

IN THIS ISSUE

**At Large —
The Turmoil in Central Asia**
Page 2

**Class Struggle Remains
World's Deadliest Conflict**
Page 3

**The Clean Air Act—
Another Failed Reform**
Page 4

**AFL-CIO Still Fronting for
U.S. Imperialist Interests**
Page 8

SLP EMERGENCY FUND—

The Final Push

The national office of the Socialist Labor Party has received many contributions, large and small, from readers of *The People* and other supporters of the party since announcing the financial emergency confronting the SLP last October. We have also received numerous letters expressing the hope that the SLP Emergency Fund drive is successful. Unfortunately we cannot print all of those letters, but the following from a supporter in New Jersey is typical of many:

"Please find enclosed \$100 for the SLP Emergency Fund. I sincerely hope that your financial problem is resolved. I have read and enjoyed *The People* for nearly 20 years now. I find it enlightening and the only true voice of the working class of America. I will send more money as I can afford to do so."

Others simply sent their contributions without comment, marked for the Emergency or some other SLP fund, and let it go at that. It is not always possible to respond, but occasionally the opportunity presents itself. One such reply by the national secretary to a supporter who has sent multiple contributions for the Emergency Fund went like this:

"I'm plumb out of new ways to say thank you for the level of generous support you have displayed toward the SLP, particularly during the past few months. The amount you sent on April 4, besides everything else, moves you beyond the little plot of vocabulary I have managed to stake out for myself since the SLP decided to plop me down and glue me to the chair in front of this computer so many years ago. Thank you very, very much, seems to be my limit. It doesn't sound like much, I know, but please believe me when I say that it is as sincere a thank you as I have ever sent to anyone."

The generous supporter who received this letter showed her generosity in another way when she wrote the following in return:

"I like to know my contributions have been received, but Thank You would be more appropriate coming from us to all of you. No need to waste your valuable time. We're hoping we can do more. And when you acknowledge them I will get out your letter and read it again. Now it's my turn—Thank you all so very, very much."

On another occasion, in reply to an SLP veteran, the national secretary wrote:

"Thank you very much for your generous

(Continued on page 6)

Unemployment Grows As Welfare Limits Approach

The "economic recovery" that was supposed to bring some relief to the American working class apparently has taken a detour.

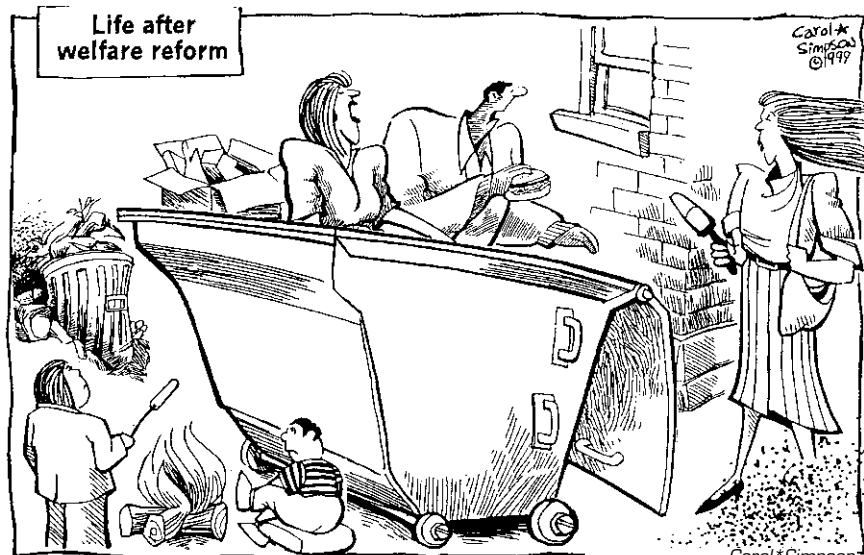
The official unemployment rate rose to 6 percent in April, following a three-month period in which "1,669 mass layoff actions...resulted in the separation of 301,181 workers from their jobs for more than 30 days," according to a U.S. Labor Department report released on May 16.

The same report said that lagging "demand for employers' products and services...was the major reason cited for layoffs in the first quarter," and that 20 percent of all "mass layoffs" resulted from "permanent closure of worksites," caused primarily by "bankruptcy, business ownership change, financial difficulty, and reorganization."

The net result, according to the department's report on the employment situation for April, was that "the number of unemployed persons rose by 483,000 to 8.6 million," and the number of workers "unemployed for 27 weeks and over rose by 161,000..."

With warehouses swollen by unsold goods, the prospects for any improvement in the employment situation during the second quarter appear to be dismal.

In the meantime, hundreds of thousands of welfare recipients are slated to receive their last welfare check under current law. Last month, the House of Representatives passed a bill that would, if enacted, compound the problem and further deepen the poverty of millions.



"Since they cut off our food stamps we've been eating out a lot."

The bill, H.R. 4737, called the Personal Responsibility, Work, and Family Promotion Act, is now under consideration in the Senate. It would reauthorize and "improve" the draconian 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, which provided a lifetime five-year limit for assistance under the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

It would do so despite a dearth of evidence that the 1996 act "succeeded" in any way but reducing federal welfare expenditures by throwing millions off the welfare rolls. Most landed in low-paying jobs that at best did little to move them out of poverty and at worst made them even poorer.

That mouthpiece of plutocratic capital, *The Wall Street Journal*, recently wrote that, "The vicious circle of pov-

erty is broken," implying that the 1996 "Welfare Watershed" had not increased poverty as many who opposed the 1996 act had expected.

It is true that by official measure—often criticized for seriously underestimating real poverty levels—poverty decreased from 13.7 percent in 1996 to 11.3 percent in 2000. However, even official figures also suggest this decrease had much more to do with temporary gains in employment and slight real wage gains made by the working class as a whole during the closing years of the now-dead economic expansion of the 1990s than to putting welfare recipients to work.

As a report in September 2001 by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) put it, the census data also show that, "The average poor

(Continued on page 6)

Workplace Stress Takes Toll

By Carl C. Miller Jr.

Stress in the workplace, already a common condition under the capitalist mode of production, became even more severe after Sept. 11, according to an article in *USA Today* on May 16.

The increase cannot be attributed to the attacks alone, but also to the economic downturn that was worsened as a result of the tragedy. The attacks, as well as the sour economic situation since then, have produced an increase in the number of workers seeking workers' compensation benefits because of job-related stress.

USA Today reported that nearly one-third of 6,000 workers' compensation claims filed in New York after the World Trade Center attacks were stress related or involved some component of stress-related ailments. This is not surprising given that the attacks took place so close to where the affected workers live and work and the resulting economic aftershocks. What may seem surprising is that the upsurge in stress-related claims is not confined to New York City. The upward trend exists across the country.

One of example cited by *USA Today*

was that of Darwin Baggett, an Illinois teacher who suffered a heart attack as a result of the stress he endured at his high school. In a court battle over his eligibility for workers' compensation benefits, the lawyer representing the Baggett family argued that Mr. Baggett's ailment was triggered by workplace stress. The Illinois Supreme Court found in Mr. Baggett's favor. "People are becoming more aware of what can happen with stress," said Robert Howerton, the lawyer who represented the Baggett family. Baggett himself has since passed away, no doubt as a result of his stress-induced illness.

In Virginia, paramedic Randall Mottram's job was so stressful that doctors said he was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. This is the same malady that usually strikes combat veterans as a result of the horrors they face on the battlefield.

Mottram's eligibility was also decided in a legal battle in which Virginia's Supreme Court found that because of the high levels of stress he dealt with on the job, and the medical condition developed as a result of that stress, he too was eligible for workers'

compensation.

Mr. Baggett and Mr. Mottram are only two examples of a much wider and worsening problem. "Nearly half of Americans grappled with stress after Sept. 11, according to a study by the nonprofit research group, Rand," *USA Today* reported. But the Sept. 11 attacks are not the only source of the problem. One obvious contributing factor is the prevailing economic situation and its effects on workers. Worries about job security and the increase in workloads since Sept. 11 are also to blame. To put it bluntly, capitalism is the problem.

In spite of hard evidence, many capitalist apologists refuse to see the rapidly growing problem and deny that workers who suffer from stress-related ailments should receive any kind of workers' compensation benefits. They claim that stress doesn't meet the criteria of an occupational injury and that employers will be hit with multitudes of bogus claims. "There may be a lot of tension in the world, but that doesn't mean it's caused by the workplace," said Joe Fleming, a labor and employment

(Continued on page 3)

at large

The Turmoil in Central Asia

By B.B.

JIHAD: THE RISE OF MILITANT ISLAM IN CENTRAL ASIA, By Ahmed Rashid. Yale University Press, publisher, 2002; 269 pages. Please order from bookseller or publisher.

Ahmed Rashid, whose book *Taliban* was reviewed in these pages one year ago, now offers a parallel book that attempts to outline the emerging crisis in Central Asia.

As a Pakistani journalist who writes for *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Independent* in London, Rashid has acquired over the years an extensive familiarity with the entire region, as well as with the personalities and material interests that underlie the turbulence.

Rashid's thesis is that the Muslim fundamentalism threatening Central Asia with political and social upheavals is a result of widespread poverty and the oppressive character of at least four of the five Central Asian dictatorships. Those dictatorships have smothered discontent and taken punitive actions against dissenters. Such dissent, Rashid contends, has taken the form of radical Islam of both a pacifist and armed guerrilla character.

Rashid further contends that the West can change all of that by investing in the region through pipeline construction, and by promoting representative democratic government. Both are necessary to remove Central Asia from the current cycle of violence and warfare, in Rashid's view.

If the past is any indication of the future when it comes to benevolent capitalist investment, a contradiction in terms, Mr. Rashid is whistling into the wind. Indeed, in the closing paragraphs of his book he gives us a glimpse of what might be expected.

