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## INDIA

### Privatizing Scheme Sparks Power Strike

In January, nearly 100,000 workers in India staged an 11-day strike in protest of government plans to privatize the country's electrical power generating industry. When the strike in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh threatened to spread to five other northern states, the government invoked several "national security" laws to send in the army, fire 500 workers and have 5,000 arrested.

While the government has no thought of abandoning its plans to sell off India's power industry, it was sufficiently alarmed by the strike and the extent of the sympathy and support it received to test the gullibility of Indian workers by promising to give the matter additional thought. It also restored the jobs of at least some of the workers it had fired and released the POWs of the class struggle it had jailed. In response, leaders of the unions involved said that the government had best come to the right conclusion unless it wants to see the strikes resume, and worse.

What the eventual outcome will be has yet to be seen. In all probability, the government will spend its time developing better strategies to deal with the widespread opposition to privatization. Regardless of how the conflict eventually unfolds, the strike and the draconian methods the Indian government used to deal with it underscore two points that workers everywhere should take to heart.

The first is that so-called national security laws—laws such as India's "National Security Act," "Maintenance of Internal Security Act" and "Essential Services Maintenance Act," all of which were called into play during the strike—are really antilabor laws. They are measures to invoke whenever ruling-class interests seem sufficiently threatened to risk stripping the velvet glove from the iron fist of bourgeois "democracy." Every political state has them—the United States included.

The second is that the "free labor" system is not a system of free labor. When workers are not free to withhold their labor without being fired, arrested or threatened by the uniformed thugs of the political state their "freedom" is only a caricature, a mockery and an insult. The United States has that, too.

## Record 'Expansion' Leaves Wages Behind

The entire fraternity of capitalist defenders—its politicians, economics professors, its self-proclaimed financial experts and particularly its professional economists, media columnists and commentators—could hardly restrain their glee and enthusiasm as they reported that February was the 107th month of the "expansion," which thereby becomes the longest in capitalism's history.

During the past five years, the capitalist economy was said to have grown at an annual rate of 4.2 percent. The official unemployment figure was down to 4.1 percent, the lowest rate in 30 years. The high annual growth rate was credited with having raised wages for all workers, although it was granted that when adjusted for inflation those raises did not even bring wages back up to 1970s levels. The real increases during the expansion were said to be in "family income." That, in turn, was said to be due, in part, to the alleged shortages in the labor market, which induced more family members to seek and get jobs and, in part, to other family members who already had jobs working more hours. As a result, while those two factors admittedly made family life "more stressful," as some of the media put it, it added an estimated average of \$1,760 a year to the median family income in 1998.

However, the following from the *San Jose Mercury News* of Jan. 19 gives a more realistic breakdown of the increased family income gained by work-

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ers during the expansion. "Nationwide, the poorest fifth of families posted an average \$103, or 0.8 percent, gain in family income, which excluded non-cash subsidies such as food stamps but did include all government grants and the Earned Income Tax Credit. The middle group saw its average household income rise \$779, or 1.7 percent, while the top fifth of society saw its average family income rise \$17,867, or 14.9 percent."

Capitalist economists offer a variety of explanations for what *The New York Times* of Jan. 19 called "the national stagnation of wages at the low- and middle-income levels." Among

them are the decline of the unions; the general decline in manufacturing; the insecurity among many workers as a result of widespread downsizing; the rapid development of automated and computerized labor-saving equipment, etc. As the *Times* editorialized last July 9: "America's current economic expansion, while broad, has produced inequality not seen since the Depression. From 1980 to 1995, the earnings of those at the bottom fell by more than 25 percent in real terms, and many also worked less and lost benefits such as employer-paid health insurance. Their lot has improved slightly

(Continued on page 7)

## Boom in Prison Building Belies Prosperity Boast

*"Where there is no economic freedom, all else is wanting, and men and women, the generators of and birth givers to future generations, will be more and more degraded. Capitalism is fast making of this country a penitentiary, and of its people a herd of characterless beings."*

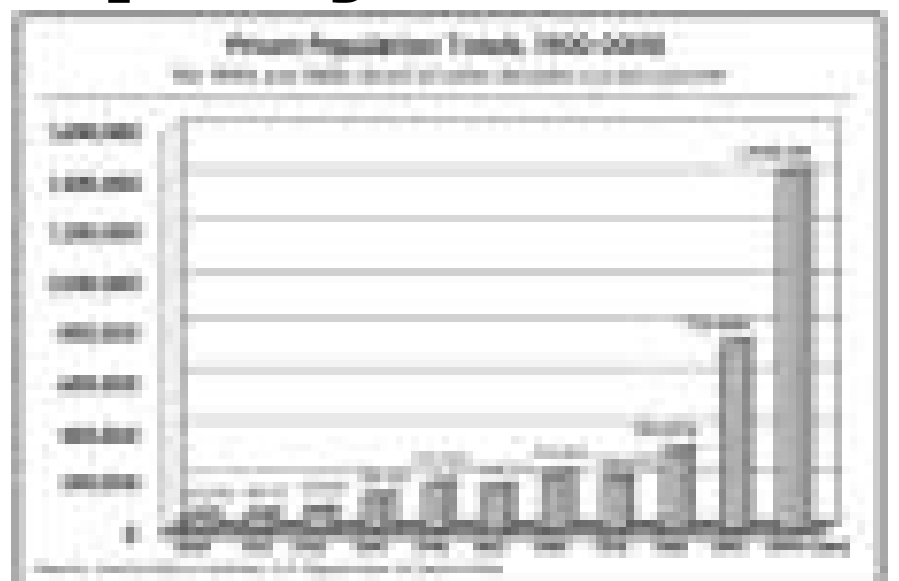
—Daniel De Leon (1895)

By Ken Boettcher

The glowing terms used in most media reports to describe the U.S. economy and its recent rate of growth foster the belief it is dynamic, robust and healthy. The implication is that this economic growth is good for all. Pundits and politicians chime in with ringing endorsements of capitalism as the best of all possible systems.

Many of the social and economic realities of life for the working-class majority under capitalism debunk this view—but perhaps none so chillingly as the latest figures on the phenomenal growth of the U.S. prison population over the past decade.

Would any sane person describe as healthy a society that has only 5 percent of the world's population, but fully a quarter of its prison population? The Justice Policy Institute (JPI), a project of the nonprofit Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, included those figures—and much more—in a recent report entitled "The Punish-



ing Decade: Prison and Jail Estimates at the Millennium."

According to the JPI's estimates, "...The U.S. now has the world's largest incarcerated population, and highest incarceration rate." The JPI estimates that by the end of this year there will be 2,073,969 prisoners in the United States. Other salient facts highlighted in the JPI's report:

- "The 688,207 prisoners added to America's institutions during the 1990s is 61 percent higher than the number of prisoners added during the 1980s, and is nearly 30 times as many as the average number added during the five

decades before 1970 in which the incarcerated population increased."

- "Our incarceration rate plays such a distorting role in the labor market, one study found that the U.S. unemployment rate would be 2 percent higher if prisoners and jail inmates were counted."

- No direct correlation exists between incarceration and crime rates. Some states with higher rates of imprisonment actually had higher rates of crime than other states with lower rates of imprisonment.

- About 1.2 million of the 2 million

(Continued on page 7)

# Arms Jobs Unsafe Despite Capitalism's Instability

By B.B.

In its unending quest for greater profits, the Lockheed Martin Corp. has eliminated 7,400 workers from its national payroll since last fall. The company employs 11,000 workers in Fort Worth alone, but 800 of those jobs are among the latest to be eliminated.

For those workers whose jobs have been lost, news of the lowest unemployment rate in decades now being trumpeted in the media will come as small comfort. A diminished market is cited as justification for the layoffs. Demand for F-16s and C-130J transports has declined, commercial satellite demand is slumped and failed rocket launches have all impacted sales. The layoffs are anticipated to produce annual "savings" of \$160 million to \$175 million.

Perhaps more to the point, the layoffs are also part of the continuing jockeying for position among the few military aircraft giants. The Lockheed Corp. and the Martin Marietta Corp., after having merged in 1995, absorbed 20 other competitors. "They wanted to force the integration of the [merged] sectors," according to a Booz-Allen & Hamilton consultant. "Now they're

positioning for the next 10 years," he added.

