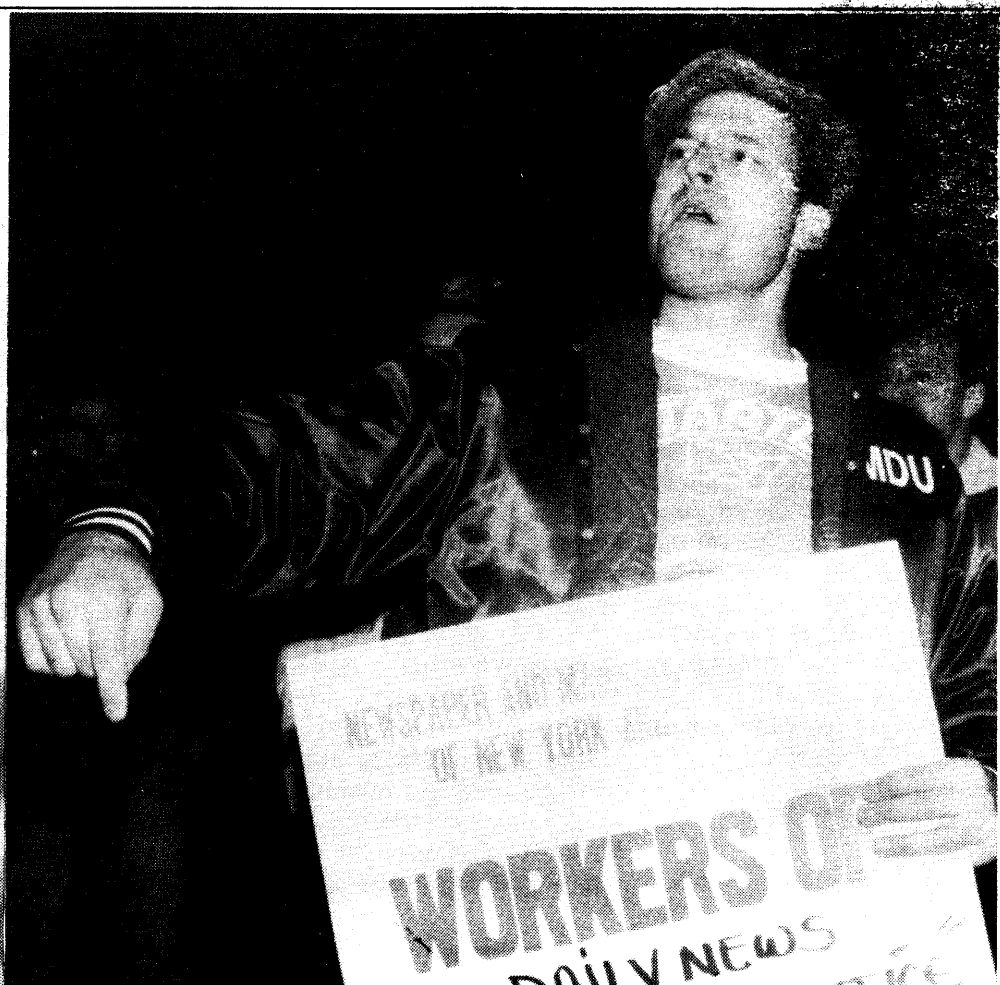


A Socialist ACTION



Eyewitness:
The former
Soviet Union
See page 10.

Vol. 10, No. 11 NOVEMBER 1992 50 CENTS



President-elect Bill Clinton told everyone what they wanted to hear. But as the economy worsens he'll hear from workers.

Clinton: A 'New Beginning' for the New World Order?

By JOSEPH RYAN

"Even as America's administrations change, America's interests do not."

These were the words of Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton on the day following his election as the 42nd president of the United States. The Democratic Party candidate, who defeated George Bush because he tapped into the electorate's disgust with the status quo, made it crystal clear, however, that he is definitely committed to the preservation of the *international* status quo.

"Today, I want to reaffirm the essential continuity in American foreign policy," he stated. Clinton has expressed his solidarity with the previous administration's wars in the Persian Gulf and Panama. And he has given warning to Saddam Hussein, Fidel Castro, and other opponents of the New World Order.

Clinton's election campaign was based on opportunism—pure and simple. He promised something for everyone. When he spoke to workers, he promised jobs. When he spoke to Blacks, Hispanics, and other minorities, he pledged social programs. When he spoke to women, he defended abortion rights. When he spoke to the elderly, he guaranteed healthcare.

Yet Clinton never explained where he was going to get the money to pay for all these promises. While Clinton was put in office by a tidal wave of anger and frustration created by this country's decaying economic conditions, he will soon find himself in a dilemma: He can't put people to work and improve the standard of living

of American working people while at the same time defending the interests of an economic system that is responsible for the recession.

And despite Clinton's "progressive" rhetoric, he was chosen as the candidate of the Democratic Party precisely because he

best represented the rightward shift of this capitalist party—not its commitment to social justice, which was always illusory.

Clinton's real challenge as the chief executive of the American capitalist class

(continued on page 5)

A different kind of Columbus Day this year



Native Americans lead a march of 3000 on Oct. 11 during the Columbus Day protest activities in San Francisco. Throughout the Americas, thousands commemorated "500 years of resistance."

Free Trade vs. Protectionism: No Choice for Workers

By NAT WEINSTEIN

One of the disputed issues in the 1992 presidential election campaign was adoption of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). It was vigorously pushed by George Bush along with most Democrats and a decisive majority of the ruling capitalist class.

But this agreement has yet to be nailed down, and is destined to be in contention for some time to come—depending on how objective economic conditions unfold.

Some Democratic Party politicians sought to identify with opposition to NAFTA on protectionist grounds, but their presidential candidate, Bill Clinton, very briefly played both sides of the fence before settling down to endorse Bush's trade policy.

Clinton had also pledged to push new legislation to modify some of NAFTA's

(continued on page 16)

Apocalypse by choice



Fightback

By
Sylvia Weinstein

await treatment.

The TB epidemic has been kindled by AIDS, homelessness, drug abuse, and the rapid disappearance of preventive-medicine health clinics in cities all across the country.

"I'm scared," said Dr. Lee B. Reichman, who has just become president of the American Lung Association, and who for 30 years has been one of the nation's leading tuberculosis experts.

"Here we are in 1992," Reichman says, "with cure rates lower than countries like Malawi and Nicaragua. We can't keep track of our patients, and all evidence suggests more and more of them have TB that is resistant to our best drugs. We have turned a disease that was completely preventable and curable into one that is neither. We should be ashamed."

Dr. Reichman blames pure and simple "neglect" for this dangerous development. Most Americans put TB out of their minds. It wasn't a problem for them. However, it was never completely eliminated in the poorest parts of cities like Miami, Atlanta, Houston, and New York. In the poorest areas, TB persisted through the

1960s, '70s, and '80s.

In 1970, for example, TB case rates in central Harlem were nearly 20 times the national average and at least five times higher than the average for New York City.

The disparities have grown worse. Last year, reported case rates in central Harlem soared to 220 per 100,000 residents—35 times the figure for wealthy residents of the Upper East Side, just a short bus-ride away. It is a disease of the poor and disfranchised.

Beginning in 1953, when the government began keeping TB statistics, the number of cases declined steadily from a high of 84,000 that year, to a low of 22,000 in 1985. By last year, however, there were nearly 27,000 new cases reported in the United States.

The American Lung Association now estimates that without a major effort, the United States, within a decade, will see at least 50,000 new cases every year and they will cost the country billions of dollars a year to treat. TB, unlike AIDS, is easily spread through casual contact with an infected person.

This is nothing more than cold-blooded murder through neglect. This is not like the

Middle Ages when the plague took millions of lives. Neither the medical nor the scientific information was available to stop that pandemic.

But what hasn't fundamentally changed is the attitude of the ruling class, who foster the belief that those who have contracted AIDS are somehow guilty of sin and are being punished by God. In the Middle Ages, the ruling class spread the same hypocrisy about plague victims.

"It is hard not to be bitter about a catastrophe that simply should never have happened," said Dr. Barry R Bloom, a senior researcher at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine and a TB specialist.

"We had everything we needed. All the knowledge, the skills, the medical expertise necessary to eliminate this disease. Instead, this country chose to very nearly eliminate the health care programs people with this disease need most."

This country has the expertise and know-how to find a cure for AIDS and to cure TB. What is necessary is a massive, unrelenting fight against this corrupt ruling class to force them to end their "apocalypse by choice." ■

In this country, over 150,000 people have already died of AIDS-related diseases. Federal health officials estimate that at least one million Americans are HIV-infected. The number of AIDS cases will almost double in this country alone by 1993.

And now, due to the criminal neglect of the U.S. government, we are in a tuberculosis epidemic with strains so virulent they threaten to return pockets of American society to a time when antibiotics were unknown; to a period more reminiscent of the Black Death of the Middle Ages.

HIV-positive people are most threatened by the resurgence of tuberculosis, which been swift and calamitous in many of our largest cities.

The new TB epidemic comes

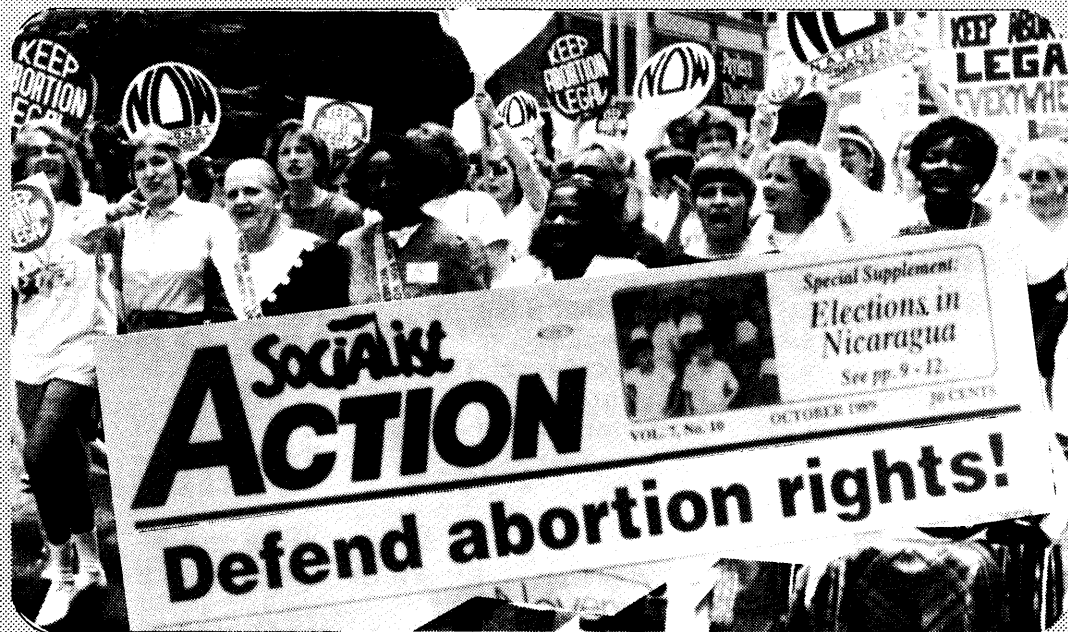
after two decades of searing budget cuts in public health programs. Without these cuts, experts say, the disease could have been all but eradicated, and new, deadly strains would never have been allowed to evolve and flourish.

New York City has 4000 cases of tuberculosis. The last time it had that many cases was in 1967. At that time, the city had more than 1000 beds assigned to TB patients. Today, there are fewer than 75 beds available.

In 1968, there were 22 full-time chest clinics in New York. Today there are only nine.

And those clinics are so over-crowded and dilapidated that scores of patients must huddle each day in the drab, dimly-lighted corridors as they

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New situation in South Africa fraught with danger for both regime and ANC

By PETER BLUMER

Following are excerpts from an article that appeared in the Oct. 12, 1992, issue of *International Viewpoint*, a biweekly journal published under the auspices of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

The article provides important background to the negotiations between the South African government and the African National Congress (ANC) and its allies, which are scheduled to resume this month. The major demand of the ANC is for an "interim government of national unity." Meanwhile, South African President F.W. De Klerk, in an attempt to mitigate opposition from the ultra-right, is standing fast for "guarantees" for the white minority.

The decision by the ANC on June 21 to break off the CODESA [Convention for a Democratic South Africa] negotiations was a sign of deep disillusionment, as the ANC leadership realized that these discussions were leading to no reduction whatever in the level of violence directed against its own activists and supporters. They found out that each apparent retreat by the regime on this or that point was each time anticipated by a new offensive on some other terrain of the talks.

This was what happened when the government came up with its proposals for a second chamber [in a proposed legislative body], while the ANC was putting all its energies into pursuing the question of an interim government. Nelson Mandela's movement thus found itself dragged along in the wake of De Klerk's initiatives, as the latter bit by bit revealed new elements in a coherent constitutional project.

This could be seen at the time of the whites-only referendum of March 17, 1992. After some 69 percent voted "yes" to De Klerk's proposals, Mandela declared: "We hope that National Party leaders will stop regarding themselves as leaders of an ethnic group but that they will regard themselves now as part of the leadership of the total population." (*Saturday Star*, March 21, 1992.)

De Klerk had certainly explained two days before that he considered himself "bound by his mandate." (*The Citizen*, March 19, 1992.) But the mandate in question had equally clearly been given on the basis of a dozen "bottom line principles," which taken together, amounted to a barricade of safeguards for keeping the white minority veto.

CODESA trap closing

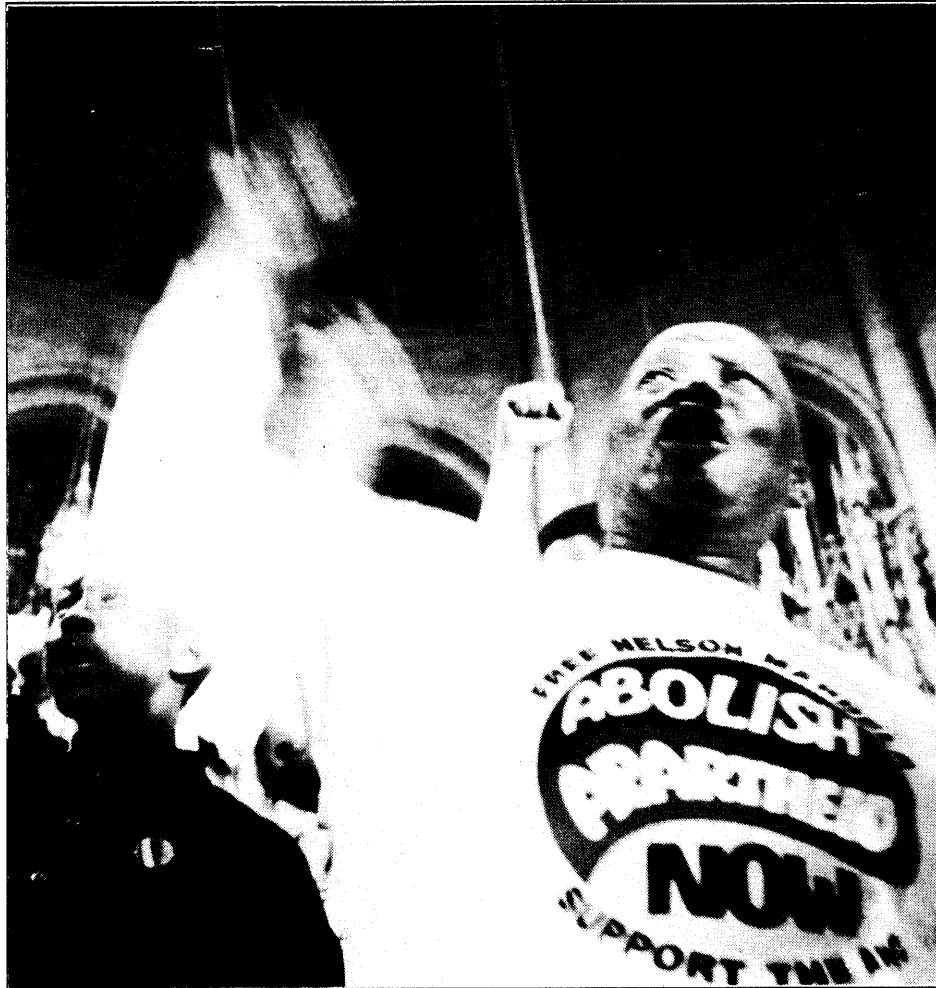
The referendum had, without doubt, a contradictory impact on the ANC's strategy, but Mandela's ambiguities, as shown in his above-quoted remark, also smoothed the way for the regime's attack.

There was growing discontent in the ANC, in particular among its intermediary cadres, and inside the COSATU union confederation. Above all, the rank-and-file lost patience and confidence and the moment was approaching when the leadership risked repudiation. The CODESA trap was closing, gravely endangering the unity of the anti-apartheid movement. If the negotiations were to be continued, then at least the rules had to be changed.

The mass campaign announced by the ANC/Communist Party/COSATU [Congress of South African Trade Unions] coalition, which was said to be aimed at bringing down the government and imposing a constituent assembly, led to the general strike of Aug. 3 and 4.

Nonetheless, the ANC's basic perspective remains that of negotiations. It felt the need to make up lost ground, increase its ability to bring pressure and respond to the exasperation of the rank and file. Discussions with the government could only be resumed if they were seen to represent a new "stage" in the introduction of a "post-apartheid society."

It is necessary to underline the impa-



ANC ranks are frustrated with slow pace of changes in South Africa.

tiency of sections of the population radicalized by two years of negotiations and waiting. Each day the television told them of the great changes, while daily life was getting worse. Thus, wages have lost ground against inflation on the order of 16 percent. However, the cost of a shopping basket of food for a family has risen by 28 percent, and vegetables by 80 percent. The mines have seen 3000 layoffs a month. The textile workers' union (SACTWU) has stated that 20,000 of its members have lost their jobs. In metal and engineering, 35,000 jobs went in 1991 and a further 13,000 in the first six months of this year.

Rise in union activity

There has been a sharp rise in union actions and strikes in recent months. One of the most significant was by healthworkers in June and July, which affected 59 hospitals throughout the country.

The general strike in August thus showed that, despite the weakening of organized social movements, popular combativity remains high. The strike was massively observed as broad sections of the Black population showed their continuing readiness to respond to calls for mobilization and action. [There is a contradiction between the militant attitude of the masses and the conciliatory attitude of their leadership.]

This problem is illustrated by an episode from the internal life of the engineering union. In May, the NUMSA [National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa] leadership organized the distribution of a leaflet entitled "prepare the war" against layoffs and wage restrictions. Then came the success of the general strike on Aug. 3 and 4.

On Aug. 8, the union leadership met and proposed to the branches a compromise with the bosses that included abandonment of the demand for a moratorium on layoffs, its replacement by negotiation of various forms of short-time working, temporary plant closures and early retirement, or simply, payment for 15 weeks of retraining after being laid off.

Thus, in a few weeks, the union had passed from conducting a "war" against layoffs to a proposal for managing enterprise reform—despite a massive general strike. On Aug. 11, the regional leadership in eastern Witwatersrand responded: "The proposals from the NEC are substantively unacceptable. Our members have consistently demanded ... serious protection against the daily threat of retrenchment [lay

offs]. That is why we, as a union, put forward the demand for a moratorium ... Our strike is supposed to threaten the bosses. It seems that with this approach we are more scared of our strike than they are....

"It is our members who are being tear-gassed by the police and threatened and even killed by Inkatha, risking their jobs and even their lives. More than 20,000 are on strike in this region alone. We therefore strongly believe that it must be those very members who must take any decision on a compromise."

In a general sense, we have seen in recent months a union strategy centered on the search for compromise with the bosses and on the working out of reorganization plans for specific industries. This is in line with the spirit of the CODESA negotiations, but above all it corresponds to the ideas in the union leaderships on the means to employ to overcome the crisis, revive production, and build a "post-apartheid" society.

This is essentially a neo-Keynesian conception based on the negotiation of a new distribution of income and the search for new ways of being internationally competitive.

"Consensus" with the employers?

We could see the unions' policy at work

on the eve of the August strike when COSATU signed a blueprint for a charter with the SACCOLA employers' union. The two parties announced that they were going to organize and call together on all South Africans to make Aug. 3 a "day for peace, democracy, and economic restructuring."

The *South Africa Labour Bulletin* modestly explains: "The draft agreement eventually floundered when SACCOLA was unable to win support for it from its constituent business organization."

But one paragraph in particular highlights current union strategy. The two parties propose "an open and inclusive approach at both [the] national and industry level to economic restructuring and to agreeing on an economic strategy that will deliver high and sustainable levels of growth and development. To this end, to seek to avoid unilateral economic restructuring and to seek consensus between government, labor, and business in this regard."

Aside from its wholly illusory view, such a declaration by COSATU is in total contradiction with the calls for a war on the bosses such as that issued by NUMSA in May. But it is, in fact, the same leaderships who are responsible for both.

To understand the confusion that such contradictions can cause, we need to remember that the August strike took place against the economic background that makes the whole philosophy of the SACCOLA/COSATU agreement redundant.

It should be recalled that the government's plan was to ensure a massive reentry of foreign investment through opening negotiations. On the basis of renewed "confidence," it also hoped that a lot of foreign financial aid would flow into social projects in the townships, calming popular expectations.

In fact, very little of all this has so far been seen. Worse still, the country has slid further into a recession made still worse by the drought that has struck some rural areas.

Bankruptcies rose by 37.7 percent in the first six months of 1992. An annual report from the Central Bank, dated Aug. 26, explains that the country may be into its longest recession since 1908. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has fallen for the third consecutive year—by 0.5 percent in 1991 and 2 or 2.5 percent this year. It is hard to attract foreign capital when South African firms themselves do not believe in investment.

The negotiations are thus going to restart in a new framework—which has been reshaped in a way unforeseen by the two main protagonists. The regime has seen its position weakened by the economic crisis, while the ANC must deal with considerable questioning in its own ranks and beyond. ■

International Viewpoint

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Parole Mark Curtis Now!

On Nov. 17, Mark Curtis, a trade union activist and Socialist Workers Party (SWP) member, will go before the Iowa State Board of Parole to be considered for release from prison.

Curtis was framed up and convicted on rape and burglary charges by the Des Moines, Iowa, police in 1988. He was sentenced to 25 years in state prison.

Spokespersons for the Mark Curtis Defense Committee have announced the launching of an international Parole Now! campaign. In a letter to supporters the defense committee states, "We want to expand the field for obtaining letters to the Iowa Parole



Board urging that Curtis be freed."

The defense committee explains that the Parole Board has been stalling on releasing Curtis. He has already been in prison for more than the three and a half year average served by those convicted of the same charges as Curtis.

Curtis's work and behavior record while in prison has been excellent and he is a model candidate for parole.

Free Mark Curtis Now! To join in this fight, contributions and letters to the State Board of Parole should be sent to:

Mark Curtis Defense Committee,
P.O. Box 1048, Des Moines, Iowa
50311. ■

Profits from poverty: The lucrative business of "aid" agencies



Andrew Holbrooke

By HAYDEN PERRY

"Lords of Poverty: The power, prestige, and corruption of the international aid business" by Graham Hancock. Monthly Review Press, New York; 234 pages; \$17.95.

"This book is an attack on a group of rich and powerful bureaucracies that have hijacked our kindness." With this introduction Graham Hancock takes us behind the scenes of the "international aid business."

This is a vast network of public and private foundations, agencies, and commissions ostensibly helping needy people in underdeveloped countries. *The Wall Street Journal* once described it as "the largest bureaucracy in history devoted to international good deeds." Hancock is not so sure of the "good deeds."

