

IN THIS ISSUE

Many Workers Excluded From Jobless 'Benefits'

Page 2

Sweatshop Commodities Stock College Store Shelves

Page 3

Editorial—The Mideast Tragedy

Page 4

The Class Struggle In China

Page 8

SLP Emergency Fund

The Fight is Not Over

Several months ago we announced that the Socialist Labor Party and its official journal *The People* were in a serious financial bind. The party's cash reserves had dwindled down to their lowest level in more than a decade and it appeared likely that we would soon have no choice but to suspend publication of *The People* and possibly go a drastic step further by closing down the headquarters of the party itself.

During the months since making that announcement and launching the SLP Emergency Fund with its goal of \$125,000, the party's membership and supporters—and others who have come into contact with the SLP and *The People* for the first time—have responded with a generous outpouring from what we know are limited financial resources.

We struggle for words to express the appreciation the staff at national headquarters feels concerning this magnificent display of generosity—feelings we know are shared by all party members towards all others who have come forward in support of this effort. That struggle to give expression to the depth of our appreciation is not made easier by the fact that despite that outpouring of support it now appears unlikely that we can reach the \$125,000 goal by the end of June, as we had hoped. The question now is whether it can be reached by the end of August, which, as we have said before, is essential.

The party's income from last October 1 through the end of March totaled \$66,845.30, of which \$48,387.24 came in as direct contributions to party funds. Apart from some interest derived from bank deposits and two small bequests, most of the balance of \$18,458.06 was derived in part from sales of SLP literature, but primarily from sales of *The People*.

New readers of *The People* may wonder why we are so candid about the SLP's financial problems. The answer is that the SLP is completely dependent upon the voluntary contributions of its members and supporters. There are no corporate or individual capitalist donors to the SLP. Unlike the political parties of capitalism that must come up with

(Continued on page 7)

Time Running Out for Millions of Jobless Workers

News accounts of a "technical fluke" that ostensibly skewed jobless figures unfavorably abounded last month when, as one Associated Press report put it, "Laid-off workers seeking to take advantage of a federal extension for benefits were required to submit new claims." Thanks to the "fluke," applications in the last week of March "shot up by 73,000 to 493,000."

But while the major media laboriously tried to explain away the rise in jobless claims as a result of the benefit extension signed into law by President Bush earlier this year, other information about the benefit extension and unemployment was almost impossible to find in one place.

Information, for example, like that contained in a study released by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) in mid-March. That report made the case that, "The extension of unemployment benefits recently signed into law by President Bush will *not* provide 13 extra weeks of benefits to most U.S. workers, and will likely *not* be enough to help the majority of unemployed." (Emphasis ours.)

The EPI study noted that not all workers in every state are eligible for 26 weeks of benefits. "Only eight states have a guaranteed 26 weeks of eligibility regardless of earnings; the rest of the states calculate the duration based upon either the total amount of wages earned or the distribution of earnings in the qualifying year," the study said. Accordingly, in 35 states unemployed workers "will



LNS

receive less than a full 26 weeks of benefits, even after the extensions." The study found that 43 percent of unemployed workers exhaust their benefits in less than 26 weeks.

Reflecting this reality, while more than 8 million workers were officially unemployed in March, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that only 3.8 million workers received unemployment benefits in the workweek ending March 30, according to the Associated Press. More than 4 million workers were therefore without benefits, desperately struggling to keep a roof overhead and food in their children's mouths.

Even the almost 4 million who received benefits in that week were experiencing desperate poverty. "Benefit" levels differ from state to state, though not widely. California, one of the most prosperous states in the nation, provides less than a quarter of the rate of pay workers received before being laid off, with a maximum weekly benefit of \$230. Reformers

assert the rate *should* be 40 percent replacement pay—which likely means that no state currently provides anywhere near that amount.

The Labor Department reported in March that the average duration of unemployment was 16.2 weeks, with over 3 million workers suffering unemployment for 15 weeks or longer.

Moreover, a briefing paper released earlier this year by the Economic Policy Institute entitled, "It Ain't Over Till It's Really Over," maintained that even once a recovery is under way workers will continue to suffer. That is due to ongoing growth in both the labor force and productivity improvements that enable increased output with fewer workers. "Attaining positive but slow growth, as some expect in spring 2002 [and as many in the major media asserted had begun last month], will not prevent unemployment from continuing to grow." "In fact," the EPI report maintains, "estimates of a spring 2002 recovery are

(Continued on page 6)

Pension Illusions Going Up in Smoke

By Ken Boettcher

"American workers now put more money into pension and retirement-savings plans sponsored by their employers than the companies do themselves"—or so proclaimed *The New York Times* on April 7.

But workers have *always* put more wealth than their employers into such retirement plans. Indeed, it is a carefully nurtured illusion that capitalists contribute to pension funds at all.

Fact is that the "contributions" some capitalists make or once made to pension funds come from wealth produced by workers and stolen from them in the process of exploitation.

The illusion that capitalists contribute to pension funds is a handy one for spurring workers to accept speed-ups, job hazards and all manner of other sacrifices on the altar of profit.

The trend reported by the *Times* makes it clear that fewer and fewer capitalists think it necessary to maintain that illusion by "squandering" resources on a working class that is clearly not organized to enforce at

least some of its demands.

For the past two decades, more capitalists have "contributed" less of the wealth they steal from workers to fund pension plans. The failure of some companies to live up to pension deals made with unions and workers produced a plethora of government regulations.

Like most reforms meant to benefit workers, however, regulations covering pensions were never intended to do away with more than the worst abuses—they were window dressing to help shore up the illusion of capitalist beneficence.

Indeed, pensions for workers, regardless of what form they take, are a tacit admission that wages are not adequate to provide for workers' needs during their working years and for their retirement. More than that, they amount to a backhanded confession of capitalist guilt in the social crime of human exploitation, which is the very foundation of the capitalist system.

Paltry and insecure as pension

plans can be, the funds that go into them represent a portion of the wealth that is produced by the workers but kept from their paychecks. Their introduction into American industry in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was a stroke of capitalist genius. They serve the double purpose of creating an illusion of capitalist generosity while concealing the fact of capitalist theft.

This capitalist scam produced enormous sociological, political and economic benefits for the capitalist system, and went largely unregulated until the Studebaker collapse in 1963. When Studebaker suddenly closed its auto production works and filed for bankruptcy that year, it not only left 7,000 production workers high and dry without jobs but claimed it could not pay the so-called retirement benefits promised to at least 4,000 of those workers under its employee pension plan.

It would take another 11 years following Studebaker's collapse and renegeing on its pension plan promises before Congress finally intervened by passing the so-called Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) in 1974. When President Gerald Ford signed ERISA into law, he said:

"Under this law the men and women of our labor force will have much more clearly defined rights to

(Continued on page 6)

Many Workers Excluded From Jobless 'Benefits'

By Carl C. Miller Jr.