Such "positioning" is done routinely, oblivious to the impoverishment and hardships forced upon the workers—ever pawns to be expended with impunity under this system. Hence, while the company was in a firing mood they also decided to get rid of 400 positions within their space division located in Sunnyvale, Calif., Denver and New Orleans.

U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchinson (R-Tex.), ever vigilant of the threat of diminished votes from workers, offered the hope that the 800 jobs lost at Lockheed Martin in Fort Worth will be restored. The company is consolidating its military aviation division to that city, leading her to believe that will stimulate "Fort Worth [as] the spot where jobs gravitate...."

This effect depends largely upon continued world instability, international crises and/or the success of the military-industrial complex postulating threats to American capitalism's global domination and convincing their congressional delegates accordingly. All are likely, since capitalism engenders international conflict in protecting and enlarging its global markets.

This is part of the abominable "harmony" of ruin that pervades the capitalist system and of which Lockheed Martin offers an example. The contraption's normal operations generate international conflict. This in turn begets the need for armaments production. Their ensuing usage begets the need for further development and replacement.

One would think that this process offers the perfect job-generating mechanism. Think again. Lockheed Martin is no less keen to take advantage of labor-displacing technologies and all of the other devices that capital employs to eliminate labor and increase profits. Hence, the jobs Sen. Hutchinson anticipates being restored for the purpose of increasing the ability to visit mass destruction upon people, places and things are not at all assured.

A rational society will have its needs and its work; capitalism has its jobs. Not only do the jobs capitalism offers squander value—military hardware being the most prominent example—but the ever receding tide of jobs, the instability of job tenure and diminishing wages make the system more and more untenable.

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years ago

## Hollow Victory for Farah Workers

(Weekly People, March 8, 1975)

Another example of just how hollow pro-capitalist union organizing "victories" can be for workers comes from San Antonio, Tex., where the Farah Manufacturing Co. recently announced the closing of two plants that would result in 1,200 workers losing their jobs. They join 300 other Farah workers who have been laid off since last November.

A year ago, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America was congratulating itself because Willie Farah had finally agreed to sign a contract with the union, ending a bitter 21-month strike by about 2,000 clothing workers in San Antonio and El Paso. AFL-CIO President George Meany said he thought the settlement could provide a "tremendous impetus" to efforts to unionize other clothing manufacturing firms in the Southwest.

What the ACWA considered a "victory" quickly developed into a grim disappointment for the workers, who had borne many hardships during the long strike. Some of them expressed their resentment over the "paternalistic" manner in which the ACWA conducted meetings during the strike. But the bitterest pill to swallow for those who survived for months on meager strike benefits of \$35 a week was the wage settlement in the contract.

The contract called for a wage increase of 80 cents an hour, only 20 cents more than Farah would have had to pay under the 1974 minimum-wage law. As *Fortune* magazine was to put it, "The minimum-wage law passed this year would by itself have required a 60 cent raise for the lowest paid workers."

When the company signed on with the ACWA last year it employed about 5,500 workers. Now nearly a third have been laid off. No one has yet suggested that Willie Farah, who used police dogs to intimidate strikers, was dismissing employees in an effort to "weed out" workers who were active during the strike.

The two plants Farah has ordered closed were also shut down during the strike and weren't reopened until May and July of last year, months after a settlement was reached. In fact, the strike began at one of those plants in May 1972 when 500 workers walked off the job. They were later joined by 1,500 workers from Farah plants in El Paso.

The company spokesman who announced the decision to close the two San Antonio plants again claimed it was because of "the declining economic situation." Farah himself claims to have lost \$4.9 million in recent months despite increased sales for his company's products.

Regardless of what prompted Farah to close the plants, many of his workers are worse off now than before they received the "benefits" of ACWA unionism.

# Expressway Gridlock And Other Absurdities

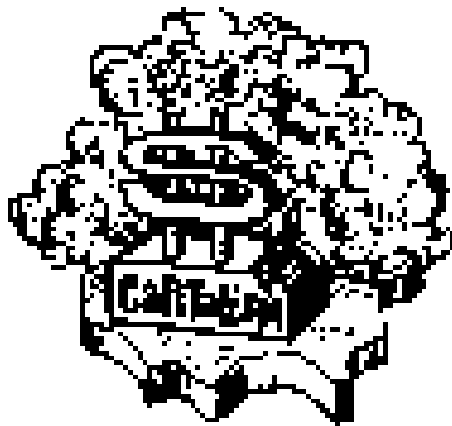
By B.B.

There is no invention that personifies the capitalist system more than the private automobile. It is wasteful of natural resources. It is a major source of environmental pollution. It promotes suburban sprawl, fragments social life and begets antisocial attitudes. It creates false concepts of property ownership and psychological illusions of power and domination. It is immensely profitable to practically the entire capitalist class. Hence, it is the quintessential commodity of the system, a "holy of holies," not to be called into question.

In this spirit Alex Marshall of *The New York Times Magazine* (Jan. 23) reported on proposals to mitigate one of the proliferating invention's major contradictions: the inevitable expressway "gridlock" as opposed to the private automobile's faulty promise of the ease of wage slavery's mobility.

In San Diego electronic sensors installed at freeway entry ramps have been deployed to allow single occupant vehicles equipped with transponders to buy entry into underutilized HOV (high occupancy vehicle) lanes. The experiment, initially called "congestion pricing," used a pricing

range of from 50¢ to \$8 for the privilege of moving in the fast lanes. This was the subject of discrimination charges, so the name was changed to "value pricing" [!] under a federal pilot program in an effort to make it more palatable to the American driving public"—meaning, we suppose, the millions of workers who get trapped in the daily rush to work and the crush to get home again at night.



Another technological move afoot to make the private automobile compatible with its chaotic proliferation and indiscriminate use is the installation of roadway sensors, cameras and computers that report to navigationally equipped cars on weather, traffic, accidents and road conditions. In the political state's role of oiling the machinery of profitability, federal highway officials plan to have such a system in place by the year 2005. The analogy called forth by one official was that of the nations' air traffic whose volume has reputedly been doubled and tripled without additional new facilities.

The ultimate absurdity in irrational technological solutions to traffic congestion is to "allow the same large number of cars currently on the highway to move at much higher speeds" by letting integrated computers drive cars rather than their occupants. The proposal would permit cars to move in dedicated lanes at speeds of up to 120 miles an hour "mere inches apart from one another." A test of eight Buick Le Sabres was successfully performed with

the vehicles spaced a car's length from one another traveling at 60 miles per hour. Large rigs might be the first to be placed in so-called "smart" lanes traveling at speeds of 100 miles an hour.

The thrust of the latter would be to constitute private and commercial vehicles in train-like configurations but lacking the efficiency and benefits of passenger or freight trains. One is led to wonder why not promote efficient trains with vehicular availability between destinations. But rational speculation is not the point of current traffic engineering or technology, imprisoned as it is within the narrow prerogatives of capitalist profit making. In fact, it is not our point either, for that rests entirely in the hands of socialist society.

Indeed, a rational approach to the issues of transportation can only emerge under socialism grounded upon production for use and not profit. In that context the transportation industrial union component of the overall industrial union government will democratically arrive at recommendations for the reorganization of the whole transportation network in coordination with other affected industries and society as a whole. In that event the role of the private automobile, or as likely, the personal automobile, will find its rightful place as a socially beneficial invention of humankind.

## Stand Up & Be Counted

By Robert Bills

A brief but eloquent appeal by the National Secretary of the SLP delivered at a Paris Commune commemoration urging all those who accept the revolutionary program and principles of the SLP to join its ranks and lend their support in doing its work.

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## FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

# 'Remember the Ladies'

By B.G.

It is perhaps strange that no women's movement emerged from the American Revolution as it did only a few years later during the French Revolution. We know, of course, of the many American women on the home front who supported their Patriot husbands in their struggle for liberty. Some women were even more active, following along behind the army, cooking and washing for their soldier husbands and nursing the sick troops. Mrs. Mary Ludwig Hays, or "Molly Pitcher" as she was dubbed by the soldiers, did figure prominently in the Battle of Monmouth in 1778, carrying water to the troops and, when her husband fell—either wounded or exhausted—taking his place at the cannon, loading it throughout the battle. Years later, in 1822, "Molly Pitcher," now Mrs. McCauley and twice widowed and supporting herself by menial labor, was remembered and honored for her war service by the Pennsylvania legislature, which awarded her \$40 and an additional annuity of \$40 for life.

