

A Socialist ACTION

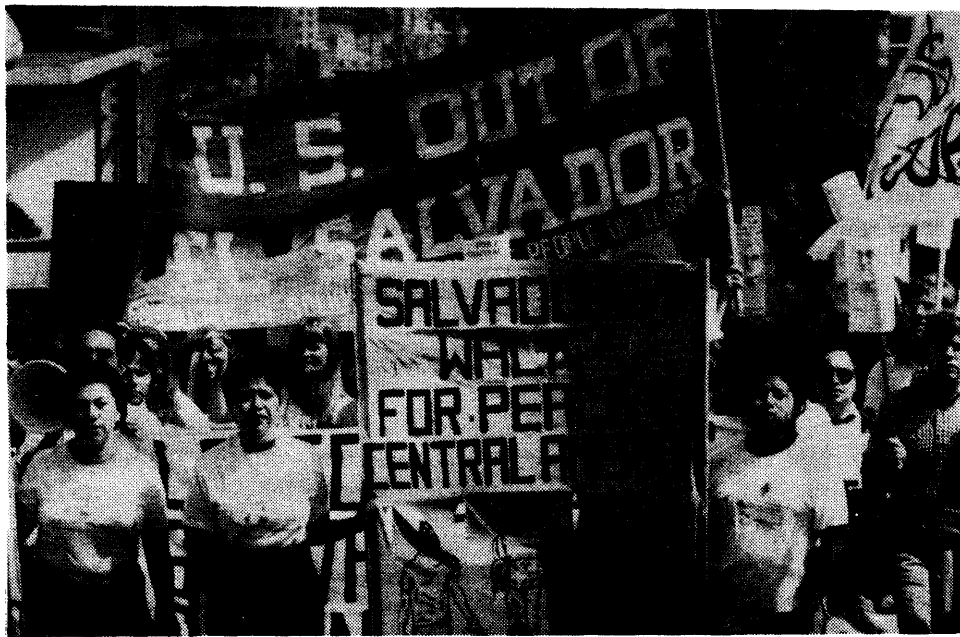
**FORUM:
Mergers and
bankruptcies
(See pages 7-10)**

Vol. 2, No. 4

April 1984



50 cents



March 24 protest against deportation of Central American refugees and U.S. intervention in El Salvador.

Texaco takebacks: Strikers say no!

By DAVID W. CAMPBELL

Don't trust your car to the man who wears the star... the true Texaco story!

LAWNDALE, Calif.—Oil workers in Long Beach, Calif., Local 1-128 and Anacortes, Wash., Local 1-591 are in the front ranks of what is perhaps the most decisive battle between Texaco Inc. and the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers International Union (OCAW). After negotiations broke down Feb. 24, union members walked off the job. This battle takes place in the midst of Texaco's \$11-billion bid to buy out Getty Oil—the biggest corporate takeover in history.

offensive goes back to the 1982 Port Arthur, Texas, strike. Prior to the 1982 negotiating sessions between Texaco and the Port Arthur OCAW group, which with 4300 members was the largest OCAW bargaining unit, the company unilaterally decreased the workers' lump-sum pension benefits. In some cases they did this by as much as \$20,000 per worker!

The union grievance led to arbitration and a protracted legal battle. The company retaliated with layoffs, massive cross-crafting, and other takeaways during contract negotiations in 1982. The union was forced into a strike. Although there was support for the strike from other OCAW locals, it was not enough to ensure a union victory. After seven months the group, for the most part fighting alone, was forced to surrender almost unconditionally. It was a crushing defeat for the union.

In 1984, with the Port Arthur workers eliminated from the picture, Texaco has turned its offensive against the smaller OCAW bargaining units. The rank-and-file negotiating committee for the Long Beach main group, representing 417 workers, met with Texaco negotiators on

El Salvador elections: Vote settles nothing

By ROBIN DAVID

The results of the March 25 Salvadoran elections were officially validated April 1. Jose Napoleon Duarte, the Christian Democratic now heading the government drew 43.4 percent of the vote. Roberto d'Aubuisson, leader of the far-right National Republican Alliance and closely associated with the death squads, placed second with 29.8 percent. Francisco Jose Guerrero of the right-wing National Conciliation Party was third with 19.3 percent. Duarte and d'Aubuisson will face each other in a runoff election within one month.

The Reagan administration banked heavily on the elections. Washington policymakers hoped to create the image of a stable government, democratically elected. This would justify their stepped-up efforts to militarily defeat the popular revolutionary forces led by the Democratic Revolutionary Front/Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FDR/FMLN).

In the week before the elections 2500 U.S. combat troops were parachuted into Honduras near the Salvadoran border. The April 1 *San Francisco Sunday Examiner & Chronicle* quoted "one military source" who described this as "sending a message to the Salvadoran insurgents that the U.S. is here." Military pressure was further increased when the Pentagon announced Ocean Venture 84 on March 22. The March 23 *New York Times* described it as a joint-service Caribbean maritime exercise involving 30,000 soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen that would begin April 20.

The same week saw the White House step up efforts to force an additional \$61.75 million in military funds for El Salvador through Congress. Edward Cody reported in the March 29 *San Francisco Chronicle* that U.S. pilots were flying reconnaissance missions for the Salvadoran army. He also indicated that although U.S. officials claim that there are only 55 military advisers in El Salvador, the actual number aiding the government armed forces is much higher.

Once pilots, ground crews, embassy personnel, 170 "other trainers," and staff are counted the number is far closer to 500.

Atmosphere of death

Despite Washington's desires the elections settled little. Any image of a broad democratic decision was challenged by the context of civil war in which the elections were held. Forty thousand Salvadorans have already been killed since 1979 by government troops and by the government-controlled death squads. The popular revolutionary forces refused to participate in the elections. FDR leader Guillermo Ungo explained in the March 22 *New York Times*, "Free campaigns and political organizing are impossible in this atmosphere of repression, fear and death. For members of the opposition to run for office is to run for the cemetery."

The democratic and stable image was also challenged by the lack of a clear majority for Duarte at the polls. Even the runoff is unlikely to be any more decisive. If Duarte wins, many fear a coup by the far right, especially now that he has come out for opening negotiations with the revolutionary opposition. If d'Aubuisson wins, the road will be opened for a sharpening of the civil war. The legitimate social demands of the majority of Salvadorans will be met with increased terror and repression.

Although Washington continues to escalate its military offensive, the recent elections mark a shift in Washington's policy away from total intransigence toward the revolutionary forces. Until now they have refused to even recognize the FDR/FMLN's offers for negotiations. However, this time they clearly favor Duarte who is openly campaigning

(continued on page 3)

Nicaragua: CIA mines ports

The U.S. Senate approved April 5 an additional \$21 million in funds for the CIA-backed "contras" seeking to overthrow the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. The following day, Reagan administration officials acknowledged the CIA's direct role in making and deploying the mines which damaged vessels from six nations in three Nicaraguan ports.

The anti-Sandinista terrorists have already been handed \$24 million in funds for fiscal year 1984. One CIA official claimed last month that some 15,000 counterrevolutionaries are currently fighting—up from only a few hundred armed men before they began to receive substantial U.S. aid in 1982.

On April 1, Undersecretary of Defense Fred Ickle praised the counterrevolutionaries for tying up Nicara-

gua's army in defense operations. The "contras," according to U.S. diplomats, have spent their multi-million dollar bankroll well. Expenditures include the bombing of the airport in Managua; the destruction of oil facilities at Puerto Sandino and Corinto; mine damage to seven merchant ships (carrying oil, food, and medicines); the destruction of farms, schools, and clinics; and the murder of hundreds of civilians.

Meanwhile, 30,000 U.S. armed forces will begin maneuvers this month in a region of Honduras close to the Nicaraguan border. U.S. army engineers have been sent ahead to construct an airstrip 20 miles from Nicaraguan territory within a staging area for the CIA-backed "contras."

U.S. HANDS OFF NICARAGUA!



**Mondale on the run
(See page 6)**

Coalition fights refugee concentration camp

SAN FRANCISCO—The Coalition for Refugee Justice was formed March 30, 1984, as an emergency response to the new policy of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) of sending undocumented Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees rounded up in the Northern California area to places such as Florence, Ariz., and Las Vegas, Nev.

The extremely isolated facility in Florence was used as a concentration camp to hold Japanese-Americans during World War II. Refugee advocates in San Francisco believe the motive behind the INS' new policy is to hasten the deportations of these refugees by, in effect, denying them the legal and human service available to them in the San Francisco Bay area.

Community outrage over this policy sparked an initial planning meeting at which the coalition was formed. Twenty different organizations including Catholic Social Services, East Bay Sanctuary Churches, Council for Resources, Education and Assistance for Raza, Bay Area Asians for Nuclear Disarmament, Political Asylum Representation Project, Real Alternatives Program, Central American Refugee Project, and Socialist Action took part in the meeting.

The first major project the coalition has decided on will be a broadly sponsored public meeting to be held May 12 in San Francisco to educate the public and build support for the coalition's efforts to stop the forced removal of refugees out of the Bay Area and to stop the deportations. ■



The "disappeared"—here and there

By SYLVIA WEINSTEIN

SAN FRANCISCO—A face is haunting San Franciscans. It's the face of Kevin Collins, a 10-year-old boy who disappeared Feb. 10 while waiting for a bus at the corner of Oak and Masonic streets. He was returning from a basketball game at St. Agnes School where he is in the fourth grade. His face haunts us wherever we go. Posters are on every store window and every light pole. A reward of \$110,000 is being offered for his safe return. Kevin is one of the disappeared.

We know that the kidnapers of Kevin Collins, if caught, will be punished. But we live in a country where official criminal acts go unpunished every day. The government in El Salvador is snatching children from their homes and using torture, rape, and murder to repress its own people. The United States government is supporting the dictatorship in El Salvador as it creates thousands and thousands of "Kevin Collins."

In Congress, right now, the government is requesting \$93 million in emergency aid that will keep the death squads going. That does not include over \$1 million per day which is being pumped into the hands of the dictatorship. Now Reagan is requesting \$1.2 billion for economic and military aid—that request comes from the recommendation of a bipartisan presidential commission led by Henry Kissinger.

What if the U. S. government was appropriating that amount of money to kidnap children like Kevin Collins from their families in this country? Would such a policy have the slightest support from the American people? But that's exactly what the U.S. government is doing in El Salvador.

The conditions in El Salvador have

forced thousands of terrorized Salvadorans to flee their homes. The refugees are children of all ages, men and women; people from all walks of life: teachers, students, workers, housewives, and farmworkers. They are victims of repression so pervasive that the majority of Salvadoran families have had at least one member either tortured, raped, or murdered by government-supported death squads.

The United States is the only government which openly deports Salvadorans back to their war-torn country, despite a specific offer from Canada to accept any Salvadoran the United States wishes to deport. Now the government has adopted a new policy that all Salvadorans and Guatemalans without proper visas who are detained in Northern California will be immediately shipped to Florence, Ariz. for deportation proceedings. The facility at Florence is a former concentration camp used for detention of Japanese-Americans during World War II.

Here's one example of what happens to deported refugees. In 1981, 24-year-old Santana Chirino Amaya was deported to El Salvador. Two months later his decapitated body was found at a site often used by the Salvadoran military as a dumping ground for their victims. The government of the United States shares guilt for this murder with the military dictatorship of El Salvador.

The United States is shipping thousands of Salvadoran "Kevin Collins" back to their sure deaths. Any of us, if we saw Kevin, would grab him up and return him safely to his family. We must do as much for our Salvadoran brothers and sisters. We must protest this outrage. We must view them as we do Kevin. They are all our brothers, sisters and children. ■

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Our programmatic heritage

The fundamental basis of any political organization is its program. For Socialist Action, a public faction of expelled members of the Socialist Workers Party, our program is simply the continuity of the revolutionary Marxist principles which were defended by the SWP from its own foundation in 1928 as a public faction of the Communist Party USA.

Like our ideological forebears who founded Trotskyism in the United States, we were bureaucratically purged because of our defense of our revolutionary continuity. We have organized ourselves in defense of this program, and in order to continue to fight against the SWP leadership's systematic retreat from its genuine heritage.

Our struggle within the SWP is documented in *Socialist Action Information Bulletin*. One can find in the resolutions reprinted in the *Bulletin* the response of the then National Committee Opposition Bloc to the SWP's deepening retreat from our traditional positions.

The first issue of the *Bulletin* contains our founding "Platform to Overcome the Crisis in the Party," an overall view of the issues in dispute; "28 Theses," which sum up the central programmatic conquests of American Trotskyism; and "New Norms vs. Old," which defends the organizational principles of Bolshevism.

The second issue of the *Bulletin* counters the SWP's abstention from the mass antiwar/antinuclear weapons movement—and its similar attitude toward the industrial unions—with its defense of the lessons of the united front tactic and the transitional method. "The Party's Default in the Struggle Against Imperialist War" calls on the SWP to throw itself into building a broad non-exclusive movement against U.S. intervention in Central America. "Socialist Strategy for Class Struggle Transformation of the Unions" and the "Trade Union Revolution" advocate a reorientation of the SWP's work in the industrial unions.

The forthcoming third issue of the *Bulletin* will contain the resolutions adopted by Socialist Action on international questions such as the Iranian revolution, the unfolding political revolution in Poland, and the Castroist current in Cuba.

These documents apply the principles of permanent revolution to the class struggle in the underdeveloped capitalist countries. They also underline the need for a political revolution to overthrow the parasitic caste which has politically displaced the masses in the bureaucratized workers' states. Because of its size, this bulletin will be published in two parts.

Future bulletins will reprint articles in defense of Leninism and permanent revolution.

Copies of the *Bulletin* are available from Socialist Action, 3435 Army St., Rm 308, San Francisco, CA 94110. Bulletins No. 1 and No. 2 are \$2.00 each; parts one and two of Bulletin No. 3 will cost \$2.00 each.

COMING IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

- **FORUM: What Way Forward For Labor in 1984: A discussion with trade union leaders and activists**
- **The feminist movement today (Part II)** by Stephanie Coontz
- **The legacy of Malcolm X** by Raymond Farmer
- **Farrell Dobbs and Marvel Scholl: A tribute** by Shaun Maloney
- **The debt bomb** by Hayden Perry
- **Lebanon today (Part II)** by Ralph Schoenman
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- **Politics and Intellectuals** by Alan Wald

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Socialist Action, 3435 Army St., Rm. 308, San Francisco, CA 94110

3000 in L.A. march hit U.S. war drive

By MARC BEDNER

LOS ANGELES—Over 3,000 people demonstrated on March 24 against U. S. support for the military regime in El Salvador. They protested the elections scheduled there the next day, and marked the fourth anniversary of the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador.

A largely Latino crowd of shoppers watched the protestors march up Broadway, chanting in both Spanish and English. Banners identified contingents from peace groups, women's organizations, labor unions, and various chapters of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) in Los Angeles and Orange counties.

The marchers came to Olvera Street where they, along with many who had not marched, heard speakers explain what is happening in Central America. The rally was chaired by Ramona Ripston, a leader of the American Civil Liberties Union, who spoke about human rights violations in El Salvador. Victor Rios spoke as a member of Casa El Salvador, which represents the large and growing community of Salvadorans who have settled in Los Angeles to escape the U. S.-financed war in their country.

Larry Frank, a staff organizer for the Communication Workers of America,

spoke as a representative of the local Jobs with Peace campaign. "The struggle in El Salvador is an economic struggle," he explained. "Capital goes to where profits are, and they have guaranteed profits in the military industry. . . . Military spending doesn't create jobs in the Black and Brown communities."

Jim Cushing-Murray, an official of the Amalgamated Transit Union, described his recent visit to Nicaragua. He contrasted the mood of the workers in the difficult strike against Greyhound with the more confident attitude among Nicaraguans, who "know that wealth comes from working people."

The speakers, chants, and banners all focused on the issue of U. S. involvement in Central America. This made a clear impact on the people involved as well as on the mass media covering the event. The following day's *Los Angeles Times* included, along with major articles on the elections in El Salvador, prominent coverage of the rally protesting the elections.

The rally was organized by the November 12 Coalition, which built a similar rally last fall. Although fifty local organizations have endorsed the coalition's activities, the work of the coalition has involved almost exclusively members of CISPES, Central American groups, and socialist organizations. The success of the rally, in spite of this limitation, indicates the extent of the antiwar sentiment among the public. If the coalition can actively involve more groups and individuals, much larger actions can be expected. ■



Los Angeles demonstration on March 24.

