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The Freedom Socialist

Voice of Revolutionary Feminism

Oct.-Dec. 1994

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Cynical politicians blame immigrants for U.S. woes

BY MONICA HILL

The ethic of the bully has always been, "When you get caught, blame the victim." In politics, it's called scapegoating; Adolph Hitler was a master at it. For centuries, the U.S. has carried out this policy against immigrant workers — from the first African slave brought to the Americas by force to the most recent refugee arriving today from Haiti, El Salvador, Afghanistan, or any one of innumerable other beleaguered points on planet Earth.

Big business and its two capitalist parties are mired in economic problems they cannot fix without sacrificing profits. So they are orchestrating a new racist onslaught against those who come

here fleeing poverty and dictatorships in other lands — a double injustice, as these bitter conditions have usually been produced by the U.S. ruling class in the first place.

But the profit-addicts have created their own nemesis. Immigrants have proven themselves to be not a pool of frightened, malleable, and expendable labor, but a savvy, tough, integral and leading part of the U.S. working class, radicalized by abuse both in their countries of origin and in their new home.

Crackdown in California. An historic, fast-paced drama is being played out in California, a microcosm for the country, indeed the world. Politicians, police, and white supremacists here are spouting the identical solution to a depressed economy — stamp out immigrants. "Save Our State," the infamous initiative on the ballot in the November election, is just one part of the most drastic and brutal anti-immigrant cam-

paign in recent U.S. history.

SOS would deny the undocumented all but emergency medical care, expel children without papers from public schools, and require cops, doctors, teachers, and social workers to report "illegal" immigrants to authorities. Elected officials refuse to be outdone by the rightwing sponsors of this ballot proposition.

- Republican Governor Pete Wilson, an SOS booster up for reelection, calls for barring U.S.-born children of undocumented workers from citizenship.

- His Democrat opponent, Kathleen Brown, calls for military control of the border. So do Democrat Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, who also would refuse even emergency medical aid to the undocumented.

- State legislators have put anti-immigrant clauses into dozens of bills. The provisions include withholding earthquake relief from undocumented



Gov. Pete Wilson, his political fortunes sinking with California's economy, turns to immigrant-bashing.

Kent Homer/AP

people and militarizing the border through the use of the National Guard.

Street-corner food wagons run by immigrant women are proliferating in L.A. as mothers try to feed their children by selling homemade tamales and fruit sticks. Already suffering the worst, women and children will be most affected by further denials of rights and services.

Immigrants and labor: one and the same. Numerous coalitions have ignited to fight back against the assault on new arrivals.

A May 28 march and rally drew nearly 25,000 to downtown L.A. The labor movement turned out in force — as well

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POR MONICA HILL

La ética del prepotente siempre ha sido, "Cuando te descubran, culpa a la víctima." En la política, se llama buscar un chivo expiatorio; Adolf Hitler era un maestro en esto.

Por siglos, los Estados Unidos han aplicado esta política a los trabajadores inmigrantes — desde el primer esclavo africano traído a América por la fuerza hasta el refugiado más reciente que llega actualmente de Haití, de El Salvador, de Afganistán o de cualquier otra de las incontables áreas problemáticas del planeta Tierra.

Las grandes empresas y sus dos partidos capitalistas se encuentran anegados con problemas económicos que no pueden solucionar sin sacrificar

dobles, ya que estas condiciones amargas las ha creado usualmente en primer lugar la clase gobernante de los Estados Unidos.

Pero los adictos al lucro han creado su propio contrincante fatal.

Los inmigrantes han demostrado que no son un grupo de mano de obra temerosa, manipulable ni prescindible sino una parte fuerte e integral de la clase trabajadora de los Estados Unidos con sentido común y liderazgo, radicalizados debido a los abusos tanto en sus países de origen como en su nuevo hogar.

Intensificación de la represión en California. Se está llevando a cabo un drama histórico a paso acelerado en California, un microcosmos de este país, de hecho del mundo.

Los políticos, la policía y los supremacistas blancos aquí están vociferando la misma solución para una economía deprimida — sacar a los inmigrantes.

Los políticos cínicos culpan a los inmigrantes de los problemas de EEUU

Los oficiales electos se rehusan a ser superados por los patrocinadores derechistas de esta proposición electoral.

- El gobernador republicano Pete Wilson, el cual apoya el SOS y que busca la reelección, recomienda que se prohíba conceder la ciudadanía a los niños nacidos en EEUU de trabajadores indocumentados.

- Su contrincante demócrata, Kathleen Brown, recomienda el control militar de la frontera así como los senadores demócratas Dianne Feinstein y Barbara Boxer, los cuales quieren negar incluso la atención médica de emergencia a los indocumentados.

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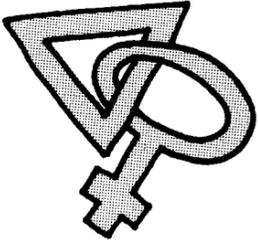
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A critique of separatist cultural nationalism and an analysis of why it attracts support from African Americans.

Freedom Socialist Credo

The Freedom Socialist boldly confronts and makes sense of the dizzying events shaping today's revolutionary world.

We're Marxists, Leninists, Trotskyists, feminists, humanists...we believe that all today's gigantic upheavals are links in an enormous global effort to topple the tyranny of imperialism or Stalinist bureaucratism or racist arrogance.

We hail the decisive leadership role played by people of color and by sexual and national minorities in the worldwide class struggle.

We focus on women's non-stop fight for equality which, in the final analysis, challenges every single basis on which capitalism rests.

Our goal is to inject the socialist movement with the revitalizing ideas of Trotskyism and feminism in order to prepare it for victory in this crucial decade.

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Letters

For socialism in South Africa

Thanks for your excellent paper: I will publicize it.

I agree with Greg Hart (Letters, Vol. 15 No. 2): we *must* help to keep the air clean — there should be smoking *outside* meetings and not during meetings: also Adrienne Weller is right — *Schindler's List* fails to show how industrialists supported Hitler. Finally: Your editorial on South Africa says what many are unwilling to say — socialism should be the goal of South Africa but that will need a more militant leadership.

All good wishes.

Dennis Brutus
Union of Writers of
the African Peoples
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Cuba sí

I found all your material in Vol. 15 No. 2 to be very informative, realistic, and sensible.

In particular, the information on the front page about "Crime and Punishment" in the USA seemed very enlightening since it proves that the criminals and delinquents most dangerous for society are, in one way or another, part of "the power elite," to use the title of the 1956 book by Marxist sociologist C. Wright Mills.

In regard to Cuba, the article by Yolanda Alaniz in English and Spanish is a true and moving argument about the harm the blockade-embargo is causing the Cuban people, especially the children, the elderly, the disabled, and pregnant women, along with the sick.

Such an inhumane blockade is a dishonor to the U.S. government in today's world.

Cuba yes, blockade no.

Oscar Ochotorena
Miami, Florida

Buying democracy

You ask for my evaluation of the article "*Cuba sí, bloqueo no!*" by Yolanda Alaniz and so I presume that you know that I and my eldest son were also participants in Friendship III of aid to Cuba.

