

Contingent Wage Slaves

By Bernard Bortnick

A recent article in *The Dallas Morning News* ominously entitled “The End Of The Office” described the fragmentation of office work by hiring contract workers, a trend that is surging as unemployment rises. It offers a far-fetched example of some 10,000 people in Kenya who are earning pennies by spending minutes on a cellphone earning as much as “a few dollars a day”(!) providing bits and pieces of information assembled at a location in Boston. These workers are styled “contingent workers” by the US Government Accounting Office which states that as many as a third of the workforce (in the US) has fallen into this category.

This comes as no surprise considering current massive unemployment and the fact that for decades in the industrial and manufacturing sectors companies and corporations have depended upon contract workers for all sorts of tasks, a practice long an irritant to unionized workers who regard them as a potential scab force in labor disputes. Indeed, in the 18th and 19th centuries, manufacturers regularly sought people in the agricultural sectors of capitalism and preyed upon their poverty and vulnerability in order to maximize profits by having piece-work done for rates below the wages paid to regularly hired workers.

In 1995 an enterprising labor lawyer, Sara Horwitz, observing the growing proliferation of “temps” launched the “Freelancers Union,” an organization that ostensibly provides a so-called ‘safety net’ for unemployed office workers who contract their labor power on short term basis. Medical, dental, disability, and life insurance is provided through the “Union” for over 12,000 New York workers and more than 120,000 nationwide.

One thing the F.U. safety net does not offer is a means to insure freelance workers get paid. Sub-contractors are notoriously ignored by firms when it comes to payment for services rendered. Often businesses that resort to contract workers are themselves marginally close to bankruptcy. According to *The Wall Street Journal* 77% of workers have not gotten paid at least once and “worse yet, more companies are trying to renegotiate lower prices with freelancers after work was delivered.” WSJ offers advice on how to get paid ultimately recommending suing the company in small claims court.

According to MIT Sloan School of Management professor Thomas Malone, author of the book *The Future of Work* is a “growing freelance workforce . . . made up of people who see themselves not as having a single job so much as having several at once.” He bases this on an earlier work by Alvin Toffler who promoted the idea of not working for a single corporation or company but having a “portfolio” of jobs. Workers are supposed to juggle these to make ends meet.

Behind such “happy-face” recommendations of pundits, literary careerists, capitalist apologists and professorial dopes is a dire world of poverty, insecurity and misery confronting office workers. Freelance labor is

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Principle or Profits?—

Google's Dispute With China

By Diane Secor

Google recently reported tracing attacks on the Google email accounts of Chinese human rights advocates to Internet hackers in the People's Republic of China (PRC), one of the most notorious police states in the world. Associated Press (Jan 13) reported that Google's dominant shareholders and co-founders, Sergey Brin and Larry Page, boasted that Google may abandon lucrative commercial ties to the PRC, in order to uphold “free speech” and the right to privacy in Internet communications. Brin and Page announced that this Google policy puts “principles before profits.”

However, the evidence strongly suggests that alleged PRC-backed hackers substantially threatened Google's profits. First of all, as reported by *The New York Times* (Jan. 20), Google claimed that PRC-based hackers stole the “crown jewel” of this firm's intellectual property called, the “source code” or “programming instructions.” Google also accused China-based operatives of launching “Trojan horse” attacks on the computer systems of over 24 other companies. *The Christian Science Monitor* (Jan. 25) reported that the PRC officially denied any involvement in these Internet attacks. But Google's accusations are substantiated by a www.dailytech.com report on Jan. 29. Slightly modified versions of the Google search engine and YouTube, an Internet video website, recently appeared in China, as Goojje.cn and YouTube.cn. The PRC regime's intense monitoring of Internet activity makes it very unlikely that Goojje.cn and YouTube.cn were created without the knowledge and consent of the state.

Moreover, Google's profits are affected by PRC Internet attacks on its clients, customers and business partners, who depend on the Google search engine, email accounts and other Internet services. Google has advantages in developing working relationships with the state, as the “executive committee” of America's capitalist class. PRC attacks on U.S. military and related software could weaken U.S. influence in strategic regions of the world and generally undercut U.S. firms in competing for international markets. According to *The New York Times*, James Gosler, a visiting scientist at the National Security Agency, complained when addressing a group at the Pentagon, that U.S. rivals “cheat, lie and steal,” with more highly skilled Internet operatives than the ones that their American counterparts use.

Google has also shrewdly allied itself with more specific U.S. capitalist interests, who claim to be targets of PRC hackers. The oil, gas and related sectors, such as the auto industry, rely on Google's search engine to bring customers to their websites. These companies also use Google's Internet searching and email accounts in internal research and development. Thus their own trade secrets can be compromised by attacks on Google. *The Christian Science Monitor* report stated that the FBI warned Marathon Oil, ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips that their computers have been attacked, quite

possibly by PRC-backed hackers. At risk are secret data, such as passwords, email messages and where key oil deposits may be located. For example, in Nigeria and Angola this information would enable Chinese firms to defeat U.S. competitors in landing oil and gas contracts.

