

A Socialist ACTION

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Why we need a
Labor Party

OCAW Secretary Treasurer
Tony Mazzocchi's speech
See pp. 10-11



Vol. 9, No. 9 SEPTEMBER 1991 50 CENTS

What the upheaval in the Soviet Union means

The last days of August 1991 were days that shook the world. The scale of the current popular uprising in the Soviet Union has had few precedents since the time of the Russian Revolution of 1917, led by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky.

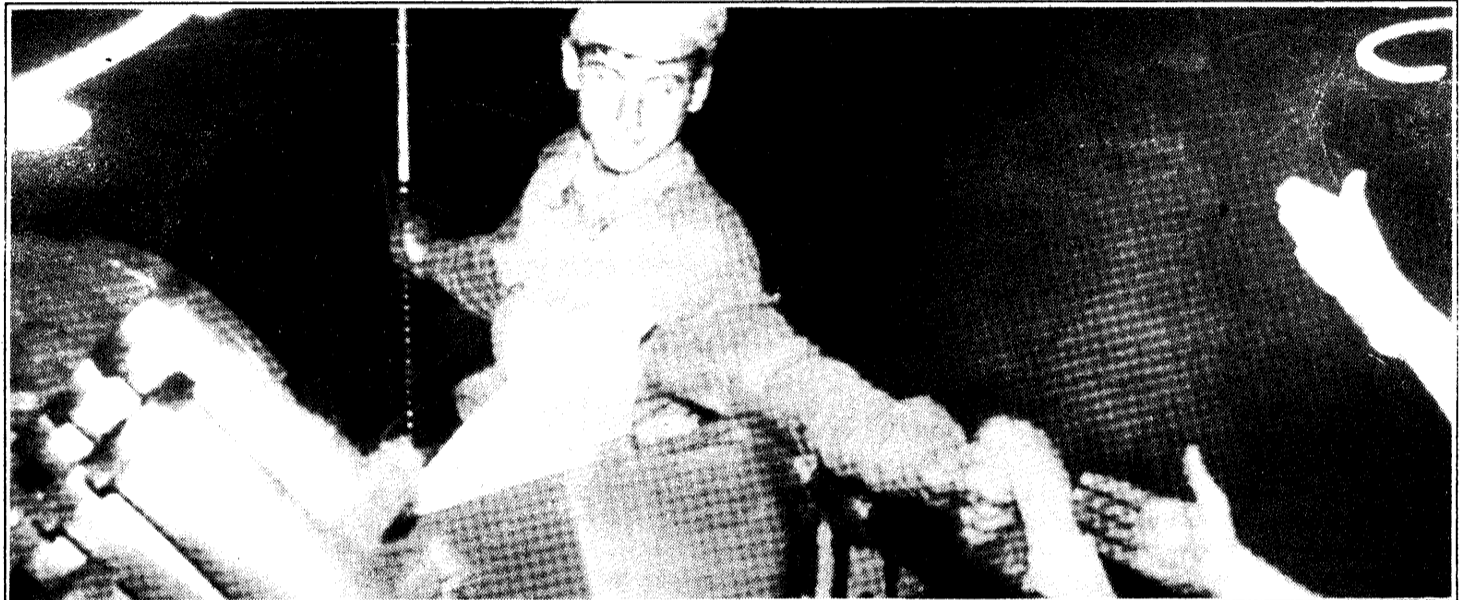
Hundreds of thousands of people filled the streets of Soviet cities. Many stood ready on the barricades, prepared to battle

EDITORIAL

troops and tanks in the cause of democracy and a better life.

Why is the Soviet Communist Party—and with it most Stalinist parties everywhere—undergoing its death throes as the main political instrument of bureaucratic dictatorship?

What is the cause of the current economic and political crisis in the Soviet Union that led to the attempted coup d'etat? Why did it fail so ingloriously and so swiftly? Understanding these momentous events is vital for those who are concerned with the future of working people and the human



race as a whole.

In the first instance, it must be stated that this episode does not confirm the view advanced by virtually all representatives of the capitalist world—and even some in the workers' movement—that there was a fun-

damental division for and against capitalist restoration in the Soviet ruling bureaucracy.

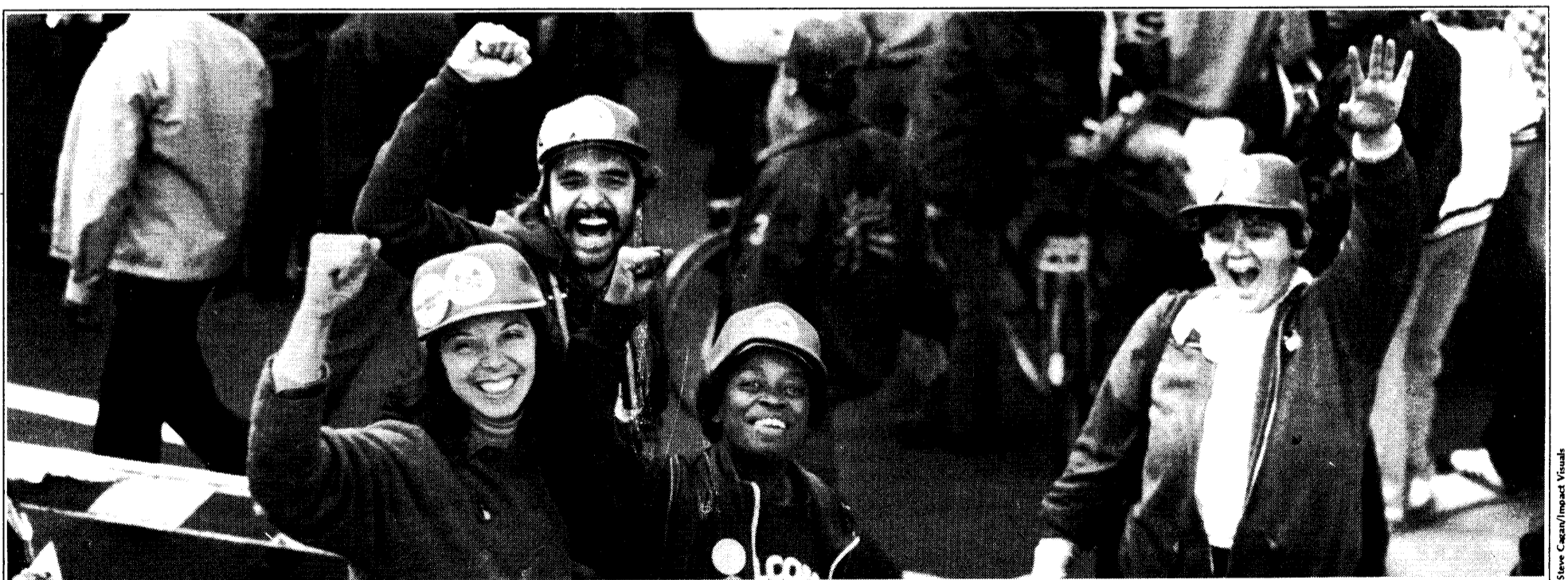
Divisions in the bureaucracy?

To the extent there are divisions among

those in governmental and state power—from Gorbachev, to the organizers of the coup, to Boris Yeltsin, to Eduard Shevardnadze—it is *not* between those supporting a market-based capitalist democracy, on one

(continued on page 12)

Labor needs its own political party



Sept. 19, 1981: The first Solidarity Day. In the ensuing decade workers' standard of living has deteriorated and unions are under attack.

Political independence: Only effective way to fight against gov't, employer offensive

By NAT WEINSTEIN

The formation of a mass workers' party in this country—independent of the parties of the bosses—could well go down in history as labor's Declaration of Independence. It would have a potential significance equaling the action of the Continental Congress on July 4, 1776.

Now, for the first time, a national orga-

nizing committee has been created by trade unionists to promote a political break from the Democrats and Republicans—the two parties of big business.

Labor Party Advocates (LPA) is a new membership organization founded by Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Secretary Treasurer Tony Mazzocchi. LPA is recruiting union officers and rank and filers to help spread the word about the need for an

American labor party based on the trade unions.

This positive development comes at a time when American working people are experiencing one of the most intensive assaults on their living standards in history. The quality of life for the great majority of the working class has steadily worsened on every front.

In the last 20 years, real wages of all

workers have been increasingly driven down, with the biggest losses suffered by older workers cast out of their jobs by the closing down of mines, mills, and factories. Many of these highly skilled workers face permanent unemployment or jobs at MacDonald's hamburger-servers' wages.

Growing numbers of our sons and daughters are also taking the brunt of this

(continued on page 9)

Pity the poor bureaucrats



Fightback

By
Sylvia Weinstein

The entire world has been glued to their television screens watching the events in the Soviet Union. Two sets of bureaucrats were vying for power. The Yeltsinites and their "hard-line" opponents were each trying to prove to the capitalist world that they were the most able to turn the people of the Soviet Union into a passive labor force for capitalist exploitation.

The Soviet bureaucrats have been doing their best to lay the entire country on a banquet table for world imperialism to feast on. The capitalist class has no

fear that any of the bureaucrats are socialists. It knows they have been busily ripping off the Soviet economy so that they'll be well-fixed when and if they're able to bring capitalism back to the Soviet Union.

What the world's capitalists do fear, however, is that no faction of Stalinist bureaucrats can deliver the goods. Even worse, they fear that while the wolves and foxes are bickering among themselves, the chickens will begin to organize and take over the whole hen house. The capitalists are deadly afraid that the working class of the Soviet Union will

tell both the bureaucrats and the capitalists to get lost.

The working class does that every once in a while. They just take matters into their own hands and do it themselves. That's what the Russian workers did in 1917, and that's what the American working class did in the 1930s. They told all of their bosses and all of their labor bureaucrats to get back and out of their way. They took them all on and came out on top.

Never forget that. The American workers showed that they can defeat the whole kit and kaboodle of bosses and bureaucrats.

Bosses demand more

And let's not kid ourselves. American workers know what the Soviet worker is faced with. Fat-cat bureaucrats are not much different no matter which country they live in. They all live off of the labor of the workers and they all want the workers to stand back and keep quiet and let them do their talking for them.

The well-dressed and well-fed bureaucrats, whether in the Soviet Union or in the AFL-CIO,

want to dicker with the bosses over how much workers should give back to these greedy pigs. They are willing to give up jobs, health, working conditions, wages, and anything else the boss demands—rather than organize the membership to fight. Their primary concern is that union dues keep coming in to pay their fat salaries. But sometimes they run into problems.

This is because the capitalist class is never satisfied. They always want more. They are especially eager to destroy unions whenever the opportunity presents itself.

The union "leaders" are so used to doing all the talking and keeping workers in the dark, that if workers don't push them into action they wake up one morning and find that the goose that lays the golden egg—the unions—has been killed by the bosses.

Workers need democracy

The rank and file of the unions must have democracy in order to defend their interests, not only from the bosses but from their

own bureaucrats—who are always ready to play "lets make a deal." The workers need to discuss among themselves the best way to defend their interests.

This is true of all movements for justice—the women's movement as well as the labor movement.

During the civil rights movement, it would have been impossible for Martin Luther King to tell the millions of Black people to go home—that he would handle the whole thing.

First of all, it would never work. Second—without those millions of Black men, women, and children—Martin Luther King would have been just another voice crying in the wilderness. And that was his strength, he knew it and did everything he could to inspire them to get into the streets and fight for their human rights.

That's what workers everywhere need—a new fighting leadership that dares to mobilize the many millions of us everywhere in the world, so that we can defend and advance our class interests. ■

By MIKE McCALLISTER

Police pattern of racism, homophobia, exposed by murders in Milwaukee

MILWAUKEE—When an articulate white man explains that the 14-year-old Laotian boy they found naked, dazed, and bleeding in the street is his lover, the police believe him.

When a Black witness phones later to find out what happened to the boy, she is told he is safe. "That's a boyfriend-boyfriend thing," the officer says. "...I can't do anything about somebody's sexual preferences in life." While the two talk, the boy is dying at the hands of the white man.

While the Jeffrey Dahmer serial killings have shaken Milwaukee, this image laid bare the rampant racism and homophobia of the Milwaukee police.

Dahmer has apparently confessed to killing 17 men, mostly gay Blacks, over the last two years. Konerak Sinthasomphone became number 13 on May 27.

The case has outraged Milwaukee's gay community since July 22, when police found preserved body parts in Dahmer's refrigerator. Reports that he usually found his victims in gay bars resulted in officials terming the slaughter "homosexual overkill."

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force noted in a statement, "When has the term 'heterosexual overkill' ever been used to describe the serial killing of women by a male perpetrator?"

When neighbors realized that police were in the killer's apart-

ment two months before, shock became rage against police insensitivity. Protests against police neglect of growing violence in minority communities, as well as the gay and lesbian communities, began almost overnight.

The largest demonstration to date was on Aug. 5, when more than 1000 men and women of assorted hues gathered to honor the victims. Victims' family and friends repeatedly denounced the police actions in this crime.

Victim Richard Cuerrero's sister said she and her family had searched for him for three-and-a-half years. "The police just let it aside," she said. "They didn't give a shit. (Richard) was just another minority person missing."

Tim Grier of Queer Nation Milwaukee wondered how police couldn't make the connection that young Black gay men were turning up missing one after another. "They just didn't care enough," he said.

Activists have called for an independent investigation of the police department's relations with the Black, gay, and lesbian communities. Scott Gunkel of the Lambda Rights Network, a local gay organization, told the



Jeffrey L. Dahmer

rally that the investigation should focus on "how deep this prejudice runs" inside the police department.

Mayor John Norquist set up a commission headed by Marquette University President Albert DiUlio to investigate police-community relations, but Black and gay leaders both questioned its make-up and purpose.

The Rev. Leo Champion of

Fellowship Missionary Baptist church announced the creation of a "black-ribbon commission" the following day. A gay newspaper, the *Wisconsin Light*, called for a similar commission within the gay and lesbian community as well.

The three officers involved in the Sinthasomphone incident were suspended with pay pending an internal investigation. On

Aug. 1, Police Chief Philip Arreola charged them with negligence.

The police association responded to the suspensions by calling for Arreola's resignation. A poll of "rank-and-file" cops showed that 98.1 percent of them opposed suspending the three veteran officers.

The *Milwaukee Journal* reported in the wake of the Dahmer controversy that 69 percent of the city's Black population feels the police discriminates against them. Only 41 percent of Milwaukee Blacks rated the police in their community positively, while 70 percent of the whites gave them a positive rating.

Ten years ago, the cop murder of Ernest Lacy sparked similar protests in Milwaukee, which ultimately led to the retirement of then-Chief Harold Breler. In the aftermath of the Dahmer slayings, some are questioning whether changing chiefs was enough. ■

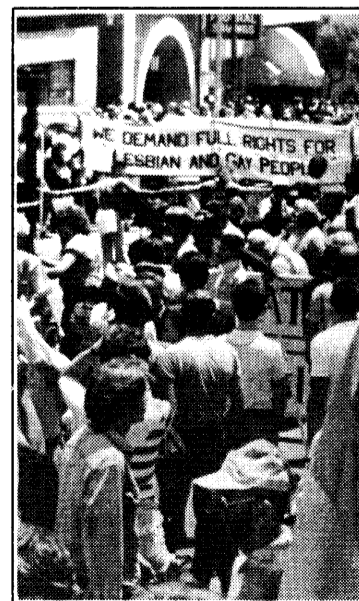
St. Paul, Minn., right-wingers push drive to repeal gay rights ordinance

By BRIAN SCHWARTZ

ST. PAUL, Minn.—Citizens Alert, a small right-wing organization, recently led a petition drive to repeal this city's gay and lesbian rights ordinance. Citizens Alert collected 5462 signatures, which are enough to place the ordinance up for a referendum vote this November.

In the July 18 *Pioneer Press*, Citizens Alert activist Larry Putnam assured the voters that his organization "doesn't hate homosexuals and we are not gay bashers in any sense of the word." But members like himself, he said, "also think gay rights is wrong." Putnam said that, in some cases, landlords and employers—such as religious organizations and the Boy Scouts of America—should be allowed to discriminate against gay people.

The majority of St. Paul's citizens, however, have nothing in common with Citizens Alert's repressive aims. At one time or



another, most of us have come into conflict with employers and landlords over the questions of wages and rental prices. Our wages are never enough and our rent is always too high. We have absolutely nothing to gain by allying ourselves with employers

and landlords to roll back the civil rights of our lesbian and gay sisters and brothers.

It is unfortunate, yet not unexpected, that Mayor Jim Scheibel and the Democratic Farmer Labor Party are not throwing their arsenal of resources into fighting Citizens Alert's repeal campaign. Scheibel could use the powers of his office and make prime-time radio and television appearances educating St. Paul voters on the need to protect the civil rights of gays and lesbians.

But all he has given us was a meek four-line quote in the newspaper pointing out the need for a campaign that he's not going to initiate or lead.

Human rights are always going to be put up for referendums and repealed as long as Republicans and Democrats remain in our public offices. Both parties remain completely tied to capitalism, which profits from exploitation and divisions between people

If St Paul voters keep the gay and lesbian rights ordinance in place this November, we can carry ourselves with pride—knowing that we are a people who protect the civil rights of the oppressed. ■

Socialist Action
Closing date:
August 26, 1991

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Socialist Action (ISSN 0747-4237) is published monthly for \$8 per year by Socialist Action Publishing Association, 3435 Army St., No. 308, San Francisco, CA 94110. Second-class postage is paid at San Francisco, Calif.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Socialist Action*, 3435 Army St., No. 308, San Francisco, CA 94110.

RATES: For one year (12 issues)—U.S. 2nd Class: \$8, 1st Class: \$16; Canada and Mexico 2nd Class: \$12, 1st Class: \$16; All other countries 2nd Class: \$15, 1st Class: \$30. (Money orders, checks should be in U.S. dollars.)

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of *Socialist Action*. These are expressed in editorials.

U.S.-inspired Middle East conference won't bring peace to troubled region

By MALIK MIAH

The crushing military defeat of Iraq did not bring U.S. imperialism and its allies the "peace" and "stability" they had hoped for in the Middle East. Saddam Hussein remains in power in Baghdad, and the Palestine "problem" continues to disrupt George Bush's "New World Order."

At the beginning of August, Bush and Gorbachev declared they would jointly convene a Middle East "peace" conference in October of this year. In late June, Syria's President Hafez Assad finally agreed to Secretary of State James Baker's proposal to attend such a conference, where face-to-face talks with Israel would take place. Israel's ruling cabinet voted to back Baker's proposal on Aug. 4.

As we go to press, with the recent crisis in the Soviet Union, it is not certain that the conference will occur. What is clear, however, is that Bush and Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir are pressing very hard to isolate the recognized Palestinian leadership, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), from playing any significant role in the meeting or other talks.

The reactionary Arab rulers are backing imperialism's plans with new treachery. Preparations are being made to recognize the state of Israel, just as Egypt's President Anwar Sadat did in 1978 (as part of the infamous "Camp David Agreement" brokered by U.S. President James Carter).

Israel's conditions

Yasir Arafat, leader of the PLO, says "Camp David II" is in the making. Why exclude the PLO, Arafat complains, if that isn't the aim?

Shamir says Israel will only participate in an October peace conference that meets its conditions. The main condition is that Israel must approve the Palestinian delegates who attend. Israel says explicitly that no Palestinian from East Jerusalem can be present. Israel annexed East Jerusalem after the 1967 war.

Shamir further adds that the West Bank and Gaza, also taken in 1967, will not be returned. There will be no land for peace trade. Israel will continue to build new settlements on "their" land despite United Nations resolutions calling the West Bank and Gaza "occupied territories."

Washington is seeking to find a way around this Palestinian-delegate issue. Like Israel, Washington is opposed to the PLO being at the conference. It seeks a Palestinian-Jordanian delegation. It also agrees

with Israel that Palestinians have no right to an independent state.

Arafat and most Palestinians respond that it is a violation of self-determination for the Israelis or Washington to dictate their delegation. The Unified Command of the Palestinian Uprising (the intifada) in the West Bank says the U.S.-initiated peace conference is part of a Zionist plot. The Islamic Jihad is also strongly against making concessions to imperialism.

Despite the strong opposition among Palestinians to a U.S.-brokered "peace" conference that excludes the PLO, the Palestinian movement for self-determination is in a weak position.

Most Palestinians backed President Saddam Hussein in Iraq's war with Washington and its allies. Iraq's defeat not only allowed Washington to put U.S. military forces in the Arab East in a way it had never been able to do before. It also allowed the traitor Arab leaders to openly back Washington and seek to isolate the PLO and the Palestinian movement as a whole. Palestinians are being brutalized in Kuwait, and denied jobs by the Saudis and other reactionary Arab regimes.

Many Arab governments are now ready to talk to Israel one on one at a peace conference. They are for a toothless Palestine on the West Bank. Historic Palestine is now seen as an impossible dream. Assad is clearly willing to make a deal with Shamir if Israel returns the occupied Golan Heights and provides a figleaf for the Palestine issue.

Camp David Agreement

Arafat's concern about another Camp David betrayal is very real. It was after the defeat of the Arab governments in 1973 that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat took up Washington's peace proposals. Sadat's decision to recognize Israel was part of a strategy of moving toward imperialism politically and economically and away from its longtime supporter, the Soviet Union.

Israel's only concession to Sadat's criminal action was to withdraw from the Sinai. Israel agreed to some kind of autonomy for the West Bank and Gaza later, after five years of discussions. This, of course, never occurred. Israel nevertheless got what it wanted. It got the most populated Arab state to recognize it, and time to build up its permanent settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

The payoff for Egypt's rulers' betrayal of the Palestinians is large-scale economic handouts from Washington. Egypt became



a strong supporter of Bush's war against Iraq. And it is pushing the other Arab governments and rulers to follow its example.

The people of Egypt have gained nothing from this rotten deal. President Sadat was assassinated in 1981 by members of a group opposed to his policies. But the pro-imperialist policies remain intact.

Although Palestinians and most Arab governments repudiated Egypt at the time, a shift away from Moscow toward Washington also began in a number of Arab countries even before the anti-Iraqi alliance was consummated last year.

The PLO and Palestinians became more isolated. While the intifada inside Israel put the Palestinian issue more up front in the eyes of the world, the defeat of Iraq and the consolidation of a pro-Syrian regime in Lebanon further weakened the Palestinian people.

It is in this context that Baker's shuttle diplomacy to the Middle East took place in the spring and summer. The U.S. peace conference is designed to drive another nail into the Palestinian coffin.

PLO still has center court

Yet it won't be that easy. While the Palestinian leadership is in a weakened position, it still holds the main court. The traitor Arab regimes, Washington, and Tel Aviv all know that without the Palestinians at what the British magazine *The Economist* calls "James Baker's tea party" there can be no credible gathering.

Arafat understands this very well, which is why he is pressing for a chair at the table—at least for someone he picks. The PLO is eager for the meeting to take place.

Back in 1988 at the PLO's last Palestine National Council (PNC) meeting, the organization voted for the first time to accept Israel's right to exist within its pre-1967 boundaries (provided the Palestinians got their own state in the West Bank and Gaza). It made that historic concession to set up a "dialogue" with Washington, hoping the U.S. government would pressure Israel to trade land for peace. Just as it does now, Israel said "no."

The PNC meets again in September. Bush and Baker hope the PNC will make another concession on the composition of a Palestinian delegation to attend the October peace conference. Arafat has stated he will not back down from the PLO's demand to appoint its own peace negotiators. Nor will he drop the demand that Israel withdraw from the territories seized in 1967 and the creation there of a Palestinian state with its capital in Jerusalem.

