



No more two-tier medicine

Health care for all!

Everyone is talking about health care plans. Clinton will be presenting his plan in a few months. It looks like something is up.

But what the people need, and what the politicians and corporations are planning, are two different things. The workers and poor people of this country need affordable health care for all. The politicians and businessmen simply want to get the government and the corporations out from under the rising expense: and if it means rationing medical care, or pushing more of the cost onto the workers, well, that's the way it's always been.

What do the workers need?

Today health costs are soaring, another major company cancels its health benefits everyday, and the insurance plans are making it harder and harder to get coverage for anything. Moreover, with increasing poverty and despair, with more occupational accidents and more epidemics, health problems are mounting rapidly.

In this situation, the hodgepodge system of free-market medicine has proved bankrupt. Instead, health care must become a right for all. We need:

- A universal system. Everyone in the country must be covered. Although there can be local and regional management, a high level of coverage and benefits must be uniform across the country. It is as inhuman to deny anyone health care as to deny them food and water. And it is impossible to solve any of the public health problems spreading across the country — from new epidemics to drug and alcohol abuse — without full coverage for all residents of this country.

- Coverage must not be linked to the job. Whether on the job, on strike, or unemployed, all residents of this country must be covered. And the doctors must be fully independent of the companies; occupational diseases and injuries are a major problem, and it is a cruel conflict of interest for doctors to treat workers while being linked to the management.

- It must be paid by a progressive tax levied on the wealthy and the corporations. Over the last ten years, more and more of the national wealth has gone to the wealthy classes; there is nothing left to squeeze from the workers and the poor.

- It must be comprehensive care. It must cover all the important health problems facing the workers. It must not simply cover band-aids while forcing the workers and poor to pay for the expensive stuff, from drug and alcohol abuse counseling to the numerous occupational diseases.

- There must be a bill of rights for patients. Rationing and two-tier medicine has always been imposed on the poor. The politicians are floating the idea of openly practicing rationing, and the state of Oregon is fighting for such a plan. But

we must instead insist on uniform health rights for all, and a charter of patient rights.

- There must be a bill of rights for health care workers. It's time to stop making the doctors into an elite, while oppressing the basic health work force. So long as nurses, orderlies, and basic staff are overworked and underpaid, they cannot deliver quality care.

Radical change

To accomplish this, there must be radical change. The system of medicine for profit has gone berserk. The U.S. spends more than any other industrialized country for health care while having a deteriorating system which leaves dozens of millions of people out in the cold with either no coverage or inadequate coverage. No schedule of cost control, no set of regulations, can set this

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- 'Managed competition': what it means for workers
- National health care in Britain, Sweden and Canada
- Crises in U.S. health care



Where are the jobs, Bill?

Remember when candidate Bill Clinton declared job creation to be his number one priority? Well, now he's president. Where are the jobs, Bill?

Planning only 500,000 new jobs

Today there are officially almost 17 million people who are either unemployed or only half-employed. Yet President Clinton's new budget promises only "a jobs program to create half a million jobs starting right now..." (*New York Times*, Feb. 19)

500,000 jobs — that's about how many were created in the anemic recovery last year. It means that Clinton is actually promising that the economy will do no better than it did under Bush.

Not enough unemployment relief

Oh yes, Clinton is also renewing for

a year the 26-week extension of unemployment benefits for a section of workers whose benefits have run out.

Unfortunately, the extension is projected to help at most only two million of the nine million officially unemployed. It won't help the millions who have been cut out of benefits by new restrictions in the last decade or who have been laid off for more than a year. It won't give a cent to the 1.6 million "discouraged" workers who have given up looking for a job that is simply not there. And it won't give a bit of help to the 6.1 million hard-pressed workers who have been forced into part-time jobs because there's no full-time work.

Well, what could you expect? Clinton is only backing the same cut-down compromise unemployment bill that George Bush signed last year. He's not giving a cent more than Bush in relief for the unemployed.

Minimum-wage summer jobs

But then Clinton is also calling for a one-year program to create 700,000 summer jobs for youth. The young people sure need the jobs. And this is a larger program than Bush ever called for.

But still, these are only temporary, minimum-wage jobs. Where are the permanent, decent-paying jobs that Clinton promised us?

Technological unemployment

Perhaps those are supposed to come from Clinton's "long-term" spending plan. But if that is the case, then more jobs can be expected to be lost.

More than half of Clinton's new spending plans, about \$57 billion over four years, is either for the development of new technology or education and training so that people can use the new

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Somalia and GI Joe humanitarianism

The last week of February saw riots and gun battles in the streets of Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia.

Crowds of Somalis took to the streets. Some carried banners and shouted slogans against the U.S. military presence. Protesters attacked the Egyptian embassy. Gun battles also took place between snipers and troops from the U.S., Nigeria, and Botswana. A number of Somalis were shot dead by the U.S. and other foreign troops in the four days of unrest.

When the U.S. intervention began in December, news reports from Somalia were full of images of GI's feeding hungry children. But only a couple of months

later, we see crowds of Somalis protesting or kids pelting U.S. military convoys with rocks.

How is it that the initial goodwill has evaporated?

The official story is that the latest Mogadishu disturbances were set off because General Mohammed Farah Aidid, one of the main Somali warlords, accused the U.S. military of allowing one of his rivals, General Morgan, to gain the advantage in the southern port of Kismayu. The accusation itself does not appear to be true. But while the U.S. may not have actually been involved in the warlord clashes in Kismayu, it is

possible that an attempt by the U.S. to withdraw troops from Kismayu had opened up a vacuum which Morgan seized. After the Mogadishu protest, the U.S. ordered Morgan to leave Kismayu, and he reportedly complied.

General Aidid may have initiated the Mogadishu riots to press the U.S. to restore the balance in Kismayu, but this is not sufficient to explain the increasingly anti-American sentiment among ordinary people in Mogadishu. What is more to the point, things are getting tense because on a daily basis American forces are running roughshod over ordinary

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Gay rights march
April 25

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No to the layoffs, we need a fight for jobs

You call this a recovery?

A system that can't even provide jobs for its workers does not deserve to exist. And that's exactly what we've got in the U.S. today.

Huge layoffs during "recovery"

We are now two years into what is supposed to be an economic recovery. Yet mammoth layoffs are being announced throughout the economy. 30,000 are to be laid off at Westinghouse; 25,000 at IBM; 75,000 at GM; 30,000 at Boeing; 10,000 at McDonnell Douglas; 50,000 at Sears; and the list goes on and on.

Indeed, plans to lay off more than 200,000 workers over the next few years have been announced in just the last three months alone. And this is on top of the net loss of 890,000 jobs in manufacturing, mining, wholesale and retail trade since the recovery began in March, 1991. (Offsetting these losses are only the growth of one million service jobs,

144,000 government jobs, and a few others which means that about a half-million jobs in total have been created in the recovery.) All told there are 16.7 million workers that are now unemployed or half employed according to the minimized count of the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

A worldwide overproduction crisis

These layoffs and the huge unemployment are not just some passing aberration from an otherwise healthy system. Oh no, they are the essential fruit of a terminally sick system — of the system of capitalist production for profit.

In the first place, we are now witnessing a global overproduction crisis that is throwing workers out of their jobs all over the world. Take a look at the auto industry for example. Mercedes-Benz just slashed 12,500 jobs in Germany and is planning further cuts. Volkswagen is

cutting 30,000 jobs world-wide. Ford announced plans to cut 10,000 jobs in Britain. Volvo is closing two plants in Sweden. Renault just laid off thousands in France. And last year Toyota announced its first-ever layoffs in Japan.

These jobs are not being slashed because people do not need transportation. And they are certainly not being eliminated because auto workers are lazy or do sloppy work. No, the workers are being thrown onto the unemployment lines because there are too many cars and trucks being produced to be sold profitably. And if the capitalist can't make a profit, he cuts back and throws the workers on the streets.

Yet, even as the layoffs mount, new car and truck plants are being built in the U.S. and Japan. Why? Because in the fierce capitalist competition, each auto monopoly has to try to grab a bigger share of the market and therefore has to have more plants and capacity for production. Thus, even as plants are shut down, new crises of overproduction are being created.

Capitalist restructuring lays basis for further crisis

Facing the enormous crisis in one industry after another, the capitalists are also on a huge drive to "restructure" the economy. They are especially adding new technology and cutting back on workers to become more efficient and profitable. And this is taking place not only in manufacturing but also in the retail trade, banking, insurance, and other services.

Karl Marx long ago explained this basic drive of capitalism: "But the perfecting of machinery is making human labor superfluous. If the introduction and increase of machinery means the displacement of millions of manual, by a few machine workers, improvement in machinery means the displacement of more and more of the machine workers themselves. It means, in the last instance, the production of a number of available wage workers in excess of the average needs of capital, the formation of a complete industrial reserve army, as I called it in 1845, available at the times when industry is working at high pressure, to be cast out upon the street when

the inevitable crash comes, a constant dead weight upon the limbs of the working class in its struggle for existence with capital, a regulator for the keeping of wages down to the low level that suits the interests of capital." (*Capital*, Part VII, Sec. 3)

Just as Marx explained, we are witnessing a growing army of unemployed workers and, beside them, swelling numbers of part-time and temporary workers whose existence is particularly precarious. And so, in order to deal with their crisis, the capitalists are putting in place new technology and production systems which actually eliminate more jobs while intensifying the work of those who are still employed. As such, they are simply creating the basis for further economic crises.

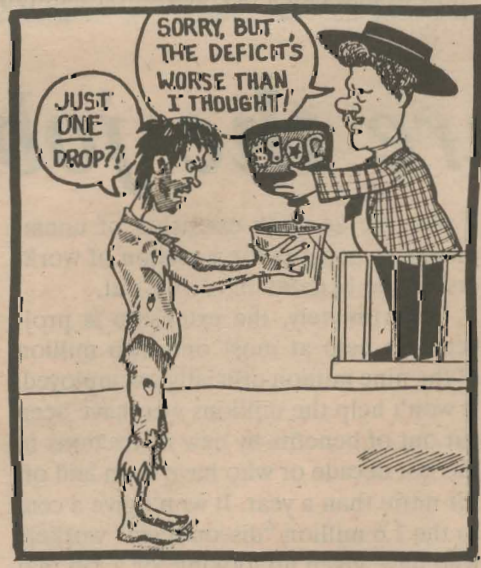
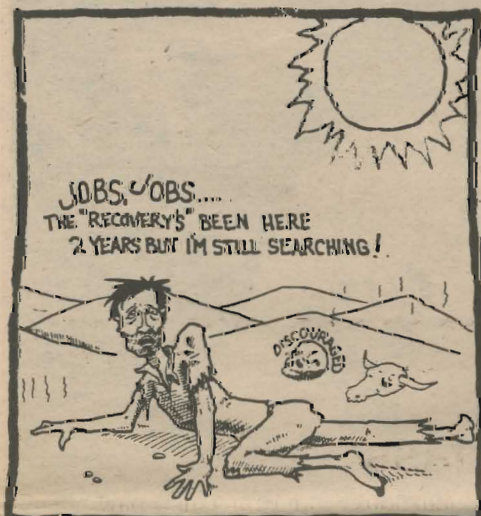
As Marx pointed out, "...Thus it comes about that the overwork of some becomes the preliminary condition for the idleness of others, and that modern industry, which hunts after new consumers over the whole world, forces the consumption of the masses at home down to a starvation minimum, and in this destroys its own home market." (*Ibid.*)

A new system out of the old

But the very fact that there is a huge amount of workers, machinery and raw materials that are being left unused and destroyed — and new technology can make them even more efficient — shows that the potential has been created to tremendously expand production to deal with all of the want, suffering and needs of the masses.

The only thing holding this back is the profit system, where nothing is produced unless the capitalist boss can make a killing off of it.

Capitalism is ripe to be overthrown. Capitalism is ready to be replaced with a new system where production is geared to the needs of the masses instead of the profits of the bosses. This new system is socialism. Not the bureaucratic system of inefficient make-work and consumer lines found in the former Soviet Union. No, a vibrant system of increasing production and productivity based on collective work and the working masses taking over the running of the society. ■



Where are the jobs, Bill?