Many workers who lost their jobs as a result of recessionary reductions are finding that just because they lost their jobs doesn't necessarily mean that they qualify for unemployment insurance. According to an article published by the Associated Press, as many as 43 percent of unemployed workers do not qualify for benefits. So, capitalism fails not only to employ all those who need work, it refuses to even assist many of those who lose their jobs as a result of its recurring crises.

One of the examples cited by the AP article was that of an Atlanta worker who was laid off from his \$7.15-an-hour parking garage job in January and thought that would qualify him for unemployment benefits. "I didn't ask to be laid off," he said. According to the "formula" used by most states to disqualify as many workers as possible, he was not eligible to receive benefits.

"The first four of the last five completed calendar quarters are counted, and a worker must be employed for at least two quarters during that time and wages must meet a certain level," the AP article explained.

"Why am I being penalized?" the Atlanta worker wanted to know. "I did not quit. I did not get fired."

"The unemployment office says that [he] was not employed at the garage for two full quarters during the eligibility period," the AP article added.

The Atlanta worker is one of many who have no "safety net" to fall back on because of the exclusionary formula used by many states to determine eligibility that plainly fails to meet the needs of the workers.

"In most states unemployment insurance isn't a true safety net, but a series of gaping holes loosely strung together," said Jeffrey Wenger, who the AP identified as a labor economist at the Economic Policy Institute in Washington.

Jeff Faux, a colleague of Wenger's,



The People

said: "The new economy is characterized by widespread job insecurities. Working life has changed dramatically."

The system doesn't take into account that today "more part-time workers, temporary workers, contingent workers, contract workers and seasonal workers than ever before" are susceptible to capitalism's periodic convulsions, or that "the unemployment insurance system has not changed" since the 1930s.

Unemployment insurance was created as part of the Social Security Act in 1935. It was a sop thrown to the workers during the Great Depression and its purpose was to offer a bare minimum of support to keep workers from gravitating toward notions of dumping the capitalist system. The purpose of the program hasn't changed since then. On average nationally, the program replaces less than half of the worker's lost wages. Benefits average about \$237.78 a week, and in most states workers can only draw the benefit for 26 weeks—provided they qualify to collect the measly pittance.

Critics of the unemployment compensation system say it is outmoded and needs to be overhauled to conform to modern conditions. The changing com-

position of the working class make this necessary, they argue, and the 43 percent figure cited by the AP would seem to bear them out.

In short, it's time to reform the reform that supposedly was designed to give workers a hand when their employers got knocked out of the competitive running or sought to save themselves by tossing unwanted workers out.

Despite statistics such as the 43 percent exclusion rate cited here, the Employment Policy Foundation, a capitalist-financed "think tank," says that the number of workers who do not qualify for unemployment benefits is being overblown. In a manner befitting of a capitalist-supported entity, the foundation, according to the AP article, said "the system was not meant to cover people who leave their jobs voluntarily or new entrants to the labor force who are counted as unemployed."

All this boils down to a pure case of confession and avoidance. By concentrating ownership and control of the means of life into the hands of a tiny ruling class, capitalism has reduced the working-class majority to a state of economic dependence, but when economic crises develop the ruling class absolves

itself of all responsibility for those whom it has reduced to this state of dependence. To obscure this morally reprehensible betrayal, particularly when circumstances threaten to alert the dependent majority to the truth—as, for example, during the Great Depression—the ruling class prevails upon its hand-picked politicians to come up with "humanitarian" reforms such as unemployment insurance. As seen, however, unemployment insurance insures no one against unemployment or its effects, and is nothing less than an insult to the workers without whose labor the wealth enjoyed by the ruling class would not and could not exist.

Worse, the ruling class not only sidesteps the responsibility implicit in its control of what society as a whole needs for its survival, it uses a portion of that wealth to prostitute science and opinion to develop "philosophies" to justify injustice and conceal the truth under a *burqa* of righteousness.

What is outmoded is not simply the unemployment insurance insult to the working class and the immoral efforts to make it appear that the insult is a "benefit," but the social system that produces economic dependence and the moral turpitude reflected in that insult.

There is a solution that will eliminate not only unemployment and all of its associated problems, but all of the other miseries that go along with the capitalism system itself. The solution is a socialist reconstruction of society along the lines laid out by the Socialist Industrial Union program of the SLP. If you agree that it's time to throw off the burden placed on us all by wage slavery and the other ills of the profit system, join us under the banner of the SLP and help make a better world a reality.

Do You Belong?

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

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

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

Get Subs!

Capitalist Ford Flips-Flops On Improved Environment

By B.G.

William Clay Ford Jr., great-grandson of Ford Motor Co. founder Henry Ford Sr., was once regarded as an enthusiastic environmentalist. He is also a vegetarian, a guitar player and a martial arts enthusiast. Just one of the guys! Only last year he wrote a "citizenship report" affirming that global warming "stands out from other environmental issues because of its potentially serious consequences and its direct relationship to our industry."

William Ford became chairman of the Ford Motor Co. in 1999, and environmentalists were delighted to have an ally at the top of the "business" heap.

But not so fast! Anyone familiar with the materialist theory of history knows the impact self-interest has on ideology. As chairman, young Ford did not have responsibility for the day-to-day operations of his company, which was then extremely prosperous. It was a good period for making altruistic declarations that made everyone feel joyous and warm all over.

Last October, however, Mr. Ford moved up from titular chairman to chief executive officer and gained operational control of the Ford Motor Co. By then the company reportedly was struggling economically. Magically, Mr.

Ford's altruistic views underwent an amazing transformation as he abandoned his grand environmental pronouncements in favor of a two-fisted capitalist approach to production, which has no place for global warming nonsense. Ford now favors the auto industry's polluting vehicles over the health of the environment.

What prompted this sudden change? A partial explanation may be a recent piece of ill-fated legislation introduced into the U.S. Senate by Democrat John Kerry of Massachusetts and Republican John McCain of Arizona. The Kerry-McCain bill aimed at requiring the auto industry to produce vehicles that are 50 percent more fuel efficient by model year 2016. Kerry and McCain also argued that the higher standard would reduce dependence on foreign oil by 2.5 billion barrels a day.

During the debate the Ford Motor Co., joined by the other auto companies, supported a vigorous advertising campaign to bring pressure on the Senate to defeat the bill. A number of far-fetched arguments were used to undermine the bill, such as a claim that fuel economy meant phasing out sport utility vehicles and trucks in favor of subcompact cars. Farmers, it was claimed, would have to give up their trucks and use subcom-

pact cars to tend their crops and take them to market.

Senate opponents of the measure made similar arguments when the proposal came up for debate. They asserted that fazing out the gas-guzzling large vehicles would increase highway deaths because smaller cars are less safe to drive.