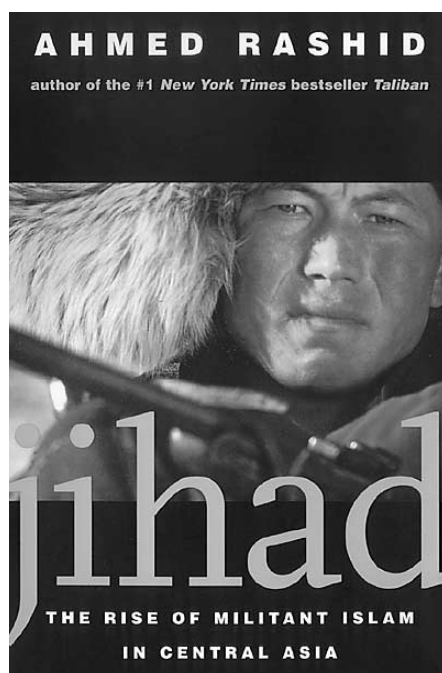
Rashid noted that, "Western policymakers have largely concentrated on two elements that they hoped would shore up stability in the region to the exclusion of other important factors: the building up of Central Asian armies to help them fight insurgency and the exploitation of energy resources...." The compulsions that shape policy are not only the military-industrial complex and their profit objectives, but the competitive advantages sought by Russia and China. Such is capitalism's future: ever a spiraling descent into conflict and war.

The cast of former Soviet apparatchiks now running things in Central Asia is largely blamed for the increasing threat of militant Islam. Rashid outlines them by country:

- Kyrgyzstan—Askar Akayev has been president since 1991 and has the reputation of being the least corrupt. He was the only one of the five former S.S.R. presidents who condemned the abortive coup against Mikhail Gorbachev in 1991 and was the only one who was not a former party apparatchik. Kyrgyzstan remains the poorest of the five states.

- Kazakhstan—Nursultan Nazarbayev has been president since 1991. His is an authoritarian, repressive regime that curries favors from both Russia and the United States. Chevron has developed a cozy relationship with Nazarbayev and his cronies. A U.S. congressman has noted that "Kazakhstan is the crown jewel of the region and is thus another likely target of Islamic extremist groups."

- Uzbekistan—Islam Karimov has been president since 1990 when he was elected by the Supreme Soviet. He now runs the most repressive of the regimes and presides over an annual production of 1.9 trillion cubic feet of natural gas,



- Turkmenistan—Saparmurad Niyazov, president since 1991, runs another dictatorial regime and presides over 106 billion cubic feet of natural gas and an estimated reserve of 6 billion barrels of oil.

- Tajikistan—Emomali Rahmonov has been president since 1994 and was reelected in 1999 for another seven-year term. Tajikistan was wracked by six years of devastating civil war, has suffered the loss of subsidies from Russia and has emerged as the most impoverished of the Central Asian countries where 80 percent of the population lives in crushing poverty.

Central Asia's historic ties to Russia and the former Soviet Union explain much about the political landscape of the region today. Stalin-era machinations compounded ethnic animosities by the arbitrary division of primarily tribal and nomadic areas into what are now the five republics. These political subdivisions made the area easier to control by pitting ethnic groups against each other while extracting wealth from the five Soviet republics created. Cotton, minerals, fertilizers, salt, agricultural products, oil, natural gas and numerous other products were drained from the economies of Central Asia, often creating monstrous environmental damage along with health problems and impoverishment. The degradation of the Aral Sea is largely a result of diverting water for the production of cotton in Kazakhstan. The pollution of the Caspian Sea came as a result of placing callous bureaucratic profitmaking ahead of human need and safety of the natural environment.

Rashid argues that Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's liberalizing policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* aroused widespread expectations among the Central Asian masses of a less oppressive and more prosperous future. Those expectations largely dissolved with the collapse of the U.S.S.R. and by an agreement among some of the former Soviet republics, under the tutelage of Russian President Boris Yeltsin, to form a new "Commonwealth of Independent States" that excluded the five Central Asian states. All five not only had come to lean heavily on Soviet Russia for economic and military support, they were utterly dependent upon it. Gorbachev had opened a "Pandora's Box" of expectations that neither he nor the Soviet Union were any longer around to fulfill. Russia and its newly organized "commonwealth" had arbitrarily cut the economic umbilical cord that tied Central Asia to Russia, and the five Central Asia states were left high and dry to deal with an insurmountable array of problems. Ultimately, Russia and the other CIS states reconsidered their original decision to keep out the Central Asian states,

but that has done little to bring economic improvements into the region and absolutely nothing to defuse the higher expectations Gorbachev stirred up during the waning days of the former U.S.S.R.

With the exception of those of Kyrgyzstan, the Communist Party bureaucrats of Central Asia had supported the abortive coup of August 1991, which aimed to save the Soviet Union by deposing Gorbachev, and they were left in a bind when the coup failed. After the collapse they each concentrated on consolidating their power.

Now the Central Asian states are beset with insurgencies that hope to capitalize on the poverty and oppression that has fed growing resentments against the bureaucratic holdovers from the Soviet era. Rashid documents the origins and activities of these Islamic-inspired rebels now being supplied and financed with Saudi money.

They are insurgent theocrats who want to establish a new caliphate led by a monarch who will rule, they imagine, like the Ottoman sultans of old.

The insurgency centers largely around Hizb-i-Islami, or IMU, a Turkestan-based guerrilla movement headed by Juma Namangani, an Uzbek and former Soviet paratrooper veteran of the Soviet Afghan debacle. Aside from a personal vendetta against Uzbekistan's dictator Karimov, Namangani's vision is to bring Islamic rule to all of Central Asia. Saudi money and support, drug transportation to Russia and Europe, and a "farm" in which he trains, indoctrinates and equips insurgents are all ingredients of his operations. Curiously enough, he has in the past been given protective transportation to various destinations by the Russian military despite the insurgency in Chechnya.

The 19th-century struggle for control of Central Asia between Russia and British colonialism was called the "Great Game." The "new Great Game" in Central Asia, as analysts call it, is a muddled one. Given the complex topography, political boundaries, ethnic mix and animosities it may also prove to be a very dangerous one. The danger is compounded by the 21st-century ruling-class rivalries now being played out, with the United States in the lead.

"The most corrupt regimes in the region—those of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan—belong to the oil-rich nations," Rashid wrote. "The leaders of these countries received fat bonuses from U.S. oil companies, as well as trips abroad and expensive gifts...." "In fact," he adds, "Western oil company investments, by creating an extremely

wealthy, corrupt minority class, are breeding even greater social discontent."

Jihad's value lies in the depth of detail and knowledge of the characters, personalities and a measure of historical background that Rashid brings to his subject. Its shortcomings lie in its limited perspective of the formative period of Soviet rule. One is left wondering about the decades of Soviet misrule that contributed to the current state.

Specifically, a reading of Lenin's "On the National and Colonial Question" deals, albeit briefly, with the Bolshevik attitude toward Central Asia. For example, Lenin stated:

"With regard to the more backward states and nations, in which feudal or patriarchal and patriarchal-peasant relations predominate it is particularly important to bear in mind:

"First, that all Communist parties must assist the bourgeois-democratic liberation movements in these countries....

"Second, the need to struggle against the clergy and other influential reactionary and medieval elements in backward countries;

"Third, the need to combat Pan-Islamism and similar trends which strive to combine the liberation movement against European and American imperialism with an attempt to strengthen the positions of the khans, landlords, mullahs, etc."

The last statement is particularly revealing. It sheds a far more penetrating view of the current insurgencies throughout not only Central Asia but in the Mideast itself.

Devoid of any working-class movement in these regions, the Islamists have opportunistically seized upon the obvious. Their opposition to imperialist exploitation is to supplant that with a harsh theocratic anachronism that favors homegrown exploiters, feudalists, capitalists and landowners. The bottom line for them is maintaining class rule under a quasi-religious cloak.

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.

Read the Paper That's
In a Class by Itself.
The Working Class.

Read the People.



the People P.O. Box 218, Mountain View, CA 94042-0218

\$2 for a 6-month subscription; \$5 for a 1-year sub
 \$11 for a 1-year sub by first-class mail

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____ APT. _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Make check/money order payable to *The People*. Allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.

Class Struggle Remains World's Deadliest Conflict

Dr. Jukka Takala is director of the International Labor Organization's SafeWork program. During a recent interview in *Labor Education*, an ILO publication, Takala estimated that more than 2 million workers die on the job every year.

Commenting on that statistic, *The Guardian*, a British newspaper, said: "The total is now three times the annual number of deaths in wars every year (650,000), or the equivalent of a Sept. 11 tragedy every day. It also exceeds deaths from alcohol and drug use combined."

In short—and while neither Dr. Takala nor *The Guardian* would put it this way—the irrepressible class struggle remains as the deadliest conflict of all. However, it may be even deadlier than *The Guardian* reported. For, as Dr. Takala conceded in his interview in *Labor Education*, "these are only conservative estimates...based on information collected 10 years ago...the actual number of people dying at work could be double this figure—so, well over 2 million."

We say "conceded" because neither Dr. Takala nor the institution he heads opposes the capitalist cause of the mayhem. This was underscored by the argument he offered on why remedial action should be taken to reduce the slaughter—it would cost less.

"The cost of doing nothing is actually much higher," he said. "We calculate that expenditure related to accidents and diseases represents the equivalent of 4 percent of the combined gross national product of all countries on this planet, or the equivalent of the total GNP of Africa, the Middle East (including oil-rich countries) and South Asia put together. So addressing the issues of health and safety at work could save a lot of resources and is in the interests of governments, companies and workers alike. It is in the interests of society as a whole."

