

IN THIS ISSUE

**Canadian Auto Workers,
Labor Federation May Split**

Page 2

**Biotech Profit Rush
Threatens Public Health**

Page 3

**Editorials:
- The Yugoslav Struggle -
- Israel and Palestine -**

Page 4

The Middle East Conflict

Page 8

To Our Readers

We believe readers of *The People* are concerned about the cause that the Socialist Labor Party and *The People* seek to promote. That is why we ask you to give this urgent appeal your careful consideration.

The SLP—and therefore *The People*—is facing a serious financial problem. In fact, it is as serious a financial threat to their existence as we have ever faced.

The situation must be corrected. To accomplish that we need the help of every person conscious of the critical times in which we are living and of the vital importance of maintaining the existence of the SLP and the publication of *The People*. Indeed, *The People* is indispensable in our collective struggle to save humanity and the world from the ruinous consequences of the capitalist system.

As you well know from your own daily experiences, costs continue to rise. For us the costs of operating continue to mount steadily. As a result, there has been a steady drain on our financial reserves, until those reserves are down to what can only be described as a very dangerous level.

In the past, many of you have contributed frequently and generously to our appeals for financial support. Now our need is greater than ever. To help meet that need we have set a \$25,000 goal for *The People's* 2000 Thanksgiving Fund. We earnestly appeal to you to contribute to that fund as generously and promptly as you possibly can.

We have no doubt that you get many appeals for funds. We get them, too. Hardly a day passes without one arriving in the mail. And all—or most—are for worthy causes.

But it is to the elimination of the capitalist source of the problems all these “worthy causes” address that *The People* and the SLP are devoting their energies and resources. And we will continue to do so as long as our supporters will help provide the material wherewithal that makes our efforts possible.

In the days ahead, our responsibilities as the sole voice calling for an immediate socialist reconstruction of society and articulating a viable program for accomplishing that goal will become greater than ever. Please use the coupon on page 6 to send your donation.

Why the SLP Deserves Every Worker's Support

Widespread indifference to the outcome of the presidential election has been acknowledged by the mass media. The media has also made much of polls indicating that the Dem-Rep candidates are running neck-to-neck among those polled and expected to cast ballots on Election Day. Not much has been made of the fact that the November turnout is likely to be as small as it was four years ago. Indeed, proportional participation in presidential elections has been in steady decline for decades and there is nothing to suggest that the trend will be broken this year.

The widespread feeling that the Democratic and Republican parties are virtually identical and that neither has anything to offer the working class is nothing new. That perception is correct, of course, but that is not the same as saying that there is widespread indifference to all the social problems that capitalism creates.

Indeed, the feel-good campaigns being conducted by the Democratic and Republican parties were an open invitation for someone to peel back the veneer and to expose some of the sores that capitalism's two major parties and their cheering sections in the mass media have methodically skimmed over or concealed.

In that regard, it may be said that Ralph Nader, the Green Party candidate, has done a better job of identifying the problems that face the country than either of the major party candidates. He also received some unexpected publicity when he was forcibly ejected from one of the Bush-Gore debates by private security guards.

That publicity and the concern the

Gore campaign has expressed that Nader's candidacy might garner just enough support to allow George Bush to win the election have forced the Democrats to wage their campaign on two fronts. The media that afforded the Nader campaign scant publicity to that point suddenly found reason to give it more—not to promote it, but to provide the Gore campaign with opportunities to arouse fear among would-be Green Party supporters that a vote for Nader was a vote for Bush. However, that could hardly be expected to arouse a stir among the indifferent millions who cannot distinguish between the two major party rivals.

In his acceptance speech at the Green Party convention last June, Nader identified a litany of social ailments that have become the rallying cries of his campaign. That list of social, economic and environmental problems largely duplicates the list of social ailments similar reformers and reform movements have identified and been adding to for the last hundred years.

Nader's list attests to something much more fundamental than what he calls “corporate greed.” It attests to the failure of reformism and provides overwhelming evidence that the SLP was right to insist (as it still insists) that reforming capitalism was impossible. It still is impossible, not because the capitalist class that owns and controls the corporations is greedy, but because the economic laws by which the system operates make them greedy.

Gore and Bush on the one hand, and Ralph Nader on the other hand, may be described as the “plutogogues and the demagogues” of the 2000 presidential election campaign. Daniel De Leon distinguished the terms when he wrote:

“He who tickles the vanities and promotes the undigested aspirations of unthinking masses is, no doubt, a wretch. The term ‘demagogue’ has been applied to him from time immemorial. He is a disturber, not of the public peace only, he is a disturber of the public mind, and, thereby renders public peace precarious.

“Unspeakably vile though the demagogue be, his counterpart is still viler. That counterpart is the plutogogue.

“The plutogogue must square himself with the plutocrat. Plutocracy is crime legalized by itself. The plutogogue's mission is to exalt the plutocracy. Not a vice of the plutocrat but the plutogogue will extenuate, if not defend. And he goes further. The sins of plutocracy are raised by him into virtues.

* * * * *

“The demagogue is bad enough. But he, at least, puts his finger upon a wrong. The plutogogue is a promoter of wrong, an ulcer upon the face of the earth.”

Gore and Bush rank as “plutogogues,” not only because they fail to address the real problems confronting the American working class, but because they unabashedly minimize or ignore the existence of those problems. Nader is the demagogue of the 2000 campaign because, while identifying many of those problems, he is either unaware of or has chosen to turn his back on their source. Nader may deserve credit for identifying some of the wrongs that capitalism commits, but he misidentifies their source and has no viable solution to offer.

Nader's warmed-over “people power” rhetoric suggests that the political state can be rescued from the clutches

(Continued on page 6)

Escalation of Middle East Conflict Threatens U.S. Interests

By Ken Boettcher

Last month's violent Palestinian protests against Israeli occupation, and the ruthless Israeli efforts to suppress them, focused attention on one of the world's most volatile and strategically important areas.

The intensified conflict between Palestinians and Israelis attests to the intractability of discord in the Middle East and its continuing potential to ignite a much larger conflagration.

For the United States and other capitalist powers, particularly Western Europe and Japan, the issue is a “stable” Middle East that will continue pumping oil for international capitalism. A Brookings Institution fellow, writing for the Perspective section in the *San Jose Mercury News*, underscored this point.

“The aim of U.S. diplomacy,” he wrote, “should be to avert a disaster for

Arabs and Israelis—and for Americans.

“And don't kid yourself: The consequence of escalation will be disastrous for all sides. This is no longer only about peacemaking, or about possible civil war in Israel, or even about saving Arabs and Israelis from themselves. It is also about protecting vital American interests, including a secure oil supply at a reasonable price. It is now a serious national security crisis here, and it could affect the world economy.”

While attempting to manipulate Israeli-Palestinian tensions to its own imperialist interests in the Middle East, the United States continues to give Israel a virtual blank check for its military machine, with little reproach for its conduct. In exchange, Israel generally serves U.S. capitalist interests in the region.

With these and other ruling-class machinations, developments are once

again affirming what the Socialist Labor Party has contended before about the Middle East conflicts: more than anywhere else in the world, they demonstrate that stable peace is impossible until the world class struggle is resolved.

If there is one thing that is clear about the Middle East it is this: until international working-class solidarity becomes a dominant factor and the working classes in the imperialist nations take power into their own hands to end the imperialistic drive itself, the conflicts consuming the Middle East will defy resolution.

Without socialist revolution in the imperialist nations—a revolution that would put a speedy end to economic rivalries and nationalistic conflicts—workers in the Middle East cannot be expected to solve, on their own, the conflicts that imperialism and their own ruling classes have embroiled them in.

