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SOCIALIST EDUCATION FUND — Socialism Means Economic Democracy

What prompted 77,000 people to go to Seattle to protest a meeting of the World Trade Organization held on American soil?

President Clinton, far from being the intellectual light weight some have mistaken him for, understood it perfectly. They wanted a voice for the people in the economic and industrial decisions that affect their lives.

What prompted 77,000 people to go to Seattle was the instinct of people nurtured on the principles of democracy, but deprived of a voice in the economic affairs of their own country, much less of the world.

What clashed in Seattle was not so much the demonstrators and the police as it was that instinct and that principle.

Instinctively, the people who went to Seattle understood that the most important decisions affecting their lives, and the lives of people all over the world, are not made according to the democratic principles they were taught should be the cornerstone of government.

Government ought to be "of the people, by the people and for the people," to borrow a phrase from Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. It ought to "derive its powers from the consent of the governed," as Jefferson proclaimed in his Declaration of Independence from Britain's tyranny over America.

The principle that government should be democratic, and the realization that governance of the economy is despotic, marks progress toward the full realization that government should be based on the economy and that the same principles of democracy uttered by Jefferson and Lincoln should be applied. That is precisely what the Socialist Labor Party and *The People* have been advocating for more than a century.

Seeking a meaningful voice in the World Trade Organization, or in any other capitalist forum, is tantamount to Lincoln seeking a meaningful voice in the councils of the Confederate government or to Jefferson seeking a voice in the councils of George III. It is bound to lead to frustration and disappointment—but it need not lead to failure and defeat.

The instinct and the principle that prompted 77,000 people to go to Seattle were sound. They are an indication that the logic of the modern era is starting to make itself felt. Developing that instinct into the sound knowledge that is needed to make economic democracy a reality is the task of all those who are knowledgeable in the program and principles of the SLP. By demonstrating the soundness, the workability and the desirability of a labor movement built on the principle of in-

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THE 'NEW ECONOMY'

Prosperity Propaganda Riddled With Contradictions

The expansion propaganda campaign by politicians, capitalist economists, media columnists, commentators and other procapitalist elements continues unabated. According to these bourgeois "cheerleaders," the "good times" just continue to explode and have an impact on all important areas of the U.S. economy.

It's a "new economy," they say, and everybody is making it during this decade-long expansion. In support of this claim, they repeatedly offer the following list of particulars—minus our asides:

The official unemployment figure is down to 4.1 percent—never mind that 4.1 percent translates into more than 5.6 million people, or that the Labor Department has not given up its old habit of discounting those who are not "actively seeking employment."

Labor is increasingly in short supply—never mind, as we show below and in an adjacent column, that layoffs are soaring again.

Even long-time welfare recipients are finding jobs, some even getting raises—never mind that the increases barely move their wages above a minimum wage that only the most cold-hearted of capitalism's apologists have the cheek to mention as a sign of "prosperity."

Productivity is up—so far up that you have to go back to 1992 to find an increase to match the annual rate of 4.9 percent reported for the fourth quarter of 1999. Never mind that increased productivity means longer hours and harder work for a working class that already is the most productive—and, therefore, most highly exploited—on Earth.

The stock markets continue to set new records—never mind that many

Layoff Scoreboard

Below we list some of the corporations that have announced layoffs during the six-month period from May to December.

Avid Technology Inc., software	200
Resource Bancshares Mortgage, mortgage lender	242
Perkin-Elmer, makers of analytical instruments	350
Komag Inc., leading maker of disks for disk drives	add'l 480
Kennametal Inc., tool maker	500
The CK Witco Corp., dyes, food and drug ingredients	500
Dow AgroSciences, pesticides and biotechnology items	700
Quantum Corp., a leading disk drive maker	800
Bausch & Lomb, eye care company	850
IMC Global Inc., large fertilizer company	850
Filene's Basement Corp., off-price retailer	900
International Business Machines Corp.	up to 1,000
PricewaterhouseCoopers, largest accounting firm	1,000
Nortel Networks Corp., No. 2 phone equipment maker	add'l 1,000
ContiFinancial Corp., financial services	1,100
Honeywell Inc., industrial controls	1,100
Eastman Chemical Co., plastics, chemicals	1,200
Oakwood Homes Corp., manufactured homes	add'l 1,300
AmSouth Bancorp, Alabama's third largest bank	1,400
NCR Corp., automated teller machines, etc.	1,500
Storage Technology Corp., a storage product maker	1,750
Hasbro Inc., toy manufacturer	2,200
Eastman Kodak Co., world's largest photography company	up to 2,500
Quest Diagnostics Inc., clinical laboratory testing	2,500
Silicon Graphics Inc., graphics computers	up to 3,000
KeyCorp, financial company, home equity, credit cards	3,000
Barmac, oil and gas platform builders	3,300
Brera Capital Partners, an investment company	3,500
Michelin, tire maker	7,500
Seagate Technology Inc., No. 1 disk drive maker	8,000
Nissan Motor Co., Japan's No. 3 auto company	21,000

Note: The foreign-based companies have been included in the list 1) because they affect jobs in the United States, and 2) they illustrate the fact that such layoffs are inherent under the capitalist system wherever it exists.

stock prices are bloated beyond any relationship to the values they actually represent, or are ever likely to represent.

Business startups are on the increase and successfully so—never mind that bankruptcies and failures also are at near-record highs. Never mind that

millions of workers are in debt up to the antennas on their mortgaged homes, or that the Internet is loaded with Web sites offering "bargain prices" on repossessed working-class homes, cars and other opportunities to benefit from

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Socialism's Answer To Global Capitalism

The following is the text of an address delivered by SLP National Secretary Robert Bills at the Northern California Thanksgiving Affair at Berkeley, Calif., on Sunday, Nov. 21. The affair, which was sponsored by Section San Francisco Bay Area of the SLP, was held 10 days before the Third Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization in Seattle and the demonstrations the WTO meeting provoked.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Comrades and Friends—

More than 150 years ago, in the *Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels declared:

"The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world's market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood."

Commenting on this in an editorial he wrote for a May Day issue of the *Daily People*, Daniel De Leon added:

"In no country is the truth of the above statement so well illustrated as in this. The American bourgeoisie, or capitalist class, has been compelled by its colossal system of...production to seek foreign outlets for the surplus products not absorbed by 'the home market.' As a result, it has exported the products of American labor to the remotest parts of the world, and taken their imports in exchange. It has, in order to protect its interests in foreign markets, engaged in international conferences for the regulation of the financial, political and economic problems of world capitalism, such as the Brussels monetary, the Hague arbitration and the very recent steel conference; and it has become involved, contrary to [George] Washington's warning against foreign entanglements, in various international controversies, of which the Spanish-American War, the Chinese war and the Panama affair are the most conspicuous. In brief, to the great chagrin of the reactionist, the ground has not only been drawn from under the feet of national indus-

try, but of the nation itself. No longer is 'Americanism' triumphant; internationalism reigns in its stead."

De Leon went on to note that those developments, pronounced and conspicuous even in 1904, left—

"...no vestige of reason for the continuance of the spirit of nationalism among the working class. The bourgeoisie, in giving a cosmopolitan character to production and distribution, has also given a cosmopolitan character to the struggle between capitalist and laborer. To the great chagrin of the labor reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of their labor-misleading industry the national ground on which it stood, and made the workers of the world what they really are, viz., the victims of international capitalism, who, in working for its overthrow, have a world to gain, and nothing but their chains to lose."

