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On Thugs in High Places

Thugs in high places were a mark of fascism in Hitler's Germany, Mussolini's Italy and Franco's Spain. A bourgeois democracy cannot be compared to the states these thugs operated in defense of capitalism, but that does not mean that low-browed thugs are not sometimes elevated to the highest positions in a bourgeois democracy.

Take Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, for example. While he has enunciated his arch-reactionary views plenty of times since his 1986 Senate confirmation, his remarks on torture in a recent BBC interview are particularly blood curdling. In the interview, Scalia defended the use of torture against terrorist suspects where knowledge of an imminent attack is suspected by asking, "Is it obvious that what can't be done for punishment [it can't constitutionally be cruel and unusual] can't be done to exact information that is crucial to this society?"

The BBC interviewer responded by saying, "...It's very unlikely you're going to have the one person that can give you that information and so if you use that as an excuse to permit torture then perhaps that's a dangerous thing."

To that Scalia responded, "...As unlikely as that it is, it would be absurd to say you can't stick something under the fingernails, smack them in the face."

That a Supreme Court justice can so easily cast away so fundamental a principle of bourgeois legal jurisprudence as the presumption of innocence is a clear indication of how easily the rest of our civil liberties could be jettisoned should our own thugs in high places deem it necessary to save capitalism.

Some may think it a "stretch" to suggest even a vague resemblance between a Scalia and the judges who staffed the so-called People's Courts of Hitler's Germany. They, however, would do well to remember that many of those judges were carried over from the Weimer Republic that preceded the Nazi era.

The Weimer Republic was set up in Germany in the aftermath of World War I. It was the first effort to establish bourgeois democracy in Germany since the country was united into a single state in 1870 and was widely regarded as "liberal" and "progressive." Its government was led by the Social Democratic Party—a party that had sold out its Marxist origins and collaborated with the Junker and capitalist classes to lead Germany into the horrors of the First World War.

Some of the "enlightened" men who occupied judicial and other positions during the Weimer years had no more trouble transferring their loyalties to the Nazis than the Social Democrats had trouble collaborating with the kaiser and the Junker class during World War I. It is a lesson worth remembering.

—K.B.

Has a Recession Begun? And When Will It End?

After merely a few years of what only defenders of capitalism could call a "recovery," economic prognosticators are filling the pro-capitalist media with their analyses of when the nation will enter the next recession or whether it has already entered one, whether it might be forestalled or ameliorated, and how bad it might become.

Most important for workers to consider is that history, not conjecture, shows that under this capitalist economic system there will always be another recession—probably sooner than later. In short, nothing can be done to completely forestall a recession—including the efforts of politicians and their economic advisors.

That said, there is plenty of evidence to support the conclusion that the U.S. economy is indeed entering another crisis.

By February, this year's mountain of economic bad news had already produced consensus among heavyweights in the business of predicting the ups and downs of what is openly called capitalism's "business cycle" that a recession had arrived.

The Institute for Supply Management reported on Feb. 5 that its nonmanufacturing business activity index, a measure of service-sector activity, "fell to 41.9 in January, from a seasonally adjusted 54.4 in December," according to *The New York Times*. "Readings below 50 indicate a contraction, a sign that most businesses think things are getting worse," according to

the *Times*. "Most economists had been expecting a figure of about 53, signaling a slowdown but not a contraction," the *Times* observed. "It is sending people into recession panic mode here," said Joshua Shapiro, chief United States economist at MFR Inc., another heavyweight in the business of economic predictions.

"The number's so terrible it's almost beyond



Carol* Simpson

belief," said Scott Anderson, the senior economist at Wells Fargo & Co., quoted in an Associated Press article the next day. "More and more economists are talking about recession, and whether it'll be a severe or mild one."

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Night Shift Work a Threat To Health of Millions

By Ken Boettcher

A suspected carcinogen is spreading across the nation—in fact across the world—with scant public attention. The health, safety and peace of mind of an increasingly large number of workers are at higher risk due to this hazard. About 15 percent of the non-farm U.S. labor force was exposed to it in 1980. Today nearly 20 percent of the labor force in advanced industrialized countries feels its effects.

The hazard is shift work. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), part of the World Health Organization, classified overnight shift work as a probable carcinogen in December. The IARC was moved to do so by the weight of scientific evidence showing that men and women working night shift over many years have higher rates of prostate and breast cancer, respectively, than those working day shift. Studies also show that "animals that have their light-dark schedules switched develop more cancerous tumors and die earlier," as one Associated Press report put it.

The human body normally produces the hormone melatonin during the darkness of night. Scientists believe it plays a role in suppressing tumors, so lower levels of melatonin can raise the risk of developing cancer. Night shift workers produce less melatonin

because light shuts down its production in the body. Long-term supplementation of melatonin isn't an answer because it also tends to shut down natural production of the hormone.

Lack of sleep can also contribute to cancer risk. That's a problem for night shift workers because most never fully switch their schedules. "Night shift people tend to be day shift people who are trying to stay awake at night," according to Mark Rea, director of the Light Research Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York. Getting too little sleep reduces the immune system's ability to fight off cancerous cells.

Confusing the body's natural circadian rhythm—the ebb and flow of the body's functions that evolution has programmed into our antecedents and us over millions of years—can lead to a breakdown of other tasks. "Timing is very important," Rea observed. Cell division and DNA repair, for example, can be affected by fluctuating schedules.

Night shift work contributes not only to increased cancer risk but also to increased risk of heart disease, divorce, family and other problems. As the pamphlet *Plain Language About Shift Work*, distributed by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and

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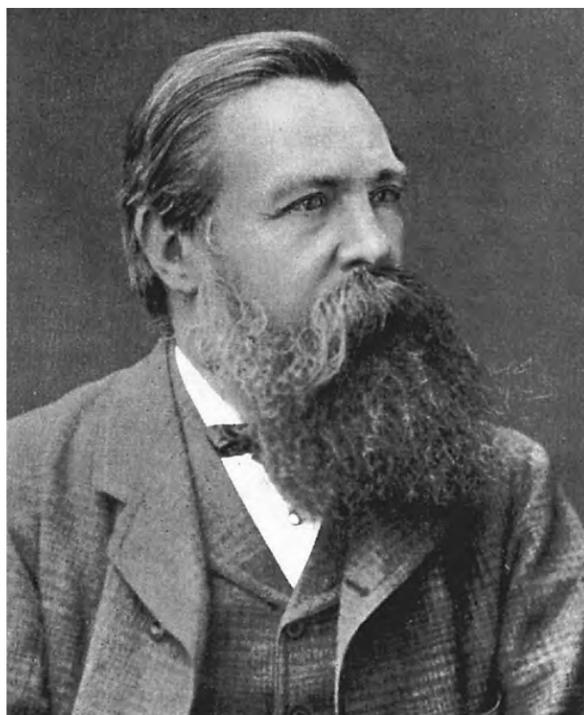
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Oration at the Grave Of Karl Marx

Karl Marx died 125 years ago, on March 14, 1883. Three days later, when Marx was buried, his friend and collaborator, Frederick Engels, delivered a brief graveside oration. Short of the socialist revolution to which he devoted his life, there is no tribute to him more fitting than these words of his friend.

On March 14, at a quarter to three in the afternoon, the greatest of living thinkers ceased to think. He had been left alone for barely two minutes; but when we entered his room we found that, seated in his chair, he had quietly gone to sleep—forever.

The loss which his death has inflicted upon the fighting proletariat in Europe and America, and



Frederick Engels

upon the science of history, is immeasurable. The gaps that will be made by the death of this titan will soon be felt.