Canadian Auto Workers Union, Labor Federation May Split

By Ken Boettcher

The Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) union and the Canadian Labor Congress (CLC) are in a power struggle that may result in a split in what passes for the labor movement in Canada. According to *The New York Times*, Canadian capitalists see the burgeoning struggle "as a barometer of labor militancy in Canada," and they "are watching closely."

In July, the 2.4 million-member CLC imposed sanctions on the 220,000-member CAW. The sanctions left the CAW with neither voice nor vote at the CLC's congress this year.

The CLC imposed its sanctions in response to CLC findings that the CAW had raided locals of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). The CAW says SEIU members approached it, seeking more militant representation than that provided by the U.S.-based SEIU. The CAW's executive board passed a resolution, also in July, "to explore the creation of an alternative" to the CLC. It wants a federation or coalition of Canadian unions that would not be controlled by "foreign" unions and that would be more "militant."

At stake in the immediate struggle are about 30,000 SEIU members—about a third of the union's membership—who reportedly want to leave the SEIU and join

the CAW. To date, 6,600 have changed unions, among them members of one local the SEIU seized. The SEIU fired its staff and sued local chieftains, whom they accused of turning over to the CAW the local's membership lists, destroying records and illegally transferring \$1 million of SEIU funds to CAW accounts. A court ordered the return of the funds, and the CAW complied.

Back in 1985, when the CAW first split from the U.S.-based United Auto Workers—ostensibly because the UAW wasn't "militant" enough—some auto capitalists expressed concern. Robert White, then chieftain of the Canadian division of the UAW, reassured the auto capitalists. The split, said White, "shouldn't upset in any way our [the proposed CAW's] relationship with the auto companies."

In short, White wanted capitalists to know that regardless of the words he spoke, his wink would mean business as usual. The union would continue to act as a broker for the labor power of its workers, cajoling capitalists to give a better deal than formerly, and training workers never to ask for more.

The intervening years buttressed White's point. The CAW increased its membership by 80 percent—but more growth has been from raiding unions organized in other industries than from real organiz-

ing. Japanese auto plants in Canada have not been unionized. Magna International Inc., the country's biggest parts supplier, has not been unionized. U.S. auto capitalists are building more cars in Canada than ever before, but with fewer workers. More than 60 percent of the union's members now come from other industries.

For the workers involved in the present struggle, it is important to realize that there is no guarantee that a more "militant" variety of business unionism will gain them even a few more crumbs. In an era of global capital, capitalists increasingly rely on double sourcing of parts and can readily shift production from country to country to negate the effects of militancy by workers in any given country.

Procapitalist unions of any variety have no interest in organizing or emancipating workers as a class from capitalism. They are interested in recruiting new members only to the extent needed to stay in the business of packaging and selling labor power and labor peace to the capitalist class and state. They are primarily interested in the membership as mere providers of dues, the better to fatten their salaries and expense accounts. Union bureaucrats may sing "solidarity forever" in their rallies, but they will wage war on each other to enhance their own power and privileges.

Another City Adopts 'Living Wage' Rule

Santa Cruz, Calif., is the latest city to adopt a "living wage" ordinance. Similar ordinances have been adopted by about 60 other cities.

The Santa Cruz ordinance applies to all full-time city workers. It also requires all companies doing business with the city's government to pay their workers at least \$11 an hour when they provide health benefits, or \$12 an hour when they do not.

This is the highest "living wage" adopted to date by any city having a similar ordinance. Chicago, for example, requires companies doing business with the city to pay a minimum of \$7.60 an hour, while Cambridge, Mass., sets the minimum at \$10 an hour.

According to Reuters, "The [living wage] issue has taken on particular political urgency in California, where the cost of living has jumped sharply with the state's economic resurgence."

That "resurgence" is the result of the labor of the state's working class. The "living wage" ordinance attests to the fact that many workers have gained very little in exchange for their surging productivity.

Are "living wage" ordinances such as the one adopted by Santa Cruz a good thing? Yes—and no!

When the price of labor tends to fall below what is required to buy the necessities of life workers are compelled to struggle for higher wages, i.e., for a "living wage." There is nothing "wrong" with this

except that such demands are too modest, and the workers who make them are often imbued with the economic superstitions implanted by capitalism.

The demand for a living wage is wrong when it is held up to workers as the end-all and be-all of their aspirations. Where capitalists and their "labor unions" succeed in convincing the workers that a "living wage" should be their goal, then, obviously, the system of class rule and class privilege is safe. It would be the same as though African-American slaves in the 19th century had limited their aspirations to securing sufficient nourishment to keep themselves in working condition. Indeed, the second president of the United States, John Adams, affirmed that, "When the workers are paid in return for their labor only as much money as will buy the necessities of life, *their condition is identical with that of the slave.*"

Workers should understand that the "living wage" concept—a capitalist concept—is not in conflict with a falling standard of living. As the standard of life is forced down, the "living wage" level falls accordingly. "Living wage" and "a fair day's wage for a fair day's work" mean the same thing. In the language of political economy, they mean "the sum required to procure to the laborer the means of existence necessary, according to the standard of life of his

station and country, to keep himself in working order and to propagate his race." (Engels)

The African-American chattel slaves were just as much slaves whether they were well or poorly fed. The same principle holds true for capitalism's wage slaves. As Frederick Engels pointed out, "It is not the highness or lowness of wages which constitutes the economical degradation of the working class; this degradation is comprised in the fact that, instead of receiving for its labor the full produce of this labor, the working class has to be satisfied with a portion of its own produce called wages. The capitalist pockets the whole produce (paying the laborer out of it) because he is the owner of the means of labor. And, therefore, there is no real redemption for the working class until it becomes owner of all the means of work—land, raw material, machinery, etc.—and thereby also the owner of *the whole of the produce of its own labor.*"

The "living wage" means precisely that—a wage sufficient to keep workers in condition to be exploited. To that extent it is a necessity for capitalists and their political state, for without workers nothing could be done. It is also an insult to workers these days when an abundance can be produced for everyone.

Field Reports

On Sept. 22, Comrade Jack Blessington and I went to Washington, D.C., to participate in a demonstration against the naval bombardment of Vieques. About 3,000 people participated. They came from Philadelphia, New York, Chicago and other cities, and from Puerto Rico.

The demonstrators chanted slogans against the U.S. occupation of Puerto Rico and the bombing of Vieques. Police arrested 73 demonstrators who committed acts of civil disobedience in front of the White House.

We were able to distribute about 300 SLP leaflets about the bombing of Vieques. Many demonstrators and a number of on-lookers wanted our leaflets. Some even came to us to ask for one. Unfortunately, we only had the 300, and they were distributed in less than an hour.

Luis Figueroa
Section Philadelphia

Do You Belong?

