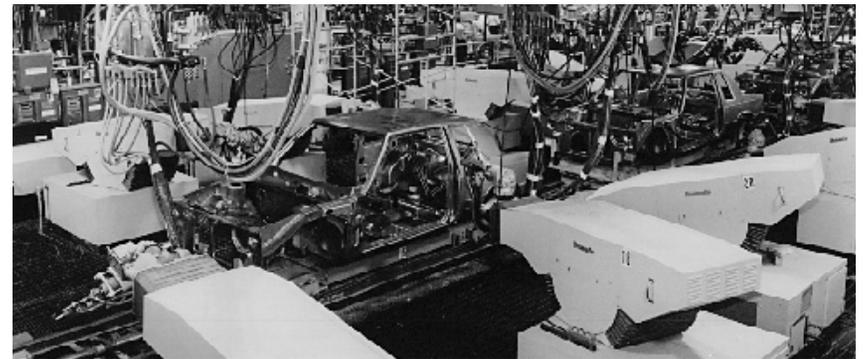


REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE



IN AMERICA

BY NELSON PEERY



RALLY, COMRADES!

THE VOICE OF THE LEAGUE OF REVOLUTIONARIES FOR A NEW AMERICA

Rally: to bring back together and put in a state of order, as retreating troops [to return to attack]

Comrade: a person with whom one is allied in a struggle or cause

Rally, Comrades! is the political paper of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America. If you are one of the thousands of revolutionaries around the country looking for a perspective on the problems we face today, and for a political strategy to achieve the goal of a world free from exploitation and poverty, then *Rally, Comrades!* is for you.

Rally, Comrades! examines and analyzes the real problems of the revolutionary movement, and draws political conclusions for the tasks of revolutionaries at each stage of the revolutionary process. We reach out to revolutionaries wherever they may be to engage in debate and discussion, and to provide a forum for these discussions. *Rally, Comrades!* provides a strategic outlook for revolutionaries by indicating and illuminating the line of march of the revolutionary process.

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Join the League of Revolutionaries for a New America!

Humanity is being reborn in an age of great revolutionary change. The tools exist to produce all that we need for a peaceful, orderly world. For the first time in history, a true flowering of the human intellect and spirit is possible. Our fight is to reorganize society to accomplish these goals. Our vision is of a new, cooperative society of equality, and of a people awakening. The revolution we need is possible. A great moral optimism is beginning to sweep this country as the poor, the oppressed, the decent-hearted, embrace this revolutionary mission and make it a reality.

The League of Revolutionaries for a New America takes as its mission the political awakening of the American people.

We invite all who see that there is a problem and are ready to do something about it to join with us.
For more information, contact us:

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Preface

“There has never been anything like this revolution in the history of the world. There is nothing analogous between it and the American Revolution or the French Revolution. It is unique, colossal. Other revolutions compare with it as asteroids compare with the sun. It is alone of its kind, the first world-revolution in a world whose history is replete with revolutions. And not only this, for it is the first organized movement of men to become a world movement, limited only by the limits of the planet.”

— Jack London from his essay “Revolution”

This pamphlet is about revolution.

It forms part of the foundation for a contemporary theory for American revolution.

This pamphlet was written by Nelson Peery. It is the product of considerable work over the last decade. It is prefaced by numerous articles that have appeared in Rally, Comrades! and the People’s Tribune.

We hope it is a complement to and an explanation of the activity of millions of Americans.

Revolutions come about because of historical economic forces at work. The reasons revolutionaries are created can ultimately be traced to the economy.

Everyone knows the economy is undergoing a profound change. This change is fundamental and irreversible; it is so great it is causing great change in every aspect of life.

The content of the change in the economy is the replacement of human labor by new and ever expanding technologies, the core of which is computer-controlled robotics.

In the history of this planet such fundamental changes in the economy have always forced revolutionary changes in the social system. Economic revolution has always precipitated political revolution.

Social reorganization becomes inevitable because basic necessities of life must be paid for with money. We make money by going to work. If the robots do the work, then how will we get the food, housing and clothing we need?

If there is going to be production without wages, then there must be distribution without money.

On the other hand, today’s world has produced 358 billionaires who have more income than the poorest two and one half billion people.

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Education for a new America

League of Revolutionaries for a New America

How will several hundred ultra rich control the growing billions of poor people? This accounts for a world-wide escalation in force and violence as a primary means of rule.

In the United States alone, one percent of the population owns 40 percent of the wealth and controls 90 percent of the wealth.

The inescapable conclusions for America are:

- That millions are striving to redistribute the wealth of society equitably, as growing numbers denied the right to go to work and earn enough to make ends meet must be taken care of.
- That an elite group of wealthy people must turn to violence and force to control the growing number of poor people.

