Outlook (Liao Wang)*, reported an urban unemployment rate of 7.5 percent. Hong Kong's *Ming Pao*, on August 8, 1997, reported that some scholars and officials attending the 15th National Congress pointed out that the urban unemployment rate had reached 8 percent. Earlier, on July 19, *Ming Pao* quoted the Chinese official media as reporting that by the end of 1997 unemployed urban workers would amount to 60 million, which did not include workers "temporarily laid off" by enterprises.

Worker Grievances and Resistance Increasing

The Chinese Labour Bureau admitted that labor dispute cases had drastically risen, amounting to hundreds of thousands of cases in 1995 and 1996. Over 50 percent of these were cases related to state-owned enterprises, and 20 percent related to foreign investment enterprises. Most cases were related to labor contracts, economic compensation and social security. When workers could not obtain their demands, many turned to the streets or went on strike.

Social security is a crucial issue in regard to privately-owned enterprises. A survey conducted by the Beijing General Labor Union Service Center found that the overwhelming majority of workers "temporarily laid off" by state-owned enterprises in Beijing requested to go to other state-owned enterprises that provided social security, even if the wages were low. Less than 1 percent of workers interviewed were willing to go to privately-owned enterprises.

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Unions, Affirmative Action, and the Courts: A Revolutionary Socialist View of the Issues

by Tom Kerry

This is an edited version of an interview Tom Kerry gave to then-youth leader Andy Rose on July 26, 1975. At the time Kerry, together with Farrell Dobbs, led the work of the national office of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Since 1938 the SWP had been the U.S. sympathizing organization of the Fourth International, founded by Leon Trotsky. In 1981 Kerry became a leader of the opposition inside the SWP to the younger-generation, anti-Trotskyist team around Jack Barnes, which ultimately took over and transformed the SWP, turning it into the marginalized sect that it is today.

Kerry's interview served as a contribution to the internal discussion in the SWP in 1975 on the issues of affirmative action and discriminatory layoffs. It was originally published in SWP Discussion Bulletin vol. 33, no. 12, July 1975.

Andy Rose: Comrade A, in challenging the party's position on affirmative action, holds up the early CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] as a model for the unity of Black and white workers. This unity, A says, was "achieved in the 1930s through a program that benefitted both." It "has nothing to do with the more privileged workers protecting the jobs of the most oppressed or anything of that kind" — the approach that Comrade A labels "divisive."

Comrade A acknowledges that "the organization of the CIO did not solve all the problems that Black workers faced in the plants at one fell swoop," but clearly advocates following the example of the CIO on the general approach to unifying the working class.

What attitude did the CIO unions really take toward Black workers? Did they do anything to help break down hiring discrimination, Jim Crow practices, or other racist abuses? Within the unions themselves, did Blacks really get equal treatment, equal access to leadership positions, etc.? And finally, what happened to the "Black-white unity" of the CIO, and is that kind of unity adequate to combat the oppression of Blacks today?

Tom Kerry: It would be well to recall that the CIO was founded by the leaders of eight AFL [American Federation of Labor] unions who sought to organize the workers in the mass production industries — that is, to organize under the industrial rather than the craft union form. This group of AFL officials took the lead because they could see the mass upsurge toward industrial organization that was brewing, and they were afraid that if they did not place themselves at the head of this movement, it would be led by radicals and socialists. So they broke with the American Federation of Labor and in 1935 established the Committee for Industrial Organization, which in 1938 became the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

These leaders of the eight AFL unions on this particular question were much more progressive than the Gompers type of bureaucrats who ran the AFL. Nevertheless, they carried with them into the CIO the prevailing attitudes on the race question.

Industrial Unions Had to Include All Workers

In order to organize the mass production industries, it was essential that they take into membership *all* the workers in the particular industry. It was impossible for them to exclude Blacks or any other section of the work force and still succeed in organizing these workers in what was then the most anti-

union section of American industry. To be sure, this alone was a step forward from the openly Jim Crow practices of the AFL craft unions, which by and large excluded Blacks entirely or else segregated them into separate, second-class locals. But it was only out of necessity that the CIO leaders opened the doors of the unions to Blacks. This was about the extent of the "progressive" record of the CIO on this question.

My recollection is that the CIO unions adapted themselves to the hiring practices of the employer right from the beginning. They made no special effort to challenge the racist discrimination that prevailed in hiring, promotion, and wages. So, while Black workers won better wages as a result of being in the union, they were still, relative to whites, relegated to the hardest, dirtiest, worst-paying positions.

Some of the unions that went through actual struggles in which Blacks participated with whites on the picket line and in the sit-down strikes took a more progressive attitude, by virtue of the solidarity established in the strikes. But nowhere, nowhere do I recall that the barriers were dropped to allow Blacks to occupy top positions of leadership in the CIO. Black organizers, yes; Black local officials, yes; but Blacks in the top echelons where decisions were actually made, practically never.

Reuther Opposed "Racism in Reverse"

Even in one of the most progressive, the United Auto Workers, it was not until the 1960s that a Black union member was designated on the executive board, and then only as an appointee of Reuther. The attitude expressed by Reuther was that he was opposed to what he called "racism in reverse." He was for the "merit system." He opposed electing Blacks because they were Blacks. Only after a long period of internal dissension, only after the civil rights movement had developed momentum and militancy, did Reuther give token recognition to the struggle of Blacks for equal treatment and appoint Blacks to the top leadership of the union.

The Blacks looked to the CIO not only as a union organization, but as a social movement. They put great confidence, great hope, in the prospects for eliminating discrimination because of skin color through the CIO — especially the early, militant CIO. *And they were betrayed, cruelly betrayed.* Because the question was not simply one of trade union organization.

The question of race discrimination in American society is essentially a *political* question. And the Democratic Party —

which was based upon a coalition of the Dixiecrat South, the big city machines, and the labor bureaucracy — was the *bulwark* of the Jim Crow system. The union leaders subordinated the political independence of the workers to the maintenance of this coalition. So long as they did so, it was impossible for them to carry through a consistent struggle against the Jim Crow system or against race discrimination. That is the fact, and the record will prove it.

March on Washington Movement

A big protest movement against race discrimination began in 1940–41, the March on Washington movement, led by A. Philip Randolph. With the preparation for the Second World War, and the outbreak of the war, industry began hiring again on a large scale — but hiring only whites, as before. Even where labor shortages developed, as they did in many war industries, the ban against Black workers in any but the most menial positions was still enforced. Mass protest meetings were held — organized and led by Blacks — to demand an end to this exclusion of Black workers.

The position of the bureaucracy in the CIO, and of the Communist Party, was that the Blacks should subordinate their struggle for equality to the winning of the war. And that meant subordinating the struggle for equality to maintaining the Roosevelt coalition, which depended to a great extent upon the southern Dixiecrats. The Stalinists and the CIO bureaucracy *opposed* the March on Washington movement as being directed against Roosevelt — and it was! It was a *political* movement, demanding equality not only in industry but in the armed forces.

As a result of this mass movement of Blacks — although Randolph called off the March on Washington — Roosevelt was compelled to issue an order formally banning discrimination in the defense industries, and to establish the Fair Employment Practices Commission. It was the first time that the government on a national scale found itself obliged to recognize that discrimination was a problem and give at least token support to the movement against racial discrimination. And it was no thanks to the CIO, either.

CIO Failure on Organizing the South

The CIO's record is a very dismal one, even so far as establishing unionism in the South. Several times, with a great fanfare, they announced "Operation Dixie," which purported to be the great push to unionize the open-shop South. It never really got off the ground — precisely because any such movement even to establish trade unions, the most elementary form of working-class organization, required a *political* struggle against the Democratic Party, which was the bulwark of Jim Crow in the South.

The CIO failed to break with the Democratic Party, and they failed to challenge Jim Crow. And so even today the South constitutes a bastion of antiunion, open-shop industry in this country. It was not only the Black workers who suffered; it was also the white workers who paid dearly for this subordination of the interests of the working class to the coalition with the Dixiecrats.

A Personal Experience

In this connection, I would like to record here my own personal experience as a member of the National Maritime Union (NMU), which, under Stalinist leadership, prided itself as being in the forefront of the struggle against racist discrimination in industry, in government, and in all aspects of public life. I joined the National Maritime Union in 1947, after leaving the Seafarers International Union. And in 1949 I recall shipping out on a tanker, the *S.S. Tulahoma*. I'll never forget it.

It was true that there was no race discrimination on the ship; Blacks could sail in every department. They even had one Black in the top leadership of the NMU, a Stalinist named Ferdinand Smith. The ship was bound for Galveston or Port Arthur, Texas, I can't recall which. On the way down, the crew got along very well, with no visible sign of any hostility or prejudice.

But when we got down to this shipyard, I was horrified. The first thing, the *first thing* they did when the ship tied up was that the shipyard workers, who were also organized in the CIO, hoisted aboard the deck of this NMU ship *two drinking fountains*: one for Blacks and one for whites! And this was in a "progressive" union, in 1949, thirteen years after the big CIO wave in which the seamen on the East Coast organized the NMU. But that was just my first shock. The shipyard was on an island, and to go ashore we had to take a ferryboat across to the mainland. It was an old, broken-down ferry that carried trucks and cars from the mainland back and forth with supplies. But lo and behold, there were signs as you walked onto the ferry, marking the right side for whites only, and the left side, Blacks only. It was a Jim Crow ferry!

I was very embarrassed. In fact, I didn't know what to do. I went over to the Black side as a sort of demonstration. But my Black shipmates began to shy away — I guess they were afraid of some kind of an incident occurring. And that's not the worst of it.

A Whites-Only Hiring Hall

When we got ashore, we went to the union hall to report these outrages. We discovered that the NMU hall was on the second floor of a corner building, and underneath the hall there was a gin mill. We thought, well, we'll go into the gin mill and have a beer before we go up and see the port agent. We walked in and there was a loudspeaker hooked up to the NMU hall above, announcing the job calls. If a job came up that suited them, they would go up to the hall and bid for the job.

But the gin mill was a lily-white gin mill! Whites only! Black members of the NMU could not go in there. In other words, obvious discrimination within the union itself, to put a loudspeaker in a saloon, underneath the union hall, from which the Black members of the union were excluded.

What the hell's the use of complaining to the port agent, I figured, he's part of the whole goddamn system. Instead we went back to the ship. That was the first and last time I went ashore there. On the return voyage we held a meeting and drew up a resolution directed to [NMU President Joseph] Curran demanding immediate action by the union against these manifestations of Jim Crow.

But we also found on the way back home that the friendly atmosphere that had prevailed among the integrated crew on the way down had been completely poisoned and destroyed, just by contact with the filth of this Jim Crow system.

Blacks Had to Go It Alone, Without CIO

No, the CIO did not “solve all the problems that Black workers faced in the plants at one fell swoop,” not at two fell swoops, not at all. The unions betrayed the aspirations of the Black workers, and after the war Blacks began to lose these illusions in the CIO as a movement expressing their social needs. In their struggle to achieve equality *they were forced to go it alone*.

The big civil rights movement that developed in the South after the Supreme Court decision on school desegregation in 1954 was exclusively Black. It began with a boycott of the buses in Montgomery, Alabama, because the Jim Crow system required that Blacks sit in the back of the bus, dividing the bus into a segregated camp. The Montgomery bus boycott, from which the Martin Luther King leadership sprang, was a *Black* movement. And from there the Blacks developed their own organizations: the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee], and other organizations, which were soon joined by other Black organizations in the North.

It was the militant actions — sit-ins, freedom rides, demonstrations in the streets — by these newly-formed Black organizations and by the masses of Blacks in the South [and North] that finally toppled the Jim Crow system. It was not the CIO. That is the actual record.

It seems paradoxical. It wasn't the unions, it was the *radicalized student youth* who openly allied themselves with the Blacks. They flocked to the South to join in the sit-ins and demonstrations, finding in the Black civil rights movement the focal point for their revolutionary energy. The unions played a passive, if not a negative, role. It was the Blacks who did the job alone — alone except for the youth, who joined with them in the fight to topple the Jim Crow system.

That struggle resulted in 1964 in the enactment of the Civil Rights Act, with its Title VII barring job discrimination. And it is precisely the acceptance, the toleration, of racist discrimination all along the line by the CIO as well as the AFL that has now come back to haunt them in the very heated controversy over affirmative action versus the Meany-type seniority rule. Those are the facts of life as I recognize them, and not the myth that the CIO played a leading role in any struggle against racism.

Andy Rose: Comrade A pushes this model for “Black-white unity” far beyond the trade union arena, specifically taking issue with the draft political solution [“Prospects for Socialism in America,” adopted by the SWP national convention in August 1975], which calls for “revolutionary unity based on support for the most oppressed.” A says, “Prospects for revolution will be dim indeed if our party is guided by one-sided formulas such as this.”

A adds: “All workers are oppressed under capitalism. For the revolutionary party to concentrate only on the most oppressed can only result in ignoring others who are less oppressed. This is a self-defeating perspective. We must defend and identify with *all* oppressed. That is the only road to unity and eventually to victory.”

What do you think about the points he raises?

Tom Kerry: Comrade A professes to defend the Trotskyist tradition, orientation, and program, but right from the start

turns everything on its head. Every sentence of the paragraph you cite is wrong, dead wrong.

We don't say that all workers are *oppressed* under capitalism; we say that all wage workers are *exploited* under capitalism. That is the Marxist concept of the labor theory of value. The surplus value created by the workers is appropriated by the private owners of the means of production. And therefore workers, who receive wages equivalent to only a fraction of the total value they create, are exploited.

All workers are exploited, that's true. But to contend — looking at the real world, not the world of fantasy — that there is no distinction; that “all workers are oppressed”; that the white male worker, the high seniority worker, the skilled worker, the privileged worker is “oppressed” and therefore is entitled to the same consideration from the revolutionary party as the Black worker, the woman worker, the youth, is to make a caricature of Marxism. It's not only my opinion, it's the opinion of all the great Marxist teachers.

“Aristocracy of Labor”

Lenin wrote extensively on this question in his polemic with the Second International. The culture medium for opportunism, Lenin said, lies in the *aristocracy of labor*. The privileges and power of the reformist labor bureaucracy were derived from the crumbs that the imperialist powers were able to grant the privileged, skilled workers at home as a result of their domination and oppression of the colonial masses. And it was on this social basis, he said, that the Second International became a reformist, an antirevolutionary international.

In the faction struggles within Russia, furthermore, Lenin observed that it was the Mensheviks who predominated among the skilled workers, the privileged workers, the *high seniority workers*, if you please! While the Bolsheviks found their base among the less privileged workers and the youth.

Special Attention to the Most Exploited

Comrade A urges us to return to the Transitional Program, and I have done so. I find that it proclaims just the opposite approach from that espoused by Comrade A. In the Pathfinder Press book *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, on page 151, Trotsky states: “Opportunist organizations by their very nature concentrate their chief attention on the top layers of the working class and therefore ignore both the youth and the woman worker.” I would interpose here that in the United States we should include the Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Chinese, and Native American worker as well.

Trotsky continues:

The decay of capitalism, however, deals its heaviest blows to the woman as the wage earner and as a housewife. The sections of the Fourth International should seek bases of support among the most exploited layers of the working class, consequently among the women workers. Here they will find inexhaustible stores of devotion, selflessness, and readiness to sacrifice.

Among the most exploited layers of the working class! That is precisely where Trotsky held that the revolutionary party should seek support.

Again, in the section headed “Soviets,” Trotsky writes that the deepening of the social crisis will increase not only the sufferings of the masses but also their impatience, persistence, and pressure. Ever new layers of the oppressed will raise their

heads and come forward with their demands. Millions of toil-worn “little men,” whom the reformist leaders never gave a thought, will begin to pound insistently on the doors of the workers’ organizations. The unemployed will join the movement. The agricultural workers, the ruined and semi-ruined farmers, the oppressed of the cities, the women workers, housewives, proletarianized layers of the intelligentsia — all of these will seek unity and leadership.

The Most Oppressed Not in Unions

Trotsky emphasizes, you see, the need to look beyond the trade unions, which include at most 20 or 25 percent of the working class, to the class as a whole, which includes the vast oppressed and unorganized masses.

Again, in the section on “Factory committees”:

The prime significance of the committee [referring to the factory committee] lies in the fact that it becomes the militant staff for such working-class layers as the trade union is usually incapable of moving to action. *It is precisely from these more oppressed layers that the most self-sacrificing battalions of the revolution will come.* [Emphasis added.]

I don’t think there can be any question about where Trotsky stood on this question. The revolutionary party, as distinct from the opportunist, reformist party, must indeed base itself upon the *most oppressed layers* of the working class.

Andy Rose: Comrade A appears to give special weight to the “Jobs for All” slogan as the one that can unify the working class. A likes it because it is “not divisive.” A says the best way to get jobs is through the shorter workweek with no cut in pay, but A also would favor accepting a pay cut to keep everyone on the job.

A’s first contribution states: “The idea of all workers remaining on the job, *regardless of how the pay aspect is resolved*, actually protects the jobs of women and minorities to a greater extent than preferential layoffs” (emphasis added). On the same page A cites the example of the New York Telephone Company, which imposed a four-day week on telephone operators. A writes: “We must assume that in all these cases there was a reduction in pay in proportion to the reduced hours. However, even in such cases a better overall situation developed than any kind of layoff could produce.”

What do you think of this approach on slogans? Should our propaganda, and our comrades in the unions, advocate shortening the hours of work *with* a pay cut in cases where the same pay cannot be won? When this proposal came up in AFSCME in New York, we opposed it.

Tom Kerry: To begin with, let me say something on the question of slogans. A generalized slogan such as “Jobs for All” is like an empty vessel — it can be filled with any content. Of course it is “not divisive” — I don’t know of *anybody* who is against jobs for all! From George Meany to President Ford, everybody says they are for jobs for all.

A generalized slogan remains an abstraction — unless and until it is concretized in specific demands. And to counterpose a generalized slogan such as “Jobs for All” to a *specific demand* that arises out of the struggle against discrimination in employment, if it is not done out of complete ignorance, can only be characterized as demagoguery.

The slogan “Jobs for All” as such does not appear in our Transitional Program. The Transitional Program has the following to say on this question, under the section on “The sliding scale of wages and the sliding scale of hours.” Trotsky writes that “two basic economic afflictions, in which is summarized the increasing absurdity of the capitalist system, that is, *unemployment* and *high prices*, demand generalized slogans and methods of struggle.” In the next paragraph he concludes by saying, “The Fourth International demands *employment* and *decent living conditions* for all.”

That is the *generalized slogan* in the Transitional Program. It becomes concretized by the actual transitional demands, the sliding scale of wages and hours. These two demands have been popularized in the American labor movement as the demands for an escalator clause in the union contract and for the thirty-hour workweek at forty hours’ pay.

When we use the slogan of a sliding scale of hours, we always tie it to *no reduction in take-home pay*. To concede, as Comrade A does, that the lesser evil would be a reduction in hours with a reduction in pay, means to condone shifting the responsibility for the capitalist crisis and unemployment onto the backs of the working class. It’s a variation of the “share the work” plan that was very popular among rightist demagogues and capitalist politicians during the Great Depression. We always characterized it as the “share the misery” or “share the poverty” plan.

Workers Not Responsible for Capitalism’s Crisis

Now here is what Trotsky said. Trotsky, you know, sometimes exploded with revolutionary indignation at the proposition that the workers should be held responsible for capitalist crises. Let me quote from the book *Leon Trotsky on the Trade Unions*. Beginning on page 62 is a transcription of a discussion held in 1938 at Trotsky’s home in Mexico City with a CIO official from the United States, whose name was withheld.

The CIO official told Trotsky: “Our union’s policies are aimed at preventing complete unemployment. We have got the work spread out among the members of the union with no reduction in the hourly rate of pay.”

Trotsky asked: “And what percentage of their former total wages do your workers now get?”

CIO official: “About 40 percent.”

Trotsky: “Why, that’s monstrous! You’ve won a sliding scale of working hours, with no change in the hourly rate of pay? But that only means that the full burden of unemployment falls with all its weight on the workers themselves. You free the bourgeoisie from the need of spending its resources on the unemployed by having each worker sacrifice three-fifths of his total wages.”

CIO official: “There’s a grain of truth in that. But what can be done?”

Trotsky: “Not a grain, but the whole truth! American capitalism is sick with a chronic and incurable disease. Can you console your workers with the hope that the present crisis will have a transitory character and that a new era of prosperity will open in the near future?”

The only way, you see, that you can consistently advocate a cut in hours with a corresponding reduction in pay is to be convinced yourself — or try to convince the workers — that this crisis does have a transitory character, and hold with Ford

that we've reached the bottom now and we're on the way up. We're entering a new extended period of prosperity.

Or else you open up the perspective of continuing to reduce the standard of living on the basis of sharing the poverty as the crisis deepens. How can you assure the workers that this is the bottom? That this concession will be the last concession they will be called upon to make? No, as the crisis deepens, you will be called upon to make another concession, and tomorrow another. The principle is wrong. The principle of shifting responsibility onto the backs of the workers can lead only to disorganizing and destroying the effectiveness of the union organization.

Crisis of the System Not Just Transitory

I can appreciate that workers feel a sense of duty and obligation and are prepared to make sacrifices for fellow workers, to share a reduced standard of living — but this is no solution to the problem! It is no solution, and it is contrary to the whole concept of our Transitional Program, that is, to invest the working class with the consciousness that the system itself is responsible for creating unemployment and mass deprivation in the midst of potential plenty.

No, I think that the manifestation of outrage by Trotsky is a manifestation of the attitude that revolutionary Marxists should take toward any such proposal.

Seniority vs. Affirmative Action

The same holds true for the advocates, supporters, and champions of union seniority as against affirmative action. What it comes down to is calling upon the Black workers and women workers to wait, telling them that this depression is only transitory and all they have to do is wait until prosperity comes along and there is full employment. Then everybody will have a job, and there won't be this controversy over affirmative action, over the right of Black workers and women workers to equality in the competition for jobs.

