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SLP CONVENTION FUND

The Bush 'Stuff'

A recent news service article reported the concern of some African Americans that the Bush administration will spearhead efforts to "torpedo civil rights and gut public education programs."

The so-called mainstream media has publicized similar concerns that others have about what the man in the White House might do where their own special interests are concerned. Activists of all descriptions have also expressed their own concerns in their own words through their own publications and by other means.

Environmentalists worry that pristine wilderness areas will be opened to oil drilling despite seemingly successful past struggles that appeared to guarantee their preservation.

Trade unionists are concerned that the new administration will try to undo many gains touching on everything from on-the-job safety regulations across the board to the right to organize and to go on strike.

Many similar concerns affecting everything from lowering the constitutional barrier separating church and state to the lowering of standards governing the inspection of meat sold to public schools have found their way into print.

All of these concerns are justified—including the one about the meat. As Thomas Oliphant of the *Boston Globe* explained:

"The only thing that stopped it was the outcry generated by its publication. In the odd political calculations that are governing public health policy in Bush II, salmonella in meat preparation for school kids apparently has a higher shock value than higher concentrations of arsenic in drinking water."

Oliphant thinks that there is only way to prevent these encroachments. "Simply put, the administration is going to keep trying this stuff and only intense vigilance will suffice as a check on it...."

We disagree. Something more is needed. Half-measures taken to slow down, stop or reverse the effects that capitalism has on our lives and the world we live in cannot change the nature of the system, the motivations of its beneficiaries or their determination to preserve their system. Sure, this administration will "keep trying this stuff," but so will the next, and the next after that, as did the last administration and the one

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THE ECONOMY

Production Workers Hit by More Layoffs

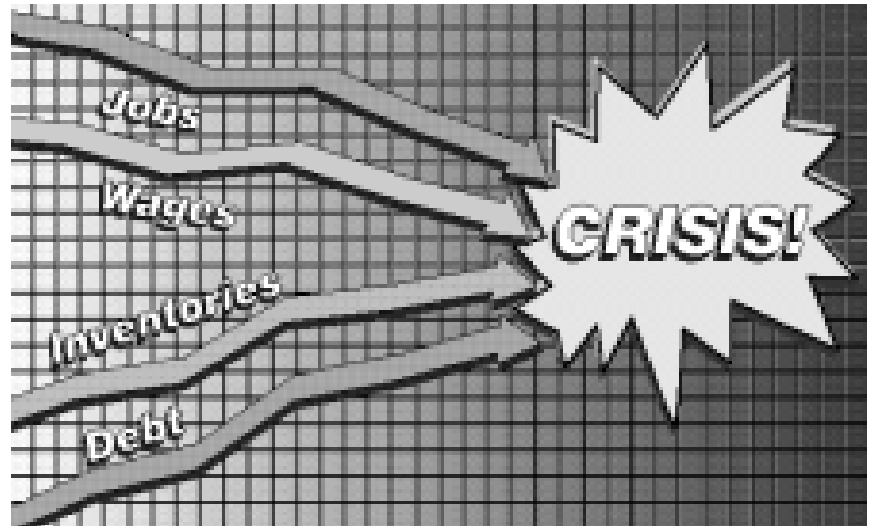
Massive layoffs continued to sweep through the industrial heart of the nation's economy during the first three months of the year as other unmistakable signs of an impending economic crisis were starting to pile up.

Swollen stockpiles of unsold commodities, declining wages, shortened workweeks and record-setting levels of working-class debt are some of the indications that the "bust" end of capitalism's "business cycle" is leading the country into yet another of its periodic economic downturns. How long it will last and how deep it will go is far from certain. What is no longer a matter for speculation, however, is that millions of workers will suffer.

Massive Layoffs

More than 240,000 manufacturing jobs were wiped out between Jan. 1 and March 31 according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the total since last June has been in excess of 451,000.

Overall unemployment also began to inch up as the number of new jobs created fell behind the number being wiped out. In April, Louis Uchitelle of *The New York Times* reported that jobs are disappearing at four times the rate that new ones are being created, reversing a pattern that held employment up for months despite the growing number of layoffs in many sectors of the economy. The number of new jobs added averaged 21,000 a month during



The People

the first three months of the year compared to a monthly average of 81,000 during the first quarter of last year.

Although the official unemployment rate edged up by only three-tenths of a percent to 4.3 percent in March, compared to 4.2 percent in February, it seems increasingly likely that those numbers will start to grow in the months ahead.

Inventories Piling Up

On April 1, the *Times* reported that Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan "has publicly leaned toward the view that the nation's economy is in a temporary, inventory-led correction, and that sustaining consumer confidence...is the key to preventing a longer downturn."

Who these "consumers" are sup-

posed to be is not clear. If he meant the capitalist class he had better look elsewhere. In April, for example, Cisco Systems of San Jose, Calif., announced that it was stuck with inventory that it could not sell at prices it anticipated.

According to a report in *The New York Times*, "Cisco has been caught with big surpluses of its equipment," and "that for accounting purposes... would reduce the value [sic] of inventory by \$2.5 billion this quarter, including \$500 million in partly completed equipment and \$2 billion of raw materials like computer chips."

The same report said that Cisco Systems "leads the market for routers, computers that manage data traffic on a network...."

In short, the products that Cisco
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Police Racism, Brutality Fuel Cincinnati Violence

By Ken Boettcher

Indignation against racial profiling, police brutality and the shooting deaths of 15 African-American men by Cincinnati police in just six years finally exploded into violence last month following the death of 19-year-old Timothy Thomas. It was the fifth fatal shooting of an African-American man by Cincinnati police since last September.

Hundreds were arrested as city mayor Charles Luken declared a "state of emergency" and imposed a curfew. But to many the state of emergency in Cincinnati has existed for decades, and simply reached the boiling point with what one local African-American capitalist described as "the killing of a person whose only crimes were the failure to pay several traffic tickets, and fleeing the police out of fear."

Police denied that the killing of Thomas was racially motivated. "Our police officers are not some band of rogue Nazis roaming Cincinnati hunting down and killing black men," said the president of the local police union in response to accusations from African-Americans. And in an effort to turn the tables on those who have accused

the police of just that, he added: "That's inflammatory, it's racist and it's wrong—absolutely wrong."

Police Chief Thomas Streicher also tried to deflect such accusations by suggesting that if racism was involved it was simply a reflection of a social condition.

"There are problems between the races in America, and it stretches much beyond police-community relations," he said, but without denying that those problems also embrace his department. "I think it is something that is encompassed by all the different aspects of society right now," he added, thereby suggesting that there is plenty of blame to go around.

However, Mayor Luken himself simply conceded that, "An end to racism...is a long way from reality here." Indeed, the Thomas shooting and the protests that followed were but the latest evidence of a long history of police brutality and racism that has plagued Cincinnati and its police department for decades. Federal and state courts have attempted to correct departmental problems with racism many times since 1981, when courts first intervened.

One would have to be blind not to see a pattern in Cincinnati's decades-long history of court-ordered "solutions" to brutal police repression and racism. True, police brutality is not limited to attacks on blacks or other people of color; it menaces all workers. But ongoing evidence of deep-seated, virulent racism among Cincinnati and many of the nation's other police forces cannot be denied.

Nonetheless, and regardless of his motive, Chief Streicher did not miss the mark. Police racism partly reflects racism in society as a whole. Capitalism is, after all, a system that requires divisions among workers in order to maintain the positions of wealth and privilege of the ruling capitalist class. Divided workers make it easier for capitalists to lower wages and thwart organizing efforts, and easier for the political state to curtail workers' basic rights and liberties.