Yolanda's article is accurate and informative but I differ somewhat with her assertion that Cuba has an incomplete democracy. To some extent that may be true but where in the world is there a complete democracy? Certainly not in the U.S. where you have two

rightwing political parties and in the sector of foreign affairs, their positions are virtually identical; however in the U.S. it is certain that in Congress votes can be bought by organizations such as CANF which practise does not occur in Cuba. In Canada, big business "invests" in the Conservative and Liberal parties in a similar fashion to CANF in the U.S.; which again is the antithesis of democracy.

I was impressed with Cuba's education system, which produces alert, self-assured children who were our guides at the Moncada barracks, etc., and with the schools for deaf and blind children.

Ed Simpson
Apsley, Ontario, Canada

Vigilance needed

We were most interested to read the article "Nazi scum on the run in Brunswick" (Vol. 5 No. 2), which highlights the need for ongoing vigilance against this ever-present kind of racism.

We would very much like to hear if further information of interest to our museum appears in further publications.

Ursula Flicker
Jewish Holocaust Museum
and Research Centre
Elsternwick, Victoria,
Australia

FS for the blind

If the *Freedom Socialist* were available to me and others who are blind in an accessible format, I would subscribe.

The impetus for writing this letter was the kick-off of the fundraising drive to support the paper here in New York. When asked to contribute, my first impulse was to do so, and to include a note stating that I would substantially increase my contribution should definite plans emerge for the production of a recorded or electronic version of the *FS*. After further reflection, I realized that to do this would be to implicitly accept the premise that equality for blind people is an issue of secondary rather than primary significance for me, which it most emphatically is not.

Blind people must not be counted among the most oppressed groups in the world. In the U.S., we are 70 percent unemployed or grossly underemployed. Federal law still al-

lows employers to pay sheltered workshop workers less than the minimum wage. At times, blind parents must still wage legal battles to prevent their children from being taken away, and it is still almost impossible for a blind person to adopt a child unless she or he has a sighted spouse. We certainly have a stake in changing society for the better, and have proven that we can wage persistent and successful struggles. Consideration of our demands for equal treatment may no more be postponed until after the Revolution, than those of women may be.

Patricia Logan
Woodside, New York

You're right. Equality for the blind is a first-rank issue. We will explore what means are available to make the FS accessible. —Ed.

Death-row request

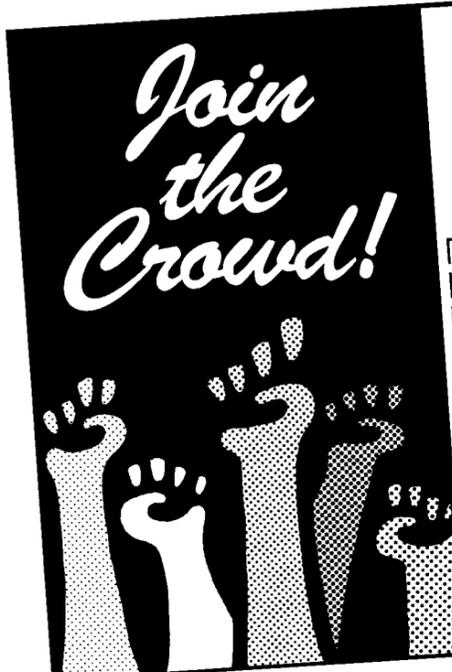
I'm presently confined on Indiana's death row. In 1982, I was sentenced to electrocution in the chair for a charge I am completely innocent of.

In 1981, I was charged with killing a police officer after a bank robbery. The trial court judge committed a fundamental error by failing to properly instruct the jury. I wasn't convicted of murder. I was convicted by the jury of a lesser charge of unarmed robbery, but the judge had sentenced me on the greater charge.

My plight is very grave. I would like to receive your kind support in my quest for freedom and justice. Please contribute financially to my legal defense fund: Equal Justice Committee, 624 Porter Street, Gary, Indiana 46404. For more information, contact: Crossroad Support Network, c/o Spear and Shield Collective, 3021 West 63rd Street, Chicago, Illinois 60629 or (312)737-8679. Thank you!

Zolo Agona Azania #4969
Indiana State Prison
P.O. Box 41
Michigan City, Indiana
46360-0041

Readers are encouraged to submit letters, news stories, commentary, cartoons, graphics, photographs, and pertinent resource information on world and national affairs. Letters may be edited for length.



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International petition campaign boosts reporter's bid for reinstatement

Support for Sandy Nelson pours in from Australia, Indonesia, Canada, and points between

BY ROBERT NATHAN GUERRERO

Canadian and U.S. supporters of reporter Sandy Nelson celebrated American Independence Day at a spirited July 1 rally outside the offices of *The News Tribune*, the daily newspaper in Tacoma, Washington.

Activists representing the civil rights, labor, Native American, and gay and lesbian movements soapboxed about Nelson's campaign to secure from her employer the same political freedoms that U.S. revolutionaries fought for 200 years ago. Afterward, they picketed the building while two delegates from the group delivered stacks of petitions to TNT management, wrapped up in a copy of the Bill of Rights and bearing 3,000 signatures from the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Germany, Holland, and England.

Almost 15,000 signatures have been collected worldwide to date, and more are being gathered.

The petitions, addressed to publisher Kelso Gillenwater, denounce the 1990 banishment of Nelson from the TNT newsroom to a non-reporting, swing-shift job editing copy as punishment for her off-duty involvement in socialist-feminist and lesbian/gay causes. The veteran, award-winning reporter was organizing on behalf of a local gay-rights initiative when she was pulled from her regular work covering education issues.

TNT bosses maintain that Nelson's activities jeopardized the paper's "appearance of credibility." That claim was answered by many speakers at the July rally. Tacoma educator Dick Mansfield told the crowd that readers need reporters who are sensitive and savvy because of their participation in community affairs; he said teachers lost an informed

perspective on education reform when TNT yanked Nelson from her beat.

The demonstration coincided with the first day of work for new Executive Editor David Zeeck. He is replacing outgoing Managing Editor Jan Brandt, the second of two top managers responsible for Nelson's forced transfer who have left the paper.

The first of the two, Norm Bell, was

"Labor has a vital interest in protecting and encouraging journalists like Nelson who are fair, accurate and knowledgeable about labor issues because of their unionism and involvement in the movement for civil liberties," the resolution read. "A victory in this case will help protect the constitutional rights to free speech and association of reporters and all working people."

Case champions political rights of workers. The rest of the year also promises to be action packed.

In September, nationally syndicated "Media Beat" columnist Norman Solomon is slated to speak at forums in Portland, Oregon and in Seattle on how the degree of freedom of expression accorded to reporters affects the rights of all.

In a recent column, Solomon used Nelson's case as an example of the double standards of publishers and managers who control their reporters' activities for the sake of "appearances" while they themselves freely engage in whatever community or political activities they choose.

Arguments in the legal arena are taking the same tack. Nelson's attorneys are preparing to file a motion for summary judgment asking a Pierce County Superior Court judge to reinstate Nelson immediately. The motion will cite a 1992 law that bars political discrimination by employers against employees, and will also rely on protections in the state constitution guaranteeing free speech and participation in the initiative process.