He is lenient with the privately funded agencies such as Oxfam, Save the Children Fund, and Catholic Relief Services. Their staffs are likely to be found in the villages of Somalia or Bangladesh feeding the hungry and ministering to the sick.

They make mistakes, he says, but they mean well, and relate directly to the poor. It was their humanitarian ideals, no doubt, that motivated Hancock, East Africa correspondent of *The Economist*, to contribute his talents to the international relief problem.

Good intentions, Hancock says, by well meaning amateurs, have not prevented private agencies from committing snafus that embarrass the agency and anger the recipient. It is due, Hancock thinks, to the prevailing attitude among aid workers that "we know what is best for you." Aid is administered to the needy rather than with the needy. Local people are not consulted when decisions are made. As a consequence, these decisions can then be disastrous.

Refrigerators running on 110 volts are shipped out to a country that uses 220 volts. Frost bite medicine is sent to a nation in equatorial Africa. "During a dis-

"One worker explained his move to the public sector of 'aid' assistance. Pointing to the three or four times higher salary, he said, 'Well, I want what they have. I want the villa and the car and the two servants. ... I don't think that is unreasonable, do you?'"

aster all sorts of junk comes rolling in." said one aid worker. In 1979, an American private agency sent 19 tons of "survival food and drugs" to Kampuchea. The food was so old that San Francisco zoo-keepers had stopped feeding it to their animals. Some of the medicines and drugs had expired 15 years earlier!

Vital as it is, distributing food and medicine to starving people involves less than 10 percent of the \$60 billion a year spent for foreign aid and development.

Most of the money goes for projects that develop a country's infrastructure. In theory a dam here and a power plant there are bound to bring benefits that trickle down to the poor at the bottom.

To plan and administer these projects a vast international bureaucracy has been built, funded mainly by the taxpayers of the industrial countries.

Among the agencies are the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Overseas Development Administration (ODA). They are ostensibly sponsored, but not really controlled by the United Nations.

Nobody monitors "aid" cartels

Hancock says, "Nobody watches or controls any of these institutions... Their excessive secrecy, their closed session meetings, all conspire to prevent any kind of oversight of their doings." But finan-

cial muscle is powerful.

"Since the U.S. gives twice as much (\$9.784 billion in 1986) as the next biggest donor, Japan (\$5.634 billion), the United States controls the World Bank and its subsidiaries through a weighted voting system. Washington has been able to hold back aid from "unworthy" nations: Cuba has not received a nickel in 40 years.

The mandate of the aid industry was expressed eloquently by Barber Conable, President of the Bank, at a world conference in 1986. "Our institution is mighty in resources and in experience," he said, "but its labors will count for nothing if it cannot look at our world through the eyes of the most under-privileged..."

Actually the poor are seen only dimly at the end of a long line by the men who preside over scores of agencies and thousands of employees. They deal only with the higher levels of foreign bureaucracies, with ministers, sheikhs, and other privileged and powerful people. The world of the elite in which they move is reflected in the aid organizations themselves.

Hancock speaks of the luxurious ambiance at the Bank-Fund's 1986 meeting of several thousand people dedicated to the problems of the poor. Hancock writes, "The total cost of the 700 different social events laid on during that single week was estimated at \$10 million..." The head of a catering firm that put on a dinner costing \$200 a person, observed, "No one is stinting—but, then, they never have."

Almost no one who works for these aid agencies is asked to stint. Salaries are

much higher than comparable work elsewhere. Altruism may sustain an OXFAM volunteer on a low salary, for a while, but the bright lights of the UN agencies are alluring.

One worker explained his move to the public sector of "aid" assistance. Pointing to the three or four times higher salary, he said, "Well, I want what they have. I want the villa and the car and the two servants. ... I don't think that is unreasonable, do you?"

Once within the UN structure the recruit finds, in Hancock's words, "A system of empires has been created by ambitious and greedy men and then staffed by time-servers and sycophants."

Much of the time-servers' time is spent traveling, first class, all over the globe. The president and executive board of UNESCO, the education agency, spent \$1,759,548 for one year of travel and lodging. In the same year they doled out only \$49,000 for educating handicapped children in Africa!

Much of this travel involves staff members making brief stops in remote countries to give advice on proposed and ongoing projects. Since the site of the dam may be hot and uncomfortable, the adviser usually skips the project itself. He or she confines their visit to the larger cities and the air-conditioned offices of top-level bureaucrats.

They often miss—or ignore—the utter failure of some projects that look so good on paper. For example, dams that become useless in a few years because the reservoir silts up at a rate never contemplated. It never occurs to them that power plants may remain unused because the poorer countries cannot afford the fuel to run them.

Charity begins at home

The aid agencies fail to see the negative affect some projects have on the needy they are supposed to help. The poor people displaced by a reservoir are seldom compensated by the venal government that cares nothing about them. Flooding a poor country with food can contribute to later famines, as local farmers cannot raise crops profitably in the face of mountains of imports.

The mountain of food sent to country "A" may relieve the burden of country "B." This is the wealthy country that finds foreign aid a great way to unload its surplus crops. Here Hancock explains why hard-nosed business men are so "charitable"—why they are willing to spend \$60 billion on poor people thousands of miles away.

Actually, this charity begins at home, paying home industries for the trucks, generators and food sent overseas. Hancock estimates that 90 percent of the money contributed stays in the donor country. The U.S. Agency for International Development proclaims, "Foreign aid does not cost Americans, it pays." Millionaire farmers agree, as they collect \$1.8 billion in procurement orders.

Aid planners prefer large projects over small ones, as more equipment can be sold this way. The results are great power grids that generate electricity for a few factories, while by-passing peasants who still must make do with oil lamps.

Since much of the aid is in the form of "soft loans" that must eventually be paid back, the poor become poorer yet as this new burden is laid upon them. In addition, loans made by the IMF carry stipulations to guarantee repayment, which push national living standards even lower.

While the poor were getting poorer, many of the elite got richer as aid money flowed in. In Bangladesh, "commission agents," who facilitate the distribution of equipment and supplies, extracted \$136 million for themselves. These "commission agents," however, are pickers when compared to Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos of the Philippines, or the Duvaliers of Haiti—whose "take" ran into the billions.

These rulers certainly did not want their countries to be developed to the point where the flow of aid money would be no longer needed. The "lords of poverty," for their part, had no difficulty working with these "kleptocrats."

Marcos, Duvalier, and countless other dictators, never objected to any inadvisable project so long as they got their "cut." And they could be counted on to silence any objections from the workers and peasants.

Hancock points out that 50 years of negative experience has led some of the poor countries to say, "Please, leave us alone!" Hancock agrees with them. If 50 years of "aid" left the poor poorer than ever, the profit-driven international aid business is a failure.

"It is time for the 'Lords of Poverty' to depart," Hancock declares. However, he does not offer a real alternative solution to the very real problems of poverty and hunger. But "Lords of Poverty" does open to informed debate the life and death question of rescuing the starving and bringing effective help to the poor. ■

Oregon voters defeat anti-Gay/Lesbian ballot initiative

By GARY BILLS

PORTLAND, Ore.—On election day, Oregon voters defeated Measure 9, known as the "Abnormal Behaviors Initiative," which was an attempt to amend the state constitution to declare that homosexuality is "abnormal, wrong, unnatural, and perverse."

The ballot measure tried to lump homosexuality with other "behaviors" that should be discouraged by the state—such as pedophilia, sadism, and masochism. Civil protection of gays and lesbians from discrimination was maligned as "special rights."

The measure was defeated by a margin of 53 percent, but the breakdown of the vote indicated the conservatism that exists outside the main urban centers. In Portland and other major cities, the measure was rejected by a three to one margin. In the rural communities, however, the vote was much closer.

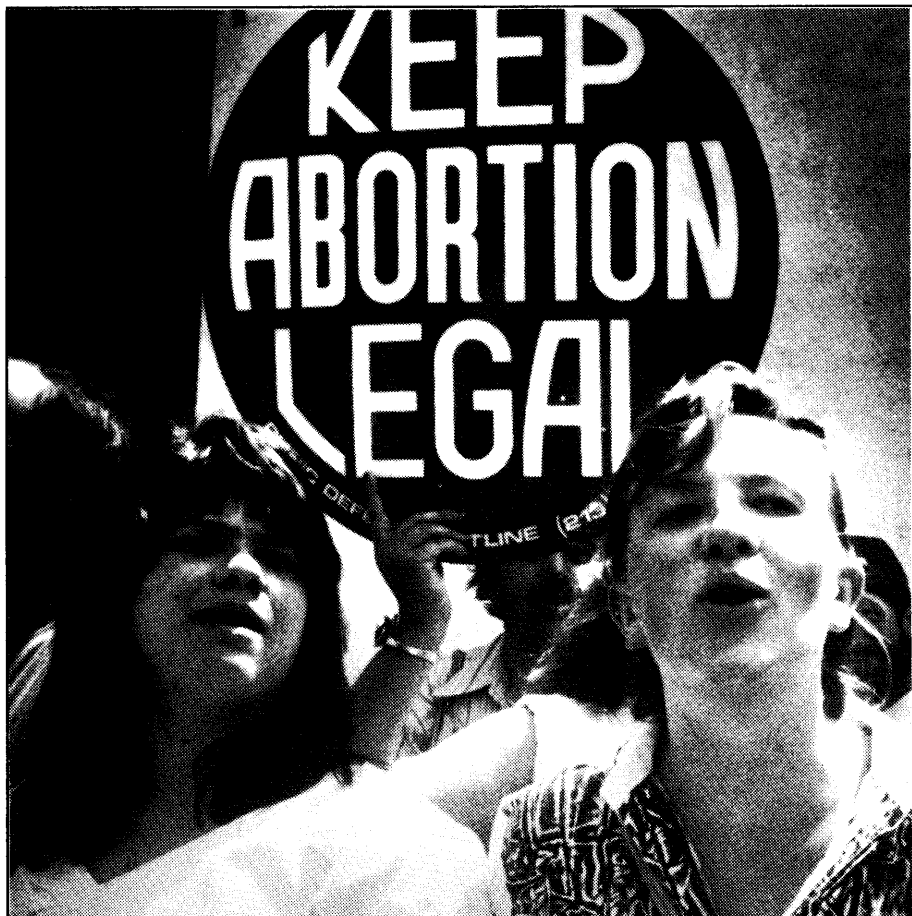
The major sponsor of the measure was a group called the Oregon Citizens Alliance (OCA), local representatives of Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, and other right-wing fundamentalist Christian groups—such as Operation Rescue, Eagle Forum, and the Coalition of Woman for Traditional Values.

These incipient fascist groupings were likewise the major organizers for support of the Gulf War, through the "Home-front Coalition" and "Defenders of Liberty Parade." And they were in the forefront of attacks on women's abortion rights.

The bigotry that such right-wing groups encourage has resulted in an anti-gay ordinance in Springfield, Ore., and a large increase in hate crimes directed at minorities, women, and gays and lesbians. The worst recent incident of a hate crime was the firebombing of a home in Salem, Ore., by racist skinheads that resulted in the death of a Black lesbian and a white gay man.

The backers of Measure 9 made children and teachers their target. They pushed heavily the notion that homosexuality is something that is taught and glorified by teachers—especially gay teachers who, according to OCA lies, are prone to pedophilia. This line of attack had a significant measure of success in frightening

Abortion rights victory in Maryland



Biggest weakness of new law is it codifies parental notification, thus restricting access of teenage women to abortion rights.

By JULIA STEINBERG

BALTIMORE—Passage of Referendum Question 6 in Maryland on Nov. 3 marks a victory for the women's movement in the struggle to keep abortion safe and legal. The referendum was held to ratify a law adopted by the state legislature last year.

Under the new law, which will replace a highly restrictive law from 1968, the state may not interfere with a woman's decision to end her pregnancy.

Question 6 passed with a majority of over 61 percent of the vote statewide, with even higher majorities in Baltimore City and in the areas of Maryland surrounding Washington, DC. In Baltimore, almost every polling place reported a

majority vote for the new law, with substantial support in working-class and African American communities.

"A number of people that I talked to were confused," explained one election-day volunteer from a polling place in a working-class neighborhood, "But as soon as I explained that a vote for Question 6 meant it would be the woman's decision, they agreed to support it."

This victory occurred despite a well-funded, visible campaign by opponents of the new law. In the weeks leading up to the election, TV ads were aired by the "Vote KNOW Coalition," an anti-choice group, which were geared towards confusing voters about which way to vote.

Rather than openly stating their opposition to legal abortion, anti-choice

forces tried to pose as supporters of women's rights who simply opposed *this* law. The resulting confusion led campaigners on both sides to expect that the vote would be much closer than it actually was.

"The majority in Maryland is pro-choice," stated Laura Newman, the Baltimore NOW chapter president. "Our victory in this referendum just confirms that. We have been working for the past three years to have a pro-choice law in Maryland, and our efforts have finally paid off. Victory was never guaranteed, but the efforts of our volunteers, along with many others, made this possible."

Question 6 was supported by numerous organizations, including Maryland NOW, Planned Parenthood, the League of Women Voters, AFSCME Council 92, Maryland State Teachers Association, and the National Black Women's Health Project, to name just a few. In addition, many individual volunteers were involved in campaign work, including high school and college students across the state.

However, the campaign for Question 6 had a serious weakness. The new law contains a parental notification clause, which requires doctors to notify the parent of a teenage woman prior to her abortion—with certain exceptions. This restriction on young women's rights weakens the pro-choice character of the law.

No such restriction existed under *Roe v. Wade*, which was the law in Maryland until the offensive by anti-choice forces.

"Maryland for Choice," the official campaign for Question 6, supported parental notification, and used the inclusion of "a responsible parental notification clause" in almost all campaign literature as a reason to vote for the new law. Despite the fact that NOW and many other organizations involved in "Maryland for Choice," understand the dangers to teenage women caused by parental notification, this strategy was never challenged.

While this victory in Maryland helps encourage all supporters of women's rights, we cannot stop until these rights are guaranteed to all women. Our momentum must be used to work for repeal of the parental notification clause. This victory was not won by waiting for the politicians to act—it was won through a grass-roots effort by pro-choice activists. To maintain the rights that we won, we must continue to organize. ■

some parents.

With the defeat of Measure 9, the OCA has already stated that it will use this fear to "fine-tune" its next attack on the rights of gays and lesbians with another initiative in two years.

This initiative greatly polarized Oregon's population. Gays—as well as women,

minorities and other working people—are trying to fight back against the attacks on them, especially against those that seek to scapegoat them for the deterioration of the capitalist social system. Measure 9 sought to blame gays and lesbians for the pressures working-class families are feeling right now—from taxes, joblessness, crime,

poor pay and benefits, and a deteriorating school system.

The heightened political tension around this battle, which was not limited to Oregon, has mobilized many people for the battles yet to come. Debates are now going on within the ranks of anti-Measure 9 forces as to which way to proceed. ■

... Clinton

(continued from page 1)

will be his ability to paper over the frustrations of American working people, on one hand, while modernizing and streamlining American capitalism's competitive edge in the world market, on the other.

Who will suffer is apparent from his record as governor of Arkansas.

Clinton rewarded the financial elite of Arkansas with low-interest loans; at the same time, he granted them over \$400 million a year in tax breaks—one-fifth of the annual state budget.

Under the Clinton administration, Arkansas, which is still 49th in individual average annual per capita income, taxed the poorest 20 percent of working people 67 percent higher than the richest one percent.

Just these two examples alone demonstrate that basically Clinton is no different from Bush or Perot (who at least was honest enough to lay out the draconian austerity measures necessary for rescuing capitalism).

Clinton's career is rooted in adjusting himself to the needs of the wealthy, from whom he solicited money for his election campaigns.

(He raised and spent \$109.2 million on

his campaign for president.)

And Clinton has proved himself both ideologically and politically reliable when it comes to attacking the democratic rights of working people. He ardently supports the death penalty. As attorney-general of Arkansas, he supported the anti-union right

itive advantage.

Clinton's task now is to keep labor, Blacks, Hispanics, women—and all those who are crying out for justice—tied to his coattails and out of the streets. His biggest problem is that he may not be able to dispense even a few crumbs to these

When Clinton says he is committed "to make the nation more competitive in a global economy," he means he is committed to increasing the rate of exploitation of working people.

to work (for less) law.

In 1986, he stated he was against abortion rights and abortion funding. And while today he says he supports a woman's right to choose, he authored a law that requires a teenage woman to notify *both* parents if she wishes to have an abortion.

Clinton's "New Beginning" will be a new continuation of the ongoing war against working people—but with some frills. When Clinton says he is committed "to make the nation more competitive in a global economy," he means he is committed to increasing the rate of exploitation of working people. That's the only way American capitalism can regain its compet-

movements given the \$4 trillion federal debt.

One thing is certainly clear in this election. Millions of working people voted for what they thought would be fundamental change. They swept scores of incumbents out of office, established term limits in 14 states, and elected by wide margins Democratic Party candidates who promised them jobs and renewed prosperity.

Undoubtedly, working people—who have been fooled once more into voting for the lesser evil—are going to be more angry than disappointed when their hopes for change have been dashed.

An example of the skepticism and anger

that is festering may be seen in the comments of three African American residents of South Central Los Angeles. Arthur Diggs told reporters: "I don't really have any negative feelings about Clinton. But that's based on promises I want to believe. I don't put much faith in promises, but at least give the man a chance."

George Smith, unemployed, was a lot more bitter—or maybe prophetic:

"I feel we're headed for a revolutionary war. It's either the ballot or the bullet, and I feel war might be superior for the Black people because they're rubbing us out. We represent 10 percent of the population and 90 percent of the prison population."

DeWayne Steps, also unemployed, said: "I don't feel like Clinton or Bush delivered on what they said they would do for us. Maybe that will change. Isn't that the word? Change?"

Only three presidents have failed to get re-elected after their first term in this century: Bush, Carter, and Hoover. All three were kicked out because of intolerable economic conditions. Clinton may well be the fourth.

But when that happens, there must be an alternative for working people that goes beyond careening from one capitalist politician to another. That would be a labor party, based on the unions and the struggles of all the oppressed—a party based on human needs, not corporate profits. ■

'Business as usual' at IAM convention

By ANDY MILLER

The 33rd Grand Lodge Convention of the International Association of Machinists was held under a dark cloud this year in Montréal, Québec, between Sept. 28 and Oct. 6.

That cloud held the prospect of IAM members, like most other unionists, facing more layoffs, concessionary contracts, and a further decline in their standard of living. Meanwhile, the union hierarchy provided absolutely no alternative to their business-as-usual response to the capitalist offensive against workers.

It is just this lack of an effective response of the union bureaucracy that has permitted the bosses to run roughshod over workers in the United States and Canada. Of course, the IAM bureaucracy takes no responsibility at all for their role in pushing through sellout contracts over the past decade.

This year's convention delegates numbered only 1183, down 800 from the last convention four years ago. The machinists union has lost more than 300,000 members in the last decade, due to plant closures and massive layoffs. Needless to say, the mood of most delegates was somber at best.

Few, if any, delegates expected much to come from this convention, owing to the lack of any hint whatsoever of a new direction coming from the IAM officials. But many delegates expressed the deep felt need for a change if the union is to survive.

Support for Clinton

What the IAM officialdom dished out to the delegates as its solution to the current situation was anything but the prospect for change. In fact, its proposals expressed the union bureaucracy's complete lack of confidence in the independent power of workers.

IAM president George Kourpias gave the opening keynote address. It was the same old worn-out message: By electing Democratic Party presidential nominees Bill Clinton and Al Gore, workers would be the winners.

Most delegates did not believe this message. But since the union bureaucracy did not present them with any alternative, the delegates resigned themselves to what was perceived as the inevitable.

After more than two days of speaker after speaker, including AFL-CIO head Lane Kirkland, repeating this same feeble pro-Clinton message, the delegates began expressing their boredom to each other.

On the morning of the third day of the convention, as if no other political option existed, the IAM officials presented and passed their own Resolution No. 22 endorsing Clinton and Gore for president and vice president.

The vote for this treacherous resolution was about as enthusiastic as the vote for a typical union bureaucrat-endorsed concession contract would be when the members see there is no one providing real leadership who is willing to put up a fight.

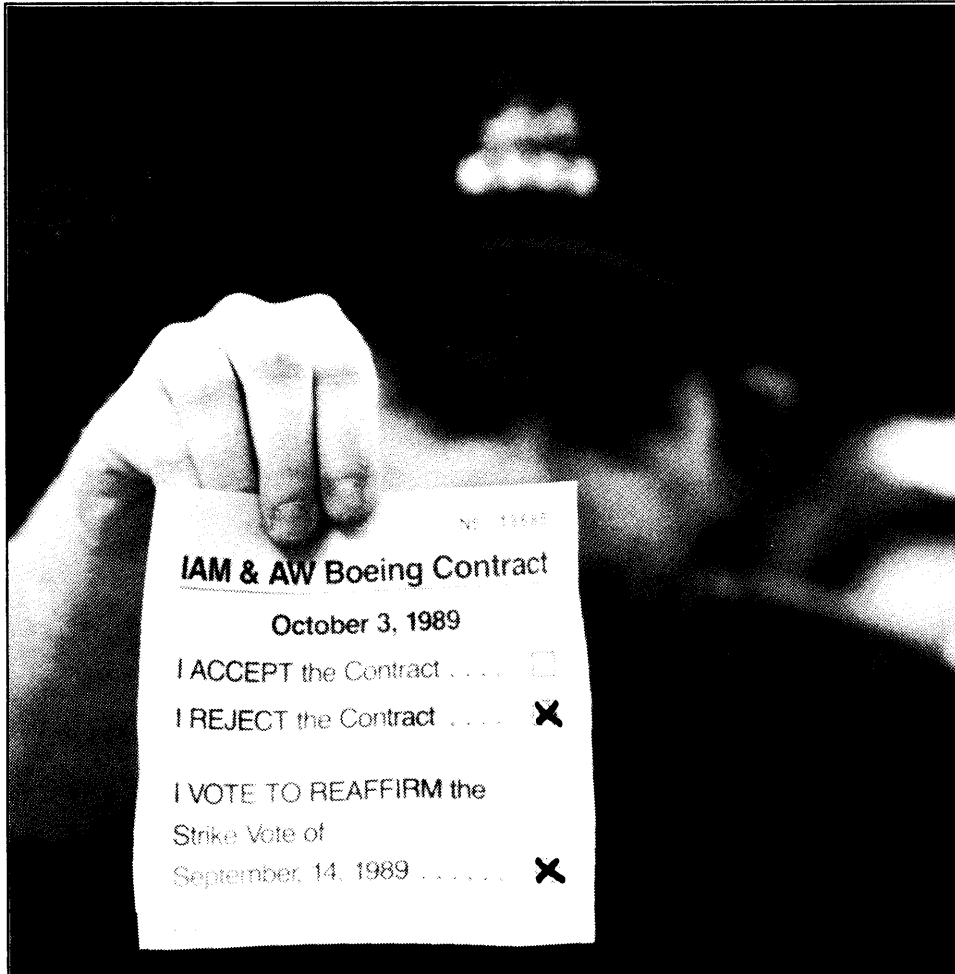
A point must be made about the timing of the bureaucracy's resolution in support of the Democratic Party ticket. This resolution was the first to be brought before the convention, even though it was the 22nd to be submitted. All other resolutions were presented in order of submission later in the proceedings.

It turns out that a resolution calling for a break by labor from the Democratic and Republican Parties was submitted by local Lodge 565 of the San Francisco Bay Area earlier this year.