More than an exposé, more than an explanation, much more than a lecture; this pamphlet is an appeal.

Join with us.

Join with us in a crusade to arm the American people with truth and a vision. The common people in America are getting poorer by the day while the rich get richer. Good times in America hid existing class divisions. Today's hard times have put the question of class at the top of the agenda.

As the ruling elite, the handful of billionaires turn to force and violence to control the rest of us — so must the growing number of restless people of this country, who love it and are willing to fight for it, come together as one. We must guarantee that the changes wracking America result in a *better* life for the common people. We must guarantee the new tools of the high tech revolution reach the potential for common good through common ownership.

Political education is the cornerstone of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America.

The purpose of our political education has been determined by the tasks history has handed to all of us. We have entered an epoch of social revolution brought on by the revolutionary changes in



League school in Los Angeles

technology. Only by engaging in the most sustained and unflinching struggle for the hearts and minds of the American people can we win this social revolution. Our task is to teach the significance.

Our educational programs are organized around teaching about the real world — how electronics is destroying the society we have known, how this is creating a new class, the dangers and opportunities inherent in the increasing polarization of society, why teaching people about the nature of this system is the key task today and what kind of organization we need to accomplish this task.

We seek to challenge people to begin the process of transformation into conscious thinkers who, through the science of society, become aware of themselves as indispensable contributors to history's highest purpose — the liberation of humanity.

If this is the kind education you've been looking for, contact the National Education Committee of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America at 773-486-0028 or

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e-mail LRNAeducation@lrna.org.

Revolutionary Change in America

BY NELSON PEERY

Today, all sectors of the social movement are facing a crisis that is undercutting their traditional roles and threatening to put an end to their existence. Many of these movements seem stuck in the mud of yesteryear and are increasingly unable to respond to the needs of the people, let alone represent the cause or purpose that first brought them into existence.

They must change.

The labor unions can no longer protect their membership from the ravages of downsizing, wage cutting, forced overtime and layoffs. Today, only 22 percent of the working class expresses confidence in the unions. The unions were formed on the basis of struggle for wages and conditions of work. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, they were reorganized on the basis of what became known as “business unionism,” that is, guaranteeing working-class support to the Cold War and, in return, receiving almost automatic wage increases as their share of the expanding economic pie. The Cold War is over. Business unionism is over. The pie is contracting. The government has dumped them. The unions and their membership are adrift in a growing sea of unemployed who are eager to replace them if they dare strike.

They must change.

The organizations that were formed to protect socially oppressed peoples, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, have become a joke among those who have not only NOT advanced, but now are in the ranks of the unemployed and homeless. With integration, the leadership and upper strata of these organizations became more concerned with uplifting the stock market than uplifting the people they were elected to defend. The Million Man March has completely exposed them.

They must change.

The political Left is in disarray. Abandoning the goals they swore they were ready to die for, they are now busy feathering the nest they snubbed a few years back. Those who stayed in the trenches have little

A shorter version of this article was presented at the “Processes of Change” Conference at MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts in November 1995.



Detroit newspaper strikers address the founding convention of the Labor Party in June, 1996. The economic revolution has torn apart the social contract between the worker and the capitalist.

PHOTO/R. LEE

to offer save angry, frustrated condemnation of anyone and everyone, from trade unionist to revolutionary, who might stray into their line of fire.

They must change.

What happened to create such a destruction of the popular movement and to so dramatically slash the living standards and expectations of the people? On the surface, it appears that the sudden emergence of unheard-of wealth resulted in a new and massive poverty. A sudden upsurge in labor productivity resulted in layoffs and permanent unemployment. Scientific breakthroughs in medicine condemned millions to poor health and early death. New instruments of education such as computers and television resulted in a drastic decline in education.

If there is a single word to characterize our time, that word is *change*. If we were to divide the 20th century in half, the first half would include the Mexican revolution, the First World War, the Irish revolution, the Soviet revolution, the rise of fascism, the Great Depression, the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War and the Chinese revolution.

wealth, still believing that wageless production can be circulated with money.

Humanity stands at its historic juncture. Can we who understand today visualize tomorrow with enough clarity to accept the historic responsibilities of visionaires and revolutionaries? I think so. Humanity has never failed to make reality from the possibilities created by each great advance in the means of production. This time, there is no alternative to stepping across that line and seizing tomorrow.

It stands to reason that a society which refuses to feed and shelter women and children will not continue to pay \$25,000 to \$35,000 a year to incarcerate, feed, shelter and care for the health of those who are imprisoned because, in one way or another, they rebelled against the lack of health care, food and shelter. We are already far down the road toward accepting self-supporting concentration camps as an alternative. Alabama's chain gang system violates two international human rights treaties signed by the United States. It hasn't kept the chain gang idea from being considered by several other states.