Apart from 2-4 million work-related fatalities, however, Dr. Takala also estimates that 410 million workers are either injured or come down with work-related ailments every year. He added that only 10 percent of these working-class casualties of the class struggle in capitalistically developing countries are eligible "for compensation in case of occupational diseases or accidents," and he suggested that this does much to explain the prevalence of child labor in the developing world.

"The reasoning is simple: if the breadwinner dies[,] or is disabled for a



The People

short or longer period, the whole family...will suffer," he said. "And there are 410 million such cases annually."

Dr. Takala said that most workplace casualties occur in "the South," meaning that part of the world that is south of the industrially advanced countries of North America and Western Europe. "The rate of fatal accidents in developing Asia is four times higher than that of industrialized countries," he said. "In sub-Saharan Africa alone, we estimate that 125,000 work-related fatalities occur per year."

Generalizing on the reason for the disparity between the capitalistically developed North and the capitalistically developing South, Dr. Takala said that "one of the trends is that industrialized countries are exporting their hazards to developing countries," leaving "dirty and difficult jobs...to the South."

Casualties are higher in some industries than others, Dr. Takala said, and the worst appear to be agriculture, mining and construction.

"Today, agriculture is one of the three most hazardous industries, together with mining and construction, in both developing and industrialized countries," he said. "We estimate that out of a total of 350,000 fatal workplace accidents [in these industries] worldwide, some 170,000 casualties are among agricultural workers every year. Many of the world's 1.3 billion agricultural workers are seriously injured in workplace accidents involving machinery, or poisoned

by pesticides and other agro-chemicals. That situation led the ILO to adopt a new convention on health and safety in agriculture last year. Mining, which is now less of a problem in industrialized countries, remains highly dangerous in the developing world. Mines in Asia or Africa are still very labor intensive, they do not use new machinery or equipment and many people still die in mining both from diseases and accidents."

Dr. Takala laments that most countries reject ILO labor conventions that recommend health and safety standards. Indeed, he as good as confessed that the ILO has failed in stemming the tide when he said:

"A key problem is that safety and health is not given a high priority in the international and national agenda...If people are left to die [or] to get disabled at work, where is the sense in the core labor standards?"

That's a good question, and one that not Takala, the ILO or the labor exploiting ruling classes of the "global economy" want to answer because the answer is that there is no sense to them at all.

Indeed, while most workplace deaths, injuries and illnesses today occur in the capitalistically developing "South," Dr. Takala also conceded that workers in the industrialized "North" still face serious workplace dangers. There is no shortage of "labor standards" or governments willing to enact them in those countries, which provide the very model that Dr. Takala wants "the South" to follow with

...Workplace Stress

(Continued from page 1)

lawyer in Miami," *USA Today* reported.

Many experts believe that workloads, as well as stress loads, will remain heavy. The same article reported Meridian Resources, a career staffing firm, as estimating "that only 21 percent of companies plan to add employees this year, and 20 percent expect to make more cuts."

As long as the profit system is at society's helm, stress and a laundry list of other ills will be the order of the day. It doesn't have to be this way; there is an alternative. The working class must begin a socialist reconstruction of soci-

ety—and the sooner the better. Socialist society will make the workplace as stress-free as humanly possible. Work will become a more pleasant and rewarding experience, and everything produced will go toward meeting the needs of society. Unemployment and poverty will become merely words in dictionaries and history books conjuring bad memories of the dark days when profit was the highest priority.

Study the program and principles of the Socialist Labor Party; if you agree, join us and help us build a better, brighter tomorrow.

Socialist Reconstruction of Society

A speech delivered by Daniel De Leon in 1905 after the founding convention of the Industrial Workers of the World. This classic explains why workers must organize politically and industrially to abolish the capitalist system of wage exploitation and establish a socialist society.

80 pp.—\$1.50 postpaid

New York Labor News

P.O. Box 218

Mountain View, CA 94042-0218

his ILO "conventions." Yet, problems still abound in that part of the world.

Those problems stem not only from direct physical hazards, Dr. Takala said, but also from increased mental pressures associated with the modern workplace. A recent trend that has gained notice is the increase in job stress due to the pressure of intensified exploitation (euphemistically called "increased productivity") brought on by globalization and increased competition. This malady is worsened by other stress-inducing concerns, such as the ongoing introduction of new labor-displacing technology, downsizing, job insecurity and worsening working conditions.

The increased stress and high-pressure work environment are leading to more workplace violence, and Dr. Takala linked racial and sexual harassment to problems faced by workers in the modern, high-stress working environment.

One hundred years ago, when exposing the "labor leader" as the sycophant of capitalism in *Two Pages From Roman History*, Daniel De Leon said:

"It is not merely by the process of sponging up the wealth produced by the working class that the capitalist class undermines the health and life of the workingman. The capitalist class is not constructively or inferentially only a cannibal class. The roots of capitalism are literally watered with the blood of the proletariat. The fields of production—mills, shops, railroad beds, yards—are strewn with the limbs and fallen bodies of workingmen. Capitalist 'progress' is built upon the skulls and crossbones of its working-class victims. Obviously, in the interest of the working class is the tearing of the veil of hypocrisy with which the capitalist class seeks to conceal these deeds of mayhem and murder, and the giving to them the greatest publicity possible. What does the labor leader do? He aids in the act of concealment, and thereby lends direct support to the capitalist's reckless disregard for the safety of the workingman's limb and life."

That much, at least, has not changed.

For its part, the ILO was created in 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles, the same treaty that formalized the end of World War I and established the League of Nations, the predecessor of the United Nations. Today the ILO describes itself as a "U.N. specialized agency which seeks the promotion of social justice and internationally recognized human and labor rights."

In truth, however, the League of Nations, the ILO and the U.N. were created to save international capitalism from itself. The League of Nations failed when, despite its best efforts, capitalism made one of its better known attempts at suicide, recorded by history as World War II. International capitalism survived the attempt and created the U.N. to replace the League of Nations.

The ILO also survived its parent and was adopted by its offspring, the U.N. While the U.N.'s generalized concern is keeping the world's ruling classes from ripping each other to shreds as they compete for markets, sources of raw materials and spheres of influence, the ILO's "specialized" concern is keeping the world's ruling classes from destroying the working-class goose that lays the golden egg of profits. From what Dr. Takala had to say on that subject, however, the globalized slaughter of workers is on the rise.

The Socialist Labor Party has proven repeatedly that the only logical solution is to rid ourselves of a system that puts profits ahead of the safety and welfare of human beings, and replace it with a socialist society where the health and well-being of its people will be the priority. Join the SLP and help us build a sane society.

(Carl Miller contributed to this article.)

the People
Founded April 5, 1891

The People (ISSN-0199-350X), continuing the *Weekly People*, is published monthly by the Socialist Labor Party of America, 661 Kings Row, San Jose, CA 95112-2724.

Periodicals postage paid at San Jose, CA 95101-7024. Postmaster: Send all address changes to *The People*, P.O. Box 218, Mountain View, CA 94042-0218. Communications: Business and editorial matters should be addressed to *The People*, P.O. Box 218, Mountain View, CA 94042-0218. Phone: (408) 280-7266. Fax: (408) 280-6964.

Production Staff: Donna Bills, Ken Boettcher, Robert Bills, acting editor.

Access *The People* online at <http://www.sp.org>. Send e-mail to: thepeople@igc.org.

Rates: (domestic and foreign): Single copy, 50 cents. Subscriptions: \$5 for one year; \$8 for two years; \$10 for three years. By first-class mail, add \$6 per year. Bundle orders: 5-100 copies, \$8 per 100; 101-500 copies, \$7 per 100; 501-1,000 copies, \$6 per 100; 1,001 or more copies, \$5 per 100. Foreign subscriptions: Payment by international money order in U.S. dollars.

the People

Published by the Socialist Labor Party

Established in 1891

National Secretary: Robert Bills

VOL. 112 NO. 3

JUNE 2002

Another Failed Reform

The Bush administration has come under fire because of its so-called Clear Skies proposal, which aims at eliminating the "new source review" (NSR) provisions of the Clean Air Act of 1990.

The NSR provisions were designed to force companies operating older coal-fired power plants, oil refineries and certain factories to comply with pollution standards set by the Clean Air Act of 1970. These older plants—some of which have been operating since the 1940s and 1950s—were exempted from compliance under the 1970 law, ostensibly on the theory that they would eventually be replaced by new plants subject to the stricter standards.

Whatever the theory, the immediate practical effect of the 1970 Clean Air Act was zilch, zero and nothing besides. It was supposed to be an improvement over the first air pollution law adopted in the 1950s and the Clean Air Act of 1963. However, any improvement in it was limited to the composition of its legalese and the industrial-sized loopholes it contained. Every major industrial source of air pollution in operation was automatically exempt. Any benefit that might come from the new law lay far in the future.

Environmentalists complained for years afterward that power companies in particular flagrantly violated the 1970 law's exemption provisions by expanding and upgrading older plants under the guise of "routine maintenance." Those complaints led eventually to the NSR amendments signed into law in 1990 by the outgoing president George H.W. Bush. They also led to a number of lawsuits by the Clinton administration aimed at forcing the owners of surreptitiously and illegally upgraded older plants to comply with the stricter emissions rules. Last year, however, the new Bush administration ordered a "reevaluation" of NSR provisions of the law by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and directed the Justice Department not to pursue the pending lawsuits or to start new ones.

During the year 2000 presidential campaign, some of America's largest energy companies developed a program for priorities if the election should give them a friendly Republican president. Their chief goal was to weaken the air pollution rule that had cost their companies billions of dollars in either compliance or litigation.