I was struck by the speech by Herbert Hill [labor director of the NAACP] that was printed in the *Militant* (July 18, 1975). He made precisely this point: "The argument that white men have a prior right to a job and that Black people must wait until there is full employment before they, too, can work," Hill said, "is the essence of the racist mentality."

The reformists, the Meanys, the Shankers, say, yes, we're against discrimination and unemployment either for sex or skin color. But we must uphold the holy principle of union seniority — this system under which so-called complete equality prevails. Yes, complete equality...where some are more equal than others! That is the essence of the present system that the union upholds to safeguard the interests of the most highly privileged and highly paid against the youth, the women, the Blacks.

Those who are against defending affirmative-action gains now are completely inconsistent when they say they are for preferential hiring — when hiring resumes some time in the future. You cannot consistently be for preferential hiring if you are in favor of maintaining the last-hired first-fired rule that prevails today.

Andy Rose: One additional point is raised by Comrade B's contribution. Comrade B takes issue with any support to law-

suits to protect the jobs of women and minority workers. B quotes the resolution we supported in the Coalition of Labor Union Women to "oppose in every way possible any reduction through layoffs in the proportionate number of women and minority workers hired under affirmative action programs...." Then B asks:

Does this include enlisting the aid of the bourgeois courts against a union? Articles in the *Militant* and discussion with the national trade union director have indicated that in fact we do not rule out support to such suits against the unions. It is only a step from appealing to the bourgeois courts to supporting bourgeois politicians who have taken a "good stand" on this issue. Crossing class lines is a principled question; sowing illusions about the bourgeois courts as friends of workers to be enlisted against the workers' movement is treacherous.

If Comrade B is correct it would have far-reaching implications. After all, we have not only supported suits to win affirmative-action plans but also suits to throw out the results of rigged union elections and force new elections, as in the cases of Arnold Miller in the Mineworkers and Ed Sadlowski in the Steelworkers.

Tom Kerry: Well, I'm not at all impressed by the "radical" rhetoric of Comrade B, that if you accept the verdict of a court in the affirmative-action cases it inevitably leads to supporting bourgeois politicians. This supposed syllogistic method of argument — bourgeois court equals bourgeois politician equals opportunism equals revisionism equals betrayal — is not convincing because it has nothing to do with reality.

This whole struggle around affirmative action developed because the union bureaucracy perpetuated a system based on discrimination against Blacks and women. What recourse did they have within the union structure? To revolutionary Marxists, that is, to the Socialist Workers Party, uncompromising opposition to job discrimination against Blacks and women is also a *class principle* — or doesn't Comrade B consider it so?

I don't think Comrade B is familiar with most of the unions in this country and the way they're run. B seems to assume that there is at least a modicum of democracy. Maybe it's true for B's union, but if so it would be the exception and not the rule.

Does Comrade B think for one moment that the Black steelworkers in Birmingham, Alabama, for example, had any recourse through the channels of the Steelworkers union to right their grievances? No! As a last resort they were compelled to go outside the structure of their union to appeal to the courts, you see, to the legal institutions of the bourgeoisie — there are no others! We do not have socialist courts under capitalism.

How, for that matter, does Comrade B think many of the victories over segregation were formally codified? By the bourgeois courts, if you please! And the bourgeois courts on these questions do not necessarily play a reactionary role. These are matters of *bourgeois democratic rights*.

Legal Rights Established Under Mass Pressure

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, in its Title VII, provides that there shall be no discrimination in employment because of race, color, creed, or nationality. This is an elementary democratic right, ostensibly guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. It is a law that is wholly progressive, and we demand that it be *enforced by the bourgeoisie*, just as we

demand that they enforce the law against school segregation in Boston with the bourgeois courts, the bourgeois police, and bourgeois federal troops!

We have no use for the Supreme Court, you see, recognizing it as an institution of the bourgeoisie. And it usually plays a very reactionary role. That doesn't mean that under the influence of mass pressure they may not be compelled to recognize that there has been a violation of these elementary bourgeois democratic rights. And wherever we can take advantage of this contradiction — it's their contradiction, not ours — we should by all means do so.

As Trotsky pointed out, in our epoch significant reforms are a byproduct of the revolutionary struggle. And the struggle against all manifestations of racist discrimination is in its very essence a revolutionary struggle.

Can the Courts Be Used to Enforce Workers' Rights?

One would think by the polemics of Comrades A and B that the Socialist Workers Party had initiated these affirmative-action suits. We didn't; we weren't in a position to. They were initiated by individual workers and groups of workers, and the organization primarily responsible for promoting these suits is the NAACP. But that doesn't give us the right to abstain. Once the courts have acted and established legal rulings that are in line with the interests of the working class — to insist that we reject them because they come from a bourgeois court, that's covering a reactionary position with a militant cloak, in my opinion.

Now, as you indicated, it's not only on this question that workers have gone to court. The murderous bureaucracy in the Mineworkers didn't stop short of assassination of people trying to exercise their democratic right to run for union office. That's the situation that prevailed.

This leader of the opposition movement in the Steelworkers, Sadlowski, was prepared to go to the courts because the bureaucrats rigged an election. He challenged them in the courts, and his challenge was upheld. When there was an honest election, he won. Now do you want to lecture Sadlowski that since he stooped to enlist the aid of a bourgeois court, he is therefore doomed forever to support capitalist politicians? That's nonsense, you see; that's pure, unadulterated nonsense!

Don't Identify Unions with Union Bureaucracies

Comrade B talks about suits "against the unions." *B identifies the union with the bureaucracy.* The bureaucrats themselves do that, of course. They interpret every action taken against their gangster methods, their suppression of internal union democracy — they interpret that as an attack upon the union. Not at all.

The unions as they exist today are ruled by a gang of bureaucratic thugs, who collaborated with the employers in

maintaining and perpetuating Jim Crow practices. And Comrade B would say to Black workers who challenge that discrimination, if you go to court, you are thereby guilty of crimes against the working class. You are guilty of crossing class lines. You are guilty of a betrayal of the interests of the working class. Well, they'd spit in your eye if you told them that.

No, we do not identify the unions with the bureaucracy. But we must further ask: What is the base upon which this union bureaucracy rests? How does it happen that a Meany bureaucracy reigns unchallenged, or virtually unchallenged, for so many years? It is because American capitalism has been fat and has been able to grant concessions to a minority, to a thin layer, to a labor aristocracy, if you please.

And when we write about these affirmative-action struggles, and why they meet such resistance, it's not exactly true to put the responsibility entirely upon the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy does not float in mid-air — it is based on a significant, a thin but significant, layer of the American workers. We must explain that the Shanker bureaucracy in the teachers unions, for example, rests upon maintaining privileges for a select minority, for a select group that supports his machine. That's why the bureaucrats are fighting so vehemently to maintain this system. Their power and their privileges depend upon it.

Can Courts Be Used to Challenge the Bureaucrats?

Affirmative action has opened up a crack in this bureaucratic dike, you see, and they are afraid that the waters will come rushing through. They are afraid that the precedent established by the Blacks and the women will be followed by the youth and by others who will begin to challenge this gang of labor fakers and the privileges of this layer of labor aristocrats.

You know, at the time of the fight with Cochran, Cannon said we've had sixteen years of prosperity, sixteen years of concessions, sixteen years in which a privileged layer has been sifted out of the mass, sixteen years in which an aristocracy of labor has developed inside the CIO. That was twenty-two years ago.

What has happened in the intervening twenty-two years? Have the unions become more militant? Have they reversed this process? No, they've become more Meanyized. More and more they reflect the influence of the employers. More and more the bureaucracy of the AFL-CIO *as a whole* has become a petty-bourgeois layer in the working-class movement. More and more they (not the Blacks! not the women!) rely upon the capitalist state and support that state.

On this question of how we fight, I agree with Malcolm X — *by any means necessary!* On this question of affirmative action, of discrimination against Blacks and women, I say we fight *by any means necessary* — and if that be betrayal, make the most of it. □

Progress Toward Charting Party's Electoral Course

by Bill Onasch

The following article, as with a similar article by the author in a previous issue, was written for the Kansas City Area Labor Party Advocate.

The hottest topic of debate at the Labor Party's Founding Convention was how to relate to elections.

There were some who argued that the Labor Party should remain strictly issue-oriented and not field or endorse candidates — ever.

Others contended that the party would go nowhere without running candidates and that electoral activity should be the main way to build the party.

Some suggested that the LP should get involved in fusion-type politics, running a few of our own candidates, but focusing on endorsement arrangements with candidates of other parties — similar to the New Party, and the Liberal Party in the state of New York.

And there were many nuances of these major positions. The delegates were clearly fragmented and still thinking through some of the complex issues involved. In the end, the convention decided that the LP would not run or endorse candidates for office. But the delegates also voted to establish a committee to bring in a recommendation for future electoral policy to the next convention — now scheduled for November 1998 in Pittsburgh.

That committee held its first meeting back in September. (A brief report of it appeared in the November issue of the *Kansas City Area Labor Party Advocate* — reprinted in *BIDOM*.) A second meeting in December has produced a draft document on electoral policy. After review by the Interim National Council, this draft will be published in *Labor Party Press*, initiating a discussion throughout the affiliated unions, and state and local chapters. [The full text of that draft, from the *Labor Party Press*, is reprinted on page 39.]

The committee will meet at least once again to take note of the discussion, and

any proposed amendments, before submitting a final document to the convention delegates.

The committee is diverse, representing most major shades of opinion on electoral matters. There were sometimes heated discussions. But by and large, the members listened to one another. All were sincerely committed to finding a principled policy that just about everyone could live with. In the end I think we did that. While there is always room for improvement in any draft document, I believe the committee's product is an excellent beginning for our party's approach to elections.

The draft statement begins with this paragraph:

The Labor Party is unlike any other party in the United States. We stand independent of the corporations and their political representatives in the Democratic and Republican parties. Our overall strategy is for the majority of American people — working class people — to take political power. Within this framework of class independence, with the ultimate goal of achieving power, we accept the tactic of running candidates.

Emphasizing the subordinate role we expect electoral politics to play in our party, the draft document goes on to say:

Although we accept electoral politics as an important tactic, we do not see it as the only tool needed to achieve working class power. Unlike other political parties, the Labor Party will be active before, during, and between elections, building solidarity in our communities, workplaces, and unions.

This reaffirms that the Labor Party will continue to be issue and action driven — not candidate driven. Solidarity work, demonstrations, petitions, education — these type activities will be the focus of

our agenda regardless of where we are in the election cycle.

But the document also commits our party, for the first time, to move toward challenging the bosses' parties in elections as well. The committee felt strongly that when we make our move into the electoral arena it should be on the basis of the growth of our party, and our influence in the labor movement and the community. While we may not win in our first attempts we do want to make a respectable showing. Our vote totals should demonstrate that we are a credible alternative to the major parties — not brand us as a marginal fringe group.

The committee recommends that the National Council establish a committee to review all applications from LP bodies that want to run candidates. To be approved, these applications would have to meet a rigid test of important criteria.

Part of the application process would be a "political impact statement." This analysis would include: "the economics and demography of the target district, the resources and politics of the incumbent, the nature of the opposition, the history of recent elections, the current political issues in the district, and the level of working class activism."

There is also a checklist of campaign resources that would have to be met:

1. Sufficient election volunteers to cover precincts.
2. Endorsing unions represent a significant portion of area union membership, sufficient to ensure that the LP candidate will be seen as the labor candidate.
3. A significant number of LP members in the district, sufficient to indicate that we can persuade district residents.
4. Credible candidate, able to articulate LP program.
5. Campaign financing plan, including cash in hand.
6. Campaign committee reflecting the demographics of the district.
7. Campaign manager prepared to carry out the campaign.
8. Campaign plan that includes tactics and goals for growth of the party.
9. Endorsements from local community organizations.

The committee's assessment is that we don't presently have any party units

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Report on the Labor Party's Future Electoral Strategy

The Founding Convention of the Labor Party adopted A New Organizing Approach to Politics which provided for a committee to develop a future electoral strategy for a report to the next Convention. That committee consisting of Frank Borges, secretary; Dave Campbell, chairperson; Robert Croghan; Jed Dodd; Ed Grystar; Kathy King; Kay McVay; Bill Onasch; Carl Rosen; Bill Shortell and Brenda Stokely, submitted its report and recommendations to the Interim National Council which adopted at its January 25, 1998 [meeting] the following statement:

I. Introduction

The Labor Party is unlike any other party in the United States. We stand independent of the corporations and their political representatives in the Democratic and Republican parties. Our overall strategy is for the majority of American people — working class people — to take political power. Within this framework of class independence, with the ultimate goal of achieving power, we accept the electoral tactic of running candidates.

The Labor Party will run candidates for public office in order to elect representatives to positions where they can help enact and enforce laws and policies to benefit the working class. We will run at governmental levels where we can best advance the goals and priorities of the Labor Party. Unlike other political parties, public officials elected by the Labor Party will be accountable to the party membership and required to follow the positions outlined in the party platform.

Although we accept electoral politics as an important tactic, we do not see it as the only tool needed to achieve working class power. Unlike other political parties, the Labor Party will be active before, during and between elections, building solidarity in our communities, workplaces and unions.

Labor Party candidates will be run only where our basic organizational criteria are met. The Labor Party will build into its electoral campaigns, and the periods between them, procedures to ensure political education and mobiliza-

tion of the working class, further development of the party structure and growth in membership, and strengthened relationships to community and labor allies.

II. Labor Party Candidates

The Labor Party will support only candidates for office who are Labor Party members running solely as Labor Party candidates. The Labor Party will not endorse any other candidates.

III. Accountability

The Labor Party is not politics as usual — we are a party of principle. Candidates shall be chosen by the members through convention at the appropriate level, not through primary. Once elected, officials are responsible to the party on core issues in the Labor Party platform. When issues arise that are not in the platform, officials shall consult with LP members for guidance. Elected officials who do not abide by the LP platform will not be allowed to run for re-election as LP candidates.

IV. State and Federal Laws

The Labor Party National Council will develop guidelines, based on legal counsel, to ensure that the Labor Party electoral campaigns meet the requirements of federal and state laws.

V. Implementation

The LP National Council will appoint a diverse committee to review all applications for Labor Party electoral campaigns. This review process will allow for consultation and discussion between the Labor Party National Electoral Committee and the subordinate body applying for campaign approval. The decision of the Committee may be appealed to the National Council. The National Council may reserve final approval for itself. The Labor Party National Council shall issue in advance of each electoral season a clear statement of the types of districts that are a priority for LP electoral campaigns.

VI. Criteria for Running Candidates

The criteria are designed to ensure that Labor Party candidates can run credible campaigns to win office. A national committee of the Labor Party will review all applications for Labor Party electoral campaigns. In reviewing each application, the committee will use the criteria to assess whether a credible campaign can be run. An electoral effort will not be blocked based on any single item not being met if there are sufficient strengths in other areas to overcome particular shortcomings.

A. Labor Party Structural Issues

1. A chartered State Labor Party exists.
2. The proposed electoral campaign has the support of the chartered state Labor Party. State organizations must use the national guidelines in evaluating campaigns.

B. Analysis of Electoral District

A political impact statement that includes the economics and demography of the target district, the resources and politics of the incumbent, the nature of the opposition, the history of recent elections, the current political issues in the district and the level of working-class activism. The statement shall address how the campaign fits national LP priorities.

C. Campaign Resources

1. Sufficient election volunteers to cover precincts.
2. Endorsing unions represent a significant portion of area union membership, sufficient to ensure that LP candidate will be seen as the labor candidate.
3. A significant number of LP members in the district, sufficient to indicate that we can persuade district residents.
4. Credible candidate, able to articulate LP program.
5. Campaign financing plan, including cash in hand.
6. Campaign committee reflecting the demographics of the district.
7. Campaign manager prepared to carry out the campaign.
8. Campaign plan that includes tactics and goals for growth of the party.
9. Endorsements or support from local community organizations.

Local party structures and State parties should notify the national Labor Party at least one year in advance, when possible, when planning to run candidates. □

Labor Party Presentation at a Union Meeting

by Paul Le Blanc

The following is based on notes for a presentation made at a meeting of Health Care Workers District 1199-P of the Service Employees International Union, AFL-CIO. It helped to generate a good discussion. Hopefully this will be useful for Labor Party activists making similar presentations elsewhere.

District 1199-P has passed a resolution endorsing the Labor Party. Today I'm here to talk about what the Labor Party is and why it is important. At a future meeting a Labor Party representative will come to talk about how we here — especially members of 1199-P — can help organize a powerful Labor Party.

I've been a member of the Labor Party from the very beginning, but I'm also from a union family, and I've worked at a number of different jobs, including some union jobs; about 25 years ago I was an orderly at a nursing home near here, and I was a member of 1199-P. Right now I'm teaching history at a nearby college. So that gives you some idea of where I'm coming from.

I want to start by posing this question: How many of you vote? [Most hands go up.]

How many have voted for Democrats? [Most hands go up.] How many have voted for Republicans? [Fewer hands go up.] That's okay—if one thing doesn't work, sometimes you try another, right? [People nod.]

Now let me ask you this: Have things been getting better for us since you started voting for these people? [People shake their heads; some say things like: "No, not really."] At the founding convention of the Labor Party one of the speakers was a guy who used to be the Democratic governor of California named Jerry Brown. I don't agree with everything this guy says, but he made a good point. He said: "Gingrich and Dole [the leading Republicans] are taking this country to destruction — but so is Clinton. They're just doing it at different rates."

That situation isn't good for people like us, and it's not good for our country. We need something better. That's what the Labor Party is all about.

The Founding Convention of the Labor Party took place on June 6, 1996, in Cleveland, Ohio. It was sponsored by 9 major unions, dozens of central labor councils, and hundreds of local unions

and community organizations. There were about 1500 delegates there.

As a matter of fact, the second National Convention of the Labor Party is taking place this year in Pittsburgh on November 13–16, 1998. So many of you may have the opportunity to attend that convention and see it for yourself. It will be important for unions like 1199-P to help make the decisions at that upcoming convention.

The purpose of these conventions is to help start a better party than the Republicans and Democrats. What we need is a party of, by, and for working people — a Labor Party. At its founding convention the Labor Party adopted a Program for Economic Justice. We are handing out to you copies of the first issue of the Labor Party newspaper that contains that whole program, as well as detailed information on what was said and done at the first convention. I want to draw your attention to the opening words of that program that gives a sense of what this party is about:

"We are the people who build and maintain the nation but rarely enjoy the fruits of our labor. We are the employed and the unemployed. We are the people who make the country run but have little say in running the country."

We need to change that. The Labor Party stands for the working class, the majority of the people, having the decisive say in running the country—which is what democracy is supposed to be about. The people should rule. Look at these figures that I'm writing on the blackboard:

U.S. families	U.S. wealth
1%	40%
+19%	+40%
80%	20%

Most of the wealth of this country, 80% of it, is owned by only 20% of the people. That means the rest of us, 80% of us, own only 20% of the nation's wealth. A small minority have a lock on

the immense wealth that all of us help to produce in this country.

Now here's another question. Big businessmen and corporation executives — do they have the same interests as people like us or different interests? [Voices: "Different."] That's right. So that means a lot of problems people like us are facing are not being dealt with adequately because those who have a lock on most of this nation's wealth are using it for other things.

And when it comes to politics, the way it's practiced in this country, money talks. There may be good Democrats and good Republicans who are friendly to labor and pro-working class. But the political parties that they belong to — both of the parties — are dependent on big money. That means that neither of these parties can adequately defend our interests. The desires of big business — their biggest campaign contributors — always come first.

If we're just looking at money, the top 20% has the big advantage. But we have something they don't have. We have the numbers. We are the overwhelming majority, and without us there wouldn't even be a country. But we have to organize those numbers around a political agenda that meets our needs, in a party that we control.

That's what the Labor Party is. That's why we need to build it. We need to do more than that. We need to build strong, democratic unions like 1199-P to fight for better wages and working conditions. We need to fight for reforms like the Living Wage campaign, which can help more and more people have a decent standard of living. But we have to go further than that. We need to change the politics of this country so that we have a real democracy, where the working class, the majority of us, not a small percentage of rich people, will make the decisions.

None of this will happen without people like you helping to make it happen. So we have a lot to talk about. We

can start talking about it now. It's something that should be talked about again when a Labor Party speaker comes to a

future meeting. And I hope that your union will be able to send a strong delegation to the upcoming Labor Party con-

vention in Pittsburgh to participate in the important discussions and help in the decision-making that will take place there. □

Right-Wing Initiative Attacks Right of Unions to Participate in Politics

Continued from page 19
the first time in decades. Extreme conservatives would gain almost complete control over state government, and the power to enact an agenda which became evident when they captured control of the Assembly. It includes elimination of most worker-protection legislation, and vast giveaways to corporations and wealthy interests.

The AFL-CIO has called Proposition 226 such a threat that it has promised at least \$8 million to defeat it, and intends to send organizers from around the country to campaign on the ground. "Once again, unfortunately, California is a bellwether for the rest of the country," notes Art Pulaski, executive secretary-treasurer of the California Labor Federation. He called the initiative "part of a broad right-wing strategy to do unions in, and use the political process to accomplish it."

The initiative ranks high in the polls because it is portrayed as a form of campaign reform, intended to get money out of politics and give rank-and-file union members a say over how their political contributions are used. It is less clear to potential voters that the measure would bar lobbying on basic workplace and consumer issues, and that it would restrict unions only, not business.

Mary Bergan, president of the California Federation of Teachers, appealed to teachers not to be misled by the rhetoric of reform. "The purpose of this initiative is not to end the influence of big money over politics, or to give union members a voice over the use of their dues money," she said. "This measure would actually deprive us of our right to participate in elections effectively. At the same time, those who oppose us, especially wealthy corporations and well-funded rightwing ideologues, would have no limits on their activity at all."

The California Labor Federation reinstated the state's health and safety act by initiative after its elimination by former Republican Governor George Deukmejian, and it fought Governor Wilson's more recent efforts to abolish daily overtime after 8 hours. It will have to connect these popular issues to the negative consequences of Proposition 226 in order to defeat it.