Modern fascism is more than a political system hostile to democracy. It is more than monopoly capitalism without the restraints of democracy. It is the political attempt to maintain a social system of privilege by force and violence after its corresponding economic base has changed. Privilege rises from scarcity. How is it possible to maintain privileges while the emerging economic structure produces undreamed-of abundance? Today, this social motion is taking the characteristics of a police state, a state wherein the police, charged with protecting the social relations, become a law unto themselves answerable to none. This fascist danger is real and it is near.

Like it or not, we are all being swept into this decisive fight. We cannot defend our country and our future by simply attempting to win back the liberties that are daily taken from us. While fighting every step of the way to maintain the existing liberties, we realize that the economic foundation is changing, and the political superstructure must change with it. We must move forward. There is no rallying point save the actual demands of this new class. We must make society aware of the actual nature of this growing new class. We must make this class aware of itself and its historic mission.

Defending our future depends entirely upon the leadership of an organization of visionaries capable of arousing and enthusing the masses.

Visionaries portray a future made possible through an examination of objective, progressive forces in the real world. Dreamers create impossible images. They are unable to control the forces at play in the real world. Yesterday's dreamers were the destitute, the exploited, the downtrodden. The visionaries were the owners of the new mechanical means of production. Today, that world stands on its feet. The visionaries are those who have been driven from the factory and from society by the more efficient electronic means of production. They visualize their social liberation, the happy, prosperous future possible if only they could collectively own and direct the instruments that are destroying them. The dreamers are those wallowing in increasingly valueless

These great historic events did not bring about such a sense of insecurity and confusion, such a fragmentation of world society as that which has dominated the past 25 years.

If there was a certain sense of stability during the great upheavals of the first half of the century, it was because the essential characteristics of "the system" did not change. The second half of our century has produced far fewer perceptual changes, yet the sense of instability is pervasive and deep.

Something fundamental to our lives, something qualitative is changing, and by doing so, is knocking out the props which supported this underlying sense of stability.

I think everyone agrees that essential characteristics of the system are under fire and being liquidated.

Ever since Heraclitus (Greek philosopher 540-480 B.C.) noted that nothing endures but change, politicians and scientists have been compelled to study change and what it means. In the study of society, they have yet to describe the hows and whys in the process of change.

WHAT WE ARE

The first step in our effort to understand and promote change is to know what we are and why. I'm sure most of us agree that it wasn't up to us. We inherited what we are. If we had our "druthers," I'm sure we'd answer as Abraham Lincoln did when he was accused of being two-faced: "If I had another face, do you think I'd use this one?"

Not only did we inherit a society, but it is what it is for objective reasons beyond any human's control.

Society is built around its means of production. No one plans this — it evolves. What evolved in our country is a society divided between those who own and those who work at the factories and in the fields and who produce the wealth of the country.

A real, if unspoken, contract evolved between the masses who are workers and the few who are the owners. That contract was: "I will buy your ability to work at its market value and pay you in money. You will use this money to buy back enough of your production to feed, house and clothe yourself and your family. In this way, you maintain your ability to work and create a new generation of workers. We can all get along if we maintain this contract."

The essence of the contract is this: Both the capitalist and the worker must sell their commodities and buy each other's commodities. The worker is not a commodity, but what he sells, his ability to work, is. Like a chair or an automobile, his ability to work is worth the cost of its

production. Like the chair or automobile, its cost of production is determined by how much labor went into producing it. The secret of profit is this: Labor produces more than it costs to create. Every worker knows, even if he or she can't explain it, that labor cranks out more value than it consumes.

So a system evolved in which everyone bought and sold. The capitalist buys the elements of production, the worker buys the elements of life. The worker sells his ability to produce, the capitalist sells the production. The producer must consume and the consumer must produce. So long as this interlocked buying and selling is not disrupted, the system works. It works unfairly, but it works.

WHY WE ARE CHANGING

Every employer understands that the surest way to increase profits is to have the worker produce more for the same amount of wages. By the end of the Civil War, labor-saving devices in the form of electrically driven machinery were introduced. It wasn't really labor-saving machinery: it was labor-wasting machinery. Every advance in machinery made the workers more productive and made more of them unemployed and wasted. The mad scramble to increase profit by cutting labor costs increased until around 1975, when machinery that was not labor-saving was introduced. It was labor-replacing.

An economic revolution had begun. The importance of the introduction of labor-replacing machinery such as robots is that it effectively and permanently disrupts that interconnected system of buying and selling. Suddenly, there appeared in the workplace a producer who does not consume. This forces the worker out of the factory. He or she becomes a consumer who does not produce.