But the racism and brutality of the police reflects more than just that. It is largely a byproduct of the social function of the police in capitalist society.

The police are the coercive arm of the capitalist-controlled political state
(Continued on page 6)

IBM Directly Profited From Nazi Use of Its Technology

By Bernard Bortnick

Thomas J. Watson Sr., the founder of International Business Machines, is a veritable demigod in the pantheon of capitalist "greatness." A recent book review posted on the Internet by Barnes & Noble described him as "one of our century's greatest minds," and somewhat redundantly as a man "who is revered as one of the 20th century's greatest thinkers...."

In its article on the IBM Corp., the online encyclopedia, Britannica.com, says that Watson "gained complete control of the firm by 1924" and "built the then-floundering company into the leading American manufacturer of punch-card tabulating systems used by governments and private businesses." It adds that, "During World War II, IBM helped construct several high-speed electromechanical calculators that were precursors of electronic computers."

In a biographical sketch, Britannica.com says that Watson "built" IBM and "aggressively pursued international trade in the 1930s and '40s, extending IBM's virtual monopoly of the business-machines industry worldwide." It also says that, "Watson was active in civic affairs and was noted for his efforts on behalf of the arts and world peace."

And there you have it: the ideal bourgeois man, bigger than life, in industry, a man of civic virtue, a patron of the arts, a promoter of peace—and according to the book referred to, the man who probably did more than any single individual to enable the Nazis to carry out the systematic extermination of millions of European Jews, gypsies, Communists and Socialists before and during the Second World War.

The book and its author, *IBM and the Holocaust* by Edwin Black, documents how Watson and his company provided the Nazis with the technology without which the Holocaust might not have been possible.

An article by Black in the April issue of



Hadassah magazine summarizes his book. He leaves no doubt about the cozy relationship that existed between IBM and the Nazis, and between Watson and Adolph Hitler. In 1937, Watson was presented "a medal of recognition from Hitler in a lavish Berlin ceremony. Considered Hitler's best friend in America, IBM was essential to the Nazis' ability to organize its war-readiness efforts—from troop and rail movements to the census that helped them identify hundreds of thousands of Jews and other undesirables in Germany and Austria."

Through its wholly controlled subsidiary, Dehomag, IBM supplied the Nazis with the most advanced calculator of the time—the 405 Hollerith, which Black describes as an "alphabetizer."

The Nazis were eager to get their hands on the IBM "alphabetizer" because it "could calculate 1.2 million multiplications in just 42 hours" for which "the slightly older 601 would need 800 hours."

Five of the machines were in Austria when the Nazis invaded Poland in September 1939. However, "even though Hitler controlled Austria, only Watson controlled IBM."

Watson initially refused to transfer control of the machines to the Nazis.

However, after some Nazi arm-twisting and vague threats he relented.

By November 1939, the Nazis were ready to organize their systematic extermination of Polish Jews. With the aid of IBM's 405s, a census of Jews was taken in Upper Silesia, Poland and Czechoslovakia the week of Dec. 17, 1939, in which every "person over 12 was required to fill out forms in duplicate and be fingerprinted" under threat of execution. IBM New York set up a special subsidiary right across the street from the Warsaw ghetto where 20 million of the "punch cards" needed to operate the 405 Hollerith were printed.

Dehomag's profits soared after the process got under way. A grateful Nazi, H. Rottke, Dehomag's general manager, sent Thomas Watson greetings of the season stating, "As Christmas is approaching I feel an urgent desire to express my most sincere and best wishes for a joyful Yuletide..." Rottke had good reason to be jubilant, for Dehomag's profit doubled from the previous year.

"The Polish case is just one of the many examples of IBM New York's intense involvement with Germany's murderous activities," Black wrote, and even when

subsidiaries in Nazi-controlled countries were placed under German-appointed receivers, all assets of the corporation were protected until after the war when the company "reclaimed its subsidiaries from receivership and collected all the frozen profits."

IBM retained control over the 405 Hollerith "alphabetizer" throughout the war. That appears certain because the machines were useless without the special "punch cards" that Germany could not manufacture and only IBM could supply in the quantities needed.

Acting through its subsidiaries in "neutral" countries after the United States entered the war in 1941, IBM continued to send billions of "punch cards" into Germany where they were used to systematize the identification of Jews and others, thereby enabling the Nazis to round them up and ship them off to the death camps in huge numbers.

"It was never about anti-Semitism," Black wrote. "It was never about Nazism. It was always about money."

If Black's documented compilation of facts is accepted as correct, the conclusion would seem inescapable that Thomas J. Watson Sr., the founder of IBM, "revered as one of the 20th century's greatest thinkers," was a war criminal, an accessory to murder on a colossal scale. But all reasoning points to a more fundamental issue, a systemic problem. Indeed, there were a bunch of American companies with profit links to the fascists, and in this the only just conclusion is that capitalism is an amoral criminal system whose primary beneficiaries—the capitalist class—don't care a whit about patriotism, morals, humanity, posterity or any civilized value. Property and profits rule.

Do You Belong?

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

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

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

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A De Leon Editorial

Class Struggle Is Global

Marx's call for the international solidarity of the workers is the answer to capitalism's worldwide exploitation.

Internationality a Fact
(*Daily People*, Jan. 26, 1911)

The railroad strike of Portugal, together with the international sentiment evoked against the same at all the stock exchanges of the world—from Berlin to Chicago, from Paris and London to New York—is one of those "capitalist manifestations" that contribute solid chunks of guidance to the practical labor or socialist movement. The particular point in the practical socialist or labor movement, that the international sentiment expressed at the stock exchanges against the said strike throws light upon, is the question of immigration.

The Marxian motto "Proletarians of all countries, unite!" is frequently considered, even by people who favor socialism, as a purely sentimental utterance. These people consider the utterance pretty, but of no practical value; and, when the utterance is sought to be applied to the question of immigration the cry is raised of "impractical," and the motto, together with all that flows therefrom, is rejected.

Fact is, there is no sentiment whatever in the Marxian motto, nor any in the matter of liberal immigration. The former, and its consequence, the latter, are supremely practical; and, as such, they are broad based on facts, leaving

their opposites sentimentally in the air.

Robust is the fact that capital is international; knows no "country," save the world; recognizes no god, save profits; bows to no flag, save that of the \$. The necessities of capital betray the fact at every turn. Periodically announcements are made of stocks sold in England, Germany, France, and of loans raised there on American railroad, mining and other properties; of Japanese and Argentinean government bonds sold in Berlin and New York; of Russian railroad and oil securities placed in Chicago. It is now discovered that Portuguese railroads are likewise owned, not at home, but internationally, hence the difficulty in settling the strike.

The first conclusion from all this cannot be escaped—it is not the capitalist class of any one country that rides the working class of that country: it is international capital that rides the international proletariat.

The second conclusion makes mince-meat of all charges of "sentimentality" preferred against the socialist posture of liberal immigration. Indeed, the second conclusion turns the tables upon the anti-immigrationists and convicts them of the worst of sentimentality—the sentimentality of superstition.

Nations today are like craft unions—compartments into which it is sought to keep the proletariat divided. The capitalist himself is above such superstitions. He needs a field as broad as the earth for his depredations; and, in the darkness which he creates, all capitalist cats are, to him, gray. Those who, though believing themselves Socialists, would distinguish between the proletariat of one country and of another, succumb to the capitalist sleight-of-hand of imagining differences where there are none; hence, of resisting the immigration of their fellow wage slaves.

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Fraudulent 'Power Crisis' Shows Need to Dump Capitalism

By Ken Boettcher

The "power crisis" that began in California, spread elsewhere over the last year and reportedly threatens to grow to national proportions this year, makes clear in whose interests the electric power industry is being "deregulated." But it does more than that. It also underscores a fundamental contradiction of a social system that places in the hands of a few the economic and political power to deliberately create crises affecting society as a whole.