Just as Darwin discovered the law of evolution in organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of evolution in human history. He discovered the simple fact (heretofore hidden beneath ideological excrescences) that human beings must have food and drink, clothing and shelter, first of all, before they can interest themselves in politics, science, art, religion and the like. This implies that the production of the immediately requisite material means of subsistence, and therewith the extant economic developmental phase of a nation or an epoch, constitute the foundation upon which the state institutions, the legal outlooks, the artistic and even the religious ideas, of those concerned, have been built up. It implies that these latter must be explained out of the former, whereas usually the former have been explained as issuing from the latter.

Nor was this all. Marx likewise discovered the special law of motion proper to the contemporary capitalist method of production and to the bourgeois society which that method of production has brought into being. The discovery of surplus value suddenly threw light here, whereas all previous investigators (Socialist critics no less than bourgeois economists) had been groping in the dark.

Two such discoveries might suffice for one man's lifetime. Fortunate is he who is privileged to make even one discovery so outstanding. But in every field he studied (the fields were many, and the studies were exhaustive), Marx made independent discoveries—even in mathematics.

I have pictured the man of science. But the man of science was still only half the man. For Marx, science was a motive force of history, was a revolutionary force. Whilst he took a pure delight in a purely theo-

retical discovery, in one which had not and perhaps never would have a practical application, he experienced a joy of a very different kind when he was concerned with a discovery which would forthwith exert a revolutionary influence on industry, on historical evolution in general. For instance, he paid close attention to the advances of electrical science, and, of late years, to the discoveries of Marcel Deprez.

For before all else, Marx was a revolutionist. To collaborate in one way or another in the overthrow of capitalist society and of the state institutions created by that society; to collaborate in the freeing of the modern proletariat, which he was the first to inspire with a consciousness of its needs, with a knowledge of the conditions requisite for its emancipation—this was his true mission in life. Fighting was his natural element. Few men ever fought with so much passion, tenacity and success. His work on the *Rheinische Zeitung* in 1842, on the Parisian *Vorwaerts* in 1844, on the *Deutsche Bruesseler Zeitung* in 1847, on the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in 1848 and 1849, on the *New York Tribune* from 1852 to 1861; a great number of pamphlets, multifarious activities in Paris, Brussels and London; finally, as crown of his labors, the foundation of the International Workingmen's Association: there you have his record. Had Marx done nothing but found the International that was an achievement of which he might well have been proud.

Because he was an active revolutionist, Marx was the best hated and most calumniated man of his time. He was shown the door by various governments, republican as well as absolute. Bourgeois, ultra-democrats as well as conservatives, vied with one another in spreading libels about him. He brushed these aside like cobwebs, ignored them, only troubled to answer them when he positively had to. Yet he has gone down to his death honored, loved and mourned by millions of revolutionary workers all over the world, in Europe and Asia as far eastward as the Siberian mines, and in America as far westward as California. I can boldly assert that, while he may still have many adversaries, he has now hardly one personal enemy.

His name and his works will live on through the centuries.

War Demystified

By Michael James

What is mystification? It means to ideologically obscure, conceal, confuse or cover up the truth. Bourgeois mystification defends, legitimizes and helps perpetuate capitalism. It comes from all around us—from corporate news and entertainment, from religion, from popular culture, and from public and higher education. What profound truths are consistently omitted and buried in bourgeois discourse?

First, capitalism is never challenged or questioned as the root cause of so much human misery. Second, socialism is never recognized as a sane, natural and desirable alternative. Third, the working class is never told of its power and glory as the creator of all wealth and of its historic mission to abolish capitalism. Fourth, the reality of class struggle is chronically denied or dismissed by bourgeois commentators, editorialists and so-called experts. Consider a recent minor but sterling example from academia.

A publication for mental health workers entitled *Counseling Today* recently printed an op-ed piece that tried to shed light on issues of social injustice. *Counseling Today's* contributor, Michael D'Andrea of the University of Hawaii, set his sights on U.S. militarism and concluded "the continued use of war as a means to resolve international differences reflects a reptilian mentality." War he defined as "a serious psychological disorder."

This is total mystification! It is a political worldview so shallow, so lacking in Marxian insight that it would be laughable except for the realization that this is what passes for higher education in America!

The U.S. ruling class is comprised of men and women, not reptiles, and as Daniel De Leon once observed: "Capitalists personally are often the mildest-mannered men that ever shattered a family or drained a workingman of his marrow." In other words, it is the logic and compulsions of a social system that is the source of war, not the individual or

even collective personality of capitalists.

D'Andrea got one thing right in his assessment of militarism and war, the assertion that "spending on WMD goes far beyond the need for the United States to defend itself against foreign attack." War is a method for conducting capitalist business, maximizing profit and securing ruling-class interests, not a psychological disorder. Yet, here is war explained away as an individualistic, psychological phenomenon attributable to certain U.S. political leaders who are supposedly akin to snakes or crocodiles.

Anyone who truly wants to understand capitalist wars need only glance at the *Communist Manifesto*: "The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere...The bourgeoisie finds itself involved in a constant battle...at all times, with the bourgeoisie of foreign countries."

Capitalism is an outmoded historical and evolutionary stage of social and economic development. Marxism allows us to understand individuals,

human relations and society, but mental health workers such as psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and counselors are often shackled by the bourgeois constraints of their respective specialties. They serve up individual cures for social diseases rooted in capitalism such as depression, addiction, loneliness, abuse of women and children, anxiety and alienation.

How does D'Andrea want to solve the problem of endless capitalist wars? The call is put forth to mental health workers to "build a culture" which will ensure "future survival."

Culture! Bourgeois mystifiers always go straight to culture. Commentators, teachers and writers who ignore or reject Marx simply avoid the question of degenerate capitalism with its private control over the means of social production and distribution, its brutal exploitation of labor and nature, its obscene enrichment of the few and callous abandonment of the many, and its corrupting profit motive. Why?

Mystifiers leap straight to culture because they passively assume that, as an economic arrangement for our society, capitalism is legitimate, inevitable and superior. Failing to see that capitalism has obtained legitimacy by linking itself with a mere pre-

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The Death of Public Education

By Bruce Cozzini

One of the purported values of American capitalism was public higher education that allowed youth to aspire to what was called the “American dream.” Its more honest purpose was to provide workers with skills that would be of value in the capitalist labor market at no direct cost to the capitalist employer. Public support was high enough that fees and tuition were nominal. However, in recent times more and more costs of higher education have been placed upon students (or their parents) to the extent that many students are now unable to afford an education or must go deeply in debt to attain their degrees.

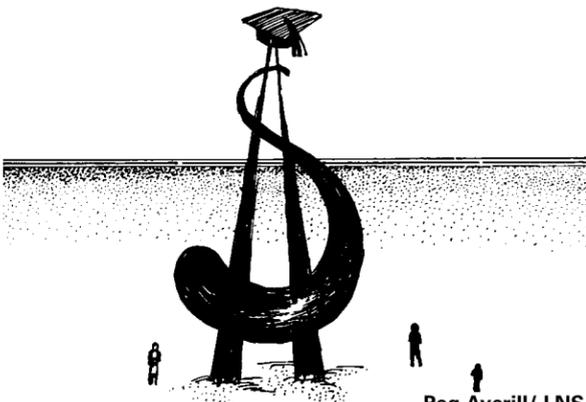
A survey by the Public Policy Institute of California found that “three-quarters of households making less than \$40,000 per year said costs prevented qualified students from attending college, compared to 56 percent people from households making \$80,000 or more.” (*Santa Cruz Sentinel*, Nov. 1) Two-thirds of those surveyed considered a college education essential for success in the workplace. Most respondents said it is harder to get an education than it was 10 years ago. Fees have risen precipitously in the past several years.