The contract is broken, and the society built on that contract begins to disintegrate.

THE SCIENCE OF CHANGE

The most essential and sometimes the most difficult aspect of any inquiry is to accurately describe what we are dealing with. We are dealing with change in society, change in the economy, change in the relations between classes and people. Change is a difficult word. Essentially, change means to put an end to a continuity, to make something different from what it was.

If we agree that change is constant — that the problems we face today are problems of change, then I think the science of change, dialectical materialism, is our best pair of glasses. I do not believe change can be

idly gaining an elementary consciousness of itself and the world. This consciousness is couched in the concepts of rich and poor. It is elementary and shallow, but it is a different conception than white and black.

It is already clear to the more advanced thinkers that as this society is destroyed, a new one must be built. The class struggle is the fight between the old and new classes over how, and in whose interest, the new society will be organized.

WHAT WE ARE CHANGING TO

The social system is crumbling as the electronic revolution destroys its economic underpinning. This underpinning is value created by the expenditure of human labor. In proportion to the use of robotics, the new system becomes more productive and less able to distribute that production. One side of production without wages is greater profit. The other side is the inability of the masses to purchase production they did not participate in. Production without wages is the emerging mode of production, yet the unyielding mode of distribution is with money. It is an impossible contradiction.

Starving in the midst of plenty, an alien within capitalist society, useless to the emerging economy, the modern proletariat has no choice but to turn against the system of capitalist relations. Any child understands that if consumers can't work and earn money, then the necessities of life must be distributed without money. This objective economic demand will sweep aside any political system that cannot conform to it. As the robot destroys the economic order, the new class will destroy the social order. The ideals of communism have moved from the subjective arena of the political and ideological, into the realm of the objective, the economic and the inevitable.

It should be noted that the very forces that are moving us toward economic communism, toward the distribution of the necessities of life without money and according to need are also an objective base for fascism. The American masses have always been controlled by bribery backed with deadly force. Huge sections of the population, locked into "McJobs" or permanent joblessness, can no longer be controlled by bribery. The ruling class absolutely must stop the drift toward the political and ideological awakening of the new class. They must prevent their political organizing. They must deepen the poverty and at the same time prevent the social upheavals. This can only be done with a fascist police state. Hence the explosive expansion of prison building and police forces. Hence Newt Gingrich and his Contract. If I could paraphrase John Donne: Ask not for whom those jails are built.



This woman participated in taking over empty homes in Philadelphia to house homeless families. There is a new movement developing to distribute what is produced by society to people whether they can pay for it or not.

is that while the Roman proletariat was politically passive, or troops for another class, this modern proletariat will play an independent political role. It is, by its social position, communistic. Owning no property whatsoever, without employment or resources, it cannot move in the direction of securing individual property. It is the only class in modern society where "each for all and all for each" has any real political meaning, and where "from each according to ability, to each according to need" makes economic sense.

The new class of the new poor includes the throw-away workers — temporary laborers with no benefits, the part-time workers, the newly unemployed as well as the permanently unemployed. This class is rap-

the process of social revolution: the new classes forcing their way into and disrupting the established class relationships, forcing the reorganization of society. The new classes were totally outside of the relationship between the existing classes. Therefore, there was no social contract between the nobility on the one hand and the bourgeoisie and workers on the other. A new social relationship could be finally settled only by force.

Once again, social revolution is beginning before our very eyes. This process could not begin without the creation of new instruments of production, and a new class or classes to interrupt, disorganize and finally overthrow the existing order. This has been the historical evolution of society thus far.

This new class of propertyless people, structurally forced away from production, is a true proletariat. One big difference

understood, let alone predicted, unless we proceed from the foundation of dialectical materialism. This foundation is that the world is integrated and connected together so that not only is motion, or change, a series of reciprocal causes and effects, but these causes and effects are interconnected. Further, cause and effect create the quantitative stages of development of every quality.

Quality is an essential characteristic. By qualitative, we mean the sum total of these characteristics which make a system or process what it is. Quantity, in this sense, is not numerical, but the definite, indispensable and knowable stages a qualitative process must pass through from beginning to end.

Two other related laws of change are: That there are quantitative limitations to every qualitative process, and that qualitative changes begin with the quantitative introduction of a new quality into the quantitative development of the old.

If this sounds like gibberish, let me quote a respected philosopher and scientist of his time. In his work, the *Dialectics of Nature*, Frederick Engels gives examples of the transformation from one quality to another. "All qualitative differences in nature rest on differences of chemical composition or on different quantities or forms of motion [energy] or, as is almost always the case, on both. Hence, it is impossible to alter the quality of a body without addition or subtraction of matter or motion, i.e., without quantitative alteration of the body concerned."