In a departure from normal procedure, this resolution did not get printed or distributed, as it should have, at the beginning of the convention.

According to Bill Leumer, president of Local 565: "The officials said they never received our resolutions, which I find strange because they received our proposed changes to the constitution that were sent at the same time as our resolutions. The proposed changes were printed and dis-

But a Bay Area local bucks officials; calls for break from Democrats



Even when IAM officials were in a position to win big gains for the membership, like the 1989 Boeing strike, they settled for contracts that fell far short of what could have been won.

"We need a policy that puts the rich on the defensive, not us..."

tributed on time." Leumer dryly noted that "the International has never failed to receive and promptly deposit our per-capita dues checks."

Local 565's resolution was resubmitted, and did get printed and distributed, but only after the Clinton endorsement was rammed through.

Time for a change

The Local 565 resolution advocated that the IAM call for a national emergency labor congress to which elected delegates from all unions would be invited to attend and discuss the formation of an independent party of labor based on the unions.

It also called for labor to return to the militant labor policies of the 1930s and 1940s—that is, mass picket lines, marches, and demonstrations to combat the employers' assaults. A shorter workweek with no cut in pay was also proposed to combat unemployment.

The delegates from Local 565 succeeded in distributing a flyer titled, "Why We Need A Fight-Back Policy," in support of their labor party resolution on the morning of the third day. The flyer struck a responsive cord among many working member delegates.

On the other hand, the IAM full-time staffers hated it, and they went about badmouthing it to every delegate who would listen. It is worth citing some excerpts from this flyer:

"We urge all delegates to seriously consider and support the IAM Local Lodge 565 resolution that calls for a complete break with the present policies of appeasement and concessions that have only resulted in lowering our standard of living..."

"Only a fight-back policy is capable of overcoming the demoralization of our ranks and restoring our membership's con-

fidence in their ability to successfully defend their interests....

"In the recent past we have heard all too often from officials in our own ranks that 'strikes are no longer effective.'..."

"The strike is an ineffective weapon only when union officials permit mere token strikes, where pickets are reduced to an ineffectual few so that scabs are allowed to freely cross picket lines...That is the lesson of the Caterpillar defeat....

"Rather than influencing the Democratic Party, our union officials have become its captive. Having rejected the idea of a labor party, these officials have left themselves with nowhere else to go.

"Supporting and voting for Democrats or Republicans is like supporting your supervisor for shop steward."

Maneuvers cut short discussion

Just as an aside, other bureaucratic maneuvers were employed by the IAM tops. For example, proposed constitutional changes were submitted by dozens of locals on dues restructuring, as well as two dues proposals from the Executive Council of the IAM.

Yet the Law Committee lumped together all the local lodge proposals, recommended their rejection, and moved the adoption of only the Executive Council's changes—the only ones that passed. This prompted delegate S.R. Anderson of Local 1125 to rise and state:

"The way I see this convention is I think it is really non-democratic, what's going on. The way your committee lumped those amendments together in one heap and only vote[d] on those that you want to."

Another bureaucratic maneuver at the convention was to repeatedly send supporters of the IAM top officialdom to the microphones to "call the question," effec-

tively ending debate. Earlier, a rule had been passed to allow a vote of 175 delegates to call the question—a mockery of Roberts Rules of Order where procedural questions are settled by majority vote.

This prompted delegate M. Glaser of Local 516 to rise to object:

"The one thing that I have observed that has disturbed me is the frequency of directing business reps that have called for the question during debate.... I know that they are a minority here, but they have done the lion's share of calling for the question, and I think this is unhealthy."

During the course of the convention, Local 565 delegates met with the Resolution Committee to push for a recommendation of their local's Labor Party resolution when it came before the convention as a whole, only to be rebuffed.

The reasons the committee gave for rejection, according to Local 565 president Bill Leumer, were: "One, they said the delegates weren't ready for a labor party, and, two, it would not look good to pass this resolution, given that the IAM had just endorsed Clinton."

But on the fifth day, United Mine Workers' (UMWA) president Richard Trumka addressed the convention and said:

"In Canada working people have a voice of their own. It's called the New Democratic Party [Canada's labor party].

"...And when it comes to political action, making sure working people in the United States have the strength we need, brothers and sisters, I sure wish that we had a political party—just one political party that would stand up for us the way the NDP stands up for our brothers and sisters here in Canada; and I say it's about time we started kicking some ass and getting us a party like that."

He got a standing ovation. So much for the delegates not being ready for the idea of a labor party!

Trumka, however, muted his call for getting a labor party started in the U.S. by advocating a vote for Clinton in this election.

On the seventh and final day of the IAM convention, Local 565's Labor Party resolution came before the full delegate body. The chair of the Resolutions Committee said about this resolution:

"The Committee can readily concur with virtually every whereas in the resolution. ... We feel, however, that this year, when Bill Clinton stands such an excellent chance of winning the presidency, is not the proper time to be considering formation of a labor party."

"Crisis will get worse"

Local 565 president Bill Leumer was the first to rise to speak for his local's proposal, stating:

"Brothers and sisters, the underlying assumption expressed at this convention is that with our so-called friends, the Democrats, in office, the economy will somehow get back on track, that further jobs won't be lost and we can all breathe a sigh of relief as business returns to normal.

"Yet all indicators point to the fact that the economic crisis will get worse and worse and thus will produce even bigger conflicts between workers and their employers.

"The employers are on a relentless campaign to bolster their competitive position and profits at our expense and no cooperative union-management partnership policy or reliance on the employer-dominated Democratic Party is going to change that.

"It is for that reason that we say that we must not sit back and rely on the Democratic employer representatives. That false policy is an obstacle preventing us from mobilizing our ranks in our defense and can only weaken and paralyze us, causing us to suffer more and bigger

(continued on next page)

By GERRY FIORI

On Oct. 12, 1992, over 8300 mechanics, aircraft cleaners, and stock clerks, members of the International Association of Machinists (IAM), returned to work after a week-long strike against USAir, the nation's sixth largest airline.

The strike began after IAM members rejected the contract proposed by the company after two-and-a-half years of negotiations.

The carrier demanded \$400 million in concessions from the union to help offset claimed losses of \$700 million in the last two years. Provisions included a one-year 8 percent cut in pay and the workers paying 10 percent of the cost of their health insurance.

The main issue in dispute, however, was that of work-rule changes. The company wanted to have the guiding of airplanes—to and from gates and aircraft de-icing procedures—performed by ramp workers rather than by mechanics.

Most of USAir's ramp workers are non-union (a recent organizing drive there failed) and earn half the pay of mechanics. This planned cross-utilization was seen by the IAM as a threat to their members' jobs (1000 mechanics jobs were expected to be lost) as well as an anti-union measure.

On the morning of Oct. 5, the machinists struck USAir. They were joined on the first day of the strike by 9000 flight attendants, until a court injunction forced them back to work.

The pilots, who had signed a contract with the company in June, stayed at work, as did the non-union ramp workers. USAir Express and the USAir Shuttle, working under different agreements, also did not strike.

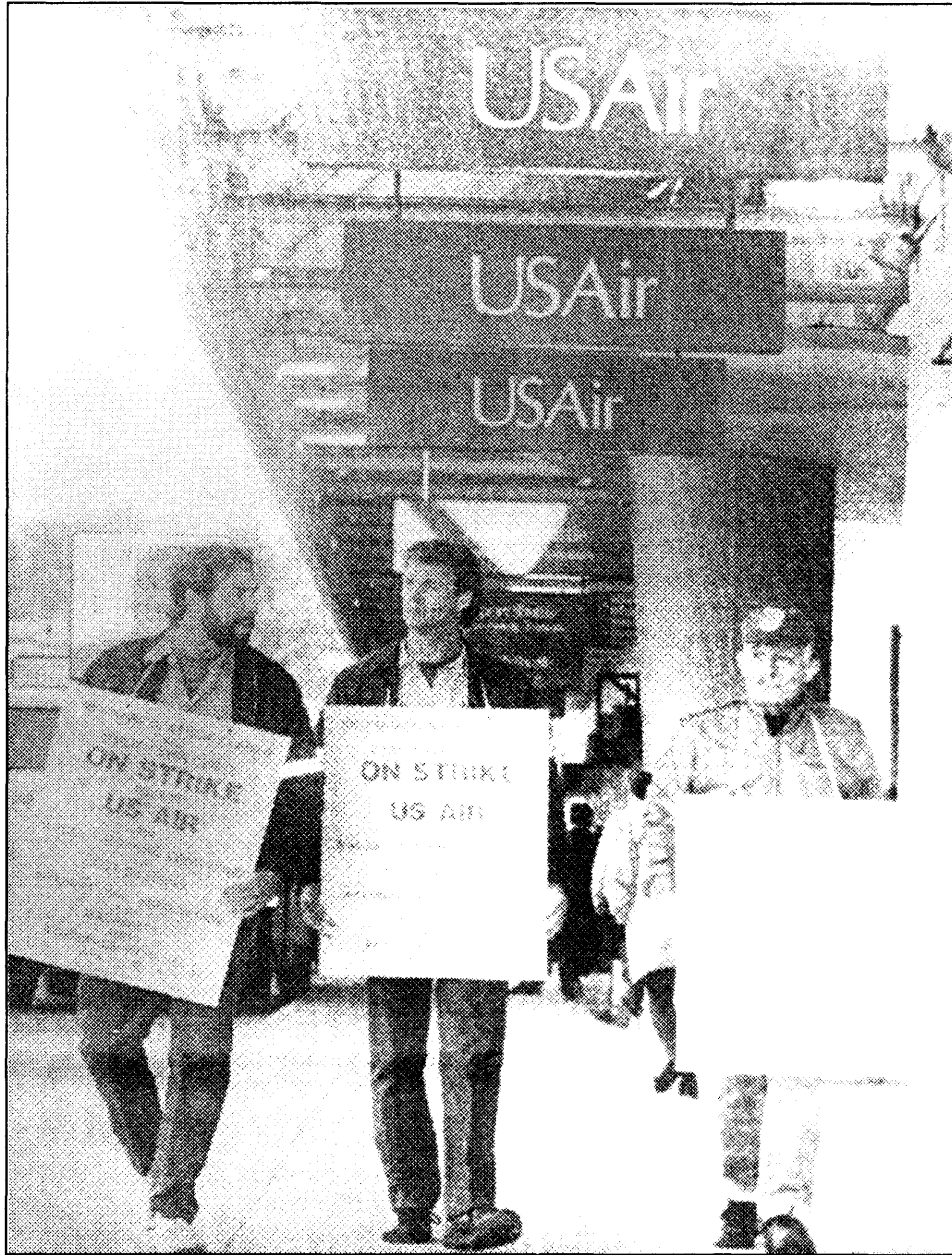
Despite their relative isolation, as well as a virtual blackout of coverage in the capitalist press, the strikers still put on an effective fight. The company itself claimed to be operating 60 percent of its flights, a figure which the union and a number of eyewitnesses said was inflated, and which included planes that were virtually empty or were in transit to maintenance facilities.

During the week the strike lasted, USAir lost between \$45-50 million. The strikers also received significant solidarity at the picket lines from other airline workers, especially employees of United and Northwest Airlines.

The main thing benefitting the strikers, according to them, was the fact that the company did not expect a strike; so USAir was unprepared.

No "replacement" scabs had been hired, as has been the pattern in recent years. This forced management as well as non-union employees to fill in for striking workers, stretching operations thin. This unpreparedness on the part of the company helped to offset the weak position of

USAir strike: Another example of a defeat snatched from the jaws of victory



"While these strikes have at times managed to blunt employer attacks, they have not been able to avoid concessions of some sort being made. The workers' standard of living thus continues to erode."

the strikers, who more than likely would have been defeated by a determined union-busting effort.

Within days of the outbreak of the strike, a tentative agreement was reached between the company and the IAM leadership, who began demobilizing their membership before the ratification vote had even taken place.

The new agreement was approved by the strikers on Oct. 11. It is virtually identical to the contract offer previously rejected.

The 8 percent wage cut has become a three-and-a-half percent wage cut. The employees will still have to pay for some health insurance costs. Some mechanics' work will be done by ramp workers, though the company is supposedly obligated to guarantee that no mechanic jobs will be lost as a result. New cleaners are to be hired at a salary of \$7.17 per hour, a third lower than the previous salary.

Union officials defended the deal as exchanging wage, benefit, and work-rule concessions for job security, and as being necessary to ensure the survival of the company. In the process, real sacrifices are being made by the workers in exchange for vague and ultimately illusory promises of job protection.

The USAir strike fits into the pattern of recent strikes in this country: The Daily News, Safeway, Caterpillar, national rail strikes, Philadelphia municipal workers, and series of rolling strikes at General Motors are the principal examples.

Overall, we are seeing a growing willingness among workers to fight back against company and government attempts at takebacks. But while these strikes have at times managed to blunt employer attacks, they have not been able to avoid concessions of some sort being made. The workers' standard of living is thus continuing to erode.

What has been lacking is a fighting leadership that matches the militancy and the will to win repeatedly demonstrated by the rank and file. And until this crisis of leadership is resolved in favor of the ranks, labor will continue to lose too many fights unnecessarily. ■

... IAM convention

(continued from preceding page)

defeats. The Democrats cannot represent us and the employers at the same time because our interests are in conflict with the bosses.

"For example, our wages can only go up at the expense of profits and vice versa. The Democrats are funded by big business. Their primary function is to defend corporate interests. Look at what happened in rail in April of '91 when all but seven in Congress voted to end the strike without the right to vote on the contract. With friends like that, we don't need enemies.

"The Democrats and Republicans agree on the basics. Workers should suffer cuts in living standards and jobs, not the boss. Rather than continuing to back the employer-sponsored politicians, we need to break with the Democrats and Republicans and form our own party, a labor party based on the unions and democratically controlled by the members.

"How would a labor party deal with the question of free trade? Well, we wouldn't

pose the question of being for or against it, rather we would advocate transforming society into one that puts people and jobs ahead of profits so that if the employers wanted to pack up and leave, we would say you can go, but your assets, plants and jobs stay.

"We need a fight-back policy. A fight-back policy would organize massive strike support rallies and put tens of thousands of people on the picket lines. That's what we should be doing at US Air. That's what we advocate.

"We need a policy that puts the rich on the defensive, not us. And with that kind of policy, we think it's the only one that can inspire our ranks so that we can move into the 21st century with our own party seeking to put the government into the hands of those who work for a living and out of the hands of the people who own for a living.

"I'll conclude with this. John L. Lewis's most famous phrase and comment was, 'The Lord helps those that help themselves.' And if we don't start helping ourselves, mobilizing our ranks to put up a fight to win, we'll never win...."

Leumer received a very warm round of

applause.

Another 565 delegate, Don Bechler, rose to support the resolution and stated: "The purpose behind this resolution is to say that we have to lead ourselves. No one else is going to do it...."

"When push comes to shove, he [Clinton] makes fundamentally pro-business decisions. And until we decide to bust out and get ourselves off the bottom of the totem pole and organize ourselves to present our own agenda for America, we'll continue to be on the bottom, and we'll continue to bleed."

Obstacle of bureaucracy

Although many delegates were lined up at the microphone to speak, the question was called and a voice vote was taken. The advocates of a labor party received, I estimate, between 15 and 20 percent of the vote. It was a very good showing given that the convention had endorsed Clinton several days earlier.

Many delegates commented that they agreed with what Leumer said and indicated that the resolution might have passed if the executive council's Clinton-Gore resolution had not been presented earlier.

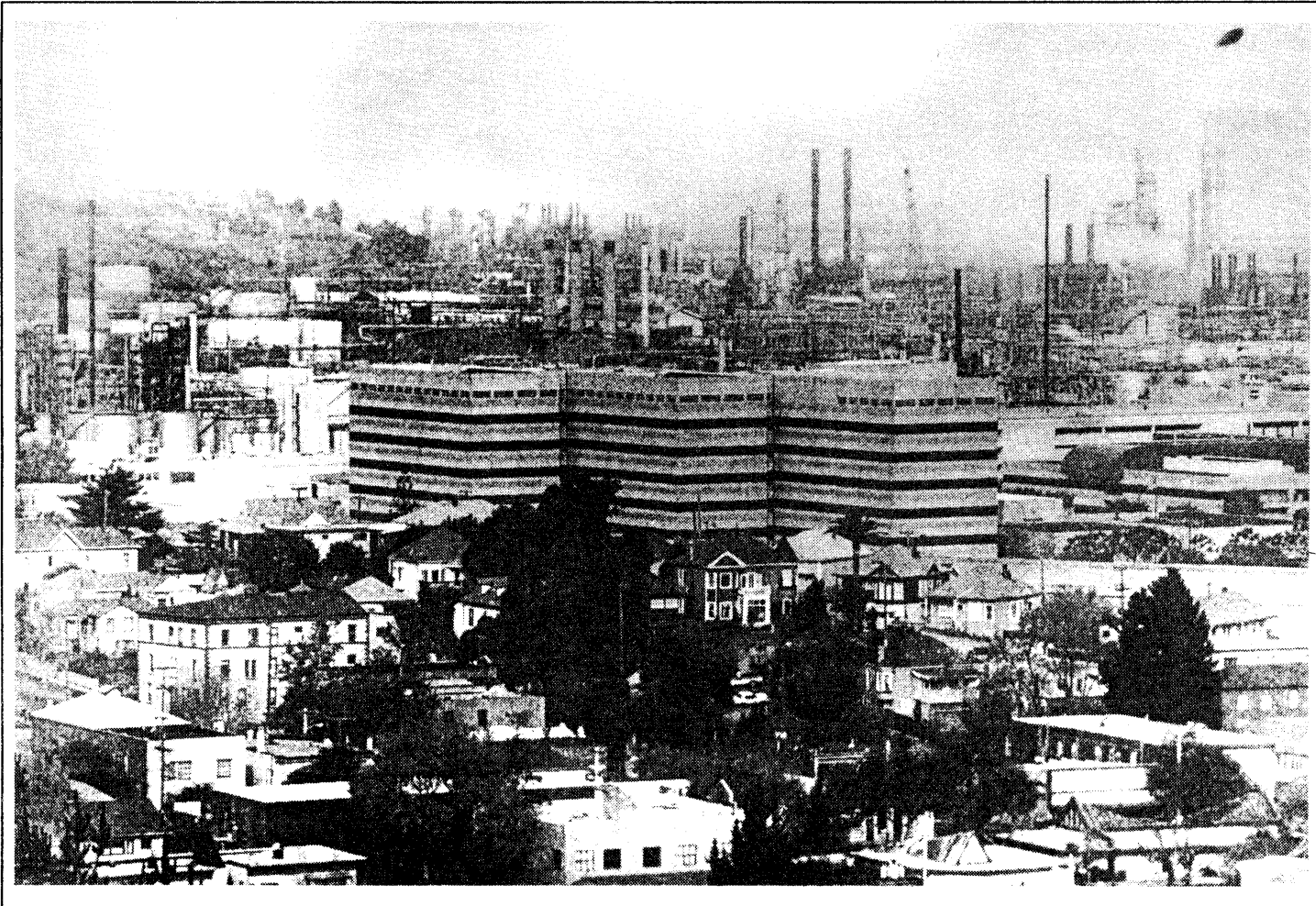
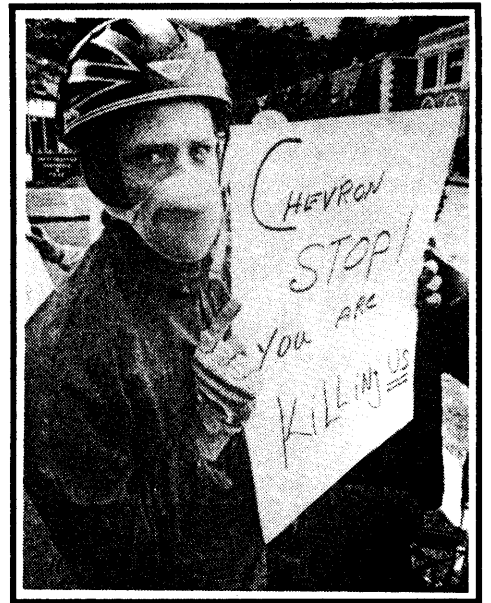
The support that Local 565's labor party resolution received strongly indicated that the only thing standing in the way of altering the relationship of forces in favor of the workers is the trade-union bureaucracy and its policy of subordinating working people's interests to labor's phony friends.

Just before the end of the convention I asked Leumer what he thought should be done next?

He said: "A long-term perspective is needed in the labor movement by those seeking a fightback policy. I'm not about to stop pushing for a policy that prepares us for what lies ahead—that is, ever-bigger attacks by the bosses and their political representatives in both parties of big business.

"If the unions are to fulfill their function of defending workers' interests they must mobilize the membership and labor's allies for independent political action based on class struggle methods. I'm confident that the dead-end policy of the current union officialdom will be replaced by a new generation of fighters. The vast majority of workers, I'm sure, will stand with the fighters." ■

Environmental crises: What are the sources; who are the victims?



Chevron Refinery in Richmond, Calif., generates hundreds of thousands of pounds of toxic air contaminants.

By ROSE CANARES

(Part two of a series)

Following World War II, U.S. industrial expansion brought with it a vast increase in the generation of industrial wastes. Pollutants from smokestacks and effluent from outfall pipes were discharged, unchecked, in growing amounts into the environment.

The Cuyahoga River in Ohio, for example, contained so much oily waste that it caught fire. Thousands of new synthetic organic chemicals were introduced into the market place.

Episodes of damage to health and environment gave birth to the environmental movement. Examples were the Kepone pesticide tragedy at Hopewell, Va; contamination of the Hudson River by PCBs; and threats of stratospheric ozone depletion from fluorocarbon emissions.

Contamination of soil and groundwater by irresponsible hazardous waste-disposal practices was dramatized at Love Canal in Niagara Falls, N.Y.; at the infamous "Valley of the Drums" site in Kentucky; and at hundreds of other abandoned waste sites around the country. At Times Beach, Mo., scores of inhabitants had to abandon their homes due to the discovery of dioxin contamination in nearby roads after a flooding of the Meramec River.

A landmark United Nations Conference on the Environment took place at Stockholm in 1972. Reports were circulated predicting that industrial growth would come up against planetary limits. If world-wide production were not curbed soon, a global ecological collapse would occur in the mid-21st century.

Biggest polluter? The military

As we read reports and statistics on pollution, it is important to bear a few things in mind. First, the biggest polluter on the earth is probably the war industry. This includes the military bases themselves as well as all of the

"...any social crisis or disaster is bound to be fought and resolved within a class context. The environmental crisis will be no exception."

military contractors. Virtually every military base in the United States is a Superfund site. This means that they are among the 1200 or more most dangerously polluted sites in the country, which require long-term restoration.

The reason is because when you're in the destruction business, you have to store and use huge quantities of toxic chemicals. And since the destruction business implies a complete disregard for health and environment, the military has long employed practices like hosing down equipment with volatile organic solvents. Tons of these carcinogens have made their way into soil and groundwater, and pose a threat for generations to come.

Now, with many bases potentially slated for closure, who will pay for the cleanup? These hot-potatoes are being unloaded onto cities and counties, who undoubtedly will be hard-pressed to pay for remediation.

An example, in the San Francisco Bay Area, is Hunters Point, a Superfund site which the Defense Department wants to lease to the city. This is to say nothing of Moffitt Field, which will be tossed to NASA; or the Presidio, which will be unloaded onto the Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

It is also important to remember that the military industry serves as a conduit for money to flow from workers' wages in the form of taxes, to highly profitable contractors—truly an example of welfare for the rich.