Deliberately, the ads and the Senate

(Continued on page 7)

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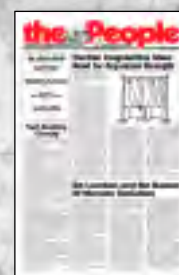
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Sweatshop Commodities Stock College Store Shelves

By B.G.

Sweatshops are alive and well in the United States, as much as in other countries where American companies contract for even more ruthlessly exploited labor to manufacture items for sale in this country. College campus stores that sell clothing with college logos have long been among the beneficiaries of sweatshop labor.

Exploited workers in Puebla, Mexico, for instance, turn out Nike and Reebok college clothing for as little as 65¢ an hour. These items can sell in campus stores for as much as \$36 for a college logo sweatshirt, \$21 for a polo shirt and \$48 for a hooded sweatshirt.

The nonprofit Worker Rights Consortium based in Washington, D.C., has been conducting a campaign to encourage colleges to dump their suppliers who deal with sweatshops. Thus far it has been successful in gaining the support of 94 colleges and universities in this effort.

There is now strong likelihood that the Worker Rights Consortium will be given a boost with the addition of the public colleges and universities in New York State. The State University of New York system has 64 campuses and the City University of New York system has 20. The New York State Legislature presently has before it a bill permitting all these public colleges and universities to refuse to deal with companies using sweatshops to make items for sale to colleges, even if these sweatshop-dealing companies submit the lowest competitive bids.

The bill has strong support in the New York State Assembly and Senate and is likely to pass and be signed by the governor. A year ago, a similar bill was approved covering public elementary and secondary schools in the state.

Private colleges in New York State are free to make their own regulations regarding sweatshop-produced products, and some have already done so.

Are politicians who have hitherto shown no opposition to capitalism per se at least beginning to react against some of the worst human rights abuses of capitalism? If they are it isn't the first time, and least of all where it concerns the sweatshop. Politicians have been "outlawing" it for more than a century, with what success may be judged by their wanting to outlaw it again—for the umpteenth time. Umpteenth time or not, however, it is as widespread in



Ball...

...and chain

Carol Simpson

the land of the "free-enterpriser" as anywhere on our dollar-green earth. "In Los Angeles, nearly 70 percent of immigrant garment workers receive below minimum wage," according to CorpWatch.com, and according to Heartsandminds.org sweatshops are "rampant" throughout the country.

"Sweatshops are again a familiar fixture in the garment industry," it says. "DOL [Department of labor] estimates that 50 percent of 22,000 registered gar-

ment contractors pay less than minimum wage, two-thirds do not pay overtime and a third operate with serious health and safety violations. Workers who try to organize and protest poor working conditions are often fired."

Despite the legislation put together by politicians in Albany, New York City still ranks as a leader in the sweatshop field.

"New York City sweatshops operate behind locked doors—often in the same

buildings used more than 60 years ago in the Lower East Side and the Garment District," Heartsandminds.org reports on its Web site. "Steam from clothing presses can be seen spewing from pipes stuck through the boarded-up windows. DOL estimates that 4,500 of New York City's 7,000 garment factories are sweatshops."

"Outlawing" the sweatshop is good politics, and always has been. However, even if such efforts are meant to succeed—which assumes a level of sincerity that most workers would not attribute to the run-of-the-mill politician—they are doomed to fail, as they have always failed, and for the same reason. Producing the mostest for the leastest, to paraphrase that Confederate rascal, Nathan Bedford Forrest, is and always will be the law of the competitive capitalist jungle.

A piecemeal reform of capitalism could take centuries more and still leave behind its worst aspect while giving only a little bit of relief here and there along the way. The dictatorship of the capitalist class would still remain, with workers constantly begging for crumbs of relief from the capitalist banquet table. What is needed is a complete replacement of an outmoded and unjust system by an economic democracy under the control of the organized workers of the nation. Only socialism means complete economic and political democracy that will ensure human dignity for all.

Death and Denial—Breaking The Silence on Black Suicide

©By Earl Ofari Hutchinson
Pacific News Service

In his stage days, comedian turned political activist Dick Gregory liked to crack that whites kill themselves by leaping from tall buildings and blacks kill themselves by jumping from a basement. For decades, blacks took perverse pride and comfort in the notion that suicide was a "white folks' thing." Despite the long, tortured experience of slavery, segregation, racially motivated violence and poverty, it was their article of faith that blacks didn't kill themselves. They were always able to laugh or pray their way out of the worst adversity.

But suicide among blacks is no longer the stuff of jokes.

In March, a study published in *Psychiatric Services*, a journal of the American Psychiatric Association, warned that more young blacks are killing themselves with guns. The study used data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Though the risk for suicide among young people is still greatest among young white males, recent CDC studies show that from 1980 through 1995, suicide rates increased most rapidly among young black males. For black males aged 15-19, the rate increased 105 percent. During the same period, the overall suicide rate for all persons of the same age increased only 11 percent.

Though CDC researchers gave no reason for the escalating self-carnage, some suicide prevention experts speculated that as more blacks climb the social and economic ladder they encounter the same pressures and frustrations as their white counterparts in the chase for better careers, bigger incomes and richer lifestyles.

This explanation is shaky. The CDC did not break down suicides among blacks by income status. In Chicago, where some mental health professionals report that the suicide rate among young blacks exceeds that of whites, most of those who take their lives are lower income blacks. They are plagued by chronic problems of drug and alcohol



E. Gentry for The People

use, high unemployment and prison rates, family breakdown and the absurdly easy access and availability of guns. These problems are compounded by the paucity of mental health centers, treatment facilities and trained professionals in poor neighborhoods.

Then there's the belief among many school counselors and teachers that young black males are inherently violent and crime-prone. They often ignore glaring signs of at-risk behavior, such as uncontrolled rage or aggression, exhibited by many young blacks. Or they don't recognize that this "acting out" behavior frequently masks acute feelings of depression, hopelessness, alienation and low self-esteem. The end result is that many young blacks fail to receive the counseling and treatment that could save their lives.

Another troubling concern that accompanies the rise in black suicides is a refusal by many blacks to accept the fact that their children can and do kill themselves. This stubborn denial of a changing reality was glaringly evident in June 2000, when 17-year-old Raynard Johnson was found hanging from a pecan tree in the front yard of his

Kokomo, Miss., home. Johnson's family openly disputed the coroner's ruling that his death was a suicide, claiming that he was murdered for dating a white girl. Civil rights leaders quickly joined the clamor over his death. Jesse Jackson flatly stated that Johnson's death had the earmarks of a lynching. The NAACP hired a private investigator, and the Southern Poverty Law Center noted that the Klan had long used white fears of black men raping white women to terrorize blacks. But there was no tangible evidence then and afterwards that Johnson's death was anything other than a suicide, and the suggestion that Johnson was lynched for dating a white girl was absurd to many, even in Mississippi.