This contradiction of capitalism is not something that the so-called mainstream media has spent much time pursuing. As an article in the March issue of *Local Power News* put it, media pundits and industry "experts" are busy trying to sell the idea that the power crisis—and the virtually unannounced "rolling blackouts" and their consequent endangerment of public safety—are the result of "the unfortunate convergence of increasing demand, bad weather, random power plant outages, grid problems and, most of all, 'not enough deregulation.'"

The real story places the blame squarely on the utility industry and the deregulation that its top executives pushed through. As Harvey Rosenfield, president of the advocacy group Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights (FTCR), noted in an article last month, "PG&E [the largest California utility] wrote the 1996 deregulation law."

In an article on the Web site of the Electricity Forum, Rosenfield observed that, "Under the plan, ratepayers were forced to pay higher rates for four years (1998–2002) in order to pay off \$28 billion in bad debts of the state's three utilities—San Diego Gas & Electric, Pacific Gas & Electric and Southern California Edison—before the free market would kick in. To disguise the bailout, legislators then imposed a 10 percent rate 'reduction' for four years, financed by bonds ratepayers would have to repay for 10 years. This plan was hailed by the utility industry as a model for the nation and, indeed, more than 20 states have followed California."

Competition never materialized. The utilities sold off most of their power plants. In PG&E's case, some plants were sold to a separate "generating" division of the same new mother company that owned PG&E's "distribution" arm. Proceeds went to the mother company. "Floating in dough," Rosenfield continued



Nuez/Granma/LNS

in the FTCR article, "the utilities went on an international spending spree, while they increased dividends to investors and jacked up their CEO's executive compensation to \$2 million plus."

The eight power generation companies that served California began using their bolstered and unregulated near-monopoly positions to manipulate the market by keeping some power plants out of service on various pretexts, thereby artificially creating a "shortage" of electricity. As the *Local Power News* article observed:

"California...has more than 45,000 megawatts [of generating capacity], while peak demand during the blackouts this winter hovered below 30,000, according to the state."

The rolling blackouts, many observers

contend, amount to blackmail by power generation facilities determined to drive up the market prices for power, and thereby their profits.

The result has been the destabilization of "a huge energy delivery system that had functioned reliably for nearly a century," as *Local Power News* put it. Despite an economy already careening down the slippery slopes of recession, the power producers have been willing to throw the production of Silicon Valley products into chaos and complicate an already sticky economic situation for high-tech capitalists. The fake energy shortage has contributed to layoffs and threatens to add greatly to other costs in the area that are already resulting in the flight of some industry from the region—and led to the filing of PG&E's power dis-

Bush Administration Shows Its 'Compassion'

By B.G.

During the 2000 presidential election campaign, candidate George W. Bush repeated ad nauseam to his audiences, "I'm a compassionate conservative." He kept the far-right ideologues, the Christian right and the wild men of Congress well under wraps so as not to embarrass him with the more moderate voters. Bush was free to ooze compassion at every campaign stop. He promised "to leave no child behind." He excoriated Vice President Al Gore for merely promising to urge industries to keep their carbon dioxide emissions under control and stated that he, George W., intended to demand that power plants control the emissions of carbon dioxide. Bush was truly a champion at on-upmanship. The aim was to mesmerize the public into believing he was a "moderate" conservative (whatever that is).

Barely two months into his presidency, he made manifest the true nature of his heart-felt compassion. His head of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Christie Whitman, had publicly announced that her agency was preparing to curb carbon dioxide emissions to lessen the danger of global warming. That announcement launched a heavy protest campaign in early March by four Republican senators led by Sen. Chuck Hagel of Nebraska, and by a collection of coal and oil utility lobbyists. They put severe pressure on Bush and his chief advisers to reverse the decision. Dutifully bowing to the pressure from the business interests that had generously supported his political campaign, President Bush in mid-March demonstrated the deep compassion he had for the mining industry and the profits of oil and coal-fired utili-

ties by immediately reversing his campaign promise on the premise that the country had "an energy crisis."

His abrupt reversal made EPA administrator Christie Whitman look like a fool, but she took it all in good stride, as any loyal and obedient Republican politician should.

The so-called "energy crisis" that Bush concocted was a reference to the current electricity problems imposed on California by the utilities industry. That power problem, however, has little to do with coal and oil utilities, which are the greatest emitters of carbon dioxide, because California obtains its electricity largely from natural gas, nuclear power, hydropower and wind power.

Christie Whitman fell obediently into line on another pet Bush issue. On March 20, the EPA announced that it was going to reverse a ruling of the Clinton administration severely limiting the amount of arsenic in drinking water to 10 parts per billion. The mining and lumber industries had strongly opposed this regulation. Now the EPA will revert to the outmoded 1942 standard of 50 parts per billion. Administrator Whitman stated that the current status of science does not support the need of a smaller amount of arsenic in water, but that more study is needed. In a TV interview, she offered the view that the Clinton administration directive was based on "squishy science."

Begging to differ with Mrs. Whitman is a 1999 National Academy of Science report stating that the old standard of 50 parts per billion of arsenic in drinking water "could easily" run a 1-in-100 risk of cancer, and recommending that the levels be revised downward "as promptly as possible." The 10 parts per billion stan-

tribution arm for bankruptcy protection.

The only "solutions" so far proposed by state officials and most pundits in the press involve "ratepayers"—other capitalists and workers alike—paying higher prices for electricity.

Many workers are already fighting these increases. They know the toll on their living standards that rate hikes of several hundred percent—such as those already experienced in Southern California—would have. But fighting these effects *solely* is a waste of time. What is ultimately needed is a socialist reconstruction of society.

The fact that we are faced with another summer of growing anarchy in power production and distribution—thanks to the profit interests of energy capitalists—marks a salient feature of a social system in decline: the utter inability to rationally attack and resolve any of the major social problems it faces.

A viable, comprehensive energy policy, one in which energy would be produced with minimal pollution and every effort made to protect the environment and public safety—would require that individual capitalist interests be set aside, and necessitate a degree of rationality and planning that is nonexistent under capitalism. Under capitalism energy policy will never be shaped by rationality and the long-term interests of society, but by competing private economic and political interests.

Only the administration of society under a collectively owned, democratically operated socialist economy could integrate the efforts of science and technology, engineering, architecture, agriculture and manufacture and thereby transform energy production from its currently fragmented, profit-oriented development into a cooperative social effort benefiting all.

dard of the Clinton administration was identical to the amount adopted several years ago by both the World Health Organization and the European Union.

Chuck Fox, former assistant administrator for water at EPA, expressed dismay and outrage at the new Bush initiative. "This action," he said, "will jeopardize the health of millions of Americans and it compromises literally a decade worth of work on behalf of developing a public health standard." In an op-ed piece in *The New York Times* (March 22), he noted that the EPA "developed these new standards under rigorous scientific review. Arsenic exposure is closely linked to lung and bladder cancer and many other adverse health effects....The old standard of 50 parts per billion was established in 1942, long before new research on arsenic's effects."

Bush supporters, however, are very happy with the new reversal and are reminding the public that arsenic is "a naturally occurring substance." Of course it is. So is lead. So are animal droppings. Does that mean that we have to have them in our drinking water or in our food?

Arsenic is a byproduct of mining operations and a substance used in pressure-treating lumber. As a consequence, both the mining and lumber industries are rejoicing at the new Bush administration directive, and are hailing the president's compassion.