These contractors own facilities that are on the Superfund list of hazardous

waste sites. The 10 largest military contractors alone have been cited for Superfund liability 221 times. These world-class corporate polluters include the likes of Lockheed, Boeing, Northrup, Raytheon, General Electric, Westinghouse, McDonnell Douglas, and Aerojet General Corp.

Bailouts and cover-ups

Recently, after Lockheed negotiated a multi-million dollar settlement with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to cleanup one of their sites, a scandal surfaced. It was discovered that the DoD had agreed to reimburse Lockheed for their costs before the negotiations had even begun.

A similar bailout of AeroJet General, in Rancho Cordova, Calif., was reported. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, Aerojet's internal documents showed "that the company for 23 years poured toxic chemicals into unlined settling ponds at the rocket engine plant. The runoff, laced with such chemicals as trichloroethylene and ammonium perchlorate, percolated into underground water and made its way into nearby drinking water wells and the American River...The chemicals penetrated the site so thoroughly that fumes coming from the soil killed a plumber working in a trench near the settling ponds in 1957."

The Wall Street Journal article documents how Aerojet tried to cover their tracks—and their costs:

"Aerojet's ground-water tests indicated the pollution was spreading, but the company didn't report the findings to the

[California Regional Water Control] Board for years...When the cleanup bills for Rancho Cordova began coming in, Aerojet passed them on to the Dept. of Defense. In 1990, the Pentagon approved initial payments of \$36.5 million for cleaning the site. The company has filed a claim for an additional \$13 million...and it will request still more as cleanup costs rise."

A pattern emerged. It was revealed that DoD had indemnified their contractors, and was quietly reimbursing all of them, out of public tax dollars, for environmental cleanup costs. This policy of DoD would make the federal government a key underwriter of cleanups that are supposed to be financed by the polluters themselves.

The magnitude of the payout could exceed \$1 billion, according to the General Accounting Office as reported in the *Los Angeles Times*. Once again, workers wages in the form of tax dollars are bailing out the large corporations.

There is another point to bear in mind when discussing the environmental crisis: For more than half of the world, the environmental crisis is not only a long-term struggle to save the planet for future generations, but a short-term struggle for survival now.

Contamination of food and water supplies, dangerous as it is, pales in significance for the poorest of the earth, who have limited access to them in the first place.

Over 500 million people are hungry, with 40 million dying of hunger and related diseases every year. Over 1.3 billion have no reliable source of clean drinking water and 23 million die from lack of drinkable water each year. Nearly 2.3 billion live without proper sanitation, and 40 million die from curable diseases each year; 1.7 billion live without a regular supply of electricity, etc.

Are we all in the same boat?

A third very important point is to debunk the myth that "we are all in the same boat together" when it comes to environmental crises.

The rulers and their media attempt to present the environmental crisis as an undifferentiated "human" crisis, affecting us all, owners and workers, equally.

Anyone who believes this would do well to remember the lesson of the sinking Titanic. Here, the question of which passengers would get into the lifeboats was decisively resolved: 75 percent of first-class passengers survived, and the same percentage of third-class passengers drowned.

In fact, any social crisis or disaster is bound to be fought and resolved within a class context. The environmental crisis will be no exception.

The Club of Rome, an international policy research group, published landmark reports on the environment in 1972 and 1974.

I already mentioned the earlier report, which predicted that ecological catastrophe would be worldwide. But the 1974 report took a closer look and indicated the opposite. It differentiated developed capitalist regions from exploited regions. It concluded that the richest

countries, unlike the poorer ones, would forestall collapse by spending money to correct their most acute environmental problems.

The report predicted that the first region in the world to experience ecological collapse would be South-East Asia, including India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. As a result, some of these countries would experience massive famines around the year 2025. How has

were atrocities committed by two governments. They are the products of years of neglect."

Environmental racism

What about here in the U.S.? Are rich and poor alike "in the same boat"? Environmentalists are increasingly documenting the uneven distribution of health risk by race, and have dubbed this phenomenon "Environmental Racism."

You remember who Chevron is: they're the "farmers" down the road in the Central Valley, benefiting from the state water projects. [See October 1992 issue of *Socialist Action*.]

Furthermore, these goliaths of profit-making have not wasted their stockholders earnings on extra safety precautions. Since November 1991, there have been eight accidents at the Chevron refinery alone.

extremely hazardous because if they are accidentally released they pose an immediate danger to the life and health of workers and nearby residents.

Sitting on a time bomb

Twelve of the hazardous chemicals in use in Richmond are more deadly than methyl isocyanate (MIC), the chemical released by Union Carbide in Bhopal, India, which killed nearly 3000 people and injured tens of thousands more. The risk of earthquakes in the Bay Area compounds the threat and the immensity of the danger to local residents.

Similar scenarios to the one in Richmond appear in other California communities, like South Central Los Angeles, East Los Angeles, Kettleman City, Westmoreland and Bakersfield. These are all lower income areas with a high percentage of Black or Hispanic residents who have been involved in public protests against pollution.

While it is commendable that environmental activists have pointed out the unequal risk that minorities bear, they could take another step forward in agitating around the problem by positioning it in context.

Being at higher risk due to environmental hazards is an injury added to many other injuries. Environmental racism is only one part of an overall system of racism. Capitalism has long required and benefited from vast armies of superexploited workers such as racial minorities.

Unequal access to jobs has brought poverty and inequitable access to housing. This is why so many minorities are forced to live in more dangerous, though no less costly areas.

Only by linking environmental justice to economic justice can we adequately explain the problem and its solution. Unfortunately, neither environmental nor economic justice are attainable under capitalism.

Victimizing farmworkers

Another risk from toxic chemical usage that is borne disproportionately by minority workers is due to pesticides.

The farmworkers in the United States have long been protesting against the use of pesticides on food crops. They have spoken out on this issue as a workers' issue, and one that especially effects their children.

Growers routinely ignore chemical warnings by sending farmworkers into fields too soon after spraying. In some areas, the workers are even in the fields while they are being sprayed.

In a 1989 tragedy, scores of farmworkers were hospitalized after being sent into a Florida cauliflower field right after it was sprayed. Because the workers toil long hours for low wages, women often work in the fields straight through their pregnancies. Many of these pesticides, which are readily absorbed through the skin, are also absorbed through the placenta as well.

The greedy practices of the growers, in pursuit of ever more profits regardless of health and safety, has resulted in illnesses and cancers for farmworkers, and birth defects among their children.

The government has offered protection—not to the farmworkers, many of whom are undocumented and disenfranchised—but to the growers, through "benign" neglect. A very modest "right to know" type of pesticide regulation languished within EPA for 12 years before it was finally passed just recently.

So we are not all "in the same boat" when it comes to suffering the consequences of hazardous waste and environmental damage. The crises are largely caused by the naked pursuit of profit by the capitalists. They have not burdened themselves with the expense of caring for human health and the environment.

The risks, the damage, and the consequences, are borne disproportionately by workers, with the poorest and most oppressed suffering the most. ■

(To be continued)



Richmond, Calif., residents marching on Chevron during March 14, 1992, protest.

this prediction of environmental disparity been borne out in practice?

U.S. corporations put their most dangerously polluting industries in less developed countries where local capitalists and governments administer few environmental restraints. These governments often enforce submission to corporate interests in a brutal fashion.

A good example is the relocation of almost 2000 American factories to Mexico. Here they exploit Mexican labor, mainly young women, and then re-export assembled goods to the U.S. without paying taxes. These *maquiladores* are highly profitable, being based on the twin conditions of low wages and lack of environmental regulation.

Domingo Gonzalez is a labor organizer and grass-roots activist who works for the Coalition for Justice in the *Maquiladores*. In an interview in *Image* magazine, he said that, "what we have here are American corporations that come and want to pay low wages and not spend money on infrastructure that protects the environment."

The city of Matamoros has 93 of these *maquiladores*, employing 36,000 workers. Because conditions are crowded, with no running water, sewage facilities, or paved roads, Matamoros has been termed "a virtual cesspool" by the American Medical Association. Huge quantities of toxics are released to the environment, (rivers, land, and air) as part of daily business.

In the last few years in this region, on both sides of the border, there has also been a notably higher number of anencephalic births. This means babies born without brains who die within a few days. Despite an inconclusive study by the state and federal government, environmentalists are understandably suspicious and fearful of the health effects of the toxics spewing into their environment for the sake of American profits.

Dr. Margaret Diaz, an occupational health specialist in Brownsville, Texas, who first noticed the cluster of anencephalic births, concludes that "these

"Each year, Richmond-area industry generates 800,000 pounds of toxic air contaminants; nearly 18,000 pounds of toxic pollutants in waste water; and about 179,000 tons of hazardous waste."

In 1987, a study by the United Church of Christ found that hazardous waste sites (like landfills and incinerators) were located in minority communities; that is communities with a large percentage of Black and Hispanic residents. The report found that three out of five Black and Hispanic Americans lived in communities with properties contaminated by hazardous wastes.

A graphic example is the community of Richmond in the San Francisco Bay Area. A report by Citizens For A Better Environment looked at the immediate periphery of an industrial area where 350 facilities handle at least 210 different hazardous chemicals.

They found that the area is made up of neighborhoods that are 72-94 percent Black. In some neighborhoods, there are also large numbers of Hispanics. And in this area, 20 to 58 percent of families live below the official poverty line.

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The largest industrial polluters include: the Chevron oil refinery, the Chevron pesticide plant, the Chevron fertilizer plant, the Chevron Research center, and many other chemical manufacturers and petrochemical processors.

The most recent accident was on June 23, 1992. A toxic plume of smoke was released because a new boiler water pump was installed without being fully tested.

Despite the fact that Chevron promised community groups that they would increase safety inspections, they have refused to pay for an independent health and safety inspector demanded by the community. They have also refused nearly 8000 claims by Richmond residents complaining of breathing difficulties, vomiting, and skin rashes.

This accident occurred only one day after the Rhone-Poulenc Chemical Co. in nearby Martinez spilled 80,000 gallons of sulphuric acid, setting off a fire that killed one worker and critically injured another.

(As the result of a just-concluded Cal OSHA investigation of the fatal fire, Rhone-Poulenc was fined \$560,000 for numerous violations of worker safety regulations. The proposed fine, which may be appealed by the company, is the largest levy ever imposed in California history.)

According to the same report by Citizens for a Better Environment, between 39 and 94 million pounds of extremely hazardous substances are in storage at any given time in the Richmond area. These chemicals are classified as

New stage for the anti-Stalinist movements in the ex-USSR



Russian officer at pro-Communist Party demonstration in Moscow. The old-line CP has made a bloc with national chauvinists.

By GERRY FOLEY

Socialist Action correspondent Gerry Foley has just returned from a six-week visit to the ex-Soviet Union and Poland. Beginning with this issue of *Socialist Action*, we will be publishing a series of articles based on Foley's impressions and observations of the new situation in Eastern Europe. In this issue, Foley analyzes the break-up and contradictions of the various popular fronts that were formed to oppose the Stalinist hierarchy.

The first elections in the Baltic states since the breakup of the USSR seemed to have opposite results. On Oct. 25, in Lithuania, the Democratic Party of Labor, the successor of the "national" wing of the Lithuanian Communist Party (and the model for CP successor parties in the other Baltic countries), won a smashing victory over Sajudis, the national-democratic front that won independence for Lithuania.

The face-lifted Stalinists got over 44 percent of the vote, and should be able to form a government in which they will be the dominant partner. Sajudis leader Vytautas Landsbergis reportedly announced that his organization will go into opposition.

This is the first time in Eastern Europe that an anti-Stalinist movement has been ousted from power electorally by the successor organization of a Communist Party.

In the Sept. 20 vote in Estonia, on the other hand, a coalition of ideologically rightwing anti-Communist parties emerged as the winners.

The Isamaa [Fatherland] won 30 out of a hundred seats in the Estonian parliament. The Popular Front (Rahvarinne), which had been the principal political force in the struggle against the ruling CP, got only 12 percent of the popular vote and 15 seats in the parliament. The party of the big factory managers, "Safe Home" (Kindel Kodu), got

18 seats, the second largest bloc.

In reality, both the Estonian and Lithuanian elections reflect the same process, the erosion and breakup of the national fronts that led mass movements against Stalinist rule in a number of republics of the ex-USSR.

Anti-totalitarian fronts break up

The old anti-Stalinist front in Russia itself, Democratic Russia, is experiencing a similar process, but it is not so well developed because the Russian front was never a mass movement on a national scale, and it has never held a parliamentary or electoral majority. Although it is Yeltsin's principal political supporter, it does not control him, nor he it.

Effects of the same process can be seen in the Ukrainian and Byelorussian national fronts, respectively Rukh and Adradzhenie, which have remained minority movements unable to break the continuity of Stalinist rule in their countries.

These movements, however, still have a strong unifying focus: Opposition to Stalinist governments still in power. They are concentrating on campaigns to force referendums to get new elections.

However, the fact that the old party bosses have taken over an important part of the program of the national fronts means that the fronts' old program of all-inclusive unity for national independence is no longer sufficient for mobilizing opposition to the rule of the bureaucracy.

In general, the anti-totalitarian fronts, which in past years have dominated the struggle against the rule of the bureaucracy, are now breaking up, like the system that they were organized to fight.

The repression of all dissent under the old system determined the all-inclusive form of opposition to it—fronts of all dissenters—united on the basis of a general democratic program. The fundamental task

of these fronts has now been accomplished. They opened up the way for the development of politics, for political debate, and the practical political experience of different views.

In the case of Democratic Russia, the first open break came when the majority of the movement opposed Yeltsin's attempt to remove the independent government of Chechen-Ingushetia, an autonomous republic within the Russian Federation.

A reactionary wing split away to ally itself with neo-Stalinists in an ultra-chauvinist opposition to the Yeltsin government, which has become known as the Red-Brown alliance, that is, a bloc of Stalinists and fascistic forces.

The process of the breakdown of the national fronts in the other republics is more complex than that of Democratic Russia.

These former groups, which existed for years as mass political movements, defeated the local Communist parties on a national or at least regional scale, and took responsibility for national or regional governments. They were based on the national intelligentsias of their respective republics. It was the support of these intelligentsias that enabled the fronts to become mass

movements overnight. They were able to address a mass audience immediately through the organs of the writers' and other creative workers' unions.

The national intelligentsias split

The national intelligentsias were a privileged layer; in a general sense they were part of the bureaucracy. But they represented a contradiction within it, inasmuch as they had a vested interest in opposing "Russification," which was the policy of the bureaucracy as a whole.

The national intelligentsias represented a heritage of the national policy of the revolutionary Soviet state that Stalinism had been unable to liquidate; that is, the right of every nationality to have a national culture and therefore the essential apparatus of a national culture, a press and a literature in the local language.

Once Gorbachev's reform policy and the divisions in the bureaucracy over it weakened Moscow's grip, the national intelligentsias launched a battle for the national rights of the nations on which they depended.

Thus, in a number of republics, totalitarian rule was shattered, and a relatively free political debate became possible. In the process, the national intelligentsias themselves split, with most of the intellectuals recoiling from the radicalization of the fronts or being marginalized by their increasing programmatic emptiness.

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A visceral rejection of everything associated with "socialism" is still general. But no one is hopeful about the market reforms. It is common to hear people condemning the Bolshevik revolution and everything it represented, and in the next breath say that their country is now sinking into the situation of the third world, where there will be a tiny minority of rich and a great majority suffering total impoverishment.

Everyone expects things to get worse, and many talk about the possibility of social explosions in the winter or early spring.

The present situation obviously cannot last. It has all the hallmarks of a galloping crisis, including wild inflation and extreme distortions in the relationship of prices.

In most places, two economies exist side by side—a hard-currency (or dollar) and one in the local currency. The two economies are like two different worlds, one developed and the other underdeveloped. Coffee and tea exist in one, but not in the other. In one you have a nice choice of sweaters for \$150 dollars each; in the other it is hard to even find socks.

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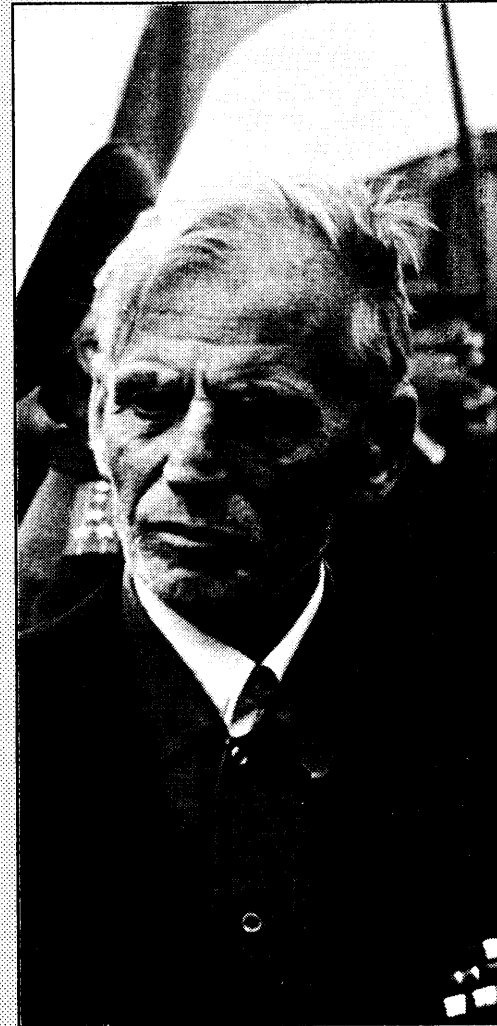
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In the first place, it has become clear that a democratic press cannot develop and become consolidated in a spontaneous way, or be assured by a free market.

Difficulty establishing press

It is notable that none of the fronts have been able to develop a press of their own that could deepen and consolidate their political influence over society.

The Ukrainian front, Rukh, seeks to lead a society of over 50 million people. In the Ukrainian capital of Kiev, the only paper that more or less directly represents it, *Narodna Hazeta* is only a monthly, and the Rukh leaders acknowledge that they are not happy with it.

In the case of Lithuania, two editorial teams, one after the other, ran away with papers started by Sajudis. The first, the daily *Respublika* has turned into a sensational muck-raking journal, with no political principles. The second, the weekly *Atgimimis*, was taken over by a small group of intellectuals.

In Estonia, the front was never able to develop a newspaper of its own. From the outset, the development of a free press has been obstructed and distorted by an inflow of emigré money. The Estonians are a tiny nationality, about a million people, with a relatively large diaspora. (About 100,000 people fled the country during World War II).

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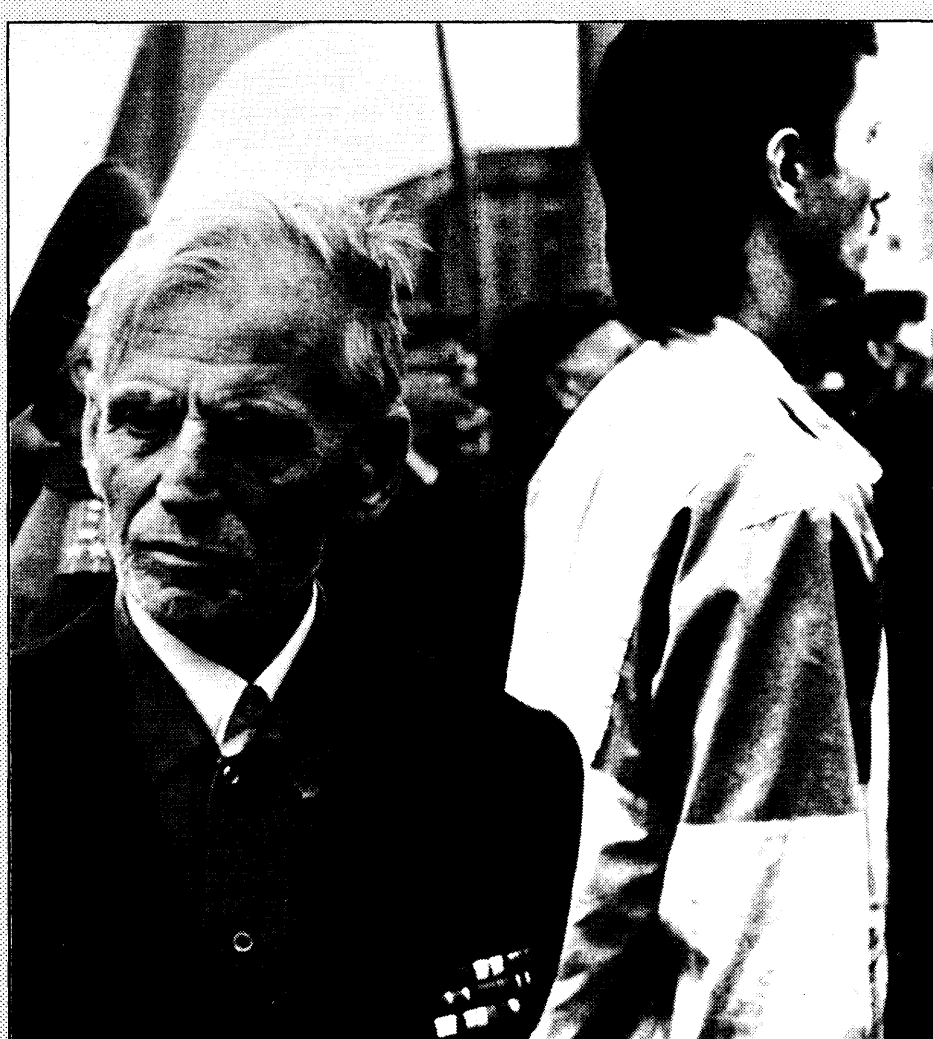
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such crowds, too, there are always a few inebriates who get fights going.

Everywhere in the ex-USSR—from the Baltics to Moscow—there are crowds pushing and shoving desperately. You can't look at any item for sale except over the shoulders of other people. The telephone lines are so overcrowded that you have to spend hours continually redialing to call another city, or often within the same city.

However, the crowds do not look undernourished or inadequately dressed. Although drabber than in the West, they do not at all resemble the masses in Third World cities.



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Thus, the emigration has had a much more visible effect in Estonia than in the other post-Soviet countries. Estonia's

most prestigious daily, *Postimees*, is firmly controlled by the rightwing. Most of the financing for the election campaign that ended Sept. 20 came from abroad.

The Latvian front (Latvian Tautas Frontas—LTF) had the most substantial and lively paper of any of the national-democratic organizations, the weekly *Atmoda*. This newspaper, however, was stolen by its editor and turned into a commercial paper. The Latvian front had to begin a new series of *Atmoda* on a much more modest scale.

The first issue of the new *Atmoda* that I read when I arrived in Latvia in late September consisted mainly of a long article by the president of the Latvian People's Front, Romualdas Razukas.

It lamented the growing abyss between a small section of the population that was enriching itself as a result of privatization and the great majority that was becoming impoverished. Razukas wrote that the incumbent government, supposedly made up of supporters of the front, actually represented the "liberal nomenklatura," and that the front considered itself in opposition to the government.

Fronts and parties in Latvia

I discovered that most of the deputies elected to the Latvian Supreme Soviet under the front's auspices had happily gone their own way once in the legislature, and they fell into representing the general interests of the bureaucracy.

Half the delegation of the harder-line nationalist group, the Latvian Independence Movement (Latvian Neatkarības Kustība—LNKK), an historic rival of the front, went

the same way. For the upcoming elections, the LTF and the LNKK are in a bloc, and the latter seems to be the dominant partner.