If black leaders are loath to admit that young blacks such as Johnson can take their lives, many black parents are even more adamant in denying that their children could be at mortal risk to themselves. They often ignore telltale signs of chronic depression or rage, self-destructive acts or notes in which their children threaten to take their lives. They refuse to seek professional help.

The tight blinders to the suicide crisis could have the same deadly consequence as the persistent refusal of many blacks to admit that HIV/AIDS was a serious threat. Even as the CDC issued report after report warning that blacks accounted for nearly half of the AIDS cases in America, black leaders, community activists and religious leaders stuck their heads in the sand or railed that the disease was a white, gay disease.

Black leaders and parents must face the bitter truth that suicide is not a desperate act reserved solely for white suburban kids. Many black kids are also taking their lives. It's no disgrace to admit that truth.

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The Mideast Tragedy

In March it was Vice President Cheney who made the rounds of capitals in the Middle East in search of support for the Bush Administration's plans for launching a new attack on Iraq. His mission appeared to fail for the good and sufficient reason that the ruling classes of the Arab states do not square with those of the United States in all particulars.

In April it was Secretary of State Colin Powell's turn to make the rounds. His mission was prompted by the same underlying motivation, but was complicated by the added twist of the apparently irreconcilable differences that go to explain the increasingly violent Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Even President Bush's seemingly flat-out demand that Israel withdraw its troops from the West Bank fell on deaf ears.

Why did these men fail? Certainly it is not because the United States lacks power and the influence that power brings with it.

To understand their failure to fulfill their missions it is necessary to go to root causes.

The root of all conflict in the modern world is material interest. The underlying conflict that is the granddaddy of them all is that between ruled and ruling classes. After that, however, things can and do become intricate and increasingly complicated.

The struggle between ruled and ruling classes is interspersed and layered by countless levels of intraclass friction and strife. These overlapping twists and turns affect ruled classes and ruling classes alike. They are made more complicated yet when they overlap national boundaries and sentiments and take on international and even global implications.

Unraveling all the twists, turns and layers of the class struggle and the fabric of material interests through which are woven the friction, arguments, hostility and violence they lead to is impossible. History has shown it to be so, and as Karl Marx and Frederick Engels observed in the *Communist Manifesto*, these class conflicts "each time ended either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes."

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict illustrates this principle to a "t." At the same time, it illustrates why it is impossible to sort it out in such a way that all the contending interests can be reconciled to the advantage and satisfaction of all who are involved.

Israel's rampage through West Bank cities and refugee camps last month was justified on grounds that Israel has the right to defend itself against acts of terror, such as the recent wave of suicide bombings. However, Israeli Prime Minister's Ariel Sharon's efforts to depict the full-scale invasion of the West Bank as an act of self-defense met with almost universal condemnation—even from the most unlikely of sources.

As deplorable and tragic as those suicide bombings were, and as culpable as the Palestinian Authority and Yasir Arafat may be in condoning or encouraging them, they hardly justified the murderous invasion unleashed by the Israeli state. So cruel and violent was the Israeli action that it sparked numerous large demonstration in Europe and caused the United Nations to condemn Israel for its

actions. So repulsive was the devastation and bloodshed unleashed by the Israeli regime that it spurred at least some in the capitalist media to denounce it. On April 12, for example, the *Christian Science Monitor* censured Israel for committing atrocities in the West Bank

"While many would-be bombers were killed or captured," it said, "the utter destruction of civilian homes and urban infrastructure, especially in Jenin, was an atrocity on the order of the 1982 killing of Palestinian civilians by Israeli-controlled forces in Lebanon."

Indeed, the Israeli invasion was so outrageous in its dimensions and destructiveness that even President Bush felt called upon to demand that Israel withdraw its forces, though his failure to do more than that made it obvious that his public repudiation of Israel's violence was more for show than a reflection of any real concern over the death, suffering and destruction the invasion caused.

Fact is that American capitalism and its political state have no sincere or genuine concern for the Israelis or the Palestinians. The U.S. interest in the conflict is its own material interests.

The strategic objective of the United States is to bring the oil-producing regions of the Middle East and Central Asia safely within the orbit of Western imperialist control. That objective is so patently obvious now that even the propaganda mills of the U.S. ruling class barely bother any longer to cover it over with sweet-sounding phrases on the virtues of the all but forgotten "New World Order" of global peace and harmony that was their theme during those heady days that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.

There can be no peace in the Middle East as long as class conflicts are permitted to exist. But they will continue to exist as long as class rule is permitted to survive, or until they lead our nation and the world into that "common ruin" that Marx and Engels warned of. In short, capitalism is leading the world into chaos. However, that need not be the case. As last year's 45th National Convention of the SLP proclaimed in its Resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict reprinted elsewhere in this issue:

"The Israeli and Palestinian working classes face mutual oppression under the capitalist system. Therefore, the Socialist Labor Party of America calls upon them to establish mutual connections to oppose their common class enemy.

"Ultimately, there can be no peace in the Middle East until the working classes of the world, first and foremost the U.S. working class, have dealt with their respective ruling classes and established a socialist world of peace, plenty and freedom."

Readers of *The People* who agree with this assessment of the situation in the Middle East and the SLP's analysis of where capitalism and its imperialist ambitions are taking the world are urged to look carefully at what the SLP offers as a solution to these problems and the tragedies they produce. Then join us in our efforts to bring the working class together to put an end to class rule and establish the universal peace and prosperity that socialism alone can guarantee.



A De Leon Editorial

Clerical Crimes No Rare Thing

Unnatural restraints imposed for institutional or political reasons by the Roman Catholic Church have often led to antisocial and even criminal behavior.

The Case of Father Schmidt

(Daily People, Sept. 19, 1913)

Murder is, unfortunately, no rare thing in our country—out of the columns of the *Sun* and the *Post* alone, two days ago, the reports of 23 murders can be picked.

Nor is the murdering of a young woman facing maternity, and murdered by the father in order to cover up his infamy, a thing unheard of in the land.

Nor yet is the superaddition of cold-blooded quartering of the victim's body, and the scattering of the victim's head, trunk and limbs to bewilder the bloodhounds of justice—nor yet is that horror a novelty.

All of these happenings are unfortunately too common; nor are they any longer peculiarly instructive.

It is otherwise with the combination of horrors that Father Johannes Schmidt of St. Joseph's Catholic Church confesses himself guilty of.

The decree imposing celibacy upon the priesthood was, no doubt, a masterstroke on the part of the papal mind that issued and enforced it. The decree marked the complete shaping of the ultramontane Catholic organization as a terrestrial entity, with religion as a pretext, and political ambition as the dominant fact. Nevertheless, however masterly, in a way, the stroke was, it, at the same time, flew in the face of nature's laws, and thereby became a source of untold evil—a double-edged sword that gashes both prelacy and parishioners.