Socialist Action/Marc Bedner

Help build Socialist Action

Socialist Action is a group of activists in the trade union, antiwar, women's, and Black movements. Our perspective is a society where human needs are the priority—a socialist society where the profits-first greed of capitalism will be replaced by the mass democracy of the working class majority.

We have been making tremendous progress since October 1983 in establishing our newspaper and organization. New subscriptions are arriving daily and we hope to continue to publish a 16-page newspaper on a regular basis. Since last month we have established Socialist Action in three new cities: Buffalo, N.Y.; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Puget Sound, Wash.

In February we decided to launch a \$16,000 fund drive to finance our publishing efforts. We have just published our first pamphlet, "In Defense of Revolutionary Continuity," by Dianne Feeley and Paul Le Blanc. (Copies of this pamphlet are available for \$4.00) In addition to our newspaper and information bulletins, we hope to begin publication of a theoretical magazine later this year. Please help to ensure that our expansion campaign continues to be a success. Send your contributions and subscriptions to Socialist Action, 3435 Army St., Rm 308, San Francisco, CA 94110 (Please make out separate checks.) ■

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... Salvador vote

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on the basis of opening negotiations with the popular forces.

In the April 1 *New York Times* Hedrick Smith described the new "Administration strategy." It is "to lure the less militant leftists into giving up rebellion and taking part in legislative elections in 1985."

Several closely connected factors lie behind this shift. Foremost is that the revolutionary fighters are gaining ground against the government army. Without massive infusions of U.S. military aid and ground troops they are unlikely to be defeated. For Reagan to greatly escalate aid or launch a major invasion, he must first overcome deep and strong opposition at home. He must also try to divide and isolate the revolutionary forces. This is doubly true in an election year when all the polls clearly indicate majority opposition to the use of U.S. troops in Central America.

Broad movement needed

The presidential election year also presents a challenge to those in solidarity with the advancing social revolutions now taking place in Central America. To stop U.S. intervention we must organize the massive popular sentiment here at home against U.S. government policy in Central America into a powerful movement similar to the one that stopped Washington's war in Vietnam. This, after all is the most powerful form of solidarity. In order to do this we must keep the movement out of—and independent of—both the Democratic and Republican parties. They are after all the parties—the Democrats no less than the Republicans—that are together slashing domestic programs in order to increase the war budget.

Unfortunately, this does not seem to be the orientation of the national leadership of one of the central solidarity

organizations, the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES). They appear to be following a strategy for the coming months that leads directly into support for and reliance on Democratic Party politicians. CISPES has thrown its energies into becoming one of the central organizers for a "Vote Peace in '84" demonstration.

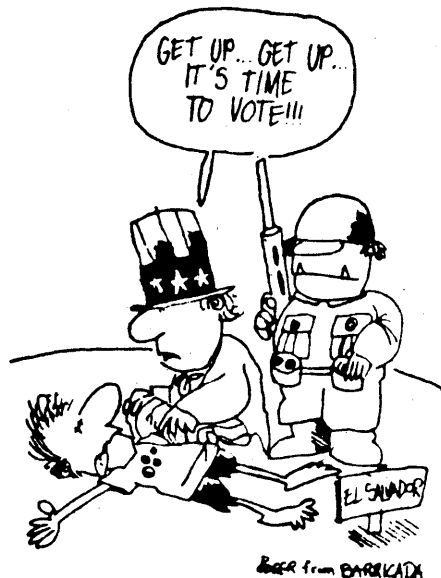
This demonstration will take place in San Francisco on the opening day of the Democratic Party National Convention. At the convention the slogans "Jobs not war," "No troops, no military aid to El Salvador" will be translated into "Dump Reagan." This would only rob the movement of its independence. Should this happen the movement would be taken out of the streets and turned into a vote-getting operation for a politician who

"The FMLN-FDR proposal, however, guarantees the security of both El Salvador and the U.S." But what are Washington's "security interests" in the region if not the maintenance of a system of oppression and exploitation? Is that what we want to guarantee?

This same leaflet points to another way the "Dump Reagan" approach twists political formulations. It poses the question as being one of stepped-up war or negotiations—intervention or dialogue. It says "Reagan is choosing war." The implication is unmistakable. The Democrats are for peace. Vote Democrat.

The reality, though, is that both are war parties that will fight to defend their "security interest" in El Salvador. Reagan is just planning to follow in a long tradition of both Democratic and Republican presidents. Both Johnson and Nixon did it in Vietnam: negotiate to seem reasonable at home and before world opinion, and meanwhile continue and even deepen the war.

The American working people, the oppressed national minorities, students, women and gays have a deep common bond with the workers and peasants of Central America. We have the same enemy. It is the Democratic and Republican parties that defend the wealth of the ruling rich at the expense of the health and well-being of working people here and in El Salvador. Only if we build a massive movement independent of and against the policies of the war parties can we help bring peace and social justice to El Salvador and the rest of Central America. ■



will promise peace to get elected and deliver war once in office.

Orienting to the war parties can knock the movement off the track in another way. A strong tendency develops to adapt the movement's political formulations so that they will not be offensive to supposedly friendly politicians. A particularly glaring example of this is a leaflet published by the Mid-Atlantic CISPES and distributed nationally. Under the heading "National Security" it says,

COME CELEBRATE MAY DAY WITH L.A. SOCIALIST ACTION

Picnic-BBQ
Sunday, April 29—1:00 p.m.
1321 Palma Blvd.
Venice, CA

For more information call:
343-4511 or 392-7685

Greenham women challenge U.S. missiles

By DIANNE FEELEY

The Women's Peace Camp at Greenham Common [England] stands as a symbol of ordinary women's determination to prevent nuclear war. Fifty-five percent of the British population lives within 100 miles of the U.S. Air Force base at Greenham Common, where 19 cruise missiles were deployed in December 1983. Each missile, only 20 feet long, has 16 times the power of the bomb

AS WE GO TO PRESS: Hundreds of police officers forcibly evicted the Greenham Common women on April 4, tearing down the fences and ripping their plastic-sheeting homes. Over 30 protesters were arrested.

dropped on Hiroshima. The missile flies below the range that radar can detect. Therefore deployment of these missiles renders verification treaties obsolete.

According to a recent poll, 73 percent of the British population is opposed to deployment. But in 1979 the British prime minister—along with the heads of state from West Germany, Italy, France and the U.S.—agreed to accept nuclear weapons if no treaty banning them had been signed by 1983. Thatcher's Conservative government supports the stationing of the additional 96 cruise missiles at Greenham Common. Plans also include trucking the missiles on maneuvers around the English countryside in a 22-car caravan.

On March 8, the evening of International Women's Day, women holding a vigil in front of the Greenham Common main gate were pushed aside so that a launcher could get out. Since their arrival last November the cruise missiles have been, according to a British defense industry magazine, "locked" inside the



the women have directly confronted both British and U.S. authorities:

With both determination and humor, the women have invaded the base, emphasizing that the land has been held in common for hundreds of years, and that they will not allow it to be used for purposes of waging a first-strike nuclear war. The women go under the fence, over the fence, or through the fence. The women have picnicked on the base, taken their children for walks there, and celebrated various holidays by invading the base in Santa Claus suits or Easter rabbit costumes. Many picnic baskets come equipped with wire cutters.

They have challenged the military by symbolic actions that represent life rather than destruction. They have danced on half-completed silos and put up Christmas crosses. On one occasion

with the British women, demonstrated as well. They were especially concerned because British Minister of Defense Heseltine had announced in the House of Commons he could not guarantee that unarmed women taking direct action against deployment would not be shot. He announced piously, "We have to protect our nuclear weapons."

Despite the pretense of joint responsibility for the cruise missiles, the U.S. military is in complete control. Many American women felt that if unarmed women were going to be shot for doing things that the Greenham Common women had been doing weekly since the camp began, U.S. women should be at their side.

Lawsuit filed

In November, just before the missiles landed at Greenham Common, 12 British women and two U.S. Congressmen (Ronald Dellums and Ted Weiss) filed a legal challenge in U.S. federal court. They charged that the deployment of the missiles is illegal under both the U.S. Constitution and international law. Since the cruise missiles are first-strike weapons, the lawsuit maintains that deployment is in itself a violation of the UN Charter, which proscribes the illegal use of force.

The women recognize that even while they have legal arguments on their side, a victory will be difficult. Whoever loses in the lower court will appeal to a higher court. Yet the women feel good about



being able to bring a suit against those who are guilty of deploying the missiles.

As part of their bringing suit in the U.S. federal court, the Greenham Common women have opened an office in New York City. They are organizing speaking tours, publicizing the case, and raising the money necessary to carry out a serious political and legal battle. The night before filing the case, they held an all-night candlelight vigil on the steps of the U.S. Courthouse in Foley Square. On the day the case was filed, peace camps were set up at all 102 U.S. bases in Britain, illustrating the presence of foreign military bases on their soil.

"I'm not a feminist and I'm not a radical. I'm just a woman who's fighting for her life. It's that simple for me. I have nothing to lose and everything to gain."

Simone, Greenham Peace Camp

base. *Jane's Defence Weekly* reported in its Jan. 14, 1984, issue that there had been consultations between U.S. Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and his British counterpart, Michael Heseltine, over the political problem the women's peace camp posed. While not wanting to admit the influence of the peace camp, the U.S. Air Force has been unable to plan for deployment beyond the nine-mile perimeter fence. Pentagon sources had maintained that the missiles would be deployed "when the British population gets used to them."

The women's camp began two and a half years ago. In the summer of 1981 women living in the area decided to march from Cardiff, the capital of Wales, to Greenham Common. They hoped that their action might spark a political debate over the deployment of the missiles. But the press did not cover the 110-mile march of the 80 women and children. By the time the group arrived at the U.S. Air Force base, they decided to camp and continue their attempt to block the stationing of first-strike nuclear weapons in their neighborhood.

Living in tents and "benders"—branches of trees covered with plastic—under harsh conditions, and facing harassment and eviction, the women have established a strong political presence at the eight military gates.

The women *did* succeed in launching a national and international political debate over deployment of the U.S. missiles. In asserting their right to life and to live without fear of nuclear annihilation,

they invaded a control tower, where they read classified documents, wrote "Greenham Women Everywhere," and, after an hour and a half, switched the lights on and off so that they could be "discovered." No matter how much security is tightened and reinforced on the base, the women find their way inside.

In December 1982, on the third anniversary of the decision to station the cruise missiles, the women at the peace camp called on women throughout Britain to come to Greenham Common and decorate the nine-mile fence with symbols of life. Despite the cold and snowfall, 30,000 gathered. They placed banners, photographs of their children, art work, and balloons along the entire perimeter. This action was built through chain letters, and through the help and aid of trade unions and other peace groups.

Last December women were asked once again to come in massive numbers to Greenham Common. Some commentators thought that they could not muster a significant crowd now that the cruise missiles were stationed there. Obviously the women had lost, they suggested, and soon they would be forced to accept reality and go away.

Instead, 40,000 women came to "Reflect the Base." They brought hand-held mirrors and musical instruments. Every hour, for a five-minute interval, the instruments played, followed by silence.

This time more than 100 U.S. women, who wanted to express their solidarity

To date there have been three hearings on the case. The women and their lawyers have been able to organize expert testimony about first-strike nuclear weapons and what that means to people's lives. They maintain that people—and especially children—have the right to live without the fear of a nuclear holocaust. The Center for Constitutional Rights and the Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy are providing the legal help.

U.S. refuses visa to activist

Helen John, a woman who marched on the 1981 march to Greenham Common, was scheduled to talk about Greenham Common and the lawsuit throughout the Western Pennsylvania and Ohio area in early March. But the U.S. Embassy in London denied her a visa because she faces a court charge in Britain stemming from an October 1983 demonstration at Greenham Common. The charge, possession of wire cutters with intent to commit damage to property, is being contested by John, who has elected to have a jury trial in mid-April. However, the embassy decision to deny her a visa appears to violate the U.S. immigration law, which states that aliens are to be denied visas only if they have been convicted of "crimes of moral turpitude."

The decision to deny Helen John a visa appears to be an attempt to prevent an outspoken and popular opponent of nuclear weapons from meeting with American citizens. In a BBC radio poll taken last December, John was named as the seventh most popular woman. Her visit was particularly important because she has been active in helping to convince British trade unions to oppose first-strike nuclear weapons and U.S. military bases in Britain, and to support unilateral disarmament. In addition, she has spoken throughout Western Europe and Eastern Europe about disarmament.

Ironically, another Greenham Common peace camp member, Jean Hutchinson, has been prohibited from leaving the U.S. After she spoke at a peace meeting at a church in Pontiac, Mich., she was arrested on three counts of conspiracy. She is barred from leaving the country until after her trial.

Today there are half a dozen peace camps in both the U.S. and Britain, publicizing the manufacture and deployment of nuclear weapons. Few are like Greenham Common, open to women and children only. But the women's peace camps do have an important role to play. As Greenham Common has shown, when women rise up as women and demand an end to militarism, the old argument that a war must be carried out to defend the women and children collapses.

For further information about the lawsuit and speaking tours, contact: Greenham Women Against Cruise Missiles, c/o Center for Constitutional Rights, 853 Broadway, 14th Floor, New York City, 10003. Call (212) 674-3304.

Iranian children are cannon fodder

Terrance Smith, in the *The New York Times Magazine*, describes the report of an East European journalist who saw "tens of thousands" of Iranian children "roped together, in groups of 20 to prevent the faint-hearted from deserting, hurl themselves onto barbed wire or march into the Iraqi minefields in the face of withering machine gun fire to clear the way for Iranian tanks." "We have so few tanks," an Iranian officer explained, without apology.

At the same time, the U.S. government, one of Iraq's principal backers, admits that Iraq has been using chemical weapons. A United Nations report issued March 24 states that an investigative team found traces of mustard gas during on-site inspections of the battle zone. ■

It has been over five years since the February 1979 revolution in Iran. Three and one-half years have been spent in a war with Iraq.

In September 1980 Saddam Hussein, president of Iraq, ordered the invasion of Iran. The stated goal of the Iraqi invasion was to prevent the Iranian revolution from penetrating into south Iraq where the Shi'ite peasants of Iraq live.

In response, *Jomhouri Islamie*, the Iranian Islamic Republican Party (IRP) daily, published an appeal from Khomeini to the people of Iraq. It stated, "It is your duty, as well as that of the army, to overthrow Ba'athism, the non-Islamic party."

The United States and its allies, such as Saudi Arabia, also feared the spread of the Iranian revolution. While the United States did not want Iraq, a long-time ally of the Soviet Union, to control the Iranian oil fields, they approved of the Iraqi military offensive to crush the Iranian revolution.

Khomeini's counterrevolution

During the first few months of the war, there were massive mobilizations inside Iran to defend the revolution. Men, women, and young people volunteered. Fedayeen and Mojahedeen members participated. Even the Kurdish people, who were under attack by the Iranian government, were ready to fight

Stabilization under mullahs

By EVAN SIEGEL

February 10 marked the anniversary of the overthrow of the Shah by the Iranian masses. The February uprising was the culmination of the most sweeping mass mobilizations seen in the history of the region. The echoes of the bloody confrontations which punctuated these mobilizations have not yet been silenced by the imperialist powers or by the counterrevolutionary governments which came to power on the backs of the people.

From the time it was swept into power, Khomeini's Islamic Republic has been plagued by the contradiction between the need to stabilize its rule politically through a vigorous assertion of nationalist values, and the need to stabilize its rule economically by reestablishing ties with the imperialist world.

One obstacle to this process of stabilization, however, has been the hostility of the Iranian masses to imperialism and to the old regime. Indeed, successive governments since 1979 have needed to legitimize themselves by publicly humiliating the imperialist countries. This is what led sectors of the ruling clerical caste to exploit the seizure of the U.S. Embassy in November 1979.

Different strategies for containing the mass upsurge were pursued within the provisional government selected by Khomeini, and later within the government of Abolhassen Bani Sadr. The "moderates" (liberals in Iranian political terms) favored a more straightforward capitalist normalization. The clerical fundamentalist current, on the other hand, was more attentive to riding the crest of nationalism unleashed by the revolution.

