

A Socialist ACTION



Toward a
**Labor
Party.**
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MAY 1991

50 CENTS

U.S. in deep morass despite Gulf victory

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

"When this is all over," George Bush said at the start of the war, "we want to be the healers" in the Gulf region. He then undertook one of the most lethal bombing campaigns in history. The B-52s spared neither homes, schools, nor hospitals. Tens of thousands of Iraqis lost their lives.

Several months later, the process of "healing" has still not begun. For the Bush administration, the entire region from Kurdistan to Palestine remains an open wound. Despite its overwhelming victory in the war, the United States has not yet consolidated its broader political objectives in the region.

Accordingly, Secretary of State James Baker has been shuttling back and forth between Middle East capitals, attempting to organize an authoritative "peace conference." If successful, the conference would reinforce the role of the United States as the central power working to maintain the *status quo* in the region. But so far, outside of the Soviet Union, Baker has found little cooperation on his project.

Perhaps even more embarrassing for the administration is the fact that, despite all its efforts, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has not yet been toppled. While Hussein hangs on, the U.S. troops in the region are attempting to disarm his opponents, the Kurdish rebels.

As Americans try to figure out the changing scorecard of "enemies" and "allies," many of them are beginning to wonder what ever happened to the quick, neat "surgical" war they thought they had witnessed on their TV screens.

The precious oil that the United States went to war to "protect" is burning and splashing out over the sands. The multi-billionaires ruling Kuwait, whom the United States vowed to put back into power, have allowed their territory to become an arena for thievery and torture.

Kuwaiti soldiers use military roadblocks to kidnap and rape Palestinian and Asian women. Members of the Kuwaiti Royal Family are implicated in the torture squads that have killed hundreds of Palestinians. Elections in that supposed "democracy" have been put off for another year.

Meanwhile, cholera has taken hold in the cities of Iraq. Children are dying from diarrhea and dehydration at from 10 to 20 times the normal rate. Families must obtain their water supplies from mud puddles and polluted rivers.

Food and medicine is in short supply, owing in large part to the U.S.-imposed blockade. Since farmers could not obtain seeds, fertilizer, and pesticides, this year's crop is expected to be a disaster.

According to human rights observers, hunger and disease may kill many more people in the coming months than died during the fighting. In the south of Iraq alone, according to Dr. Peter Fuchs of the International Red Cross, "There is a major humanitarian catastrophe going on. ... Five million civilians are at risk."

Ordeal of Kurdish refugees

In recent weeks, the world's spotlight has been placed on the people of Kurdistan—

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**Repression
against the
Kurds.**
See page 15.



GIs in occupied Iraq—enforcing the New World Order?

Rail workers confront strikebreaking by gov't

By LYNN HENDERSON

At 7 a.m. on Wednesday morning, April 17, unions representing 235,000 rail workers nationwide went on strike against the 10 largest railroad carriers and 88 other smaller lines.

Less than 24 hours later, the Democratic Party-dominated Congress (renowned for neither its decisiveness nor its swiftness) rammed through a joint resolution forcing striking workers back on the job. A new "special board" was set up, which was empowered to impose a contract on the rail unions within 65 days.

The 19 hours of this nationwide rail strike

were pregnant with many lessons. First, in effectively shutting down the entire U.S. rail system, the strike decisively demonstrated the enormous power of rail labor when it engages in job action.

In recent years, many pundits inside and outside the industry claimed that the rail unions and their members had become divided and weak, that union consciousness and solidarity had eroded, and that any attempt to shut the carriers down would be at best an embarrassing failure and at worst a disastrous demonstration of weakness on the part of the unions.

The carriers openly boasted that they could and would maintain rail service with re-

placement workers, union members who crossed the picketlines, and management personnel—on whom they had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in training programs to prepare them to operate the trains through a strike.

All of this proved illusory, however, as rail workers from 10 different craft unions, in a demonstration of union solidarity virtually without exception, shut the railroads down from coast to coast.

Are railroads "marginal?"

It has also become popular in recent years to picture railroads and railroad workers as

(continued on page 6)

Thou shall not break the 'Eleventh Commandment'



Fightback

By
Sylvia Weinstein

In this country (the richest in the world), every 67 seconds a teenager has a baby, every eight seconds of the school day a child drops out of school, and every 53 minutes a child dies of poverty.

Bankrupt schools

In Richmond, Calif., the schools will have to close at the end of April because they are bankrupt. Although the federal government didn't hesitate a moment before bailing out the savings and loan institutions at the rate of \$7,420,000 per hour last year, now neither the state nor the federal government will bail out the Richmond schools. (Richmond will only need another \$20 million to continue through the rest of the school year.)

One of the reasons the governor is so merciless is because the Richmond Board of Education had the nerve to grant their teachers a

nine percent raise two years ago (after a long period without a salary increase).

Now the governor is demanding that California teachers suspend collective bargaining and accept a wage freeze for three more years—a total of five years without an increase. The governor, of course, is getting a 40 percent salary increase this year. Surely, he will refuse to take it?

Soak the workers

Why can't we have quality public schools and quality public childcare centers for every child? Why can't every person have good health care, free of charge? Why can't all universities and colleges provide a free education to all students who want it? Why can't every person have decent housing?

Because for the last 40 years, 50 percent of every federal tax dollar

has been going to the war budget, while only 3 percent has been going into education and the rich have been dumping the tax burden on the workers and the middle class.

Four-member families whose incomes put them in the lowest one-fifth, averaging \$12,700 a year on a national basis, pay 13.8 percent of their earnings in state and local taxes. The richest 1 percent, with incomes averaging \$875,200 a year, pay 7.6 percent of their earnings to state and local governments. These figures come from a report by Citizens for Tax Justice.

And now we learn that the Pentagon's share of next year's budget will rise by 14 percent. We also learn that the new estimate for the Gulf War is \$100 billion and the United States will have to cover most of it. To top that off, we read that Lockheed will get \$95 billion to develop the F-22 fighter plane to replace the F-15.

In fact, Defense Secretary Dick Cheney judges that defense spending will exceed \$2 trillion through 1997. And the poor Richmond School District only needs a measly \$20 million.

Several school districts across the nation are on strike for better conditions for teachers and students. What is needed is a national movement by teachers, students, and parents—and all of their unions—who are sick of being crapped on by our "education president" and the rest of the political servants of the rich in both parties. And then, we need a political party obedient to working people—not to the capitalist class.

Noted Marxist economist Ernest Mandel, a central leader of the Fourth International, toured the United States last month. He spoke to enthusiastic audiences in New York, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

The meetings were sponsored by Socialist Action, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, and Solidarity.

In the course of the tour, about \$40,000 was raised for the launching of a Russian-language edition of *Inprecor*, the magazine published under the auspices of the Fourth International.

Thou Shalt Not Tax The Rich! That's the only commandment the legislators and the president obey. The other 10 were made to be broken by them and their buddies, the ruling rich. In fact, the 11th commandment should read: Thou shall not tax the rich—only tax those who work for a living.

In state after state, regressive taxes (such as sales taxes) are growing like toxic waste. City, county, state, and federal politicians are working overtime to pick the pockets of the poor, so as to save the rich from paying even a modest share of the cost for schools, health care, and social welfare.

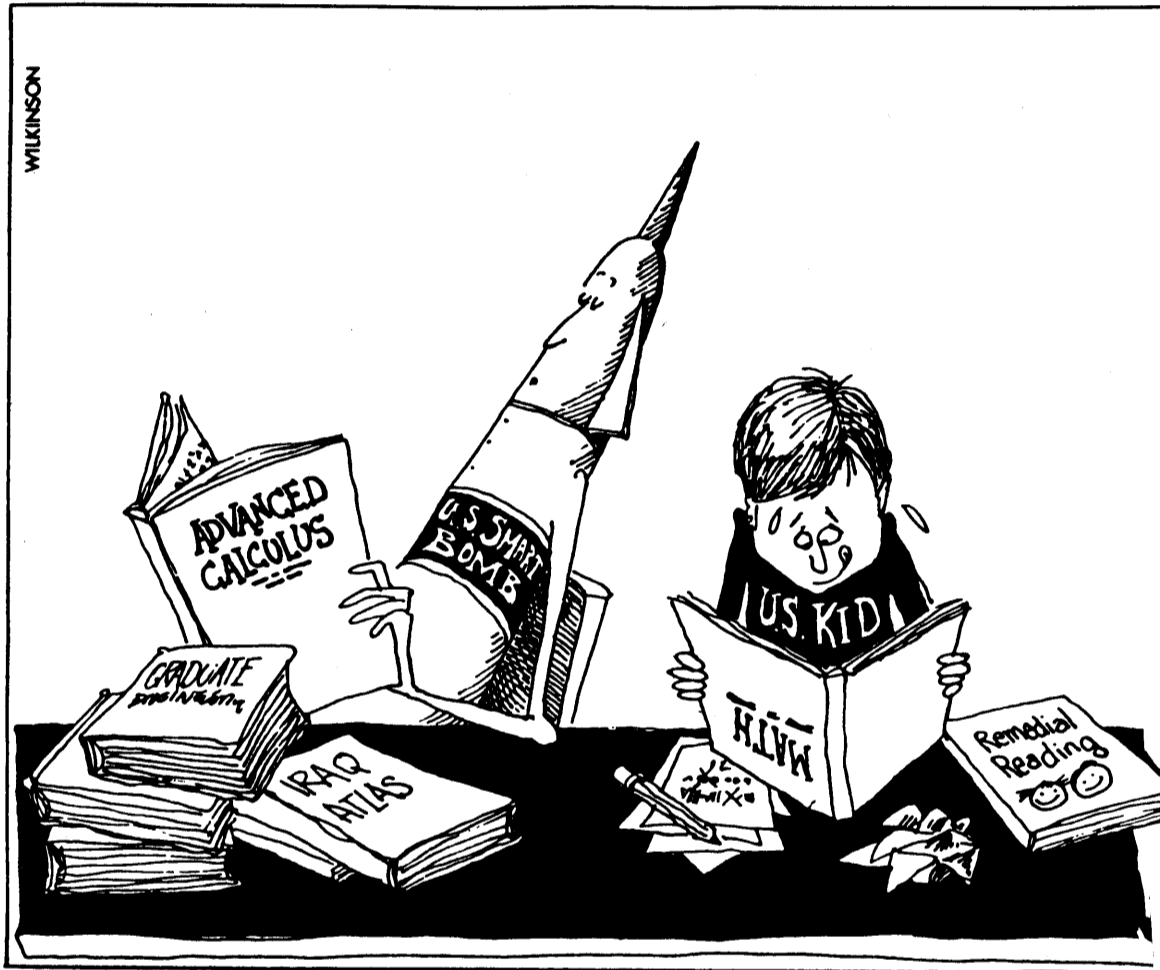
President Bush is busy cutting the public school budget while getting ready to hand over the money saved to private schools. Bush deserves the title of "education president" as much as Adolph Hitler deserved the Nobel Prize for Peace and Humanitarianism.

The federal government is cutting its contribution to state and local governments, forcing them to get the money any way they can. Of course, all of the state and local politicians are going to get it out of the hides of those who are already bearing the lion's share of the tax burden.

The real blows will be felt mostly by our children. In the United States one out of 10 people is illiterate. Less than one-half of this country's students finish high school. In California alone, one in five children live in poverty, one in three do not graduate from high school, and more than half of all two-year-olds are not immunized

against fatal diseases.

In fact, across the country there is a resurgence of measles—which is easily preventable. But children are dying because they have not been inoculated. Community health centers are being closed down all over the country, and most parents have no health coverage for themselves or their children.



Coverup unravels in death of Boston prison inmate

By ART LE CLAIR

BOSTON—Arthur Mullally, 48, an inmate at the Suffolk County House of Correction, Deer Island, died on Feb. 17, following what sources inside the prison have called an "altercation" with guards at the facility. Mullally had at least 13 broken ribs when he was taken to Boston City Hospital (BCH). Six hours later, he was dead.

Mullally's death is being investigated by the Massachusetts State Police, after Suffolk County District Attorney Newman Flanagan removed the Boston police from the case.

The performance of the prison's guards and medical personnel are at the heart of the investigation. Also in question is Boston Mayor Raymond Flynn's administration of the city-run prison.

Less than a month before Mullally's death, Flynn dismissed Penal Commissioner Robert Walsh, after the latter's relationship with the guards' union had deteriorated. Walsh was replaced by Benjamin

Thompson in January. Since becoming commissioner, Thompson has rehired at least six guards who were fired by Walsh for excessive absenteeism, falsifying medical documents, and substance abuse.

"Deer Island is in a sorry state, right to the top of City Hall," stated attorney Anthony Traini, who represents the Mullally family. "I have a zillion questions. And before it's over, I'm going to get answers to all of them. The first deposition I'm going to take when this civil case gets underway is the mayor's. ... How many times does he fire the police commissioner when he doesn't get along with the union?"

According to Sean Kelly, whose cell was close to the dead man's, Mullally was taken into a segregation cell in the early-morning hours of Feb. 16. He was complaining about not getting his medication. At approximately 4:30 a.m., five guards entered Mullally's cell. Kelly heard sounds that indicated a struggle. The next time he saw

Mullally was at breakfast later that morning, hunched over his food and in obvious pain.

The most serious questions yet to be answered revolve around the actions of the guards. Why didn't they file detailed "use of force" reports after Mullally's death? Why were notations in the prison log book detailing Mullally's condition altered? Why was the log book kept from Boston police detectives for six weeks after Mullally's death? Why haven't any of the guards involved been suspended?

All that is known is that after finding Mullally naked in his cell on the morning of Feb. 17, guards decided to take him to the hospital. At noon, he was transported to BCH in a prison van. At 6:30 p.m., Arthur Mullally was dead.

Guards maintain that Mullally fell down a flight of stairs. Of course, it is difficult to imagine how a 5-foot-7-inch man, weighing 150 pounds, could fall down stairs while being "escorted" by as many as five guards.

Why was Mullally denied his

medication? He had been taking Propranolol to help combat the effects of cirrhosis of the liver. He first complained about not getting the prescription medication in a Feb. 15 phone call to his wife, Lorraine. Without the medication, Mullally was subject to internal bleeding.

Attorney Traini and the members of Arthur Mullally's family, including Mullally's father, a retired

Boston police sergeant, are curious to learn why Mullally was transported in a prison van instead of an ambulance. And why was he taken to BCH instead of to Winthrop Hospital, which at noontime is at least 20 minutes closer?

According to Traini, even the last few hours of Arthur Mullally's life are a mystery. "We don't even know if he was operated on," he said. "We can't get the medical records." ■

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By MALIK MIAH

South Africa's President F.W. de Klerk has a lot to be happy about these days. On April 23, he had dinner with British Prime Minister John Major at 10 Downing Street in London. Major told de Klerk that the British government supports the lifting of all remaining bans against trade and international sports competition with South Africa.

Britain has won the 12-member European Community to its position that the EC's 1986 ban on the import of South African iron, steel, and gold coins should be lifted. Nigeria—the largest Black African country and historically a strong backer of the South African liberation movement—recently stated it will follow the EC's lead when Pretoria withdraws its remaining apartheid laws.

President George Bush and Congress are also expected to extend an olive branch to de Klerk soon if more apartheid laws are formally rescinded. In 1986, Congress adopted anti-apartheid legislation imposing sanctions on South Africa until minimal conditions were met. These conditions included legalization of banned groups, abrogation of apartheid laws, and the freeing of all political prisoners.

President de Klerk claims there are less than 200 political activists still in prison; the ANC says there are more like 3500. Recently, the ANC affirmed that it would end talks with the government if all political prisoners were not freed by May 9.

Nevertheless, the government has been stalling. Justice Minister H.J. Coetsee said on April 25 that the process of indemnifying those who had committed "crimes" in opposition to apartheid would be extended several weeks.

More ominous is the fact that, according to the ANC, "massive plans" have been uncovered to assassinate some of its leaders and to attack the Black communities before the May 9 deadline. The ANC traced the plot to a "third force" with links to the government security forces.

Keep the sanctions!

In spite of de Klerk's international campaign to clean up the image of his regime, the white supremacist system is still very much alive and in control of South Africa.

Nelson Mandela, the main leader of the ANC, told Black mineworkers on April 27 that the EEC's decision to lift the sanctions was "racist." It shows once again, he said, "how Europe allies itself with South Africa and has no regards for the lives, the views, and the needs of Black South Africa."

In an interview in the April 13 issue of the People's Weekly World (which reflects the views of the U.S. Communist Party) Chris Hani, a central leader of the ANC's military wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, explained the ANC's stance on sanctions. Hani, who is on a speaking tour of the United States, is one of the ANC leaders facing criminal charges in South Africa.

"Apartheid is still in place in our country," Hani said. "We still have a racist parliament and racist institutions. What is happening in our country is the repeal of certain laws by the regime, but the repeal of those laws is meaningless because the land acts are repealed but there are no resources given to the landless—who are in the majority—to buy land.

"The regime will say that the Group Areas Act has been repealed. But again, Blacks cannot move into the so-called white areas without the permission of the white residents. So to the outside world, de Klerk appears to have introduced reforms. But in practice, those reforms remain on paper.

"It is wrong for the international community to act on the basis of de Klerk's promises. The victims of oppression, the oppressed people, should be the ones who say, 'We pleaded with you to maintain sanctions. We feel now that sanctions have achieved their purpose. You should lift them.' The signal should not come from the oppressor because the oppressor doesn't feel the pinch of oppression. It should be those who are subjected to oppression and exploitation who should feel the situation is irreversible."

Is the end of apartheid irreversible? Bush, Major, and de Klerk say it is. By that they mean legal segregation called apartheid has been eliminated.

ANC continues to retreat

In fact, the rooting out of apartheid as a system is exactly what Hani implies: full political and economic empowerment of the oppressed Black majority—which de Klerk is

Apartheid regime campaigns to have trade sanctions lifted



Gill de Vlieg

Paul Weinberg



'The racist system is still very much alive and in control...'

dead against. The policy of the ANC and SACP, however, will not bring about that empowerment.

The ANC (and its allies in the South African Communist Party, the unions, and the popular organizations) are in a dilemma.

Mandela, Hani, and other ANC leaders recognize, on the one hand, that the de Klerk government is seeking to weaken their support among the Black majority in favor of right-wing forces such as the Inkatha group, while stiffening the backs of white supporters of the regime with the easing of international sanctions.

At the same time, the Black majority—especially the youth—are demanding protection from goons and death squads organized by the police force. They are also pushing for more rapid changes in the system.

The ANC, the largest anti-apartheid group, is running a two-track policy. It is participating in talks with the regime on its measures to phase out apartheid. It is also responding to mass pressure by calling for the formation of Black self-defense guards to protect the Black townships from attacks by Inkatha and police-supported vigilantes.

While the ANC has mobilized people in marches, rallies, and mass boycotts, these tactics are seen as subordinate to the ANC

leadership's behind-closed-doors talks with the government.

A constituent assembly

The ANC has downplayed the idea of a freely elected constituent assembly—which could give voice to the demands of the Black population within a new constitution. To date, the ANC continues to call vaguely for an "interim government" to be put in place before a constituent assembly could be organized.

On April 12, the ANC released an important discussion paper for a new constitution. The document, which follows months of discussions by the ANC's legal experts and supporters, is supposed to be a model for a constitution guaranteeing a non-racial democracy with basic freedoms enshrined in a bill of rights.

The paper envisions an elected president, as well as a prime minister and a two-chamber parliament. Elections would be by universal franchise. Currently, under the 1984 constitution, Blacks (three-fourths of the population) are denied any political rights.

The white regime is also floating some ideas for a new constitution. One proposal is for a two-chamber body but where the rights of the whites are arranged in such a way that

their influence will not be significantly weakened.

The entire policy of the ANC is to seek a legal transition from apartheid to a democratic republic. All of its threats of boycotts, mass protests, and defense guards against political violence are made from that standpoint.

There are no indications that—if the white minority government continues to stonewall as it makes progress on ending its international isolation—the ANC will act to build a mass movement to take power.

Moreover, the de Klerk government is seeking to draw the ANC back into the fold at every step. That's why it made the decision to extend the process of indemnification for political prisoners and exiles, and to continue holding talks with the ANC.

In June, the ANC plans a policy-making conference to discuss its proposals on a new constitution and other matters. In addition, the ANC is seeking alliances with old opponents such as the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). In mid-April, Mandela attended a two-day meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe, between the ANC and PAC. The two groups say they will now work together; they are planning a conference in August to forge a united front.

The South African government is planning its own multi-party gathering this summer.

"Two hats" in the unions?

Debates on perspectives are also unfolding in the trade unions. Most unions are connected to one popular organization or another through adoption of common programs or union leaders being leaders of the anti-apartheid organizations as well. This has led to debates over "two hats." Can a leader of a trade union which is broad-based also be a leader of the ANC or another group without compromising the union's aims?

The debate, not a new one, became more urgent after the unbanning of the ANC, PAC, SACP, and other groups last year. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the largest federation, is led by ANC supporters. Many who attack their leadership do so by claiming the leaders have a "divided allegiance."

In fact, the debates on "two hats" is over what strategy for the unions and anti-apartheid movement. Every union battle is a political fight in South Africa because of the apartheid system. If the working class is to lead the popular movement, its leaders must be leaders of the nationalist and revolutionary formations.

Meanwhile, the need for international solidarity is urgent. De Klerk and his allies in Europe and the United States are making gains. The anti-apartheid forces must redouble their efforts demanding that the U.S. government and employers maintain sanctions.

By MALIK MIAH

Pressure is mounting on the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) to prosecute to the fullest extent of the law those cops responsible for the brutal March 3 beating of Black unemployed construction worker Rodney King.

King, a member of the Laborers International Union, continues to suffer from painful headaches and numbness on the right side of his face, where bones of his cheek and eye were fractured "like an eggshell," according to a plastic surgeon.

The vicious assault on King gained worldwide attention when a homemade videotape was played on television. The tape prevented the cops from covering up their crime.

The Coalition for Justice and an End to Police Brutality is calling for the removal of LAPD Police Chief Daryl Gates, prosecution and conviction of the 27 cops involved in the assault on King, and the creation of an independent, publicly accountable commission to oversee the direction of the police department.