That which flies in the face of nature is impossible of permanence. Its continuance can, in the long run, be on the surface only; and then the surface is periodically broken through by tell-tale events, like pimples and carbun-

cles that break through a skin which stretches over diseased muscles. Minor eruptions have occurred before, and are occurring plentifully in the land. Father Phillips of Scranton, found dead in a bordello in this city, and so many kindred occurrences north, south, east and west, are of the number. As has happened everywhere else, where ultramontane Catholicism has held sway, larger and louder eruptions were sure to happen in the United States, where ultramontanism is boasting of making miraculous progress—eruptions of such nature that to hush them up, as many others have been hushed, would be impossible.

Such an eruption is the case of Father Schmidt.

*Well did the Vatican its bus'ness know
When, at the goal of universal power
aiming,*

*And the creation of a fighting army,
That, free from all entangling hindrances,*

*On one great aim its complete efforts
bends.*

*Upon the clergy imposed the sinful duty
Of celibacy.*

Such is the estimate of the institution of celibacy—"a sinful duty"—expressed by Ferdinand Lassalle in his drama, *Franz von Sickingen*.

Before Lassalle—whose dictum ultramontanism might reject on the ground of his being a Socialist—another giant mind, in a way a greater, whom ultramontanism cannot so lightly affect to brush aside, summed up the institution of celibacy from another, the moral viewpoint. The summary was made by François Rabelais, himself a Francis-can and then a Benedictine monk, and all

(Continued on page 7)

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 May 1912 is the fourth 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 STRIKE ZONE

STRIKERS STANDING FIRM IN EVERY TOWN—PATERSON POLICE STOP INTENDED PARADE AT LAST MOMENT.

NEWARK EVENING STAR ATTEMPTS TO STAMPEDE STRIKERS INTO THE "BUMMERY," AND FINDS STRONG ALLY IN THE NEW YORK CALL AND VOLKSZEITUNG—SOCIALIST PARTY LOCAL IN PASSAIC ATTEMPTS SAME SCABBY TACTICS.

"From victory to victory," is the story of the progress of the IWW strikes in Paterson, Passaic, Bayonne, Hackensack and towns in Hudson County, N.J., and Astoria, L.I.

In Paterson, where 5,000 silk workers were out in the early days of the strike, shop after shop has settled, recognized the shop committee and agreed to pay the union's scale. The manufacturers were taken quite off their feet by the splendid movement set on foot by the organizers of the Industrial Workers of the World, and during the strike held a number of powwows to see if they could get their bearings. Powwows they were, too. Your correspondent has it on good authority that the meetings were tumultuous and disorderly, as the bosses were terribly wrought up over the revolt of their wage slaves. Capital is extremely nervous anyway.

From these confabs the solemn news was sent forth—yea, tremble, ye wicked agitators—that the silk manufacturers would never—no, never—recognize the Industrial Workers of the World. Being unconscious humorists, as most capitalists are, they could not see that they were, in those very announcements, recognizing the Industrial Workers of the World.

The IWW did not, like the old style craft unions, ask the bosses to sign long-term contracts, which are binding only on the arms of labor. It was not necessary for the bosses to "recognize" the union in that form. The IWW does not depend for its life upon the recognition of the capitalist, as do some of the unions affiliated with the AFL, whose dues are checked from the pay envelopes of its members by the bosses (the United Mine Workers, for instance).

The IWW demanded recognition in the most practical and sensible way possible—recognition of the shop committee and payment of the union scale of wages. The shop committees and the bodies of workers they represent recognize the union, and that is the only effective recognition—the recognition of the working class. A union which secures that is a real union, and not a machine manipulated in favor of the capitalists.

The IWW secured it. As spontaneous as the walkout was the rush to join the union. Over 4,000 silk workers have enrolled with every indication that they mean business. They realize that unless they are organized as a body in an industrial union, with correct scientific principles and tactics, they cannot hope to maintain what they have won.

At the beginning of the strike, it was insisted upon, that the manufacturers sign their names to the wage scale (without any agreement of any kind), as a sign of their good faith in the promise to pay the scale, and many of those who first settled did so. But as a large num-

ber of manufacturers were afraid they would be "recognizing" the union if they signed, and the matter was delaying settlements in many shops, a meeting of the local was called in Turn Hall, Paterson, which was attended by 2,500 members, who decided, that so long as the boss recognized the shop committee, and posted the scale of wages in the mill and paid it, his signature was not necessary. Besides, it was realized that a capitalist's signature is no more binding than his word; the workers can depend only upon their own organized might to enforce it.

That the action taken was correct has been proved by subsequent events; the very bosses who were the first to sign the scale have attempted to cut the wages again, and they have a second strike on their hands, as the workers remained organized. The Siff & Cohen Co. is one of these, also the United Silk Co. and the Empire Silk Co. as well as a few smaller shops. There are still about 800 weavers on strike. The weavers of the notorious Mason Silk Co., where the conditions of labor were abominable, have been striking valiantly for several weeks. The Henry Doherty strikers, whose fight started the present agitation, have joined Local 25 IWW, and are receiving support through the organization. FELLOW STRIKERS EVERYWHERE SHOULD RUSH TO THE SUPPORT OF THE WORK NOW GOING ON. This is no time to hang back.

Organizer Rudolph Katz has been to Allentown and Mauch Chunk, Pa., preparing the ground for a movement of the silk workers there. He addressed enthusiastic mass meetings in which he explained what was going on in Paterson and other New Jersey towns, and urged the workers in Pennsylvania to get ready to demand more of the product of their labor, looking forward to the time when they can demand and get it all. Four thousand weavers, winders and dyers in the woolen mills and dye shops of Passaic, Garfield, Clifton and Lodi struck for an increase of wages and the abolition of the fining system. Boris Reinstein took charge for the IWW and, with the help of a couple of Polish fellow workers, organized the strikes in the IWW, forming Local No. 28.

At the same time several hundred ribbon weavers and winders struck in Astoria, L.I., and are putting on a great fight under the leadership of Organizer David Goldberg and Local 27, IWW.

No sooner were these strikes under way than a general walkout took place among the silk workers in Hudson County—West Hoboken, Bayonne, Union Hill and other places. Several shops belonging to a single firm, the Schwartzenbach and Huber Co., struck in Hudson County, and also their mill in Hackensack. At this writing the workers

in the same firm's shop at Sterling, N.J., are expected to strike. Between 6,000 and 9,000 silk workers are on strike in this district. They also have formed a local of the IWW known as No. 120. One shop has already granted the demands—20 percent increase—and the workers have returned to their looms and frames. This is the R. & H. Linon Co. at Union Hill.