The major difference in the past was that the LNKK rejected the legitimacy of the local Supreme Soviet and called for restoration of the pre-1940 Latvian republic, based on those who lived in it at the time and their descendants. That is, it denied citizenship rights to most of the Russian-speaking people, who make up about half or more of the population today.

The LTF, on the other hand, had always appealed to the Russian-speakers, as well as Latvians, on the basis of its democratic program—and it succeeded in winning over a large number of them. But today the LTF has adopted the line of the LNKK.

What program? No program?

The LTF leader Razukas is one of the most lucid of the Baltic Front leaders. He

controlling any deputies they elect than the LTF.

At the same time, he said that the Social Democratic party had no programmatic differences with the Latvian Democratic Party of Labor, which models itself after its electorally-successful Lithuanian counterpart. The question was purely one of "people." The DPL was made up of former or present bureaucrats, while the Social Democratic party membership were "new people."

Differentiations in Lithuania

In Lithuania, I heard a similar story, curiously enough, from the office manager of the League of Liberals, an ideologically right-wing organization whose headquarters was plastered with Bush-Quayle election posters.

Of course, he thought there was certainly an ideological difference between his group and the local Democratic Party of Labor,

"Despite the rejection of the concept of a disciplined programmatic party because of the reaction against the Communist Party and everything associated with it, the need for such a party is becoming more acute."

understands that the front form is outdated. His answer to this problem is that the LTF has to transform itself into a party.

In order to combine the party form with the breadth of the front, he thinks that the new party should be a "centrist" one. But what he means by this seems to be that the party should not have any definite program but simply reflect the prevailing political climate.

Thus, he told me that when the front was founded it had a Leninist program, then a Social Democratic one, and now a right-wing free-enterpriser program, since a "right wind" is blowing internationally.

It is possible that the LTF-LNKK bloc will succeed electorally at least for a time, so long as the Russian-speaking population is disenfranchised.

However, the LTF is losing its political role. At the same time, it is abandoning important territory to the new Social Democratic Party, which is in the process of trying to define itself programmatically.

The LTF, on the other hand, consciously rejects all aspects of a movement. It aims to be a purely parliamentary party, with a disciplined parliamentary group.

The opposition trade-union movement that developed in the orbit of the LTF, the Workers' Union, now looks to the Social Democratic Party. It is composed equally of Russian and Latvian workers, and is opposed to discrimination against Russians.

The women's movement that grew up in the shadow of the LTF is also going its own way. This organization, the League of Women, began as an anti-militarist movement of mothers of soldiers protesting the treatment of their sons in the Soviet army. It then appealed to mothers in other parts of the USSR to protest against their sons being sent to repress the Latvians. As the movement developed, its leaders became interested in the economic problems of women.

The leader of the League of Women, Anita Stankevica, told me that women had been hardest hit by the economic changes, in particular the closing of daycare centers and higher prices. She wanted to build a united, independent women's movement to fight to defend the interests of women. The Social Democratic Party also supports the idea of an independent women's movement.

Thus, the Latvian Social Democratic Party seems to be playing a significant role in the realignment of political forces.

However, the party itself does not have a left program. It is not programmatically distinct from the local successor of the Communist Party, the Latvian Democratic Party of Labor.

The chair of the Latvian Workers' Union told me that he did not expect the Social Democrats to have any more success in

since the stock in trade of the League of Liberals is its consistent "free market orientation." But the Liberal leader said that the actual base of his organization was the same as that of the Lithuanian Democratic Party of Labor, that is, "intellectuals and entrepreneurs."

The difference supposedly was that the liberal entrepreneurs were doing business with their own money and not the people's. But that distinction is probably pretty fluid. Few in a Stalinist society could accumulate any money without some sort of "in" with the bureaucracy.

Since the opposition fronts—and the new parties that have grown out of them—do not have a different program from the old CP bureaucracy—that is, they both support capitalist restoration—the distinction between them tends to come down to personnel.

In Lithuania, Sajudis sought unsuccessfully to exclude former CP bureaucrats by law from certain positions. The proposal was called the "De-Sovietization Law."

A leader of the Green Party, which works in the framework of Sajudis, and who supported the measure, told me that she considered that the vote on this bill was the dividing line between "left" and "right."

But despite the hostility of the population to the bureaucracy, it is unlikely that such proposals are very popular. First of all, a considerable part of the population—perhaps one-quarter—had ties of one kind or another with the bureaucracy.

Imposing legal disabilities on old CP bureaucrats and their accomplices would require a very wide ranging witch-hunt. The majority of the population would gain nothing from it.

In the case of most of the fronts, people talk about radicalization. The intellectual layer that originally formed their backbone is withdrawing—generally going into new parties that, to one degree or another, favor compromise with the bureaucracy.

The ranks of the front, on the other hand, are more impatient for a real change from bureaucratic rule.

That applies to the Lithuanian front. But the radicalization of the fronts has not led to a new program. Sajudis's fundamental problem is that its program—privatization—is clearly benefitting the old bureaucracy, not its mass base.

The New York Times attributed Sajudis's electoral defeat to "factionalism," and political divisions within it. But Sajudis has remained less politically differentiated than the other fronts. It went into the elections still showing aspects of a coalition of parties.

The old division that existed between the radical nationalists in Kaunas and the moderates in Vilnius had disappeared. Rather

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such crowds, too, there are always a few inebriated who get fights going.

Everywhere in the ex-USSR—from the Baltics to Moscow—there are crowds pushing and shoving desperately. You can't look at any item for sale except over the shoulders of other people. The telephone lines are so overcrowded that you have to spend hours continually redialing to call another city, or often within the same city.

However, the crowds do not look undernourished or inadequately dressed. Although drabber than in the West, they do not at all resemble the masses in Third World cities.

There are beggars, mostly elderly people or invalids. But you do not see a significant marginal population, like the homeless in American cities. What is striking is not so much poverty as distortions caused by shortsighted or corrupt economic bosses.

While the shortages could not be easily overcome, there must have been a better way to organize distribution. It was shortsighted not to give a higher priority to develop mass transport in the cities and develop reliable communication grids.

The arbitrariness of the officials created an attitude that maximized frustrations even when there were not absolute shortages. For example, a middle-aged working-class woman in Minsk told me of the bitterness she felt because she was forced to stand in line 24 hours, outdoors in winter weather, to get a tiny allowance of foreign currency so that she could visit a relative in Poland. "Those Bolsheviks want to humiliate you, to destroy your human dignity."

In some places, the distribution has improved. Growth of small business is represented by a proliferation of kiosks around railway stations, whose owners sell only a few items, or the "resellers," who sell books at many times the prices of the bookstores, or by bazaars dominated by traveling groups of Azerbaijanis.

Working people are discontented, but for the moment intimidated by fear of unemployment. But this fear is a result of accepting the perspective of privatization, the right of bosses to fire workers for the sake of "profitability."

In Poland, where privatization began earlier, the illusions in the market have faded more than in the ex-USSR.

In the latest wave of strikes, Polish workers were much less impressed by the needs of any potential bosses. They are turning to militant union leaders who have built an alternative—Solidarnosc '80—to the pro-government unions. This is a union that stands on the program of Solidarnosc before it was taken over by procapitalist elements.

Poland set the example for the mass movements against Stalinism. It is still showing workers in the ex-USSR their future. ■



Poland: Capitalist restoration in crisis as conditions worsen

By JAN SYLWESTROWICZ

(Part one of a two-part series)

The project of capitalist restoration in Poland, under way for three years now, finds itself in deep crisis. And no quick or easy solution is in sight.

As the events of the summer and early autumn showed, none of the forces leading capitalist restoration in Poland, nor their backers in the West, have any solution that could slow down, let alone reverse, the rapid growth of economic, social, and political instability.

The "solution" being mentioned more and more often—today suggested openly by the most dogmatic of Poland's pro-capitalist ruling elite, and echoed by certain Western "advisers"—is that of a dictatorial clamp down.

Various leaders of the parties in Poland's governmental coalition have declared recently that the "key to stability" is "capitalism, not democracy" (these include the leader of the Liberal-Democratic Congress and L. Balcerowicz, the author of the program of capitalist reform begun in January 1990 and known as the "Balcerowicz Plan"). This is quite logical.

As events in other countries of Eastern Europe are demonstrating—particularly in the former republics of the USSR—the popular discontent engendered by capitalist restoration means that this project cannot indefinitely be pursued along parallel lines with democratic freedoms.

At some point a choice has to be made. Contrary to what the mass of the people were led to believe, capitalism and democracy, in the crisis-torn countries of Eastern Europe, are simply incompatible.

For the time being, however, the "dictatorial option" is not yet in the cards in Poland. As a whole, the ruling elite is not yet ready for this, nor does it have the necessary, if limited, mass base for a move towards dictatorship, given that the Polish armed forces are far from reliable at the present.

In addition, the most influential body of opinion among Western leaders believes this would be a total disaster for the "victory propaganda" put out by the West since the fall of the Stalinist regimes. They still hope this can be avoided; but in the long term it is difficult to see how.

Poland's economic crisis

The most recent acceleration of the crisis of the capitalist project in Poland stems from at least three factors.

First, is the deepening of the economic recession and the effect this is having on working people.

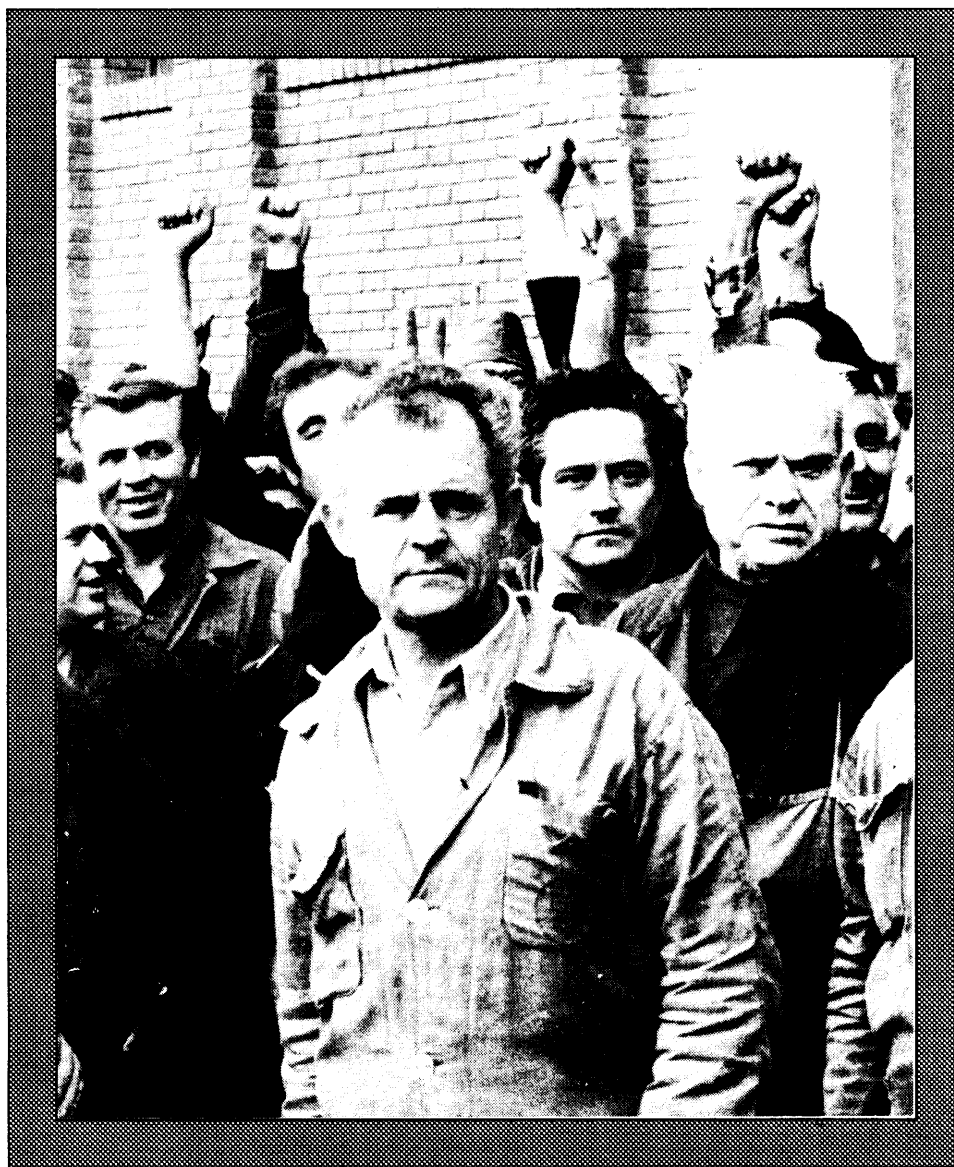
Three years into the capitalist reform project, production continues to decline, particularly in engineering, mining, aerospace and textiles. In all these sectors output is at least 25-40 percent lower than two years ago. In some sectors (particularly textiles and machine tools) the fall has been 50-60 percent. Estimates of agricultural output foresee a drop of 20 percent this year alone.

Unemployment continues to rise. The official jobless figure is now well over 2,500,000, although the real total is probably nearer three million. The qualifications for receiving unemployment benefits have been tightened.

Real purchasing power slumped dramatically over the summer, as prices began to soar once again. The price of a number of basic food articles, including butter and sugar, rose 100-200 percent.

The government followed this in September and October with announcements of higher prices for transport, housing, fuels, and electricity—which were compounded by further cutbacks in social services.

While these cutbacks and price increases have been going on for some time,



"Just how long the present coalition can last depends most of all on the third factor that has made itself felt over the summer: The return of the Polish working class to center stage."

the government's axe is now hitting the bone: A special bill is being submitted to Parliament that will deprive Poles of the free public health services they have enjoyed since the end of World War II. The cost of medicines will rise dramatically, and patients will now face hospital bills for "food and accommodation" (although 43 percent of wages are deducted at the source for pensions and health care).

While medical treatment itself is to remain free of charge, this does not include non-essential "operations" and much dentistry work. Already, many hospitals have begun charging an "unofficial" fee for all services (as indeed have medical schools and nursery schools).

Mounting anger of Polish citizens

Secondly, the popular anger at the state of the economy and falling living standards is increasingly being linked not only to the policies of this or that government (Poland currently has its fifth prime minister since the reforms began), but to the policy of capitalist restoration in general.

This began to be dramatically apparent over the summer, as the country was rocked by a series of scandals involving corporate bankruptcy, corruption and criminal conduct.

While the previous scandals of this sort concerned representatives of the old Stalinist bureaucracy, quickly denounced by government officials for "continuing their old, corrupt ways," the major players in this summer's scandals were some of the best known of Poland's new capitalist

entrepreneurs, generally held up as models of what capitalist success can bring.

One by one, a string of the very largest of the new private capitalist companies announced "liquidity problems" or just declared bankruptcy outright. In almost every case, allegations of financial malpractice were also raised, and frequently the workers at the firms involved rushed into strike action to occupy the firms' plants and buildings, taking them "hostage" to ensure payment of overdue salaries.

Two examples are illustrative:

In September, the largest Polish private financial institution, the "Westa" insurance company, declared bankruptcy. Large-scale misdealings are being charged.

This company was touted as a shining example of the "new Poland," and had become the second largest insurance house in the country.

The owner, one of the richest men in Poland, is also chair of the Association of Insurance Brokers and a right-wing senator.

Also in September, a new and ironic development took place in the longest-running of Poland's corporate scandals, that of the Art-B Corp.

This outfit was set up by three unknown entrepreneurs around three years ago—most probably with Stalinist cash. Through a combination of bluff, lies, and crude financial scams, they amassed a huge fortune—no one knows how much—before fleeing to Israel, a country with which Poland has no extradition treaty.

An indication of their mode of opera-

tion, is that some months before, one of these people flew to Israel and purchased a controlling share in the largest Israeli petroleum corporation for cash, which he produced from suitcases he had brought with him!

Fox guarding the chickenhouse

When the whole affair became known, the government appointed the wealthiest private businessman in Poland, one A. Gawronik, to oversee the "rescue" of the company. Gawronik performed this function for a month, being forced to resign after a public outcry when it was discovered that the government was paying him more for each day of his services than the average wage in Poland for a whole year.

It now transpires that the first thing Gawronik did when he arrived at the Art-B offices was to steal for himself part of the loot the previous crooks had been unable to take with them.

He "appropriated" several Mercedes Benz cars, antiques, and a collection of paintings that includes ones by Renoir and Picasso. The authorities were forced to arrest Gawronik, the millionaire they themselves had hand-picked for the job, at the end of September.

These are only two examples out of very many. As these "facts of life" about how the new capitalism is to operate become known, popular anger mounts at the criminal politicians and "entrepreneurs" who are robbing the economy for all they can while working-class living standards plummet.

The day after the arrest of Gawronik, the editorial in Warsaw's largest and staunchly pro-capitalist newspaper was forced to admit that "after three years, the perspective of moving to capitalism stands discredited."

The same editorial demanded the government "do something" before it was too late. But what can the government do? It can't change the way capitalism works (nor does it want to). It can't halt the recession while adhering to the economic policy dictated by the IMF and the World Bank.

Yet blind obedience to the IMF and World Bank is the only thing that holds the current government coalition together (alongside their fear of early elections, a demand that is heard increasingly often, but one that would undoubtedly result in a heavy defeat for all the parties most openly identified with the pro-capitalist governments in power since 1989).

Emergence of the working class

Just how long the present coalition can last depends most of all on the third factor which has made itself felt over the summer: The return of the Polish working class to center stage.

While sporadic industrial action has accompanied the capitalist reform programs since the beginning, with a substantial strike wave at the start of this year, the last three to four months have seen the most widespread and combative strikes in Poland since the initial Solidarity period of 1980-81. Work stopped for various lengths of time at many of the country's largest and best known industrial plants, with particularly important strikes:

- In the coal mines of Upper Silesia (a month-long strike including occupations of mines and official buildings, hunger strikes and the use of flying pickets)

- In the copper mines of the Lubin Basin in Lower Silesia (a two-month strike with occupations)

- At the giant FSM car factory in southern Poland (workforce: 23,000), where a two-month occupation strike, accompanied by a rotating hunger strike was especially significant in that a majority share in this factory has just been bought by the Italian carmaker Fiat (the largest foreign investment in Poland since capitalist restoration began).

In fact, the original demand of the workers here was for pay parity with their Italian counterparts.

Other industries particularly affected by strikes included engineering and aerospace. At the same time, farmers held regular protests because of the failure of

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than internal political differences, the Lithuanian front's problem was a lack of politics, combined with radical rhetoric. It would not be surprising if many Lithuanian voters thought that the Democratic Party of Labor was more reasonable and more coherent.

Ukraine and Byelorussia

In the case of the Ukrainian front, Rukh, the intellectuals even claim that it is becoming "lumpenized," that is, that lower-class elements are becoming predominant.

Here the differentiation is clearer. Despite their different programs, all the parties that have emerged from the front favor a more conciliatory attitude to the Ukrainian Stalinist-continuationist Kravchuk government.

Most of the new parties give token support at least to Rukh's referendum campaign for new elections. But Yuri Badzio, leader of the Democratic Party, says quite frankly that new elections could "put more conservatives in the Supreme Soviet," because of the negative effects of the privatization policies on the living standards of the masses.

In Byelorussia, political differentiation is least developed. The Byelorussian national democratic movement, although enjoying mass support in certain areas, was relatively the weakest.

The Stalinist-continuationist Shukevich regime is considered the most stable in the ex-USSR, along with the Nazarbaev government in Kazakhstan. One reason is the historical weakness of Byelorussian national consciousness. Another is the fact that there has been less deterioration in economic conditions there than elsewhere.

Byelorussians see disaster all around them, and thus tend at the moment to want to hunker down and not rock the boat. The situation in this republic at present is a good example of the advantage of capitalist restoration for the bureaucracy.

The workers know that layoffs are coming because of the market reforms. Therefore, they are afraid to protest against the government's policies, lest they put themselves in the front line to be fired. The Byelorussian front condemns the effects of the privatization policy, but does not offer a general alternative to it.

Even here, new parties have begun to form and play a role. The prime example is the Social Democratic party. It has become the predominant force in the journal of the national intelligentsia, *Literatura i Mastatsva*, which was the front's sounding board.

But a major difference it has with the front is the question of the old unions.

The Social Democrats think that it is possible to bloc with the former official unions on specific trade-union and labor issues, while the front rejects them totally as bureaucratic organizations. The chiefs of the new party say that they are seeking more flexible policies than the front, whose positions, they say, tend to be "populist."

A search for signposts

In the confusion and decay that exist in the countries of the ex-USSR and Eastern Europe, intellectuals in particular are seeking ideas.

An appearance of consistency can be important to the masses as well, until they see that certain politically consistent poli-



Carl Finamore

cies have consistently bad results.

At the moment, the "consistent" advocates of a market economy can have the advantage in some circumstances. Since all the major political forces agree that that is the only way to move, shouldn't it be better to bite the bullet and get the pain over with? That attitude probably played a role in the Estonian elections, which were a victory for the right wing.

The components of the coalition that won the Sept. 20 elections were essentially small groups of intellectuals with hard "free enterprise" ideas, who display more intellectual consistency than realism.

Despite Isamaa's impressive electoral victory, however, none of the political leaders I spoke to in Estonia, either of the left or right, think that the new government is likely to survive more than a few months.

For one thing, Isamaa promises to return all confiscated property to its original owners. That would be an impossible economic burden on the country, and a provocation for the local people, who are much poorer than the emigres.

Secondly, the Estonian ultra-nationalists simply do not have the strength to exclude the Russians from the political life of the country and drive them out.

The Estonian national movement cannot, moreover, afford to alienate public opinion in Russia itself. Given the smallness of Estonia and the fact that the West's fundamental interest is in Russia, the Estonians can only maintain their independence with the support of democratic public opinion in their giant neighbor.

The Estonian front leaders understand these realities, and their opposition to an

movements. The national democratic movement in Estonia led the way for the others, and the political process there is still setting the pace.

Despite the discrediting of everything "left" and socialist by the experience of Stalinism, left-right programmatic differences are inevitably emerging.

Despite the rejection of the concept of a disciplined programmatic party because of the reaction against the Communist Party and everything associated with it, the need for such a party is becoming more acute.

Without such a party, these societies cannot really be changed. The old elites will continue to dominate, even if in a new form and with the addition of new elements.

The bureaucracy has shown that it can live with privatization. What it cannot live with is a thorough-going democratization of the society and the economy, which is what the front programs originally called for. But that is impossible without a party with a program and the means for organizing the working people—the great majority of the society—in their own interest.

For example, the Latvian front's attempt to become more coherent by transforming itself into a purely parliamentary party is exactly the wrong response to the problem of controlling the deputies it elects.

History has shown that only an active membership, active in day-to-day struggles, with a clear program for social change, can prevent elected representatives of mass organizations from succumbing to parliamentary "clubbiness" and joining the established elites.

Although some of the demands of the national fronts have been achieved, at least for the moment, the national liberation and development of the peoples they represent is still far from being accomplished.

In fact, the gains of these nations are being more and more put at risk by the slow return of the Yeltsin government to openly Russian chauvinist positions. This is exemplified by Yeltsin's recent decision to suspend troop withdrawals from the Baltics and to use the presence of Russian troops to put political pressures on the local governments.

Now, the advance toward national liberation can only be resumed by a party capable of integrating a perspective of national liberation into a program of fundamental democratization of social relations—workers' democracy.