In response to this growing public campaign, Gates and the police department have tried to limit the damages. The *Los Angeles Times* has revealed that documents from the LAPD's Internal Affairs Division (IAD) call for the firing of four cops directly involved in the beating.

The four cops—Stacey Koon, Lawrence Powell, Timothy Wind, and Theodore Briseno—have all been indicted on felony charges. But despite the IAD recommendations, Gates says none of the attackers will be fired before a hearing is held.

Meanwhile, outrage against Gates and the cops continues to expand. Jesse Jackson led

LA officials on hot spot in cop brutality case



Kathleen O'Nan/Socialist Action

a protest of some 5000 people outside police headquarters on April 7.

Jackson was cheered when he said, "We must not just remove Gates, we must remove Gateism. We know the absence of Gates is not the presence of justice. The aberration wasn't the violence, it was the video camera. The beating of Rodney King exposed a national malady."

Another protest is set for May 11, with a rally at police headquarters at 2 p.m. The

slogans are: "Stop Police Brutality" and "Community Control of the Police." Sponsoring groups include the Rainbow Coalition, NAACP, American Civil Liberties Union, Brotherhood Crusade, and LA Coalition Against U.S. Intervention in the Middle East.

In other developments, a petition drive has been launched to recall Gates. Petition organizer Kerman Maddox, an instructor at Los Angeles Southwest Community College,

says 63,000 signatures are needed to put the issue on the ballot.

Supporters of Gates have threatened to launch a petition drive of their own to recall LA Mayor Thomas Bradley, who also calls for Gates' resignation. While expressing solidarity with Gates, however, the Los Angeles Police Protective League's board of directors voted on April 17 not to join the effort to recall Bradley.

One reason is that the police are feeling heat from inside the department itself, where Black cops charge they receive racist abuse from fellow officers.

The community pressure is also great. "We feel a little picked on," said Capt. Bruce Mitchell, commander of the LAPD's North Hollywood Division, discussing the aftermath of the beating of King. "Everybody's treating us like an occupying army."

Because Gates has refused to resign, the city fathers are having a hard time sweeping the King beating under the rug. On April 4, the Police Commission placed Gates on a 60-day paid leave of absence. The next day, the LA city council instructed the city attorney to settle Gates's suit by placing him back on the job.

On April 8, Superior Court Judge Ronald Sohigian issued a temporary restraining order barring the Police Commission from placing Gates on leave. Afterwards, Bradley and Gates held a joint press conference saying they were united in achieving justice.

A cover up is clearly unfolding. Public protests demanding full prosecution and the resignation of Gates are the most effective ways to force the city government and cops to pay a price for their "normal" use of force against Blacks and other working people in the city of Los Angeles.

Black community activist announces candidacy in Boston mayoral election

By SCOTT ADAMS-COOPER

BOSTON—May 1 will be the beginning of a "crusade" to shake Boston "so that it can never go back to business as usual," the Rev. Graylan Ellis-Hagler told an April 18 meeting at the Church of the United Community in Boston's Roxbury neighborhood.

On that date, the Rev. Ellis-Hagler will officially announce his candidacy for mayor of Boston. "It's time," as one campaigner said, "to challenge that racist administration down there that calls itself 'Boston.'"

The Rev. Ellis-Hagler will go head to head with the incumbent Mayor Ray Flynn, who is running for his third term. Flynn was elected as a "mayor of the neighborhoods," but his neglect of the Black and Latino communities has exposed him as the same racist who led the antibusing struggle while he was a state legislator during the 1970s.

The Rev. Ellis-Hagler is a well-known leader of Boston's Black community and has been in the front lines of many important struggles of working people in this city.

He fought alongside Greyhound strikers in 1990 and 1983 (when he was arrested on the picketlines); he led Black community opposition to the Gulf War, he stands as a "spiritual" leader with the militant Hotel workers Local 26; and he was a prime mover behind the victory of Black construction workers seeking jobs at the site of a new postal facility in Roxbury.

The Rev. Ellis-Hagler's candidacy can provide a focal point for Black community control, for workers' rights, for drug treatment instead of prison sentences for addicts, and against police brutality.

Central activists in the Black community have already pledged their support. They include Shakur Ali, a Vietnam veteran who has waged a struggle against gang violence and who was a key spokesperson for Black opposition to the Gulf War; Chuck Turner, the leader of the Greater Roxbury Workers Association (GRWA); Savina Martin, a longtime activist for the homeless; leaders of "Treatment on Demand," and others.

In many ways, the Rev. Ellis-Hagler's campaign is another indication that the ideas of Malcolm X are still alive. To date, the campaign is seen as an independent expression of the political aspirations of the Black community and its allies. It could demonstrate that the real program for Black liberation will emerge in struggle, not from some agenda set by the Democratic Party-controlled Rainbow Coalition.

The Rev. Ellis-Hagler sees his campaign as national in scope. He has reached out for support in other cities, while maintaining his independence from the "mainstream" Black leadership, who will characterize him as an "extremist" outside of the "legitimate" Black struggle.

At the April 18 meeting, Rev. Ellis-Hagler told the crowd of 100 that "community is running for mayor," and that



Rev. Graylan Ellis-Hagler

Joseph Ryan/Socialist Action

"it is a sin to let Flynn take all these votes out of the Black and Latino community." He envisions a campaign that "starts in the housing projects and on the street corners."

"Our campaign will turn this city upside down," Savina Martin told the meeting. "We're going beyond a campaign," she said. "We're reaching out for our survival. In this community, we're always underrepresented, misrepresented, slandered, and lynched. It's time to reclaim our streets and our neighborhood."

Martin highlighted the issues of inequality of education, lack of proper healthcare, infant

mortality, unemployment, and homelessness as keys to the campaign platform.

In pledging the full support of the GRWA, Chuck Turner told the meeting of the Rev. Ellis-Hagler's "gift of inspiring us to stand up and speak for ourselves. We don't need political leaders who speak for us."

On May 2, the Rev. Ellis-Hagler will participate in a Socialist Action forum on South Africa, which will be held in his church. On May 19, his campaign will participate in a celebration of the birthday of Malcolm X.

Boston Socialist Action Forum:

The Transformation of South Africa Into a New Society

Speakers:

Neville Alexander

South African political activist; imprisoned at Robben Island; founder & chair, Workers' Organization for Socialist Action; Educator, Univ. of Cape Town.

Rev. Graylan Ellis Hagler

Church of the United Community, Roxbury, Mass.

Minister Don Muhammed

Nation of Islam

Chris Nteta

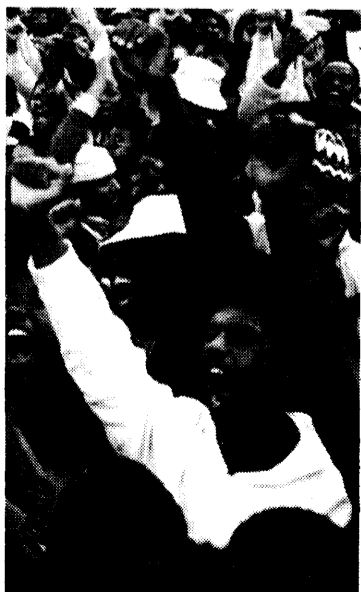
Prof., U. Mass., Boston; South African supporter of Black Consciousness Movement

Thursday, May 2, 7:30 pm

Church of the United Community

118 Roxbury St., Roxbury, Mass.

Call (617) 497-0230



5th Annual Socialist Educational Conference Saturday, May 4, U. Mass., Boston, Downtown Campus 100 Arlington St., Boston, Mass. Call (617) 497-0230

11:30 am-1:00 pm:

Socialism, Democracy and National Liberation: The Example of Cuba

Speaker: Barry Sheppard, Political Committee, Socialist Action; former Political Committee, Socialist Workers Party

2:30 pm-4:00 pm:

The Revival of Black Nationalism

Speaker: Roger Sheppard, National Committee, Socialist Action

7:30 pm:

Cuba and the 'New World Order': An Eyewitness Report

Speakers: Rev. Graylan Ellis-Hagler, Church of the United Community; Ann Salmeron, Socialist Action

\$3 donation requested per event/\$8 for 3 events \$1/\$3 students

By MALIK MIAH

Debates for or against affirmative action have often taken place between racists of the Jesse Helms stripe versus NAACP leader Benjamin Hooks.

The North Carolina senator makes clear that all remedies for past and current discrimination are anti-white. Hooks counters that only strong positive action by the government and courts will end Blacks' second-class economic status.

Hooks also adds, "I don't think it [America] has ever been ready to extend full equality. I can't think of anything we've gained as Black people that has not come without a struggle."

But since the victory of the civil rights movement in the 1960s that ended "Jim Crow"-legal segregation, there have been many changes in U.S. society. The most far-reaching changes have affected the oppressed Black nationality.

For the first time since Blacks were brought here on slave ships 300 years ago, a sizable Black middle class has been forged. The political and social weight of the middle class in the Black nationality has led to shifts in debates on how to end discrimination and who is responsible for its continuance.

The debate over affirmative action and quotas to achieve equality is now not just between the Helmses and the Hookses; it also includes Robert Woodson, a Black conservative who heads the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise. Woodson says, "The civil rights agenda [of the NAACP and other Black rights groups] has nothing to do with the deterioration of life for low-income Black people."

He and other Black conservatives raise an old idea that equality is the responsibility of Blacks themselves. The laws have been changed, they argue, so let's get down to hard work and do what the Irish, Italians, and Jews did. The fact that the other immigrants never were slaves or suffered legal race segregation is brushed aside.

Civil Rights Act of 1991

The current debate centers around the new Civil Rights Act of 1991. Last year, the Civil Rights Act of 1990 was vetoed by President George Bush on the false claim that it would force employers to use quotas in hiring and promoting Blacks and women.

That bill and the new one explicitly reject the use of quotas (the only effective way to enforce affirmative action). Both bills, if adopted, however, would reverse six recent Supreme Court decisions that make it more difficult for Blacks and women to win employment discrimination suits.

Of course, the real dispute is not over quotas but over whether new steps should be taken by the government to stop the erosion of civil and democratic rights. The bottom line of maintaining race and sex discrimination concerns profits.

In the current fragile world economy, competition between the U.S. corporations and their competitors—particularly in Europe and Japan—drives the employers to lower their labor costs by any means available. Racism and sexism is a powerful weapon in their hands.

Helms and his ilk say past history is not their problem. White male workers can't be held responsible for what their parents did, they argue. They are for a "colorblind" society based on "merit." Any moves to give extra help to Blacks and women is "reverse discrimination." Period.

The Black conservatives, and many liberal Democrats and Republicans, argue in a similar fashion, except that they reject the charge of "reverse discrimination." They are simply for a better way to correct discrimination without the use of quotas.

In addition, they fear being "stigmatized" by their white associates, who might charge that they received their positions through affirmative action and not merit. And they don't want their children to suffer the same condition.

Black middle class

It is useful to discuss the concerns of the Black academic and professional layers: does affirmative action and the civil rights agenda hurt the ability of the mass of Blacks to achieve full equality? Is there a "stigma" attached to taking part in an affirmative action program? Is full equality possible in our society?

Let's begin with some basic facts on the current state of Black America.

The median family income of Blacks is

Debate erupts in Black community over affirmative action programs

Conservative Black leaders question necessity of quotas to end discrimination



Ell Reed

just 56 percent of that of whites. The unemployment rate for Blacks last year was 10.5 percent, twice that of whites. The leading cause of death among young Black men is murder.

By the official definition of poverty, 43 percent of Black children are born poor. Two-thirds of Black babies are born to unmarried mothers. The average Black male youth is more likely to go to prison than to college.

At the same time, there is a growing Black middle class that is not much different in social outlook than its white counterpart. Government and other sources use the term "middle class" to include workers who have relatively high-paying jobs that allow them to own a home and live in better-off neighborhoods.

In the last 30 years, this economic Black middle class has grown from a tenth to more than a third of the Black population.

The significance of these figures is not just quantitative. Historically, there has always been a layer of Black professionals and better-paid Black workers who lived in the Harlems and Watts.

The lawyers, doctors, and rail and postal workers had homes in these communities. The leaders of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and '60s for the most part lived in the inner cities. They had no choice because of legal segregation. Not surprisingly, many of these figures became role models for the young.

Today, Black sports professionals, corporate executives, doctors, and better-paid workers live in the suburbs or other neighborhoods that Black ghetto youth rarely step foot in. The youth in the ghettos are a world apart, growing up physically and socially separated from these communities.

Not surprisingly, most Black professionals are generally out of touch with the mass of Blacks. They can't identify with the problems of inferior schools, unemployment, and rotten healthcare.

The average Black working person wants an education, a job, and housing. The concerns of poor Black workers—employed and unemployed—are not identical to those of the Black middle class. The latter identify more with the white professional than the Black worker.

Racist backlash

The racist backlash against affirmative action is based on white males who falsely be-

lieve they are losing jobs and opportunities to "unqualified" Blacks.

But as Black educator Roger Wilkins correctly notes: "We have had preference programs in this country, and we still have them, and the preferred are white men. But somehow in the debate all the victims are white men worried that Black people are going to take their jobs. The only place in America where Blacks have taken jobs in a major way from whites is the National Basketball Association."

Unfortunately, many of the new Black middle class more and more accept the discriminatory framework of their white counterparts. They say the road out of the ghetto is individual action. Political activism to fight discrimination is fine. But getting ahead, they say, requires self-discipline, hard work, and determination, which other immigrants have shown.

Of course, these "other immigrants" were not brought here as slaves and did not suffer legal segregation for 100 years. But to the new generation of Black well-to-do, this is all past history.

Black working people, however, do not have that luxury. It is institutional discrimination that keeps Blacks in Milwaukee, Chicago, Oakland, New York, Detroit, and other major cities in the ghettos. It is why Black unemployment is always at least twice that of whites; why housing is worse; why education is less than adequate. It is why the "economic upturn" in the 1980s barely affected poor Blacks, who became even more impoverished.

The fact that the Black middle class is larger than it has ever been (meaning that a layer of Blacks is living quite well-off), only camouflages the fact that over the last 30 years life for the average Black person has become worse.

What solution?

By definition, the only solution to racial discrimination is a radical solution.

While the end of legal segregation allowed the creation of a new Black middle class and significant gains for Blacks overall, such as affirmative action programs in all fields (important conquests, which began to remedy historic discrimination), it could not end racism or bring full equality.

Racism is an integral part of capitalist America. People within the Black middle class can't escape the color of their skin. (For that reason, the Los Angeles police department is apt to stop them as well as

unemployed workers like Rodney King!)

It is the capitalist system that continuously creates and reproduces racism and discrimination.

Discrimination helps create the basis for profits for the employers. Blacks and women are super-exploited because of that discrimination. Blacks and women are on the average paid less for their labor power than white males. That's why racism is very profitable.

The large pool of cheap Black and female labor helps to depress all wages. The employers use racism and sexism to divide the workforce: to encourage white males to blame Blacks, immigrants, foreigners, and women for job loss; lack of promotions, etc.

That is why in the 1960s, at the height of the civil rights movement, militant leaders like Malcolm X said that real equality would not be possible until Blacks rejected the capitalist system.

Malcolm explained that full equality would only be possible when Blacks had both legal and economic equality. He said that Blacks must rely on themselves and not look to leaders who refuse to challenge the underpinnings of racism.

(The only country in the world that has actively done so is Cuba, where racism is illegal and the government policy is to promote Blacks in all spheres of Cuban society.)

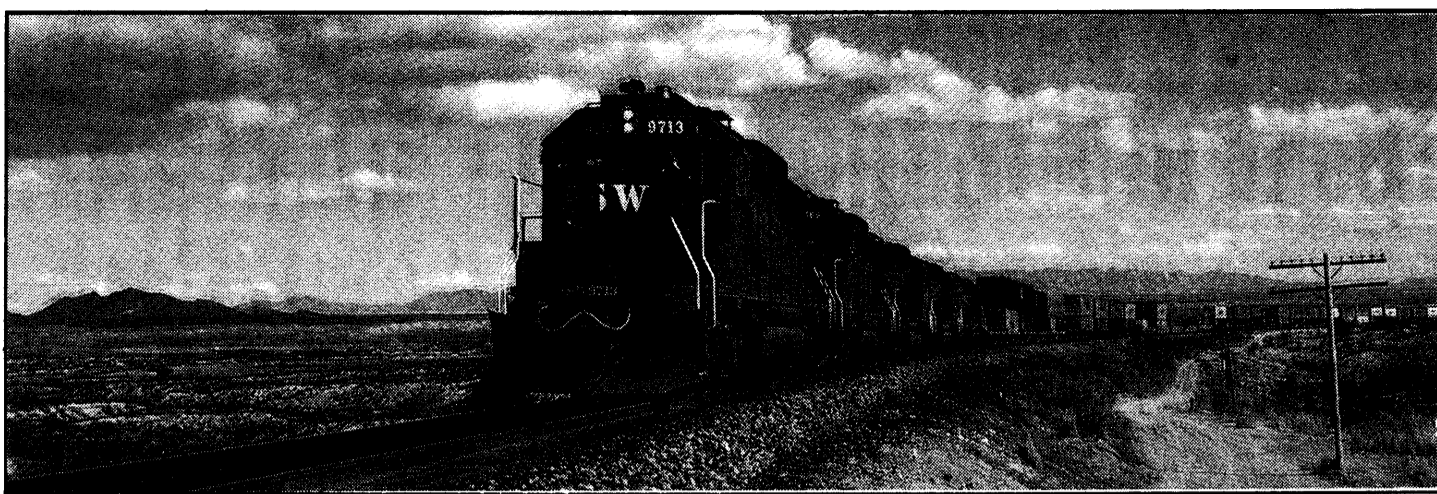
While many Blacks may be rich and famous and leave the inner-cities, real equality still evades Blacks as a group. A Jesse Jackson can run for president and be taken seriously. Blacks can be mayors of big cities as Democrats or even Republicans.

But for the mass of Blacks life is getting worse: While life expectancy for whites has grown to a record 75.2 years, life expectancy for Blacks fell to 69.2 years!

A new perspective is needed in the Black community. Supporting legislation for affirmative action is fine, but it can't solve the deep social and economic problems. That requires a radical shift in policy.

The civil rights agenda must be broadened and updated, not junked. It means a new leadership that orients to and concerns itself with the problems of the poorest sectors of the Black community.

Moreover, it means a leadership tied to the labor movement, which is the strongest natural ally of working-class Blacks. It means taking up Malcolm X's call to break with the Democratic and Republican parties and forming a new working people's party that fights for the interests of all of labor, especially its most discriminated sections. ■



Gary J. Benson

... Rail workers face gov't strikebreaking

(continued from page 1)

outdated and marginal, no longer at the center of economic life. Even if some disruption of rail service did occur, the claim went, its economic impact would be minimal.

But the reality is quite different. More than one-third of all goods shipped each month in the United States, 37 percent of all freight transportation, is carried by rail. Trucks, the railroad's next largest competitor, carry only 25 percent of the nation's traffic.

Furthermore, much of the rail freight (coal, chemicals, bulk grain, etc.) cannot be realistically shifted to any other form of transportation.

Rail's decisive economic weight was confirmed by a steady stream of corporation heads appearing on the nightly news, pleading that their operations would be shut down within the week or even within days if the strike were not brought to an end.

In short, the strike demonstrated that railroad workers, organized in rail unions, represent potentially the most single powerful body of organized workers in the nation today.

Pro-company intervention

Unfortunately, this was not the only lesson demonstrated by the strike. Once again, rail workers and their unions were subjected to swift government intervention directly to the benefit of the railroad owners.

The immediate cause of the strike was the entirely pro-company contract recommendations handed down by Presidential Emergency Board 219, which was appointed by Bush in January 1990 under the Railway Labor Act (RLA). The contract recommendations in PEB 219 gave the rail owners virtually everything they wanted:

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

2) It drastically changed work rules, which would eliminate 20,000 jobs within months and further erode already dangerous safety conditions in the industry.

3) It would reduce the real wages of rail workers by 20 percent to 30 percent over the course of the contract.

Traditionally in the rail industry, wage increases are retroactive back to when the previous contract expired. This is crucial because the procedures under the RLA result in an extended period without a contract—in the present case, almost three years. Without retroactivity, this entire period constitutes a wage freeze.

But PEB 219 includes no retroactive wage provision and instead substitutes a paltry \$2000 "lump sum" payment, which the Board called a "signing bonus." This works out to about three cents per hour for the three years railroad workers were without a contract.

The Board's recommendation amounts to a 10.3 percent total wage increase over nearly 7 years. This amounts to an annual wage increase of 1.4 percent in an economy with an annual inflation rate of at least 5 percent.

The Railway Labor Act

Unions in the rail industry negotiate under the strictures of the Railway Labor Act. This special act of Congress was passed in 1926 in response to the growing power of rail labor, as demonstrated in a series of historic strikes through the turn of the century—the victorious 1894 strike on the Great Northern (led by Eugene V. Debs against the powerful rail magnate James J. Hill), the Pullman strike of 1894 (also led by Debs), and the shop crafts strike of 1922.

Rail owners and the ruling class as a whole recognized that they had to adjust to

the new relationship of forces and to make concessions to the growing power of rail labor. But they were determined to do it in a way that would be least damaging to themselves and that would strengthen the unions as little as possible.

The capitalist class hoped to begin a process of undercutting and eroding the power of rail labor—encompassed in the unions' ability to strike and shut the railroads down. For that reason, they made the concessions in the form of federal legislation—a series of congressional acts culminating in the Railway Labor Act of 1926.

The RLA codified a series of significant concessions to the unions. It gave the rail unions official government recognition, including government recognition of the union shop and the dues checkoff. It required carriers to negotiate with the unions and to set concrete procedures for doing that. It restricted the carriers' ability to set up company unions, which was a widespread practice throughout the industry. It curbed the ability of the carriers to discriminate against union members.

But at the same time that it codified these concessions, the Act seriously restricted the right of rail unions to strike. At the end of a contract period, unions no longer had the legal right to strike. The old contract remained

government control of unions that goes beyond anything in the RLA.

