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SOCIALIST EDUCATION FUND

Counting Capitalists As Workers

In December *The New York Times* printed an article by its economics writer, Louis Uchitelle, in which he said that the class struggle just isn't what it used to be. Even that was quite an admission considering its source and that the *Times* has been known to deny the existence of classes in America, much less a struggle between them.

"Capitalism is all about splitting the national income between profits and wages, aka capital versus labor...and Karl Marx proclaimed that when labor's share fell too low, that was cause to throw off the chains." To this Uchitelle added that, "Economists still keep score, but not with the old passion. Class struggle does not seem as pertinent to them anymore."

Why do you suppose that is?

Part of the explanation offered by the "economists" who Uchitelle had in mind is that the line that divides labor and capital has been obscured because "the labor roster now includes many more [sic] multimillionaire executives, managers and professionals," among whom he listed as a specimen in evidence former Microsoft CEO Bill Gates, reputedly the world's richest man. Gates and some others whose fortunes come from profits disguised as "bonuses, exercised stock options, profit sharing, fancy perks and more" are said to "count as card-carrying workers through the wage portions of their fabulous incomes..."

There was much more to the web of nonsense that Uchitelle wove into his column for Dec. 5, but we must be content to limit ourselves to these few lines and reserve the rest for another time.

Karl Marx, of course, did not "proclaim" any such thing as Uchitelle claims he did. What Marx proclaimed, and proved, is that labor—the working class—is the producer of all social wealth and that the capitalist class is the producer of none.

The modern class struggle is a struggle over the division of labor's product between capital and labor, to be sure, but to suggest that any division of labor's product was anything less than theft, or that the nonproducing class of thieves are "card carrying" victims of their own crimes, is as malicious as it is fictitious. What share of what labor and labor alone produces is "too low," "too high," or "just right"? The answer, of course, is that labor is not entitled to only a "share" of its own product, but to all of it.

We don't believe that many workers read Uchitelle's Goldilocks rendition of capitalism, classes and the class struggle. But similarly iniquitous shams permeate the social atmosphere of self-justification and deceit that capitalism creates to miseducate and mislead the working class. To combat it the Socialist Labor Party needs all the support it can gather from those who understand the need for socialist education. You can help by contributing as generously as you can to the Socialist Education Fund. Please use the coupon on page 6.

AFL-CIO Jockeys for Support From Undocumented Workers

After decades of the most unabashed support for reactionary and divisive legislation against immigration, the executive council of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) recently announced that the federation will henceforth support "regulated legal immigration," amnesty for all undocumented workers presently in the country and a policy of noncooperation with the notorious Immigration and Naturalization Service.

In a press release announcing the executive council's resolution, the federation announced that, "The AFL-CIO proudly stands on the side of immigrant workers." Really? As a matter of policy, it certainly didn't do so before now. Is this new position staked out by the federation really the about-face it seems to be? Or is it merely more opportunist accommodation of the capitalist class? History and the facts of the case tell the story.

For decades, labor chieftains across the country and at all levels of the federation maintained, in agreement with some of the most racist and reactionary elements of the capitalist class, that "illegal immigrants" take jobs away from American workers, thereby depressing wages and subverting working conditions. Furthermore, they said, these "aliens" helped companies break strikes and thwart union organizing drives.

One would expect an organization that claims to represent workers' interests to strongly and unequivocally oppose these unconscionable attacks on undocumented workers. Such an organization should be expected to expose and counter such efforts to divide workers along racial and ethnic lines.

NEC Session Banquet
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Speaker:
SLP National Secretary Robert Bills

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A real working-class union would recognize that all workers, regardless of where they were born, have an overarching common interest as exploited wage laborers who must sell their labor power to the capitalist owners of industry in order to live—a common interest that makes unity and solidarity absolutely essential.

A working-class organization worth its salt would have pointed out that the overwhelming responsibility for unemployment and economic insecurity rests with the profit-motivated capitalist system itself.

The AFL-CIO, in its attacks on undocumented workers, conveniently ignored its own failure to organize an effective defense of workers' interests. The fact is that they failed, and continue to fail, to make any determined effort to organize the vast majority of the working class. The chieftains of the

AFL-CIO were content to have several major industries "organized" enough to assure the dues they needed to guarantee the federation continued existence as a bureaucracy and to feather their own nests as individuals.

They complained that undocumented workers were difficult to organize and blamed them for undermining the few feeble attempts to "organize" workers that the federation even bothered to undertake. They failed to mobilize the workers they did manage to corral into the business unions to fight capitalist demands for givebacks, concessions and "restructuring" cuts. Yet they blamed undocumented workers for depressing wages and working conditions. And while they failed to challenge the very system that breeds unemployment, they blamed undocumented workers for taking the jobs of U.S. workers.

(Continued on page 6)

Alaska Air Crash Victims Sacrificed on Altar of Profit

By B.B.

The recent crash of an Alaska Airlines MD-83 jetliner off the coast of southern California, which took the lives of 88 people, triggered yet another frantic search for cause and culprits on which to fix responsibility for what may have been an unnecessary human tragedy. An FAA investigation concluded that a faulty jackscrew, which controls the aircraft's pitch through manipulation of the tail stabilizer, had malfunctioned. But the real malfeasance, the real malignancy that caused the crash, will not be found by the capitalist media or, if found, will not be reported—for it is the capitalist system itself that is at fault.

In the immediate aftermath of the crash entire fleets of MD-80s were examined with focus on the jackscrews. Widespread dereliction in the manufacturing process at the McDonnell Douglas' plant in Long Beach, Calif., where the aircraft was produced, has been revealed. The twist that the capitalist media gave to this ambiguously hangs the production line workers for

their supposedly slovenly ways, while offering sobs and nose-gays for the poor stressed-out company.

Accordingly, the *Los Angeles Times* stated: "In the early 1990s, government auditors found that employees at McDonnell Douglas' plant in Long Beach, Calif., performed slipshod work, used out-of-date blueprints and improperly inspected parts—all as the financially troubled company was scrambling to keep planes rolling off the assembly line."

This piece of editorial pandering is the stock in trade of media hacks.

Despite the audit FAA officials issued no warning regarding safety, and since the crash have cited nothing that would indicate that poor quality control was the cause of the crash. Indeed, former aircraft executives indicated that "overall quality control was sound." That is, as sound as the pressures of the "devil take the hindmost" system would allow.

The *Times* has the effrontery to intone: "...The McDonnell Douglas Long Beach plant—which was facing

stiff competition and defense cutbacks in the early '90s—illustrate how economic pressures can potentially compromise the quality of aircraft construction and threaten the very existence of a respected manufacturer."

"Respected manufacturer!" In the vernacular: "Give us a break!" This "respectability" was responsible for the deaths of 88 people. What about *their* existence? In fact, the company was scrambling to stay afloat by literally piecing together the aircraft from undisclosed numbers of subcontractors scattered all over the globe. "To assemble the complex jets, McDonnell Douglas devised an equally complex supply chain, drawing parts from far-flung corners of the globe. Nose sections came from Chengdu, China. Cabin doors came from Spain." Stabilizers from Shanghai and Tulsa, Okla.; the jackscrew ensemble from the defunct Peacock Aerospace of Norwalk, Calif.

While the airplanes were being jerry-rigged from innumerable cut-rate subs, the company was busy cutting

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Danger Grows at Kentucky Uranium Processing Plant

By B.B.

New revelations concerning the federal government's Cold War-era uranium processing plant near Paducah, Ky., surfaced in February and suggest that the facility and the land surrounding it are even dirtier and more hazardous than formerly supposed.

According to one press report, over "1,600 tons of nuclear weapons hardware may be buried" at the same site where, for nearly 40 years, the federal government "enriched uranium for nuclear weapons." The 3,000-acre site is still owned by the federal government, but the plant, known as the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant, is leased and operated by a private capitalist company. That company, the U.S. Enrichment Corp. (USEC), reportedly "is the country's only processor of uranium for commercial nuclear power plant fuel."