The division between these two wings was never pure. The "moderates" needed to borrow from the fundamentalist arsenal of political demagoguery. For example, the "moderate" Bazargan proclaimed inflammatory statements about how the left, the Kurds, or the unemployed were U.S. or Israeli agents, while Bani Sadr incited street riots against the student left. For their part, the parasitic clergy needed qualified technocrats and administrators of the liberal wing in order to firm up its links with the West.

In June 1981 the Islamic Republican

Iraq on the condition that their autonomy be recognized.

Within less than two years, the Iranian troops had managed to push back the Iraqi army behind its own borders. But in July 1982 a turning point occurred in the war, with Iran launching a large-scale offensive directed against the Iraqi city of Basra. Internally this military offensive was accompanied by the unleashing of a wave of official repression aimed at dismantling the mass organizations of the revolution, and at silencing all opposition to the Islamic regime. Over 20,000 Iranians were summarily executed for their opposition to Khomeini.

At this point, Saddam Hussein began to call for a unilateral ceasefire and peace. The Khomeini regime, however,

refused Hussein's offer, demanding instead war reparations and a change of regime in Iraq.

What has followed in the last two years has been a grim spectacle of death and destruction. Tens of thousands of "volunteers" are rounded up monthly in Iran and are then sent out to the front lines to be slaughtered. Rejection of the war is growing among the Iranian masses, particularly the youth. This is also increasingly the case among the soldiers and peasant masses of Iraq.

End the fighting now!

The mullahs in Iran have managed to deal a crushing blow to the Iranian revolution. Today they are pursuing a policy of normalizing relations with imperialism and returning to a more "normal" form

of bourgeois rule. The demagogic but reactionary Baathist regime in Iraq is also shoring up its relations with the imperialist powers.

For their part, the imperialist countries continue to arm Iraq—while making sure that sufficient arms get to Iran as well. They hope that the ruling cliques in both countries will exhaust the masses in their respective countries. Nonetheless, if the war begins to threaten the stability in the region—or threatens vital oil supplies—the United States and its allies may intervene militarily.

This war has not resulted in the liberation of any nation or people in the Middle East. Rather it has resulted in over 250,000 deaths and over 500,000 permanent injuries. Almost every family in Iran has lost one or two relatives. This war has cost over \$400 billion.

This is a war between two capitalist countries. The continuation of the war is not in the interest of the workers and toilers of Iran or Iraq. They have nothing to gain from a military victory of one side over the other.

A victory for the workers and peasants of Iran and Iraq is only possible through the defeat of the Saddam Hussein and the IRP governments at the hands of their own workers and peasants. Working people in the United States must demand that the imperialist governments stay out of the Persian Gulf region.

- End the fighting now!
- Imperialists out of the Gulf! ■



middle class sections of Persian-speaking urban areas."

By September 1981, the Iraqis were being driven back from Iranian territory. Iraqi military officials conceded that they had lifted the siege of Abadan and were being pushed over the Karun river.

By April 1982, after a massive offensive, Iranian forces had decisively broken the stalemate in the war and were advancing rapidly. The Islamic Republic's confidence soared as Iraq and the Arab Gulf states cowered. Iran's President Khomeini exclaimed, "The Arabs should know that we are the most powerful country in the area."

By now, Saddam Hussein was anxiously looking for a way out of the war on terms which would allow him to stay in power. But the war had been much too good for the Iranian regime: (1) It had provided the furnace in which to forge its armed forces—above all the Revolutionary Guards and Mobilization Corps. (2) It had kept the army, the only organized alternative to the clergy, out of Teheran politics. (3) It had generated an atmosphere of national unity under clerical hegemony which countered demands for social improvement.

Land reform rolled back

The land reform, for example, was one of the first victims of the war. The land that had been seized by the peasants was gradually returned to its former owners. The massive migration of peasants to the cities—dwarfing the flight from the land which took place under the Shah—is mute testimony to the paralysis of Iranian agriculture.

A similar process has taken place in the factories. During the period of revolutionary instability, the regime cultivated controlled mobilizations of the workers, and through a process of purging unreliable elements and promoting loyal ones, consolidated its hold over the Islamic factory organizations, gradually depriving them of any independent character. This was accompanied by the implementation of totally reactionary labor legislation.

Iran's political stabilization has been accompanied by a dramatic economic recovery—based on oil profits—which has increased the gap between rich and poor. In next month's issue of *Socialist Action* we will survey Iran's foreign policy and its growing trade and financial ties with the imperialist centers. Future articles in this series will analyze the status of women and of the oppressed nationalities, as well as the state of the opposition currents inside Iran. ■

Party (IRP), the fundamentalists' combat party, consolidated its power having out-manuevered then-President Bani Sadr. The Mojahedeen insurrection against this creeping coup by the mullahs was mercilessly stamped out in an unprecedented wave of mass executions. The IRP recovered from the cycle of violence which left its most capable leaders dead, and dealt its death blow to the Mojahedeen by capturing and executing its leading cadre inside Iran in February and March of 1982.

The war between Iran and Iraq also played an important role in stabilizing the Islamic Republic. Richard Cottan

writes in the January 1984 issue of *Current History* magazine:

"The Khomeini regime had indeed lost support in Iran since early 1979. In fact, by September 1980, when the Iraq attack occurred, the regime was probably down to its core support. It had lost the support of ethnic communities that adhere to Sunni Islam and was badly weakened in the large and important Turkish-speaking Azeri community. It had purged and hence alienated the large, secular-minded middle class. And it generated little strong support in Persian-speaking rural areas. Its intense support was mainly in the lower and lower-



By NAT WEINSTEIN

"In state after state, large blocs of voters show hostility to the unions," stated nationally syndicated columnist Joseph Kraft in his March 27 column. Kraft gives faint praise to "labor" for enabling Walter Mondale to "claw his way back" against Gary Hart after suffering stunning losses in recent primaries. But increasingly the labor bureaucracy, Kraft argues, is proving to be a liability to aspiring politicians.

Kraft cites Professor Mark Perlman of the University of Pittsburgh, who notes that "several different groups in the population have turned sharply against labor." He lists retired people living off fixed incomes who "blame inflation on big wage increases forced by the unions." He refers to Blacks, Latinos and the middle class, all of whom, he

Mondale/Hart: No friends of labor

claims, are turned off by positions taken by the unions.

Aside from the false insinuation that wage increases cause inflation, Kraft's theme that labor's positions have allowed its traditional support from these layers to slip away contains more than a grain of truth. But the reasons for this are not the ones given by the apologists of big business.

For example, such advances as unemployment insurance and social security pensions—won by the labor movement in the 1930s and enjoyed by all these sectors of the population—have been allowed to stand still, at inadequate levels, or even shrink. This was a conscious policy carried out by the bureaucrats at the head of the labor movement. Each union has carried out a policy of opting for its own supplementary pensions, unemployment insurance, and private medical plans.

The foolishly narrow-minded policy of cutting a separate deal for each union has left members of weak unions—not to mention the unorganized—to fend for themselves. Ironically, private medical plans are being undermined by profiteering hospitals and doctors who have raised their rates beyond the capacity of employee welfare funds to maintain the existing level of benefits. Fewer workers in every industry further undermine these welfare plans.

The reason the labor bureaucrats have stood by and watched all the social programs get cut back is simple: the capitalist party candidates slavishly supported by the union bureaucrats refuse to take a

stand in favor of an adequate program of social security, much less to carry it out! For the labor bureaucrats to organize a campaign around such strategically important social objectives would lead willy-nilly to a break with the Democratic party. Consequently, the labor bureaucracy pursues the disastrous social policy of every union for itself and the working class as a whole be damned.

Self-defeating policy

This suicidal policy continues unabated. The labor bureaucrats have tied their fate to Walter Mondale, who promises damn little and will give even less if elected. History has its way of punishing those who close their eyes to experience. The self-defeating policy of adapting labor's aims to the fundamentally antilabor policy of the best of the capitalist political "friends" has so eroded labor's political standing that its endorsement now appears to be as much a liability as it is a credit.

Joseph Kraft and other labor-haters have good reason to gloat at Mondale's difficulties. Kraft ends his column with the observation: "Soon, a Democratic senator said of the AFL-CIO, 'they'll be up for sale. They'll go the way of the Teamsters.'" (The Teamsters supported Reagan in 1980 and seem headed in that direction in this election.)

Today Mondale's chief rival for the Democratic Party nomination, Gary Hart, is raking him over the coals for his position on Central America. Hart correctly nails Mondale for his support of

imperialist intervention. Hart, for a brief period, demagogically called for the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from the region. Hart shows that he accurately reads the mass sentiment in opposition to U.S. intervention in that part of the world.

Meanwhile, Mondale derides Hart's withdrawal position as "pulling the plug on Central America." But Hart's clear withdrawal position didn't last long. The April 1 edition of the *New York Times* reported that Hart and Mondale now claim that "the other has come around to his rival's position. Both would remove the several hundred troops sent to Honduras for military exercises. *Both would leave in place approximately 200 American military advisers who were training Honduran military units...*" (our emphasis).

The verbal sparring between Mondale and Hart reveals their mutual hypocrisy in attempting to adapt themselves to the mass sentiment against imperialist military intervention in Central America and Lebanon. Both candidates, along with Jesse Jackson, fully support the stupendous military budget—each proposing a somewhat lesser amount than Reagan's program.

Whoever finally gets the nod from the Democratic Party convention will do working people no good. And those in the labor movement who endorse the Democratic Party presidential ticket to "stop Reagan at all costs" will further discredit both themselves and the millions of working people they claim to represent. ■



Former Arkansas Governor Orval E. Faubus, a symbol of Jim Crow segregation, endorsed Democratic candidate Jesse Jackson for president. Faubus is best remembered for ordering the Arkansas National Guard to encircle Central High School in Little Rock in 1957 to prevent the court-ordered enrollment of nine black children.

This, of course, is not necessarily Jackson's problem: He can't be held responsible for who supports him. It's who and what *he* supports that counts. But such endorsements of Jackson are not unique. Other prominent figures, whose "support" for Blacks' rights and workers' rights can only be considered a grotesque joke, have also given Jackson their support. Democratic Party House Majority Leader Jim Wright of Texas said he could support a presidential ticket of San Francisco Mayor Dianne Feinstein and Jesse Jackson. Jackson's attitude toward such endorsements can be measured by his ritual posing for press photographers with Alabama's George Wallace—no less a symbol of American racism than Faubus.

Jackson has received extensive coverage in the mass media and has been gen-

Faubus endorses Jesse Jackson

erally given favorable treatment usually reserved for "major" (approved) candidates. The media's overall friendly treatment of the Jackson candidacy can only be partially explained by the mass Black support Jackson enjoys. The fuller explanation for the boost given Jackson's campaign by the big-business media is their acute concern over the growing boycott of the electoral process by the most oppressed of the nation's eligible voters. Forty-seven percent of them—disproportionately Black, young, poor, and unemployed—abstained from voting in 1980.

Almost all sides of the body politic, for their own reasons, are interested in bringing the abstainers into the electoral process. The Democrats expect to be the main recipients of the votes of those brought into the electoral process by the Jackson campaign. The heads of the labor, Black, and women's organizations hope that greater participation of "their" constituencies at the polls will strengthen their ability to solicit concessions from capitalist politicians.

Even the Republicans, who don't bother to disguise their anti-working class politics, have a stake in getting out the vote of the disaffected and disenfranchised sector of the electorate. They fear that behind the mass abstention lurks a steady accumulation of explosive discontent. As long as the ruling class can keep the choices limited to the "major" candidates, getting this large disinherited mass of people involved in elections is a safety valve for letting off some of the built-up dissatisfaction.

Jackson's base in the Democratic party machine makes him a prisoner of the capitalist money-bags who bankroll the party. The compromises Jackson is compelled to make to earn the support of the capitalist class prevent him from serving the interests of Blacks and all working people. He must support the war budget and its imperialist purposes, albeit with the usual liberal-sounding

phrases calling for piddling reductions in military spending. He must support the principle of capitalist profit-making.

Jesse Jackson, shackled by his dependence on one of the main political institutions upholding racism in capitalist America, may help bring some of the large number of disenchanted sectors back into the electoral shell-game, but it will lead to disappointment and demoralization for these new voters. The only way to bring millions of people who have turned their backs on the electoral farce into political activity that can inspire, mobilize, and produce results is through a decisive break with capitalist political parties.

The idea of a "Rainbow Coalition" has great merit. The exploited and oppressed of all colors need to unite in a political movement to win their freedom from exploitation and oppression. But a

"Rainbow Coalition" tied to the capitalists and their parties will never win freedom. It can only serve as an objective support for the capitalist system. The only way a coalition against capitalist profiteering, racism, and war can carry out a genuine struggle is through electing independent *working class* candidates *against* the parties of the bosses. A genuine "Rainbow Coalition," a labor party *based on the unions*, would be a giant step toward a real struggle in the interests of the disinherited masses, including those who have turned their backs on electoral politics.

While a labor party may not be in the cards for this year's presidential election, we can cast a vote for the principle of class independence by supporting Mel Mason and Andrea Gonzalez, the Socialist Workers Party presidential ticket. —N.W. ■

ROSARIO IBARRA DE PIEDRA

- Spokesperson, National Front Against Repression (FNCR)
- First Woman Presidential Candidate in Mexican History (1982)

Hear: Rosario Ibarra

LOS ANGELES: April 14-18
MAIN RALLY: April 14, 7 p.m.
International Institute, 435 S. Boyle
SANTA ANA: April 15, 7 p.m.
City Hall Annex, Santa Ana

SAN FRANCISCO: April 18-20
MAIN RALLY: April 19, 8 p.m.
Women's Bldg., 3543 18th St.

MINNEAPOLIS: April 20-21
MAIN RALLY: April 20, 7:30 p.m.
Law Bldg., West Bank
229 19th Ave. S., U. of M.

CHICAGO: April 21-23
MAIN RALLY: April 21, 7:30 p.m.
UE Hall, 37 S. Ashland Ave.

NEW YORK: April 23-25
MAIN RALLY: April 24, 8 p.m.
Riverside Church

HOUSTON: April 25-27
MAIN RALLY: To be announced
Contact David Rossi
(713) 643-2030

Oil company mergers: Refineries shut down, thousands lose jobs

By CARL FINAMORE

OAKLAND, Calif.—The latest flurry of mergers threatens the jobs of oil workers and raises the likelihood of an increase in gasoline prices for consumers. The oil companies are rejecting any large scale improvement of their current plants in favor of acquiring the plants of their competitors.

The largest corporate takeover in history with the \$10.2 billion purchase of Getty Oil by Texaco was quickly exceeded by the \$13.4 billion buyout of Gulf by Standard Oil of California (SOCAL). This was soon followed by Mobil gobbling up Superior Oil, the nation's largest independent oil producer.

Who benefits from these mergers?

Gulf's chairman, James Lee, can console himself for the loss of his company with the \$11 million proceeds of his stock options and shareholdings. Wall Street analysts report that Salomon Brothers and Merrill Lynch will share a \$46-million fee for arranging their end of the deal for Gulf. SOCAL's bankers, Morgan Stanley and Bank of America, are also being suitably rewarded.

But what's in it for the rest of us? For starters, it will significantly increase monopoly control of the oil market and enable the top producers to maintain high gasoline prices despite the worldwide oil glut. At the same time, they can cut their production costs through layoffs and plant closings. Ultimately, the wealthy oil barons will decrease production in order to free capital for other currently profitable ventures such as real estate, chemicals, and mining. Eighty-two refineries have been permanently shut down since 1981 and thousands of oil workers have been laid off.

Favorable tax laws such as the oil depletion allowance, which grants huge tax deductions to cover the costs for drilling and exploration, have also added millions of dollars to the treasuries of the oil giants, accounting for profit levels four times greater than 10 years ago. This "embarrassment of riches," as one SOCAL executive put it, has resulted in an unprecedented buying spree by the top corporations in the United States. Between 1979 and 1982, over \$30 billion was spent on mergers in the oil industry.

But not one new oil well has been drilled as a result of the billions of dollars being exchanged in these deals. On the contrary, mergers signal a decrease in oil exploration and production. Mobil and SOCAL were able to "strike oil" by purchasing the large reserves of their competitors. As competition disappears, this trend will continue. Undoubtedly this will prompt the oil companies to demand more tax benefits for any future explorations.