Not only did an overwhelmingly Democratic Congress ram through this dangerously anti-union legislation (there were only five dissenting votes in the House and a unanimous consent resolution in the Senate to preclude any debate or roll call vote), but the specific wording of House Joint Resolution 22 makes it crystal clear that the main intention of the new "Congressional Emergency Board" is to reaffirm the horrendous recommendations of PEB 219.

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

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

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



Eva Akesson

Striking rail workers and families demonstrate in Twin Cities.

in force and a long period (often lasting more than a year) of formal notifications, "cooling off" periods, and board hearings ensued.

If the parties could still not come to a negotiated settlement, the final stage of the procedure was the appointment by the president of a Presidential Emergency Board, which had 30 days to come up with contract recommendations. The railroads and unions then had 30 additional days to consider it.

Only after these lengthy procedures had been exhausted, were the unions theoretically free to strike.

New level of government control

Nothing in the RLA, however, authorizes the government to impose a contract on railroad workers.

The action by Congress on April 18, ordering railroad workers back to work and setting up a new "Congressional Board" with the explicit power to impose a contract completely over the heads of rail workers and their unions, represents a new level of

The Congressional resolution is consciously crafted to disallow out of hand the consideration of these union demands by the new Board.

But the most revealing section in exposing the real intentions of the new "Congressional Emergency Board" is Section D, Procedure and Determination, which lays out the basis on which the board will carry out its deliberations and make a decision.

This section states, "In making a determination under this subsection, the special board shall accord a presumption of validity to the recommendations of Presidential Emergency Board No. 219. The party requesting a modification of a particular Presidential Emergency Board recommendation shall bear the burden of persuasion with respect to the modification of such request. In order to overcome such presumption of validity, the party requesting a modification must show that the Presidential Emergency Board recommendation is demonstrably inequitable or was based on a material error

Nationwide protests

Local demonstrations and rallies have been organized all across the country in opposition to the government's intervention against the rail unions.

On March 9, in Guernsey, Wyo., 200 union members and their supporters gathered to show their solidarity in the face of government attacks. Representing 23 unions from a four-state area, they marched and listened to speakers denounce the anti-union recommendations of the Presidential Emergency Board (PEB 219).

In Alliance, Neb., 23 officials representing the various shopcrafts sponsored an "All Unions Rally" to demonstrate the workers' commitment to one another and their unions.

In Minneapolis, 250 unionists gathered to discuss the PEB. Picketing was organized at the Federal Bldg. in St. Paul in April. Similar events took place in La Crosse, Wisc., and in other cities.

Plans are being made to hold a citywide meeting in Boston against the government's attack. Union members and officials from Conrail (as well as from Amtrak—which, although not part of the national dispute, has been without a contract for three years) are participating.

So in spite of the negative impact of the government's interference in the collective bargaining process, people have begun to organize themselves on the local level for the next fight. *Socialist Action* will be following their efforts in the days ahead.

—ART LE CLAIR

or material misunderstanding." [Emphasis added—editor.]

"Friends of labor?"

Ever since World War II, the strategy followed by top rail union officials has been based totally on relying on "labor friends" in Congress to barter a good deal under the Railway Labor Act, rather than relying on the union's own strength and its ultimate ability to strike.

How badly they miscalculated is reflected in the statement made by the president of the United Transportation Union, Fred T. Hardin, when (within hours of this treacherous Congressional action) he boasted, "The railroads are going to be disappointed if they think Congress will panic and force a quick settlement."

Representative Jim Slattery, a Kansas Democrat and "friend of labor," who is a member of the House committee that wrote the joint resolution, justified his actions by explaining, "I consider myself to be a representative of the blue-collar workers of America." But he further explained that he could not ignore the interest of the struck Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe, which runs through his state.

After all, Slattery pleaded, "Forty percent of the Santa Fe's business is sensitive to truck competition."

Congressman Al Swift, another Democratic "friend of labor" from Washington state (who headed up the key House transportation subcommittee and along with Ted Kennedy played a decisive role in lining up votes for House Joint Resolution 222), praised the Republican-Democrat solidarity on the issue. "I have not seen an issue as potentially as contentious as this one," he boasted, "resolved with so little partisan politics."

But the fight is not over. Congress could have done what they did two years ago in the Chicago & North Western railroad strike, when they directly imposed the PEB. This year, however, Congress was afraid to do this. Noting the thousands of letters, the numerous demonstrations by rail workers across the country, and the solidarity of the strike, they feared that striking workers might defy them by refusing to return to work.

Instead they decided to retreat a little, set up a new Board, and get the workers calmed down and back to work. They hoped to demobilize and demoralize the workers in preparation for imposing the PEB 219 recommendations with a few cosmetic changes.

Congress and the new Board will now be watching rail workers and their unions to see how angry, organized, and determined they remain. In the next 60 days, rail workers and their unions must launch a campaign to let Congress and the new Board know that they will not accept a clone of PEB 219. ■

'Oh, I'm positive all right. I'm positive we got the shaft.'

Rail workers realize they need a fighting strategy to defeat carriers' profit drive, gov't intervention

By TINA BEACOCK

When strikers at the Chicago Northwestern Railroad's (CNW) stack yard walked out at 7 a.m. on April 16, one switchman took out of his car the picket sign his wife had made him. The sign got a chuckle from most of the picketers. "Railroad executives are white-collar criminals," it read, and the workers all knew what he was talking about.

The CNW officials, including President Schmeige (annual salary a cool \$500,000), had awarded themselves a 100 percent bonus, while we were being denounced for making "too much" money.

In the days leading up to the strike, I travelled around to various worksites. Workers in every craft were pretty clear about their reasons to support the strike and to reject the findings of the Presidential Emergency Board (PEB).

The wage freeze of the past three years and the 25 percent cut in real wages we were offered, as well as the new co-payments on health insurance, hit a sore nerve with most people.

The day before the strike, I leafletted the commuters with a B&B (bridge and building) worker, a member of the BMWE. "I ask the commuters," he said, "have they gotten a raise in the last three years?"

I found that each craft had its own specific complaints. Maintenance of way workers, for example, weren't anxious to work under the new rules; they could be ordered on short notice to go anywhere on the railroad (in their own cars) to join roving gangs to replace the gangs working in each district. They would have to work for an indefinite period of time, through the weekends.

A diesel ramp technician explained the massive job elimination possible with the new "incidental work" rule, under which he could be ordered to do the work of virtually any craft.

And for the yard switchmen (already stinging from the recent reduction of crew sizes on the CNW) the new PEB posed the threat of a further reduction of jobs, at least by half, as the road crews would be forced to perform yard duties.

A test of nerves

Many strikers showed up to picket for a while at the CNW stack facility, knowing they'd be needed there. While the CNW had been ordered to run the commuter service—and while it didn't attempt to run any freight—the railroad and the stack company did try to keep the stack facility open.

Picket duty there was a test of nerves between strikers and truckers (mostly independent owners), who were waved past the pickets by supervisors.

Although only a handful of strikers were there, the railroad called out their own gumshoes, a Chicago police squad car, and the infamous labor detail of the police.

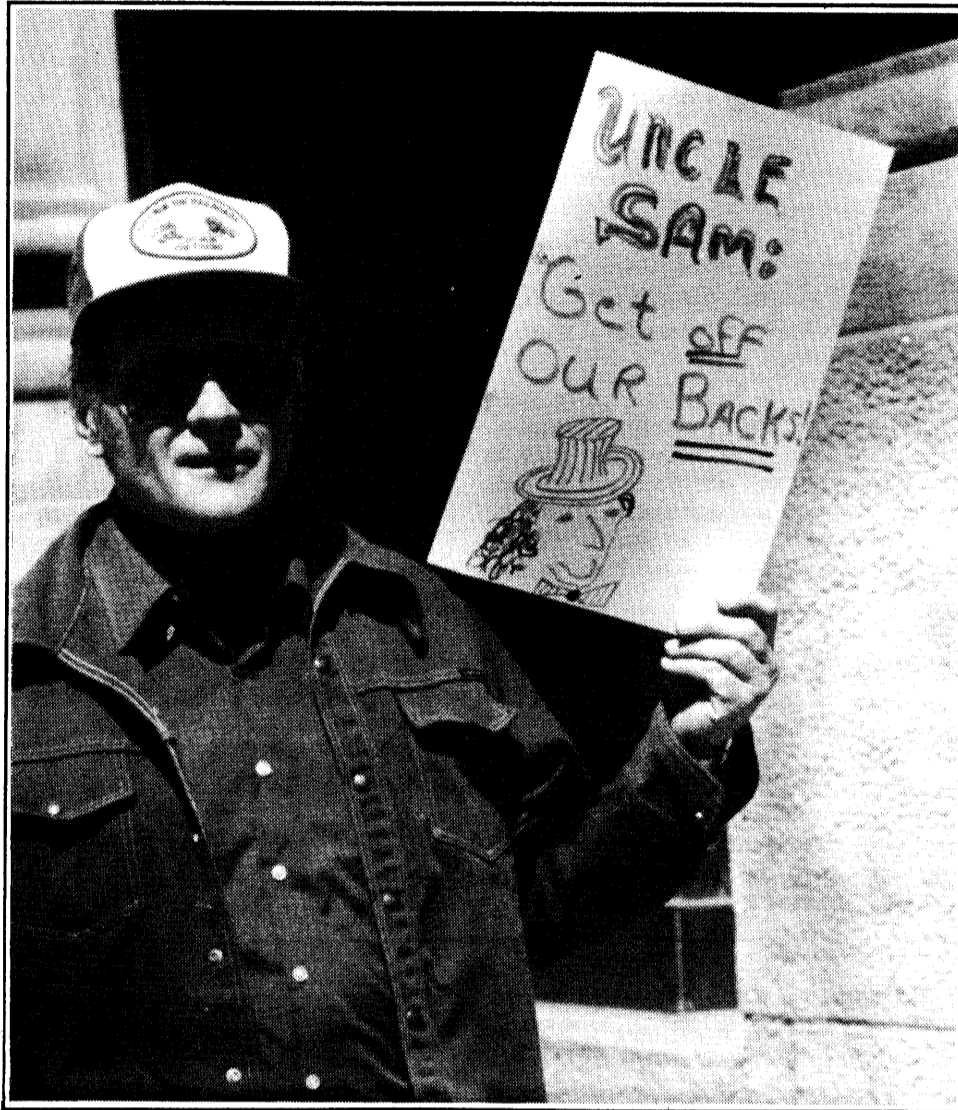
The picketers weren't sure of their effectiveness until one independent driver convinced his company not to run that day, and another pleaded with picketers: "Please let me through. I won't go back after I drop this load. I didn't realize you guys would be so tough."

This was a small taste of what could be possible with a serious mass picket line, and the real test of strength was not with these few trucks. But strikers showed up to picket there, because they knew it had an effect.

At one point, a railroad supervisor came out to fume at the strikers. Who could be so stupid and ignorant, he asked, as to leave tacks on the road? The strikers replied that they had no idea—but they wanted to know who could be so stupid and ignorant as to wave trucks through a picket line?

Just how stupid—or worse—was shown a

Tina Beacock is a member of the United Transportation Union.



Eva Akesson

few hours later when a striker was hit by a truck that had been waved through by a supervisor. James Buttons was hit, and the truck didn't slow down.

When asked to call an ambulance, the ever-present police simply said, "Just call 911." No news media covered this incident, although hourly bulletins talked about the status of commuters.

An open-ended discussion

Both before and during the strike, every discussion of the most simple basic tasks quickly became a discussion of the probable role of Congress, and how to deal with it. Everyone expected Congress to intervene on the side of the railroads. Hundreds of railroad workers turned out on April 13 for a rally

against government intervention.

In one union meeting before the strike, a UTU member outlined what was necessary to continue the strike—against Congress if need be. When some of us talked about the example of the miners (who had stayed out after the government ordered them back to work), people asked, "Did we mean the Soviet miners?"

There was an open-ended discussion about why a united national strike was necessary. The proposal to keep the commuter lines running was hotly debated. As part of an over-all strategy to win over public opinion and to stand up to Congress, it could be quite effective. But it was proposed, in part, as a way to convince Congress that the unions should be supported—and to avoid a

Teamsters 'hang tough' at White Rose

By GERRY FIORI

NEW YORK—Local 138 of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) has been on strike against White Rose Foods since Feb. 1.

White Rose, a Long Island-based grocery wholesale supplier owned by the DiGiorgio Corporation, forced out the more than 500 members of the local by demanding acceptance of a contract calling for major concessions. At the time, the company was making high profits.

The strikers have responded to the company's union-busting tactics (which included the opening of a second warehouse in New Jersey months before the start of the strike) by setting up picket lines at the distribution facilities.

In addition, the strikers have organized flying squads to leaflet in front of retail stores

that buy from White Rose. They see this as a means of enforcing a total boycott of the scab groceries.

On April 14, the strikers held their first public rally. Over 1000 strikers, their families, and supporters gathered at the union hall of Local 25 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in Melville, N.Y., and marched several miles to the White Rose warehouse in Farmingdale. Once there, they held a spirited rally featuring speakers from Local 138 and from supporting unions.

According to Mike Ruscigno, recording secretary and business agent of Local 138, solidarity is building for the strike. "A lot of the other Teamster locals, the Eastern machinists, and the Greyhound workers have come out for us," he told *Socialist Action*.

"We've just come through the Daily News strike and the phone company strike—and the solidarity in the New York area now is strong," Ruscigno pointed out. "We know we have to jump in and help each other. Everybody realizes this strike is going to affect every union job in the area."

Donations and letters of support can be sent to Teamsters Local 138, 1038 Jackson Ave., Long Island City, NY 11101. Telephone (718) 392-2300.

PEB that way.

Faced with this proposal, some workers saw it as undermining solidarity. As one union member put it: It won't matter if the commuters run or not—as long as Congress is going to pass the PEB and order us all back to work anyway.

Many railroad workers felt a crying need for a serious strategy to take on the carriers and Congress. In the UTU strike headquarters, on the afternoon of April 16, the strikers (with one ear on the radio) talked about their options:

Wouldn't the railroads fire strikers and replace them if they refused to return to work? That possibility was dismissed. But who would lead such a move? Certainly not the union's national president, Fred Hardin, who has encouraged Congress to set up yet another Presidential Emergency Board.

Railroad workers on the CNW went back to work the next day, holding their breath to see what the consequences of Congress's intervention would be. The details are slow in coming. One engineer, encouraged to think positive, said, "Oh, I'm positive, all right. I'm positive we got the shaft."

What did become clear to a larger number of railroad workers than before was that, as long as our unions do not have a clear strategy to oppose the carriers' drive for profits and the government's intervention against our right to strike, we will continue to lose out.

Rail workers rally in Chicago

By JIM MILES

CHICAGO—Over 300 railroad workers rallied downtown on April 13 to oppose federal intervention against railroad unions and a national contract imposed by Congress.

The Chicago rally was sponsored by Rail Labor Chicago, an ad-hoc committee of union members and officers from several crafts based mainly on the Burlington Northern (BN) and the Chicago and Northwestern (CNW) railroads.

The rally was addressed by Mike Bruton, secretary-treasurer of the Chicago Federation of Labor, and U.S. Congressman Charles Hayes, among others. Hayes told the rally that "you can't trust anyone in Congress to be pro-labor." But he also said that was why railworkers shouldn't strike, if they didn't want the conditions of PEB 219 imposed on them.

In contrast, Lynn Henderson, a switchman on the BN in Minneapolis and an editor of *Straight Track* newspaper, received the biggest round of applause for pointing out that railworkers face the same struggle today that our brothers and sisters faced in Poland—the fight for independent trade unions free from government control.

By the end of the rally, over 180 railworkers and their families had signed a mailing list for more information as to what they could do.

On the CNW, where railworkers in the United Transportation Union lost hundreds of jobs due to a settlement imposed by Congress after a one-day strike in 1988, some workers thought that we should follow the example of the United Mineworkers union and its successful defiance of government back-to-work orders issued under the Taft-Hartley act.

By following the example of the miners, rail workers would not only have the right to vote on the contract, but would also become a social movement that reaches out to small farmers, shippers, and everyone affected by the rail carriers' price gouging and cut-backs in freight and passenger service.

The top union officials in Chicago presented the tactic of not shutting down the commuter lines (which transport more than 40,000 commuters daily) as a way to get a "better deal" from Congress, rather than as a way to gain public support so as to stand up to Congress.

But few workers today expect the new PEB to fundamentally alter the job cuts, net wage losses, and drastic work-rule changes of the previous PEB "proposals." As one 17-year member of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees said, "We're going to get the exact same thing by the new PEB as the old PEB shoved down our throats."

Jim Miles is a member of United Transportation Union Local 577

Boston labor rallies against cutbacks

By RICK TUDOR

BOSTON—In what the AFL-CIO called a "take back the government" protest, at least 20,000 demonstrators marched on City Hall and the State House to the chant of "Governor Weld go to hell." The April 13 march and rally was called to protest layoffs and furloughs of state workers and cuts in public education and social services.

The march, one of organized labor's biggest actions in this area in years, included Boston firefighters, building-trades workers, rail workers, retail employees, and dozens of public-employee unions representing social workers, teachers, subway operators, and other workers.

The Republican Party administration of Gov. Weld is continuing the massive cuts started by Michael Dukakis's Democrats in trying to balance the state budget on the back of the poor and workers. While seeking over \$100 million in public education cuts, Weld, recently pushed through an \$85,000 salary increase for his cabinet.

It's this kind of in-your-face shamelessness that the people of Massachusetts are coming to see as the reality of state government. Gov. Weld, who acts like he won his office on the squash court from some other member of the Brahmin Club, is making enemies in labor faster than you can say "croquet."



20,000 workers marched through the streets of Boston on April 13.

Boston's Mayor Ray Flynn, a Democrat, is not winning any popularity contests either. This "pro-labor" mayor has plans to eliminate 1500 city jobs. Greeted with boos and jeers by the protesters as he crept onto the podium, Flynn told the crowd, "There's no government that has the right to take

away a person's right to work."

But the Boston city hospital workers, who have been working without a contract since July, and the members of other unions whose members have been laid off by the Flynn administration, were less than impressed.

Gov. Weld's furlough plan, which would affect up to 80,000 workers, is basically slave labor—1990s style. If you are considered a "critical" worker, you show up to work without pay for from two to 15 days. If you're not considered "critical," you stay home unpaid. The rumor is that Weld considers his gardener "critical."

The April 13 rally promises to be the start of a long hot summer for Weld and his cronies and the idle Democrats in state government who are doing what they seem to do best—wringing their hands with a grimace and counting time till their pensions come through.

The official union leadership is encouraging caution, informational picketing, and letter writing. But they also say that they are seeing new heights of anger.

College students, increasingly angry with service cuts and tuition hikes, plan another mass protest at the State House (their last one, in October 1989, drew 15,000). Teachers, angry at having to work without pay, are planning on cancelling classes and organizing informational picketing, with wildcat strikes to follow.

Joseph L. Langis, executive director of the State Students Association of Massachusetts, said recently that "it's really coming to a head." Speaking on the discontent over state education cuts, he said, "The bulk of the students are coming from lower-income and middle-income levels. They don't have the luxury of living off trust funds. It's become more of a class war" ■

By NAT WEINSTEIN

How is it that here, in the richest country in the world, the public school system, the mass transit systems, the vast network of roads and bridges—the entire infrastructure of American society is being allowed to steadily deteriorate and even collapse?

Why is it that although a steadily increasing portion of workers' wages go to city, state, and federal treasuries to pay for schools and other social services, the tax collectors demand more, claiming there aren't enough tax dollars for these things in the treasuries?

Not only are "we" rich, but each year the economy continues to grow, producing more goods faster than the increase in population. Each year society has more productive capacity available out of which these basic systems can be maintained at their highest level of efficiency, not to mention, be improved.

But, this increasing wealth doesn't get where it needs to go to maintain the basic infrastructure of society.

Moreover, for at least the last 20 years, the living standards of those who produce the wealth of this country—the working class—have steadily declined despite the increasing number of breadwinners in the average family.

An ever-larger proportion of the working class is being driven below the poverty level, with growing numbers of homeless people sleeping in the streets of the nation's big cities.

Karl Marx was the first to come up with a fully consistent explanation of how the capitalist economic system works—and why it *doesn't* work. While it's beyond the scope of a newspaper article to attempt to present Marx's economic theory here, we can point the reader in that direction by providing a brief introduction to a few basic ideas.

Where do profits come from?

All wealth is produced by workers. All commodities are exchanged according to their value; that is, the labor time necessary for their production.¹

Although wage workers are paid the value of their labor power, they are compelled to work longer than necessary for reproducing the value of their wages. Thus, a good portion of the workers' labor—perhaps half, on average—is not paid for. The difference between the wages paid out and the surplus value produced by the worker is pocketed by the capitalist as profit.

But this "profit" is shared by the industrial capitalist with the whole class of capitalists, including bankers and landowners,

¹ More accurately: socially necessary, abstract, human labor power.

Why do we have cutbacks in the world's richest country?

A short introduction to Marxist economics

and their servants—from cops, prison guards and nightwatchmen, to mayors, senators, presidents, dictators, and kings.

Thus, the surplus value produced by workers and taken from them without payment, is distributed as interest, rent, taxes, etc., with the balance being net profit to each industrial capitalist.

In other words, all those who do not work live on the pickings of this surplus value, which reaches them in one way or another. To find the answer to the above questions, however, we must look deeper.

The declining rate of profit

There is a long term tendency, intrinsic to the system of capitalist production, for the rate of profit to decline. This means that even though absolute profits might steadily grow, the rate of profit on invested capital may simultaneously decline.

How does this seemingly illogical phenomenon occur? And how is it related to the absurdities of increasing wealth, increasing tax revenues, and the deteriorating infrastructure, declining living standards for the majority, and the insidious destruction of the quality of life for all humanity on this planet?

Marx showed in *Capital*—his major work explaining capitalist economy—that money invested in capitalist production is divided into two parts:

- What Marx called *constant* capital, is the money laid out for the purchase of machinery, buildings, raw materials, land, interest, etc. The value of this portion of invested capital used up in the process of production, is reproduced in the commodities created. But it adds no *new* value to the goods produced. Marx called it *dead labor*.