If rising fees are not bad enough, a recent government report on “Investment Planning in the 21st Century” suggests that a way to balance the state budget “might be to eliminate state funding for the University of California.” The authors of the article reporting this consider it a bad idea, considering the asset the university is to the state as a whole and business in particular. However, they note that this is taking place piecemeal: “In 1970, 7 percent of the state’s general fund went to UC. Today, that figure is less than 4 percent.” Compensating for that, student fees have almost doubled in the past four years. (*San Jose Mercury News*, Dec. 31)

Compounding the problem in California is the state budget deficit, which the governor is threatening to balance in part by a 10 percent cut in higher education expenditures. This is in the face of a

record number of student applicants to the California university systems. Possible remedies include increase in fees larger than the already projected, 7.4 percent for the UC system and 10 percent for California State Universities (CSU). The new budget is expected to deny enrollment to 10,000 new students at CSU. (*San Jose Mercury News*, Jan. 21)

It is not only in California that higher education costs are rising. The College Board released cost information from private and public universities around the country. *The New York Times* notes that



tuition rose to “\$6,185 at public four-year colleges this year, up 6.6 percent from last year, while tuition at private colleges hit \$23,712, an increase of 6.3 percent....Last year, tuition and fees at public institution[s] rose by 5.7 percent; at private ones, by 6.3 percent.” While fees are often offset by grants and tax benefits, the net costs are rising more quickly than prices of other goods and family incomes. (Oct. 22)

Also rising is the cost of room and board. When that is included, “At four-year public institutions, tuition, room and board on average now total \$13,589; at private colleges, \$32,307.”

How do students and their families pay these steep costs? Loans, federally guaranteed, private loans from banks, even credit cards are used. Private loans, not guaranteed by the federal government, added up to \$17 billion in the 2006–07 academic year. In the same period, students and their families borrowed \$59.6 billion in federally guaranteed loans. In 2003–04, students in for-profit institutions took out “an average of \$6,750 in loans, approaching the \$7,320 borrowed by students at private colleges, \$5,390 by those at public four-year institutions and \$3,180 at public two-year ones.”

And these loans add up. Leslie Wines, in an Associated Press article, observes that “a typical debt load soars into the tens of thousands of dollars.” The average debt for graduate students nationwide ballooned by 150 percent between 1994 and 2004 to \$37,600. Undergraduate average debt shot up 108 percent to \$19,200 over the same period. A couple of students cited by Wines estimated that it would take about 20 years for them to be debt free. That assumes, of course, that they will be employed at rates that they expect. (Oct. 28)

Today’s capitalism has taken what had been a social expenditure, paid by taxes, and put it onto the back of the student who is now put in the position of an investor at risk. In some universities, this is expressed explicitly by charging higher tuition for majors that promise higher incomes. Last July, Jonathan D. Glater reported that the University of Wisconsin was to begin charging \$500 more tuition per semester to undergraduate business majors. In 2006 University of Nebraska began charging \$40 additional fees for each hour of class credit in engineering. University of Kansas and Rutgers also apply differential fees for selected majors. (*The New York Times*, July 29)

In the past, American capitalism has offered workers the illusion of ever increasing prosperity. The route toward that in recent times has been higher education. Now that is becoming available primarily to the wealthy, who can send their children to Harvard, Yale or other institutions whose endowments are generously supported by capitalist wealth.

Now the student, the future worker, in a world in which higher education is required for many jobs, is put into a position at a serious disadvantage. Already in debt, the worker has less control over job choices and less bargaining power. And in competition with outsourced labor, the worker of the future faces a higher degree of exploitation and a lower standard of living than previous generations.

The American capitalist class has used its class-consciousness in a long-standing campaign to cripple higher education by lowering taxes on their profits and properties. Forcing workers to pay all costs of higher education reduces their real wages. Workers cannot fight this unless they develop their working-class consciousness and organize to overthrow the corrupt capitalist system and establish socialism.

...War

(Continued from page 2)

text of democracy, they mistakenly think that capitalism and democracy are the same thing. After all, who wants to oppose democracy?

Marx knew that “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” and that capitalism “has simplified the class antagonisms” so that “Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: bourgeoisie and proletariat.” Yet today’s mystifiers turn away from the class struggle and hide in culture!

There is a special irony in the fact that mental health workers come up so empty-handed in their quest to understand war. They should be joining the socialist effort to abolish capitalism. We have never needed Marx, the SLP, and *The People* so much.

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Texas Poverty

By B.B.

Two days before Christmas *The Dallas Morning News* Sunday edition published an alarming assessment of poverty in Texas, the second wealthiest state in the nation with a gross domestic product close to \$1.1 trillion. Tod Robberson, the author of the report, admonished his readers to be more charitable and consider how wealthy the state is and how well off they are! “As some of us enjoy the good times,” he intoned, “it can be easy to disregard people who are not sharing our success.”

Fact is the majority of working-class Texans are themselves only days, weeks or months away from the poverty of the homeless workers he refers to, depending on how far they can stretch their wages or savings in the event of unemployment. But he was not addressing Texas workers. His appeal was to “provoke everyone from the Legislature to the pulpit to the company human resources department to ask: Can Texas do better?” His appeal was to the corporations that profit from the exploitation of human labor and to the state that, in theory at least, is supposed to provide for the “common welfare.”

Some of the startling facts Robberson cited:

- Poverty—Out of a state population of 23.5 million, 3.87 million are impoverished, second only to California.
- Income—The average annual income of the poorest 20 percent of families in the state is \$14,700, while the average annual income of the richest 5 percent is 13.8 times that of the poorest, or \$203,200.

- Hunger—“16 percent of Texans live with hunger or in fear of starvation—the third-highest in the nation in 2005 after New Mexico and Mississippi.”

- Children—Of the 3.6 million impoverished in the state, 13.9 percent are children under age 5; 26.1 percent are children between ages 5 and 17. Indeed, something between one-quarter and one-third of children under 5 years old live in poverty.

Texas also hosts some of the biggest exploiters in the country, many of whom are centered in what is ironically labeled “The Golden Triangle,” an area roughly between Port Arthur and Houston. This is cancer country where corporations have the green light to ooze toxic waste and pollutants. Here 40 percent of the biggest refineries in the country produce plastics and petroleum products. An occasional devastating explosion, such as occurred at British Petroleum in Texas City killing 15 workers and maiming others in 2005, is cynically regarded as the cost of doing business. The health risks add to the ruined lives and poverty of the state. For example:

- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in the Golden Triangle counties of Jefferson, Liberty, Hardin and Orange average 523 cases per 100,000 residents, more than double Texas’s overall average of 259 cases per 100,000 residents.
- Cancer cases of all types come to 213 per 100,000 residents, against 185 cases per 100,000 in the state as a whole.

- Pollution ranks Houston and Beaumont (at the

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Karl Marx

Karl Marx died 125 years ago, on March 14, 1883, yet it is probably no exaggeration to state that his name is as well or better known today than virtually any other historic figure from the same period.

Around the world, millions of people revere the name of Karl Marx even though his life-long friend and collaborator, Frederick Engels, described him as the “best hated” man of his time. The very mention of his name still stimulates the vilest reactions on the part of ruling classes throughout the world, and more effort and wealth have been devoted to “proving” his ideas to be wrong than to most other fields of inquiry.

Marx would not have been surprised. The reason is that socialism, which is virtually synonymous with his name, is a science. Unlike botany, electronics or chemistry, however, socialism is also politics—working-class politics—and it challenges the existing capitalist order at almost every point. For that reason, as Marx expressed it, socialism arouses “the most violent, mean and malignant passions of the human breast, the furies of private interest.”