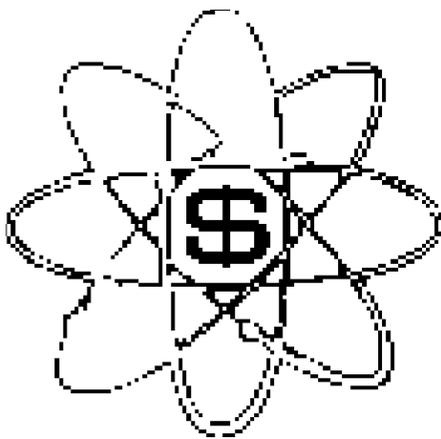
Last October, after a series of articles in *The Washington Post* and other newspapers, we summarized the facts as follows:

"According to the *Post*, workers and the surrounding community...have been exposed to high levels of plutonium and radioactive metal contamination for decades. 'Unsuspecting workers inhaled plutonium-laced dust brought into the plant for 23 years as part of a flawed government experiment to recycle used nuclear reactor fuel....' During this period, the DOE [Dept. of Energy] and its contractors failed to tell or warn workers of the hazards, despite a growing awareness among employees of a series of cancer deaths.

"In the immediate environs, the deadly toxins found their way to drainage ditches, creeks, wildlife areas and private wells, while waste was thrown into adjoining fields, abandoned buildings and landfills not authorized for hazardous wastes.

"It has further come to light that, although the plant was designed to handle uranium only, between the mid-1950s and

mid-1970s its past contractors—Union Carbide initially and subsequently Lockheed Martin, Martin Marietta and currently the U.S. Enrichment Corp. (sic)—'buried the facts about the plutonium contamination.' But the facts are everywhere in evidence as 'workers weave between makeshift fences that cordon off hundreds of radioactive "hot spots" spattered across the complex. New ones are discovered each



year. In one corner of the plant, mildly radioactive runoff trickles from a nearly half-mile-long mound of rusting barrels that still contain traces of uranium."

"Weapons grade plutonium-239 with a half-life of 244,000 years—54 times the age of the Cheops pyramid—causes cancer. A mere millionth of an ounce is all it takes.

"Joe Harding, a worker who died of cancer in 1980, apparently ingested at least that amount. He compiled a list of 50 coworkers who also died of cancer. Before his death he stated, 'Everything was so safe, so riskless. Today we know the truth about those promises. I can feel it in my body.' His testament is a clear allusion to the deception practiced by the DOE and the capitalists that ran the facilities and amassed fortunes at the expense of the workers and their community.

"In support of the class-action suit filed

against the DOE and the corporations, Thomas Cochran, nuclear program director of the Natural Resources Defense Council, noted that, 'The situation is as close to a complete lack of health physics as I have observed outside of the former Soviet Union.' His statement tends to confirm the cupidity and callousness characteristic of class-ruled societies.

"Feigning concern, Energy Secretary Bill Richardson declared that the department has 'sent many of our workers into harm's way' and that they were going to take responsibility and 'right the wrongs of the past.' This is baloney in the context of the capitalist system."

That was where things stood as of last October. Now come the later revelations concerning the 1,600 tons of "special nuclear hardware" dumped at the same site.

A letter sent to the DOE by Raymond G. Carroll, a senior manager for health and safety at the USEC-operated plant, warns of the dangers. According to *The Washington Post*, Carroll stated that, "Personnel could conceivably encounter highly enriched uranium or plutonium [or even tritium] without ever knowing it."

Meanwhile, it would appear that a tip-toeing act of avoiding responsibility for the mess at Paducah is being played out by various governmental agencies. The DOE admits the presence of "an underground classified storage site at Paducah," while the Pentagon, the Justice Department and the DOE were studying the matter. None of the three had informed either the current plant owners or its workers of the existence of the buried bomb parts. The usual screen of "classified national security programs" lies at the base of their secretive paralysis.

Indeed, the collateral victims of the so-called defensive and offensive weapons production have been almost exclusively the armaments workers, whom apologists

and propagandists have touted as the beneficiaries of nuclear weapons production. A cloak of secrecy and "national security" has been the ploy used to inveigle the working class.

Additionally, the political state's record of recklessness and the creation of severe health hazards since the development of the infernal weaponry is abominable. The history of the notorious Hanford, Wash., weapons facility exemplifies that. No expert, nor anyone else, knows what costs and measures must be taken to clean up Hanford, but the amount "guesstimated" comes to about \$280 billion over the next half-century—a sum equal to the Pentagon's annual budget. (See *Scientific American*, May 1996)

The Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant follows the Hanford mold. Since government agencies are largely beholden to the profit interests of the capitalist class, it is not human life that must be protected but rather capitalist profit making.

Despite assurances from Secretary of Energy Richardson, no order has been issued for the immediate closure of the Paducah complex while a plan is developed to clean up the site, protect workers, the community and the environment. Accordingly, it's "business as usual."

As we said in our report of last October, "Any demand to clean up the nuclear debacle is a demand for socialism, for only a society based upon democratic control of industry and production for use can summon the resources needed to accomplish this massive feat." This assessment is reinforced by continued disastrous news rising from the effluvia over the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant at Paducah, Ky.

Do You Belong?

Do you know what the SLP stands for? Do you understand the class struggle and why the SLP calls for an end of capitalism and of its system of wage labor? Do you understand why the SLP does not advocate reforms of capitalism, and why it calls upon workers to organize Socialist Industrial Unions?

If you have been reading *The People* steadily for a year or more, if you have read the literature recommended for beginning Socialists, and if you agree with the SLP's call for the political and economic unity of the working class, you may qualify for membership in the SLP. And if you qualify to be a member you probably should be a member.

For information on what membership entails, and how to apply for it, write to: SLP, P.O. Box 218, Mountain View, CA 94042-0218. Ask for the SLP Membership Packet.

Get Subs!

Wall-Mart's Ruthless Counteroffensive

By Nathan Karp

From its very beginning, Wal-Mart Stores Inc., which operates the nation's largest chain of retail stores—including a number of supermarkets—has been unyieldingly antiunion and has inexorably fought any effort to organize any of its employees. Today, 38 years after the first Wal-Mart store was opened, the company has thousands of retail outlets and tens of thousands of employees but not a single segment of its workforce is unionized. A *Washington Post* news dispatch published in the March 6 *San Jose Mercury News* noted that Wal-Mart is "a company that has used every tool to keep the unions out." And it has done so ruthlessly and, to date, successfully.



In defense of its antiunion posture, the company "insists it has an 'open door' approach to labor relations and that it is the company's profit-sharing program that eliminates the need for unions in its stores."

In mid-February it appeared that there had finally been a successful penetration of the company's antiunion wall. On Feb. 17, the meat cutters in Wal-Mart's Jacksonville, Tex., store won their fight for union recognition by a vote of more than 2 to 1. Doug Dority, president of the

United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW), hailed the union's victory as "the vote heard 'round the world." But it proved to be a short-lived victory.

Two weeks later the company launched its counteroffensive—and a ruthless counteroffensive it was. The company announced that it would be closing the meat-cutting operations in 180 of its stores, including the one in Jacksonville. Starting in May, all those stores will handle only prepackaged "case ready" products, i.e., products cut, wrapped and shipped to the stores from outside sources.

For the UFCW the Jacksonville victory was to provide the momentum for a drive to organize the meat cutters at additional Wal-Mart units. To some degree that organizing drive was already under way, and some additional meat cutters have petitioned for union elections. The UFCW, understandably, believes and has said that the Wal-Mart action was intended to discourage the incipient prouion sentiment and thwart the organizing effort.

The company dismissed the union's complaint by declaring that its decision "was in no way related to the Jacksonville situation" and that "to roll out a program of this magnitude takes months of preparation." It remains to be seen how far the union efforts in Wal-Mart stores will go and what countersteps the company will take in defense of its long-standing antiunion policies.

Capital and Labor

By Arnold Petersen

A series of essays that discuss and define such terms as capital, profit, labor power, price controls, etc., and explain the underlying causes of class conflict.

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AOL-Time Warner Merger Makes Media Critics Nervous

By Ken Boettcher

The \$166 billion merger of America Online and Time Warner announced by company chieftains in January, and the \$37 billion Viacom-CBS merger announced last September, have generated a buzz among critics worried about monopoly control of the major media and commercialization of the Internet.

Syndicated columnist Norman Solomon characterized the Viacom-CBS merger as "a story with dire implications for possibilities of democratic media as the 21st century gets under way." "Today," he said in an article for Creators Syndicate after the merger announcement, "some huge corporations are sitting on the windpipe of the First Amendment. Meanwhile, many journalists—and the public at large—are gasp-

ing for the oxygen of public discourse that allows democracy to breathe."