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

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

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

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By Robert Bills

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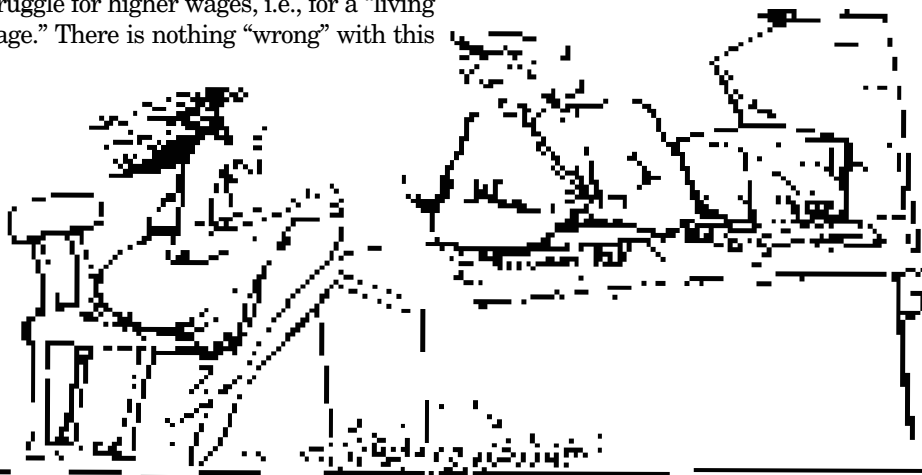
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Carol Simpson

Biotech Rush to Profit Threatens Public Health

By Bruce Cozzini

Biotechnology, spurred on by the mapping of the human genome this year, has experienced tremendous growth. The U.S. Patent Office, according to the *Boston Globe*, says that "the number of biotech applications nationally increased by 15 percent last year to more than 20,000," and "the number is expected to jump by another 25 percent this year."

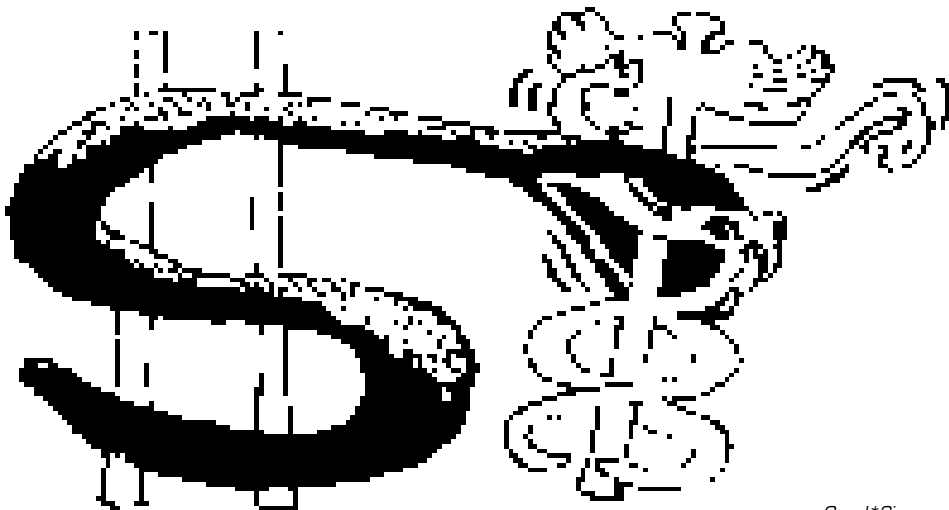
The *Globe* reported that over "1,300 companies are now competing to identify genes and proteins, treat cancer and other diseases, and develop ways to speed that research." A single company, Millennium Pharmaceuticals of Cambridge, Mass., "has a staggering 1,500 patent applications pending at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office," the Boston newspaper added.

Whatever promise biotechnology may hold for producing cures for a myriad of diseases—and scientists are far from unanimous in their opinions—that potential is being thwarted by the drug industry's need for profit. Ironically, the very rush to patent genes may impede the research that might lead to new drugs or treatments that would prove, or disprove, that potential. Profit-driven research not only subverts scientific inquiry and reporting, it fragments that research by establishing petty monopolies over isolated areas of research and discovery.

While patents may lead "venture capitalists" to fund research, patents also block research by others on patented genes or processes. Patent requirements state that inventions must be new and have "specific, substantial and credible" uses. However, some gene patents allowed companies to lay claim to future uses of which they were not aware when the patents were granted. The *Globe* comments that Dr. Aubrey Milunsky, director of the Center for Human Genetics at the Boston University School of Medicine, is concerned that "companies like Celera Genomics Corp., which recently decoded the human genome, want to patent genes without knowing much about them."

"By doing so," Milunsky says, "they would ultimately exclude someone else from working on that gene."

The search for profit does more than impede scientific discovery. It corrupts the process of medical research and puts lives in danger.



Carol Simpson

At a three-day symposium of pioneering genetic researchers at the Asilomar conference center in Pacific Grove, Calif., last February, participants expressed concern that pressures on researchers and companies to earn profits were causing biased reporting of research and undermining traditions of scientific integrity. Dr. Donald S. Frederickson, former director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), said:

"Morality has been soiled. Entrepreneurs are repressing any information that suggests an unfavorable outcome as 'proprietary'—and keep it secret."

The event that epitomized this concern was the September 1999 death of an 18-year-old boy at Pennsylvania State University. The boy died after an experimental gene therapy treatment. The FDA suspended the Penn State program because researchers there failed to report two earlier serious reactions to the treatment.

After the Penn State incident medical centers reported 691 instances of serious adverse effects from gene therapy experi-

ments. Of these, 652 were reported late. Some previously unreported deaths remained unexplained, suggesting the possibility that the Pennsylvania boy was not the first victim of gene therapy experiments. Despite these incidents, the Biotechnology Industry Organization is seeking regulatory changes that could decrease disclosure of "proprietary" adverse events.

The Penn State case is one example of financial interests influencing the course of research. After the boy's death the Associated Press reported that a company founded by the principal scientist in the case, Dr. James Wilson, had funded part of the Penn State study. The company, Genovo Inc., was sold to a larger company, netting Wilson a reported \$13.5 million in stock.

This is not an isolated instance. The AP article also reported on a NIH conference where speakers said that researchers who have a financial interest in drug companies may bias medical findings and put patients at risk. The magnitude of the problem was stated by Dr. Thomas

Bodenheimer, a professor at the University of California, San Francisco. He said that financial conflict of interest in research can "impact the practice of tens of thousands of physicians" who will use the suspect research in treating millions of patients.

Bodenheimer noted that most drug trials are paid for by drug companies, creating a risk of bias and inaccurate results. As an example, Bodenheimer cited an analysis of 70 studies on the safety of a heart drug in which 96 percent of authors with drug company ties found the drug to be safe, whereas only 37 percent of experts without drug company connections said the drug was safe. Also, an analysis of company-funded studies published in peer-reviewed journals found that results favored the company's product 98 percent of the time.

Bodenheimer also noted other ways in which conflict of interest could affect research. Private doctors who are paid \$1,000 to \$5,000 per patient recruited for a drug trial may enroll patients who don't belong in the trial or who don't even have the disease being studied. In other cases, cancer drug trials exclude older people to make it appear that a drug is more effective than it actually is. "Up to 75 percent of people recruited for cancer studies are younger than 65 because older people respond more poorly to chemotherapy, though 63 percent of cancer patients in the United States are over 65," the AP article said. Lastly, drug companies, which own the data, may manipulate its publication for their own benefit.

Clearly, as long as research is in the hands of companies whose purpose is making profits rather than healing the sick, the potential benefits of research will not be realized. At both the Asilomar and NIH conferences, scientists expressed moral indignation at the tendency of commerce to subvert and pervert science, but a moral reevaluation of science will have little effect since the morality of capitalism places profits above all else.

Day Laborers Victimized

By B.G.