As for leaving no child behind, the Bush administration has announced that it intends to make deep cuts in the upcoming budget in programs for providing child care, preventing child abuse and training doctors at children's hospitals. The child care grants are slated for cuts of \$200 million and the child abuse program for a cut of \$15.7 million. He also intends to eliminate completely the \$20 million that Congress had appropriated for an "early learning fund" to improve the quality of education and child care for children under age 5.

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A PAGE FROM WORKING-CLASS HISTORY

The Kilbowie Strike

The month of March 2001 marked the 90th anniversary of the first significant strike ever waged against a multinational corporation. That strike occurred at the Singer Manufacturing Co.'s "Kilbowie" plant at Clydebank, Scotland. The strike was defeated after a few weeks, but its importance is not affected by the outcome. Indeed, the lessons derived from the struggle are of particular importance in these days of multinational corporations and global capitalism.

What follows is the second and concluding half of text of a manifesto issued by the Industrial Workers of Great Britain after the Kilbowie strike ended. It was published in July 1911 in *The Socialist*, the official monthly journal of the Marxist-De Leonist Socialist Labor Party of Great Britain. Although the strike itself was directed by a strike committee of the 12,000 men and women who waged it, the IWGB and SLPGB both played significant roles.

Two previous articles on the Kilbowie strike, also taken from *The Socialist*, were reprinted in our issues of February and March. The first half of the manifesto reproduced here was printed in our April issue.

—Editor

(Continued from last issue)

Let us summarise the condition of affairs at this juncture. Out of over 12,000 workers in Kilbowie Works, about 1,500 were members of the I.W.G.B.—most of them members of only a few weeks' standing. Furthermore, this membership (although members were to be found in almost every part of the works) was mainly centred in four departments. The remainder had no sort of organisation, except the few tradesmen who belonged to their respective unions. The common sentiment among them was "The workers in the Buffing Department have got their grievance settled. The men in No. 10 Department sent a deputation to the Manager and got what they wanted. No. 16 Department have stopped the bullying and victimisation by a 'policeman.' Can we not all go and do likewise?" The reasoning was plausible and seductive. All had grievances. There was abundance of motive for action. The pluck and courage of the working class was also present. The one thing lacking was organisation and education.

On Tuesday, the 21st of March, the Buffing Department, No. 13A., had sent a deputation to the Manager with the knowledge and approval of the General Committee of the I.W.G.B. The Committee had also been informed that the girls of the Cabinet Polishing Department were sending a deputation to protest against certain grievance, among which was a serious reduction in wages. The General Committee promised both departments their support. In doing so they did not contemplate the possibility of a general stoppage. They merely looked for, at most, a strike among the four departments which contained the bulk of their membership: Accordingly the deputations visited the Manager. No. 13 Department received satisfaction upon all the points in dispute. The other department was less successful. While the management gave way upon certain matters, it refused to make any concessions on the vital question of the reduction in prices. Accordingly, the Cabinet Polishing Department came out on strike forthwith, and the men in No. 13, although their own grievances had been rectified, immediately followed them—in pursuance of the decision of the General Committee. The other three

departments organized in the I.W.G.B. also struck work automatically.

For the first day, then, the strike was confined to the I.W.G.B. departments, and was controlled by an I.W.G.B. Committee. Next day, however, there was a general movement of revolt. Department after department struck work, until by the end of the week practically



The Singer Works, Clydebank. (Circa 1910)

all the workers were out except the foremen, clerks, and a few tradesmen. This development had not been foreseen by the I.W.G.B., but, when it took place, they were quick to face the situation. It was seen that an I.W.G.B. Committee could not effectively or honestly act as representatives of a body of strikers of whom only a fraction were Industrial Unionists. Accordingly, it was arranged that each department as it came out should appoint five delegates to act as its representatives on the Strike Committee. This was done until on the following Monday 37 out of 41 departments were represented. Thus, before long, the Industrial Unionists were in a minority in the Strike Committee, and consequently the I.W.G.B. cannot, as an organisation, claim whatever of credit or of blame attaches to the action of this body of delegates. While this is so, however, the I.W.G.B. is proud to have been associated with such a Strike Committee. Its whole conduct of the strike, its spirit, courage, vigour, and unanimity were in line with the best traditions, the finest qualities of the working class. Mistakes there may have been; it is easy to be wise after the event, but the general management of the strike by this Committee is beyond all praise.

But no Strike Committee, however capable, could have done what they did, had they not been supported by men and women of the proper stuff. It succeeded where it did succeed, because it was, in a true sense, representative of the strikers, and because the admirable qualities which it possessed, were in very truth a reflection of the sterling manhood and womanhood of those who elected them. For a fortnight eleven thousand men and women, without strike funds, with no assistance in the way of speakers and organisers save that derived from their own ranks, with only a fraction of their number organised, kept at bay a Trust of world-wide importance and gave the working class of the entire country a lesson in orderly and determined solidarity. One of the most remarkable demonstrations in the history of the Labour Movement was that arranged by the Strike Committee when, on the Saturday following the outbreak of the strike, the workers went to the works to receive their arrears of wages. Eleven thousand

met in Kilbowie Park and marched, nine abreast, in their separate departments with bands and flags up to the works' gates. The local daily and evening press, organs not by any means sympathetic to the strikers, bore unanimous testimony to the order and organisation displayed. The *Glasgow Evening News*, a paper which was from first to last bit-

monosyllable which greeted them as they entered the works' gates. When the strike began to break down, they were the first by post cards to signify to the management their willingness to return to work.

An even lower depth was reached by the Scottish Typographical Society. The printers employed in Kilbowie Works belong to this union. The girls who "feed" paper into the machines, not being organised in a trade union, came out in support of their sisters of the Cabinet Polishing Department. The "organised" printers refused to come out, and the management, encouraged by their treachery to their fellow-workers, called upon them to commit the further infamy of doing the work of their feeders who had struck. This was a little bit too strong even for trade union stomachs. They refused, and the management told them that in that case, as there was no work for them to do, they had better go fishing, and out they went, or rather out they were pushed. Their Executive Council forthwith intervened, and, incredible as it may seem, ordered them to do the work of the striking girls, i.e., to act as scabs, until such time as they, the officials, got girls to take the place of the striking feeders. In other words, the EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF A TRADE UNION PROPOSED TO ACT AS A SCAB RECRUITING AGENCY FOR SINGER'S LIMITED.

Admirable as the conduct of the strikers was, unorganised valour cannot prevail against the organised forces of plutocracy. And it was precisely this lack of organisation which the management selected as a means of striking the workers in their weakest places. First rumours were spread that the works would be closed down. Next, post cards were sent by the General Manager to every one of the employees (and to a great many more) with a reply post card attached. This post card promised that, on a resumption of work, all grievances would be investigated, and any injustice rectified. It also, while refusing collective bargaining, granted to the workers the right of sending a deputation direct to the management if any dispute arose, provided the deputation was composed of the workers immediately affected. On the reply post card was a statement, with a blank space for the signature of the addressee, pledging the signatory to return to work when the firm should be able to assure him that 6,000 persons had signed the agreement.

This was a particularly insidious move, and one very difficult to counteract. To begin with, the firm had the addresses of all the workers. The Strike Committee

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terly hostile to the workers, and which raised itself to a bad eminence, even among its dirty peers, by a particularly odious and malevolent expression of triumph when the strike failed, had the following remarks to make upon the demonstration:—"Never before in the history of the burgh have more stirring scenes been witnessed in Clydebank than those which presented themselves in the streets this morning." "One of the most singular and novel demonstrations, which could only have been accomplished by excellent internal pre-organisation." "One of the features—besides that of its impressive character—was the absolute good order which prevailed, a fact to be wondered at considering the number of persons taking part in the parade and the difficulty always experienced in handling such a huge crowd." A further proof of the discipline and self-control of the strikers was the entire absence of foolish acts of violence by which the workers in trade union strikes often play into the hands of the capitalist authorities.