Does all of this sound familiar? Well, it should. "Exploitation of the world's markets"; "international conferences for the regulation of the financial, po-

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Capitalism and the Iroquois

CONSPIRACY OF INTERESTS: IROQUOIS DISPOSSESSION AND THE RISE OF NEW YORK STATE, by Laurence M. Hauptman. Syracuse University Press, publishers, 1999. Please order from bookseller or publisher; do not order from us.

By B.G.

This new book by historian Laurence M. Hauptman describes the development of exploitative capitalism in the early American Republic, specifically in New York State. The exponents of this budding capitalism were the state transportation interests and the land companies. Its leaders were such Founding Fathers of the republic as Philip Schuyler, revolutionary war general and, after the revolution, U.S. senator from New York, and Robert Morris, known as the financier of the revolution. They had a host of zealous supporters, eager to dispossess the Indians of the Iroquois Confederacy, who occupied the entire area west of the Mohawk River and the frontier post of Fort Stanwix (now the city of Rome, N.Y.).

Besides land speculator Robert Morris, there were the Holland Land Co., the Phelps-Gorham and the Ogden Land companies, all of whom would eventually dispossess the Iroquois by fraud, bribery, fomenting of Indian factionalism, use of liquor and illegal purchases.

At the end of the American Revolution, "the Iroquois were weakened and split," as Hauptman points out. Most of the Iro-

quois had supported the British, who abandoned them after the war. Most of the Tuscaroras and Oneidas had supported the Americans, who now preyed upon them to obtain their lands. The Oneidas, nearly destitute and still suffering from the burning of their main village by the British-allied Iroquois during the war, were the first to feel the blow of the ax from the land and canal company interests and from New York State politicians to sell large areas of their country in exchange for pittance payments that would provide only temporary relief to them.

The Senecas in the far western region of what is now New York State lost even more of their land as the result of the manipulations of the various land company agents. The most notorious and corrupt of the land negotiations and "treaties" took place in this area from the Treaty of Big Tree in 1797 to the "treaty" of 1826, which separated most of Seneca lands from them. The 1826 proceedings were rank with bribery and payoffs to the federal commissioner present and to some of the Seneca leaders. This "treaty" was never ratified by the U.S. Senate and so should have been considered invalid. Instead, it was used to dispossess the Senecas of a huge amount of land base, leaving them with a total of 86,887 acres for the largest tribe in the Iroquois Confederacy. This type of fraud was later perpetrated at the notorious Treaty of Buffalo Creek in 1838, further drastically reducing Seneca land holdings, including the confiscation of their largest reservation.

This practice of steady separation of the Iroquois from their land in return for the paltry payments that would temporarily ease their poverty gave these early capitalists the land they coveted to enrich themselves. Western New York was now opened up to the building of turnpikes and canals, notably the Erie Canal and its branch canals, and later the railroad. A flood of white settlers eager to buy house plots from the land companies was followed by the emergence of a whole string of new towns and cities, giving further impetus to capitalistic enterprise. The coming of the railroad to the southern tier of New York was quickly followed by a large number of white squatters moving onto the Allegany Seneca Reservation and the establishment of towns within Indian lands, all without the permission of the Senecas.

These developments enriched many but overwhelmed the Iroquois and further intensified Indian poverty. Most of the Oneidas migrated to Wisconsin and Canada in search of peace and a new life. New York State politicians actively pressed all Iroquois to move out of the state and go west, but with only minimal success. New York State today still has the largest Indian population east of the Mississippi River. And the Iroquois still regard the state as their oppressor.

Hauptman's research is wide ranging and impeccable, and his narrative style is most readable as it reveals the methods used to dispossess one population in favor of another. The book is highly recommended reading.

...Democracy

(Continued from page 1)

dustrial or economic democracy—which is the cornerstone of the socialist movement—the instinct that manifested itself in the streets of Seattle can be directed down a more constructive path.

Seattle showed that the program and the principles of the SLP are not only relevant, but that the Socialist Industrial Union program for economic democracy is the only viable alternative to the capitalist system.

Won't you help the SLP to spread that message? You can, in many ways, but one of the most important is by your generous contribution to the SLP's Socialist Education Fund. The proceeds from that fund will be announced at the banquet that will be held in conjunction with the next regular session of the SLP's National Executive Committee on Saturday, April 2, 2000. Between now and then we aim to do everything in our power to increase the circulation of *The People* and to stimulate a wider interest in the SIU program. By your donation to the fund you will be supporting our efforts to spread the liberating message of the SIU program—the message of how to make economic democracy a reality. Please use the coupon on page 6.

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.

What the Suffragettes Owed the Iroquois

By Jacqueline Keeler
©Pacific News Service

The new PBS series on women's fight for the vote is marred by a major—but not surprising—omission.

"Not for Ourselves Alone" documents 70 years in the lives of two remarkable women, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, who galvanized American women to fight for citizenship and equality. But the new documentary, by Ken Burns, does not ask an important question—where did they get the idea?

The narrator notes that when the women organized the first women's rights convention in 1848 at Seneca Falls, N.Y., and demanded the right to the vote "not one nation in the world...allowed women to vote."

In fact, there was a nation in their midst that gave women—and only women—the right to vote. Only a stone's throw from the Wesleyan Chapel where the conference was held, women of the Iroquois nation had been electing leaders for centuries.

The women of Seneca Falls were very well aware of this. In those days, before the reservation system, American Indian communities and European American communities were in daily contact with each other.

Seneca was the name of one of the Six Nations of the Iroquois, and Lucretia Mott, a well-known abolitionist and Stanton's mentor, spent the summer of 1848 with Seneca women in nearby Cattaraugus. There she saw women reorganize their nation's governmental structure—and she then headed directly to Seneca Falls and inspired Stanton to put on the convention.

Historian Sally Roesch Wagner notes, "Stanton envied how American Indian women 'ruled the house' and how 'descent of property and children were in the female line'—rights women did not have under American law.

At the convention, Stanton read her

"Declaration of Sentiments" (patterned on the Declaration of Independence), which stated a woman was, "if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead," and had "taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns." A woman was "compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master," and she had no rights to her children in the case of divorce.

American Indian women were quick to notice that women's rights were curtailed under Christianity and civilization. Alice Fletcher, an ethnographer, told delegates to the 1888 International Council of Women of an Indian who told her, "As an Indian woman I was free. I owned my own home, my person, the work of my hands, and my children would never forget me. I was better as an Indian woman than under white law."

The first part of the documentary ends with black and white men dropping the cause of universal suffrage to ensure [male] Negro suffrage. But American Indian men were noted for their continued support of it.

In 1893, when suffragist Matilda Joslyn Gage was arrested for the criminal act of trying to vote in a school board election, the Iroquois once again stepped in to support her. After she was released they honored her by adopting her into the Wolf Clan of the Mohawk nation and with the name "Karonienhawi," Sky Carrier.

None of this appears in Burns' documentary, though as Laguna Sioux Indian scholar Paula Gunn Allen notes, to "search the memories and lore of tribal peoples... The evidence is all around us."

American Indian egalitarian societies not only inspired suffragettes like Stanton and Anthony, but also inspired Marx, John Locke and Rousseau.

Yet my ancestors were villainized as "savages." Europeans noted with horror our habits of bathing frequently, derision of authoritarian structures, and worst of

all, their "petticoat governments." Yet, these qualities (except the last) have come to be the mark of Americanism and modernism. To become an American is therefore in large part to become "Indianized."