But there have been "corporations...on the windpipe of the First Amendment" for much of this century. Regardless of the number of capitalists in control of the major media, "the public discourse that allows democracy to breathe" hasn't made an appearance on the American scene in several generations. For decades capitalist control of the major media has virtually blacked out the information workers need to make informed decisions about real democracy. In fact, workers get precious little information on the so-called "democracy" that presently veils capitalism's economic dictatorship.

The AOL-Time Warner merger also made Solomon uneasy. In a commentary

for *Z Magazine* he wrote: "I think this is a tremendous blow for the potential for democracy in our society through genuine wide-ranging discourse." The merger will ostensibly accelerate the proliferation of the business model of the Internet—which views it as a kind of electronic strip mall rather than the "information superhighway" its most fervent defenders wish it to be. "We're essentially seeing," Solomon continued, "the mass distribution of corporatization of consciousness, and this step...is a big stride down that very slippery and very dangerous road."

Edward S. Herman, another media critic, agreed, writing that the merger "will further concentrate and oligopolize the media, bringing the New Media into this web of privilege and power." Gary

Chapman of the *Los Angeles Times*, in a January column, wrote that, "The moguls of AOL, Time Warner, AT&T, Microsoft and other companies view the Internet as an advanced form of cable TV—as a consumer service used primarily to sell products and secondarily to entertain or inform."

But for anyone "surfing" the Internet these days, its commercialization already appears an established fact. The most well-traveled paths on the Internet are already commercialized, with Web sites already as glitzy and slick as television ads.

That's the way it is under capitalism. The major media are owned and controlled by the capitalist class, and they are used, regardless of their promise for education and information, primarily to sell the products workers produce in the industries and services owned and controlled by the capitalist class. Secondly, they are used to "sell" the ideas and views of the ruling capitalist class to those they rule—the majority working class. To any real student of the media it should come as no surprise that new media are being commercialized just like older means of communication. It should come as no surprise that the capitalist-owned media are subject to the same laws of competition that lead to greater and greater concentration of capital—and control—in every industry.

As for the effects of capitalist ownership on the media, they have been known for some time. Daniel De Leon, near the turn of the last century, described the gist of the newspaper business this way:

"A capitalist paper, much as appearances point to the contrary, does not sell news, and does not live on that. What a capitalist paper sells and lives upon, and prospers on, is advertisements; or to be more accurate, space for advertisements and subsidized opinions. The two virtually amount to the same thing. The news in a capitalist paper is only what the electric illumination and other such attractions are to a store. Not a metropolitan capitalist newspaper could exist six months if it depended only upon its sales....

"The revenue has to come from the subsidies which the paper receives in the shape of advertisements and otherwise. To sum up, and with no intent at offensiveness but simply to sum up with objective terseness and truthfulness, capitalist newspapers live and prosper on blackmail...with the plethora of their news blossoms as a gauge and measure of the blackmail levied."

Mergers in the major media will not change the role of media propagandists for that "best of all possible" systems, the economic dictatorship of the capitalist class. Merged or not, journalists, editors, talk-show hosts, and television and film personalities for the major media will still faithfully ply the ideological wares of the owning class on an unsuspecting working class, seeking to yoke workers to the capitalist system that exploits them.

The problem with the likes of Solomon and Herman is that their criticism becomes propaganda useful to the capitalist class: They make it seem that perhaps, if enough laws were passed or some other conditions were met, a real dialogue on the issues facing the working class—poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation and hazards on the job, to name a few—might be had through the capitalist media.

In fact, whether few capitalists or many own and control the mass media, the "information" conveyed by the major media has not brought the working class an inch closer to knowing what to do about the dire problems capitalism creates. Workers would be far better off leaving antitrust reform to the lawyers of competing elements of the capitalist class—and putting their energy and support into a real advocate of workers' concerns and class interests like *The People*.

The Death of Amadou Diallo

By B.G.

Forty-one shots and an innocent, inoffensive young African immigrant lay dead in the entryway to his apartment building in the Bronx. His name was Amadou Diallo and he was only 22 years old. He had come from Guinea in West Africa in hopes of bettering his life in the United States. He worked diligently as a street peddler every day, doing everything right and lawful, paying his bills and rent on time, and carefully saving what money he could.

This slight, quiet, pleasant young man was a threat to nobody, and yet he was gunned down on his own doorstep one night last year. What went wrong? Did he live in a high-crime neighborhood? Hardly. He lived in the Soundview section, a family neighborhood in the Bronx, the northernmost borough of New York City. Of the 41 shots fired by his assailants, 19 entered his body. The rest penetrated the walls and door of the apartment building. One shot entered the first-floor apartment of a sleeping tenant and passed just over his bed.

Amadou Diallo never had a chance. His assailants were four plainclothes white officers of New York City's elite street crimes unit. Their motto is "The night belongs to us." Driving by at night, they saw Diallo standing in the entryway of his building, allegedly looking up and down

the street. That behavior looked suspicious to them. The driver backed up the car and stopped. The four got out and approached Diallo. What actually happened we shall never know because the corpse is not here to testify on his own behalf. The four officers, who testified at their trial in February of this year, said they identified themselves as police and asked to talk with him. An eyewitness said they gave no identification of themselves, but that one of their number called out "Gun!" and all officers began firing at the man in the doorway.

On the witness stand a year after the event, the four gave similar coordinated stories. Diallo looked as though he was up to something. He looked like a rapist they were after. One cop said he thought Diallo might be contemplating a robbery. If he got inside the door, they would have trouble chasing him inside. Dangerous for the officers! He had a wallet in his hand and it looked like a gun.

(Can't tell a wallet from a gun? Well, you see, they said, the lighting in the entryway was dim. But he sure looked like the rapist they were after, despite the supposed dim light! After all, he was a black man with a mustache, just like the rapist; and all blacks look alike to white folks, anyhow.)

One officer said Diallo held out his wallet toward them and then went into a combat stance. Really? Did he think they were going to rob him, these four white men bearing down on him, and so he was handing them his wallet? Or was he searching for his identification? Or did he just happen to have the wallet in his hand? We'll never know. Unfortunately, he could not testify from the grave. As for the "dim lighting," one investigative officer who was later called to the scene of the tragedy said the lighting was good. Another investigative officer, however, fraternally backed up the four and said the lighting was dim. The caretaker of the building said the front entryway lighting that night was good. Take your pick.

The defense lawyers had gotten a change of venue for their four clients, and the place of the trial had been moved from the Bronx to Albany, even before the selection of a jury had begun. A black woman judge had been assigned to the trial in the Bronx and the cops and their defense team considered this an unfavorable development. A racially mixed jury in Albany acquitted the four officers of all charges on Feb. 25. The judge had charged the jury to put themselves in the shoes of the police officers. No, he was not a prejudiced judge. That is the way the law reads. If a policeman believes his life is in danger, or that a crime is about

to be committed, he is permitted to use his weapon.

So if the officers advanced upon Diallo because they believed he had a robbery of someone somewhere (who knows where?) in mind, then they were in the process of making an arrest, and if he pulled a wallet on them, it was obviously a threatening move, because they thought that item was actually a gun. Or maybe he was looking for someone to rape. Anyway, he was suspicious because he was standing on his doorstep looking around and he was a black man, like the rapist. And who is there to counter this testimony or to prove that they made all these justifications up? Certainly not the corpse. And if the police in the line of "duty" shoot and kill an innocent person, they can always make it up to the victim and his family by saying, "Oops! So sorry!"

Richard D. Emery, a civil rights lawyer writing on the Op-Ed page of *The New York Times* (Feb. 26), analyzed the situation. How could four officers wearing protective body armor and carrying 9 mm automatic handguns fear for their lives and "overreact with 41 shots? How could they have misread the situation so tragically?" As Emery emphasized, they "were poorly prepared, poorly trained and poorly supervised. Put simply, they panicked in a situation that called for equanimity, tactical forethought, common sense and proper procedures."

In 1997, present Police Commissioner Howard Safir decided to triple the street crimes unit to 380 officers, evidently to make his reputation as the champion crime crusher in the city and to accommodate his take-no-prisoners, macho crime-fighting boss, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, whose willing puppet Safir is.

There was no way to properly train every officer who was suddenly thrust into one of the most dangerous kinds of work around, notes Emery. "The police department must take tactical and safety training more seriously. It must rigorously supervise and discipline officers that ignore police procedures. It is not the number of officers out there that counts. It's the quality of the officers."