In addition to petitioning TNT, organizing public forums and demonstrations, and providing assistance to the legal team, Nelson's defense committee is also accepting invitations to set up educational booths at town festivals throughout Washington.

After five years of uphill struggle, momentum is building for victory, but a real push on Nelson's behalf is needed now in order to cross the final hurdles and ensure a win. Endorsements and donations of time and money are all being sought eagerly. Send contributions or offers of help to the Sandy Nelson Defense Committee at P.O. Box 5847, Tacoma, WA 98415, or call (206)756-9971. □



Nelson's supporters picket *The News Tribune* this July, delivering petitions from the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Germany, Holland, and England.

fired — and now, ironically, is also suing TNT, using one of the same legal arguments as Nelson.

Help from organized labor. The summer heat wave of support continued in August, when trade unionists at the 1994 Washington State Labor Council convention adopted a resolution to donate \$1,000 to publicize Nelson's ACLU-backed lawsuit against TNT.

Early in the summer, resolutions in defense of Nelson were sent by the Seattle and Los Angeles locals of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees to the union's international convention, where 201 delegates urged their adoption.

On September 8, AFSCME's executive board endorsed the case, approved a \$1,000 donation, and agreed to file a friend-of-the-court brief in support.

Immigrants blamed for U.S. woes

from the cover it should!

Latino workers, heavily represented at the march, have become the most militant and successful union activists in Southern California — the backbone of the drywallers' strike in July 1992, the Justice for Janitors union drive, and revived field organizing by the United Farm Workers.

Immigrants are in the forefront of labor battles up and down the state. Garment industry workers in San Francisco, many of them Chinese women, have launched a national campaign to collect their paychecks from bosses who are withholding them.

On the agenda for the immigrant-rights movement is a massive October demonstration in L.A.

Organizers are reaching out to enlist the support of capitalism's other scapegoats — people of color, women, Jews, lesbians and gays, leftists, the homeless.

And just by holding the demonstration, they are defying liberal politicians and the heads of mainstream Latino/Chicano organizations who want to put a lid on street militancy in favor of electoral organizing to put more Democrats into office — despite the fact that Democrat officials were among the first to jump on the anti-immigrant bandwagon.

Newcomer-bashing as U.S. policy. The national Democratic record is no

better than California's.

Haitian refugees were the first group Bill Clinton sold out as president. And he wants to pinch pennies by limiting the eligibility of even legal immigrants for food stamps and other aid — while at the same time he proposes to spend an additional \$368 million in 1995 to beef up border patrol.

Whether Democrats or Republicans are in charge, immigration is a spigot that turns on or off to suit the economic and political needs of Capital.

The U.S. economy has always depended on labor from other lands. The goal of immigration control is never to completely exclude foreign-born workers, but to regulate their numbers in order to manipulate the job market, intimidate them with threats of deportation, exploit their vulnerability by paying them less, blame them for job crises, hold them up to other workers as possible replacements during strikes, and use them to depress the wages and conditions of all labor. The bosses use racism to implement this profoundly anti-worker policy.

Immigration flow is also a tool for pursuing the interests of the U.S. internationally.

Until recently, for example, Cubans claiming political asylum after arriving here unsanctioned were granted it automatically, as a way of showcasing "the evils of communism."

Haitians, however, who are more

likely to harbor leftwing sympathies, have been routinely characterized as economic refugees and denied sanctuary from the murderous military thugs running their country — whom the U.S. government pretends to abhor, but has never stopped working with.

A winnable fight. In the past, the official labor movement has abandoned foreign workers, as well as non-unionized women and people of color.

But not this time. The workforce of today, especially in California, is immigrant, is female, is dark-skinned.

More and more unions are coming to understand this.

But the alliance of immigrants with labor can only go so far as long as labor is led by cheerleaders for the Democratic Party.

As the coalitions in defense of immigrants pick up steam, labor bureaucrats who are inclined to back off from this fight, a pivotal one for the decade, had better be prepared to change quickly or get out of the way.

A class-conscious united front capable of not just defeating SOS, but of educating about and challenging the root causes of anti-immigrant hysteria, will do the following:

- Promote solidarity with workers



Chinese immigrants in New York demand humane conditions and decent pay.

worldwide.

- Fight to open the borders, disband the INS, and use the money saved to fund social services and schools for all.
- Defeat English Only laws and press for multicultural, bilingual education.
- Pledge to give not one vote, not one union dollar, and not one minute of doorbelling or phone campaigning to the betraying Democrats.
- Run electoral candidates on united left tickets as a workingclass alternative to the Wilsons and the Clintons.
- Use labor-union power to organize the unorganized and to build an anti-capitalist Labor Party that will fight the bigots in the legislature, at the polls, and in the streets. □

Los políticos cínicos culpan a los inmigrantes de los problemas de EEUU

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• Los legisladores del estado han incluido cláusulas en contra de los inmigrantes en docenas de proyectos de ley. Las proposiciones incluyen el no proporcionar ayuda en caso de temblores a la gente indocumentada y militarizar la frontera por medio de la utilización de la Guardia Nacional.

Los carros de comida están proliferando en las esquinas de las calles de Los Angeles pues las madres inmigrantes tratan de alimentar a sus hijos vendiendo tamales y barritas de frutas hechas en sus casas. Las mujeres y los niños, que son los que más están sufriendo, serán los más afectados por la futura denegación de derechos y servicios.

Los inmigrantes y la mano de obra: una misma cosa. Varias coaliciones se han formado para luchar en contra del asalto a las nuevas personas que van llegando.

La marcha y manifestación del 28 de mayo atrajo a casi 25,000 personas al centro de Los Angeles. El movimiento de los trabajadores se manifestó con fuerza — ¡así como es debido! Los trabajadores latinos, fuertemente representados en la marcha, se han convertido en los activistas sindicales con más éxito de California del Sur — la espina dorsal de la huelga de los "dry-waleros" en julio de 1992, la campaña del sindicato de "Justicia para los Trabajadores de la Limpieza" (Justice for Janitors) y la reactivación de la organización en el campo de los "Trabajadores del Campo Unidos" (United Farm Workers).

Los inmigrantes se encuentran a la vanguardia de la lucha laboral a lo largo del estado. Los trabajadores de la industria de la confección de San Francisco, muchos de los cuales son mujeres chinas, han lanzado una campaña nacional para exigir sus cheques de pago a sus patrones que los están reteniendo.

En el programa del movimiento pro derechos de inmigrantes está una demostración masiva en octubre en Los Angeles.

Los organizadores están trabajando para obtener el apoyo de los otros chivos expiatorios del capitalismo — la gente de color, las mujeres, los judíos, las lesbianas y homosexua-

les, los izquierdistas y las personas que viven en la calle.

Y el simple hecho de realizar esta demostración es un desafío a los políticos liberales y a los dirigentes de las organizaciones latinas y chicanas establecidas que quieren imponer un límite a la militancia en las calles en favor de la organización electoral para elegir a más demócratas — a pesar del hecho de que los oficiales demócratas fueron unos de los primeros en unirse al movimiento en contra de los inmigrantes.

El asedio a los recién llegados como política de los EEUU. El historial democrático nacional no es mejor que el de California.

Los refugiados haitianos fueron el primer grupo que Bill Clinton traicionó como presidente.