What to expect?

Until the Palestinian people are granted self-determination, that is, control of their homeland that Israel has occupied since 1948, there can be no peace in the Middle East.

Washington has failed to turn its military defeat of Saddam Hussein into a major political victory. Its allies in the Arab East are dictators, not bourgeois democrats. Israel remains Washington's only dependable friend. Yet it won't play ball the way Bush wants them to.

Israel refuses to make any significant concessions to the Palestinians or the Arab traitor regimes. This brings forward more anti-U.S. hatred among the Arab peoples, who point to the hypocrisy and double-standard of U.S. policy of demanding enforcement of United Nations' resolutions against Iraq but not Israel.

The Palestinian people will not surrender or commit political suicide. The only viable solution is the creation of a democratic, secular Palestine on the land now called Israel. This will require a social revolution inside Israel and the entire Arab East. ■

An important letter to our readers:

Dear readers,

A meeting of the National Committee of Socialist Action in August voted to take some important steps forward.

One was to recommend that serious consideration be given to increasing the frequency of publication of *Socialist Action* newspaper sometime in 1992. This would make the paper more useful to you by presenting news and analysis in a more timely way.

To help prepare for this transition, the paper is launching a fall subscription drive both to win new readers and to urge current subscribers to renew. Supporters

of the paper, including members of Socialist Action, have already taken combined goals of new subs and renewals. The campaign will go through Dec. 15.

We plan to put some subscription teams on the road to introduce new people to *Socialist Action*. Any readers who would like to participate in the teams should get in touch with our business office.

Of course, another aspect of publishing the paper more frequently is finances. The pro-capitalist daily papers rely primarily on revenues from advertising. *Socialist Action*, on the other hand, must meet the deficit between its cover price and publica-

tion costs through donations by its supporters. Increasing the frequency of publication will cost more money.

Simultaneous with the subscription drive, we are launching a fund drive—also to go through Dec. 15. Our goal is to raise \$24,000 from supporters by that date.

Finally, the loft which houses both the editorial and business offices of *Socialist Action*, as well as the national and San Francisco offices of the organization with the same name, are just not big enough to accommodate us anymore, and we've got to move to larger premises this fall. The move itself and expected higher rent mean

we have to raise more money in addition to the costs of expanding the newspaper.

We urge you, our readers, to participate in both these efforts by helping sell subscriptions and by donating to the \$24,000 fund. Please make checks payable to *Socialist Action*, and send them to the address on the subscription blank below.

If readers in areas other than those shown on the initial scoreboard would like to take a goal for the subscription drive, that would help significantly in this effort.

In solidarity,
Barry Sheppard,
Business Manager

Don't miss an issue. Subscribe Now!

Initial subscription goals:

Introductory offer. Six months for \$3.

Renewals. Six months for \$4. — One year for \$8.—

Enclosed is \$ — fund drive contribution.

Name _____

Address _____

Baltimore	35	New York	55
Bath, Me.	5	New Haven	5
Boston	75	Philadelphia	20
Chicago	5	Portland, Ore.	15
Cincinnati	50	San Francisco	250
Cleveland	15	Twin Cities	25
Detroit	10	Others	60
Los Angeles	25	Total goals	650

Send to Socialist Action, 3435 Army St., San Francisco, CA 94110

Goal of first-ever Sandinista congress: Capitalist stability



Executive Committee of First Sandinista Congress in Managua, Nicaragua.

By JEFF MACKLER

The first congress in the 30-year history of the Nicaraguan Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), held in Managua on July 19-21, marked its further consolidation as a pro-capitalist radical nationalist party committed to maintaining a social partnership (or *concertación*) with the government of President Violetta Chamorro.

Despite the extensive preparations for the congress, which is reported to have included debates among 47,000 FSLN members in 1374 regional assemblies, there was little opposition to the course projected by the eight-member National Directorate of the FSLN.

While many social advances were made in the early years of the revolution, the FSLN rejected the socialist option for Nicaragua and proceeded to confine the nation's development to the framework of a mixed, or capitalist economy.

The large majority of the land producing Nicaragua's cash crops remained in the hands of a tiny capitalist elite, and the independent mobilization of the working class, peasantry, and their respective FSLN-led mass organizations was frequently discouraged in favor of the interests of the "patriotic" capitalist sector.

These FSLN policies, the unremitting U.S.-sponsored economic and military assault, and the virtual cutoff of aid from the Stalinist governments combined to deny the Nicaraguan people the fruits of their revolutionary victory.

Virtually every FSLN leader addressing the 581 delegates at the congress based their remarks on the premise that Nicaragua's future was intimately tied to capitalist "stability," including a continua-

tion of the International Monetary Fund-type austerity measures begun in the mid-1980s under the FSLN. Their occasional references to socialism were rhetorical in content and referenced to the distant future.

The "Declaration on National Stability, Peace and Reconciliation," which was passed nearly unanimously, blamed the accelerating economic crisis in Nicaragua on the "regrouping of the most extreme right-wing political sectors who, although a minority, are using their influential positions in the government in an attempt to revert the social transformations of the Revolution."

Excluded from this group of "rightists" was the actual government of Violetta Chamorro, whose representatives attended the congress as observers—assessing it as "positive, self-critical, and of importance to the entire nation."

Other than to call for a "national conference on the peasant problem, including the participation of all sectors," the congress offered no solutions to the mounting attacks of still-armed contra (or "recontra" bands, as they are now called) which have forced peasants off their land at gunpoint.

In relation to the Chamorro-sponsored moves to further erode the relatively insignificant Sandinista-created state sector of the economy, only "government incoherence in confiscation revision, and privatization policies" was noted. The FSLN offered no plan to mobilize Nicaragua's workers and peasants against these policies.

The repeated reference of Sandinista leaders to rebuilding FSLN support among the peasantry was a tragic admission that the FSLN-sponsored land reform had failed to

satisfy the needs of tens of thousands of peasants. The now undeniable result has been to drive a not insignificant number of the country's most oppressed into the camp of the U.S.-sponsored contras.

Little aid from the Stalinists

FSLN Commander Victor Tirado explained another congress theme that has gained general acceptance among the Sandinista leadership. "Experience shows us," he stated, "that people seek to destroy imperialism politically and economically when making national liberation revolutions. ... But revolutions of this kind cannot sustain themselves all alone; now there is nobody to subsidize them."

The idea here is that any advance in the direction of socialism (to the creation of a society based not on capitalist production for profit but on the democratic organization of society in the interests of the workers and peasants) is excluded without outside aid.

In reality, Nicaragua never received the aid it needed from the misnamed "Socialist Camp."

The aim of the token aid extended by the Soviet Union to Nicaragua was not to promote the advance of genuine socialism, but to increase the bargaining power of the Stalinist bureaucracy as it sought an accommodation with world imperialism. The condition set by imperialism for its half-hearted promise of future aid to the crumbling Stalinist economies, was a cessation of all support to national liberation struggles.

The remaining eight members of the National Directorate—plus two other top FSLN leaders, René Nunez and Sergio Ramirez—were elected as a slate with vir-

tually no opposition. Attempts to add former FSLN Health Minister Dora María Téllez to the slate and to vote on each nomination separately to allow for expression of discontent with the policies of individual leaders were defeated with little opposition.

Lack of internal democracy

Commander Tomas Borge summed up the agreement reached between the top FSLN officials on this point as follows:

"It's good to know that all the decisions made over these past years were made by this directorate. ... No one in particular can be blamed for the mistakes that were made. If anyone has to be blamed, it should be the directorate as a whole."

Borge's statement reveals perhaps more about FSLN functioning than was intended. In the 11 years of Sandinista rule, all party and state decisions concerning the fundamental course of the revolution were made by the nine-member National Directorate. During the entire course of the revolution, no decision-making institutions of the workers, peasants, women, youth, and soldiers were ever created.

The policies of the trade unions and peasant associations, including the right to strike, were in the province of the nine commanders, as was the FSLN-dominated National Assembly elected in 1984 by universal suffrage.

Inside the FSLN itself, democracy was totally absent. The party membership decided nothing. Its first national meeting in 30 years, consisted of only a handful of workers (3 percent) and peasants (10 percent). The congress elected a 98-member decision-making assembly, which is to meet every six months, and provided for a congress, which is scheduled to meet four years hence. Previously, all members of the assembly were appointed by the Directorate.

Despite the early egalitarian measures of the FSLN which had undoubtedly won them mass support, the FSLN failed to involve the Nicaraguan workers and peasants themselves in the fundamental task of running society democratically. If this had been the policy of the FSLN, the result could only have been a massive and unprecedented explosion of popular support for the revolutionary process—for the full, unimpeded distribution of the land, for the establishment of worker's and farmer's control over production to stop the capitalists from "decapitalizing."

A truly socialist-oriented Nicaragua would have inspired the oppressed everywhere with a living example that working people can rule in their own name, through their own institutions, and in their own class interests.

Such a Nicaragua would have been in the best position to appeal to the world's oppressed for aid and support—the admitted pre-condition for the establishment of genuine socialism. ■

By HAYDEN PERRY

The collapse of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) is sending shock waves rippling around the world. Farmers in Africa and merchants in India are devastated, as their life's savings melt away. An ex-president of Peru faces indictment because of BCCI. The national treasury of Nigeria has vanished.

How could such an "outsider" bank shake up the world's financial and political leaders? Agha Hasan Abedi, to all appearances, had no such intention when he founded the bank. According to an interview published in *The Wall Street Journal*, Abedi is a devout middle-class Muslim who ascribes all unfortunate developments to the "will of Allah."

Abedi founded his first bank in Karachi, Pakistan, in 1958. He opened branches in villages that had never seen a bank before. When oil revenues began flowing in torrents around the Persian Gulf in the 1970s, Abedi was ready to move onto the international stage. He flew to Abu Dhabi bearing gifts for tribal ruler Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan, one of the wealthiest men on earth.

With \$10 million of the Sheikh's money, Abedi set up shop in Luxembourg, a venue favored by many international concerns because of its lax controls. A natural clientele for the new bank were the thousands of Pakistanis who had migrated to the Middle East and Europe to fill jobs that the great boom of the 1970s created.

Cultivating the politically powerful was the best shortcut to growth, Abedi found. Wherever BCCI opened any of its 350 branches, local VIPs were brought into its fold. In London, senior Conservative members of Parliament and former Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan head

Poor countries hardest hit by BCCI collapse

the list of "consultants" and "trustees" of the charitable foundations set up by the bank.

When BCCI set up a holding company to acquire First American Bankshares in Washington, D.C., it went to the top of the American establishment to find a man to front for them. He is Clark M. Clifford, former Secretary of Defense and senior advisor to presidents.

Little did he suspect, Clifford claims, that he was fronting for that "Bank of Crooks and Criminals," as Robert Gates, nominee for CIA chief, described it. Clifford could not explain, however, how he and his partner, Robert Altman, made \$10 million profit on First American shares bought with money borrowed from BCCI.

It was natural that people like Clifford did not want BCCI investigated, but American and British authorities also obstructed any thorough investigation. The U.S. government's hesitation is understandable since it found BCCI to be an ideal agent for a number of its own nefarious operations.

The *London Observer* newspaper has implicated Oliver North and BCCI in the Iran-contra caper. It published the serial numbers of three accounts North opened in the Paris branch to pay for arms shipped to Iran.

BCCI also helped manage the CIA's funding of anti-

government forces in Afghanistan, while laundering money from heroin sales by the rebels. Closing down BCCI, no doubt, interrupts a number of CIA operations until new illicit channels can be opened up.

After several years of ignoring signs of trouble, the Bank of England, which licenses foreign banks, shut down BCCI on July 5. However, a British High Court has granted a four-month stay of the shutdown, while the world-wide ramifications of its collapse are considered. Operations in a number of other countries are continuing, but scarcely as before.

In the United States, there is pain and embarrassment in official quarters, as prominent citizens are exposed as liars and crooks. But the real tragedy of the BCCI fiasco is felt in the fields and towns of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Millions of Third World people thought BCCI was their bank. They were given loans when British or American banks would not let them in the door.

They were betrayed. But they will learn that no enterprise run by sheiks and politicians—or any capitalist, for that matter—will ever be more than money machines to be looted for their enrichment at the expense of the workers and peasants in the underdeveloped countries. ■

U.S. Army doctor convicted of desertion for opposing Gulf war

By BOB KUTCHKO

KANSAS CITY—On Aug. 8, Captain Yolanda Huet-Vaughn was convicted on charges of desertion in court-martial proceedings at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., for her refusal to participate in Operation Desert Storm. The next day, she was sentenced to 30 months in prison and dismissed from the army with loss of all pay and benefits.

Capt. Huet-Vaughn is a 40-year-old medical doctor and mother of three children (ages two through eight). She was called to active duty on Dec. 26 and sent to Fort Riley, Kan., to her medical unit—one of many reserve units mustered for the war against Iraq. She left the unit several days later and issued a press statement condemning the U.S. drive towards war and warning of the horrible consequences in terms of casualties and medical unpreparedness.

Not only was Capt. Huet-Vaughn one of the highest-ranking war resisters, she also was one of the most highly visible. She addressed the quarter-million anti-war protesters in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 26 and was seen by millions on the Sally Jessy Raphael talk show. Publications such as *The New York Times* and *People* magazine reported her defiance.

When Capt. Huet-Vaughn returned to the Kansas City area on Feb. 2 to turn herself in to federal authorities, 200 supporters protected her at St. Mark's Church until she spoke to her welcome-home rally. Dur-



Capt. Yolanda Huet-Vaughn

ing the days leading up to her return, county sheriffs, city police, and federal marshals took turns harassing her husband David and their children. On the day of the rally, at least two Kansas City police detectives infiltrated the event, posing as news reporters.

Army proceedings were geared towards limiting the scope of Capt. Huet-Vaughn's defense. Arguments that the war itself was illegal were ruled out of order; attempts to summon as witnesses personalities such as President Bush and Desert Storm command-

er General Norman Schwarzkopf were denied.

The court-martial addressed only the charge that Capt. Huet-Vaughn had refused hazardous and important duty—not why. Defense lawyers objected to the fact that the seven-member jury contained no Hispanics, females, or doctors.

Upon receiving her sentence (half of the possible five years she faced), Dr. Huet-Vaughn stated, "I don't regret the [anti-war] position I took. It was an avoidable war, and there are children in Iraq that cannot

rejoin their families in 30 months." (Greenpeace estimates Iraqi deaths at nearly 200,000.)

Prior to her taking an active anti-war stance, Dr. Huet-Vaughn had devoted her career to providing health care to the poorer sector of society. In 1980, Dr. Huet-Vaughn entered a residency at Truman Medical Center, Kansas City's public hospital. For several years, she served mostly lower-income Hispanics in Kansas City's Rosedale community.

Friend and colleague Dr. Frank Vaughters told *The Kansas City Star*, "(Yolanda) lived an extremely modest lifestyle. She is completely free of the stigma that many doctors suffer, of being in the business for the money."

In 1981, Dr. Huet-Vaughn was a founder of the Kansas City-area chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility. Among her many defense and character witnesses were former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark and actress Margot Kidder.

Despite her humanitarian motivations about preserving life, Dr. Huet-Vaughn also faces possible revocation of her license to practice medicine in Kansas and Missouri as a result of her felony conviction.

Although an appeal process is underway, Dr. Huet-Vaughn has been placed nearly incommunicado from her husband at the Army Disciplinary Barracks in Fort Leavenworth, Kan. Protest letters demanding her release may be sent to: General Daniel Christman, Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, c/o Capt. Cooper, Legal Defense, Fort Leonard Wood, MO 65473-5000

Dr. Huet-Vaughn's husband requests that copies of letters and legal-defense donations be sent to: David Huet-Vaughn, 4002 Booth, Kansas City, KA 66103. Please make donations out to Citizen Soldier for Yolanda Huet-Vaughn. ■

Prison files reveal ongoing harassment of Mark Curtis

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

Mark Curtis, a packinghouse worker and member of the Socialist Workers Party from Des Moines, Iowa, was arrested in 1988 and convicted on frame-up charges of rape and burglary. He has been in prison for two years and 10 months on a 25-year sentence.

On Aug. 6, Curtis was transferred from the Mount Pleasant Correctional Facility to the Iowa Men's Reformatory in Anamosa. He had only been at Mount Pleasant for three weeks.

During his time at Mount Pleasant, prison officials had tried to get Curtis to enroll in their Sex Offenders Treatment Program. But Curtis told the authorities that he could not participate in a program that would require him to abandon his defense efforts and confess to a crime he didn't commit.

Soon afterward, he received word that, because he had "refused" to undergo treatment, he would be transferred to Anamosa.

"Mark didn't refuse to enter their program," John Studer, coordinator of the Mark Curtis Defense Committee, told defense supporters. "He just refused to stop fighting." Studer said that the authorities hope to point to Curtis's alleged refusal in order to sabotage his eligibility for release on parole.

Curtis's next parole hearing is scheduled for November. In addition, a trial is scheduled in federal court on Nov. 25 on a lawsuit Curtis filed against the Des Moines

police for violating his civil rights and beating him. This is the second time that Curtis has been incarcerated at Anamosa.

According to official records that Curtis received as part of his fight for parole, he was transferred out of that facility in 1990

because authorities believed he had become "too powerful" as a political activist.

He had been elected secretary of the Martin Luther King Jr. Organization, which organized political and cultural programs for the prison inmates.

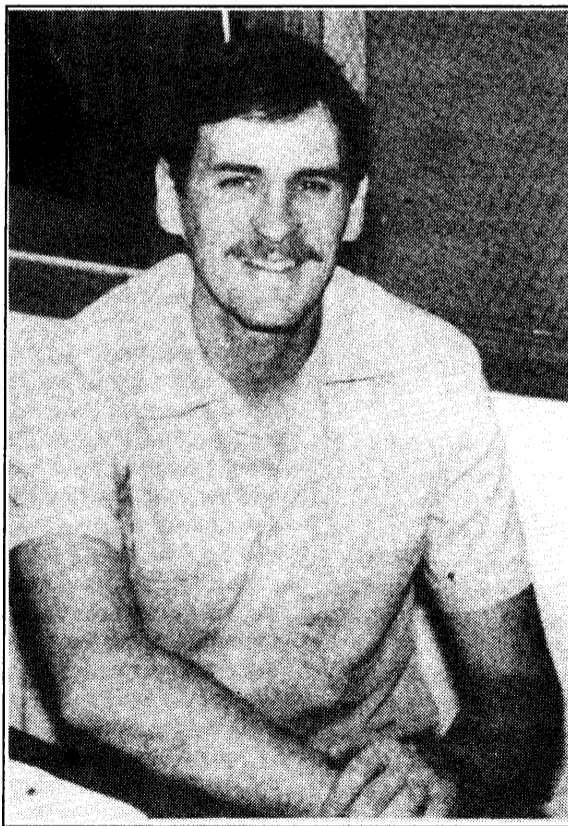
The very first entry in Curtis's 120-page file, written upon his arrival at Anamosa on Dec. 19, 1988, reads: "Political activist for El Salvador. Promotes socialist causes. Nationwide campaign as a political prisoner." The entry then adds:

"Was involved in labor dispute at Swift Packing two days prior to arrest."

These references to Curtis's political views and activity continue throughout the file, especially in entries prepared for review by the state parole board. The first question parole board members asked Curtis in his 1990 hearing was, "Do you still consider yourself a political prisoner?"

Thus, Curtis's legal and political efforts to overturn his conviction—as well as his political activity inside prison—are being used as grounds to keep him behind bars.

Letters supporting parole may be sent to the Mark Curtis Defense Committee, Box 1048, Des Moines, Iowa 50311. ■



Mark Curtis: Had become "too powerful"



... Wichita

(continued from page 20)

clients are utilizing their services, and pro-choice forces are assembling in clinic-defense efforts and at rallies.

For instance, after OR spokesperson Mahoney predicted that only "10 to 12" people would turn out for a pro-choice rally on July 21, over 1500 demonstrated in support for a woman's legal right to choose.

An Aug. 11 poll of 483 Wichita adults, commissioned by *The Wichita Eagle* and TV station KAKE, found that 78 percent disapproved of Operation Rescue's tactics. And 77 percent said that OR has had no effect on their personal views about abortion.

Despite Operation Rescue's claim to have "God's franchise" on the issue of abortion, Catholics for Choice and members of many other denominations have thrown in their support at the picket lines protecting the clinics.

"We'll stick it out"

A special target of Operation Rescue in Wichita has been Dr. George Tiller and his clinic, Women's Health Care Services. Tiller is one of the few physicians in the nation who specializes in third-trimester abortions, of which he performs a few dozen annually.

One of Tiller's patients, who identified herself only as Sylvia, appeared at a press conference, tearfully explaining that her fetus was not expected to live, and that it was her choice to abort, not Operation Rescue's.

Following a July 23 attempt to be treated at Dr. Tiller's clinic, a 16-year old woman and her boyfriend talked to a reporter. Referring to the right-wingers who had successfully blocked the entrance, she said, "They got my name and address, and they've been hollering that at me. I've been here since 8 a.m., and I was hoping to get out by noon. But we'll stick it out all night if we have to." She described her decision to abort as extremely painful and too personal to discuss.

It is the health, emotions, and constitu-

tional rights of women such as these that are being assaulted by religious fanatics and governmental opponents of a woman's right to control her own body. The battle for abortion rights in Wichita is part of the nationwide challenge that pro-choice defenders face, in the streets as well as the courts. ■

Pro-Choice march in S.F. on Oct. 5

By CAROLE SELIGMAN

"Pro-choice, and proud of it!" proclaim flyers announcing a San Francisco march and rally to defend abortion rights. Set for Saturday, Oct. 5, 1991, the action was called by the San Francisco Area Pro-Choice Coalition, the organization which mobilized a demonstration of over 20,000 in April 1989.

The 1989 action was called as the U.S. Supreme Court was deliberating the Missouri case which led to the infamous *Webster* decision. That decision dealt a blow to safe, legal abortions by allowing states to place prohibitive restrictions on the facilities where they could be performed.

This action comes at a time most pro-choice activists consider even more critical for women's rights. A letter from the Pro-Choice Coalition soliciting support from organizations for its Oct. 5 Call to Action cites several alarming attacks on legal abortion.

These attacks include the growing restrictions on abortion passed by states and territories (Pennsylvania, Guam, Louisiana), the parental consent laws, the Clarence Thomas nomination to the Supreme Court, and most ominously, the U.S. Justice Department's intervention on behalf of Operation Rescue's illegal efforts to blockade women's clinics.

The Oct. 5 demonstration will assemble at Justin Herman Plaza at the foot of Market Street and march to the Civic Center for a rally. For more information and to volunteer to help build this important action, call: (415) 255-1989. ■

Sellout of rail workers represents new stage in gov't strike-breaking



Rail workers have worked without a contract for three years which, in effect, constituted a three-year wage freeze.

'Congress deliberately set up a procedure under which rail labor was ruled guilty until proven innocent.'

By LYNN HENDERSON

"Good morning, suckers. Welcome to the oldest floating permanent crap game in Washington. Like the suckers in 'Guys and Dolls,' you are risking your futures on the roll of the dice. ... By being here, by having Congress legislate that three outsiders will finally and in binding fashion, without review by anyone, determine what your collective-bargaining agreements will be, you have abrogated your responsibilities."

It was with these arrogant and disdainful remarks that Chairman Robert Harris opened the proceedings of the Emergency Board set up by Congress when it passed legislation last April forcing striking railroad union members back to work.