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technology. But more technology simply means more job elimination.

Business Week recently pointed out that "In the early 1960's, economists worried that automation would create what was termed 'technological unemployment.' That crisis never materialized, however, because the 1960's were a decade of 4% annual growth, which kept generating jobs and customers for the new technology. But with 2% growth in the 1990's, automation does cause net job displacement." (Feb. 8)

In other words, unless there is much bigger economic growth, new technology will actually mean more job losses. And even Clinton's own optimistic estimates show the economy stagnating at around 2.5% yearly growth through 1998. (The

Congressional Budget Office expects the economy to plummet after 1994 down to only about 1.8% growth in 1998 and even this is probably too optimistic.) (*New York Times*, Feb. 19)

In the final analysis, Clinton is just carrying out a program to help the capitalists. The new research, technology and education may not create jobs. But it will help the capitalists become more efficient, help them slash jobs, and thereby increase their profits. This may not be the true "supply side" program as Bush. But it is sure not a program to help the workers.

For jobs to be saved, for the unemployed to get serious relief, the workers will have to fight against the capitalists and their political representatives — no matter if they are Republicans or "change"-spouting Democrats. ■

Temporary work — half the new jobs

Despite the so-called recovery, not many jobs were created last year. But even then, half of them were temporary jobs.

According to the January 19 *Wall Street Journal*, temporary employment agencies placed workers in 222,000 jobs

during the first 11 months of 1992. This accounts for over half of all the new jobs created last year.

And temporary work is expected to expand. David Lewin, the director of the

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What's fair about these taxes?

Last year, Bill Clinton promised to turn around the enormous tax breaks that Reagan and Bush gave the rich and bring fairness back to the country's tax structure. Now Clinton has released his first budget proposals, and it's hard to see what is fair about his new taxes.

The rich keep a \$60 billion tax break

As late as 1980 the rich paid a top marginal income tax rate of 70%. In 1982 Reagan slashed that down to 50%. And then in 1986, the top rate was again slashed to only 33%. According to the Citizens for Tax Justice, these tax cuts gave the richest taxpayers — with incomes of \$549,000 per year — a total giveback of some \$84.4 billion a year.

Now Clinton comes along and raises the top income tax rate, but only to 36% for couples with incomes of over \$140,000. And he adds to that a 10% surcharge for couples making over \$250,000 a year. According to Clinton, these changes will bring in about \$25 billion a year.

So it looks like they will still be getting a tax break of nearly \$60 billion a year.

More loopholes

And don't think the rich will even pay these rates. While Clinton has ended some loopholes, he has also added a series of additional ones that allow the rich to slash their taxes down to a minimum.

Most important in this regards is the capital gains tax on investments. Clinton left that rate at 28% and cut it down to only 14% for five-year investments into small businesses. This gives the rich a convenient shelter to avoid paying the 36% income tax rate. And this is just one of a thousand loopholes that Clinton has left for the rich to wiggle through.

The workers get an energy tax

Meanwhile, Clinton is calling for an energy tax that will cost a typical family anywhere from \$320 a year (by Clinton's estimate) to \$500 a year (by estimates of the energy industry) in direct and indirect costs.

This is a regressive tax that hits the workers and poor disproportionately hard. Clinton could have simply made the income tax more progressive, with even higher rates for the richest of the rich. But, oh no, Clinton had to stick it to the working people who have been taking the brunt of the growing tax burden for over a decade.

Nothing fair in capitalism

This only goes to show you can't expect fairness out of capitalist politicians like Clinton.

As long as society is split into classes where an elite class grows rich off the exploitation and misery of a working class, then talk of fairness ends up being nothing more than a cover-up for oppression. Real fairness can only be accomplished by abolishing classes and creating

a communist system that works on the basis of from each according to their

ability, to each according to their needs. ■



More tax breaks for the corporations

Clinton would like to make us think that he is making taxes fairer by increasing the tax rate on the corporations. But you don't need to know calculus to see that his figures actually mean more tax breaks for business, although he shuffles which businesses get it.

Raising the corporate tax rate to 36% is supposed to bring into the government

\$30.6 billion more over six years.

But then Clinton's "investment plan" turns around and hands back to the businesses \$60 billion in tax incentives.

I'm sure anybody would be willing to hand over more taxes if the government gave them back twice as much. No wonder Wall Street has said it's happy with Clinton's plan. ■

Growing part-time work force — another attack on the working class

The growth of part-time workers during the Reagan and Bush years was astronomical. In 1978 there were about 3.5 million part-time workers. Now there are some 6.1 million.

But even these numbers may be a gross undercount. Recently the Bureau of Labor Statistics has been testing a new, more detailed questionnaire for its monthly survey of 65,000 households from which it determines the unemploy-

Raise the minimum wage!

A recent study showed that 43% of the workers in the U.S. between the ages of 18 and 24 are working at minimum wage. The figure compares to 23% of such workers employed at minimum wage in 1981.

President Clinton has said he favors raising the minimum wage. But by how much? The bureaucrats from the AFL-CIO demand a raise to what they call the historic level of the minimum wage — 50% of the average workers' wage. Today that would mean an increase to \$5.35 an hour from the present \$4.25 an hour. But this would still be only about \$10,700 a year, several thousand dollars below the official poverty level for a family of four of \$13,924.

And Clinton doesn't even want to give this much. The other day Robert Reich, his labor secretary, declared the administration wants the minimum raised only to \$4.70 an hour. Yet still, the hacks of the AFL-CIO are praising Clinton and Reich to the skies.

What the workers need is not toadying to the capitalist politicians, but a fight against them. ■

ment rate. The tests so far have shown, among other things, that there are at least an additional 1.8 million people working part-time. Up to now they have been counted as full-time workers because they were holding more than one part-time job.

Today there is a lot of talk of a "restructuring" of the economy. The shift to part-time work is a large part of that restructuring. Of course some workers want or need part-time work. But the huge shift to part-time work now taking place makes it into a whole system where the part-time workers receive lower pay and fewer benefits (or none at all), are forced into irregular hours sometimes long and sometimes short, and have few if any rights on the job.

The capitalists reap huge profits off the extreme exploitation of these workers. And they also use them to intensify

the competition between workers to push down the wages and conditions of all the workers. The fight for full-time, perma-

nent jobs — and for equal pay, benefits and full rights for part-time workers — is a must for the working class. ■

Companies flout plant-closing law

Remember the last time the Democrats promised to stand up to the bosses and help the workers deal with layoffs? Four years ago the Democrats, with a great deal of fanfare, passed a law requiring that companies give their workers 60 days notice before mass layoffs. Of course such a law by itself would not protect jobs. But advanced notice might give workers time to organize to fight against the closing or, at a minimum, allow them to begin to look for another job.

Well, the General Accounting Office just did a study of the effects of the law. It found that more than half of the plant

closings it studied in 11 states gave less than 60 days notice to workers, and many gave no notice at all. Why so little compliance? Well, the Democrats wrote a whole series of loopholes into the law so that virtually any company that didn't want to give advanced notice could easily avoid it. But more than this. There is no government body enforcing the law and no fines if a company ignores it.

But then this is how the Democrats tend to jobs. They make a lot of promises to the workers, but it's the capitalists that get all the breaks. ■

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UCLA Institute of Industrial Relations, predicts that contract or temporary workers will expand from the current 24% of the work force to some 40% by the year 2000. ■

One million to march for gay rights, April 25

On April 25, a million people from around the country will converge on Washington, D.C. to demonstrate in support of the human rights of homosexuals. This march will demand an end to all discrimination against gays and lesbians, including an end to homophobia in education. It will also demand funding for the AIDS crisis and universal health care. The marchers will also express their stand against racism and the oppression of women.

The Marxist-Leninist Party supports the mobilization for this demonstration. All who can should go and join their voices to this outcry of protest against a type of bigotry that is still regarded as reasonable in many quarters of U.S. society.

Stand up to the right-wing "cultural war"

This year the fight against discrimination toward gays has special importance. The fight for the right of gays to be treated like human beings instead of social pariahs is presently a focus of the struggle against the right-wing of the capitalist establishment.

Since last summer, the forces of the religious and political right have embraced homophobia as the cutting edge of their effort to build a mass base for a reactionary offensive against all working people. The Republican Convention last year was used as a national platform to launch this offensive. Pat Buchanan called for a "cultural war" against gays, women, inner-city people (blacks), and all who oppose religious bigotry and state-sanctioned religion. In Colorado, the right wing succeeded in passing a bill outlawing all bans on anti-gay discrimination. With the defeat of Bush, the Christian right has declared that gay-bashing will now be their main organizing tool. They want to repeat their Colorado effort on a national scale.

During the late 70's and 80's, the right wing saw the anti-abortion crusade as the key front to recruit footsoldiers for their reactionary drive of militant imperialism, white supremacy, and the war on the workers and poor. In the last few years, however, the anti-abortion movement has run into trouble as a result of mass resistance. Despite support from the Reagan/Bush White House, the Supreme Court, and wealthy backers, the anti-abortion crusade has become increasingly isolated from the majority of American working people. The battle over abortion isn't over, but the same well-heeled forces of bigotry have decided to focus on gays as their prime target in the coming years.

The struggle against anti-gay bigotry isn't just a question for gays and lesbians. It is an important issue for all working people. Homophobia is just one more prejudice the rich use to divide the

working people and numb their minds to reality of life in capitalist America.

Is Clinton the answer?

How do we press forward the fight for gay rights? Is Bill Clinton our savior, as the establishment gay organizations claim and many people are today inclined to believe?

We say no.

Yes, we have a president who promotes a more tolerant attitude to gays than any previous occupant of the White House. During his campaign, he associated himself with gays, sought out gay votes, and promised action on such issues as ending the ban on gays in the military and funding for AIDS.

But Bill Clinton is no bulwark against the conservative wing of the ruling establishment. He has already shown a readiness to conciliate the right wing and wimp out on his election promises. And he hasn't even been in office all that long.

Take the ban on gays in the military. Instead of standing on his promise, Clinton worked out a deal which has postponed things for a few more months. This fight isn't over. There are signs that he may compromise on regulations which would end the ban on gays but allow segregation of gays and discriminatory regulations.

Take the question of lifting the ban on allowing HIV-positive immigrants. More than 200 Haitians who have been given temporary political refugee status are

linguishing in Guantanamo because the U.S. won't allow them into the mainland. They are on a hunger strike for a month now. Bill Clinton didn't issue an executive order ending this unjust ban. He hardly stirred against the Senate when it decided to make the ban into law.

The last 12 years of bigotry sanctioned from the White House should not lead us to lower our hopes and expectations because of arguments about political expediency. Bill Clinton should not be let off the hook simply because he's taking a few stands in support of gay rights. Bill Clinton's practice is to make minimal changes and to back off where change requires taking on powerful reactionary interests.

Liberalism on the cheap

What is more, it must not be forgotten that Clinton is not just an individual but he is the standard-bearer of the Democratic Party. And while his personal stand may be to wimp out on certain issues, there are others in his party who are champions of the conservative offensive. Senator Sam Nunn led the charge to defend the military's gay ban, and Democratic senators helped out on the vote on HIV-infected immigrants.

Clinton and the Democratic Party stand for spare-change liberalism, liberalism on the cheap. If we are content with this, this is all we are going to get.

Clinton and the Democrats are today poised to make the working people pay for the party which Reagan and Bush

threw for the rich for the last 12 years. They made plenty of promises about jobs, tax relief for the "middle class," and so forth. But in office, Clinton has discovered the national deficit, as if it wasn't under his nose all along. Sure, they talk of "fairness" and "everyone sacrificing," but it is no big secret that those who wield the power and wealth in America will do little sacrificing while the working people are going to get socked.

What path forward then?

It is essential to step up the fight for gay rights. It is also essential to make this fight a part of the broader agenda on behalf of all working and oppressed people. On both counts, a policy of relying on Clinton and the Democrats is a sure loser.

The establishment gay organizations would like to settle the issue of gay rights within the confines of capitalist politics. This is understandable for them. But any progressive gay person or any progressive supporter of gay rights rejects the narrow mentality of my rights only, you can oppress every one else.