También quiere ahorrarse unos centavos limitando la elegibilidad de los mismos inmigrantes legales para conseguir estampillas de comida y otros tipos de ayuda — mientras que al mismo tiempo propone gastar \$368 millones adicionales en 1995 para fortalecer la patrulla fronteriza.

Sean demócratas o republicanos los que se encuentran en el poder, la inmigración es una llave de agua que se abre o se cierra para satisfacer las necesidades económicas y políticas del Capital.

La economía de Estados Unidos ha dependido siempre del trabajo de otros países. El objetivo del control de la inmigración es el de nunca excluir completamente a los trabajadores de origen extranjero sino de regular su número para poder así

manipular el mercado de trabajo, de intimidarlos con amenazas de deportación, de explotar su vulnerabilidad pagándoles menos, de culparlos por las crisis en el ámbito laboral, de amenazar a otros trabajadores con la utilización de los inmigrantes

político después de llegar aquí sin sanción se les concedía automáticamente como medio para mostrar "los males del comunismo."

A los haitianos, sin embargo, que tienen más inclinación a simpatizar con la izquierda, se les ha caracterizado como refugiados económicos y se les ha negado el refugio de los asesinos militares que gobiernan a su país — los cuales el gobierno de los Estados Unidos finge aborrecer, pero con los cuales nunca ha dejado de colaborar.

Una lucha que se puede ganar. En el pasado, el movimiento laboral oficial ha abandonado a los trabajadores extranjeros, así como a las mujeres y a la gente de color, que generalmente no tienen afiliación sindical.

Pero esta vez no será así. La fuerza de trabajo de hoy día, especialmente en California, es de inmigrantes, es femenina, es de piel oscura. Más y más sindicatos están llegando a comprender esta cuestión.

Pero la alianza de los inmigrantes con el movimiento laboral sólo puede avanzar hasta cierto punto siempre y cuando este movimiento sea dirigido por porristas en pro del Partido Democrático. A medida que las

coaliciones en defensa de los inmigrantes incrementan su energía, los burócratas laborales que prefieren retirarse de esta lucha fundamental de la década deberían estar listos para hacer cambios rápidos o si no, para quitarse del paso.

Un frente unido con conciencia de clase capaz, no sólo de vencer al SOS, sino también de educar acerca de las causas básicas de la histeria en contra de los inmigrantes y capaz de desafiarla, deberá hacer lo siguiente:

- Promover la solidaridad con los trabajadores a nivel mundial.
- Luchar por la apertura de las fronteras, disolver el INS y usar el dinero ahorrado para financiar servicios sociales y escuelas para todos.
- Vencer las leyes de "Sólo Inglés" y presionar para crear una educación multicultural y bilingüe.
- Prometer no dar un solo voto, un dólar sindical, ni un minuto de ayuda para ir de puerta en puerta o en campañas telefónicas para los demócratas traicioneros.
- Postular candidatos en candidaturas de izquierda unidas como una alternativa de la clase trabajadora a los Wilson y a los Clinton.
- Usar la fuerza de los sindicatos de trabajadores para sindicalizar a los trabajadores no sindicalizados y construir un Partido del Trabajo anticapitalista que luche en contra de la gente intolerante y prejuiciosa en el cuerpo legislativo, los procesos electorales y en las calles. □



Clockwise from left: Mexican flower vendors rally in New York; Los Angelenos protest crack-down; gay militants support Haitians.

como rompedores de huelgas y de utilizarlos para disminuir los salarios y las condiciones del ambiente laboral en general.

Los patrones usan el racismo para implementar esta política rotundamente en contra de los trabajadores.

El flujo de inmigración es también una herramienta para satisfacer los intereses de los EEUU a nivel internacional.

Hasta tiempos recientes, por ejemplo, a los cubanos que pedían asilo

Look us up! • ¡Búsqúenos!

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Melbourne: P.O. Box 266, West Brunswick, VIC 3055. Phone/FAX 03-386-5065.

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CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles: Teamsters Building, 1616 W. 9th St. Ste. 7, Los Angeles, CA 90015. Ph. 213-365-1792. FAX 213-365-6088.

San Francisco: RW National Office, Valencia Hall, 523-A Valencia St., San Francisco, CA 94110. Ph. 415-864-127B. FAX 415-864-0778.

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BY LINDA AVERILL

A few years back, when then-Vice President Dan Quayle blamed single mothers like TV's Murphy Brown for every problem imaginable, he seemed out of touch.

Today his ideas have become establishment "wisdom." President Clinton helped popularize them in a February State of the Union sermon against "the breakdown of the family," an event which he identified as the cause of crime and poverty.

In order to sell a pet project — "ending welfare as we know it" — Clinton offered up stories about teen-age moms having babies so that they can set up house and collect welfare.

Congress will discuss the president's welfare-reform legislation, "The Work and Responsibility Act," next year. The plan would restrict poor mothers to a *lifetime* maximum of two years of assistance; compel recipients to take *any* job offer; eliminate childcare subsidies one year after a recipient is employed; require hospitals to establish paternity at birth; and force welfare applicants to name and help find a child's father before receiving benefits.

Sex and race inequality. The majority of women on assistance are in their late twenties and have one or two children. Contrary to Clinton's portrait of proliferating teen-age welfare moms, adolescent pregnancy isn't on the rise.

But of moms who *are* teens, 60

percent have fled abusive homes; sending them back, as Clinton advocates, will endanger them and their babies.

Contrary to stereotype, most women on welfare are white — even though racism means that while white women earn an unfair 70 cents to every dollar a man makes, Black women earn only 61 cents, and Latinas just 55.

Mary Waterhouse, author of *Farewell Welfare*, a book that tells about her own experiences with public assistance, warns that "we're being duped into a new McCarthyism" through the lies



Harvey Finkle/Impact Visuals

that politicians and the press are peddling about poor mothers.

Democrats punish the needy. What Waterhouse finds particularly odious about welfare-reform schemes are the proposed time limits.

While 70 percent of women go off welfare within a year, a majority have to return. "Half go back because they land jobs that don't pay enough to cover childcare, medical care, housing, transportation, and food," Waterhouse explains. "Adequate training, quality daycare, and educational op-

portunities are what poor mothers need."

Instead, states are considering everything from abolishing welfare entirely to denying it to mothers whose kids skip school or aren't immunized.

Fight poverty, not the poor. It's thanks to the economy's "jobless recovery," not loose morals, that welfare rolls have swelled, up to five million cases today from 3.7 million in 1989.

Democrats and Republicans alike are calling for increasingly repressive measures to address crime and poverty. Forcing poor single mothers into marriage or low-wage, non-union jobs is part of that trend. Both organized labor and feminists share a stake in countering these proposals with real solutions.

Economic dependence, on men or on the state, is in fundamental contradiction to women's emancipation; the answer must be to lift women out of poverty. To start with, government and industry should fund free, quality childcare and healthcare, and employers should provide paid maternity leave.

Full employment *at union-scale wages* is essential. A war against wage discrimination based on race and sex must take the place of the current war against its victims.