Harris made clear just who the suckers were when on July 19 the three-person Congressional Emergency Board ruled against the rail unions and for the railroad companies on all issues that had led to the strike.

But even more ominously, the legislative action by Congress and its board represents an entirely new stage of government intervention and control of the unions. Through Congress, the government has now *written and imposed* a nationwide contract on workers in an entire industry, while stripping them of any vote or say on the conditions under which they will work.

Rail workers had been working without a new contract for *three years*—enduring a three-year wage freeze. During the entire three years, rail owners refused to engage in one day of legitimate negotiations. They were convinced that if they just sat tight the politicians would intervene to impose a contract that would give them infinitely more than they could possibly achieve through any legitimate negotiations process.

Finally, last April 17, after exhausting all the "cooling off" and Emergency Board stalling provisions incorporated in the Railway Labor Act, unions representing 235,000 rail workers went on strike against the 10 largest railroad carriers in the country and 88 other smaller lines, in a solid, nationwide rail strike. The rail industry was successfully and dramatically shut down from coast to coast.

Less than 24 hours later, the Democratic Party-dominated Congress—not renowned for either its decisiveness nor its swiftness—rammed through a joint resolution forcing striking workers back on the job and setting up a new "special board" empowered to *impose* a contract on the rail

unions within 65 days. The measure was passed with only five dissenting votes in the House and a unanimous consent resolution in the Senate.

The immediate cause of the strike was the entirely pro-company contract recommendations handed down by Presidential Emergency Board 219 (PEB 219), which was appointed by Bush in 1990 under the Railway Labor Act.

Overall reduction of wages

The contract recommendations issued in January 1990 by Bush's PEB 219 gave the rail owners virtually everything they wanted.

1) It shifted the financial burden of health, medical and hospitalization benefits onto the workers in the industry.

2) It drastically changed work rules, which can within months eliminate 22,000 jobs and further erode already dangerous safety conditions in the industry.

3) It reduced the real wages of rail workers by 20-30 percent over the course of the contract.

Traditionally in rail, wage increases are retroactive back to when the previous contract expired. This is crucial because the stalling procedures contained in the Railway Labor Act can be used to assure an extended period without a new contract. Without retroactivity, this entire period constitutes a wage freeze.

PEB 219 included no retroactive wage provisions and instead substituted a paltry \$2000 "lump sum" payment, which the Board called a "signing bonus." This works out to about \$.03 per hour for the three years railroad workers were without a contract. But significantly, even this paltry amount, given in the form of a lump sum payment, does not become a part of the continuing wage rate.

The Board's recommendation amounted to a 10.3 percent total wage increase over nearly seven years.

This amounts to an annual wage increase of 1.4 percent in an economy with an annual inflation rate of at least 5 percent.

This is the contract that the new board, created by Congress, has now imposed on railworkers. And it should come as no surprise that this Congressional Board has reaffirmed in total all of PEB 219's original recommendations.

Guilty until proven innocent

House Joint Resolution 222, jointly written by Ted Kennedy on the Democratic side and Orrin Hatch on the Republican side, made it crystal clear that the main

intention of the new "Congressional Emergency Board" was to reaffirm the horrendous recommendations of Bush's PEB 219.

To begin with, the resolution empowered Bush to name all three members of the new "Congressional Board." It went on to specify, "One member of the special board shall be an individual who was a member of Presidential Emergency Board No. 219."

On Friday, May 24, Bush named the new three-member board—Robert Harris, George S. Ives, and Marjorie Gootnik. As expected and planned, it was a railroad-carrier board from top to bottom.

The new board's chairman, Robert Harris, had not only had been the chairman of Bush's PEB 219; he also chaired the Chicago and North Western Railroad (C&NW) PEB three years ago, which Congress then used to impose a disastrous crew-size contract on the C&NW unions.

In another crucial section, Joint House Resolution 222 states, "Issues on which Presidential Emergency Board No. 219 made no specific recommendation shall not be subject to consideration by the special board."

Virtually all the demands raised by the unions—such as additional vacation, holiday, and personal-leave days, longevity pay, shortline protection, entry rates and modification of the two-tier wage system introduced in the 1985 contract, were arrogantly swept aside and not even addressed by PEB 219.

But the most revealing section in exposing the real intentions of the new "Congressional Emergency Board" was "Section (d): Procedure And Determination," which laid out the basis on which the board would carry out its deliberations and make a decision.

This section stated, "In making a determination under this subsection, the special board shall accord a presumption of validity to the recommendations of Presidential Emergency Board No. 219." It affirmed that the recommendation of PEB 219 would only be modified if the unions could prove that it "is demonstrably inequitable or was based on a material error or material misunderstanding."

In other words, Congress deliberately set up a procedure under which rail labor was ruled guilty until proven innocent.

Hardin misses the point

Ever since World War II, the strategy followed by top rail union officials has been based totally on relying on "labor friends" in Congress to barter a good deal under the

Railway Labor Act rather than relying on the unions' own strength and its ultimate ability to strike.

This failed strategy has now culminated in a government-written and imposed contract that drastically reduces the standard of living for rail workers and threatens the continued functioning of the rail unions themselves.

How badly top union officials miscalculated is reflected in the statement made by UTU President Fred T. Hardin when, just hours before the treacherous Congressional action ordering striking workers back to work and setting up the "special board," he boasted, "The railroads are going to be disappointed if they think Congress will panic and force a quick settlement."

President Hardin was also mistaken when he implied in the May issue of the *UTU News* that the passage of Joint House Resolution 222 and the setting up of the new board was a victory for rail labor.

Faced with the disastrous results of Joint House Resolution 222 and the Congressional Board, Hardin has now shifted his hopes from the politicians in Congress to the politicians in black robes. In a letter to all UTU General Chairpersons, he announced the union's intention of filing a suit against the government based on the Fifth Amendment provision prohibiting the government from taking "private property for public use without just compensation."

In this same letter, Pres. Hardin observes that: "Around the time of our strike, the miners in the Soviet Union were also on strike, and neither President Gorbachev, nor the Supreme Soviet, nor the Soviet army could put them back against their will. But in what is still the greatest republic in human history, we are stripped of our right not only to strike, but also of hard-won contract rights that were none of PEB 219's or the government's business."

There is a lesson in this observation, but Hardin completely misses it. The difference between the coal miners' strike in the Soviet Union and the rail strike in the United States was not that Gorbachev and the Supreme Soviet were more sympathetic to the rights of striking workers than Bush and Congress. On the contrary, Gorbachev also ordered the striking miners back to work, and the Supreme Soviet passed emergency legislation specifically stripping miners and railroad workers of the right to strike on the basis that they were "essential workers."

The difference was that the miners and their union leadership defied the emergency legislation and Gorbachev's order, *remaining on strike* until significant concessions were offered.

Congress plans sham hearings

Hardin also approvingly reports that: "Many members of Congress have voiced their anger and criticism of the Special Board in carrying out the intent of Congress in the legislation that stopped the strike and established the Special Board. Sub-Committee Chairman Al Swift, at the request of members of Congress, has scheduled a hearing on Oct. 3, 1991, ... on options available to Congress for ensuring due process in labor-management disputes in the rail industry."

These hearings—which have no power or inclination to reverse anything—are a sham. They will be a cynical platform for those who perpetrated this act, including its Chairman, Al Swift, to now verbally take their distance from it.

Democratic Party Congressman Swift is a so-called friend of labor from Washington state. He headed up the key House Transportation subcommittee and along with Ted Kennedy and Orrin Hatch played a decisive role in lining up votes for House Joint Resolution 222. After the passage of H.R. 222, Swift praised the Republican-Democratic solidarity on suppressing the strike. "I have not seen an issue as potentially contentious as this one," he boasted, "resolved with so little partisan politics."

Rail-union members are paying a heavy price for the union policies that have relied on Democratic "friends of labor." For the first time, many are now seriously questioning this strategy. They are tired of being betrayed.

What is needed is a serious discussion throughout all the rail unions to hammer out a different strategy, one based on class independence from these politicians and on the will to exercise their right to strike. ■

Proposed Crime Bill seen as direct attack on human and civil rights

Following are excerpts from an interview with Don White of the Los Angeles Committee on Secret Trials and the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES). The interview was conducted by Socialist Action reporter Kathleen O'Nan on Aug. 7, 1991.

Socialist Action: What is the Committee Against Secret Trials and what are its objectives?

Don White: The Ad-hoc Committee Against Secret Trials (CAST) is a coalition of human and civil rights, solidarity, immigrant, and community organizations which have come together to educate the American people about the Crime Bills that are being introduced in Congress. One already passed the U.S. Senate on July 11, and the House version comes up right after the present recess.

We're trying to make it clear that these are political bills in the facade of a crime package. They're trying to push through provisions that would impact immigrants, criminalize youth, and extend the death penalty. It's a basic attack on the Bill of Rights. So CAST and similar groups around the country have come together to stop this Crime Bill and to make sure people understand its implications.

SA: What is the history of the Crime Bill?

DW: For decades in this coun-

try, red-baiting—the charge of communism—has been used to try to neutralize the progressive movement. This bill is really in the same tradition, although the charge of communism is being replaced by the charge of terrorism and narco-terrorism. It also comes off the success that Bush has felt as a result of the Gulf War.

I would also say that the government has studied very carefully the LA Eight Case in Los Angeles. You'll remember that almost five years ago, the government seized seven Palestinians and the Kenyan wife of one of the Palestinians. And they tried to immediately deport them for their political activities.

In studying what went wrong for the government's case, why after five years the Eight are still in this country fighting it out in the courts, we think the government is trying through its present Crime Bill to eliminate all of the recourses that those folks have.

SA: What are the major provisions of this bill?

DW: The bill is massive, so the membership of CAST broke it down into four general areas. The four areas are: 1) The secret trial provision and the criminalization of material aid to struggles in other countries; 2) the extension of the death penalty; 3) the criminalization of youth; and 4) the overall attack on the Bill of Rights.

Under its Terrorist Alien

Removal Provision [the bill] would establish a special court in this country similar to ones in existence in South Africa, [Northern] Ireland, and other places where the government rigidly controls political activity. A panel of five judges appointed by the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court would hear terrorist activity deportation cases.

Terrorist activity would include giving financial or other material aid to any individual or group that has ever been involved in what the government says is illegal, violent activity in order to change a government's policy. The definition is so broad that it covers even small contributions for humanitarian aid, [for example] to hospitals operated by the FMLN in El Salvador.

If the House version [were passed] a non-citizen could be arrested, taken into custody, and held for a secret trial. He or she would not have the right to an attorney. The charges would not be public. The whole proceeding would be secret. And the government could immediately deport them. If no government could be found to accept them, they would languish in a U.S. jail.

Fifty-one new crimes would be added to the list of those punishable by death. Youth—even as young as 14—if they are identified as a "drug kingpin" could be sentenced to death and executed even though they were not part of a criminal act that took a human life.

This expansion of the death penalty is particularly rallying people who are concerned that it is applied according to racial and ethnic lines. Not only are the overwhelming percentage of executed people from minority communities, but recent studies in Georgia have shown that if the victim is white, the perpetrator is incredibly more likely to be executed than if the victim is Black or Latino, etc.

The bill attacks young people, especially minority youth, under the pretext of curbing youth violence. For example, juvenile records would be available for the first time, not only to national law enforcement agencies, but to employers and licensing agencies. Young people 13 or 14 years of age, accused of relatively minor offenses, would have their finger prints entered into the FBI pool. This is a stigma that could follow these young people all through their lives.

This bill provides \$150 million for the re-opening of [recently closed military] facilities, but as military style boot camps for inmates under the age of 25. Many African American activists working in CAST particularly condemn this provision. They don't want their young people put in boot camps. It is clear to most people what this might lead to—cannon fodder for the U.S. military for future aggressions.

Both versions of the Crime Bill dramatically reduce rights under habeas corpus and reduce the constitutionally guaranteed avenues of appeal. It allows evidence to be introduced for the first time whether or not it was obtained with a warrant, whether or not police had good-faith suspicion that a felony was in

progress.

It includes a national security exemption allowing the FBI to access telephone and credit card records without a court order and without notice to the individual. It expands the government's power for drug testing and pre-trial HIV testing. It strips the federal courts of the power to correct violations of the Bill of Rights in death penalty cases.

SA: Why doesn't the public know more about this?

DW: The public is pretty poorly informed. When the president unveiled his original Crime Bill package on March 11, 1990, he urged the Congress to enact it within a hundred days.

He used an appeal to patriotism. He actually called upon the Congress to honor our soldiers returning from the Persian Gulf by quickly enacting a bill that would fight crime. The headlines always refer to "Crime Bill," but what the American people don't understand is that a non-citizen can have a totally secret trial and be deported or languish in U.S. jails without any public process.

A citizen like myself could be arrested and sentenced to 10 years for committing a terrorist act by sending money to an FMLN field hospital. People don't realize that boot camps for urban youth are being established. This is not fighting crime; this is attempting to undercut the legitimate rights of people to organize and to aid the liberation of people in other parts of the world.

Once it is passed by the Congress and signed into law, it may be too late. Now is the time to rally our forces to prevent the most incredible attack on human and civil rights that we have seen in many, many years. ■

Last month, Philadelphia gained a "reprieve" from bankruptcy when it issued bonds at the extraordinary rate of 9.25 percent tax-free interest. This was a bonanza for wealthy investors—but working people will have to pay. Here Dennis Marcucci comments on the city's self-made "budget crisis."

By DENNIS MARCUCCI

PHILADELPHIA—Democratic Party Mayor W. Wilson Goode recently recommended to the city council that they back city cuts of \$47 million. What were those cuts? To slash services at city health centers, to close four fire companies, to slash funding for the homeless, and so on.

The mayor was not successful this time. But it will not be the first or the last time that politicians recommend—and are successful—in attacking the working class.

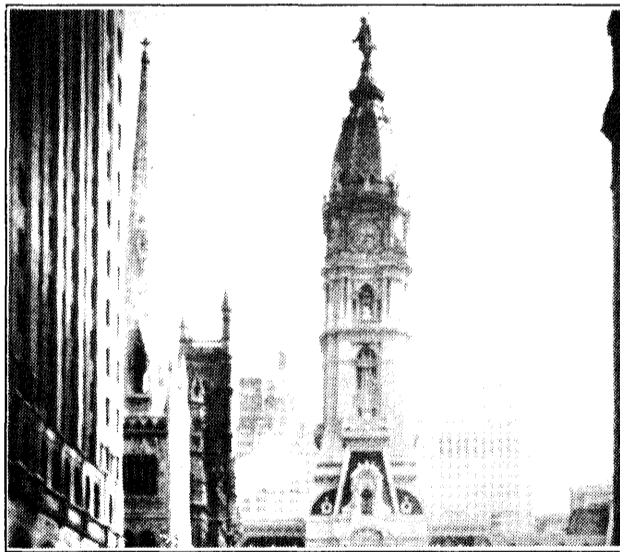
Now the politicians are calling for the privatization of Philadelphia's sanitation department. They claim that this isn't an attempt to bust the union. What lies! City officials stated that both union and non-union companies can put their bid in. But any company that wants to stay competitive will have to slash wages and benefits to the bone in order to keep profits up.

So, who do you think will get the contract—no matter how low the unionized company's bid is?

The politicians will not go to the banks and insurance companies (who pay little to no city taxes) as a source to solve their budget crisis. That would be political suicide.

The city will spend money, they claim, only when it

Philadelphia politicians take from the workers, give to the rich



can see a return on its investment. Examples? The city agreed to pay CIGNA Corp.'s rent for five years (\$13

million a year) on its new center city skyscraper space, if CIGNA could not find a tenant for its old space. In addition, it agreed to let the corporation keep the \$7 million in taxes the city collects from CIGNA employees' paychecks. Is this a sensible "investment?"

The city also plans to invest \$6 million (and the state \$13 million) for a new sports stadium. Likewise, the city paid \$2,631,000 for a walkway to connect the tourist section with the waterfront.

Meanwhile, 25,000 are homeless in Philadelphia. Fifty-two homeless people were found dead on the city's streets last year. Recreation centers and playgrounds are shut down because of lack of funds.

The city applied for an \$8 million urban grant that was to be used to fund the recreation centers and playgrounds. Then the city turned the grant over to CIGNA Corp. at one percent interest to decorate their offices!

Working-class people in Philadelphia have the power to turn things around. We need grassroots, militant struggles in the streets. And we need our own party—a labor party—to fight to end exploitation, poverty, and homelessness. ■

State workers in Maine fight against lockout

By LISA HARDY

BATH, Maine—On July 1, Republican Gov. John McKernan shut down the state government for lack of a budget. Ten thousand workers were locked out of their jobs, and their paychecks were shut up in a vault.

Months of haggling with the Democrats over a "budget crisis" and how to "downsize" state government resulted in a halt to all but the most essential public services.

Members of the Maine State Employees Association (MSEA, SEIU Local 1989) immediately organized boisterous picket

lines at the state capitol to protest the governor's action.

Gov. McKernan had linked passage of his budget to passage of a workers' compensation "reform" bill—which favored the insurance companies and seriously threatened the rights of injured workers. Some of the proposed changes would reduce the number of weeks that injured workers are covered, and force them to do a statewide job search for alternative employment.

Big businesses in Maine have a powerful lobby at the State House, and they threatened to leave the state if they did not have their way with this bill. It left the

Democrats and Republicans fighting amongst themselves over workers' compensation, when everyone knew that eventually the Democrats would cave in and vote for lesser-evil reforms.

During the lockout, MSEA members set up a union tent city on the capitol lawns. Their goal was to be a constant reminder to the governor, legislature, and public of their unjust treatment. To show support, several other local unions set up tents, donated food and other resources, and attended rallies.

On July 5, over 1000 workers showed up on the front steps of the State House to

loudly confront the lawmakers. The sentiment of the public was clearly on the side of the locked-out workers, judging from the number of honking horns and thumbs-up the workers on the picket lines received.

On July 16, after MSEA threatened to "lock in" legislators in the House and Senate until they passed a budget, it was finally voted on. The workers were called back onto the job the next day, and are working at the present time.

But what will happen during the next fiscal year? Will workers be asked to work without pay again? Will they be laid off, furloughed, and have their benefits slashed to nothing?

To date, the strategy of most public-sector unions facing this type of crisis has been to pursue legal avenues—to file grievances, court injunctions, and so on. But in order to win, a real fight-back strategy is needed.

Hopefully, public-sector workers in Maine have learned not to rely on the Democrats, but they need real leadership from their unions to be able to fight back.

Socialist candidate Jacobs fields questions on S.F. radio

The following is an abridged and edited version of phone-in questions to Socialist Action's San Francisco mayoral candidate Joni Jacobs during an July 22, 1991, interview on radio station KQED.

KQED: Our guest on Forum is Joni Jacobs, a candidate for mayor of San Francisco. If you have any comments or questions for her please call at (415) 863-2476. June in San Francisco, do you have a question for our guest?

Juni: As a socialist don't you believe that working people should own the means of production and their products and the distribution of their products collectively and democratically and establish a planned economy?...

Joni Jacobs: You know, we have social production in this city. Just taking one example, a hotel. A hotel can't be built by one person, it has to be built using hundreds of workers and then once it's built it has to be run by hundreds of workers. And yet the way it works now, one person or a few people in a corporation will own the hotel. What I want to do is change it so that we not only have social production, we have social ownership. Then the people that work in the hotel will decide how best to run that hotel in cooperation with the people in other areas of the city as well...

Sylvia: I know Joni from clinic defense at Planned Parenthood. I know she had a major responsibility in building the two major marches here in San Francisco for abortion rights when the Webster decision came down. Don't you think that it's about time that we had some more major marches?

JJ: Yes, I think it's time for another demonstration. The last one was in October of 1989 and we had 60,000 people in San Francisco demonstrating to keep abortion safe, legal and accessible. The National Organization for Women just had their national conference in New York a couple of weeks ago and they've called for a large demonstration in the spring of 1992 in Washington, D.C.

I think that we should be having building actions in San Francisco and other cities in California to build the momentum for that big demonstration. Frankly, I would certainly like to see my esteemed other candidates working to help build such a march. However, I don't think their endorsements will be anything other than paper endorsements, although I am sure if we build such a march they'll show up to speak to the crowd and try to take credit for being the most pro-choice candidates.

KQED: Sylvia, you have one more question?

Sylvia: What I tend to find is that more people think the Democratic and Republican parties are dead and that's why more and more people are just simply not voting for either one of them. In fact, they are having a very hard time getting out the vote for either the Democrats or the Republicans. They feel that they are both phony parties and I'd like Joni to comment on that.

JJ: I agree with Sylvia that I think people are waking up to the idea that there's really no difference between the Democrats and Republicans. They are both representing the interests of the rich in this country.

A clear example of that was what happened around the recent rail strike. The Democratic Party is supposed to be the party of labor. The labor bureaucracy has always supported the Democratic Party and has refused to run its own candidates. When the rail workers went out on strike, within 24 hours there was a bipartisan imposition of an unfair contract on the workers through both the houses of Congress. In the Congress they took a vote and only five people stood up and said, no, this is unfair to workers. And in the Senate, they didn't even have a roll call vote, they did it by acclamation. The labor unions need to wake up to the fact that the Democrats have never really been their friends and have never really been interested in protecting their interest. Labor should run their own candidates.

Richard: Hello, yes, this is Richard. I have been in Czechoslovakia, I've seen massive pollution, I've seen people that were really disillusioned about the system, and it seems like Gorbachev is asking for advice from capitalism. And it seems like the candidate's talking about going back to a communist form of system that doesn't work. People don't care. It hasn't worked. I don't know why will she comment on it.

JJ: Well, the kind of system I want to see wasn't the kind of system they had in Czechoslovakia. There the workers didn't have democracy. For instance, they couldn't make decisions about what kind of industrial production they wanted to have, or how they could produce things in a way that wouldn't destroy their environment. What they had was a caste of bureaucratic planners who lived off the wealth that was created by the Czechoslovakian people. Those bureaucrats are the ones now that want to railroad through new programs to further the market mechanisms and bring capitalism to those countries. And the workers are going to lose out too. We see that



Joni Jacobs

'I think that labor unions need to wake up to the fact that the Democrats have never really been their friends and have never really been interested in protecting their interests. Labor should run their own candidates.'

happening with the incredible unemployment and inflation that is happening in Czechoslovakia and Poland right now. I'm talking about a different kind of system where workers not only own the means of production, but they decide how those means of production are going to be used to benefit the vast majority of people in this country.

Richard: But if you take away the profit incentive, people don't care, they don't want to work.

JJ: Well, I don't agree with that. When you live in a system where the only way you can survive is by being greedy, then you tend to develop the opinion that human nature is greedy and that we have to be greedy and we have to work for profit. I don't think that is true. I think that human beings are cooperative, that they like to work together. I think you saw that after the earthquake when everybody came together and helped each other. I think that's human nature and we need to find another system of social ownership which would further that human nature.

KQED: Have you encountered that question a lot? It seems that with Gorbachev now coming with hat in hand to the Big Seven, are people wondering if your candidacy is out of date by 20 years?

JJ: Well, you know, it's interesting, I don't think so. I've found that when I'm out petitioning to get on the ballot, for example, I tell people that I'm a socialist, running as an open socialist, and more people are willing to sign my petition to get on the ballot than in the past. I think we have to do a lot of education around what is going on in the Soviet Union and to talk about what real socialism is, how it has to be democratic, and how that's not what they had in the Soviet Union. That's one of the challenges of my campaign.

Clayton: Hi, Joni, this is Clayton. I have been organized by you on various occasions and I am sure you can make a very good mayor because you are a great organizer.