This law, which grew out of investigation of the physical world, also applies to society and societal change.

It is not possible to examine society and its process of change without beginning with change in its economic foundation. People organize their society around the instruments of production. The application of science to industry, and the resulting changes in the productive forces create or intensify contradictions in the social structure. The existing relations become unmanageable. A period of struggle to reform the economic and social structure begins. That struggle subsides when economic and social relations are changed to conform to the new quantitative level of the means of production.

An increase of intensity and change in the form of contradiction marks each stage of quantitative development. The final stages of contradiction of a process, in this case society, create the conditions for the introduction of antagonism.

Contradiction is opposition and is the basis of development and growth. Antagonism, on the other hand, is the mutual resistance or active opposition of two opposing forces, and leads to destruction and

transformation from one quality to another.

Contradiction does not grow into antagonism. Antagonism, under certain conditions, replaces contradiction.

As each succeeding quantitative stage becomes more polarized, it more sharply expresses its quality. The development of science and of the productive forces is spontaneous. Each quantitative stage further prepares for the introduction of a new quality which replaces contradiction with antagonism. The quantitative introduction of a new quality is the catalyst for the leap. For instance, the invention of qualitatively new machinery called forth the perfection and application of the steam engine. Together, they revolutionized not simply the economy, but the social order.

The contradictory relationship between the material forces of production and the productive relations forms and develops capitalism. That "certain stage" in the contradictory relationship begins with the "quantitative alteration of the body concerned" through the introduction of a



Ford assembly plant in Wixom, Michigan in 1982. Industrial production has been replaced by electronic production. Millions of people have lost their jobs and are unable to buy the necessities of life. This process is throwing all of society and class relations into upheaval.

PHOTO/MONDAY

the city as soon as the ink was dry on the laws allowing them to do so. A section of the African American workers also benefited from integration. Holding stable jobs, they too, moved from the inner city into much more stable neighborhoods. With the factories shutting down, the land around these factories quickly lost their value. Those who could flee did so. Taxes fell, maintenance dwindled and the combination of the American form of apartheid, plus the liquidation of jobs, created a new type of slum: the black, permanently destitute, rotting inner core of the formerly central working-class area of the city. This was also accepted as simply the result of racist economic policies of capitalist industry, rather than the social expression of an economic revolution that was couched in the historic American form of racial discrimination.

Since that phrase "underclass" was coined, the process of social destruction has continued. We can see now that this new group of permanently unemployed is not the result of the welfare system, but of the new means of production, of what they call downsizing.

The results are broader than the social problems caused by racism. It is acknowledged now that, in fact, the white so-called underclass is larger and growing faster than the black. What we are dealing with is not an underclass, but a new class. Gingrich and Company understand the implications of this. A new class outside the constraints imposed by the worker-capitalist relationship is a mortal danger to the system.

Electronics as a new means of production is producing more than an irresolvable depression. It is creating a social revolution. By social revolution we mean the process of qualitatively new means of production disrupting the economic order. In turn, new classes are created that disrupt and disorganize the existing society. The new class (or classes) finally overthrow the ruling class and create a society in their own image. We are in the first, elementary stage of a social revolution. It is important that we take this abstract idea and see what happens in a concrete way.

Let us look at the social revolution from agriculture to industry. In Europe, its political expression was from feudalism to capitalism.

Over a considerable period of time, manufacturing developed from simple, manual manufacture to a system of power-driven machines. As the principal means of production, machinery was qualitatively different from plots of land. As the use of machinery increased, so did the new class of workers who manipulated them. The two classes that developed with machinery — the bourgeoisie and the proletariat — grew with the spreading use of machinery. Wage labor, the new system of exploitation, ruined the peasants and the handicraftsmen. This was

one of the rare times when this analysis was wrong.

The effects of robotics on the white unskilled and semiskilled workers were not so easily seen. They are scattered throughout the general white population, especially in the suburbs. The African Americans were highly visible, being concentrated in a relatively small urban area. Also, the percentage of black laborers among the African American population was higher than white laborers among the white population. Racism provided the form, but the content is the beginnings of a social revolution. The first expression of that revolution was the wrecking of the economy of working-class black America. That revolution now is moving on to wreak its havoc against the formerly secure sections of the blue-collar, white-collar and lower management levels of the white workers.