Finally, our nation's capital has to be cleansed of its puritanical climate. To air the place out, labor and feminists must dump the Democrats, who have shown that their sympathies lie with the likes of Dan Quayle, not with poor women. □

Dateline Canada

Ruling in Mary Pitawanakwat case upholds her right to return to work



K. Merrigan/FS

Victory at last! Courageous Ojibway Native and civil servant Mary Pitawanakwat has won a landmark resolution to her eight-year-long race discrimination suit against her employer — the federal department charged with helping Canada's racial minorities.

The award granted her \$200,000 in back pay, the largest employee settlement Ottawa has ever made, and reinstatement. In June, she returned to work as a social development officer at the federal Department of Canadian Heritage (formerly the Secretary of State) in Regina, Saskatchewan. Congratulations poured in to Pitawanakwat and her defense committee from staunch supporters around the world.

However, Pitawanakwat observed, "The award is only five to ten percent of what they spent fighting me." The significance of her triumph is best mea-

sured by the number of government-erected barriers she had to surmount.

A long hard road to success. Pitawanakwat was fired from her job in 1986, one year after filing a race discrimination and sexual harassment complaint against the Secretary of State.

For the rest of the 1980s, the mother of two logged countless hours pushing for a review of her termination. Along the way, the courts tossed out her charge of sexual harassment on a technicality.

After two lengthy court appeals, Pitawanakwat was finally granted a Canadian Human Rights Tribunal hearing. In 1993, after weeks of testimony, the three-member, all-white panel of government appointees concluded that race discrimination did occur.

However, they decided that Pitawanakwat was partly responsible for

her firing — by contributing to an already "poisoned work environment"! The tribunal granted her re-employment, but not in Regina, where she had worked and lived. And they awarded her only two out of eight years' lost pay.

After yet another appeal, the tribunal's ruling was overturned in April 1994 by a federal court. Judge Frederick Gibson wrote that under the Canadian Human Rights Act, Pitawanakwat was clearly discriminated against. The tribunal, by reasoning that she was partly to blame and thus ineligible for reinstatement, was condoning discriminatory behavior. His decision set an important precedent in favor of other public workers pursuing such cases.

Barriers to justice must go. Although Pitawanakwat has settled,

her fight isn't over. Her sexual harassment complaint has never been addressed, and her award falls short of compensating for the toll the battle took on her life and health.

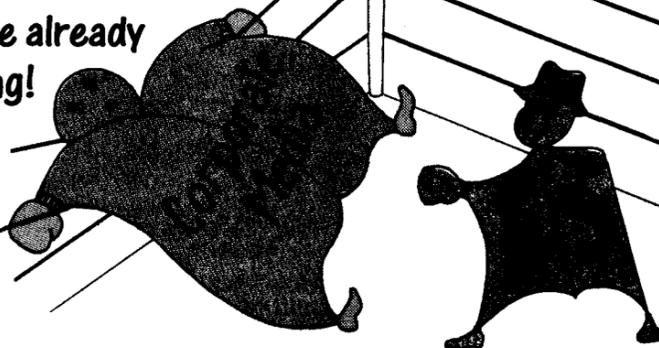
"I've achieved my job back, but at a cost much higher than anyone should be expected to pay," says Pitawanakwat, who developed terminal cancer and lost precious time with her children while engaged in her case. During the same time, she notes, the supervisors who fired her advanced their careers.

She plans to continue to publicize her story as a dramatic illustration of the need for tougher human rights laws and agencies willing to enforce them, so that the perpetrators of discrimination — not their victims — are punished. □

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Editorials

Blood on its hands: U.S. gov't is to blame for plight of Cubans...

NINETY MILES OFF THE COAST of Florida lies one of the globe's last reminders that there's another way to exist, one that's free of anxiety over pink slips, and crime, and homelessness, and the million and one abuses and aggravations caused by living in thrall to the bottom line.

The 30-year U.S. embargo against Cuba is meant to erase this example of socialist striving and workers' cooperation, to re-enshrine the rule of profit and end a giant threat posed by a tiny nation.

The fall of the USSR and the cutting off of Soviet trade with Cuba powerfully abetted this campaign. Cuba is running short of oil, medicine, food, all kinds of consumer products, parts for industry, and, in some quarters, hope.

THOUSANDS OF BALSEROS (rafters) are taking to the sea, seeking a brighter economic future in the very country that denied this to them in their homeland.

But Clinton doesn't want them. Business' pool of cheap reserve labor (otherwise known as the unemployed) is quite full, thank you, and he doesn't want 65,000 refugees rioting in the streets of Miami when they find their prospects are no better here. They're already demonstrating against the scandalous conditions at Guantánamo Bay.

But the biggest problem of the U.S. ruling class isn't the *balseros*, and it isn't even Castro, really, despite the media's morbid fascination with the leader *Time* magazine calls a "master mischief-maker."

THE REAL TORMENT is Cuba's ten million people, the vast majority of whom remain loyal to the revolution and would defend it with their lives. They *are* defending it with their lives.

And they are not alone. Millions of people around the world look to Cuba as a promise still to be fulfilled — endangered but not extinguished.

As part of its tightening the noose around Cuba, the U.S. government is making it harder for people to organize in defense of the island, or even offer a helping hand to individuals there. The bank account of the Freedom to Travel Campaign was frozen; the rights of family members in the U.S. to visit Cuba and send money have been squashed; and drastic restrictions on humanitarian aid are in place.

BUT THE SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT is undaunted. Pastors for Peace is forging ahead with the organizing for its next blockade-busting Friendship of aid in November.

The role that the mobilization in defense of Cuba plays is crucial. The stronger the campaign is, the more the U.S. government is held in check in its machinations against the workers state.

And, as important as that is, perhaps one thing is even more important. The movement keeps Clinton and his cohorts from "disappearing," through lies and censorship, the real facts about Cuba and the light Cuba's existence shines on a different, higher path for humankind the world over. □

...and for desperation of Haitians fleeing junta

HAITI IS THE HEMISPHERE'S poorest country. During the 1700s, however, it was the richest and most lucrative colony in the West.