The last 30 years' experience offers some guidelines on how we should proceed to advance the fight against anti-gay bigotry.

First it must be remembered that the fight for any one section of society proceeds best within a generalized social

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See GAY RIGHTS

Right wing wants showdown on gays in the military Clinton takes a wimpy stand

The controversy over lifting the ban on gays in the military is far from over.

Right-wing Christians like Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, militarist criminals like Ollie North, and other conservative politicians are mobilizing to pressure Congress and the White House to preserve the ban on allowing gays into the military. They are poisoning the airwaves and newspapers with the crudest and stupidest of lies and stereotypes in order to defend bigotry against gays.

The right-wing campaign should not be taken lightly. Already, opposition from the Pentagon brass and conservative politicians has succeeded in getting Clinton to adopt a wimpy stand on his promise to overturn the ban on gays in the military.

During the presidential campaign, as he sought votes from gays and other supporters of gay rights, Bill Clinton had said that he would issue an executive order ending the ban on gays in the military. Within days of his inauguration, however, he was confronted with opposition from the Pentagon and Congress. General Colin Powell and Democratic Senator Sam Nunn were in the forefront of this crusade. Senators and Congressmen — Democrats as well as Republicans — who had spent the last 12 years as easy doormats for Reagan and Bush now suddenly appeared to gain a backbone, not for any noble purpose but for a shameful defense of bigotry and prejudice.

Clinton was faced with a choice to stand on principle, to give up completely on his promise, or to find a compromise for reasons of political expediency. He chose political expediency.

An agreement was reached postponing any executive order. Instead, new recruits would no longer be asked their sexual orientation. In addition, Clinton agreed that while the military could continue to initiate discharge proceedings against avowed gays, they could not discharge anyone (unless they engaged in

"prohibited sexual conduct" — on or off duty). Rather, they would be taken off active duty and placed in standby reserve for six months, without pay or benefits. During the next six months, Clinton said Congress and the Pentagon are to draft regulations to address what he described as the "practical and not insignificant issues" raised by defenders of the ban. It is quite possible that this means that the regulations which will be drafted will conciliate anti-gay prejudices. Press reports have already indicated that proposals being discussed include separate barracks and showers for gays and straights and barring gays from combat duty.

The effort to keep gays out of the U.S. military goes back decades. However, in 1982 Reagan issued an executive order to enshrine it into law. This policy did not mean that there have been no gays in the military. Sure there have been. But the anti-gay order only intensified the long-standing practice of witch-hunts and officially-condoned violence against thousands of gay men and women. On average, the Defense Department discharges 1,500 men and women each year on charges of homosexuality. Beatings and killings of gays also take place as a result of the fervent homophobic atmosphere in the military. Many women have been discharged on the grounds of being lesbians because they resisted the unwanted sexual advances of superior officers.

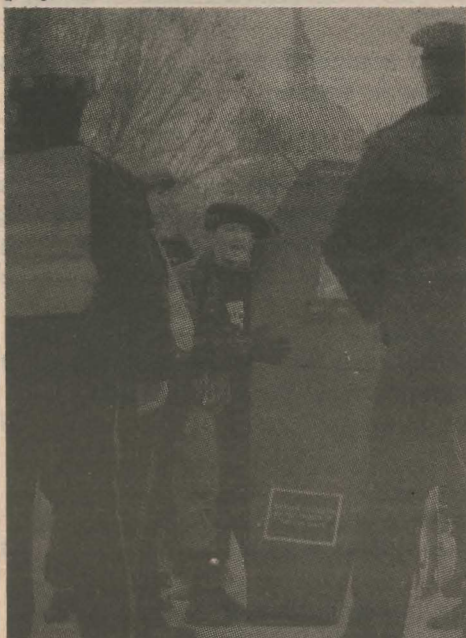
Many of the arguments used to defend the ban on gays were also used to justify segregation of blacks in the military before that was ended in the late 40's. Although racist prejudices are far from being eliminated in the military, the integration of the military over several decades has amply shown that all the arguments to defend segregation were totally false and simply covers for bigotry.

Ending the ban on homosexuals in the military is a matter of simple democratic rights.

As communists, we in the Marxist-Leninist Party are no friends of the U.S. military. This institution is not the popular and democratic defender of the people as our schools, media, and politicians teach us. Rather it is an instrument of American imperialism which has long been marauding the world. It has been used to kill hundreds of thousands of working and poor people, from Viet Nam to Iraq. It has also been used to massacre the Indians and, at times of domestic crisis, to keep down workers and black people here at home.

We do not campaign for an end to the ban on gays in the military because we want to strengthen this war machine or because we look forward, as establishment gay rights organizations do, to gays in the military performing honorable deeds on behalf of U.S. imperialism. But we recognize that no matter how abhorrent the nature of the military is, it is also a major social institution encompassing several million people. Most of the soldiers are ordinary working people who have joined either out of naivete over the character of the military or, even more likely, because they saw in the military a prospect for a job or the promise of job training. We believe that all social institutions should be free of social discrimination of any sort.

Beyond the issue of justice and democracy, the breaking down of all unreasoned prejudices in society's mass institutions is a good thing, because it brings working people shoulder to shoulder with one another, where they can find that the differences of race, sex, or sexual orientation should not be allowed to split and divide us. The more we defeat the divide-and-rule policies of the right wing and the establishment generally, the better we will position ourselves to fight together over the real interests which unite us — our class interests as the oppressed and exploited victims of profit-mad capitalism. ■



Activists were blocked when they tried to deliver Sen. Nunn a coffin symbolizing deaths of gay soldiers.

DOWN WITH RACISM!

Supreme Court sanctions execution of innocent

In a six to three ruling on January 25, the Supreme Court essentially declared that states have the right to execute prisoners — even if new evidence comes out after the trial showing their innocence.

The ruling was made in the case of Leonel Herrera. He was convicted and sentenced to death in 1982 for the killing of two cops in Texas. Three years later, his brother Raul told his lawyer that he had shot the two cops. He said it was over drugs and that at least one of the cops he had killed had been heavily involved in the smuggling operation. Raul speculated that his brother had been quickly railroaded because the police were afraid that an extensive investigation would uncover that the police department was involved in drug smuggling.

Raul was later shot to death by another participant in the drug ring. It was only then that Raul's lawyer told Leonel's lawyer of Raul's confession. It was then also that it came out that Raul's son, who was nine at the time of the murder, had told police that his father had shot the cops and that Leonel was not present at the time. Herrera has also presented statements from three other witnesses who had earlier named Raul as the killer.

But state courts have refused to hear the new evidence, and the Supreme Court agreed with them. Chief Justice Rehnquist, arguing for the majority, declared that the evidence of Herrera's innocence was without legal weight because, "Once a defendant has been afforded a fair trial and convicted of the offense for which he was charged, the presumption of innocence disappears."

Rehnquist also argued to rehear such cases would be too disruptive to the judicial system. "Because of the very

disruptive effect that entertaining claims of actual innocence would have on the need for finality in capital cases, and the enormous burden that having to retry cases based on often stale evidence would place on the states, the threshold showing for such an assumed right would necessarily be extraordinarily high."

Rehnquist claimed that Herrera's new evidence was not good enough. He declared that only "truly persuasive" evidence with an "extraordinarily high" chance of success in a new trial might be

an exception to the rule and be considered by federal courts.

This ruling is another in a long line making it harder for people on death row to get a fair hearing. The Supreme Court is pushing for quickly executing people to clear the decks of some 2,400 inmates who are on death row nationwide. But studies have found that at least 350 innocent people have been sentenced to death since 1900. Most of these convictions were later overturned. But at least 23 people were executed. And this is only

those cases where very strong evidence turned up because someone had the time, energy and money to push the cases through legal channels. Studies have also shown that there is strong racial bias in the sentencing of people to death. A black person convicted of killing a white person, for example, is five to six times more likely to be sentenced to death in Florida and Texas — and 11 times more likely in Georgia — than a white person killing a black person. ■

Justice for Ricardo Aldape Guerra!

"What do we want for Ricardo?" shouted a protest leader January 17. "Justice and freedom!" replied 275 demonstrators as they marched through an east-side barrio of Houston, Texas. The marchers included construction workers, office cleaners and farm workers. They denounced the courts for turning down Ricardo's latest appeal on January 13.

This is the fourth march in Houston in support of Ricardo in the last year. There have also been protests around the country. Last August, one hundred people marched in San Francisco's Mission district. In May, some 300 marchers from Mexico and the U.S. linked arms on the international bridge between Brownsville, Texas and Matamoros, Mexico. As well, there have been demonstrations in Mexico City, Monterrey and other Mexican cities. And tens of thousands of people have signed petitions demanding justice for Ricardo.

He has now been on death row for 10 years. In 1982 he came to Houston from Monterrey looking for work. But in a wave of anti-immigrant hysteria he was jailed and convicted of killing a Houston cop.



'Stop execution of Ricardo Aldape Guerra!' say San Fran. marchers, Aug. 30.

Since his trial, a good deal of new evidence and new witnesses have been uncovered proving that Ricardo was innocent. New witnesses testify that when Ricardo and a companion, Roberto Carrasco Flores, were stopped for a traffic violation, it was Carrasco who shot the cop while Ricardo had his hands on the hood of the police car. Carrasco was shot and killed by police who arrived at the scene later. As well, police tests didn't find any trace metal from the murder weapon on Guerra's hands while

there were traces on Carrasco's. It has come out that the state hid this evidence and at least one witness from Ricardo's lawyers. As well, a 10-year-old witness against Ricardo was not able to identify him in a line-up and could not have actually seen the shooting anyway.

Despite these facts, state and federal courts have refused to reopen the case and hear the new evidence. At present, Ricardo is once again waiting for the courts to set an execution date. ■

IN BRIEF

Killer cops whitewashed in Cleveland

Hundreds of people have been demonstrating against the murder by Cleveland police of a 23-year-old black man, Michael Pipkins.

Cops grabbed Pipkins on December 28 for suspicion of car theft. One cop put him in a chokehold while the other cop handcuffed him. He never regained consciousness.

100 people joined a protest at Pipkins' funeral. A hundred people also demonstrated in front of a police station with signs saying "No more Rodney Kings!" And on January 14, protesters gathered at the Cleveland City Hall to denounce Cleveland Mayor Michael White for covering up for the police. The day before the local coroner ruled the killing a "homicide during legal intervention," and thus exonerated the police. At the rally, Pipkins' stepfather declared, "We want the police to be put on trial!" ■

Transit police denounced in Oakland

About 50 people demonstrated outside the headquarters of the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) in Oakland, California on January 14. They protested the killing of one black man and the arrest of another by transit cops last November. The protesters then confronted officials at a hearing on BART police procedures.

The police account of the incident is

highly suspicious. They claim that it began when someone called a subway train operator on an intercom and reported the robbery of a walkman radio. When the train pulled into the next station about 50 people got off, including Jerrold Hall and John Henry Owens.

Then a BART cop named Fred Crabtree, accompanied by a German shepherd, approached the two men in the parking lot. It is then claimed that Hall tried to take the officer's gun away — and the highly-trained police dog did nothing. Then the passenger who had initially reported the robbery, and had not made any contact yet with the police, is supposed to have suddenly run out into the parking lot and, pointing to Hall and Owens, shouted, "That's them!" This mysterious person then ran off and hasn't been seen since. Hall was shot in the back of the head. Owens was arrested for felony robbery. About 30 people came out to his arraignment on January 13 to show their support. ■

No to INS murder!

More than 200 people marched January 15 in Tucson, Arizona. They protested the acquittal of an Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) Border Patrol Agent, Michael Elmer, by a state court. He had been charged with the murder of a Mexican immigrant, Dario Miranda Valenzuela. The protesters demanded that he be charged with feder-

al civil rights violations.

The demonstrators included students from the University of Arizona, Pima College, and from as far away as the University of Texas in El Paso. About two dozen high school students joined the march as it passed Tucson High School and headed downtown. ■

Mexican youth fight cops

Hundreds of mostly Mexican-American youth threw bottles and bricks at the police in Salinas, California at the end of January. The youth were outraged at the murder of a 19 year old by policemen as he came out of a 7-11 store. The unarmed youth was shot in the back four times and died on the spot.