President Bush's election as president has loosed the intensive lobbying of these companies to undercut NSR investigations and enforcement. This lobbying is led by Southern Co., the nation's second-largest utility operator and a leading coal burner, and is supported by other energy companies that also are being sued by the government to clean up their plants and refineries.

These energy lobbyists are making a strong impact on the Bush administration, which has a number of former oil men running the U.S. government.

Chief lobbyist for the Southern Co. is Haley Barbour, former chairman of the Republican Party. Marc Racicot, its current chairman, is another Southern lobbyist. C. Boyden Gray, former counsel to the first President Bush, is also a lobbyist. All three have met frequently with administration officials urging less enforcement of the air pollution rule.

A great number of energy producers,

apart from Southern, have joined this energy company onslaught against the Clean Air Act.

The Environmental Protection Agency is more vigorous in enforcing the Clean Air Act than the Energy Department and seems to oppose that department and the White House itself on this issue.

President Bush's new Clear Skies proposal, which he claims will reduce air pollution, is currently at odds with the stricter alternatives drawn up by his own EPA.

Study documents show that the EPA's proposal would have been far more effective and prompter in reducing air pollution than President Bush's more capitalist-friendly Clear Skies proposal.

The EPA wanted the total sulfur dioxide emitted nationally restricted to 2 million tons annually by the year 2010. Sulfur dioxide causes acid rain and other damage to the environment. President Bush rejected that EPA proposal and instead offered a level of 3 million tons by year 2018.

There is an obvious struggle going on between the EPA and the Energy Department, with the president favoring the views of the latter and wanting more lenient treatment of the energy companies, undoubtedly as a reward for their more than generous monetary contributions to the Republican Party.

The Bush Clear Skies plan would set certain limits for sulfur dioxide, mercury and nitrogen dioxide and then let energy plants with high emissions levels either introduce controls to reduce those emissions or else buy credits from plants that had lower emissions. This queer arrangement would just let the dirty plants remain dirty.

The EPA's documentary study of its proposal to reduce pollution, which the current President Bush rejected out-of-hand, showed that the program in reducing pollution "would prevent at least 19,000 premature deaths, 12,000 new cases of chronic bronchitis and 17,000 hospitalizations and would save about \$154 billion in annual health care costs by 2020." (*The New York Times*, April 28)

By contrast, there is no comparable study for President Bush's Clear Skies proposal, no analysis of death or disease reduction, no detailed analysis of air quality under this plan.

The Clean Air Act has been in effect for 30 years and might have been more effective if strictly enforced and complied with by reluctant energy companies. But in many respects it has been a dismal failure, and Bush's Clear Skies proposal only underscores that failure. As Bradley M. Campbell, commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, put it: "Whether it's a matter of intention or effect, this is a huge gift to the electric generating industry." Last December, the state's attorney general, Richard Blumenthal, said: "These laws have been on the books for more than 30 years, and the power companies have been violating them brazenly and blatantly, purposely and continuously."

Some argue that things could be much worse without the Clean Air Act. When you consider that we have "progressed" from an air pollution problem to the threat of global warming, however, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the Clean Air Act is anything more than another failed reform.

—B.G.

A De Leon Editorial

On Dispensing 'Justice'



Small interests, as well as large, often explain the "course of justice" in capitalist society, as attested to by so many recently overturned criminal convictions.

The Struggle for Existence

(Daily People, July 30, 1901)

What the struggle for existence has come to in this "best of social systems" and "happiest of countries" was exemplified in the recent Fosburgh trial in Pittsfield, Mass.

A man was dragged before a jury on an indictment of having murdered his sister. The trial brought forth not even a semblance of a hook on which to hang the charge that the accused was guilty. From beginning to end, the testimony was an insult to the understanding: it was contradictory, it was flimsy, it was irrelevant. So preposterous was the case presented by the prosecution, that it did not reach the jury, but was contemptuously thrown out by the trial judge.

Did the police that "worked up the case" not know what sort of a case they had? Did the grand jury that found the "true bill" not realize that, upon such evidence, almost anyone of themselves could be hauled up as the slayer of the girl? Finally, did the prosecuting attorney have no appreciation of the worthlessness of the testimony he was to present? Only upon the theory that, from the first to the last, every one of these is an idiot, can the hollowness of the Fosburgh case have escaped them. How, then, came they to handle it, pushing it until it was thrown out? Was it an instance of personal malice? There is no evidence of that. Was it an instance of unqualified perseverance? Yet again, no. It was a manifestation of the struggle for existence, of the lengths to which a social system will drive men when the lash of want or the fear of want amidst plenty is the spur for human exertion.

The police have to live; the prosecuting attorney has to live; their ramifica-

tions in the machinery of the state's criminal procedure, the grand jury, was willing to "give them a chance." A crime was committed in the Fosburgh mansion; burglars had invaded the house, been discovered and had fled after firing a shot that had killed a daughter of the house. The sleepy police, active and swaggering when the work is to crack the heads of workmen on strike, felt their jobs endangered if the criminal or criminal escaped; too unfit for their work, which they use only as a means to a living without any sense of its responsibility, the culprits slipped through their fingers; unable to find the real criminal, they were willing to substitute an innocent man; and pounced upon the murdered girl's brother. The prosecuting attorney, partaking their fears in his own behalf, joined hands with the police. And thus the Fosburgh case was cooked up: a desperate attempt to immolate an innocent man on the altar of official pap-holderism.

It is not many years ago when a similar scheme was successfully put through in this city. A streetwalker was found cut to pieces; the appearance of the corpse called to mind the feats of the mysterious and at that time active "Jack the Ripper" in London. Inspector of Police Byrnes, then under a cloud and since dropped from the force with disgrace, instantly pounced upon a certain miserable waif as the murderer, and the fellow though innocent was railroaded to the penitentiary for 15 years. His conviction was necessary to Byrnes and his adjutants, it gave them a glamour of "effectiveness," and under that they sailed along for a little while longer.

The Fosburgh case carries the evidence, of what the struggle for existence is leading to, to the highest pitch yet attained in point of deliberate, extensive and criminal planning.

what is socialism?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A PAGE FROM WORKING-CLASS HISTORY

The Paterson Silk Workers' Strikes of 1911-1912

The following article from the Industrial Union News of July 1912 is the fifth in a series of reports on the Paterson silk workers' strikes of 1911-1912. The Industrial Union News was the official monthly newspaper of the "Detroit IWW." Its reports from the scene were written by Russell H. Palmer. An introduction giving background to the strikes and their causes appeared in our February issue. The series will conclude with an epilogue on the significance of the strikes and the organization that conducted them.

—Editor

FROM THE NEW JERSEY STRIKE ZONE

WORKERS' POLITICAL RIGHTS VIOLATED—DENIED RIGHT TO PICKET—DENIED RIGHT TO FREE SPEECH AND PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

RECORDER CARROLL, THE 'MAN FRIDAY' OF THE SIFF AND COHEN CO., SENTENCES GEB MEMBER RUDOLPH KATZ TO SIX MONTHS JAIL FOR PICKETING—GOV. WILSON GETS MANY LETTERS OF PROTEST. PROMISES INVESTIGATION

AFL Loomfixers and Twisters continue to scab on the IWW—H. Richter, Gen. Sec'y-Treasurer IWW, in Paterson

Paterson, N.J., June 14—The notorious police judge James F. Carroll, of this city, whose highhanded stretchings of the law have come to be the talk of the country, put the finishing touch to his career as strike breaker for the silk capitalists on May 31, when he sentenced Rudolph Katz, organizer of the Industrial Workers of the World, to jail for six months for the heinous crime of picketing a struck shop. The arrest was made at Siff and Cohen's mill on Clay Street and at the direct instigation of Mr. Siff, a member of the firm. The police had been carrying on a most abominable and unwarranted campaign against the pickets at that mill, with the aforementioned Siff goading them on, and Katz decided to go on the picket line there and see just how far the police were going. He did not have long to wait. The patrol wagon was at the mill before the pickets went on duty, the police being there evidently with the intention of making arrests whether the peace was violated or not.

Katz spoke to several workers who passed along the walk to their work in

unstruck shops and shook hands with some of them. Presently, a man whom Katz has known for some time but has not seen lately, came up and shook hands with the organizer. Katz asked him where he was working and he replied, "In Siff and Cohen's." He was told it was a struck shop and was asked to quit work but he refused to do so, and passed into the mill. Immediately, Mr. Siff, who was standing in the door, yelled out for the policeman to arrest Katz. Obeying, like dogs, the officers took Katz into custody. He was taken to the police station where he was placed in a cell until the recorder's court convened. He was then called to the bar and was represented by David Smith, an intelligent young lawyer, but without the experience of Ward and McGinnis, regular counsel for the union. Accordingly, Mr. Smith asked for postponement on the grounds that regular counsel could not be present. This "His Honor" refused, saying, in his own pretty (?) way that Katz was no better than anybody else and the trial would go on then and there.

Katz took the stand in his own behalf, saying that he had not exceeded the rights which the law allows in the matter of picketing and maintaining that his arrest had been purely to satisfy the Siff & Cohen Co., and that if the court convicted him it would be turning itself into a strike-breaking agency at the behest of the bosses.

The officer who arrested Katz testified that Katz was not blocking the walk or impeding traffic. Besides the testimony of the scab who was once Katz's friend and that of the officer who made the arrest a certain female scab, not noted for her chastity, testified that she was afraid of bodily harm when she saw Katz picketing. All who know Katz know that he is a man who would not start a physical encounter with anybody, let alone a woman, even if the principles of his organization did not deter him.