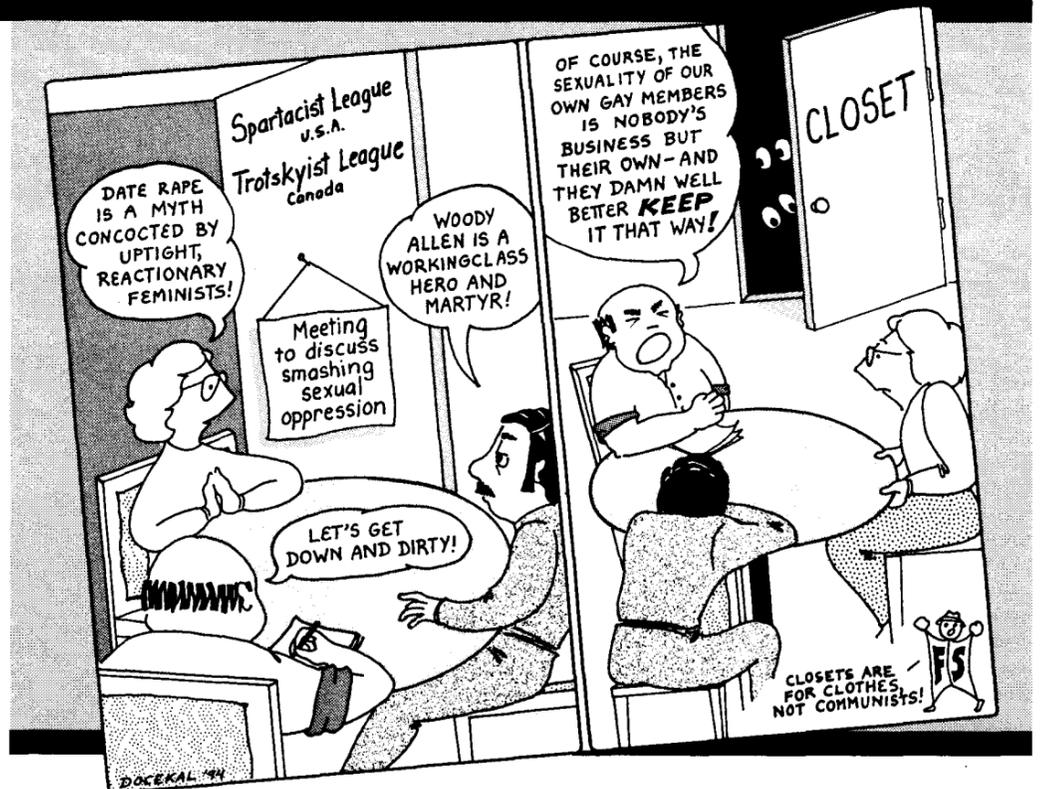
This is a case of cause and effect. Haiti has been bled dry by a succession of foreign powers — most recently, the U.S. The Marines invaded to protect U.S. economic and geopolitical interests in 1915; as we go to press, it looks as though they may be about to land again.

This time the excuse is the need to replace an illegitimate, terrorist military regime. But this pretext is paper-thin, given that the U.S. has never stopped training, sharing intelligence with, and otherwise collaborating with the malevolent junta it officially disclaims.

Whether the U.S. invades or not depends on how the decision-makers calculate the odds; the only thing that bothers them about the inhuman rule of the junta is the possibility that it will provoke mass revolt.

And they have good reason to fear revolution in Haiti, because Haiti's workers and peasants are no passive victims. They defeated Napoleon's fabled army; they pushed out the Marines in 1934; and, while still under the thumb of the U.S.-created Haitian military, swept reformer Jean-Bertrand Aristide into the presidency in 1990.

Aristide is not the answer to Haiti's problems; the workers and peasants who elected him are. It is on *their* account that he must be restored as head of the government — not by sending in U.S./UN troops, but by the U.S. government withdrawing every last iota of financial, political, and military support from its Frankenstein, the Haitian generals. □



Dateline Australia

Activists challenge laws against abortion and homosexuality

BY DEBBIE BRENNAN

Tasmania and New South Wales are hot zones in a war developing in Australia over abortion and the right to be gay. A growing number of feminists and gay activists in these two states are latching on to some new strategies to confront some old injustices.

Battle for legal abortion.

In most Australian states, termination of a pregnancy is a crime. In New South Wales, a woman challenged the abortion ban by suing her doctors for concealing a pregnancy diagnosis from her for nearly five months, thus denying her the choice to abort.

In April, the NSW Supreme Court found against her, ruling that she was claiming the "loss of an opportunity to perform an illegal act."

Their decision contradicts and threatens a 1972 precedent that liberalised anti-abortion policy by setting out conditions under which the practise would be legal. Emboldened by this cue, Right to Life protesters started harassing workers and patients outside a Sydney pre-term clinic, and doctors began advising patients against going ahead with their abortions.

This sorry state of affairs underscores the urgent need for a national campaign to repeal all abortion laws.

Such an effort already exists in Sydney, where feminists so far have focused primarily on lobbying state politicians to initiate a repeal bill and on polemicising against the so-called "conscience vote," which lets members of parliament break from party policy on the issue of abortion.

Gay rights are human rights. In Tasmania, gay rights activists are using legal challenges and civil disobedience to try to overturn the state law against homosexual-

ity — which carries a prison sentence of up to 21 years.

After Australia signed on to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1981, a gay Tasmanian asked the United Nations Human Rights Committee to rule that the anti-gay law violates the pact. In April of this year, the U.N. committee upheld his case, proclaiming unanimously that lesbian and gay rights are basic human rights.

Gay movement organizers used this decision to pressure the federal government to override Tasmania's law, but the government refused to pick up the gauntlet. In August, Cabinet members all agreed to draft a Human Rights Sexual Conduct Bill that will suppos-

family obviously cannot accommodate female independence; neither can it tolerate alternatives to the traditional family, like homosexuality.

Cross-continental epic. The tug-of-war between sexual freedoms and capitalism's needs is international.

In the U.S., where abortion has been legal nationally since 1973, it is only a right on paper for many women. Poor women cannot use federal assistance to pay for abortions; states are allowed to impose broad restrictions; and a terror campaign against clinics and doctors, including murder, has left huge areas of the country without any abortion services.

And state by state, both the pro-choice and gay movements are having to mobilise against rightwing initiatives (referenda) aimed at driving women back to the home and gays back to the closet.

The conservative wing of the feminist movement in the U.S. tries to keep the struggle concentrated on cutting deals with politicians, just like a section of the movement does in Australia. And the U.S. gay movement lacks a cohesive national leadership and program — just like Australia's.

In order to defend reproductive and sexual freedom in both countries, a national push must take place not only in the courts and legislatures but on the job and in the streets.

And the fight can't be left just to women and gays. These are *class* issues, affecting the disabled, youth and elders, indigenous people, people of colour and every worker.

All working people deserve:

- free, safe abortion on demand;
- free, 24-hour child care;
- free, nationalised health-care;
- and an end to discrimination based on sex, sexuality, age, disability, race, national origin, or poverty. □

The defence of reproductive rights and sexual choice should not be left only to women and gays. These are class issues.

edly protect the privacy of consenting adults — but not interfere with Tasmania's law.

Meanwhile, four gay men went to the police with affidavits detailing how their sexual activities breached the criminal code; a lesbian friend turned herself in as an accomplice.

The Tasmanian Attorney General threatened to press charges "if there's enough evidence," but the offenders haven't been hauled in.

The family harnesses women and closets gays. There's a good reason that the family-values onslaught targets both women and gays. Sexism and heterosexism are two halves of the walnut.

The patriarchal family originally developed as a means of passing wealth down through male heirs. It remains essential to capitalism today — as a way of providing for the care of each generation of workers through the unpaid labor of women, for example.

A system dependent on the

Voices of Color

NAFTA: tri-country genocide against indigenous people

BY ANN ROGERS

On New Year's Day this year, the Mayas of Chiapas, Mexico rebelled against the North American Free Trade Agreement. Why? Because its "free trade" policies threaten the inherent rights of the indigenous nations of Mexico, the U.S. and Canada to control their lands and destiny.

NAFTA provides multinational corporations with yet one more weapon in their genocidal war against Native Americans — a tool to abrogate treaties, negate sovereignty, and steal resources necessary for Indian survival.