EDITOR'S NOTE: With all due respect to Ms. Keeler and her editors at the Pacific News Service, there is no similarity between the communistic democracy of traditional Native American cultures and the "Americanism and modernism" of today. "Modernism" is only a euphemism for capitalism, and nothing abhors "derision of authoritarian structures," or exerts more effort to squelch such "aberrant" behavior in workers, than the authoritarian structure of capitalist corporations. The traditional values of democracy implicit in the term "Americanism," though they are not exclusively American, bear a certain similarity to traditional Native American values. That, we believe, is what Ms. Keeler meant to suggest—and with that we can readily agree.

Socialism vs. Anarchism

By Daniel De Leon

In this 1901 address, De Leon explains the origins and meaning of anarchism as a concept of government and why it has no application in modern industrial society. Includes Paul Lafargue's "The Police and the Anarchists."

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Socialism's Answer to Global Capitalism

(Continued from page 1)

litical and economic problems of world capitalism"; "international controversies" that lead to wars; "labor reactionists" having the feet kicked out from under the "national ground" on which their "labor-misleading industry" has stood; the "workers of the world" shown to be what they really are, "victims of international capitalism"—all these phrases are as fresh as this morning's headlines, though the origins of the developments these ideas convey are older by far than De Leon's 1904 editorial and even Marx's 150-year-old *Manifesto*.

Capitalism—world capitalism—creates so many problems it is hard to know which one to focus on. Occasionally, however, something comes along that seems to put everything else into perspective.

That something else may not have a direct effect on the working class, though the treatment it receives in the mass media, or at the hands of the politicians, the unions, and all the institutions of capitalism, often converge to make it appear otherwise.

This is particularly true whenever the capitalist class has a big stake in the outcome of some piece of legislation, or some dispute with another country.

When that happens, all the institutions of capitalism converge to claim that workers also have an enormous stake in how the issue is resolved.

While most issues affecting the capitalist class do not affect the vital interests of the working class, they invariably serve the purpose of confusing the working class and, more important, of distorting or concealing entirely what workers' interests really are. The present debate over the World Trade Organization and, together with that, the U.S.-led effort to draw China into it, provide a case in point.

The debate over the WTO has touched on virtually all the evils of capitalism. Nearly every dreadful effect of the capitalist system has been dragged into it in one way or another, including, among others, U.S. capitalism's place in the world market, the role of the political state, the power and influence of the ruling class, the limits on that power, the unions, poverty, wages, jobs, unemployment, immigration, crime, workers' rights, human rights, child labor and environmental pollution.

Several days from now, representatives from more than 130 countries will be gathered in Seattle for what is being called the

Third Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization.

They won't be alone.

Dozens of organizations, the AFL-CIO "labor reactionists" among them, are expected to send thousands of people to Seattle to stage a demonstration objecting to the way the WTO conducts its affairs. President Clinton referred to all of them in unmistakably condescending tones during a speech he gave at a Harley-Davidson motorcycle plant in Pennsylvania on Nov. 10.

"Every group in the world with an ax to grind is going to Seattle to demonstrate," he said, and he added that he hoped they would.

Clinton said something similar at a press conference on Oct. 14. He said he

yesterday, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney had this to say:

"The World Trade Organization, founded five years ago, is the capstone of the corporate-dominated world marketplace—it oversees and enforces the rules of the global economy, arbitrates trade conflicts, and claims the authority to challenge state and national laws that conflict with its rules—rules that protect corporate interests, but not people."

Sweeney denies that the AFL-CIO's concerns have anything to do with differences over so-called free trade versus protective tariffs, despite the AFL-CIO's stand on NAFTA and similar capitalist trade agreements. "This is nonsense," he told his Press Club audience. "The debate isn't about free trade or protection, engage-



Virginia Hunter/Impact Visuals

A scene from the anti-WTO protests in Seattle

was "sympathetic with all these negative feelings. But one of the things that spawns these negative feelings is, these folks feel like they've been shut out. They think the WTO is some rich guys' club where people get in and talk funny language, and use words nobody understands, and make a bunch of rules that help the people that already have and stick it to the people that have not. That's what they think."

Clinton's sarcasm aside, he was right about what many people think of the WTO.

What is the WTO? What and whose purposes does it serve?

According to itself, the WTO "is the only international organization dealing with the global rules of trade between nations." The WTO also says that, "Its main function is to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible."

Something calling itself the Working Group on the World Trade Organization and Multilateral Agreement on Investment puts it somewhat differently. They describe the WTO as "a powerful new global commerce agency, which transformed the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) into an enforceable global commercial code."

Elaborating, this group goes on to say that, "The WTO is one of the main mechanisms of corporate globalization. While its proponents say it is based on 'free trade,' in fact, the WTO's 700-plus pages of rules set out a comprehensive system of corporate-managed trade."

To round out its definition, the same group added that, "Under the WTO's system of corporate-managed trade, economic efficiency, reflected in short-term profits, dominates other values. Decisions affecting the economy are to be confined to the private sector, while social and environmental costs are borne by the public."

The AFL-CIO agrees with much of this. Speaking before the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., day before

ment [with China] or isolation. We all know we are part of a global economy."

"The real debate isn't about free trade or protection," he added, "but over what are the rules for that economy and who makes them—not whether to engage China, but what are the terms of that engagement, and whose values are to be represented."

Pursuing this line of thought, Sweeney went on to say:

"Global corporations have defined the global market and dominate it. They enlisted governments to slash regulations, free up capital, open up markets, [and] guarantee investment. They made the rules and cut the deals."

Well, of course they did. What did Sweeney expect?

International trade agreement are precisely that—agreements on tariffs and trade. They are not an agreement on jobs or wages, on unions or on workers' rights. They are not conceived and are not designed to protect the American working class, or the workers of any other country. They are conceived and designed to protect the interests of the capitalist owners of huge corporations. Yet, from all the back-and-forth on the World Trade Organization set up to enforce and improve on rules and regulations promoting global capitalism one would think the whole debate centered on what is best for workers.

Indeed, while Sweeney was speaking to the National Press Club on November 19 more than half of the Democrats in the House of Representatives were sending a letter to President Clinton in which they made arguments similar to those of the head of the AFL-CIO. In that letter they said:

"Through the WTO, rights of business have been greatly expanded in the form of tariff reductions, trade liberalization, curtailment of government purchasing prerogatives and intellectual property protections.

"But not a single worker protection, child labor prohibition, minimum wage standard or right to organize unions and bargain collectively has been achieved or even protected through the WTO."

Sweeney and the congressional Democrats who signed the letter to Clinton are right when they say that some developing countries, China among them, are undemocratic, persecute and imprison trade union leaders, and prevent workers from organizing themselves for the trade union goals of better wages, better conditions and harmonious relations with their economic masters. What of it?

Even in America—democratic America, where unions may be broken with virtual impunity, where workers are frequently fired for trying to organize themselves, where the police are frequently called out to harass picket lines and protect capitalist interests, and where the state will occasionally step in to destroy a union, as was done with the air traffic controllers union by the Reagan administration—even in democratic America workers have no more say over international trade agreements than they have over anything else that does not belong to them.

Workers do not own the state or the industries, and they have no meaningful say over either of them. That is as true in the United States as it is in China, or anywhere else in the world. The weight of working-class numbers counts for nothing, unless it is as a gauge of their mood and an indicator of when it is time to go a little easier on them.

As noted a moment ago, and in an editorial on this very subject in the current issue of *The People*, many groups have issued calls for workers to come to Seattle to join the protest, most of them under the guise of protecting jobs, protecting the environment or "socially responsible investing." The Web site of the Seattle WTO-Mobilization Against Corporate Globalization says, "We are a group of international, national and Seattle groups who have come together to oppose the destruction of people and environment that untrammelled free trade promises." It encouraged workers "to come to Seattle to be counted in our call for the involvement of civil society in the assessment of the impact of the WTO on people, governments and the environment."