One looks in vain, however, for a woman's liberation movement, either during or after the war, despite the fact that no woman had the same rights as a man. Most American women had not made the connection between British subjection of its colonies and male subjection of women.

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There was therefore no movement for granting American women the same legal, political and social rights as males. Even the loophole in the New Jersey Constitution of 1776 that permitted women to vote was a benefit that lasted a mere 20 years.

There was, however, one prominent, well-read woman who keenly realized that the liberty for which Americans were fighting was incomplete, for it still left women under the traditional common-law suppression of males. Absent a women's movement in the country, Abigail Adams hoped to work through her revolutionary husband, John Adams, for improvement in women's condition. On March 31, 1776, she wrote to husband John, then a delegate to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia:

"...In the new code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation.

"That your sex are naturally tyrannical is a truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute; but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of master for the more tender and endearing one of friend. Why, then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity. Men of sense



Abigail Adams.

in all ages abhor those customs which treat us only as vassals of your sex."

John responded with amused condescension:

"As to your extraordinary code of laws, I cannot but laugh. We have been told that our struggle had loosened the bonds of government everywhere; that children and apprentices were disobedient; that schools and colleges were grown turbulent; that Indians slighted their guardians, and Negroes grew insolent to their mas-

ters. But your letter was the first intimation that another tribe, more numerous and powerful than all the rest, were grown discontented."

Abigail, seeing that her husband, revolutionary though he might be, had thoroughly internalized the common views of a woman's proper place, and not wishing to alienate him, replied firmly but gently:

"I cannot say that I think you are very generous to the ladies; for, whilst you are proclaiming peace and good will to men, emancipating all nations, you insist upon retaining an absolute power over wives. But you must remember that arbitrary power is like most other things which are very hard, very liable to be broken; and, notwithstanding all your wise laws and maxims, we have it in our power, not only to free ourselves, but to subdue our masters, and, without violence, throw both your natural and legal authority at our feet;—Charm by accepting, by submitting sway, Yet have our humor most when we obey."

The quoted lines are from Alexander Pope's "Of the Characters of Women," and were undoubtedly inserted to appease John and soften the blow of Abigail's radical views. During the period of Abigail Adams' life, the time was not ripe for a woman's rights movement. That time would not come until later in the 19th century when women in significant numbers began to participate in the abolition movement. They then made the connection between suppression of all sorts, whether chattel slavery or suppression of rights on account of gender. In 1848, at the Seneca Falls Convention, there at last emerged a movement, led by women and joined by numbers of sympathetic males, that harkened back to Abigail Adams' plea to "Remember the Ladies."

## FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

# Mary Wollstonecraft: Rebel

By B.G.

In looking down the long corridor of history, it becomes evident how lengthy the struggle has been for women seeking social, economic and political equality. Whenever the feminist movement reaches a peak, a new issue of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is published. It first appeared in England in 1792 and caused quite a sensation for its dramatic claim that true freedom meant the equality of both women and men. So popular did the book become that a second revised edition was issued later that same year. The London edition was soon followed by publication in Dublin, Paris and America. In the late 1860s, Susan B. Anthony serialized the book in her feminist newspaper *The Revolution*. During the first hundred years of its publication, four American and six English editions were published. In 1975, W.W. Norton and Co. issued the first annotated publication of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, based on the second London edition of 1792, which represented Wollstonecraft's revisions and most mature thoughts on the subject.

The 18th century was an age when women had few rights and little formal education. A married woman had no right to the property that she had held prior to marriage or that she had obtained after marriage. Whatever money or property she brought to marriage became her husband's property. Whatever she acquired after marriage also became her husband's. Save for basic reading, writing and ciphering, education on a par with male education was not thought to be a necessity for women, who were considered to be "the weaker sex"—flighty creatures with inferior mental capacities. The common practice



Mary Wollstonecraft.

in women's education was to train women in household duties and in how to please their husbands.

An Englishwoman, Mary Macaulay, had protested against such a frivolous view of women in her 1790 book, *Letters on Education*. Mary Wollstonecraft was profoundly influenced by this book, and she reviewed it in the November 1790 issue of the *Analytical*. Thereafter, she developed and expanded upon the views of Mrs. Macaulay in her *Vindication*, published two years later.

That women were inferior to men in bodily strength Wollstonecraft readily admitted. This, she said, was the law of na-

ture and could not be denied. But she objected strongly to the condescending view which male-dominated society took of women. She wanted women treated like rational creatures instead of being viewed as though they were in a state of perpetual childhood. Woman is endowed with as much reason as man is. It was her conviction that the woman who is strong and healthy in body and who exercises her mind will, in managing her family, be the better wife and mother and will become the friend of her husband rather than his humble dependent. A woman, married or single, should be allowed to develop her true potential according to her talents and her desires.

In her chapter taking issue with various writers who had sought to instruct women in life-long subservience to men, she aimed her most sustained criticism (15 pages) against Jean Jacques Rousseau and his *Emile or A Treatise on Education*. Although Rousseau was an Enlightenment thinker and an opponent of much of his contemporary society, he was in agreement with its views about women: The poor creatures had no minds and no means to advance beyond their vacuity. Their only role in society was to be of service to men, from cradle to the grave. Women's education, therefore, should always be in relation to men, to learn how to care for them in childhood and adulthood and to render their lives easy and agreeable. Without question Wollstonecraft considered this to be a degrading view of education.

In demanding justice for one-half the human race, Wollstonecraft believed that she was serving the whole human race. Equality in society would mean a fuller life for both men and women.

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## Two Lessons

Soon after it was crushed in the waning days of May 1871, Karl Marx described the Paris Commune as "the harbinger of a new society."

Although Marx's statement may seem unduly optimistic to us looking back over 129 years, no one should dispute that the Commune, and the events that surrounded it, were the harbingers of momentous events that were about to unfold.

The Franco-Prussian War, which preceded the Commune and the French Civil War, Marx described as "the most tremendous war of modern times"—but that terrible conflict pales in comparison to the two colossal world wars that followed.

French capitalism's monstrous slaughter of 30,000 working-class victims during and after the Commune's two-month struggle for life Marx described as "unparalleled" in history—but the massacre of the Communards, perpetrated by French militarism in service to French capitalism, fades in comparison to the monstrous toll of working-class victims that world capitalism piled up during the 20th century.

If the Paris Commune was not the immediate harbinger of a new society, if Marx's optimism seems misplaced, it is only because the alternative was too horrible to contemplate. Who today would dispute that the events of the spring of 1871 were a forewarning of what would follow if Marx's expectation was not met?

The Paris Commune has been described as a socialist revolution, but it was not that. Socialism is a movement of the working class, whereas the Paris Commune was not, at least not at the start. It was a rebellion of the Parisian proletariat and petty bourgeoisie against the effects of a terrible war brought on by an overreaching ruling class, the economic hardships that war imposed on all sections of the Parisian population, and the treason of the French capitalist class, French militarism and the political flunkies who usurped state authority during the confusion that followed France's disastrous defeat at the Battle of Sedan, the Prussian capture of French Emperor Napoleon III, and the ensuing scramble for position and power.

After Sedan, the Prussians occupied the city of Versailles and laid siege to Paris. Economic life in the capital came to a virtual standstill. Unemployment, poverty and even starvation were widespread. In early March 1871, according to Stewart Edwards (*The Paris Commune 1871*), the government exacerbated the situation by adopting four measures.

One of those decrees lifted a moratorium that had prohibited the sale of goods deposited with the Mont de Piété, or state-run pawnshop. Many of those goods were tools that workers had pawned to fend off starvation for themselves and their families.

A second decree allowed landlords to demand payment of rents that had not been paid since the siege of Paris began in October 1870.

A third "abolished what in effect had become a form of unemployment pay, the daily 30 sous allowance to the National Guard..." (Edwards)

The fourth measure allowed bankers to demand payment on overdue loans and interest from the owners of small factories and shops, which drove the petty bourgeoisie away from the government and towards the workers.