What I am really concerned about though is that you say the current administration is not representing the working people. When you are mayor it sounds like you would be representing the working people, but you say that you won't really be representing the interest of Big Business. And the mayor has to represent everybody. I'm really concerned that it doesn't really sound like you have worked out a plan to represent their interests because they really do have viable interests, people who do business in the city and so on.

JJ: Well, I don't agree that the current mayor is representing everybody. I don't feel that he's representing my interests, for example. My standard of living hasn't improved in the past four years, and yet the standard of living of the corporations has. I guess that I don't accept that as an assumption of my campaign and I think that we have to again say flat out I won't be representing the interests of Big Business. What I will be representing are the interests of working people.

Clayton: But you need to represent the interests of everybody in the city, right?

JJ: Well, I think the vast majority of the people in this city are working people, and that's the interest that I want to represent. Like I say, there are other candidates out there who will represent the interests of Big Business, and they will tell you that they are going to represent your interests as well. But you will find out once they are in office that they don't. It's impossible. The interests of working people are counterposed to the interests of Big Business. I want to stand with the workers against Big Business.

KQED: Gerry in Livermore, thanks for being patient.

Gerry: Yes, Joni, at one point in your opening comments, you mentioned something about having to vote for the lesser of two evils. At one point, just prior to the presidential election, I heard something about a thing on the ballot which would be none of the above, and if none of the above won, then they have to come up with new candidates. Have you heard anything about that, and what are your feelings about that. I'll take my answer on the air.

JJ: No, I haven't heard that. It sounds like it might be a good idea ... But I think a better idea is to have people run their own candidates to represent their own interests. NOW (the National Organization for Women), has been talking a lot about forming a new party. That was a big part of the discussion at the national conference a few weeks ago in New York. And it's because women are realizing that neither the Democratic nor Republican parties represent their interests. They want to find another party that would represent their interests and further the cause of reproductive rights, affirmative action, the interests of all women.

That's a good start, but they need to also tie it to a labor party, to having a class perspective, because that's the thing that's really lacking in all this. We don't need another third capitalist party, we need a working-class party that can represent the interests, not only of women, but of Blacks, Latinos, of working people, of environmentalists ... but it has to be based on a class understanding of what is happening in this country.

KQED: Pat in San Francisco, you're on the air with Joni Jacobs.

Pat: Joni, I like your remarks about a labor party. I think that's a very important idea and I am very impressed by the arguments that you gave in favor of it. Let me ask you this: You belong to another party called Socialist Action, and how does that square with your idea of being in favor of a labor party. Would you quit your party to join a labor party? What would you do? ...

JJ: I have a lot of hope for the Labor Party Advocates. I think that there's a large segment of rank-and-file workers in unions that are understanding the treachery...

KQED: I'm not familiar with them. Are they trying to form a new party?

JJ: This is Secretary Treasurer Tony Mazzocchi from the Oil, Chemical, Atomic Workers Union (OCAW). [Mazzocchi is agitating for the formation of an organization called Labor Party Advocates (LPA), which is currently on a nationwide membership recruiting campaign—Editors.]

But the problem that I see with Tony Mazzocchi's perspective is that while he's trying to build this labor party, which I support, he's also giving support to Democratic [Party] candidates. So he's trying to find a middle road, and I don't think there can be a middle road. The Democratic Party does not represent the interests of labor unions. Labor unions are going to have to make a break with them and form their own party.

Now as far as being in Socialist Action. If a labor party was formed that was independent of the Democratic Party, I would join that labor party. I would work to build it and work to get its candidates elected. I would also fight within the party for my own ideas and my own perspective about what I thought the labor party should be doing and what they should be putting forward. So I don't see that as a conflict.

KQED: I'm curious Joni, when did you join the Socialist Party or when did you become interested in socialism? Was it in college?

JJ: Actually, it was around 1987 or so. I'm ashamed to admit it, but as a member of NOW I had worked to get Walter Mondale elected to the presidency. I'm not a red-diaper baby or someone who was brought up with all these ideas. But my own personal experience as a woman in this society led me to believe that there's something more going on in this country than just the oppression of women. It is a class thing that's happening here, the rule of one class over another. One class being the rich, a very small, tiny percentage of the population, and the other class being the working people, the vast majority of the population. Until we change the system so that the working people run this country, run it in their own interests, we're always going to have racism and sexism. ■

... Workers need their own political party

(continued from page 1)

anti-labor offensive. They are condemned to enter the workforce at wages cut to the bone under "two-tier" wage contracts imposed on our unions in an accelerating series of employer take-backs.

At the same time, our living standards have been further eroded by a bipartisan governmental policy of shifting taxes from the rich to the poor. The rate of income taxes continues to be lowered for the small minority of millionaires and billionaires, and raised for the great majority who work for a living.

Sales taxes of all kinds—which more than any other taxes fall heaviest on those with the lowest incomes—have been systematically increased by local and state governments across the land. Sales and other value-added taxes, moreover, have been relentlessly extended in most cities and states to cover growing numbers of food products and services previously exempted from such taxes.

At the same time, social benefits like unemployment insurance are being distributed to an ever-smaller portion of the jobless. And public assistance to the poorest Americans is steadily being cut back. Hardest hit are the children, who suffer most when their parents are made jobless and driven down into pauperization.

Furthermore, all of our children, including those whose parents still hold jobs, are being increasingly cheated of their right to a quality education by teacher lay-offs and other cuts in the public school system. The shockingly high numbers of so-called functional illiterates produced by the deteriorating educational system is rising. These are our children, working-class children.

Meanwhile, the increasing load of taxes ripped-off from the working class is being handed over to the owners of bankrupted savings-and-loan and other failed enterprises. The "owners" of these collapsed businesses don't lose a penny when government agencies bail them out. And, adding insult to injury, the former owners are further rewarded by being allowed to buy back each other's bankrupted enterprises at a fraction of their remaining values.

In a nutshell, we are experiencing an unprecedented redivision of the wealth of the nation in which the government steals from the poor to give to the rich.

The Republican Party's game is to pretend that letting the rich get richer will create conditions for a healthier economy—which, they say, would indirectly benefit working people. The Democrats, on the other hand, often cry crocodile tears for working people. But when push comes to shove, they line up solidly with the Republicans to smash labor.

That is just what the Democrats did last April, for example, when Congress voted almost unanimously to force striking railroad workers back to work. Then, under the guise of a congressional board, they imposed a harsh takeback contract on the workers, denying them their right to vote for or against it.

A fighting program

An effective political program for mobilizing working people in their class interests must be a fighting program that raises clear demands that go to the heart of solving the economic and social problems of the entire working class and its natural allies—oppressed nationalities, women, farmers, professionals, and other middle-class victims of the deepening crisis of capitalism.

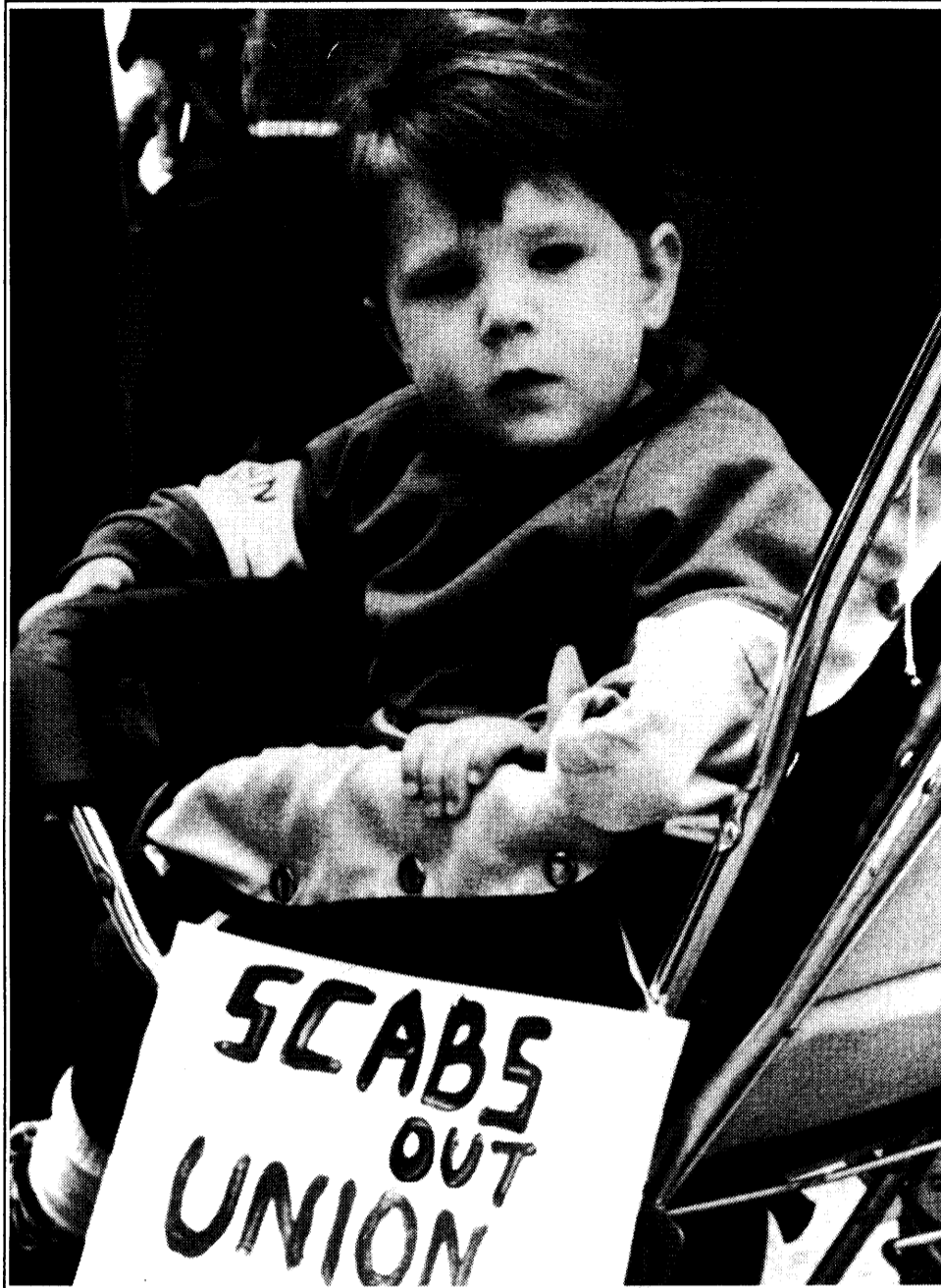
A very brief outline of what such a program should look like follows:

Economic demands:

- A shorter work week with no reduction in pay.

For most working people today, jobs are at the center of their concerns. Despite talk about an end to the recession, the economy continues to falter and unemployment deepens. There is no good reason for tolerating this plague.

Modern industrial technology advances every year, leading to ever more goods produced by fewer workers. But instead of the increasing abundance of wealth created by working people leading to shorter hours and higher pay, increasing numbers of people wind up on the unemployment rolls.



A young labor militant during the Jay paper strike.

Alexei Folger/Socialist Action

'When the trade-union movement unites and takes the road of independent political action, working people then become stronger than the opposing class of employers and bankers.'

The old labor slogan, "Forty hours pay for 30 hours work," needs to be placed at the very top of the list of workers' demands.

- A public works program, designed to meet the needs of the entire population. Building adequate housing, schools, hospitals, and environment-friendly mass public transit, moreover, can help guarantee jobs for all!

- Full medical coverage for everyone, fully paid by taxing capitalist profits.

- Unemployment insurance at full union wages for the entire period of unemployment.

- A national escalator clause, keeping all forms of workers' income—from wages to unemployment insurance and social security pensions—indexed to the rising cost of living.

- Abolish all restrictions on the right to strike and to freely picket struck workplaces. All such restrictions violate freedom of speech and assembly guaranteed by the first 10 amendments to the Constitution of the United States.

It should be noted, however, that labor history shows these rights are won only in struggle. The great labor victories of the 1930s were characterized by mass defiance of court injunctions limiting pickets to an ineffectual few.

Since that time, the right to picket has been gradually eroded, so that scabs can be herded into struck plants to break strikes and steal jobs. It is time for the trade-union movement to fight back with both hands.

Effective picketing that can close down struck plants must again become our "left hook." And an independent labor party based on the unions must become our "right cross." With this one-two punch, we

can halt labor's retreat, go on the offensive, and win back our right to decent living standards.

Social demands:

- Equal rights for all!

On the strictly economic arena of struggle, the bosses' class is stronger than the working class. This is because they have the government, the courts, and the cops at their service to be used as a club whenever there is a confrontation between them and us.

Moreover, they own and control the mass media of communication—newspapers, radio, and TV. They use these instruments to manipulate public opinion with half-truths, outright lies, and slander to turn worker against worker.

The basic strategy of the ruling rich is to play one part of the working class against another—white against Black, men against women, skilled against unskilled, young against old, etc. Divide and conquer is the name of their game. How else can the tiny minority of millionaires and billionaires rule over the vast majority of working people and their natural allies?

One of the turn-of-the-century robber barons of capitalism bragged that he could "hire one-half of the working class to kill the other half." That was only a slight exaggeration. The bosses systematically use the mass media to instill racist, sexist, religious, and xenophobic prejudices in the minds of working people. Their control over who works and who doesn't is then used to intensify the competition for jobs, which provides the material substance to feed the prejudices they nurture among us.

A program for a workers' political move-

ment must include demands that will inoculate workers against the divide-and-conquer tactics of the bosses. The labor party program must support:

- Equal pay for equal work for all—women, Blacks, and other oppressed nationalities.

- Affirmative action to correct the injustices of 400 years of racial oppression.

The mouthpieces of the bosses seek to turn worker against worker by charging that affirmative action will have the effect of making white male workers suffer for 400 years of capitalist-inspired racism and sexism. This is absolutely false.

In the 1930s, the new industrial unions overcame the anti-union practices of giant corporations because they became the champion of all working people irrespective of race, sex, or national origin. The CIO took a principled position to achieve real unity by proving to Blacks, women, and other discriminated-against workers that "united we stand, divided we fall" was more than an empty slogan.

A vigorous campaign by the labor movement in support of affirmative action and all other measures for unifying working people would symbolize a renewed upsurge of union solidarity that will make the labor movement irresistible.

What "solidarity" really means

Most important of all, when the Black community rises up to protest against racial injustice, when women mobilize to defend their right to choose—whether or not to terminate a pregnancy, for instance—the whole labor movement must also rise up and say: "An injury to one is an injury to all!"

The National Organization of Women (NOW) has called for a mass march on Washington in the spring of 1992 to protest the wide-ranging attack on abortion rights. *This is a working-class issue.*

When abortion was illegal in most parts of the United States, the wives and daughters of the rich were not in the slightest prevented from having a safe and legal abortion simply by hopping on a plane and going to a place in this country or abroad where it was legal. But working-class women were driven by economic pressures to have life-threatening illegal abortions.

The labor movement must mobilize working people in solidarity with NOW and the movement of women for equal rights. NOW has called for a million supporters of women's rights to come to Washington. If labor puts its shoulder to the wheel, this pro-labor political action could easily exceed that projected number. Such a mass rally—fully backed by the AFL-CIO and independent unions—would shake the very foundations of the bosses' political, economic, and social power in this country.

When the trade-union movement unites and takes the road of independent political action, working people then become stronger than the opposing class of employers and bankers. The old labor song, "Solidarity Forever," gives the time-honored workers' answer to the bosses' divide-and-rule strategy in these words:

"When the union's inspiration through the workers' blood shall run, there can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun!"

International Viewpoint

A biweekly magazine published under the auspices of the Fourth International.

One year subscription: \$47

*Send to:
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Montreuil, France*

Following is the speech by Tony Maz-zocchi, secretary treasurer of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers union (OCAW) to an open meeting of the San Francisco Labor Council on July 22, 1991.

Thank you. That was a very kind introduction, and thank you again to the officers of the Central Labor [Council] for inviting me again to agitate for the concept of organizing a labor party in the United States.

I'd like to discuss with you the concept. Some of you in the audience—who I recognize, of course—have been involved in these discussions. But many of you are hearing for the first time this plea to help organize a group that we call Labor Party Advocates.

I, for many years, have felt that we need a labor party—along with many others in the country in the labor movement. However, I think many of us thought that, although philosophically we were for a labor party, conditions were not right, that most working people—trade unionists—

his own election promises. We could not even get it out of the so-called "veto-proof Congress."

"Fighting defensive battles"

And the story, when you examine the post-war period (especially the last 20 years), is that labor has had great difficulty advancing an issue and even greater difficulty trying to defend what we have. You know, probably better than I do, what's happened to us. Our wages are lower than ever before. In real terms, we're back to the level of 1970.

It's more difficult to organize workers than at any time in the post-war period. We're losing membership by the hundreds of thousands per year. There's a hemorrhage of jobs to low-wage areas of the world. Our industrial base is diminishing. As a result, the ability to generate high-paying jobs in other areas such as the people who build things is greatly diminished also.

I think that [in] the recent scandal of the

Why we need OCAW's secretary treasurer Tony the time is now for labor to form t

If you look at the campaign contributions that float into both parties, you'll see that they really come from essentially the same sources, big industry, big construction firms, investment interests.

And it is very difficult for us to carry on a political dialogue in a situation where corporations control every avenue of expression. The media is totally controlled by big business. And working people real-

being tugged by the corporations and labor's voice is miniscule. A political party that would pose a threat to the existing Republican and Democratic parties, just the mere threat of its existence would do more to capture the attention of the existing political parties.

We can't do it by constantly throwing money at them. You get their attention for about five minutes when you bring in the big check, and right after that they forget who you are and proceed to forget until they come up for election a few years hence.

That situation assumes that we're fools. I've been in the labor movement 45 years. And I've just decided that we are fools because any system [in which] you're constantly raising money for politicians and approaching them with a naiveté that we wouldn't approach our boss at the bargaining table with, and just assuming that if we give them money, that we can somehow influence them to vote our way.

Well, I've dealt with the Oil Workers for most of my life, knowing that the sum total of money that we could collect in this movement and give to a legislator, the oil industry could pack in a black bag and persuade legislators directly or indirectly to advance their interests.

And multi-national corporations have demonstrated that to us. They've diminished our wages. They've scabbed our jobs abroad. They've created the worst working conditions that I've seen in the entire post-war period.

They've put us up against the wall. We've been fighting defensive struggles. It's rare that we win a struggle. There are some victories—they're so few and far between that all of us are very proud of them. And we wave the flag of those few victories because we have to rally around some flag.

"Organize in a serious way"

I would submit that the way to turn this around is to demonstrate that we're tired of it, that we understand the way the system works, and that we're going to organize in a very serious way.

Not just rhetorical, not just waving the flag and saying we're going to do this, that, and the other tomorrow. But organizing like we would organize a major corporation, long-view, organize in small committees to organize larger committees until at the appropriate time we're able to call for an election.

In the case of organizing [a union at] a large company, you call for an NLRB election. In case of a political party, I would submit that what we are establishing in Labor Party Advocates is a political party.

It is organizing members. We need 100,000 members before we're even able to make a major political pronouncement. After we consult with the people who've joined [together] in a convention, we'll formulate what our program should be.

One hundred thousand members—we would be at the beginning of a movement that I think can shake the major political parties to at least begin to understand that there are alternatives. Working people want alternatives.

The alternative they're choosing today is "none of the above." Sixty-five percent of the people don't vote, and it's not because they're stupid or apathetic. They don't vote because they don't see what voting will get them. They really feel that there's very little choice.

I substantially agree. There's choice by nuance. Some elected officials express themselves a bit differently on the issues. There are a handful of people that are true friends of working people. They're in Congress. They're in the state houses.



Robert Fox/Impact Visuals

I believe that first of all, we have to advance our interests so the public can respond to the issues as we frame them. And they have got to be directly framed issues of full employment, full income, the question of national health insurance—the whole litany of issues that advance working people's interests.

felt that they could advance their position by working within the Democratic Party. And I myself worked many years within the Democratic Party as legislative director of my union for 12 years.

I, of course, was working in concert with my fellow AFL-CIO legislative directors to advance working people's interests in the capital. I became frustrated at that task when I realized that lobbying, trying to convince an elected official that they should act appropriately on behalf of the people who we represent, was sort of a futile task.

Mostly you get lip-service from legislators—especially around election time. We've raised considerable amounts of money in the labor movement to help elect legislators, and on issues of crucial concern we're always left wanting.

I think the final straw for me personally was when we in the labor movement worked hard to elect Jimmy Carter. And at that time, we had a slogan, "Let's elect the veto-proof Congress. ..."

And we, both building trades and the industrial unions, advanced two issues at the time: situs picketing and labor reform to make it easy to conduct NLRB [National Labor Relations Board] elections.

You all know the formidable obstacles in organizing workers. And it turned out we could not really get that legislation advanced even to the point where it could be vetoed if our president decided to violate

so-called "free-trade" bill with Mexico, all the friends that we supposedly had who were going to support us in that effort deserted us. Many of the key ones—we put a considerable amount of money behind their campaigns. I would mention Dick Gephardt, who received about \$275,000 from the AFL-CIO alone, from the collective unions in the AFL-CIO. On an issue of such paramount concern to us, we've seen our so-called friends run.

Now, I need not describe the condition of our nation at the present moment, the condition of the labor movement. When I came into this labor movement, we practically represented 40 percent of the workforce, and the most significant parts of the workforce. And today, depending on who's counting, we represent between 11 and 14 or 15 percent.

I submit, it's probably on the lower end of that scale. Either way, it is a rather low percentage of the workforce, and no trade union movement that [only] represents 10 to 15 percent of the workforce can really advance the interests of working people.

All we're doing today are fighting defensive battles. The issues are being framed by corporations. We're always arguing about an issue that is framed by the corporations. It's their agenda that's being advanced. They're the ones that are putting up enormous amounts of money in election campaigns for members of both parties.

ly have very little power to change things through the existing political parties.

Now I don't believe we can change that over night. I believe that first of all, we have to advance our interests so the public can respond to the issues as we frame them. And they have got to be directly framed issues of full employment, full income, the question of national health insurance. The whole litany of issues that advance working people's interests have to be up there in advance of any other issues.

We have to be hammering away at that. We have to organize ourselves into a large movement. We can't do it within an anti-union climate where both parties are afraid to even move issues that will allow us a level playing field to allow us to organize workers.

"Move along in steps."

A labor party that I would propose would move along in steps. One, we'd have to organize ourselves in substantial numbers—not run anybody for election—but essentially organize a large group of people who then would develop a constitution and then a series of issues; also newspapers and other means public expression where we could begin to hammer out a cadence around the nation from our particular viewpoint that would effect the agenda of both political parties.

Right now, both political parties are

Why we need a labor party

OCAW's secretary treasurer Tony Mazzocchi says the time is now for labor to form their own political party.

If you look at the campaign contributions that float into both parties, you'll see that they really come from essentially the same sources, big industry, big construction firms, investment interests.

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One hundred thousand members—we would be at the beginning of a movement that I think can shake the major political parties to at least begin to understand that there are alternatives. Working people want alternatives.

The alternative they're choosing today is "none of the above." Sixty-five percent of the people don't vote, and it's not because they're stupid or apathetic. They don't vote because they don't see what voting will get them. They really feel that there's very little choice.

I substantially agree. There's choice by nuance. Some elected officials express themselves a bit differently on the issues. There are a handful of people that are true friends of working people. They're in Congress. They're in the state houses.