Around the same time, another 19-year-old youth was chased by about 20 cops in Watsonville. Eye witnesses say the police beat him and pushed him into the river. His body has not been found. ■

Anti-KKK demonstration in Austin, Texas

About 5,000 people kept up loud drumbeats and songs at the Texas State Capitol on January 16. They drowned out the 40 Ku Klux Klan members who, with the protection of hundreds of riot-equipped police surrounding them, tried to hold a rally opposing the holiday for the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Austin's liberal city council had urged people to stay away from the Capitol and ignore the Klan rally. But the anti-racist protesters gave the KKK hell. Eight people were arrested for throwing eggs

at the Klansmen. Eventually the KKK members had to be whisked away to safety by the police. ■

Rally for bilingual education in Chicago

1,000 people rallied for bilingual education in Chicago February 16. Most were Latino. But the crowd at the University of Illinois Circle Campus also included Arab, Polish, Asian, and African-American groups. Parents and students spoke out against cutbacks and called for the expansion of bilingual programs. Spirited slogans were chanted. And placards sported messages like "Bilingual is better!" "No cutbacks!" and "Cut Phillips!"

James "Pate" Phillips, State of Illinois Majority Senate Republican leader, called right after the November elections for cutbacks in bilingual education. His reactionary call quickly gave rise to a demonstration and numerous meetings in favor of bilingual education. ■

Deal made with one of the racist torchers in Tampa, Florida

On February 17, police made a deal with Jeffrey Pellet. He is one of three racists who kidnaped Christopher Wilson, a black man from New York who was taking a vacation in Florida. The three whites robbed him, taunted him with racial slurs, doused him with gasoline and set him afire.

Police agreed to allow Pellet to plead guilty to lesser charges in exchange for his testimony against the other two white racists. ■

'MANAGED COMPETITION'

Profits for insurance companies, second-rate care for workers

Clinton's health program puts cost control in the forefront. Over and over during his campaign, he promised to save money; in New Jersey, he talked of a \$700 billion savings by the end of the century.

But where are the savings to come from? Indeed, now the health commission headed by Hillary Clinton is wondering whether to postpone the promised reforms.

Clinton has not yet spelled out his program, other than calling for "managed competition" and cost control. But we can get some idea of the outlines of what he is pondering by examining the main ideas coming from his appointees and friends and the discussion of the health commission.

What is "managed competition"?

Managed competition means preserving the crazy-quilt pattern of private market medicine. This system is to be regulated or "managed"; national standards are to be set up to regulate what the insurance companies can do. And there may be overall national caps on spending.

The alternative would be a unified national system for at least the financing of health care — as a number of people are proposing — and preferably for even more of the health care system. Canada, for example, has a system that deals solely with financing treatment. There is universal health coverage (province by province) that finances most health care for Canadian residents. Everyone is covered, and there is no role whatsoever for insurance companies except for those medical procedures not covered by the provincial plans. There is good quality of care, patient choice of doctor, and peace of mind for Canadians, who do not worry about whether they will lose their health coverage or pay increased insurance premiums if they get ill. Moreover, the Canadian health system spends one-half as much for administrative forms and paper-shuffling as the U.S. system.

It will not do away with the insurance companies

Managed competition, by way of contrast, preserves the private insurance companies. This means letting them keep the huge amount of money, one out of every eight dollars they receive in premiums, that they reserve for administrative costs, profits, etc.

The plan is to set up regional super-agencies which will add another layer between the purchasers of health insurance and the insurance companies. Individuals purchasing insurance, or companies insuring their workforce, would subscribe through the regional super-agency. The super-agencies will then provide insurance by contracting it out among the insurance companies. The super-agencies, as giant purchasers of health insurance in each region, will seek to use their clout to get the best bargain. They will also demand that the insurance companies obey certain conditions. Clinton has promised that these conditions include not being able to exclude people with pre-existing conditions or force out people with expensive diseases.

Thus the money for an insurance policy will be collected by the super-agency. The agency will then pass along the money to an insurance company, which in turn will pay out money to the health providers (doctors, hospitals, etc.) as necessary for the care of the insured individuals — or rather, as is covered by their insurance policy.

But if the super-agency is already collecting the insurance premiums,

wouldn't it be simpler if it itself dealt with the health providers? Apparently the only reason for preserving the insurance companies is to satisfy the powerful monied interests that run the insurance companies. They are to be allowed to keep their piece of the action. When it comes to the profits of the privileged, cost control goes out the window.

Thus managed competition amounts to an additional layer of bureaucracy in

to offer at least a standard package of benefits. But many Clinton advisers suggest that the tax exemption for medical insurance (workers are not now taxed for company-paid health plans) might be wholly or partially removed for plans that provide more than the minimum plan. For example, if your plan includes braces for your children, and the minimum plan excludes orthodontic work, you will be penalized. If your plan includes drug and

ance company an average amount.

This is supposed to provide an incentive to the insurance company to put pressure on the doctors and patients to economize. If the individual gets a lot of treatment, the insurance company will lose money, since its payments to the doctors and hospitals will be less than what it gets from the super-agency. But if the individual gets less treatment than the national average, the insurance company will pocket the money it has saved.

But such economizing means more and more restrictions on treatment. Already patients are finding it harder and harder to get insurance companies to authorize treatment. Horror stories and court cases are increasing over the denial of care. The levers of cost control proposed under managed competition would spur on the insurance companies to be more hard-fisted and deny more care.

The savings may go to the deficit, not to better health care

With all this emphasis on cost control, where will all the supposed savings go?

Right after Clinton's inauguration, it was debated among Clinton appointees whether it should go back into the health care system, or to reduce the budget deficit. Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala wanted it to go to extending care towards universal coverage. But Budget Director Leon Panetta began talking about cuts in Medicare and Medicaid in order to solve the deficit problem.

Since then, there is less talk of managed competition bringing in much of a savings. Instead there is talk of simply cutting medical expenditures. The health commission has not yet brought in its plan, but the Clinton administration is already proposing cuts in Medicare and Medicaid. A reduction in how much these programs pay for various procedures is being proposed. If this is implemented without any other reform, it will simply mean reducing the care available under these programs. It will not be health care reform, but ordinary squeezing of the elderly and the poor, as proposed earlier by Bush.

There will not be free choice

Another feature of managed competition is the reliance on managed care plans. This is being touted as things like health maintenance organizations (HMOs). A quality HMO can be a real blessing, if you can afford it. But cut-rate HMOs, based on a minimum plan of service, and grudgingly authorizing any treatment, are a dead weight on the workers.

Such tyranny is not a necessary feature of national health insurance. A number of countries with national plans, like Canada, have avoided it. But it will be a feature of what many workers will face under managed competition. The competition referred to in managed competition is among insurance companies and the big health providers, not the free choice of patients.

Part of the problem, not the solution

Managed competition means putting off radical health reform. It has much in common with the Republican school of health reform — make it harder for the workers to seek health care, and justify this as cost control. It also has a number of promises that appeal to people: universal care, coverage despite pre-existing conditions, relief from rapidly escalating

"Managed competition" means putting off radical health reform. It has much in common with the Republican school of health reform -- make it harder for workers to seek health care, and justify this as cost control. It also has a number of promises that appeal: universal care, coverage despite pre-existing conditions, relief from rapidly escalating insurance premiums.

But how can these promises be carried out on the basis of the same old system of insurance companies and private health providers that is at the root of the present crisis?

the health care chain. It sets up agencies that could replace the insurance companies, but instead just funnels money to them.

Under the present patchwork system, administrative expenses take up to 20% of the entire health care budget. The private insurance companies are responsible for the biggest share of this. Indeed, dealing with insurance companies results in an astonishing amount of paperwork and overhead for doctors and hospitals, and often for the patients too. Under managed competition, no major savings can be expected. Perhaps, if the government succeeds in standardizing insurance forms, a bit of saving may result. But it is also possible that the added level of bureaucracy in managed competition will actually increase the overhead.

It will not be universal

Some enthusiasts for managed competition say that it will cover everyone. But it should be noted that this is a promise, not an essential part of the system. Managed competition in itself only means regulating the present system. It does not provide universal coverage unless someone can be found to pay for it.

Indeed, in his election campaign Clinton talked about a gradual process for extending coverage to everyone. This means that universal coverage is only something for the future, and not an essential part of the system. Clinton said that more and more presently uninsured people would be covered as the system became more efficient. The savings would be used to extend coverage to more people. Of course, if the promised savings never materialize, then neither will the universal coverage.

Now that Clinton is in office, the talk is that the promised savings aren't going to be there, not for years, and that universal coverage would cost a lot of money. Advisers to the health commission say that universal coverage would cost too much, about \$40 billion a year. There is one trial balloon after another being floated about putting off universal coverage. Some say put it off for another four years. Others say, consider extending coverage to all children in the next four years, but forget about adults for the time being.

Discouraging health care in the name of cost control

The plan seeks cost control through setting financial penalties for utilizing health care.

For example, under managed competition every insurance company is supposed

alcohol abuse treatment, and the minimum plan does not, you will pay and pay.

Thus managed competition, instead of encouraging wider utilization of health care, will mean discouraging health care. It will not mean preventing unnecessary operations and overmedication (both of which are a real problem), but penalizing workers for absolutely necessary care that is not part of a minimum plan. Much of its cost control will come from less utilization of health care, or from shifting the cost for expensive procedures onto the workers.

But this is not being presented as a burden. Why no. It will simply be the use of market mechanisms in order to cut down the price of medical care. Believe it or not, putting financial pressure on the workers is supposed to result in pressure on the hospitals and doctors to keep costs low. The Clinton advisers, and the Republicans too, say that the reason for inflated health costs is that people don't worry about how much is spent on health, since their plans provide everything free.

This however is utterly absurd. Tens and tens of millions of working people are already up in arms over escalating medical bills and premiums. Almost 40 million people are totally uninsured, tens of millions of more people have inadequate coverage, and yet more are worried about losing their coverage. Millions more worry about the high price of prescription drugs, and some retirees have to forego medicine or eat cat food because they can't afford both food and their prescriptions. If all this hasn't put pressure on the insurance companies, the hospitals, the doctors, and the drug companies to keep prices down, then why will an additional tax on workers' health care suddenly control costs now?

A health tax on the workers and the poor will not control costs. It will simply cut the amount of health care they can receive.

Other pressure for less treatment

Another proposed lever of cost control is that the super-agencies will use a new method of reimbursing the insurance companies. When they give out contracts to the insurance companies, they will not pay the insurance companies for the amount of treatment used by each patient. Instead, they will reimburse the insurance companies based on the general health condition of the group of people being insured. They will estimate how much treatment is usually required by such people, and then pay the insur-

Continued on next page
See COMPETITION

National health care in Britain, Sweden and Canada

The health care system in the U.S. is in crisis. Some 37 million people lack health insurance, and millions more have inadequate coverage. But while the medical system has failed to deliver good coverage for the masses, it has led the world in runaway price inflation. The health system based on the profiteering of private insurance companies, hospitals, drug companies and doctors is just not working.

Many people are looking to various forms of nationalized health care in Canada and some Western European countries as an alternative. In general, these national health care systems provide better medical care for the masses than the U.S. They offer universal coverage with little out-of-pocket expenses or costly private insurance.

However, while the nationalized systems have shown their superiority to our "private-market" model, they also show the limits of any health care arrangement under capitalism. Wherever a wealthy elite runs society, any reforms benefiting the masses tend to be partial and subject to being dismantled.

The national health care systems are no exception. In some countries, chronic underfunding has long caused problems. Since the 80's, there has been a more general and intense effort to keep down government health expenditures as a way to solve capitalist economic and fiscal crises.

Not only are budgets being cut, the nationalized systems are being reorganized by introducing "market incentives." The purpose of these incentives is to make health care systems less like a social service, and more like a profit-hungry business. Also, by punching gaps in the system, they open up places for private firms to do business, thus helping entrepreneurs find places to make a buck.