Robert McLure, member of the General Executive Board of the IWW is in charge of the situation in Paterson. August Gillhaus, Olive M. Johnson, Wm. Fennen, C.E. Patrick, Arthur Reimer, Louis Reinstein and others are in charge of the various strikes. Organizer Katz is in demand everywhere and flies from one place to another, meeting the calls.

In all these places where the IWW is engaged in conducting bona fide strikes, that aggregation of slummists calling themselves I'm-a-Bummery and sailing under the colors of the IWW have attempted to put in their dirty work and break up the strikes by engendering confusion, and trying to throw discredit upon the leaders of the strikes and the IWW.

In Astoria, L.I., several of the Bummery—Jack Walsh, Tom Flynn and a worthy by the name of Breen made their appearance, and after futile attempts to get halls for the holding of opposition meetings, entered the meetings of the IWW strikers and tried their hand by flashing "credentials" from the Chicago outfit of syndicalists.

Cries from the strikers greeted them. "We know you; you belong to the bunch that broke the IWW in 1908. We want nothing to do with you."

"Put them out, they have no right here. Credentials, indeed! Show us your preamble."

Organizer Goldberg asked them if they believed in political action and the ballot, the civilized means of setting disputes. They answered no, they wanted nothing to do with the ballot box.

The strikers rose from their chairs with cries of "Leave the hall, we don't want you here. No anarchism here."

Seeing which way the wind was blowing, without waiting for a government Weather Bureau report, they decamped, taking their precious "credentials" along with them.

Walsh, however, was not satisfied that he and his "principles" were not wanted, so he took a ride to W. Hoboken, where a mass meeting was in progress in Frobel's Boulevard Park on Saturday afternoon, March 23, but having imbibed too freely from the bowl that cheers, and having created a disturbance in the park by expressing his desire to fight out the principles of industrial unionism "man to man, hic" and having soused the policeman who tried to evict him from the park, he was arrested and on Monday morning at North Bergen, sentenced to 30 days in jail. A little bird whispers to me: "Will his meal ticket pals try to break into jail with him to beat the capitalist government?" but something tells me no, for more damage can be done on the outside and wherever the most damage can be done there will birds of prey be found.

On a more serious nature was the attempt of the Bummery in Paterson to disrupt the strike by bringing Haywood to the city to speak on "The General Strike." This was the second time Haywood had been advertised to come; the first time he did not show up. At that time the IWW issued a statement clearing itself of all responsibility for

anything Haywood might say or do, and washing its hands of the "Bummery" in general. A second statement was issued, when his appearance was again announced, and thousands of copies were distributed.

It should be borne in mind that the meeting at which Haywood was to speak was advertised on hand bills as A MASS MEETING OF SILK WORKERS under the auspices of Local 152 "IWW" to be addressed by Haywood on "The General Strike." Notices sent to the daily press stated that Haywood would also decline "direct action."

This time Helvetia Hall was discarded and Turn Hall, the largest in the city, was hired. Haywood arrived and opened his speech with denunciation of Rudolph Katz, the organizer of the IWW and leader of the strike, ridiculing his name and throwing slurs at him. The audience hissed Haywood, so he quit in a hurry.

Then, instead of doing what the sneaking "Bummery" had advertised that he would do, he confined his speech to a description of affairs at Lawrence, and attempted to give the impression that he had come to raise funds for the Lawrence strikers. He said that Katz and the IWW had slandered the Lawrence strikers, which is not true. The IWW in Paterson has collected money from its own strikers and sent it on to Lawrence, and if the books of the Strike Committee in Lawrence are ever made intelligible it will be found that the money was received.

Haywood advised the strikers in Paterson to stay where they were (in the Detroit IWW) till after the strike and then "join the real IWW." Bah! The strikers are wise!

His followers in Paterson are working overtime to draw the strikers away from the IWW and into their bogus "organization." They hold dual meetings and whoever cannot be induced to join their "local" they do their best to confuse him, so that he will join nothing at all.

And all this in the midst of a bona fide strike against the capitalist class—the Bummery gnawing like wolves at the flanks of the working-class army that is engaging the capitalist forces in the front.

R.H.P.

Paterson, N.J., March 29.

255075100
years ago

The Martyrdom of Patriotism

(Daily People, May 6, 1902)

Potter Palmer of Chicago is dead. Potter Palmer was a patriot.

He foresaw the Civil War, and his patriotic heart swelled within him. So he invested all the money he could get his hands on in woolen and cotton goods, and he made \$5,000,000 on his patriotism and foresight.

Then, having done all that he could for his country, he retired from business in the memorable year, 1865.

He rested long on his laurels, and presumably was proud of the many wounds he missed. In 1871 civic patriotism called on him, for the city of Chicago, where he lived, had a "visitation of God," and a terrible fire wiped out the greater portion of the city.

Mr. Palmer was among the greatest sufferers, as his hotel and many other buildings belonging to him were burned. But disdaining all that, he went to work, bought the depreciated property from the impoverished holders, rounded up three-quarters of a mile of valuable land along State Street, and within five years Mr. Palmer's patriotism, expressed in cash, was worth \$25,000,000.

(Continued on page 7)

... Time Running Out

(Continued from page 1)

quite consistent with unemployment rising to 6.5 percent by late 2002."

According to the EPI report, high levels of unemployment may be here to stay, with levels of 6 percent or more lasting well into the next few years. The report maintains that it also may be "years more before families see their incomes return to prerecession levels."

In short, time is running out for millions of unemployed workers, many of whom capitalism may never need again. What can be done? What should these workers do to avert the social catastrophe

that massive permanent unemployment promises?

The answer lies in the hands of the unemployed and the rest of the working class. What they must do is accomplish a complete social change—one that will end the planless, anarchistic capitalist system, with its booms that benefit so few and its busts that devastate so many. Workers must place the means of production and distribution and all the social services in their own hands so that they can be administered democratically and operated to produce an abundance for all. In short, they must accomplish a revolutionary change of our society from

capitalism to socialism.

Accordingly, the task confronting American workers—whether unemployed, underemployed or employed—is to organize their political forces into a party of their class. Further, they must consolidate their economic power into one mighty Socialist Industrial Union. The goal of both must not be merely to ameliorate their condition by demanding replacement wages or higher wages, jobs or job security, but to demand the abolition of the wages system and its effects altogether and undertake an orderly and civilized socialist reconstruction of society. —K.B.

activities

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

OHIO
North Royalton
Social & Discussion—

Section Cleveland will hold a social and discussion on Sunday, May 26, at 9626 York Rd., North Royalton. Begins at 1:30 p.m. Refreshments served. For more information please call 440-237-7933.

OREGON
Portland
Discussion Meetings—

Section Portland holds discussion meetings every second Saturday of the month. Meetings are usually held at

the Central Library, but the exact time varies. For more information please call Sid at 503-226-2881 or visit our Web site at <http://slp.pdx-home.mindspring.com>. The general public is invited.