Dave Newman/Impact Visuals

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"We asked the rank and file"

So given that situation, I submit, the time is now. It's not an easy task, and it's not a popular task. I'm an international [union] officer and I consort with other international officers in the trade union movement, and I can tell you this is not a popular thing to do. But it's popular with the rank and file.

The reason I say that is that we've been conducting polls. I started with my own union because there was a resolution at one of our conventions saying you ought to talk to the rank and file. I always think that's a good idea that too many of us forget in this movement.

We went out to our rank and file, and we essentially asked them how they felt about the political parties in existence. And we were very much surprised when 60 percent categorically rejected both the parties, and 60 percent said it's time to form a labor party.

And I thought, maybe because we work with a lot of toxic substances, our brains were a little different than our fellow trade unionists, but then we began to convince unions, construction trades, public sector, white collar workers. We have conducted polls across the [whole] spectrum of working people through their organizations.

I can now predict any poll that you would conduct among your own local unions. I have no fear of contradiction because, of 50 or 60 locals we've polled, the results all come in the same.

They're the same by gender, they're the same by race, they're the same by geogra-

phy. Workers in a small town, Mormon communities in Utah, respond precisely the same way workers in a major urban area would respond. There is no difference at all.

We find the only difference is in the ages 55 to 65. The respondees tend to be a bit more conservative, not appreciatively more, but a bit more. They want to work more with the existing political parties.

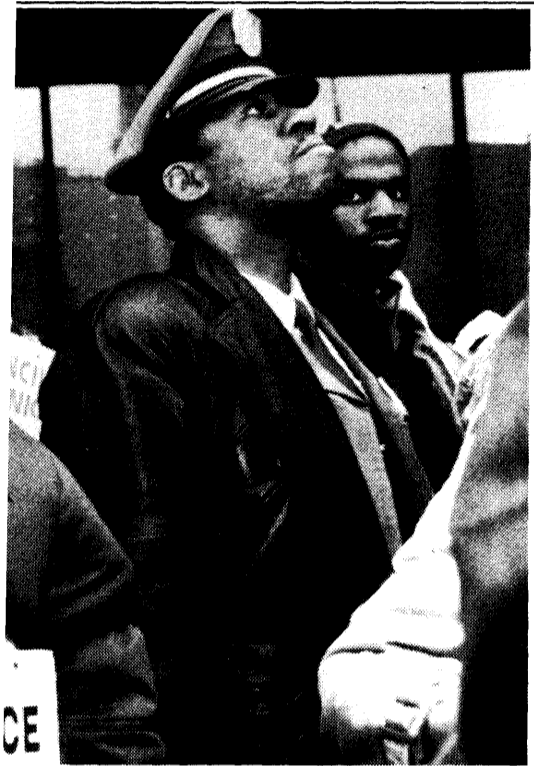
The younger workers are totally rejecting [this approach] right up the line. You conduct a poll in your own union. We've developed all the polling data. We've developed computer programs to interpret the data. You'll see that the figures I'm using will hold up generally.

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The mere fact that we would meet to discuss and argue among ourselves what a political agenda should consist of will shake politicians appreciably, and rather than having continuing attacks on people, they would have to be taking note that we're ready and prepared to contest at some point in time.

"Friends" in New Jersey?

Now all our "friends" are deserting us. I come out of New Jersey. I work in Denver, but I live in New Jersey. And the Communications Workers of America (CWA) represent all the state workers in New Jersey. They've just gone through an incredible experience, because we broke our neck collectively—the UAW, the CWA, the building trades, the industrial unions—to elect who they perceive to be a pro-labor governor—Gov. Jim Florio.



Robert Fox/Impact Visuals

advance our interests so we frame them. And issues of full employment of national health that advance working

ly have very little power to change things through the existing political parties.

Now I don't believe we can change that over night. I believe that first of all, we have to advance our interests so the public can respond to the issues as we frame them. And they have got to be directly framed issues of full employment, full income, the question of national health insurance. The whole litany of issues that advance working people's interests have to be up there in advance of any other issues.

We have to be hammering away at that. We have to organize ourselves into a large movement. We can't do it within an anti-union climate where both parties are afraid to even move issues that will allow us a level playing field to allow us to organize workers.

"Move along in steps."

A labor party that I would propose would move along in steps. One, we'd have to organize ourselves in substantial numbers—not run anybody for election—but essentially organize a large group of people who then would develop a constitution and then a series of issues; also newspapers and other means public expression where we could begin to hammer out a cadence around the nation from our particular viewpoint that would effect the agenda of both political parties.

Right now, both political parties are

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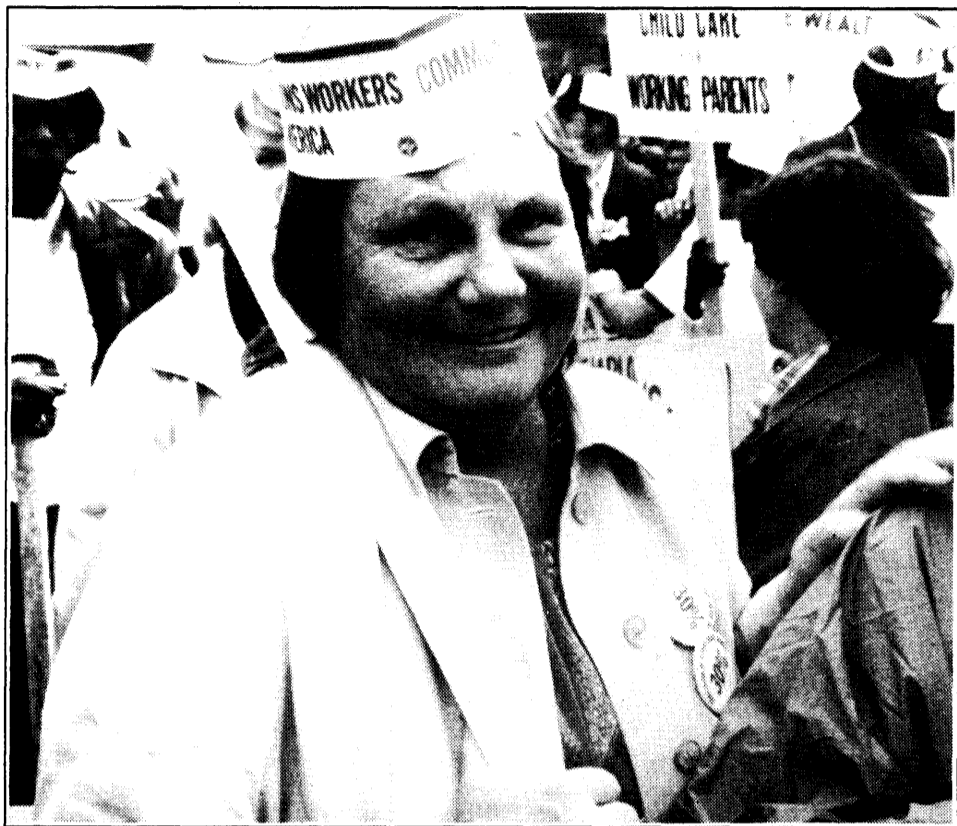
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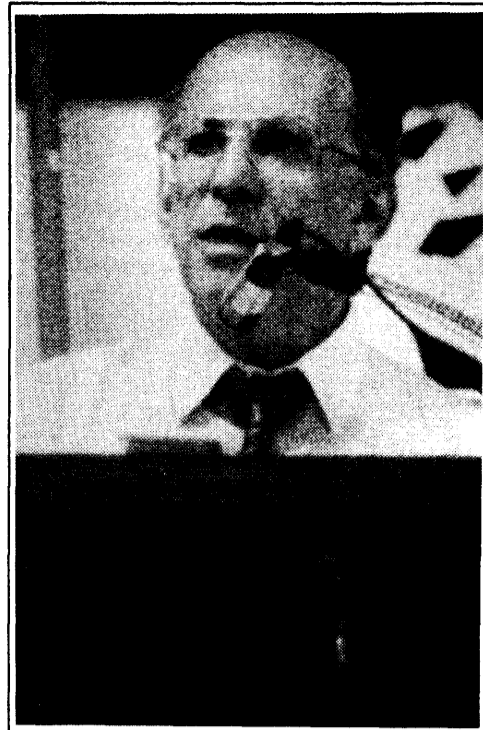
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He was the guy that was going to subscribe to labor's program. He appointed a former business agent of the ILGWU as labor commissioner. Well, negotiations came up—the state is in fiscal trouble like every other state in the country—and the governor, friend of labor (the CWA characterized him as "our friend"), came out and called for the abrogation of the contract—wanting the workers to take concessions and wanting to lay off 8500 workers and destroy the contract.

That was while he was their "friend." When he became their enemy, he ended up not forwarding or advancing one single concession unless 8000 workers were laid off. ...

Well, what turned the enemy into agreeing with the CWA position? There was a very narrow balance in the assembly, but the Democrats controlled the assembly. What the CWA did was that they picked all the marginal districts out and they entered 17 candidates and said to the Democratic Party, "You're going down to defeat. Those 17 candidates are the difference, and we may not elect our people but



Joseph Ryan/Socialist Action

Tony Mazzocchi at S.F. labor council

Their position always is, "Well, we have to represent everybody." Well, I don't want an elected official to represent everyone, I want him to represent us.

we're going to defeat you."

And those legislators refused to accept the governor's proposal, and the CWA won an absolute victory. The largest newspaper in the state said that the union stabbed the governor in the eye, and the governor blinked. And that's precisely what happened. No concessions, less than 2000 lay offs, contracts are intact. And that's because they decided they're going to break with the party.

And it was a disgusting spectacle at the time because the labor commissioner, coming out of the labor movement, said he would be the first to cross the picket line. There were reportedly scabs to break the picket line.

In the next state, New York, you have the same thing—fiscal crisis, workers have to give up benefits, take lay-offs. The city of New York—same thing. These are places where labor broke their necks and spent millions of dollars to elect "friends." With friends like that, we're on the road to oblivion.

I'm sure you have your own set of stories of betrayals by politicians. And even when there aren't betrayals, they're just weak-kneed politicians who'll back down when you ask them something substantively. Their position always is, "Well, we have to represent everybody." Well, I don't want an elected official to represent everyone, I want him to represent us.

So, I come before you this evening to ask you to consider joining the party called the Labor Party Advocates. It won't get you a thing initially. It'll cost you 20 bucks a year. You'll get a couple newsletters.

But you're going to be part of a national effort that's seeking to recruit 100,000 people. It's part of an organizing drive.

The expectation level should be kept low. I think we should be modest about our objectives. This is a formidable task. We're looking to recruit 5000 organizers who would volunteer to organize others. Hopefully, we can generate sufficient income to where we can hire full-time organizers.

Now, we're in a period of agitation. A number of us are beginning to go around the country and speak to various meetings. We've been asking for lists so we can solicit people through the mail, and so far we've been getting a 10 percent return on the lists that we've been getting.

Last week, for the first time, we're doing an experiment. We've got 10 local unions

scattered around the United States, various international unions, who've submitted their membership lists to us with the approval or their executive boards. We're doing a direct solicitation to their members.

We don't expect a large return. If we get a one percent return, that would generate enough money to continue to mail. At least the organization will then get its name out to the people.

And we're interested in getting it out before the people. Not recruiting from the top down, but from the bottom up. This has got to be an organization that has *real* members, not local unions that say they represent X-amount of members.

But we need real people scattered throughout the United States. Members of unions and people who don't belong to unions, people who work. And I use the term working people generically. It covers everyone who works for wages or should be working for wages if we had a just society.

Briefly, that's what we're about to do. I have no doubt there's a million people out there who'd join. The question is reaching them. It's not a question of convincing them. I find wherever I go in the United States, and I do travel quite extensively, I have found no difference in response, whatever sector of the United States I have visited.

People are disgusted with the existing political process. They've abandoned it. They don't believe in it. We are weakened as a trade-union movement because we're constantly telling people to get out for Joe Shmo or Joe Blow or Katherine Shmo or Katherine Blow, and it's the same situation.

We disillusion people because we never get those legislators to accept even the most primary program that we put forward.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity and I'd be happy to take questions. ■

**For more information about
Labor Party Advocates
write to:**

**Labor Party Advocates
P.O. Box 1510
Highland Park,
New Jersey
08904-9998**

... Upheaval in the Soviet Union

(continued from page 1)

side, and "hardline communists defending socialism," on the other.

Nothing could be further from the truth. All major currents in the state apparatus—including national and local parliamentary bodies—support the reintroduction of capitalism.

The fundamental difference between them was whether it was possible to continue the process of capitalist restoration by political means, or whether an iron-fisted dictatorship was necessary to impose the anti-working-class measures this policy requires.

The desertions from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) by life-long Stalinist bureaucrats like Boris Yeltsin and Eduard Shevardnadze heralded and helped trigger the attempted coup—which turns out to have been the last desperate effort to save the party—the main instrument of bureaucratic rule—from destruction.

Yeltsin and Shevardnadze, and others who had earlier abandoned the CPSU, had come to the conclusion that it was no longer possible for the bureaucracy as a whole to control the privatization process it had begun.

The unspoken real issue dividing the "Communist" bureaucrats was whether or not the CPSU could stay in control over the process of capitalist restoration. The real aim of the leaders of the coup, who at that point were the real leaders of the CPSU and the bureaucratic apparatus as a whole, was to strengthen the bureaucracy's strategic position so that it could end up as the major stockholders in a privatized economy.

The Communist Party ceased being communist when Stalin assumed dictatorial control over the party that led the Russian workers to victory. It became the institution by which the bureaucracy exercised its political dictatorship. It became the centralized instrument for the ruthless crushing of any resistance to privileges rivaling those of millionaires and billionaires in wealthy capitalist countries.

This last-ditch desperate attempt to maintain the solidarity of the bureaucracy in their campaign to transform themselves from a privileged caste into a property owning capitalist class was decisively rejected by a spontaneous uprising of the peoples of this land.

All serious observers, who have visited any of the so-called "socialist countries" since the revolution that swept across Eastern Europe at the end of 1989, could not help but see the indignant hostility of the working classes there toward the Stalinist bosses.

Especially repugnant to the masses of workers was the drive by the "Communist" bureaucrats to rip-off nationalized industry for a song. This is backed up by reports in the mass media documenting how "Communist" bureaucrats heading nationalized enterprises were discovered to have "sold" the same enterprises to themselves, and for a fraction of their values!

Another factor triggering the attempted coup was the new union treaty Gorbachev was scheduled to sign, which would give a greater measure of independence to the republics clamoring for the right to self-determination.

The failure of the coup, of course, has made the concessions made by Gorbachev in the proposed union treaty far from adequate. Republic after republic has since declared its unqualified independence—which they are backing up by closing Communist Party newspapers, driving the party out of the workplaces, confiscating the billions in property the CPSU has amassed, and effectively destroying it as the main political instrument of bureaucratic rule.

It will be extremely difficult now for the bureaucracy and its allies to organize a new, effective, instrument to carry through the restoration of capitalism

What underlies the crisis?

An explanation for the crisis which led to the attempted coup is not hard to find.



'The unspoken real issue dividing the "Communist" bureaucrats was whether or not the CPSU could stay in control over the process of capitalist restoration.'

The Soviet economy was and is spiraling downward, prices and unemployment are spiraling upward, and the patience of the Soviet working class is wearing thin. As bad as things were before 1985—before Gorbachev launched the current campaign to reintroduce a market-driven economy—conditions are worse now than ever.

The capitalist world explains the crisis as being the result of Gorbachev's half-measures—that he hadn't gone far or fast enough toward privatizing the nationalized economy. There is a grain of truth to this, but it's not because Gorbachev and the bureaucracy as a whole have not been doing their utmost to carry it through. There are two basic obstacles standing in the way of capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union, as well as in all of Eastern Europe.

• The first obstacle is the refusal of working people to accept the prerequisites of a market economy—the most important of which is the abolition of their guaranteed right to a job.

Capitalist market relations require that working people be at the complete mercy of the boss. They must be denied the fundamental security of a right to a job. And they must be denied the fundamental right to the basic necessities of life—not as charity, or as a dole, but as a right to sufficient food, clothing, shelter, medical care, vacations.

Moreover, they must be denied the system of retirement pensions, still relatively intact, that permit retired workers to live out the rest of their years in dignity.

Before there can be a "self-regulating," market-driven economy, employers must have the basic right to hire and fire. Prices

of everything from food and rent, to labor power (wages), must be free to find their own levels on the market place—to rise and fall according to the economic laws of capitalism.

To carry this out requires in the very first instance the abolition of the guarantee, in effect for over 70 years in the Soviet Union, that when workers are unemployed for shorter or longer periods, they continue to enjoy an essentially undiminished standard of living until they are assigned another job. This means that unemployment cannot be used as a weapon to force workers into a desperate competition for jobs such as is the norm in all capitalist countries.

The right to hire and fire enables the bosses in all capitalist countries to drastically reduce wages—and thus raise profits. Trade unions constitute an attempt by workers in capitalist countries to unite as sellers of labor power so that they can gain the highest possible price, or wages, and establish a force—the union and its institutions, committees, stewards, etc.—to maintain their gains.

The Russian Revolution is, in a manner of speaking, the equivalent of unions and other workers' class institutions taking over the state and putting a floor under wages that cannot be reduced except by counterrevolution.

Thus, before the present ruling caste and its allies can achieve their goal they must abolish the system of full social security for every child, every senior citizen, every worker, before capitalism can take root and flower.

These social guarantees, impossible in

any capitalist country, are a direct product of their planned economic system. And although big inroads into these conquests have been made in some of these countries, it remains a qualitative obstruction to the market system. These rights can be abolished only by dealing the working class a decisive defeat.

Gorbachev gets cold shoulder

• The second obstacle is the refusal, thus far, of the world's bankers and capitalists to invest their money in the Soviet economy. Soviet bureaucrats and entrepreneurs don't have the kind of money required to pay for or modernize the Soviet economy. And capitalists don't lend money if they think the borrower will not be able to pay it back—and with "reasonable" profits to boot. So far, every effort by Gorbachev, Yeltsin, or the so-called "hardliners" to get the Soviet workers to accept the sacrifices necessary for guaranteed profits has failed.

When the Group of Seven, an economic association of the seven most powerful imperialist nations, met just a few months ago, Gorbachev went there hat in hand. He desperately sought to convince them that capitalist restoration depended on their willingness to put up some real money to give their common project a chance at success.

Gorbachev was given little more than friendly pats on the back for his efforts, but no real cash. In fact, the Aug. 19 edition of *The New York Times*, which was published just hours before the coup, headlined the response of capitalist bankers to the Soviet economic crisis as follows: "Shortage of Cash keeps Soviets Out of World Markets—Banks Shunning Loans—Efforts by Western Leaders to Mesh Moscow Into Global Economy Undermined."

The Times piece led off with this essence of the report. It read:

"Even as President Bush and other Western leaders take steps to integrate the Soviet Union into the world economy, a crippling shortage of foreign currency is forcing the Soviets to retreat from global trade and financial markets."

A few paragraphs later, they wrote: "International banks not only are refusing to issue new loans to Moscow, but have declined to renew nearly \$20 billion of old loans ... Such short-term loans for most large borrowers are routinely reissued at the prevailing interest rate as they come due."

The rest of the piece details a sharp decline in bank loans, not to mention that the world's capitalists have come up with no new aid or assistance. Scariest of all, perhaps, was the difficulty the bureaucracy had in borrowing a mere \$600 million for grain imports even though 98 percent of the principal and most of the interest was guaranteed by the U.S. government.

This story was preceded about a week before by reports of an uproar over a deal involving a projected investment of billions of dollars by Chevron, the giant American oil corporation. The tentative agreement was for development of relatively untapped Soviet oil reserves, said to be several times larger than the huge oil fields in Alaska.

Furthermore, the reports at that time indicated that there was widespread criticism of the deal as a giant rip-off of the Soviet Union's natural wealth by Chevron. The two main criticisms were that Chevron's commitment of capital was miniscule compared to the amount to be put up by the Soviet government, and that under-the-table payoffs had been made by Chevron to Communist Party bureaucrats.

Will workers accept sacrifices?

Clearly, workers need to see hard evidence of better times to come before they will accept further sacrifices and wind up with all the disadvantages of capitalism, but with none of the hoped-for advantages.

They need to see an inflow of capital being put to work modernizing their economy so that—they hope—a capitalist Russia could compete effectively on the world market. That is, they want to see at least the promise of Western living standards not far down the road. Otherwise, they are not willing to sink deeper into a system that might land them into the capitalism of the 1930s' Depression—if not that of underdeveloped countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa today.

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This jealous guarding of their economic conquests is not equated in workers' minds with socialism or communism. In their minds, if the Stalinist system is "socialism," they want no part of it. Nor will they tolerate any longer the hoggish CPSU officials who masqueraded as "socialists."

Soviet citizens scornfully told a reporter for *The New York Times* (Aug. 25, 1991) that they knew of local bureaucrats who preached in public against the privatization of the land while privately negotiating to buy sites for their vacation cottages for only token sums.

"There could be no better time to stop feeding the bellies of the party bigwigs," one woman sneered. "A well-fed person does not understand a hungry one."

We should not misread, either, the current lumping together of Lenin and Stalin. Stalin and the bureaucracy falsely claimed from the moment they began their assault on Leninism that they were Lenin's real political heirs. The entire capitalist world backed up Stalin 100 percent in this absolutely false claim.

It is a matter of historical fact that Lenin called for Stalin's removal as head of the Communist Party in his famous "Last Will and Testament." And it's also a well documented fact that when Stalin began his attack on Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the October Revolution, Stalin won the support of the entire capitalist world. He went on, after defeating Trotsky and the Leninist opposition, to his political counter-revolution, and murdered virtually everyone of Lenin's political collaborators, including Trotsky in exile in Mexico.

Parenthetically, one eyewitness to the events in recent days reported to *Socialist Action* (see box on this page) that Lenin is viewed with generalized respect. He says he saw not a single instance of defacement of Lenin's statues and posters throughout his 25-day stay, which included witnessing the mass mobilizations in Moscow against the coup.

Now, the same hated bureaucrats who had been enthusiastic supporters and participants in the Stalinist repression, mass imprisonments, and mass murders—culminating in two of the bloodiest purge trials in history—profess to have been innocent of all their crimes. And now, all these Stalinist rats are hypocritically cursing their own past and deserting the sinking ship of the Communist Party as fast as they can.

Parliamentary democracy

There was also a very important political component to the rising crisis that the coup conspirators must have believed was in their favor. They made the mistake of believing that the masses would prefer the old Stalinist "order" to the currently worsening economy.

Gorbachev's strategy for reintroducing capitalism is closely connected with his introduction of a kind of democracy known generically as "parliamentary democracy."

That's the kind of democracy that can exist in capitalist countries like our own, and it is far different from the democracy of the fledgling Soviet republic. In the first years following the Russian Revolution, every point of view of the workers was given the fullest opportunity for expression. The leadership of the workers' councils (called "soviets") was elected and subject to recall by simple majority vote.

Capitalist parliamentary democracy—while better than capitalist political dictatorship—nevertheless favors those who already are in control of the economic and social life of the country. In capitalist countries, the capitalists derive a decisive advantage because of their ownership of everything of real value, including the mass media of communication—the press, radio, and TV.

In the Stalinist bureaucratic system, parliamentary democracy gives a decisive advantage to the privileged bureaucracy and the vast middle-class layer of writers, artists, scientists, lawyers, technicians, and others who have long shared in the privileges reserved for the elite.