Accordingly, both sections of the Parisian population—the working class and the petty bourgeoisie—had their own grievances against the ruling class and the French state, which led them into a tenuous alliance. When the government negotiated a deal with the Germans, whereby French prisoners of war would be released to bring new

pressures on beleaguered Paris, the Germans vacated Versailles and the French government moved there from the provincial city of Bordeaux, where it had regrouped after the collapse of the French army and the German advance onto French soil.

Outraged by the arrogance and rapacious greed of the ruling class, and alarmed by the betrayal of a government led by monarchists and militarists, Paris began to prepare for the worst. As the probability of civil war increased, however, the unlikely alliance between the Parisian workers and petty bourgeoisie began to break down. When war became certain, the petty bourgeoisie became frightened and, together with many municipal bureaucrats, abandoned the city and marched to Versailles. The workers of Paris were left on their own as the Germans continued their siege from the north and Versailles, reinforced by its returning POWs, prepared to march on Paris.

The invasion of Paris began on the night of March 17, when troops sent from Versailles made an unsuccessful effort to seize the cannons of the Parisian National Guard. The Commune was declared on March 18, and during the next two months Paris struggled to keep the city running and get the economy going while waging a defensive war of street fighting and barricades against the army of Versailles.

Whether the Paris Commune was doomed to failure because of the seemingly overwhelming forces arrayed against it, or whether missed opportunities for early military successes that may have brought the rest of France to its aid was decisive, is a matter of dispute. The two articles reprinted in this issue as our annual tribute to the memory of the heroic Communards focus on other problems. Both are taken from *The Socialist*, the official publication of the now defunct Marxist-De Leonist Socialist Labor Party of Great Britain.

Despite the passage of time, these two articles highlight lessons taught by the experience of the Commune that are more germane to modern conditions than how the Communards waged their war of defense.

"The Greatest Lesson of the Commune" was written during World War II and is taken from the March 1941 issue of *The Socialist*. "The Commune and Unity" is of much earlier date. It comes from *The Socialist* of March 1912. This article locates a fatal weakness of the Commune in the early alliance between the working class and the petty bourgeoisie of Paris. "By avoiding false unity and substituting revolutionary teaching," it says, "we, the workers, can, by relying upon ourselves, destroy capitalism and usher in the Socialist Republic."

There is a second aspect to this question of unity that was not mentioned by the writer, but which is at least as important to the ultimate success of the socialist movement. If efforts to unify forces having different interests and different aims pose a danger to the movement, a failure to unite by those having identical interests, shared aspirations and a common goal can only hinder the movement by blocking its progress. That is why all those whose knowledge and acceptance of Marxist principles and the De Leonist program of Socialist Industrial Union should become members of the Socialist Labor Party.

Several footnotes have been added to enhance the value of these articles for today's reader. The names of the two writers are not known to us, but presumably they were members of the British SLP and convinced Marxist-De Leonists. Each drew a lesson from the Commune that is important. In our view, however, the neglect of either would be equally fatal when the working class finally decides that the Paris Commune was, indeed, "the harbinger of a new society."

### A De Leon Editorial

## Capitalist 'Gifts'

When capitalists give multimillion-dollar gifts to endow universities, establish foundations, assist worthy causes or help the poor, it is not a matter of conscience, but of self-defense.

### 'Conscience'

(Daily People, Dec. 3, 1903)

The Rev. Dr. Thomas R. Slicer, pastor of All Souls' Church, recently delivered an address in Cooper Union of specific economic viciousness. Dr. Slicer roundly denounced "the millionaires who wring the life of the poor" and then, in the usual style of such gentlemen, proceeded forthwith to destroy whatever value there may be in such denunciation by giving an economically false explanation of the "benevolence" of the millionaire freebooters. Dr. Slicer's explanation is that "the millionaires give only to ease their conscience." The explanation is false, both in psychology and economics. It is false in psychology because the "millionaire's conscience" does not exist. It does not exist because it cannot exist; why it cannot exist is an economic demonstration.

The "millionaire" is a capitalist entity. As such he combines in his person a permanent and a transitory feature of "large production," of the sort of production that civilization demands.

The permanent feature is the concentration of large productive powers. This feature is permanent because without such concentration production is unequal to the needs of civilized society.

The transitory feature is the private ownership of such concentrated large productive powers. This feature is transitory because future society will not tolerate in private hands that upon which depends the life, liberty and pursuit of happiness of the people. As our political structure is democratic, so must the economic structure be. The Socialist Republic, whose outlines are heaving above the horizon, requires that the machinery of production must belong to the people in common, the same as their machinery of government.

It is owing to the combination of this transitory feature with the permanent one in one person that the peculiar thing, the "millionaire," springs up, and his qualities are developed.

The holding of \$1,000 for productive purposes in private hands generates the necessity to protect that \$1,000, and the instinct how to do it. There is but one way. It takes \$4,000 to buttress up that \$1,000; it takes \$16,000 to buttress up that \$4,000; it takes \$256,000 to buttress up that \$16,000. To make a long tale short, it takes \$4 million to picket the front, rear and flanks of \$1 million of productive wealth held in private hands; \$16 million to do the same for the \$4 million—and so on in an endless, and, consequently, self-destructive chain. When the capitalist amasses wealth he does so on the identical principle that a general amasses troops and pickets. From this central maneuver flow a number of minor ones—that of "giving" among the rest. Every "gift" is an outpost, to give warning of danger, a barrier to keep danger out should it press, a picket to disarm hostility. That's what a general is taught to do; that's what the "millionaire" instinctively does. Andrew Carnegie's recent "gifts," especially the proffered one to the United States of \$10 million bonds on his newly launched steel trust, and unsalable for 10 years, is the most obvious illustration of the quality of the "gift." Conscience has no more to do with the transaction than with a dog's burying of his bone.

To place capitalist gifts on the ground of a self-extorted balm to conscience is to convey a false structural notion of modern society. The act is vicious. It is all the more vicious when, as does Dr. Slicer, the vicious notion is conveyed within the sugar coating of a just denunciation of the capitalist brigands.

## 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.

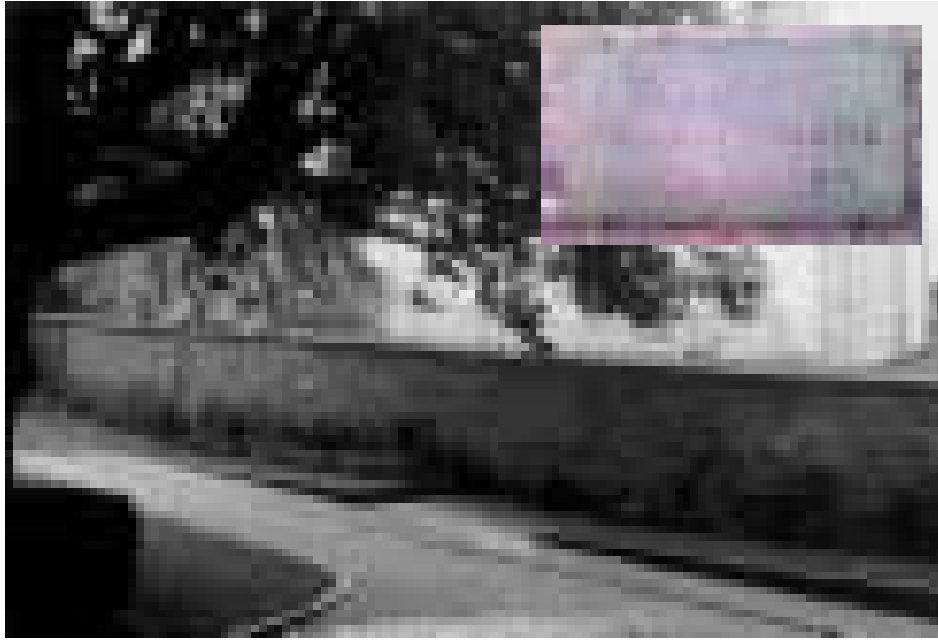
You are needed in the ranks of Socialists fighting for a better world. Find out more about the program and work of the Socialist Labor Party and join us to help make the promise of socialism a reality.