Forty years ago, when Republicans put a "right to work" (anti-union) measure on the state ballot, unions mounted a campaign against it which was so effective that Republicans lost the entire state administration, a senatorial seat, and numerous congressional and legislative positions for the first time in decades.

Today, when unions are less popular, California unions need alliances with communities fighting issues like the preservation of bilingual education, to capture a similar wave of popular support and understanding to defeat Proposition 226. □

February 21, 1998

Teamsters to Vote on New Freight Contract

Continued from page 20
some Teamsters. One is the lack of a first-year raise, because workers understand that so-called bonus money is no substitute for wage increases that are compounded into future increases.

The other troubling provision is the five-year length of the contract. Employers want to be able to calculate costs and plan for the long haul, so a lengthy contract is an advantage to the company, but not to the union. Workers usually want a short contract in order to make up for changes in the cost of living not covered by a contract or to correct a company's malpractices with the threat of a strike when the usual grievance provisions give them little or no relief.

The companies will partly pay for the new pension increases by holding down the wage increases. *Wall Street Journal* reporters cite analysts who peg the

yearly wage-benefit increase at 2.5 percent, while the UPS settlement is estimated at 3.7 percent a year.

If the union had the hammer in the freight negotiations, then one has to wonder if the union team really slammed it hard on the table and gained comparable trade-offs from the companies for agreeing to a no-strike early settlement *and* a five-year agreement.

Is the Contract "Good" or "Bad"?

In the wake of the 1980 federal trucking industry deregulation, the Teamsters lost scores of thousands of jobs in freight as the major companies opened their own non-union subsidiaries ("double-breasting"). Deregulation, sweetheart contracts agreed to by the old guard leadership, and the lack of majority rule by the membership in contract ratification votes allowed the

imposition of two-tier wages and an overall decline in freight workers' buying power.

Without having access to the actual contract wording, we can make no more than a preliminary assessment of the proposed agreement. Clearly, it's good that the members' expectations have been met, at least in the main. No contract is good or bad in the abstract. In fact, it's best to dispense with terms like "good" and "bad" and assess the worth of the contract in terms of the relative power of the contending sides.

So the ranks will have to ask, Did the negotiators leave on the table anything of consequence that they were strong enough to have taken back to the members? Are the Teamsters getting a *quid pro quo* for the no-strike early settlement the companies so badly wanted? □

March 3, 1998

An LP Dinner in Honor of Martin Luther King

by Bob Mast

The following report was posted on the labr.party discussion conference of the Institute for Global Communications computer network.

Sisters and Brothers,

Here is the promised report of the Labor Party dinner meeting on January 19, celebrating the legacy of Martin Luther King.

A major objective of the New Mexico LP gathering was to try to bring closer some households from the 28th amendment canvassing neighborhood, which corresponds to Precinct 255 of State Legislative District 18 in Albuquerque.

To that end, an attractive flyer entitled "Labor Party Dinner in Honor of Dr. Martin Luther King" was distributed to every household in the district (about 700) which invited *everybody* to a free dinner, friendly conversation, and entertainment from 5:00 to 7:00 pm at the local Life Tabernacle Church. There would be discussion on welfare rights, the LP and a living wage, and the King legacy. Some phone calls were made to those who had put their numbers on the 28th petition. A mailed invitation also went out to each LP member.

At 4:45 pm Anne [Mast] and I arrived at the church with our ham and cake, and a camera. A half dozen hard-working brothers and sisters had set up the social room of this unpretentious church — which had everything we needed (long tables, chairs, full kitchen, piano, rest rooms, stage, etc.) to put on a good party. The program for the evening was well in hand, according to the brothers and sisters, but they were apprehensive about attendance and whether the potluck food would arrive.

At the end of the affair, nobody doubted that the gathering was a success with some 60 adults and 10 children attending (some estimates were higher). At least four neighborhood families came, some showing definite interest in the LP. These dozen or so people can't be a cause for great rejoicing, but it's a big start for a political party that's not known and a chapter without experience in this kind of thing. As the LP activists

had predicted, the community guests were mostly Latino/Hispanic/Hispano/Mexicano people, whatever the term.

There's a sensitivity here about "ethnic" identity. I use the term Latino since I'm told it's the more generic. These were family groups and they were mostly Latino. The two go together. That's something to remember in a city that's now 50 percent or more Latino, and growing.

I talked for some time to one neighbor, irregularly employed, who complained of this and that problem in the neighborhood until we got into the LP program. Then his eyes lit up with interest. When I mentioned something about the rich benefiting from the labor of working people, he responded with an expressive YEAH, and from then on we got along just fine. Other LP activists, especially our sister who lives in the neighborhood, broke the ice with the other guests. We all were pretty busy. It's a small breakthrough and beginning link to a sympathetic neighborhood. It needs follow-up.

Of the remaining attendees, I'd say roughly 30 to 40 percent were LP members (that's about one-third of the entire state chapter). Another 30 to 40 percent were from the progressive community (e.g., peace and justice), a certain portion were Greens, and about 20 percent were African American. (New Mexico is three percent Black.) Some folks here belong to both the LP and the Greens, as well as other people-oriented organizations. They may be "hedging their bets," a term used by one LP brother to explain his personal reason for being an activist in a variety of organizations. Multiple memberships makes for multiple loyalties, multiple spreading of personal resources, and possible political confusion. But it also can serve to spread the LP word, bring in resources to the LP, and recruit new LP members.

The two-hour gathering was more *gemütlich* (German for, I think, folksy, kindred, kindly) than I usually experience at LP functions. The children were great — well behaved and genuinely helpful. People were friendly, a not uncommon thing in this Western town. But they were hungry. The potluck that LP members and friends had agreed to prepare was arriving much too slowly. By about 5:30 enough (but not all) tasty food had arrived to allow the dinner call. Most folks, who had been sitting and talking, and listening to King-appropriate background music, jumped into the serve-yourself line that formed a circle half-way round the room, and took liberal portions of what was there. But the really hungry returned to the serving table several more times to get more, and then more, of the late-arriving food. The welfare activists were at another table selling donated cake and cookies. There was a literature table with the 28th amendment petition, voter registration material, etc. Several of us were selling \$1.00 tickets for a TV and cash raffle. Someone else passed a name, address, phone clipboard. So, there was a lot of human motion, with bodies shuffling from table to table in search of, or circulating, desirable things. We got to know each other this way.

At about 6:00 the program began. It was an appropriate package that linked the King legacy with the reality and needs of today's working class, and the logic of there being a labor party as a political expression of the working class. The amiable master of ceremonies was a Black postal retiree who also hosts a program on local TV. Among those he introduced was Pablo Trujillo, recently elected president of the Bernalillo County Central Labor Council. This CLC consists of 38 locals and four trades councils in the greater Albuquerque area. Four of its seven executive council are LP members. Lo and behold,

one of them is Pablo. Pablo identified himself with the LP and encouraged everyone to join the party. But his most important contribution was to link organized labor with ordinary working people in the community, most of whom have little contact with unions. Pablo did this in his words, and through his symbolic presence as a union leader.

[Brief divergence #1. In this list's thread "Labor-Community Organizing" (i.e., in the labor party discussion conference) I've argued that chapters must learn how to organize in neighborhoods where it's possible that local self-interest and self-determination, in conjunction with the LP's facilitation, might lead to the creation of some worker-supportive structures such as LP clubs or forums. 28th amendment neighborhoods are ideal for this. I've focused more on neighborhoods because this seems like foreign territory to many LPrs. But Pablo's role in the King gathering shows that intermediate levels of organized labor (the other side of the union-community dialectic) can be drawn into the equation, if they are friendly. We haven't talked much about that. Some central labor councils, friendly to the LP, can be crucial linkage points in the union bureaucracy, especially those closer to the rank and file. More internal union democracy may be facilitated in the locals, allowing a wedge for LP input and a potential conduit to the community. This list should hear about the success stories where CLCs took the lead with the LP.

[Brief divergence #2. By virtue of my being a union member (NWU) in good standing, I'm on two AFL-CIO Union City committees (mobilization and organizing) just formed by the Bernalillo County Central Labor Council. Union City got off the ground partly through the prodding of some LP members who are liberally on the committees. My first impressions are that much is possible in buttressing up ongoing organizing and union-growth projects. What is less clear, but critically important for LP purposes, is how some of the work of these union-based committees can link up with LP organizers and program. The Mobilization Committee has not lost sight of the potential support from grass roots groups.]

Back to the King event. Jon Weger-Thomas, our talented chapter chair, officer of the CLC, and member of the Letter Carriers, gave a rousing talk on the history and goals of the LP. As he reviewed our program point by point, the enthusiasm of his audience rose, even to the point of applause on several items such as a national health care program. Jon was followed by Caroline, a neighborhood resident, mother of two nice children, and welfare rights activist. She outlined the objective condition of the working class in New Mexico, now with the highest poverty rate in the country, and the insidious efforts of the governor to press even harder on the poor. She cleverly linked the LP program with workfare/welfare organizing efforts.

Finally, the featured speaker, Dr. Maisha Baton, presented her informal talk "Martin Luther King and the Common Dream — A Living Wage." Maisha, a professor in Black and Women's Studies at the University of New Mexico, presented the worker-friendly King whose life was snuffed out in Memphis while organizing sanitation workers, agitating for the poor peoples' movement, and raising doubts about capitalism. She clarified that a living wage for all was one essence of King's dream. The LP wants it to become a common dream today for more and more workers. I suppose that's also the guts of the 28th amendment campaign — a dream whose fulfillment is possible only by concerted political effort by both the organized and unorganized struggling together. And I think that may have been the feeling of most who attended this first serious effort by el Partido del Trabajo de Nuevo Mexico (LP of NM) to bring the LP and unions together with the community.

Finally, the LP activists who put on the King affair knew there were flaws, omissions, and mistakes. We knew from the beginning that there was too late a start, inadequate organization, too few resources, failure to communicate, not enough democratic decision-making, uncertainty about goals. I'm dazzled by the vision of what the Albuquerque sisters and brothers could put on if we were WELL organized and unified. I'll leave this now and try to ask the brothers and sisters what we've learned from the experience. □

January 22, 1998

How Ohio Labor Won the 1997 Election

Continued from page 18

Secretary John Ryan, was that labor must continue the broad coalition of all segments of the labor movement with citizen activist groups, trial attorneys, and community organizations to build grass-roots campaigns on other issues, such as privatization of government jobs and school financing.

Ohio AFL-CIO President William Burga also said that maintaining the

broad coalition will be key to future victories for working families. He "pledged the full support of the labor federation's affiliated unions in fighting efforts to eliminate the state's affirmative action programs." (*Ohio AFL-CIO News and Views*, December 1997-January 1998).

Through united, independent political action to mobilize working-class voters and their allies, Ohio labor was able to win a battle against corporate

capital. But some workers are learning from labor history — local, national, and international — that while we can win an occasional battle, we need a strategy that can win the war against corporate capital. A strategy that will bring in a workers' government to establish real democracy, to fundamentally change the existing system in which big business and the employing class dominate under the disguise of "democracy." □

February 9, 1998

Debs's Labor Party Epiphany

by Chris Driscoll

*The following article is meant to provide some historical background to the January 1925 **Socialist World** article by Eugene V. Debs and Debs's February 1925 speech to the Conference for Progressive Political Action, reprinted in this issue of **Bulletin in Defense of Marxism**.*

Eugene Victor Debs, the founding father of the class-struggle left wing tradition in the American labor movement, spent the last three decades of his life promoting international socialism and building the Socialist Party in the United States. During most of that period, roughly the last half of the 1890s through the first half of the 1920s, Debs was convinced that the Socialist Party could become a mass working class party with the ability to challenge the bosses' parties in the electoral arena. After all, mass socialist parties were challenging capitalist rule in other advanced industrial countries, and even in some nonindustrial nations.

Debs ran for president on the Socialist Party ticket five times, in 1900, 1904, 1908, 1912, and 1920, the last time from a federal prison cell, where he landed for delivering an antiwar speech in Canton, Ohio, that allegedly violated the wartime Espionage Act. During these twenty years Debs's commitment was to the idea that what was happening in European countries, the almost linear construction of mass workers' parties, could happen in the United States, and that an avowedly socialist party could do the job.

Debs's Long Journey To Labor Party Support

Debs's initial objection to building a union-based labor party, as opposed to an ideologically-based socialist party, is noted by Nick Salvatore in the excellent biography *Eugene V. Debs: Citizen and Socialist*. Salvatore contrasts Debs's early opposition to a labor party with his strong later commitment to the idea: "The endorsement of [Sen. Robert M.] La Follette in 1924, and Debs' hope that it would lead to a labor party after the election, dramatically etched the contrast between the pre- and postwar movement. In 1910, Debs, William English Walling, and others had argued against a labor party on the grounds that

it would at best duplicate and more probably supplant the Socialist Party itself. In 1924, however, they were willing to grasp at any prospect that might encourage the development of such a labor party."

Salvatore tells us that in the *International Socialist Review* in 1910 Walling, then a leader of the Socialist Party, argued that the British Labour Party relied on skilled workers, "the aristocracy of labor," for its electoral support. The American working class was more advanced, more class conscious, Walling asserted. The *International Socialist Review*, an important theoretical journal of the U.S. socialist movement at the time, sided with Debs and Walling, saying that an American labor party would flounder on the conservative reefs of official trade union ideology.

La Follette was the presidential candidate chosen in 1924 by the Conference for Progressive Political Action (CPPA), a coalition led by unions representing one-third of the organized work force. The coalition included farmers, civic and socialist groups, with state Farmer-Labor Parties and Debs's Socialist Party playing a key role. Labor, farmer, and socialist organizations had formed the CPPA in 1922 in the wake of a federal government crack-down on rail union strikes in 1921.

In 1924 the CPPA, at the urging of the Socialist and Farmer-Labor forces within it, decided to launch the Progressive Party and draft La Follette, a "progressive" Republican Senator from Wisconsin. He accepted the nomination — but only as an independent. La Follette indicated that he would use the response to the campaign and the vote as a gauge of the potential for an ongoing third party. The American Federation of Labor (AFL) voted to support the La Follette campaign, promising to donate \$50,000, but in the end giving only \$25,000.

The Progressive Party campaign on behalf of La Follette was able to raise and spend only \$200,000, while the Democrats spent \$900,000 and the Republicans spent \$4,200,000. The vote tally gave the Progressives 4,822,000, or 16.5 percent; the Democrats 8.4 million, or 29 percent; and the Republicans 15.7 million, putting Coolidge into the White House with 54 percent of the popular vote.

This "grand coalition" of socialist, populist, and liberal forces had succeeded in winning only 16.5 percent of the vote. Still, this was almost five times as much as Debs had ever received. Debs thought this could be used to advance the movement for a labor party and began agitating for such a party to be created by the CPPA in 1925.

Progressive vs. Working Class Leadership

Meanwhile, Samuel Gompers, the head of the AFL, who had once been a socialist, but later championed business unionism, took a different tack. He reasoned that even a coalition of forces well beyond the labor movement could only get barely one-sixth of the vote. Why should anyone expect a labor party to get more? Gompers had been an opponent of a labor party in the U.S. for years, actually writing a pamphlet explaining his opposition to the idea in 1921.

Philip S. Foner, in volume nine of his *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, describes the powerful opposition Debs was facing in 1925 from the Gompers machine: "In fact," says Foner, "Gompers used the defeat of La Follette as an occasion to proclaim, in an *American Federationist* [official organ of the AFL] editorial that 'as a matter of democratic principle, American labor does not want a separate political party and as a matter of practical politics is far too wise to indulge in any such futility.'"

Many other labor groups followed Gompers's reasoning, using the vote tally as an excuse to reject the labor party idea, and one can see Debs answering these opponents, especially in his February 1925 speech to the CPPA, with explanations of the difference between a "progressive" movement and a real workers' movement: Debs warns the audience that the multi-

class “progressive party” that some wanted to form would only lead to such a formation going “the way that all third parties have gone...”

Debs also explains the reason that unions must be at the center of any genuine labor party: “A labor party is the only party that can be organized with any hope of making it a permanent party and achieving its historic mission,” Debs said. The failure of the AFL to raise even the money it had promised La Follette reveals the real reason that campaign failed to accomplish any more than it did. All-out support by organized labor for a real labor party expressing the undiluted needs, interests, and demands of the working class would have been more successful than a weak, coalition, multiclass party with conflicting class interests and hence a platform unattractive to the majority.

Labor parties in other countries with the same kind of electoral system as in the United States (Britain and Australia, for instance) had been quite successful in becoming mass, working class parties, when ideologically-based parties had not, because they gave the unions a much bigger stake in supporting them — financially and by organizing the hundreds of thousands of volunteer campaign workers unions are capable of organizing.

The importance of building a labor party with unions in the lead can be seen clearly in the contrast between the New Democratic Party (NDP) of Canada, a coalition between the unions, socialists, environmentalists, the women’s movement, and other “progressive” forces, and the British Labour Party, (so far) a genuine labor party with the unions in the majority of leadership positions. The NDP has been handicapped by receiving much less union money and organizational help — by percentage — than its sister party in Britain, according to a study conducted in Canada by Keith Archer and published in the book *Political Choices and Electoral Consequences: A Study of Organized Labour and the New Democratic Party*.

The NDP gives the unions only a minority of leadership positions, while unions are squarely in the lead in the British Labour Party. (At present, it is true, a liberal wing of the British Labour Party, led by Prime Minister Tony Blair, is engaged in a determined campaign to

reduce the unions to a minority leadership role. This will undoubtedly constitute the center of an important fight in that party in the coming period.)

The Canadian unions have reacted to their minority role in the NDP by paying less attention to it. This is at least part of the reason for the NDP’s weakness in federal elections.

Debs’s Jail-Cell Realization

By the time Debs was released from his Atlanta federal prison cell on Christmas day in 1921, it had become clear to him that the development of a mass Socialist Party in the context of U.S. capitalist democracy was an impossibility. A combination of selective repression and a strong two-party system made an ideologically-based worker’s party a non-starter. Like other bourgeois democracies with winner-take-all elections, a labor party, funded and led by the unions, was the only way a mass, working class, electoral party was going to be created in the United States.

And a nonelectoral party would never be taken seriously by the working class as long as the opportunity existed to run in elections, a lesson history had already taught through the failure of numerous third-party movements. The aim of building a mass socialist party became a Catch-22: the party was not kept out of the elections, but it was sure to never win more than a small minority of the offices it sought because it could never build the institutional backing needed to seriously challenge the monopoly of the two major parties backed by big business.

Meanwhile, in Britain over the first two decades of the 20th century, another model was unfolding. In that country, socialist organizations had turned to workers’ economic organizations with the idea of building a labor-based party, one that used the institutional strength of unions to make up for the superior financial strength of the capitalist class. Finally, the way forward had been found. This was no panacea, no direct linear road to the socialist promised land, but the Labour Party did offer a vehicle for the socialist movement to spread class consciousness from within a class-based mass organization that occasionally was able to hold government office.

And while there is some legitimate fear that British labor’s almost century-

old party is about to be destroyed beyond repair by Blair’s liberal movement, removing every tie of the Labour Party to workers’ institutions, it will still leave behind the legacy of a century of teaching class consciousness and socialism to the working people of Britain. And while the Blairites hold the leadership today, the British LP is still a vehicle for pro-working class, internationalist, and anti-imperialist-war forces in that country. At least for the moment, the unions still have the majority of leadership positions in the party.

Why Look At Debs’s Labor Party Ideas?

Debs’s importance to the contemporary labor movement should not be underestimated. In one way or another, practically all leftist political tendencies in this country trace their organizational roots back to Debs’s Socialist Party, and most U.S. labor unions see him as a spiritual leader on an equal par with Gompers.

In fact, Debs and Gompers can be seen to this day as representing the two most significant and counterposed philosophies in the labor movement. Debs envisioned the totality of labor’s economic and political institutions as a social movement whose goal was nothing less than defending and advancing all the interests of the entire working class. Gompers, in contrast, held to a much more humble goal: organizing craft workers into traditional craft guilds that would fight for economic advances.

Gompers’s political strategy is summed up in a slogan that has been recently revived by AFL-CIO President John Sweeney: “Punish your enemies, reward you friends!” In the Gompers model, the capitalist class creates the parties and sets the rules of the game, and the working class simply plays — or imagines that it plays — Democrats against Republicans, soft cop against hard cop. While this model held limited value for the working class, it did have the advantage of letting each party know that it could not count on the working class vote automatically, that it had to do something for workers to earn their votes.

This policy was abandoned in the mid-1930s for the even less effective strategy of supporting a single party regardless of the outcome, the so-called checkbook strategy. No big surprise

then that most of the labor legislation in the U.S. Congress since that time has been disastrous for unions. But instead of turning to the strategy that has never been tried in this country but always worked wherever the unions have tried it, that of building a Labor Party, Sweeney has chosen to straddle the line between the Gompers approach and all-out support for the Democratic Party. In practice, this strategy has shown itself to be little different from the strategy of the last six decades.

Conclusion: The Proof In the Pudding Called The 20th Century

The struggle between Debs and Gompers can be seen as the archetype of the fight between the class-struggle left wing of the labor movement and the Gompers-style accommodationist wing. This struggle has played itself out continuously since the early days of the century. Immediately after Debs delivered his speech to the CPPA, that body was disbanded by union bureaucrats who had been won to the Gompers position. Although Gompers won that battle, which had raged across the first half of the 1920s, the working class lost a great chance to build its own party as a result.

Subsequent history has provided ample evidence that, when compared to

the advances of working classes in countries with mass working class parties, the working people of the United States have lagged behind by any objective measure. Our low political status in the society, our lack of protective legislation, our inadequate and inferior social services, our lower standard of living despite this country's position as the richest country in the world, all attest to the failure of the AFL-CIO's political strategy of relying on the Democrats instead of creating our own party, a working class-based, union-led party.

While Gompers won the battle with Debs, we lost the war with the bosses and owners of corporate America, and if we are ever to turn this situation around, we are going to have to begin to apply the lessons that Debs and others in the Socialist Party had learned by the 1920s. We are going to have to stop listening to the bureaucratic labor mentality that got us into the fix we are now in in the first place.