As more nations like China rapidly industrialize, imperialist rivalry becomes more intense and Internet spies become a key factor in competing for world markets, raw materials and cheap labor. Google may have slogans, such as “Don't be evil.” Brin and Page may proclaim that Google puts “principle before profit.” But Google was certainly eager to profit from contracts with PRC despots, until Google's “crown jewels” were threatened. These facts show that Google is no different from any other capitalist entity. Under capitalism, profits override human rights, freedom of speech, or any other “principle.” Idealistic slogans from Google and empty “socialist” rhetoric from the PRC cannot change this reality under capitalism.

‘Globalism’—

U.S.-China Relations a Tangle of Contradictions

By John Houser

The China/U.S. relationship is a tangled web of contradictions.

The growing antagonism between China and the United States is ironically thwarted by world capitalism's growing net of financial interdependency —i.e. “globalism.”

China now holds more than \$1 trillion in U.S. assets, mainly U.S. Treasury bonds. These assets represent money borrowed from China by the United States to sustain the growing deficits required (by the U.S.) to defer economic collapse. Despite the precarious dollar value of these holdings, (given the inflation of the U.S. money supply) China cannot simply dump them on the market (thereby lowering their price) . . . because the value of the Yuan is pegged to the dollar. Nor can she afford to jeopardize the solvency of the United States, which is her main export market, by not continuing to buy U.S. assets. Either option would be disastrous for both countries—with serious international repercussions. Capitalism is confronted by a conundrum of its own making.

Capitalism is ever dynamic and dangerous to the last—even in senescence. Whether the growing contradictions between private (or state) ownership of the tools of production and the socialized labor of the working masses, who have nothing to sell but the ever-reduced value of their own labor power, will result in:

1. A global economic collapse, shocking the working class into accepting its historic revolutionary responsibility.
2. The unthinkable consequence: war, or
3. The establishment of the ultimate police state—already incipient in every devel-

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Letters to the People

FEMA's 'Emergency' Powers

In the March 2010 newsletter Jim McHugh wrote that Hitler didn't have the propaganda media efficiency capitalism has today and that capitalism may have developed beyond the need for neo-fascism. True, the TV media is especially effective at propagandizing U.S. workers into believing that totalitarianism is Marxism. But such propaganda also provides evidence of ruling-class fear of the possibility of a genuine Socialist revolution and working-class takeover of production and distribution.

The capitalist class are aware that technological displacement of labor and outsourcing of American jobs to cheap labor havens is debilitating the working-class living standard. I can remember several years ago that charitable organizations compared statistics revealing that somewhere around 24 million hungry Americans were fed in a single year.

Evidence suggests that the capitalist class doesn't believe that their system of labor exploitation is eternal. Following are examples of what is planned in the event of systematic collapse:

Without congressional or voter approval, President Executive Order Number 12148 created the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). While made to appear as an apparatus to aid the public in an emergency, it's budget reveals something more sinister. Research shows that only about 6 percent of FEMA's budget is used for emergencies. Hidden are vast sums for construction of secret underground bases possibly for civilian control during social unrest. FEMA "emergency" powers include surveillance of citizens, restriction of public gatherings and isolation of large groups of Americans.

In Nazi Germany labor conscription ensured authoritarian control and workers couldn't seek different employment without government permission. Executive Order Number 11,000 gives FEMA similar power over U.S. laborers. Emergency powers include a national citizen registry, confiscation of railroads, public storage units and the relocation of entire communities. Executive Order Number 11921 permits takeover of the means of production, distribution, wages and the flow of bank money.

The ruling-class have been preparing for possible economic collapse for years. Detention facilities stand ready for such an event across America. Most recently Halliburton's Kellogg Brown and Root subsidiary received a \$385 million contract to build such U.S. detention camps.

In the event of social collapse, something equivalent to De Leon's industrial feudalism is likely being set in place and I agree with Jim McHugh that we may be living in "dangerous times". We must never become complacent enough to believe that authoritarianism can't happen in America. Actually such ruling-class reaction should be encouraging to revolutionaries, for history reveals that ruling-class arrogance is a primary ingredient for development of a revolutionary environment. Formation of a nationwide Socialist Industrial Union could eventually arise out of necessity to counter such ruling-class arrogance.

—C. James Matuschka

Some 'Common Sense' For the 21st Century

I recently read some critical articles on the economy on the net and could not help wondering how such writers can endlessly circle a problem without ever seeing its capitalist center. It seems beyond their comprehension that

society could be reorganized along lines of cooperative production for need and use, rather than profit. But if this thin membrane concealing the obvious is ever pierced, I believe society will be awash in the floodwaters of revolution.

Students of the SLP are not limited in this way, but our challenge is greater. How can we dissolve this invisible barrier that both imprisons and blinds the working class?

We stand in the shadow of capitalism's decline. The desperate social need of productive humanity and the survival of planetary life are eclipsed and trampled upon by a desperate ruling class gone mad in its rush for profit.