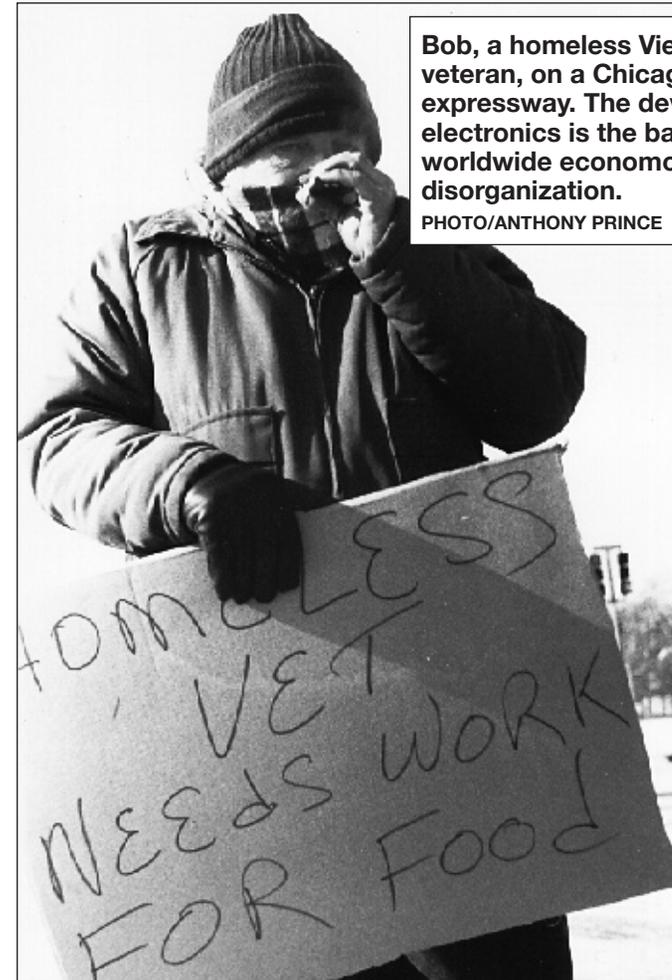
The economists, their social vision distorted by racist ideology, were unable to understand the difference between the reserve army of unemployed created by industrial capitalism and the structural, permanent joblessness created by robotics. They only saw a growing mass of African Americans outside the labor market. They eagerly embraced the term "underclass." What were the origins of that term?

European industry was born and began its development while feudal political and economic relations still existed. As industry developed, new economic classes came into being. The bourgeoisie and the modern working class were created from the serfs. Some of these ex-serfs did not make it into either of these new classes. This social flotsam existed as best it could on the periphery of emerging capitalist society until the system finally absorbed them.

Those who coined the term "underclass" perhaps thought here again was a group unable to keep up, and once falling behind and supported by welfare, consciously accepted an existence outside the capitalist relations of worker and employer. It must have seemed that a subclass of blacks, reliant on welfare, had lost the work ethic. Worse, that they were creating a subculture of immorality and criminality in the midst of a great national expansion of wealth and productivity.

A more concrete look will show something different. First, the new productive equipment has polarized wealth and poverty as never before. Absolute wealth in the form of 145 billionaires and absolute poverty in the form of some eight million homeless and absolutely destitute are new to our country. Secondly, the increase in production was accompanied by an increase in unemployment and joblessness.

The black poor were hit first and hardest by both these aspects of the new economy. The black bourgeoisie fled their traditional sections of



Bob, a homeless Vietnam veteran, on a Chicago expressway. The development of electronics is the basis of the worldwide economic and social disorganization.

PHOTO/ANTHONY PRINCE

qualitatively new and antagonistic quantity.

Qualitatively new productive forces inevitably call forth, and are used by, qualitatively new motive forces.

Let's glance at this process and the overthrowing of feudalism. Manufacturing was the highest and final stage of the manual labor system. The last stages of manufacturing prepared the ground for mechanical labor and made its introduction inevitable. A qualitative change in motive force was necessary. "Not till the invention of Watt's second and so-called double-acting steam engine was [such] a prime mover found."

(Karl Marx *Capital* Volume I p. 337) In a leap, manufacturing changed to industry.

Feudal relations, which were contradictory to the manual labor of the serf, faced an antagonism in the process of large-scale mechanization possible with the steam engine. Almost every schoolbook states that the industrial revolution brought down feudalism. The world created by manual labor was overthrown by the new world created by mechanical labor. The newly liberated productive forces consolidated and a new social order was built to accommodate them.

Complex industrial machinery, including the steam engine, developed during the manufacturing period, but did not create an industrial revolution. As machines became bigger and more complex, demanding a powerful and reliable motive energy, the engineers introduced the double-acting steam engine. Contradiction became antagonism and the social revolution was under way.