Planning for use—not profit

Using hundreds of millions of dollars in tax write-offs the oil companies make a private claim on a natural resource and then sell it back to us at an inflated price. We need a far more equitable plan to rationally develop our oil reserves for the benefit of all of us, not private profit. A start would be to look into the financial records of the oil companies.

A national plan of investment and production could best be accomplished by nationalizing the oil industry with industrywide working conditions regulated by the unions involved. This type of nationalization under workers' control would end the private exploitation of an important natural resource and is the only protection against further layoffs and price increases. ■

This month's Forum takes up the challenge to the labor movement posed by the reorganization of U.S. industry. With the deepening economic crisis, major industrial sectors are being dismantled while others are consolidated under greater monopoly control. In order to maintain their sacred profits, the employers are resorting to all sorts of schemes to make the workers pay for the crisis: employee "profit-sharing" plans, bankruptcy suits, concession demands, and out-and-out union busting.

The various contributions to this sec-

tion explore the effects of this corporate strategy in the rail, oil, airlines, steel, and construction industries. They sharply expose the disastrous policies of the union leadership in the face of this clear assault on the working class, and they raise the need for a fighting perspective to counter this offensive. Next month's Forum will discuss in greater depth the kind of program and strategy needed to save jobs, defend working conditions, and establish a sound production plan to meet human needs.



Bankruptcy ruling stuns labor

By CARRIE HEWITT

The U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision in the Bildisco case, which allows employers to use bankruptcy proceedings to violate hard-won union contracts, handed a major victory to employers. Top labor leaders, who have remained confident over the years that they can rely on friendly support from the courts, were stunned by this clear warning that future dependence on the legal system for a helping hand will be short-sighted and ill-advised.

The Bildisco case began shortly after Ronald Reagan's election in 1980. Bildisco Manufacturing Co., a New Jersey-based building supplier, had negoti-

ated with Teamster Local 408 for a three-year contract set to expire in April 1982. Barely one year into the contract Bildisco, in January, 1980, refused to pay health and pension benefits and failed to remit union dues that the company had withheld from the workers' paychecks. A few months later, the company also failed to pay scheduled wage increases.

Turning to the legal system, the union filed unfair labor practice charges against Bildisco with the National Labor Relations Board. The NLRB found that the company had indeed broken the law and ordered Bildisco to pay its employees back wages and benefits.

The unions' paper victory, however, was short lived. The company, in complete disdain for the NLRB's ruling, refused to turn over any of the past due wages or benefits. Instead, Bildisco filed a bankruptcy petition seeking permission to set aside the entire financial package negotiated under the contract. Company lawyers argued that Bildisco could save substantial sums of money—approximately \$100,000 in 1981 alone—if only it could get rid of the union contract.

The court granted Bildisco the best of two worlds by allowing the company to continue operating its business while disregarding the financial obligations spelled out in the contract. The bankruptcy court disregarded years of established legal precedent and ignored a specific clause in Bildisco's collective bargaining agreement that stated that the contract would remain binding even

though bankruptcy proceedings might be filed before the expiration of the contract.

Pursuing separate actions, the NLRB appealed Bildisco's failure to comply with its ruling and the union appealed the bankruptcy court's decision. These two matters were eventually consolidated and appealed together to the U. S. Supreme Court in the fall of 1983, over three years after Bildisco first violated the contract.

Neither the NLRB nor the union contested the company's right to force its employees to accept wage and benefit reductions while the company continued to make profits under a court-approved debt reorganization plan. Teamster attorney James Zazzali primarily objected to Bildisco's failure to negotiate with the union before the company unilaterally modified the contract. Zazzali insisted that the union only wished to put forward "a moderate and a modest proposal." The union recognized, Zazzali contended, that they could not force management to reach an agreement on concessions during mid-contract modification talks. However, he urged the court to grant the union an opportunity to voluntarily work out concessions before permitting the company to force concessions through bankruptcy proceedings.

According to *U. S. Law Week* (Oct. 25, 1983), the union's legal counsel went so far as to cite, with approval, newspaper headlines about other unions that

(continued on page 10)

The Goliaths of the Oil Business

After the latest mergers among major oil companies, there's a new order in the industry. Below, a look at two old giants, three new combinations and how they now rank in the standings. Figures in parentheses represent the acquiring company before the latest merger.

COMPANIES Acquiring/Acquired	REVENUES Billions, 1983	NET INCOME Billions, 1983	1983 DAILY PRODUCTION Millions of barrels	WORLDWIDE RESERVES* Billions of barrels
EXXON	\$94.59	\$4.99	2.6	6.347
ROYAL DUTCH SHELL/ SHELL OIL	92.19 (86.03)*	3.99 (3.49)*	3.0 (2.9)	6.37 (5.67)
MOBIL	58.52	1.50	1.3	2.255
SOCAL/GULF	58.07 (29.18)	2.57 (1.59)	2.3 (1.8)	3.59 (1.63)
TEXACO/GETTY	53.42 (41.40)	1.72 (1.23)	2.1 (1.9)	3.90 (1.94)

*As of the end of 1982.

Sources: Petroleum Analysis Ltd. and company reports

Restructuring of steel industry

By SHIRLEY PASHOLK

CLEVELAND—A little over a year ago, the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) signed an agreement with the basic steel companies which resulted in wage and benefit concessions that will cost the average steelworker a minimum of \$11,745 over the course of the contract.

Although the old agreement hadn't yet expired, top union officials had been pushing for months to reopen the old contract and grant concessions to what they described as an ailing industry. These union officers argued that the well-being of steelworkers is integrally tied to the profitability of steel companies.

Two previous concession agreements were voted down by the basic steel local presidents. The second agreement had been pushed by the top union bureaucracy as the best possible deal under the circumstances.

The final agreement wasn't much better than the one that was turned down a few months before. Reflecting the disintegration of the organized opposition in the USWA following the 1977 defeat of the Sadlowski campaign, local union presidents who opposed concessions weren't able to organize to effectively explain their views.

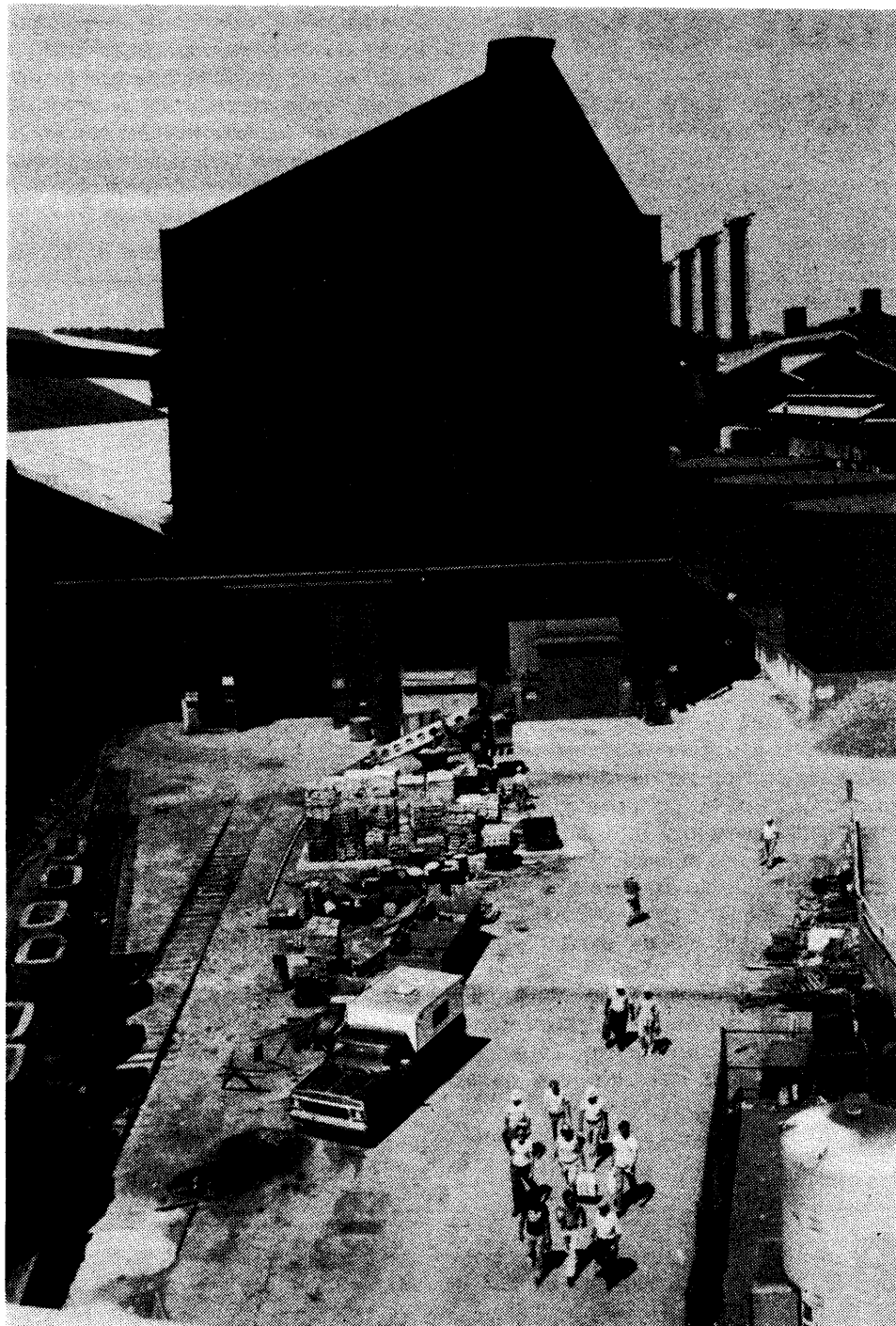
USWA members in basic steel don't have the right to vote on their contracts. Therefore, this concession agreement was never presented to the membership for approval or rejection. The presidents weren't even allowed time to take the proposed agreement back to discuss with members of their locals as many had pledged to do. Although there was widespread dissatisfaction over the provisions of this agreement, some steelworkers felt that, bad as it was, it might help protect their jobs and put some laid off steelworkers back to work.

Business of making money

A year under this concession agreement has made it clear that these concessions didn't put people back to work or lead to investments to modernize existing facilities and prevent plant closings.

Instead, these concessions provided the necessary capital to allow companies to diversify outside the steel industry. US Steel Chairman David Roderick summed up the steel bosses' position when he said, "US steel is not in the business of making steel. It is in the business of making money."

Big business economists assert that there is still too much steel capacity in the world and that much of this excess capacity is in the United States. In 1977, U.S. steel capacity stood at 160 million tons. Now, it's down to 136 million tons—a 10 percent drop in the last year alone.



Homestead, Pa., steel mill slated to be closed by US Steel.

The results of these corporate decisions to scale down steel capacity in order to increase profitability have been devastating on steelworkers. In the past three years, the membership of the USWA has declined from 1.4 million to 725,000. Basic steel employment has suffered a similar decline. In 1953, there were 571,000 basic steel workers. By March 1982, this figure had dropped to 234,000. In 1981 alone, 78,000 lost their jobs. In November 1982, there were 152,000 working basic steel workers—a decline of 150,000 from peak 1981 employment. Of these 150,000, it's estimated that 90,000 will never return.

Despite an upturn in the economy and modest business recovery, the outlook for 1984 remains uncertain at best for

the average steelworker. In fact, despite a 3.8 percent increase in shipments during the first nine months of 1983, as compared to a similar period in 1982, there was an 18.9 percent decrease in employment. Now, with the "recovery" in full swing, only 252,000 steelworkers are still on the job.

Conditions for these working steelworkers have steadily worsened as the bosses play on workers' fear of job loss to force through speedup, job combinations, and wage and benefit concessions.

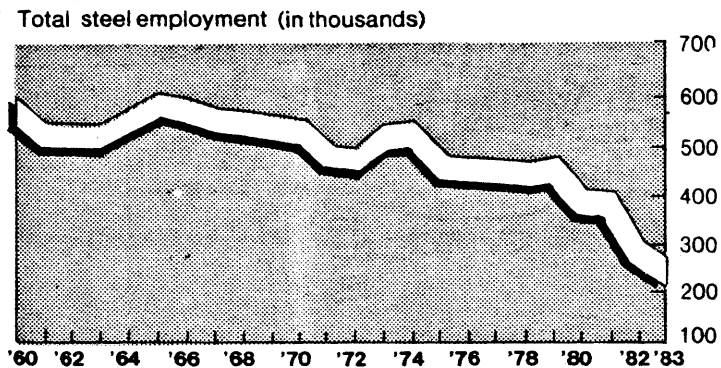
Republic-J & L merger

On Sept. 28, 1983, Jones and Laughlin (a subsidiary of LTV Corp.) and Republic Steel announced their intention to merge. They plan to form a new steel company called LTV Steel which will be the second largest in the United States.

This \$770 million proposed merger would result in a company with 24.2 million ton capacity, controlling 15.8 percent of the U.S. market. (US Steel, the largest American steel company, controls 16.4 percent of the U.S. market.) The new company would employ 64,500—including 17,000 currently on lay-off.

Once this merger goes through, thousands more steelworkers will lose their jobs as the new company combines its facilities to keep only the most efficient and profitable operations from both

Employment is sharply down . . .



companies. Even before the merger was completed, Republic announced plans to permanently close its Buffalo mill.

The bosses are trying to take advantage of workers' confusion over the effects the merger will have on their lives by using blackmail techniques to increase productivity. In Cleveland, a large J & L mill is adjacent to a large Republic mill. J & L workers were told they can expect to lose their jobs if they don't give up their better incentives. Republic maintenance workers were threatened with J & L's practice of contracting out more work. Workers at both mills were advised they'd better give up such local working conditions as lunch breaks and wash-up time if they wanted to continue working.

Similarly, workers at Republic's Warren, Ohio, mill were told they need to become more productive than the Cleveland facilities, or their jobs will be lost.

Republic's Gadsden, Ala., facilities are generally regarded as among its least modern. The work force has been cut from 3000 to 1800. The company demanded a number of local work-rule concessions which the union granted. Although the mill has turned a profit, the company has refused to invest in needed capital improvements—instead demanding additional wholesale gutting of work rules before even considering the investment.

A "fair-minded policy"

On Feb. 15, 1984, Assistant Attorney General J. Paul McGrath announced that his investigation found that the proposed merger violated provisions of the Clayton Anti-Trust Act by causing too great a concentration of two steel product lines. Let anyone get the impression that the Justice Department had suddenly become concerned about the interests of working people, McGrath, in addressing the National Association of Manufacturers, explained: "We plan to pursue an active, vigorous and fair-minded enforcement policy—one that recognizes the contribution that mergers make to the free-market system but that also recognizes the economic threat posed by some mergers."

Lawyers for J & L and Republic immediately began working out a new deal to meet the objections of the Justice Department. At the same time, Commerce Secretary Malcolm Baldrige and U.S. Trade Representative William Brock criticized the Justice Department decision. Even President Ronald Reagan and Vice President George Bush got in the act, expressing their pro-merger feelings.

Finally, to no one's surprise, McGrath announced that a merger plan answering his original objections had been worked out. This involved an agreement that Republic would divest itself of its Gadsden, Ala. mill and its Massillon, Ohio, stainless mill. McGrath insisted these facilities are to be sold, not shut down. There has been considerable speculation as to who the final buyers will be, but one real possibility is that the workers will be finagled into buying the plants.

US Steel blackmail

In December, US Steel announced its plans to permanently close a number of facilities, laying off 15,400 workers. For several months before this announcement, the company presented the workers with various blackmail schemes.



Mergers in rail industry confront resistant workers

By DAVID EDWARDS

HOUSTON—Workers in the rail transportation industry face early summer contract expiration dates this year. Unions representing some 350,000 rail workers, including engineers and train crews, maintenance and repair, and clerical workers are involved. They will face an industry management looking for openings to impose major changes in pay, benefits and conditions of work.

There is a massive reorganization of corporate structures taking place in the transportation industry, and large mergers of main line railroads are occurring. Workers in the industry have responded to the attacks resulting from the mergers. They have engaged in both strikes and political demonstrations. But at the same time they are aware of the experiences of workers in other sectors of the transportation industry and other major industries like steel production.