The result? The budget-tightening and market reforms are reducing the quality of health care for the workers and poor and increasing the cost burden on them. In some cases it means driving down the conditions of the hospital employees, especially the lower ranks. The more public health services decline, the more the field is open for profiteering by the private sector. The sum total of all these developments is that the former single standard for treatment in the nationalized systems is starting to break down. More and more, the quality of health care will depend on how much money you have.

Market reforms undermine British health service

To get a better idea of what has been going on, it is useful to take a quick look at the British system because of the extent of the changes there.

The modern British health care system dates back to the post-World War II Labor government. The government basically nationalized the existing private health services and took over financing of the whole system. Virtually free health care was established for the entire population, funded by national, general taxes. Hospital-based physicians became salaried public employees, and the government contracted the services of general practitioners who were independent but closely integrated into the whole system. And it laid stress on maintaining contact between the population and a large number

of general practitioners, distributed across the country.

Beginning in the mid-70's, a concerted effort began to introduce more market principles into the National Health Services (NHS). This involved various fiscal austerity measures of the Labor government. But the process really took off under Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the 80's.

Thatcher went on a spree of selling off nationalized enterprises. But even though the NHS had been suffering from underfunding, it was still popular enough that handing it all over to private capitalists would have been political suicide. The NHS remained. But Thatcher began a series of reforms to create an "internal market" within the NHS which fragmented it into different parts competing against each other like individual capitalist enterprises.

For example, since 1991, some NHS hospitals could become "self-governing trusts." These hospitals still get government funds. But they can keep any surplus funds as profit for themselves rather than return the surpluses to the government as before. They can compete for patients and sell their services to other hospitals. The original plans for these self-managed hospitals also allowed them to get out of union contracts negotiated with the NHS, although we are not sure if this has been enacted. Moreover, hospitals have long had the right to threaten their workers with subcontracting and to take competitive bidding for laundry, domestic and catering services with private firms, and this was made mandatory for all hospitals in 1985.

The competition for funds will lead to greater inequality between hospitals since the surplus of one hospital will come at the expense of funds that would have gone to other hospitals. But providing quality care is not the point of these reforms. Present Prime Minister John Major says he is excited about self-governing hospitals because they will be more ruthless in slicing staff.

Indeed, the market reforms have already taken a heavy toll on hospital workers. Laundry, domestic and catering service workers in the hospitals usually win their bidding wars against the private companies. But they have paid a great cost for these "victories." The number of such workers has dramatically declined as have their wages and benefits and working conditions.

The 1991 reforms in the NHS also affected the general practitioners. These doctors have traditionally played the role of referring patients to other medical treatment. Now, in addition to the usual funds they get from the government for their services, many larger practices will get a sum based on NHS projections of the cost of potential referrals of their patients. The practitioners do not actually have to refer the patients, however. They can keep any surplus money if they treat the patient themselves. This is obviously a powerful incentive to cut corners on treatment.

The deterioration of the NHS has been accompanied by growth of the private health care industry. For instance, the crisis in NHS acute care services, typified by long waiting lists for elective surgery, has helped fuel the market for private insurance and hospitals. About 70% of acute care is currently funded by private insurance. In the early days of the NHS, insurance was virtually non-existent. Now 15% of the population has some sort of health insurance. Among the well-off strata of managers and professionals, about 70% have insurance. Wherever the "free market" goes, gross disparities in health care follow.

The same story in Sweden

Similar market reforms are going on

in Sweden and other Nordic countries which have nationalized health services. These systems had developed a reputation as among the best in the world in terms of providing extensive and universal care. But as in Britain, the capitalist economy has been putting the squeeze on the health care budgets. For example, in Finland there was expected to be a 15-20% cut in the health budget for 1992.

Contributing to the budget crunch has been the pressure from the European Community to reduce public spending as a condition of integrating the European economies. Finland has also been pressured by the loss of traditional trade relations with Eastern Europe following the recent collapse of the Soviet-bloc regimes.

Like Britain, Sweden is moving toward a system where hospitals and clinics are "self-managed." Instead of getting an automatically allocated budget from the government, the hospital will compete for contracts with the government and private sources and will sink or swim on the basis of the revenues it can generate.

General practitioners in Sweden were at one time salaried employees. Reforms have changed this so that they get paid something like the present general practitioners in Britain. In Sweden, many physicians themselves worry that this reform will cause doctors to substitute financial considerations for sound medical judgment. There is also concern that by encouraging doctors to build up their

charge was \$400 a year for an individual and \$816 for a family. This is mitigated by the fact that about a third of the provincial population is exempt from these fees.

The gaps in the national insurance are big enough that a sizable private insurance market exists. 60% of Canadians have private plans to supplement the provincial insurance. Patients have also had to deal with the illegal but common practice of "extra-billing" by doctors and health facilities not satisfied with the amount paid by public insurance.

Nationalized health care and efficiency

The market reforms of the nationalized systems are often carried out in the name of "efficiency." These measures may squeeze more out of the hospital employees and may help cut government expenditures. But in terms of providing good health care for all and not just those that can afford it, these reforms are not at all efficient. The multi-layered profiteering and wasteful anarchic development of private sector health care creates huge costs and huge gaps in care.

One need look no further than the private U.S. system for proof. While the U.S. provides an inferior health care system, per capita health spending in 1990 was 45% higher in the U.S. than in Canada, and 164% higher than in the United Kingdom. The U.S. is now the world leader in health care sector infla-

While the nationalized systems have shown their superiority to our "private-market" model, they also show the limits of any health care arrangement under capitalism. Wherever a wealthy elite runs society, any reforms benefiting the masses tend to be partial and subject to being dismantled.

individual practices, the successful system of preventative care provided by doctors and support personnel at public clinics will be undermined.

In all the Nordic countries, the private insurance and hospital sector has also been encouraged to grow.

National health insurance in Canada

Unlike countries like Great Britain and Sweden, Canada does not have a government-run system encompassing hospitals and doctors. There is instead universal health insurance run by each province, according to nationally-set standards, with general tax revenues from the federal and provincial governments. Private insurers exist, but they are forbidden from offering coverage for services covered by the provincial plans. The system provides access to medical care for all Canadians, though it is not as comprehensive as the British or Swedish types.

Since it was founded in 1971, the national health insurance has experienced budget pressures. The federal government has reduced its share of funding for the insurance from a high of 50% to a 1990 level of 38%, shifting more of the cost burdens onto provincial governments. In turn, the provinces have made a number of cutbacks in services. For example, in 1986 five provinces excluded osteopathic physicians from insurance coverage and placed greater limits on eye care, dental care, foot specialists and chiropractors. There are waiting lists for some procedures, but nothing like the horror stories spread by the health care establishment in the U.S.

As well, some provinces charge for health insurance. In Ontario in 1986, the

tion — and, especially since 1985, by a wide margin.

The potential of socialism

Medical care for profit is one of the great crimes of capitalism. As we have seen, a nationalized health care system can improve things. Still, these national systems exist in a capitalist environment which inevitably takes its toll.

This means that as we fight for a national health care system today we must also look beyond the framework of the capitalist system. If the partial limitation of private-profit health insurance, hospitals and doctors can produce positive results, why not go on to end private sector medicine completely? Why not step-by-step do away with private ownership of production in society as a whole so that production can be made to serve the masses? The nationalized systems are not socialist, but they hint at the potential promise that socialism would bring. ■

COMPETITION

Continued from previous page

insurance premiums. But how can these promises be carried out on the basis of the same old system of insurance companies and private health providers that is at the root of the present crisis? ■

Health care for all!

Continued from front page

right. The various private interests — insurance companies, drug companies, health companies — compete for profits, and they make a mockery of any rational system of utilization or pricing.

There must be radical change that cuts back this thicket of private interests.

The insurance companies were supposed to make the system of marketplace medicine affordable. Instead they not only proved incapable of dealing with the present health care crisis, they are part of the crisis. One-out of every five dollars spent on health care goes for administrative and billing expenses, a large part of which is due to the system of private insurance. The insurance companies must be entirely replaced by a national health plan. The experience of many countries with world-standard universal care systems shows that insurance companies are entirely unnecessary.

The drug companies, according to a government report at the end of February, spend many dollars on advertising and developing useless new brands of existing drugs, for every dollar they spend on research into new drugs. The cost of prescriptions is bankrupting patients, while the drug companies rake in far bigger profits than any comparable companies. And the huge, expensive promotional campaigns of the drug companies reinforce medicine as pill-pushing. These companies cannot be reformed by a bit of price control, but must be thoroughly overhauled, or faced with the competition of national drug research houses, or nationalized.

The hospital system must be radically reformed or, if necessary, taken under national control. The present patchwork system of hospitals funnels the bulk of health care money, and does it badly. Rural hospitals are closing down; city trauma centers are closing down; while a few favored hospitals rake in big bucks. Moreover, the present hospital administrations have proved incapable of rational utilization of health resources: they serve as the frontmen for the overinflated prices of health companies. The present hospital system is not only incapable of exerting discipline on the medical companies that provide their resources, it itself takes its own cut.

The doctors work in a system that makes the majority of them into a privileged elite, isolated from the other health workers and earning in the top 1% of incomes. This is not just a source of

price inflation, it is bad for medicine. It has resulted in a lack of general practitioners and a glut of specialists, in a lack of general care and a widespread callous attitude of many doctors toward mere patients and mere health workers. It encourages assembly-line medicine where the doctor barely takes a look at you, due to the high cost of doctors' time, and it places numerous hurdles in the path of those dedicated doctors who want to really make a difference.

"Managed competition" is more of the same

If instead of radical change, there is mere paper shuffling, then nothing will change. In that case, "cost control" will mean cutting back on care for the working people, while overall health costs soar. The Republican plan of simply subsidizing the system of private insurance means pouring gasoline on a fire. And the Clinton plan of "managed competition" is managed disaster; it just adds another layer of bureaucrats to the hodgepodge of conflicting interests.

Don't trust big words, ask for results

Clinton will soon present his plan. Don't trust empty words. Ask what his plan really means.

Will he really provide universal care? Or will he put it off until his next term, or till the next century, or until the next coming of Halley's comet?

Will his "cost control" mean curbing the obscene profits, and even more obscene bungling, of the health elite? Or will it mean rationing health care, cutting back on care for the poor and the elderly, and even taxing all health benefits above an inadequate minimum?

Don't leave things in the hands of the elite!

The workers, the minorities, the residents of the inner-cities, must have their own voice on the issue of health. The vast mass of the underprivileged must intervene if it is to ensure its right to health care. Don't leave things in the hands of the corporate elite and their political spokespeople! Don't leave things to be worked out in a deal between the insurance companies, the corporations, and the Clinton administration! Let's do our best to make sure that health care reform has something to do with the needs of the workers and the poor.

Health care for all! ■

Health care in brief: A system in crisis

Drug company highs

The drug companies are flagrant profiteers, who exploit the sick with sky-high prices of prescription drugs. This is the only conclusion one can reach from the figures in a study just released at the end of February by the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), a bipartisan Congressional agency.

The drug companies whine about their high expenses. But they make billions of dollars in profit, at a rate of 13 to 14%, which the OTA says is several percentage points higher than the rate earned by other successful, high-technology, high-risk firms. This is aside from the extravagant salaries and benefits of the executives, which are officially listed as an expense of the company, rather than as profits.

Perhaps even more importantly, these companies plow huge amounts of money into work to distort the practice of medicine. 22.5% of their total revenue, almost one dollar out of every four, goes to advertising and promotion. This amounts to a whopping \$10 billion a year. This, in our opinion, is not only extravagant, but it distorts the practice of medicine. Doctors are given free samples and expensive promotional material, and seduced into giving drugs for everything, and to giving the most expensive brand at that, even though other brands are sometimes not only cheaper, but a lot better and safer.

It is true that the drug companies spend a lot of money on research. But this only amounts to \$8 billion a year,

less than the promotional budget. Worse yet, the OTA found that most of the \$8 billion of research is spent on creating duplicate brands of existing drugs. They spend the least money on developing new drugs, and they pester Congress until they get special incentives for research.