# Our Tribute to the Communards of 1871

## Greatest Lesson Of the Commune

*That after the most tremendous war of modern times, the conquering and the conquered hosts should fraternize for the common massacre of the proletariat—this unparalleled event does indicate, not as Bismarck thinks, the final repression of a new society upheaving, but the crumbling into dust of bourgeois society. The highest heroic effort of which old society is still capable is national war; and this is now proved to be a mere governmental humbug, intended to defer the struggle of the classes, and to be thrown aside as soon as that class struggle bursts out in civil war. Class rule is no longer able to disguise itself in a national uniform; the national governments are one as against the proletariat!*

—Karl Marx



The 'Wall of Martyrs' today.

Emily Bills

## The 'Wall' of Père-Lachaise

"Saturday morning [May 27, 1871] dawned foggy and raining, for the second day running. The fighting was now confined to Belleville. There was little ammunition left....Some of the last fighting this day took place in the Père-Lachaise cemetery, which the 200 National Guards there had foolishly failed to put into a proper state of defense. The army blew open the gate, and there was bitter hand-to-hand fighting among the tombs in the heavy rain and failing light, enemies falling and dying in the same grave. The last of these combatants fell by the busts of Charles Nodier and Balzac. Those not killed in the fighting were lined up against the wall in the eastern corner of the cemetery and shot. The killings continued for several days afterwards.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Nine years later, in 1880, a few days after the first time 14 July [Bastille Day] had been celebrated as a national holiday, and after several previous attempts had failed, a general amnesty was voted. This was the result of Republican and Socialist electoral victories, culminating in the election of the shoemaker Trinet, ex-member of the Paris Commune, as a Socialist deputy for Belleville in June 1880. Just previously, on 23 May, 25,000 had responded to the appeal of Guesde and the Socialists, in spite of police attacks, for the first demonstration at the 'Wall' of Père-Lachaise."

—Stewart Edwards, *The Paris Commune 1871*

The first anniversary to be celebrated by the international working class movement was that of the Paris Commune. It is fitting it should be so, for of all the struggles of France during the 19th century, the Commune was more definitely a working-class effort than any. The "Social Republic" of the February Revolution [1848], says Marx, "did but express a vague aspiration after a republic that was not only to supersede the monarchical form of class rule, but class rule itself. The Commune was the positive form of that republic." The working-class character of the Commune was shown in one of its first statements, published in the *Journal Officiel*, in which it declared: "The proletarians of Paris, amidst the treasons and failures of the ruling classes, have understood that the hour has struck for them to save the situation by taking into their own hands the direction of public affairs." It was just that class character of the movement that united the capitalist class of Europe against the Parisian workers as nothing else could have done. If any worker should doubt that the capitalist class of all countries is united as one against the working class, let him think for a moment of the Paris Commune and the attitude of the capitalist governments of Europe, as well as of the capitalist press of Europe.

At the close of the war between Germany and France, a war in which the German army had besieged Paris for four months and starved it into surrender, the self-appointed government of France made a deal with the invaders and united their efforts to crush the workers of Paris. The German army was to hasten the release of prisoners of war, so that they might be used to crush the Commune; and that army, stretched in a line to the north of Paris, was to cut off any retreat of the Communards to the north. That fraternal assistance between the ruling classes of Germany and France carries a lesson that should not be forgotten. Differences between the ruling classes in other countries are dropped and the whole class becomes one when it is a case of keeping the working class in subjection.

### The Aims of the Commune

Thanks to the efforts of the ruling class, who have carefully seen to it that precious little information of the facts should reach British workers, and only such distortions as those concocted by its own penny-a-liners should be published, the workers of this country know very little of the Commune. The following are a few of the facts.

One of the briefest outlines of the Commune itself is given by Marx. "The Com-

mune was formed of the municipal councilors, chosen by universal suffrage in various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally workingmen, or acknowledged representatives of the working class. The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time. Instead of continuing to be the agent of the central government, the police was at once stripped of its political attributes and turned into the responsible and at all times revocable agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the administration. From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at *workmen's wages*."

But the Commune, or, as it was called, Communalist, movement was to be no mere local affair. It aimed at the unity of the entire country in district Communes, which, in turn, were to be united in a National Delegation, the delegates to which, as in the local Communes, were to be removable at any time. That Communal Constitution, if it became a fact, clearly meant the destruction of state power. The latter is claimed to be independent of, and above, the nation. The Communal Constitution was, in every detail, to be a part of and subject to the elected representatives of the Communes, together with all administrative organs. Even judges were to be stripped of their dictatorial power, to be elected by the people, and removable if they failed to give satisfaction to the workers who elected them.

Though the Constitution did not look beyond the national frontiers, its authors did expect it would go further, and that it would become the basis of that "Universal Republic" they visualized in the future.

That Communal Constitution never got beyond the stage of a skeleton draft. From the first the Commune had to fight for its life against the Versailles army and lasted but two months.

### The War of Defense

The members of the Thiers government had scuttled out of Paris in a fashion more speedy than dignified.<sup>1</sup> No sooner were they safe in Versailles than they set to work to organize war on the Commune. They were boastfully ready to shed the last drop of blood, somebody else's blood, and not their own, to teach the recalcitrant workers of Paris a lesson. With the aid of Bismarck they organized an army and the attack began only a few days after the Commune was elected. The conduct of the war in its pitiless bru-

(Continued on next page)

<sup>1</sup>Adolphe Thiers (1797–1877) was a monarchist who had been premier of France twice during the reign of Louis-Phillippe—for eight months in 1836 and again for eight months in 1840. "Thiers was consistent only in his greed for wealth and his hatred of the men who produced it," Marx said of him. "Having entered his first ministry under Louis-Phillippe as poor as Job, he left it a millionaire. His last ministry under the same king...exposed him to public taunts of peccation in the Chamber of Deputies...." Despite a "private life as infamous as his public life is odious" (Marx), the monarchist-controlled National Assembly at Bordeaux chose Thiers to head the provisional government in February 1871. After successfully urging that body to accept the peace terms negotiated with the Germans, he ordered troops of the line into Paris to crush the Commune. Several months later, in August 1871, the National Assembly dubbed him president of the republic. Despite his slavish service to the ruling class, including the massacre of the Communards, the monarchist majority in the National Assembly eventually decided that he was "insufficiently 'conservative.'" (*Encyclopedia of World History*) He resigned from office in May 1873.

## The Commune And 'Unity'

By W.P.

We learn from the past. True it is there are many who criticize the mistakes of the past generations. There are some who seem only grateful to our forefathers for their struggles that brought success. It is better to have struggled and failed than never to have struggled at all. Historic mistakes are sometimes the bitter price paid for ultimate victory. The errors of the past should be a guiding light for future action. A movement like the modern socialist one can neglect the history of past failures only at its peril. We can glean from the Paris Commune many points that should strengthen us in our struggle against capitalism.

Many critics of the Paris Commune are positively jubilant over the discord and hostility that prevailed within the council elected by the Paris populace....The critics contend that this "socialist" council, by its internal dissension, proves beyond confutation the impossibility of ever getting humanity to work together in a harmonious manner. From the discord existing within the council the anti-Socialists' claim that they are right in their contention that "human nature" must be changed before any alteration in society can take place.

We desire to examine the circumstances that provoked the Commune, and to see if there is not something behind the reason the members of the Commune Council quarreled even when the government troops were hammering down the gates of Paris.

Before the inauguration of the Commune the French government at Bordeaux repeatedly insulted the Parisians by a series of impudent and blundering demands. We know that the government was highly eager to reinstate the monarchy,<sup>1</sup> but was afraid of Paris, the population of that city controlling numerous formidable cannons—those delightfully persuasive arguments of Winston Churchill & Co. during strikes.<sup>2</sup> The government's hatred and fear of Paris led it to make many attacks on Paris, which incurred not only the opposition of the Socialists, but of other sections [of the population] that had no sympathy with the final aim of the revolutionaries.

From Bordeaux the government arrogantly demanded that all overdue rents and commercial bills be paid at once. The stupidity and insolence of such a demand may be easily recognized when we remind our readers how long Paris had been in a state of siege, a condition of things which completely dislocated industry. There is no denying the effects this action of the government had on the small middle class and workers, these two sections [of the population] were in open revolt against the government. The National Guard had their pay stopped, and those heroic defenders of Paris must have been incensed at the ingratitude of the government. When the

(Continued on next page)

<sup>1</sup>A majority of the National Assembly were monarchists. According to one source, 200 were "Legitimists" who wanted to restore the old Bourbon line of kings toppled by the French Revolution and restored for a time after Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo. An equal number were "Orleanists" who favored that line of claimants to the throne. A smaller group of 30 wanted the Napoleonic line restored to power. These divisions, widespread opposition among French workers, farmers and other petty bourgeois, and bickering between the two primary pretenders to the French crown, finally torpedoed the monarchists' schemes.