While revered by millions as a champion of the exploited, downtrodden and oppressed, it is probably true that the majority of those who recognize and honor Marx's name have only a vague idea of his accomplishments.

Marx lived in a period of modern history that was revolutionary in the changes that occurred in our productive capacity, in our social environment and in our thinking. In that period, capitalism was taking giant measures in its triumph over the previously dominating system of feudalism. The development of the tools of production led to an inquiry into the laws of nature that resulted in an age of science that overshadowed all the previous history of science.

Marx's contributions to social science include the development of the materialist conception of history. As Frederick Engels explained in the graveside oration printed in another column:

“Just as Darwin discovered the law of evolution in organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of evolution in human history. He discovered the simple fact (heretofore hidden beneath ideological excrescences)

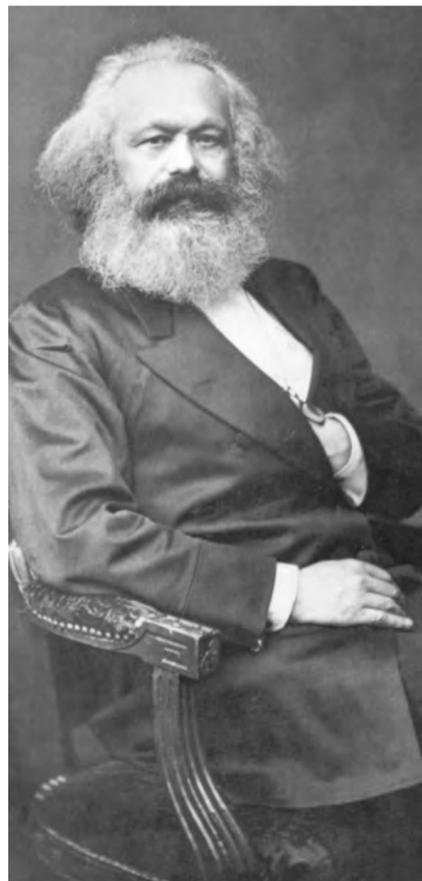
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Another major contribution of Marx was “the complete analysis of the value form and the scientific demonstration of the extraction of surplus value.” That is, Marx proved that labor, and labor alone, produces social wealth, and that the capitalists exploit labor by appropriating the value produced by labor over and above the amount that the workers receive in the form of wages. The ignoring of the surplus value concept in an examination of economics leaves the investigator adrift in a sea of confusion, and, in the case of capitalist “economists,” results in the tacit and false admission that capitalists make profit, when selling commodities at their value, by cheating each other.

Marx's third great contribution to social science was his exposition of the actuality and consequences of the class struggle. Marx didn't “invent” the class struggle. It existed before he was born. It manifested itself throughout his lifetime in ways over which he had no control or influence. It manifests itself today in the halls of Congress, as well as elsewhere, and would manifest itself today even if he had never been born.

Marx saw in the class struggle not the divisive force that it is within capitalism, but a progressive force that would force the exploited workers to organize for the ending of the society that is based on class rule and for the building of the socialist society that will know no classes.

This goal will mean a change in social relations that will forever end the subjugation of one social class by another, that will free the forces of wealth production from private and state control and enable humankind to use them for the production of bounteous plenty. It will elevate all humanity to the dignity and freedom that scientific achievements have made possible. We owe our knowledge that that goal can be achieved to Karl Marx.



A De Leon Editorial

‘Stimulating’ the Economy

The Bush administration's economic “stimulus” package inadvertently attests to the fact that capitalism robs workers as producers and not as consumers.



How to Increase the Common Capacity for Consumption

(The People, June 28, 1896)

In our last issue we commented upon a remarkable article in the *Journal of Commerce*, which went to show that the revolution in production, together with the high degree of perfection attained by the methods of production, brought society face to face with a new problem of surpassing importance. We also pointed out that, despite its many excellent features, the article betrayed here and there capitalist habits of thought that prevented the writer from boldly launching forward to the self-evident solution. We wish to point out today one interesting respect illustrative of this point. The writer says:

“The only wholesome remedy for this condition of affairs must be found in an increase of the common capacity for consumption.”

A leading defect of capitalist thought is the ignorance of the existence of a class struggle between the possessing or capitalist class and the propertyless or working class. Capitalist thought, being unscientific, knows naught of the fact that the biologic law of the struggle of the species is reproduced in the sociologic law of the struggle of the classes. Each class seeks to defend and perpetuate its interests. The class interests of capital push to the aggregation of larger and larger wealth into the hands of that class. To give up that policy is to abandon its stand and surrender its existence. To “increase the common capacity for consumption” means to increase in the hands of the masses, i.e., of the working class, the money value of the fruits of their labor; the fruits of the workers' labor is the pile from which now wages are taken for the worker and profits—interest, dividends, rent—are appropriated for the idler or capitalist. Hence it follows that to increase the workers' “capacity for consumption” is tantamount to reducing the idlers' (capitalists') fleecings (profits). In other words, the suggestion of remedying existing evils by “increasing the common capacity for consumption” means to leave extant the capitalist system with its class of oppressing and fleecing capitalists, but demanding of them that they disgorge part of their stealings. As well suggest that the dangers of the jungle be remedied by inducing the tiger to be less ferocious and voracious.

No doubt the “common capacity for consumption” must be increased. But to take up the subject of present social distress from that side is putting the cart before the horse. The existing low common capacity for consumption is not the cause of the existing distress; it is the result of an evil, which consists in the private ownership of the tools of production. These tools have to be operated collectively; without access to them labor cannot exercise its functions; being thus lamed, the masses are compelled to work for starvation wages, and thus the “common capacity for consumption” must inevitably be lowered.

The only remedy is the abolition of the social system that deprives the worker of the ownership of his product. The common capacity for consumption can be increased only by the overthrow of the sponging class of capitalists. Then only, and not before, will order prevail and wretchedness disappear. Capitalism must go.

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. It means a classless society that guarantees full democratic rights for all workers.

Socialism does not mean government or state ownership. It does not mean a closed party-run system without democratic rights. Those things are the very opposite of socialism.

“Socialism,” as the American Socialist Daniel De Leon defined it, “is that social system under which the necessities of production are owned, controlled and administered by the people, for the people, and under which, accordingly, the cause of political and economic despotism having been abolished, class rule is at end. That is socialism, nothing short of that.” And we might add, nothing more than that! Remember: If it does not fit this description, it is not socialism—no matter who says different. Those who claim that socialism existed and failed in places like Russia and China simply do not know the facts.

Socialism will be a society in which the things we need to live, work and control our own lives—the industries, services and natural resources—are collectively owned by all the people, and in which the democratic organization of the people within the industries and services is the government. Socialism means that government of the people, for the people and by the people will become a reality for the first time.

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, to end poverty, racism, sexism, environmental disaster and to avert the still potent threat of a catastrophic nuclear war. 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.

Agricultural Workers Still Bearing Heavy Load

By B.G.

Although all agricultural labor is difficult, often backbreaking work, the most arduous and exploitative is what is known as “stoop labor.” This refers to the labor involved in the planting, tending and harvesting of such low-growing crops as tomatoes, strawberries, potatoes, squash and cabbage, where workers are often constantly on their knees planting and harvesting or bent over weeding and picking all day long. They must also lift and carry the heavy crates holding their harvested crops. They are constantly pressed for greater and greater productivity by their boss, even when constant pressure causes injury to the workers trying to comply and keep up the speed.

Many of these laborers are Latinos, some of American birth, but often large numbers are undocumented immigrants from Mexico trying to earn enough to support their families after the Mexican agricultural economy had left them unemployed.