One of the factors in the Diallo case that has been generally slighted in the mainline press is the matter of race. To most white cops detailed to look for guns and drugs on the street, the minority community is considered fair game. Minority men, women and children are regularly stopped, searched, harassed and often bullied and brutally roughed up, even when no contraband is found. Some minority individuals have been stopped

(Continued on page 6)

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An Open Letter
To *Science & Society*
Dear Abby Luby:

We received your e-letter of March 10, which we reproduce here for the benefit of our readers and for those of them who may wish to take advantage of the offer it contains:

Subject: *Science & Society*

Date: Fri, 10 Mar 2000 14:04:50-0500

From: abbylu@highlands.com (Abby Luby)

To: thepeople@igc.apc.org

The editors of *Science & Society*, the oldest American Marxist journal (established 1936) are reaching out to a growing community of readers who are interested in Marxism today. Our focus is on reinvigorating Marxist theory and research; assimilating current results from mainstream social science, history and philosophy; and critically reexamining the classical literatures of revolutionary social thought from a contemporary perspective.

We're hoping to find members of your organization who might want to know more about us or receive a free copy. We find that not just academics but also policy planners, labor community organizers and others welcome a chance to stay on top of the latest products of Marxist scholarship. To help us connect with them, we're inquiring about an exchange of mailing lists, an ad swap or other mention in your publications to members. Our database includes about 1,700 scholars and thinkers with an interest in Marxist thought.

Can we help each other? Thanks for replying....

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Not simply as a matter of pride, though we take great pride in it, but as a matter of historic accuracy and, more important, of justice to the thousands of workers who have fought, sacrificed and suffered, sometimes at great personal loss to themselves and their families, for socialism, for the Socialist Labor Party and for its official journal, *The People*; and with all the respect due those who publish and contribute to *Science & Society*, and who, despite their presumed knowledge of "social science, history and philosophy," claim for it the distinction of being "the oldest American Marxist journal (established 1936)," we wish to restate the previously undisputed because indisputable fact that the oldest American Marxist journal (established April 5, 1891)—and perhaps the oldest Marxist journal in existence—which enters into its 110th year of publication with this issue, is *The People*, official journal of the Socialist Labor Party of America.

You state that *Science & Society* focuses "on reinvigorating Marxist theory and research; assimilating current results from mainstream social science, history and philosophy; and critically reexamining the classical literatures of revolutionary social thought from a contemporary perspective."

We do not know in what particular or set of particulars *Science & Society* believes that Marxist theory needs "reinvig-

orating." Have the materialist conception of history, the law of value or the fact and significance of the class struggle lost their vigor? If that is the view of *Science & Society*, what basis, what reason, what point would there be to "assimilating current results from mainstream social science, history and philosophy," unless it is to be absorbed by them? Our purpose, using all the tools that Marxism places at our disposal, is to expose these things as anti-Marxism, hence antisocialism, bourgeois prejudice and bourgeois self-justification.

Marxism is social science. There is nothing else worthy of the name. It is a vast quarry of knowledge, but more important, it provides the tools necessary to acquire more and, more important yet, to apply them to a purpose. Daniel De Leon gave expression to that purpose in our issue of April 12, 1896, when he wrote: "It is one of the most important functions of our press to inspire the workers with self-confidence and hope of victory, to overcome their natural low-spiritedness and to counteract the capitalists' policy of misrepresenting and belittling our movement."

We do not dispute the need for Marxist research and the application of Marxist principles to modern capitalism and the class struggle. But a Marxist journal must be more than that. Again, as De Leon expressed it, "the SLP press holds that the 'radical press' must be of all arms—it must be agitational, critical, fervid, besides scientific...." (*Daily People*, April 22, 1906) However, if the purpose of *Science & Society* is simply to gather information to test the value of Marxism as a scientific method we suspect that it may be running the danger to which De Leon referred in the *Daily People* of Dec. 27, 1903:

"Theoretical articles are only for the few" he wrote. "Only these have time and mind to sit down to such articles. But theory is needed. How convey it to the masses, who alone can carry the movement to success? There is but one way—weave the theory into the events of the day. That is a much more difficult task than to reel out, or refine upon theory. It implies a thorough grasp of the theory, so thorough as to perceive its various manifestations in running events. Eschew the theorist, he is intellectually indolent. Purely theoretical articles must be few in a socialist journal of agitation, education and organization."

And earlier, in *The People* of June 27, 1899, De Leon said: "*The People* is an outpost and a sentinel on a tower. It is the bounded duty of such to give notice of the enemy's approach, and forthwith open fire. Had *The People* done otherwise than it did it would have betrayed the grave trust imposed upon it. *The People*...is a weapon for battle. If it can't or won't fight, it has no reason to exist...."

These are among the principles of Marxist journalism that have guided the editorial policy of *The People* through 109 completed years of publication. They will continue to guide it through its 110th, and through as many more as necessary until its mission is fulfilled.

Sincerely yours,
ROBERT BILLS
Acting Editor

A De Leon Editorial

When Socialism Wasn't Possible



Socialism presupposes a highly developed industrial economy and a working class. But that has never kept capitalist "intellectuals" from spouting nonsense about socialism and what it means.

A Capitalist Ignoramus— No Rare Thing (*The People*, July 28, 1895)

Our French comrades are pushing the French capitalist hard. These have now unearthed a certain Leon Caubert, who delivered a lecture before the French Academy to show that socialism has been tried and rejected. He took China for his "historical" illustration. About the time when Clovis, king of France,* was baptized, said he, a great Chinese scholar, by name Cuang Ngam Che, was writing and preaching the principles "which underlie modern socialism." He then proceeded to claim that China thereupon did establish socialism, "the land and all that it produced belonging to everybody"; but that after a while "the Old Adam asserted itself," and the experiment was given over.

The report does not state how this wondrous bit of history and economics was received, but one needs no great imagination to see the capitalist audience that listened to the address settle itself back, and, heaving a long sigh, say: "Now, workingmen, you see it is no use; keep quiet, and let us ride you in future as we have done in the past."

The fact is that, to be very charitable, Mr. Leon Caubert is an ignoramus.

In the first place, he should know that "modern socialism" could not have been preached in China in the age of Clovis. Modern socialism is born of a machinery-using age that compels cooperation and illustrates its advantages. The age of machinery is a recent one.

In the second place, he should know that socialism does not propose that "the

products belong to everybody." It demands that wealth shall belong to those who can and do produce it.

In the third place, Mr. Caubert shows that he can't distinguish between the early communism, through which the ancestors of all of us went centuries ago, and modern socialism; in fact, that he is ignorant of the history of the human race.

Of such mud walls are built the fortresses of capitalism; and they are expected to withstand the solid artillery of facts and science of socialism.

The parallel between China is not with the Socialists, but with the capitalists. Modern Chinese history tells of a celestial emperor who, sitting within the, to his childish mind, consecrated walls and under the consecrated roof of his porcelain palace, laughed at the idea of the cannon of the united navies of the Western forces of Europe doing him any harm; and that, when the bombardment started and his palace fell over his ears, and he discovered he had been living in a fool's paradise, simply doubled up and died.

Ditto, ditto is about to happen with the fatuous capitalists, who fatuously imagine themselves to be planted upon an impregnable position.

We recommend the reading of Chinese history to Mr. Leon Caubert and his likes. It is never too late to learn; they may yet learn something.

*Clovis, king of the Franks, united France and reigned from 481 to 511 A.D. He was the first major "barbarian" monarch to accept Christianity.

what is socialism?

Socialism is the collective ownership by all the people of the factories, mills, mines, railroads, land and all other instruments of production. Socialism means production to satisfy human needs, not, as under capitalism, for sale and profit. Socialism means direct control and management of the industries and social services by the workers through a democratic government based on their nationwide economic organization.

Under socialism, all authority will originate from the workers, integrally united in Socialist Industrial Unions. In each workplace, the rank and file will elect whatever committees or representatives are needed to facilitate production. Within each shop or office division of a plant, the rank and file will participate directly in formulating and implementing all plans necessary for efficient operations.

Besides electing all necessary shop officers, the workers will also elect representatives to a local and national council of their industry or service—and to a central congress representing all the industries and services. This all-industrial congress will plan and coordinate production in all areas of the economy. All persons elected to any post in the socialist government, from the lowest to the highest level, will be directly accountable to the rank and file. They will be subject to removal at any time that a majority of those who elected them decide it is necessary.

Such a system would make possible the fullest democracy and freedom. It would be a society based on the most primary freedom—economic freedom.