Such a program also has to be an international one. It has to be able to appeal to the majority in the oppressor nations as well. This is the next stage for the political process set in motion by the rise of the mass national movements. ■

...Poland

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the government to guarantee minimum procurement prices for their produce. One of their favorite tactics was to block the major inter-city highways with agricultural vehicles.

The balance sheet of these strikes is rather mixed. While some may be considered at least partial victories, others ended in defeat. Nevertheless, total defeat was avoided; more importantly, they have begun a dual process of shopfloor radicalization and union recomposition which could have far-reaching impact.

To understand the latter process, we must first bear in mind that the Polish union movement today is sorely split. The three major federations are NSZZ Solidarity (the "official" wing of Solidarity), Solidarity-'80 (a smaller and more radical, although largely apolitical and populist split-off), and the OPZZ (heir to the Stalinist official union movement).

There are also numerous smaller, sectoral unions; some with their own traditions (most notably the teachers' union); others, the result of parts of the OPZZ leaving the federation to cut their links with anything associated with the previous Stalinist regime.

The official Solidarity movement, while formally declaring that it is no longer prepared to play the role of a "pro-

TECTIVE umbrella" for the government, in fact acted largely as a scab union during the summer strikes, sabotaging industrial action and demanding the right to negotiate separately and independently of the strike committees.

In the mines of both Upper and Lower Silesia, this conduct led to Solidarity officials being physically ejected from the mines by striking militants and to rank-and-file members burning Solidarity membership cards.

Dynamic role of Solidarity-'80

The leading role in the most important strikes was played by activists from Solidarity-'80, who nevertheless remained open to collaboration with other unions.

The strike committees which led the struggles were in all cases composed of members of Solidarity-'80 and unorganized workers, and most often, also included members of the OPZZ or other unions (including official Solidarity rank and filers).

At the level of individual plants, the fact that such broad and democratic cross-union cooperation was possible marked a large advance. However, this cooperation was also taken further in mid-July at the initiative of the strike committees from the copper mines and the FSM car plant.

A national negotiations and strike committee was formed, bringing together Solidarity-'80, the OPZZ, several sectoral unions (chiefly from the mines) and the most militant of the farmers' organizations, "Samobrona" ("Self-Defense").

The fact that Solidarity-'80 had set up a "united front" with the OPZZ was greeted with astonishment by the government and dismay by its media.

While this new national body has so far mainly blustered (threatening a general strike at an unspecified date) it nonetheless represents an important step in the right direction.

On the 12th anniversary of the strikes which resulted in the establishment of the original Solidarity movement in 1980, the committee published a list of 21 demands (the original Solidarity was set up on the basis of 21 demands put forward by the Gdansk shipyard workers). This list of demands is exceptionally interesting. Aside from items related to pay, working conditions, defense of social services, employment, etc., the unions are also demanding the defense of state industry and a halt to privatization.

This new unity of the Polish union movement is marred only by the absence of official Solidarity itself. However, as Maciej Guz, a leader of Solidarity-'80 at the FSO car plant in Warsaw bluntly points out in the October issue of *Dalej!* (newspaper of the Polish Fourth Internationalists):

"The wave of strikes which swept Poland from June until the end of August was the result of everything which has built up over the last three years.

"In other words, the marketization of the Polish economy and the attempt to introduce capitalism, in its most blood-sucking, primitive 19th century form, but

also of the frustration of working people and their loss of confidence in the ethos of Solidarity ... Solidarity has lost its authority due to its inactivity, its sectarian politics and above all, because it is unable to resolve the dilemma, 'Who should we be defending? The ruling elites who came out of Solidarity, or working people?'"

As Guz points out, there are exceptions, notably in the Warsaw region of Solidarity, which has a leadership which is far more radical than the national office.

Nevertheless, many people, blaming Solidarity for the economic catastrophe and the proliferation of corruption, today speak of it as "the new Communist Party."

Whether the rank and file of Solidarity can force their leaders to fall into line with the rest of the Polish labor movement remains to be seen.

Yet whatever happens on this score, the stage is definitely being set for the recomposition and reappearance of the organized Polish working class.

A crucial factor in this context is not only the trade-union movement, but most importantly: the political representation of the workers—working-class political parties. What are the perspectives for the rebirth of workers' class politics in Poland? ■

Part two of this two-part article will deal with the tasks facing the Trotskyists.

By DAVE HUDSON

British miners march against pit closures

LONDON—British politics have experienced a remarkable change. From a depressing situation of relative acquiescence and passivity by the working class in the face of mass unemployment and the deepening recession, and with strikes at a 100-year low, we have seen a sudden tide of popular protest over the government's coal mine closure program.

Demonstrations of 200,000 people and more have been organized in solidarity with the miners and the tens of thousands of other workers who will be laid off in related industries.

The demonstrations and rallies were the largest of their kind for more than a decade, with hundreds of banners representing unions and local Labour Party units.

It was a resounding answer to those who thought the labor movement was nearly dead.

The degree of popular support was unprecedented in recent years. And it was fully reflected in the capitalist media, which for once publicized and even encouraged the developing outcry against the callous closure policy.

Very broad forces, from the organized working class, professional layers—and even small-business people crushed by the recession and high interest rates—joined local demonstrations. Even sectors of the ruling class hostile to government policy spoke out against the pit closures.

The government decision to close 31 pits (half the industry) had acted as a catalyst for the growing anger of the population at the effects of a catastrophic recession. The issue now is whether the Tory

government will survive, for the threat to close the pits has acted as a catalyst against all the social ills that have plagued Britain for over a decade: Mass unemployment, a deepening economic slump, a draconian hospital closure program in London, and growing opposition to the Maastricht Treaty on European unification.

It could result in a defeat in parliament, and force a general election. But even if

the government manages to survive this crisis, which would be the result of a pathetic response to the crisis by the Labour Party and the trade-union leaders, the marches and rallies of the miners and the support campaign that is now being constructed could well prove to be an important watershed.

So far, the labor movement mobilizations against the Tory government have been limited to mass protest actions. The

strategy of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), led by Arthur Scargill, has concentrated on building on the groundswell of popular support. But this clearly has limitations.

Already many of the Tory MPs, who originally supported the miners, have defected back to the government. This began after the government was forced to make a partial retreat and instituted a moratorium on closing 21 of the pits. The government also promised to initiate a "far-reaching" review of the coal industry and the nation's energy requirements.

So, while the issue of the miners has deepened the crisis of the Tories, and is creating a new mood that is regenerating confidence among the masses, the key contrast with the 1970s workers' upsurge is the lack of significant industrial strike action.

The erosion of rank-and-file organization, the consolidation of the so-called "new realist" right wing of the Labour movement, and the Tory anti-union laws, have made strike action much more difficult. However, mass industrial action, including from the miners themselves, is necessary in order to roll back the closure policy and defeat the government.

The NUM leadership will need to escalate the campaign, call a national day of solidarity action—including solidarity strike actions—to take the potential of the movement forward and not dissipate the anger.

For example, some workers in construction, health, teaching, and the power industry did take strike action in support of the first demonstrations of 100,000 in Hyde Park, London.

The possibilities are clearly there, if a lead is given. ■



Chinese garment workers demand back wages

By BARBARA PUTNAM

SAN FRANCISCO—Twelve Chinese women garment workers in the San Francisco Bay Area are fighting for back wages of more than \$15,000 owed by Lucky Sewing Co. of Oakland, a former Jessica McClintock sweat-shop contractor. Lucky Sewing Co. went belly up in January, and there was no protection for these workers.

You would never know by looking at Jessica McClintock's frilly, romantic attire—which hangs in expensive shops like Macy's—anything about the lives of the workers who make these garments.

Has Jessica McClintock, a successful, rich clothing designer ever tried to feed a family on starvation wages by working seven days a week, 10 hours a day? Is she even aware of the dust-filled shops and back-breaking labor of the women garment workers—that is, when they are being paid?

The hidden lives of immigrant Chinese garment workers are coming into the light of day, exposing the reality behind the fiercely competitive garment industry. These workers often accept their lot in silence. But now they are raising their

voices and fighting for their rights.

Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA), the organization championing the cause of the Chinese workers, has been actively defending them in the Bay Area through demonstrations and rallies focused on pressuring Jessica McClintock Inc. to pay up—since Lucky Sewing is defunct.

Although manufacturers are not legally responsible for a contractor's default on wages, organizers believe that manufacturers such as McClintock should be bound by labor rights and human rights to provide decent wages and conditions for workers.

Too often, they say, contractors in the fiercely competitive garment business bid for jobs for less than it takes to provide even a minimum wage or enough to pay the workers for overtime hours.

Young Shin, AIWA's executive director says, "We are saying garment manufacturers should be responsible to the women who sew their products." (*Oakland Tribune*, Oct. 14, 1992).

As an example, Shin explains that for every \$120 dress, labor costs equal \$10, material \$15, and contractors \$10. Jessica McClintock thus clears about \$85



Jim West

in pure profit.

On Oct. 13, about 200 protesters marched on the Jessica McClintock Inc. headquarters—chanting, pounding drums, and carrying placards.

They also held a rally on Oct. 20 in San Francisco to launch a national campaign to focus attention on the substandard wages and horrible working conditions suffered by immigrant Chinese women. One sign read, "Hell no, we won't sew!" Another said, "Jessica, our

fingers bleed for you."

At a public forum held at San Francisco State College on Oct. 15, sponsored by the Philippino American Collegiate Endeavor, one of the Chinese workers explained through a translator how hard it is for the seamstresses, who have few marketable skills and face extreme language and cultural barriers, to come forward and face the possibility of being blacklisted in the industry. Their courage is a real inspiration to all workers. ■

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Italian workers refuse to accept new cuts in living standard

By **SERGIO DAMIA**
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As they returned from summer vacations at the beginning of September, Italian workers waged massive protests against the austerity package of the government of Social Democratic premier Amato. The anger of the workers was directed at their own conciliatory leaderships, as well as against the regime. The following article is translated from the Oct. 16, 1992, issue of *La Breche*, the French-language newspaper of the Swiss Socialist Workers Party. It has been edited for space.

Seven million workers took part in regional general strikes. Kicked off by actions in Florence on Sept. 22, and in Milan the following day, they swept almost all regions of the country. Over the last eight days of September, at least a million and a half people came out for rallies.

The bosses and the government were surprised by the high level of combativity and by the spontaneous actions that showed how fed up both young and older workers were.

After experiencing a constant erosion of wages and jobs for years, Italian workers have had to face a ferocious offensive conducted by the bosses and the government in "compliance" with the demands included in the Maastricht Treaty [for European economic union].

In fact, Italy is very far from having met the demands of the Maastricht Treaty for a "convergence" of economic conditions in the Common Market countries. This goes for the rate of inflation and interest rates, and above all, the size of the budget deficit relative to the Gross Domestic Product.

In 1992, the deficit will be on the order of 11 percent of the GDP, while the Common Market goal is 3 percent. The total national debt has reached a total of 107 percent of GDP.

This year, the Italian government will pay out about \$130 billion in interest on this astronomical debt. Such payments account for about 95 percent of the budget deficit. This represents a considerable income for buyers of government bonds, which yield high interest.

The banks, insurance companies, and "professional tax evaders"—who proliferate in Italy among self-employed professionals and industrialists—get rich by holding these government bonds. Foreign investors have also been major buyers of this profitable financial paper, even if the recent devaluation of the Italian currency has made them less attractive.

Tax burden falls on workers

To understand how this growth of the national debt has enriched the privileged at the expense of the wage earners, you have to be aware that in Italy 75 to 80 percent of tax receipts come from wage earners, whose taxes are deducted directly from their paychecks.

The agreement between the trade union confederations, the government, and the employers' associations signed on July 31, the beginning of summer vacations for workers, definitively and completely abolished automatic cost-of-living increases and banned any form of contract negotiations at company or industry level for two years.

By the end of the summer vacations, there was already strong pressure for strikes. And this tension was combined with radical criticism of the union leaderships.

More and more, the workers are seeing that the union leadership is integrated into the state machinery. And the extent to which they share responsibility for the decisions of the government and the bosses is becoming increasingly apparent to workers.

The government destroyed a public health system that was already in bad shape, reduced wages and pensions, raised the retirement age for both men and women, and banned all contract negotia-

tions for public workers. The response was a wave of spontaneous strikes throughout the country.

The reaction of the government and the bosses was an alarmist campaign warning that the national currency would collapse and "the Italian system would go bankrupt," and stressing the danger of "being excluded from Europe" and "thrown onto the other side of the Mediterranean" [that is, reduced to the level of North Africa]. But these threats failed to stop the workers' mobilizations.

The initial response of the three main union confederations—the CGIL (close to the majority of the old Communist Party), the UIL (close to the Social Democrats), and the CISL (close to the Christian Democrats)—was crystal clear. They ruled out any idea of a general strike, despite the scope and severity of the austerity plan.

The workers were getting a clear view of the yawning gulf between their own interests, anxieties, and concerns and the priorities of the union apparatuses.

Spontaneous strikes

At the end of September, strikes and demonstrations started in the cities. Often they were initiated by the more militant union activists. Sometimes they developed quite spontaneously.

The local union leaderships immediately felt the heat. The central leaderships still thought that they could channel the movement by calling for one-day regional strikes and thus avoid a general strike.

The national union leaderships did not want to destabilize the government, which despite its "weak" public support is waging a brutal anti-labor policy.

However, the trade-union leaders' scheme failed in two respects. First of all, the demonstrations in the various regions gained scope and impact in broad layers of the society.

Second, almost everywhere in the big cities where impressive rallies were held, discontent with the trade-union leaders boiled over. The spokespersons of the trade-union apparatuses found themselves unable to speak. They were drowned out by whistles and floods of the fall-harvest vegetables. A determination to organize a general strike took hold everywhere at the end of September.

The paradox of the Italian social and political situation was strikingly displayed. On the one hand, you could see the big squares full of workers, who took advantage of the calls for token strikes issued by the union leaders to come into the streets and express their total distrust of their leadership.

On the other hand, you could see the leaders standing on esplanades, protected by the police and shielded by plexiglass shields from the avalanche of vegetables.

The change in the social climate was best illustrated on Sept. 25 by the massive strike of workers at Fiat in Turin, the first in 10 years. At the demonstration in Turin, in response to the cries of protest coming from the crowd, one of the CGIL secretaries, Cofferrati, denounced "extremists" and called on the workers to leave the area. Only the leaders left. For an hour, 80,000 workers continued to demonstrate there.

Need for new leadership

What happened in Turin highlighted another key contradiction of the social and



Union bureaucrat uses shield to deflect the fall tomato harvest thrown by angry ranks during Oct. 13 strike in Milan.

political situation in Italy: The gap between the readiness to fight back, and the difficulty of building an alternative leadership, an alternative orientation.

The left opposition in the CGIL, "Be a Trade Union," played a part in building the demonstrations. But it did not have the strength and political capacity to fill the vacuum that had been created by the departure of the leaders from the podium.

The Refounded Communist Party, formed by the anti-Eurocommunist minority of the old CP, and including forces such as *Democrazia Proletaria* [a New Left group] and independents, also played a role in building this mobilization.

But there was a still too much of a disparity between the demands expressed by broad sections of the population and the capacity of this political formation to offer an alternative.

In Rome, on Sept. 26, there was a gigantic demonstration of 200,000 retirees, who were especially hard hit by Amato's austerity package.

Feeling extraordinary pressure, the union leaders made the first timid and embarrassed overtures for a general strike. The objective was not so much to mobilize people as to regain control of the situation. By Sept. 29, the wave of demonstrations had reached the cities in southern Italy.

Under the pressure of the movement, the government parties and the PDS started wiggling. For the entire first phase, the CGIL refused to contemplate a general strike. Then, after a stormy debate in its leading bodies, it made a vague proposal for such an action to the other two trade-union confederations.

On Saturday, Oct. 2, the demonstration in Rome of public workers and teachers brought out 150,000 people. At this rally, strong opposition was expressed to the government, as well as a determined desire for a general strike.

On Oct. 3, the assembly of "Be a Trade Union" was held in the traditional bastion

of the Milan workers' movement, Sesto San Giovanni. It was marked by a strong contingent of trade-union activists—about 2000 delegates. The meeting confirmed the determination to organize an opposition to the CGIL leadership, and the immediate task adopted was to build a real general strike.

Ranks force general strike call

On Oct. 3-4, the perspective of a general strike being called by all three trade-union confederations took on more substance. In the following three days, the three confederations called a four-hour general strike for Tuesday, Oct. 13. They excluded the public workers from the call.

The strike platform was vague. It did not go beyond denouncing "austerity," and failed to put forward a demand for the government's resignation. This strike was seen by the trade-union leaders as a means both of regaining control of the movement and making some marginal improvements on Amato's economic program.

The Oct. 13 general strike was a success. *La Stampa*, the daily paper of Fiat boss Agnelli, headlined: "Half of Italy stopped work, but whistles, bolts, and tomatoes disturbed the demonstrations somewhat."

In many regions and among the strikers, a very clear desire to extend the strike to the public sector was expressed. However, the union apparatuses managed to get the division that they wanted between workers in the public sector, where the CGIL has the strongest organization, and workers in industry. Moreover, restricting the action to four hours made it appear only a token strike and not a real general strike.

Participation in the strike was very high. During the day of Oct. 13, we saw a spread of the social mobilization to the most remote cities. On the other hand, in the big regional capitals, participation was less, or no more than in the strike wave at the end of September.

The antagonism of the masses to the union leaders remained a force. There was a general awareness that the strikes were imposed on the union leaderships by the rank and file.

In Milan and Naples, after the official rallies, alternative assemblies were held, which were followed attentively by thousands of workers.

This happened in Milan, where the alternative assembly was called by the

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Rank-and-File Trade-Union Committee at Alfa-Romeo. In Rome, after clashes that occurred on Oct. 2, the unions decided not to call a demonstration. So, the High School Coordinating Committee issued a call that brought out more than 10,000 students.

There were two reasons for the fact that the mobilization in the main cities was a bit smaller than in the previous weeks.

First of all, various politicians used the threat of a governmental crisis to reduce debate in parliament. In this context, many workers wondered what good a demonstration would be if the strike were limited to four hours.

Secondly, while a growing distrust of the union apparatuses was being expressed in the public squares, no credible alternative emerged. And so, a feeling of impotent rage took hold.

[For the weeks following the Oct. 13 strike, meetings of trade-union activists were scheduled that would be a test of the impact the protests made on the union movement.]

Moreover, during the Oct. 13 marches, a slogan began to emerge for a 24-hour general strike with a national demonstration in Rome. There is no doubt that around this demand, like that for a general strike before, the mass movement has begun a tug of war with the trade-union apparatuses. ■

... Free trade vs protectionism

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anti-worker and anti-environmental features.

But most observers see Clinton's pledge only as a sop to limit the embarrassment of his disappointed supporters in the AFL-CIO bureaucracy, who for many years have put all their eggs in the basket of an alliance with protectionist sectors of the American capitalist class. This notoriously chauvinist AFL-CIO policy went under the slogan, "Buy American!"

Tactical options for capitalists

Viewed from a short-term perspective, capitalists whose products are competitive on the world market tend to be for free trade. They are against tariffs and other barriers put in the way of opening up foreign markets for their products (tariffs invite counter-tariffs).

On the other side of the question are the capitalists whose products are not competitive. These capitalists tend to be for tariffs and other ways of blocking (protecting against) the invasion into their home markets of cheaper competing commodities.

Viewed from a longer-term perspective, it can be more complicated because of the possible effect of trade policy on economic conditions in the home market and/or world market as a whole.

Capitalists—both efficient and inefficient manufacturers—might be for one or the other trade policy even if it didn't meet their special immediate needs.

In the current worldwide economic slump, for instance, non-competitive capitalists might favor a free trade policy if they believed it could expand trade and thus give themselves a little more space for their products in an expanded market.

A free trade policy might give these capitalists a little more time to modernize and become more efficient producers, and thus more competitive. Or they might see their best option being to cut their losses, i.e., sell out, and find another arena for investing their capital more profitably.

It's true enough that NAFTA does not serve the interests of American workers. Its only purpose is to improve profits for American capitalists on the world market and to force the least efficient producers (including their own weaker American competitors) out of business—leaving a larger share of the global market to a leaner, and meaner—more competitive—American capitalism.

But it is also true that protectionist trade policies *do not* provide any advantage for U.S. workers. Its purpose is also to improve profits—and like free trade, at the expense of jobs and workers' interests.

U.S. capitalism after World War II

Free trade on the world market had been in the interests of American capitalism for a few decades after World War II because it emerged from the war as the most highly efficient producer in the world market place.

But it was also economically and militarily strong enough to have its cake and eat it, too.

Thus, American capitalism, in the period after World War II, could enjoy the rare luxury of controlling a lion's share of the world market because of its highly competitive productive forces.

At the same time, it kept profits artificially higher in the domestic U.S. economy by selective tariffs designed to minimize competition from a few more efficient foreign manufacturers.

It was not easy for U.S. capitalism's competitors to impose retaliatory tariffs at that time because huge masses of American capital were productively invested inside the competition's domestic economies—and consequently was less affected by the host country's protective tariffs.

Moreover, foreign capitalism was heavily dependent on U.S. military power in the Cold War, as well as on the huge amounts of capital they needed to borrow from the American colossus to revive their own economies.

U.S. capitalism began its shift toward free trade in its domestic economy when measures protecting inefficient U.S. pro-

ducers in the home market began eroding the efficiency of American industry as a whole.

Through deregulation, the American capitalists removed the crutches that kept marginal U.S. enterprises from bankruptcy, which allowed average productivity of surviving American producers to rise and more effectively compete in the world market.

In accord with the objective laws of capitalist economy, this was the only way U.S. capitalism could defend and broaden its share of the world market in the given economic context.

Therefore, in their struggle to become more competitive and maintain as large a share of world markets as possible, free traders today have just as valid (or invalid) a claim to be "defending" American jobs as was claimed for protectionist measures in the previous phase of world economy.

But whether advanced by free traders or

NAFTA must be seen in the larger context of the struggle between the three main capitalist contenders for world economic domination. Viewed from this perspective, each of the three contending free-trade blocs includes within them the element of protectionism, but on a larger scale.

For example, the current trade dispute between the United States and Europe, primarily over French subsidies to agricultural exports, exemplifies how the three *free-trade* regions of the world—dominated by the United States, Germany, and Japan—are also three *protectionist* regions.

The current dispute over Europe's subsidies to selected agricultural and other export-oriented commodities (reducing their export prices and thus underselling U.S. exports) could break down into an old-fashioned trade war—with each bloc, if not each nation, erecting tit-for-tat trade barriers against each other's exports.

This, of course, would do no good for world capitalist economic stability and therefore serves to discourage opposing

their employees on the scrap heap. They feel no shame since they reject the working-class solutions advocated by revolutionary socialists to fight unemployment.

They are convinced that the capitalist class is intrinsically stronger than the working class. They reject a campaign to expand employment by reducing the work-week (with no reduction in pay) because it would reduce the rate of profit, and therefore, because of capitalist opposition, cannot succeed.

This defeatist conception leads inexorably to the conclusion that since workers can't beat the boss class, they have no choice but to join them. That's why the bureaucrats long ago opted only for "solutions" of society's problems that were *acceptable* to the U.S. capitalist class.

This bankrupt policy has led the working class into a decades-long retreat during which there has been a gradually accelerating loss of the ground gained by labor in the course of the great class-struggle upsurges of the 1930s and '40s.

In the light of this historic retreat, it's all too evident that the bureaucratic thesis that capitalists are stronger than workers is a self-fulfilling prophecy. This is because class collaboration *does make* workers weaker and capitalists stronger!