It was on such testimony, after refusing a postponement of trial to allow regular counsel to be present, and additional witnesses to be secured, that "Judge" Carroll sentenced Rudolph Katz to the Passaic County jail for six months. What a commentary upon our judicial system which allows ignorant politicians to be placed over intelligent and honest men, with almost arbitrary power to take away their liberties as citizens. And in this state of New Jersey after all the "progressive legislation of Gov. Wilson"! Katz is now in jail with Frank Young and they are busy reading scientific books and worthwhile fiction.

The powers that be have gone even farther than railroading peaceful pickets to jail. They unqualifiedly stopped all open air meetings of the IWW, but for a time allowed political meetings to be held. After a while, though, they arrested speakers of the Socialist Labor Party and the Socialist Party. The SP speaker was allowed to go and finish

his meeting but the SLP men were held for trial and were later found guilty of "obstructing the street" (sic!) and sentence was suspended. Permits will now be granted at the discretion of the chief of police, John Bimson.

In reply to a set of resolutions adopted at a protest meeting held by the IWW and sent to him, Gov. Wilson says that he will look into the condition into which the lower courts of this city have fallen and endeavor to straighten things out. He states that he has already instructed the prosecutor of the pleas of Passaic County to conduct an investigation. To date, however, nothing has been heard of it. It appears that Gov. Wilson has been receiving letters of protest from all over the country. Joseph F. Darling, of New York, a lawyer and single tax advocate, sent an open letter to the governor in which he denounced the Paterson authorities for smashing picketing and denying the right of free speech and public assembly.

Katz has been nominated for Congress from the Seventh New Jersey district by the Socialist Labor Party.

The national secretary of the IWW, Herman Richter, is in the city now, familiarizing himself with the situation.

The "I'm-a-Bummery" is spreading all kinds of rumors and misrepresentations over the town, but is meeting with very little success in befogging the workers' minds.

One conference has been held between a committee from the strikers and representatives of the silk capitalists. The bosses declared that they would settle on no other grounds than a three-loom system. The committee laughed at them and the strikers gave those terms the cold and stony stare.

Resolutions adopted at a mass meeting of the IWW on May 24, calling upon the AFL Loomfixers' and Twisters' Association to withdraw its men from the struck shops, were sent to that union. So far, there has been no compliance with the request. It will be remembered that this is the "union" which scabbed on the Doherty strikers a few months ago.

A call has come from the strikers in Perth Amboy, N.J., to the IWW to take charge of things there. Caleb Harrison has been sent. The strike in Perth Amboy is assuming the dimensions of a general strike. About 3,000 workers are out, 1,500 of whom are women. The American Smelting Co., the Atlantic Terra Cotta Co., Pardee Tile Works, Barber Asphalt Co., are some of the places struck. A larger number of women tobacco workers are out also.

Several men have been killed and many wounded by hired deputies since the strike began. The companies are howling for the militia but the authorities refuse to ask the governor to send troops as the fault lies with the companies' thugs.

R.H.P.

25 50 75 100 years ago

Strike Silences Vocal Teachers!

(Weekly People, June 14, 1952)

Columbia University broke the strike of its cafeteria workers on May 2.

On May 27, Murray Kempton of the *New York Post* conducted a telephone poll of Columbia professors on their university's strikebreaking.

Prof. George S. Counts, past president of the AFL teachers' union, said: "I've just been so busy I haven't done anything to find out about it."

Prof. Paul Brissenden, author of *The IWW—A Study of American Syndicalism*, said: "I wasn't close enough to it [the strike] to be entitled to an opinion."

Prof. Bernhard Stern, who has frequently fronted for the Stalinists, said: "Offhand, I have no comment."

Prof. Henry Steel Commager, the historian, said: "I haven't any opinion I'd care to publish."

The trained observers and analysts of Columbia were less than observant and analytical when a strike occurred under their very noses.

An exception may be noted. Prof. Commager's quoted statement did not express his full views. Mr. Kempton wrote: "I feel impelled to abandon ethics for the moment and present a rough, unauthorized summary of his private views of the Columbia strike. Prof. Commager believes that the strike was

a political attempt to embarrass Gen. Eisenhower [president of Columbia University] and that susceptible young men should be careful to look below the surface of these things."

One thing "below the surface," but so far that Commager couldn't see it, was that Columbia's cafeteria workers were and are badly exploited, even by capitalist standards. Married men with families get take-home pay of \$33 a week. The "objective" Prof. Commager evidently believes that the workers should keep silent about their exploitation in order to avoid hurting Eisenhower's chance for the presidency of the United States.

The End of the Boer War

(Weekly People, June 14, 1902)

Once more is modern capitalism triumphant. Once more has huge colonial concentration superseded petty national isolation. The Boers, having collected the "price that staggered humanity," have accepted Britain's terms and practically consented to absorption and annihilation. Unable to withstand the military power of the forces that, economically, have been sapping the integrity of their republics for years, the Boers have concluded peace on such terms as their conquerors saw fit to offer.

Henceforth the medieval republics of the Boers will be part of a South African empire dominated and directed by mod-

ern capitalism as practiced by Great Britain. Henceforth their medieval institutions will be impregnated with modern capitalist principles. Their church, state, government, thought will undergo the revolution which modern capitalist conditions have long demanded of them. Their mines, with their advanced capitalist development, will more likely dominate their fields, with their medieval agriculture.

This triumph of modern capitalism was easily foreseen. Small nations, medieval in their structure and life, can no more resist the power of large nations, capitalist in their organization and purpose, than can petty industries, medieval in character, survive the competition of large industries that are modern in form and ramifications.

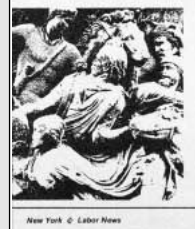
The tendency of the age is toward combination and concentration, economically and politically. It is inevitable, much as we may regret its harsh features. There is but one thing to do in the premises and that is to conform ourselves to this tendency. It will lead to socialism, nationally and internationally; and in this, not in the attempted frustration of this tendency, lies the hope of the race.

Thus, in the long run, every triumph of capitalism of this character becomes a triumph for socialism.

100th Anniversary: 1902-2002

An analysis of the so-called labor leader, or "labor lieutenant of the capitalist class," and a comparison with the ancient Roman plebs leader. A masterpiece of social portraiture and a study in revolutionary strategy and tactics. Contains also the famous "Ten Canons of the Proletarian Revolution."

TWO PAGES FROM ROMAN HISTORY DANIEL DE LEON



120 pp. — \$3.50 postpaid

New York Labor News

P.O. Box 218

Mountain View, CA 94042-0218

...Welfare Limits Approach

(Continued from page 1)

person fell further below the poverty line in 1999 and 2000 than in any other year on record; these data are available back to 1979."

Measurements of the "poverty gap," which the CBPP report defines as "the amount by which the incomes of all [officially] poor people fall below the poverty line," reinforce the view that the 1996 act deepened the poverty and misery of the poorest members of the working class. "The poverty gap in 2000 was only one percent smaller than the \$67.1 billion poverty gap in 1995, despite the fact that the number of people in poverty was 13 percent lower in 2000 than in 1995," said the report.

The total effect of kicking millions off the welfare rolls and leaving them at the mercy of capitalism's wildly fluctuating labor market—a market that is ever diminishing in size relative to the total population—may not become clear until later this year.

Under the present provisions of TANF, as another CBPP report observes, "half of the families receiving assistance...must be engaged in some kind of work-related activity for at least 30 hours per week." Moreover, it notes, "the general rule is that no family may receive federally funded assistance for longer than five years." Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of recipients are therefore only now reaching their fifth and final year of "benefits."

"States are allowed to use... TANF dollars to extend time limits, but only so long as no more than 20 percent of the caseload has exhausted the five-year limit," the CBPP report says. According to the CBPP report, "about 20" states established lifetime benefit limits of less than five years. Many extended those limits. Ben-

efit limits for at least 30 states are thus only this year coming into effect.

In California, for example, according to a Department of Social Services count cited by the *San Jose Mercury News*, "more than 114,000 adults" will receive their last welfare assistance check by Dec. 31, when they will be permanently dropped from the rolls. More than half are employed, but make so little that they qualify for welfare assistance. California, unlike many other states, will continue assistance to children of these adults "until they are 18 or graduate from high school, whichever comes later"—but the cuts will drop family income by an average of \$130 a month. "To parents already making choices between food and rent, the cuts will have an impact," observes the *Mercury News*.

That impact will come at a time when the working class generally is experiencing worsening hardship, with the official unemployment rate expected to rise to at least 6.2 percent in 2002.

It is at this grim juncture that Congress and the Bush administration are bending every effort to further stiffen the requirements for TANF aid. H.R. 4737 would increase the required share of welfare recipients who work to 70 percent in 2007, and raise the work requirement itself to a full 40 hours per week, with no more than 16 hours a week spent in a rehabilitation or educational program. Those unable to meet these new requirements would be tossed off the rolls, left to compete with a growing army of far more skilled workers recently laid off as a result of the economic recession. The bill would also grant the executive branch "superwaiver" authority to allow governors of some states the "flexibility" to cut state assistance

spending.

Clearly, the "success" of welfare reform for the political henchmen of the capitalist class in Washington consists first and foremost in the number of welfare caseloads dropped and the total expense saved by the capitalist class that pays for the political state. While they still mouth platitudes about bolstering personal responsibility and pride and reducing poverty, their actions speak louder than their words.

These partisans are instinctively if not cognitively aware that welfare was never intended to do anything more than to manage poverty in the interests of bolstering capitalist rule. Franklin Roosevelt, with the deepening Great Depression producing massive unemployment and social unrest that threatened the very existence of capitalism as a backdrop, declared the welfare reforms that established the basis of the present welfare system to be, not efforts to reduce poverty, but to "save our system, the capitalist system."