I end with a quote by Debs from a March 20, 1925, article titled "Hostility to Labor Party Disclosed Conference as Masked Reactionary Body."

[The 1925 CPPA conference] also had lessons, chief of which is that a labor party for independent political action will have to be forced by the rank and file of organized labor; it will never

come through the initiative of highly-salaried labor leaders, or rather labor followers. Therefore the important task is to open the eyes of the rank and file of the trade and labor unions...." □

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Economic Meltdown in Asia

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first jobless crisis since World War II. Japan's budget deficit is now more than 5 percent of the GDP, which means that it will be difficult to use government funds to shore up collapsing businesses.

While the Japanese government places the blame on the currency crash in Southeast Asia, the truth is that there has been a major economic problem due to sluggish domestic demand in Japan and accumulating inventories which could not be sold on the market.

The fundamental cause of the crisis is the overproduction in the advanced capitalist countries. Actual or potential overproduction of commodities is burdening most industries throughout the world — a trend since the 1970s. The

new capital steadily formed every year no longer finds investment opportunities to secure at least the average rate of profit. This average rate of profit itself is depressed compared to the long wave of capitalist expansion that occurred from the 1940s to the 1960s.

The nature of overproduction in the capitalist countries takes the form of overproduction of capital. The fact that this capital is not being productively invested feeds the long depressive wave, which feeds the over-accumulation of capital and the growing transformation of this capital into speculative activities. And this speculative activity is not only carried out by professional speculators like George Soros — Mahathir's favorite "whipping

boy" — but by big banks and corporations themselves.

But speculators make money — in the form of profits from interest rates — and this has to be subtracted from the total amount of surplus value that is currently produced worldwide. This means that the amount of surplus value — of real capital — that is the basis for growth and expansion of the capitalist system continues to decline. A big chunk of it is now being channeled to speculative activities. Thus the world is awash with "speculative," "illusory," and "fictitious" capital, and yet there is an increasing shortage of real capital.

This is the nature of the crisis that started to erupt in Southeast Asia in 1997. □

The American Labor Party

by Eugene V. Debs

This article first appeared in the Socialist Party publication Socialist World, Vol. 6, No. 1, January 1925.

The progressive tendencies in American politics are the outgrowth of the final stages of American capitalism and reflect the political awakening of the American working class.

These tendencies, despite all the attempts through the blind stupidity of the workers and the covert machinations of their enemies to thwart or misdirect them, will inevitably lead to and result in the formation of an American labor party.

When?

We do not know. I hope soon. But sooner or later it will come. That I know if I have learned anything at all about the operation of the resistless forces that are centralizing capital, socializing industry, organizing and arraying the workers against their exploiting masters, and compelling them more and more to take the initiative in the intensifying struggle growing out of their antagonistic economic interests, which can end only with their complete industrial emancipation.

This struggle is political as well as economic and will, because it must, be fought out accordingly, and this can only be done when labor has a political party as well as an economic union of its own to express its interests, declare its aims, and develop its power to fight its battles and achieve its victory.

This does not mean that a labor party shall consist exclusively of workers but it does mean that all who enter its ranks do so with the understanding that it is a *labor party*, not a middle class party, not a reform party, nor a progressive party (of which the Republican and Democratic parties are shining examples) but an open-and-above-board labor party, standing squarely on a labor platform, and marshalling its forces to fight labor's political battles for industrial freedom.

Most earnestly do I hope such a party will result from the Conference for Progressive Political Action to be held at Chicago beginning February 21st in pursuance of the agreement of the Conference to follow up the progressive campaign with a permanent party organization.

To be frank I shall have to confess, not without reluctance, that I have not the faith I should like to have in a consummation so devoutly to be wished. But whatever the outcome I shall not be disappointed. I have long since gotten over that and learned how to wait.

We can have no effective labor party without the backing and support of the labor unions. That is a fact without question. The present leaders of the unions, strange as it certainly appears, are almost to a man opposed to a labor party. In this they are in entire accord with the capitalist masters and labor exploiters.

The hope for an American labor party lies not in the official labor leaders but in the rank and file, and until the latter are aroused, insist upon, and compel independent political action, no such a craft can be successfully launched upon the foul and stagnant waters of American politics.

If a bona fide labor party cannot be organized at Chicago then I hope that no party at all will issue from that conference. Better far no party than a nondescript imitation of one, composed of so-called progressive and reform elements, more or less muddled, discordant, and wholly lacking in clear aim, definite object, and concerted purpose.

A "third party" of such a nature would at best align the dwindling "little interests" against the "big interests," seek to patch up and prolong the present corrupt and collapsing capitalist system, and failing utterly to effect any material change or achieve any substantial benefit would finally fizzle out and add one more to the list of "third party" fiascos.

A political party to succeed, for good or evil, must express, in the main, identical economic interests, without which there is no foundation to build or stand upon. A third party at this advanced stage of our industrial and social development, unless it stood expressly for labor, would be lacking such a foundation and consequently could not endure. Only a labor party can now be organized

as a third party with any hope whatever of permanence and achieving its object.

A political party today must stand for labor and the freedom of labor, or it must stand for capital and the exploitation of labor. It cannot possibly stand for both any more than it could for both freedom and slavery.

I want to see the workers of this nation rise in the might of their intelligence and demand a party of their own, free, eternally free from the paralyzing putridities of the parties of their silk-hatted, wealth-inflated, job-owning and labor-exploiting masters — a *party* with a backbone and the courage to stand up without apology and proclaim itself a *Labor Party*, clean, confident of its own inherent powers, bearing proudly the union label in token of its fundamental conquering principle of industrial and political solidarity, and challenging the whole world of capitalism to contest the right of this nation to own its own industries, to control its own economic and social life, and the right of the toiling and producing masses to own their own jobs, to enjoy the fruits of their own labor, and to be the masters of their own lives.

I am suspicious of those who admit that we must have a labor party but object to having it called by its right name.

It should be a matter of pride and certainly not of shame to a labor party to have its true title nailed to its masthead.

If not, why not? Shall we fear to keep out many who would otherwise join? That is the very reason the party should be known for what it actually is as well as what it actually stands for. We must bear no false label, carry no false banner, nor seek support under any false pretense whatsoever.

We must stand avowedly, face front, for labor — for the people who produce, who render needed service, and who are useful and necessary to the world.

We need not designate both industrial labor and farm labor in naming our party. Both are *labor*, alike useful, productive, and necessary, subject to the same oppression and the same exploitation, and bound to be united in one political solidarity in the same political party.

It is a fact amazing as it is humiliating that the workers of the United States, the most advanced industrial nation on the globe, are practically the only ones who have no political party of their own, being content to give their support to the

corrupt and enslaving parties of their masters, and meekly bowing their necks to the yoke of injunction rule.

Every other nation large and small with scarcely an exception has its labor party in full panoply fighting its political battles for emancipation.

Even Mexico, so long reviled by our one hundred percent morons as the land of “greasers” and peonage, has its militant labor movement to shame us into getting into line with the advancing columns of International Labor’s Grand Army of Emancipation.

Let me make it clear that I am not wanting another socialist party organized. We already have one and that is enough. Neither do I want another capitalist party organized, having already two, more than enough.

Asia: Four Crises in One

Continued from page 30
investment. The goal is thus to break a model that is too statist for the IMF and to discourage those who might have been tempted to imitate it. It is thus no exaggeration to speak of a success for U.S. imperialism.

China

The last crisis is the looming crisis in China. There is a dual transmission mechanism here. The falling prices resulting from devaluation of the region’s currencies hurt the competitiveness of Chinese exports. In addition, the stock exchange collapses threaten to

A middle-class party, by whatever name, would still be a capitalist party, for while it might champion “little interests” against “big interests,” with a sop to labor, it would still stand for the capitalist system and the perpetuation of wage-slavery.

If a genuine labor party is organized at Chicago I shall not expect the platform to go the limit of radical demands but shall be satisfied with a reasonable statement of labor’s rights and interests as well as its duties and responsibilities, doubting not that with the progress of the party its platform will in due time embrace every essential feature of the working class program for deliverance from industrial servitude.

The Socialist party can, should, and — I have no doubt — will join such a party whole-heartedly, becoming an

integral part of its structure, reserving, however, its autonomy unimpaired and using all its powers and functions in building up, equipping, promoting, and directing the general party.

To this end the Socialist party must stand fearless and erect, inflexible and uncompromising for the working class upon the basis of the class struggle and wage the war against capitalism for the liberation of labor from its age-old bondage.

In the event of failure to organize a labor party with which we can consistently affiliate, I shall hope and strive for the continuance of the Conference for Progressive Political Action and its sessions and deliberations from time to time until it shall finally culminate, as it eventually must, in the AMERICAN LABOR PARTY. □

spread by way of Hong Kong, and to interfere with a so far unparalleled economic dynamism.

In general, these four crises reinforce one another, because of the trade relations and investment flows that bind these countries together in a tight network, with the Chinese diaspora acting as relay. So the complex structuring of a whole region, until now presented as the motor of global growth, has been deeply destabilized by mechanisms reminiscent of capitalist anarchy and interimperialist struggles. U.S. supremacy, particularly on the level of technological domination, has been reaffirmed.

This has resulted, in a certain way, in a blockage of the intensive Japanese growth based on innovation. This blockage was then articulated in a hierarchical way throughout the zone.

But this destabilization is pregnant with a boomerang effect. The slowdown of Asian growth will in fact tend to cut back one of the main sources of financing for the long cycle of growth in the U.S., which is showing a tendency toward deepening trade deficits. Even if it does not degenerate into a generalized financial crash, this crisis has already called into question the unstable equilibrium of the world economy. □

China Going More Capitalist

Continued from page 31
Because of a general resentment against privatization, the CCP has found it necessary to retain in the Constitution the jargon of “persisting with socialism,” “persisting with Marxism-Leninism,” and maintaining the primary role played by state-owned enterprises and the public ownership system.

Party Control

In the face of more resistance from the workers and the general populace, the 15th National Congress called for fur-

ther solidarity by party members in “defending the party’s authority, maintaining unanimity with the Party Center ideologically and politically, and assuring that the Party’s line and the Center’s policies can be smoothly implemented and executed.” The 58 million CCP members were called upon to carry out “democratic centralism” — with no out reference of course to how internal party democracy or the freedom to dissent or form factions could be exercised. In the

name of “solidarity,” the authority of the Party Center was to be obeyed.

Power is now concentrated in the hands of Jiang Zemin, who is all in one — State President, Party General Secretary, and Chairman of the Military Committees. The sign is not one of greater solidarity, but of greater tensions and struggles for power within the top echelons of the party leadership. With social contradictions accelerating, political repression is now seen as more necessary than before. This includes further clampdown on dissent within the CCP and in society at large. □

November 20, 1997

Speech at 1925 Conference for Progressive Political Action

by Eugene V. Debs

A copy of an original transcript of this speech is preserved in a Library of Congress microfilm collection called "Collected speeches and writings of Eugene Victor Debs." The manuscript has the following information at the top of page one: "Speech of Eugene Debs, delivered before the final session of the Conference for Progressive Political Action, held at the Lexington Hotel, February 21, 1925, in Chicago, Illinois (copied from Minutes and Journal of this Conference for Progressive Political Action, in the possession of Dr. Mercer G. Johnston, 2015 Klingle Road, NW., Washington, D.C. Dr. Johnston was Chairman, 1926-1928, of National Progressive Headquarters, the organization formed when the CPPA was dissolved in Feb. 1925)."

EUGENE DEBS: (prolonged, tumultuous applause) Fellow Delegates and Friends: I appreciate fully the very cordial reception you tendered with such marked enthusiasm, but I don't forget that this high compliment is paid to the cause that I have been endeavoring to serve and to me personally not at all.

I wish that you were all Socialists. (laughter) But I realize that a great many of you are not. I hope I have never been and never shall be narrow enough and bigoted enough to deny any human being the same right to his or her honest conviction and the same right to express these convictions and stand up and fight for them that I shall claim for myself. (applause)

There are, as I see it, two paramount questions before this body. The first is, shall a new party be organized, and secondly, if a new party is organized, what kind of party shall it be?

It is quite natural that there should be a very wide divergence of opinion as to these questions. It would be a miracle almost if the delegates composing this great body, representing so many different elements and constituents, were of one mind, of one purpose, as to the questions that confront them for consideration and action.

Speaking for myself and my colleagues, I favor the organization, here and now, of a new party. (tumultuous applause) I also stand, in addition to the demand for a new party, that this shall be a party of the working class.

A party in this later day of our industrial and social development is either a capitalist party or it is a labor party. It is the one or the other. It cannot be both. We all know that in the evolution of industry and of society there has been a division of society, and that today it consists mainly of two economic classes,

the capitalist class upon the one hand and upon the other the working class; and these two classes, whether you admit it or not, are pitted against each other, not only in this country, but throughout the world, in an irrepressible struggle. These two classes can never be permanently harmonized or reconciled. It is this that is called the class struggle, that is shaking the foundations of the whole civilized world.

This is an age of organization. Working men realize this in having organized pretty thoroughly upon the industrial field in pitting themselves against the organized power of their masters and their exploiters. They have yet to learn that the labor question is essentially a political question. (applause) If they find it necessary to unite upon the industrial field, to unite and strike together, how can they consistently fight each other at the ballot box?

Politics Expresses Economic Interests

Politics is simply the expression in political terms of the economic interests of certain groups or classes. The masters and exploiters realize this fact and they are in politics, not in non-partisan politics, but in politics.

I have heard some allusions to non-partisan political organization. That is to say, a political party that is not a political party. I know of no organization, no political organization, that is or can be non-partisan. It is a question, as we believe, mainly of the education of the working class, and here let me say that my interpretation of the working class includes all useful workers of brain and brawn, all who usefully serve society in any trade, occupation, or profession. All of these properly belong to the working class. I draw the line at the exploiters

and the parasites and there I draw it sharply. (applause)

Now it has been said that the time has not yet come to organize a new party, and when, I venture to ask, will that time come?

It was my good fortune to personally know the founder and Grand Chief, the first Grand Chief of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, to personally know the first Grand Master of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Fireman. How often I have heard both of them tell of their early experiences in the efforts they made to lay the foundation of the organization of their class. There were but a handful of men who organized these two great brotherhoods. They were told that the time had not come for such work and everything possible was done to discourage them, but they were of such fiber, such moral fiber, that they had the courage to stand erect, to assert themselves, and to make the beginning that resulted in these great organizations.

Every great human movement has a small beginning in every age, in every nation. There have been a few heroic souls, women and men, who have ideas in advance of their time, who have had the courage to give expression to these ideas, to stand staunchly in their advocacy and to pave their way by their heroism, by their self-sacrifice to better conditions for mankind.

Susan B. Anthony

It was my pleasure, as well as my honor, to be with that magnificent woman, Susan B. Anthony, almost a half century ago, when she came to the town in which I lived, in response to an invitation that I had extended to her to advocate the cause of women's rights. I remember in escorting her from the station to the hotel how she was sneered at by passers-by, who felt insulted that this

brazen creature had been permitted to enter that community. I recall it all so vividly as I stand here in your presence this afternoon; all of the influences surrounding her were brought to bear to prevent her from advocating the right of women to take part in the affairs of society. They declared that the time had not come for it. They declared that it was impossible. They made all sorts of arguments to discourage Susan B. Anthony, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, these magnificent women whose names are in history, the glory of their sex. It was a small beginning they made, but they had the courage to make it, and they have written their names in indelible letters in the annals of mankind. We may not be able to make a very great beginning here, but the important thing is that we shall make a beginning.

One Party Can't Serve Both Classes

I have said that a party is either a capitalist party or it is a labor party. I deny that any party can by any possible means serve both these classes with the same fidelity. It is absolutely impossible. If a party serves the capitalist exploiter it is at the expense of his exploited victim, and if a party serves the exploited worker it is at the expense of his economic master.

Much has been said about wresting the power of monopoly from the hands of the few who hold sway in our affairs. Let it be understood that the economic power is always and everywhere the political ruler. How are you going to wrest this power from the hands of the autocracy, who are in the minority, unless you organize the workers and their sympathizers, who are in the majority, unless you educate and organize the masses? And build up the political power that will wrest from them the power they have to oppress and exploit the people by taking from them the private ownership of the instruments of production that make them the economic masters and the political rulers of the nation? (applause)

The question for us to consider is simply this: are or are we not in favor of this nation owning and controlling its own industries? That is the fundamental question. That is what confronts this body. As long as you permit a relative

few to privately own the sources and means of wealth, the tools of production, they will be in power. You will be in servitude. You will produce the wealth and they will have it under whatever administration you may have. They will do nothing and you will have that, and that is what you have been getting (laughter) under the administration of both the Republican and Democratic parties all of these years.

Now if what has been charged against these two parties by this body, by this conference, if the half of what has been charged, is true, then these parties are hopelessly corrupt and reactionary, and how can the great body of people who are oppressed and exploited and degraded, how can they hope for any relief by timidly approaching the doors of these corrupt parties and begging for some slight consideration, and be treated with contempt?

Capitalist Minority Can't Rule Without Corruption

The class now in power cannot rule honestly. They must rule corruptly. They are in the minority. They have not the votes of their own to put them in power, but they have the money with which to corrupt the electorate. They have the money with which to corrupt the courts and to buy the legislators, and to debauch all our institutions. They have the power to do this because they have the money, and they have the money because they own the means of production and distribution. The great mass of the workers depend upon them for employment. In this system no working man - we boast of every man having the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and yet in this system that has been alternately supported by both of the capitalist parties, no man has a right to work. He can only work on conditions that the master who owns the tools he works with grants him permission to work, and the man who works by permission lives by permission, and is in no sense a free man.

Now we make the claim that the time has come for the great body of the workers and those who sympathize with them to organize a new party and to begin the work of extending the operation and activities of this party all over the country. We can make the beginning here.

We can start forth with a message. We can make the appeal that will ring all over this country, and I am satisfied that hundreds of thousands of the workers will respond to that appeal. But the great mass of the people are not articulate. They have no means of making themselves heard. If the question of organizing a new party, and that party being a labor party, if that question were submitted to the great body of the American workers, I am satisfied that a very large proportion of them would vote in favor of launching a new party. (applause).

Multi-Class Party Can't Last

There are those present — I concede their honesty — I impugn no man's motive — there are those present who believe that a kind of middle party can be organized that will embrace so many more of the people. They indulge the illusion that it is possible to permanently unite men whose interests are in conflict. It cannot be done. It is an impossible undertaking. I venture to say that if this body in the course of its deliberations decides upon organizing a middle class party that shall be neither one thing or the other, but that shall have progress for its shibboleth, that shall be known as a progressive party — and by the way — do you know of a party that is not a progressive party? (laughter) I don't. Do you know of any man or woman in this country who will confess himself or herself a reactionary? I don't. Rockefeller is a progressive. So is Morgan. So are all the rest of them progressive, and there is not a term in our vocabulary that has been more prostituted in the last few years than the term progressive. Now, what does it mean? Absolutely nothing.

Make your appeal broad enough to embrace small capitalists and workers and all sorts of elements, launch that party tomorrow, and I admit that it may make some little progress. I admit that it may have some small accession to its ranks, but it cannot live. Its death is a foregone conclusion. Organize a so-called progressive party combining all of these elements, more or less in conflict with each other, and they soon begin to disintegrate and they will go the way that all third parties have gone during the last fifty years.

Only a Labor Party Can Last

A labor party is the only party that can be organized with any hope of making it a permanent party and achieving its historic mission. (applause)

It is a fortunate fact that the workers everywhere are beginning to open their eyes at last, beginning to realize that they have brains as well as hands, that they can think as well as work, that they are fit for something better than slavery and for cannon fodder. They are beginning to stand erect here and there and everywhere all along the line, beginning to realize that what is done for them must be done by themselves. (applause) And so they are gradually developing their self-reliance and they are making the appeal to their own solidarity.

They are still in the minority, and here let it be observed that every great movement in its inception was not only in the minority, unpopular, consisting of those who had ideas and courage, who did their work and rendered their service to humanity, these awakened and awakening and intelligent and awakening workers are still in the minority, but they are in alliance with the force of evolution, and as certain as I stand in your presence this afternoon, this minority will be converted in course of time into the triumphant majority and sweep into power (applause) and seize the reins of government in the name of the people and transfer the title deeds from the Rockefellers, Goulds, Vanderbilts, and Morgans to the people in their collective capacity, and then for the first time we will have democracy and self-government in the history of this Republic.

Ah, but this is far-fetched, some of you seem to think, and possibly it is. But it is the only issue before this body that is worthy of serious consideration. This is a movement that is making progress.

Now the workers have organized to a very large extent industrially. They are beginning to realize their interests, their power, their duty, their responsibility as a class now. I know that it is not very popular in the presence of some people to talk about classes. We are supposed to be a classless country. There are no classes in the United States. We are all in the same class with Rockefeller and the rest of them, and we prove it by voting that ticket on election day. (laughter) (applause)

Capitalists Very Class Conscious

Now, Rockefeller and Morgan and Gary and the rest of them, believe me, are class conscious. I only wish the workers were as class conscious as are these great exploiting capitalists.

The power that they have over people never can be abolished while they are in possession of the instruments that give them that power. That is the private ownership of the means of our common life. They own the railroads; they own the telegraph, the telephone; they own all these great agencies of production and distribution, the mines and the mills and the factories that have been socially produced, that are socially operated, that are socially necessary and still are held in private hands. The owners of the railroads have nothing to do with their operation. If every owner of an American railroad took a ship, an airship tonight, and left this planet, the people would never know it, for every train would come and go on time, and so with all of the great industries. Their private owners have no more to do with their management or their operation than if they lived upon Mars.

Now, if the people, in their collective capacity can develop these great industries, if they can operate them socially, and if their very lives depend upon them, can't they also develop intelligence enough to make themselves the owners and the masters of these industries and operate them, not to produce multimillionaires and billionaires, but to produce wealth in abundance for all of the people?