But the history of the class struggle in every country proves the exact opposite. Given a leadership capable of mobilizing the workers independently as a class—in their own class interests—the workers are the stronger class. That was the lesson of the great labor victories of the past.

On "dividing" the enemy

However, in the face of growing mass worker discontent, the class collaborationists must conceal and rationalize their defeatist view of the objective relations between class forces.

The most sophisticated apologists for the labor bureaucracy conceal their subordination to the capitalist class by citing the need to "divide" the class enemy.

They argue: We must take sides with that faction of the bosses (in the case before us, the protectionists, and more generally the Democratic Party) that holds positions allegedly coming closest to those benefiting workers.

Dividing the enemy class is certainly an important consideration. But to illustrate the fallacy of the class collaborationist's interpretation of this tactic, an analogy is appropriate: For those who are opposed to the death penalty, it does no good for the struggle against it if you take sides with the advocates of lethal injection against the advocates of the gas chamber.

That's the real choice we have between opposing capitalist "solutions," including the choice between opposing trade policies.

Most importantly, when labor bureaucrats and their apologists oppose free trade without also opposing protectionism, they give aid and comfort to its anti-worker, chauvinist consequences.

But in the eyes of the top echelons of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy, the demoralization of the working class is the lesser evil (it poses no threat to their dominant position) even if it results in a smaller and weaker union movement. The bureaucracy fears more than anything else an inspired, confident, combative working class. *This*, for them, is the greater evil.

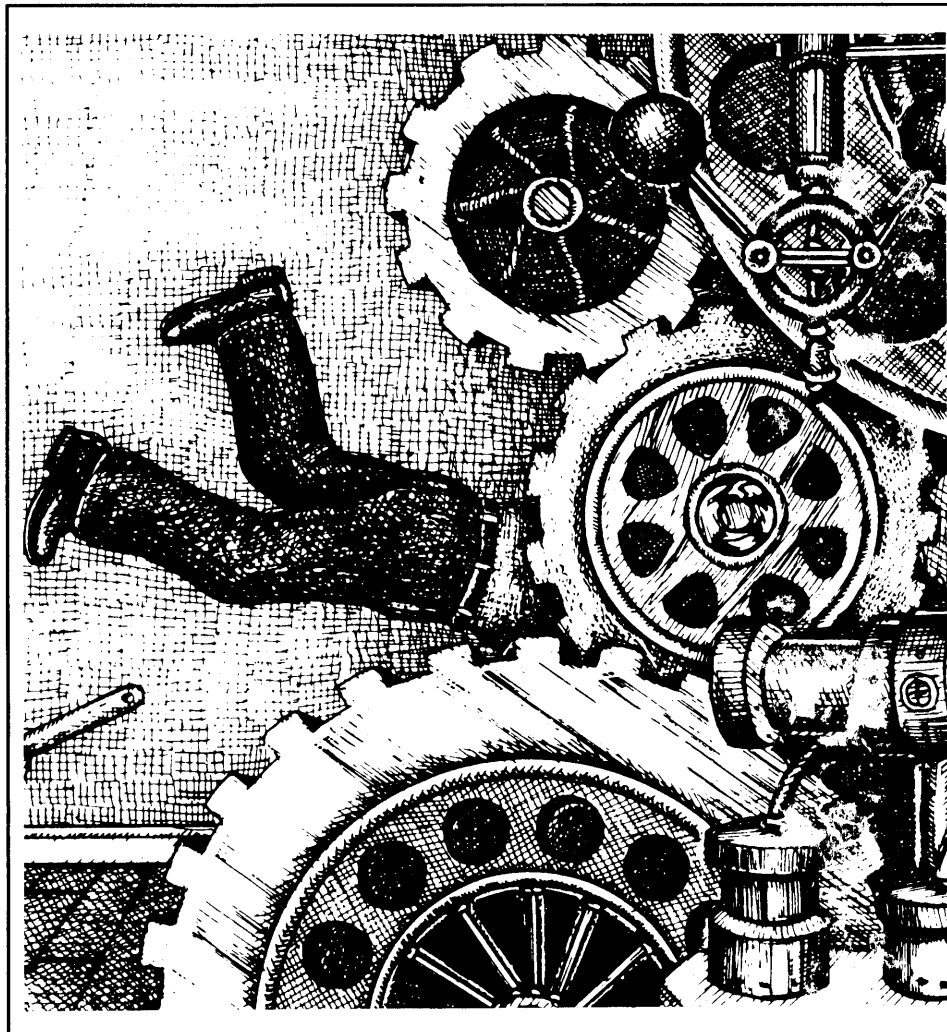
History shows, however, that despite the obstruction of their misleaders, workers will ultimately be forced to explode into defensive action. And once they win even the most modest victory against the boss, they will confidently and readily turn their attention to dealing with the obstructionist union misleadership.

History also teaches that compared to winning a battle against the boss, sweeping the bosses' "labor lieutenants" out of the way will tend to be a relatively easy job of housecleaning.

"Left" apologists for bureaucracy

In recent months many political groups which claim to be socialist, even a couple calling themselves revolutionary, have jumped aboard the labor bureaucracy's protectionist bandwagon.

Up until recently, some of these groups



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protectionists, this argument is *false to the core*. All capitalists are always driven to *eliminate* jobs!

The A B C of capitalism is always for each and every capitalist to vigorously strive to reduce the work force as close to zero as possible, while simultaneously increasing the rate at which commodities are produced—that is, endlessly multiplying the rate of labor productivity, so that an ever-greater quantity of products are produced by an ever-smaller number of workers.

This is the essence of the matter for capitalists. No capitalist has the slightest interest in saving jobs. In fact, one can sum up the nature of capitalist competition as a contest over which capitalist can most quickly reduce the number of workers required to produce the greatest number of goods.

The capitalists who win, survive; while those who lose this never-ending cut-throat competition are driven into bankruptcy. The result is ever-fewer, but ever-bigger, ever-more concentrated and monopolistic giant enterprises.

America vs. Germany and Japan

To see more clearly the hopeless bankruptcy of the AFL-CIO's class collaborationist strategy, we must view from still another angle the complex interaction between the world's competing masses of capital.

trade blocs from going over the brink. But U.S. capitalism, so far unable to get acceptable reductions in European export subsidies, is playing the game of economic brinkmanship by threatening to levy heavy tariffs on wine, cheese, and perfume to force reductions in European export subsidies.

It should be obvious that in this war for markets, victory for one nation is always at the expense of the others. And in the short run, the workers in the victor nation may experience a temporary rise in employment and even other economic benefits. But in the long run, no matter which nation's capitalists win, all workers will lose.

In this light it should be even clearer that there is no *capitalist* solution to deepening unemployment. And at this stage in world history, no matter which trade policy is opted for, there will be fewer jobs as world capitalism enters the latest stage of final decay.

Why bureaucrats want protectionism

The labor bureaucracy long ago made its peace with capitalism and sees itself as a player on the bosses' team.

Their fundamental outlook is simply to subordinate workers' interests to the employers' inalienable "right" to make a profit. As they see it, if the employers cannot make a "reasonable" profit, they have every right to shut down and throw

had kept some distance from the AFL-CIO's protectionist trade position when the latter nakedly supported repressive restrictions against competition from "illegal aliens coming up from south of the border to take Americans' jobs."

Labor Notes, a radical journal published monthly in Detroit by the Labor Education and Research Project, has entered into the front ranks of opposition to NAFTA.

Its Executive Director, Kim Moody, wrote two articles in the journal's October 1992 issue explaining why *Labor Notes* is supporting a campaign of opposition to NAFTA by "labor, farmers and environmentalists."

(Moody previously co-authored with Mary McGinn a *Labor Notes* pamphlet, "Unions and Free Trade—Solidarity vs Competition," published in January 1992.)

Basically, the arguments advanced by *Labor Notes* for its opposition to NAFTA are anchored in the same pro-capitalist premises advanced by the labor bureaucracy and have absolutely nothing in common with international worker solidarity or with an authentic defense of working-class interests.

But *Labor Notes* attempts to make a more convincing case by including a few pages of "leftist" window-dressing. In one of the articles by Kim Moody (*Labor Notes*, Oct. 1992, page 8) he writes:

"Until now, most trucking cargo between the U.S. and Mexico had to be transferred at the border. Mexican drivers could not deliver in the U.S. and U.S. drivers could deliver only to certain plants in a narrow zone along the border. ...Over 10 years all such national restrictions ... in any of the three countries will be eliminated. Mexican firms, paying only a fraction of the wages earned by U.S. drivers, will be able to deliver and pick up international cargo anywhere in the U.S. and Canada at the end of a three-phase process. ..." [Emphasis added]

This kind of chauvinist argument is central to the protectionist thesis and has no redeeming virtues. It derives directly from and is designed to further the viewpoint that U.S. trucking bosses and trucking workers have a community of interest in keeping out their Mexican counterparts.

There is absolutely no good reason for linking the counterposed interests of trucking bosses and truck drivers.

However, *Labor Notes* seeks to cover its left flank with a page in its pamphlet headlined, "How Restricting Immigration Hurts All Workers." This one-page box correctly lays out the arguments against any restrictions on undocumented workers. Such laws they correctly state, are equally harmful to all workers.

Good. But in no way does this undo the damage of the *Labor Notes* argument (quoted above) warning against NAFTA's allowing low-paid Mexican truckdrivers to work north of the border and thus undermine U.S. wages! This contradicts its lip-service to international class solidarity.

The best traditions of the workers' movement points to a diametrically opposite approach to the question of how to deal with the problem of superexploitative wage levels imposed on Mexican and other workers.

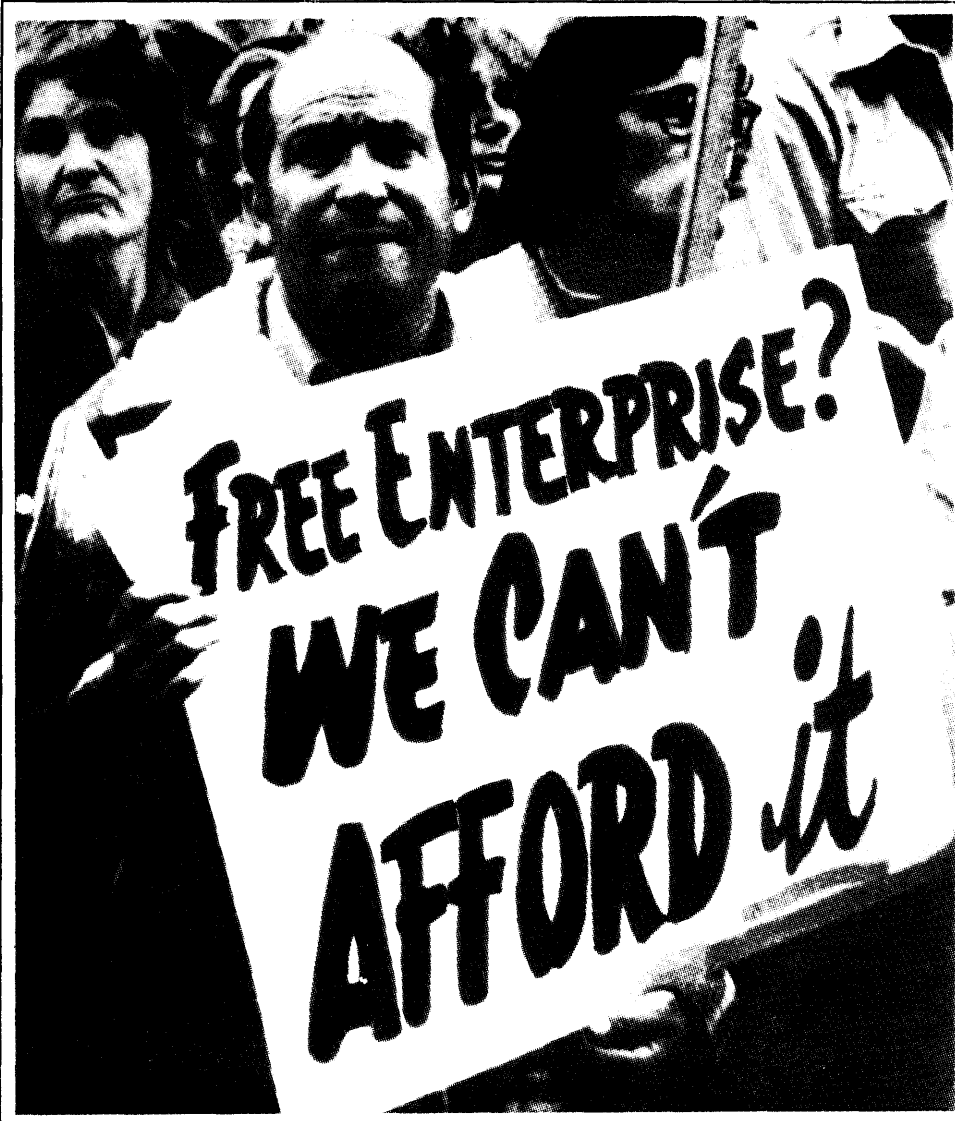
Organize the unorganized!

If these workers are unorganized, help them organize themselves into unions. In any case, help them fight to raise their wages to the level of American truckers.

This approach has a logic that ultimately links North American workers in a common struggle that can raise living standards for all. Moreover, it helps set into motion the broader movement—beyond North America—toward international working-class solidarity.

Worse yet, by demanding that all three capitalist North American governments reject NAFTA, *Labor Notes* puts in first place the status quo, which bars workers from south of the border from freely entering and working in the U.S. And even worse, this policy places confidence in capitalist governments (providing they reject NAFTA) as the main force for "defending" American workers' rights.

Furthermore, U.S. truckdrivers, orga-



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nized in one of this country's strongest unions, the Teamsters, are in a uniquely powerful position to help Mexican teamsters reach parity in wages and working conditions with their class sisters and brothers above the Rio Grande.

A brief glance into history shows that the Teamsters' union was built into one of the nation's most powerful unions by the class struggle methods of organizing over-the-road drivers—the same strategy that is desperately needed by North American truck drivers today.

The Teamsters in the 1930s—led by American Trotskyists like Farrell Dobbs, Carl Skoglund, and Vincent Ray Dunne—organized the warehouses and depots in key cities across the main trucking routes, and then utilized the traditions of class solidarity to exclude unorganized trucking bosses from loading or unloading.

This is the tried and tested proletarian road to international class solidarity.

"Long-term goals of solidarity"

In chapter 8 of its pamphlet "Unions and Free Trade," *Labor Notes* again seeks to cover itself from criticism on the left.

It lays out what it calls the "long-term goals of [its] solidarity strategy." The journal lists a few working class demands, including the eventual convergence of wages, benefits, and working and living conditions for workers in all three North American countries; a shorter work week with no reduction in pay; national health care; and cancellation of Mexico's debt to U.S. banks.

But, unfortunately, only a very small part of this pamphlet is devoted to these "long-term goals" and is counterposed to the pamphlet's unmistakably central thrust in favor of one pro-capitalist trade policy against another.

The "long-term goals" come as an afterthought. The real effect serves as a screen for *Labor Notes*, while it puts itself at the service of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy and their attempt to maintain an alliance with the few protectionist capitalists still in opposition to NAFTA.

If the executive director of *Labor Notes* were truly concerned with organizing the workers of North America to defend themselves against the adverse consequences of free trade, it would not be necessary, in

the slightest degree, to support either protectionism or free trade.

Both trade policies serve capitalists in their relentless assault on the class interests of working people. Moreover, we can be sure that the antilabor offensive of both protectionists and free traders will deepen, not ease up.

So, in what way does taking a stand in favor of either of the ruling class's trade policies help workers defend their living standards? The answer to this question is never given by the labor bureaucracy or its apologists. It is only implied that labor's interests can be served by supporting one wing of capitalists against another.

Working-class policies

Which trade policy is in place is irrelevant to the workers' struggle to defend their class interests. Supporting or opposing either trade policy adds nothing to the fight to defend labor's interests—unless one thinks that leaving the door open for a section of capitalists to "join" labor's defensive struggle will strengthen labor's position.

On the contrary, this approach detracts from workers' defensive efforts by throwing a cloud over the real issue—the fundamental fact that the interests of workers and bosses are diametrically counterposed—no matter what trade policy the bosses support at any given time.

Worst of all, by directing labor's fire against one or another capitalist trade policy, the main culprit, the capitalist system itself, is let off the hook.

Furthermore, supporting free trade or protectionism is a hopeless and reactionary utopianism because no man-made law can be higher in capitalist society than the laws of capitalist production.

For instance, despite all the "trust-busting" laws passed against capitalist monopolies—from the 19th century to the end of the 20th—monopolization has not been slowed in the slightest.

Monopoly is an inexorable product of capitalist development and nothing but socialist revolution—the conquest of state power by a democratic, revolutionary working class government—can stop it. Moreover all capitalist "restrictions" on the excesses of capitalism wind up, like antitrust laws, being applied against the

workers' "trusts"—that is, the unions!

Defending against the consequences of either free trade or protectionist trade policies—such as against the growing scourge of unemployment, against runaway shops, against any and all attempts to remove health, safety, environmental, or any other regulations serving the interests of workers and society as a whole—has nothing whatever to do with whether or not NAFTA is ultimately approved.

These attacks on socially progressive regulations have been going on since long before NAFTA was even a gleam in some capitalist theoretician's eye.

Like all antilabor and antisocial measures, levied with increasing severity for at least the past 45 years, it is a consequence of the developing world capitalist crisis—at the heart of which is the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.

The generalized assault on workers' living standards on every level—wages, benefits, social services, taxes, and all manner of environmental controls—is designed by the capitalists to bolster declining profit rates. That's a simple fact of life in capitalist society.

Fight unemployment—jobs for all!

• The central demand for a shorter work-week with no reduction in pay should be high on the workers' list of demands.

And more exactly, since the productivity of labor is limitless with applied technology, labor's program must include the demand for a sliding scale of hours with no reduction in pay.

This means that our goal is ultimately to divide the total number of hours required for production of all the things that society needs by the total number of workers—this goal points directly to a socialist society, where human needs will come first.

The labor bureaucracy, committed to maintaining the profitability of U.S. capitalism, has dropped any mention of labor's historic struggle for the shorter work-day/work-week with no reduction in pay as the workers' answer to capitalist unemployment.

Despite historic victories won in the United States for the eight-hour day and five-day week, this has become a virtual dead letter, as the eight-hour day and forty-hour week have become things of the past for ever more American workers.

This default of responsibility must be turned around 180 degrees. Moreover, it would be a betrayal of working-class interests to relegate this most burning of all questions to second place, substituting for it a campaign to support this or that capitalist trade policy.

• To stop the shut-down of plant after plant in auto, steel, and other industries because capitalists cannot continue profitably producing the goods that society needs, revolutionary working-class fighters should demand that abandoned workplaces be expropriated and production resumed under control of their workers.

If capitalists want to run away to low wage areas of the world, let them go—but keep the workshops, created by the sweat and blood of workers where they are—and place these productive forces at the service of society as a whole.

• Furthermore, to get people back to work more swiftly, a massive public works program should be initiated at once.

Construct an environmentally-compatible mass transit system on a scale that would gradually phase out the current dependence on ecologically destructive, gas-guzzling automobiles.

Also necessary for getting the country back to work, is a massive campaign to provide publicly-financed housing for all who need it, as well as schools, hospitals and other necessary social institutions.

• How would it be financed? By taxing the rich, not the poor. No taxes on incomes below \$75,000 a year; and a steeply graduated tax on all incomes above that amount, reaching a 100 percent tax on annual incomes above \$500,000.

These demands would be a good beginning line of defense for the vital interests of the working class in this country—free trade or protectionism notwithstanding.

And we should do everything in our power to encourage and assist the workers of the whole world to follow this example—not ask them to choose between two pro-capitalist trade policies. ■

... Malcolm X

(continued from page 20)

leaders, and have the right to self-defense in the face of racist attacks.

Educate and organize

In his last year alive, Malcolm X was hounded, harassed, and faced with the constant threat of sudden death. Despite these obstacles, he worked frantically to build an organization.

(When he was killed he was about to give a speech to open discussion on the program of the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), the group he founded to politically organize the Black community.)

Malcolm X was vilified and slandered because he called American society by its right name—racist. He was against "non-violence" when Blacks were physically attacked by racists and he advocated Black self-defense. He was called a "Black racist," an "extremist," and a "hate monger" by so-called liberals because he could not see the efficacy of "turning the other cheek."

Malcolm X said, "If we react to white racism with a violent reaction, to me that's not Black racism. If you come to put a rope around my neck, and I hang you for it, to me that's not racism. Yours is racism. ...My reaction is the reaction of a human being reacting to defend and protect himself."

When Malcolm X spoke, Black people listened. A brilliant speaker, who stripped American racist society to the bare bones, Malcolm X smashed illusions in gradual reform: "You've been waiting over 400 years for your freedom."

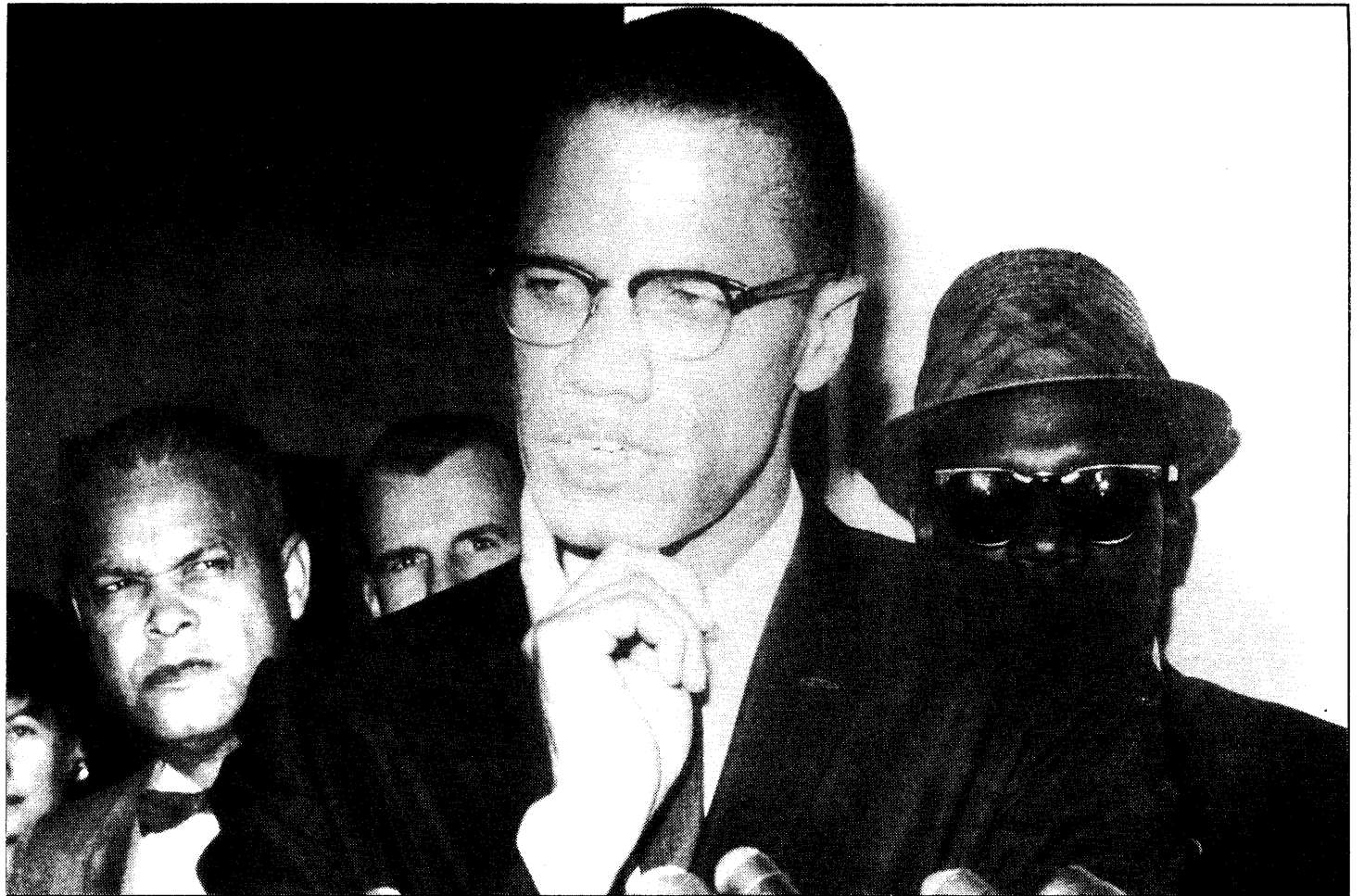
He exposed the hypocrisy of the liberals, who cautioned Blacks to go slow and be "non-violent." "They want you to be non-violent here," he said, "but they want you to be very violent in South Vietnam."