<sup>2</sup>As British home secretary during the general strike at Liverpool in 1911, Churchill sent two warships and troops to intimidate the workers and break the strike.

# ... Greatest Lesson

(Continued from page 5)

tality has not been equaled, unless it be by the German-Italian conquest of Spain<sup>2</sup> with its cowardly and inhuman slaughter of unarmed and helpless people of all ages and sexes, as at Malaga and Guernica,<sup>3</sup> and so forth.

By the end of May the Communal forces were defeated. Isolated from the rest of the country, the Paris Commune had no chance. Its last stand, the Père-Lachaise Cemetery, witnessed scenes of brutality to a conquered foe such as the world had rarely known. Between one and two hundred of the conquered Communards were lined up against the cemetery wall and murdered in cold blood. That was but the beginning of a massacre of the population of Paris in which neither age nor sex was spared. For two months the slaughter was continued and the river Seine ran blood. Even then it was only halted by the fear of pest from the putrefying bodies of the victims. In those days there was no more mercy for a woman or a girl than for a man. How many were massacred? Who shall say? It has been said that, discounting the largest estimates, there were probably 30,000 slaughtered. Others died in the prisons, and still others on prison ships and in transportation.

## A Lesson of the Commune for Us

Without a doubt there are many lessons to be gleaned from the record of the Commune. There is one we specially would urge on present-day workers. It was stated many years ago in *The Socialist* and is worth recalling:

"The fundamental weakness of the Commune lay in the fact that the French working class was not economically organized: The word was there, and the idea, and heroic and devoted men were there, and they had arms in their hands; but falsifying the word and the ideas, and paralyzing the physical force in its service, was the fatal absence of working-class education and organization on the economic field.

\* \* \* \* \*

"The Commune represented a working class edu-

cated only on its negative side of opposition to capital, conscious and active only on its negative side....

\* \* \* \* \*

"The absence of working-class economic organization shows itself fatally in the character and in the division of the Commune.

"From another side it presents itself glaringly in the obstacle of organization, which, with all the devotion of its best, the Commune could not surmount.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Enemy of capitalist society, the Commune was at the same time immured within it. Prisoner in Paris, and prisoner of its circumstance, the sole policy that was the natural expression of its being was the one policy impossible—to render the instruments of labor to the working class. The working class had no institution—no economic organization—to accept them. One government can succeed another, and a minority by fortune or audacity possess itself of public power. But if it does so in the name of the social revolution it compromises and adapts itself to its surroundings, or it falls; for the institution of a new order of society such as that promised by the Socialist Movement cannot be improvised on the spur of the moment, or brought into being by governmental decrees."

Before the working class can possess itself of the tools of production it must have its industrial organization fashioned and ready to take them and to operate them. It is the most important lesson of the Commune.

—from *The Socialist*, March 1941

<sup>2</sup>During the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s, Nazi Germany and fascist Italy sent tens of thousands of "volunteers" to help assist the insurgent fascist forces led by Gen. Francisco Franco. Although the German and Italian "volunteers" did not "conquer" Spain, their role was an essential factor in Franco's ultimate success in 1939.

<sup>3</sup>Malaga was the scene of a major battle during the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s, and Guernica was one of the first cities in history to suffer civilian casualties resulting from air raids.

# ... Commune and 'Unity'

(Continued from page 5)

clique at Bordeaux suppressed the Republican journals, it aroused the opposition of the Republicans. The determination of the government to humiliate Paris may be judged from the fact that it decapitalized that city. In Paris a large portion of the population worships their city, they consider it the pivot around which civilization revolves; these patriotic Parisians shrieked when Versailles was nominated the capital of France. To all these elements of revolt against the government, we must add the Socialists, who hoped to gather all the rebellious units in one movement against capitalism and proclaim the overthrow of that system.

The desire for "unity" of the rebel forces was realized when the "psychological moment" arose. Unity of forces is a peculiarity of intense moments in history. Under certain conditions the chemist can unite elements that fly apart at the slightest change of conditions. A study of history shows that sections [of the population] have united not because of solidarity of purpose, but rather due to a sentimental yearning. In many cases superficial unity covers a multitude of weaknesses that produce paralysis in the "united" organization....Unity does not always mean strength. Milk is not strengthened by uniting it with water. *Unity can only mean strength when the units are agreed upon the final aim of their endeavors and upon the methods of obtaining that end.* Where these conditions are not fulfilled disaster must overtake the "united" elements.

Disaster overtook the communal council. After the Commune was proclaimed, after the middle class gained their point concerning their overdue commercial bills and rents, they had no sympathy with the Socialists, whom they considered too extreme. When the patriotic Parisians realized what fighting the government meant their ardor and enthusiasm suddenly cooled. Even the Republicans could not work with the Socialists, whose demands were too revolutionary. In a word, the various elements united against the government found their aims were not the same, hence the bickering and

quarreling in the communal council, where the antagonism of interests found its highest expression. We find, therefore, that the material interests of the various elements were not identical, and consequently these differences had to be fought out and were fought out. The friction within the council is thus traced to the conflict of interests and not to the weakness of human nature.

We learn from the past. We Socialists learn from the Commune the valuable lesson that under no circumstances must the revolutionary movement aid or seek the aid of organizations whose aims and objects differ from those of revolutionary socialism. We learn from the Commune that no unity is possible where every unit is not agreed as to the objective and method of attainment. By ignoring this lesson we may rush into the arms of those who would betray and leave us in the lurch at the last moment, as the non-Socialist elements did with the Parisian workers in 1871. We must shun alliances and spurn treaties with the capitalist class. Our demand for social ownership must be made in language plain and explicit. Our hostility must be class hostility, organized hostility. Our quarrel is with the capitalist class: we do not reckon with or recognize individuals. We must not descend to that quintessence of idiocy that impelled Ben Tillett<sup>3</sup> to advocate the murder of individual capitalists (vide *Forward*, Feb. 17).

By education and organization we can raise the united army of labor on the political and industrial field. By avoiding false unity and substituting revolutionary teaching, we, the workers, can, by relying upon ourselves, destroy capitalism and usher in the Socialist Republic.

This lesson the failure of the Commune teaches us.

—from *The Socialist*, March 1912

<sup>3</sup>Ben Tillett was a leader of the dockers' union who, despite his militant rhetoric during the 1911 general strike, became an ardent supporter of British involvement in World War I and an opponent of strikes.

## activities

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

information please call Sid at 503-226-2881. The general public is invited.

### OHIO

#### North Royalton

**Paris Commune Commemoration Social**—The public is invited to Section Cleveland's Paris Commune commemoration social on Sunday, March 12. Begins at 1:30 p.m. at the Burns' residence, 9626 York Rd., North Royalton. 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

### PENNSYLVANIA

#### Philadelphia

**House Party**—Section Philadelphia will host a house party for the benefit of the National Executive Committee Banquet fund. The house party will be held on March 12, from 2–5 p.m., at the home of George Taylor, 7467 Rhoads Street, Philadelphia. Speaker: Matt Keeley. For more information call 216-673-1170 or e-mail slp-philly@aol.com.

### WISCONSIN

**Discussion Meetings**—Section Milwaukee will conduct discussion meetings at the Milwaukee Public Central Library, first floor meeting room, 814 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee. The meetings will be held from 2–4 p.m. on Sunday, March 5 and on Sunday, April 9.

## SLP National Executive Committee Session

# BANQUET Reservations

SLP • P.O. BOX 218  
MTN. VIEW, CA 94042-0218

Enclosed is my check/money order in the amount of \_\_\_\_\_. Please make the following reservations for the SLP's NEC Session Banquet on Saturday, April 1, at the Holiday Inn, 4200 Great America Parkway, Santa Clara, Calif., at \$12 per adult and \$6 for children age 12 & under. Social hour at 5:30 p.m. Dinner at 7 p.m.