Through its Web site, the AFL-CIO spoke of working families coming together "at Seattle's Memorial Stadium to make their voices heard for new rules to make the global economy work for working families." "This," said the AFL-CIO, "is the best opportunity working families have had in decades to change the rules for international trade and investment and stop the global race to the bottom."

Is it really?

Even if the WTO meeting—or the demonstrations outside—were the "best opportunity...to change the rules for international trade and investment," such changes couldn't do much for workers. This is not to deny that some basic U.S. industries are shipping production and jobs overseas and cloaking themselves in the dress of their supposed "foreign" competitors. Nor is it to deny that international capital, "untrammelled" by any sort of regulation, is likely to more rapidly reduce our remaining forests to barren landscapes and speed up other environmental degradation. Domestic capital has done a pretty good job of both all by itself. Lest we forget, American capitalism was built behind a wall of 19th-century protective tariffs, and that was the century in which it stripped most of our forests and much of our other natural resources away.

Likewise with massive dislocations for

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the People

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The Seattle Police Riot

Of all the human props of the political state, the police prop is the most menial. The soldier may commit iniquities; but when he does...he does so under immediate orders from superiors whom he is bound to obey. The soldier is a blindly obeying tool—a menial he is not. The menial's character is to adapt himself, his views, hence his conduct also, to the hand that feeds him. The menial reflects, he loves to reflect, his master's opinions. Such are the characteristics of the police, as a whole. It was this feature of the police that exhibited itself...in Washington.

—Daniel De Leon (1913)

The Washington mentioned by De Leon in his 1913 editorial was Washington, D.C., where police stood by laughing and egging on bands of anti-Suffragist thugs who waded into the annual Suffrage Day parade to beat down women and break up the demonstration.

Differently from the D.C. police of 86 years ago, the police of Seattle did the wading in, beating down and breaking up themselves during last month's anti-WTO demonstrations; but just like the D.C. police of 86 years ago, they did not act for the sake of a principle, a sentiment, or even an idea of their own.

The capitalist class is a cowardly class. It lives by what it steals from the working class. Unlike the bold princes and kings of medieval times, it does not take up the sword and place itself at the head of an army of soldiers and knights to enforce its thieving in its own name or by its own hand, or to restore order when those it steals from utter some objection.

To enforce "order" as it sees it, the ruling class hires mercenaries, which it draws from the working class and bedecks with brass buttons, boots, nightsticks, guns and other symbols of authority to do its dirty work. These are the police, one of the armed branches of the political state. But when these menials of ruling class botch the job, as they clearly did in Seattle, do their cowardly masters step forward to take responsibility? Not on your life. That would take courage, which they lack, and give the working class too much of an insight into the true function of the police. When menials botch the job heads start to roll, and the ruling class takes refuge behind commissions and inquiries to fix the blame by diverting attention from itself and its thoroughly rotten system. So it has always been, and so it is in Seattle.

Indeed, Seattle's police chief has already resigned in the wake of criticism of his department's response to the four days of protest against the WTO from Nov. 29 through Dec. 2. Characteristically, the Seattle City Council has already called for a commission to review police handling of the demonstrations. But neither the police chief's resignation nor the council's commission can hide what really happened in Seattle: a bloody, baton-wielding, jack-booted police force rioting against unarmed, mostly peaceful protesters.

The particulars are well known. Videotape shot during the protests and broadcast on television attest to the truth. As an article in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* described one videotaped incident, "A SWAT officer on riot duty...during the World Trade Organization protests kicks an unarmed man in the groin. Then he fires a beanbag round from his rifle at close range while the man retreats, hands high above his head."

Most accounts have the police first violating the peace. In fact, despite what one account says was "upwards of 70,000 people" who were involved in the protests, only a handful were reportedly involved in window-smashing and graffiti-spraying. Even this vandalism reportedly began only after police began using pepper spray and rubber (plastic) bullets against peaceful protesters. Once the vandalism began, it was used by police as a rationale to break the heads of all protesters, peaceful and violent alike.

Even King County Sheriff David Reichert and unnamed Seattle police officers blamed the city's police chief and mayor for much of the vandalism and scattered violence that occurred on Nov. 30. Many criticized the indiscriminate firing of tear gas and rubber bullets, and charged that "innocent workers, shoppers and residents were swept up in the arrest of more than 500 people Nov. 30 and Dec. 1," as an Associated Press account put it.

What all the above plainly shows is that, despite its democratic pretenses, the capitalist state remains willing, apparently even eager, to employ police-state methods at the slightest provocation. The city quickly declared an unconstitutional "no protest" zone and a "state of emergency." Ruthless police violence was given the go-ahead. Downtown Seattle was transformed—into a de facto police state repressed by martial law.

The WTO protesters have made their experience. They now know what many others know who have protested the effects, conditions or policies of the ruling elite and the class-divided system of capitalism that produces them. However, such jettisoning of this country's democratic traditions should surprise no one. Capitalism is fundamentally an economic dictatorship under which political democracy has at best a tenuous existence. As deteriorating social conditions generate increased potential for working-class unrest, the existence of political democracy becomes ever more tenuous.

The groundwork for a more permanent slide into martial law and political—as well as economic—dictatorship is continually being laid. For decades, Congress, state legislatures and the courts have steadily put more power and discretion in the hands of the nation's police forces, and armed them to the teeth with technologically advanced, military-style weaponry. There can be no mistaking the danger implicit in this many-sided attack on democratic rights and civil liberties.

Any movement aspiring to bring about substantive social change in this country must be prepared to deal with a state quite willing and capable of turning its arsenal—ostensibly produced to fend off foreign enemies—against its own citizens. That means a movement of committed revolutionaries who understand the need for education first, then political and industrial organization to enforce the will of the majority in face of the antisocial tendencies of the capitalist system and its political state. It means building a movement on the foundation provided by the Socialist Industrial Union program of the Socialist Labor Party. That, and that alone, will free our country from the threat of future police riots and the abnegation of the rights and liberties won by the revolution of 223 years ago.

—K.B.

A De Leon Editorial

'Doomsday'—Again

Newsweek says that 18 percent of Americans believe they will live to see the "Second Coming"—if not on Jan. 1, 2000, then not many years into the 21st century—and that 239 Web sites are devoted to "millennial scenarios" of various sorts. That shows how far science has advanced over superstition since Jan. 1, 1000, when virtually all of Europe expected the world to end.

Ends of the World

(Daily People, Sept. 27, 1909)

Three hundred Triune Immersionists, defeated in their hopes of the end of the world, are now sadly plodding back from West Duxbury, Mass., to the homes they left shortly ago, some as far away as Virginia, to pick up again the thread of the earthly life they thought they had laid down forever. Not only that. Many of them are going back to face scenes of desolation and destitution. Believing the usefulness of worldly goods outlived, they gave up their jobs, abandoned their businesses, sold their property and donated all they had to the church.

This is not the first time a similar drama has been enacted, nor the largest stage it has occupied. The founder of Christianity, after describing the destruction of the world, his own second coming and the judgment, declared: "This day and generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled." And his followers took him at his word. Thus are accounted for the rapid gains the faith made among the poor of earth, their unshakable adherence to the new doctrine, and their sublime indifference to persecution. What mattered a brief season of pain? It was not to a lifelong struggle against evil he was calling them, but a temporary preparation before the end of all and the relief from oppression.