Recent Supreme Court decisions [see *Socialist Action* March 1984 editorial] set the stage for total economic warfare

author of these lines is revealing in another context. In the 1880s and early 1890s labor engaged in struggle with railroad companies, suffering defeats and deaths at the hands of "federal deputies" (armed thugs) brought against strikers by the companies. A founder of the U.S. socialist movement, Eugene V. Debs, was arrested for his leadership role in these early struggles. It is interesting that trade journals today are recalling this period of struggle. Are the railroad bosses looking for some old tactics with which to confront the unions this summer?

The objective of the mergers is to consolidate the railroad, trucking and warehousing networks under the control of the large rail monopolies. Short lines and spur lines which used to serve internal markets lie abandoned in the dust of fast moving freights. The railroad workers who were part of the "obsolete" and "unprofitable" portions of rail operations have nowhere to go but the unemployment lines.

This reorganization also affects

ing place in major sectors of the productive economy.

The reorganization of the railroad industry has benefited from government support. The 1976 "4R" act which created the Conrail system pioneered the current era in railroad reorganization. This act took "unprofitable" rail systems such as the Penn Central Corporation's rail system (Penn Central Corporation still exists, and recently tried to obtain Gulf Oil!), reorganized them at government (taxpayer) subsidized expense, and prepared the new rail system for return to direct private ownership and management. Conrail workers, in the process, suffered job loss and were forced to accept a 10 percent wage differential between their system and 11 other systems with union contracts.

The 1980 "Staggers Act" (passed under Carter) set the stage for current restructuring, mergers and rate "decontrol." In a revealing candid statement concerning "deregulation," Gus Welty, senior editor of *Railway Age*, wrote in the January 1984 issue of his magazine: "Somewhere, the purposes of deregulation may have gotten lost in political perception: Deregulation was not intended as a vehicle to provide shippers with lower costs, per se; rather, it was intended as a vehicle which would carry transportation companies to a point at which revenues would be adequate to provide for maintenance and improvement of the system, thus removing the threat of a breakdown in the system which would probably lead to nationalization."

The Staggers Act windfall in increasing rates for freight generated proportionally more income for carriers. Interstate Commerce Commission accounting regulations allowing railroads to capitalize and depreciate fixed plant projects, instead of treating them as operating expenses, provided tax incentives (read: lost taxes from railroads) for increasing maintenance-of-way activities. The result has been a rebuilding of main-line roads to high levels of reliability. In the depths of the slump, railroads spent almost as much on maintenance of way as during the last pre-slump period. This reflects the willingness of the government to "interfere" in private enterprise when and where the owners of the companies involved deem it profitable.

Industries related to railroads, such as steel, car and locomotive manufacture, and high-technology applied to railroads, are affected by the restructuring of transportation. Less track mileage translates into smaller orders for steel rails. South Works, Chicago, was supposed to have become a rail production plant, but now, US Steel has decided to close it down.

In addition, merger activity brings company-owned car manufacturing shops into the fray. The Union Pacific shop in Roanoke, Va., is robot-equipped, and can mass-produce the needed cars. The overall effect, while opening up some jobs in the transportation companies, is to reduce overall employment. Shorter production runs will translate into more "furloughs" for rail workers and car-building company workers.

The mergers taking place in the railroad industry—the titanic pressures and forces involved—make confrontation with resistant workers more and more likely. Already major strikes—such as the fall 1982 strike by engineers—have resulted from changes in work rules. In the second part of this article the growing resistance by rail workers to the companies' assault—and perspectives for fighting back—will be explored in greater detail.

At the US Steel Lorain-Cuyahoga Works wire mill in Cleveland, workers were asked to vote themselves out from under the basic steel umbrella, accept a \$5-per-hour cut in wages and benefits, reduce the work force by 100, and give up all local working conditions. Although USWA District 28 Director Frank J. Valenta argued this might help save their jobs, Local 1298 members rejected the offer by a margin of 500 to 10.

In explaining their vote, Local 1298 members said that an important consideration was the effect this agreement would have on other steelworkers. If they voted themselves out from under the basic steel umbrella, it would allow the company to approach other locals with similar offers and lead to the end of a national contract for wages and benefits.

US Steel's blackmail offer at its Fairfield Alabama Works involved contract-

In the March issue of Socialist Action, Shirley Pasholk discussed the recent history and perspectives for the USWA—and the need for a fighting leadership. Back issues can be ordered for 50 cents each from Socialist Action, 3435 Army St., Rm 308, San Francisco, CA 94110.

ing out all maintenance work. In other cases, the company demanded combination of production and maintenance jobs.

Opposition to further concessions in basic steel has grown so strong among the union ranks that the International Executive Board unanimously approved a statement Dec. 13 opposing all further wage and benefit concessions in the steel industry. Literature for all three candidates for International president declared opposition to concessions.

In January, US Steel reported losses of \$1.16 billion in 1983. (Much of this loss was in the form of write-offs for the closed facilities.) The day after announcing these losses, US Steel announced its plans to spend \$575 million to purchase National Steel.

US Steel workers were particularly incensed that a company which supposedly can't find money to modernize its existing facilities had no difficulty coming up with the funds needed to purchase the nation's seventh largest steel producer. They also angrily recall that two years ago, while pleading poverty, US steel was able to buy Marathon Oil Co.

US Steel withdrew its request to purchase National Steel after the Justice Department rejected the original J & L-Republic merger proposal. Regardless of whether this merger is put into effect, it's clear that the restructuring of the steel industry, while increasing profits and providing huge tax write-offs, will do nothing to benefit workers.

Instead of reacting in shocked disbelief to every new attack on steelworkers, the USWA needs to stop operating in the framework of "what's good for the companies is good for the workers." What's good for the companies is increased profits, lower wages, and worse working conditions. The union needs to mount an offensive against the continued attacks on worker's living standards.



Eugene V. Debs, leader of American Railway Union and pioneer of American socialism, initiated first efforts to organize rail workers into industrial unions.

between labor and capital. The cumulative effect of clashes between air transportation workers and, recently, bus workers in the "deregulated" transportation sector indicates that this may be a summer of tension, if not outright conflict, in the rail industry.

A massive restructuring of basic industry is developing during the depths of the present economic crisis. Transportation of commodities and raw materials, for which railroads, oil pipelines and truck fleets exist, must take place on terms more profitable to the owners of large capital holdings who control transportation. This restructuring takes place because of trends in the world markets of multinational corporations. In railroads, especially, this is an historic pattern.

In an article on mergers in the railroad industry (*Modern Railroads*, December 1983), F. Stewart Mitchell states the following:

"It would appear that the present merger movement is more a trend towards regional systems ... Present behavior is much the way the railroad industry consolidated itself in the late 1880s and early 1890s, when, then as now, shifting world trade patterns forced railroads to seek greater economies of scale through acquisition of more and more mileage under the same corporate banner."

The historical consciousness of the

related manufacturing companies such as track maintenance companies. The December 1983 issue of *Modern Railroads* put it sharply: "We must produce machines that get on and off the track more quickly and are more productive while they're working."

The track maintenance operations of rail employers, in turn, are reducing road crews and increasing investment in machinery, thereby intensifying the labor of those left on track crews. The needs of rapid freight transit dictate the emphasis on speed and efficiency in all areas of railroad and intermodal transportation. The increased speed-up is now threatening safe working procedures and decent work rules for crews and maintenance forces in the industry.

The driving force animating mergers and reorganization of labor is the need of capital investment to require rapid realization of profits—a tendency based on reduced turn-over time of fixed capital (the time between installation of new equipment and its physical consumption in the production process). This tendency is driven by rapid technological innovation, the objective of which is to realize profit from investment at above average rates (superprofits). This driving force of the world market exerts pressure on all basic industries in the United States—from steel production and coal mining, to transportation of raw materials and commodities. It is why mergers are tak-



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Airline deregulation forces concessions



Striking Continental Airlines workers show solidarity with workers on strike at McDonnell Douglas, Long Beach, Calif., last Feb. 7.

By MARK HARRIS

Continental Airlines' decision last September to declare bankruptcy—and then reopen two days later after firing two-thirds of its employees and rehiring the rest at half their former wages—delivered a stunning blow to airline workers. The reverberations from this move will be felt far and wide for some time to come. As the Nov. 28, 1983, issue of *Business Week* magazine noted, "Continental's use of the bankruptcy law to abrogate its labor contracts escalates the struggle to a new level."

The struggle *Business Week* refers to is an accelerating effort by the airlines to cut back workers' wages and benefits, eliminate jobs, and impose new work rules. Increased competition and heavy losses in recent years have prompted every airline to seek a greater competitive

edge within the industry by reducing the one real variable in their total operating expense—the cost of labor.

The passage of the Airline Deregulation Act in 1978 touched off a major shake-up in the airline industry. Prior to 1978 the Civil Aeronautics Board saw to it that competition among airlines was kept to a minimum—to the advantage of the major carriers. Increased labor costs were simply passed on to the consumer by raising fares via the mechanism of government regulation.

Deregulation led to new fare wars, however, with average fares dropping 12% since 1977. The entry of 14 new no-frills carriers onto the scene, dramatic fuel price rises in 1978-79, and declining passenger business in a recession-wracked economy have hit the airlines hard. In 1982 the airline industry incurred losses of \$800 million.

Are skies safe under deregulation?

Are the skies safe under deregulation? This question is being posed with increasing frequency as the airlines push their cost-cutting campaign. Harold F. Marthinsen, accident investigator for the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA), warns: "There's going to be a deregulation accident. It's just a matter of time, and maybe we already have had it." Marthinsen referred to the crash of an Air Illinois plane on Oct. 11, 1983, that killed 10 people. The Federal Aviation Administration grounded the airline after a pattern of unsafe maintenance procedures was reported.

The ALPA cites seven safety incidents involving the "new" Continental Airlines. In January, Continental flew a damaged 727 for three days before mechanics for another airline reported its cracked fuselage.

American Airlines and other carriers have eliminated a last minute walk-around check of an aircraft by a mechanic. This is now done by a crew member. The ALPA considers this a lowering of safety standards.

Last fall, air traffic controllers described before Congress an air traffic control system "strained near the breaking point." John O'Hara, an investigator for the House Public Works and Transportation Committee, stated that morale among controllers "is the lowest since August, 1981. There are near accidents happening constantly that are not reported and not being investigated."

The Federal Aviation Administration is notorious, as *Newsweek* points out (Jan. 30, 1984), for its "glacial slowness in mandating safety changes." The reason? Promoting airline profits and regulating safety "are absolutely at loggerheads," according to San Francisco aviation lawyer Gerald Sterns. *Newsweek* reports, "after an outside consultant placed the value of a human life at \$430,000 in 1979 dollars the FAA started considering a ruling that maintaining crash-fire trucks at small airports is not cost-effective. "In the old days the FAA used to say, "If it saves one life, it's worth it," says Wayne Williams, founder of The National Transportation Safety Association, a watchdog group. "I haven't heard that phrase in a long, long time."

Do profits come before human life in this society? A future air catastrophe may well provide tragic affirmation to this question.—M.H.

Business Week duly notes management's main concern: "The troubled airlines have one overriding problem in common: high labor costs." Labor expenses at the major carriers, *Business Week* states, are between 33% and 37% of total operating costs while the no-frills, nonunion carriers allot only 19% to 27% for labor costs.

Airlines impose concessions

Business Week then gets to the heart of the matter: "Several more years of financial blood-letting may be in store...until the major carriers reduce their own labor costs to nonunion levels."

The "non-union" levels at the no-frills airlines such as People Express, Midway, and others include ticket agents who double as flight attendants or baggage handlers, often for as little as \$4.50 an hour, and mechanics whose duties include cleaning aircraft interiors.

A brief survey of some of the major carriers reveals the extent that management's "blood-letting" strategy has progressed. Pan Am started the ball rolling in 1980 when it won \$350 million in concessions. The "incentive" for acceptance of this deal was Pan Am's offer to give employees 13% in company stock and a seat on the board of directors.

Western and Eastern airlines have followed a similar formula. Western negotiated a "partnership plan" in 1983 that cut workers' pay 10% for one year in exchange for 32% in company stock. Within 48 hours after Continental declared bankruptcy, Eastern's chairman, Frank Borman threatened a similar move if workers did not accept drastic pay cuts. Heavily-indebted Eastern owed \$240 million in interest alone to the banks last year. At the behest of its creditors, Eastern imposed an 18% pay cut and, in return, offered employees 25% in stock and a "voice" on the board of directors.

Republic Airlines won \$73 million in givebacks from its workers in 1982 and last fall imposed a 15% pay cut that will mean an additional \$100 million for the company. At TWA management is currently pressing for a 15% pay cut and benefits reduction that would represent a \$200 million savings for the company.

Delta and United airlines have deferred scheduled pay increases for 1984 while they develop "cost-cutting" policies. American Airlines has set up a two-tiered wage structure that pays new employees significantly less.

Frontier Airlines has partly circumvented its union contracts by setting up a subsidiary, Frontier Horizon, that pays its nonunion employees much lower wages.

The result of all these concessions is that the airline industry is once again showing a profit—to the tune of \$500 million in 1983. *Dollars and Sense* magazine (March 1984) reports that profits in the airline industry could reach \$2 billion in 1984. More passengers and lower fuel prices figure into this turnaround but most important are the wage and benefit concessions imposed at almost every airline. *Business Week* reports (Nov. 28, 1983) that United Airlines, for example, operated last year at 96.4% of its 1978 capacity with 21% fewer workers. The

industry as a whole provided 19% more output with less than 1% more employees than the 1978 level.

The response of union leaders to this offensive has been dismal. Striking Continental workers have, for the most part, been left to fend for themselves, as was the case with the air traffic controllers in 1981. Writer Stanley Aronowitz, echoing the "what else can we do" thinking of many labor officials, explains in *The Nation* (Dec. 17, 1983) that the "reciprocal" bargaining formula of the Pan Am, Eastern, and Western agreements is a preferable alternative to the out-and-out union-busting a la Continental. Aronowitz argues that these deals, which offer workers stock and a representation on management boards in return for pay cuts, reflect a necessary shift from "a strategy aimed at militant wage bargaining...to one aimed at winning a larger voice in the management of the various transportation industries."

Both of these "alternatives," however, only weaken the ability of the labor movement to protect job rights and resist layoffs. Did Douglas Fraser's seat representing the United Auto Workers on Chrysler's board of directors lessen the employers' assault on Chrysler workers or save jobs? The answer is no.

The employers, for their part, understand what "reciprocal" bargaining is all about. Andre C. Dimitriadis, Western Airlines' senior vice president for finance doesn't mince words. "We've got to continue the pay cuts. That's why we put in the partnership plan," he said.

The choice is not between an Eastern or Continental-type deal—between jobs with pay cuts or no jobs at all. Airline unions can continue to accept the premise that hard times mean hard deals—and passively acquiesce in the face of a steady drive to impose takebacks—or the labor movement can begin to mobilize their members to stand firm against concessions and initiate a drive to organize the new nonunion outfits. This is the only way airline workers will achieve the type of "larger voice" that can send management one clear message—that the "cost of labor" is not a variable item in the corporate account books.

... Bankruptcy ruling

(Continued from page 7)

agreed to renegotiate contracts in the hope of saving jobs.

The NLRB assumed a somewhat more aggressive stance. They argued that union contracts should only be set aside in bankruptcy proceedings if the company can demonstrate that the business is likely to fail unless the contract is voided.

The Supreme Court rejected both of these arguments. The court's Feb. 22 decision delivered a heavy-handed blow to the collective bargaining process—holding that companies can set aside union contracts immediately upon filing a Chapter 11 bankruptcy petition.

The Supreme Court ruling now allows a company to discharge its labor contracts by merely showing that the contract burdens the reorganization plans and that the interests of the parties—the company, creditors, and union—balance in favor of rejecting the contract.

Little danger exists that thousands of businesses will now rush to bankruptcy court. However, many employers will file such petitions, and countless others will undoubtedly use the Bildisco ruling to threaten workers and impose concessions.

Moreover, the Bildisco case openly demonstrates the Supreme Court's willingness to tamper with what the labor officialdom considered untouchable notions about the so-called sanctity of the collective bargaining process. It is clear that legal action alone offers no real protection for workers' rights.

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Building trades workers organize for fight

By ROLAND SHEPPARD

SAN FRANCISCO—More than 300 rank and file construction workers held a spirited demonstration here on March 30, effectively picketing both gates at the Veterans Hospital. The mass picket was organized at a meeting held three days earlier at the Laborers Hall. The picket was in opposition to nonunion electricians working on the job—an attempt to break the construction unions through the utilization of the notorious “two-gates system.”