For individuals, socialism means an end to economic insecurity and exploitation. It means workers cease to be commodities bought and sold on the labor market and forced to work as appendages to tools owned by someone else. It means a chance to develop all individual capacities and potentials within a free community of free individuals.

Socialism does not mean government or state ownership. It does not mean a state bureaucracy as in the former Soviet Union or China, with the working class oppressed by a new bureaucratic class. It does not mean a closed party-run system without democratic rights. It does not mean "nationalization," or "labor-management boards," or state capitalism of any kind. It means a complete end to all capitalist social relations.

To win the struggle for socialist freedom requires enormous efforts of organizational and educational work. It requires building a political party of socialism to contest the power of the capitalist class on the political field and to educate the majority of workers about the need for socialism. It requires building Socialist Industrial Union organizations to unite all workers in a classconscious industrial force and to prepare them to take, hold and operate the tools of production.

You are needed in the ranks of Socialists fighting for a better world. Find out more about the program and work of the Socialist Labor Party and join us to help make the promise of socialism a reality.

Capitalism Destroying Fragile Australia

By Brian Blanchard

Australia is unique among the great land masses of the world. Its land surface is older than those of other continents and large islands. It is extremely delicate and sensitive to modern agricultural practices and other uses to which it has been subjected for 200 years. The damage it sustained may be irreparable, and certainly so unless sweeping changes are made in the ways it is managed.

It is no exaggeration to say that capitalism is responsible for the centuries-long abuse and mismanagement of this unique and beautiful land, but it is hard to say how many who are informed on the immediate sources of environmental problems are as well informed on the social system from which the destructive practices flow. We suspect that some are better informed than they are prepared to say in public. Nonetheless, many are sufficiently alarmed to call attention to the damage that is being done.

According to Dr. Graham Harris, for example, Australia's land surface "is between 40 million and something like 500 million years old. The soils that we've got are quite unlike say, New Zealand, North America, Europe where many of the soils are maybe 7,000 or 10,000 years old....We're talking about a landscape which has been exposed to the air and the water for those lengths of time, and basically everything has been washed out of it except the clays and the iron....So we're

really talking about a very ancient land."

Dr. Graham is chief of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) Land and Water. His remarks were made during an interview on Radio National's "Earthbeat" program in November. Responding to a question about the effects of modern agriculture on the Australian land surface, he said:

"It's accelerated a whole bunch of processes. We accelerated the rates of erosion, wind erosion and water-borne erosion into coastal waters; we've also made the soils in many cases saline and acid....What we've also done is to mine a lot of the organic carbon out of the soils. When you clear the forest and turn it into western agriculture, you get something like a 50 percent drop in soil carbon over about the first 30 to 50 years. This has a big impact on soil structure, it makes it much more likely that it's going to blow around and wash away."

"What we've done in a couple of hundred years is to really fundamentally change something that was at equilibrium," Dr. Graham added. "So in 50 or 100, or 150 years we've irreversibly changed something that's basically 50 million years old."

Australia's fragile soils are clearly unsuited to the requirements of the competitive and rapacious profit-driven capitalist system. They need lots of care and special attention and must not be pushed

beyond their capabilities. However, it may already be too late for that. As the commentator for "Earthbeat" noted: "Parts of this geologically unique country have been irreparably damaged."

Moving beyond the agricultural practices discussed with Dr. Graham, the commentator cited a newly released report from the Australia Institute showing that "this country now has the highest per capita emissions of greenhouse gases in the world. We emit 25 percent more than the United States and double that of most of the countries in the European Union."

Other sources concur that destructive land use practices are having similar deleterious effects, despite which the madness goes on at an accelerated pace. Indeed, *Australasian Science*, in its January-February issue, reported that "Queensland has rates of land clearing that are among the highest in the world."

Change the atmosphere and you change life on Earth. The only reason we have a habitable planet to live on is its atmosphere. Without its ability to trap the sun's heat, the Earth would be a frozen wasteland. Our atmosphere is a thin blanket of gases, the most important of which is carbon dioxide; but put too much of it into the atmosphere and it is like adding an extra blanket—it will block the escaping heat and the Earth will heat up. After 200 years of burning fossil fuels, coupled with cutting down forests, capi-

talism has done just that. The temperature is going up, carbon dioxide levels are set to double, and studies of air trapped in ancient ice cores show they are already the highest they've been for 400,000 years. If nothing is done the Earth could heat up by almost four degrees by the end of the 21st century.

To solve a problem we must first admit that it exists. Capitalists and those who serve them are in denial about the greenhouse effect and other environmental problems. The Australian government is not only in denial, but aggressively so.

Socialists, of course, know that capitalism has destructive features that cannot be removed through reforms, which after all are only meant to mitigate the evil effects and not to root out and destroy the ultimate source of environmental destruction. No amount of tinkering with percentage points can, under capitalism, stop the greenhouse effect, anymore than moving the deck chairs could save the *Titanic*.

There is no doubt that Australia, and the rest of the world, is plagued by massive environmental problems, and it seems that the richer the capitalists of the world become—and today they are obscenely rich—the faster our planet rushes towards disaster. The only way that humanity and our planet can be saved from catastrophe is to remove the cause of these problems, the capitalist system itself.

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IAM Tactics Divide Strikers

(*Weekly People*, April 5, 1975)

The International Association of Machinists' (IAM) "nationwide" strike against the McDonnell Douglas Corp. offers another example of how today's labor organizations divide and weaken the workers' strength in their struggles with the ruling class.

The strike began Feb. 10 after six months of contract negotiations failed to produce a satisfactory wage agreement. About 20,000 IAM members at McDonnell Douglas operations in California and Missouri walked off their jobs. Actually, the contracts covering 7,000 IAM members in California had expired five months ago. But rather than pull all McDonnell Douglas workers out at that time, the IAM chose to defer action until separate negotiations in Missouri also failed.

Despite the fact that the IAM is now on strike at all McDonnell Douglas plants, it continues to bargain for separate agreements. On March 24, the California workers overwhelmingly rejected the company's latest offer to settle the dispute on the West Coast. If an agreement had been reached, however, the California workers presumably would have returned to their jobs. In effect, 12,000 IAM strikers in Missouri would have been forced to continue an isolated struggle for the improved wages and benefits they are seeking.

Actually, the McDonnell Douglas workers have already been forced to wage an isolated struggle. Even before the strike began, the IAM had reached new contract agreements with Boeing and Lockheed, the aerospace industry's other two major firms. By bargaining separately, first with the two firms, and then with McDonnell Douglas on a regional basis, the IAM sapped the strike of its potential strength. Such tactics make a mockery of the concept of labor solidarity.



Why Is the U.S. Still Bombing Iraq?

By Diane Secor

U.S. air raids against Iraq continue to this day. Why does the Clinton administration risk the lives of American pilots and yet another gulf war?

The explanations put forth by the administration—that this is being done to get the U.N. arms inspectors back into Iraq and to protect the Kurdish and Shiite minorities in Iraq's northern and southern "no fly" zones—have been discredited. Now its public relations strategy is to keep the raids as quiet as possible but, when the media occasionally takes notice, to claim that the bombing raids are only aimed at "Iraq's air-defense system." According to a Feb. 29 report from the Associated Press (AP), however, at times the Iraqis have fired back and insisted that civilian targets were bombed. The U.S. media have generally cooperated with the administration with a virtual blackout of any news coverage of the bombing. The only notable investigative reporting on this subject in the capitalist media has been by Colum Lynch of *The Washington Post* (Feb. 20).

Lynch found that U.S. corporations are making under-the-table commercial agreements with Saddam Hussein's regime to help partially reconstruct Iraq's oil infrastructure, which has been demolished by years of economic sanctions and "almost daily" U.S. and British bombing. This is "legal" under the U.N. "oil for food" program, an ostensibly "humanitarian exemption from the U.N. trade embargo imposed on Iraq after [its] 1990 invasion of Kuwait." But the U.S. government does not want to advertise this trade with a "rogue" state, and apparently the U.N. has agreed to cover for them. Thus, according to Lynch, the U.N. "oil for food" Web site was taken offline when the U.N. found learned that *The Washington Post* was using it to track down American firms that buy Iraqi oil through foreign subsidiaries.