Today's backdrop of a disorganized working class that has failed so far to formulate any collective response to their increasing hardship under capitalism provides little impetus for Rooseveltian reforms, which threw the working class a few more bones to keep them quiet. The political partisans of capitalism recognize this, and are pushing for even smaller expenses on welfare while the pushing is good.

The "economic recovery" that was supposed to bring some relief to the American working class not only appears to have taken a detour, but may soon have its place taken by yet another of capitalism's recurring economic crises.

—K.B.

...SLP Emergency Fund

(Continued from page 1)

contribution of \$500.00 for the SLP Emergency Fund. I know that a receipt has already been sent, but I wanted to add a personal word of thanks in response to your generosity and the concern it reflects for the SLP and its future. We still have a mountain to climb, as the saying goes, but we are slowly making our way upward. If every member and supporter of the SLP responded to the Emergency Fund

with the same selfless generosity that you have we would scale the top in no time at all. Let's hope that many more friends and supporters of the SLP will soon step forward to emulate your example. I am confident that they will."

And they have...

Since the Emergency Fund was started last October, the SLP has received over \$90,400, nearly \$54,500 of which came as direct contributions to SLP funds—near-

ly equal to the party's entire income from all sources last year.

If the members and supporters of the SLP continue to respond to the Emergency Fund appeal as they have until now we should soon see some light coming from the end of the dark tunnel we have been traveling through.

Now is the time to dig in for the final push.

Please use the coupon printed in this issue.

Funds

(April 12–May 17)

SLP Emergency Fund

Section San Francisco Bay Area (\$1,738): Jennie Seekford \$1,000; section treasury \$300; \$100 each Dale Birus, Bruce Cozzini "In memory of Louis Fisher"; Steve Littleton \$75; Louis Lipcon "In honor of Jennie Seekford" \$50; \$25 each Marty Radov, Jill Campbell, Robert & Donna Bills; William Kelley \$20; Katy Bills \$10; Diane Secor \$5; Frank & Mary Prince \$3.

Joan M. Davis \$1,200; \$1,000 each Joseph McCabe, Irene Schelin; Anonymous \$500; \$200 each Gerald M. Lucas, Joseph Bregni, Chris Dobreff; Thomas Klepper \$112; Anonymous \$104; Jack Platt \$100; Section Cook County, Ill., \$85.32; Bill Conklin \$55; \$50 each Frank W. Bell, Robert Ormsby, Tony Marsella; Jim Plant \$40; R.E. Langh \$30; George E. Gray \$26; \$25 each John Hagerty,

Paul Putz, Margaret Kay, Robb Angelo, Rosemary & John Gale, J. Blessington, Joseph T. Longo; Marshall G. Soura \$24; \$20 each Irwin Hunsher, Juliette Jackson "In memory of Faye Banks," Marvin Ronis, Tom Dooley, Daniel Goodsaid, Richard Vobornik, Robert Varone; \$10 each Richard F. Mack, Frank Rudolph, Diane Lorraine Poole, David Brian Lazarus; David P. Mohle \$9; David Melamed "In memory of Genevieve Gunderson" \$8; Paul Putz \$6.50; Alex Iwasa \$5.60; Karl Piepenburg \$5; Don Patrick \$4; Craig L. Kysar \$1.
Total: \$7,158.42

SLP Sustainer Fund

Michael Preston \$600; Robert P. Burns \$150; Section Wayne County, Mich. (\$105): section \$100, A. Sim \$5; \$100 each Chris Dobreff, Bernard Bortnick, Karl Heck; Carl C. Miller Jr. \$70; Frank & Margaret Roemhild \$25; George E. Gray \$20; Chris Faatz \$10.
Total: \$1,280.00

Press Security Fund

\$100 each Harvey K. Fuller, Alan Taylor, David Wurdeman "In memory of Etta Wurdeman"; Michael Preston \$25; \$10 each Charles Wolfsfeld, Dora Ruggiero, Edward L. Kochian; James R. Dyer \$5.
Total: \$360.00

Leaflet Fund

Joseph J. Frank \$10; John S. Gale \$8; \$1 each Heidi Hoyt, Walter K. Bagnick.
Total: \$20.00

Christmas Box

Marshall G. Soura \$12. (Total)

Socialist Labor Party Financial Summary (April 2002)

Expenses \$ 13,288.15
Income 23,571.70
April Surplus..... 10,283.55
2002 Surplus 9,487.70

activities

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

CALIFORNIA

Oakland
Discussion Meeting — Section San Francisco Bay Area will hold a discussion meeting on Saturday, June 1, 4–6 p.m., at the Rockridge Branch Library, 5366 College Ave., (corner of College & Manila streets), Oakland. Moderator: Frank Prince. Title: "What Price Terrorism 'Til the End of Capitalism?"

OHIO

North Royalton
Discussion & Social—Section Cleveland will hold a discussion and social on Sunday, June 30, 1:30 p.m., at the Burns residence, 9626 York Rd., N. Royalton. For more information call 440-237-7933.

OREGON

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

TEXAS

Houston
Discussion Meetings — Section 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@ev1.net or visit the section's Web site at <http://houstonslp.tripod.com>.

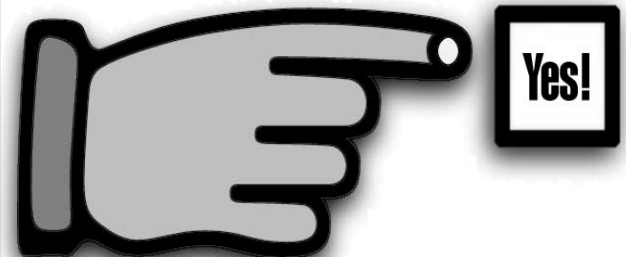
Steps You Can Take...

You can help provide for the long-term financial security of *The People* by including a properly worded provision in your Will or by making some other financial arrangement through your bank. Write to the Socialist Labor Party, publisher of *The People*, for a free copy of the booklet, *Steps You Can Take*. Use this coupon.

Socialist Labor Party • P.O. Box 218 • Mountain View, CA 94042-0218

Please send a free copy of *Steps You Can Take* to:

YOUR NAME _____
ADDRESS _____ APT. _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____



Please send me free information on socialism.

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____ APT. _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Socialist Labor Party, P.O. Box 218, Mountain View, CA 94042-0218 06/02

Help Break Our Chains!

Support the
**Socialist
Labor
Party**



Emergency Fund!

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

This is my contribution of \$_____ for the SLP Emergency Fund. (Make checks/money orders payable to SLP.)

I pledge \$_____. I will pay this pledge by _____ (date).

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____ APT. _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Acknowledgments will be made in *The People*. Please indicate if a receipt is desired: Yes No. (Political contributions are not tax deductible.)

directory

USA

NATIONAL OFFICE
SLP, PO Box 218, Mtn. View, CA 94042-0218; (408) 280-7266; fax (408) 280-6964; e-mail: socialists@slp.org; Web site: www.slp.org.

ALBANY, N.Y.
SLP, P.O. Box 105, Sloansville, NY 12160-0105.

CHICAGO
SLP, P.O. Box 642, Skokie, IL 60076-0642.

CLEVELAND
Robert Burns, 9626 York Rd., N. Royalton, OH 44133. Call (440) 237-7933. E-mail: j.oneil@worldnet.att.net.

CORPUS CHRISTI, TEX.
Call (512) 991-0287.

DALLAS
Call Bernie at (972) 458-2253.

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

EASTERN MASS.
Call (781) 444-3576.

HOUSTON
Call (713) 721-9296. Web site: http://houston.slp.tripod.com. E-mail: houstonSLP@ev1.net.

HUNTER COLLEGE, NYC
HunterSLP@aol.com

LONG ISLAND, N.Y.
LongIslandSLP@yahoo.com.

MIDDLETOWN, CT
SLP, 506 Hunting Hill Ave., Middletown, CT 06457. Call (860) 347-4003.

MINNEAPOLIS
Karl Heck, 5414 Williams Ave., White Bear Lake, MN 55110-2367. Call (651) 429-7279. E-mail: k57heck@cs.com.

MILWAUKEE
SLP, 1563 W. Rogers St., Milwaukee, WI 53204-3721. Call (414) 672-2185. E-mail: milwaukee.slp@webtv.net.

NEW LONDON, CT
SLP, 3 Jodry St., Quaker Hill, CT 06375. Call (203) 447-9897.

NEW YORK CITY
Call (516) 829-5325. E-mail: nycslp@aol.com. Web: http://hometown.aol.com/hunterslp/index.html.

PALMDALE, CALIF.
E-mail: med@ptw.com

PHILADELPHIA
SLP, P.O. Box 28732, Philadelphia, PA 19151. Call (215) 234-4724. E-mail: slpphillly@aol.com

PITTSBURGH
Call (412) 751-2613.

PONTIAC, MICH.
Call (810) 731-6756.

PORTLAND, ORE.
SLP, P.O. Box 4951, Portland, OR 97208. Call (503) 226-2881. Web: http://slp.pdx.home.mindspring.com E-mail: slp.pdx@mindspring.com.

SACRAMENTO, CA
SLP, P.O. Box 221663, Sacramento, CA 95822-8663.

S.F. BAY AREA
SLP, P.O. Box 70034, Sunnyvale, CA 94086-0034. E-mail: slpsfba@netscape.net.

SEABROOK, N.H.
Richard H. Cassin, P.O. Box 2538, Seabrook, NH 03874.

ST. PETERSBURG, FLA.
Call (727) 321-0999.

S.W. VIRGINIA
Thad Harris, P.O. Box 1068, St. Paul, VA 24283-0997. Call (540) 328-5531. Fax (540) 328-4059.

AUSTRALIA
Brian Blanchard, 58 Forest Rd., Trevallyn, Launceston, Tasmania 7250, Australia. Call or fax 0363-341952.