- The second portion of invested capital Marx called *variable* capital; that is, the part paid to the worker as wages. The price of the worker's *living* labor power is also reproduced in the goods manufactured; but the worker continues to work, creating new, or surplus value which is not paid for.

Marx calls this division of productive capital its *organic composition*.

The portion of the laborer's time spent to reproduce the value of wages, Marx called *necessary labor*; and since he or she



Karl Marx

is made to work longer than what is necessary to replace wages, a surplus is also created. Marx called this portion of the labor time *surplus labor*, which is appropriated by the capitalist. This is how surplus value, or profit, is created and becomes the property of the capitalist.

Contrary to the popular myth, profit is not an addition to the value of commodities, it is a deduction. The capitalist, as a capitalist, adds nothing to the product of society. They only take.

In the course of competition among the capitalists and the normal development of technology, more and bigger machines are introduced—the simplest hand tools giving way to increasingly complex machinery, driven by water, steam, and electric power—which systematically increases the productivity of human labor.

Consequently, the proportion of capital laid out for *dead labor* (machinery, etc.) grows faster relative to *living labor*

(wages). And since surplus value is created only by *living* labor, an ever smaller proportion of total capital produces surplus value.

Or, to put it another way, since profit is calculated as a percentage of total capital invested—both constant capital and variable capital—the rate of profit tends to go down.

This, however, is a long-term tendency which is not expressed in strict accord with the changing organic composition of productive capital. This is because there are a variety of factors which counteract the tendency toward this evolution to a higher proportion of constant to variable capital.

For example, as productivity increases, there are cheaper machines and raw materials, reducing the value and price of constant capital; and cheaper food, clothing and other necessities reducing the value and price of labor power.

Most importantly, the rate of exploitation—intensity of labor, length of work day—is variable. And like the level of wages, the rate of exploitation is determined by the relation of forces in the class struggle.

These and other *countervailing* factors, as Marx called them, may slow down or postpone the decline in the rate of profit.

Destabilizes capitalist economy

What we see happening today is in great part dictated by the law of the falling rate of profit.

Especially in the United States, where the resources wasted on war production and the other costs of policing the world to make it safe for capitalist exploitation are highest, the pressure on profits has compelled the ruling class to accelerate its attacks on the wages of workers and the shifting of the tax burden from the rich to the poor.

The capitalists are also forced to chisel away at health, welfare and other tax-subsidized social benefits—in effect reducing, what some call, the *social wage* of the working class. Also being neglected are the necessary expenditures for maintaining the entire infrastructure.

But this is only the beginning. Despite the current recession, world capitalism remains stabilized. But the relentless pressure to sustain the rate of profit will accelerate the pauperization of the working class down toward an absolute state, as predicted by Marx a century and a half ago.

Sooner or later, there will be an explosion of resistance that will open the door anew to the socialist revolution. Now is the time to get prepared to learn how to fight for the victory of the world working class and humanity as a whole. Join us. ■

The role of working people in the fight for free, quality education

By SUZANNE FORSYTH

For working-class Americans, access to public education constitutes a fundamental right. The United States was exceptional in its commitment to public schooling and high enrollment much earlier than other Western countries. What had been achieved in public schooling in the United States by the mid-19th century wasn't reached in Europe until after World War I, and in some countries, until after World War II.

During colonial times, education began within the church and family. From the earliest times, however, schools began to appear in rented rooms and abandoned cabins, meeting halls, and churches. A massive popular demand for public education existed.

Public primary schools were established first in Boston in 1818, followed by New York in 1832. Elementary schooling was widely available in older and settled areas by the 1820s and '30s. The public-school movement of this time served to spread schooling to newly settled areas and systematize that which already existed.

By 1860, most states had established universal free public school systems. By 1880, 62 percent of white children attended school, but only 34 percent of Black children.

As the shift to an industrial economy progressed and work left the household and entered the factory, shop and market, the role of the family in education declined. Because of a labor shortage, the old European apprenticeship system never took root in the United States. In addition, the lack of the extended family ties—created by emigration and mobility—eroded familial control that had tied generations to one place and one profession.

This trend continued into the modern era and, as households declined in size and influence, public education in terms of socialization increased in importance.

Labor fought for schooling

Unions were always strong supporters of public education. As the schools came under attack, the working class emerged as one of its most effective defenders.

Workingmen's Party and Knights of Labor platforms most often included demands for mass public schooling. Craft unions also gave support, especially in the major port cities of the Northeast. Throughout the latter part of the 19th century and into the Progressive Era, unions supported expanding public education and compulsory attendance. Their efforts were generally tied to the fight to abolish child labor.

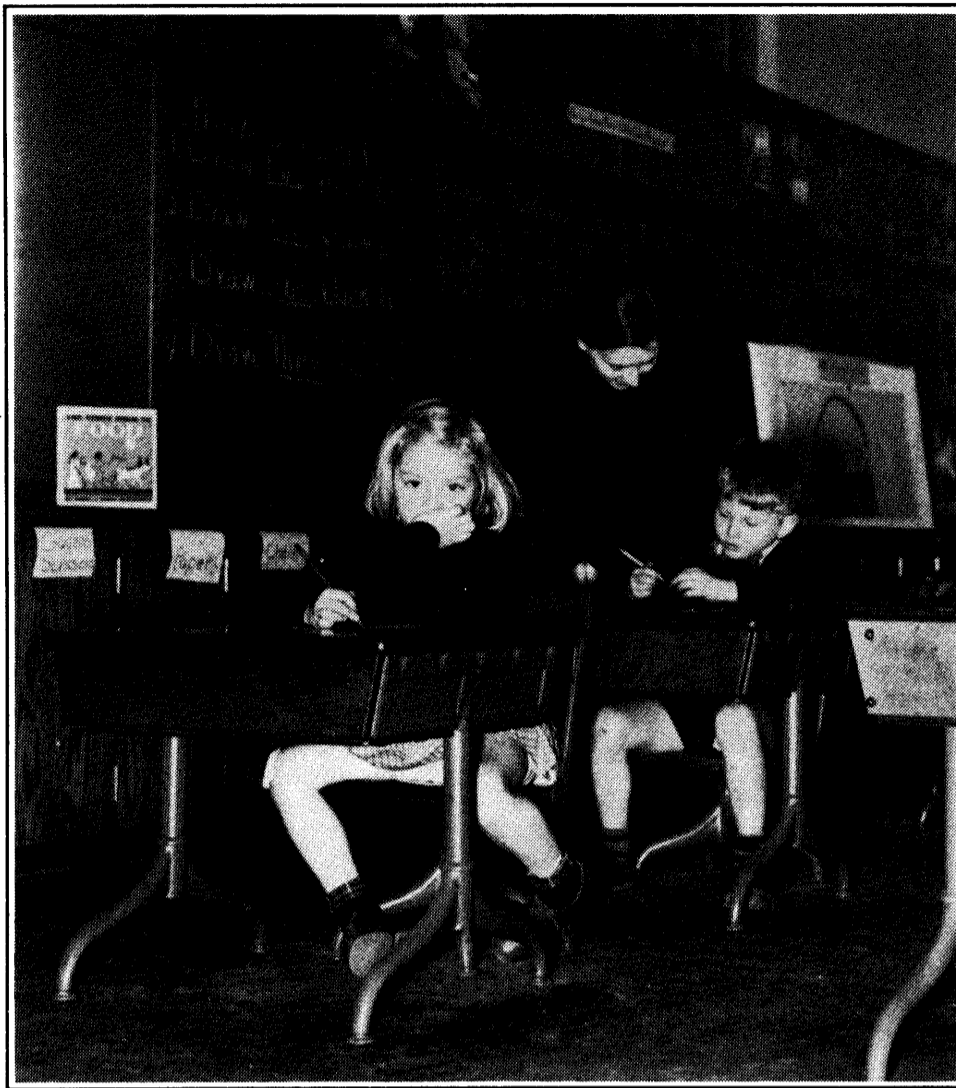
When the broad curriculum of Chicago primary schools was attacked as "costly luxuries" for the "children of the masses" by the *Tribune* in 1893, labor argued for its expansion.

P.H. McLogan, a Chicago printer, expressed their sentiment: "The duty of the appointed protectors at our school system [is] to provide for the mass of the people, not a scant education, instruction in those branches which may be deemed necessary for the immediate bread-winning, but a liberal one. ... We think that instruction in our public schools should be so ample as to dispense absolutely with the necessity of private schools." (From Ira Katznelson, "Schooling for All.")

As the high school began to develop as an institution, unions and working-class leaders protested the exclusion of workers' children. Public primary schools did not adequately prepare children for high-school entrance exams, and many working-class families could not afford to keep their children out of work.

By the turn of the century, students were compelled by law to attend primary schools, and the vast majority enrolled in public institutions. Urban school systems had developed significantly.

By the 1920s, nearly 50 percent of the population had settled in urban areas. Both foreign immigration and the migration from rural areas to the cities forced the expansion of school systems and the provision and enforcement of compulsory education. The funds spent on public education per pupil increased over three times between 1910 and 1924.



Arthur Rothstein

Schools *did* equalize access to basic primary education. But at the same time, public education adapted to the economic forces of the industrial revolution. Curriculum was standardized, testing introduced, records collected, hours extended, and class size increased.

All reflected the values of industrialism known as "Taylorism," after one of its major proponents. In one study, the actual time required for recitations in Latin versus French was used to argue for the greater "efficiency" of the study of French.

Free, universal education is a right and a social gain; but in the words of one historian, "It never frees without at the same time socializing." (Lawrence Cremin, "Traditions of American Education.")

The establishment and expansion of public education in the United States was part of the ascendancy of modern industrial capitalism. Pre-industrial patterns of social control were shattered in the new republic. The capitalists had need of a system of labor training

which would permit the costs of training to be borne by the public.

Public education served to transmit the values necessary for a society moving from an agricultural to an industrial economy by teaching punctuality, competitiveness, and respect for authority. This eased the transition into the industrial world of work. Schooling was one method of creating order by socializing children from different social classes and cultures into accepting many of the values and attitudes of the ruling class.

Big business seizes control

During the Progressive Era, school administration was taken out of the hands of voters, the neighborhoods, and put into those of bureaucracies. Big business, along with a new group of "experts," led a movement to control public schooling.

Business and civic organizations of the ruling class argued that government (and therefore schools) should be run on

"business principles." The governance of school systems imitated the corporate form of policy-making boards and management by experts.

Labor councils and unions fought moves to take control away from working-class parents and campaigned for a return to elected school boards. But without an independent working-class political movement or party to oppose the splitting off of school administrations from local politics, their effect was muted. Increasingly, workers were prevented from having any voice in their children's education.

In the case of Chicago, working-class action was successful in fighting back the tide of business control for many years. There, the teachers unionized early under the leadership of two "lady labor sluggers" (as they were named by one anti-union school board member) and affiliated with the Chicago Labor Council.

One of these women, Illinois suffragist Margaret Haley, rankled the school board and the Chicago Chamber of Commerce by demanding that higher teachers' salaries be financed by taxing business. The union also sought the support of feminists when the school board tried to increase the number of male elementary-school teachers and pay them higher wages.

Throughout the country, elected boards of education and superintendents were replaced by appointed ones. The restructuring of the 1920s removed school administration from public pressure and the electoral process by defining them as "non-partisan" and "beyond politics," the domain of specialists acting in the public interest. By 1930, autonomous school bureaucracies directed by education professionals were a fact of urban life.

Ironically, in the decade when labor emerged as a powerful mass social movement on a national level—the 1930s—school politics were no longer seen in terms of social class.

Workers were represented by union officials on school boards, but the mass base of the labor movement was no longer mobilizing around issues of education. The labor movement began to focus narrowly and exclusively on the issues of pure-and-simple trade unionism for school workers, i.e. teachers' and janitors' pay and benefits.

It is a great loss when the labor movement fails to understand that it is a movement for the advance of society as a whole. Literacy is a basis of freedom. It opens up the world of ideas and gives us the power of self-expression and critical thinking, which are necessary tools for liberation.

Universal education can no longer be taken for granted. The ruling class is content to watch the children of the working class fall through the cracks, as schools close down or degenerate beyond hope. Education is a right that workers must organize themselves to defend and expand as part of the struggle to transform society into a socialist future—a future where the benefit of each is to the benefit of all. ■

Black Americans' historical struggle for right to education

By SUZANNE FORSYTH

The case of *Brown v. Board of Education* brought the issue of American school segregation to the world's attention in 1954, but Black Americans had to organize and fight for their right to public education from its inception.

In contrast to the American labor movement, Black demands for education were tied to the challenge of their oppression on many fronts because they were denied education as a group on the basis of race.

Throughout U.S. history, universal access to public education applied only to white children. During slavery, most Southern states outlawed teaching slaves to read and write. But if the potential for rebellion inherent in a literate slave was obvious to the slave-owners, it was also clear to the slaves who sometimes managed to learn to read, often in secret.

After the Civil War and during the period known as Radical Reconstruction in the South, there was an enormous demand for schools by freed Blacks. Most of the first Southern statewide free public



Arthur Rothstein

schools were established under Black lawmakers, who preferred integrated schools.

When Radical Reconstruction was ended in the 1870s, schools for Black children were one of the first victims of reaction. As symbols of Black equality, the schools became targets of racist hate and some were burned down. Most, however, were

closed when funding for Black education was slashed and segregation made law.

For example, when the Atlanta public school system was founded in 1872, 40 percent of the city's residents were Black. Yet Black children were given inferior schools which were so overcrowded that 10 years later, only half the Black children seeking to attend primary school could do so. No high schools were provided for Black students in Atlanta until the 1920s.

But education persisted as a symbol of freedom and advancement, and Black teachers struggled against enormous hardship to operate schools for Black children. This legacy of struggle culminated in the gains the Civil Rights movement made for Black education in the decades of the 1950s and '60s.

The intensity and mass character of the Black struggle for equal education and desegregation, contrasts with involvement of the labor movement in the establishment of public education. Because they were excluded from all avenues of power, Blacks resorted to mass action—picketing, sit-ins, marches, and boycotts—in order to achieve their demands.

This vision of education as part of the larger struggle for Black liberation and the use of mass action to press for the movement's demands is more necessary than ever today. ■

Socialist candidate Joni Jacobs:

'Our childrens' futures will be the casualties of cutbacks'

'Tax the rich to pay for our schools!'

The following is a speech given by Joni Jacobs, the Socialist Action candidate for mayor of San Francisco, at the April 12 Socialist Action forum titled, "Speak-out Against the Cutbacks!"

Other speakers included Tasso Geist, president of CSEA Chapter 305 (San Francisco State University) of SEIU Local 1000; and the Rev. Dorsey Blake (see speech printed below).

San Francisco's schools are facing a massive financial crisis. Experts predict that next year the entire school district will be bankrupt.

Already, over 1600 teachers and staff have received layoff notices, and the district intends to lay off at least 500 personnel. Balboa High School is slated for closure; its 1200 students will be "consolidated" into other schools. The entire teaching staff of Buena Vista elementary school has received layoff notices, and it's likely that all its fourth and fifth grade teachers will be laid off in June. The district is also planning on eliminating all extra-curricular and most elective programs, including sports, music, arts, and language programs.

It's not just San Francisco's schools that are affected. Gov. Pete Wilson is proposing cutting \$2 billion from the state education budget to help alleviate a projected \$12 billion state budget deficit. Over 11,000 teachers and school workers state-wide have received layoff notices.

Wilson's budget cuts will mean that the state will spend an estimated \$198 less per student than last year. California already ranks among the lowest states in the country on per-student spending for education, and we're going to fall further behind.

What's happened here? How could financing for schools get so bungled up? Partly it's due to a shifting of the burden. The federal government long ago shifted the burden for educating this country's children to the state level. Today, federal money accounts for only 7 percent of the education budget.

Local property taxes account for 18.8 percent of the education budget. In 1978, when California voters passed Proposition 13, they blocked the ability of local districts to raise taxes.

This means that funding for education has become concentrated at the state level. Today the state funds 61.1 percent of education. So when this money is cut by \$2 billion, it's a devastating blow to every school district in the state.

Rather incarcerate than educate

Gov. Wilson says that with the \$12 billion budget deficit, every sector of the state must bear its "fair share" of cutbacks. However, one sacred cow that won't feel the ax of the budget cutters is the corrections system. That's slated to receive a 35 percent increase in its budget.

In 1981, there were 35,000 people in California prisons, at a cost to the state of \$350 million. In 1991, California has 100,000 people in its prisons, and it's costing us \$2 billion a year. In just 10 years, the budget for the corrections system has increased 5.7 times, twice as fast as the prison population. The difference—\$1.65 billion—would almost cover the education budget deficit.

These are the priorities—California would rather incarcerate its young people than educate them. In fact, that's the message throughout this country, especially with respect to the African American community.

One in four Black men between the ages of 18 and 45 are under the jurisdiction of the



Joseph Ryan/Socialist Action

'The only way free, quality public education will be guaranteed for our children is under an economic system that puts human needs before profits.'

criminal justice system—either in prison or on probation. There are more Black men in prison than in college. Four times the percentage of Black people are in prison in the United States than in South Africa.

Another feature of Gov. Wilson's slashing of the education budget is his attempt to use the budget crisis to break the teachers' unions.

Recently, when the Richmond school district faced bankruptcy, Wilson demanded that the teachers give up their contracts and collective bargaining rights for three years before the state would bail it out.

Wilson has repeatedly remarked in the press that the problems with school budgets result from the inflated salaries of overpaid teachers. He was quoted in the *San Francisco Chronicle* as saying, "At a time when so many are making real sacrifices the teachers' union bosses shouldn't be exploiting California's children in pursuit of fatter paychecks."

Wilson has declared an all-out war to bust the teachers' unions, and our children's futures will be the casualties of that war.

Making the victims pay

What are the solutions being offered? In Sacramento, virtually every politician—both Democrat and Republican—say that cutbacks and layoffs must occur in all state areas, including schools, and that taxes must be raised. A bipartisan committee is talking about taxing candy, magazines, dry cleaning, and all kinds of services.

San Francisco schools Superintendent Ramon Cortinez proposes a temporary one-quarter-cent increase in the city's sales tax to raise money to cover the education budget

shortfall. In other words, he wants the victims of the budget crisis to pay for it.

San Francisco already has one of the highest city sales taxes in California. And very few taxes, if any, are temporary. Once they are imposed, they are rarely removed, even when the project requiring the "temporary tax" is paid for.

One example is bridge tolls. The Golden Gate Bridge has been paid for umpteen times over; yet soon the toll will be raised to \$3! The politicians figure once they get working people used to paying taxes, they'll keep taxing them at increasing rates.

Socialists are opposed to sales taxes and taxes on services, goods and gasoline because they are regressive. Because they are a flat rate, everyone pays the same amount, regardless of their income and ability to pay. What that means is that low-income people pay a much larger percentage of their income in taxes than the rich do. The poor end up shouldering a disproportionate, and unfair, share of the burden.

In 1929, the bottom-earning 80 percent of Americans paid no income tax. Today, working people pay 75 percent of income taxes. The tax rates for the rich have fallen from 70 percent in the 1940s to 28 percent today.

This shifting of the tax burden has taken place through both Democratic and Republican administrations. While the most devastating shifts occurred while Reagan was president, the Democratic Party-controlled Congress passed every "tax reform" Reagan asked for—and are just as responsible.

The wealth in this country remains ridiculously unequally distributed, and is becoming more so. In 1983, families in the top 2 percent income bracket owned 30 percent of



Joni Jacobs

all liquid assets (checking accounts, money market accounts, and the like), 39 percent of corporate and government bonds, and 71 percent of tax-exempt municipal bonds. Yet workers pay 75 percent of the taxes.

And what are we getting for chipping in 75 percent? Cutbacks and layoffs. The tax system has created a system of "welfare for the rich."

The clearest example of this is the savings and loan bailout. Over \$300 billion has been voted by Congress to reimburse the greedy S&L owners, who stole the money in the first place. Now the banks are in trouble, so Congress has just appropriated \$70 billion to bail them out. And Congress recently voted to spend \$56 billion to pay for the Persian Gulf war, which was fought for the benefit of the oil conglomerates.

What kind of priorities are these? Fifty-six billion dollars to murder the Iraqi people. Seventy billion dollars to bail out the banks. Three hundred billion dollars to bail out the S&Ls. And not one dollar to bail out the schools! No money for housing. No money for health care. No money for AIDS research. No money to feed the one in eight American children who are starving.

I saw an item in Herb Caen's column [in the *San Francisco Chronicle*] today which I thought was appropriate. He says American cities are plagued by SCUDS, too. Sickness, crime, unemployment, drugs, and school underfunding. But where are the million-dollar Patriots to the rescue?

Union leadership defaults

So what are we to do? How can we save our schools? What is the leadership of the California teachers' unions proposing?

Unfortunately, the California Teachers Association (CTA), which represents 230,000 teachers in the state, has defaulted in its task of leading the fight-back. Instead of offering clear direction, its approach to the crisis is to rely on Democratic Party state politicians.

Because a two-thirds majority in the state legislature is necessary to block Wilson's suspension of Proposition 98 (which guaranteed that 40 percent of the state budget be allocated for education)—thus allowing him to cut the \$2 billion from the school budget—the CTA is counting on its "friends" in the Democratic Party to vote against the suspension.

Local union leaders are telling parents to write letters to their state legislatures and are circulating petitions to send to the statehouse.

The union leadership has bought the arguments of the politicians that there's just not enough money in the budget and that cuts must come from somewhere. They are calling for increased taxes and asking that other state programs, not education, be cut.

This is not a winning strategy. Outside of the fact that the Democratic Party cannot be counted on to safeguard any of our rights, it will be a hollow victory if Prop. 98 remains in place but every worker is paying a higher sales tax to finance less quality education.

It's not true that there's not enough money in the budget, and it's certainly not true that there's not enough money to fund the social services people need. The priorities of spending the money are screwed up. In 1988, the federal government paid

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Rev. Dorsey Blake on education crisis:

'We're wiping out a system that is already pretty bad'

Below are major portions of a speech by the Rev. Dorsey Blake. In the 1960s, Blake became the first Black male student to attend the University of Alabama. Today, he is the president of the Ecumenical Peace Institute, the director of the Center for Urban Studies, and was an activist in the Emergency Committee to End the War in the Middle East.