In strong contrast with the fine spirit of loyalty displayed by the unorganised and "unskilled" strikers is the pitiful part played by those aristocrats of labour, the "skilled" trade unionists. While some, such as the Sheet Metal Workers, organised in the Scottish Tinplate and Sheet Metal Workers' Society, earned an honourable distinction by coming out in support of the girls of the Cabinet Polishing Department, with whom the strike originated, and sent their delegates to the Strike Committee, the great majority of them either stayed in altogether, or only came out, either because there was no work for them to do owing to the general cessation, or because they were shamed into it by the well merited stigma of "scab" which was hurled at them by the indignant strikers. It was under these circumstances that the members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers came out. (They had been preceded, by the way, by the unorganised engineers, who had no pure and simple union to stifle their class instinct.) The A.S.E. men came out, cursing the strikers as "a mob," ignored the Strike Committee, and tearfully apologised to their officials for their action, explaining that they did not come out on account of sympathy with the strikers, but because their sentiment of self-respect (!) was hurt by the odious

Strike and Its Lessons

had none except those of the small minority organised in the I.W.G.B. The cards reached the workers individually in their homes, unsustained by the courage and confidence which the society of their fellow-workers inspired. Further, being spread over a wide area, no one knew how others were going to act. Finally, only 24 hours were given in which to make the reply, so that the Strike Committee had no time to counteract the move, nor had the workers, especially in the outlying districts, adequate time to consult the Strike Committee. Another point to be noted is that the management sent cards to thousands other than strikers—to all their clerks, foremen, and assistants, to people who were dead or out of the country, and to others who had long been out of their employment. Consequently, it is not surprising that when the enumeration took place, cards purporting to be signed by 6,527 men, women, foremen, corpses, and clerks were counted by Provost Taylor as expressing a desire to resume work. This meant the end of the strike.

The Strike Committee, in the short time at its disposal, urged all the workers to send the postcards to them crossed "Refer to Strike Committee." In spite of the overwhelming difficulties they had to face and the demoralisation which had set in, they secured 4,025 cards, counted by the same enumerator. This, under the circumstances, was a remarkable achievement, considering the fact that no cards were sent either to the Strike Committee or to active strikers. Indeed, it is not too much to say that had the workers been even approximately organised, had the Committee been in possession of the addresses of a substantial portion of them, the number of cards returned to them would have represented a considerable majority of the strikers, and the management would not have secured anything like the number of cards they claimed to have secured, unless by resurrecting half the graveyards in the Clydebank district.

After an unsuccessful attempt to make terms with the management on behalf of those 4,025 who had returned their cards to them, the Strike Committee recommended a resumption of work. Department meetings were held which confirmed this recommendation. The workers had come out in organised fashion. They went back in like orderly array, not as a panic-stricken mob. They had been defeated, but the defeat did not degenerate into a rout.

When the strike was breaking down, the management spread the statement that no victimisation would take place, and the 4,000 who stood by the Strike Committee pledged themselves to resist any such attempt by combined action. Circumstances have occurred which have prevented them from putting this pledge into effect. The firm has created an artificial slackness by importing goods from their works at Elizabeth Port, New Jersey. The workers there had, at the outbreak of the strike, been working eight and a half hours per day. They straightway had their working day increased by one hour, and, so far as can be learned, it still stands at that. British Labour is being defeated by American Labour, but in this case, as capitalist interests are involved, no protest has been made by those self-styled friends of the working class,—the Tariff Reformers. Under cover of this pretended slackness over a thousand men and women, including all active in the strike, the entire Strike Committee, the entire General and Shop Committees of the I.W.G.B., and every known Industrial Unionist have been dismissed from the

employment of the firm. In spite of this the Singer's Group of the I.W.G.B. has preserved its organisation and is making preparations for the next struggle with the firm. The firm has repeatedly denied victimisation, but their foremen have not been so discreet or so mendacious. Time after time workers have been told that their dismissal is on account of their participation in the strike. At propaganda meetings of the I.W.G.B., foremen have

workers are as badly exploited as those at Kilbowie. We are not to be diverted by childish ebullitions of futile spleen from the serious and responsible work of organising to take possession of the means of production. We see in the persecuting agents of the firm, their lying management, their bullying and spying foremen, the unconscious agents of a social-economic development which we must organise ourselves to combat efficiently,

Capital and Labour are engaged in a life and death struggle, and the vanquished need expect little quarter. Capital has neither mercy, faith, honour, nor magnanimity. We need expect nothing from it but what we can compel it to yield. It will keep no promises to us except those which we have the power to enforce. The primary lesson that we have to learn is to arm ourselves with the power which comes from knowledge and organisation and give a wide berth to the specious substitutes for these essentials which are being offered in certain quarters.

been seen sneaking about like slimy reptilia, looking at the faces of individuals in the audience, noting those under them, and subsequently dismissing them, giving as the reason their participation in the meeting in question. Equally untruthful is the plea of slackness. Not only is Port Elizabeth working overtime, but while dismissing men by the hundred, they have been taking them on in a similar ratio in Kilbowie itself.

It is useless, however, to rail at Singer's firm or the pitiful specimens of degraded humanity whom it employs to do its dirty work. Capital and Labour are engaged in a life and death struggle, and the vanquished need expect little quarter. Capital has neither mercy, faith, honour, nor magnanimity. We need expect nothing from it but what we can compel it to yield. It will keep no promises to us except those which we have the power to enforce. The primary lesson that we have to learn is to arm ourselves with the power which comes from knowledge and organisation and give a wide berth to the specious substitutes for these essentials which are being offered in certain quarters. In particular we desire to repudiate any responsibility for the farcical boycott agitation which has been initiated by certain irresponsible outsiders. To seek to boycott an article of daily and hourly necessity such as the sewing machine is from the nature of things futile. Discrimination is impossible when one firm has a practical monopoly and control of the trade, and even if this were not so, a boycott places the labour movement in the undignified and impossible posture of endeavoring to revenge itself upon Singer's by acting as touts and commercial agents for rival firms which are either controlled by Singer's or have established an understanding with them, and whose

not in order to destroy, but to master.

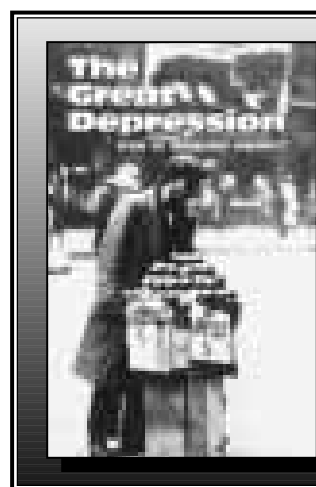
After what has been said, the fallacy of attributing the failure of the strike to Industrial Unionism will be pretty manifest. The I.W.G.B. was never in control of the strike. Only a fraction of the workers were members. The great mass—nine tenths of the whole—not only were not members, but knew nothing of industrialist principles. As a matter of fact, so far as industrialist principles entered into the strike, they were fully justified. If, with a trifling industrialist organisation including less than a tenth of the workers, and with little previous knowledge and education, a strike of such dimensions could be maintained for over two weeks, sustained by the most splendid spirit of class loyalty, courage, and manhood, and conducted with perfect discipline and order, it can be inferred what might have been attained had the Industrial Union organisation had longer time to mature and had it included a larger body of workers. Indeed, the failure of the strike was due to the fact that industrialist organisation was so extremely limited in its scope. Instead of including both the productive and distributing agencies of the firm, it included only a small minority of the former. Had the collectors, canvassers, and agents, all of whom have as heavy grievances as the Kilbowie workers, been organised and brought out, even the importation of American goods would have been futile. The Hire Purchase system necessitates weekly or monthly canvassers and agents to dispose of the goods. Had they been brought in line with the others, the firm would have been left stranded. But the industrialist organisation does not stop there. We have been defeated by the aid of our American fellow-workers, who lent themselves as unconscious blacklegs to help the firm in its extremity—nor is

this the first time that the workers of one nation have been employed against another. To prevent the indefinite recurrence of this pitiful tragedy, we must get into touch with the workers in all branches of the firm, in America, in Russia, and in Germany, and organise on international lines. This is no chimerical dream, but an obvious deduction from the necessities of the situation, which is being soberly discussed by the workers of all lands. We must not be behind the others in stretching out the hand of brotherhood towards our fellow-workers beyond the seas, and in joining forces with them against the common foe.