The growing numbers of American citizens who have become stirred up by news articles of increasing “illegal immigration” into the United States, and the politicians like Republican presidential hopeful Mike Huckabee and others who have tried to outdo one another by promising to keep out the undocumented worker by building a wall across the border, or by establishing an electronic fence across the border, etc., etc., etc., are not people who are envious of the jobs that these workers do. And they gladly and without question eat the food that these exploited workers provide.

Researcher Ann Aurelia Lopez, who spent 10 years studying 33 immigrant Mexican families in the United States and their families on various farms in Mexico, has produced the results in her book, *The Farmworkers' Journey*. She has concluded

that NAFTA, the legislation favorable to American agricultural capitalists that was passed during the Clinton administration, was actually the culprit that has caused enormous unemployment in Mexico and a flood of desperate Mexican immigrants into the United States seeking to keep their members alive by finding work wherever it was available.

NAFTA permitted U.S. corn producers to pour enormous amounts of American corn into Mexico, while the Mexican government at the same time ter-



Carol Simpson

minated its subsidies to their country's small corn farmers. The result was disastrous to these marginal farmers and their employees. The latter, desperate to make a living rather than to starve, sought work north of the border. NAFTA was a government gift to American agricapitalists, but a disaster for struggling Mexican workers. Large numbers of them chose to take the risky night-time journey northward to California where farm owners eagerly hired them for the backbreaking work that American laborers seemed unwilling to perform.

Another area of exploitation of farm laborers is

Florida, where 85 percent of the country's winter tomatoes are grown. The workers are subjected to long days, backbreaking work and low pay. A farmworkers' group has been formed by some of these laborers in the southern region of the state and is known as the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. It has been conducting a campaign to put pressure on growers to gain more favorable income for tomato pickers. They ask for a pittance—one cent more per pound of tomatoes picked, which would add a few cents more to each bucket picked by each laborer—and would raise a picker's wage to 77 cents per 32-pound bucket from the old, 45 cents per bucket.

The coalition succeeded in persuading McDonald's and Taco Bell to have the tomato-growing companies from which they received their tomatoes pay this small amount more to their laborers.

The New York Times (Dec. 24, 2007) reported that Burger King adamantly refused to make the request of its tomato suppliers. Also, the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange, the cooperative body that represents 90 percent of Florida's growers, considered this request for a few pennies more to be “un-American when you get people outside your business to dictate terms of business to you.”

Reggie Brown, the spokesperson for the Tomato Growers Exchange, further stated that the Immokalee Workers were in violation of antitrust laws in joining with the two companies that agreed to the slight raise in workers' wages.

A competent law scholar disagrees with this peculiar interpretation of American law. *The Times* quoted Prof. Mark Barenberg of Columbia University Law School, who said: “The only possible antitrust violation is by the growers since they seem to be conspiring among themselves to refuse to deal with fast-food companies that want to buy supplies made under certain specifications.”

The Florida Tomato Growers Exchange, however, has unveiled another strategy to undermine the workers' attempts at receiving a few more pennies per bucket. The growers' group has promised to impose “noncompliance penalties” on any of the growers that let third parties, like McDonald's, know what wages they pay or how much tonnage is picked by their laborers. As a result, growers who were scheduled to abide by the higher wage agreement with the two fast-food companies have now pulled out of that agreement after the Tomato Growers Exchange threatened to fine the growers who complied.

The Tomato Growers Exchange is fighting not only over pennies but also over the issue of power and the growing influence of the workers whose coalition is threatening to the agricultural capitalists who have heretofore been free to suppress the workers to the profit of business. What the workers have asked is minute, but that they should get it alarms the capitalists. The growers' spokesperson, Reggie Brown, insists that his group pays the workers a very adequate wage, as is proved by their continued choice to work as pickers and by the money they send to their families in Mexico and Central America.

Leaders of those church organizations and charities that have been assisting the workers economically for years disagree sharply with the growers' spokesperson about the supposed wealth of the workers. A spokesperson for the Campaign for Fair Food for the Presbyterian Church noted that their organization fully supports the workers in their quest for more economic justice and added that so far from receiving an adequate income from the tomato industry to support themselves comfortably, the workers were living near poverty. This church organization had for years assisted these workers financially to make up for the pittance they received from their employers.

Predatory capitalism obviously is not a thing of the past. It did not die in the 19th century. It is still alive and more than flourishing today in the 21st century, squeezing and exploiting workers as effectively as its predecessors did in past years. There is no such thing as a reformed capitalism.

The Death of Suharto

By B.B.

Another of capitalism's trusted toadies is dead. Indonesia's Gen. Suharto, who succeeded nationalist Gen. Sukarno in a bloody coup in 1967 and ruled for 32 years, died Jan. 27. His legacy is one of genocide, vile human rights abuses, monumental corruption, massive environmental degradation, nepotism, fear and widespread oppression.

Suharto's ascent to power came on the heels of U.S. concern that Indonesia was steering a course too close to its arch-rivals, China and the then Soviet bloc. Its immense natural wealth could not be allowed to fall into the “communist” sphere of influence.

Sukarno, Suharto's predecessor, had successfully rid the country of Dutch colonialism. His nationalization of the country's wealth was intolerable to the United States. With the assistance of the CIA, a foiled attempt by “left wing” military officers provided the pretext for a vicious political purge organized by Suharto, which accompanied his takeover of the military.

During the succeeding months, Suharto led a massive purge of so-called Communists, during which an estimated 600,000 people were murdered, though some estimates put the number closer to 1 million.

Suharto's regime was marked by numerous outrages, cronyism, corruption and swindling. His family amassed an immense fortune thanks to deals brokered with various corporations that gave them free rein to plunder the country. His money-grubbing wife, Tien Suharto, became known as “Madame Ten Per Cent.” Jim Gittings, writing in *The Guardian*, summarized the Suharto years accordingly:

“Under his rule Indonesia became closely aligned with Western interests during the Cold War and was rewarded with aid and investment to foster rapid economic growth—which made fortunes for Suharto's cronies and favored ambitious, but often unsound, development projects. Schemes to relocate millions of landless peasants and open up virgin forests paved the way for the country's current environmental cri-

sis. Vast numbers of political opponents were killed, jailed or sent to labor camps during three decades of Suharto's rule: tens of thousands died in East Timor alone after its illegal annexation in 1975.”

In spite of the brutality of his regime, or perhaps because of it, Suharto benefited from the support of every U.S. administration, Democratic and Republican, during his 32 years in power. Through the Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, the first Bush and the Clinton administrations, the differences in presidential attitudes towards the Indonesian despot were imperceptible.

Richard Nixon set the theme and “spilled the beans,” so to speak, during a 1969 visit to Indonesia. In remarks made in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta on July 27, 1969, Nixon praised Suharto and extolled his regime as “one of the great and most populous democracies in all the world...with unbounded natural resources” that “excite the imagination.” “There is much in the way of resources that needs to be developed,” he blurted out, “and to the extent that we and other nations on a multi-lateral basis, or a bilateral basis, can be of assistance, we want to play our fair part.”

After years of pillaging, we now see what that “fair part” has wrought. Feasting upon the resources and working class of the ravaged country are such outfits as Unilever, Mobil, Uniroyal, Goodyear, Union Carbide, Singer Sewing Machine, Freeport MacMoRan, International Nickel and a long list of other companies.

The consistency of U.S. relations with Suharto underlines the close alliance between U.S. capitalism and the state, the latter being no more than the obedient servant of the former. It further focuses on the murderous character of the system that has no scruples about its compradors killing off distant masses of Indonesian workers while garnering huge profits and enrichment. Capitalism bears the real responsibility for the crimes of Suharto. Indeed, he is not the only one who is dead. While one may mourn for the victims of the system, we must resolve to remove capitalism from the face of the planet.