A cannon aimed by big business. NAFTA was constructed by multinationals and passed into law with the blessing of Republican George Bush and the signature of the "liberal" Democrat Bill Clinton.

It can supersede any Native, federal, or local protections that hinder business' freedom to exploit labor, resources, and markets.

One example of how this will work was demonstrated in 1991 under the rules of the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT, a global pact similar to NAFTA). U.S. environmentalists had succeeded in getting a law passed to ban tuna imports from countries that killed more than 20,000 dolphins annually during tuna catches. Mexico challenged this law as an "illegal restriction on trade," and an international GATT panel ruled in NAFTA's favor.

NAFTA's provisions, designed without input from indigenous peoples, directly conflict with the responsibility the U.S. government has to protect tribal lands and resources.

The legal codes that ensure the Native rights to territory and self-governance will be deemed barriers to foreign corporate investment, just as laws protecting labor and the environment will be, so that mega-companies can appropriate Native lands and the minerals they contain. Like GATT, NAFTA sets up an "independent" tribunal that will decide if a law inhibits free trade.

NAFTA allows multinationals to cross borders unhampered. But it does nothing about racist immigration laws that block indigenous people from following these corporations in search of jobs. It has nothing to say about granting free access across dividing lines to people who belong to Native nations split by the borders of the U.S. with Mexico and Canada, such as the Mohawk and the Colville-Okanagan.

"Free trade" expands the international freedom of capital and the slavery of labor.

Legal theft of Native resources and land. In recent years, Native Americans have succeeded in reclaiming many of their treaty rights. For example, in the U.S., the Puyallup

tribe won a large claim to tidal areas in Washington state that big businesses had stolen from the Indians decades ago and the Indians developed.

NAFTA will make it much harder for indigenous people to win these land claims. In anticipation of the pact's ratification, former President Salinas of Mexico gutted Article 27 of the country's constitution, abolishing the ancient territorial rights and the *ejidos* (communal lands) of the Mayas. This paved the way for non-Native speculators to grab these valuable properties for large cattle, timber, and farming operations, and it forced many of the peasants who were thrown off their lands into the cities, to become a desperate source of cheap labor.

The Free Trade Agreement between the U.S. and Canada, a NAFTA predecessor in effect since 1988, gave the U.S. access to Canadian hydropower and electricity. Now, under NAFTA, Canada cannot reduce the amount of these products it exports to the U.S. unless it reduces its domestic consumption by the same percentage. To supply multinational aluminum industries in Canada and maintain exports to the U.S., hydroelectric projects involving massive dam systems have been built on Native lands in Canada, destroying Native homelands and hunting and fishing resources.

In Quebec, the James Bay project has made the traditional Cree and Inuit ways of life impossible, threatening their survival. In British Columbia, the Kemano project has flooded the Carrier and Cheslatta nations and reduced the Nechako river to a trickle, devastating the dwindling salmon population.

Organizing to stop the assaults. Indigenous peoples are fighting these free-trade-inspired projects, just as they have fought land theft and treaty sabotage for centuries. Many of the affected tribes are currently organizing international protests of the recent round of betrayals.

NAFTA itself was vehemently denounced by many Native organizations (such as the American Indian Movement and the Continental Commission of Indigenous Nations, Organization of Indigenous Peoples, a clear giveaway of indigenous self-determination by the three North American governments. But indigenous people by themselves cannot stop NAFTA, any more than the trade unions or environmentalists can. The separate groups harmed by NAFTA — Native peoples, labor, and ecologists — must come together across national borders to organize as one. We have common goals that can be realized only in an international united front against our common enemy, international big business. □

Ann Rogers, a Seattle feminist and Marxist of Chippewa descent, is a leader in the United Front Against Fascism.



Cree hunter, with geese, is threatened by James Bay hydro project, a NAFTA precursor.

Stuart Franklin



Clara Fraser

Socialism for Skeptics IV: Class — the Power That Heals

MY PREVIOUS COLUMN ENDED BY posing a dilemma: The downtrodden people who need change the most seem to spend their energy sniping at each other, figuratively or for real. A Die-Hard Skeptic (DHS) takes this for granted.

DHS: THE WHOLE GLOBE LOOKS more and more like Rwanda on a bad day. The only way half of the world's citizens can exist side by side is as corpses. People this badly divided will never come together to overthrow the system, no matter how rotten it is.

Me: SURPRISE — UNITY HAPPENS! Sometimes overnight, to the amazement of everybody but Marxists. Solidarity steals onto the stage unannounced. Togetherness is provoked by too-long suppressed fury — fury at the shared whip of maltreatment, the mutual endless years of exploitation, and the common chronic dehumanization and insult.

All of a sudden, when the bosses or the government go one little step too far, an apparently spontaneous eruption occurs. All the workers previously feuding over race and sex/sexuality and religious or national or cultural differences, and the normal menu of ego wars that rage on any job and in any community, coalesce suddenly, caught up in a euphoria of sister/brotherhood forged by a joint reaction to the guys with their heels on *everybody's* necks.

The folks in the plants and fields, in the offices and shops, may not understand this reflex themselves. But it is as inexorable as a law of nature; it is a *social* imperative. As inevitable as night following day, *class* has conquered over all.

Oppression forges resistance in spite of and across the deep chasms separating the resisters. Because when people are galvanized into fighting back, they desperately seek allies, and they sublimate previous antagonisms as they learn to work together in the upsurge against the newly identified real enemy.

This is a fact, not a utopian dream. And this fact is the engine of history.

If fusion *didn't* happen, we wouldn't be here talking about it. How do you think all our vaunted freedoms were won?

The creation of oneness out of division is what produces strikes, mass voter protests, and ultimately revolutions. The essence of human nature — its communal impulse, its fundamental habit of cooperation for survival — reasserts itself over transitory, superficial and reactionary centrifugal forces that break things apart and atomize what used to be melded. Humanity triumphs over its failures and rises to its greatest heights as it seeks justice and relief from apartheid.

Note the triumphant victory over legal affiliation in South Africa. Note, even, the absolute solidarity of the baseball strike, in which players who make five million dollars and players who make \$50,000 are hanging tough together.

And people never forget the thrill of marching hand in hand with comrades they hated only yesterday.

DHS: BUT WATCH WHAT happens after the excitement of the action wears off. Everything reverts to the status quo ante and nothing lasting is achieved. For every anti-war fighter or Black Powerite or racial or sexual liberationist who still has a shred of idealism visible, I can name you twenty who are getting rich peddling barbecue sauce or real estate or new ways to buff your bod.

Me: AHA! BUT THIS IS PRECISELY where the role of a party comes in. When a revolt takes place without a party or ahead of a party or behind the back of a party, you're right: the movement will not endure, huge errors of strategy and tactics will be made, key lessons will not be drawn, and front-line insurrectionists will not grow into leaders for *all* seasons.

Only the revolutionary party can ensure that activists and agitators become political professionals geared and educated for the long haul. Only the party can help the militant strike or sit-in or electoral upheaval take the next leaps forward and aim for state power. Only the party can extend isolated insurgencies into constant, concerted mobilizations for the total re-vamping of society.