But the day and generation passed away, and all these things were not fulfilled. To account for the fact, recourse was had to "allegorical" interpretation. The day and generation were interpreted as meaning centuries, periods of 500 years, or even longer. The texts were eagerly scanned for more data. Finally the

beginning of the year 1000 was set for the event.

The consequences of such a belief are easily imaginable. As the year 1000 approached industry was neglected; the arts and sciences drooped, the fields were allowed to lie untilled. No one would build for a future that wasn't going to be. The stream of human endeavor lay choked by the obstacle of an expected doom. The world was stagnant. The church alone was active, gathering in the estates and goods of those who could be induced to give them over as a peace offering to the hereafter.

The last hours of the year 999 drew on. Multitudes thronged the streets and fields awaiting the cataclysm that was to wipe them out, and give the serf and laborer rest. Midnight arrived. The clocks sounded the hour—and nothing happened. The world wagged on as before.

Then broke in their full virulence the effects of the years of inaction. The earth, untilled, bore no crops. Frightful famines devastated the land. Thousands upon thousands died of starvation—for 30 years want and pestilence stalked the continent of Europe. The populations were decimated. Babies died at their mothers' dry breasts. Reduced to the last extremity, survivors ate the bodies of those who succumbed.

The 1909 reenactment at West Duxbury of the catastrophe of the year 1000 is but a puny echo of the earlier event; so far has the spread of scientific knowledge carried us. But in one way or another similar tragedies will continue until the workers cease to look to the skies for relief, and put their shoulders to the task of building, here on earth, the social system that will render misery and exploitation impossible.

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.

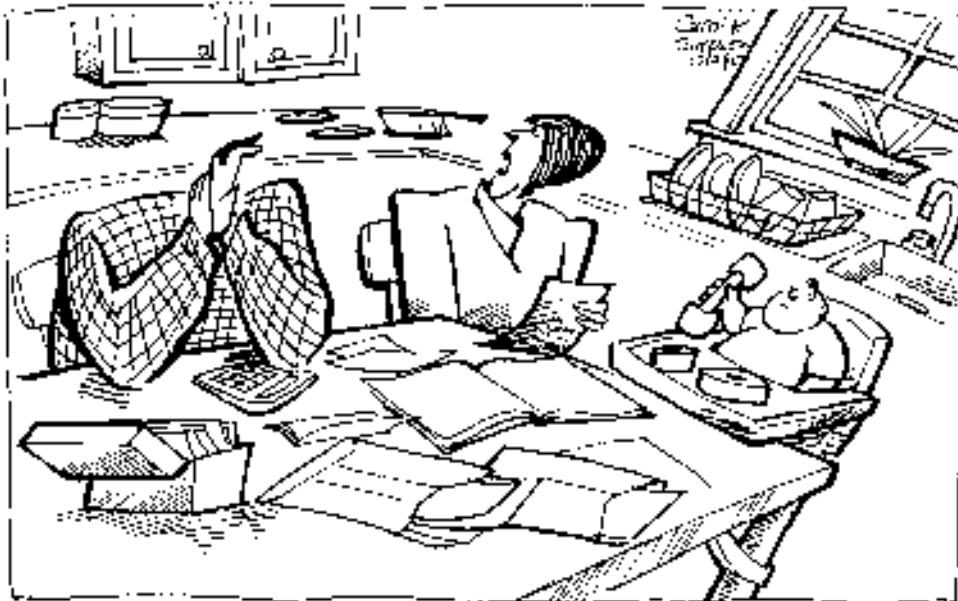
The 'Living Wage' Illusion

By Nathan Karp

Thirty-three years ago when a proposal to raise the federal minimum wage was being debated, George Meany, president of the AFL-CIO, told the National Industrial Conference Board that raising the "legal" minimum was "the most important single step that can be taken to wipe out poverty." Meany completely ignored that during the 27 years preceding his statement the "legal" minimum wage, despite periodic nominal increases, did not wipe out the blight of poverty in the United States. Now we can add that the same has proven true during the 33 years since Meany's contention, even though the minimum wage has been increased several more times, from \$3.10 in 1980, when Meany died, to its present level.

The current federal minimum wage of \$5.15 has been in effect since September 1997. Raising that minimum is currently being considered again—this time on two fronts. Recently the Senate passed a Republican-backed proposal to raise the minimum wage \$1.00—not right now, but by "early 2002." It would be done in three stages—35 cents on March 1, 2000; 35 cents on March 1, 2001; 30 cents on March 1, 2002.

However, even these piddling increases did not become law, in part because the Senate had acted too late for the House to consider the Senate proposal before adjournment. Moreover, the Senate's minimum wage provisions were tied to a bill that aims to tighten the bankruptcy laws and make it more difficult for individuals to renounce all their debts when filing for bankruptcy. All in all, the possibility of a raise of the minimum wage appears dead for now and it remains to be seen if or when it will come up for consideration in the next Congress.



"We can afford groceries if we take up hibernation in the winter months."

Carol Simpson

In the meantime, there are a small number of states that have enacted laws that mandate a somewhat higher minimum wage than the federal statute. However, in recent years there has been a growing tendency by city and county governments to pass local laws or ordinances establishing what are designated as a "living wage" for certain workers within their jurisdictions. According to *The New York Times* of Nov. 19, "Forty cities and counties in 17 states...have enacted such wage laws since the movement began five years ago." Additional cities—more than 50—are said to be joining the movement at a rate of one a month.

Among the localities that have enacted "living wage" laws are: Baltimore (\$7.70); Milwaukee (\$6.56); Tucson (\$9.00); Jersey City (\$7.50); Los Angeles (\$8.76); New

Haven, Conn. (\$8.03); Boston (\$8.23); Duluth, Minn. (\$7.25); Durham, N.C. (\$7.55); Chicago (\$7.60); Oakland (\$8.00) and San Jose (\$9.50). Last May, Tom Ammiano, president of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, introduced a "living wage" proposal calling for a minimum of \$11.00 an hour. If enacted, it would be the highest minimum "living wage" enacted to date.

Despite technical differences, the "living wage" laws generally are applied to businesses that have lucrative business deals with the local governments. It is also generally true that these wage ordinances apply to relatively small numbers of workers. As these ordinances proliferate, opposition and complaints from firms affected by them are increasing. This although the increased costs to the companies run a mere "1 to 1.5 percent of their total expenses,"

according to Robert Pollin, an economist at the University of Massachusetts who led a study of the ordinances and their impact. Little wonder that "the vast majority of affected companies, though often ducking full compliance, have generally lived with the law rather than give up profitable contracts, subsidies and leases on choice city-owned properties...."

It is estimated that 28.5 million workers in the United States earn less than \$8 an hour. That is more than one-fourth of all American workers. However, according to an analysis by Pollin and two others who conducted studies of the "living wage" movement, "no more than 44,000...are covered so far by wage ordinances, the largest group being the 9,000 or so in Los Angeles." The New York City wage ordinance covers only "about 1,400" workers. These meager results convincingly demonstrate that such makeshift reforms cannot successfully deal with the widespread poverty created by capitalist society as a matter of course. This is no exception. Time and again, reform measures intended to enable workers to cope with the long-standing problems and miseries that capitalism engenders have proved totally inadequate to the task.

Widespread poverty is an inevitable product of the capitalist system. It won't disappear as a result of unrealistic or utopian promises by procapitalist labor leaders or liberal capitalist reformers. Nor can it be legislated out of existence by capitalist politicians. It can be wiped out only by a classconscious working class organized politically and industrially to change the economic basis of society. That change must be from the present class-ruled capitalist society, with its private ownership of the means of life, to a socialist industrial commonwealth, wherein the economy will be socially owned, and democratically and collectively operated in the interest of all society.