We know the difficulties we face, but if we cannot at least sustain the intellectual spark, which we hold in trust for humanity, we are failing the martyrs of our socialist past, the future of our children's children and the planet upon which we stand—a failure neither we, nor the world, can afford.

Our weakness as a party is overcome by the strength of the idea we hold. Its power and logic lives in our literature. It is the key that can unlock the mind of the working class, abolish the wages system and change history.

The SLP has flowed and ebbed over its long history; but we too are now in crisis, and when old strategies are no longer effective we must discover new ones.

Could we not extract the socialist meat from our best literature, pamphlet by pamphlet, subject by subject (eliminating out-dated references to forgotten people, incidents of the 1940's, etc.) and bring those principles to bear on the present in a comprehensive and cohesive form?

Gathering the information would require a sustained, but not overwhelming effort. This material could then be organized fairly easily under headings to facilitate its incorporation into the text.

The most pertinent parts of our literature would then be consolidated in a cogent and logical manner, culminating in the SIU concept and incorporated into an attractive booklet or over-size pamphlet—a sort of 21st century version of Tom Paine's *Common Sense*.

Such a book could be self-published inexpensively on the net by Blurb.com and printed for delivery on order as needed. It could also appear digitally on our website; with hard copies in select bookstores.

Successfully accomplishing such a project would require psychological insight and skillful writing. I doubt that a committee could do this effectively, but I think it might succeed as a collaborative effort with the assistance of an SLP advisory board. Not an easy task altogether, but worth the effort, I believe—and we have the talent.

—John Houser

Haiti's 'Humanitarian' Reconstruction

In Comrade Bernard Bortnick's excellent article in the Feb. 2010 *Newsletter*, he demonstrates conclusively, as he stated, that "the quest for imperialist profits in the Caribbean trumps all consideration for human life." Ken Boyte (www.allvoices.com) published two articles, with additional facts, which support Comrade Bortnick's premise: "Garment Industry Targets Haiti for Cheap Labor" and "Multinationals Eye Haiti's Oil, Natural Resources."

Is the profit motive, in the quest for markets, cheap labor, and raw materials, the real driving force behind these "humanitarian" campaigns under capitalism? President Obama paraded former U.S. Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush as paragons of virtue in organizing fund-raising for "humanitarian relief" for Haiti's earthquake vic-

tims, with the Clinton Bush Haiti Fund. [1] In addition to what Comrade Bortnick wrote about the history of U.S. and European military intervention in Haiti, Obama also sent the U.S. Marines to Haiti, ostensibly to coordinate this "humanitarian relief" after this earthquake last January. But, according to the first Boyte article, Haiti is among the countries with the cheapest labor in the world, which has lured the Soros Development Fund. [2] Reportedly, as U.N. Special Envoy to Haiti, Clinton has brokered deals with Soros investment groups, the Haitian Mevs clan's WINS conglomerate, and foreign textile and agricultural firms to exploit Haiti's pool of cheap labor. For instance, in October 2009, Gap, Levi Strauss, and American Eagle Outfitters were among many corporations represented at a Clinton and Inter-American Development Bank-led conference in Port-au-Prince for investors. Last January this earthquake demolished major infrastructure and disrupted these Clinton-Soros-WINS schemes. Then none other than William Jefferson Clinton "volunteered" to lead in "rebuilding" Haiti!

The second Boyte article provides additional reasons for this Clinton Bush Haiti Fund and the U.S. military's "humanitarian" mission in Haiti. [3] The Bush clan's ties to the U.S. oil industry have been a matter of public record for years. Haiti also is of strategic value in securing the raw materials of the Caribbean region. French and other sources have reported on a key oil reservoir in Haiti by the source of the River Thomonde, as well as another oil deposit in the Dominican plain of Azua. Moreover multinational firms reportedly have designs on Haiti's plentiful gold deposits and minerals useful to the nuclear industry, such as iridium, uranium, and zirconium. These capitalist interests clearly have major stakes in the "reconstruction" of Haiti's basic infrastructure, such as in transportation and port facilities, some of which is controlled by the WINS Group.

—Diane Secor

Globalism . . .

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oped or developing capitalist country—is unanswerable.

But we do know that Democratic, Industrial Socialism, as ultimately determined by the working class, is the solution. As we struggle to understand and analyze changing events in the world we must also deal with how to strengthen and improve our outreach. The solution is useless without the working class and the working class is helpless without the solution. Our task is to unite these two elements into one overpowering force. The question is not If? but how?

. . . Wage Slaves

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nothing more than disguised unemployment. The fact is that once reductions are made in office staffs, companies resort to the increased productivity that reduced staffs afford who are in turn pressured to take up the slack. To look for rehiring those bumped into the street is a fantasy although they can be exploited in the "cottage-office" capacity reminiscent of practices in the distant past. Capitalists like a large army of unemployed available to pressure and virtually crack the whip over those that are still employed. Only overturning the whole system and establishing production for use and democratic control of industry and office as advocated by the SLP can open up the promising vistas of future work and life.