Finally, Industrial Unionism offers the only model upon which such a concern as that of Singer's can be organised. The general subdivision of labour, the innumerable processes into which the work is divided, each process merging almost imperceptibly into the next, tender organisation upon Trade Union lines quite impossible. Besides the miserable spirit of poltroonery and treachery displayed during the strike by the trade unionists employed at Kilbowie, has rendered this form of unionism deservedly odious to the workers. We appeal to the workers of Kilbowie to close up their ranks once more. Do not let the splendid sacrifices, the magnificent courage and endurance which characterised you during the strike, be wasted and fall to the ground. From defeat accept the lessons which, if carried into practice, will lead to final victory. The Industrial Union is your only hope.

We make our appeal not only to the Singer's Workers, but to the whole working class. The lessons of the Kilbowie strike are lessons for them too. Throughout all branches of industry, machinery and the divisions of labour are breaking down the trade divisions upon which trade unions are based, and are making this form of organisation more and more inadequate and more and more of a hindrance to working class progress. The tendency which has reached mature development in Kilbowie, is at a more or less advanced stage in all departments of industry, and the merciless methods of exploitation and the reign of terror which the management of Singer's has meted out to all efforts towards organisation, will be your fate to-morrow, unless through Industrial Unionism you organise yourselves as a class to resist it. Already these methods of capitalistic tyranny have been so successful in America that in many places no form of organisation is possible. Over twenty years ago the great Steel Combine attacked the strongest trade Union in America in the great Pittsburg [Homestead] strike and utterly defeated it. Since then in the whole city of Pittsburg all forms of Labour organisation have been remorselessly killed. Mr Parks, the General Manager of Kilbowie Works, wishes to reduce the British worker to the same level, to make Kilbowie, like Pittsburg, another "Hell with the lid off." We are confronted by a determined and vindictive attack upon the whole principle of organisation. To-day it is Kilbowie; to-morrow it may be any industrial centre in Great Britain. The plot aims at reducing the workers to a mass of disorganised serfs, degraded and dehumanised instruments for producing wealth for others, incapable of helping each other or of offering the smallest resistance to the never-ending and ever-increasing robbery of the master class. We appeal to you to support us by studying industrialist principles and by getting into line with the Industrial Workers of Great Britain.

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INS Detainees Face Nightmarish Conditions

By B.B.

Thousands of undocumented immigrants enter the country every year. According to *The Dallas Morning News*, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) may hold as many as 20,000 in detention on any given day. Most are probably deported to the countries from which they fled. However, a considerable number are held in jails, prisons and similar institutions for prolonged periods of time—not for weeks or months only, but often for years.

Last month, the *News* printed an article summarizing an investigation it started in 1998 under the Freedom of Information Act. Staff writer Dan Malone summed up the findings as follows:

“The *News*’ three-year inquiry into the INS’ long-term imprisonment of foreigners found contradictions and errors in the data the agency provided. The agency said in 1999, for example, that it had held 294 prisoners for more than three years. Records released a year later, however, show nearly three times that number—851 foreigners, half of whom have been held for more than five years.”

The INS told the *News* that 60 percent of those held for long periods were convicted of felony crimes. However, INS records offer no such explanation of why the remaining 40 percent—361 individuals—are being held.

Several prisoners told the *News* that the INS has understated the length of their detentions, and the *News* reported that “INS officials say some entries regarding the criminal histories of individual prisoners are wrong.”

How many of those records might be wrong, and in what particulars, the *News* could not report. Bad recordkeeping by the INS apparently precluded even an educated guess. Regardless of the specific number of errors, however, the treatment of these refugees has

provoked criticism of the INS from several sources.

“We have one of the most extreme policies of any country in the world,” said Wendy Young, of the Women’s Commission for Refugees and Children. “That’s ironic in that we’re a nation that prides itself on immigrant and refugee traditions...[while] causing human rights violations against refugees within our own borders.”

Jane Kochman of the U.N. High Commission for Refugees agrees, noting that “asylum seekers who are not a threat to society should not be detained and should not be treated like criminals.”

According to the *News*, the INS has immigrants from 65 to 70 countries in detention. INS Assistant Commissioner James O’Malley defended the government agency. He disputed Ms. Kochman’s conclusions by claiming that “we are the model for these other nations.”

Of the 588 Cubans his “model” has detained, 160 have been held for over a decade without being charged with any offense! A group of 80 people from Southeast Asia also have been held for extended periods of time. Another 171 people have been detained for three years or longer and are from 65 other countries. Meanwhile, the refugees often end up in some of the toughest prisons, jails and private lockups in the country.

An example of one of the detained was Thavarajah, a farmer from Sri Lanka. Thavarajah is Tamil and from that part of Sri Lanka where Tamil rebels are seeking to establish a breakaway independent state. Thavarajah himself was not part of the decades old insurgency. Nevertheless, he was imprisoned and tortured by the Sri Lankan army. After his release he fled to join family in Canada. However, when his plane touched down in New York he was immediately arrested. He has been detained for over three years at a privately operated center that does

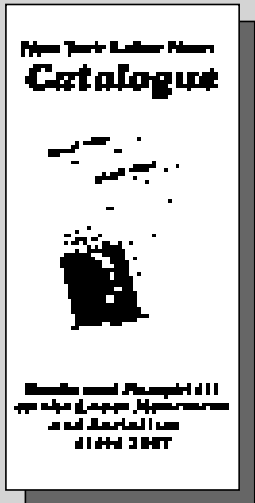
not permit inmates to be outdoors.

Seattle attorney Llewelyn G. Pritchard, presiding over an American Bar Association committee on imprisoned foreigners, stated flatly that, “The numbers are unconscionable” and “are much bigger than we’ve been told.” Unconscionable as well is the INS refusal to provide information on why each person is being held.

Needless to say, most detainees are of the working class. Most fled from nightmarish conditions in their homelands for what they hoped would be a better life. However, their marketable skills are considered marginal or worthless and their low value as wage workers militates against them. It also exposes assertions of freedom, democracy and the rights of the individual as hyperbole. As Francis Avit from the Ivory Coast who has been festering in detention for more than five years wryly observed:

“This is a country where everyone can cite their opinion and has the right to liberty and freedom, but it hasn’t worked out for me.”

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activities

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

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Discussion Meeting—Section San Francisco Bay Area will hold a discussion meeting on Saturday, April 28, 4–7 p.m., at Community Room #1, 2nd floor, Rockridge Branch, Oakland Public Library, 5366 College Ave., Oakland. Moderator: Frank Prince. Topic: “Prosperity’ and ‘Progress’ for Workers Today.” For more information please call 408-280-7458.