...a Recession Begun?

(Continued from page 1)

Housing sales are still in a steep fall, foreclosures are still mounting, unemployment is on the rise, and the banking industry's mortgage meltdown crisis is widening into other credit areas, with rising defaults on auto and other loans and on credit card accounts.

Whether bourgeois economists call it a recession or a depression, events have already demonstrated that 2008 is and will continue to be a year of deeply increased economic suffering for many in the U.S. working class.

"Breaking a four-year string of growth in hiring, employers shed jobs in January, the clearest sign yet that the U.S. economy is nearing a recession, if not already in one," said a McClatchy Newspapers report in early February after the Labor Department announced that nonfarm payroll employment had fallen by 17,000 jobs since December. The officially reported unemployment U-3 rate was 4.9 percent for January, though the Bureau of Labor Statistics' own more accurate U-6 measure put the rate at 9 percent. According to a recent study by the Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR), U.S. unemployment as of June 2007 was actually 13.8 percent, based on the analytical methodology of a 2006 estimate of unemployment in Sweden produced by the McKinsey Global Institute.

The CEPR also released a report in early February estimating that "Up to 5.8 million more workers in the United States could join the ranks of the unemployed by 2011 if the economy were to fall into a severe recession," as another McClatchy Newspapers report put it.

The 2.2 million foreclosure filings in 2007 were 79

percent higher than in 2006. A January report from First American Core Logic projects that "The risk of foreclosure is on a rapid rise nationally, and could last for years," as a CNNMoney.com report put it. Core Logic found that the risk of foreclosure was 22 percent higher than in January 2007, and projects that risk will continue to increase over at least the next 18 months.

Despite the 2005 passage of new bankruptcy regulations that made filing for personal bankruptcies much more expensive and difficult, bankruptcies are again on the rise. According to the American Bankruptcy Institute, the number of overall consumer bankruptcies jumped by 40 percent in 2007, rising from 573,203 in 2006 to 801,840 in 2007. Bankruptcies among businesses are expected to rise in 2008, which will fuel more personal bankruptcies among workers.

Moreover, as an ABC News report put it in January, "Many of the poorest people in the United States are still struggling to recover from the effects of a recession that ended six years ago, making them very vulnerable as the country stands on the brink of a new downturn." The understated official poverty figures from the Census Bureau show 12.3 percent of Americans living in poverty, compared with 11.7 percent in 2001, at the end of the last recession.

In short, the economic state of the U.S. working class is already dire. If the economy has not already entered its next inevitable contraction, imagine the horrors it will deliver to workers when it does.

As *The People* has noted on many occasions over more than a century of U.S. capitalism's "business cycles," the contraction of the economy has nothing to do with what is possible, but with the constraints placed on society by capitalism's system of production for profit. Natural resources, factories and service structures still exist, undiminished, when a recession "comes along." So does human labor power.

Nothing changes in the months before a recession and the months after it begins except that capitalists make a conscious decision to cut back production and services because workers do not have enough money to buy back what they produce. Lacking opportunities for profitable investment, the tiny capitalist-class minority that owns and despotically controls the economy simply decides to throw as many members of the class that built and operates its industries and services out of work as it sees fit until a way is found to get rid of the surplus workers have produced—historically through exports, wars or other destruction of the products.

The irony of this is that workers produce more than they can buy, and are thereby oppressed by this surplus in the hands of the capitalist class, precisely because that class, in the biggest robbery in history, does not pay workers the full product of their labor. While workers seem to be paid for every hour they work, they are actually paid only the price of the commodity labor power, which represents—as does the price of any other commodity—only its cost of production, moderated by supply and demand, and weighted a bit by historical standards.

In short, capitalism's recurring economic crises are brought on by the absurd contradiction that workers are thrown out of work and into poverty because they have produced too much!

We have reached the stage of human social evolution where progress demands the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a collectively owned and democratically administered economy that produces to serve the needs of humanity and the ecology of the planet on which we live.

There is only one power that can serve to abolish capitalism and replace it with a viable socialist society that will serve the interests of all.

That is the combined political and industrial power inherent in the working class of the nation. Unless and until the workers of America recognize, accept and act upon these facts, the massive economic problems confronting us cannot be permanently resolved.

—K.B.

...Texas

(Continued from page 3)

center of the "Triangle") as fifth and 22nd, respectively, in the nation.

"Many living in the state's most high-risk areas don't stand a fighting chance against health problems because they have no health insurance," Robberson reported. "Per capita, we have the worst coverage rate in the country. In places like Port Arthur, the median household income is about \$35,000 a year—less than half of that of Plano. In other words, the people most exposed to toxins in their air and water are among the Texans least able to pay for health insurance."



What Robberson failed to note is that poverty is precisely the condition corporations feed upon. Why? Imbedded in the wages system is the commodity status of human labor power. It is the fundamental requirement of the system. Labor power, like any other commodity, varies with supply and demand. As a commodity, the price of labor power rises and falls consonant with its abundance or scarcity. When there is an abundant supply, better yet an oversupply, wages fall.

Readers of Mr. Robberson's dire account are left with no hope of rising out of the morass of chronic poverty expressed in the dour thought that "There is no prescription for a quick fix to the problems," which is "too bad. Because we all know that Texas can do better."

The state of Texas might or might not be able to do "better," but it is not likely even to make much of an effort unless something comes along to motivate it. What would motivate it to curb the greed and stimulate the cooperation of the state's ruling class in devoting the resources needed to at least mitigate the problem of wrenching poverty within its borders is a working-class movement that aims to replace the capitalist system with the economic democracy of genuine socialism. Such a movement would not only hold out the promise of mitigating poverty, but would provide the means of abolishing it.

directory

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255075100 years ago

GM-Toyota Venture Means Fewer Jobs for Auto Workers

(The People, March 19, 1983)

What's good for General Motors is not necessarily good for GM workers. The truth of that observation is being driven home with a vengeance by the recently announced joint venture between GM and Toyota to build subcompact cars at GM's idled plant in Fremont, Calif.

GM, the world's largest auto company, and Toyota, the third largest, will form a new company to produce 200,000 subcompacts a year, beginning in late 1984. The cost of the 12-year, \$300 million venture will be split evenly by the two companies.

For GM the venture is a good deal. Its \$150 million share includes use of the mothballed Fremont plant and \$20 million. Developing a subcompact from scratch to replace its aging Chevette would cost 10 times as much. GM will market the entire output and, with Toyota's sophisticated manufacturing technology, production costs should be substantially below those of GM's domestic competitors.

Toyota also benefits from the venture. It gains some relief from import restrictions that limit its U.S. sales to 530,000 vehicles a year. By employing U.S. workers, Toyota hopes to diffuse calls for even stricter limits. It will receive a royalty on each car sold. And its \$150 million investment is considerably less than the average of \$500 million each that Nissan and Honda are spending to build plants in the U.S.

Laid-Off Workers Living on Hope

The losers will be the 6,800 former workers at GM's Fremont plant. Since the plant finally closed a little more than a year ago, the laid-off auto workers have been living on the hope, fueled by periodic rumors of a deal between GM and Toyota, that they will get their jobs back.

Fewer than 800 of the former GM workers have found new jobs since the plant closed. Most workers have exhausted their unemployment compensation

payments, and only the most senior workers still receive any company-paid SUBs [Supplemental Unemployment Benefits]. Many are having trouble paying bills and feeding their families. Home foreclosure sales in Alameda County, where two-thirds of the former GM workers live, have tripled since the layoffs began in 1981.