Lynch identified and described several of

these U.S. corporations, including "such petroleum industry giants as Halliburton, the world's largest oil field service company; Schlumberger, the second largest oil field servicer; the Fisher-Rosemount unit of Emerson Electric Co. in St. Louis; the Hamilton Sundstrand unit of United Technologies in Windsor Locks, Conn.; and Baker Hughes Inc. of Houston."

It is interesting to note that when John M. Deutch, who was CIA director during the Gulf War, is now on the board of directors of Schlumberger. Halliburton's CEO is none other Richard B. Cheney, who was secretary of defense during the Bush administration! It seems that this type of duplicity is not limited to the Clinton administration, but part of a larger trend within America's capitalist class.

Using State Department figures, Lynch also found that U.S. corporations are officially on record as exporting "about \$15 million of oil-related spare parts and \$400 million of food, medicine and water treatment equipment to Iraq...." But the actual amount of oil production equipment and spare parts American companies sell to Iraq is substantially higher when adding in what is sold via foreign subsidiaries under the auspices of the U.N. "oil for food" program. A Fisher-Rosemount spokesperson claimed that both "the Treasury Department and a U.N. Security Council sanctions committee" authorized this arrangement.

Nevertheless, the U.S. government has officially blocked an estimated \$1.5 billion in such contracts, according to Lynch. Some of these U.S. corporations would prefer the convenience of directly dealing with Iraq, as opposed to channeling these transactions through their foreign subsidiaries. Thus it was not too surprising when the AP reported that the Clinton administration had vehemently opposed any easing of the sanctions, but recently relented and decided on "easing restrictions on sending Iraq industrial equipment to improve its dilapidated

oil industry and other facilities." (March 1)

Moreover, Lynch reported that American capitalists have used foreign intermediaries to purchase Iraqi crude oil and that an estimated "700,000 of the 2 million barrels of oil exported daily by Iraq" ends up in the United States.

This entire scenario seems to be totally bizarre, without rhyme or reason. However a statement by Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz helps solve the puzzle. According to the AP, he concluded that "the United States will try hard not to let Iraq have free access to its oil riches. 'The industrial-military complex in the United States will not leave alone an independent country like Iraq with such huge reserves.'"

How is America's capitalist state trying to keep Iraq from controlling its oil resources and from exporting as much oil to wherever it chooses?

First, the "no fly" zones in northern and southern Iraq, which U.S. and British military forces have prevented Iraq from controlling, just happen to be where the oil deposits are located. This is also where U.S. bombs are falling. The targets have frequently been oil pipelines, pipeline control stations, pumping stations and related facilities. This has cut oil exports, even those specifically authorized by the U.N. "oil for food" program, as reported by the Iraq Action Coalition. (Iraqaction.org/nofly.html)

Second, the United States has admitted that U.S. naval forces are stationed in the Persian Gulf to prevent Iraq from exporting oil in violation of the embargo. But such enforcement is selective. For example, on Feb. 10, the AP reported that recently the U.S. Navy interdicted a Russian tanker smuggling oil out of Iraq. However, Iraq claims that the United States allows oil smuggling to Turkey through northern Iraq's northern "no fly" zone. This permits Iraqi oil to reach Turkey, a U.S. client state, whenever it happens to serve U.S. purposes.

(Continued on page 7)

LNS

... AFL-CIO Jockeys

(Continued from page 1)

The federation went so far in its attacks on undocumented workers as to throw its weight behind proposals to increase funding for the INS and to establish a national worker identification system. That would have been a huge step toward the establishment of a repressive internal passport system and could have laid the basis for the total regimentation of labor.

In taking its new stance on immigration, undocumented workers and the INS, none of the above nefarious AFL-CIO history was mentioned. No apologies were offered to the U.S. working class or the working classes of the world.

In fact, the language of the resolution hints that the federation really hasn't changed its spots. It wants a change but only because, after years of decline, it needs new members so badly that it's willing to go after the undocumented workers it once despised and

attacked. It wants a change, but one managed by and subservient to capitalist interests. "Labor and business," reads one provision of the resolution, "should work together to design cooperative mechanisms that allow law-abiding employers to satisfy legitimate needs for new workers in a timely manner without compromising the rights and liberties of workers already here." "Labor and business," another provision reads, "should cooperate to undertake expanded efforts to educate and train American workers in order to upgrade their skill levels in ways that enhance our shared economic prosperity."

But under capitalism, law-abiding capitalists compromise workers' rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness every day. Under capitalism there is no "shared economic prosperity"—prosperity is for the capitalist class and increasing economic

insecurity, poverty and misery is for the working class.

Workers, immigrant and resident, would be far better served by a unionism that fought its battles in keeping with what Daniel De Leon expressed when he wrote, "Between the working class and the capitalist class, there is an irrepressible conflict, a class struggle for life. No glib-tongued politician can vault over it, no capitalist professor or official statistician can argue it away; no capitalist parson can veil it; no labor faker can straddle it; no 'reform' architect can bridge it over. It crops up in all manner of ways...in ways that disconcert all the plans and all the schemes of those who would deny or ignore it. It is a struggle that will not down, and must be ended only by either the total subjugation of the working class or the abolition of the capitalist class."

—K.B.

... Alaska Air Victims Sacrificed

(Continued from page 1)

workers. Its California operation fell from 53,000 employees in 1989 to fewer than 13,000 in 1995, while it struggled to fill orders for MD-80s and MD-90s and "even geared up to produce two new airplanes: the commercial MD-11 and the military C-17 cargo plane." This did not prevent McDonnell Douglas supervisors from exhorting workers to improve their work since "consequences for failure are heavy fines, and in the extreme, loss of our pro-

duction certificate."

The *Los Angeles Times* report is not a search for the truth. It tries to fix the blame for faulty work on the workers themselves—typical of the whole tendency within bourgeois society to blame those who are already victimized.

What is apparent from this is that of an aircraft manufacturer that tried to maintain a competitive stance by cost-cutting measures that encroached on safety standards, including a speed up in

production. Whatever recalcitrant attitude that may have emerged among workers is no different than the hostility galley slaves of old harbored for their overseers as they laid on more lashes to increase the pace of rowing.

Meanwhile, the aircraft disaster graphically refutes the solemn chant that capitalist competition begets quality. This is socialism's turf, for only a society rooted in production for use, not profit, can deliver on that issue.

... Death of Amadou Diallo

(Continued from page 3)

and frisked dozens of times, for no other reason than the color of their skin.

Was Amadou Diallo initially deemed a suspicious character because of his race? To the thousands who have demonstrated and protested after his death and since the acquittal of his killers, the answer is obvious. Do Mayor Giuliani and Commissioner Safir care, in their rush to lower the crime statistics, that they are loosing a Gestapo on the citizenry? Must ordinary human beings fear the police force as much or more than they do the criminal element?

Instances of this sort are of such frequent occurrence that such questions answer themselves. But there is more to it than that, and the protests and demonstrations make clear that those who have gotten that far in their thinking have not gotten to the heart of the question.

What are the police? What is their social function? Whose interests do they serve?

The idea that the police provide a service without which society might fall into chaos is only partially correct. The police are an armed wing of the political state. It does not matter what state or whether it is "democratic" or despotic. All political states—from America to Zambia—have and make use of police. The state is by definition despotic. It is an institution of class rule, of the domination

of one social class over another. Its primary function is to maintain order. But what constitutes order is a reflection of the interests of those most concerned with maintaining it. The order in question is the social order, the status quo, the way things are, which are merely euphemisms for capitalist rule. The order that the capitalist ruling class wants maintained is the order that keeps them in power, and that implies the use of force and of maintaining the agencies and institutions needed to apply that force when the social order is threatened.

Amadou Diallo was no threat to the capitalist order of things. He was no threat to his neighbors, no rapist. He wasn't even a threat to himself, a berserk, a potential suicide. But even if he were one or all of those things, as thousands are, no rational order of things would deal with those human afflictions by means of armed force. Anti-social behavior denotes emotional abnormalities or mental illness. These are not problems for armed squads of roaming police to contend with. They are problems the nature of which suggests that they can only be dealt with by workers trained in dealing with emotional or mental disorders and other manifestations of aberrant behavior that pose a threat to their victims or to those who come in contact with them.

Capitalism cannot deal with these problems. Indeed, capitalism

is the source of many of them and can no more eliminate these social byproducts of its existence than a leopard can change its spots.

Amadou Diallo was no threat to order, to his neighbors or to himself; but the capitalist order of things is a constant threat to all of us. Demonstrations, calls for better training or closer supervision of police only provide politicians, police chiefs and other functionaries of the state an opportunity to deflect righteous indignation and anger until the next recurrence. That is no solution to the problem. The solution is to abolish the conditions that make such incidents possible and without which they would become impossible.