And with the attempted introduction of a market economy, there has also come a growing layer of entrepreneurs. These aspiring capitalists have sprouted mainly from the bureaucracy itself and from other privi-



leged sectors of Soviet society. And it is from the latter sectors that the political allies of the Stalinist bureaucracy have emerged to dominate the parliamentary institutions.

It is an axiom of politics that parliamentary democracy works best when economic systems are in equilibrium, but is absolutely counterproductive in a crisis. The Soviet parliamentary system has been typically beset with quarreling politicians unable to agree on any plan of action for reaching their capitalist goals.

A brief glance at history will reveal that in such periods of crisis, when solutions are far from apparent or easily reachable, the ruling parliamentary representatives of power and privilege tend to fracture into contending factions. It is at such moments that the "strong men" of history tend to come forward in a desperate attempt to unite their cohorts in a drive toward a successful resolution of their crisis.

Why the coup failed

This is the dynamic behind the attempted coup. It was an attempt to end the fractious parliamentary squabbling and empower a strong government to impose the preconditions for safe and profitable imperialist investment with whatever force was necessary—perestroika by bayonet, not glasnost.

However, those "democrats" who have come into the center of the new political power will not be able to smash the resistance of the workers and make their way to capitalism without new strongmen and political dictatorships. Russian President Boris Yeltsin, who has already shown strong tendencies toward rule by decree, may be the next to try the road of the eight

coup-conspirators.

Why did the plotters hesitate when resolute action, from their point of view, was called for? Why did they not unleash a bloodbath, a vital necessity to scoundrels organizing such a campaign when some degree of mass opposition is inevitable? Coldly calculated bloodletting to intimidate and break the will of mass opposition is indispensable to any such operation.

It seems clear that they were paralyzed by the breadth of the opposition from Moscow to Leningrad to Siberia to the Baltic states. And not only was this junta confronted with hundreds of thousands in the streets, but by striking coal miners and other industrial workers in the heartland of the USSR.

In Estonia, some 400,000 workers participated in a two-hour general strike to protest the coup. And President Yeltsin, holed up in his Republican capital, issued a call for a political general strike throughout the country.

Moreover, the army was divided. An organized opposition has existed in the Soviet military for some time. It already played a role in defeating the attempted coup in Lithuania in January. Now, whole crews of armored cars and tanks defected to Yeltsin in front of the TV cameras.

Had the Bonapartist clique actually followed through with orders to shoot and kill, it was clear that a broad general strike and civil war were the most likely outcome.

As Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze prophesized at the time of his resignation from that post: "Dictatorship is coming. I state it with complete responsibility. No one knows of what kind this

dictatorship will be, and who will come—what kind of dictator, what the regime will be like...." Clearly, the biggest outcome this life-long Stalinist feared was just this, a revolutionary rising by the worker victims of his bureaucratic dictatorship.

On Saturday, Aug. 24, Shevardnadze told a news conference in Moscow:

"Very soon people will begin judging the new democratic leaders by the way they cope in new conditions with the extremely serious problems facing the country: a slump in production, the supply of power, and so on. If these problems are not resolved, I am afraid that people may take to the streets."

As they poured into the streets, the Soviet masses wisely and instantly determined who their main enemy was. They successfully mobilized to oppose the coup-faction of the CPSU and halted it in its tracks.

We are still at the beginning of the political revolution, although it must be said that a new stage has been reached—the CPSU has been overthrown. Now there is a political vacuum in this land, but Soviet workers have not yet begun to take action in their own name. Tomorrow, we can be sure, they will mobilize again and again to rid their land of all totalitarianism.

But to be successful, the workers will need to take action in their own name and in their own class interests. For this, they will need to organize a revolutionary party of workers, which will study their own rich history. Thus armed, they will find their way to a program that can renew the historic struggle of Soviet workers for real socialism—and win! —N.W.

John Edmond, an American working in the Soviet Union, witnessed the events surrounding the attempted coup. Socialist Action spoke to him on Aug. 25. Excerpts from the interview appear below, and larger portions will be published in our October issue.

When I got to the barricades early in the morning [in Moscow, on Aug. 21], the transport workers had been the first people on the scene. They drove all their buses there and filled them up with diesel fuel, and drove them across the boulevards.

The idea was that if the tanks had charged, they would torch the whole lot. In fact, a few of them were torched when it looked like there was going to be an attack.

What happened then was that they scoured the entire city for miles for building materials. They must have moved a hundred-thousand tons in a few hours!

They went about it very professionally. [Many of these people], who were ex-conscripts, knew everything about tanks.

They began to construct "hedgehogs," which are big tangled arrays of reinforcing bars, steel scaffolding, all the things you find on construction sites. Then in the core of that, inside the hedgehogs, they had massive pieces of machinery, big transformers, you name it. What would happen was that, if the tanks charged, their catapillar tracks would get caught up in the pipes and the bars—and that would be the end of them.

An eyewitness to coup resistance

So they had all that in place early Wednesday. It was a frantic effort. You couldn't sleep Tuesday evening because of the noise of the construction work. There were so many people, you couldn't move in the center of Moscow.

The interesting thing was—and it was true in Siberia when I was there the day before—there was this feeling that there was going to be a protracted civil war. But there was no preparation for it. Nobody was stockpiling food. Nobody was trying to get ammunition.

As in [the battles of] Stalingrad and Leningrad, they said, "We'll fight with our hands. And we'll probably be fighting our parents." They said this because the age structure is such that people over 50 are sort of sympathetic to the system, and everybody under 40 hates it.

And these people were terrified. Rumors were flying on the streets of Moscow. It's not even clear how many people were killed. I went to the funeral—which was all day Saturday [Aug. 24]—and they just brought in three coffins. But the funeral was seen by everybody as a symbolic burial for the 15 million who died in the slave camps.

Those people [killed near the barricades] were killed by the Red Army. But the Red Army, as everybody knows, has a romantic, patriotic association, particularly for

the Russians. The idea that Red Army troops would kill Russians—there was just fury, and that was the end of the coup.

So everything stopped in Moscow. When the government cordoned off Red Square against demonstrations, people laughed and said: "We're not going to defend the Kremlin. We're going to defend the White House [the Russian Parliament Building]. We don't care about the Kremlin any more."

Everything was packed solid. When the tanks tried to move, [they] would be surrounded by thousands of people—many would be carrying the red, white, and blue Russian flags. So the soldiers all had to get out of their vehicles, take a flag, and cheer—and then they were allowed to move.

The government was unable to get any of the other army units involved. By Thursday, the conscripts—who were unarmed—had joined the crowd.

Essentially, the whole city had stopped completely. (It's hard to know what to call it. Do you call it a *μ*strike?) People just went to demonstrations; there was no question of showing up for work. The area where the people were killed was full of flowers. By this time, the barricades were just gigantic—with rows of buses—and they were piled with flowers. ■

'Black majority's political struggle has only just begun in South Africa'

Following are major excerpts from a speech by Dr. Neville Alexander, chairperson of the Workers Organization for Socialist Action (WOSA) in South Africa.

The speech was given on May 2, 1991, at a Socialist Action forum titled "Transformation of South Africa into a New Society," held in the Church of the United Community in Boston. The transcript has been slightly edited to avoid repetition.

In South Africa today, a contradictory historical movement is taking place. On the one hand, the bourgeoisie—and the ruling class in general—has decided to de-racialize the racial capitalist system, what we've come to know as "apartheid," properly speaking, in the modern period.

There are many reasons for this: economic, political, even military. But the fundamental point to understand is that they have decided to de-racialize the system. Of course, it's a result of pressure from the mass struggle, from the mass movement. Of course, it's a result of international isolation, of sanctions and all the rest of it.

But it's not because they have been defeated. It's not because the state in South Africa has been threatened with destruction. And this is a vital proviso to understand the real dynamics of change in South Africa today.

There are people in South Africa on the so-called left who characterize the present period as one in which we are bringing to an end, we are consummating, what they call the national-democratic struggle. That struggle, in their own terms, should be consummated by way of the conquest of power by the popular masses under the leadership of working-class parties.

But if you look at the real situation in South Africa, you will find that, of course, this is not happening—far from it. The ruling class has decided to bring about certain reforms. So, on the one hand, you have that movement—it's an historic movement—away from formal, institutionalized racial inequality. That is one movement.

The other movement, and it is obviously interrelated, is one in which petit-bourgeois, middle-class layers of the oppressed people are being co-opted, are being brought into the corridors of power—in order to help the ruling class to police and to tax the rest of the working people.

And the problem for the middle-class militants is that while they are being co-opted, they have to give the impression that they are leading a struggle for liberty. They cannot allow the masses of the people to think that they are selling out.

"To adapt the system"

The ruling class came to the decision after the 1976 uprisings—in the words of P.W. Botha, the former president—"to adapt the system" in order to prevent it from dying. After Botha became president in 1978, they introduced various reforms at the constitutional level. All of them were simply tinkering with constitutional change with a view to getting hand-picked collaborators from amongst the oppressed in order to continue to work the system of white supremacy and white-minority domination.

But that failed, as the entire history of the '80s, in particular, demonstrates. That particular strategy failed hopelessly. The uprising of 1984-86 demonstrated more clearly than anything else that the broad liberation movement was not to be suppressed, was not to be defeated.

So, quite apart from P.W. Botha's own incapacity to govern as an individual (some of you might know he became very ill), the National Party had to decide to scrap apartheid, to scrap the nightmarish visions that people like Voerword and Dr. Iceland and other architects of apartheid had had in the 1940s.

And it was left to [President D.W.] De Klerk, one of the staple, typical conservatives in the National Party, to undertake the so-called transformation, to initiate the so-called New South Africa. One of the most conservative people had to do it because nobody else would have been able

to bring along the rest of the National Party with them.

Now, what we have seen then on the part of the ruling party is a complete somersault. The day before the 2nd of February, 1990, everybody in the National Party who wasn't in the know was speaking the language of apartheid, was trapped in the discourse of racial superiority and racial inferiority, the discourse of Aaron Falkland. On the day after the 2nd of February, 1990, everybody had to learn to speak a new language.

And a lot of them are still stuttering and trying very hard to learn this new language—and failing, incidentally, but that's by the way.

The point I want to make then, simply, is that this somersault that we're seeing on

comrades" had advised them that perhaps it is necessary to make a distinction between the dismantling of apartheid and the ending of white rule.

Now, the ANC didn't say that they should accept that. But, it was deliberately included. People were being primed to accept the possibility of the ending of apartheid without the ending of white rule. And by the ending of apartheid, by the dismantling of apartheid, was meant simply the repeal of the laws put on the statute books by the National Party since 1948.

But we in the left movements of Africa have never defined apartheid as a set of laws put on the statute books by the ruling party, the National Party. For us, apartheid was simply the latest form of the system of racial capitalism.



'It is necessary to understand that the system of racial inequality is firmly in place today and that is why, for all kinds of reasons, the ruling class has got to dismantle the laws of apartheid so that the system of racial capitalism can continue, so that it can be perpetuated.'

the part of the ruling party is obviously incredible in the proper sense of the term. It's unbelievable. It doesn't mean that that somersault has really taken place.

ANC's call for negotiations

In June 1988, the African National Congress (ANC) issued from Lusaka a document in which it for the first time raised the possibility publicly of participating in negotiations. And in that document—it's quite a large thing, very highly publicized inside South African and outside also—there was a small clause hidden away where very few people noticed it.

And in that clause, they said that they had consulted very widely—amongst others with "the Chinese comrades" (I assume they meant the leadership of the Peoples' Republic of China.) And "the Chinese

For us, the dismantling of apartheid could never be constituted simply by the repeal of the laws which the National Party put on the statute books. In fact, if you take a sort of Aristotelian empty kind of logic, if all the laws of apartheid are repealed, you're not in a post-apartheid South Africa, you're in a pre-apartheid South Africa. You are, in fact, in a South Africa which was known as the South Africa of segregation.

What I want to say, simply, is that it has become very well understood today that if all the laws of apartheid are repealed, you do not bring an end to racial inequality. The capitalist mode of production operates in South Africa in such a way that social inequality, class inequality, is reproduced as racial inequality for reasons of the peculiar colonial history of South Africa.

It can only be stopped, as I've already indicated, through working-class revolution.

Struggle has only begun

In recent times in South Africa, the metaphor has been popularized that the dismantling of apartheid is similar to the dismantling of a scaffolding which you use when you erect a house. You need the scaffolding while you're building the house. But the moment the house is standing on firm foundations, you have to dismantle the scaffolding because the scaffolding gets into the way.

It is necessary to understand that the system of racial inequality is firmly in place today and that is why, for all kinds of reasons, the ruling class has got to dismantle the laws of apartheid so that the system of racial capitalism can continue, so that it can be perpetuated.

I think once you understand that, you will also understand that whatever else happens in the next period, the ruling class generally (and the National Party in particular) is not going to allow the "management of change," as they call it, to slip out of their hands. They may be forced to, of course, but they are not going to allow it as of themselves.

And it is a pipe dream of the worst kind to believe that the white minority—more specifically, the capitalist class—in South Africa is going to hand over power to a Black majority just because some people think they should do so, because it's morally correct to do so. It won't happen. It's as simple as that. I think once one understands that, we realize that the struggle has only begun.

And anybody living in the United States understands, I now know from my own personal experience, that racial oppression, racial inequality doesn't need laws after a certain measure of capitalist stability has been acquired. It doesn't need laws.

I think once that is clear to us, the problems of the liberation movement can be appreciated much more clearly. The South African government, the South African ruling class, has not been defeated. The repressive apparatus—the army, the police, the civil service, the judiciary—is completely intact. It is simply nonsense to suggest that they have been somehow even threatened with defeat.

Now, when one speaks like this, people look at you and sort of wonder whether you're really serious. And the answer is you are deadly serious. You are saying that our struggle is going to take a very long time still.

Mind you, we are not suggesting that there will not be certain superficial changes, which will allow the Black middle class more upward mobility, but will trap the rest—that is the vast majority of the Black people, the working class in the ghetto, in the homelands, in the compounds—continue to trap them there in a desperate sort of way, and that therefore the struggle has to continue. The class struggle has to continue.

What course of action?

We support and will mobilize support for those aspects of negotiations as a political strategy which will promote the interests of the working class.

For example, the whole question of the constituent assembly, if I may just take that one example, we obviously support that. We support it in the most consistent and radical way—more than any other group in the country in fact.

But the alternative to that is to continue the class struggle for fundamental social reforms such that in the balance of forces, the working class in South Africa is strengthened all the time.

Whether it is a slogan like, "One Family, One House," whether it is a national minimum wage, whatever! Fundamental social reforms. Thirty-five hours a week. Those are the things that are going to change the balance of forces in South Africa at this stage.

We're not suggesting at all that military aspects of the struggle should be ignored. Far from it. But we're also not saying that people should rush into suicidal actions simply because some of the young people think that power comes out of the barrel of a gun.

Of course, power comes out of the barrel of a gun. It's how you get hold of the barrel of a gun that is important to understand.

(continued on next page)

...South Africa

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Now what I am saying then, what I want to stress is that we mustn't fall victim to the illusion that some kind of freedom is around the corner in South Africa. Or that negotiations is another of the many magic formulas that we've had in the last few years in South Africa.

Whether it was sanctions, or general strikes, or "liberation before education," we've had so many magic formulas which everybody believed was going to bring instant liberation. But none of that, of course, has worked. The overall grand strategy of liberation has got to be continued.

International socialist movement

I want to round off what I'm trying to suggest here this evening by looking at the international situation.

Reference has been made to the fact that WOSA, the Workers' Organization for Socialist Action, of which again it has been repeatedly said that I am the nominal chairperson (nominal because I've been away most of the time), that we represent the most consistent, most open socialist strand in South Africa. No reference at all has been made to the Communist Party, and that is not an oversight.

The Communist Party in South Africa is one of the most petit-bourgeois organizations in the country. It has abdicated its right to represent working-class politics by falling behind, falling into the wake of the African National Congress, a nationalist, populist organization (many of whose political actions we obviously support).

But the Communist Party, as a party that claims to represent workers' interests, has never acted as an independent force. And to that extent, I think WOSA does deserve special mention.

But we must not have any illusions. Since November 1989, the entire world situation has changed. Since the collapse of the Berlin Wall, as it was called, since the destruction of the bureaucratic centralist so-called socialist societies of Eastern Europe, the entire world situation has changed.

The contradictions of the capitalist sys-



Peter Magubane

'We need to strengthen, in that context, the voice as well as the weight of the working class and of the interests of the working class within such a united front.'

tem as a world system will inevitably bring about a turn of the tide. But, of course, we don't know how long it will last. It can last 10 years, it can last 20 years.

But it is vital to understand that we are in a trough as far as the international socialist movement is concerned.

[That is true] even though South Africa is one of the few countries in the world that has the social base, that has a peculiar history to make possible the not just the coming into being, but the strengthening of a militant socialist movement. ...

If you succeed in destroying the state machine in a particular country, it is capable of being smothered by imperialism in the way in which it has been busy smothering one revolutionary initiative after another in different parts of Latin America, different parts of the world.

And that is the problem that we face. We've got to realize that it is not enough

for us to become strong in South Africa. But we have to help build an international socialist movement. Without that, there is no way that a successful socialist revolution is going to take place in South Africa.

Building the united front

There are times when ... we have to criticize people and organizations which can smother us overnight if they so wish. Again, I haven't got the time to demonstrate how a movement like Inkatha shows the potential for multiple civil war in South Africa—Lebanonization, as we call it in South Africa.

To make two last points: One is that, in order to prevent the Lebanonization, we need to promote a united front on the question of the constituent assembly in South Africa.

We need to strengthen, in that context, the voice as well as the weight of the working class and of the interests of the

working class within such a united front. And we are busy trying to do that with other organizations, including, of course, people in the ANC.

It isn't simply a question of principle; it's also a question of strategic necessity for us to stress that outside [South Africa], the solidarity movement needs to help us build that united front on the issue of the constituent assembly.

Because if we fail in this, we will find ourselves in a position where very likely for decades we are going to be fighting, arms in hand against one another, with a divided working class that is obviously going to continue to be ruled in the most ruthless way by the powers that be at the moment.

We can work together

And then finally, I want to come back to the United States. I want to say, very simply, that the one thing that has struck me over the past seven or eight months that I've been here is that hardly anything is being done about studying the question of racism—racial inequality, racial prejudice and all the other derivatives—which is the common experience of these two societies, the United States and South Africa.

Very little has been done about studying that in the sort of comparative context that will make sense in both of these countries. I'm trying to suggest that here is an issue on which radicals, militants in both countries can and should act together, take up that particular issue, make it into a central issue.

Because, although the demographic relationships are very different, the power relationships in these two societies are very similar. The white power structure in South Africa, despite being a minority demographically speaking—just on the question of land; I would quote other things: stock exchange, the share market, capital. ... You know, the white minority owns virtually the entire country.

The future of South Africa could look like the the present of this country 30 years after the civil rights movement thought it had succeeded in freeing the Black people. Now, it's for that reason I say that we can learn from one another, we can teach one another, we can act jointly in many, many ways. ■

Veteran solidarity activists honored as threats to Cuba's survival deepen

By HAYDEN PERRY

OAKLAND, Calif.—While Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union lurch toward a market economy and mass unemployment, Cuba completes its third decade as a workers state.

The July 26 Cuban national holiday was celebrated in the San Francisco Bay Area by a number of film showings, dinners, rallies, and open forums. Nearly 1000 people attended one or another of the five events that were sponsored by either the U.S. Hands off Cuba Coalition, Global Exchange, or the Venceremos Brigade.

The Venceremos Brigade has aided Cuba for 22 years by sending solidarity teams totaling nearly 5000 supporters to visit Cuba. They help with harvests, visit clinics and factories, and learn about life without capitalists. At home they oppose U.S. hostility to Cuba, and demand an end to the trade embargo and the travel ban.

Jorge Ruiz, attache of the Cuban Interest Section in Washington, D.C., represented Cuba at the festivities in the Bay Area. Since the United States refuses to recognize Cuba, the country has no ambassador to this country. In his public meetings and two interviews on radio station KPFA, Ruiz expressed the optimism that pervades Cuba despite the difficulties they face.

Asked how Cuba has survived three decades in the face of U.S. hostility, he replied that internationalism—support from countries around the world—helped Cuba resist the pressure of the imperialist powers. The presence of Nelson Mandela from South Africa at the celebrations in Cuba symbolized this internationalism,



Photo: Courtesy of A. Willis

Asher Harer speaking to Oct. 1962 S.F. protest during Cuban missile crisis.

Ruiz said.

Ruiz admitted the retreat of the East Europeans toward a market economy has produced problems for Cuban trade. He said Cuba is developing new industries that will lead to new trading patterns. The government plans to develop a tourist industry with some foreign participation. Ruiz stressed that Cuba will always maintain the controlling share. "We will not

be yielding control of our economy to multinationals," Ruiz said.

"The imperialists say Cuba is isolated," Ruiz declared. "But we are isolated only from the imperialists. Our ties to Latin America and other Third World countries are getting stronger."

Cuba has no intention of taking the road of Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union to a market economy. Ruiz

explained that the socialist goal is strong in Cuba because it developed out of the Cubans' own experience with capitalism. He said the Cuban people don't blame their present difficulties on socialism but on the blockade and other hostile acts by imperialism. Cuban healthcare and free quality education for everyone is not equaled anywhere.

Only socialism, he said, will guarantee national sovereignty, independence, and respect for human dignity. "We do not intend to give that up!"

A dinner and rally held in Oakland honored Cuba and also some of the earliest defenders of the new Cuban state. In 1960, the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC) was founded by two CBS journalists who interviewed Castro and Che Guevara while they were still in the mountains.

Longshoreman Asher Harer was executive secretary of FPCC in San Francisco. He and Ruth Harer, both members of Socialist Action, were honored guests at the dinner.

Asher looked back 30 years, when as many as 1600 people attended meetings protesting the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, the travel ban, and other American threats to Cuba. He said, "I do fully believe that FPCC helped stay the drive of U.S. imperialism to destroy the Cuban revolution in the 1960s."

Asher got a standing ovation when he concluded, "The need for a massive movement to defend Cuba is even greater than in the 1960s. Ruth and I are retired trade unionists. But we are not retired from politics. We will help you. We are socialists, members of Socialist Action. Now I'll close the way I did in the 1960s: VIVA CUBA! VENCEREMOS!"

The very successful series of events in San Francisco demonstrates that sympathy for Cuba is strong in California. It is time to mobilize again and stop the bipartisan drive to isolate and destroy the first workers' state in the western hemisphere.

Dialectical materialism:

Does the philosophical foundation of Marxism stand up to the test of events?

A six-part series which explains how this controversial world outlook evolved through history



By CLIFF CONNER

Following is the first of a series of articles on the philosophical foundations of Marxism. The articles are based on classes given by Cliff Conners at the Socialist Action national educational conference in August 1989.

"One of the principal propositions of dialectical materialism asserts that nothing can be fully understood unless and until its entire course of development has been disclosed and grasped." — George Novack

The purpose of these classes is to redirect some of our attention to our ideological roots. We are confronted with some extremely complicated political issues right now. I'm thinking particularly of the immense changes that are taking place in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China. If we are able to make sense of what's happening now in those places, it is due to the fact that we and our predecessors have worked out, on the basis of many years of experience, a coherent picture of how societies develop and change—a science of society.

But that general historical framework rests on an even more general understanding of how the world works. The ultimate foundation of our analysis of current political events, then, lies in the fundamental philosophical principles of Marxism, that is, the method of thinking called dialectical materialism.