TEXAS
Houston
Discussion Meetings—The SLP group in Houston holds discussion meetings the last Saturday of the month at the Houston Public Library, Franklin Branch, 6440 W. Bellfort, southwest Houston. The time of the meetings varies. Those interested please call 713-721-9296, e-mail houstonslp@ev1.net or visit the group's Web site at <http://houstonslp.tripod.com>.

... Going Up in Smoke

(Continued from page 1)

pension funds and greater assurances that retirement dollars will be there when they are needed."

Despite the reforms, under most pension plans workers forfeit pension benefits unless they remain with a company for years, and benefits are usually forfeited when workers change jobs.

While workers are thus obligated to individual capitalists if they want to preserve their pension rights, capitalists are free of such obligations. They can—and do—terminate workers' pensions by a variety of means.

Not infrequently, workers are fired before qualifying for pensions, and many others are disqualified by the fine print in pension contracts. Capitalists have closed entire plants to avoid paying pensions to an aging workforce.

The trend, according to the *Times*, has been away from pension funds as such. Capitalists more and more prefer 401(k) and similar schemes that have less possibility of government oversight and "lack the protections [sic] of the old pen-

sion plans, such as a guaranteed benefit and federal insurance if the company goes bankrupt."

The Enron debacle provides an example of what can happen to workers who trust the newer plans. Enron workers were encouraged by company officials to invest their 401(k) plan funds in the company's own stock. When the company went down workers lost not only their jobs but their retirement funds.

Workers with some sort of pension or retirement plan—old-style or new—should therefore not count on a cozy retirement simply because they have such a plan.

Moreover, apart from Social Security, only 52 percent of U.S. workers are included in retirement or pension plans of any kind. Excluding government employees, according to the *Times*, "only 47 percent of employees have anything other than Social Security awaiting them at retirement."

A cozy retirement is not in the cards for most workers even though the working class collectively produces more than enough material wealth to satisfy the

needs of all workers—including those of retired workers—but the wages and "benefits" workers receive represent only a fraction of this wealth.

Ultimately, both active and retired workers face the same problem—increasing economic insecurity, poverty and misery under the oppressive, exploitative capitalist system. Their only defense against such conditions is to begin to organize an *offense*—classwide Socialist Industrial Unions that can wield enough economic clout to defend their interests under capitalism, and ultimately to overthrow capitalism and establish a socialist society under which the workers themselves will collectively own and democratically administer production in the service of human needs and wants.

Perhaps, with the illusion of pension "benefits" fast fading, more workers may realize that their future security is dependent upon themselves and their own class-conscious actions, not on the "generosity" of the capitalists who employ—or employed—them.

...SLP Emergency Fund

(Continued from page 1)

"finance reforms" designed to cover their financial tracks and conceal their subservience to capitalist interests, the SLP is an organization of working class men and women whose purpose is as straightforward and simple as anything could be. That purpose, as briefly explained in our last issue, is this:

"For 111 years *The People* and the Socialist Labor Party have proclaimed the right of the people to democratically decide their own fate. But it has ceaselessly pointed out that no such right can be established and ensured against usurpation unless the people collectively own and democratically control the nation's economy. That's why *The People* has relentlessly persisted in its efforts to bring the message of the SLP's Socialist Industrial Union program to the American working class.

"But dedication to principle by those who do the day-to-day work of publishing *The People* is not enough. It also requires a matching level of dedication and financial support from all those who understand why it is important that the SLP and its official journal contin-

ue until their mission is successfully completed."

We admittedly are in a race against time to build up the cash reserves of the SLP to a point where we can continue our efforts to spread that message. We are prepared to continue that fight, and plan to stay put unless it becomes plain that the

resources are not available to go on. Our fight is yours, and if you want to see *The People* continue holding up its end of that fight it is imperative that you redouble your efforts to hold up yours. You can do that with your contribution to the SLP Emergency Fund. Please use the coupon printed in this issue.

...De Leon Editorial

(Continued from page 4)

all the time the friend and protégé of no less a Catholic dignitary than Cardinal Du Bellay. The summary, delivered with Rabelaisian humor, is to the effect that "the very shadow of the steeple of an abbey is fruitful."

Finally, long after Lassalle, from what country and what parishioners has the demand come of late in loudest notes for the abolition of celibacy? It came from among the Catholic laity and clergy of the Catholic kingdom of Bavaria—Father Schmidt's own native land.

The atrocious crime of Father Schmidt was due. It has been for some time. It is the timely warning that nature and history combine to give to the country against a polit-

ical organization whose disciplinary system begets such a monster among its ex-officio holy officials.

Abolition of Poverty

By Daniel De Leon

An examination of capitalism and its philosophical "justifications" as presented by a Jesuit priest. Contrasts socialism's materialist conception of history with class society's "idealism."

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45TH SLP NATIONAL CONVENTION

Resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The following is the text of a resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict adopted last June by the 45th National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party and subsequently approved by a general vote of the whole membership of the party. The resolution, which was printed in our July 2001 issue, is reprinted here for the accurate and timely analysis it gives of the ongoing tragic conflict.

The 45th National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party unequivocally condemns the ongoing U.S. imperialist manipulation of events and alliances in the Middle East.

The goal of that manipulation is continued U.S. capitalist-class control over the production and distribution of oil. The crass material interests that lie behind U.S. imperialism's need for that control produced the economic and social conditions that fueled the recent renewal of armed conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. They also make peace a virtual impossibility in the Middle East and increase the risk of global conflagration.

Ensuring the uninterrupted flow of oil from the Middle East is a primary concern of U.S. imperialism, which remains heavily dependent upon imported oil to run domestic industry and power its empire. The political arrangements made in past decades with governments throughout the Middle East, and which are being cultivated by Colin Powell and the Bush administration, all support that objective.

The material and military support Israel receives from the United States

government is an attempt to bolster a beachhead for U.S. capital and Western imperialism in the region. This beachhead was established not only to promote capitalist and imperialist economic interests, but also to counter the imperialist objectives of what was then the Soviet Union.

The Gulf War and its aftermath, the embargo and continued military actions against Iraq, the maintenance of a fleet in the Persian Gulf, air bases in Turkey and Saudi Arabia, and the Clinton and Bush administrations' overtures to the ruling classes of nearby African countries all attest to the ongoing commitment of the U.S. ruling class to maintain and secure their material objectives.

American foreign policy sorts out those governments that will conform to capitalism's material objectives, those who do so reluctantly and those who won't. Military and other economic and strategic aid flows to those who toe the line for U.S. capital, regardless of whether the governments involved are nominally democratic, as in the case of Israel, or autocratic regimes like virtually every other nation in the region.