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activities

Activities notices must be received by the Monday preceding the third Wednesday of the month.

OHIO North Royalton

Social—Sections Akron and Cleveland will hold a social on Sunday, April 9, beginning at 1:30 p.m. at the Burns' residence, 9626 York Rd., North Royalton. Refreshments will be served. The public is invited. For more information please call 440-237-7933.

May Day Celebration—All are welcome to attend Sections Akron and Cleveland's May Day celebration on Sunday, May 7, at the Burns' residence, 9626 York Rd., North Royalton. Begins at 1:30 p.m. Refreshments will be

served. For more information please call 440-237-7933.

OREGON Portland

Discussion Meetings—Section Portland holds discussion meetings every second Saturday of the month. Meetings are usually held at the Central Library, but the exact time varies. For more information please call Sid at 503-226-2881. The general public is invited.

WISCONSIN

Discussion Meeting—Section Milwaukee will conduct a discussion meeting on Sunday, April 9, from 2–4 p.m., at the Milwaukee Public Central Library, first floor meeting room, 814 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee.



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Engineers, Technical Workers Strike Boeing

By Nathan Karp

On Feb. 9, 19,000 engineers and technical workers struck the Boeing Co. (Boeing estimates the number at 17,000.) The negotiations that then ensued between the company and the union, the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA), broke down one day after the company made what it has since called its last, best offer. The strikers were demanding pay raises and bonuses like those received by the company's 44,000 production workers. Those production workers, who belong to the Machinists union, the largest union at the Boeing Co., had received during their last contract negotiations a 10 percent signing bonus. That has become one of the major demands of the current strikers.

The SPEEA claims to represent some 22,000 Boeing engineers and technical workers. Most of them are from Boeing plants in the state of Washington. The rest are scattered through Boeing plants in California, Florida,

Kansas, Oregon, Texas and Utah. About 63 percent of those workers are reported to be dues-paying members of the union.

On March 4, the company suddenly announced that it had decided to put into effect selected provisions of its Feb. 26 proposal. Alan Mulally, president of the Boeing Commercial Airplane Group, made the announcement at a news conference, saying, "Now it's time to get back to work and start focusing on our customers." And he added, "We are implementing the last, best offer we made to our team because it's time to move forward." But Tom McCarty, a member of the workers' negotiating team, bluntly declared, "We're not coming back until they sit down at the table with us and negotiate this contract."

Under the provisions being implemented by the company, the technical workers would get wage increases equal to a guaranteed minimum of 2 percent. In addition, a pool equal to a 3 percent increase has been set aside which

would "be doled out selectively."

The engineers would not be guaranteed any increase the first year. However, there would be what are designated "performance-based raises" that would be paid from a special fund, as would one percent raises for engineers about to be promoted.

Other provisions of the company's Feb. 26 offer will not be implemented—at least not at this time. Those provisions include a proposal to reduce life insurance benefits and another to make changes in the health insurance setup.

The union will file an unfair labor practice charge against the company with the National Labor Relations Board, said Phyllis Rogers, SPEEA's general counsel. "We believe it's [Boeing's unilateral action] a move on Boeing's part to try and get employees to cross the picket line and we believe it's going to be monumentally unsuccessful."

Incidentally, in the past these striking professionals did not

(Continued on page 8)

... Bombing Iraq

(Continued from page 5)

And, of course, the U.S. Navy will not stop oil shipments from Iraq by U.S. firms through their foreign subsidiaries.

Saddam Hussein has reportedly made billions of dollars from oil smuggling operations which slip through the cracks. As long as he is relegated to the position of black market dealer and uses the profits to enrich himself, as opposed to making an all-out effort to develop his country's infrastructure, and as long as his regime is weakened and destabilized with constant air assaults and sanctions, he is no grave threat to the United States. In other words, he is in no position to control international oil markets or even to exercise control over much of the oil resources, production and transport within his own country.

If the Clinton administration or its successor does decide to stop blocking an end to the embargo, the United States will be in a strong bargaining position. Lynch also reported that Iraq is largely

dependent on U.S. firms for oil spare parts, since "the equipment...was originally made in America." Lynch also quoted the president of the Petroleum Industry Research Foundation as saying, "The U.S. spare parts industry is too dominant to ignore." Thus as U.S. bombs smash much of Iraq's oil infrastructure, Iraq will be forced to seek further U.S. assistance to rebuild it and to eventually settle on terms which are favorable to American capitalists.

Putting all the pieces together, it is clear why the Clinton administration wants to hide the truth about the U.S. air war against Iraq. Control of international markets and raw materials does not sound as noble as "humanitarian intervention," "fighting for democracy in the New World Order" or "keeping weapons of mass destruction out of the hands of a rogue state." And when all else fails, cover up, stonewall and repeat, "We hit air defenses and other military targets only."

Homeless Victimized

Thank you for this article ["Homeless Victimized by Brutalized Youth," February] and for all the work you do to bring us the news that the corporate media ignores. The situation concerning the homeless and violence in Denver is horrible. Little is done more than tongue-clicking, promises no one believes and the excuse that the homeless are difficult to protect. Now, if this were a celebrity killing or if one of Denver's new millionaires were to be murdered, the whole thing would be different. There is evidence reported that the killings could be the work of college students seeking a thrill. Your article is right on the nose.

Bill Mahan
Alamosa, Colo.

Workers Dehumanized

Conservatives and libertarians state that a government concerned about the economic welfare of its people is not a worthy government. They say that it violates freedom, that it uses the government illegitimately to interfere with the invisible hand of the marketplace. Well, what also is a force, as powerful as any government, is capitalism's giant corporations where one worker, or even groups of workers, have little power.

Conservatives pretend in their fairy tale land that the worker or small union has just as much freedom or leverage as the corporate giant, which is an utter myth. Corporations dehumanize the workers by reducing them into wealth-producing appendages to the machine, not liberate them. So-called liber-

tarianism means the liberation of corporations from regulation and taxation. It would only help the corporations. It would do nothing for the working class.

Jerome McCollom
Milwaukee, Wis.

Greetings!

God, I'm glad the SLP is still out there. I must admit, you've never left my heart. I did some work for the SLP in my teens and early twenties, but then got married and figured that normal, married Americans had to be either Democrats or Republicans. Well, I miss *The People*. I miss your perspective on what really matters. While I'm not one to subscribe to Marxism, De Leonism nor any -ism, I think you have the best idea of how this country should be run. Hell, every one of my friends has known me as a Socialist. It's time I once again got in touch with the original, and most sensible, socialist party in the U.S.A.!

Emmett Hoops
Ticonderoga, N.Y.

SLP Web Site

The Socialist Labor Party has an extremely interesting and inspiring Web site. Thank you. I am very impressed with the history, accomplishments and goals of the SLP. It is incredible that the first American socialist party is still functioning and still so vital.

I am carefully considering joining the SLP...I want to make sure that if I do decide to join that it will be to make a difference. I do feel that this party is the only one that stands for what I've always believed in. I

am not in a union, that is due to my occupation and where I live. Will this present a problem upon seeking membership into the SLP? I hope to hear from you and thanks again for leading the fight.

Sean
via e-mail

Being or not being a rank-and-file member of a procapitalist trade union presents no barrier to membership in the SLP, but understanding the difference between procapitalist trade unionism and Socialist Industrial Unionism, and why the SLP rejects the former and embraces the latter, is essential. Prospective applicants for membership in the SLP are encouraged to read all of the party's literature on the union question, starting with Daniel De Leon's Socialist Landmarks and Two Pages From Roman History down to and including the SLP's handbook on Intervention and Union Work.

Anyone who joins the SLP automatically makes a difference. How much and what sort of difference they make is then up to them. Only by choosing not to join do friends and supporters of the party minimize the positive and constructive difference they might otherwise make.

—Editor

The People welcomes your letters and comments. Letters intended for publication should be brief (500 words or less) and on subjects of interest to our readers; longer letters may be shortened or not used. Anonymous letters are not printed, but names and addresses are withheld upon request. Write to The People, P.O. Box 218, Mountain View, CA 94042-0218, e-mail thepeople@igc.org, or fax (650) 938-8392.

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Crisis in the Taiwan Straits

By Diane Secor

For the second time in four years, mainland China and the United States are at loggerheads over the future of Taiwan.