When you can't afford your prescrip-

tion, remember that most of the price for the really expensive stuff goes for advertising, profits, high executive salaries, and useless duplication of effort. Only the teeniest part goes for the actual production of the drug or for research into new wonder drugs. This is a sterling example of private enterprise at work. ■

Growing poverty is a major cause of the health crisis

A panel of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) issued a report at the end of February saying that American health standards were stagnating. It pointed to the spread of tuberculosis, syphilis and other diseases, and said that society was increasingly split into the insured and uninsured. And why? Most of the health problems were due to "a growing division between the haves and the have-nots in our society."

In fact, poverty is a leading cause of

health problems, and even of the escalation of health costs. For example, the growth of poverty has escalated the ranks of those on Medicaid, who receive inadequate health care while the government pays inflated prices for it.

The NAS also suggested that perhaps one-third to one-half the gap between the mortality rates of middle-age blacks and whites could be inadequate access to health care, caused by poverty and the lack of health insurance. ■

Blaming the people for the health crisis

The American Medical Association (AMA), mouthpiece for establishment doctors, issued a study claiming that almost one out of every four dollars spent on health care goes for correcting the products of a bad life-style. They referred to the cost of cigarette smoking, drug and alcohol abuse, crime and other "life-style" issues.

The hidden message of the AMA study is, don't blame the medical profession for the health crisis, it's all the fault of the screwed-up patients. Let them pay for their sins.

This type of anti-people attitude from doctors and the health establishment is one of the reasons why there aren't enough drug treatment programs in this country, and why many health plans exclude treatment for various life-style

ills. Instead of taking a public health approach to such problems as addiction, obstacles are placed in the way of seeking a cure.

Moreover, the AMA did not point out that poverty was a prime cause of many health care problems, and of the intensification of many life-style issues. Nor did the AMA note the connection between an individual's life-style and the nature of the surrounding society. When it is a question of looking at the former Soviet Union, it is common to note the connection between rampant alcoholism and the rotten nature of the bureaucratic regime there. But when it is drinking and drug-taking in the U.S., it is all supposed to be a matter of the perverse reaction of individuals to a society of alleged opportunity and freedom. ■

Courts allow insurers to deny necessary medical care

These days patients are finding it harder and harder to get their insurance companies and health maintenance organizations to authorize needed care. The patients have to learn how to fight their way through a bureaucratic maze of paperwork and appeal processes.

Meanwhile the courts have shrugged at the problem.

For example, Florence Corcoran was having a difficult pregnancy and her doctor recommended prenatal hospitalization. United Healthcare Inc. refused to authorize it, and the baby died. Ms. Corcoran sued United for malpractice. And the judge, Carolyn Dineen King, held that United might indeed have made a "serious mistake."

The result? The judge ruled that United wasn't liable for anything. She held that the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) gives United free rein to do what it pleased

with respect to medical review.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, commenting on this and similar cases, "In cases where reviewers have been held liable for their medical decisions, the courts typically don't award punitive damages or damages for such claims as emotional distress and loss of companionship. Instead, ERISA usually entitles successful plaintiffs only to the cost of the care they were denied." (Nov. 25, 1992)

Thus the health insurers have little to fear from the courts if they deny treatment. At worst, they may have to pay the cost of the treatment they denied. Even if their denial of health care leads to a death.

Unless the workers organize for their rights, "cost control" will deny them of any certainty of medical care even if they are covered by insurance or a health maintenance plan. ■

Clinton calls for vaccinating children — sort of

Health care is going backward. Only 40-60% of preschool children get the recommended vaccinations, and in some inner-city neighborhoods it is more like one in 10 children. Only at the time of enrollment in school, for which vaccination is required, do the children get the shots, and even then, perhaps not in the medically-approved manner. As a result, there is an increasing danger of the spread of measles and other childhood diseases.

In the last 10 years the cost of vac-

cines has skyrocketed. The recommended battery of childhood vaccinations cost \$23 in 1982, but \$224 ten years later. This is still the same vaccine, but the price has skyrocketed. It is the same vaccine that is sold in other countries for a fraction of the cost. This excessive profit-taking in the U.S. is one of the factors holding down the rate of vaccination, although a few states buy vaccine and distribute it to doctors free.

Continued on page 10
See VACCINATIONS

Clinton reverses Reagan-Bush decrees but leaves anti-abortion restrictions

On January 22, President Clinton overturned five anti-abortion decrees of the Reagan/Bush administrations.

What Clinton overturned

- He did away with the "gag rule" of 1988 which prohibited even mentioning abortion at health clinics receiving federal funds.

- He ended the ban on using fetal tissue from abortions for medical research — research which had shown much promise in fighting several diseases.

- He ordered research to determine whether RU-486, the French abortion pill, is medically safe. If the health authorities give the OK, they will lift the ban on importing it for personal use. RU-486 has also shown much promise in treating various diseases, but research too had been crippled by an inability to obtain it due to interference from the U.S. government.

- He canceled the ban on U.S. aid to international humanitarian organizations that, as part of their activities, provided any abortion information or services.

- And finally, he reversed a 1988 directive barring abortion at military medical facilities. Now, if the woman pays for it, she may receive an abortion there.

A religious dictatorship

These regulations deserved to be reversed. They were vindictive and ugly rules. They mandated lies in the name of medical advice; they interfered with medical research into contraception and various diseases; and they burdened women seeking abortions.

These rules showed that Reagan, Bush, and the religious right wing weren't just out to exercise their own ethical choice about contraception and abortion. Instead they are holy dictators who want to deny anyone else's right to their own values. They are people-haters who would rather see the whole world perish than see each woman exercise the right to her own choice and her own values.

Even some opponents of abortion had doubts about some of these rules, for example, those with relatives and loved ones suffering from diseases which might be controlled or cured by RU-486 or with the use of fetal tissue.

Abortion rights remain out of reach for many women

Reversing such policies is about as far as Clinton seems willing to go. Yet there is a great deal more to do if women are really to have the right to choose.

It is becoming harder and harder for many women to obtain an abortion. The Supreme Court has gutted the *Roe v. Wade* decision legalizing abortion, and allowed the states to pile up one restriction after another. There are fewer and fewer hospitals that perform abortion, and fewer and fewer medical schools that teach doctors about abortion. The Clinton administration would leave most of these obstacles intact.

Won't the Freedom of Choice Act guarantee abortion rights?

But wait. What about the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA), that has bounced around Congress for several years. Doesn't it stand a chance of passing now that Clinton is president?

It does.

But this act basically accepts the present status quo, where abortion is legal in theory, but there are a lot of restrictions in practice. It is promoted as a way of preventing the Supreme Court from reversing the *Roe v. Wade* decision which legalized abortion. But it actually accepts the present stand of the Supreme

Court, which preserves *Roe v. Wade* in name, but allows the states to impose heavy restrictions on abortion. These restrictions have no other purpose than preventing as many women as possible from having abortions, but the Supreme Court says fine, so long as it isn't an "undue burden." This stand by the Supreme Court means that there will continue to be state by state battles over abortion. The FOCA will preserve this situation.

For one thing, this year's version of the act in the House of Representatives contains an amendment that specifically allows states to force teenage women to have "adult involvement" before getting an abortion. This would permit states to continue imposing "parental consent" and "parental notification" restrictions.

The FOCA also allows haggling over the time of viability of fetuses, and over restrictions on abortion in the name of medical necessity.

As well, according to the *Congressional Quarterly*, backers of the Freedom of Choice Act say it would allow states to reject public funding of abortion. (July 11, 1992, p. 2046) This shows how little it will do for poor women who can't afford an abortion.

It is also worth noting what public funding has been interpreted to mean in the past. Missouri, for example, not only won't pay for abortions for poor women, but also forbids abortion or abortion counseling in any hospital or medical facility which receives public funds or by any public employee (unless it is neces-



Marching in San Francisco on the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, Jan. 22, '92.

sary to save the woman's life). This Missouri law was upheld in the Supreme Court's notorious 1989 *Webster* decision. It's not clear whether the present version of the FOCA would allow Missouri-style bans on "the public funding of abortion."

It's different, but it's not freedom

Clinton hopes that women will be satisfied by the reversal of the most outrageous policies of Bush and Reagan. But working class and poor women will continue to be victimized by numerous restrictions on abortion, and by the

widespread lack of public funding. And with his calls for financial sacrifice and cutbacks, the network of providers of abortion, birth control and prenatal care will continue to be squeezed, and the situation facing many women will continue to deteriorate.

The liberal Clinton administration is a change from the Reagan/Bush years. But it's still an administration of the wealthy, still an administration that calls for belt-tightening on the workers and poor. If the situation of working and poor women is going to improve, their rights must be demanded by a movement of working class women and men. ■

International Women's Day

Women's status is linked to the class struggle

International Women's Day, March 8, had its origins in militant struggles of women workers at the turn of the century against capitalist slavedriving, for the suffrage, and for socialism. It was inaugurated as International Working Women's Day by an international gathering of socialist workers. If we look at the situation facing women today, we can see that the fate of the vast majority of women is still tied to the fate of the class struggle.

Reagan/Bush vs. women's rights

Twelve years of Reagan and Bush are now over. This was a time of the backlash against women, when it became fashionable among the conservatives to blame social problems on women's rights.

The efforts to roll back the abortion rights won in the 70's was the most visible target. But the struggle over abortion rights coincided with a big push by the capitalists to drive down the conditions of the workers and the poverty-stricken. Mass layoffs, wage and benefit slashing, speedup and harassment ravaged the workers.

Clinton arrives

But now Clinton is president. He says he'll bring change. The appointment of some wealthy women to positions in government, the repeal of some especially vicious decrees, and the promises, promises, promises have engendered hopes.

Yet the times are getting harder for working women. The Clinton administration calls for sacrifice, and the poor will bear the brunt. His reforms always seem to leave working and poor women the shorter end of the stick, as with his family leave bill: if you're lucky enough to be among the one of three workers

who are covered by the bill, you have to have enough money to survive on unpaid leave in order to utilize the bill.

A class movement

The ruling class isn't going to meet the urgent needs of working class and poor women. For this, there must be a class movement of the oppressed, of working women and men united in struggle.

But what has the class struggle to do with an issue like abortion rights?

Doesn't this affect both rich and poor women? It does. But the poor do not have the means to overcome the legal restrictions and financial obstacles which the rich don't care that much about. Moreover, working women and men have a stake not just in legal maneuvers, but in actively confronting the anti-abortion fanatics, who are shock troops against all their rights. The establishment women's groups have more interest in proving their loyalty to law and order and climbing into posts in the ruling class.

The class struggle is not just a matter of fighting for immediate economic improvements. It involves the workers and poor putting their stamp on all the progressive struggles in society from women's rights, to the anti-racist struggle and the fight against imperialist war.

Workers' socialism and women's liberation

Moreover, as long as this country is still split between rich and poor, every gain is subject to reversal. Nothing else is clearer after twelve years of the Reagan/Bush backlash.

And this sorry state of affairs is true round the world.

The collapse of the tyranny of the state capitalist regimes in Eastern Europe

falsely calling themselves communist was supposed to usher in an era of freedom and progress. Instead a backlash has set in against the social rights of the people. In East Germany, women are so upset with the unemployment and elimination of job protections and social programs that the number of births has dropped to 87,000, one-half of what it was two years ago. They are on a "birth strike" against the insecurity of life, as Edith Brier, the women's commissioner for the city of Magdeburg, calls it.

If we are to have a society that can liberate women from discrimination and exploitation, capitalism must go. We need a system where every gain of the millions on the bottom is not just an imposition on a wealthy, ruling elite, waiting for the chance for revenge. We need a society where the great wealth made possible by modern production does not lead to more unemployment and poverty, but can be used to provide for the needs of those who toiled to create it.

For lasting and radical change, socialism is necessary. No, not the systems that collapsed in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. No, not the "mixed economy" that has gone into crisis in Sweden and elsewhere. Not the free-market fanaticism of the U.S. But workers' socialism. The running of society by the working class, on the path to the abolition of all classes and the creation of a truly human society. The dream of the Paris Commune in 1871 that wasn't meant to be at that time. The dream of the Russian revolution of October 1917 that wasn't meant to be at that time either. But now the necessity of our time if modern productive forces are to bring prosperity and not more and more insecurity, unemployment, and despair. ■



Strikes and workplace news

Coal miners strike Peabody

It appears that a long and bitter struggle is opening up for job security in the coal fields.