OHIO

North Royalton—Section Cleveland will hold a social on Sunday, May 20, 1 p.m., at the home of R. Burns, 9626 York Rd., North Royalton. Refreshments served. All are welcome. For more information phone 440-237-7933.

OREGON

Portland

Discussion Meetings—Section Portland holds discussion meetings every second Saturday of the month. Meetings are usually held at the Central Library, but the exact time varies. For more information please call Sid at 503-226-2881 or visit our Web site at <http://slp.pdx.home.mindspring.com>. The general public is invited.

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Discussion Meetings—The SLP group in Houston holds discussion meetings the last Saturday of the month at the Houston Public Library, Franklin Branch, 6440 W. Bellfort, southwest Houston. The time of the meetings varies. Those interested please call 713-721-9296, e-mail houstonslp@lycos.com or visit the group’s Web site at <http://houstonslp.tripod.com>.

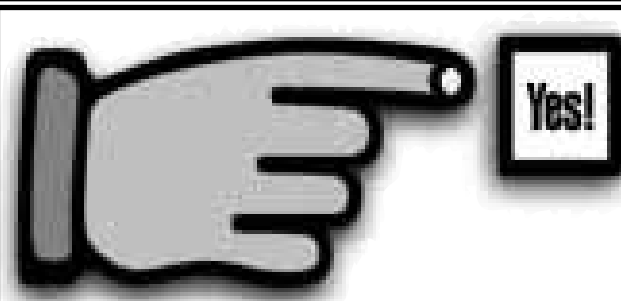
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... Bush’s ‘Compassion’

(Continued from page 3)

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) complained that Bush’s policies had set the country back 50 years. The senator is far too kind. Bush has actually set the country back at least 175 years to the age of the 19th-century Robber

Barons of industry.

Bush has a habit of publicly chastising his political opponents who, he says, are pitting the poor against the rich and fomenting “class warfare.” It is actually Bush and his cronies who are the true experts at class warfare. Bush’s

“compassion,” so far from being aimed at uplifting the downtrodden and comforting the working class is actually directed at bolstering the haves rather than the have-nots and at comforting the comfortable. What better example is there of class warfare?



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... Police Racism, Brutality

(Continued from page 1)

at the local level. As such they are recruited and trained for the purpose, not merely of maintaining order, but of maintaining order on capitalist terms. They are trained to be the forceful defenders of the status quo, of capitalist power and property—witness the role they play in strikes and demonstrations, for example.

As Daniel De Leon once put it, “The policeman has exemplified that feature of the menial which consists in identifying himself with, and adjusting himself to the requirements of his master, even against his own class. A

menial of the political state, the policeman generally looks upon the workmen as so many heads to be cracked.”

This social role naturally tends to encourage a reactionary political outlook. Racism thus comes as naturally to the police as it does to the capitalist ruling class that profits most directly from racism—and in whose interests the cops do their head cracking. The point is not that all cops are racist, but that their social function gives them an affinity for racist and other right-wing ideology—the ideology of the police state.

Calls may now be heard in

Cincinnati and elsewhere for more “study” of the problem, more police review boards, more hiring of people of color as cops. But police brutality, repression and racism can never be ended under capitalism.

The problem lies in the very existence of a class-ruled system that requires police in the first place. Ending the scourge of racism and police brutality will take a sweeping social change to a worker-controlled, poverty-free economic system, a system that would eliminate the need for police altogether and cut the root of racism at its source.

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The Tragedy of Willie McGee

(Weekly People, May 19, 1951)

In terms of political losses to its arch-imperialist rival, American capitalism is paying a heavy price for its racist practices. A few years ago an American state that was bent on preserving "white supremacy" by means of racial terror could legally lynch Negroes accused of rape without causing more than a ripple of protest beyond its own borders. Now, however, all this is changed. When the State of Mississippi executed Willie McGee for alleged rape shortly after 2 a.m., May 8, the news that "American justice" had claimed another Negro victim was instantly flashed around the world.

The Stalinists exploited the Willie McGee case so skillfully that many non-Stalinists and anti-Stalinists, here and abroad, joined

the chorus of protest. Indicative of the widespread feeling was the action of the French Assembly, an official legislative body, which observed a minute of silence in memory of Willie McGee a few hours after news of the execution reached Paris.

Willie McGee was preeminently a victim of capitalism, and the racist behavior capitalism engenders. But he was ultimately doomed by the intercession of the Stalinists, who exploited the case for all that it was worth both among American Negroes and abroad. Obviously the victim of a typical Southern "raping" charge, he might have escaped the penalty but for the success of the Stalinists in identifying themselves with his defense. American capitalism had gone too far to back down without giving the Stalinists the opportunity to boast that they had saved

McGee from American justice. So the State of Mississippi was allowed to go through with the legal lynching, thereby handing the Stalinists fresh evidence of American barbarism.

Astute members of the ruling class have long known that race prejudice, bred by capitalist conditions, is a severe handicap in the struggle for world supremacy. They have encouraged race reforms and pleaded with the members of their class to adopt an "enlightened" viewpoint. But all in vain. The consequences of the exploitation of the working class, and of the rivalries engendered by capitalist conditions, are not to be exorcised by such means. Racism—this ugly sore on the body politic—will disappear only when its capitalist cause is destroyed and society is reconstructed on socialist lines.

...Hit by More Layoffs

(Continued from page 1)

manufactures are primarily for other industries, and in a separate report the *Times* noted that "as some economists say, the basic problem now is that companies overinvested in new equipment and technology."

Declining Wages, Rising Debt

However, if Greenspan had the working class in mind he is in for a disappointment.

Indeed, according to Uchitelle, "with output falling, hours have been cut" for many workers, resulting "in smaller weekly paychecks for millions of people who had come to depend on the extra income. The

average weekly paycheck is \$470, adjusted for inflation. The amount has been falling since November, compared with the corresponding month a year earlier.

Worse, the number of workers and working-class families filing for bankruptcy was 1.2 million last year, and the number who filed for bankruptcy during the first quarter of this year was 20 percent higher than for the first quarter of last year.

You Are Needed

There is only one force in the country that has the potential strength to head off the economic crisis now looming. That force is

the working class. But before that force can be organized to put an end to capitalism and its crises all those who now recognize the need must dedicate themselves to building up the Socialist Labor Party by joining in its work to spread the message of Socialist Industrial Unionism. The alternatives are becoming increasingly clear. Those who would stand back now when they are needed for the work that must be done will inadvertently add to the obstacles that the working class must overcome to end capitalism and establish the socialist democracy. Now is the time to come forward. You are needed.

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2001 SLP National Convention



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...Bush

(Continued from page 1)

before that. The only way to prevent them from "trying this stuff" is to rid the world of their system and the profit motive that drives it. The only way to ensure that our democratic rights are protected, that the environment will not be ruined, that our children will have safe food, etc., is to establish a truly democratic society, a socialist society in which ownership and control of the economy is placed in the only hands where it is safe—the hands of the working class.

The Socialist Industrial Union program advocated by the SLP is the only means by which the working class can take matters into its own hands and establish that democratic society. Help us deliver that message by contributing to the SLP's 45th National Convention Banquet collection for the SLP Sustainer Fund. Please use the coupon on page 6.

The characteristic weakness of the proletariat renders it prone to lures. It, the least favored of all historic revolutionary classes, is called upon to carry out a revolution that is pivoted upon the most complicated synthesis, and one withal that is easiest to be obscured by the dust that its very foe, the capitalist class, is able to raise most plentifully. The essence of this revolution—the overthrow of wage slavery—cannot be too forcefully held up. Nor can the point be too forcefully kept in evidence that, short of the abolition of wage slavery, all "improvements" either accrue to capitalism, or are the merest moonshine where they are not sidetracks.