The preparatory meeting, organized and initiated by rank and file building trades workers and endorsed by the San Francisco Building Trades Council, was addressed by leading labor officials in California. The speakers included John Henning, executive secretary California State Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO; Jim Herman, president International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union; Stan Smith, secretary-treasurer San Francisco Building Trades Council; Walter Johnson, president San Francisco Department Store Employees; and Paul Dempster, vice president San Francisco Central Labor Council. Dempster read a prepared speech for Central Labor Council President Jack Crowley who was unable to be present. The majority of the officials of the construction unions were absent.

The meeting was chaired by Donna Levitt, a member of Carpenters Local 413. Bill Daly, Painters Local 4 recording secretary-business agent, who is one of the main supporters of the rank and file initiative, introduced her as “the first woman chairing a meeting of this kind... and it's about time!” In her brief introduction Levitt explained, “We're here for one purpose—to draw the line against the two-gate system.”

The “two-gates” refers to a legal trick originally introduced under Taft-Hartley, a union-busting law passed by Congress in 1947. It is designed to overcome the solidarity between building trades unions through prohibition of “secondary boycotts.” The trick is to establish one “gate” for entrance to the construction site for nonunion workers and another “gate” for unionized workers. The

“gates” are a legal fiction. Construction sites are often not enclosed and “gates” are speciously designated by posting a sign.

In the Veterans Hospital case, union electricians who want to picket against nonunion electricians taking their jobs can only picket at the posted entrance used by the nonunion workers. It is illegal to picket the entrance designated for the unionized crafts. This disarms the unions of their most potent weapon for compelling builders to maintain an all-union work force on construction jobs.

Normally, the electricians union would simply place one or two pickets on the job and all trades would refuse to work until the nonunion electricians were removed. Now the electricians union can only picket the “gate” used by the scabs. The other unions, since they are not technically confronted by pickets, cannot stop work in solidarity with the electricians under penalties provided in

Taft-Hartley against violation of the prohibition against secondary boycotts. These penalties include imprisonment of union officials as well as legal sanction of court suits against the unions concerned.

When the Taft-Hartley prohibition of “secondary boycotts” was first introduced, its primary effect was to legally restrain the picketing of a firm utilizing products produced by nonunion workers—hence the term “secondary boycott.” It wasn't until the 1960s that a serious campaign was mounted nationally to break the construction unions themselves. That is when the “two-gate” legal gimmick was instituted. Since that time, the solidarity defenses of the construction unions have been broken through in a growing number of cities considered strongholds for these unions.

Stan Smith told the meeting at the Laborers Hall: “You can picket gate A but not gate B. But you can picket all the

gates at the White House! The Ku Klux Klan can picket the black community but we can't picket gate B! The unions can't do it anymore,” he concluded, “it's back to the rank and file.”

Two-party prison

John Henning said, “Joe O'Sullivan [a recently deceased carpenters' union official with a long and militant reputation] would have let you call San Francisco anything, but not a two-gate city.” Despite his support for Walter Mondale's candidacy, he referred to the Union Labor Party which elected a Mayor of San Francisco in the early part of the century. “In those days,” Henning said, “you didn't have to go hat-in-hand to the politicians.” He then went on to explain that, “as long as the two-party system exists, labor is a prisoner.”

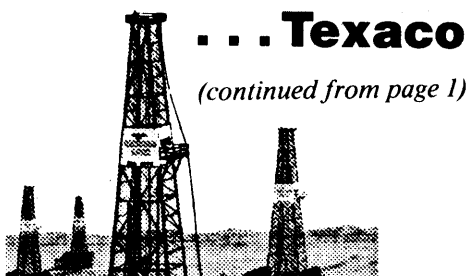
Walter Johnson proposed a mass labor rally in San Francisco's Union Square in response to the attacks on working people and in particular to the “two-gate system.” Johnson concluded his remarks with the warning that it might be necessary, to get the message across to the employers, “to stop all work in the city of San Francisco.”

The rank and file who spoke tended to stress the importance of taking leaflets to the jobs announcing the picket line slated for the early morning of March 30th at the Veterans Hospital. One of these speakers appealed for funds to finance the activities of the committee. Chairwoman Donna Levitt announced that the collection amounted to \$1189.

Three days later 300 rank and file construction workers effectively picketed both gates. While some union members entered the site through newly established third and fourth gates a mile away, many others respected the picket line. The rank and file showed they were prepared to fight. But a victory over the two-gates threat to the existence of the construction unions will depend on whether the unions will bring their full force into the battle despite the undemocratic Taft-Hartley restrictions placed on the right to assembly. ■



Building trades workers picket “two-gates” at Veterans Hospital in San Francisco.



- The hiring of temporary summer help for only \$5 per hour.
- The filling of temporary vacancies for an unlimited time without regard to seniority.
- The elimination of the union dues check-off system.
- An “absolute” no-strike clause to include an expressed “no sympathy strike” provision.
- The elimination of benefits payable to workers engaging in strikes.
- Vacation takeaways.

Texaco also proposed a “wage realignment schedule” but, unlike the above proposals, they refused to define this phrase for the OCAW negotiating team. The parties met again on Dec. 27. The company withdrew its proposal to end the union dues check-off and replaced it with one which denied all union security. Texaco, however, would not budge on any other proposal.

The various Texaco rank-and-file negotiating committees from around the country realized that the offensive against them was being coordinated at top corporate levels. A special meeting of the union's Texaco Coordinating

Council was called for Jan. 4 in Denver in order to develop a united fight back program.

In OCAW the rank-and-file controlled National Oil Bargaining Policy Committee (NOBPC) has the authority to call a strike at any or all locations on national issues developed by that committee. Additionally, local union members can authorize their local rank-and-file negotiating committee to call a strike on local issues, as determined by the membership.

From Jan. 5 through Jan. 8 OCAW's Long Beach committee met almost continually with Texaco, but to no avail. The union proposed a 72-hour contract extension to continue negotiations but Texaco would not accept this proposal. Texaco insisted on limiting the arbitration procedure to discharges and suspensions. They also demanded an immediate end to the dues check-off system. Obviously, they were bent on wholesale contract violations.

Nevertheless, in an honest effort the workers' negotiating committee warned the employees of the hazards of working in such an environment and continued to try to negotiate. They met several times with Texaco between Jan. 8 and Feb. 23. During this time the workers' committee twice modified their proposals and, finally, by Feb. 23 all local proposals had been withdrawn.

The International proposals were very modest. They called for a two-year agreement with annual increases of 20 and 35 cents per hour. This is less than two percent the first year and less than

three percent the second. OCAW has no Cost of Living Allowance (COLA). For its part, Texaco stuck hard to every item listed above. It also added two more takeaways, one of which would establish a regular 42-hour workweek and thereby eliminate 35 jobs. Texaco also finally saw fit to explain “wage realignment” at this point.

Despite the fact that the OCAW had recently fought and won the battle with Union Oil over the institution of a union busting two-tier structure, Texaco's “wage realignment” meant a multi-tier wage structure for workers performing the same jobs, reduction in pay for some job classifications of over \$6 per hour, and pay freezes for the rest.

Bitterly denouncing Texaco for engaging in bad-faith bargaining, the committee proceeded to give 24-hours' strike notice. Their members, as well as the 34 members of the Los Angeles Sulfur Recovery Plant group and the 258 members of the Anacortes group, are now battling one of the world's richest giants.

More takeaways

On March 21 Texaco finally met with the union's committee for the first time since the strike began. Texaco arrogantly put four more takeaways on the table. These included the elimination of job classifications and the replacement of those workers with nonunion, lower-paid contractors, the lay-off of another unspecified 80 employees, and reduction of sick benefits.

More and more rank-and-filers, con-

fronted with vicious corporate assaults, are realizing that labor-management cooperation is a dead-end road that leads to profits for the few and lower living standards for the many. We must ally ourselves with other victims of the corporations' anti-worker policies: the workers of all industries, the unemployed, the aged, the poor, the homeless, Blacks and women. We must rekindle that spark of militancy that gave birth to the CIO.

We in Southern California are trying to take initial steps toward creating an areawide, broad-based strike support committee. In the Los Angeles-Long Beach area the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union has, as always, been a stalwart in providing whatever jobs and pickets it can to strikers. More such support is needed from others. Additionally, we need to mobilize all allies in deploying militant tactics that will win strikes, that will turn the tide on unemployment, and that will secure just treatment for the disadvantaged and a better life for all of us. ■

Donations to aid the Texaco strikers may be sent to: Texaco Unit Strike Fund, 2100 W. Willow St., Long Beach, CA 90810, or Texaco Unit Strike Fund, c/o OCAW Local 1-591, PO Box 483, Anacortes, WA 98221.

Volunteers for the picket lines in the Long Beach area should first call the Texaco Strike Desk at 213-424-2879.



Origins of women's rights movement



By **STEPHANIE COONTZ**
and **DIANE LUTZ**

It was not until working women began to organize that the women's rights movement discovered the power of mass action. Women's rights sentiment had developed primarily among middle class women who were dissatisfied with their exclusion from production and social respect. But a new factor had to come into play before a women's rights movement could develop, and that factor was the organization of the working class.

The collective organization of working women (and men) was made possible by industrialization and the creation of factories, where workers could discover their similar oppression and their collective power. The earliest factories were textile mills. In this country these were centered in New England. The workers in these factories were primarily young unmarried women: white native-born daughters of New England farmers, who could be paid less than men because their employment was seen as supplemental and temporary. Throughout the first half of the 19th century women dominated the textile industry. In 1831, for example, there were 18,539 men and 38,927 women in the cotton industry.

Because of the difficulty of attracting workers to their factories, mill owners initially offered significant inducements, paying wages that were the highest women could then earn—six times more than they could earn at teaching. In the first 20 years of the mills, many factors worked against the women operatives organizing for better wages and conditions and shorter hours: the paternalism of the mill owners, the relatively better working conditions than other occupations, the temporary nature of most women's work, and the acceptance of the ideal of domesticity even by women workers themselves. Most important, there was not yet a consciousness among the working class that they were permanent proletarians. Men as well as women hoped to work only until they could move onto a farm of their own.

But the relatively good working conditions in the textile mills lasted for only 20 years at the most. Faced with falling profits and increased competition after the depression of 1837, companies cut wages at the same time that they increased hours and demanded more

work from the operatives. Those workers who could get out, did so, and were rapidly replaced by Irish immigrants, who, along with the remaining workers, became a permanent wage-labor force.

"Try Again"

The deterioration of conditions in the textile mills sparked the first great organizing efforts in that industry. In 1845 the women workers at Lowell formed the Lowell Female Labor Reform Association, the first real union of mill operatives, which adopted the slogan "Try Again." It was led by Sarah Bagley, and its primary fight was for the 10-hour day, for which they immediately launched a huge petition drive. The women gathered thousands of signatures on a series of petitions and sent them to the Massachusetts legislature, which was forced to hold a public investigation of mill conditions—the first ever held in this country. (This achievement becomes amazing when it is remembered that the women worked for 12 to 16 hours a day in the mills and did their signature gathering in their "free time." The commission, however, after admitting the terrible conditions, concluded that no interference was necessary.)

Even though, in most cases, women workers initially accepted the values of domesticity, early women unionists were forced to argue against women's social restrictions just to organize as workers, and were early led to demanding their rights as women. Indeed, it was working women who issued the first call for women's suffrage: The United Tailoresses' Society and the Association of Working People (an early labor party) of New Castle, Del., first demanded the vote for women in 1831—exactly 17 years before Seneca Falls. (Lavinia Wright, the secretary of the UTS, also demanded the right of women to sit in legislatures.)

Throughout the 1840s a growing number of workers, especially textile workers, joined the Abolition movement. In 1832 workers at Lowell had formed the Lowell Female Anti-Slavery Society, and by 1845 they were holding fairs to raise funds and circulating anti-slavery petitions despite hostility from the mill owners. The mill women argued that both free labor and slave labor faced a common enemy: "the lord of the loom and the lord of the lash."

But women in the Abolition movement faced opposition to their full participation. By 1839 the Anti-Slavery Society was split into two factions: those who supported the right of women to participate equally in the organization and its work, and those who denied women the right to speak publicly and hold office. In 1840 the World Anti-Slavery Convention refused to seat the

women delegates. Convinced of the need for an independent women's movement, these women went on to organize the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, launching, with the full support of Black abolitionists, the women's suffrage movement.

Mass action tactics

The history of the women's suffrage movement illustrates the dependence of the women's movement on the state of the working class struggle. In the United States, the women's rights movement went through a period of intense conservatism in the second half of the 19th century. This was a period of aggressive capitalist expansion. Jim Crow was institutionalized, the final mopping up campaigns against the Native Americans were undertaken, strikes were brutally attacked, and toward the end of the period, with the Spanish-American War of 1898, the United States embarked on its first imperialist ventures. Many observers have documented the ways in which the women's movement adapted to these pressures, formulating racist appeals to give white women the vote, attacking working men, and attempting to ally with reactionary forces. Unfortunately, most of them have also implied that this period of conservatism was essential for the victory of the suffrage movement.

In fact, however, while the women's suffrage movement suffered from beginning to end from the limitations of its white, middle class leadership, the period of its most intense accommodation to conservatism was the period in which the suffrage movement made no significant gains. Only in the wake of populist agitation and radical labor organization did

movement only lasted four years: Barry resigned when she married and she was not replaced. The Knights of Labor itself, despite its rapid growth, was torn by internal conflicts and fell apart in the 1890s.

The labor movement itself, however was gaining strength. The depression that began in 1893 was the worst the country had yet seen. It lasted four years and stimulated massive labor unrest, which expressed itself in the 1892 Carnegie Homestead steel strike, the 1894 Pullman strike and boycott, and the coal field battles of the 1890s and 1900s.

AFL excludes women

The most important labor organization of this time was the American Federation of Labor, founded in 1880. By 1904 it represented 80 percent of the more than 2 million union members in the United States. The AFL was a much more conservative organization than the Knights of Labor, doing less for women, blacks, and unskilled labor in general. While AFL conventions regularly passed resolutions on organizing women, women were in fact excluded from most of its member unions.

The result of this attitude on the part of the most powerful labor organization in this country was that, despite the fact that from 1890 to 1910 the number of women workers doubled from 4 million to more than 8 million, there was a drop in the number of women in unions, from 4.6 percent of all union members in 1895 to 2.9 percent in 1908. Fewer than 1 percent of women workers belonged to unions. During the period of AFL hegemony there was alienation between the suffrage movement and the union



Lewis Hine

Garment workers in turn-of-the-century sweatshop.

suffrage once again begin to win victories, and the final push for women's suffrage was victorious because the organizers began to reject the elitist tactics of previous years and mobilize working people and women of all classes in mass action directly inspired by the labor movement.

The background to this change of orientation was the rapid industrial growth of the 1880s and 1890s, and the growing organization of workers in response to it. The Knights of Labor, founded in 1869 as a secret fraternal order, discarded its ritualistic aspects in 1881 and became the first union to actively seek to organize unskilled workers, blacks, and women on an equal basis with white men.

Women joined the Knights of Labor all over the country in huge numbers. By 1886 there were 50,000 women in the organization. The 1886 General Assembly of the Knights set up a Department of Women's Work, headed by Leonora Barry. For three years she traveled around the country speaking and organizing women. But the Women's Depart-

ment, and this was also significantly a time of stagnation in the suffrage movement.

In 1903 two organizations were formed whose purpose was to help organize the unskilled. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) combated the narrow craft unionism of the AFL, promoting industry-wide organization that included women and even the unemployed. And, perhaps even more importantly for women, the National Women's Trade Union League (NWTUL) was created to bring together trade unionists, socialists, and liberals around the goals of organizing women into unions, persuading unions to organize women, and lobbying for protective legislation for women and children workers. The NWTUL became the major meeting-ground of middle and working class women, a place where working class techniques of mass mobilization could be absorbed by middle class women.