On February 2, about 7,500 miners struck 22 mines owned by the Peabody Holding Company and its subsidiaries in West Virginia, Kentucky, Illinois and Indiana. And the strike threatens to spread to other companies.

Peabody is the biggest coal producer in the U.S. and the leader of the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA) — which includes 12 major coal companies and 60,000 miners. About 300 other companies follow the BCOA's lead and sign "me too" contracts.

This strike is over job security. Past contracts have restricted BCOA companies from laying off union miners and then reopening mines with non-union employees. But the companies have continued to do this, only changing the name of the mine and hiding the actual ownership in layer upon layer of holding companies and complicated corporate structures. As a result, today more than two-thirds of all coal produced nationally comes from non-union coal mines. As well, increased mechanization has reduced the mining work force. In the last 10 years 100,000 miners have lost their jobs. And today more than half of the 125,000 employed miners are non-union.

The United Mine Workers union (UMW) demanded that the BCOA companies reveal their hidden structures so they could be held to account. But the BCOA refused and, while bargaining stalled, Peabody refused to extend its contract. So the miners struck.

Unfortunately, the UMW leaders are following a "selective strike" strategy. Instead of bringing out the full strength of the workers and completely shutting down the coal fields, they are striking only Peabody. And even at Peabody they have kept miners on the job at one Indiana mine and in others in Montana, Colorado and Arizona. As well, Peabody has built a huge stockpile from which it is daily transporting coal to its customers. A selective strike has little chance against them.

The harm of this strategy is known. It isolated the A.T. Massey strike in 1984 and the Pittston strike in 1989. In fact, the Pittston strike only went as far as it did because miners went beyond the restrictions of the top union leaders and organized a wildcat bringing out some 46,000 miners across the coal fields. Rank-and-file miners at Peabody, Consol and other mines have already begun to talk about using roving pickets to spread this strike. ■



Coal miners in Madison, West Virginia, making a picket shack.

Workers protest cuts and layoffs in Detroit

Over 100 workers marched in front of the City-County Building in Detroit, Michigan January 15 to protest city layoffs.

Last year city workers voted down Mayor Young's demand that they accept a 10% wage cut. Soon after, Young laid

off 800 city workers and cut back health care and other city services. The marchers denounced the cutbacks, and they called for the banks and corporations to pay for the restoration of jobs and services. ■

Strikers claim Domino Sugar is not sweet

In early February, New York strikers traveled by bus to picket the Domino Sugar plant in Baltimore. Over 150 Baltimore workers refused to cross their fellow workers' picket lines. And many

attended a strike rally outside the plant gates.

Since October 2, Domino Sugar workers at the Brooklyn, New York refinery have been on strike. The 350 workers

struck after rejecting Domino's latest takeover offer which included lump sum bonuses rather than wage increases over the next three years. Domino also demanded that workers give up three days of leave, and it is seeking the right to combine, transfer and eliminate jobs.

Domino Sugar is owned by the British conglomerate, Tate & Lyle, the world's biggest producer of sugar. It exploits workers in 24 countries. In 1991, its net profit was a quarter of a billion dollars

on sales of six billion. Yet it is demanding more concessions from its workers.

While hardly any sugar is being shipped from the Brooklyn warehouse, Domino's other two refineries — in Baltimore and New Orleans — have been working round-the-clock to supply Domino's customers in the Northeast. The February solidarity action is a first step towards uniting the workers and beating back Domino's takeback drive. ■

Families of dead miners demand entry to hearings

The families of three miners who were killed in a December 7 explosion picketed Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) hearings in Wise, Virginia on January 13. The hearings are part of the investigation of the accident that killed eight miners at South Mountain Coal Co. No. 3, a small non-union mine near Norton, Virginia.

The families are angry that they have been excluded from the hearings and that Assistant Labor Secretary William Tatersall is insinuating that individual miners are to blame for the explosion. Tatersall, who also heads the MSHA, has stated that smoking materials and cigarette butts had been found on and around the victims and that a methane gas monitoring device on a continuous mining ma-

chine had been blocked out.

In fact, coal mines are filled with all kinds of ignition sources and the way to avoid explosions is through ventilation of mines to dilute and carry away methane so it cannot explode. Instead of focusing on how many cigarette butts they can find, the real question is how methane gas accumulated to such an explosive level in South Mountain No. 3.

Past investigations of small mines have disclosed many failures to meet minimal state and federal health and safety laws and lax enforcement by regulatory agencies. The current epidemic of mine disasters seems to show a consistent pattern of operator negligence combined with MSHA indifference. ■

Alabama steel workers on strike

Since September 19, steel workers have been on strike against Trinity Industries rail car plant in Bessemer, Alabama. The central issues include wages, the high cost of health insurance, and the 53 workers who were fired for alleged "strike violations."

While the company claims the strikers have been violent, it is actually the company and its band of strikebreakers who have been violent. On October 12, company thugs teargassed a peaceful picket line. On January 4, a strikebreaker shot one picketer, wounding him in the head, and pistol-whipped another.

Trinity claims to be operating the plant with a small number of scabs. Yet, since the strike started not one rail car has been produced at the plant.

The strikers spoke at Martin Luther King Day rallies in Birmingham, Alabama and received strong support. As one striker put it, "It's support like this that

will help us win a decent contract." ■



VACCINATIONS Continued from page 8

Clinton denounced the drug companies for the high price of vaccine, and floated the idea that the states and federal government should buy up the vaccines and distribute them free to public clinics and private doctors. As well, by such a buying plan, pressure could be put on the drug companies to reduce the price. This was a typical Clinton reform — a popular idea, that reverses a glaring scandal of the past, but won't cost very much, perhaps an additional \$300 to \$500 million. And Bill and Hillary got a lot of press as noble knights out to joust against the drug companies.

Many pediatricians and child advocacy groups applauded. But the drug companies frowned and, surprise, surprise, two

weeks had hardly gone by before Clinton wilted.

He did announce a program to keep the clinics open more, bolster outreach services, create a national tracking system for vaccination information, and so forth. Fine and good — there is more to vaccinations than simply buying vaccine. But hidden in the fine print, Clinton backed down on the program of opposing the outrageous vaccination prices, and instead will simply help clinics pay what the drug companies demand. And his program will not come close to reconstructing the network of clinics that closed down in the last 10 years. It's just a bandaid, not a solution.

What kind of health reform can we expect if Clinton can't even defend children's vaccines for two weeks from the frown of the drug industry spokespeople? ■

Somalia and GI Joe humanitarianism

Continued from front page

Somalis.

The February disturbances highlight the problem of trying to solve Somalia's deep-seated problems through a military-dominated "humanitarian" intervention.

You can't run a relief operation Texas Ranger style

On February 5, some 200 Somali youths gathered at Mogadishu port and pelted U.S. Marines with stones. The youth had rallied because of reports that six Somalis had been killed by the Marines. The Marines denied the charge.

But whether or not this particular report was accurate, it is true that a number of unarmed Somalis have been killed by trigger-happy U.S. soldiers. A recent article in the *New York Times* focused on the harrowing tale of one such death. ("Boy's death in Somalia tests uneasy U.S. role," Feb. 20)

This article told the story of one 13-year old boy. The official story was that Omar Mohammed was about to throw something on the back of a military truck. A U.S. marine, believing it was a grenade, shot and killed him. However, no object was ever recovered. Witnesses say that he was only pointing at the truck. Moreover, medical records show that Omar was shot in the back.

The article also mentioned other killings. Two children were earlier shot in the back after stealing something from

the back of a truck. The *Times* says, "There is no way to determine just how many Somalis have been shot by foreign forces. American military spokesmen have related the individual killings of more than two dozen Somalis, but refuse to release information on the total number killed." No U.S. troops have been publicly called to account for taking a Somali's life.

The killing of 13-year old Omar sounds just like the racist killings by police in America's inner cities. We have heard the excuse so many times that the victims were brandishing some "shiny object," which is seldom, if ever, found. The killings of young kids in Somalia display the same disregard for the lives of poor people which is a hallmark of the police and military forces of the United States.

Humanitarianism wasn't the motive in Somalia intervention

Somalia was unable to deal with its tragic food crisis. People were dying in tremendous numbers because the food supply had been disrupted by a civil war between different factions, which broke out in the aftermath of the collapse of the dictatorship of Siad Barre. The government apparatus had completely collapsed and the country had descended into chaos, with warlord-dominated armies and other armed brigands running roughshod over the people. There was no

prospect of a settlement in sight.

It was unfortunate that the situation was allowed to reach this point; and for this, both the U.S. and UN share part of the blame. But under the circumstances, the Somalis had no choice but to accept food aid accompanied by military intervention — the Somalis needed a certain security in cities and on roads. Yet U.S. intervention was not the best option for this, because its troops are part of an imperialist army which is trained in arrogant, racist and oppressive attitudes towards Third World peoples.

Bush claimed the Somalia intervention was guided only by humanitarian motives, but this assertion was not borne out by reality. If humanitarianism was really the motive, why did Bush wait after so many Somalis had died before even ordering the first airlift of food to Somalia? And the U.S. government itself had been partly to blame for the destructiveness of the civil war; it had backed the Siad Barre regime since the mid-70's as part of its rivalry with the Soviet Union over the Horn of Africa.

The truth is that the intervention was not really about Somalia. Bush intervened in order to paint up the military apparatus in humanitarian colors, to justify maintaining a huge military machine, and to set up a precedent for future "humanitarian interventions" where the U.S. and other powers respond with police action to wrenching social crises internationally created by the evils of capitalism and imperialism.

Though the U.S. presence in Somalia did end up providing some security to relief distribution and feeding some people, such a military presence cannot provide any lasting solutions. A relief operation dominated by military forces leaves much to be desired. The trigger-happy murders of Somali youth is one of the consequences. Another is the danger that U.S. forces get involved in the civil war. Above all, the civil war requires a political solution among the armed groups and clans, which could restore some semblance of governmental authority to Somalia and open the way to the revival of an economy.

So far such a solution has not been arrived at. And nothing fundamental has been solved in Somalia. Right now, the U.S. is caught in a bureaucratic squabble with the United Nations over handing over control of the intervention. The U.S. would like to reduce some of its forces in Somalia, but the UN is dragging its feet. And nothing has yet been done about recuperating the economy, providing jobs to displaced youths who had been making a living through the gun or by escorting relief convoys, etc.

More and more, the U.S. intervention is looking like a fiasco. Will they acknowledge that, cut their losses and leave, or is Somalia destined for a long-term U.S. presence, where we will see more unrest directed at the U.S. as Somalis tire of being treated with imperial arrogance? ■

MAQUILAS

Continued from back page

related to organization, and the difficulties of women traveling to and from work.

In the aftermath of the recent worker unrest, foreign investors are using economic blackmail to pressure the Sri Lanka government for increased concessions. Some have threatened to pull out of the country if the government does not ensure industrial peace. Of course, the capitalist bloodsuckers neglect the simple logic that they could prevent industrial disruptions by actually honoring the demands of the workers for better pay and working conditions.

Strikes in Viet Nam

Viet Nam is looming up as a major site for new export processing plants. With the end of the Cold War, numerous foreign investors are breaking from acquiescence to the U.S. economic embargo to set up plants there.

In mid-February, about 600 workers waged a successful strike at a factory in Ho Chi Minh City. The plant manufacturer had been and is a joint venture between the Vietnamese government and the Bee Young Company from South Korea.

The workers walked out to protest low wages, forced overtime, and brutal treatment by their Korean managers. Conditions had been so harsh that workers had been fainting on the job. After a three-day strike, management gave in to the workers' demands and reduced the workday from 12 to 8 hours. The workers also got a pay raise to \$35 a month.

This was the biggest strike since Viet Nam opened to foreign investment five years ago. There have also been worker protests at other Korean-run factories. More Korean investment is coming into the country. In February, South Korean investors announced 60 projects in Viet Nam valued at \$450 million.