Poverty Amid Plenty

Is it not strange that in this land of fabulous abundance there is such widespread poverty and misery that defies the power of all language to properly describe? Here in America we live in perhaps the most favored land beneath the bending skies, vast areas of the richest and most fertile soil, all of the raw materials in inexhaustible abundance, the most marvelous productive machinery on the face of the globe, and the million of workers, men and women and children, aye children, two million of them still having their puny bodies coined into the capitalist profit, is infinitely more important than the working man's life.

Is it not strange that in this land of fabulous plenty there is still so much poverty, so many million of our people whose life consists of a long, hard, fierce struggle all the way from youth to age and at last death comes to the rescue and stills the aching heart and lulls that victim to dreamless sleep.

This all seems very strange to me, in one aspect of it, but not in another, for I have learned enough to know in my experience and observation that that very limited class that owns and controls the means of our common life not only controls the government in every department and has the injunctions issued under both Republican and Democratic administration that paralyzes labor unions; they not only control the government in every department, but they control all of our educational institutions, they have the power to penalize, to proscribe, to exile the workers by discharging and black-listing the men, the best among them, for the reason they have intelligence enough and courage enough to stand up for the interests of their classes. They have the power to control the education, a large part of which consists of miseducation, the purpose of which is to keep the people in ignorance and, through their ignorance, in servitude.

Shakespeare was right when he said, "There is no darkness but ignorance and there is no slavery but ignorance," and that is the trouble with the American people, and the average politician tells them that he is so proud to stand in their presence, to look in their intelligent faces, he flatters their ignorance to keep them ignorant, while upon the other hand, the Socialist agitator has made himself an undesirable citizen, despised and persecuted, because he has the courage to tell the workers that they are ignorant and that they will remain where they are so long as they are ignorant, indifferent, and unorganized. He tells them about the class struggle, not because he is in favor of classes, quite the contrary, because he is opposed to classes and wants to put an end to the class struggle.

Capitalists Depend on Workers' Votes

The capitalist, upon the other hand, tries to obscure it in every way possible. He'd not have the workers realize it and that is

why the great majority of them remain in the parties of their masters. Who is it that votes the Republican party and the Democratic party into power? It is the working class. The capitalist doesn't vote a working class ticket, but the working class do vote the capitalist ticket, and that is why the capitalists are in power and the workers in servitude, and we want to reverse this situation and put the workers in power, and that is what will come to pass with a triumph of this great movement that I hope to see inaugurated here in the form of a new political party that stands foursquare to all the storms that blow for the working class, and those who sympathize with them in their heroic struggle for industrial emancipation, and it is coming. (applause)

As I stand here this afternoon, looking into your faces, many of whom are so familiar to me, I congratulate myself for being here. I feel all the better for being in a little nearer touch with those with whom I have disagreed and who have disagreed with me. I feel that it is so far better for us to be at least on decent human terms with each other, no matter how widely we may disagree, far better this than to be pitted against each other in hostile camps, wasting our time in abusing each other.

Now I have every respect for every one of this movement who is looking forward or who thinks he is looking forward. He is proceeding according to his light. I would do nothing under any circumstances to discourage the tendency, the progressive tendency of this movement. I would not utter a word to reflect upon any man or woman, any delegate in this body who, however reactionary they may seem to me, believe that they are looking forward and in their heart desire to be progressive.

Role of Socialists — Help Educate and Organize

I would encourage all of these tendencies and that is why the Socialist Party became affiliated with this Conference, not for the purpose of being absorbed or absorbing the Conference, but for the purpose of helping along, for the purpose of helping in the work of education

and organization, encouraging those who don't yet see their way clear to come to the Socialist movement, and this Conference, whatever may be the outcome, my friends, is going to leave something that will have a permanent place in the annals of our nation. It is going to result in some good. We may leave here more or less disappointed. No matter. The very fact that this Conference has been possible is sufficient evidence to my mind that it is going to result in some good. It is the beginning. It will have its continuance. It is a more or less logical development. It will lead to something else, and in the right direction, and so I am very glad I am here, and have had the privilege of meeting those [who are here], many of them with whom I have hitherto been in disagreement.

Now I believe that it is impossible to compromise a principle, and the Socialist Party is committed to a certain principle. To compromise principle is to court death and disaster. It is better to be true to a principle and to stand alone and be able to look yourself in the face without a blush, far better to be in a hopeless minority than to be in a great popular and powerful majority of the unthinking.

Do you know that all the progress in this whole world's history has been made by minorities? I have somehow been fortunately all of my life in the minority. I have thought again and again that if I ever find myself in the majority I will know that I have outlived myself. (laughter) There is something magnificent about having the courage to stand with a few with and for a principle and to fight for it without fear or favor, developing all of your latent power, expanding to the proportional end, rising to your true stature, no matter whose respect you may forfeit, as long as you keep your own.

Labor Party Must Expect Capitalist Attack

I am glad to stand with a staunch revolutionary minority, and the capitalists understand what we are and what we stand for, even if the workers don't. They don't object in the least to the

organization of a third party. They know very well it will not last very long, but they are decidedly opposed to the organization of a labor party. That is what they are opposed to, and if a labor party is organized, it must expect from the very beginning to be misrepresented and ridiculed and traduced in every possible way, but if it consists of those who are the living representatives of its principles it will make progress in spite of them, and in due course of time it will sweep into triumph.

So I have learned to be patient and to bide the time. I am expecting something from this body before it adjourns. But let me say to you, whether I receive what I expect or not, I shall not leave here disappointed. Long, long ago in my life I learned how to refuse to be disappointed. No one can disappoint me but myself, and I refuse to betray myself. I can't do that. I prefer to be on speaking terms with myself, and so I stand for this principle. Make the appeal to the working class on this principle.

You workers of brain and brawn, it is you and you alone who support the government and conserve all civilization. Were it not for you, the whole social fabric would collapse in an instant. It is you who do the work, the useful work. It is you who produce the wealth, every ounce, every dollar of it, you who support the government and conserve civilization. You have but to realize this to awaken to the necessity of unifying your forces all along the line, taking counsel of yourselves, cultivating self-reliance, closing up the industrial ranks, the political ranks, striking together, standing together in every hour of conflict, every hour of strife, and in due course of time the hour will strike, your day will have come, you will sweep into power and you will issue for the first time in human history the proclamation of the emancipation of the workers and the true civilization of all mankind. (applause, prolonged and tumultuous)

Note — Following Mr. Debs's speech, Mr. Shepherd, of the Railroad Brotherhoods, introduced the motion to adjourn the Conference for Progressive Political Action *sine die*. The motion, after some discussion, was adopted with the Socialists voting against the motion. □

Real Kennedy Legacy Shows Why Clinton and Democrats Don't Deserve Workers' Support

by Tom Barrett

How would history have remembered John Fitzgerald Kennedy if he had not been assassinated? What is the real legacy of the brief Kennedy administration? The near-canonization of the “fallen leader” began even before his body left Dallas’s Markland Hospital. The image of a president who championed civil rights, world peace, and economic justice — exhorting America’s young people to “ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country” — is invoked by labor officials and African American leaders to justify continued support to Democratic candidates, all of whom claim a share of the Kennedy legacy.

Seymour Hersh’s *The Dark Side of Camelot* presents a vastly different view of the Kennedy presidency, one which has drawn angry criticism from those who would continue the Kennedy myth. Hersh shows us a man elevated to the presidency by the machinations of his father, Joseph P. Kennedy, a semi-gangster with fascist sympathies. Hersh gives the reader a Kennedy of no political principles, no moral values, and little ability for statecraft. According to Hersh, Kennedy became president through electoral fraud and proceeded to endanger the Republic’s security and to bring the world to the edge of nuclear war.

Hersh’s credibility is enhanced by his lack of a political agenda of his own. He does not present Kennedy’s 1960 rival, Richard Nixon, in a more favorable light, and the foreign policy decisions of which he is most critical he shows to be bipartisan and often continuations from the preceding Eisenhower administration. Hersh himself was a respected reporter for the *New York Times* for many years, and it was he who wrote the first account of the My Lai massacre in 1969, within a year of its occurrence. His sources are the principal figures in government and politics at the time; he either draws from written memoirs or

personal interviews. In short, Hersh has no reason to lie, and his book’s allegations are well supported. The attempts to debunk *The Dark Side of Camelot* in the weeks following its publication have fallen flat, especially concerning the most important issues — Kennedy’s foreign policy decisions related to Cuba and Southeast Asia.

Sex — or How to Create an Instant Best Seller

A great deal of media attention has been directed to Hersh’s recounting of Kennedy’s sexual liaisons — doubtlessly with prompting from Little, Brown’s marketing department. Readers looking for all the gossip on JFK’s personal life will not be disappointed: Marilyn Monroe and Judith Campbell Exner — Kennedy’s best-known mistresses — are featured, along with many women not familiar to most people, including Durie Malcolm, a divorcée whom Kennedy was alleged to have married in 1947, and Ellen Rometsch, a German national

who had briefly belonged to an East German Communist youth organization. Additionally, Hersh describes “swimming parties” that remind the reader of the entertainments of the Roman emperors. He writes:

Kennedy was consumed with almost daily sexual liaisons and libertine partying, to a degree that shocked many members of his personal Secret Service detail. The sheer number of Kennedy’s sexual partners, and the recklessness of his use of them, escalated throughout his presidency. The women — sometimes paid prostitutes located by [personal aide David] Powers and other members of the so-called Irish Mafia, who embraced and protected the president — would be brought to Kennedy’s office or his private quarters without any prior Secret Service knowledge or clearance.

Kennedy was hardly the first or last world leader — or U.S. president for that matter — to have a voracious sexual appetite. And in spite of the media, the



Bobby, Jack, and Joe Kennedy

American voting public seems to have little concern about politicians' private lives, if election results are any indication. Indeed, one possible beneficiary of the revelations about Kennedy's affairs is Bill Clinton, who is a choirboy by comparison to Kennedy. The voters, both in 1992 and 1996, were not dissuaded from voting for Clinton by allegations made by Gennifer Flowers and Paula Jones, though it is possible that the Republicans had with their defense of Clarence Thomas denied themselves the opportunity to exploit the issue. Early reaction to the latest allegations concerning Monica Lewinsky show that a majority of people responding to surveys think that Clinton did have an affair with Lewinsky but do not think it disqualifies him from continuing as president. The revelations concerning Kennedy's personal life are often cited by those who are inclined not to pass judgment on Clinton's alleged indiscretions.

What is more relevant, however, is not the number of Kennedy's sexual partners nor his violation of the Seventh Commandment, but his attitude toward women. Jewel Reed, the former wife of one of Kennedy's shipmates in the Navy, recalled, "He didn't have any value for women, except for a particular purpose."

It is sometimes easy for us, nearly three decades after feminism made its historic re-emergence, to forget how deeply sexism pervaded every aspect of life during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Sexual freedom was thought of in strictly male terms; *Playboy* magazine publisher Hugh Hefner expressed the new attitudes most explicitly. Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* and *Tropic of Capricorn* emerged from the limbo of censorship to be accepted as serious literature; on movie screens Sean Connery strutted his stuff as James Bond (adapted from novels which had been serialized in the pages of *Playboy*), surrounded by actresses doing little more than looking pretty in minimal costumes.

One of Kennedy's mistresses gave several extensive interviews to Hersh for the preparation of *The Dark Side of Camelot*, on condition that she remain anonymous. She had met Kennedy in the late 1950s, when she was a 19-year-old student at Radcliffe College (in Cambridge, Massachusetts) and he was a U.S. senator from Massachusetts. The relationship lasted four years. Her

insights are quite revealing, both of Kennedy and the time in which Kennedy was president. She told Hersh:

It was glamorous...It was supposed to be terrific. It was supposed to be just what anybody would want, what any woman would want....

I did not have the foggiest idea of any consciousness of solidarity with other women. It just did not flicker. I cannot tell you how unevolved as a woman I was, and how it was assumed that women compete with each other for the best men. I just went right along with that. Somehow it didn't register with me in any deep level that what I was doing was absolutely immoral, absolutely atrocious behavior....

I was somebody who happened to cross his radar screen, and so he said, "Well, you. I'll take you." Charge and send. I was young. I was pretty. I could talk along. I was just thrilled and said, "Oh, wow, gosh. Here's this handsome older man. Here's this person, he's interested in me." But in retrospect it's really sad. I was just another girl. There was a compartment for girls, and once you were in the sex compartment, you weren't a person anymore. I got declassified and depersonalized.

The first half of the 1960s gave a certain respectability to sexism — even outright misogyny — provoking women to rise up in revolt against it as the 1960s were coming to an end. That does not excuse Kennedy's attitudes, any more than the historical context excuses Theodore Roosevelt's racism, as an example. It does, however, demonstrate how much the women's liberation movement has *already* changed society, even though gender equality remains to be won.

Kennedy, Cuba, and the Mob

The Cuban revolution remains one of the most stinging defeats ever suffered by the U.S. employing class. Even to this day the revolution's persistence leaves the capitalist class's Cold War victory incomplete.

John F. Kennedy was elected president less than two years after the July 26th Movement overthrew Fulgencio Batista's dictatorship. Kennedy used the Castro victory as a campaign issue against his Republican opponent, the incumbent vice president Richard Nixon, accusing the Eisenhower administration essentially of "losing" Cuba. Kennedy cynically called for an

invasion of Cuba, knowing full well that plans for such an invasion were in the works but that Nixon could not discuss them publicly. Kennedy, as Hersh explains, did not "inherit" Eisenhower's hostility to the Cuban revolution; rather, he shared it and carried it to a higher level. Hersh asserts that Kennedy was "obsessed" with Cuba, because the relationship of prerevolutionary Cuba to the United States — and its multinational corporations — was a complex one, and the Kennedy family was directly affected. Kennedy's obsession with "getting rid of Castro" went beyond his role as the chief executive of the U.S.'s big business-dominated government.

Cuba achieved legal independence in 1898 following the Spanish-American War; however, under the terms of the Platt Amendment, the United States exercised effective control of the island as though it were a colonial possession — at a time when the industrial powers of Europe, along with the United States and Japan, were dividing the rest of the world up among them. For the next twenty years, the U.S. government and big business developed Cuba as any other colonial possession, with the added advantage of proximity.

It was Cuba's proximity to the U.S. mainland that gave rise to a different relationship, beginning in the 1920s, one which was not officially sanctioned by the U.S. government. In 1920, the U.S. Constitution was amended to outlaw the sale and public consumption of alcoholic beverages in all states. Prohibition made multimillionaires of those with the nerve and ingenuity to connect American consumers with beer and whiskey. One of them was a Russian-born Jewish immigrant named Meyer Lansky. Another was Joseph P. Kennedy, Jack Kennedy's father.

Lansky, who was in his late teens when Prohibition was enacted, began amassing a fortune in association with Salvatore "Charley Lucky" Luciano, who was later to become the most powerful Mafia don in New York City. He observed that Cuba had become a popular tourist destination for Americans — it was only 90 miles from Florida, and they could drink there, and good stuff, too, not just bathtub gin or moonshine whiskey.

Additionally, gambling and prostitution were legal. Lansky recognized the opportunities for investing his rum-

running profits in hotel and resort properties in Cuba, but he needed someone in the Cuban government who could eliminate whatever legal and tax-related obstacles stood in his way. He found his man in an army sergeant named Fulgen- cio Batista, excluded from the officer corps because of his humble social origins and mixed race, but nevertheless a man of intelligence, ambition, and no scruples whatsoever, not unlike Lansky himself.

The partnership was profitable to both men beyond their wildest hopes; in 1933 Batista led the "Sergeants' Revolt" against the dictator Machado, received a commission as a colonel, and became the most powerful man in Cuba. Though still excluded from high levels of government, he played the role of king-maker. Presidents served at his pleasure until, in 1940, he was able to become president himself. In the meantime Lansky and other gangsters developed a resort industry that returned millions of dollars in profits and additionally enabled them to launder their illegal stateside earnings.

Joe Kennedy, a Harvard graduate and son of a liquor importer, was able to secure licenses to import alcoholic beverages for "medicinal purposes." Kennedy was at the time assistant manager of the Fore River Shipyard in Boston, an ideal place for rum running if there ever was one, and the Kennedy family became very rich very quickly during this period. For obvious reasons there is no documentation which proves beyond a reasonable doubt that Kennedy was guilty of smuggling, but Hersh quotes several gangsters to that effect. It is also very unlikely that Kennedy would have been able to import alcohol either legally or illegally without some accommodation with the organized crime syndicates.

What is well documented is that as soon as Prohibition was repealed, Joe Kennedy had exclusive contracts to import Gordon's Gin and two premium Scotch whiskies. He also had interests in gambling, owning a controlling interest in the Hialeah race track (near Miami, Florida) in the 1940s. There was simply no way, in either the liquor or gambling businesses, that he could avoid doing business with gangsters, and in fact, he made no secret of it.

In 1960 Joe Kennedy, according to Hersh, used his Mob connections to insure Jack Kennedy's election as president. He writes:

He risked the family's reputation — and the political future of his sons Bobby and Teddy — by making a bargain with Sam Giancana and the powerful organized crime syndicate in Chicago. Joe Kennedy's goal was to ensure victory in Illinois and in other states where the syndicate had influence, and he achieved it, after arranging a dramatic and until now unrevealed summit meeting with Sam Giancana in the chambers of one of Chicago's most respected judges. The deal included an assurance that Giancana's men would get out the Kennedy vote among the rank and file in the mob-controlled unions in Chicago and elsewhere, and a commitment for campaign contributions from the corrupt Teamsters Union pension fund.

Jack Kennedy and his brother took office knowing that organized crime and Giancana had helped win the 1960 election. Just what Joe Kennedy promised Giancana in return is not known, but the gangster was convinced he had scored the ultimate coup by backing a presidential winner. The heat would now be off the Chicago syndicate.

Without question, it gave Kennedy an added motivation to put a quick end to the Cuban revolution.

The Bay of Pigs

The Kennedy administration enlisted the cooperation of organized crime in its plans for a direct frontal assault by U.S.-trained Cuban exiles at an obscure beachhead on the Bay of Pigs. The plan was that by the time the invading force hit the beach, Castro would already be dead. Hersh writes:

"Taking out Castro was part of the invasion plan," Robert Maheu, the CIA's liaison to the Mafia, told me during one of our interviews for this book. Castro's murder was to take place "before — but preferably at the time of — the invasion," Maheu said. "We'd get word that something had happened. And we were waiting to hear" if "poison had made it into his food." Maheu spent much of the winter and spring of 1961 plotting Castro's murder while holed up in hotels in Miami with Sam Giancana and two of his fellow mobsters, Johnny Rosselli and Santos Trafficante.

The Mafia failed in its mission to whack Castro. Hersh gives us no indication as to why, though he does make it clear that Cuban intelligence was well aware of plots to assassinate the revolutionary leader. In fact, there were so many reported plots against Castro's life that the Cuban security forces had difficulty determining which were real and which were not.

Kennedy and his associates were guilty of a far more serious blunder, however. They acted on the assumption that the Cuban revolution was centered around the leader Fidel Castro and that its ideology was Cold War loyalty to the Soviet Union. They failed to understand that Castro had only provided leadership to a broad struggle for real political and economic independence and for better standards of living for the Cuban people. They thought that by eliminating Castro they could destroy the revolution; further, they failed to understand the depth of the Cuban people's support for their government and its policies. It was not about "Communism"; it was about literacy, medical care, and food; it was about getting rid of Lansky, Trafficante, and their casinos and whorehouses.

Consequently, when the exile brigade of 1,400 made its amphibious assault on the Bay of Pigs it was routed by the Cuban army and militia. An initial air strike by Cuban exile pilots two days before the landing had failed to take out the Cuban air force. Kennedy, in the interests of not involving U.S. forces directly, canceled a second air strike, but — inexplicably — not the invasion itself, which went in without air cover. The result was that 114 of the exiles were killed; nearly all the rest were taken prisoner. Kennedy took it personally, and remained obsessed with "getting rid of" Castro for the rest of his life.

There has been considerable speculation — with some evidence — that the Cuban exiles and mobsters who felt betrayed by Kennedy's cancellation of the second air strike took their revenge on Kennedy on November 22, 1963. Hersh himself does not doubt the conclusions of the Warren Commission, that Lee Harvey Oswald and he alone assassinated President Kennedy. He does not provide any strong defense for that view, however.

The Missile Crisis of 1962

Following the Bay of Pigs fiasco, the Kennedy administration carried out a number of hare-brained schemes to assassinate Castro, including the notorious “Operation Mongoose,” which the American people first learned about from the Senate investigations headed by Frank Church during the 1970s. The American people may not have known about the attempts on Castro’s life, but Cuban and Soviet intelligence knew about them as they were happening, and according to Hersh, they viewed all this as an attempt by the Kennedy administration to overturn the Cuban revolution. For that reason, Castro appealed to Soviet Premier and Communist Party General Secretary Nikita Khrushchev, who agreed to place nuclear missiles in Cuba to deter any future U.S. invasion.

Hersh puts into perspective the military threat represented by the Soviet missiles “90 miles from our shores”:

The Soviet Union had submarines that were capable of launching nuclear missiles on New York, Washington, and other major American cities; it was the threat from a missile that was of interest to American policymakers, not whether it was fired at sea or from an island ninety miles offshore. Few in Washington seriously believed that a few dozen ballistic missiles in Cuba could change the essential fact of the strategic balance of power: the Soviet Union was hopelessly outgunned. By the fall of 1962, America’s arsenal contained 3,000 nuclear warheads and nearly 300 missile launchers — far more than the Soviet Union’s 250 warheads (including those in Cuba) and estimated 24 to 44 missile launchers.

The attention given the administration’s highly publicized state of readiness masked another important fact: the Soviet Union made no military moves at all on its home territory during the crisis. Its fleet of liquid-fueled ICBM launchers, which required hours to be ready for a launch, was not put on alert. Soviet reserve forces were not called up. There were no threats against Berlin.