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Spy Plane Incident Heightens Tensions Between U.S. & China

By Diane Secor

The most surprising thing about the April 1 collision between a prop-driven U.S. EP-3E spy plane and one of China's F-8 jet fighters may be that something similar hasn't happened before.

While the U.S. insisted that the spy plane was flying through international airspace when the collision occurred, the Associated Press reported that "foreign defense experts say U.S. pilots sometimes nudge Chinese airspace to probe its defenses and make China's military switch on its radar...." The purpose of the flights is to "monitor how effective Chinese systems are."

The collision, which caused the Chinese fighter to plunge into the South China Sea and forced the U.S. plane to make an emergency landing on China's Hainan Island, was only one of two recent incidents that received publicity. The same April 2 AP item quoted above also reported that, "A Chinese warship chased a U.S. Navy ship out of waters off China's east coast just nine days before the collision...." In this instance also, the U.S. insisted that the American vessel was navigating in international waters when it was accosted by the Chinese vessel, but the area is one that China claims as its "exclusive economic zone."

Why play with fire in the South China Sea?

No doubt the U.S. capitalist state takes such risks because it deems them to be in the overall best interests of the U.S. capitalist system. However, there



U.S. Navy

also are two powerful sectors of America's capitalist class that have specific material interests at stake—the U.S. oil industry and the arms industry.

According to *The Wall Street Journal* of April 6, the EP-3E spy plane and China's F-8 fighter collided right over the oil-rich Paracel and Spratly islands, surrounded by vital transport routes. China claims sovereignty over these islands, and in the last 10 years has developed the military and economic power to back up its claims.

Other nations in the region, notably the Philippines and Vietnam, also claim some of these islands, which has led to tense confrontations with China.

It is not in the interests of the United States for any Asian country to gain too much control over the vicinity of the

Spratlys and the Paracels. Thus the growing military muscle of the People's Republic of China (PRC) has made it America's chief rival in the region.

U.S. oil corporations have lucrative contracts with various nations that have conflicting claims to the islands, such as the PRC and Vietnam. Thus U.S. intelligence operations and military forces in the region are meant, in part, to defend the "rights" of U.S. oil firms to drill for oil and have access to shipping routes.

Another sector of the U.S. ruling class that stands to profit from growing tensions in the region is the arms industry. In spite of the U.S.'s official "one China" policy, American arms sales to Taiwan are a multibillion-dollar business. American firms, such as Boeing and Lockheed Martin, which sell arms to Taiwan, are

also building up the military establishment of the PRC.

Boeing has sold airliners to the PRC that reportedly have been converted into jet transports for China's military.

Lockheed Martin "has built a naval surveillance system for the...[PRC] on Hainan Island—coincidentally the same location where a Lockheed-built EP-3E surveillance plane was forced to land...." The Lockheed Martin system is of strategic value to the PRC, since it is "designed to monitor and control" both commercial and military ships in the Qiongzhou Channel between Hainan and the mainland.

Lockheed reportedly has arranged with the PRC to construct similar naval surveillance systems in other locations, and a Lockheed spokeswoman, Ellen Mitchell, did not "rule out placing" one along the Taiwan Strait.

Lockheed has maintained that no U.S. export license is needed to make these sales to China. Apparently the company obtained direct approval for its dealings with the PRC from the Clinton administration, and the Bush administration has done nothing to suggest that it might steer a different course.

Lockheed and Boeing are not the only U.S. corporations eager to add to Taiwan's high-tech arms inventory. Last year alone General Dynamics Corp. had contracts to supply "\$513 million in new secure-transmission radio equipment." Also, United Defense Ltd. of York, Pa., got a piece of the action with "\$405 million for 146 155mm howitzers, machine guns and other equipment."

While the arms industry sees their profits rising as the PRC spars with Taiwan and with other nations in the South China Sea over oil resources, the risk of more serious confrontations than occurred after the midair collision near Hainan can only increase.

Virtual Slavery in U.S. Samoan Garment Industry Sweatshop

The garment industry "sweatshop" has been a blight on the nation for more than 100 years. Despite numerous and often highly publicized efforts to eradicate the pest by unions, activist groups and all levels of government it continues to flourish.

A recent example comes from the U.S.-controlled Pacific island of Samoa, where for more than a year 250 female workers were held in virtual slavery by a company that had been investigated and fined several times by the federal government.

The owner of the Korean-owned company was finally arrested in March and taken to Hawaii where he awaits trial for violations of federal antislavery laws. The company itself has been placed in receivership and another firm is looking to take over its production plant.

Some of the workers also were flown to Hawaii to testify against Kil-Soo Lee, the owner of the slave pen, and his company, Daewoosa-Samoa Ltd. Others were granted temporary asylum on the mainland and a few have returned to Vietnam, where most were recruited with promises of "good paying" jobs on an island where the minimum wage condoned by the federal government is \$2.60 an hour. The women paid fees and bribes of \$5,000-\$8,000 before they were transported to the U.S. island. What they found when they got there was summarized by an article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* of April 9:

"Conditions at the plant and dormitories were deplorable, according to accounts of workers and federal investigators. Temperatures in the factory sometimes

reached 104 degrees. The...women had only four working toilets. Meals were thin broth of cabbage and rice—and if workers complained, even that was withheld by guards and supervisors, who beat the employees to discipline them.

"Workers labored as many as 21 hours a day and often were not allowed to leave the compound. The monthly salary of \$400 never materialized. When workers were paid, they got only \$200. More often, the paychecks were simply not handed out.

"In March 1999, after nearly two months without pay, four of the women organized a work stoppage. The company retaliated by withholding food.

"A few days later, one of the women...climbed a fence and walked to a nearby village to beg for food and told Christian missionaries about the conditions at the plant.

"That triggered a series of strikes, lawsuits by workers, and investigations by the Labor Department and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration into conditions at the plant, which is regulated according to U.S. law. Over the next year, the company was fined \$250,000 and ordered to pay more than \$500,000 in back wages.

"Last November, tensions at the plant boiled over when company guards began beating a female worker. A melee ensued when male workers tried to protect her. Eleven workers were injured; the female employee later lost an eye.

"After the federal investigation at the plant—one investigator described some

workers as 'walking skeletons'...."

As suggested by the *Inquirer*, none of this was a secret from the federal government, and according to the activist group, Sweatshop Watch, the Department of Labor (DOL) "confiscated Daewoosa's garments, under the 'hot goods' provision of the FLSA [Fair Labor Standards Act] last December. Nonetheless, the firm was permitted to continue operations while the DOL and U.S. Justice Department "investigated" further.

J.C. Penney and Sears, among other beneficiaries of Daewoosa's slave labor practices, have sold Daewoosa-made garments with "Made in the USA" labels sewn into them. According to Sweatshop Watch, however, "None of the corporations are known to have taken any action to guarantee the workers their unpaid wages."

When the Justice Department finally decided to act on March 24 by arresting Lee and shutting down his operation, U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft took the opportunity to grandstand for reporters in a transparent effort to soften his image as a "right-wing reactionary" who may not be trustworthy as the country's top law-enforcement official.

"One of my last acts as a U.S. senator was to vote for a law which would curtail this kind of activity. That law was signed on Oct. 28 of the year 2000. This law increases the terms of incarceration for those involved in human trafficking crimes and broadens the definition of 'trafficking offenses' to reach the subtle means of coercion, the techniques of hold-

ing workers in against their will."

As his conclusion, Ashcroft added: "It's hard to believe that these crimes exist in the United States of America, but they do."

Indeed they do. And they will continue to exist as long as there is profit to be made from the exploitation of human labor.

Diane Secor contributed to this article.

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