Malcolm X connected the struggle of Blacks in America to the struggles of the oppressed all over the world.

"We are living in an era of revolution," he told students at Columbia University, "and the revolt of the American Negro is part of the rebellion against the oppression and colonialism which has characterized this era. ...It is incorrect to classify the revolt of the Negro as simply a racial conflict of Black against white, or as a purely American problem. Rather, we are today seeing a global rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, the exploited against the exploiter."

The logic of Malcolm X's fight against U.S. racism and injustice led him to take anti-capitalist positions. "You can't have capitalism without racism," he said.

Asked what he thought was responsible for race prejudice in America, he responded: "Ignorance and greed. And a skillfully designed program of miseducation that goes right along with the American system of exploitation and oppression."



Wide World Photo

"WE ARE LIVING IN AN ERA OF REVOLUTION, AND THE REVOLT OF THE AMERICAN NEGRO IS PART OF THE REBELLION AGAINST THE OPPRESSION AND COLONIALISM WHICH HAS CHARACTERIZED THIS ERA."

In the last analysis, it was Malcolm X's political evolution that was the reason for his assassination.

"By any means necessary"

Malcolm X believed that the fight for Black freedom should be won "by any means necessary." He became an implacable opponent of the Democratic and Republican parties. "Any Negro who registers as a Democrat or a Republican," he said, "is a traitor to his own people."

"Our people need to get registered," he stated. "[They] need to pile up political power, but they need to hold it in abeyance and throw it in...when they know it will get results. Don't just throw it because you've got it."

When he was asked by the Freedom Now Party in Michigan (an independent Black party) to be their candidate in the 1964 elections, he gave it serious consideration. He declined only because he would have had to shorten his trip to Africa.

Malcolm X had no illusions in the so-called differences between the Democrats and Republicans. "One is the wolf, the other is a fox. No matter what, they'll both eat you." In the 1964 presidential elections, when the candidates were Johnson (the "peace" candidate) vs. Goldwater (the "war" candidate), Malcolm X exposed the deceit of this phony distinction.

"The shrewd capitalists, the shrewd imperialists," he said, "knew that the only way people would run towards the fox (Johnson) would be if you showed them the wolf (Goldwater). So they created a ghastly alternative. ...And at that moment he (Johnson) had troops invading the Congo and South Vietnam."

Revolutionist of action

Malcolm X was much more than just a "shrewd" observer. He was a principled political leader in the fight for Black rights. Despite his tactical disagreements with the predominant "non-violent" wing of the civil rights movement, Malcolm X

stressed the need for all tendencies and organizations in the Black movement to come together—in action.

He advocated and promoted a united front of all Black organizations independent of the "white power structure." He stated repeatedly: "There must be Black unity before there can be Black-white unity." Once that was accomplished, Malcolm X was willing to work with any person or group who wanted to help.

He considered himself a Muslim, a Black nationalist, and a revolutionary. And although he did not consider himself a Marxist, he observed in favorable terms that most of the former colonial countries of Africa and Asia were opting for socialism.

The tragedy of Malcolm X's death was that he was cut down while he was still evolving; still searching for a method and program that would be the most effective tool for Black liberation. Only 39 years old when he died, he wasn't allowed to reach his full political stature. Consequently, the Black liberation movement was deprived of one of its best fighters and leaders.

Unfortunately, there are no national birthday celebrations for Malcolm X (he was born Malcolm Little on May 19, 1925). No boulevards or streets—and with the exception of some alternative schools in the Black community—virtually no buildings bear his name.

But his ideas and his example will inspire a new generation to correct this glaring omission—in action, like Malcolm X would have done. It will be called the American socialist revolution.

Even in death, Malcolm X is still a very "dangerous" man. ■

The Coming Black Rebellion and the legacy of Malcolm X



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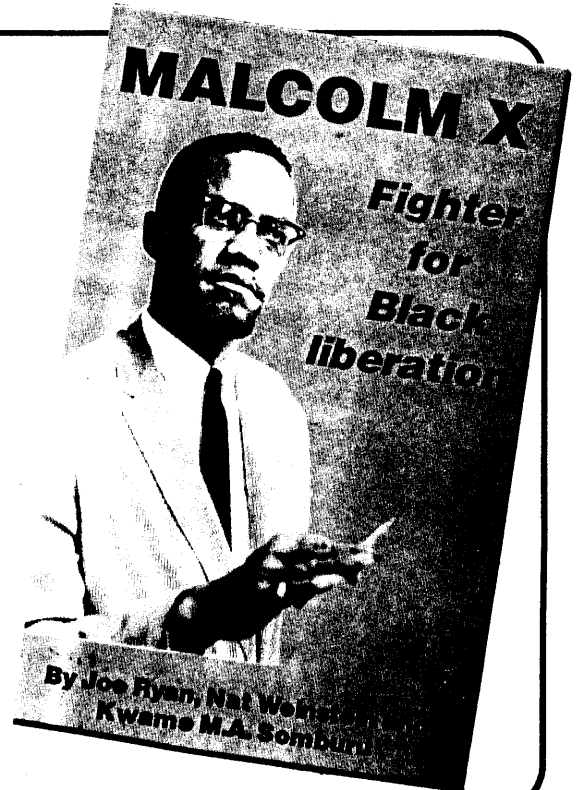
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Our readers speak out

Not shy

Dear editors,

I can't begin to explain the feelings of gladness I felt at seeing minority viewpoints at the Socialist Action convention being discussed in the party's paper. These were important issues. Thank you for covering them as fully as possible.

That alone would be reason enough for me to keep distributing *Socialist Action*. But I also admire your coverage of the new left formations coming about. Keep up your real reporting and coverage of the Native American struggles.

J.M.,
Albuquerque, N.M.

Prisoner

Dear editors,

I am an inmate at a state hospital. I have been trapped in this so-called Mental Health System for the past 10 years. This bureaucratic quagmire that I find myself trapped in is one of the major industries in the area. And I have come to the sad realization that as a patient, I have been reduced to being nothing more than a commodity. But for all intents and purposes, I am simply a prisoner.

I have been a socialist, and voted as such for many years. I still retain my voter rights while at this hospital. I would like to know what is your recommendation for the upcoming election, for I plan to continue to vote as a socialist.

I would also like to request a subscription to "Socialist Action." Knowledge is of great value to me. Locked up, I have to reach out for knowledge. During these hard times, great changes are happening everywhere. Information is needed so I can make good choices.

C.L.,
Pueblo, Col.

The editors reply: In our October 1992 issue, we gave critical support to the candidates of the Socialist Workers Party—James Warren for president and Estelle De Bates for vice president.

Real people?

Dear editors,

Your "Bush and Clinton should run on the same ticket" article [October 1992] was excellent.

The Socialist Workers Party's dropping of Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution shows that is no longer has faith in the working class. Otherwise, it would not support the class-collaborationist strategy of the South African Communist Party. However, considering the alternatives, a vote for the SWP candidates—even if we have to write them in—is necessary.

But this election is not one in which we should vote for something as much as it is one to vote against something. And that something is the big criminal corporations that are destroying the earth.

Corporations in this country are unique in that under the law they are considered to be a person—such as you or I. This was decided by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1886 in *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad*. Chief Justice Waite told counsel that the court would not hear arguments on a certain point because the corporations were persons, and therefore protected by the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

If any of our readers really think that a corporation is a person, I suggest they check page 556 of "Black's Law Dictionary" for the entry: HABITUAL CRIMINAL: "By statute in several states, one is convicted of any crime (or twice so convicted), or who is convicted of a misdemeanor and has previously (in New York) been five times con-

victed of a misdemeanor."

Thus, our corporate citizens are the leading outlaws. They may regularly violate the law without surrendering their political rights.

Let us look at a good example—"Citizen GE" (General Electric Corp.)—which started the second-rate "B" movie actor, Ronald Reagan, on a lecture circuit that led to the White House. A look at GE's recent rap sheet shows that after a 14-week trial in 1990, a jury in Philadelphia convicted GE of criminal fraud for cheating the Army on a \$254 million contract for battlefield computers.

Rather than appeal to a higher court, GE paid \$16.1 million in criminal and civil fines, including \$11.7 million to satisfy government complaints that it had padded its bids on 200 other military and space contracts. Then, in Cincinnati, GE agreed to pay the government \$3.5 million to settle five civil lawsuits on contractor fraud at the Evendale, Ohio, jet-engine plant.

During the same period, GE paid \$900,000 to settle claims that it overcharged the Army for electronic adaptors used in the M-1 tank and the Bradley fighting vehicles. It settled a similar complaint for cheating the Navy on components for guided missile frigates.

These are all criminal activities, but GE's police record goes back almost to its founding in the early part of this century. The current law suit against GE, the principal operator for nearly 20 years of the government's Hanford nuclear reservation in Washington—which completely contaminated the surrounding land and ground water with both radioactive and toxic chemicals—is yet to be settled.

Obviously, GE, as a "person," is a habitual criminal. However, the system in the United States provides forgiveness for its worst criminals—when they are rich enough. Look at the bankrupt banking system.

Refusing to vote at all does not

make clear what part of the system one opposes. A vote for the Socialist Workers Party candidates shows that we are against the entire capitalist system dominated by big criminal corporations.

Victor Saxe,
Oakland, Calif.

Resentment

Dear editors,

On Sunday, Sept. 27, two interesting articles appeared in the usually dull *Cincinnati Enquirer*, one on the "successful" breakthrough in the South African negotiations between De Klerk and Mandela and the other on the economic and political changes taking place in China.

At a joint news conference in Johannesburg, De Klerk agreed to a list of concessions—including freedom for political prisoners, banning the carrying and display of weapons in public places, and fencing off certain migrant workers dormitories to cut down on violence. And on Mandela's part, "only" one concession was

made—to reconsider its program of protests, rallies, strikes, and sit-ins "that has caused turmoil in recent months."

In the article titled, "Urge to make money eats away at Chinese socialism," the Communist Party in 1949 is credited with having "stamped out conspicuous consumption" while providing a basic living for all.

Currently, however, less productive workers are fired, 12 to 15 hour workshifts are being implemented, and there is no minimum wage for private businesses.

The article concludes, "The main beneficiaries of economic reform are those who have political power and can use it to amass great wealth. ... It's going to create a lot of resentment and antagonism."

Resentment and antagonism continue to grow in South Africa as well, aimed now at the brutal South African government. But these same feelings will also be directed at the leadership of the African National Congress if this promised muzzling on all forms of public protest is enforced.

Margaret O'Kain,
Cincinnati, Ohio

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"Zebrahead"—Two young lovers in a decaying world

By ROLAND SHEPPARD

Zebrahead. A new movie written and directed by Anthony Drazan. Starring Michael Rappaport and N'Bushe Wright.

On the surface, "Zebrahead" is a story about a Jewish boy and an African Amer-

MOVIE REVIEW

ican girl who fall in love. The plot is similar to Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet."

But the social context of the movie is that of a racist society. High school youth are shown trying to survive in a decaying inner-city Detroit.

The writer and director, 37-year-old Anthony Drazan, researched his script inside high schools, where he recorded many hours of conversations. His dialogue picks up on the language of ghetto youth. The music by Taj Mahal sets the mood for their culture.

The interplay between deteriorating Detroit and the relationship of the characters—based upon their economic

background and their family relationships—keeps the film interesting both as a drama and as a portrait of real life.

The story focuses on the romance between Zack and Nikki, two high schoolers who must cross the barrier of skin color in order to fall in love.

The two face heckling from the other students right from the beginning. The older folks are also worried. As Nikki's parents exclaim: "He's white, she's Black. This is America—and that's a problem."

At the end, it is the breakdown of society that leaves the viewer hanging. The movie, without proselytizing, is a sensitive reflection of life and the apparent lack of hope for an egalitarian society under the present economic system. This is the real message of the movie.

The Detroit school system becomes the symbol for the institutionalized racism of American society. It is the defender and enforcer of the status quo and it has no relationship to the basic needs and aspirations of the teenagers who are characterized in the movie.

The movie's best attribute is its demonstration of the aspirations of youth for a better society based on human val-



Michael Rappaport and N'Bushe Wright.

ues. The teenaged characters, who are mostly African American, come into constant conflict with society because of the few options it offers.

The director has no vision of how to

change society, but the reality of the characters' situation helps to identify the insoluble problems of American capitalist society. It also makes it easier for socialists to explain the solutions. ■

MALCOLM X: Fighter for Black Liberation

By JOSEPH RYAN

Malcolm X has been dead for nearly 28 years. But never before has there been as much interest as there is today in the life and ideas of the martyred Black revolutionary.

Over the years, numerous books have been published about Malcolm X. And with the release this month of Spike Lee's movie, millions of people will be introduced to this extraordinary man, who gave his life in the fight for equality and justice.

Below we are reprinting a chapter from the pamphlet titled, "Malcolm X: Fighter for Black Liberation," published by Walnut Publishing Co. in September 1988. [See ad on page 18.]

This chapter gives a Marxist appreciation of the life and ideas of Malcolm X and the reason for his impact on American society.

On Feb. 21, 1965, Malcolm X was gunned down by assassins as he was about to give a speech at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem, N.Y. His assassination was a stunning blow to the Black liberation movement.

The circumstances surrounding the death of Malcolm X remain unresolved. Many people believe—and rightfully so—that the real perpetrators and killers were never caught. Undoubtedly, the greatest beneficiary of Malcolm's death was the U.S. government.

The American ruling class will discover, however, that the ideas and solutions

that Malcolm X popularized cannot be buried as easily as the man.

Malcolm X was an uncompromising opponent of the U.S. government. In the early 1960s, his ideas for what road to take for Black freedom and equality represented the most militant wing of the fight against racism.

Nation of Islam days

Malcolm X first came into public prominence as a dynamic spokesperson and organizer for the Nation of Islam (Black Muslims).

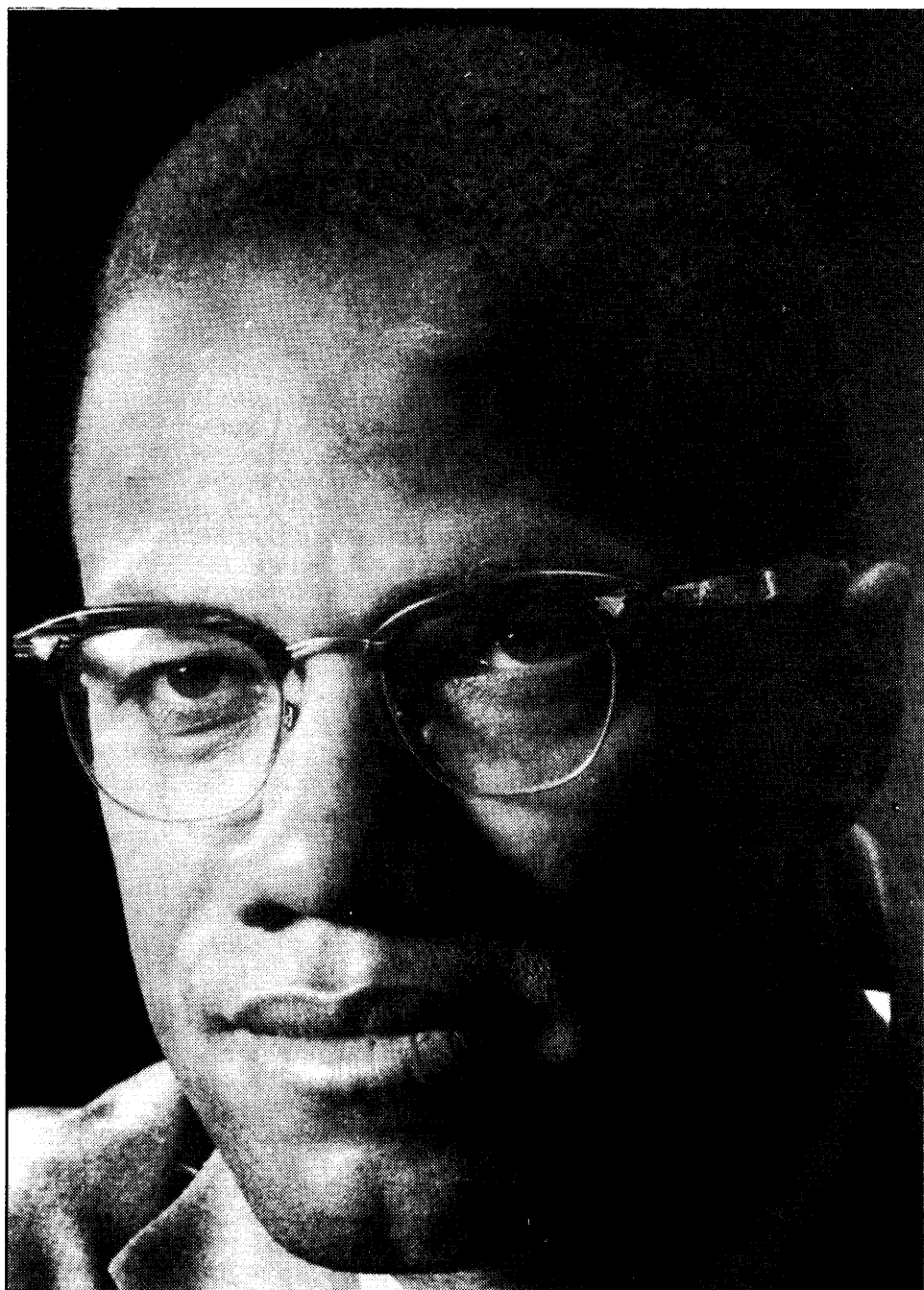
The Nation of Islam advocated a religious and separatist solution to the scourge of white racism. It was an attractive organization to many Black people because it encouraged Black pride and independence. In addition, they were opposed to integration with the "white man" and instead advocated Black self-reliance and a Black "homeland."

Malcolm X was the Nation of Islam's most eloquent and powerful speaker. He was their best recruiter and was responsible for its tremendous growth in membership.

In early 1964, however, Malcolm X broke with the Nation of Islam. There were many reasons for this, but the most important was their abstention from the Black struggle for civil rights.

Need for political action

Malcolm X believed that political organization and action was the most effective means to win Black liberation. Although his painful break with the Nation of



Wide World Photo

Islam forced him to re-examine many of the solutions and tactics he had previously advocated, he never changed his basic analysis of what was needed to win the fight for justice and equality.

Malcolm X was a consistent Black nationalist and a revolutionist of action.

He constantly argued that:

- Black people will get their freedom only by fighting for it;
- that the U.S. government is a racist government and is not going to grant freedom;

• that gradualism (slow reform), the program of the liberals—Black and white, Democrat and Republican—is not the road to equality;

• that traitors within the Black movement ("Uncle Toms") must be exposed and opposed;

• that Black people must rely on themselves and control their own struggle;

• and that Blacks must determine their own strategy and tactics, select their own

(continued on page 18)

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

PHILADELPHIA—On Oct. 30, a new mural of Malcolm X was unveiled here. Malcolm's widow, Betty Shabazz, was present at the dedication.

The mural was produced by the artists of the Philadelphia Anti-Graffiti Network, who are responsible for many of the portraits of Black heroes and heroines that grace the walls of the city's African American community.

The new mural, a portrait of Malcolm against a solid blue background, covers the side of a three-story house. The inscription reads: "Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today.—Malcolm X."

The day after the dedication of the mural, I set out to find what young African Americans in Philadelphia think about Malcolm X. As I interviewed people on the street, I found a wide range of opinions. But it was evident that almost all of the young people who answered my questions had thought a lot about Malcolm X and his message.

I first met Deborah, age 23, in a commuter rail station. She told me that she approved of the new mural about Malcolm X because, "that's the only way that we as young people can go back and say he was here. We can look at the way we're going to fight racism and oppression—and see that we can do it the same

Malcolm X mural dedicated in Philadelphia

Young people give their impressions of African American leader

way he did. That means a revolution."

Deborah said that she thought Malcolm's ideas on the need for self-defense are still relevant. She said, "Young people look at history and then say, 'Non-violence didn't get us anywhere.' A lot of the things we got through the civil rights movement are now being revoked."

I met Sharon, age 16, and her friend Darnell, 29, outside a supermarket. They told me that they had heard about the new mural and they thought it was an important development to "help more people understand what Malcolm X stands for."

Darnell explained that "a lot of people wear an X on their caps, just like me, but they don't know what X stands for. They don't understand why Malcolm Little gave up his slave name. Malcolm was for our independence."

Darnell and Sharon also approved of Malcolm's call for self-defense. But Sharon pointed out: "What he was saying was not just self-defense. Malcolm said that if you take a stand, then people won't mess with you. That was opposed to Martin

Luther King, who said we should use non-violence. But a lot of people got killed that way, too."

I met Rog, 21, at the corner of Germantown and Chelton Avenues in northwest Philadelphia. He was wearing a T-shirt from "Malcolm X University." Rog told me that Malcolm X was about "restoring our blackness." When I encouraged him to continue, he explained: "Lots of people are not treating their own race like they should. Rather than sticking up for what we have, they want to be on the other side of things. But Malcolm made us see where we came from, and what we had to do to get here."

A teenage woman on the same street corner told me that "Malcolm X is important to me. He tried to fight to

make things better for all people."

But an older friend who was standing nearby, Lisa, strongly disagreed. "Malcolm X was selfish," she interjected. "He didn't fight for everybody but for his own kind—the same people he was about. He fought for Islam, not for us."

Another young woman I interviewed, Shana, age 17, who was visiting from Georgia, was likewise pessimistic. "I don't favor what Malcolm X stood for," she said. "He wanted the Black race to get together before they united with any other race. But today, Black people aren't going to get together. We'll never get together."

But her friend, Nova, also 17, didn't agree. "A lot of people don't realize that Malcolm changed in the last year of his life," she pointed out. "In the beginning, he was angry. He wanted to separate. But he matured at the end of his life. He gained more insight. He realized that with hate, you can't get anything."

Nova continued: "I think that many people aren't getting the whole picture. They're focusing on a small part—skin color. That breeds hate. But I think that everything is socio-economic. I have friends who are white or Hispanic. They're as good as me. People should give everyone a chance."

Finally, Donyesha, age 13, told me: "Malcolm X was a Black role model. That's what other people say. That's all I know about him." ■