This speech was given at a San Francisco Socialist Action forum entitled, "Speak-out Against the Cutbacks," on April 12, 1991. It has been edited for style and space.

When I was a kid, it was said about education in the Black community: "This is the one thing that will assure your becoming a part of the society, of being included. Get your education. Nobody can take that from you."

And now, all of a sudden, young Black kids are getting the signal that education is not important.

So we're wiping out a system that is already pretty bad. I want to spend just a few minutes on how bad it is, because it is really frightening.

I was at a meeting in Los Angeles two days ago with the National Defense and Education Fund of the NAACP. In an article, they said that if you took 100 Black children in California, only 50 of them would graduate from high school. Of the remaining 50, only two, after going through high school, would be qualified to go to the University of California system.

Of the ones who end up in the system, only 60 percent graduate. That's actually better in California than it is nationwide. Nationwide, there's an 80 percent drop-out rate among Blacks in predominantly white institutions. With Black males, sometimes it's as high as 95 percent at places like the University of Toledo and so on. That's what we're facing.

We're facing a shift even in terms of Blacks going into higher education in colleges. Many years ago, the predominant number of Blacks had been to historically Black institutions. Now about 80 percent of Blacks go to predominantly white institutions.

And so, when you're getting 80 percent going to predominantly white institutions and only 20 percent graduating, that's frightening. Black schools now with only 20 percent (some say 15 percent) of Blacks are still producing 50 percent of the graduates.

There has actually been a decrease in the



Rev. Dorsey Blake

Joseph Ryan/Socialist Action

number of Blacks and Hispanics enrolled in higher education in the last few years. Some of the reasons for that have to do with Reagan's budget and Bush's budget, which have really knocked out educational systems. There aren't the same kinds of grants or loans there used to be when I was in college.

This helps us to see why we have so many Blacks and Hispanics in the military. Thirty percent of the forces in the military are Black people. So this is part of a whole movement, I think, to destroy a people.

Only 23 percent of young Black males are now in college. Twenty-five percent are in prison or related to the prison system. It is estimated that by the year 2000, some 70 percent of all the Black males who are now living will either be dead, incarcerated, or on drugs.

And when [Boston activist] Rev. Ellis Hagler was here, he talked about the incarceration of Blacks in this country being four times that of South Africa. Remember that statistic—which is absolutely shocking!

"Raise no questions"

Let me give you another little scenario of what happens in the educational system, because I think we have to see it in its full range of negativity.

This comes from experience not only at the University of Alabama, but at Ohio University—some of the things that Black students, and I'm sure Hispanic students, have to endure in the system to get through.

Because the purpose is, if you get through, you are going to be sanitized individuals who raise no questions about the legitimacy of the system.

Black students have had to deal with such realities in terms of taking tests at Alabama as "who multiplies most rapidly?" And they list among the choices, "rats, rodents, or Negroes." I'm talking seriously; these questions have been asked on tests.

One of the things that we see has to do with the cover of integration, which prevents us from seeing the continued racism and elitism of the education system.

When I first went to the University of Alabama, it was easier for the Black community in Tuscaloosa to see the racism. There were no Blacks there. Once I came there, once they brought 25 other Black staff and faculty and went from, when I went there, 400 Black students to 1700 Black students by the time I left, people thought they were really integrated.

What they never realized was that the policies were the same. They had, in the words of Ron Daniels, included a few to exclude the many—the masses of people. And we're seeing that time and time again.

That is part of the reality of our educational system.

One of the things we fought for at my alma mater was to get more Black faculty, more Black staff there. We thought that if we had them there, it would make everything a lot better. And I think it does to an extent,

... Socialist candidate

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\$216 billion in interest on loans and bonds.

Corporations pay a 6.2 percent tax rate. That's less than one quarter of what I personally pay. In 1972, it was estimated that loopholes for corporations meant \$77 billion a year in lost taxes.

And what about the war profits of Chevron, Bechtel, and all the other California corporations that benefited in the war against the Iraqi people? At the very least, shouldn't those war profits be taxed 100 percent and used to fund education, health care and other vital social programs?

But the union leadership isn't raising these demands. It's not organizing its membership, independent of the interests of the Democrats and Republicans, to fight for its own interests.

Instead, it's organizing lobbying rallies, like the one that was held in Sacramento on April 3. An estimated 8000 to 10,000 teachers and parents attended the rally, which shows the potential to mobilize people to defend their right to education. It was unfortunate that this rally was held on a weekday,

or it might have been much, much larger.

But the speakers who addressed the rally—one Democratic Party state legislator after another—had no solutions for the concerned crowd except, "Trust me." They didn't demand a progressive tax rate on the rich, they didn't demand cuts in the corrections system budget, or any other minimal reforms which you would think the so-called opposition party would raise.

Quality public education is a simple, democratic right. It should be the first priority of society to educate its young people and prepare them for their future. It's much too important of a priority to leave to the Democrats and Republicans.

Strategy for winning

But public education wasn't our birthright. It was a victory won in a struggle to end the oppressive child-labor system that prevailed in the early history of this country. Working people organized themselves in labor unions and independent political parties to fight for the right to put their children in quality public schools, not in workhouses and factories. We fought—and continue to fight—to integrate the schools, and now we're going to have to fight just to keep them open.

The only way to guarantee quality public education is the same way it was won—through independent, mass action involving labor, parents, teachers, students, and everyone affected by education, which is every working person in this country.

Our strength is our unity and our independence. Instead of relying on Willie Brown and Jesse Jackson, we should be organizing parent and teacher meetings in every school in the state, and bringing these committees into mass action. We should raise demands like, "Suspend bond-interest payments, not Prop. 98," "Education, not incarceration," and "Tax the rich to pay for our schools."

The only way free, quality public education will be guaranteed for our children is under an economic system that puts human needs before profits. But that's impossible under capitalism, which is predicated on greed, individualism, and the priority of short-term profits for the few over the needs of the majority. Reforming the tax system may help alleviate this crisis, but it won't last.

The pressures of capitalism work to increase the disparities between the rich and the working class. When the working class has been strongly united—as it was during the

depending on where those Black faculty and staff are in terms of their own consciousness.

But one of the things you face if you are the first Black person, or first woman, or first Hispanic, and you have a lot of students there from the same background, it is natural for the students to call on you for help. One of the reasons you are there is that they identify with you.

Well, the only problem is you're not rewarded for that. I was told at the University of Alabama, for example, to quit spending so much time counseling Black students, and to shut my door and write some books. That was why I was there.

And I said, "Oh, I thought I was here as a teacher. I thought I was supposed to teach." That was my priority. But you were told basically to ignore all those realities.

You're not promoted for counseling, you're promoted for whatever is set up as the criteria for tenure. And tenure is always established by whom? By those who are already there. The ones you are trying to replace and who need to be replaced.

This is part of the entrapment of the educational system. So many Black faculty have said to me in terms of my activities, that they would love to support some of the things that we've been doing but they just could not do it because they needed to get tenure. They said once they got tenure, they would feel freer to engage in political activity.

But, of course, the reality was that they never felt free enough. Because once you enslave yourself, you're going to remain enslaved. There's tenure, there's promotion, all these other kinds of things. Once you've bought the system, it's very difficult to be free.

A dual problem

What we need to understand is that educational institutions are political institutions, and they exist primarily not to transform the culture, but to transmit the culture intact, the way it is.

So we have a dual problem when it comes to California. They're predicting that next year 20 other school systems in California alone will go bankrupt. I think there are educational systems in six states that will also go bankrupt next year.

We've got to deal with two realities. One is saving the system, and then, providing a quality education for the students that will help them to question the basic structure of our society.

And we've got to try some alternative methods of educating people so they will understand that education is only part of a total cultural understanding of life. Education must be related to economics, it must be related to the media, and so on.

Education is an extremely important tool. It can be provocative, it can be transforming. But in order for it to be transforming, the people must control it again and make it the kind of system that reflects some of our values. Thank you. ■

1930s, for example—there has been a more progressive tax structure. But when the working class is demobilized, the capitalist class implements its austerity drive.

What we need is a planned economy. What we ultimately need is a socialist revolution. That's the long-term goal.

In the short run, however, I am running as a socialist candidate for mayor of San Francisco. I hope to get out the message that socialism can work, that we can work together to solve our problems, save our schools, provide housing and health care for everyone, without ruining our environment in the process.

A socialist mayor of San Francisco would end the "welfare for the rich" policies of this city. We would tax the corporations—who pay virtually nothing in city taxes—to pay for vital city services. We would use the resources of the mayor's office to organize and mobilize parents, students, teachers, and workers to keep our schools funded not only at the current level, but at the level necessary to truly prepare our young people for their futures.

I invite you to join me in our campaign to put human needs before profits. Thank you. ■

Strike wave shows explosive power of Soviet working class

By GERRY FOLEY

In the past month, spreading strikes have polarized political life in the Soviet Union. They became the main target of the official press. The authorities, however, were obliged to take a careful tack. They made a great show of sympathy for the "just" economic demands of the strikers, while darkly denouncing the political "ambitions" and "ultimatums" of "certain forces."

For several months, strikes had been spreading among miners in the main coal fields, who, besides raising economic demands, called for Gorbachev's resignation and the dissolution of the Soviet ruling bodies. (In most areas in the last elections, freedom of choice was still quite limited.) The price rises at the beginning of April, however, started a real snowball rolling.

For the first time, the workers' movement has taken the leadership of the opposition. The entire opposition has fallen in behind the strikers, organizing solidarity and material aid. But the strikes have become the locomotive of all the mass movements.

By the end of April, the threat to the ruling bureaucracy had become so great that both the official wing led by Gorbachev and the "oppositional" wing led by Yeltsin were forced join together in an attempt to rescue the *nomenklatura*.

Significantly, Yeltsin's leap from "opposition" to the "defense of order" earned a gushing accolade from *The New York Times*: "In a remarkable turnaround, Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin, setting aside their personal differences, pledged Wednesday to concentrate on saving the Soviet Union from political and economic disintegration. Their agreement is the first hopeful sign in months that radical reform can be revived and hard-line dictatorship avoided." (Editorial, April 26.)

Price rises spark an explosion

The first blowup came in Minsk, in the republic of Byelorussia, where a reported 100,000 striking workers massed in the street to protest the price rises. This has been one of the better supplied Soviet cities, where workers were not used to having to pay black-market prices. So the drastic increase in the official prices came as a sharp jolt.

Although, overall, Byelorussia has been kept under tighter control than other parts of the Soviet Union, the national-democratic People's Front of Byelorussia has gained predominance in the capital, Minsk. It seems to have played an important role in the strike movements.

The combination of the national democratic movements and the workers' actions has invariably drawn the hottest fire from Soviet Communist Party organs, such as *Pravda*.

For example, *Pravda* correspondents in Minsk wrote on April 11: "If there are representatives of the strike committees and the Byelorussian People's Front at the microphone, the atmosphere becomes sharply politicized. 'You won't buy us off with presents!'... 'Put all the leaders on trial!' 'Dissolve the Supreme Soviets of the USSR and the Byelorussian SSR, as well as the Congress of People's Deputies,' 'Let the government negotiate only with the workers' unions and not with the [official] trade unions.'"

The Byelorussian strike was led by an organization called the "Workers Union," according to the usually well-informed and reliable Paris Russian weekly *Russkaya Mysl'*. The paper also reported that a strike committee was formed.

The "legal state" in danger

A front-page article in the April 11 *Pravda* warned that *de facto* organs of power were being created. "The strikes follow differing courses, raise differing demands. But one general tendency is obvious—a passage of real power in the 'hot spots' to unconstitutional structures."

"The strike was growing not only geographically," the April 19 *Russkaya Mysl'*

reported, "but was spread to more and more industries. After the unexpected solidarity action of the workers in the biggest refining plants on April 3-5...strike committees started to arise in many enterprises throughout the country."

"In factories in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Noril'sk, Sverdlovsk, Donetsk, and Vorkuta, workers' committees declared their readiness to go on strike. The idea appeared of a political general strike, and it started to spread throughout the country."

A rally of 20,000 workers in Minsk on April 23 was portrayed by the *New York Times* as a failure. Nonetheless, its report showed a high level of consciousness on the part of participants. For example: "It is we who feed the Communists," Nikolai Khralovich, a 29-year-old laborer at the Minsk tractor works, said. 'They don't feed

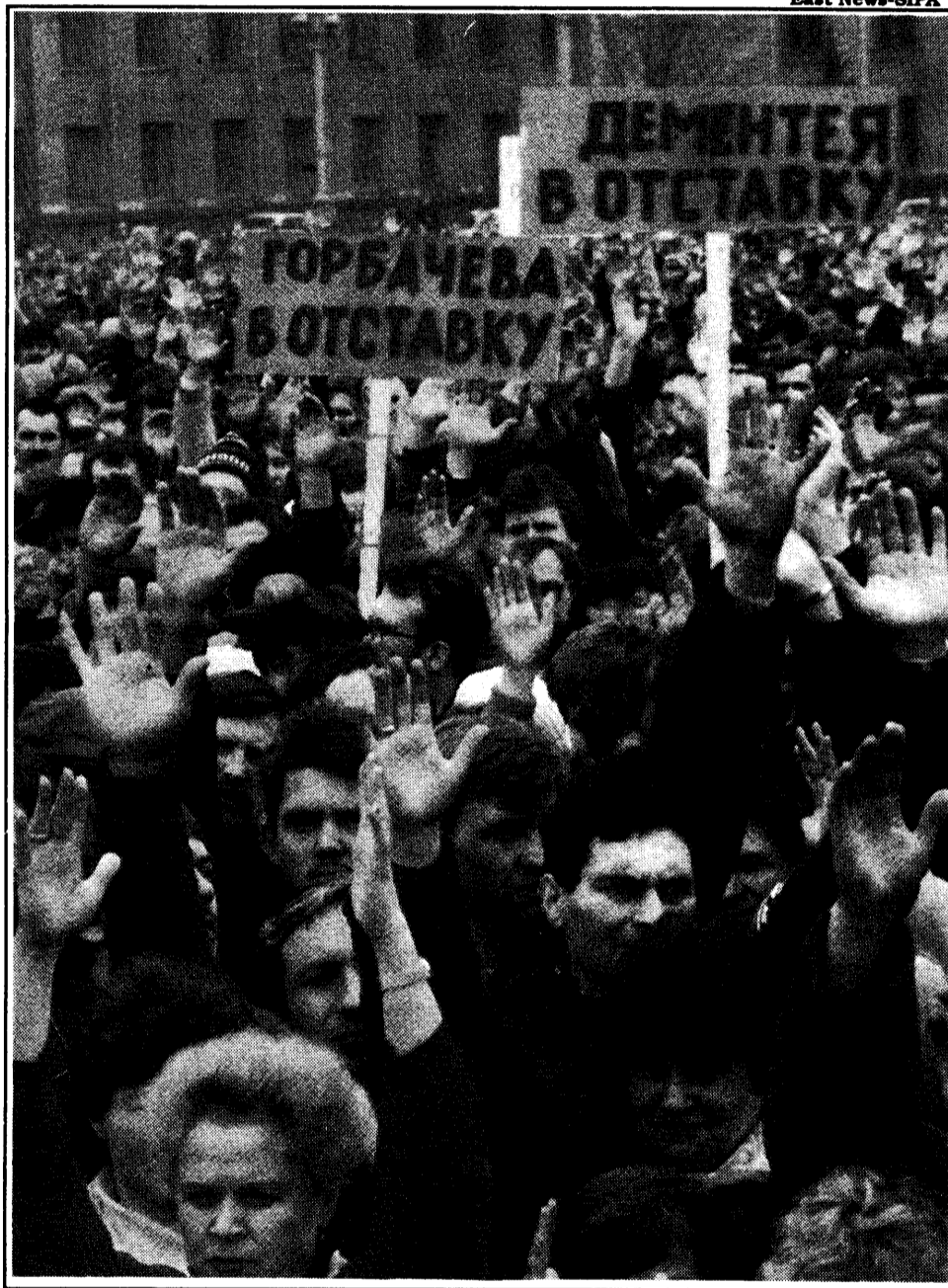
us.'"

"In his view," the *Times* continued, "the party, through the Gorbachev Government, was appealing to the principle of law and order but actually fighting to retain its own patronage positions and privileges now that Soviet workers finally are focusing on politics as the key to economic change."

The talk by Gorbachev and the rest of the bureaucratic leaders about a "state of laws" and "parliamentary democracy" is an attempt to defend the continued rule of the bureaucracy with arguments and forms borrowed from the Western capitalist countries. This Minsk worker showed that he saw through the basic pretenses of Gorbachev's reform line.

A specter of workers' revolution

The reaction of the bureaucracy to all this



Soviet strikers in Minsk call for Gorbachev's resignation.

The contradictions of Boris Yeltsin

The Western press generally portrays Gorbachev's rival (and now ally) as a "free-enterpriser." Boris Yeltsin does claim to favor faster privatization than Gorbachev. But he also tries to present himself as the champion of those who would be the victims of such measures—the workers.

His report to the Third (Special) Congress of the Congress of People's Deputies of the Russian Federation showed these contradictions.

In his introduction, Yeltsin said that the economic system in the USSR had put it "in the tail-end of civilization." But the basic problem was, he said, that the Soviet system "ignores people," who are hardly the central concern of capitalist economics. He called for more rapid privatization, while rejecting the price rises—the essential first step for a free-market economy.

The "opposition" leader called both for the "constitutional state" (Gorbachev's basic political formula) and "developing a system of direct people's rule." He proposed "increasing the minimum wage" and "lowering taxes on earned income."

His program even included "establishment by law of a list of socially important goods and services and a minimal consumer budget level for given zones of the Russian Federation" and allotting 20 percent of new housing to the underprivileged at special rents. The privatizers in East Europe have not done that, and those who try to follow them in the USSR will not either.

Yeltsin has something for everyone. But when the rise of the strike movement forced him to make a concrete choice, he showed his basic loyalty to his caste—the parasitic, antiworking-class bureaucracy.

—G.F.

is easy to surmise. In the East European countries, every time the workers have gotten a chance to organize, revolutionary general strikes have developed quickly against the bureaucracy—as in Hungary in 1956 and in Poland in 1980. In the latter case, it was price rises that ignited the explosion.

Now, such a thing seemed a real possibility even within the vast Soviet Union. The bureaucracy could see the specter of its overthrow.

Gorbachev tried at first to counter the spread of strikes with new anti-strike laws. Asked his opinion of this in Paris on April 17, the Soviet president's rival, Boris Yeltsin, said: "With regard to the question of resolving the strikes, I think that the problem cannot be solved in this way [by anti-strike laws]. We wanted to form an interparliamentary group, with the participation of leaders of the republics and representatives of the country, but also the strike committees, the leadership of the [official] trade-union committees, and at this round table negotiate about further actions."

"After these negotiations, I intended to personally appeal to the miners and all the strikers to declare a moratorium on the strikes, for them to do that themselves. I am certain that they would respond positively to such a call. This would be a genuinely democratic principle of relations on all levels."

Yeltsin thus made it clear that he sought the same object as Gorbachev—except by persuasion instead of coercion. That is, he was playing "soft cop" for the bureaucracy. So, it is not surprising that on April 24 he joined with Gorbachev and the official leaders of the nine tame republics to appeal for an end to the strikes.

Yeltsin rallies to defend "order"

The appeal was adopted at a secret conference in a *dacha* outside Moscow. It was part of a compromise package presented as a last alternative to chaos in the country. The statement produced by the conference promised reconsideration of the price rises and new taxes. It even pledged that cost-of-living raises would be considered.

At the same time, the statement declared: "Taking into account the exceptionally acute crisis situation in the country, the leaders of the union and republics regard as intolerable any attempts to attain political ends through incitement to civil disobedience, strikes, or calls for the overthrow of the existing lawfully elected state power bodies."

New York Times correspondent Francis X. Clines commented that while Gorbachev conceded that he had made mistakes in his perestroika policy, "he won from Mr. Yeltsin and other republic leaders a call for 'strict compliance with current laws.'" In fact, Yeltsin rallied behind the political line of perestroika—the constitutional state, parliamentary democracy—the rule of the bureaucracy through legalistic forms.

A parting of the ways?

What is going to be tested now, Clines wrote, is whether the "trust" that Yeltsin has won by his past support of opposition movements and opposition demands will be sufficient to convince the workers to stop striking.

There are indications that confidence in Yeltsin has been eroding. For one thing, the contradictions of his populist line are more and more glaring. The polarization created by the strikes makes it harder and harder to offer something for everybody. The anti-bureaucratic consciousness of the striking workers clearly goes beyond Yeltsin.

However, in order for the movement to rise to the level necessary to fight and defeat the bureaucracy as a whole, a new leadership with a new political and social program is necessary—one that corresponds more consistently to the interests of the working people.

That is not likely to happen overnight. But there is no sign that the bureaucracy can halt the economic ruin. All its measures, so much lauded by the Western press, have only made it worse. And now it has been forced to promise to retreat from its concrete market reforms—the price rises and new taxes—when it has no alternative.

It seems clear that the political crisis of the bureaucracy will deepen. In response to the disarray of the bureaucratic rulers and the ruin of the economy, a more consistent, more radical opposition will arise, based on the rapidly growing organization of the workers themselves.

Chinese government steps up repression of worker militants

The following article is reprinted from the March 1991 issue of *October Review*, a monthly magazine published in Hong Kong.

By YANG HAI

Immediately after the Chinese New Year in mid-February, the Chinese government announced that all trials related to the June 4, [1989 Tiananmen Square massacre] "incident" were finished.

And yet, on March 5 and 8 [1991] Beijing's courts have conducted trials of Chen Yanlin, Zhang Yafei and Han Binglin on the charges of counter-revolutionary acts. All three of them are workers, and were active in organizing workers during the democracy movement [1989].

On March 18, 1991, friends of Zhang Yafei said that he was sentenced to seven years on charges of leading a counter-revolutionary organization and publishing an anti-Communist publication after June 4 until his arrest in September 1990.

Meanwhile, the main leaders of the Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation (BWAFF), such as Han Dongfang, Liu Qiang, Lin Jinjin and He Lili, have still not been put on trial.