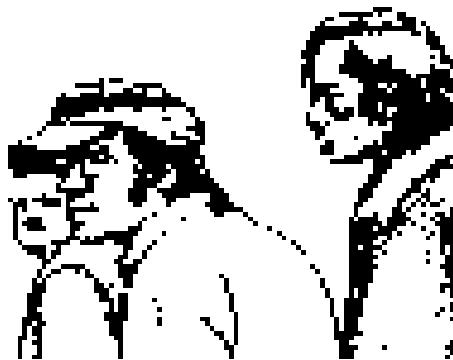
False perceptions and misinformation linking immigrant workers to an imaginary crime wave in New York's Suffolk County show how insecure feelings about petty property interests can dehumanize presumably intelligent people and reduce them into irrational victims of unfounded prejudices.

Mexican immigrants in Farmingville, a village of 15,000 in western Suffolk County, account for about 10 percent of the total population. Most are day laborers who must gather before dawn on certain roads to wait for contractors who come by and hire them for such short-term jobs as landscaping, roofing and general construction labor. These men often wait two hours or more hoping for employment. Their presence apparently aroused resentment among other village residents.

Many citizens reportedly believe the immigrant workers are responsible for a crime wave in the town of Brookhaven, in which Farmingville is located. Some village residents want to sue the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to force it to move against alleged illegal immigrants in the county. Others would go further.

"Some residents, who are members of Sachem Quality of Life, are demanding that the INS deport the men—even if bringing in the army and tanks is necessary." (*Newsday*, Sept. 1)

New York Times reporter Charlie LeDuff claims that Mexican immigrants in the area are "drawn by wages that can top \$15 an hour" and are "brought into the village by smugglers at a cost of \$2,000."



Rachel Burger/cpf

The immigrant men, who generally come without families, often rent a single family house into which 20 or 30 will move. This year, the town of Brookhaven passed a law limiting the number of unrelated people who may live in a rental house. At least one landlord found a way to beat the fines. He raised the rental \$50 for each of his 30 tenants in one house to cover the expected expense.

At the end of August, the Suffolk County legislature debated a bill to sue the INS to force it to enforce immigration laws in the county. The legislative hearing room was crowded with citizens determined to improve "the quality of life" in their county by ridding the area of immigrant workers. A large number of the latter were also present, holding up signs saying "Stop the Hate," "We Cut Your Grass" and "We Are All Immigrants." In the lobby, the laborers held up a banner imitating the legend inscribed at the base of the Statue of Liberty: "We are your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free. Let us work."

"We are not here to make crime," one Mexican worker said. "We are here be-

cause we have money problems at home. It would be nice to be brothers, but we have so many problems here."

The legislature had requested the Suffolk County police commissioner and the chief of department to come and speak to them about the charge by one legislator that immigrants were responsible for a "spate" of crimes in Farmingville.

Both police officials brought in to speak gave evidence to the contrary. The total number of arrests in Farmingville in 1995 was 463, but only 40 of those were noncitizens. The number of immigrant arrests since then is dwarfed by the total arrest record of citizens in Farmingville. In 1999, 436 people were arrested in the village, but only 28 were noncitizens. As of Aug. 28, only 19 noncitizens had been arrested compared with 204 citizens. "We do not have...a crime wave in Farmingville," said the police commissioner.

A county legislator commented, "There is no crime wave, period. The police statistics just don't bear it out....I see some fear of people who are different than the established population in the area."

What accounts for this fear? *Newsday* touched the nerve in passing when reporting that, apart from the nonexistent increase in crime, "decreased property values" were high among the concerns of those who not only want the INS to move in, but would have their own town occupied by the army.

Apparently the testimony disproving the "crime wave" assertions had only a limited effect. After a hot debate, the resolution demanding INS action was voted down 9 to 8, with one abstention.

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The Yugoslav Struggle

Yugoslavian workers have tossed out an autocrat, but the road ahead is fraught with dangers for their aspirations toward peace and economic security.

Leaders of nations in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Clinton administration foremost among them, lost no time in hailing the downfall of the corrupt and brutal regime of Slobodan Milosevic. Vojislav Kostunica, of the Democratic Opposition of Serbia, has been inaugurated as president of Yugoslavia and a transitional government is now in place in Serbia until parliamentary elections are held on Dec. 23. Milosevic's party is sharing power in that transitional government, but its power appears broken.

President Clinton called Milosevic's defeat "a big blow for freedom." However, when an American president talks about "freedom," workers everywhere should recognize that what is meant is not necessarily freedom for workers—especially not freedom from economic necessity and want—but rather the freedom for capital to more completely dominate their lives. That is what Western capitalism—in the European Union and the United States alike—hopes is now on the fast track in Yugoslavia.

The profit interests of U.S.-European capital crave a stable central Europe. The opening up of Yugoslavia to Western capital means access to a large pool of reasonably skilled labor at wages lower than those in their domestic labor markets—unemployment in Serbia is reportedly over 30 percent. It means access to Yugoslavia's natural resources and industrial base—at least that portion that can be competitive in today's world market. Above all else in the oil-dominated economies of today it means the potential for greater control

over the territory needed to pipe oil from the Caspian Sea region into Europe.

To those ends, world leaders announced they would lift economic sanctions against Yugoslavia when Milosevic resigned. But the aid that will pour into Serbia from Western capitalist sources will come with strings attached. As Dr. Marjorie Cohn, a professor at Thomas Jefferson School of Law in San Diego, put it, "Mr. Kostunica's government would be compelled by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and NATO allies to end price controls and other welfare programs." According to Cohn, "Any future reconstruction of bombing damage will have to go to contractors from NATO countries..."

In short, the "aid" planned for Yugoslavia is the same as that meted out to other former satellites of the former Soviet Union. The hope of the "aid"-givers is that the local ruling class will be sufficiently strengthened by the funds to consolidate its rule and hold workers in check—i.e., subjugated to the profit interests of both the imperialists and domestic capitalists.

Accordingly, the "aid" itself holds the potential to cut short Western capitalist jubilation over the downfall of Milosevic. Yugoslav workers went through hell as the federation was torn asunder by nationalism, war and ruling-class pillage under Milosevic's regime. Hundreds of thousands lost their jobs as state factories were sold or otherwise looted by Milosevic and friends. The promise of more suffering under the thumb of the same imperialists who bombed them senseless because of Milosevic's transgressions against Western capital may bring Yugoslav workers back into the streets.

—K.B.

Israel and Palestine

Since Israel took over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967, Israeli settlers have smashed much Palestinian-owned agriculture and commerce, making the occupied territories economically dependent upon Israel to a large extent. As a result, the supply of Palestinian wage labor swelled, with workers essentially coerced into being exploited by Israeli capitalists at cheap wage rates. Other Palestinians work for Israeli capitalists in the territories at even lower wage rates, or work in Palestinian-owned textile sweatshops that subcontract with Israeli firms.

Due to their enforced dependence upon Israel, these occupied territories are also a huge export market for Israeli products.

In short, Israel has a colonial relationship with the occupied territories. But its dependence upon Palestinian labor from the West Bank and Gaza territories, as well as Palestinian labor within Israel, has made the Israeli capitalist class somewhat vulnerable to organized labor action by Palestinians. Periodic general strikes, supplemented by boycotts, have shown their potential as a weapon in the Palestinian struggle.

A recent *Newsweek* interview with Ariel Sharon of Israel's Likud Party makes it clear that whatever tentative new peace is negotiated—if there is to be peace at all—must include continued Israeli domi-

nance over the Palestinian economy. In any new agreement, Sharon said, "there should be understandings on the economy. If they decide to make their area a free-trade zone, they could destroy us."