Unrest among the millions of impoverished working-class oppressed in every country in the Middle East has been largely channeled into nationalistic illusions and religious fanaticism. In none of those states has an expression of true working-class interests emerged.

Among the Israeli working class an incessant barrage of deceptive propaganda promotes reactionary irredentist visions of an Israel rooted in the biblical past to "justify" settlement expansion and



State Department

continued encroachment on Palestinian lands in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. That propaganda promotes the destruction of Palestinian homes and a refusal to confront past ethnic cleansings by the Israeli state. It refuses to recognize the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes, or to other restitution.

Palestinian resistance and anger have become more intense in the face of Israeli intransigence and cavalier use of military force. Israel's response to Palestinian terrorism has been state terrorism, car-

ried out under the governments of the Likud, Labor and coalitions of other parties. With few exceptions all are arrayed against a subjugated population and have indiscriminately trained Israel's superior instruments of war on Palestinian men, women and children.

Daily reports of this seething ferment, of reciprocal attacks and reprisals, have prompted the Bush administration to issue warnings to both sides and to repeat the admonitions tirelessly drummed by the Israeli government that the "violence must stop." But warnings and admonitions cannot bring a lasting peace.

The Bush administration's packing off of Colin Powell on tour of the region serves notice to the participants that U.S. capitalism is not seeking peace in the region so much as it is allies to enforce its imperialist will. Whether the Bush administration continues this tactic or promotes some new peace initiative, its main goal in the region is a continued "stability" in the region—forced or otherwise—that will allow the oil to flow.

The political subjugation of a population expressing legitimate aspirations to national identity is inimical to international working-class unity. Therefore, the Socialist Labor Party of America condemns the continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza by Israel and the brutal military force used to insure its continued dominion over those areas and to maintain the beachhead desired by U.S. capital.

The Israeli and Palestinian working classes face mutual oppression under the capitalist system. Therefore, the Socialist Labor Party of America calls upon them to establish mutual connections to oppose their common class enemy.

Ultimately, there can be no peace in the Middle East until the working classes of the world, first and foremost the U.S. working class, have dealt with their respective ruling classes and established a socialist world of peace, plenty and freedom.

The Class Struggle in China

By B.B.

Ever since the fall of the Soviet Union, the mantle of misrepresenting socialism has fallen upon the People's Republic of China. This despotic bureaucratic state has served world capitalism well. It has offered vast markets and investment and development opportunities. It has supported the most reactionary regimes in concert with capitalist imperialism. It has disfigured, warped and distorted socialism's meaning into a monstrous ogre to the utter glee of capitalists everywhere.

Of course, exploitation of the Chinese working class has been a given since the overthrow of the thoroughly corrupt nationalist regime in 1948. Mao and his guerrillas, being steeped in Leninist and Stalinist thought, attitudes and practice, hadn't the slightest inclination toward socialism and were intent on implementing the Stalinist model. Wage slavery, flavored with a sprig of pseudo-Marxism, was their ticket. It remained so until the lure of the exceptional profits that could be achieved by applying the methods of the capitalist system.

The course of events, particularly over the last decade, has brought state industries and the apparatchiks who mismanaged those complexes to the threshold of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The conditions of entry into this exclusive "club" involve demonstrating that the industrial character of applicant nations possess the most advanced techniques for exploiting workers. Investors,

financial institutions and stock exchanges require attractive slim figures on the runway, so to speak, but fat profits. China, with its top-down, bureaucratic, iron-fisted industrial dictatorship copied from the U.S.S.R., did not fit the capitalist ideal.

China wrangled long and hard for acceptance by the United States and other Western nations that feign objection to China's human rights record. However, the lure of exceptional profits proved far more compelling than the cause of political dissent and human rights. So China was granted membership in the WTO. With that, and indeed years before, a whole new chapter in the class struggle in China has emerged.

Accordingly, despite heavy censorship by the dictatorship, recent reports lay bare some facts that can no longer be concealed behind the thin veil of bureaucratic deceit, ye olde "bamboo curtain."

At issue is the impingement of market-driven forces on China's outmoded and inefficient state-run industries. They are rapidly being subsumed by the prerogatives of stockholders on the New York and Hong Kong stock exchanges rather than by bureaucratic state directives. The state bureaucrats remain behind to pillage, profit and manage the more intense exploitation of the remaining workers.

Hence, a familiar capitalist pattern has emerged. For example, workers at the Daqing oil companies, "who were long exalted as national heroes, say they

were pressured to accept severance agreements that will strand many in poverty, facing old age without medical insurance or pensions." (*The New York Times*, March 19) Fifty thousand workers out of more than 200,000 agreed to a \$500-per-year-worked buy-out scheme in December 2000 that has left them unemployed, in poverty and without security. Company executives gave them the usual hard-luck stories of imminent bankruptcy and layoffs if they didn't knuckle under.

Organized protests commenced when the Daqing Oilfield Bureau asserted they would no longer pay former employees' heating bills, and that they would have to carry their own large medical and old-age expenses. (This could as well be California, Georgia or New York, for workers the world over are confronted with the same song and dance.)

According to reports, as many as 30,000 workers protested in street demonstrations. Han Dongfang, an exiled labor advocate in Hong Kong who operates the *China Labor Bulletin*, referred to the Daqing demonstrations as "probably the largest protests over labor issues since 1949."

Indeed, the national oil industry is in turmoil. Severance pay conflicts have emerged in Huabei field in Hebei Province, and in the Songjiang field in Jilin Province, according to labor sources. "Reports seeping through the censorship in recent weeks suggest how common and seemingly intractable such conflicts

have become."

Liaoyang, a large aging northeastern industrial city where similar events are unfolding, brought 5,000 workers from six bankrupt factories together in unprecedented unified protests over unpaid wages and pensions and charges of embezzlement by company bureaucrats. This resulted in a standoff of 30,000 workers representing 20 different factories who demanded the release of an organizer against the pledge made by authorities.

Similarly, in the coal-mining region of Liaoning Province, 10,000 miners in Fashun, incited by paltry severance packages, have blocked highways and railroads.

Sichuan textile workers are striking against similar cuts and moves by management to sell off factory assets instead of rescuing them. Han, apparently tutored by capitalist labor fakerdom, and reflecting an acceptance of wage slavery as the final station in humankind's progress, acknowledged "that state industries must reduce their workforces but said the hostility and misunderstanding reflect the inability of Chinese workers to organize and bargain." This contrasts with the militancy reflected in that of a laid-off worker who stated, "In the past, Daqing oil workers were docile types who obeyed the leaders. Now we feel differently."

It remains to be seen whether that immense body of workers can rise to the vision and promise of socialism, for the need to seize, operate and democratically control the entire industrial complex of China in behalf of society. In the meantime, be it noted that capitalism cannot help but extend and create those conditions that not only increase the strength of its competitors but also create the conditions for its own demise.