LABOR NEWS NOTES

Democracy—Its Past, Present and Future

The title of Arnold Petersen's *Democracy—Past, Present and Future* clearly implies a concept of development. It is not one that postulates a beginning, maturity and decline or death, but that views the democratic process in terms of evolution as humanity evolved as a social being, and as its means of livelihood and wealth production evolved from the primitive to the highly complex. This concept recognizes periods of retrogression and of defeats, but it nevertheless sees the process as one of growth, sometimes of a distorted growth that provides its own lessons that will assist the human-guided evolution of democracy to full maturity and perfection through socialism.

Petersen pays much more than a formal tribute to democracy in this work. He relates a history of the beginning of democracy in humanity's earliest origins as a social being in primitive communist society. He records what may be called the rediscovery of democracy in political and private-property society. And he outlines the social and material forces that have brought humankind to the threshold of the new socialist era in which industrial democracy will universalize the rule of the people. He shows that this will be done on a material basis that will ensure democracy's perpetuation and make of it an everyday practice of the useful producers of the socialist society.

The people of primitive society could not have survived without the democracy of the gens (commonly called "clan"), or without their primitive communism, with its obligation of all to contribute to the common store of the requirements of life. The history of human development from

the nonpolitical, communistic society of primitive life to the beginnings of private property and class-ruled society tells us that democracy—political democracy—was necessary at the latter stage of development, too.

The author's story of Solon, Cleisthenes and the ruling-class democracy of ancient Greece, like the story of the Roman republic's development, presents us with a story of historic necessity. Athens could have political democracy for its citizens and complete subjection for the citizens' slaves. Historic developments show that political democracy could, and does, exist alongside of economic despotism, and that the more the latter developed the more political democracy retrogressed. We know that in our own country the tradition and practices of political democracy continue while the mass of the people are as subject to economic despotism as the slaves of Athens were. And, of course, as in Germany, Italy, Brazil, modern Greece and other lands in the course of the 20th century, the reality of economic despotism proved to be the cause of the abandonment of political democracy for political despotism. Petersen's work relates part of this history—and shows the danger of its repetition in this country with even greater implications for all of humankind and the future of the world.

In his chapter on "The Economic Basis of Industrial Democracy," the author brings the reader very near to the present period, in which the private-property and class-rule necessities of the past have become socially obsolete and socially destructive. History does indeed show that these things were necessities to social development.

Despite the parasitism implicit in the few having more than the many, and in ruling the many as the means of holding onto and increasing their wealth and relative security, the inequality did provide the leisure for some (including surrogates for the possessors of wealth) to develop art, literature, history, mathematics, mechanics, astronomy and so on, leading to the accumulation of knowledge and to a further development that, in turn, led to the real golden age of science in this capitalist era.

Capitalism, as Marx and Engels said, produced wonders that surpassed the wonders of the ancient world. But its wonders of manufacture and commerce produced the monstrosities of capitalist war, of almost universal exploitation and of insecurity. It proved to be far more wasteful of humanity than Rome was of the people its ruling class robbed, enslaved and killed.

Capitalism's development led by its industrial revolution to the social need for a new economic and democratic order. It also led to this by its retrogressions from the idealism of political revolutions against monarchical and feudal restrictions on the new capitalist economy that was developing in the feudal economy. The evolution through thousands of years to this need for socialism is told in this work, capped by the author's explanation of how democracy can be revitalized through genuine socialism. The knowledge and logic called upon to tell this story of humankind and its society, and to tell it with realistic hope rather than with despair, are products of Marxism-De Leonism. Studied, this work can help to raise the reader's sights to the certainties of the cooperative

and democratic society of socialism. The certainties include the raising of humanity's stature, the solution to its problems of taking care of its needs, and the institution of the means—through Socialist Industrial Unionism—of governing itself so that never again will people rule and exploit other people.

The reader will note in studying this work that its discussions of the particular problems at the time of its original publication on the eve of World War II are as timely now as they were then.

The reader will, therefore, learn about the meaning of current events, as well as about the past, the present and the future course of democracy, and of society. By learning these lessons well, the reader can become a more potent link in the evolutionary, and revolutionary, chain of action that will lead to a better social world.

Democracy: Past, Present and Future

By Arnold Petersen

80 pages—\$1.25 postpaid

NEW YORK LABOR NEWS

P.O. Box 218

Mountain View, CA 94042-0218

letters to the People

A Bit of a Stretch

At the recent AFL-CIO convention in Los Angeles, John Sweeney was heard to say that, "Our unions help make sure our economy works just as well for families living in barrios or for families living in gated communities." Yuck! In addition to this classic "Sweeney-ism," he made the claim that unionized workers, overall, earn 32 percent more than nonunionized workers. I was wondering if you had any information that could clarify this. His statement seems like a bit of a stretch to me. Thanks very much.

Steve Peterson
Los Angeles, Calif.

ANSWER—The question our cor-

respondent raises is an important one. While we cannot offer a specific refutation of Sweeney's boast that union members receive nearly one-third more in wages and other compensation than nonunion workers, it is probably true that unionized workers believe that the present unions get them the best wages possible. Nevertheless, the facts are that with their "contracts" (tying the workers' hands for years at a time), and their conservative capitalist outlook ("after all, the boss must be allowed a **fair** profit"), the unions are helping to hold wages down at a time when the demand for labor is rising. Indeed, the failure of wages to rise when the so-called labor shortage is supposed to be of such grave concern to the ruling class lends sup-

port to the SLP's position that today's unions help to hold wages down.

Illusions have a powerful influence on the human mind. For more than a century after Copernicus established that the Earth turned on its axis every 24 hours, and that the planets traveled in their respective orbits around the sun, even supposedly educated persons believed that it was the sun that moved about the Earth. That certainly is the way it appears to the eye.

Similarly with the illusion that because the union negotiates a new agreement periodically, and the labor leader talks tough (for the benefit of the duespayers—under the table they play footsie with the employer), it is the union that is getting workers the raise. The real facts are that when

the demand for labor goes up, at least under what might be called ordinary circumstances, the market price of labor will also go up. The union agreement stipulating a wage increase under those conditions is simply a joint union-employer acknowledgment of these economic phenomena.

These, however, are not ordinary times. Many of the union-employer contracts negotiated today stipulate the elimination of jobs in exchange for wage gains. Negotiating a 3 or 4 percent increase in wages over the life of a contract of four or five years' duration, while wiping out 100 percent of the wages formerly paid the workers whose jobs the unions could not protect, helps put the unions' boasts about higher wages into perspective.

In making the point that the present procapitalist unions help to hold wages down, the SLP doesn't argue for **no union**; what the SLP argues for is the creation of a real working-class union, and one based squarely on working-class interests.

Finally, the significant thing about union members' attitudes is not that a majority of them are still taken in by the faker-led unions; the significant thing is that the far larger majority of nonunion workers appear to have rejected the unions' claims.

'Laissez Faire'

The reprint of De Leon's editorial of Jan. 12, 1907 ["Admissions, Crowding Fast," on the revolutionary origin and historic meaning of the term "laissez faire"] in the November issue was so appropriate for today. Sometimes I have some difficulty with his writing, but this time it was very clear. I have made several copies and will send them to various "left" groups.

Frank Roemhild
Bayfield, Wis.

People Waking Up!