The impetus to further conflict may now be more than any party to the dispute can overcome. As *The New York Times* reported, "A leader of Yasir Arafat's Fatah movement who has organized the biggest West Bank street protests vowed ...to continue confrontations with Israeli forces until they withdraw from the entire West Bank and Gaza Strip, as they did from Lebanon earlier this year." Perhaps smelling victory on the question of Palestinian statehood, a summit of Arab leaders in Cairo last month produced offers of significant aid from Arab states to the PLO.

For its part, Israel has at this writing withdrawn from peace talks and is reportedly making plans to essentially cordon off—build a new "Berlin Wall," if you will, around—Jewish settlements and borders in the event that Palestinian statehood is proclaimed.

With their economies so interdependent, Palestinian leaders "reacted with horror" to the Israeli plans, according to the *Times*. "It's a declaration of war," said Yasir Abed Rabbo, the PLO's information minister.

There could hardly be a more ominous statement on what lays ahead. —K.B.

A De Leon Editorial

Third Parties

"Third parties" have played a major role in American history whenever they reflected the interests of the progressive class. The progressive class today is the working class—and its interests are reflected by the SLP.

A Popular Superstition

(*The People*, Dec. 25, 1892)

Upon being asked last week, whether a third party was to come up, Sen. John Sherman promptly and emphatically answered: "No, this country cannot afford more than two parties."

An expression of this sort would not be surprising from people of less intelligence and information than Sen. Sherman; indeed, it is a common one on the lips of a large number of ignoramuses, who inflict their opinions upon a patient public. That this opinion should be shared by Sen. Sherman shows, however, the power of popular superstitions, and goes far to confirm the suspicion that even the ablest among the plutocratic politicians is an intellectual bankrupt.

The political history of our own country, as much as, if not more so than, that of any other, establishes the maxim that progress is due wholly to third parties and that, not only has this country ample room for such, but that its people have periodically raised such third parties into power; crowded both the old parties, in existence at any such time, out of the way; annihilated one of them; and maintained the quondam third party in power until it had run its course, and a new broom, representing an advanced idea, became necessary, when the old process would be renewed—each time despite the protests of the then existing parties that the country had no room for more than two parties. The most amusing feature of this recurring phenomenon is that the party most emphatic in the assertion of this dogma is always that one which itself rose from the "third party" stage to that of "one of the two great parties."

Sen. Sherman illustrates the truth of this statement. Thirty-seven years ago there was no Republican Party in exist-

tence in the United States. The Democratic and the Whig parties then divided, in the main, the political convictions of the country. The question of chattel slavery had forced itself forward. The Democratic Party, true to its moss-back, reactionary instincts, upheld slavery, the Whig Party did not dare to grapple with, and dodged the problem. The aspirations of the antislavery movement had to find expression in a new, third, political party; and in that way, and for that reason was the Republican Party born. It sprang up as a third party, in the teeth of the declarations of the Whigs—who had similarly sprung up before—that there was no room in the country for more than two parties; it put a quietus on the Whig [Party]; overthrew the Democratic Party; came into power, and there developed the class characteristics of the class that had called it into being—the capitalist class: it wiped out chattel slavery, the last vestige of feudalism in America, and introduced "free competition" among the working class.

The present situation is identical in all essential respects with that under which the Republican Party was born as a third party, destined to make an epoch in the history of the country. Not only had this country room for a "third party" it is now again ripe for one. All the signs of the times point positively to that conclusion. Indeed, that third party is now forming despite the chestnut protests from the defunct Republicans that there is no room for it. Its motto is "The Abolition of Wage Slavery—The Cooperative Commonwealth." Its victory is assured; as surely as, 31 years ago, the Republican banner was raised over the ruins of the Whig and the Democratic parties; or, some 20 years before, the Whig banner

(Continued on page 6)

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.

On the Web

The De Leon-Harriman Debate

One of the significant debates in American labor history took place in the Grand Opera House at New Haven, Conn., 100 years ago Nov. 25. The protagonists were the editor of the *Daily People*, Daniel De Leon, and a spokesman for the newly formed Social Democratic Party (later the Socialist Party), Job Harriman. The question of the debate as it was formally phrased was:

“Resolved, that the tactics of the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance against the pure and simple trade union is for the benefit of the working class and for the promotion of socialism in America.”

The De Leon-Harriman debate was stenographically recorded and printed in the *Daily People* immediately after the event. Within a month the SLP issued the text as a pamphlet. The pamphlet has been out of print for decades. Recently, however, the original text was added to the SLP's Web site (www.slp.org).

Tactics of the ST&LA

The ST&LA was a militant socialist union that openly proclaimed its ultimate goal to be socialism. Its tactics against the “pure and simple”^{*} unions (the American Federation of Labor and kindred unions) were to expose them relentlessly as fakes and frauds that committed organized scabbery, divided the workers into competing crafts and were run by the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class. Its tactics were also to organize the workers who were tired of being rooked and misled by the labor fakers, as well as the unorganized workers, into its own militant ranks.

“The trade union policy of the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance involves the trade union policy of the Socialists organized in the Socialist Labor Party,” De Leon explained. “That policy was not evolved out of the inner consciousness of any one man or set of men. It is a policy that is based upon certain facts, certain historic facts, certain undeniable facts, and established upon conclusions that are inescapable.”

Opposed to the trade union policy of the ST&LA, and of the SLP, were the labor leaders and their political allies among the reformists and opportunists in the Social Democratic Party. Their spokesman, Job Harriman, upheld the view that ST&LA activity was injurious to the growth of socialism and that the correct tactics were to get into the “pure and simple” unions and “bore from within.”

Step to Industrial Union Concept

This brief review will deal mainly with De Leon's first presentation. Harriman's contribution is hardly worth mentioning except insofar as it reflected the crude cunning and mental crookedness of the protagonist of “boring from within.” He made little or no effort to argue principles or to meet the points raised by his Marxist adversary. Instead he sought to sidetrack the whole debate into a specific dispute in which the issues were complicated and clouded by misunderstanding.

De Leon's speech of Nov. 25, 1900, was not the kind of speech he would have made four or five years later. The concept of the Socialist Industrial Union as



De Leon at his desk.

a mighty proletarian power, capable both of enforcing the socialist ballot and constituting the framework of the Industrial Republic of Socialism, had not yet reached maturity in De Leon's mind in 1900. The ST&LA, therefore, represented an important step toward a mighty idea, but it was not the final one. Its role was frankly to win for the workers “temporary relief” in the form of economic gains and at the same time to win them over to the socialist cause.

Penalty for Nonclassconsciousness

Only a trade union that recognizes the class struggle can keep free of the “entanglements that the conflicting interests of their competing employers might bring them into....A workingmen's organization that is not classconscious, a workingmen's organization that imagines that the interests of the capitalist class and the interests of the working class are one and the same—such an organization and such workingmen are simply appendages to the capitalist class, and will be drawn into the vortex of competing capitalist conflicts.”

De Leon then related the actual experience of the SLP after it had been reorganized on its present Marxist basis in 1890. There were economic organizations of workingmen in 1890, but “instead of being classconscious, they built upon the principle of the brotherhood of the workman and the capitalist....these trade

unions, guided by a natural instinct, and yet by an untutored instinct, moved in a peculiar way. The giant was blind. He struck in the air, and sometimes his blows fell upon individual capitalists. The capitalist class then proceeded to endeavor to control the trade union [through its labor lieutenants, the labor fakers], and a struggle took place within the unions.”

The upshot was that the Socialists were eventually beaten and the trade unions, completely under the domination of the labor fakers, became the chief means for taming the workers to accept capitalist conditions.

“Such a trade union movement, whatever it was,” De Leon said, “was no longer a movement of the working class, any more than an army that consists of workingmen is a workingmen's army if it is manned and officered by representatives of the capitalist class.”