The Soviets were also threatened by land-based missiles within sight of their borders. Hersh writes:

A year earlier, President Kennedy had overridden objections from Khrushchev and some of his own advisers and approved operational status for fifteen medium-range Jupiter nuclear missiles in Turkey, across the Black

Sea from Russia. The weapons had been ordered to Turkey in 1959 by President Eisenhower, but were not ready to fire until the Kennedy administration was in office. Khrushchev, who had a seaside summer home in Soviet Georgia, was incensed by the deployment, and often asked guests, especially Americans, to peer with binoculars across the water. When they asked what they were looking at, he said, “U.S. missiles in Turkey, aimed at my dacha.”

Those of us who lived through those tense days in October 1962 recall that the “unthinkable” — nuclear holocaust — was not only “thinkable” but a serious possibility for which the American people were urged to prepare. What we didn’t know then was how close we actually came, how the Kennedy brothers’ hurt pride nearly led to a war which could have caused the extinction of the human species, if not all life on earth. The American Strategic Air Command went to alert status DEFCON 2, one level short of actual war; General Maxwell Taylor, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was urging an air strike against Soviet surface-to-air missile sites in Cuba, to be followed by an all-out invasion. Castro, Hersh asserts, was urging Khrushchev to launch a nuclear attack against the United States. Ironically, it was Khrushchev, remembered today as a rather ridiculous Stalinist *apparatchik*, who quite literally saved the world at that time.

The story we all remember is of an unflappable President Kennedy ordering a naval blockade of Cuba — a “quarantine,” he called it — and Khrushchev unilaterally backing down in the face of superior courage and strength. The story Hersh tells is different. Both Kennedy — or rather, the Kennedy brothers, for Attorney General Robert Kennedy was as much a player in the drama as the president — and Khrushchev were riding the cyclone, being driven by events over which they were increasingly losing control. It is true that Khrushchev was the first to stand down. He ordered the Soviet ships not to challenge the American blockade, and he did agree to remove the missiles. But it was not without a considerable amount of “back channel” negotiations between Robert Kennedy and the new Soviet ambassador to the U.S., Anatoly Dobrynin. It was agreed in those negotiations that the

U.S. would withdraw the Jupiter missiles from Turkey in exchange for the Soviet withdrawal of the Cuban missiles. That agreement was kept secret in the interests of protecting the Kennedy’s political reputation in the United States, both for Jack Kennedy’s re-election campaign and for Bobby’s future presidential campaign.

Hersh’s account is of a president — and his father and brother — who were more willing to risk nuclear annihilation than electoral defeat. At a time when the Clinton administration is preparing to go to war against the “madman” Saddam Hussein, it is useful to remember how close our own government came to using “weapons of mass destruction” on a far bigger scale than the Iraqi dictator ever has or ever could.

Vietnam

During the second half of the 1960s the Kennedy family — attempting to capitalize on the growing opposition to the Vietnam war — began circulating the myth that if Jack Kennedy had not been assassinated but instead re-elected in 1964 he would have negotiated an end to the Vietnam conflict. Those who were working for the election of Robert Kennedy as president in 1968 put forward the idea that the war was entirely the fault of Jack Kennedy’s successor Lyndon B. Johnson.

Of course, most of the architects of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam were Kennedy appointees, principally Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, and National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy. If Johnson was carrying out a different policy in Vietnam than Kennedy would have, they never said so. Even McNamara, who has in recent years repented of his role in getting the U.S. into the Vietnam war, has never given any support to the contention that Jack Kennedy was in any way opposed to American involvement in Vietnam.

It was ten months after the Kennedy assassination that Congress passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which gave the president the authority to commit U.S. forces to a land war in Vietnam, which ultimately became the worst military disaster ever suffered by the United States. What Hersh’s account shows is that there were ample opportunities to prevent that

disaster during Kennedy's tenure of office, and that he missed them all.

The Dark Side of Camelot focuses its attention on the Kennedy administration's complicity in the 1963 overthrow and assassination of South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Nhu. In light of the later history of the Vietnam war, Hersh's account is especially informative, even to those who are well acquainted with the story's characters and plot.

During 1963 South Vietnam was rocked by protests against the government led by the Buddhist clergy. The Ngo brothers — along with Ngo Dinh Nhu's outspoken wife — were Roman Catholics (a large minority in Vietnam, a legacy of French colonialist influence). The monks accused the government of restrictions on the Buddhist majority's religious freedom, and in May 1963 troops fired on a demonstration of monks in the precolonialist capital of Hue, killing nine. Soldiers then began breaking into pagodas, claiming to be looking for weapons. In protest, a monk named Thich Quang Duc burned himself to death in Saigon; Malcolm Brown's photograph of the political suicide appeared on newspaper front pages and newsmagazines throughout the world, and it remains one of the most vivid images from the history of the Vietnam conflict. Mme. Ngo Dinh Nhu ridiculed the suicide as a "barbecue," causing further resentment.

The disunity within South Vietnam in the face of the North Vietnamese-backed insurrection of the National Liberation Front was obviously considered a big problem by the U.S. government. However, that was not the primary motivation of the Kennedy administration in getting rid of Diem. Hersh writes:

Kennedy's personal responsibility for the November 2, 1963, overthrow and murder of Ngo Dinh Diem...has been obscured by the lies of the men who worked for him, and the lies of his ever-loyal brother Bobby. Diem's fall is now considered by many historians to be a turning point in what suddenly became no longer a Vietnamese but an American war. The men and women around the president, in their eagerness to shape the truth, have also obscured one of the reasons Kennedy decided Diem had to go: in the months before his murder, the South Vietnamese

president had begun to talk settlement secretly with North Vietnam. Diem was looking for a way to get the Americans out — before the Kennedy administration took him out.

Hersh addresses the issue of whether Kennedy would have withdrawn from Vietnam after the 1964 elections, as reported in Kenneth O'Donnell's book *Johnny, We Hardly Knew Ye*. In 1964 Robert Kennedy gave interviews to the Kennedy Library, and at no time did he indicate that his brother had opposed continued U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

His brother, Bobby Kennedy told the library, "felt he had a strong, overwhelming reason for being in Vietnam and that we should win the War in Vietnam." Jack Kennedy did not want to put American troops on the ground in Vietnam, Bobby Kennedy added, "because everybody, including General [Douglas] MacArthur, felt that land conflict between our troops — white troops and Asian — would only end in disaster. So we went in as advisers to try to get the Vietnamese to fight, because we couldn't win the war for them. They had to win the war for themselves."

Kennedy then had this exchange with his interviewer, John Barlow Martin:

Martin: "But the president was convinced that we had to stay in there?"

Kennedy: "Yes."

Martin: "And we couldn't lose it?"

Kennedy: "Yes."

Martin: "And if the Vietnamese were about to lose it, would he propose to go in on land if he had to?"

Kennedy: "We'd face that when we came to it."

In his acceptance of the Democratic Party's presidential nomination in 1964, Lyndon Johnson repeated over and over, "Let us continue." After interviews with many of the principal players from that period, including Daniel Ellsberg; Tran Van Dinh, one of Ngo Dinh Diem's closest aides; and Torbert Macdonald, Jr., the son of one of Jack Kennedy's advisers and close friends, Torbert Macdonald, Sr., Hersh concludes that Lyndon Johnson did exactly that in his Vietnam policy, with the advice and support of Dean Rusk, Robert McNamara, and McGeorge Bundy. Though at the time of his assassination only 78 Americans had been killed in Vietnam, John F. Kennedy shares responsibility with his successors Johnson and Nixon for the 58,000 Americans and hundreds of thousands



Kennedy with Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, who continued Kennedy's policies in Vietnam after Kennedy's assassination.

of Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian civilians and soldiers who died during the ten years following.

The Kennedy Legacy

The "Thousand Days" of the Kennedy presidency are often cited — by those who urge support to the Democratic Party — as a kind of "golden age" of social concern and enlightened values. The facts are different. Seymour Hersh's *The Dark Side of Camelot* shows us the true face of liberalism, and while the face may be pretty, as Kennedy's was, it was only a mask for the harsh rule of the employing class.

In his campaign ads in 1992 Bill Clinton featured a film clip of himself as a teen-aged participant in the Arkansas Boys' State program shaking hands with President Kennedy. His admiration for Kennedy is real, and it is even unlikely that Lloyd Bentsen, who served as secretary of the Treasury under Clinton, would have pointed his finger at him and accused, "You're no Jack Kennedy."

At this writing, Clinton is preparing to send U.S. forces into battle in the Persian Gulf, risking the unleashing of chemical and biological — if not nuclear — weapons. In spite of the urging of the United Nations, other governments, and even the anti-Communist Pope John Paul II, he continues the brutal embargo against Cuba. In spite of rhetoric about racial equality and economic justice, Clinton has pursued trade policies which export jobs to the lowest-wage countries; he has supported draconian welfare "reform" to

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The Need for a Real Left, “One Hundred Percent Left”

by Christian Picquet

The following article is slated for the April 1998 International Viewpoint, monthly publication of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. The author is a leading member of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), the French section of the FI.

A new social radicalism has been in the air since the public sector strikes of November-December 1995. When it comes to voting, however, the lack of real left alternatives has channeled much of this new radicalism to the far-right National Front. But the possibilities of a polarization to the left of social democracy were shown in the recent Gardanne by-election, which was carried by a Communist Party candidate supported by most of the radical left.

The Gardanne (Bouches du Rhône) seat was vacant because the incumbent Radical (left) Bernard Tapie had been declared bankrupt and stripped of his civil rights. Millionaire, personality, and now film star, Tapie was a symbol of the corrupt “champagne socialism” of the 14-year Mitterand administration.

Tapie’s Radical Party and the Socialist Party presented voters with another darling of the Paris salons, Bernard Kouchner, former minister for humanitarian action, and a leading supporter of the Maastricht integration process for a united Europe.

The Communist Party mayor of Gardanne, Roger Mei, benefitted from a large range of supporters, including the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) of Alain Krivine. In the first

round of voting Mei came first, and beat the National Front candidate in the second round. (Kouchner came 4th in the first round.)

The Mei campaign was particularly popular with this mining region’s blue-collar workers, concerned about workplace “rationalization” and unemployment.

This was the first time in a long time that the far right has lost votes in a by-election, particularly in its stronghold on the Mediterranean coast.

“We need a new kind of left unity to beat the right and the far right,” LCR spokesperson Alain Krivine told *Le Monde* on October 18. “Not unity to repeat the deceptions of the Mitterand years, and not unity behind the application of slightly moderated right wing policies, but left unity to implement really left, 100% left policies.”

“Let’s hope that the Communist Party will allow us to repeat this Gardanne experience on a national scale. If only the Socialist Party would recognize the clear lesson of this by-election: in a climate of growing social exasperation, it is no longer electorally successful to propose more ‘loyal’ and ‘responsible’ management of finance-style Europe.

“But rather than hoping for the sudden enlightenment of Socialist Party

leaders, we should strive to change the balance of forces on the ground, and within the broader left. In Gardanne, Communists, environmentalists, critical-thinking socialists, and far-left socialists have cut a new path, together, on the basis of a few elementary principles, and respecting the identity and other engagements of each current. Together, we have begun to articulate a response to the menace of the right, and the way the Socialist Party left has abandoned its principles. In Gardanne, we found the road down which we can and must continue.”

Alain Krivine was not the only one enthusiastic about the emergence of a new “radical pole” on the left. In the face of substantial media interest in the theme, even the normally reticent Communist Party leader Robert Hue was obliged to acknowledge an “alternative dynamic, with a particular conception of ‘the left,’ wanting to situate itself on the left, and on concrete issues.

Nevertheless, writing in the Communist Party paper *l’Humanité* on October 24, Hue restated the Communist Party leadership’s reluctance to enter into any broader alliance to the left of social democracy. General Secretary Hue was less than lukewarm about the creation of what he called “a pole of radicalism which would consist in the unification of a part of the left in order to put pressure on the Socialist Party...tying the left into the whole balance of forces equation.”

Some of us thought that changing the balance of forces equation on the left was precisely the issue facing those of us who want to lift the labor movement out of the muddy rut in which it has become stuck as a result of the conversion of so many social democrats to the doctrines of neo-liberalism and the imperatives of the financial markets. □

Real Kennedy Legacy Shows Why Clinton and Democrats Don’t Deserve Workers’ Support

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deny needed benefits to poor women and their children; he has proposed a “national dialogue on race,” but has done nothing to defend affirmative action or other gains made by the civil rights movement which are now in dan-

ger of reversal. Also, like Kennedy, he is presiding over an upturn in the business cycle, for which he deserves no credit.

Labor officials and others who urge us to vote for Democrats like Clinton or for other Democrats who promise to reverse Clinton’s anti-labor policies —

such as House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt — are doing us no service. The facts, as presented in Seymour Hersh’s *The Dark Side of Camelot*, show that peace and economic justice are no better served by the Democrats than the Republicans. □

February 7, 1998

The Russian Revolution in Historical Perspective — and Its Meaning for the Future

by Paul Le Blanc

In a previous article we reported on an important international conference (held in the Paris suburb of St-Denis) on Russia's October Revolution of 1917. The conference was sponsored by Espaces Marx — an intellectual and scholarly center associated with the French Communist Party — as well as such organizations as the Ernest Mandel Center of Belgium, the International Institute for Research and Education of Amsterdam, and various left-wing publications.

The present article constitutes the second half of my report on the conference, focusing on the final major panel entitled "What Balance Sheet?" and taking place on November 16, 1997. Here we shall survey the panel contributions speaker by speaker — although readers should recall that they are reading not a transcript of the speakers' comments but a reconstruction from the author's notes as he listened to their presentations.

Samir Amin: Alternatives to the Logic of Capitalism

Samir Amin is an internationally prominent economist — born in Egypt, educated in Paris, currently the head of a research institute in Senegal. He is the author of such works as *Accumulation on a World Scale*, *Unequal Development*, *The Future of Maoism*, and *Eurocentrism* (all published by Monthly Review Press).

Amin's presentation involved a challenging conceptual simplicity expressed at a fairly high level of abstraction. The Bolsheviks under Lenin sought to utilize Marxism to mobilize workers and peasants in order to open a new path of social-economic development capable of transcending the destructive and exploitative logic of capitalism. This revolutionary attempt did not succeed in the way that its leaders had hoped, but it did generate three models that were developed as a response to the 20th century crisis of capitalism: the Soviet model, the welfare state model, and the "populistic" national liberation model. At the same time, the three models themselves are in crisis as the 20th century comes to an end.

Most spectacular is the failure of the Soviet model in the face of global capitalism's growing power. The Soviet model [not to be confused with a model based on democratic workers' councils] focused on the goal of "catching up" with the technological development and industrial productivity of capitalism — not by building socialism, but through building a particular form of statist economy that did not transcend the capitalist law of value.

The social democratic welfare state in the advanced capitalist countries — also inspired by Marxism and developed in large measure as a moderate alternative to the revolutionary approach of the Bolsheviks — obviously did not even claim to transcend capitalism, although its comprehensive social programs — similar to those associated with the Soviet model —

have been beneficial to substantial sectors of the working class and imply a logic that runs counter to that of the market economy.

National liberation struggles in the "third world" can be characterized as "populistic" — based not simply on relatively small working classes, but also on other urban sectors and on the massive peasantries of these regions — were similarly inspired by the October Revolution but were largely dependent on the existence of a bipolar world which has ceased to exist since the collapse of the USSR.

It has turned out, according to Amin, that there must be a longer period of global development in the transition from capitalism to communism than we had once thought. In this period of transition, a complex and contradictory set of processes must unfold in which the logic of capitalism is at various points and increasingly challenged by other logics.

These oppositional logics involve the ongoing struggle to reduce economic alienation. They involve the struggle to expand other sectors of the economy — not just leaving things to the selfish and irrational dynamics of the private sector. They involve the struggle to prevent the destruction of natural resources and the habitable environment of the planet. Such struggles for creating non-capitalist economic logics, far from being utopian, are absolutely necessary for the continuation of human life. Capitalism itself has put on the agenda the struggle to transcend the capitalist law of value.

Daniel Bensaïd: A Qualitative Difference Between Communism and Stalinism

Daniel Bensaïd is a well-known political activist and writer in France who is representative of that segment of "the generation of 1968" that never renounced its revolutionary aspirations. He is a leader of the LCR — Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, French section of the Fourth International.

Bensaïd reminded his listeners of what the philosopher Immanuel Kant once said about the French Revolution — that its promise of a better existence for humanity had left a trace that persisted over and above the failures of the revolution itself. Similarly the October Revolution offered a glimpse of the possibility of changing the human condition, of a world without exploitation, of a society based on humanistic planning and democratic self-management. Revolutionaries of today continue to be influenced by the meaning and tradition of this great event.

Of course there were good and bad sides of the October Revolution. But the present-day anti-Communist ideologists, such as the authors of *The Black Book on Communism*, represent a capitalist-restorationist project which equates the October Revolution with the Gulag, Lenin with Stalin, Communism with Stalinism. This thesis of a continuity

between the Bolshevik Revolution and Stalinism cannot be demonstrated honestly.

The deaths attributed to the Red Terror that begin in the summer of 1918 and to the terrible famines in the early Soviet Republic of 1921–1922 cannot be understood outside of the context of the brutal civil war, economic blockade, and foreign military interventions designed to prevent the success of the October Revolution.

The anti-Communist historians treat the relative peace, prosperity, and freedom associated with the 1920s as a “pause” or deviation from what they view as “the true line” of murderous Communism — the so-called proof of this notion being the fact that Stalinism hit with full force in the 1930s. But this is also a distortion, because it ignores the international dimension. Bolshevik strategy involved the assumption that the Russian Revolution would generate other revolutions — in Germany and elsewhere — which would link up with and be supportive of the development of Russia in a manner facilitating the creation of a socialist democracy.

These other revolutions came close to happening but were defeated, and these defeats isolated the Soviet Republic — creating immense and devastating pressures.

The different responses to this, reflected in the debate between “socialism in one country” (Stalin and Bukharin) and permanent revolution (Trotsky), drew the line between the original Bolshevik perspective and the bureaucratic-conservative orientation of Stalinism. The turning point came in 1928–29, leading to the internal deportation of oppositionists, the rise of the mass labor camps (the Gulag), and finally the purges of 1937–38. Such things destroyed not just the old Bolshevik leaders, but reached into the depths of the rank-and-file Bolsheviks, devastating mass organizations and social movements associated with the October Revolution.

The difference between repression under the early Bolshevik regime and repression under Stalin’s regime is not simply a difference in scale but rather involves a qualitative shift in the nature of the regime.

The concept of Thermidor — the label related to the history of the French Revolution in the 1789–1794 period, involving the concluding moment when the revolutionary project was decisively defeated — applies here as well. To view the anti-revolutionary triumph of Stalinism in this way is not meant to be a personal denunciation of Communist Party militants of various countries who had illusions about Stalin and his policies. Not everything positive in the Soviet Union or in the world Communist movement was wiped out. For example, there was the role they played in the great struggle against fascism, which could be characterized as involving “bureaucratized heroism.”

Despite whatever continuities one might find, however, it is necessary to insist that there is a qualitative demarcation between Communism and Stalinism. Stalinism is not simply a deviation, a mistaken form, of Communism. They represent two fundamentally different political and moral worlds. Only on the basis of this understanding is it possible to build a truly Communist future.

Julio Carranza: A Cuban Perspective on the Crisis of Our Time

Julio Carranza is a young Cuban scholar. Carranza suggested that it would be pretentious to attempt a complete balance sheet on the October Revolution, seeing his own remarks as simply a contribution of some ideas toward the development of such a balance sheet. Especially concerned with the impact of the October Revolution on “the countries of the South” (the so-called Third World countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America), he emphasized that first it was necessary to underline the difference between the revolutionary process of October 1917 and the policies associated with the consolidation of Stalinism.

The Bolshevik-led triumph of workers and peasants in Russia showed that revolution is possible, it profoundly enriched revolutionary theory, and it created a new international balance of forces. This fed into popular struggles and popular revolutionary achievements in the countries of the South. It also resulted in the construction of an economic system favorable to some countries in the South.

It is essential to understand that in the modern world “under-development” is not a phase of a country’s economic development but rather represents the impossibility of development, involving that country’s being merged in a backward way into the world capitalist order — that only in exceptional cases is it possible for such a country to develop a full and rounded economic development along capitalist lines. For countries such as Mongolia, Cuba, and Vietnam, the new economic system that resulted from the October Revolution provided support in their development that capitalism could no longer give them.

On the other hand, the experience of the Soviet Union was converted into a model of socialism, but this model could not go beyond “extensive development,” successfully producing a heavy industrial sector but not a consumer goods sector — it could produce sputnik but not good razor blades. It did not create an adequate synthesis between planning and the market (even under socialism the market is necessary).

Also, the Soviet Union tried to subordinate the international Communist movement to Soviet foreign policy. It made Marxism dogmatic and impoverished it, cutting short the history of the development of Marxist theory in the 20th century. It failed to resolve the question of democracy in an adequate manner, failed to resolve the national question, didn’t generate a genuinely socialist culture, and committed crimes unpardonable from any point of view.

Such things contributed to the collapse of the Soviet bloc. This collapse, however, leaves revolutionaries throughout the world without allies. This creates an especially bad situation for revolutionary Cuba. In addition, the errors associated with this Soviet model negatively affect socialism as any kind of paradigm for the working class. The consequence of this means that we face a terrible reality.

Some years ago, in a speech delivered in Managua, Ernest Mandel defined the crisis of our time as involving the fact that the only solution to the historic problems facing us is socialism, but that the workers and humanity in general don’t realize this. Left-wing intellectuals have a very important role to play in helping to overcome this crisis. We must start with the

Marxist classics, but we must go well beyond them in trying to solve the problems facing us.

Capitalism has shown greater capacity for innovation than “the left” has. There are fundamental questions facing us today to which we must find answers. For example, what is the relation of imperialism to globalization? What is the “revolutionary subject” [the social force acting to carry out revolution] in our time, as the working class is atomized and the bourgeoisie is unified — what is the role of social movements and organization? What is the role of the national state in the globalized world? What is the impact of the absence of the USSR on the countries of the South — who will support “third world” nations in their struggle for human dignity and social justice? What programs of “the left” will be capable of dealing with the realities we face?