Earlier, in February, the regime refused to make public the sentence of Liu Zhihou, a worker. However, a court notice in Beijing on March 18 announced the sentencing to death of Han Wijun, aged 24, for the "serious crime" of "setting fire to a car and armoured personnel carrier on June 4, 1989." He is the first to be sentenced to death since the initial wave of executions immediately after June 4, 1989.

Thus, this execution could represent a new aspect in the policy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to present a moderate image to the outside world. It is also increasingly clear that the workers are the main target of this renewed wave of repression.

Bureaucracy fears workers

Why is the regime striking so hard against the workers? While it denounces some intel-



Wang Guiyuan, an unemployed worker, and Zhou Xiang Cheng, a shopkeeper, being prepared for their execution last year.

lectuals as "black hands" behind the student movement, it tries to dissociate the worker activists in the democracy movement from the student movement by denouncing them for hooliganism and other ridiculous charges. What does this reflect?

During the Democracy Movement '89, after more than a month of preparation and organization, the BWAFF officially declared its foundation on May 20, [1989], and published its provisional statutes on May 30. A few hours after that, three leaders of the BWAFF were arrested, well before the arrest of any students or intellectuals. On June 3, just prior to the massacre, the BWAFF issued a call for a general strike on June 4.

While the massacre might not have been a

direct reaction to the actions of the BWAFF, it is quite clear that, since mid-May, the regime and the BWAFF have been in a tense race for time. While the BWAFF had not yet evolved to the position of seeing the regime as unreformable, the regime saw the BWAFF as its grave digger, and the destruction of the BWAFF as a necessary and urgent task to save itself.

Ever since the June 4 crackdown, the discontent of the Chinese working class towards the ruling bureaucracy has kept growing. While the regime has tried to pacify the workers by allowing more wage raises in general, more and more workers have been affected by production stoppages and unemployment, as well as other prob-

lems and grievances, as reflected by speeches of bureaucrats and in the media.

For example, a news dispatch by the China News Agency on December 10, 1990, reported the president of the official All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) saying in an Executive Committee meeting that "all levels of the trade unions must work hard with a great sense of political responsibility to assist the government [to] solve properly the problems of production stoppages and waiting-for-employment [unemployment], as well as other problems affecting the mood and livelihood of workers."

Worker discontent grows

As reported in a news dispatch by AFP [Agence France-Presse] on January 25, 1991, the *Workers Daily* acknowledged that the confidence of the workers in the Chinese leadership has fallen to a dangerous level and appealed for immediate action to prevent turmoil and unrest from appearing in the society.

[The *Workers Daily* also acknowledged] that workers hate the negative phenomena of corruption in the Party and society, as well as many other factors leading to discontent; [for example], the low social status (of workers); too [many] rich private business merchants; poor public facilities, housing and benefits, price rises and the sluggish economy; and so on.

Therein lies the significance of the continued and intensified repression by the regime on workers: a reflection of the CCP's consciousness of its crisis among workers.

Today, there is an international petition campaign mounted by the Tiananmen University of Democracy among non-governmental organizations and the broad public against the repression of democracy activists by the Chinese regime.

In addition, among other campaigns, a petition campaign [has been] mounted by the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU) among trade unions and labour groups in Hong Kong specifically for the release by the Chinese government of all arrested democracy movement worker activists, in particular the members and leaders of the BWAFF.

The statement printed below is from the HKCTU on the Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation. The HKCTU is also calling for a campaign for the release of one of the best-known independent union leader[s], Han Dongfang.

Workers' Autonomous Federation: Vanguard in Democracy Movement



Peter Turnley

The role played by Chinese workers during Democracy Movement '89 should not be forgotten by history. The event with the greatest historic significance must be the formation of [the] Workers Autonomous Federation (WAF) in Beijing and all over the country, raising, for the first time since 1949 in China, the banner of independent trade unions.

The members of the WAFs were comprised mainly of industrial workers, workers in the services, construction workers and worker intellectuals. Their age ranged mainly from 20 to the 40s. These workers attempted for the first time spontaneously to form autonomous organizations outside the official ACFTU.

The Beijing Workers Autonomous Federation (BWAFF), in its Preparatory Program published on May 21, 1989, emphasizes the need to form an autonomous organization that speaks for and serves

workers, and stresses that the BWAFF should be joined voluntarily by workers, be formed through democratic procedures as a completely independent and autonomous organization, and not controlled by other organizations.

The ultimate aim is to have the right, in state-owned and collectively-owned enterprises, to take all legal and effective measures to supervise their legal representatives and guarantee that the workers become the master of these enterprises, and, in other enterprises, protect the rights of workers through negotiation with enterprise owners and other legal means.

Organizers of the BWAFF insisted that its members obey the following pledge: "I voluntarily obey the constitution and laws of the state and work incessantly for the overall interests of workers."

At the early stage of preparation, the leaders of the BWAFF had attempted to get

it registered with the municipal Public Security Bureau (PSB) and the Municipal Office but were refused on the reason that "illegal organizations cannot be formed."

Although hampered by the authorities, the leaders of the BWAFF persevered and in mid-May, in extremely difficult conditions, set up a tent in Tiananmen Square as its headquarters and began recruiting. Over ten thousand workers joined all in all, and several hundred workers became "correspondents" (activists) of the BWAFF.

They formed a broadcast station and read out messages from workers and citizens. Later, it strove to link up with autonomous worker organizations in other cities throughout the country and build liaison networks with rank and file workers.

Besides Beijing, similar independent worker organizations were formed in Shanghai, Guangzhou, Hangzhou, Nanjing, Xian, Suzhou, Changsha, Fuzhou, Jin and Hohhot.

At the end of May 1989, the tension in Beijing heightened. The secret arrests of three core members of the BWAFF immediately triggered protests and demonstrations by workers, students and citizens. Under the leadership of Han Dongfang and legal adviser Li Jinjin, members of the BWAFF tried to negotiate with the PSB.

After much difficulty, the three were released the next day. This incident was later declared by the Chinese government as a crime of "attacking the PSB" and is the main charge against Han and Li today.

At the end of May, core members of the BWAFF and their families had constantly been followed, harassed and threatened by Public Security Bureau personnel. On June 2, the Beijing government declared both the BWAFF and the High Schools Students Autonomous Federation as "counter-revolutionary organizations" and banned [them].

During the June 4 massacre, many

members of the BWAFF died or were injured. Afterwards, the authorities launched an all-out hunt for leaders and activists of BWAFF.

From June 6 to June 20, demonstrations by citizens appeared in over 20 cities in China to protest the bloody repression of the Beijing students and democracy movement activists. Banners of WAF's appeared in many of them. In many places, there were calls for worker strikes in protest and quite a number of factories stopped work for a period of time.

According to estimates, thousands of workers were arrested and detained after June 4 for participating in Democracy Movement '89. Almost all of the main leaders and members of the WAF's all over the country were arrested; most of them have been illegally detained for a long time, tortured and tried secretly. Some were even executed.

Today, WAF leaders like Han Dongfang, Li Jinjin, He Lili and Liu Qiang are still in jail and waiting for trial. To demand the release of these outstanding and brave democracy movement workers should be the most urgent task of labour movement leaders in all countries. Furthermore, we should pay close attention to the right of Chinese workers outside jails to association and other basic rights of worker citizens.

The 1989 workers' autonomous movement is a historic brave act. It marks the first open attempt since 1949 by workers to fight for the right of independent organization.

The aims of the WAF's are revolutionary, their will is sincere, their action brave, their means peaceful, and they have won the hearts of many. The banner of [the] Chinese independent trade union movement will one day see the light of day and fight for rights and democracy for the Chinese working people!

... U.S. in deep morass



Iraqi soldiers on the offensive against Kurdish nationalists.

(continued from page 1) their fight for self-determination, their forced exodus, and their anger at the lack of support by the U.S. government and its allies,

Newsweek (April 15, 1991) reported that the Kurdish *peshmerga* "were not asking for weapons; they captured a small arsenal from Saddam's forces a month ago. But they did want air support against Iraq's helicopters and tanks, as well as more food and medical aid."

The Kurds—and people of other oppressed nationalities from the region—were trapped on the northern mountainsides. On one side were the Iraqi government troops. On the other were the Turkish forces, who robbed, beat, and shot at the refugees. The Turkish government, fearing that the exiles would link up with the oppressed Kurdish people in Turkey, refused to let them pass to safety.

Some relief agencies claim that 500 to 1000 people were dying a day. Finally, after an international outcry, the allies began to organize airlifts of food and blankets. What irony! These same "world philanthropists," the imperialist governments, had been largely responsible for the food shortages in the first place!

According to *Newsweek*, the U.S.-initiated economic sanctions against Iraq "hit Kurd-

istan hard. So by the time the Kurds 'liberated' themselves in early March, their economy was in a shambles. ... Even before the Iraqis retook Zakho, people were talking about fleeing to Turkey simply because of the lack of food."

President Bush's first reaction to the plight of the Kurds was to go fishing. Later, forced to explain himself, he said: "I do not want to see United States forces, who have performed with such skill and dedication, sucked into a civil war in Iraq."

But in mid-April, the administration rapidly reversed itself. National security advisor Brent Snowcroft told reporters that they had made a "blunder" in not doing more to prevent Kurdish suffering. They had "underestimated," he said, the severity of the Iraqi government's counterattack against the Kurdish rebellion.

U.S. strategy backfires

Yet the action behind the scenes was far more complex than the White House wished to reveal. During the war, The Voice of Free Iraq (operated by the CIA and Saudi intelligence) had encouraged the Kurds to rise up and establish a second front against the Hussein regime. British commandos, who were dropped behind Iraqi lines, also had made contact with the Kurds and other resistance groups for this purpose.

"White House strategy all along," reported *Newsweek*, "was to encourage the revolts as a way to weaken Saddam during the war for Kuwait, then have the Iraqi Army hold Iraq together against the Kurds and Shiites—then have the Army turn on Saddam."

In other words, from the very beginning, the U.S. government viewed the struggle of the Kurds and other oppressed groups as expendable. In the meantime, the U.S. military—and their Saudi surrogates—were grooming "captured" members of the (Sunni Moslem) Iraqi officers' corps to take over from Saddam Hussein. Some troops of Iraqi POWs, headed up by turncoat officers, were even infiltrated back into Iraq.

But the U.S. government's strategic design failed to materialize. Instead of seeing the Iraqi Army chop up the Kurds and the Shiites and then execute a tidy coup d'etat, they witnessed a full-scale popular rebellion—in which the officer corps rallied to Hussein's defense.

"The rebellion is strengthening Saddam, not weakening him," Phoebe Marr of the National Defense University pointed out in the *Washington Post*. "No military is going to overthrow him while they are fighting a rebellion."

As the Kurdish fighters continued to hold major towns in the north, the Bush administration grew increasingly apprehensive. In retrospect, one State Department official told *Newsweek*: "It probably sounds callous, but we probably did the best thing not to get



Democracy?

Four Iraqi Kurdish leaders, including Jelial Tabalani of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and Nashirwan Barzani of the Kurdish Democratic Party, announced on April 24 that they had gotten a promise from Saddam Hussein to introduce democracy into the Kurdish area.

This is a pledge of democratic rights for Kurds from a bloodsoaked dictator who has driven a good half the Kurdish population into headlong flight by present atrocities and the memory of past ones, who has imposed a virtual totalitarian dictatorship on the whole of Iraq.

How can he permit democracy for the Kurds, without allowing democracy in Iraq as a whole? Thirty years of history attest to the impossibility of this.

The Kurds were the first to be attacked when the anti-imperialist revolution in Iraq lost its democratic thrust. What the long suffering of the Kurds has shown is that there is no solution for the Kurdish people without a real revolution that can offer liberation from neocolonial tyrants and imperialist domination.

—GERRY FOLEY

near [the Kurdish revolt]. They're nice people, and they're cute, but they're bandits. They spend as much time fighting each other as central authority. They're losers."

But the most candid officials revealed that their major concern was that the Kurds might be *winners* rather than losers. One member of the Bush administration—who may have some understanding of how mass struggles can snowball—exclaimed: "It's 'autonomy' today, but a 'separate state' tomorrow. We all know that!"

A successful fight for self-determination in the Iraqi portion of Kurdistan would provide the Kurds within Turkey and Syria—whose central governments are U.S. allies—with an inspiring example. A victory for the Kurds in Iraq, in fact, would encourage and strengthen the struggles of oppressed nationalities throughout the Middle East.

(Unfortunately, Kurdish leaders gave assurances to Turkish President Turgut Ozal that, in return for his support, they would not allow liberated territory in Iraq to be used by Kurdish groups fighting in Turkey. Such guarantees only serve to further divide the Kurdish national movement—and are thus self-defeating.)

Bush grins and bears it

Back in the United States, the president was undergoing a lot of criticism—including some from former supporters of the Gulf War. *New York Times* columnist William Safire wrote: "Not since Jimmy Carter's Desert One has a failure of nerve resulted in such ignominious defeat. Not since John Kennedy failed to provide air cover at the Bay of Pigs has a president made such a costly blunder."

This was the first time since the beginning of the Gulf War that so much dissent toward U.S. government policy had been allowed into the mainstream press. But the White House chose to grin and bear it—until it was certain that the Kurdish national movement had been defeated.

Even when Hussein's troops began to push back the Kurdish rebels, the White House did nothing. And later, after authorizing the first limited food drops, President Bush continued to speak out against establishing refugee camps—alleging they might become "staging areas" for guerrilla fighters.

At the time, the Bush administration strongly criticized the plan put forward by British Prime Minister John Major (and the other European allies) for a Kurdish "enclave" in northern Iraq. An "enclave," said Bush, could be used later by the Kurds to claim an independent state.

Besides, the administration's spokespeople said, such a concept might have uncalled-for effects. "You're talking about invading Iraq!" one U.S. official told the *Los Angeles Times* in mock horror.

"Think about the implications," he continued, in a more serious vein. "Let's say there are riots in Armenia and Georgia. Then the Red Army comes in and puts them down. Is that genocide? Does the UN come in and put up safe havens in Armenia and Georgia?"

Just a few days later, having reassured the Kremlin and other allies on the issue, the administration put such arguments aside. The British Prime Minister's proposal was adopted in all its essentials.

Plans for a refugee zone in northern Iraq (not to be called an "enclave") were soon put into effect. Over 7000 Army and Marine troops were lifted into the area. The aircraft carrier Theodore Roosevelt and its battle group were sent into the eastern Mediterranean to bolster the "quick reaction" forces.

As part of its "antiterrorist" operations, the U.S. troops were ordered to disarm the Kurdish guerrilla fighters. Col. Jim Jones, Marine commander in northern Iraq, explained in the *Chicago Tribune*: "If we are operating in this area, and are going to be the guarantors of safety, we will not have any competition. We can't disarm the Iraqi army and allow the *peshmerga* to have arms."

Thus, legitimate relief efforts for the Kurdish refugees have been manipulated by the U.S. military as one more way to enforce George Bush's New World Order. U.S. soldiers will supply tents to the people whose cities they bombed. Food rations will go to those whose borders have been blockaded. And little more will be said about "democracy" or the rights of the Kurds and other oppressed nationalities.

The United States has a long-term Middle East settlement in mind that will require the continued presence of U.S. troops (or substitute UN forces). But to achieve this, the U.S. government will pay a price; resentment will grow among working people—both at home and abroad—who are weary of the bloodshed as well as the ebbing away of our living standards.

The rulers of this country may yet find that the "Vietnam Syndrome" has not been laid to rest, as people cry: "End the blockade against Iraq!" "Bring *all* the troops home now!"

'Peace conference'

As we go to press, the Israeli government has retracted even the minimum commitment it made to U.S. Secretary of State James Baker on a "Middle East peace conference."

Few diplomatic endeavors have been so futile. The reason is that there is a basic contradiction that is unsolvable in the context of the status quo. The state of Israel is based on the denial of the rights of the Arab populations of the territories seized by the Zionists, with the help of the imperialist powers. The Palestinian masses will never accept the Israeli state unless Arab nationalism is crushed.

But the imperialist powers, as well as the Zionists, have insufficient resources to do that. The imperialists thus have no choice but to try to negotiate a deal with the neocolonialist Arab regimes, which they can only do at the expense of the Israeli state—by twisting the arms of the Zionist rulers. But they cannot twist their arms too hard, because Israel is their basic bastion in the Middle East.

So, the dance continues without leading anywhere. The only way out of this vicious circle is a deep-going revolution that could offer the basis of a democratic settlement for the peoples of the region.

—GERRY FOLEY

Iraq's brutal repression of Kurds should be no surprise to U.S. gov't

By GERRY FOLEY

Washington has been forced to offer minimal help to the Kurdish refugees only by a monumental international scandal. Reports of millions of Kurds fleeing to Turkey and Iran (the total number of Kurds in Iraq was only about 4 million), reinforced by TV pictures of desperate multitudes starving and freezing on bare mountainsides, threatened to stamp a skull and crossbones on Bush's "new order."

There is no question of the U.S. rulers having any sympathy for the aspirations of the Kurdish people. Bush administration spokespersons made it clear that they were against any "breakup" of Iraq. Washington even opposed establishing a sanctuary for the Kurdish refugees.

"The Administration backed away from the idea of setting up a Kurdish 'enclave' that later might be used as a claim to statehood by Iraq's Kurdish minority and the 20 million Kurds dispersed over five nations in the region," Patrick Tyler wrote in the April 12 *New York Times*.

The United States, the conservative great power of the 20th century, made no bones about the fact that it was as much committed to maintaining "established borders" as the conservative powers of the 19th century were in preserving "legitimate monarchs."

Both principles deny the democratic rights of peoples. Moreover, the historical claims for both monarchs and borders often cannot stand much looking into.

In fact, the Kurdish people of Iraq never wanted to be included in the Iraqi state. The British empire handed them over at gunpoint to the Hashemite Arab monarchy it set up to rule a country that it carved out of the Turkish empire. It itself assumed the task of suppressing the Kurdish rebellions against the artificial state.

The Kurds were concentrated in the Mosul vilayet (province), also the location of most of the known oil resources at the time the British moved in during the First World War.

Britain only began to occupy this area after the armistice with Turkey. In 1919, it lost control of Suleymanieh, the most important Kurdish center, to the Kurdish nationalist leader Sheikh Mahmoud Berenji. It put down the revolt, but could not crush Kurdish aspirations.

"They supported independence"

The British political officer in Baghdad, Sir Arnold Wilson, wrote later: "The Kurds wish neither to continue under the Turkish government nor to be placed under the Iraqi government."

Wilson also wrote: "In Southern Kurdistan, four out of five people supported Sheikh Mahmoud's idea to set up an independent Kurdistan."

In order to secure their control of the oil, the British were determined to include Mosul in their Iraqi client state. They, however, promised the Kurds autonomy within Iraq to justify separating the area from Turkey. In 1921, Sir Percy Cox, the British high commissioner in Baghdad, had the Hashemite Prince Feisal enthroned as king of all Iraq, including Mosul.

In his report to the League of Nations Commission on Mandated Territories, Cox acknowledged: "The Kurds feared for their interests if Baghdad should hold the reins of industry and the economy in Iraq. They assumed they would be cheated. The Suleymanieh region decided not to participate in the election of the King of Iraq. In Kirkuk, the emir's [Feisal's] candidacy was rejected and the Kurds demanded a government of their own race. ... Suleymanieh was almost unanimous in rejecting outright any form of inclusion under the Iraqi government."

When the British ended their mandate in 1930, giving formal independence to Iraq without offering the Kurds anything, the imperial army again had to put down a rebellion in Suleymanieh.

In 1932, when Iraq was admitted to the League of Nations, it had to put down a revolt in Barzan. During the Second World War, Mustafa Barzani led a rebellion, but his

forces were driven into Iran by the Royal Air Force.

The suppression of the Kurds was an integral feature of the neocolonial regime. The Kurdish people make up around a quarter of the population of Iraq. Any regime that denies them their national rights has to have at least the connivance of its neighbors and the imperialist powers active in the region. By suppressing the Kurds, it puts itself at the mercy of the bordering states and the imperialists.

The 1958 uprising in Iraq

After the Second World War, the Iraqi monarchy became the kingpin of the U.S.-

of the Kurdish struggle, turned for help to the shah of Iran, a lieutenant of U.S. imperialism opposed to Arab nationalism.

Mustafa Barzani, did not trust the Iranian monarchy. In fact, he was in Iranian Kurdistan in 1946-1947, when the Iranian state crushed the short-lived independent Kurdish Mahabad republic. He had to fight his way out through the Iranian lines with 500 stalwarts. But the U.S. government, in the person of Henry Kissinger, gave a special guarantee to the Kurds.

In fact, the U.S. administration gave an example of cynicism shameless even for capitalist international relations. The publication in 1976 of the Pike Report to the



Patrick Robert-SYGMA

'There is no question of the U.S. rulers having any sympathy for the aspirations of the Kurdish people. Bush administration spokespersons made it clear that they were against any 'breakup' of Iraq. Washington even opposed establishing a sanctuary for the Kurdish refugees.'

sponsored neocolonialist alliance in the region. When this contemptible regime was swept away by a popular uprising in 1958, logically enough the government that rose to power on the wave of revolution extended a hand to the Kurds.

The constitution adopted two weeks after the revolution proclaimed: "Iraqi society is based on complete co-operation between all its citizens, on respect for their rights and liberties. Arabs and Kurds are associates in this nation; the constitution guarantees their national rights within the Iraqi whole."

This was the first time any state with a large Kurdish minority had recognized their national rights. It made a major impact throughout the region, where assuring the rights of minorities is vital for an effective fight against imperialist domination.

Unfortunately, it was just as logical that, as the new Iraqi regime turned its back on the revolutionary wave that brought it to power, it also turned on the Kurds. Finally, *Thawra*, a publication close to the government, published a series of articles calling for forced assimilation of the Kurds. This process led to five wars against the Kurds.

Until the last one, the Kurds held their own. And then their leaders made a disastrous mistake. They trusted the United States. But to give them their due, they did not have much choice. The Soviet Union had made an opportunist alliance with the populist Arab dictatorship in Baghdad.