Socialists Try ‘Boring From Within’

At this point the Socialists adopted the strategy of “boring from within.” “We tried it,” De Leon said. “We went into the unions and bored from within. We tried to teach the class struggle. One division, in which I was active myself, was in the Knights of Labor. We struggled and we struggled with the labor lieutenants of the capitalists; it came to hand-to-hand encounters; finally, we landed on the outside.”

But there was another division of the “borers from within” that met with a different fate. These were the “Socialists” for whom the class struggle was unimportant or nonexistent. They started off aggressively, but soon they found it more expedient to soft-pedal socialism and even to go along with Republican heelers. De Leon cited specific instances to substantiate his point. He said:

“‘Boring from within’ resolved itself, accordingly, into this: either you must bore to a purpose, and then you land quickly on the outside; or you don't land on the outside, but then you knuckle under, a silent supporter of the felonies committed by the labor lieutenants of capitalism. Such was the experience.”

De Leon's Confidence in the Workers

De Leon's confidence in the workers, once they were enlightened as to their class interests was, like that of Karl Marx, boundless. He believed that “the

correct course, the integrity, the purity of the Alliance shine across all the clouds of calumny that are being hurled against it.” He stressed that, unlike the capitalist-controlled unions, the ST&LA stood by the workers in all their struggles against their exploiters, regardless of whether the workers involved were members of the Alliance or of a “pure and simple” union. “If there is a real conflict, the Alliance stands by those men, regardless of the organization, as it has done in more than one instance.”

Concluding his first presentation, De Leon summed up the theory of the Alliance: “...Boring from within, with the labor faker in possession, is a waste of time, and the only way to do is to stand by the workingmen always; to organize them, enlighten them, and whenever a conflict breaks out in which their brothers are being fooled and used as food for cannon, to have the ST&LA throw itself in the midst of the fray, and sound the note of sense.”

How Militant Socialists ‘Bored’

Among the shallow but specious arguments advanced by Harriman in his presentation was the contention that the SLP had started to “educate” in the unions while it was still too weak. De Leon disposed of the argument neatly, at the same time shedding light on the bona fide attempt to bore from within. In part, he said:

“...We should have waited till we were strong; that is, a man should wait till he can swim before he goes into the water. [Laughter.] Wait till all the men are converted to socialism, then start to educate them!! [Laughter.] We went into those unions and when the labor faker came there with capitalist propositions, we rose and tried to teach the rank and file. The rank and file—not through dishonesty, indeed not—the rank and file could not take our views; didn't dare to take our views, because in most of these unions there is a system of blackmail and browbeating that the labor leaders exercise upon the men. For the sake of keeping their jobs, for the sake of not losing their sick-and-death benefit advantages, the men caved in; and when the labor faker gave the signal, those men voted as the labor faker dictated....”

Time Has Vindicated De Leon's Appraisal

The accuracy of De Leon's appraisal of “boring from within” is certified by the status of the “pure and simple” unions today, in 2000. Today what passes for the “union” movement is still as *dis*-united as ever, with jurisdictional wars and organized scabbery rampant. When on some rare occasion the crafts find it mutually expedient to cooperate and form a “united front” (as in the recent transit workers' strike in Los Angeles), the occasion becomes one for celebration. But once the occasions responsible for such rare phenomena are spent, the entire movement relapses into its ancient state of disorganization. Its ruling motto is as applicable today as it was half a century ago—“Every union for itself and devil take the hindmost.”

The propositions that De Leon established in this debate have not lost their validity with time. His exposition of the hopelessness of converting the faker-run unions into bona fide working-class organs was an essential prerequisite for the full-orbed program of Socialist Industrial Unionism. Only when faith in “boring from within” was dead were the energies of classconscious workers freed for the task of building a union movement based on the class struggle, a union movement capable of enforcing the socialist ballot by taking, holding and operating the industries, in short the Socialist Industrial Union—the workers' power!

25 50 75 100 years ago

Friend of ‘Labor's Friends’

(*Weekly People*, Nov. 4, 1950)

Daniel F. Tobin, president of the Teamsters' union, weeping copiously over the plight of the erstwhile secretary of defense, Louis Johnson, in an editorial in the *International Teamster*, also sheds a few tears for the workers who have been betrayed by their “friends” in Congress.

“...We of labor have gotten something of the same kicking around as Louis Johnson,” Tobin writes. “The only difference is that ours is a thousand times worse because millions of men and women, who are working for a living...have been crucified by many of the men in Washington whom they helped to elect and who were elected on the platform, ‘We are the friends of labor and we will do labor justice.’”

“Those friends whom we helped in their hour of need are making the laws

in Washington and have practically forgotten the people who put them in office. All the progressive [?] laws that were enacted over a period of 14 years have been set aside. We have injunctions against us of every kind....” Etc.

On the same page Tobin urges the workers to “go to the polls” to vote for another batch of capitalist politicians who are running on the platform, “We are the friends of labor and we will do labor justice.”

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^{*}The phrase “pure and simple” originated in the report of Samuel Gompers to the 1892 convention of the AFL. In that report he asserted his conviction that “trade unions pure and simple [i.e., without political ties or aspirations], are the natural organizations of the wage workers to secure their present and practical improvement and to achieve their final emancipation.”

... Campaign

(Continued from page 1)

of corporate power. He asserts—perhaps he believes—that corporations have corrupted the political state and diverted it from its true mission. But the political state is not an institution that can be isolated from the social system that adopts it. Whether the state is openly autocratic or nominally democratic it is, as Karl Marx proclaimed, an instrument of class rule.

Nader does not oppose capitalism, only capitalism as it is. He claims that it can be made to work in the interests of all the people. His pattern for a more humane capitalism is, apparently, cut from the cloth of the European social democratic parties.

“Look at Europe,” he said in his acceptance speech. “During the fifties and sixties, several European countries provided all their citizens with health care coverage, day care and other services for children, labor laws which facilitate the organization of trade unions, a statutory ‘social wage’ for all workers, union and nonunion, providing one-

month paid vacations, retention of pay while caring for sick family members, pensions and other services. In the year 2000 A.D., most workers in our country do not have these basic rights... Western European countries provided for their people 30 to 50 years ago. Why can't we do it now in a period of economic boom? It's possible....”

The underlying premise of the Nader campaign appears to be that the primary beneficiaries of capitalism—the capitalists—have corrupted the system, and that they in turn have corrupted the politicians, thereby reducing the government to paid servants of the “corporate elite.”

In truth it is not the capitalists who have corrupted capitalism, but capitalism that has corrupted its ruling class and the politicians who run the government. Capitalism is corrupting because it is based on a corrupt principle, namely the wages system under which the means of producing wealth become concentrated in the hands of a few by exploiting

the dependence of the many.

What Nader fails to notice when putting forth his list of reforms is that Western Europe, too, has its share of Green parties, all of which are busily occupied in resisting capitalism's efforts to dismantle the reform measures he touted in his acceptance speech. Those measures may be traced to an earlier reform wave, spearheaded by the so-called Social Democratic and Socialist parties of Germany and other countries, all of which have long since betrayed their socialist pretenses and accepted capitalism.

Capitalists own the means of life, the working class does not. Capitalists need workers to carry on production, but because workers have no independent means of supporting themselves they are forced to accept the conditions that capitalists offer. While workers may occasionally force employers to increase their wages or to make other concessions, these are minuscule in proportion to the enormous exploitation that capitalism im-

poses by virtue of its ownership and control of the economy. That ownership is the corrupting factor, and as long as the working class tolerates a system based on that principle it will continue to be exploited.