“Globalization” is a neutral term replacing imperialism, but there are different kinds of globalization. What is predominant now is globalization in favor of the interests of transnational corporations, when a country is prevented from controlling its own economic policies and development, allowing for the free flow of capital while strictly controlling labor and popular consumption.

The market is sovereign now, with the Group of Seven becoming a world government overseeing a globalization in which one part of the world dominates the rest. While the Third World is being exploited mercilessly and the Second World [the former Soviet bloc] is being marginalized, the First World itself is splitting in two with a growing gap between wealthy elites and increasingly hard-pressed majorities.

Marxism must develop its understanding so that it comprehends forms of oppression that are not simply associated with class — creating a situation in which the existence of a struggle, if it is not a class struggle, is not recognized. We must go beyond this in order to understand the situations and struggles of women, gays, and other social groups.

Lenin posed the question “what is to be done?” Such colloquiums as this are very useful in helping us to develop our thinking in a manner that puts us more in touch with reality. If we fail to do this, “the left” runs the risk of being like Pontius Pilate, who wrote to a friend in Rome: “What I don’t like about this place is that nothing ever happens here.”

Carranza then concluded with some remarks about Cuba. Focusing on the country’s economic difficulties — flowing in part from the U.S. economic blockade, combined with a lack of Cuban economic efficiency, he commented that the economic tensions were intensifying social contradictions. The sustaining of revolutionary power in Cuba, and the ongoing resistance to North American pressure without international allies (since the collapse of the Soviet bloc), demonstrated the autonomy of Cuba’s revolutionary process, in which there was a determination to carry out necessary reforms “under the socialist option.”

The sharpening problems pose sharp questions about what is to be done by those struggling to build “socialism in one country” that happened to be smaller, poorer, and closer to the United States than Russia had been. It is necessary, he emphasized, to be creative in the effort to build a new socialist alternative, while at the same time working to overcome distortions of socialism that are present in Cuba. To move for-

ward, one must adhere to Antonio Gramsci’s dictum: “Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will.”

Marc Ferro: Critical Comments on Anti-Communism and Marxism

Marc Ferro is one of the most distinguished French historians of the 20th century, associated with the historical journal *Annales*. Among his important works are *The Great War, 1914–1918*, *The Russian Revolution of February 1917*, and *The Bolshevik Revolution: A Social History of the Russian Revolution*. Ferro began by referring to perverse effects of publications over the past few years — such as *The Black Book on Communism* — with which the media sought to foster a sense of defeat for those on the left around “the collapse of Communism.” Before offering a critique of *The Black Book*, however, he wanted to comment on points of agreement with previous speakers.

He agreed with Samir Amin that the October Revolution and existence of the USSR had positive secondary effects — for example, the development of the “welfare state” in the West was a reform response to the “Red menace” from the East and was, in fact, based on the Soviet example of expanding social programs for the working class.

He also agreed with Daniel Bensaïd that in the Soviet Union itself the so-called “pause” of the 1920s represented genuine possibilities of non-Stalinist development that were cut off, not simply a deviation from the inexorable development of Communism. A similar deterministic outlook had developed among those historians who had recently sought to discredit the French Revolution — for example, Francois Furet — who argued that the radical turn taken by the Jacobins represented the revolution “skidding off the tracks” (as if the appropriate tracks of History had already been predetermined).

Finally, he agreed with Julio Carranza that phrases about “globalization” equaled the reality of an ex-imperialism — “ex” in the sense that what is involved is not expansion by one capitalist power, but rather domination by multinational corporations for the benefit of the totality of all leadership groups in all countries and at the expense of the majority of the world’s people (including the majority of those in living the United States itself).

Turning his attention back to *The Black Book on Communism*, he expressed shock at the book’s unambiguous equating of Communism with Nazism. Of course, it is possible to point to massive crimes of both — but this doesn’t mean they are the same. If one restricts oneself to crimes in this manner, it is possible to find massive crimes on the part of France, the United States, and Britain: in the case of Britain’s role in Australia, for example, one can point to the destruction of nine-tenths of the aboriginal population.

It is false to use such criteria to argue that the regimes are similar. Looking at Communism, one can find various alternatives to what was represented by Stalin, from Trotsky to Khrushchev to Dubcek to Gorbachev. But if one looks at the Nazis, where are the similar alternatives to Hitler? Where are the Nazi militants who denounced Hitler’s crimes? More than this, if one examines the substantial literature documenting the experience of Russian Communists during the brutal and brutalizing civil war period of 1918–1921, some of whom committed criminal acts, one finds many cases in the 1920s of

breakdowns, illness, and mental anguish among the perpetrators — in contrast to the case of Nazis, who were being true to themselves when they committed crimes. “Never having been a Communist myself,” he concluded, “all of this seems quite clear to me.”

The historian then turned his attention to the future by making reference to what seemed to him to be a tragic aspect of Communist practice — that it involved an economistic version of Marxism that projected itself as being the key link for countries seeking modernization and economic development. Such Marxism may have had relevance in 1900 or 1970, but not now. The world has changed too much. Marx’s ideas continue to be a useful instrument in seeking to understand the world, but Marxism as such is no longer adequate for understanding reality. Marxism wanted to be the representative of science and technology, helping one to govern the world in the interests of economic progress. But its focus on economic classes blinded it to such things as the oppression and condition of women, or to the persistence and resurgence of things that were expected to disappear, such as Islam. It is dangerous to rely on Marxist theories, because other powerful forces exist in the world that cannot simply be linked with economic progress.

This is related to a problem that existed among all Russian revolutionaries — whether Menshevik, Bolshevik, Socialist-Revolutionary, or anarchist. In all cases, they were doctrinaires who ignored the popular will. Rhetorically they made reference to the will of the people, but more fundamentally they were committed to helping to facilitate the development of “objective forces” — independently of what most people actually thought or wanted. The revolutionaries sought to harness these forces and guide them in order to create a better society. It is wrong to attribute all crimes against humanity, however, to such an orientation. Such crimes are the product of human society itself, which is not a tender place.

Today, however, such revolutionary militants cannot play the role that they played in Russia. Today, for example, we have television, and millions of people are informed (or feel they are informed) about what is happening and where things might be going. People feel that they don’t need militants to guide them. Today militants can be little more than supporters of parties — as opposed to being dynamic intermediaries between political parties and the oppressed masses.

Yet as business goes on, and as technology continues to develop, people who believe in progress believe that this is something which must enhance their own individual liberty. They see progress as our mother, and this increases as globalization increases. It seems that the result is the inexorable forward movement of a judicial order, with lawyers replacing militants. If people aren’t happy about something, they turn to lawyers in order to sue something or someone, seeking redress for grievances through judicial arbitration, not revolution. It is a different world, and theoreticians have a responsibility to understand it as it is, without doctrinaire preconceptions.

Monty Johnstone: A Better Way of Making the Russian Revolution

Monty Johnstone is a British historian and political writer long associated with the Communist Party of Great Britain, though currently a member of the “Green-Socialist” caucus of

the ex-CP organization Democratic Left. He distinguished himself in the 1960s and ’70s by writing sophisticated and well-researched articles on the question of the party and the workers state concepts in Marx, Engels, and Lenin — arguing that these were consistent with genuine democracy. He was also well-known for defending Trotsky from Stalin’s old Moscow Trials charges while at the same time defending reformist Popular Front and Euro-Communist perspectives from Trotskyist critics.

Johnstone began by noting that the Bolsheviks’ attempt to lead humanity in a leap to freedom propelled forward a powerful world socialist movement and helped to unleash a surge of national liberation movements, but that eighty years afterward we are still very far from the hoped-for goals of the October Revolution. “While the October Revolution has been a major inspiration for me and for millions throughout the world,” he added, we should be ready and able by this time to have a critical approach to it even as we appreciate its contributions. In this light, he wanted to pose three critical questions having to do with the crucial question of democracy.

First, coexisting in the October Revolution were elements of a popular revolution and of a coup d’etat. Expressing agreement with a speaker from the conference’s first session, Gilbert Achcar (who had argued that the revolution involved a minority coup similar to those advocated by 19th-century revolutionary Auguste Blanqui — and that Karl Kautsky had made valuable criticisms of the Bolsheviks’ violations of democracy), he insisted that while the revolution could not be reduced to simply a Blanquist coup, we cannot be allowed to ignore this element of the reality. It is true that the insurrection was organized through the Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) of the Petrograd Soviet, but this was initiated in secret by the Bolsheviks who were dominant in the MRC (which also contained Left Socialist Revolutionaries and anarchists). The MRC was not like a strike committee discreetly carrying out the implementation of a decision made by the workers (which had been suggested by Samuel Farber in an earlier session), but rather was substitutionist — because the authoritative Second Congress of the Soviets had not yet convened while all of this was going on. The Bolshevik-initiated coup presented the Soviets with a *fait accompli* — it was not truly the work of the Soviets. This created a dynamic which made bad things more probable — not inevitable, but more probable.

Second, the decision to abolish the Constituent Assembly had negative consequences for democracy. Even after the October coup Lenin continued to support combined power of the Soviets and the still-to-be-elected Constituent Assembly. The decision to dissolve the Constituent Assembly was made only when it became clear that the Bolsheviks would be a minority in it. Their arguments in favor of this action are unacceptable. If the outcome of the elections no longer expressed the will of the majority of the workers and peasants, this could be demonstrated by organizing new elections that would more accurately reflect that popular will (as Rosa Luxemburg had suggested).

Nor could one say that the Soviets were more representative of Russia’s toiling masses: 20 million voted for delegates to the Second Congress of Soviets, but 44.5 million voted for representatives to the Constituent Assembly. In the voting, the Bolsheviks had a clear and overwhelming majority in the

working class, they had support from half the army (workers and peasants in uniform), but they did not have a majority of the peasants (by far the largest segment of the population). In 1919 Lenin developed the rationale that a minority of revolutionaries could seize power and then educate the masses. Such a logic bore heavy consequences for the future of socialist countries.

Third, it was not true that the only alternatives were Lenin or Kornilov — either a dictatorship of the Bolsheviks or a right-wing military dictatorship. A coalition of left parties was possible — the Bolsheviks, the Left Socialist Revolutionaries, and the left-wing Menshevik Internationalists — who rejected the Kerensky regime, favored radical land reform, and favored an end to World War I. The existence of such a coalition government could have helped to avoid much of the brutal civil war that had such disastrous consequences for the Soviet Republic.

Catherine Samary: The Continuing Relevance of Revolutionary Marxism

Catherine Samary is a leading authority on Eastern Europe (author of the highly acclaimed study published by Monthly Review Press, *The Dissolution of Yugoslavia*), who has focused her economic studies on the questions of planning and self-management. She is also a prominent member of the LCR.

Samary began with the comment that we cannot remake history, but we can make it intelligible. She posed the question of what were the real mistakes that facilitated the rise of Stalinism. These can be related to the Trotskyist view that what was needed in the USSR was a political revolution to reestablish workers' democracy. That was the essential ingredient whose erosion paved the way for Stalinism. The question, "Were the USSR and the Eastern European countries actually socialist?" is not a secondary debate. Given the absence of workers' democracy, popular control over the economy, these were not socialist countries. The populations of these countries concluded that they had nothing to lose if these countries went capitalist (in this they turned out to be wrong), but they didn't feel they had anything to defend.

In these societies, the decisive political and economic decisions came from above, from the nomenklatura (privileged bureaucratic elite). She approvingly cited a presentation of Peter Gowan in an earlier session in which he had argued that this elite had made a fundamental strategic mistake in choosing to prioritize military spending to keep up in the Cold War arms race rather than prioritizing consumer goods that would benefit the masses of people; he suggested that this decision was, in turn, rooted in structural (undemocratic) limitations inherent in the USSR's political economy. These structural limitations generated a long-term crisis which the nomenklatura was incapable of overcoming. This combined with the impact of global developments — not only the arms race, but also the ongoing and accelerating technological revolution — created a challenge which the bureaucracy was incapable of coping with, being inherently unable to efficiently mobilize resources and human energies.

The ease with which the pro-capitalist restoration took place shows that the USSR was not socialist. It also shows that the nomenklatura was not a specific class nor was it a bourgeoisie. At the same time, the chaos of the present regressive

order in Russia is very far from being a functioning capitalist economy. This demonstrates that those who believe that the USSR was a form of capitalism were wrong: it was relatively easy for the old system to collapse, but it is not easy for actual capitalism to arise.

On the other hand, those of us who had a Trotskyist orientation were too optimistic about what the consequences would be of the system's collapse. We had held too optimistic a view of what was represented by the experiences of Poland and Hungary in 1956, and too optimistic a view of the early 1980s Solidarnosc movement in Poland. In Hungary and Poland there were, in fact, workers councils — and these were not for the restoration of capitalism, but instead favored a democratic socialism. Similarly, the early Solidarnosc was not for privatization of the economy.

There was also the experience in Yugoslavia, especially the radicalization of youth and the intelligentsia, who expressed solidarity with Vietnam, demanded workers' control of the economy, and came out against the "Red bourgeoisie" (the bureaucracy). The question was posed of the relation of the market to self-management — with the idea of democratic, self-managed planning as being superior to the market mechanisms that the Yugoslav elite was utilizing. All of these were important historical moments — but they were repressed, in some cases with tanks and military violence resulting in the deaths of militants. The impact of this was a swing to the right, exacerbated by the setbacks experienced by Social Democracy in the West.

Lessons must be learned from the current defeat, lessons that are rooted in historical developments since October 1917. It is worth paying attention to alternative possibilities for the USSR's development existing in the 1920s. It must be emphasized in no uncertain terms that the development of Stalinism represented a qualitative break from October. But we also underestimated the elements of continuity in the 1920s leading to Stalinism. For example, there was not sufficient attention given to law and democracy in building the revolutionary regime. (In this regard, the Sandinistas of Nicaragua have something positive to teach.) One can't afford to stifle the critical spirit, and it was a mistake to repress the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, the left-wing Mensheviks, and the anarchists.

There was also a substitutionist logic that developed so that — for example — the factory committees whose mobilization had been important for the triumph of October were then demobilized, to the detriment of the revolution. Of course it was necessary to rebuild the economy, a task which may have seemed to run counter to the dynamics of militant factory committees, but it is necessary to develop ways to combined economic planning with workers' self-management (not just on the local level but also on a national scale).

In response to the comments of Marc Ferro, Samary concluded that Marxism, now more than ever, is an adequate and necessary instrument for understanding and changing the world. Of course no Marxist party is the incarnation of scientific truth — but the very essence of genuine Marxism is non-dogmatic. Such vital and creative Marxism links together an understanding of the situation and interests of women, oppressed nationalities, and the working class — combining the struggle for democratic rights with the struggle for socialist democracy.

Timur Timofeyev: A View from Russia on the October Revolution and Its Heritage

Timur Timofeyev — for many years a prominent Soviet academician and Communist Party member — was a friend and associate of an important (and semi-dissident) historian V.P. Volobuyev, who had been scheduled to speak at the conference but had recently died. Timofeyev opened with the comment that the October Revolution was not only a Russian phenomenon but an international phenomenon. He very much agreed with Samir Amin that this determined the main directions of the 20th-century resistance to the logic of capitalism, including the development of the welfare state in the West.

Nonetheless, there are naturally and necessarily controversies — since the collapse of the USSR — regarding the character of the October Revolution. Some of those who once put forward the most sterile and dogmatic “orthodox” explanations before the collapse are today putting forward the most negative and anti-revolutionary interpretations. Among the welter of “new estimates,” some are quite interesting and others are ridiculous. For example, at a recent round-table discussion on the October Revolution at the Gorbachev Institute, a Professor X advanced what he termed a completely new understanding based on psychological dynamics: war and revolutionary violence were the outcome of the masses of Russian youth not having sufficient outlets for their explosive sexual energy. On the other hand, there was the interesting interpretation of Professor Danilov that the appropriate dates for the Russian Revolution should be 1902 to 1917, years which he argues encompass a pattern of peasant struggles for the land in Russia.

Timofeyev expressed disagreement with Marc Ferro that none of the Russian revolutionaries among the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, Left Socialist Revolutionaries, etc. truly represented the will of the people. There is substantial research showing that in fact the ideas and aspirations of many of the working people were reflected in these parties. It is undeniable that October 1917 represented a working-class revolution, combined with a years-long development of peasant struggles, and the Bolshevik-led insurrection representing not a coup d'état but part of a much larger process. The October Revolution combined features of general democratic demands with more specific proletarian demands.

Turning his attention to more recent developments in Russia, he commented critically that the Communist Party of the Russian Federation led by Gennady Zyuganov doesn't reflect the old views of Communism. Recalling that during the Gorbachev period he and others had urged the formation of two competing Communist parties — one of which could represent the dogmatists, the other which could include new approaches first opened up by the 1956 20th Party Congress — and he reported that recently Gorbachev admitted to him that the failure to bring this about had been one of his regime's biggest mistakes. But such a pluralism is coming into being today. Timofeyev referred to a second Russian Communist Party which in his opinion had some “good positions,” though he was critical of its embrace of Stalin. His own sympathies were with another group, the Movement for New Socialism.

One of the lessons of the October Revolution, he emphasized, was the mistake of establishing one-party rule. It would have been better to have a coalition government after 1917.

From this he generalized that the USSR's Communists had underestimated the role of democracy. He added that they had also overestimated the degree of maturity of their country's socialist development. But, he insisted, here some of the previous speakers were wrong: the USSR was a socialist society — but an underdeveloped socialist society. Lenin had once commented that Russia suffered both from the development of capitalism as well as the underdevelopment of capitalism. Similarly in the decades following the October Revolution, one could refer to the development of socialism as well as the underdevelopment of socialism.

Our concepts are changing, he concluded, but times are also changing. Referring to the prestigious *International Review of Social History*, published in Amsterdam, he commented that a few years ago it was referring to the worldwide collapse of socialism — this was not the collapse of socialism, he interjected, but the collapse of the Stalinist model of socialism — and also discussing the decline of the workers' movement. Now the same journal is running discussions of “new trends in the labor movement” as workers' struggles once again come to the fore.

Different ideas of society, alternatives to the status quo, are being considered by many who are worried or oppressed by aspects of the changing world. It is necessary for us to develop new approaches to connect with this development. For example, many are rightly speaking out against violence — and we should join in speaking out against overt violence among people — but also against structural violence, that is, against exploitation. The United Nations is sponsoring a Year of Peace, and “the left” should utilize this opportunity to advance ideas that would help overcome both overt and structural violence — social justice and socialism.

Discussion Period: Comments of Jacob Moneta

The discussion period involved a diverse range of viewpoints and arguments which — like most of the conference itself — did not add up to a coherent whole. There were, however, a number of interesting and valuable comments. I will restrict myself to the contribution of the old German working-class militant Jacob Moneta, who made two points.

First of all, Moneta insisted that democracy is essential not only to socialism but also to the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Far from projecting the October Revolution as a minority coup d'état, Lenin emphasized in his 1921 debate with ultra-leftists in the Communist International that “we achieved victory in Russia, not only because we had the undoubted majority of the working class on our side (during the elections in 1917 the overwhelming majority of the workers voted for us and against the Mensheviks), but also because half the army — immediately after we seized power — and nine-tenths of the peasantry — within the course of a few weeks — came over to our side.”

Moneta's second point was to insist that the development of Stalinism — once the Soviet Republic was isolated due to the failure of workers' revolutions in other countries — had nothing to do with the socialist goal for which Lenin had struggled. He repeated a comment made by a German dissident, but first he told us about her. She had once been in the Hitler Youth but — as she matured and understood the world around her — had

come to oppose all forms of oppression and, in order to place her entire being in the struggle against anti-Semitism, had

taken for herself a Jewish last name. She asserted: "Socialism failed because it was not socialism. Capitalism will fail because it is capitalism." □

Caterpillar Workers Reject Proposed Contract

Continued from page 14

supported this sellout contract. In fact, they did everything they could to get us to buy into this agreement.

"Three weeks before we took the contract offer to a vote, many UAW local presidents — such as Jim Clingan, president of UAW Local 974 [at Caterpillar's plant] in Peoria, Illinois — admitted the contract was a piece of shit. But then one week before the vote, Clingan said we had to take the contract. He had buckled under the pressure of the UAW International.

"The members right there saw something was wrong. They started speaking up. It happened in Peoria, Aurora, Decatur, and everywhere else."

Austin reflected the view of many workers quoted in the press about why they rejected the latest offer: "Our own union was going to allow 441 unfair labor practices, which we have been

winning, to be dropped completely. They wanted us to give amnesty to the scabs, but they wouldn't give amnesty to our members. And even amnesty is not good enough for our fellow unionists. Amnesty still means they were guilty — even though they didn't do anything wrong. They should all be exonerated...

"Another outrage: The grievance procedure was gutted. And the list of abominations goes on and on — cuts and takeaways in healthcare, retirement, holidays, apprenticeship programs, grievance backlogs."

Austin and others are organizing "a bus trip to Solidarity House [the headquarters of the UAW International] in Detroit — just like we did when we organized a bus trip from the Decatur War Zone to the AFL-CIO's National Executive Board meeting in Bal Harbor, Florida, a few years ago.

"We've contacted other UAW locals — at Ford and GM — and invited them to come along with us and participate. Our purpose is to say that we, the rank and file, are the boss. We will determine the fate of our union. It's bottom-up leadership from now on. We are the ones who pay the dues, so we are the ones will determine what we want in a contract.

"We've elected people at the top of our union to do the job. So now we tell them, 'If you can't do the job for us — which you've shown you can't — then get out, resign!'"

The fact that these workers could still hold their heads high and vote for what is right and for solidarity with their fired brothers and sisters, in spite of being forced back to work under onerous conditions and in face of the capitulation by their own leaders, indicates that class struggle unionism is not dead, a lesson that was also illustrated by the United Parcel Service workers last summer. □

Progress Toward Charting Party's Electoral Course

Continued from page 38

that could meet the criteria for running candidates. But we believe there may be some ready by the 2000 elections. This would coincide with the goal announced at the recent AFL-CIO convention of "2000 in 2000" — 2000 candidates out of the labor movement.