\_\_\_\_ ADULTS \_\_\_\_ CHILDREN  
\_\_\_\_ CHICKEN MARSALA \_\_\_\_ VEGETARIAN

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ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ APT. \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Please don't mail cash. Checks/money orders payable to the Socialist Labor Party. Reservations must be made through SLP, not Holiday Inn, and must be received by Tuesday, March 28.

## ROOM Reservations

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Enclosed is my check/money order in the amount of \_\_\_\_\_. Please make the following room reservations for the undersigned for Saturday, April 1, at the Holiday Inn, 4200 Great America Parkway, Santa Clara, Calif., at the rate of \$86.50 per night, tax included. I will share these quarters with \_\_\_\_\_. I will arrive (day and date) \_\_\_\_\_ and depart \_\_\_\_\_.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

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Please do not mail cash. Use separate sheet if necessary. Make check/ money order payable to the Socialist Labor Party. All reservations must be made through the SLP, not the Holiday Inn, and must be received by Friday, March 17.

## To Break the Chains Of Wage Slavery, Workers Need Socialist Education.

## Support the SLP's Socialist Education Fund

Yes! I want to help support the SLP. Enclosed please find my contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

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[ Please send a receipt. (Contributions are not tax deductible.) Please do not mail cash. Make your check/money order payable to the Socialist Labor Party. Send to:

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# directory

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For information, call Rudy Gustafson at (218) 728-3110.

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## SACRAMENTO, CALIF.

SLP, P.O. Box 2973, Sacramento, CA 95812.

## SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

SLP, P.O. Box 70034, Sunnyvale, CA 94086-

0034. (650) 938-8370. e-mail: slpsfba@netscape.net.

## SEABROOK, N.H.

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# ... Record 'Expansion'

(Continued from page 1)

[very slightly] since 1995, but they are still worse off than those at the bottom 20 years ago."

Moreover, if one looks closely and objectively at the current state of the economy, it becomes quite obvious that there are more than a few serious economic and social problems that persist despite the long period of expansion and its alleged spread of prosperity throughout the nation.

The agriculture industry, for example, is mired in economic misery. The number of farms, which once peaked at 6.8 million, is now down to 1.9 million and falling. Net farm income has fallen 38 percent since 1997.

The once booming U.S. copper industry is also in deep economic trouble. Last Sept. 11 the *Times* reported that, "Over the last few months, a string of major copper producers has announced layoffs, reductions and closures." The *Times* noted that similar conditions prevailed in other industries, among them aluminum and paper, and that those conditions were "forcing producers in a variety of basic industries [to] join together to eliminate overcapacity..." That, of course, led to closures and layoffs.

In addition, despite all the propaganda about low inflation and keeping the lid on prices, soaring prices of such daily working-class essentials as housing, utilities, health care, transportation, basic food items, etc., continue to erode the standard of living for millions of workers and their families.

According to a Census Bureau report released last November, 13.7 percent of the American people lived in poverty in 1996. Last month *USA Today* cited a recent study that estimated "one out of every 100 Americans used a homeless service—from emergency shelters to soup kitchens—at some point during 1996, nearly double the number from a decade before...." (Feb. 2)

Ironically, this decade, when incredible amounts of wealth were produced by the workers and appropriated by the capitalist owners of the means of production, and when the federal government was bragging about its growing accumulation of financial surpluses, was also the decade of massive cuts in programs intended to ease somewhat the critical food, housing, medical and other primary needs of the poor and deprived.

An item in the *San Jose Mercury News* of Feb. 1 succinctly summed up the benefits of the expansion that accrued to the workers when it observed: "In-

deed, this will be the expansion remembered as much for its contradictions as for its euphorias....Millions of households will recall the 1990s as a time of downsized corporations, part-time jobs and economic insecurity."

The list of capitalist contradictions and its economic and social problems can be extended considerably. What it all adds up to is that despite the latest and highly touted "record expansion," the entire brood of capitalist-engendered economic and social evils is still very much with us—and the worst is yet to come. Even capitalism's defenders expect it. As the *Times* rather bluntly put it: "A recession must come. No economist doubts that. The only questions are when, and with how much damage." (Jan. 30)

Almost 90 years ago, America's premier Marxist Socialist and editor of the Socialist Labor Party's official organ, the *Daily People*, wrote:

"Today, the excuse, the apology for the involuntary poverty of a single member of society exists no more. Material conditions have changed so radically that, so far from insufficiency, there is today the material possibility of abundance for all. The mechanisms and the methods of production are such today that the leisure, the freedom from arduous toil for the necessities of life, the emancipation from the clutches of the fear of want, all of these prerequisites to mental and spiritual expansion, one time enjoyable but by some, are today possible to all. Today—all statistical researches combine to demonstrate—man can have an abundance at his disposal with no more exercise of physical energies than is requisite for health." (*Abolition of Poverty*)

That is ever so much more true today.

There is no way, however, that the retrograde capitalist system can be made to function so as to assure every man, woman and child a secure and healthy life. Currently in capitalist America's so-called "new economy," where the productivity possibilities are greater than ever, millions of workers and their families are still not assured of a secure and healthy life. Many are not even assured of their most primitive needs. By no civilized standards of reason and judgment ought capitalism be retained. It should be replaced with the democratic Socialist Industrial Republic. The Socialist Labor Party's Socialist Industrial Union program explains how it can and must be done.

—Nathan Karp

# ... Prison Building

(Continued from page 1)

U.S. prisoners are incarcerated for nonviolent offenses—mostly crimes against property and drug offenses. Government at all levels spends "50 percent more incarcerating [nonviolent] offenders than the entire \$16.6 billion the federal government is currently spending on welfare programs that serve 8.5 million people."

•The racial bias of the justice system is clear. In 1997, for example, "even though African Americans made up only 13 percent of the population, half of the 1.2 million state and federal prisoners were African American."

What all the above really demonstrates is that the U.S. capitalist socio-economic system, far from being healthy and vibrant, is actually deteriorating. It is increasingly exhibiting the symptoms of a society in decay.

While official figures show unemployment under 5 percent, these figures conveniently ignore not only the 2-million-strong prison population, but also a similar number of workers who have given up looking for work, and millions more who need full-time jobs but can only find part-time work.

The so-called "booming economy" has produced record profits for the tiny class that owns and controls the socially produced means of life—the nation's industries and services. But while profits are up for many large companies, real wages have regained little of the over 20 percent they fell from 1972 through 1995.

Poverty has increased over the past 20 years, even using the government's methods for defining, identifying and measuring it. Government studies—along with many others—confirm the relationship between economic deprivation and a host of working-class crimes. That many of the

nation's inmates are incarcerated because of non-violent crimes against property also attests to that relationship.

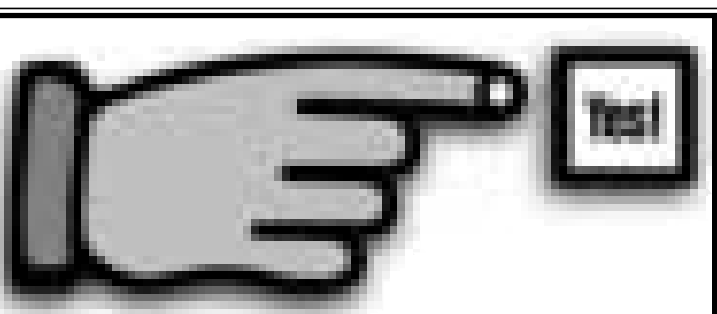
Unemployment and poverty, the inevitable results of capitalism's ruthless exploitation of the working class, breed crime. Exploitation itself is a crime, albeit unrecognized by capitalism's class-biased "justice system."

Capitalist-class justice really means that the wrong people go to jail. The perpetrators of the biggest crimes against society are not poor, exploited and oppressed workers, who are themselves victims of capitalism's dehumanizing social conditions. The real social criminals are the capitalists, who, as a class, are responsible for those conditions, and who, via the process of exploitation, rob the working class of the majority of the social wealth they create. (And this says nothing of the crimes that capitalists perpetrate against one another.)

Some—including the JPI—say that the answer to the growth of the prison population is for the "justice" system to come up with alternatives to incarceration. Socialists say that the only way to rid society of crime—including the biggest crime of all, exploitation—is to put ownership and control of the means of life squarely under the democratic control of the workers themselves, organized into Socialist Industrial Unions.