Even a perfect understanding of dialectical materialism, of course, can't guarantee accurate political conclusions. But without a solid philosophical foundation, political activity is nothing more than a series of accidents. So let's step back for a moment and reconsider some of the most general philosophical questions that human beings have been grappling with for thousands of years.

In this class, I'm going to concentrate mainly on materialism. Later, we'll focus more on dialectics. In practice, we wouldn't want to separate the two, but it's a convenient way to divide the subject into two classes.

When I hear the word "materialism," the first thing I think of is Samuel Johnson's response to idealists who claim that material objects exist only in our minds. He kicked a large stone, it hurt his foot, and he said that no further proof was necessary.

It is tempting to think that this is all that has to be said about materialism and

idealism. It seems clear-cut enough; let's just dismiss all the idealist claptrap out of hand. But unfortunately, it's not that simple. Philosophical idealism has a strong material basis in class society, as we will see, and consequently it also has a strong basis in human psychology.

On top of that, the philosophical positions of idealism are by no means as frivolous or foolish as they seem when we think about Dr. Johnson kicking the stone. Materialists like ourselves can't simply ignore or brush aside the arguments of idealism; it is necessary to

defend their answers in a logically consistent way. The first in the line of Ionian philosophers was Thales, and his answer was: Water. Everything in the world, in the final analysis, comes from water. A little later another philosopher, Anaximenes, asserted that the ultimate stuff of which the world was made was not water, but air. And other answers were suggested. Heraclitus believed the ultimate element was fire.

In spite of the diversity of these answers, they all had one thing in common: all agreed that the world was made of

**The most fundamental question in philosophy was:
"What is? What is it that exists?
What is Being? What is the world made of?"**

understand them and answer them.

Neither materialism nor dialectics began with Marx, of course. Both had their origins in the world of the ancient Greeks. To understand something as fully as possible, it is necessary to understand how it developed, from the very beginning. So let's start at the beginning and work our way forward to the class struggle of today.

The first philosophers

The beginning of philosophy took place on the Ionian coast, an area in Asia Minor which is now part of Turkey, but which in the 6th century B.C. was colonized by Greeks.

The most fundamental question in philosophy was the first one that was tackled by those ancient Ionians: "What is? What is it that exists? What is Being? What is the world made of?"

The older Egyptian and Sumerian civilizations developed elaborate myths to explain where the world came from and what it was made of, but these were supernatural explanations that were to be accepted on the basis of religious authority. The Ionian Greeks in the 6th century B.C. were apparently the first to attempt to interpret the world in terms of observed natural processes.

They came up with a number of answers, and they debated and tried to

some fundamental material element. They sought the causes of things and events within nature itself. This was a revolutionary change from the supernaturalistic cosmologies of the Egyptians and Sumerians. The first philosophers, then, were materialists, and materialism is as old as philosophy itself.

The Greek idealists

The materialist outlook did not remain unchallenged for long, however. A school of philosophers based in Elea developed the notion that the world we think we know—the world we see with our eyes and feel with our hands—is not real at all. It is all an illusion. And the way you can tell that it is an illusion is because it changes.

If something really exists, they believed, then it would be permanent and unchanging. Take yourself, for example; what kind of existence did you have a hundred years ago? What kind of existence will you have a hundred years from now?

Anyway, it seemed to them that any concept of being—of existence—that only had to do with things that are here today and gone tomorrow was trivial; not worth much. If something is real, if something exists, it has to exist past, present, and future.

If the world around us—the one we can

see and touch—is not permanent and eternal, and therefore is not real, what is? Well, nothing in our experience is permanent and eternal, but we can still imagine something that lasts forever and doesn't change. We can form a mental picture. The only true, unchanging reality, then, must be somewhere in the realm of thoughts, or ideas, rather than in the material world. This is the central tenet of idealism, and so the fundamental battle lines in philosophy were drawn—materialism versus idealism.

Idealists believe in the priority of mind over matter; that is, that in the creation of the world mind, or thought, or some kind of intelligence came first, and then matter came later. Materialists believe the opposite: that the material world existed prior to and independently of mind; that mind is something that developed from the evolution of matter.

The Atomists

The early idealists raised some important questions about the problem of change in the material world. Another materialist school of thought came up with an answer. These were the atomists, who said that the world is made up of extremely small pieces of material they called atoms.

These atoms, they said, combine to make up all of the larger things we see in the world. The atoms themselves are permanent and unchanging, except that they move around a lot, and when they move the things that are made up of them change. In this way the atomists thought they could account for change in a world with a permanent material basis.

In those early days of philosophy, materialism remained the predominant trend. But that came to an end in Athens in the 4th century B.C. with what has been called the Socratic revolution. From a political standpoint, it would be more accurate to call it a counterrevolution. Socrates founded an idealist school of thought that was developed, in different ways, by Plato and Aristotle, and for at least the next 2000 years idealism dominated philosophy.

The Ionian philosophers had begun by studying the physical world. Socrates and Plato shifted the focus of philosophy from the world of nature to the world of human society. In itself, this was a positive contribution to extending the scope of philosophy. But the way they went about it was not so positive: they took human psychology as their model of the world as a whole and imposed the laws of thought and consciousness on nature. That was the basis of their idealist outlook.

Now—that's a very brief thumbnail sketch of the origins of materialism and idealism, but let's look a little deeper into the matter. Let's ask, first, why did philosophy originate when and where it did? Why were the Ionian Greeks the first to philosophize, rather than the Egyptians or the Sumerians? And then, let's also consider why it was, a couple of hundred years later, idealism was able to triumph over materialism and remain dominant for 2000 years.

Why did philosophy come about?

The way we approach these questions has to do with our own philosophical position. If we were idealists, we would say that the ideas were the determining factor, that the Egyptians and Sumerians were simply mentally underdeveloped; that the Ionian Greeks had superior minds.

But since we're not idealists, and we don't believe that ideas have an independent reality of their own, we aren't satisfied with that answer. As materialists, we look

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for some explanation that connects the ideas of these ancient peoples to their material circumstances.

The Ionian Greeks looked at the world in a new way because they were living in a new world. Their social environment was so radically different from that of the Egyptians and Sumerians that it gave rise to an entirely different kind of consciousness.

The central feature of the Egyptian and Sumerian civilizations was their agricultural base. Social relationships were largely determined by the fact that their food supply depended on a system of tight, centralized control over the water supply. Survival, then, required a totalitarian form of social organization that dominated every aspect of their peoples' lives, including their thinking.

All learning and knowledge was monopolized by conservative priestly castes who were themselves subordinate to absolute monarchs. Such a social climate nourishes traditionalism and discourages original, creative thought. It should not be surprising, then, that radically new cosmologies did not surface or take root in Egypt or Sumer.

On the other hand, very different forms of social organization were beginning to develop in the Greek world, and especially on the Ionian coast, in about the 8th century B.C. Here the economies were not based totally on agriculture; a considerable amount of mercantile activity began to develop.

The increasing role of commerce in the economy led to a growth in the numbers and importance of nonagricultural social classes—namely merchants, manufacturers, artisans, shipbuilders, and sailors. I'm not suggesting that these new social classes represented a majority of the people. Even in the cities, "they were a minor fraction of the population, but their very existence introduced a new dimension into the quality of the community and its structure." (M.I. Finley)

The new Greek settlements that grew up on the Ionian coast were trading centers. They exported oil, wine, weapons, pottery, jewelry, and clothing and imported grain, fish, wood, wool, metals, and slaves. These port cities were populated by immigrants from all over the Greek world and elsewhere, as well as by the natives of Asia Minor. They were people of diverse backgrounds who were away from their traditional settings and exposed to a variety of foreign outlooks and customs.

The existence of this multilingual, multiethnic population in a commercial economy during an economic boom created a situation conducive to intellectual ferment.

New forms of government

As the merchant and artisan classes grew in strength, new forms of government developed. First, the hereditary kings who originally ruled the independent Ionian city-states were replaced by the rule of aristocracies of noble families. Then later, by the middle of the 7th century B.C., the aristocracies were overthrown by coalitions of merchants and manufacturers. Then, in the 6th century, these merchant oligarchies were replaced by tyrants.

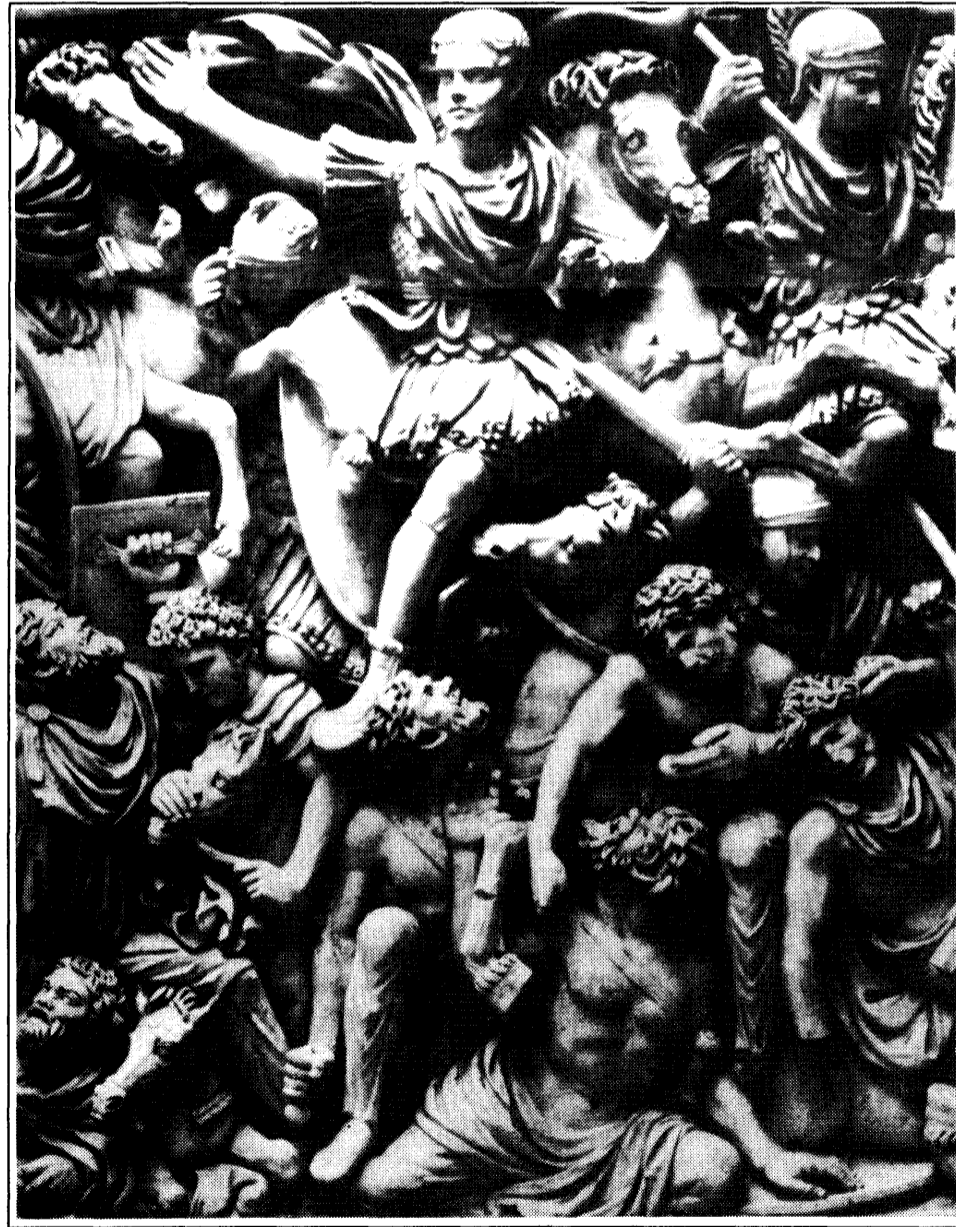
The words "tyrant" and "tyranny" have very bad connotations today, but they didn't at first. Tyranny was a new form of government that reflected the development of class struggles between the rich merchants and the ordinary people, the plebians.

The plebians became a real political force. They fought for their interests by waging strikes and rioting and generally creating social turmoil. Then some prominent politician would step forward and claim to represent the interests of "the people." If he succeeded in winning the leadership of the plebian masses, this politician would seize power and set up a tyranny. These tyrants were something like the familiar populist demagogues of the modern world (like Peron of Argentina or Qaddafi of Libya).

Within a generation or two, the tyrants became what their name implies today—repressive and unpopular—and then they, too, would be overthrown and replaced, in some cases by democratic republics.



'The plebians became a real political force. They fought for their interests by waging strikes and rioting and generally creating social turmoil.'



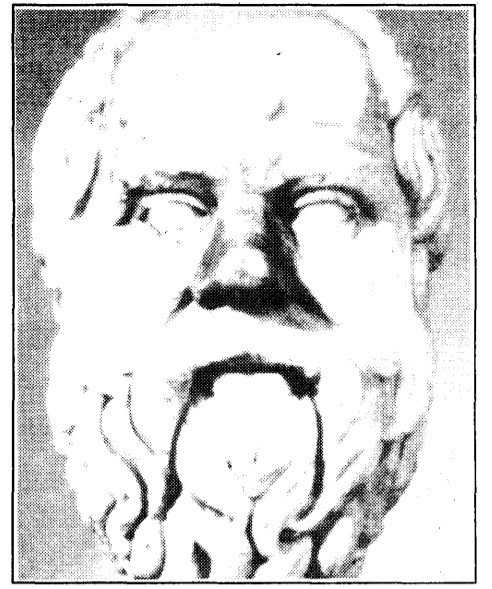
On the Ionian coast there was one city in particular that stood out as the most dynamic; that was Miletus. It had experienced an unprecedented maritime expansion. This one city had established 90 colonies all around the Black Sea, and had a virtual monopoly of trade in that important area. This colonization of the Black Sea area began about 650 B.C.—that is, only about 50 years before the first philosopher, Thales, appeared in that city.

Today if you try to think of a name symbolizing extreme wealth, "Rockefeller" or "Trump" or "Leona Helmsley" might come to mind, but in the ancient world the personification of wealth was King Croesus of Lydia. The thriving economy of Miletus enriched its upper merchant class

to the point where King Croesus himself went to the bankers of Miletus when he needed to borrow money.

But as the upper classes got richer in Miletus, the plebians got stronger, too. A tyranny was established in 604 B.C.; it was thrown out a few years later; there were two generations of political turmoil; a constitutional regime came to power; then a new tyranny; and finally a democratic government was established that ruled Miletus until it fell to the Persians in 546.

These rapid shifts in government reveal a population that was politically active and difficult to suppress or intimidate. The social climate was one in which thought and speech were relatively unchained; it was a tumultuous "marketplace of ideas."



Socrates

It isn't surprising that this environment stimulated new ways of looking at the world; it would be surprising if it had not.

The merchant economy

Those individuals who have become known to us as the first philosophers and first materialists were not simply Milesians; they were a product of the Milesian merchant class—either themselves merchants or under the influence of merchants. That is to say they were not detached ivory-tower thinkers; they were prominent and active citizens of Miletus.

Thales, for example, is reported to have been a shrewd businessman. We have this account of Thales' activity from Aristotle: "It is said that, having observed through his study of the heavenly bodies that there would be a large olive crop, he raised a little capital while it was still winter, and paid deposits on all the olive presses in Miletus and Chios, hiring them cheaply ... and so made a large profit."

Whether this anecdote is based on fact or not, it illustrates the perceived connection between commerce in Ionia and the origins of philosophy.

Many of the specific ideas of the Ionian philosophers can be traced directly to the economic activities going on around them. I mentioned earlier that Anaximenes believed that air was the primordial element of the material world. He explained, for instance, that clouds are produced from air by a process he called "felting." Felting was a word used to describe an important manufacturing technique that involved subjecting woven materials to high pressure. It is clear that Anaximenes derived philosophical ideas from analogies drawn from the productive activities of the time.

I also mentioned that Heraclitus believed that fire was the primordial substance. Listen to the metaphor he used to express this idea: "All things are an equal exchange for fire and fire for all things, as goods are for gold and gold for goods." Again, it is obvious that the commercial activities surrounding Heraclitus had a great impact on his thinking.

In general, the mercantile economy created fertile ground for philosophy because participating in commerce affects the way a person looks at the world and the things in it. Although merchants may handle a great variety of products, what they're really interested in is reducing them to a single general dimension, namely the monetary value as expressed in a commodity's price. Trade prompts the merchant "to institute comparisons, enables him to discover the general element in the mass of particular details, the necessary element in the mass of accidentals, the recurring element which will result again and again from certain conditions." (Karl Kautsky.)

That is exactly the way that Thales and the other early materialists approached the question of what the world is made of: they were trying to discover the general element in the mass of particular details.

The point I've been illustrating at some length here is that materialism did not originate by great minds thinking thoughts of pure reason in a vacuum, but were a product of material circumstances, a product of the class struggle in the ancient world. That is what is summed up by the materialist epigram "Being determines consciousness."

(Part II of this series will appear in the October issue of *Socialist Action*.)

Who really pays all the taxes?



Learning About Marxism

By
Barry Sheppard

Part one of a two-part series

This month we are inaugurating a new column, written by Barry Sheppard, National Organizational Secretary of Socialist Action. Sheppard will use the column each month to explain basic Marxist ideas.

Every worker knows that the federal, state, and local governments have been raising our taxes, especially taxes that hit working people the hardest, like sales and property taxes. At the same time, government social services that benefit working people like unemployment checks and education have been cut.

Just what are taxes? What do socialists say should be done about them from the point of view of what's good for working people?

Of course, the answer to the first question seems easy: Taxes are monies collected from the population by the government to pay for its expenses. But where do these monies come from?

Money, under capitalism, is a measure and embodiment of economic value, among its other functions.

But there are two different meanings of value. One meaning of value is everything that contributes to the well-being of humanity. Value in this sense comes from the interaction of

nature and human labor.

Nature provides us with many things—the earth, air, water, sunlight, plants, animals, and everything else that occurs “naturally,” including ourselves insofar as we evolved as animals.

But human beings do not just use nature as they find it. They improve upon it through labor. Human labor acts upon nature to create useful, valuable things for human survival and betterment. So far as things that are a product of nature or nature acted upon by human labor are useful, we say they are valuable, have a value.

There is another meaning to the word value, however. This other meaning is expressed when we bring a product of human labor to market and exchange it for another product.

What is exchange value?

In primitive barter, for example, I might bring to market a pair of shoes that I made, and find that I can exchange them for a bushel of apples. In this sense, a pair of shoes is “worth” a bushel of apples.

If I tried to barter with producers of other goods, I would find that I could exchange my shoes for all kinds of things, as long as the proportions were right. I might find that I could exchange 100 pairs of shoes for a small canoe, for example. The seller of apples would find that it would take about 100 bushels of apples

to get the same canoe, more or less.

So we see that a bushel of apples represents the value in this new sense of one pair of shoes. A canoe represents the value of 100 pairs of shoes or the value of 100 bushels of apples. Of course, we can look at it the other way around and say that the value of one canoe is represented by 100 pairs of shoes or by 100 bushels of apples.

This kind of value is called exchange value. The difference between exchange value and the value of a thing in terms of its usefulness can be seen by looking at the two different values of, say, both a gallon of tap water on the one hand, and of a large cut diamond on the other.

The usefulness of water cannot be denied. We would die if we couldn't get any water for three days or so. But we could live quite well (at least most of us could) without the diamond. None of us, however, would think of exchanging a large cut diamond for one gallon of water! We say that the diamond is “worth” much more than that.

How is value determined?

Products of human labor that are made to be exchanged in the market are called commodities. Because commodities are exchanged in the market in definite proportions, it is clear that their “worth” or exchange value is a measure of something quite definite. What is it?

First, we note that products of pure nature that have had no human labor expended upon them have no exchange value. You can't go to market and sell sunshine or air. No one would exchange anything for these very useful things because everyone can get them “for free.”

So we see that all commodities have human labor bound up in them. In fact, they have nothing else in common, so it is labor that must be measured by exchange value!

But it is not a particular kind of labor—like apple growing, shoemaking, mining, or canoe making—that is being measured by exchange value, because each commodity embodies its own unique kind of human labor, and they are not the same.

What is common to all commodities is that they are the product of some kind of human labor, human labor as such, abstracted from its particular type. How is human labor as such measured? By the time expended in labor.

In our example above, the labor time expended to produce one pair of shoes would equal the labor time to grow and pick a bushel of apples. It would take 100 times as much human labor time to make one canoe. (This is approximate. The intensity of the labor and some other factors also must be taken into account, but on the whole and on the average, it is human labor time that determines exchange value.)

What is money?

In the course of the development of the market in human history, money arose. Money is a commodity that is used to represent the value of all other commodities. Any commodity can do this, as we saw that one bushel of apples can represent the value of one pair of shoes. But over time, certain commodities (the precious metals like gold and silver) were singled out to serve as money.

This was because of their physical properties—they don't

rust and can be divided easily—and because a small amount represents a lot of labor time in their production. Thus, gold and silver can be divided up to represent the value of any commodity accurately, and you don't have to carry around a lot of either to buy other commodities. The development of money greatly facilitated the process of exchange of commodities.

We have come far afield from the question of taxes, but since taxes under capitalism are monies paid to the government, we had to get some understanding of what money is, to come to our first conclusion, which is rather startling at first glance.

All goods produced capitalistically in our society are produced by workers hired by capitalists. Most goods are produced this way in the United States. All these goods are produced for sale on the market. The exchange value of all these goods, represented by a certain amount of money, is equal to the sum total of all the labor time expended by all the workers in their production.

Now we know that the capitalists somehow rip off the lion's share of the exchange value the workers create. We'll discuss just how in our next article. But the point we want to look at first is that no matter how they get their hands on a big hunk of the total exchange value, the taxes they pay come from that very pool of total exchange value the workers created.

So all the taxes, whether actually paid by the capitalists or by the workers, come out of the total exchange value created by the workers. In this sense, we pay all the taxes!

For a more exact and complete explanation of exchange value and money, interested readers are referred to “Wage Labor and Capital” and “Value, Price and Profit,” two pamphlets by Karl Marx—as well as the first chapters of Marx's book, “Capital.”

Next month we'll discuss what socialists advocate about taxes.

Our readers speak out

Gay coverage

Dear editors,

Please find enclosed \$4 for six months of *Socialist Action*. I liked the articles in the July issue about Sri Lanka, the pro-choice coverage, and coverage of events in Eastern Europe.

I am a reader of *The Militant* and think it is important for revolutionary socialists to seriously consider the viewpoints of both newspapers in this era of capitalist euphoria and Stalinist betrayal.

I also liked Sylvia Weinstein's salute to Dorothy and Bill on Gay Liberation Day. I hope *Socialist Action* will more widely cover both the AIDS crisis and participation of lesbians and gays in the social protest movements.

Sadly, one common feature of *The Militant* and *Socialist Action* was the complete lack of coverage about gay participation in the gulf antiwar movement which, in both San Francisco and New York, was quite large. However, I keep an open mind and eye toward this changing. My comrades in Act Up and

Queer Nation shouldn't have to say “One hundred thousand dead from AIDS—where was the left?”

I am looking forward to reading *Socialist Action*.

G.K.,
New York, N.Y.

Visual arts

Dear editors,

Franklin Balch's article “Do the visual arts have a future,” in the Opinion column of your August edition, was quite thought-provoking. Nevertheless, I believe the author presents a rather narrow definition of what he terms “social and political meaning” in art.

Along these lines, for example, the author continually disparages “irrelevant abstraction” in painting—in which he lumps Mannerism, the abstract style of the late 16th and early 17th centuries.