Enclosed please find something for the Christmas Box and some additional for 1,000 SLP leaflets. I hope one percent of the leaflets are answered. Mostly they are well received. There is so much dissatisfaction, especially with the world trade thing. There was almost a revolution in Seattle last week.

I have passed out 20,000 or more SLP leaflets so far the last couple of years in Olympia and surrounding cities. People, I believe, are waking up.

Keep up the good works.

Milton Poulos
McCleary, Wash.

The Disturbing Undertone Of 'Realistic' TV Shows

By Don Patrick*

The popularity ratings of today's TV courtroom, police and "law enforcement" shows carry a disturbing undertone.

Their consistent message is that ordinary people are entrapped in a giant gill net of inescapable rules of behavior. No one explains that the rules (i.e., laws) are set by the ruling capitalist class.

Examples are "Judge Judy" and "The People's Court." Self-righteous, black-robed authority figures oversimplify each case. They loosely, freely insult their working-class litigants.

Police "chase" videos focus on

workers in desperation, never once explaining what drove the "criminal" to antisocial acts. (Often it is unemployment.)

They never once portray corporate or white-collar crime. When was the last time you saw the police pursue a crooked stockbroker or industrial polluter?

Prime time TV shows like "Law and Order" and "NYPD Blue" preach neofascist ways to manipulate us: Police and prosecutors routinely ignore constitutional protections with illegal arrests, searches and seizures.

"Walker, Texas Ranger" has the very same plot-premise every week: violence solves everything.

Under a dishonest dramatic cover of "humanizing" police, prosecutors and judges, all of these TV series are skillfully scripted to hypnotize us into false values. They want us to fear each other.

Commercial television is a fact of American pop culture. It's not truth. So long as you realize this, you and your children will be free to think your way out of this deadly TV swampland into the future free vistas of socialist democracy.

*Don Patrick is a Seattle playwright.

Get Subs!

... Socialism's Answer

(Continued from page 8)

proval or disgust with continuing "under the WTO's system"—but really capitalism's system—"of corporate-managed trade, economic efficiency, reflected in short-term profits, dominat[ing all] other values." Capitalism is rapacious and hostile to all those "other values" by its nature. Something more decisive must be done, and the Socialist Labor Party believes that its program offers the strategy and tactics through which all those "other values" can be realized.

That program—Socialist Industrial Unionism—has revolutionary objectives and calls upon workers to form their own class-wide political and economic organizations: A political party—

- To promote classconsciousness among workers while advocating a complete revolutionary change from capitalism to socialism;

- To urge into being a revolutionary economic organization embracing all workers;

- To challenge the power of the ruling class, to capture the state machinery and to turn the reins of social administration over to a socialist industrial government.

The immediate role of the Socialist Industrial Union form of classwide economic organization

would be to mobilize workers to fight the class struggle on a daily basis. SIUs would organize both the employed and the unemployed to fight against all manifestations of exploitation. The class solidarity it would engender, the general revolutionary outlook it would embody, would make them infinitely more responsive to workers' needs and more effective in pursuing them than the existing unions with their procapitalist leadership and bourgeois ideology.

But the SIU's ultimate purpose would be to unite workers at all levels within an industry into a single integrated body capable of wielding the workers' collective economic might in behalf of their class interests. All the unions in the various industries would, in turn, be united at the local, regional and national levels around a common set of working-class objectives.

Workers from all industries and services would be united into a single movement. The class solidarity that such organization would embody would make it an invincible force.

These socialist union organizations would also provide a framework on which to structure socialist society. Comprising a united

network of producers fully competent and equipped to manage production cooperatively and democratically, the SIUs would be fully capable of seizing control of the entire productive process and of expropriating the capitalist class.

The chaos and increasing oppression that exists in capitalist America today make it clear that socialist revolution is past due. The working class is paying a heavy toll in human misery and suffering, which will become more intense unless our class organizes its political and economic strength and uses it to establish the socialist alternative.

As a Marxist organization, the SLP provides positive revolutionary direction to workers by promoting the growth of classconsciousness. However, just as classconsciousness will not grow of its own accord, neither will the SLP. That responsibility ultimately rests with those the SLP has reached. Just as it is the responsibility of a revolutionary movement to promote classconsciousness, it is the responsibility of all those who grasp the SLP's message to step forward, to join the party's ranks and to enhance its ability to reach the working class.

Thank you.

activities

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

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. The general public is invited.

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Our thanks and appreciation to all whose interest and concern in the Socialist Labor Party and its official journal prompted them to respond so generously to The People's annual Thanksgiving Fund.

(Total as of Dec. 10: \$12,214.48)

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... Prosperity Propaganda

(Continued from page 1)
someone else's misery.

Profits are doing well too, thank you, for both the old and the new enterprises—never mind that they are being squeezed out of the hides of an overworked and exploited working class.

In short, things economic are coming up roses—if you belong to the ruling class. But if you belong to the working class, finding your tiny rosebud means wading through a veritable bouquet of thorns.



We have looked at the "bright side" of the economic picture as drawn by the politicians, capitalist economists, media columnists and commentators, etc. However, if that picture of the economy (minus our asides) is true, how come there are some 28.5 million workers between the ages of 18 and 64 earning less than \$8 an hour? (Many earn considerably less!)

How come some 40 million Americans have no medical coverage?

How come over 14 million chil-

dren continue to live in poverty in this rich nation, despite its almost decade-long "booming" economy?

How come untold numbers of homeless people—including a good percentage of "working poor"—roam the streets of our cities during the day and sleep in doorways, abandoned warehouses, old cars or on the bare ground during the night?

How come urban slums not only continue to exist, they progressively deteriorate in practically every city in the nation?

How come the educational system, particularly in the primary and secondary areas, is seriously underfunded?

How come decent housing for working people is as scarce as hens' teeth?

How come the nation's infrastructure is steadily falling apart?

And how come tens of thousands of workers in major industries are rather steadily consigned to the industrial scrap heap, even as capitalists intensify their claims of a tight labor market?

In its May 1999 issue, *The People* published its last "layoffs scoreboard." During the six months since then, the capitalist media has underplayed the continuing mass layoffs. On Dec. 8, however, the following two-inch item appeared in the business

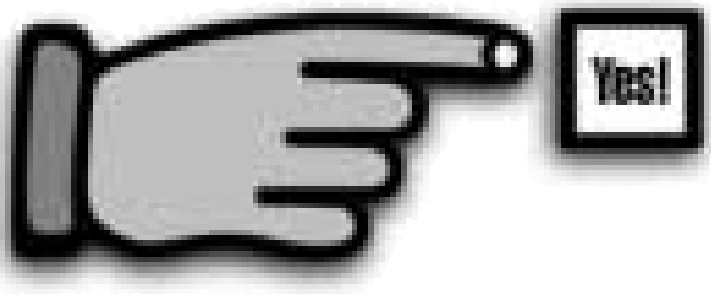
section of the *San Jose Mercury News*.

"Layoffs resume pace toward corporate record"

"After hitting a 15-month low in October, U.S. corporations returned to the job-chopping block, announcing 50,907 layoffs in November, a 123 percent surge from the previous month, according to Challenger, Gray and Christmas, an international outplacement firm. Retail leads all other sectors with 61,684 job cuts so far in 1999, sharply higher than the total 23,784 in 1998. The computer industry takes a close second with 59,343 job cuts, while financial services have posted 56,683 layoffs so far in 1999. The report said November's resurgence in downsizing could make 1999 a record year for corporate layoffs."