The Democratic and Republican parties owe their domination of the political state to the ruling class. Reformers such as Nader and his Green Party assert that the evils of capitalism can be lessened by the election of honest officials and the adoption or enforcement of laws designed to curtail the power of corporations. But every worker who stops to think should see through the fiction in a moment. How many “honest politicians” have been elected over the years? How many have promised to introduce legislation or to pursue goals meant to restrain the excesses of capitalism and establish “good government?”

To ask these questions is to answer them. Thousands of such reform-minded politicians have been elected at the local, state and national levels over the years. More than enough of them have come and gone to prove beyond a doubt that reforms serve only to

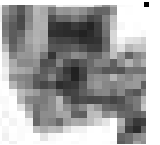
postpone the day when the working class majority finally come to grips with the central problem and decide to rid the country and the world of the capitalist system. Indeed, there is no stronger and no more convincing proof of the truth of this observation than that Nader and others having similar aims are not only still pursuing them, but confess that the problems they point to are worse and more numerous than ever before.

All the social problems that Nader points to—and that Gore and Bush close their eyes to—can be solved. But their solution depends on rooting out their cause, and that is the capitalist system.

The Socialist Industrial Union program offered by the SLP is that solution. Every working man and woman who is concerned for the future, for their own welfare and for the welfare of all coming generations should inform themselves on what the SLP stands for.

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Question Period

Bush and Gore both claim that their tax reduction proposals will benefit workers. Does the SLP agree with either, or does it still hold to its position that taxation and “tax reform” are capitalist issues of no concern to workers?

The SLP agrees with neither. It still holds to its position, and that position is as sound today as it ever was.

We are aware, of course, that workers nominally pay income and other forms of taxes. Ultimately, however, taxes can have no serious or lasting effect on workers' wages or their living standards.

This follows logically from the economic facts. The most important of those facts is that labor power—the ability of workers to put in a productive day's work—is a commodity. Taking into account the ebb and flow of the labor market, its price in the long run corresponds to its value. This Karl Marx demonstrated to be equal to what it costs in socially necessary labor to produce the workers' necessities.

In everyday language, workers normally get a price for their labor power that amounts to a *living wage*. If workers did not receive a living wage—regardless of taxation—they could not produce or perform the services that capitalists hire them to perform. While capitalists are constantly looking for ways and excuses to hold wages down, without a working class physically and mentally fit to produce the capitalist system would soon collapse. Accordingly, as Frederick Engels once explained, “What the worker pays in taxes goes in the long run into the costs of production and must therefore be compensated for by the capitalist.”

Marx and Engels were not alone among the great economists who understood this. In his book, *The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, for example, David Ricardo described all the applied forms of taxation and their effects, including a proposal to tax wages. Some of the thoughts he expressed in his

chapter on “Taxes and Wages” are as logical today as when he wrote them 183 years ago. He wrote:

“Taxes on wages will raise wages, and therefore will diminish the rates of the profits on stock.” “A tax on wages is wholly a tax on profits.” “The ultimate effects of such taxation are precisely the same as those which result from a direct tax on profits.”

Similarly, when the federal government was considering a proposal to collect taxes by way of wage deductions during World War II, the shrewd and highly classconscious L.M. Giannini, then-president of the Bank of America, expressed the following dissent: “...if taxes were taken off the wage or salary earner's compensation at the source, it would not be very long before the employee would be after the employer to restore the amount to him by means of an increase in wages.” (*United States News*, March 20, 1942)

This is precisely what happened. Initially, when the tax was levied, the effect was a wage cut across the board. In the long run, however, the capitalists must pay the workers enough in wages to enable them to keep in condition to repeat the labor process. Hence, with time, and after some strikes and threats of strikes after World War II, take-home wages tended to equal the value of labor power.

In short, workers got a living wage before income taxes were invented and, on the whole, they still get a living wage despite the deductions for income taxes.

This does not mean that workers always succeed in forcing employers “to restore the amount...by means of an increase in wages.” On the contrary, while some workers succeed, many more fail, and the government, which is the executive committee for the whole capitalist class, does everything it can to insure their failure.

What are workers to do about this situation? Are they to allow themselves to be duped into supporting the tax reduction proposals of George W. Bush or Albert Gore? If they do,

the best they can hope for is that Congress will go along with whichever capitalist candidate wins the election to restore a few pennies to their wages, which they may or may not keep, depending on the state of the labor market. Meanwhile the real robbery not only continues unabated, but is actually strengthened through such reforms.

We mean this literally, because every reform measure that diverts workers from the issue of wage slavery tends to strengthen the capitalists' position astride the workers' backs.

The position of the SLP on taxes is the correct one, hence it is the one that best serves the interests of the working class. It is the position that directs the workers' attention to the fact that they are robbed as producers, not as “taxpayers.” Furthermore, it directs their attention to the task at hand, which is to replace outmoded capitalism with the economic democracy of socialism.

Fall Colors

You may soon find yourself tramping through rain, sleet and snow to get your copy of *The People*. Wouldn't it be easier to enter a subscription? And one for a friend? Use the coupon on page 2.

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...De Leon

(Continued from page 4)

was raised over the ruins of the Federalist and Democratic forts; so will the standard of socialism be triumphantly planted in the near future over the ruins of both the Republican and Democratic together with whatever other parties may enter the lists for capital and resist the absolute emancipation of the proletariat.

In the history of “third parties” in this country, the Socialist is the third in the line of succession. But its glory will eclipse the brightest pages of either of its predecessors, whether Whig or Republican.

activities

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

CALIFORNIA San Jose

Discussion Meeting—Section San Francisco Bay Area will hold a discussion meeting on Saturday, Oct. 28, 1:30–4 p.m., at the Empire Branch Library, 491 E. Empire St., San Jose. Moderator: Bruce Cozzini. For more information please call 408-280-7458.

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 [\[spring.com\]\(http://spring.com\). The general public is invited.](http://slp.pdx.home.mind-</p>
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PENNSYLVANIA Philadelphia

Section Philadelphia will hold a pizza party on Sunday, Nov. 19, from 2-5 p.m., at the home of George Taylor, 7467 Rhoads St., Philadelphia. For more information please call 215-673-1170.

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 reds1964@netzero.net or visit the group's Web site at <http://home.beseen.com/politics/houstonslp>.

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The Middle East Conflict

The violence that erupted last month between Israelis and Palestinians could not have come as a complete surprise to those familiar with the history of the conflict over the last 50 years. All the elements that combined to ignite several wars and countless lesser outbreaks of violence and hostility since the United Nations partitioned Palestine to make way for the state of Israel in 1947 are still in place. If there is an exception it is the absence of the Soviet Union—an absence that proves that whatever it may have done to exacerbate tensions in the region during the Cold War era was not a fundamental cause of those tensions.

The imperialist intrusion of the former Soviet Union, and the continuing involvement of the United States in pursuit of its own imperialist interests in the Middle East, turned on their ability to manipulate the rival ambitions of the ruling classes of Israel and the Arab nations. Those rival ambitions, in turn, rest on the ability of the ruling classes of the area to manipulate the suspicions, fears and superstitions of their respective working classes.

Whether the ruling classes of the region eventually work out some accommodation among themselves, or if a bloodier conflict lays ahead, no one can tell. What is certain, however, is that no permanent solution can or will be found as long as the material foundations of the dispute remain. Only the working classes of Israel, Palestine and the rest of the Middle East have the capacity to remove those material conditions and to lay the foundation for a permanent peace.