CANADA NATIONAL OFFICE
SLP, 1550 Laperriere Ave., Ottawa, Ont., K1Z 7T2. Call Doug Irving at (613) 728-5877 (hdqtrs.); (613) 226-6682 (home); or (613) 725-1949 (fax).

VANCOUVER
SLP, Suite 141, 6200 McKay Ave., Box 824, Burnaby, BC, V5H 4M9.

PUERTO RICO
SLP Group of Puerto Rico, Calle 415, NA-28, 4ta Ext., Country Club, Carolina PR 00982. Call (787) 757-5951.

UKRAINE NATIONAL OFFICE
Sergiy Skubenko, 42, 10/1 Pryvokzalna Str., 04116 Kiev, Ukraine SS. E-mail: escort71@hotmail.com.

MYKOLAYIV
28, 7 Shapayeva Str., Mykolayiv, Ukraine. Telephone 23 35 22.

Religious Group Bilks Millions From Its Faithful

Since the following article was written, the trial on which it reports came to an unexpected early end when, on May 6, the Andersen accounting firm agreed to pay \$217 million in damages. A large portion of that—\$41 million—is scheduled to go to lawyers and \$176 million to defrauded investors, most of whom are elderly. The Baptist Foundation's law firm had already agreed to pay \$21 million, of which \$18 million is supposed to go to the defrauded investors. If all the payments are made, which is far from certain considering the perilous financial situation of the Andersen firm, the sum will amount to only a portion of what was owed to each investor when the Arizona attorney general's office closed the foundation down in 1999. As the trial got under way in late April, The Wall Street Journal reported that, "For the plaintiffs, who lost hundreds of millions of dollars they invested in the Baptist Foundation, there is substantial doubt that they will be able to collect much money even if they do obtain a large verdict." On May 6, the Arthur Andersen firm paid \$11.2 million, according to a report in The New York Times, and monthly payments of \$10 million through October are supposed to follow. With what the Baptist Foundation's law firm previously agreed to pay—and, again, assuming it is paid—the payments "would cover more than half the estimated \$350 million lost by investors...."

By B.G.

A sordid bankruptcy trial in Arizona pits the Baptist Foundation of Arizona (BFA) against its accounting firm, with each accusing the other of fraud.

In November of 1999, the bankruptcy filing of the Baptist Foundation of Arizona revealed that capitalist greed had infected not only such scandal-ridden organizations as Enron and the Arthur Andersen accounting firm, but also some religious organizations not shy about wading through the same moral morass as their secular counterparts. Now that the case is under way, the truth is coming out in all its venal details. This Baptist foundation was a get-rich-quick scheme that enticed innocent investors, many of them elderly and retired, to entrust their life savings to the organization, which promised interest rates up to 15 percent. Any sophisticated person wise to

the ways of the world knows that if a proposition looks and sounds too good to be true, it is too good to be true. Let the buyer beware!

Unfortunately, most of the investors were trusting souls who placed utter confidence in anything that was churchly, without a thought that religious organizations are sometimes run by incompetents and scoundrels. Many of the investors seemed to know that the Baptist Foundation of Arizona was an investment organization that was not federally insured, but were lulled by the organization's ongoing claim: "We are Godly insured."

The truth is that the Baptist Foundation of Arizona was what is known as a Ponzi scheme—that is, an "investment" organization without solid, ongoing financial backing, but one that will use income from later investors to pay off earlier investors and that will use all sorts of devious financial finagling to stay afloat until the house of cards finally comes crashing down.

The BFA used money from investors to invest in real estate, promising high profits. With the decline of Arizona's real estate market, the BFA management found a way around that unpleasant fact by establishing shell corporations to purchase real estate from the Baptist Foundation at greatly exaggerated prices. The foundation itself lent the money to these fraudulent corporations to make the purchases. It all amounted to an elaborate shell game, which eventually was bound to implode.

When the Baptist Foundation came crashing down in 1999, it was \$570 million in debt to 11,000 mostly elderly investors.

Guess who was the auditor for the Baptist Foundation of Arizona? None other than Arthur Andersen LLP.

Now the Baptist Foundation's liquidation trust is suing the Andersen auditing company. John P. Coffey, the lead attorney for the liquidation trust, claims that it is Andersen that is at fault because it went "from being a negligent auditor to being complicit in the fraud." Andersen's lead lawyer, Don Martin, disagrees and says that it is unfair that Andersen is being sued because his company was also a victim of the fraud.

Both incompetent organizations are pointing fingers at each other.

For years, certain insiders had

tried to warn Andersen about the questionable activity of the Baptist Foundation. In February 1997, Karen Paetz, a former foundation accountant, warned the manager of Andersen who had been designated to oversee the BFA audits that the foundation's books "were cooked," or fraudulent. Andersen did nothing.

In 1998, Deeanne Griebel, who was a financial planner and a certified public accountant in Mesa, Ariz., had investigated BFA's financial status at the request of a client. She found that one of the Baptist Foundation's affiliates had a huge negative net worth of more than \$100 million. Griebel then notified both Andersen's Phoenix office and its Chicago headquarters that the foundation was out of funds, bankrupt, and that Andersen should withdraw its favorable accounting opinion.

Andersen did nothing of the sort and never even bothered to return Griebel's telephone calls.

Not only is Andersen claiming that it, too, was fooled by the foundation's executives, many of whom have already pleaded guilty to fraud or racketeering or are presently awaiting trial, but is looking around for others to blame, such as the Arizona attorney general's office and state regulators, that had received consumer complaints about BFA but did nothing at the time. These Arizona agencies, in turn, excuse themselves by saying that those complaints at the time were not factual enough.

So far, none of these incompetent entities has sought to blame God for the disaster.

The Arizona state attorney general is now jumping into action—better late than never—and has a separate lawsuit against Andersen to collect money for investors and to revoke Andersen's state license.

What better example is there that capitalism corrupts all that it touches? Supposedly reputable organizations can be caught up in the rush to wealth and, in their intense desire to succeed, can be drawn willingly into the worst aspects of capitalism, resorting to fraud and deviousness to prop up a bubble institution whose downfall brings misery to the many whose trust has been betrayed. The crime in this instance was theft, contemptible theft under the guise of godly benevolence. Unfortunately, just another capitalist scandal!

Question Period

Did Marx say the socialist revolution would come first in an economically advanced country? What was his reasoning?

Marx did, indeed, state that the socialist revolution would come first in an industrialized nation. He based his reasoning on the fact that socialized production—i.e., production that is highly organized and in which there is a high degree of division of labor—is a prerequisite for socialism. Marx regarded it as the historic task of capitalism to transform scattered, individual production into large-scale capitalist production, and scattered, individual property into large aggregates of capitalist property. Only when social production had reached this higher stage would it be possible and practicable for the workers to take it over and manage it.

Marx set forth his postulation in a resolution dated Jan. 1, 1870, that he drafted for the General Council of the International Workingmen's Association, which was addressed to the Federal Council of Romance in Switzerland, saying:

"Although the revolutionary initiative will probably come from France, England alone can serve as the lever of a serious economic revolution. It is the only country where there are no more peasants and where property in land is concentrated in a few hands. It is the only country where the capitalist form—that is to say, com-

bined labor on a large scale under capitalist employers—has invaded practically the whole of production. It is the only country where the great majority of the population consists of wage laborers. It is the only country where the class struggle and the organization of the working class through the trade unions has acquired a certain degree of maturity and universality. As a result of its dominating position in the world market, it is the only country where every revolution in its economic conditions must react directly on the entire world. If this country is the classic seat of landlordism and capitalism, by virtue of that fact it is also here that the material conditions of their destruction are most highly developed....

"The English have all the material requisites necessary for the social revolution."

The perceptive reader will, of course, apply Marx's reasoning to the present. The expectation that the "revolutionary initiative will probably come from France," was correct in 1870 (the Paris Commune came in 1871), but would obviously be incorrect today. But all that England was to the world of 1870, the United States is to the world of today. The only exception is that it is not the "classic seat of landlordism" in the sense that England was. But land as well as capital in the United States is concentrated in ownership. Production is thoroughly

socialized. The workers of brain and brawn are the overwhelming majority.

Clearly, of all the countries of the world today, it is in the United States that these conditions are most highly developed. The house of socialism is all built in America. All that is needed is for the working class to wake up and move in.

How will the socialist revolution come about in America?

No one can predict the way the revolution will develop in the United States or anywhere else except in the most general way. However, logic and experience teach us that two factors are absolutely indispensable to a fundamental social change. One is a socioeconomic crisis culminating in a revolutionary situation that awakens and sets into motion the mass of workers. The other is that the class whose interests are incarnate in revolution—which, in the case of the socialist revolution, means the working class—understands where it is going and how it is to act, and that it be organized accordingly.

Contrary to the reiterated charges of ruling classes, agitators do not "make" revolutions. As Frederick Engels put it in an article in the *New York Tribune*, Oct. 25, 1851: "The times of that superstition which

attributed revolutions to the ill-will of a few agitators have long passed away. Everyone knows nowadays that wherever there is a revolutionary convulsion, there must be some social want in the background, which is prevented, by outworn institutions, from satisfying itself."

Moreover, revolutionary crises develop spontaneously, often taking by surprise the revolutionists themselves. Lenin attested to this in a speech on Aug. 23, 1918, saying: "...revolution moves unconditionally and irresistibly. But only a fool can ask for the precise moment at which revolution will blaze in the West. It is impossible to calculate or predict a revolution; it comes out all by itself. It is maturing now and must break forth. Did anyone think, a week before the March revolution [1917] that it was ready to blaze forth? Did anyone think, at the moment when the insane monk led the people to the czar's palace, that this was the beginning of the revolution of 1905? But revolution grows slowly and must inevitably make itself felt."