The Barzani family, then in the leadership

House of Representatives on the covert activities of the CIA made clear the game the United States was playing. The report stressed: "Neither the foreign Head of State [the shah] nor the President and Dr. Kissinger desired victory for our clients [the Kurds]. They merely hoped to ensure that the insurgents would be capable of sustaining a level of hostility just high enough to sap the resources of the neighboring state [Iraq]."

The large-scale military aid given by the shah encouraged the Kurdish *peshmergas* to try to fight a regular war with the Iraqi forces, which outnumbered them three-to-one. The Kurdish war did achieve its objective for the shah. Saddam Hussein granted his territorial demands. The shah then dropped the Kurds.

Results of trusting Washington

Barzani gave up the fight and withdrew to Iran. As part of his deal with the shah, he opposed Kurdish nationalist activity in Iran, and actually collaborated in repression of Kurdish militants. From that time on, the Barzani remained clients of the Iranian state.

The results of the collapse of the Kurdish leadership were tragic. Saddam accelerated the campaign of Arabization, especially in the oil-producing areas. Some 200,000 Kurds were expelled from lands where in many cases their ancestors had lived since pre-historic times. Arab colonists were brought in to replace them.

A regime of terror was imposed on the

Kurdish area, as on the rest of Iraq. But in Kurdistan, it was a racist-chauvinist terror directed against an entire people.

Armed resistance to the Iraqi regime was resumed, on a small scale, by Jela Talebani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which got some support from Syria. The PUK adopted a more radical language than the Barzanis, whom it denounced as "feudalists." On the other hand, some radical Kurdish nationalists in Iraq suspect Talebani of being more open to deals with Baghdad than the Barzanis.

In Iran also, massive repression was clamped down on the Kurds. Here there are no mineral resources and very little development of any kind.

The Kurds lived mainly in the countryside, in villages of earthen dwellings. But the shah's secret police had a large building to centralize their surveillance over these poor farmers and shepherds. When the crowned dictator fell in 1979, it was torn to pieces and the files scattered over a good acre. I watched the crows picking through them on a sunny afternoon in March 1979.

An inextinguishable rebellion

The minute the power of the Iranian state faltered, the perennial opposition of the Kurds came to the surface. Almost immediately, the Khomeini regime turned on the Kurds. But to this day, despite a prolonged pacification campaign, it has not been able to stamp out their resistance. Iranian Kurdistan became a refuge for all the Iranian leftists fleeing Khomeini's repression.

During the Iran-Iraq war, the Kurdish nationalists in Iraq eventually came to accept Iranian support, while their compatriots in Iran took Iraqi aid. Both argued that this was a tactical necessity and that they would not become dependent on their suppliers. Talebani at one point tried to make an alliance with Saddam Hussein against the Iranian butchers of the Kurds, but the Iraqi dictator's treachery and bloodthirstiness aborted the attempt.

It was quite clear that any alliance of Kurdish nationalists with either Tehran or Baghdad was inherently unstable—if not an outright deception. The basic reality is that the Kurds have been the consistent victims of undemocratic settlements in the region, and the instant they get an opportunity they will rise up against them.

Thus, the Kurdish rebellion against Saddam Hussein was as predictable as the Iraqi dictator's savagery in repressing it. Washington cannot claim that it was taken by surprise by the one or the other.

By the same token, the struggle of the Kurds for self-determination is an essential part of the fight for democratic rights, and therefore social liberation, of all the Middle Eastern peoples.

The victory of the Kurds, as of the other peoples, depends on alliances firmly based on the principle of respect for the right of self-determination for oppressed peoples. Such alliances, and most specifically the fight of the Kurds, will be favored by the broadest possible understanding of, and solidarity with, the Kurdish struggle by democrats and socialists throughout the world.

The prophet of the revolutions of 1848, Michel de Lammenais, referred to the Polish people as a martyr people suffering for humanity. That certainly applies to the Kurds. Their cause should be as central a concern for the movements for political and economic liberation in the 20th century as that of the Irish and the Poles was to the progressive movements of the 19th.

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Union leader calls for formation of labor party But on what basis will it be formed?

By NAT WEINSTEIN

Tony Mazzocchi, who is currently secretary-treasurer of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union, has established an organization, Labor Party Advocates, devoted to advancing the idea of an independent workers' party based on the trade unions. But before we take this development up, some preliminary remarks will put it in proper perspective.

The need for an independent party representing working-class interests has been widely felt among working people almost from the founding of the United States.

There have been a variety of workers' parties going back to the early part of the 19th century. From then until the beginning of the 20th century, there were numerous attempts to establish such parties, most of which were locally organized as "Workingmen's Parties." The great majority of these attempts to organize workers politically were initiated by trade unions, which also constituted the mass base of these primarily electoral formations.

The most successful of them succeeded in electing representatives to local and state governments and, more rarely, to the U.S. House of Representatives. And at the turn of the century, the increasing number of votes received and the growing number of local labor party candidates elected, especially in New York state, scared capitalists and their political representatives.

The Democrats were most active in taking measures to block this threat and became quite adept at co-opting parts of the labor program for the purpose of cutting it off.

Capitalist politicians, however, had to pay a price in exchange for blocking the threat of a growing movement toward independent working class political action. They were compelled to pass some of the laws championed by the trade unions and parties of the workers. Thus, for example, progressive legislation was passed which we now take for granted, such as universal public education and against child-labor.

Role of radicals

The movement for working-class independent political action had its ups and downs. It reached a high point when Eugene Debs, the Socialist Party candidate for president of the United States in 1920, received nearly a million votes—from a much smaller number of eligible voters in those days—while imprisoned for his opposition to the first imperialist world war.

Debs had started out as a railroad union leader and supporter of Democratic Party "pro-labor" candidates. But in an earlier imprisonment for his labor activities he broke with the Democrats and became a socialist, fighting capitalist injustice for the rest of his life.

The movement toward a mass party of labor subsequently took a different course with the victory of the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the formation of the Communist Party of the United States. The early American communist approach to political action was, of course, far more rounded and complete than even that of the Socialist Party of Debs.

The communists brought to the American working class an understanding that electoral activity is only a small part of working-class political action. They taught workers that the responsibility of a workers' party is to organize the defense of class interests on every level—in the streets and in the workplaces, as well as at the polls—and not just on election day, but every day of the year.

But that promising development was short-circuited when the Stalinized U.S. Communist Party in 1936 broke with the principle of class independence and gave back-handed support to Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Democratic Party candidate for re-election as president of the United States.

Since then, independent class political action has fallen to its lowest ebb since the founding of this nation. The Stalinist turn to the politics of class collaboration removed the main obstacle and opened the flood gates to class collaboration. By 1940, the labor



Solidarity Day, 1981.

Joseph Ryan/Socialist Action

'Mazzocchi has been arguing for a labor party based on the unions for the past ten years. His agitation has recently become more ambitious, taking more concrete form.'

bureaucracy, reformist Socialists and Stalinists were united in support of Democratic Party capitalist politicians.

Bankruptcy of class collaboration

But as early as the 1960s, the bankruptcy of this strategy led to sections of the labor bureaucracy occasionally endorsing Republican Party candidates in a desperate and hopeless attempt to warn their "friends" in the Democratic Party that they shouldn't take their support for granted.

This, of course, frightened no one. The only real result has been to further contribute to the mis-education and to the increasing sense of despair of working people. This is graphically registered in the uninterrupted increase in the rate of worker abstention from voting. This in turn led to a massive decline in the ability of the bureaucrats to deliver the vote for their chosen candidates.

Things went from bad to worse when first George Wallace, then Ronald Reagan, proved able to win support from workers by appealing to a combination of racism and a growing rebellion against the relentless shifting of the tax burden from the rich to the poor.

Since then virtually the whole spectrum of capitalist politicians has adopted the tactic of heaping taxes on workers (while cutting taxes on the rich) and blaming the higher taxes on those social services reaching the poor—Blacks, Latinos and immigrant work-

ers in particular.

In the late 1970s, the setbacks suffered by labor reached such intensity that the phenomenon appeared of bureaucrats making empty "labor party" threats. This demagoguery, of course, is not new.

Walter Reuther, president of the United Auto Workers union from his election in the 1940s until his death in 1969, had been notorious in his advocacy of a Labor Party based on the unions—always sometime in the future, "but not now."

Lip-service to the labor party idea given by such ex-militants, however, had originated from a genuine mass sentiment in the auto and other industrial unions in the 1930s and 1940s.

Most of the Walter Reuther types really believed it when they first advocated formation of a labor party. Reuther himself had risen to the head of the union movement on the crest of the labor upsurges of that period. But he began to shed his progressive positions, including support for a labor party, as he rose in the ranks of the bureaucracy.

The spate of labor party threats of the 1970s and early 1980s, however, is even more cynical. Those that began mouthing this slogan had always been unmitigated class collaborationists. They were among the loudest advocates of the strategy of supporting the "friends of labor." Coming from

these unreconstructed class collaborationists, not a single capitalist could possibly take their labor party threats seriously.

Other labor fakers, like Douglas Fraser, a former president of the UAW, uttered plaintive protests against "one-sided class war," which some observers believed also to be an implied threat to turn it into a two-sided war—that is, to fight back. But, coming as it did from spineless, long-time supporters of "cooperation" with the bosses, it was merely intended to appeal to the sense of fairness of their capitalist friends to please ease off on their antilabor offensive.

Mazzocchi's Labor Party crusade

Tony Mazzocchi is not in the same category. He is a long-time progressive and even radical militant in the American labor movement who has not broken with some of the best of his early positions. He was, for example, a militant local leader of his union. He has been in the forefront of the struggle against "Jim Crow" segregation and for full equality for Blacks.

He was an early opponent of the nuclear arms race and against U.S. military intervention into the affairs of the neo-colonial countries of the world. And more recently, he has emerged as a champion of reform of the American labor movement.

Mazzocchi has been arguing for a labor party based on the unions for the past 10 years. His agitation has recently become more ambitious, taking more concrete form. He has initiated a modest campaign to organize the nucleus of a national organization, Labor Party Advocates (LPA), strictly limited to promoting the idea. He has been going around the country signing up supporters.

Early this year, the Socialist Action national office received an invitation to attend a meeting in San Francisco along with two brief tracts. The first was an invitation to join LPA, explaining the purpose of the organization and why a labor party is necessary. And the second went into more detail in question-and-answer form.

In his explanation of its purpose, Mazzocchi correctly emphasizes the primarily educational function of LPA at the pre-



Tony Mazzocchi

sent time. His letter of invitation and pamphlet advance good arguments for a break from capitalist politics and for the formation of a labor party based on the unions. Thus, Mazzocchi's campaign can play a positive role.

His letter correctly recognizes that the LPA is not yet, in fact, a labor party. So that while declaring that the new organization "has a single purpose: To organize a Labor Party in the United States," he also correctly declares that the LPA "will neither run nor endorse candidates for political office." (There is no such thing as a "labor party" worthy of the name that is based on a few hundred, or even a few thousand activists.)

The declaration rejecting endorsing candidates seems clearly intended to block the temptation to support those candidates, like Jesse Jackson, who are not truly based on the unions, nor independent of capitalist politics. This intention is made more explicit in one of the questions he poses in his pamphlet. He asks:

"Aren't trade unions too small a base on which to build an alternative party? Shouldn't we at least be joining with others

(continued on next page)

The following is a letter we received from Rich Winger, editor of *Ballot Access News*, a newsletter which gives overviews and updates in regard to ballot access court decisions and legislation. Because of its importance, we are publishing the letter as if it were an article.—the Editors

By RICH WINGER

Earlier this month, a federal court shattered the oldest protection that courts in this country have given to voting rights. For over a century, state courts, followed by federal courts, have always protected the right of a voter to vote for any qualified candidate that the voter wished to vote for.

But on March 1, a federal court ruled for the first time that the government may prevent a voter from voting for a candidate who is legally entitled to hold the office for which the candidate is running (*Burdick v. Takushi*, no. 90-15873, 9th circuit.)

The decision upholds a total ban on write-in voting in Hawaii. Never before has a federal court upheld such a ban. U.S.

Supreme Court upholds denial of ballot access to write-in candidates

District Courts in Hawaii, Indiana, Kansas and Ohio have struck down such bans, as have the State Supreme Courts of 17 states. (See most of the state court citations *Canaan v. Abdelnour*, 710 P 2nd 268, California Supreme Court, 1985.) Some of those precedents are over 100 years old.

Although the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the [restrictive] ballot access laws of California, Georgia, Texas, and Washington, all of those states permitted write-in voting, so despite the existence of the ballot access hurdles, a voter was still free to vote for any qualified candidate in those states. Forty-five of the 50 states permit write-in voting in general elections; the only ones which do not are Hawaii, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Nevada and Louisiana.

The write-in is frequently used to elect people. U.S. Senator Strom Thurmond,

California Congressman Ron Packard, and New Mexico Congressman Joseph Skeen were first elected to Congress by write-in votes at general elections. In 1988, Jackie Stump was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates by write-in votes at the general election. In 1990, Mark W. Dailey was elected to the Rhode Island House by write-in votes at the general election.

There were no government-printed ballots in the U.S. before the 1890s (see the Winter 1991 *Harvard Journal on Legislation* for the article by Bradley Smith which discusses this), so the voters were free to prepare their own ballots (although most voters chose to use a party-printed ballot).

When the government began the job of preparing the ballots, it always preserved a blank space for a write-in vote, so as to preserve the original common-law right of

a voter to vote for any qualified candidate, whether the candidate was on the ballot or not. That is the origin of the write-in space on American ballots, and thousands of write-in candidates have been elected.

At the November 1990 election, when Indiana permitted write-in voting for the first time since the 1970s, 40 write-in candidates were elected (according to Indiana State University Professor Dean Myers; see the January 21, 1991 issue of *Election Administration Reports*, a bi-weekly publication from Washington, D.C.)

What's the local (California) angle? There is one. Secretary of State March Fong Eu signed an amicus curiae brief in this case, on the side of the Hawaii Attorney General, arguing that the courts should not tell Hawaii whether or not to permit write-in voting.

She holds herself out as a friend of the voter, but in this case, she was the foe of the Hawaii voters. Hawaiians especially need write-in space on ballots. Over half their legislative races in 1990 had only one candidate on the ballot! ■

... Labor Party

(continued from previous page)

to create a broader third-party coalition?" His answer is insightful:

"No. The trade unions are the best possible base on which to build an alternative party in the United States.

"First, we command the kinds of resources necessary for a long term organizing effort. Other efforts to launch a third party have failed because they lacked access to a steady stream of income over a period of years. Local unions could help provide this income, but we are not likely to support an effort we do not identify with.

"Second, the great majority of local unions are democratic institutions which enjoy the support of their members. Working people are the largest potential constituency for an independent labor party in the United States. We are more likely to want to join a party based on the trade unions—which whatever their problems are working-class institutions—than a coalition party.

"Third, one of the primary reasons for wanting to organize an independent labor party is to give political expression to the desire of many working people in this country to fight against the increasing power of the corporations, a power which we have experienced first hand at work. A coalition party—made up, say, of trade unionists, environmentalists and church activists—would be more likely to blunt its anti-corporate message than would a party built primarily by local trade union leaders." These are pretty good arguments.

A spoonful of tar

Unfortunately, Mazzocchi also raises some bad arguments, which, even with the best intentions, serve to undermine his main points.

From the outset, Mazzocchi muddies up his main line of argumentation. He starts out with what, at first sight, might appear to be diplomacy: He grants that there are "a handful of labor Democrats who are genuine friends of the trade-union movement and of working people." He seeks to balance this by immediately noting that, "However, they are without any real influence in their own party."

But this is, nevertheless, a major concession to the basic premise of those inside the labor movement who have rationalized the policy of supporting the bosses' candidates by promoting the myth of "friends of labor."

There are no friends of labor in either capitalist party in the sense this phrase has come to mean. Every single one of these "friends" stand unambiguously on the basic premise that there is a community of interest between capital and labor—an assertion that collapses under the least critical examination. And when it counts most they are found on the side of the enemy or, at best, put up token resistance, as part of their shell game.

The interests of capital and labor are diametrically opposed. This opposition is made crystal clear when we take note of the fundamental relation between wages and profits: When wages go up—all other things being equal—profits go down, and vice versa. This



Workers won strike battles in the 1930s based on militant mobilizations on the picketline and in the plants.

conflict between class interests determines all economic and social relations between classes.

The fact is that labor's "friends" in the capitalist parties are the first to acknowledge that this friendship is subordinate to the interests of the "nation as a whole." Or, as the head of General Motors Corporation once declared, "What's good for General Motors is good for the country."

Mazzocchi's effective arguments are further undermined by his position that it wasn't always wrong to support "good" capitalist politicians. Thus, he argues:

"The New Deal under President Franklin Roosevelt promised to establish a model of American democracy where working people would have the power to defend themselves against Corporate America...The New Deal also put in place a worker-oriented economic policy that sought to ensure growth and protect working conditions by giving money and power directly to workers. These policies worked. But, they have been slowly dismantled by successive Republican and Democratic administrations." That is, by the "bad" capitalists.

This line of argumentation does more than undercut Mazzocchi's pro-labor party stand. It leaves the door open to being sucked back into capitalist politics. We can be certain that when the developing economic crisis breaks out of control, there will be new Roosevelts willing to shout their friendship for working people to gain leverage for derailing a political fightback when it begins to take off.

A lesson from labor history

Roosevelt, contrary to the myth, didn't give workers the right to peacefully organize into unions. Neither section 7(a) of Roosevelt's National Recovery Administration (NRA), nor the Democratic Party sponsored Wagner Act give workers union rights. Art Preis, author of *Labor's Giant Step*¹, summarizes the real history of this

¹ *Labor's Giant Step*, by Art Preis, Pioneer Publishers, New York.

period. He writes:

"The Wagner Act proved no more effective than section 7(a) [of the NRA] in protecting the workers' right to organize and bargain collectively. It took a couple of million workers in the 1936-37 sit-down [strike] wave to actually seize that right by the seizure of hundreds upon hundreds of factories and other places of work [in sit-down strikes]."

Mazzocchi's declaration, "We need another New Deal," contradicts his labor party theme. It will come back to haunt supporters of a genuine labor party—especially when such a political movement actually gets off the ground and threatens to challenge the ruling capitalists for control over the economic, social and political life of the country.

Mazzocchi may be sincere in his advocacy of a labor party. He eloquently describes the merciless assault on the living standards of working people. Moreover, he takes account of the developing economic crisis and how that will aggravate workers' misery. "Who is responsible for this outrage?" he asks. He answers:

"The Democrats in Congress blame the Republicans in the White House. The Republicans in the White House blame the Democrats in Congress. In fact, both are to blame. And millions of Americans including many trade union members, know it. In the 1990 Congressional election, only 35 percent of the electorate bothered to go to the polls. The rest of us stayed home—voting, in effect, for None of the Above.

"Enough is enough. The bosses have two parties. Working people should have at least one. It is time for the labor movement to organize its own independent party of working people."

But then further along he again mucks up the labor party message. He asks:

"Does someone have to break their ties with the established parties in order to be a Labor Party Advocate?" Strangely, his answer is: "No. Labor Party Advocates as an organization will not run its own candidates, and individual Labor Party Advocates will therefore be free to work for the candidates of

any of the major parties." [Emphasis added]

Clouding the issue further, he asks: "Will supporting the creation of an independent labor party interfere with the on-going electoral work of the trade unions?" "No," he says, "In fact, local unions could increase their political leverage by supporting Labor Party Advocates and calling for the creation of an independent labor party."

Thus, deliberately or not, Mazzocchi implies it is okay to support capitalist party candidates.

Don't let bureaucrats off the hook

How is this contradictory line of argumentation to be explained? Mazzocchi, who is himself a top union official, evidently is concerned that his attempts to reform the unions not be interpreted as an attack against his peers within the labor bureaucracy—that is, those who fashioned the bad policies and who continue to carry them out. The most generous explanation of his approach is that it is based on his hopes of convincing the labor bureaucracy, or at least a section of it, to reform itself.

This further suggests that Mazzocchi has a flawed understanding of labor history. It was not the "progressive" labor bureaucrats who were responsible for the labor upsurges and conquests of the past, it was the ranks of the working class and the new leaders emerging from their ranks that sparked and carried the movement forward to win labor's historic gains.

The likelihood of American workers forming an independent mass labor party based on the unions in the not too distant future is promising. But it will not come as a result of bureaucratic initiative.

The best that can be expected from the top labor bureaucracy is that some of them will be swept along by a militant and spontaneous upsurge of millions of rank-and-file workers who will have no choice but to defend and advance their class interests. And they will not stop at the level of economic action, they will go beyond, to social action in opposition to racism and sexism, as well as to independent class political action.

The formation of Labor Party Advocates will best serve the interests of working people if those like Tony Mazzocchi, who may sincerely seek to advance labor interests, educate workers in the true history of class struggle. Any objective reading of labor history will reveal two central lessons to guide the coming generation of class-struggle leaders and fighters:

First, the boss class and their political representatives are the enemy. Workers must be organized as a class in economic, social, and political struggle against the enemy class.

Second, those officials within the ranks of the labor movement who block effective struggle in defense of our class interests, may not be the enemy, but their function as the "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class" must be exposed and combated.

These are the first steps toward the construction of a new leadership, a mass revolutionary labor party, a winning strategy, and finally, decisive victory. ■

Those interested in finding out more about LPA, write to: Labor Party Advocates, c/o Tony Mazzocchi, 94 Linden Lane, Princeton, NJ 08540.

By HAYDEN PERRY

Starved for funding, public healthcare is collapsing

Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come, and no idea is pressing more insistently on people's consciousness than national health insurance. For all but the wealthiest segment of our society, this is literally a question of life or death.

From the comfortable middle class, who can be devastated by medical bills of thousands of dollars, to the poorest citizens who must wait eight hours to get a five-minute session with an exhausted intern, everyone knows there is something terribly wrong with the American system of healthcare.

Almost daily, the newspapers publish horror stories. On April 11, the *New York Times* showed its readers how the Medicaid system works in a run-down Chicago neighborhood.

Medicaid is the system that supposedly guarantees our poorest citizens good medical treatment. Twenty million people, including 13 million children, depend on Medicaid to keep them healthy.

Doctors are paid by the state and federal governments to treat these patients who cannot afford private health insurance. Doctors are also paid under another program, Medicare, to serve patients over 65.