255075100 years ago

God in a Brown Shirt

(Weekly People, April 22, 1933)

Keeping in mind the sociological dictum that man creates God in his own image instead of vice versa, one is able fully to appreciate the scene, which recently took place in the "Third Reich" when the "German Christians" got together in convention in order to reconstruct the church to meet the requirements of the times.

The "German Christians" met in Berlin on April 4. They constitute a Nazi Protestant movement that is determined to bring the church in harmony with the new order. The first meeting ended by giving solemn thanks to the Lord for his gift of Hitler to Germany.

On the following day 39 million good German Lutherans learned that their church was on the way to becoming part of the Nazi government, that it would be reorganized on Nazi lines. Its constitution will be rewritten and its parliamentary government will be abolished. The swastika and the cross will be placed side by side, and Protestants marrying members of a foreign race will be excluded from the church. The doctrine will be adopted decreeing that "if Christ returned to earth He would be a leader, alongside Chancellor Hitler, against Marxism and internationalism."

Among the many ludicrous resolutions adopted was one calling for the substitution of the living for the ancient language and for the dismissal of the Old Testament and substitution of "sagas and fairy tales to take the leading personalities from German spiritual, philosophical and artistic life."

We quote in part a canon that was adopted at the close of the first session:

"God has created me a German. Germanism is a gift of God and God wants me to fight for my Germanism.

"Service in war is not a violation of Christian conscience but is obedience to God....

"In the German view, the church is a community of believers bound to fight for Christian Germany. The aim of German Christians is an evangelical German state church. Adolf Hitler's state calls to the church; the church must heed the call."

And delegate Hossenfelder* declared:
"The Brown Shirts have cleared the way for us

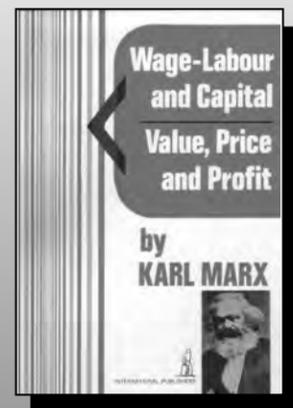
The human costs of this economic misery have been substantial. At least eight laid-off workers have committed suicide since the plant closed. Twenty-three have died of heart attacks and six from cirrhosis of the liver.

Officials of the United Auto Workers Local 1364 say that many families have broken up due to lay-off related tensions. Domestic violence is on the rise, according to local police. And a Fremont shelter for battered women is turning away more than 100 women and children a month due to lack of room.

and we shall be eternally grateful to them. Luther said a plowman can be more pious at his plowing than a nun at her prayers. We say a storm trooper in his fighting is more in God's will than a church that does not jubilantly join in the call for the Third Reich."

How strictly in keeping with the present order of things it would be if the Nazis clothed their Lord with a brown shirt and swastika and made him proclaim that He and His "chosen people" were at last ready to save the world with their *Kultur*.

*Presumably Joachim Hossenfelder (1899-1976), an early convert to Nazism, who was elevated to the post of bishop of Berlin and Brandenburg in September 1933.



International Publishers edition—

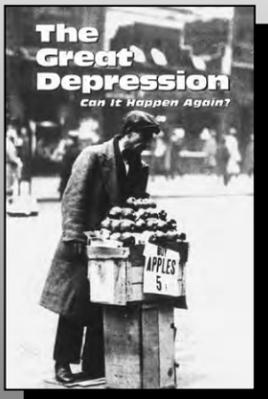
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ACTIVITIES

OHIO

Independence: Discussion Meetings—Section Cleveland will conduct discussion meetings on Sunday, March 9, and on Sunday, April 13, from 1-3 p.m., at the Independence Public Library, 6361 Selig Dr., off Rt. 21 (Brecksville Rd.) between Chestnut and Hillside. For more information call 440-237-7933.

Columbus: Discussion Meetings—Section Cleveland will conduct discussion meetings on Sunday, March 30, and on Sunday, April 27, from 1-3 p.m., at the Main Library, Grant and Oak streets. For information call 440-237-7933.

Funds

(Dec. 15-Feb. 15)

Press Security Fund

\$100 each Nicholas York, Keith Wood; Wendel Wettland \$25; Severino Majkus \$20; Tom Sanchez \$10; \$5 each Lavonne Lela, Dan Oskey, Tom Hight.
Total: \$270.00

Prisoner Subscription Fund

Richard Mack \$5.00 (Total)

SLP Sentinel Fund

Jack Radov \$1,925; John Houser \$477; Irene Schelin \$300; \$100 each Al Bikar, Don Rogers, Henry Coretz, Richard E. Edgar, Section Wayne County, Mich.; \$75 each Harvey Fuller, Walter Leibfritz; Lloyd A. Wright \$60; \$50 each Bill Kelley, Colleen Campbell Pedrazzi, Randolph Petsche, Robert Ormsby, Roger A. Stoll, Walter J. Leibfritz; James & Nancy Kniskern \$42; \$40 each Anonymous, Corrine K. Brodick; Juliette Jackson \$35; Joe Randell \$29; Karen Field \$25; \$20 each Donald P. Ruehl, Robert Jensen; Donna Meyer \$18; George E. Gray \$16; \$10

each Charles Bateman, Scott M. Sullivan; Sam Colman \$5; Joseph Bellon \$1.

Total: \$4,023.00

SLP Sustainer Fund

Joan Davis \$800; Bernard Bortnick \$500; Robert P. Burns \$400; Frank Cline \$245; Roy K. Nelson \$200; Lois Reynolds \$150; Sid Fink \$75; T. McGregor \$74.76; Al Bikar \$60; Robert & Mandarsita Brothers \$56; Mike Kowalski \$50; Richard A. Aiken (In memory of John W. Aiken) \$45; Jill Campbell & Steve Littleton \$40; \$30 each Clayton Hewitt, Earl Prochaska, Ken Boettcher; \$20 each Alex Iwasa, George E. Gray, James & Nancy Kniskern, Marshall G. Soura, Richard Cassin; James Lehner \$15; \$10 each Kenneth McCartney, Richard Mack; George Gaylord \$1.
Total: \$2,921.76

Socialist Labor Party Financial Summary

Bank balance (Nov. 30)\$ 44,216.03
Expenses (Dec.-Jan.) 18,569.32
Income (Dec.-Jan.) 9,435.55
Bank balance (Jan. 31)\$ 35,082.26
Deficit for 2007\$ 40,032.94
Deficit for Jan. 2008\$ 3,673.04

Goal of 'Responsibility' No Match For Competitive Struggle

By Diane Secor and Donna Bills

News of dangerous and defective commodities pouring out of China and into the United States and of the appalling conditions in which Chinese workers labor concerns all of us. The Socialist Labor Party calls for the abolition of the capitalist profit system, which is the root cause of these and other problems. Others, however, see another solution: "corporate social responsibility." It is viewed as a way to correct the misery, uncertainty and degradation that accompany the massive profits enjoyed by the companies that do business in China.