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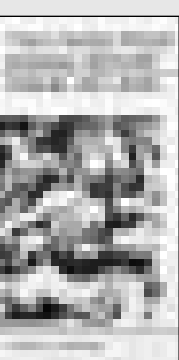
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**HE'S A REFORMED MAN**

## Augusto Pinochet Catches The Entrepreneurial Bug

Eighteen months ago, while on a trip to chilly London, England, Augusto Pinochet, the bloodstained former dictator of Chile, was detained by British authorities. It seems that a judge in Spain had issued a warrant for Pinochet's arrest to stand trial for crimes against humanity, mainly those perpetrated on Spanish nationals in Chile during his reign. Ever since, Pinochet has been under house arrest in one of London's finer neighborhoods while the British courts have struggled over what to do with the old reprobate. The Spanish judge wants him extradited, but the British keep dragging their heels and seem more inclined to ship him back to Chile.

The more time passes the less likely it seems that Pinochet will be extending his European visit to the land of his Spanish ancestors. Lawyers in his defense have argued that turning him over to face his accusers could open a Pandora's box that might subject any head of state, or former head of state, to similar treatment. What, they want to know, would prevent some former African or Asian colony from slapping the irons on Queen Elizabeth, Prince Philip or Prince Charles for crimes committed by their predecessors during the days when the sun never set on the lands Britain held and the peoples it oppressed if they should venture to set foot onto one of those unavenged countries?

**It hardly seems conducive to the cause of "law and order" for courts and governments to sanction the prosecution of state and corporate criminals when their crimes were committed to keep the top on the top and the bottom where they belong. Isn't that what our ruling-class "law and order" is all about?**

The argument is not meant to sort right out from wrong. It is meant to remind the judges of English courts that political figures such as Pinochet are not the only perpetrators of crimes against humanity, or the only successors of those who committed similar crimes. It is for his crimes that the Spanish court wants Pinochet, and since innumerable crimes against humanity were perpetrated throughout the British colonial empire by militarists, corporations and colonizers of all shapes and descriptions, politicians among them, no scion of crown or pound could venture far from their island home without running a similar risk. Why, they wouldn't make it past Ireland! It is bad enough that the world is crawling with NGO vengeance takers and "terrorists" of all political and religious persuasions. It hardly seems conducive to the cause of "law and order"



Former dictator Augusto Pinochet and some of his minions.

for courts and governments to sanction the prosecution of state and corporate criminals when their crimes were committed to keep the top on the top and the bottom where they belong. Isn't that what our ruling-class "law and order" is all about? Furthermore, Spain itself is crawling with enough blood-drenched fascists from the Franco years to fill court dockets for the rest of the millennium. Shouldn't Spanish judges be worried about cleaning their own stable before reaching out for Pinochet?

While the legal wrangling continues, it turns out that Pinochet didn't swap a Chilean summer for an English winter for the sake of the weather. He didn't fly to Heathrow for political reasons, either: He's done that. No, Pinochet is a reformed man. He's caught the entrepreneurial bug. He went to London on business, and being at least as smart as the average retired dictator he chose a field of venture with which he was familiar. Pinochet is an arms merchant, a man of business, and we all know that business is a promoter of peace and fellowship in this post-Soviet, but not quite post-Pinochet, world of today, don't we?

Therein lies the difficulty for the English courts.

According to one account, the purpose of Pinochet's ill-fated 1998 trip to England was "to finalize the deal for a rocket system called Rayo, which was being developed in a joint venture between Royal Ordnance and the independent Chilean armed forces agency Famae." He reportedly arrived in London with an extensive "shopping list," including "radar and other sensor equipment...infantry support equipment...pyrotechnics...secure communication sets and spares...[and] aircraft spares." It is believed that he hoped to make major purchases from "GEC, Hunting and British Aerospace."

Another account says that Pinochet was also in London "to open a cycle of negotiations for the purchase of three British warships for the Chilean Navy at a price of \$277 million, with a further option on two frigates for \$166 million." British Aerospace, "whose largest shareholder is the British Royal Family,...invited Pinochet to London" and is reportedly covering his "hospital and legal charges."

Pinochet's dealings with British Aerospace apparently go beyond bilateral British-Chilean agreements, and involve Brit-

ish Aerospace and British Royal Ordnance's international marketing strategy. It has been reported that the former dictator "acted as advisor [for British Aerospace]...in the part-purchase of a Swedish competitor" and was instrumental in the "formation of Famae-Ordnance, a joint venture between the Chilean state-owned army company and the British Royal Ordnance to sell missiles and other arms worldwide."

Within the ruling classes of Spain, the United States, Britain and Chile, there are, of course, antifascist elements, and Pinochet has his share of enemies even among his former supporters. However, those who are hoping for his extradition to Spain are fighting an uphill battle, given the widespread support that the arms industry has among the British capitalist class. British Aerospace and Royal Ordnance's cheerleaders are not only found among right-wingers like Margaret Thatcher. With the expansion of NATO, the power of the British arms industry has increased. Thus Tony Blair's "Labor" administration may be predisposed to send Pinochet home to Chile for "humanitarian" reasons and to sweep the whole thing under the rug.

Pinochet's position has also been bolstered by his control of other Chilean companies having trade agreements with Britain. It has been reported that Pinochet and his relatives own "Soquimich, the largest Chilean producer of iodine and nitrate fertilizer," which "exports goods to Britain."

Another obstacle to Pinochet facing his "day in court" is the extensive economic and political power of the arms industry in Chile. This may help explain why Ricardo Lagos, Chile's "Socialist" president-elect, does not support Pinochet's extradition to Spain and why he has tried to be conciliatory toward the former dictator's supporters in the military establishment.

On Jan. 17, the Associated Press circulated a report that Lagos "is committed to maintaining the free market economic policies first implemented by Pinochet," tempered with "social concerns" to address "inequalities."

Another report explains how Pinochet put himself in such a position of power. During his regime, he evidently used his "privatization" program of state-owned industries to tighten his control over various sectors of Chile's economy by award-

ing enterprises such as Soquimich to relatives and cronies. Most important, he consolidated his holdings in Chile's weapons industry through Famae and other firms. When he left office he brokered a deal with his presidential successor to create "a tripartite alliance of the armed forces, private enterprise and government authorities for arms purchases, with a central role for himself." Reportedly, his "authorization" is mandatory to finalize "all the major purchases involving the Chilean armed forces."

This "tripartite alliance" is also reflected in a report that Pinochet "chairs the Defense Commission in the Senate, which gives final approval" for arms sales to Chile. Under Pinochet's leadership, "the Chilean military high command chooses what arms to buy, independently of the government, and also negotiates the price and the conditions of sale, including [multimillion-dollar] commissions. This is because all defense funds in Chile are guaranteed by law as a proportion of copper export profits."

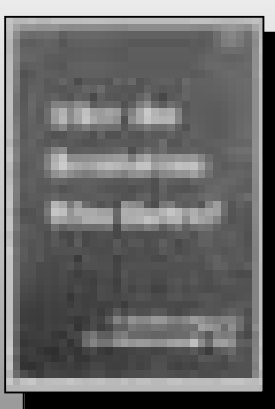
It would appear from these and similar reports that Pinochet has made himself indispensable to foreign capitalists seeking to sell arms to Chile. It is also not too surprising that international arms merchants would value Pinochet's connections and expertise in chasing after international markets.

This is also why those who long for Pinochet's extradition to Spain cannot expect to get much help from the Clinton administration. The administration would certainly hesitate to totally alienate a man who is the gatekeeper to selling arms to Chile. According to the *Financial Times*, "U.S. Defense Department officials" and U.S. aerospace corporations "such as Boeing and Lockheed Martin have been lobbying the Chilean government and air force." (Nov. 17) In fact, U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen made a special trip to Santiago to pressure Chilean president Eduardo Frei to buy more "U.S.-made F-16 and F-18 fighter jets...as a test case for Latin America."

At the same time, the fact that Pinochet's arrest in London has cooled European arms agreements with Chile has given the U.S. arms industry the edge.

It is said of the penal system here in America that it is designed to reform offenders and turn them into useful and productive citizens. Given the capitalist idea of what is useful and productive we would have to conclude that Augusto Pinochet Ugarte, globe-trotting entrepreneur out to make an "honest" peso, fits the bill—admirably.

Diane Secor contributed to this article.



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