The current round of protests may help ensure that workers can put some limits on the brutal abuse from their bosses.

Exporting the Korean model of exploitation

While conditions at free trade zones are bad most everywhere no matter what the national origin of the employer, South Korean capitalists have gained a reputation as particularly nasty overseers. An article in the December 1992 issue of *Multinational Monitor* describes the conditions in Korean-owned maquila factories in the Central American country of Guatemala ("Zones of exploitation: Korean investment in Guatemala").

Guatemala's maquila plants mushroomed in the 80's. Today more than 250 factories with a work force of 60,000 export more than \$350 million of assembled garments to be sold in the U.S. South Korean capital dominates this industry. More than 20% of all foreign Korean apparel assembly factories are in this Central American country.

The Korean businesses located here for two main reasons. First, they wanted to get around U.S. textile import quotas. Each textile-exporting country is awarded a quota under the Multi-Fiber Agreement. To exceed their quotas, many countries have opened up factories elsewhere, especially in places which were not significant apparel exporters. Second, they sought to cut labor costs. The labor upsurge of the 80's in South Korea changed the picture there. Korean workers had succeeded in driving up wages and building a union movement.

When the Korean capitalists set up shop in Guatemala, they sought to export their traditional repressive model of labor management. They brought in their own supervisors, and with the Guatemalan government's military repression in the background, they imposed extremely harsh labor discipline. Guatemalan workers are forced to work long hours, at a fast pace, and showing total obedience to the bosses. Workers are humiliated and even physically assaulted if they do not conform.

This cruel system was welcomed by the Guatemalan government and supported by the U.S. Embassy. However, since the Cold War anti-communist alliances have been shaken up and trade conflicts worsened worldwide, the U.S. govern-

ment has changed its tune. It has suddenly discovered labor abuse in the Korean-owned plants. The State Department has pressured Guatemalan authorities to subject Korean operations to "unprecedented scrutiny."

Neither the State Department nor the Guatemalan regime are really concerned with workers' conditions. The U.S. government is merely voicing the interests of U.S. manufacturers faced with Korean competition, and there are also Guatemalan businessmen who are upset with the Korean domination of the garment industry. It is revealing that the criticism of Korean-operated companies manages to ignore that labor violations are also rampant in Guatemalan and U.S.-owned

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movement. It was the mass upheavals of the 60's and early 70's — the black people's movement, the fight against the Viet Nam war, the women's movement, the motion among the poor and workers — which broke up the mind-numbing grip of cold war mentality on U.S. society. This gigantic struggle of the lower sections of society also created the opening for the struggle for gay rights and helped break down homophobia in society.

The reverse is also true. Anti-gay bigotry is a component part of every reactionary drive to turn back the clock on social progress, the drive to put women, minorities, workers and the poor "back in their place."

What is more, experience suggests the vital role of mass struggle and confrontation with the government and establishment institutions by gay rights activists over the refusal to confront the AIDS epidemic and persecution of AIDS sufferers, and struggles which the organized bigots of the religious right, have played a major role in the fight against anti-gay discrimination and persecution.

In light of this experience we believe that the path forward lies along these lines:

1) The fight for gay rights must be seen as part of the fight of the working

factories in the country.

But for all the criticism, the government remains hostile to efforts to nationalize any of the factories, Korean or otherwise. Several times, workers in Korean-owned factories were approaching unions when the government stage-managed the settlement of disputes in order to call things off. And the government also blocked the application of workers at Philips-Van Heusen factories for a union. Meanwhile, union activists at Coca Cola remain victims of persecution by management and government; the Coca Cola plant has long been a focus of bitter clashes between the workers and the bosses. ■

and oppressed masses generally and made a part of that fight. Gay rights activists should not restrict their role simply to the fight for gay rights but join into the broader struggle to build an independent movement of the working people against all forms of oppression and against the system of exploitation of the many by the rich few.

2) The fight against anti-gay persecution must target the government, institutions, political movements and parties of the capitalist establishment. Liberalism, even when it is not a leading part of the anti-gay offensive itself, is part of the establishment which is pressing down on the working people, including the working people who are gay.

Through that struggle lies the avenue to any kind of lasting social progress. ■

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Sri Lanka, Viet Nam and Guatemala Workers struggle in maquiladora factories

Twenty years ago, how many people knew what *maquiladoras* were? Certainly not many. But the 1980's made sure that the concept — if not the word itself — has become familiar around the world.

Maquiladoras are the name given to the factories on the Mexican side of the U.S.-Mexico border which were set up to assemble goods for the U.S. market. Under this program launched in 1965, U.S. or other foreign-made components are brought into Mexico duty free, assembled, and exported to the U.S.

While the same name may not be used, the *maquiladora* system exists throughout the third world. In most places, the setup goes under the name of "free trade zones." Today, thousands of factories, small and large, dot the landscape of poor countries from the Caribbean to Asia and Africa, where miserably-paid workers toil to produce goods for the world market, principally going to the rich lands of Europe, North America, and Japan.

To poorer countries, the production-for-export system offers investment, jobs, and foreign exchange earnings. As well, bureaucrats get kickbacks and some local businessmen enrich themselves as partners of foreign capital. In return, the governments of these countries promise to ensure that wages remain low and labor is kept docile. At a time when third world countries are hard-pressed by big debt burdens, such foreign investment is eagerly sought. Indeed, with so many poor countries around the globe, the competition for investment is quite fierce.

For those who labor, the system is a mixed blessing. Yes, jobs are offered to the hungry unemployed, but they face pitiful wages and atrocious working conditions. In some places, they are prisoners of a thinly-veiled industrial serfdom. Still, the new industrialization is also creating profound social transformations. By creating new workers from largely rural recruits, global capital is giving rise to new battalions in the world working class. A huge section, if not the overwhelming majority, of these new workers are women. And these workers are being confronted with the challenge to learn how to collectively struggle and organize, against both industrial exploitation and sexual domination.

The revitalization of the workers' movement on a global scale requires class conscious workers everywhere to find ways to learn about and support the struggles to organize the *maquiladora* workers. In that spirit, we report below on some recent struggles.

Women garment workers strike in Sri Lanka

The island of Sri Lanka, south of



Garment workers in Bangladesh.

India, is home to three free trade zones where many garment, textile, and leather goods factories are located. More than 60,000 workers are employed there, most of whom are women of rural origin involved in wage labor for the first time in their lives.

In December, workers in at least four garment factories at the Katunayake free trade zone struck over wage and other grievances. This included 3,000 workers at the Smart Shirt Company. Police were called in to suppress the workers. At least 34 women and six men workers were badly injured. Eleven people were arrested.

The strikes came just a month after several groups organized a demonstration to protest the unjust conditions in the

free trade zones. More than a thousand people participated. The workers' demands included: better pay, working and living conditions; reinstatement of fired worker activists; and an end to police repression. Police and gangsters were mobilized to attack the protesters.

In the free trade zone, conditions are harsh for the workers. Some of them have been employed for ten years, and still make just a little over the government-mandated minimum wage of \$45 a month. Women workers live in boarding houses in nearby villages where six to eight people share a room. They organize themselves on a shift basis to use cooking, bathing, and toilet facilities.

There are no trade unions at any of the plants, and workers' complaints to

the authorities fall on deaf ears. Women who speak up and protest are severely punished, and some of them have been killed or "disappeared."

Still, despite such odds, the women have found various ways to resist. Their collective living situation helps provide them with a certain organization. At work, they find ways to resist speedup. The main focus of resistance has been a newspaper put out by local activists since 1984. This paper, with a circulation of 8,000, provides a voice for women workers to send in articles, poems, and stories. It exposes outrages against women, and has campaigned on such issues as nightwork, sexual harassment, problems

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Clinton spurns Haitian hopes

For a month now, more than 200 Haitians held at the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo, Cuba, have been on a hunger strike. By mid-February, at least seven had lost consciousness. The fasters are protesting their exclusion from the United States. These refugees have been given temporary political refugee status by the government, but they are being barred simply because they have tested positive for HIV.

Bill Clinton opposed this policy during last year's election campaign, but he did nothing to change it after he took office. There was some talk that he was considering changing the policy, but Clinton was soon upstaged by the Senate.

On February 18, the majority of Democratic U.S. senators joined all but one of the Senate's Republicans to pass a bill barring entrance to the U.S. by foreigners who test positive for the HIV virus.

The Senate's action takes Bush's policy and elevates it to the level of law. Since the Senate vote Clinton has been silent, apparently not wanting to disturb the bigots on Capitol Hill. His press secretary hid behind the senators' coats by telling reporters, "If you look at the vote margin [76-23], he doesn't have that many options. I think the Senate made a pretty strong statement." But the White House had done next to nothing to lobby against this legislation. "Congress is helping [Clinton] get rid of some of the baggage early on," one senator said, referring to this and other campaign promises made by Clinton.

The media goes along with this shameful policy by refusing to publicize the hunger strike by Haitian refugees. Reporters attended a press conference in New York on February 9, but nothing from it was publicized afterwards.

Clinton's refusal to act on the HIV-infected refugees comes in the wake of the other big reversal of his campaign promise toward Haitian refugees. Clinton had promised to reverse Bush's cruel policy of intercepting Haitians on the high seas so they can be returned before setting foot in the U.S. But after being elected Clinton stabbed the Haitians in the back and approved a complete ring of Coast Guard vessels around Haiti, to keep refugees in.

Meanwhile the army generals continue to torture and jail opponents of the regime. Jesse Jackson was allowed to visit Haiti in January, but afterwards the army arrested a businessman who had helped arrange Jackson's visit. Now the businessman is being held incommunicado. A new United Nations report acknowledges that mass terror is a feature of daily life for Haitians. (See adjoining article.)

Some demonstrations in support of Haitians were organized in the U.S. in mid-February. This included protests

outside the Krome Avenue detention center in Miami, and demonstrations in New York and San Francisco. Some black celebrities and prominent figures have also undertaken solidarity fasts, but the black establishment as a whole is half-hearted, and has not undertaken a campaign as they did in the mid-80's to protest apartheid in South Africa. This

is partially because while they are critical of Clinton's policy, they want to do nothing embarrassing to the president they otherwise support.

Real solidarity with the plight of the Haitians requires more than token fasts. It requires a strong stand on principle, and it means taking Clinton on. ■



7,000 people marched in Miami February 7 to protest against the cruel treatment of Haitian refugees.

Haitians protest military regime

On February 16, an overcrowded ferry boat capsized in Haiti and more than 1,000 people drowned. A week later, a funeral mass for the victims turned into an angry demonstration against the military government, which had come to power by overthrowing the elected president Jean Bertrand-Aristide.

Some 2,000 mourners who had gathered at a cathedral chanted, "Aristide or death!" Angered by this display, pro-government thugs attacked the mourners as well as the priests. They slapped and beat up a pro-Aristide bishop. At least eight people were arrested by police.

The transformation of the funeral into a protest demonstration shows the hatred the Haitian people feel towards the military regime. Behind this bitterness lies the daily brutality which the people suffer from tyranny.

A United Nations investigation released in Geneva on February 26 again verified that the Haitian people are living in terror. It noted that executions, torture, arbitrary arrests and beatings by military forces are a daily occurrence. Fear of persecution has caused about 300,000 people to go into hiding, and

repression in the rural areas is particularly intense.

Despite such savagery, the military rulers of Haiti have not succeeded in defeating the people's spirit.

On January 18 the military dictators organized a phony election to the national senate. However, through their boycott and demonstrations the populace rejected this attempt to legitimize the military regime.

There was a widescale strike in the north of the country. Inside Port-au-Prince there were a number of demonstrations against polling places. In some areas the military tried to force people to vote. Even so, the voter turnout was only about one-half of one per cent. This did not stop the official candidates from declaring victory, however. In some places the polls opened at 7:30 a.m. and by 8:00 a.m. the ballot boxes were already full of votes, even though hardly anyone had voted. The corrupt politicians getting themselves elected in this way are all aligned with the coalition headed by Marc Bazin, the acting prime minister who is a stooge of the generals. ■