In the meantime, the American working class is called upon to fill an essential role, not only for the sake of the working classes of the Middle East, but for the sake of the entire world. For the rivalries that exist in the Middle East, and which the ruling class of the United States continues to manipulate in pursuit of its own strategic and oil interests, hold the potential to trigger a much larger and more dangerous conflict.

The following position paper on the Middle East, adopted by the 31st National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party, provides the background American workers need to understand the tensions that continue to keep that area in turmoil and to threaten world peace. —Editor

The problems posed in analyzing the situation in the Middle East from a Marxist point of view derive from the fact that this crisis has its roots deeply embedded in the long history of this region, and in the fact that it is thoroughly complicated by the aggravation of conflicting interests and claims in the area by the pernicious influence of capitalist imperialism. The matter is made far more difficult by the vast amount of propaganda that daily passes for news on this subject generated by the capitalist media. Here we will attempt to present the barest possible factual background requisite for any understanding of this situation before we begin our analysis.

First, we should point out that the geographical area that we are dealing with here is the heartland of the Arab world, which includes the area encompassed by Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, Libya and Saudi Arabia (including Yemen, Oman, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates).

Second, we also point out the fact that what we are discussing here under this very general heading is the Arab-Israeli conflict from the point of view of the interests and outlook of the world proletariat and the proletariat of the area re-



Carol *Simpson

gardless of its ethnic makeup. It should be made abundantly clear at the very outset that the Socialist Labor Party views this entire situation and all of its ramifications solely from the point of view of what is in the best interests of the proletariat in its historical march toward world socialist revolution and that the only identity that we recognize as truly important in this case is that of the class identity of the parties to this conflict.

Historical Background

The Middle East has throughout its long history been the scene of one vicious struggle for control after another because of its strategic value. Consequently, it has repeatedly changed hands from one conqueror to another throughout history.

The Jewish people have had a nexus with this region since Old Testament times, particularly in the area formerly called Palestine and now called Israel. The last substantial settlement of Jews in this area prior to the turn of this century was destroyed and dispersed by the Roman Empire in 70 A.D. In Jewish history this is known as the Diaspora or dispersion of the Jews. While this dispersion was quite comprehensive, it was not complete and substantial numbers of Jews remained in Palestine after this time and throughout history, albeit making up a small percentage of its total population.

Between the second and the seventh centuries, the area of Palestine was at one time part of the Byzantine Empire and at another subjected to temporary control by local princes. At this time the Arabs were an obscure nomadic people concentrated in the area of the Arabian Peninsula.

The rise of Mohammed and Islam during the early seventh century provided the impetus for one of the most phenomenal expansions by military conquest that any people has ever experienced. The Arabs suddenly burst upon the stage of history and quickly conquered the entire region that we are discussing here, including Palestine.

The Arab Empire, which at one time included the entirety of the Middle East as defined above, all of North Africa and all of Spain, and which reached as far as northern France in the west and central Europe in the east with its outposts, disintegrated into a number of petty and great local powers as quickly as it had arisen. During this period the Arabs ruled over a domain that included a number of ethnic, racial, religious and cultural groups, in-

cluding the Jews.

Under Islamic law—there being no civil law of any kind—the religious affiliation of individuals affected, among other things, their tax rate. The lowest rate was paid by members of the Islamic community. The highest rate was paid by the non-Islamic conquered peoples. A median rate was paid by converts to Islam (called Malawi). Consequently, contrary to Christian propaganda, the Islamic rulers had little interest in forcing the conversion of the non-Islamic peoples over which they ruled by conducting a religious persecution of these peoples. Thus, toleration was the norm in the Islamic Empire under both Arab and later Turkish rule. In fact, both of these imperial authorities extended special protective status, called *Dhimmi*, to certain of their subject minority groups and the Jewish community consistently held this privilege.

Consequently, during periods of vicious religious persecution in Europe during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Jews fled to the Mideast in order to escape this menace. Throughout this period of history they represented a flourishing and powerful commercial interest in the Middle East.

After the decline and final collapse of the Arab Empire, this region was subjected to violent turmoil and conquest by various Turkish tribes and European Christian crusader armies. During the period of brief Christian control of Palestine, the Jews of that area were subjected to a vicious religious persecution that was finally terminated by an Arab reconquest of the region. It was the Arab armies that were greeted by the Jewish communities of Palestine as liberators from European persecution.

It should be made clear here that the factual information given thus far is designed to explode the myth propagated by Zionists that the enmity between Islam and Judaism or between Arab and Jew is of ancient origin. This is obviously not in accord with historical fact.

With the final conquest of this entire area by the Ottoman Turkish Empire in 1517 came a period of relative stability and growth for the area in general and the Jewish community of Palestine in particular. From this point on in history and right on through the 19th century, the question of Palestine must be viewed within the context of the overall development of Arab nationalism and the decline of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East.

European Imperialism and Zionism

The imperialist powers of Europe stood in indecision throughout the 19th century waiting for the final collapse of the Ottoman Empire while the Ottomans held on to the bare thread of tenuous life that their empire possessed. Within its borders the various ethnic groups of this polyglot feudal monarchy began to stir under the impetus of fast-rising nationalist aspirations. Arabs, Greeks, Armenians, Kurds and others were all influenced to some degree by this nationalism, the greatest social force of the century.

It was at this time that the Zionist movement was ushered upon the stage of history. It was a movement programmatically founded upon the demand that the imperialist powers of Europe support the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine (see the Basle Program of 1897) with a view toward receiving in return the support and vassalage of this state. The Zionist program and movement were the brain child of a group of Jewish European intellectuals and professionals led by Theodore Herzl. These founding fathers of Zionism were all bourgeois, assimilationist Jews (i.e., those who had achieved a certain degree of ethnic anonymity in the European community) who recognized a vague Jewish cultural identity. At this time the Jewish population of Palestine did not exceed 8 to 10 percent of the total.

It is interesting to note at this point that Zionism did not immediately settle upon a policy of migration to Palestine, despite later protestations to the contrary. Other possible areas were considered by the Zionists as sites for a Jewish state, including Uganda, Argentina, Cyprus and Syria.

As World War I threatened the total destruction of the Ottoman Empire, the British Zionist Organization entered into negotiations with the British government on support for the Jewish settlement of Palestine after the war. In 1917 Lord Balfour, the British foreign secretary, issued the Balfour Declaration, which was a limited guarantee of British support for this venture.

The end of World War I brought the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the ruthless carving up of Arab territories by the British and French imperialists. It appears that while the British government was assuring the Zionists of support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, they were also guaranteeing certain Arab leaders of support for the creation of an independent Arab state in the Middle East and at the very same time entering into an agreement with France and other imperialist powers on the division of the spoils in this region once the war was over.

At the conclusion of the war, the entire Middle East became the preserve of the British and French imperialists. And all of this was cloaked with bourgeois legality by the so-called League of Nations through its mandate system. Palestine became a British mandate and, in keeping with the Balfour Declaration, Jewish immigration under the auspices of the Zionist organization's Jewish Agency was expanded.

What occurred at this point was the progressive displacement of one culture and people, the Arabs, by another totally alien to the region, that of European Jewry. There can be no serious argument on this point, and it speaks volumes on the nature of Zionism as a movement.

It also should be noted here that while it is true that the Jewish Agency purchased large parcels of land in Palestine during this period, in perfect compliance with local laws, it did so from absentee Turkish and Arab landlords who had for years merely collected rent from its Palestinian occupants without ever trying to

(Continued on page 7)