Capitalism today presents the illusion of a relatively stable system. Actually, it is a system built on a foundation of dry rot, and one torn by inner contradictions. Sooner or later

these contradictions will culminate in breakdown and crisis. Thus historic forces will themselves supply one of the essential ingredients of fundamental social change—an all-embracing crisis that will jar the working class out of its apathy.

In this connection it may be well to recall that a revolutionary situation was developing in the United States in 1933, but the crisis was prevented from coming to a head by the swift and aggressive actions of the incoming Roosevelt administration. In describing these measures, Raymond Moley, head of the New Deal "brain trust," said: "Capitalism was saved in eight days." (*Saturday Evening Post*, July 29, 1939)

However, while historic forces and inherent capitalist contradictions may be depended upon to produce the apathy-destroying conditions for revolution, its successful consummation will depend wholly on the degree in which the workers understand their class mission and are organized to carry it out. And this, in turn, will depend on how well the revolutionary political organization (the Socialist Labor Party) has done its work of agitation and education. This is why SLP "party building" is the order of the day.

VENEZUELA—

AFL-CIO Still Fronting For U.S. Imperialist Interests

By Ken Boettcher

“Could the bad old days be returning to the AFL-CIO’s operations in other countries?” asked an article in the May issue of *Labor Notes*. The article wonders out loud if they are, citing evidence from reports surrounding the April coup attempt in Venezuela. The evidence actually suggests the “bad old days” of federation involvement with right-wing movements and dictators never really left.

“Fear that in Venezuela the AFL-CIO was supporting both a right-wing union federation and a U.S.-backed coup led some [U.S.] solidarity activists to mount a picket line at AFL-CIO headquarters in February,” *Labor Notes* reported.

In fact, the AFL-CIO *did* sponsor, “with the National Endowment for Democracy [NED], a closed forum featuring representatives of the CTV [Venezuelan Labor Federation].” As *Labor Notes* observed, “The forum was part of a tour funded by NED, and included meetings with several AFL-CIO leaders.” One union member who participated in the meetings said “the CTV representatives noted they were here to discuss the chances for a coup.”

The NED was set up in 1983 to promote capitalism and counter Soviet and other influences around the world. It is described as a “private, nonprofit organization,” but it receives an annual appropriation from Congress. NED doles out these funds to what it decides are “pro-democracy groups” in foreign countries.

In short, NED was set up to finance opposition parties and groups in targeted countries—a practice with characteristics similar in intent to what the United States ostensibly frowns on when foreign capitalists seek to influence the Democratic and Republican parties with their campaign contributions. The AFL-CIO’s role in these quarrels among factions of foreign ruling classes struggling for authority and power within their own countries has nothing to do with the interests of workers and everything to do with the interests of the U.S. ruling class. The fiasco it tied itself to in Venezuela is typical of similar services performed for capital in the past.

“In December business owners [capi-



U.S. State Department

talists, that is] called a strike, sending millions of workers home, to protest the Chavez government,” *Labor Notes* writer Katherine Hoyt said. “The invitation to a forum sent out by the AFL-CIO and NED proudly stated that the CTV played ‘a key role in the national strike on Dec. 10’ and joined with business and other groups in ‘a massive demonstration against government on Jan. 23.’”

In short, the strike was not a simple manifestation of the class struggle. It had nothing whatever to do with the struggle between capital and labor, or between labor and Venezuela’s state-run branch of the country’s oil-producing industry, and it was not a direct outgrowth of either the state-run or capitalist-owned oil companies’ exploitation of oil workers. It was, rather, a political strike, organized and staged by one arm of the Venezuelan ruling class against another with the physical backing of the CTV.

Venezuela’s president, the democratically elected militarist and demagogue Hugo Chavez, had angered U.S. capital by pushing for greater national control of Venezuelan oil, “criticizing the Bush administration’s war on terrorism, oppos-

ing the Free Trade Area of the Americas and calling for an end to the Cuban embargo.” The coup attempt failed within two days. Where Chavez and his inchoate Peronista-like movement are headed vis-a-vis the material and strategic interests of U.S. and Venezuelan capitalism remains to be seen. There is little evidence to assume they will produce anything but a bourgeois state headed by nationalist radical petty bourgeois elements or another variant of bureaucratic state despotism under which the class interests of workers and peasants are subjugated by a new elite.

It isn’t the first time that the AFL-CIO and agents of the U.S. political state have been involved in such goings-on. The AFL-CIO served U.S. imperialist interests by collaborating with the CIA to destabilize and overthrow the popularly elected Allende government in Chile—revelations that came to light in the 1970s. For decades, and in country after country, the AFL-CIO has used CIA funds to set up labor unions in its own mold—unions that collaborated with repressive regimes catering to U.S. capitalist interests.

the idea of Marxism-De Leonism. We are planning to continue our Marxist-De Leonist propaganda in the universities and enterprises, both in Kiev and in other regions where the prospects for such work are quite good.

Fraternally yours,
Sergiy Skubenko
National Secretary, SLP

party news

New Section in Texas

Five members of the SLP met in Houston on March 23 to organize a new section of the party. The members elected temporary officers and signed an application for a charter that was submitted to the party’s National Executive Committee. The NEC unanimously approved the charter in April and the new section is expected to complete its organization by electing permanent officers and committees in June. The temporary officers elected in March were Carl C. Miller Jr. as organizer and Judy Scypion as financial secretary. Section Houston is the first SLP section organized in Texas since 1922.

May Day in Kiev

Under date of May 3, the NEC received the following communication from Sergiy Skubenko, national secretary of the SLP of Ukraine.

Dear Comrades,

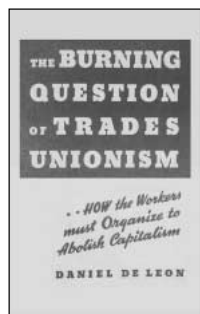
Congratulations on May Day from all

SLPU comrades to all American SLP comrades!

Socialist Labor Party of Ukraine (SLPU) successfully intervened in May Day rally and meeting in Kiev. The rally was from Slavy Square to Evropeyskaya Square, where the meeting was. About 4,500 persons participated in these events. The main slogans of the action were “Smash bourgeois system!” “Workers of all lands, unite!” “Long live the proletarian revolution!” Our banner was “For Marxism-De Leonism!”

We succeeded in buying a computer and printer with the help of US-SLP comrades, so this time we succeeded in printing and distributing many more leaflets than usual—about 130 copies. In this leaflet we explained our positions, who we (the SLP) are, and what the US-SLP and Marxism-De Leonism are. As a result we won some new contacts among workers, students and left activists. We may estimate the action as a successful one of SLP for promoting

De Leon examines every major argument—pro and con—on the union question, traces confusion on what unions can and cannot accomplish to its source in the American Federation of Labor, and outlines the general principles on which genuine and effective working-class unions can be built. One of De Leon’s best.



48 pages—\$1.25 postpaid

NEW YORK LABOR NEWS
P.O. Box 218
Mountain View, CA 94042-0218

After the CIA’s ties to these outfits were exposed, the U.S. ruling class and government set up the largely federally funded but *private* NED organization. During the Reagan administration it funneled aid to like-minded political, cultural and union organizations abroad—including the federation’s Free Trade Union Institute, which was involved in “projects” in Chile, Brazil, Peru, Poland, Portugal and several other countries.

In 1995, when John Sweeney was elected president of the AFL-CIO, he and his underlings in the labor federation promised to turn over a new leaf. By that they did not mean that they wished to change the essential character of the AFL-CIO as a federation of procapitalist unions dedicated to propping up the system of wage slavery at home and abroad and to feathering the nests of union bureaucrats in the process.

What they really wanted, and what the federation continues to want under Sweeney’s leadership, is to bolster the *appearance* that the existing unions serve the interests of the U.S. working class—and that their reflections overseas do the same for workers of every country. Their object is to attract more workers to its fold, halt the AFL-CIO’s membership decline and thereby bolster their own positions of power and privilege.

The “new leaf” that was to be turned included, among other things, promises that the federation would press for more “militant” organizing efforts at home and more “militant” demands in what the existing unions call “collective bargaining.” Collective bargaining is the process by which union bureaucrats lend the color of labor to contracts that invariably bind the hands of workers and sell their class interests down the river—while often doing less than keeping wages apace with inflation. It is a process diametrically opposed to real militancy in defense of workers’ interests.

Many who fell for that line also expected that the federation would halt its long-standing support for reactionary regimes around the world with the aid of the CIA or other political, military or economic arms of U.S. capital—whose material interests these regimes served.

By now it is clear that any “militancy” the AFL-CIO leadership brokered in the existing unions has been completely unable to stem the tide of declining membership. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported earlier this year that union membership in 2001 had dropped to 13.5 percent of the “labor force” (as the BLS designates workers in the labor market), compared to 14.9 percent in 1995 when Sweeney and his associates turned over their new leaf. Little wonder, since any “militancy” that has as its basis *acceptance* of the very economic system responsible for driving down workers’ real wages and cutting or terminating pensions, other retirement and health benefits is doomed from the start. Workers clearly remain largely unconvinced that such unions significantly serve their own interests.

It is also clear, with the revelations surrounding the recent coup attempt in Venezuela, that the federation’s long-standing service abroad to U.S. imperialism continues. As *Labor Notes* observed, “the AFL-CIO’s Solidarity Center receives much of its funding from NED.”

This is all quite natural. Before the “new leaf” turned and after, the procapitalist AFL-CIO openly collaborated at home with the capitalist exploiters and betrayed workers’ interests. Abroad, before and now, it collaborates in defending the global interests of U.S. imperialism. Nowhere does it challenge the system of exploitation that is creating growing hardship for workers around the world.