Organization among women workers proceeded slowly until the first large-scale women's strike occurred among the

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Fur and leather workers on strike in New York in 1912.

garment workers in the winter of 1909-1910. The strike began when workers at the Triangle Waist Company in New York were locked out after having joined the waistmakers union. It quickly spread throughout New York and Philadelphia and became known as the "Uprising of the 30,000." The NWTUL played a prominent role in the strike, which was the first organized almost completely by women. The strike was generally a success: It won a 52-hour week and a 12 percent pay raise for the majority of the shops. The most important gain was the right to unionize. When the strike began, every shop in New York had been open; when it ended, 312 shops had a full union contract. The International Ladies Garment Workers Union emerged from the strike as the AFL's third largest union—and the majority of its members were women.

Other large strikes involving women in the early part of the century included the garment workers in Chicago in 1910, and the famous strike among the Lawrence, Mass. mill workers in 1912, in which the IWW played a prominent role.

The fruitfulness of working class inspiration for the women's movement was demonstrated by the Boston Equal Suffrage Association, founded in 1901, which learned that its greatest support was in the factory towns. Its experience with organizing working people led this group to pioneer the aggressive mass action and outreach activities later adopted by the Women's Party in the final push for women's suffrage.

In addition to the role of working women in inspiring new forms of action by the suffrage movement and gaining it support from working men, there was also a small but significant involvement of working women in the actual suffrage struggle. The Knights of Labor supported women's suffrage and Leonara Barry was a popular speaker at suffrage meetings. Barry also played a prominent role in the successful Colorado campaign for state suffrage in 1893. After 1903, the suffrage movement began in turn to reach out to working women.

In 1907 the Women's Political Union (WPU) was formed, uniting factory and professional women around the goal of involving working women in the suffrage struggle. In 1910 Agnes Nestor, the secretary-treasurer of the International Glove Workers joined the "suffrage special" train from Chicago to Springfield. She spoke at whistle stops to industrial workers on women's suffrage. Union women in the NWTUL spent much of their time on the suffrage campaign. Leonara O'Reilly, Maggie Hinchley and Rose Schneiderman were all popular speakers. The NWTUL organized a special suffrage division, the Wage Earners Suffrage League, to reach unionists on this issue. League speakers would travel to wherever a state suffrage bill was pending.

After 1914 women workers increasingly entered the same trade unions as

men. Their collaboration increased the support of male workers for the rights of women, and in turn their support brought the suffrage movement out of its 20-year period of defeat known as "the doldrums." In Colorado, for example, the suffrage vote had lost in 1877, but in 1893, in a campaign where the only new factor was the support of labor, it won. In New York, it was the working class and immigrant vote that won the suffrage bill of 1917.

Allies in working class

Through the huge upsurge of working class women's activities in the aftermath of the garment strikes, the suffrage movement gained new allies in the working class movement. In 1919 there was a large increase in women in unions and a tremendous upsurge in both the women's movement and the labor movement. By 1920 women were being organized in large numbers, and, of course, women had won the vote, using mass action strategies pioneered by the NWTUL, the WPU, and the Boston Equal Suffrage Association.

We have argued that the 19th and early 20th century women's movement (while middle class in leadership and even in composition) depended ultimately on collaboration with the working class struggle. Today's women's movement not only depends more than ever upon such collaboration, but must move toward the development of a working class leadership and program. Women make up about 45 percent of all workers, and more than one of every four union members is a woman.

The mutual dependence of the women's movement and the labor movement is especially clear in the current economic crisis. Labor is under attack, and the existence of sexism hurts its ability to resist. Low wages paid to women pull down the wages of all workers, and labor solidarity cannot exist if almost half the workforce is excluded from equal participation.

On the other side, the lip service to equality by politicians and business has begun to disappear now that profits are threatened, while the legal protection that many middle class women counted on has been practically wiped out by the Supreme Court ruling that it is not enough to prove the *fact* of discrimination to get redress; we must also prove *intent*.

It is clear that women cannot rely on business or on the politicians and judges that the capitalists control. Only by uniting with labor can women hope to further their struggle for equality, and only by involving women can labor present a united stance against corporate attacks. The two struggles must be connected by the participation and leadership of working women, who experience both sides of the contradictions women face, and can mobilize both these important forces in the struggle for our rights. ■



The lesbian and gay movement in Mexico

By ANN MENASCHE and DURINDA COURSEY

The following article is based on information obtained during a visit to Mexico in August 1982. The authors are lesbian-feminists from San Francisco. Ann Menasche is a member of Socialist Action. Durinda Coursey is not a member of any political organization.

When we arrived in Mexico City on Aug. 15, we had not a clue on how to locate lesbians and gays, or the gay rights groups that we had heard existed in this city. All we had was the address of the PRT (Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores—Revolutionary Workers Party, Mexican section of the Fourth International). From a gay PRT member, we obtained the address of Lambda, a mixed gay rights group that the PRT had helped organize in 1978, and presently the largest gay organization in Mexico. Lambda is housed in the former PRT headquarters, which Lambda shares with Oikabeta, an autonomous lesbian organization.

The following evening, we met Manuel Alvarez Reyes of Lambda, who granted us an interview and showed us copies of the Lambda newspaper, *Nuevo Ambiente* (New Environment).

Lambda has an active membership of 40 and a periphery of 100. Nearly half of its members and leadership are women. Most members of Lambda are socialists. They actively support workers' struggles in Mexico and other countries, and are in solidarity with the revolutions in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Many are sympathizers of the PRT.



During the last election, Lambda fielded lesbian and gay candidates of their own choosing under the PRT ticket, and supported the PRT candidate for president, Rosario Ibarra de Piedra. Rosario, a feminist, is one of the most well-known women in Mexico and a leader of the National Front Against Repression.

Police violence

A key issue among lesbians and gay in Mexico is anti-gay and anti-women violence and extortion, often involving the police. Gay bars are periodically raided and must bribe police in order to be allowed to operate.

While we were in Mexico City, police arbitrarily detained large numbers of gay men in the streets, holding them until they paid a bribe. Lambda's response was to help organize a demonstration in coalition with other groups.

Anti-gay repression has been even more severe in Guadalajara, the country's second largest city. Two weeks earlier, 250 lesbians and gays were arrested at the point of machine guns while peacefully attending a gay social function. The prisoners were kept totally incommunicado for as long as three days, and were required to pay large fines to win their release.

Lesbians and gays in Guadalajara have been organized since 1981 in Grupo Orgullo Homosexual de Liberacion (Gay Pride Group for Liberation). At the time of our visit, Lambda and Oikabeta members were doing all they could to assist their sisters and brothers in Guadalajara.

There are presently no lesbian bars in Mexico City. Lesbians meet through the political and social activities sponsored by both organizations, or else sheer luck. There are a few gay men's bars, some having an exclusively upper-class and others an exclusively working-class clientele. Only one of these bars, a working-class bar, admits any women at all. This is a grim place, overwhelmingly male, mafia-run, with no dancing permitted. (We were told that same-sex dancing is actually illegal in Mexico.) We noticed a surprisingly large number of soldiers in uniform at this bar.

The situation for lesbians and gays in Mexico City is better than in the rest of Mexico. Though repression is still severe, lesbians and gays are organized and fighting back. But in most of the rest of Mexico, with the exception of Guadalajara, there is no organized gay movement, and lesbians and gays are extremely isolated. Lesbians, of course, are the most invisible, often even to themselves. Many of them, especially those who are poor and uneducated, or those living away from major cities, still have no alternative but marriage and children.

Yet lesbians and gays in Mexico are more organized and therefore better off than in most other countries in Latin America. The pioneer work of the lesbian and gay movement in Mexico will clearly begin to have an impact way beyond its borders.

"Socialism without Sexism"

The most striking difference between lesbians and gays in the United States and those in Mexico is the degree of radicalism and political activism of lesbians and gays in Mexico. On Gay Freedom Day, 4,000 marched in Mexico City to protest gay oppression. Their slogan was "Socialism without Sexism."

Since there is no illusion of freedom in Mexico, no illusion of being able to "make it" within the system, lesbians and gays in Mexico who are "out" or who identify with the gay liberation movement are, almost without exception, revolutionaries.

Though they have tried to create supportive social alternatives for themselves, there is no talk that we heard of building a counterculture as a retreat from political struggle. Their political consciousness, and complete independence from capitalist politics can teach a lot to gays and lesbians in the United States, particularly in "gay meccas" like San Francisco. ■

Letter to editor

Dear editor,

Your interview with Margarito Montes Parra of the Mexican PRT (*Socialist Action*, March 1984) contains an important mistake. In the middle of the interview it states, "All the left parties—including the PSUM (Communist Party)—participate in the Front Against Repression, which last October organized a national day of protest..."

It was not the Front Against Repression which organized the day of protest, but the National Workers, Peasant, and Popular Assembly (Asamblea Nacional Obrero Campesino Popular). Fraternally,
Francisco
San Francisco



Michael Bry

Sharon Lockwood, Wilma Bonet, and Audrey Smith stickin' with the union in San Francisco Mime Troupe's new production, *Steeltown*.

A musical comedy on plant closures

By ROBERT HURWITT

Steeltown, a musical comedy written, directed, and performed by the San Francisco Mime Troupe.

There is nothing inherently funny about the economic and labor issues connected with plant closures, but that hasn't stopped the San Francisco Mime Troupe and its chief script writer, Joan Holden, from celebrating the troupe's 25th anniversary with a musical comedy based precisely on those issues.

That humor can be a potent political weapon has been often remarked, by Mark Twain among others. It has been used as an effective tool for political reform (by, for example, Twain and

THEATER

Thomas Nast against Tammany Hall, or by Walt Kelly against Joe McCarthy), and in the hands of a master, such as Bertolt Brecht or Italy's Dario Fo, serves to drive home a point and even deepen the analysis of a contradiction. After more than two decades of practice, the Mime Troupe, too, can be counted among the masters of the technique, and have excelled in using humor to spread the word about, and help raise opposition to, American intervention in Vietnam and in El Salvador among other issues.

But these are comparatively easy issues, painted in bold black and white and lending themselves to treatment in an agitprop format, compared to the complexities of plant closures and union policies and politics. Happily the Mime Troupe has risen to the challenge with one of their most thought-provoking, not to mention entertaining, productions since *A Minstrel Show* in the mid-sixties.

That production, a stunningly vivid recreation of the old minstrel format, had delved beneath the surface of civil rights questions to raise issues, at that time politely ignored in many circles even within the civil rights movement, of sexual politics and class divisions, and culminated in an unmistakable call for Black Power (one that was deeply disturbing to many liberal supporters of the civil rights movement, and which proba-

Steeltown will tour in California through May 17. It opens in San Jose on April 12, in Pasadena May 3, in San Diego May 5, and in Los Angeles May 9. Another tour of the midwest and northern industrial states is slated for the fall. For information call 415-285-1717.

bly was more responsible for Troupe members being arrested after some performances than the stated complaint of obscenity).

Steeltown has similar far-reaching implications and, interestingly enough, at least one local California arts council has tried to break its contract for a performance on the grounds that local growers may be offended by its pro-union stance. Based on information gathered from the Plant Closures Project, the Midwest Center for Labor Research, and other sources, *Steeltown* looks at the closure of the major plant in one industrial town, at a union powerless to intervene, at workers sucked into management's version of the American dream, and at suggestions for workers taking over control of the factory; then steps back, almost 40 years, to look at the same town, same plant, and some of the same people in the heady atmosphere at the close of World War II, to trace the historical roots of some of the problems the workers face today.

A bold step

It's a bold step, for it involves shifting gears on the audience right in the middle of the show, breaking the hold on our imaginations that has been secured by characters we've just gotten to know, and leaving us hanging just as the plot has come to its moment of crisis. It's also a bold step in that it departs from the Troupe's recent standard format of winding up its shows with a happy ending that provides a progressive solution to the problems raised in each piece.

But it works on both levels, for it serves as an alienation device, in the Brechtian sense, breaking the hold of both plot and character so that our minds focus all the more clearly on the issues, and looking beyond easy answers to provide audiences with historical information necessary to coming to intelligent conclusions. And, for all its structural and thematic complexity, it is also a wonderfully entertaining, brilliantly performed, an often hilariously funny piece of theater.

The first act centers on two families, the Magaracks and the Mirandas, next door neighbors in the steel town. Joe Magarack (Dan Chumley) is a middle-aged worker killing himself in overtime work at the steel mill in a last ditch mass effort, encouraged by the union, to save the plant by increasing its productivity and in his own personal effort to win the company's Man of Steel Award for productive workers. His wife Annabelle (Sharon Lockwood) is conducting her own personal campaign to get Joe to take early retirement, willingly or not,

while she improves herself with night classes including one from a Marxist economics professor.

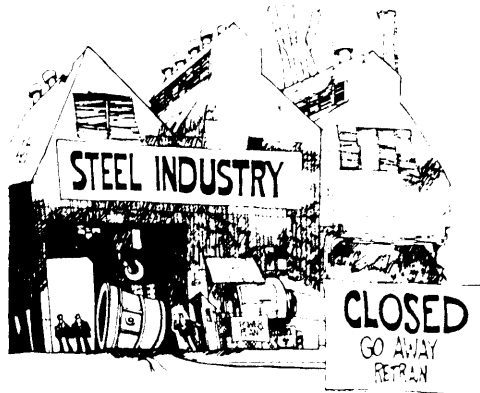
The Mirandas have it tougher, for Louie (Eduardo Robledo) has been laid off, and, he feels, sold-out by the union, and is resentful of having to stay home and keep house while his wife, Linda (Wilma Bonet), struggles to bring home the bacon and do all the housework Louie neglects.

It's a strong first act, though it did tend to go on a bit too long when the play opened at San Francisco's Victoria Theater March 12, and some elements, notably a confused bit about attempted plant sabotage, didn't seem too well worked into the text.

But it's laced with some fine songs by Bruce Barthol and Eduardo Robledo, sharply directed by Arthur Holden, and performed with captivating broad energy by all the principals and by Audrey Smith as an uptight ramrod of a company PR person and by Gus Johnson as the increasingly exhausted foreman trying to drive his workers toward greater and greater productivity. Just when the various plot lines have come to a head—when Joe has been injured in a plant accident, Annabelle has decided to leave him, Linda is laying down the law to Louie, and the plant closing has been announced—suddenly we're thrown back into the closing days of World War II.

If the first act was good, the second is splendid. Here we meet Annabelle as a young defense worker at the same mill, working alongside Linda's mother, Rita (Bonet again), and a tough Black worker named Rose (Smith). We also meet the youthful Joe (both Chumley and Lockwood seem to have shed several decades from the first act), returning from the war to take the job of the very woman he falls in love with.

It's an upbeat, up-tempo act, filled with the euphoria of the war's end and vistas of prosperity for all, staged in the lively production numbers of the forties with new songs that seem to be right out of that era. Particularly remarkable are an Andrews Sisters-type number, "National Defense Boogie," sung with impeccable style by Lockwood, Bonet,



and Smith, and "Stand'n With the Union," an early rhythm blues style piece sung by Smith even as her union is talking cooperation with management and women and Third World workers are beginning to lose their war-era jobs.

The euphoria builds through victory celebrations to end the production on a note of high optimism—but it's a false optimism, as the first act has already made clear. Beneath the energetic production numbers the Troupe has been laying the groundwork for the actions we have already seen, showing us women being laid off, racial tensions at the plant, an old union organizer (Robledo) whose warnings go unheeded, and the international's unwillingness to support a local strike over issues of wages and the firing of women. *Steeltown* sends us out of the theater highly charged with the energy, expertise, and humor of the Troupe, but also charged with information and energized about an important issue. This is the San Francisco Mime Troupe at its best.

Robert Hurwitt is Editor of *West Coast Plays*, Associate Editor of the *East Bay Express* (Berkeley), and theater critic for *California Magazine*.

Bill Farrell: 1910-1984

Bill Farrell, a founding member of the Socialist Workers Party and a supporter of Socialist Action, died in Moraga, Calif., on April 1, 1984. He was 74 years old.

We wish to express our recognition of his life's work, which was devoted to the cause of socialism.

When Bill Farrell was 17 he shipped out as a merchant seaman. During World War II he and other Trotskyists in the Merchant Marine helped to keep open the bonds of communication among revolutionaries around the world.

Bill Farrell became a member of the Socialist Party in the 1930s while a student at Columbia University. The Trotskyists at that time were working as part of a revolutionary current inside the Socialist Party. Farrell joined with the Trotskyists in 1936. After the Trotskyists were undemocratically expelled from the Socialist Party, he helped to found the Socialist Workers Party in 1938.