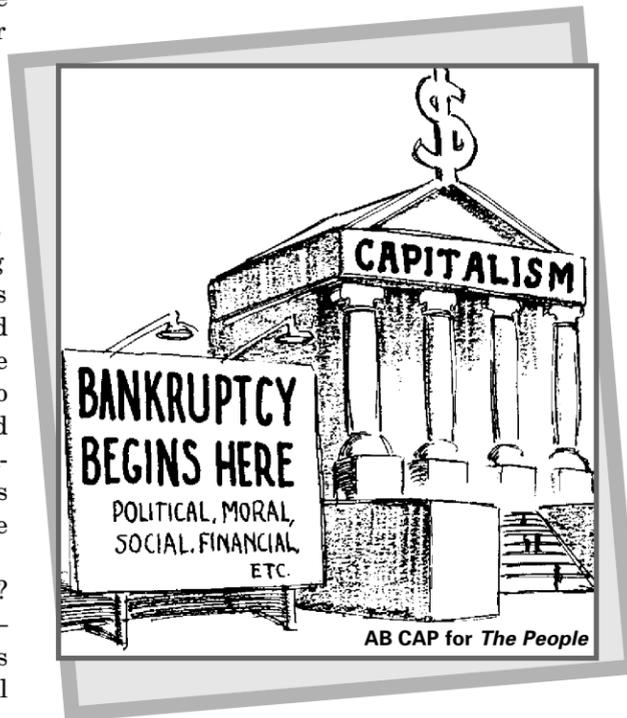
The Institute of Contemporary Observation (ICO), headquartered in China, offers consultations on corporate social responsibility for capitalists doing business there. Among other things, ICO councils corporations to "pursue labor rights protection" and to standardize production processes because "in the globalization era, consumers require companies to conduct its [sic] business practices with social and ethical standards, and [require] laws to reduce negative influence on society and environment." It boasts that it "helped over 200,000 workers" in its first three years of operation.

Can companies be induced to operate responsibly? After all, are not the companies currently in China—Nike, Gap and Mattel, among others—the same ones that demonstrated their capacity for "corporate social responsibility" when they fired workers in the United States to move production overseas?

Indeed, over 10 years ago critics assailed Mattel, Gap, Nike and other manufacturers for having their commodities produced under sweatshop conditions in China. The companies reacted by becoming "socially responsible." Their operations and suppliers became part of a system of inspections and factory audits that won approval by some for the improved working conditions. *The New York Times*, however, recently reported that despite all that, some companies still acknowledge problems. Alan Hassenfeld, chair of Hasbro, a company with manufacturing in China, was quoted as saying, "The factories have improved immeasurably over the past few years. But let me be honest: there are some bad factories. We have bribery and corruption occurring but we are doing our best."

The problem, however, is more pervasive and complicated than bribery and corruption among some

factories as Hassenfeld implies—and doing one's best, whether well intended or not, is not enough. It is common practice in China for suppliers to outsource to other suppliers who might outsource to still other suppliers to fill manufacturing orders demanded by U.S. corporations. Such practices make it very



difficult to regulate, much less correct, abuses, whether those abuses are cutting corners on manufacturing quality or on labor practices—or both. As the *Times* noted, "Western companies are constantly pressing their Chinese suppliers for lower prices while also insisting that factory owners spend more to upgrade operations, treat workers properly and improve product quality."

Wal-Mart, with an estimated \$9 billion of the products it sells manufactured in Chinese factories, is one company recently targeted for abusive labor practices by several groups. Fifteen factories that produce for or supply commodities to Wal-Mart were found to employ children as young as 12 years old. Other children worked 15-hour days and yet other children were exposed to and injured by toxic substances. (A company spokesperson promises that Wal-Mart would investigate!) The Hong Kong-based Students & Scholars

against Corporate Misbehavior report that deplorable working conditions in the Chinese factories and the shoddy commodities produced there are a direct consequence of Wal-Mart pushing their plants and other contractors and suppliers to use the cheapest labor and materials. All this, of course, so that Wal-Mart can compete effectively and reap its enormous profits.

In addition, independent unions are outlawed in China and existing labor laws are not enforced. Indeed, ICO's own director, Liu Kaiming, said, "This is a problem that has been difficult to solve. China has too many factories. The workers' bargaining position is weak and the government's regulation is slack."

So, as companies constantly pressure their Chinese suppliers to produce as cheaply as possible, with independent unions—even of the labor-faker variety—prohibited, and with lax enforcement of labor laws and manufacturing oversight, what exactly can ICO and other organizations like it accomplish by counseling "corporate social responsibility"? Nothing fundamental. The very nature of capitalism dictates it so.

Capitalism is an economic system where commodities are produced for sale with a view to profit. Its inherent competition guarantees that labor will be exploited to one degree or another and that commodities will be produced as cheaply as possible to maximize profits. Consequently, for any company to remain viable the drive for higher profits must override any desire for or pretense of "corporate social responsibility."

Until competition and the profit motive are removed from production and replaced by socially owned and controlled production for use, workers will continue to unavoidably suffer abuses in the workplace and risk consuming dangerous or defective products.

... Carcinogen

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Health, observes, "Working at night makes it difficult to get enough sleep. Sleep after night work usually is shorter and less refreshing or satisfying than sleep during the normal nighttime hours. Brain and body functions slow down during the nighttime and early morning hours. The combination of sleep loss and working at the body's low-point can cause excessive fatigue and sleepiness. This makes it more difficult to perform well, which increases the risk of accidents."

Shift work is clearly life threatening. Yet, under our existing economy, according to research published by the Sloan Work and Family Research Network, the continuing shift to more service industry jobs will only mean more night shift work.

Since the overwhelming majority of those who work night shift jobs do so because the job demands it—not because they prefer to do so—that means that increasing millions of workers will continue to be literally forced to live with this threat if they wish to survive.

Fundamentally, that is because under capitalism, when the interests of the tiny ruling class that owns and controls the economy dictate that the safety and health of workers be sacrificed for the sake of profit, they are.

The strength of a socialist society is that it can operate to serve human needs and wants rather than merely the profit interests of a few. Under a collectively owned, democratically administered socialist society, workers could abolish most such shift work and minimize the burden felt by individual workers for any tasks that could not be accomplished during the day.

But that's just a fraction of the revolution in work that will bring wonders of peace, plenty and new heights of human happiness with the transformation from capitalism to socialism.

China Better Its Image—Through Public Relations

By Diane Secor and Donna Bills

Hosting the upcoming 2008 summer Olympics has put a little pressure on China's ruling Communist Party. In addition to constructing the venues and infrastructure necessary for the games, the Chinese government has had to construct a better image of itself while leaving intact its repressive rule. That is no easy task to be sure, but with the help of world-renowned public relations firm Hill & Knowlton, headquartered in New York, they are succeeding.

How is this being accomplished? By boosting what it calls "cultural soft power"—a turning away from the government's usual control tactics of militarism and rigid diplomacy and toward culture and sports. This year, for example, Chinese New Year was extravagantly celebrated at Beijing's Olympic Museum with several days of cultural festivities that included speeches by the International Olympic Committee director general and the Chinese ambassador to Switzerland. The purpose of all this was to emphasize and honor the richness of Chinese culture and to give an appearance of decency to the Chinese government. That the celebration was held at the Olympic Museum with the IOC

and Chinese government representatives rubbing elbows provided an air of acceptance that is much needed by the Chinese Communist Party.

For its part, Hill & Knowlton announced in January 2007 "the launch of its arts and culture sponsorship service in China." According to its press release at the time, the company proclaimed that "In China specifically, an in-depth understanding of the government's agenda can turn a sponsorship investment into a highly influential communications campaign." In other words, Hill & Knowlton will ease the way for investing in China. Kodak, McDonald's, Coca Cola and Visa are some of the big sponsors of the Beijing Olympics that stand to reap large profits such sponsorship promises. And, under capitalism, what's good for the Beijing Olympic sponsors is good for how the world perceives China. Hill & Knowlton is there to ensure that both happen.

Public relations is defined by the *American Heritage Dictionary* as "The methods and activities employed to promote a favorable relationship with the public." The Chinese Communist Party in partnership with Hill & Knowlton is perfecting the practice.