In February, China issued a "white paper" in which it warned Taiwan to abandon any thought it might have of declaring itself an independent state. It added that Taiwan could not expect to prolong negotiations on reunification indefinitely, and that it still considered military force as an option for bringing reunification about.

China issued its threatening "white paper" in response to some election campaign rhetoric by candidates in Taiwan's upcoming presidential elections. Four years ago, during Taiwan's only other presidential election campaign since 1949, the "People's Republic" lobbed some missiles into the Taiwan Straits that separate the island from the mainland, and the United States sent in a fleet of warships as a warning to Beijing.

This year's offending presidential candidates put a cap on their campaign sloganeering after Beijing issued its "white paper," and the Clinton administration has warned China to keep its hands off Taiwan.

In spite of the heated dialogue sparked by Taiwan's version of sound-bite politicking, the quarrelsome threesome of China, Taiwan and the United States are less likely to lose their heads and do something rash than all the hissing and spitting of recent weeks might suggest. China is not Grenada or some other pip-squeak for the bully with the big bomb to simply push around. For its part, and despite its posture of impatience, China can bide its time where reunification is concerned. Taiwan's ruling class is incapable of resisting the lure of profits to be made by doing business with its "ideological foe" across the straits, despite apparently toothless efforts by the island's ruling Nationalist Party to keep the growing economic integration within bounds. Apart from that, China has some potentially explosive domestic problems to keep a finger on, not the least being an army of unemployed larger than the populations of some small countries and the prospect of substantial additions to its jobless count as it modernizes its industries with labor-displacing technology.

For the present, at least, the ruling classes of China, Taiwan and the United States have their hands so deeply into each others' pockets that pulling them out for a fight would be madness—not madness in the usual sense of making war to further one's own material interests, but just the opposite. There is too much to lose and nothing to gain by igniting a spark just now, though the scene is clearly being set for some such conflict sometime in the future.

The complex web of material interests that bind the ruling classes of China and Taiwan together at present were summed up on Feb. 28 in a *San Jose Mercury News* article by Michael Dorgan. Dorgan pointed out how mainland China and Taiwan's ruling-class interests are intertwined for mutual benefit:

"Despite such tensions, officials in both Taipei and Beijing are well aware of the devastating economic consequences of a military conflict.

"With just 22 million people and few natural resources, Taiwan needs China's cheap labor, abundant resources and huge domestic market. China needs Taiwan's capital, technology and management know-how."

Taiwan's economic stake in mainland China has grown dramatically, which



Dorgan summed up in five brief paragraphs:

"In the 20 years since Taiwan and the mainland resumed trading, trade volume has grown by a stunning average of 36 percent per year, according to China's customs data.

"Last year, according to the mainland's figures, trade between the two reached \$23 billion, up 14.5 percent from the previous year.

"No less impressive is the pace of investment, though it has flowed in only one direction because the Taiwan government bans mainland investment on the island.

"Precise figures for Taiwanese investment in the mainland are not available, because trade mostly is routed through Hong Kong and other places. But 43,000 Taiwan-funded projects are registered on the mainland, according to China's Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation.

"By its tally, those projects represent \$43.59 billion in pledged investment, about \$24 billion of which already has been spent. That greatly exceeds the amount Taiwan has invested in any other country."

In the port of Xiamen, for example, the Xiang Lu Fibers Co. has established a synthetic fibers production facility and is eager to expand its investments.

"Tan Yi Bing, a manager at the predominantly Taiwanese-owned Xiang Lu Fibers Co. in Xiamen, explained why.

"The Xiang Lu plant, built in 1995 for \$315 million, has 1,876 employees. The typical starting salary is about \$122 per month, which Tan said is one-fourth of what the company would pay had it built across the strait in Taiwan.

"Cheap labor is not the only reason Xiang Lu is in China. By producing its synthetic fibers on the mainland, it can distribute them there without having to pay large import taxes that would make its products less competitive in what is potentially the world's biggest consumer market.

"The environment for investment is very satisfying in Xiamen for this kind of enterprise," Tan said, adding that Xiang Lu's owners plan to build a \$650 million plant nearby to manufacture the chemical compounds from which polyester fibers are made.

Taiwan's economy is becoming more dependent on these numerous mainland-Taiwan joint ventures as smaller Taiwan-based companies as well as larger ones are lured by these same advantages.

In addition to generously putting an abundance of cheap labor at the disposal of capitalists from Taiwan, the "People's Republic" has thrown in other advantages to sweeten such deals. According to *China Daily*, mainland officials have issued edicts

lowering "processing and license fees," granting "preferential policies on bank loans and taxation," and even establishing special schools for the "children of Taiwan investors." The "People's Republic" has also made it clear that "China's Criminal Law...guarantee[s] Taiwan investors' safety." It is also understood that the power of the state will protect the Taiwan financial interests. (Jan. 11)

Therefore if this "communist" regime collapsed, Taiwan's capitalist class would suffer huge losses. And conversely, if Taiwan were to fall, the "People's Republic" would suffer a major setback in its transition to a "free market" economy and could conceivably fall apart at the seams. Furthermore, Dorgan quoted a Taiwan capitalist as saying that if both the "People's Republic" and Taiwan were to "join the World Trade Organization" both stood to benefit since, "in theory at least," both would be forced "to reduce tariffs and eliminate many other trade barriers."

Then why would the "People's Republic" and Taiwan want to jeopardize these relations? In international ruling-class relations there are no eternal allies or eternal enemies. This is just another "marriage of convenience," as Dorgan put it. As more countries, such as China, industrialize and move toward "market" economies, the global competition for markets, raw materials and cheap labor heats up. Since Taiwan had a head start, it often has the advantage over China in raw economic power and cold cash.

The United States has billions of dollars invested with the "People's Republic" and Taiwan. The Clinton administration, like its predecessors, and most likely its successor, does not want to sacrifice one for the other and has tried to walk a narrow tightrope between the them. The dangers of burning a candle at both ends are clear. Thus it seems that many U.S. capitalists and the U.S. capitalist state would benefit if the "People's Republic" and Taiwan reached some type of accommodation or even moved toward reunification. While this may be true, the situation is far more complex. Some U.S. capitalists, especially in the arms industry, are making huge profits from keeping China and Taiwan divided. According to a Mother Jones Wire, often under the auspices of the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act arms sales to Taiwan have been a bonanza for U.S. corporations such as Lockheed Martin, Boeing and Raytheon.

Moreover, the U.S. arms industry is vigorously promoting the inclusion of Taiwan in the TMD (Theater Missile Defense), an antimissile defense system, according to the Center for Nonproliferation Studies. The potential for profits from TMD and

related enterprises is enormous. But these arms sales to Taiwan, TMD in particular, has strained overall Sino-U.S. relations. Consequently, the U.S. capitalist state is engaged in another juggling act, how to avoid losing huge American investments in the "People's Republic" while protecting the interests of the U.S. arms industry.

As the ruling classes of the United States, China and Taiwan alternately wheel, deal and threaten each other when their material interests are at risk they are not only endangering their own lives. As nuclear powers go eyeball-to-eyeball waiting for the other side to blink, they hold the entire world hostage.

... Boeing

(Continued from page 7)

think of themselves as proletarian partners of the production workers. But, as Harley Shaiken, "a labor specialist" at the University of California at Berkeley, puts it, "This strike underscores...[that] there are many professionals who are feeling that they are the proletariat of the information age."

Before the current strike, the SPEEA had never engaged in any such economic struggle. In fact, in its 56-year existence its only action was a one-day walkout in 1992. However, there has been a growing resentment among the professional and technical workers at the company's callous treatment of them in recent years. The "record expansion" seemed to be passing them by. They resented not only not being offered the 10 percent signing bonus, but also the swollen bonuses being collected by the company's top executives. Some months ago, the society apparently began to think of itself as a "real" union, one like the existing procapitalist unions, and affiliated itself with the AFL-CIO. Before the current strike, the SPEEA did not even have a strike fund and only recently took steps to set one up. Now they have about \$160,000 and promises of financial aid from John J. Sweeney, president of the AFL-CIO. Typically, however, the Machinists and other unions at Boeing are prohibited by their contracts with the company from work stoppages in support of the society's strike.

At present, the strike has become bitter and could go on for sometime. Boeing is eager to settle, but on its terms. Its production is already behind schedule, and engineers and other professionals are still essential to the aerospace industry.

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