The fees paid doctors for Medicare patients are low, but the elderly patients are expected make up the shortfall out of their own pockets. This is the dreaded "medigap" that impoverishes so many retired people.

Doctors who treat the poor under Medicaid are paid even less: 48 percent to 69 percent of Medicare payments—and there is no opportunity to collect anything from

their impoverished patients. As a result, physicians are quitting the Medicaid program in droves.

'Writing off the poor'

The result can be seen in the city-operated Neighborhood Health Center on Chicago's North Side. Dr. Claudia M. Fegan will not take any new Medicaid patients.

She loses money on nearly every one. But she wrestles with her conscience, she says. She puts the blame on federal and state governments who won't fund the program adequately. "Now they are writing off the poor with new budget cuts," she says.

The "written-off" poor can be observed five days a week at the North Side clinic. They line up outside the door long before the 9 a.m. opening hour. Between 500 and 700 patients a day try to see a doctor. There used to be seven internists; now there are only four.

One patient said she had to wait an hour to see a nurse and three more hours to reach a doctor. All she wanted was a routine shot for her baby.

Doctors are also kept waiting—waiting for the small stipend the government pays for each patient treated. Often a claim has to be submitted three times while the bureaucracy checks for fraud. Final payment is often delayed three months or more. This is additional incentive for doctors to

quit the system.

A liberal physician, Dr. Quentin Young calls his policy of limiting Medicaid patients a mix of "reality and shame;" reality that he cannot stay in practice on Medicaid income, and shame that he has to turn away sick people.

"The health status for people represented by Medicaid is declining," he said. "It is a reflection of the powerlessness of the poor, and the hardening of the heart of America that is ominous."

Cutbacks worsen the misery

Meanwhile, Californians are seeing their hospitals close for lack of public funds. "Health agencies face the worst cuts in memory," proclaims a *San Francisco Chronicle* headline on April 15. Moreover, the paper reports, more than half the Los Angeles County hospitals will be forced to close this year unless they get increased funding.

In Alameda County, Calif., where patients already wait three months to see a dentist and two years to get in a drug treatment program, a further \$7 million cut is proposed. Pediatric services have already been cut back to the point where babies must wait a month for a checkup. Adults must wait seven months.

A health worker in Los Angeles commented, "You can't cut any more out of our budget and still call it a health sys-

tem." The effect on the staff who try to deliver healthcare under these circumstances was summed up by an observer: "I see too many practitioners whose eyes reflect hopelessness and despair."

Such despair might be expected among rescue workers confronting famine in Africa, but this health crisis is taking place in the richest country in the world. Unlike Africa, the resources to treat every sick person in America already exist. Hospitals are standing idle, wards are being closed, and workers are being laid off, while sick people are begging for treatment.

The Bush administration has no interest in a national health plan. Bush wants to push the whole problem onto the states. State governments push the burden onto the counties, where authorities give up entirely and close the county hospitals. This leaves the poor with absolutely nowhere to go.

American working people will not tolerate this situation forever. Many are looking next door to Canada, where a national health plan serves every citizen. "If the Canadians can do it, why can't we?" Americans are asking. Why should we be the only major industrial nation (besides South Africa) without a national health plan?

As the scandal of poor Americans dying needlessly spreads, the pressure for adequate healthcare will become an irresistible force. The immovable object in this case is the profit-motivated health industry and their political agents in Washington. They can and must be pushed aside by the power of aroused people determined to save the health of the nation. ■

Our readers speak out

Schools closed

Dear editor,

My kids came home from school yesterday and said they had been told to clean out their desks—the school is going to be shut down next Tuesday. Just like that!

Here it is six weeks before school's usual end. Where are our kids supposed to be between now and June 14? What are they supposed to be doing? There is little in the way of childcare in Richmond, so what are working parents supposed to do?

This is outrageous. Gov. Wilson is using our children and us as battering rams to jam through more regressive taxes in California, as well as to try to break the teachers union.

A number of frustrated parents are trying to sue the state, but this doesn't seem too profitable. The state says yes, it is responsible for money for education, but not for mismanagement of it. (And the buck goes round and round.)

My son said his English teacher told the kids yesterday that more money is spent on prisons and on prisoners than on schools and students. Perhaps our kids will conclude that it is better to be in prison than in school?

The government can find money for education if they tax the wealthy and the corporations. Close the loopholes, not the schools!

B.P.,
Richmond, Calif.

Viva Sylvia!

Dear editor,

After months of reading through the national papers with the hope of finding one courageous reporter to tell us what is really going on in the Iraq war, along comes Sylvia Weinstein's "David-Goliath" commentary in your March issue. She

cuts right through all the mesmerizing, rhetorical bull crap and tells it like it is.

She writes with intensity, and her keen insights make her dynamic articles a pleasure to read.

Pat Scott,
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Go biweekly

Dear editor,

Once again, in the spirit of resistance, I gladly renew my subscription to your informative newspaper. I appreciate your critical historical analyses of Western war-mongering in the Arab world. Your perspectives are a breath of fresh air amidst the sappy, lap-dog reporting of the

mainstream press.

I join with other advocates for a biweekly publication of *Socialist Action*, in the interest of more up-to-date analyses of contemporary events.

Norberto Valdez

Soviet Union

Dear editor,

The bias of the *New York Times*'s coverage of the Soviet crisis was especially obvious in its April 27 issue. The major story at the top of the page was about a highflying junior-birdman speculator who had cashed in big from the market reforms and now wanted to form a "trade-union" for oppressed

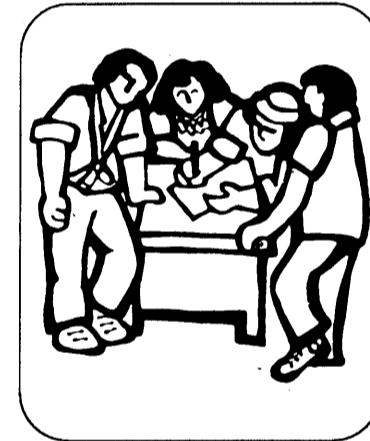
millionaires.

A much smaller story below concentrated on Gorbachev's warning to "secessionists," and only mentioned in passing that he made it on the same day that 50 million workers struck in the Russian Federation.

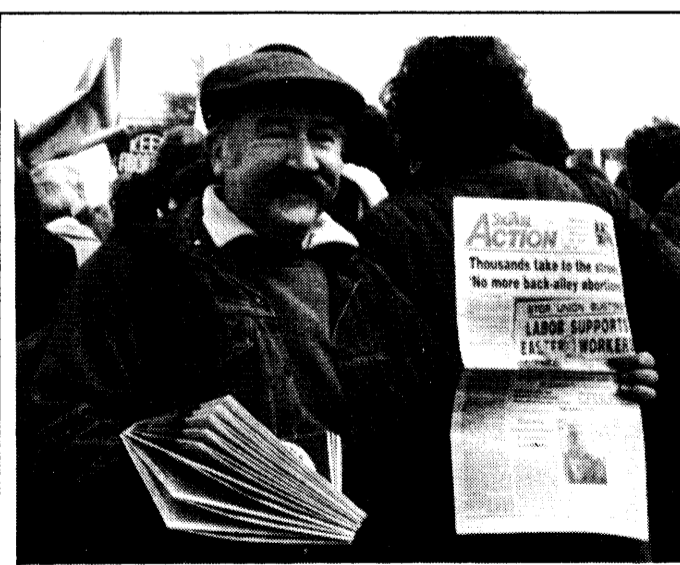
Neil Sears,
Palo Alto, Calif.

Correction

In our February issue, the speech by Malcolm X, "Prospects for Freedom in 1965," should have been accompanied by the following notice: "Reprinted from *Malcolm X*



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Why U.S. and Mexican workers should oppose Free Trade Agreement

The U.S. and Mexican governments are pressing ahead in negotiations for a so-called Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries. Such an historic pact would phase out most, if not all, tariff barriers between Mexico and the United States.

In 1988, the U.S. and Canadian governments signed an FTA. Since then, U.S. exports to Canada have grown by \$12.3 billion. Big business hopes for even greater benefits from a pact with the semi-colonial country of Mexico, whose economy is only four percent the size of that of the United States.

Average production wages in Mexico, moreover, are 14 percent to 16 percent of those in the United States (i.e., in many cases less than \$1 per hour). There are also few environmental laws to hinder major U.S. corporations from super-polluting Mexico.

AFL-CIO opposes FTA

Not surprisingly, the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) is strongly opposed to the Bush administration's agreement as now written.

The labor leaders are not against an FTA *per se*. They are for a "fair" deal. Their fire is aimed at eliminating the right of the White House to continue to use "fast-track" negotiations with Mexico.

Fast-track authority allows the U.S. government to negotiate an FTA without any chance for amendments by Congress, which could only vote the agreement up or down. Fast-track authority will automatically be extended for another two years after June 1 unless specifically rejected by Congress.

The labor tops argue that an FTA with Mexico would lead to U.S. companies moving to Mexico to take advantage of low wages. This, they say, will lead to loss of jobs from the relocated plants and from a flood of Mexican-made products forcing other workers to the unemployment line.

In other words, the AFL-CIO officialdom's opposition to the pact is because it supports protectionism—laws limiting "free trade." It falsely argues that U.S. workers can "save" our jobs by preventing big business from building plants abroad. The problem with this analysis is that capitalists (the owners of electronic, auto, and other companies who move to Third World countries and other countries) seek the lowest labor and other costs to maximize their profits.

In the United States, companies are always "relocating" to areas where labor and other costs are lower—from union states to non-union "right-to-work" states, from high-property-tax regions to low-property-tax regions, etc.

The maquiladoras

The U.S.-Mexico Free Trade Agreement is simply an extension of this everyday policy for the capitalists. The United States and Mexico have a 1900-mile border. U.S. firms already locate plants south of the border, many of them *maquiladora* assembly-lines, whose products have, in effect, duty-free entry to U.S. markets.

By some estimates, around 500,000 Mexicans now work in these plants. These workers, a large percentage of whom are women, are paid on average 50 percent less than other Mexican production workers. That's super, super exploitation!

The official labor movement claims these factories have led to a loss of U.S. jobs. While it is obviously true that many factories have closed in the United States and been reopened in Mexico, the net result of these geographical shifts has not been a loss of U.S. jobs. The rise of the maquiladoras in the 1980s has led to a U.S. trade surplus with Mexico.

This means more U.S. jobs have been created than lost. But there is a catch—the jobs lost are high paying, while those gained tend to be low paying and all non-union.

Which Side Are You On?

By
Malik Miah



I'm opposed to the U.S.-Mexico trade agreement. But I reject the AFL-CIO's protectionist arguments. They are not only inaccurate but can also lead to racist attacks on Mexican workers for "taking our jobs." It is the employing class here and in Mexico who are for expanded tariff-free trade with Mexico.

Super-exploitation

I oppose the FTA because it will increase the exploitation of Mexican workers by U.S. companies. These companies are more than willing to hire Mexican capitalists to run their plants at low wages. Mexican capitalists, like their U.S. counterparts, are more than willing to pollute the environment.

The main losers if an FTA is adopted will be Mexican working people. Mexican workers already suffer from unfair trade relations with the U.S. and other advanced countries.

History has shown that advanced (i.e., imperialist) countries don't export their technology to benefit the local people. That's why Latin America and Africa are so underdeveloped. It's why they all have huge unpayable foreign debts.

Mexico has a foreign debt of nearly \$100 billion. It pays huge interest costs mainly to U.S. banks. Fair trade is impossible between imperialist and semi-colonial countries.

The more that Mexican workers

are exploited, the less strong U.S. workers will also become. Any new jobs that are created will be poorly paid.

An alternative policy

The unions will be weaker too, if they continue to follow their current policies. The challenge facing labor is not stopping "fast-track" negotiations but developing a strategy based on solidarity with Mexican workers, aimed at advancing the interests of U.S. and Mexican working people.

The AFL-CIO and its affiliated

unions should use our resources to demand that Washington cancel Mexico's debt immediately. We should support demands by Mexican unions for higher pay for workers in the *maquiladoras*. We should support strong environmental standards in both countries.

Our policy should be to insist that Washington adopt legislation giving full unemployment compensation and job retraining to workers here whose plants are shut for any reason. We should fight for national healthcare. That's the only effective labor policy to protect our interests.

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

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Trotsky's biography of Stalin published in Soviet Union

By ALEX CHIS

Walnut Publishing Company has received copies of the first publication in the Soviet Union of Leon Trotsky's biography of Stalin. The issuing of this book is an event of major importance.

"Stalin" has been published in two volumes in an edition of 100,000 by Terra Publishers, who earlier published the four-volume "Archives of Trotsky: The Communist Opposition in the USSR 1923-1927" (see *Socialist Action*, August 1990).

"Stalin" was the book Trotsky was working on at the time of his assassination by an agent of Stalin. Written during Trotsky's exile from the Soviet Union, it represents his mature political thought on the phenomenon of Stalinism. He had already come to the conclusion that a political revolution was necessary in the USSR and had founded the Fourth International.

To have a work from this period of Trotsky's life published in the USSR is a major step forward in reclaiming the history of the Soviet Union. It will bring to the Soviet masses the tools necessary for an understanding of the bureaucracy and the necessity of completely overthrowing it. Furthermore, the biography of Stalin—written by the man that the dictator tried to write



'In 1991, only Russian readers can actually read a version of 'Stalin' that is purely Trotsky's.'

out of history—will have great popular appeal.

Walnut Publishing Company is proud to have helped in this publication. Yuri Felshtinsky, who compiled this Russian edition of "Stalin," told us, "Walnut Publishing Company's help was essential in having 'Stalin' published in a timely manner. Thank you!"

Readers may remember that, at the time of Trotsky's assassination,

only Volume One of "Stalin" was in a final form. Charles Malamuth, who had been hired as the English translator, then "completed" the second volume, interpolating many ideas opposed to Trotsky's thinking.

At the time, this was vigorously protested by Natalia Trotsky (Leon Trotsky's wife). But the work was published anyway by Harper & Brothers (the two Russian volumes were published as one in English). Pioneer Publishers, the major English-language publisher of Trotsky at that time, even went so far as to paste a disclaimer in the copies they distributed.

This Russian edition of "Stalin" is completely Trotsky's written text. Dr. Felshtinsky, working with the Trotsky archives, put together the second volume by using Trotsky's outline for the work and only Trotsky's words.

So now, in 1991, only Russian readers can actually read a version of "Stalin" that is purely Trotsky's.

All those who have contributed to the Trotsky Fund can be proud of having helped in this historic event—the first mass publication, not only in the Soviet Union but in any country—of a publication of "Stalin" faithful to Trotsky's ideas.

The Trotsky Fund was set up by Walnut Publishing Company to assist in the publication of Trotsky's works in the Soviet Union.

Much more waits to be done. Please help by mailing checks to: Trotsky Fund/Walnut Publishing Co., 3435 Army St. #308, San Francisco, CA 94110. ■

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Marine faces death penalty for opposition to Gulf war

By JEFF MACKLER

Erik Larsen, a U.S. Marine Reservist who applied for Conscientious Objector (CO) status and was an outspoken critic of the U.S. war in the Middle East, now faces the death penalty.

According to the Marine Corps, as stated in their charges against Larsen: "Lance Corporal [Erik Larsen] has been in an [un]authorized status for a period in excess of 30 days during a time of war and pending serious charges, including an alleged violation of Article 85, Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), desertion. If found guilty of these alleged charges, he faces the possibility of the maximum punishment authorized, which is death."

The threat to Larsen's life was part of a government brief filed in opposition to Larsen's appeal (filed and argued on April 19, 1991, in the Federal District Court of Northern California) to the Marine Corps denial of his application for CO status.

This is not an idle threat. On April 29, Larsen's assigned military counsel at Camp LeJeune, N.C., reported that the formal charges against Larsen include "desertion in time of war," thus confirming the real possibility of the severe penalty involved.

Of the estimated 3000 GI resisters who expressed their antiwar views during the U.S. intervention in the Middle East, Larsen is the first to be charged with desertion in time of war.

The Erik Larsen case must sound an alarm to all those who are committed to the defense of democratic rights, especially of the democratic rights of a soldier to express his or her antiwar views. In addition, this courageous young Marine faces the full governmental power of a capitalist state that wishes to make an example of him.

The charges of "desertion" against Larsen were based on his missing the Feb. 9, 1991, deployment of his unit to Arizona for training prior to being sent to Saudi Arabia. But Larsen's unit was never sent to Saudi Arabia.

Larsen's civilian attorney, Robert Rivkin, maintains that the activation order was illegal because of the unnecessary delay in acting on Larsen's CO application and because the order was deliberately calculated to increase the punishment against his client. Rivkin, a specialist in military law, has represented thousands of conscientious objectors since the Vietnam War.

Larsen's case was thought by many in the legal profession to be a model in regard to the requirements for Conscientious Objector status. In fact, the military chaplain assigned to interview Larsen recommended that his CO application be approved. But it was denied out of hand by the Marine Corps brass on the grounds that it was based "solely on political grounds."

Rivkin stated at an April 19 press conference, following the federal court hearing, that his client's right to free expression is being violated because the Marine Corps plans to court-martial Larsen in retaliation for his antiwar speeches. Larsen toured some 22 U.S. cities as well as Germany, England, and Italy to help build the international antiwar movement.

Handcuffed and Shanghaied

When Larsen turned himself in to Marine Corps authorities at Treasure Island, Calif., on March 21, he was immediately handcuffed and flown to Camp LeJeune, N.C., where he was told by the commanding officer that a sentence of "seven years to life was almost guaranteed."

While in custody, the threats against Larsen have escalated—which is why he now faces the death penalty.



Erik Larsen

The military establishment and the Bush administration are striving to justify their venture in the Middle East. Another no less

important goal of the U.S. rulers, is to wipe out the deep-seated opposition of the American people to capricious interventions

Muslim sailors face frame-up by U.S. Navy

At the peak of the U.S. propaganda buildup for the Gulf War, two young Black sailors on an aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf were arrested on spectacular charges. They were accused of "encouraging fellow sailors to sabotage the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Ranger's aircraft-launching system and kidnap the skipper, Capt. Ernest Christensen." (*New York Times*, March 30, 1991).

A Navy spokesperson, Lt. Cdr. Kevin Mukri, claimed that they had done this in answer to Saddam Hussein's call for a Muslim holy war against the United States. The two sailors were ordered to face court martial on March 29, and face a possible sentence of 10 years in prison, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, and reduction to the lowest rank.

The Black Muslim newspaper, *The Final Call*, reported April 22 on a news conference given by the two and interviews with relatives. One of the defendants, Kevin Brothers, 22 years old,

changed his name to Abdul Shaheed. His friend and co-defendant is James Moss, 21 years old. Shaheed reportedly converted to Islam two years ago. The Black Muslim paper did not say if Moss was also a Muslim. But before the war, he applied for Conscientious Objector status.

Shaheed reported that he had been arrested on Jan. 17, the night the United States launched its air campaign against Iraq, while he was praying. "Just because I am a Muslim, that does not mean that I support Saddam Hussein," Shaheed said.

Moss also rejected the charges: "I have never supported Iraq or Saddam Hussein. In fact, I have always opposed Saddam Hussein, Iraq and war in general."

This case has all the hallmarks of anti-Black and anti-Muslim hysteria. It can be an important test of the U.S. authorities' ability to use the Gulf War hype to attack Blacks and other minorities. ■

into "hot spots" around the world.

With the U.S. victory over the Iraqi people, enormous pressures have been placed on military resisters who refused deployment to the Middle East. Rather than risk the threatened long-term sentences in military prisons that could result from contesting government charges in formal court-martial proceedings, many have opted to plea bargain.

Shortly after the war's end, several resisters settled for jail sentences of 6-9 months. More recently, plea bargaining has resulted in jail terms doubling this figure.

Camp LeJeune, N.C., like other military holding centers for GI resisters, is filled with government informers and even some frightened soldiers who have been convinced by unscrupulous government agents to fink on their fellow resisters in return for reduced sentences.

Confinement in the brig is no easy matter. The most minor alleged violations of military rules and regulations, not to mention the expression of political dissent, is met with ever-increasing punishment.

Maximum-security confinement, for example, can result in being placed in a six-foot by eight-foot cell with no windows and an allowance of only five minutes daily for hygienic purposes. Reading and writing are prohibited.

If the prisoner dares to exercise, he can be stripped to his underpants and sent to an ever-more confining "psych cell," which Marines describe as being close to a "dog cage" in measurements. These are the options faced by Erik Larsen, as he fights for his life—and freedom.

Support grows

Support for Larsen's freedom has been direct and immediate. The Mobilization to Bring the Troops Home Now (the West Coast coalition that organized the Jan. 26 San Francisco demonstration of 250,000) voted to allocate virtually all of its funds to the legal defense of Larsen and his Marine friend, Tahan Jones—who also received his reservist training in Hayward, Calif. The estimated \$6000 Mobilization contribution was an important effort toward raising the \$40,000 in anticipated legal fees.

In a related and very important development, Tahan Jones—a Black Marine and antiwar activist who was often a keynote speaker at many of the mass demonstrations in the San Francisco Bay Area—is expected to turn himself in to the military authorities soon. He will more than likely face the same charges as Larsen.

In addition to the legal-defense funds established by the families of Erik Larsen and Tahan Jones, a joint effort has also been initiated by their supporters and families. This includes the organization of a mass rally in the Bay Area in early June.

Rally coordinator Hilary Diamond, formerly the staff director of the Mobilization to Bring the Troops Home Now, told *Socialist Action* that a major effort was underway to galvanize the widest possible support for the defense efforts of Larsen and Jones.

With the agreement of their families, a Jones/Larsen Defense Fund has been established to organize the June rally and publicize the cases of these two GIs across the U.S. and internationally.

Tax-free contributions to this effort can be made as follows: For Erik Larsen: Hayward Area Peace Fellowship/Erik Larsen Defense Fund. For Tahan Jones: Third World Resisters/Tahan Jones Defense Fund. For the joint fundraising effort: Jones/Larsen Defense Fund. All checks can be mailed to the Jones/Larsen Defense Fund, 4229 Telegraph Avenue, Oakland, CA 94609. Telephone (415) 655-1201. ■