Bill Farrell remained an ardent socialist although he was gravely ill for many years. When Socialist Action was formed, he became a supporter.

We extend our deepest sympathy to his family and to his comrade and companion, Ada Farrell. Friends in the San Francisco Bay Area are planning a meeting to commemorate Bill Farrell's life and his contribution to the socialist movement. *Socialist Action* will publish a commemorative article in a forthcoming issue.

... Nan Bowe — healthcare in Nicaragua

(continued from page 16)

campaign against diarrhea. This involved teaching mothers how important it is to rehydrate babies, to give them fluids, and to bring them to the centers so they will not die, because a baby with diarrhea can die in a day or so.

And there were also campaigns for sanitation, prenatal care, and well-child care. One of the interesting things was that formula was banned in Nicaragua. There were big posters encouraging women to breast feed because they knew that breast feeding was the best for women.

But the conditions in Nicaragua today are still quite poor. And I think what this reveals is that the threat of aggression from the United States is a public health issue in Nicaragua. And this is so because if you're forced to spend money to prepare your defense, you cannot use that money to build more hospitals, improve healthcare, and buy more supplies.

So all of these issues tonight are the same. What's happening in East Oakland is the same as what happened in Nicaragua or Grenada. The main thing is getting education and taking care of mothers and babies—particularly prenatally. If we spend money for prenatal care, we're spending money for the next generation. It's like money in the bank.

But just as importantly, if there's one thing we can all do here tonight is realize that it is our sons who will be going to fight against the people of Central America. It's the young brothers that are on the streets of Oakland who will fight there. They are the ones who went to Grenada and probably didn't even know there were Black people there; and when they got there probably thought: "I'm shooting people who look just like me."

And so this is the way the war will be fought. Rockefeller won't have to send his sons. He can always find oppressed people to go fight his wars. It will be my son, my collective sons, who will be there.

"Good Morning, Revolution"

By KWAME SOMBURU

Langston Hughes (1902-1967), the very popular and prolific Black writer and poet, had a career that spanned over three decades. He was called the "poet laureate of the Negro Race." Hughes' reputation generally is that of a poet and writer who was deeply concerned about the problems of being Black in white America. He wrote with seriousness, humor, and plenty of satire.

According to Professor Saunders Redding of Cornell University, "no poet caught with such sharp immediacy and intensity and humor and the pathos, the irony and the humiliation, the beauty and the bitterness of the experience of being Negro in America." An excellent chronicler of the Black-American experience, Hughes was generally not considered to be a writer who drew radical and revolutionary conclusion from his acquired knowledge and life experiences.

But there was a revolutionary side to Langston Hughes. Hughes' poetry, prose and essays from 1925 to 1967 show him to be a strong opponent of capitalism and racism, and a firm advocate of revolutionary change.

I believe that it is an appropriate tribute to Langston Hughes to name my column, which begins this month, after the title of a poem that he wrote in 1932. Here it is in its entirety.

GOOD MORNING, REVOLUTION

by Langston Hughes

Good morning, Revolution:

You're the very best friend
I ever had

We gonna pal around together from now on.

Say, listen, Revolution:

You know, the boss where I used to work,
The guy that gimme the air to cut down expenses,

He wrote a long letter to the papers about you:

Said you was a trouble maker, a alien-enemy,

In other words a son-of-a-bitch.

He called up the police

And told 'em to watch out for a guy

Named Revolution.

You see,

The boss knows you're my friend.

He sees us hangin' out together.

He knows we're hungry, and ragged,

And ain't got a damn thing in this world—

And are gonna do something about it.

The boss's got all he needs, certainly.

Eats swell.

Owens a lotta houses,

Goes vacationin',

Breaks strikes,

Runs politics, bribes police,

Pays off congress,

And struts all over the earth—

But me, I ain't never had enough to eat.

Me, I ain't never been warm in winter.

Me, I ain't never known security—

All my life, been livin' hand to mouth,

Hand to mouth.

Listen, Revolution,

We're buddies, see—

Together,

We can take everything:

Factories, arsenals, houses, ships,

Railroads, forests, fields, orchards,

Bus lines, telegraphs, radios,

(Jesus! Raise hell with radios!)

Steel mills, coal mines, oil wells, gas,

All the tools of production,

(Great day in the morning!) Everything—

And turn 'em over to the people who work.

Rule and run 'em for us people who work.

Boy! Them radios—

Broadcasting that very first morning to USSR:

Another member the International Soviet's done come

Greetings to the Socialist Soviet Republics

Hey you rising workers everywhere greetings

And we'll sign it: Germany

Sign it: China

Sign it: Africa

Sign it: Poland

Sign it: Italy

Sign it: America

Sign it with my one name: Worker

On that day when no one will be hungry, cold oppressed,

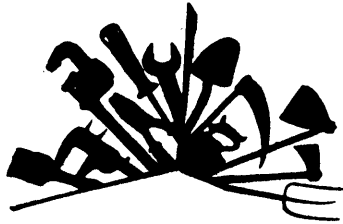
Anywhere in the world again.

That's our job!

I been starvin' too long,

Ain't you?

Let's go, Revolution!



... Zakiya Somburu

(continued from page 16)

\$1 billion in 1981 by a Congress with a Democratic majority.

This government was founded in September 1787, after over four months of secret discussion behind closed doors by 55 financially, politically, and socially privileged white males. They designed a constitution, and a legal, political and military system to serve their interests against the majority of the population who were not represented. That included Blacks, women, propertyless whites, and Native-Americans.

Changes have taken place since 1787 that have somewhat masked the rule of the ruling class. But any serious examination can expose the corrupt, mercenary, and exploitative nature of the present system. We who are involved with the issue of infant mortality must acquire a more sophisticated and knowledgeable awareness of the nature, strengths, and weaknesses of the beast that we are dealing with.

Healthcare in Grenada

Prior to the murder of Maurice Bishop and other revolutionary leaders of Grenada, and the U.S. invasion of that country last October, tremendous gains had been registered in the areas of healthcare, education, employment, and social services. Those gains occurred as a direct result of the March 1979 revolution in Grenada.

That revolution began a four-and-a-half-year process—aborted by the U.S. invasion last year—of putting human needs and desires for a better life ahead of the profit needs of the capitalist system.

Before the revolution, healthcare was a privilege reserved for those who could pay. The upper class patronized the island's private doctors or traveled abroad for medical care, while the rest of the population was left with the decrepit public hospitals which had no equipment, medicines, or even bed linen. Women gave birth on cold concrete floors as cockroaches scurried through the filthy wards.

The revolution decreed health to be a basic human right. Its approach to healthcare was based on the concept of preventive medicine, and primary care teams of health professionals were sponsored by the government to utilize films, lectures, and workshops to popularize concepts of preventive medicine and involve the masses in identifying and preventing health problems in their communities.

That is what a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, can do.

Cubans put healthcare first

In the last year prior to the Jan. 1, 1959, victory of the Cuban Revolution, life expectancy was 58 years, and more than 70 infants died for every 1000 born alive. In 1958, approximately 20 million Cuban pesos were spent on public health. In 1982, a little under 600 million pesos were allocated for public health.

The present infant mortality rate is 17.3 for every 1000 live births, a result of adequate prenatal mother-infant care. In 1959 there was one school of medicine, one school of dentistry and six schools of nursing. Today there are 17 schools of medicine and four schools of dentistry in Cuba. The life expectancy of the average Cuban regardless of occupation, sex, color, or function in society is 73.5 years.

Contrast that with the racial, educational, income, class, sex, and occupational breakdowns for life expectancy in capitalist America.

We must learn, teach, organize ourselves and others, and develop strategy and tactics for our immediate and long-range gains. We must fight to preserve every prior victory and collectively fight to win all of the many battles on the road to the final one—the battle for the complete transformation of this capitalist system. Our battle is for a society where the masses are in control of their lives and destiny—where infants and all human beings come before profits.

... Renee Smith

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various conditions such as anemia, diabetes, toxemia, all of which contribute to low birth weight, which is the leading cause of infant mortality.

This program also includes health education, which goes with counseling women about smoking, alcohol, and drug use in pregnancy. Teenagers and low income, minority, undocumented women are the most likely not to seek or have health care available for them, and they're the highest risk for having a low birth weight baby with illnesses that can cause disabilities and even death.

Save our infants

As a health care provider I have found very simple things that can, in my opinion, save our infants. Comprehensive healthcare and satellite clinics that

are accessible to women in their neighborhoods—so they don't have to travel across town—really has made a difference. Providing bilingual practitioners and having an ongoing 24-hour translation service is also important. Informing people of their resources is another factor. I find that a lot of people who come to me do not realize that they can apply for MediCal and still get prenatal care.

I have a lot of people who go to the welfare office, where you would think they would tell you where you can go to seek prenatal care, but they don't. Outreach makes a difference. Being sensitive and aware of cultural differences, having competent midwives and doctors makes a difference. And one of the most important things that I have found as a practitioner is human kindness.

So I leave you with a saying from Fanny Lou Hammer, who was a Black woman activist: "I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired, and let's do something about it."



RENEE SMITH

A symposium:

Infants Before Profits!

San Francisco Socialist Action held a forum attended by over 70 people on March 30 entitled "Infants before profits: A symposium on the high Black infant mortality rate."

Socialist Action is reprinting major portions of the talks given by three of the speakers at the forum. These speakers are Renee Smith, a nurse midwife at Highland Hospital, Oakland, Calif.; Nan Bowe midwife family Nurse Practitioner; and Zakiya Somburu, coordinator of the Black Women Health Project and a member of the National Black Independent Political Party. In addition to the speeches, Ms. Bowe, who recently returned from Nicaragua, showed slides on health care in Nicaragua.

Renee Smith: "Black infant mortality up"

We're here today to address and protest the fact that 10,000 Black babies will die before their first birthday, at a rate two times greater than white babies. While the overall infant death rate has dropped (which includes white and Black babies), there has been a rise in the mortality rate of Black infants.

Infant mortality is a significant indicator of the state of a nation's health. The state of Black health has strong implications of racism. There are troubling interrelationships between racism, poverty, health care, and health status. To be faced with financial barriers to quality health care, but to also have to suffer from conditions that poverty causes is just too much. To be poor and a member of a racial minority is a heavy burden. I would like to add that other Third World allies are not far behind the Black infant mortality rate.

Here are some statistics: 80 percent of Black people live in or near poverty. Black income is considerably less—not to mention our unemployment level. One out of every two Black children is born in poverty. Black children are three times more likely to be born to a teenager. Forty-four percent of all Black children are born to single mothers; 50 percent of these women are on public assistance. Blacks have less resources and less access to health care. When you're poor, you're sicker, and so you tend to seek health care at a later stage.

A survey in Atlanta, Ga., asked Black women how they viewed their health. About 50 percent of Black women saw themselves in poor or fair health. The truth is that Black women have five times the childbirth complications that white women have due to the fact that we are poor in health, poor in nutrition, and our prenatal care is inadequate.

So when we look at why Black babies are dying, it's clear. It's because of institutionalized racism that breeds poverty and offers totally inadequate health care.

Prenatal care

I work as a nurse-midwife at Highland Hospital. I work primarily with poor and Third World women. In 1983 the midwives delivered approximately 380 babies. The total hospital birth was approximately 1,000. Highland has many pros and cons. Some of the cons are poor nursing staff (there is definitely



Leonard Freed

a shortage of nurses); no 24-hour pediatric or anesthesia; the worst technical equipment (our equipment falls apart all the time); tired staff; long waits in clinic, which is very discouraging—as you can imagine—having to wait five hours to see your practitioner.

One of the major pluses of Highland is the nurse-midwife services. The midwives practice comprehensive prenatal care. All of us believe healthcare is a right, not a privilege. When a woman comes in pregnant, she comes in with her history. Her pregnancy may not be her priority but her reality.

Does she have enough money for food? What is her housing situation? Can she figure out how to get on WIC [a food program for low-income families]? Can she figure out how to get on AFDC [Aid for Families with Dependent Children]?

So what does comprehensive prenatal care mean? It means having a nutritionist, a social worker, a health educator, a public health nurse, a nurse-midwife, a doctor, all available for her and her family needs. At Highland we have nine prenatal clinics. So now we're doing about three-quarters of the prenatal care.

It is well documented that comprehensive healthcare can change prenatal and postnatal outcomes. Early exams plus enough—just enough—prenatal care can make a difference even if someone comes in during the second or third trimester. These continued exams can screen for

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Nan Bowe speaking at March 30 Socialist Action forum.

Nan Bowe: "Health first in Nicaragua"

Nicaragua has a centralized system of health. You have regional hospitals, health centers, and health posts. And then in the frontlines are the brigadistas who go out into the rural areas to do the kinds of work you have to do in terms of sanitation, education and immunizations. The health brigadistas are sort of the cement of the healthcare system because at the village level they are really dealing directly with the people.

Under Somoza, very few received healthcare. Children had virtually no healthcare. Ninety percent of all the medical services were for 10 percent of the population. There was poor sanitation, only 20 percent of the population had access to sewage disposal, and only 40 percent had safe drinking water.

Because of the combination of poor nutrition and poor sanitation, diarrhea was a leading cause of infant death. In the 1970s, six out of every 10 children was malnourished. In 1976, the life expectancy was 53 years. Only a small percent of the population reached old age. Under Somoza, for example, infant mortality in Nicaragua was 121 per 1000. So that meant that for every 1000 babies born, 121 died.

For children less than one year, most deaths were related to infectious disease. Many, many babies died from tetanus, from cord infection. In other words, the cord was cut with a dirty instrument, and then babies developed huge abscesses in the cord because of poor hygiene. And this is true not just in Nicaragua. This is true all over Latin and South America.

In addition to the poor health conditions in general, in 1972 there was a major earthquake. Four thousand Nicaraguans died and 20,000 more were injured. To make matters worse, 13 out of the 37 hospitals were destroyed during the fighting against Somoza.

One of the priorities of the new government was maternal and child health. Mothers and children were 70 percent of the population. Fifty percent of the population was under 14. One of the campaigns developed in Nicaragua was a

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Zakiya Somburu: "Make children a priority"

We have learned much this evening from the well-informed panelists that have spoken to us. It is apparent from what we have heard that the human rights and welfare of pregnant women, infants, and children are not a priority to the wealthy rulers of this country.

The present inhumane, and profit-oriented policies are not unique to the Reagan or Deukmejian [governor of California] administrations. They flow from the very basis and nature of this political, economic, and social system called capitalism.

At the end of 1983, the 4th Quarterly Report stated that the nation's Gross National Product was just under \$3.5 trillion. That was the value of all goods and services produced by this nation's working class and by the cheap labor exploited by U.S. multinational corporations in foreign countries.

However, because this is a government of the rich, by the rich, and for the rich, the overwhelming bulk of that immense wealth is not spent to uplift the living standards of the masses of Americans—and specifically to eradicate the high infant mortality death rate among Black-Americans, other oppressed minorities, and impoverished whites.

A major priority of the wealthy rulers of the United States is their military expenditures. The current so-called defense budget is almost \$1 billion per day, and it is projected to be \$1 trillion for the years 1984-88. Mondale and Hart each want it cut 4 or 5 percent, while Jackson wants it reduced from 20 to 25 percent. Why not end it entirely?

Pregnant women, mothers, healthcare workers and activists, and the tens of millions of America's working class are not involved in making any decisions regarding how the tremendous wealth produced by the working class is to be spent.

The United States is ranked 15th in infant mortality, far behind nations such as France, Japan, and Canada. And as we have heard, Black-Americans have the highest rate in the United States, with first place going to the Black community of Washington, D.C. With tens of thousands of infant deaths per year among Blacks and other oppressed sectors, Congress is going to consider the possibility of increasing medicaid payments to pregnant women by a paltry \$200 million out of that almost \$3.5 trillion GNP.

Twin parties vote cutbacks

We cannot blame this callousness on either the Democrats or Republicans separately. We must blame both parties for their role in representing this profits-first, profits-last, and profits-always capitalist system against the needs and desires of the majority of America's people.

Cutbacks and other anti-human policies did not start with Reagan and the Republican Party, and they will not end if his Republican administration is replaced by a Democratic administration in the fall.

Funds were cut from food stamps, education, and housing programs by Jimmy Carter and his administration. Federal Medicaid payments were cut by

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