The period of Mannerism was one of wars, revolts, and scientific “heresies” against religious doctrine. By means of distorted, inward-looking, and dream-like

images, the Mannerists reflected (and tried to deal with) the turmoil of society in their times. In the field of literature, a good example of the rather complex “social and political meaning” of Mannerist works can be seen in Shakespeare's later “dark plays,” such as “Hamlet.”

Art today—however unconsciously—reflects a period at least as tumultuous as that of Shakespeare's time. But it is useless for commentators to prescribe what style today's artists should adopt to enhance their “social and political meaning.” For socialists, our job is to change the material basis of society. As always, art will adjust to reality.

Richard Arnold
San Francisco, Calif.

Visual arts II

Dear editors,

I was upset seeing how much space you gave to F. Balch's theories about “art.” While you labeled it as “opinion,” Balch seems to think he is dealing with a lot of hard facts.

If people like Balch are excited about “art” they should show it by making some strong political cartoons, etc., and I don't mean “great” stuff like what he calls “Picasso's powerful Guernica.” The bombing of Guernica civilians could inspire great protests, but Picasso's abstract painting of it is an “evocation of horror and pathos” only for those who have entered the museum through the right door and read the right books, etc., etc.

A scientist has theories that he can explain, step by step, as far as we can follow. So does an artist to a certain extent; then maybe he gets into what Balch says somebody else called “a puzzle which ... the artist himself hasn't solved.”

That doesn't stop the followers of followers from jumping on bandwagons of those who propose to see and feel more deeply than themselves. These insecure people are simply afraid to believe that they don't appreciate something that is “great art.” They remind us of the old story wherein the cat cried because the dog cried, etc., and finally we come to the little boy—and even he didn't know why he was crying.

Finally, consider what happens when you have a milieu where the air is full of talk about a tempest in a teacup. If one has to learn a new language to feel worthy of a “political” group, that's one more obstacle keeping people out.

An art teacher once said, “If you do not understand the French language, how do you expect to ever understand art?” And some people think that if you don't understand “art,” you can't learn to understand politics.

Don Simpson,
Concord, Calif.

We welcome letters from our readers, but please keep them brief. Some letters may have to be edited for space considerations.

What Little Rock and Wichita have in common

The Justice Department's intervention in the Wichita, Kan., abortion rights dispute on the side of the rightist Operation Rescue is a case of "deja vu all over again."

In 1957, the same Justice Department sided with racist opponents of desegregation who were attempting to deny Black children entrance to Central High in Little Rock, Ark.

The Attorney General, then as now, said that a federal judge had no right to order state officials to abide by the U.S. Constitution. It was a matter of state jurisdiction, he explained.

Not surprisingly, this stance of the highest government body charged with enforcing the Constitution emboldened the rightist opponents of Black civil rights. It came three years after the U.S. Supreme Court issued its famous Brown decision declaring segregation in public schools as unconstitutional.

Arkansas Gov. Orval Faubus disagreed with the Court. He placed National Guardsmen in front of the school to keep Blacks out. His action was a direct challenge to the civil rights movement and the law of the land.

If Faubus won, the 1954 ruling would be worth less than the paper it was written on. But Federal District Judge Ronald Davies refused to bow to the racists. Like his 1991 counterpart, Judge Patrick Kelly, he was denounced and received death threats.

What happened? After about three weeks, President Eisenhower ordered federal troops to enforce the judge's order so the children could attend school. The racists were defeated, and the tide of the civil rights movement swept across the land.

"Followers of King?"

In 1991, rightist forces are attempting to deny women

access to health clinics that perform abortions in Wichita. They are doing so with the complete sympathy of the government—city, state, and federal. They falsely claim they are continuing the tactics of the civil rights movement and Martin Luther King Jr.

In truth, they are the direct descendants of the racist opponents of civil rights in the 1950s. They are opposed to civil rights.

In 1957, they railed against the 1954 ruling of the Supreme Court and all Constitutional laws that defended the rights of Blacks. Today, the rightists oppose the 1973 Supreme Court ruling legalizing abortion and the 1871 Civil Rights Act that makes it illegal for two or more people to conspire "for the purpose of depriving any person or class of persons" from exercising their Constitutional rights. This is the law that many clinics are using to force the government to protect the democratic rights of their clients.

In fact, anti-women rightists oppose all laws expanding the rights of the individual. Worse. Many openly favor killing a federal judge to "protect" an embryo! ("Don't worry about being excommunicated," one caller told Judge Kelly, a Catholic. "You are dead.")

President Bush, a strong opponent of legalized abortion and affirmative action, has reluctantly told the rightists not to break the law. The government, through Congress, executive orders, and the courts, has been very effective in weakening abortion rights since 1973. It doesn't need vigilante terror.

At the same time, its policies give protection to rightist forces who want to implement the anti-women, racist, and anti-working class objectives of the employment class. The Operation Rescue

Which side Are You On?

By
Malik Miah



thugs simply try to go faster and further in implementing current policy. Thus, conflicts arise between a federal (anti-abortion) judge and the rightists.

Drive against workers

So why did Eisenhower bring in Federal troops in 1957? In the 1950s, a massive civil rights movement existed. It began during World War II and never let up after the war. It was this powerful social movement led by Black working people that led to the legal rulings of the 1950s and the Civil Acts of the 1960s. The racist mobs had to be put under the rule of the new laws by the federal government for fear of more massive explosions against the rulers.

In 1991, there is no such mass civil rights or women's rights movement pressing on the employers and their government.

For the last 20 years, the government and employers have been on an unabated drive to lower the standard of living of working people, especially the most oppressed and super exploited, Blacks and women.

This anti-labor drive has been basically successful, with real wages down, union organization at its lowest level since the 1920s, and civil rights gains being steadily eroded. The attack on abortion rights is part and parcel of this overall offensive.

President Bush, Congress, and the courts do not feel pressure from a galvanized labor movement or an independent Black or women's movement.

While the demonstration organized by the trade unions for Aug. 31, Solidarity Day II, is a step forward, its aim is simply to rally for so-called pro-labor Democrats and legislation—not to organize an independent labor party.

The National Organization for Women is organizing a mass

march in the spring. That's a good start to mobilize pro-democratic rights forces in defense of legalized abortion.

Organizing mass actions against reactionary government policies and in solidarity with striking unionists and others fighting back is key to isolating the rightists and protecting previously won gains.

In today's precarious economic reality, independent political action is decisive to moving forward. ■

For forums, classes and other activities, contact the Socialist Action branch in your area!

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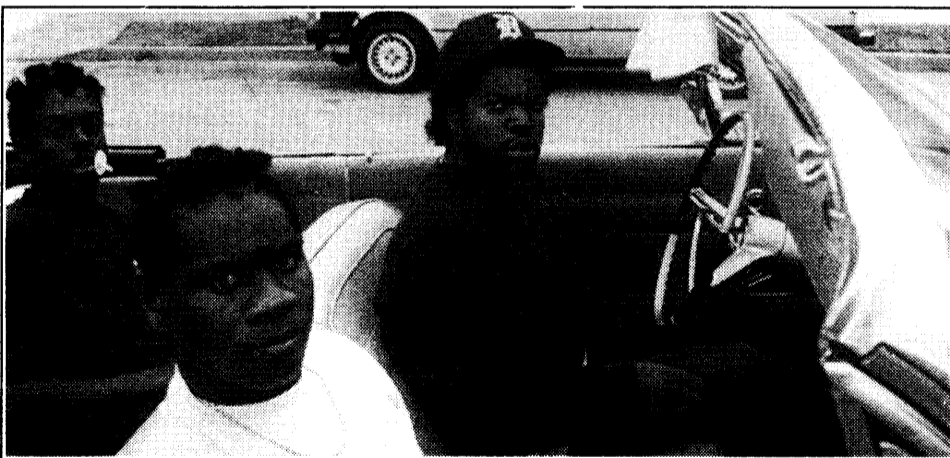
By BONNIE BLAKE

Boyz 'N the Hood, a film written and directed by John Singleton.

John Singleton pulls no punches in this portrayal of the lives of Black youth growing up in the ghettos of Los Angeles. The camera not only brings the viewer eye to eye with the characters, but the closeness of the shots are designed to put you within arms reach of them.

If you are looking for the standard moral lessons on the evils of drug addiction or how gang membership ruins the lives of the young, then watch "The Cosby Show." But if you want a true picture of how

Boyz 'N the Hood powerfully portrays struggles of Black youth



MOVIE REVIEW

poverty, joblessness, racism, and the political and economic structure of our society set out to destroy lives, then see this movie. In it, you will meet the true heroes of today, fighting a life and death battle in the streets of the "Hood."

The intentions of the film are stated from the very beginning when we are given two statistics that effect the lives of Black Americans every day: First, one in 20 Black males will be murdered in their lifetime. Second, 80 percent of those murders will be committed by other Black males. After those statistics are given in bold text, this extraordinary story begins.

There are no stereotypic characters in this film. Singleton succeeds through clear, frank shots with vivid colors and mostly bright, warm sunny days to describe the conditions that exist in ghettos of poverty all over the world. The story centers around the lives of three main characters. Cuba Gooding Jr. acts the role of Tres, Ice Cube is Dough Boy, and Larry Fishburne is Furious Styles, Tres's father.

At the beginning of the film, Tres, about 12 years old, is seen in his classroom trying to pay attention to a history lesson about the Pilgrims and how they survived the winter with the help of the "Indians." His teacher, a young white woman with good intentions, is simply dishing out the curriculum—the "important facts."

The classroom is unruly, and Tres makes some smart remark. The teacher asks if he would like to conduct the class. Tres eagerly steps to the front of the room, pulls down a map of Africa, and begins a lecture on African-American history—which he has learned from his father. For this he gets into serious trouble.

His mother, trying to work and go to school herself, believes that her son needs more guidance than she can give him. Reluctantly, she sends Tres to live with his father, Furious Styles, who is self educated, intelligent and strong.

The father is keenly aware of the dilemma most Black Americans face in this society. He sees his role in his son's life as not only to teach him basic human integri-

ty but to clearly explain how the system is designed to tear a person down

Tres is best friends with his father's next-door neighbors, Rickey and his younger half-brother, Dough Boy. In Rickey's and Dough Boy's house there is no father. Dough Boy, chubby with low self-esteem, is constantly criticized by his mother, who always compares him to her "good son," Rickey.

After creating a foundation for the characters, Singleton reintroduces them seven years later around the ages of 15 and 16. The scene is a backyard homecoming party for Dough Boy, who is just out of jail. Tres and Rickey are in high school now and thinking about their future. Both want to go to college. Perhaps that way they can escape.

Dough Boy is selling drugs and living day by day hanging out. All the time, he is rooting for his brother's escape from this life through a football scholarship, but he sees no escape for himself

Throughout the film, Singleton shows how the humanity of the characters sur-

vives the violence, degradation, and poverty they face on a daily basis.

In an important scene, Furious takes an opportunity to point out the hypocrisy and inhumanity of the system that produces these realities. He has driven his son and his friend to a billboard on the corner of a street that even they are afraid to walk on. The billboard shows a picture of a small house with a giant pile of dollar bills next to it. It reads, "Cash for your house!" Furious explains how the plan is designed to drive down the property values, buy up the land, and move the Blacks out of the neighborhood.

"How do you think crack comes here?" Furious asks a small crowd that has gathered to listen to someone who seems to be making sense for a change. "We don't own no ships. We don't own no planes!"

"Why is it that there's a gun shop on every corner in this part of town? I'll tell you why. Because they want us to kill each other off. What they couldn't do in slavery, they are making us do to ourselves."

To emphasize the nature of the violence and oppression the characters must endure in their lives, Singleton threads throughout the movie the sounds of gunfire, police sirens, and police helicopters—which seem to buzz incessantly. The police presence is everywhere, eagerly awaiting an opportunity to trap and punish, beat and jail.

The ghetto is portrayed as a giant rat trap. The economic structure of society is itself the jail walls. The schools serve as tiny doors that can only let out a few at a time while the rest are supposed to fight over the few scraps inside.

But the people inside the trap are complex—not all this and not all that—each one simply seeking a route of escape from the insanity of their circumstances. Each is struggling to recognize the "enemy" and overcome him.

I have not seen a film as intelligent and powerful as this in a long time. It stands head and shoulders above what Hollywood normally puts out. You will come away from this film a different person. Go see it!

Attacks on abortion rights escalate, Operation Rescue aided by gov't

By BOB KUTCHKO

KANSAS CITY—Women in Wichita, Kan., have been besieged since mid-July by a combination of Operation Rescue (OR) blockades of three abortion clinics and local, state, and federal complicity with the unlawful tactics. Abortion rights supporters have responded with mass rallies, demanding that the government enforce the legal rights of women to enter the clinics unmolested.

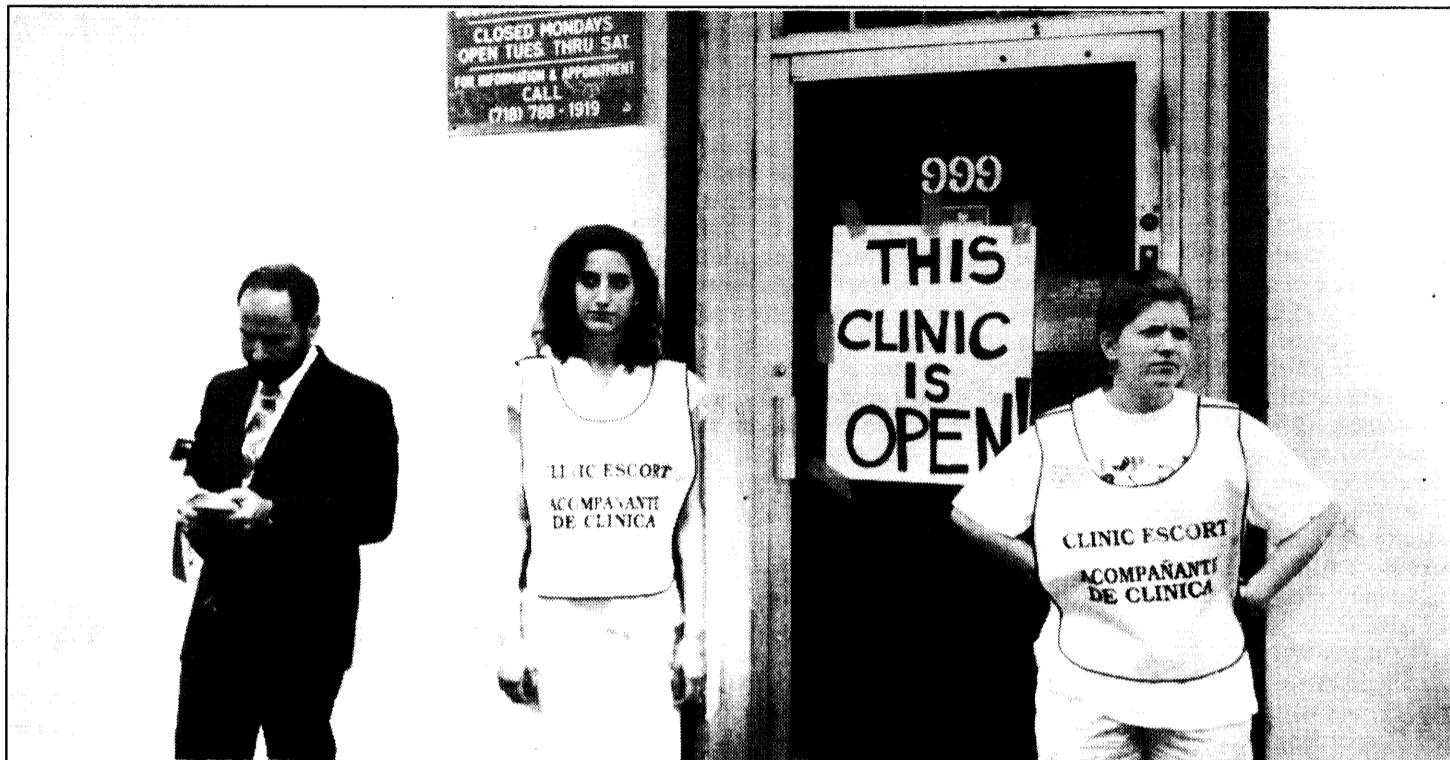
Well over 2600 blockaders have been arrested. Forty-four percent of those arrested by Aug. 15 had given out-of-state addresses. Over 400 people were arrested more than once, some as many as eight times. One blockader received a one-year jail sentence for defying U.S. District Judge Patrick F. Kelly's injunction against obstructing access to the clinics.

Judge Kelly's role as a governmental defender of a woman's legal right to choose has been a lonely one, with most politicians either taking anti-choice positions or disappearing into the woodwork.

Joan Finney, the Democratic Party governor of Kansas, took the microphone in front of 1500 Operation Rescue supporters on Aug. 2, telling them that she was anti-abortion and that she would sign anti-abortion legislation into law if given the chance.

The Rev. Patrick Mahoney, an OR leader, told *The Kansas City Star*: "This is the first time a standing governor has ever come out and addressed Operation Rescue while an operation is underway. Gov. Finney is a friend of Operation Rescue."

Local officials also have played key roles in encouraging the clinic blockades. Wichita Mayor Bob Knight, who had recently voted in favor of a defeated City Council ordinance that would have outlawed abortions, issued instructions to the chief of police that officers were to allow OR participants to block clinic entrances before



Clinic defenders at the Abortion Healthcare clinic in Brooklyn, N.Y. where—as in Wichita, Kan.—Operation Rescue struck.

making any efforts to assure safe passage.

Wichita abortion clinics had closed their doors during the first week of Operation Rescue protests. When they re-opened on July 22, the police (as instructed by their mayor) allowed clinic entrances to be blocked before using mounted cops to clear pathways for patients. Then, arrested blockaders were allowed to take miniature, time-consuming steps towards police vehicles, as dozens of their companions took their places in the driveways.

Finally, in the face of repeated inaction by the police, Judge Kelly called in federal marshals to enforce his injunction against obstruction. Observers from national abortion rights groups have stated that the use

of federal marshals to enforce—and not just serve—injunctions against anti-abortionists is a nationwide first.

Government gives a "signal"

But on Aug. 6, the U.S. Department of Justice filed a legal brief in U.S. District Court in Wichita stating that federal officials should not be used in what were state, not federal, matters. Legal experts attacked this "technicality" argument, pointing out that the government had given a signal to the blockaders that they could violate Judge Kelly's order.

Judge Kelly himself said, "I am disgusted by this move by the United States." He appeared on several national news shows,

condemning the Bush administration brief as a political tool threatening to incite bloodshed between pro-choice and anti-choice activists outside the clinics. On Aug. 15, a friend-of-the-court brief supporting Kelly was filed by NOW, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Abortion Rights Action League, and Planned Parenthood.

The Bush administration's entry into the battle over usage of federal marshals to defend women's legal rights is far more significant than the attempts of Operation Rescue to achieve their goals or sway public opinion. Clinics are open in Wichita,

(continued on page 5)

The stakes are high for working people in Wichita, Kan. Over 2000 anti-abortion zealots have been arrested for illegally blockading two medical clinics that perform abortions.

When U.S. District Judge Patrick Kelly issued an injunction prohibiting Operation Rescue (OR) from blocking access to the two clinics and physically harassing clinic staff and patients, the federal government stepped in. But not to uphold access to the clinics. No, the feds came in on the side of the blockaders!

The Justice Department filed a friend-of-the-court brief. This is an unprecedented intervention by the U.S. government on the side of the most reactionary anti-woman group in the United States today.

OR's sole purpose is to stop women from exercising their constitutional right to abortion. They have blockaded clinics, harassed, and physically assaulted women throughout the country. Their printed material claims Wichita to be their "most successful 'rescue' project ever!"

OR and the KKK

In issuing the injunction, Judge Kelly cited an early civil rights law, enacted during Reconstruction, to stop the Ku Klux Klan from assaulting and violating the civil rights of Blacks. The anti-Klan law is perfectly suited to Operation Rescue. The Klan used violence (and still does) to stop Blacks from exercising their newly won rights. OR uses blockades to stop women from exercising their right to abortion and other reproductive health services.

Patricia Ireland, Executive Vice President of the National Organization for Women, said, "the Justice Department has weighed in on the side of the vigilantes." She characterized the department's action

as "a measure of just how far this administration is willing to go to support and pander to the anti-abortionists. ... We see in this case that they are willing to promote mob rule and lawlessness against women and their doctors as well."

The ramifications of this act of the Bush administration should not be underestimated. It should be seen for what it is—a blatant smack in the face of all working people.

Reproductive services, including abortion, are an essential part of decent health care. The rich have never had the problem of access to abortion or any medical procedure they need. But working women—employed and unemployed—are the ones who get their medical care at clinics such as the ones OR is trying to shut down.

If Operation Rescue, backed by the feds,

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succeeds in shutting even one clinic, that clinic's patients will not be the only

losers. *An injury to one is an injury to all.* This age-old foundation of workers' solidarity is the real lesson in this attack.

Consider this scenario: Workers in a particular job have had their fill of concessions, but the boss wants more. After exhausting all efforts to get a decent contract, the union resorts to its last line of defense—a strike. The government intervenes on the side of the boss, placing all manner of injunctions against the union's exercise of the fundamental right to withhold labor and protect union jobs. The company tries to operate the job with scabs, so the government, through the cops and courts, comes in on the side of the scabs.

This is becoming more and more the real situation for workers today. What does it have to do with women and abor-

tion rights?

Everything. If scabs or rightwingers try to take away people's rights (such as their jobs or their healthcare), and the government actively intervenes to help do it, no one's rights are secure!

Operation Rescue is trying to take women's rights away. The boss is using scabs to take worker's jobs away. The government is giving aid, comfort, and support to both of them.

Independence is key

What can we do about it? The key is to organize independently of the Democratic and Republican parties. Neither women nor workers—men and women—can rely on anyone but ourselves to defend our rights.

The Democrats and Republicans who run the government, national and local, have proven unwilling and unable to defend us. The courts have ruled against our rights. The administration is blatant about where it stands.

Independence means massive mobilizations for our issues. It also means solidarity for all working people and all women who act to defend their rights and their living standards. It should lead in the direction of a definitive break from the Democrats and Republicans—the political parties of the bosses. To continue trying to find a supportable representative from either of these two parties is to enter the ring against a formidable opponent with one arm tied behind our back.

The unions must come to the defense of women's right to abortion. In so doing, they will be helping to assure the kind of firm alliance between the unions and the women's rights movement that both will need in order for either to secure their rights.—The editors

6000 rally in Wichita

WICHITA, Kan.—On Aug. 24, people gathered here from throughout the Midwest to show Operation Rescue's fanatics exactly what the pro-choice majority looks like.

"We will fight back!" chanted the 6000 women and men who rallied in downtown Wichita. Banners held by local people proclaimed, "Wichitans for Choice!" The event was sponsored by the Pro-Choice Action League.

Patricia Ireland, president of the National Organization for Women (NOW), was cheered when she reported

that simultaneous rallies were being held in many towns and cities of the United States—including Bush's summer home of Kennebunkport, Maine.

Ellie Smeal, of the Fund for the Feminist Majority, addressed OR's claim that they follow in the footsteps of the Black civil rights movement. "We remember this," she said, "We were the people that organized to get the Black children in the schools. They [OR] were the people standing in the doorways."

"Wichita is a decisive battle," she summed up. "We have to be at the clinics." The implication was that pro-choice supporters must defend the clinics in this city and throughout the United States.—TINA BEACOCK