Any putative leftist or progressive who sneers at parties and scoffs at vanguards is revealing deep-seated hostility toward revolution and socialism. A transformed reality will not be concocted out of literary documents and good intentions and dreams of paradise, but out of mortals who build an instrument that is capable of organizing the overthrow of the existing government, the creation of a new structure, and the administration of a new course.

A true humanist and visionary needs to embrace the party as the midwife who brings to birth a brave new world.

Okay, you non-believers out there — what stones have I left unturned? Send us your quibbles, quarrels, and questions, by mail or Internet, and let the dialectical dialogue develop! □

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Labor turns up the heat on bosses

Growing anger fuels strikes, sit-ins, and organizing drives

BY LINDA AVERILL

In Collins, Mississippi, at Sanderson Farms poultry-processing plant, employees must get a doctor's note to use the rest room more than three times per week. The mostly Black workforce there recently voted to unionize — becoming part of a trend that saw unionization rise last year, reversing a 14-year fall.

In Decatur, Illinois, at A.E. Staley's corn-processing plant, locked-out workers have walked the picket line since June 1993. Their efforts were bolstered this summer when area workers at Caterpillar and Bridgestone/Firestone also went on strike.

For years the media has trumpeted unionism's decline. Now Labor Secretary Robert Reich is speculating that "labor-management cooperation" will render unions obsolete. But events like the ones above tell another story: U.S. workers have had it, and they're fighting back.

Fed up and fired up. Faced with union-busting bosses, anti-labor laws, and a conservative top leadership unwilling to fight either, labor has taken a beating over the past decade. AFL-CIO officials champion labor-management teamwork as the answer, but the troops are ready to try more militant strategies.

Decatur is one case in point. When Staley locked out 760 workers last year, it meant to force United Paperworkers International Local 7837 to abandon its campaign against poor safety conditions, 12-hour shifts, and gutted grievance procedures. Instead, UPIU dug in. Members have rallied public support, faced down riot police, and organized a national boycott of a Staley

ally, State Farm Insurance.

The city's Caterpillar workers struck in 1992 but were ordered back to work by United Auto Workers' international leadership. Since then, the company has fired scores of union militants and racked up 92 unresolved unfair labor

practices. In June, UAW Local 751 walked out again. In July, they were joined by members of United Rubber Workers, who left their jobs at Firestone over the tire-maker's plans for wage cuts of up to 30 percent and seven-day work-weeks with 12-hour shifts.



Jim West/Impact Visuals

Rick Gerhart/Impact Visuals

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Decatur has become the site of a major employer-worker showdown. Unionists there are standing united, with joint rallies, slogans, even t-shirts.

"Workforce 2000" revitalizes unionism. The change in labor's mood

the action is.

Justice for Janitors, a campaign to unionize predominantly Latino workers, is one of labor's most successful organizing drives in recent history. Black Workers for Justice has won national recognition for uniting the battles for power on the job and racial equality.

Women workers, like the mostly female flight attendants who struck American Airlines in November 1993, are scoring big successes that owe a lot to model public-education efforts. Lesbian and gay unionists have formed a national group to link the struggles of sexual

minorities and labor.

Immigrant workers are bringing a more internationalist perspective to the labor movement. U.S. workers are starting to see their struggles in a global light. United Electrical Workers, for example, has joined with the Frente Auténtico del Trabajo to unionize sweatshops along Mexico's northern border.

All these developments are helping organized labor shed the white, straight, male, and national chauvinisms that have historically played into the employer's game of divide and conquer.

Workers' democracy yes, Democrats no! One other welcome trend is blooming: the push for a labor party.

Throughout the Reagan/Bush era, AFL-CIO honchos kept the ranks pacified by pledging better days under the Democrats. That false promise has since been exposed (yet again) with NAFTA's passage and the defeat of anti-scab legislation. At AFSCME's 1994 international convention in San Diego, officials were confronted with six labor party resolutions.

The Democrats know that their stranglehold on labor's loyalty is loosening. That's why they're working double-time to convince us that plagues like poverty and crime are the results of lost family values, an untrained workforce, or other such myths. The real cause is untrammelled capitalism, allowed by a weak working class movement to have its way with people.

New stirrings in labor's trenches indicate that the time is ripe for a break from the bankrupt policies and pro-Democrat leadership that have reigned during labor's decline. It's up to militants in the movement to encourage labor's renewed feistiness and seize upon the opportunities it will present. □



Sestini/Gamma Liaison

Media mogul and new prime minister Berlusconi governs in alliance with fascists.

BY STEVE HOFFMAN

Economic crisis in Italy has transformed Benito Mussolini's legacy from historical nightmare into present-day reality in the streets and in parliament.

This March, billionaire media mogul Silvio Berlusconi led a three-party coalition to victory in the national elections, bringing Italy its first ultra-right government since the end of World War II.

The amalgam is made up of Forza Italia, Berlusconi's brand-new, heavily bank-rolled electoral machine; the separatist Northern League, which urges more autonomy for the affluent North; and the fascist National Alliance, the direct descendant of Mussolini's party.

New Prime Minister Berlusconi won the election the old-fashioned way: he bought it. His vast control over communications — three TV networks and a glut of film companies

and print ventures, for starters — leaves little room for democratic participation.

Berlusconi's program is re-fired Reaganomics: quick-fix tax cuts, privatization of state enterprises, and slashing of social services, all seasoned with calls for law and order, family values, and tightened borders.

The National Alliance is the coalition's fascist extreme. Intensely nationalistic, they propose that Italy annex parts of Croatia and Slovenia on the Adriatic coast. Parliament member Teodoro Buontempo has lauded the moral code of the "nazi-skins" who have escalated their attacks on immigrants. Party leader Gianfranco Fini, who usually goes out of his way to demonstrate the Alliance's "respectability," recently called Mussolini "the greatest statesman of the century."

No answers from the Left. Italian voters, having been treated to an unending soap opera of government corruption on the part of the Christian Democrats and the Socialists, were looking in any direction for solutions to decades of worsening poverty and unemployment, which has reached 12 percent.

The Left responded by form-

ing its own alliance, including the Democratic Party of the Left (formerly the Communist Party), the Greens, and others. They expected to get votes simply because of people's fear of the fascists.

But for years the Left had surrendered to big business' offensive against wage protections, public ownership, and the so-called welfare state. Their closet was bare of a red flag to wave — or even a pale pink one. Their economic program was indistinguishable from that of the former prime minister and governor of the Bank of Italy,

Carlo Azeglio Ciampi.

The Left failed to campaign on the only real alternative to fascism — namely, socialism — and thus opened the door for the right wing, with its "solution" of a completely free reign for big business.

Take it to the streets. Bill Clinton visited Italy shortly after the vote and gave the new regime his blessing, calling it "committed to democracy."

Not everybody agrees. Ten thousand lesbian and gay rights supporters cascaded through the streets of Rome on July 2 to

protest against the new government. The message of their march is that the targets of fascism have no intention of becoming the victims of a 21st-century Nazi final solution.

It's time for the Left, in Italy and around the world, to get its act together and form a united front capable of stopping the push toward fascism — and making today's Nazi drive the last one in history's book. □

Steve Hoffman is a nine-year veteran of the FS production staff and member of AFSCME Local 304.

Fascist chic: "respectable" heirs of Mussolini elected to office in Italy

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