In much the same manner, electricity was adapted to machinery, creating labor-saving devices around the time of the Civil War. The use of electricity became more and more sophisticated. Finally, development of electrical devices could go no further with computers the size of a house. The micro-chip and the semiconductor were developed outside the industrial process and then brought into it. They have created an antagonism by transforming electricity from a help to mechanics into an independent life as electronics and in opposition to mechanics. They have sparked the ongoing economic revolution.

What is an economic revolution? An economic revolution is the substitution of one productive process by another. Now, that seems like a very simple thing and one that has been going on for a long time. The problem is that an economy cannot change without changing the society. Society cannot change without changing all the class relations and a change in class relations means ending the privileges that one class has over others. Ruling classes are prepared to accept new machinery, but they have resisted and will resist to the death any attempt to change society in such a way as to threaten their privileges. Thus, economic changes in history have always ended in revolution and often in civil war.

All of us sense or understand, in one way or another, that the accelerating development of electronics is the basis of the worldwide economic and social disorganization. Being human, we are so involved in grappling with the immediate problems of homelessness, unemployment, the rise of a new racism that only a few have studied, discussed and really understood the historic implications of our time.

Worst than that, the government turns its back to the former worker. He or she is not considered unemployed, but jobless.

The government, which today is little more than an executive committee to manage the affairs of the ruling, capitalist class, is not going to care for something it cannot exploit.

Naturally, robotics entered industry at the lowest and simplest level. Its first victims were the unskilled and semiskilled workers. Part of the legacy of slavery was that a huge section of the African American work force remained tied to the land and especially employed in cotton culture after emancipation. Tracted off the land after the development of the cotton-picking machine, they were the last section of the rural population to join the industrial work force. Consequently, they were concentrated in that sector — the unskilled and semiskilled sector — that was

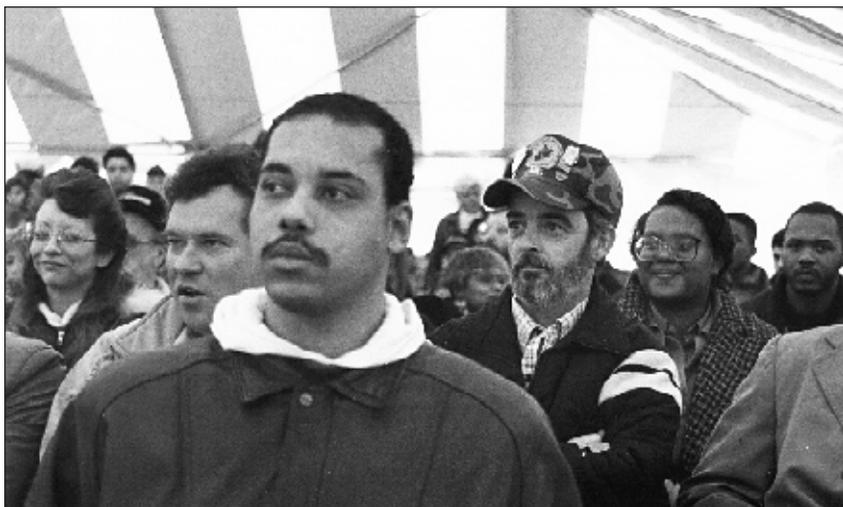
first attacked by the robot.

The social oppression of the African American is the fulcrum for the political leverage of the economic elite of America. We are used to using this historic oppression as a context of understanding the economic and social motion of the country. Last hired and first fired has been the economic lot of the African American since Emancipation. Therefore, it was natural that the wholesale wiping out of African Americans from industry was understood as racism. It is



This woman took a job at a downtown Los Angeles hotel as a manager. One month after accepting the job, she was given a one-day notice by the owner to vacate. She became homeless, never thinking it could happen to her. A new class is being formed as people permanently lose jobs and are no longer a part of the worker-capitalist relationship.

PHOTO/LISA HARTOUNI



Almost 10,000 people applied for 1,000 jobs at the building supply chain HomeBase in a Chicago suburb. The government is telling us that it will not take care of people it cannot exploit.

PHOTO/PEOPLE'S TRIBUNE

important. The conscious forces on both sides realize they must prepare to take political advantage of the social upheavals that are now absolutely inevitable.

Wanting to turn the spontaneous social struggles to one's political advantage and being able to do so are different things. The game has changed. This is not 1932.

Apparently, Gingrich does not understand the social consequences of the economic changes he is pushing through Congress.

As the application of these new scientific marvels to production expanded, a new economic category, the structurally unemployed, was created. A hundred and fifty years ago, the philosophers and scientists Karl Marx and Frederick Engels coined the term "the reserve army of the unemployed." This was the industrial reserve to be thrown into the battle for production as the need arose. The structurally unemployed are different. They are a new, growing, permanently unemployed sector created by the new emerging economic structure. Once a job is taken over by robotics, the worker who once performed that job becomes permanently unemployed. His category of work, his job, is eliminated because no human being can work as efficiently or as cheaply as a robot.