The politicians, the capitalist economists and particularly the media with its columnists and commentators are waging a propaganda campaign to convince the American working class, and possibly themselves, that the U.S. capitalist system is in great shape and its future is bright. But it's a story riddled with contradictions, and it cannot be scrutinized without its being revealed for what it really is—a media-driven propaganda campaign.

—Nathan Karp



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Socialism's Answer to Global Capitalism

(Continued from page 3)

workers. These, too, are a feature of the capitalist system, not merely a side effect of one trade policy that would be absent under another trade policy.

Not many capitalists today cry out for protective tariffs to keep foreign commodities off U.S. markets. That is because American capitalism, by and large, is more competitive than its foreign rivals. It is more competitive because American labor, on the whole, is still the most productive on Earth, which is only another way of saying that American capital exploits American labor more efficiently than any of its rivals.

There are exceptions, such as the steel industry, of course, and where deemed expedient the government has made, retained or restored certain protective measures. However, that is no foundation for the conclusion that such measures protect American jobs. Sticking to steel, according to the refrain sung by the AFL-CIO and steel capitalist duo, the 10,000 steelworkers who lost their jobs over the last year would not have lost them if not for Japanese and other foreign steel being "dumped" onto the American market.

Fact is that over the last 25 years or so, the U.S. steel industry has done everything it could to replace its entire steel producing plant with new technology specifically designed to eliminate jobs, reduce labor costs and place itself on a more competitive basis, i.e., to make its steel as cheap and dumpable as any cheap and dumpable steel could be. And in the doing, it turned large sections of Ohio, Pennsylvania and other states of the "industrial corridor" into a "Rust Bowl" that was the graveyard, not only for outmoded plants, but for tens of thousands of jobs in the steel, iron and ancillary industries. American steel simply wants to become more competitive in world trade. That means improving productivity, which means kicking workers out of jobs. Workers lose either way.

How would what Sweeney likes to call "fair trade" and "fair labor practices" protect the jobs of American workers and change the fact of international capitalist competition for markets? What good would it do a worker to have a job in an industry where new techniques of production increase productivity or exploitation to the point where domestic markets cannot be found to dispose of it all? What good would it do when the same new techniques of production, increased productivity and exploitation are duplicated in identical industries in other countries where unsold surpluses present the same problem?

Fact is that the loss of what Sweeney and other proponents of so-called fair trade measures are pleased to call "good jobs" is not caused by capitalist trade and treaties. Fact is that even a democratic China—democratic, that is, as Sweeney and those who object to the way the WTO pursues capitalist interests conceive of democracy—would not alter that fact. The problems that trouble the AFL-CIO, and all the other groups about to converge on Seattle and the WTO meeting, are caused by capitalism itself—by the way in which our whole society is constructed. That is why the SLP maintains that workers have no stake in the WTO negotiations, or any other capitalist issue.

As for China, the SLP takes a back seat to no one when it comes to supporting the rights of workers to organize, politically and economically, to defend themselves against their oppressors and exploiters

and to advance their own interests. China, despite its lingering socialist pretensions, is a despotic society dominated by a despotic ruling class.

Critics of the WTO charge that it is undemocratic because it focuses exclusively on the profit concerns of corporations to the exclusion of the concerns of what it describes as the "public."



Andrew Ngo/Impact Visuals

Seattle police spraying tear gas toward protesters.

The WTO counters by asserting that the charge is not true. In what it describes as one of 10 misconceptions about itself, the WTO states that, "Decisions in the WTO are generally by consensus. In principle, that's even more democratic than majority rule because everyone has to agree."

And who is "everyone" in the eyes of the WTO? It makes that clear when it says that "the WTO's trade rules...were negotiated by member governments and ratified in members' parliaments." In short, it is the ruling classes, collectively represented by their respective political states, that have a voice in its "democracy."

But who is this "public" that the WTO's critics speak of, and what are their "interests"?

If you strip the "public" of its working-class element, which owns nothing that figures into capitalist trade and commerce apart from their ability to perform physical and intellectual labor—

If you strip it of the young who are being nurtured in the schools and colleges to take their parents' places on the labor market, like so many saplings on a tree farm being nurtured for the Christmas tree market—

If you strip the "public" of that working-class element, what do you have left?

What you have left, of course, is the capitalist element, the politician element, the bureaucrat element, the "negotiator" or "ministerial" element, which adds up to a microscopic part of the population and amounts to less than the proverbial hill of beans.

If what the opponents of the WTO and its policies mean by the "public interest" is the working class' interest, then let them say so. That, so to speak, would clear the air more than all the demonstrations and any new set of rules and laws and regulations put together.

Just over 150 years ago, again in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx wrote that capitalism's rapid development of industrial technology, transportation and communications, coupled with the "cheap prices of its commodities," would eventually batter down all "Chinese walls" of resistance to the emergence of world capitalism.

That may seem ironic to those who believe that it is U.S. capital and U.S. labor that "cheap" foreign products and "cheap" foreign labor are pushing to the wall. Apparently, however, workers in China don't see it that way. It is *cheap American commodities* produced by *cheap American labor* that is causing many in China to fret.

Indeed, one day after reporting what

industrialized countries, and he or she also leads the way in terms of productivity.'

"He added that 'in 1996, the U.S. outpaced Japan by nearly \$10,000 (USD) in terms of value added per person employed and in terms of value added per hour worked by nearly \$9, but in recent years workers in Japan have been rapidly closing the gap.'"

"A similar situation prevails vis-a-vis the U.S.'s largest trading partner, Canada, where labor productivity is increasing at a faster rate in terms of value added per hour worked....In terms of valued added per hour worked in 1997, U.S. workers outproduced their Canadian counterparts by more than \$5USD.

"According to Johnson, 'The productivity race is like a never-ending marathon in which the U.S. worker today is ahead of the pack, but a significant number of competitors—notably Japan, the Republic of Korea and the major European countries—are picking up speed with the U.S. in their sights.'"

It should be noted that the ILO also reported that this "productivity gap" is rapidly closing—and we all know why. It is closing because modern technology, applied to industry, is rapidly spreading from the industrialized to the industrializing countries.

In the current issue of *The People* we express our suspicion that if Karl Marx were alive today he might bow his head with regret over these developments while giving a reluctant nod of approval. Marx would bow his head with regret while nodding his approval because he understood that the growth of 19th-century capitalism into the world capitalism of the 21st century was unstoppable—short of a socialist revolution. Short of that, Marx knew that unfettered capitalist competition on a world scale would translate into a ruthless increase in the exploitation of the working classes of all countries.

Yet, he might have nodded his approval because he knew that capitalist "free trade" on a world scale would finally force workers to understand that capitalism had to be replaced before it reduced them to a state of utter degradation—to what was once called "Chinese cooliedom." As he put it:

"Generally speaking, the protective system in these days is conservative, while the free trade system works destructively. It breaks up old nationalities and carries antagonism of proletariat and bourgeoisie to the utmost point. In a word, the free trade system hastens the social revolution. In this revolutionary sense alone...I am in favor of free trade."

The Socialist Labor Party cannot stop world capitalism from creating even more misery on a global scale than it already has. Only the working class can do that. What the SLP can do, however, is hasten the day when workers will come to the realization that they must act to end capitalism and build socialism. The SLP can do that *provided* it receives the full support of all those who appreciate the urgency of the times and the need to spread the socialist message.

The United States—not its working class, and certainly not its ruling class—cannot emancipate the Chinese working class, or the working class of any other country, from class oppression. That is something they must attend to for themselves.

What the American working class can do to help that process along, however, involves more than demonstrating disap-

(Concluded on page 6)