"2000 in 2000" is a worthy perspective, seeking to put working class people into office. The weakness of "2000 in 2000" is that most of these candidates will be running as Democrats. Time and time again, historical experience has demonstrated that good labor people elected as Democrats either get coopted by the party bosses, and forced to compromise on their principles, or else they become marginalized and never survive

reelection. That's why we need our own political base — the Labor Party.

Accountability of candidates is a crucial question. The committee draft says:

The Labor Party is not politics as usual — we are a party of principle. Candidates shall be chosen by the members through convention at the appropriate level. Once elected, officials are responsible to the party on core issues in the Labor Party platform. When issues arise that are not in the platform, officials shall consult with LP members for guidance. Elected officials who do not abide by the LP platform will not be allowed to run for reelection as LP candidates.

Accountability was also an issue in the committee's discussion about endorsements and cross-endorsements. While some favor the endorsement tac-

tic, the big majority felt this would blur our independence — and our control over those receiving our support. The draft states:

The Labor Party will only support candidates for office who are Labor Party members running solely as Labor Party candidates. The Labor Party will not endorse any other candidates.

Of course affiliated unions, and individual LP members, will remain free, as they always have been, to support other candidates where there are no LP candidates on the ballot. But this cannot be done in the name of the LP, or using any LP resources.

The committee's draft document should stimulate a useful discussion throughout the party. It will help prepare us to add a needed new dimension to our project of becoming a mass party of the working class. □

Reading from Left to Right

by Joe Auciello

It's not likely that any contributor to *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* pleaded with the managing editors for the chance to cover President Clinton's national dialogue on race held on December 3, 1997, in Akron, Ohio. Who would want the assignment? After all, you'd be forced to listen to the whole charade on C-SPAN, and then, in the days after, wade through the self-important commentary by puffed-up pundits.

Clinton's Dialogue on Race — "Smooth Jazz"

Nothing could be worse, though, than the president's own performance: smug, self-righteous, saccharine. Hearing Bill Clinton talk about race is like listening to "smooth jazz," a passionless parody of the real thing.

In this national dialogue, the participants — a carefully screened assemblage of respectable "experts," moderates with inoffensive opinions — dutifully played their part, lobbing soft pitches for the president to hit.

In fact, sitting on his stool, calling on the professors who eagerly raised their hands like schoolchildren, the president sounded like nothing more than the high school baseball coach who also teaches the civics class. Clinton listened intently for any glimmer of a thought in order to reduce any possible insight to a safe, mealy-mouthed platitude.

In These Times Comments

What is it about Bill Clinton that turns people's minds to mush? The first result of the Monica Lewinsky mess, for instance, shows a surge in presidential popularity from a peak approval rating of 60 percent to a record 75 percent. Salim Muwakkil, the sharp-edged, sober-minded columnist for *In These Times*, goes all wobbly and soft when discussing Bill, describing the dialogue-on-race charade in exhilarating and giddy prose. Muwakkil calls this "a serious effort by a president who is genuinely concerned about racial divisions" and says that "Clinton deserves credit" for his "well-intended foray into the maze of race relations."

Further, Muwakkil commends Clinton for "demonstrat[ing] some political courage by raising the contentious issue of race...Perhaps as an homage to his boyhood in Arkansas, Clinton has chosen an anti-racist theme for his legacy." (See *In These Times*, February 8, 1998.)

From Muwakkil's account, you'd think that something had actually happened that night in Ohio. No socialist, it seems, can get more dewy-eyed and dreamy than a moderate socialist enamored with a Democrat. Once again, hope and wishful thinking triumph over reason and experience.

Adolph Reed in *The Progressive*

At least one honest and intelligent voice can be heard in contrast to the soporific chatter, though, of course, this speaker was not invited to attend the president's televised presentation of mendacity. Adolph Reed Jr., writing in the December 1997 *Progressive* magazine, single-handedly lifts the national dialogue above a bantering of banalities. In an article aptly titled, "Yakkety-Yak About Race," Reed scoffs at a discussion ("fundamentally empty rhetoric") that focuses on "efforts to change whites' individual attitudes rather than on changing laws."

Reed notes: "The problem isn't racial division or a need for healing. It is racial inequality and injustice..." Racism, in other words, is deeply rooted in the realities of American economic and social life. It is primarily a political-social-economic problem, rather than a psychological one. Therefore, racism will not be "solved" simply by changing individual attitudes through exhortation or increased sensitivity, however good these might be in themselves.

Education and Social Inequity

A recent article by educational theorist Robert Slavin highlights this reality. In an article entitled, "Can Education Reduce Social Inequity?" (*Educational Leadership*, December 1997–January 1998), Slavin decries "the crisis of equity" in American society and rightly

observes: "The school system often compounds these inequities." He does, however, point to successful early intervention programs like the Abecedarian Project in North Carolina, which has significantly raised minority children's test scores. This research, Slavin says, "demonstrates that if we as a society, decided to substantially reduce the equity gap, we could do so."

Slavin is none too optimistic about the likelihood of schools to help minorities and the poor: "The Abecedarian Project is too expensive under current conditions to replicate widely." The public schools, then, will continue to widen class and racial divisions in America. Perpetuating class society and racial inequality is, after all, one of the social functions of education under the present system.

Reed understands these essential facts and frames the issue well: "We need a clear commitment by the federal government to preserve, buttress, and extend civil rights, and to use the office of the Presidency to indicate that commitment forcefully and unambiguously...[T]his is the only effective way to change racist attitudes and beliefs."

Don't expect to see the president organize this kind of program or arrange a debate that might lead to some legislative action. "Bill Clinton has absolutely no interest in that kind of talk, however, and it's easy to understand why. If he did, he'd have to explain why he and his Administration have repeatedly pandered to the resurgent racist tendencies he purports to bemoan."

Anyone who wants to understand the national (non)discussion on race should shut off the TV, toss out *Newsweek*, etc., and study Adolph Reed's illuminating article in *The Progressive*. (Reed's most recent book is *W.E.B. DuBois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line*, published by Oxford University Press).

Allen Ginsberg and Boston Trotskyists

Allen Ginsberg's death in April 1997 has occasioned tributes, reminiscences, and appreciations for America's best-known poet. Two brief but notable articles are Scott McLemee's, "No! In Thunder: Allen Ginsberg 1926–1997" in *New Politics*, summer 1997; and Helen Vendler's "Two Poets" in *Har-*

vard Magazine, Sept.-Oct. 1997. These articles make a good introduction for anyone who wants to become acquainted with Ginsberg's work and will be valued by those who are already readers of his poetry. (Vendler's article can be found on the World Wide Web at: www.harvard-magazine.com/so97/poets.html.)

Sometime in the early 1980s, during a performance at Passim's cafe in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Ginsberg altered a line from one of his most memorable poems, a tip of the hat to the local audience: "America...When will you be worthy of your Boston Trotskyists?" A handful of Boston Trotskyists who were present clapped in gratitude at this line, and Ginsberg, smiling owlishly, seemed genuinely pleased.

Shortly before Ginsberg's death, a *Selected Poems* was published. □

January 30, 1998

P.S. The following announcement was posted on the internet in early March:

The Institute for Critical Research is proud to announce the publication of *Friedrich Engels — A Critical Centenary Appreciation*, edited by Joost Kircz and Michael Löwy, as a special issue of the U.S. journal *Science & Society*.

Copies can be ordered either from *Science & Society* or from the International Institute for Research and Education (IIRE) in Amsterdam (price: NLG 17.50, £5.50, \$10.00). Discounts for bulk orders. To contact the IIRE, write them at: Postbus 53290, 1007 RG Amsterdam, The Netherlands; phone: 31 20 6717263; fax: 31 20 6732106; e-mail: IIRE@Antenna.nl.

P.P.S. Frank Lovell has called to our attention an interesting and thought-provoking article, which readers will probably find worth their time to study. It is Murray E.G. Smith's "Revisiting Trotsky: Reflections on the Stalinist Debacle and Trotskyism as Alternative." It appears in the magazine *Rethinking Marxism* for "fall 1996/1997."

Smith's is a complex and contradictory article that takes up many themes. It often, but not always, argues along the same general lines that our magazine

has since 1983. And it's accompanied by a valuable two-page bibliography, with emphasis on the writings of Leon Trotsky and Ernest Mandel.

One particular point that I especially appreciate in the article is its opening passage. It quotes Trotsky's *My Life* to the effect that a *defeat* suffered in the international revolution, while it might confirm the predictions of Marxist revolutionaries, is bound to be disappointing and disorienting to the masses in general. On the whole, defeats weaken the international working class movement, while victories strengthen it.

Smith, who indicates he was "a Trotskyist during the 1970s" (apparently in Canada or Britain), says that this passage from Trotsky's autobiography "haunted [him] insistently" as he watched the unfolding of events in the Soviet Union in 1991 and after. I find this interesting because the same passage has often recurred to me in thinking about the impact of the dissolution of the USSR.

Trotsky was writing in 1929 about the impact of the defeat of the Chinese revolution two years earlier.

In 1927, thanks mainly to the wrong policies pursued by the Stalin leadership of the Communist International, Chiang Kai-shek was able to carry out a bloody coup, crush the Chinese workers movement, rout the Chinese Communist Party, and put an end to a powerful revolutionary upsurge that had the potential to begin a socialist revolution in China led by the working class. (The revolution's failure in 1927 left the Chinese people to face more than two long decades of militarist rule, imperialist domination, Japanese invasion, world war, and civil war before Mao's peasant armies finally carried out a deformed "Communist" revolution.)

Trotsky described the impact of the 1927 China disaster on revolutionaries in Soviet Russia.

"A wave of excitement swept over the party. The opposition raised its head... oppositionists came to [my office] by the scores... Many younger comrades thought the patent bankruptcy of

Stalin's policy was bound to bring the triumph of the opposition nearer. During the first days after the coup d'état by Chiang Kai-shek, I was obliged to pour many a bucket of cold water over the hot heads of my young friends — and over some not so young.

"I tried to show them that the opposition could not rise on the *defeat* of the Chinese revolution. The fact that our forecast proved correct might attract one thousand, five thousand, or even ten thousand new supporters to us. But for the millions, the significant thing was not our forecast, but the fact of the crushing of the Chinese proletariat. After the defeat of the German revolution in 1923, after the breakdown of the English general strike in 1926, the new disaster in China would only intensify the disappointment of the masses in the international revolution. And it was the same disappointment that served as the chief psychological support for Stalin's policy of national-reformism." (*My Life*, New York: Pathfinder, 1970, p. 530.)

The collapse and/or continued erosion of the remnants of working class power in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China, Korea, and Vietnam since 1989 and '91 — while confirming the correct Marxist predictions of the Trotskyist movement on the destructive role of the privileged bureaucracy in those states — have on the whole contributed to a sense of discouragement and disappointment within the working class and "on the left." The notion that "socialism failed," that there is no alternative to capitalism, was reinforced. It is an uphill struggle to reassert the need for workers to fight for their own interests, to demand that people come before profits, to challenge the all-powerful, impersonal reign of "the market," to believe that a different way of doing things is possible.

Victorious struggles, such as the August 1997 UPS strike and the December 1995 strikes in France in defense of the social safety net, strengthen workers with the confidence that we *can* "fight city hall," that we *can* "change the system" and improve our lives and our children's and grandchildren's.

— George Saunders

Letters

Against Government Intervention in the Unions

The following letter was sent out in late February from Jerry Gordon, chair of the Ohio State Labor Party, and a number of unionists in the Detroit and Cleveland areas. To date there are more than 25 signatories, including Baldemar Velasquez, a national co-chair of the Labor Party, chairs of local LP chapters, and officers in a number of local unions and labor bodies. For more information or to register, write to: Jerry Gordon, 2200 Kerwin Road, #113, Cleveland, OH 44118; phone: (216) 382-4597.

This letter is for trade unionists and others active in the Labor Party who favor the Party's taking a strong stand defending workers' democratic rights to run their own unions at a time when increasing government intervention in unions is squelching those rights. We see this most clearly in the case of the Teamsters.

We invite you to attend a meeting to be held Saturday, June 13, in Cleveland, Ohio, for the purpose of launching an educational campaign within the Labor Party to win it to a government-hands-off position. The meeting will be held at Painters District Council 6, 2605 Detroit Avenue, on Cleveland's near West Side, between noon and 5 p.m.

The Labor Party can take a position on this question without involving the party in the Teamsters' internal affairs. The issue here is not for or against any candidate for office in the Teamsters' elections. Rather, the issue is the democratic right of union members — whether Teamsters or members of any other union — to freely elect their own leadership without government interference and disqualification of candidates.

We think it is not only appropriate but necessary for the Labor Party to take a clear stand and defend the labor movement's traditional position demanding that government stay out of

the unions. Of course, the national leadership of the AFL-CIO should be leading the way. But they are not. So the Labor Party must do what it can to fill the vacuum and educate the labor movement on this issue. After all, the survival of the labor movement in this country requires that a fight be made to protect unions from being taken over and controlled by the government.

Please join us in Cleveland on June 13.

In Solidarity

Jerry Gordon
Cleveland

A Correction

Page 2, line 4 of the January-February 1998 *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* contains a factual error which should be corrected: "bipartisan" is not correct.

The Ohio pro-business law cutting back on compensation for workers injured on the job was not bipartisan. It was a Republican Party measure opposed by the Democratic Party, which was outvoted.

As a matter of fact, the Ohio Democratic Party reported spending \$53,230 for postage and mailing labels for the "Vote NO" campaign. And as I wrote in the second half of my report on the campaign [published on page 17 of this issue — *eds.*], the big guns of the Democratic Party — Senator John Glenn and Congressman Louis Stokes — went on TV in support of labor's campaign for a No vote. And local Democratic politicians, even including Mayor Michael White, spoke out against Issue 2.

The point I tried to make was that the Democrats can't defeat the most reactionary Republican measures — only united independent labor can mobilize the opposition to attacks by Big Business and the most reactionary politicians.

It is important to protect our credibility in the labor movement and with the working class generally by strict

adherence to facts in reporting on the actions and role of the Democratic Party. Only a tiny minority will break with the local and state Democrats until there is a viable Labor Party alternative.

Meanwhile, we need to strengthen the self-confidence and class-consciousness of the workers through participation in union fight-back campaigns, Labor Party support on legislative issues, and one-on-one recruitment to the Labor Party to build a viable alternative to lesser-evil politics.

Jean Tussey
Cleveland

Profound Change in the Working Class

I am writing to congratulate you for the latest articles in *BIDOM*. Frank Lovell's report of the AFL-CIO convention, while brief, indicated the profound change that has occurred in the "American" working class.

The change is as significant as those perceived before the collapse of the Asian economies. "There were cracks; now there are chasms," if I paraphrase correctly some of the commentators about South Korea, etc., in a recent C-SPAN program.

Nat Weinstein in *Socialist Action* (Vol. 15, No. 12, December 1997) writes about "Asia's Economic Turmoil." He implies that the world economy will repeat another 1929.

This is not my opinion.

The imperialists have learned a great deal. They are not ready to commit suicide yet.

Our position is still extremely weak. The fundamental mind-set is not so far from the 1950s.

That could change instantaneously. It will.

What pleased me very much in *Socialist Action* was [the report] that the Castro government has begun to discuss Trotskyism.

Alan Sawyer
Greensboro, Alabama

An Appeal to All Readers and Supporters of Bulletin IDOM

You look forward eagerly to each new issue of *Bulletin IDOM*. There is nothing quite like it among the many newspapers and magazines attempting to propagate the ideas of revolutionary socialism. Of first importance: it is on the extreme left without being sectarian. Where else could you find such a stimulating mix of news and discussion articles? You can't quite put your finger on what it is that makes it so outstanding. Is it because of its reports on activity in the labor movement on both sides of the Atlantic and Pacific? Is it because sometimes issues are hotly debated? Or the fact that there may be two or more different opinions put forward about the same piece of news? Or because the editorial viewpoints concretize what you have been thinking? Even if it is none of the above and you have your own particular reasons for liking the magazine, we ask you now to concretely show your support in two ways:

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Call for a BIDOM Conference

A decision-making conference of BIDOM supporters will be held at a convenient hotel at the Newark, NJ, airport on Saturday, May 23, 1998. It will be by invitation only. Most of our readers, subscribers, contributors, and production associates are being invited. If you wish to inquire about an invitation, write to the Editorial Committee at BIDOM, PO Box 1317, New York, NY 10009.

The main purpose of the conference will be to orient our magazine more firmly than ever toward radicalizing workers, especially in the Labor Party, in strike struggles, and in the many new campaigns of organized labor.

An internal discussion bulletin among BIDOM supporters will continue to publish contributions as a necessary part of pre-conference preparation and clarification. Pre-conference discussion will conclude May 22, 1998.

ELEVENTH HOUR RED ALERT!

CALL FOR EMERGENCY MOBILIZATION IN DEFENSE OF ZAPATISTAS

This message was posted on the Internet March 19.

Since the massacre at Acteal, the war in Chiapas has intensified. Throughout December, January, and February the specter of war which arrived on December 22 was met with continual protest demonstrations. Despite the power of these combined global protests, the Mexican government's war continues. The constant harassment of the communities is unabated. The list of those assassinated grows. The suffering of the refugees continues. Human rights workers and priests are expelled from the country, and more stringent immigration requirements are placed upon visitors to Chiapas.

Violent Military Solution in the Making

Ignacio Garcia Garcia, spokesperson for the 200-member International Civilian Human Rights Observation Commission [which recently visited Chiapas], has stated that there are grounds, "in accordance with international law, for accusing the Mexican government of genocide. In Chiapas, the will exists to exterminate a population group for ethnic, religious, and political reasons. The signs we have seen in Chiapas indicate to us that a violent, rather than a peaceful, solution to the conflict is in the making."

Zedillo signs his own version of a law on indigenous rights and culture and sends it to the Mexican Congress. He ignores Cocopa, the body of legislators who had already presented him a legal initiative acceptable to the Zapatistas. In the words of Indian leader Adolfo Regino of the National Indigenous Congress, Zedillo's initiative constitutes "a true offense against the individual and collective dignity of our peoples." The initiative will be signed into law once the Mexican Congress [which has a PRI majority] approves it.

Zedillo's package of "reforms" essentially denies any right to self-determination, and it excludes basic territorial rights as acknowledged in ILO Treaty 169. If the Mexican federal government had made the San Andrés agreements a legal reality, it would have legalized a process of social organization completely outside government control. Millions of members of a social group would exist in autonomous and independent form.

Zapatistas Establish Autonomy

To the demagoguery and repression of the Mexican government, the EZLN has responded with the establishment of indigenous autonomous bases. In almost 40 regions of Chiapas, indigenous communities have decreed the formation of autonomous municipalities, based on concepts in the San Andrés agreements. It is difficult to appreciate the importance and complexity of this incredible process of self-organization. The government understood better than others the significance and the importance of indigenous autonomy. If this process were to flower, if it were to be emulated by a majority of Mexican civil society and by fundamental sectors of peoples all over the world, it would rip to shreds the well-worn mantra that the world's media has been repeating in every nation, language, form, and image: "Resistance is futile. Conform and practice passivity."

President Zedillo's response to the Indigenous peoples has been state-sanctioned terror and increased levels of militarization. Daily surveillance flights have increased dramatically. *La Jornada* reported on March 17 that PC7s, Condors, and ARVA airplanes were spotted conducting practice bombing runs near an airport outside of Tuxtla Gutierrez. It was also reported that there is increased activity of Bell 206 helicopters, used to transport equipment and troops near the "conflict zone."

At the same time, in an interview with the Chilean newspaper, *El Mercurio*, Zedillo states that "what occurred in Acteal was a massacre committed by a group of assassins who were taking revenge," repeating, in an international medium, the racist, ignorant position of his Justice Department. His true position regarding Acteal, despite damaging evidence and international outcry, is reflected in the fact that the paramilitaries still operate openly, under the auspices of the Mexican Federal Army.

Meanwhile the American Embassy smugly affirms that there has been U.S. military presence in Chiapas at least once in 1997 and several times before. U.S. military sales to Mexico rose to \$28 million in 1997 from \$4.8 million the year before, an increase of 60%. Arms sales are a bloody insurance policy for the massive U.S. investment, which is

67% of the total foreign investment in Mexico.

In Chiapas, a war which has foreign sanction, sponsorship, and the active participation of several industrialized countries is taking hold. Acting on behalf of the monster called the "global market" are Swiss planes, Israeli intelligence, and U.S. military officers. In response to this extremely volatile situation, which is quickly evolving, and in solidarity with various Mexican organizations we call your attention to the following:

1. A 100-hour march called by dozens of independent Mexican organizations in response to the evolving crisis.

2. A call by Enlace Civil for Mexican nationals to travel to Chiapas to exert a constant and organized presence in indigenous communities suffering military and paramilitary pressure.

3. A call by the "San Patricio" Battalion, a civil committee of dialogue of the Zapatista Front for National Liberation (FZLN), for the "utilization of all forms of demonstration and peaceful and civil expression to demonstrate to the government and all those who, together with it, promote the war...that there are more than thousands of Zapatistas and that they are everywhere."

4. A call from the organization CONAI to all "movements and organizations of civil society to reactivate their invaluable efforts — in this crucial hour their strength and presence are irreplaceable."

The Coordinating Committee of the [El Paso-based] National Commission for Democracy in Mexico (NCDM) will be holding an emergency meeting to evaluate potential strategies so a powerful message of opposition can be sent to both the U.S. and Mexican governments, which appear to be hell-bent on their war of extermination of the Zapatistas. It is necessary for all people of conscience to begin to prepare an appropriate strategy for their voice to be heard — and to respond to the suffering in Southern Mexico.

The situation is urgent. If this is our last chance to act, let us demonstrate to both governments that indeed, there are Zapatistas everywhere, and it is impossible to eliminate them all.

For more information please contact the NCDM at: (213) 254-9550 or (800) 405-7770; e-mail: moonlight@igc.apc.org