Parkside Housing Project in Detroit stood empty and heated as massive welfare cuts forced people into the streets. The important thing is to understand what lies behind the millions of homeless, acres of burned-out neighborhoods and the slaughter of our youth.

PHOTO/DAYMON J. HARTLEY

The term "electronic" means different things to different people. To some, it means a qualitative improvement in their sound and entertainment systems. To others, it means a new quality in the process of producing our means of life. I would like, for the moment, to speak of electronics as a new quality that is emerging and forming the basis of not any particular aspect of life, but creating, or has the potential to create, a whole new form and quality of life.

When we speak of the electronic revolution, we are not talking about electricity. By electronics, we essentially mean processing knowledge with matter other than the brain. The electronic revolution should be compared to the discovery of fire. Fire was more than a means of production — it was the foundation for the quantitative separation of

humans from animals. Everything that the following social and economic formations created was based on the discovery of fire. Steel and the steam engine, to name just two things basic to our civilization, are unthinkable without fire.

Electronics should be viewed the same way. Far from being simply a "Third Wave" in the production of social wealth, we are constructing the launching pad for humanity's second great leap. The result will be humankind's complete separation from the animal world and its restrictive, brutal systems of natural law. Unfettered by such restraints, humanity will begin the journey toward its full realization.

Between the dangerous jungle of our time and that wonderful future lies an epoch of struggle, destruction, revolution and change. This is the topic of our discussion.

HOW WE ARE CHANGING

Great social problems do not happen out of the context of a certain time. To understand a problem, we must understand the period of time in which it occurred. I do not think it is possible to understand a period of time by simply describing a series of events. Events are a chain with a key link which drags the entire chain forward. We must identify and concentrate our thinking on that key link. Or to put it another way, it is necessary to understand the crucial content of a time in order to understand the time.

The content of our time is the historic shift from production by electromechanics, that is, production by human labor aided by electrically driven machinery, to production by robotics, or production by computer-controlled machinery with very little or no human labor involved. This ongoing economic revolution shapes and determines the social destruction we see around us. It is bringing to the forefront a political struggle unknown to our country.

With this in mind, let us dig beneath the form that this historic shift is taking — the millions of homeless, the tens of millions of jobless, the acres of burned-out neighborhoods, the slaughter of our youth, the "in your face" looting of the public treasury, the decline of health care and education and the elimination of social services. The important thing is to understand why this is happening and what the political results are bound to be.

When and why did government grow big with the alphabet programs and when and why did it suddenly need to shed itself of these programs?

The major task of government is to create the structural programs

and policies that allow the economy to function. For example, when the government was the instrument of the farmers, that government did the things necessary to protect and expand the farm. The Indians were cleared from the fertile lands, slavery was protected and extended, shipping lanes for export were cleared and frontiers expanded. As the farm gave way to industry, the government transformed itself into a committee to take care of the new needs of industry.

At that point, government began to grow. Industry needed literate workers, so the school system expanded. The army needed healthy young men to fight the wars brought on by industrial expansion, so a school lunch program was started. As industry got big, a Department of Housing and Urban Development provided order to the chaotic, burgeoning cities it created. In other words, government became big government in order to serve the needs of industry as it became big industry. The workers were kept relatively healthy and the unemployed were warehoused in such a manner as to keep them available for work with every industrial expansion.

New means of production changed the game. Expanding sections of the working class are permanently unneeded. The new mode of production no longer needed a reserve army of unemployed. Nor does it need healthy young men for an infantry war. As industry gave way to the new electronically controlled means of production, it downsized. The government necessarily had to follow suit. Robots do not need unemployment compensation or Social Security, decent food or environmental protection. These entitlements are part of the cost of production. Newt Gingrich aims to transform them into increased profitability. This is the demand of internationally competitive industry. This is the meaning of his revolution.

These fundamental changes in the economy opened the political door for reaction and social progress to fight out who was to benefit from the economic revolution. The initiative was seized by the reaction under the slogan of the Republican Contract With America. The first 100 days of the 1995-96 Congress was a whirlwind of reactionary legislation.

The historic result has not been the legislation, but the beginnings of a new mass political awakening. The recent quarter of a million-person march in Washington called by the National Organization for Women was the first mass reaction to the change. The million-plus march called by a coalition of major black organizations and churches was a watershed that defines the approaching mass struggle. It was the tip of a political iceberg of social discontent. The unreported struggles and growing restlessness in the streets of the nation's poor are even more