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the People

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'American Justice'?

George Will was astonished by something President Bush said in his State of the Union address on Jan. 28. Will expressed his astonishment on ABC-TV's postspeech show, where he and several other pundits sat around a table ready to give their opinions of the speech. But time was short, and Will had only a moment at the tail end of the show to express his surprise.

Will used that moment to recite a passage from the president's speech, a passage he punctuated with deliberate inflections of his voice to emphasize his surprise.

"To date," Will quoted, "we've arrested or otherwise dealt with... various terrorists. 'All told, more than 3,000 suspected terrorists have been arrested in many countries' and 'many others have met a different fate....'"

Then, as time ran out, Will quickly added: "The astonishing thing is that the president of the United States, in calculated icy language, is saying we are tracking them down one at a time—and killing them."

What did Will find astonishing about this presidential confession? Was it that the United States is "tracking...down" suspected terrorists "and killing them" in cold blood? Was it that the president's "cold icy language" made it clear that the president knows about, approves of and condones this cold-blooded killing? Was it that the president identified this "tracking them down one at a time—and killing them" as "American justice"? Or was it that the president would confess such a thing publicly for the whole world to hear?

Will did not say. There was no time. Host Peter Jennings intervened and said: "Thank you all. I realize it is, as always, brief..."

Will, however, had all the time and space he needed to explain his astonishment in his syndicated column for Jan. 29. He called it "Struggle in the Shadows," and wrote:

"Having flourished the bouquet of policy posies expected in State of the Union addresses, the president made an abrupt rhetorical turn. With words as spare and pointed as an ice pick, he told Americans that killers were being killed, one at a time.

"Key al Qaeda commanders have been arrested 'or otherwise dealt with.' And although more than 3,000 suspected terrorists have been arrested in many countries, 'many others have met a different fate' and 'are no longer a problem.'

"This necessarily oblique reference to the worldwide struggle in the shadows is pertinent to the problem the president has in presenting his case for invading Iraq."

Will did not say if he approved or disapproved. He was no less "oblique" than the president had been. The president may have

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More Than Oil at Stake In Dispute With Iraq

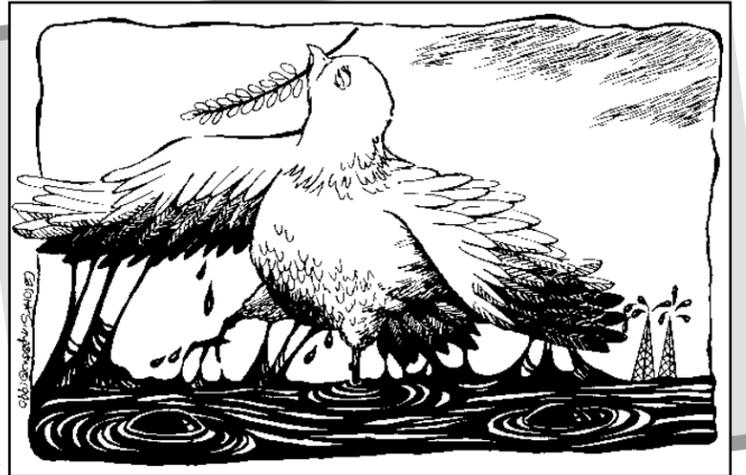
Bush Shows Contempt for Growing Antiwar Movement

Millions of Americans oppose the Bush administration's determination to wage war on Iraq, and they are speaking out. Their slogans make it clear that they believe that Iraq's oil is at the bottom of the Bush administration's warmongering. They do not want men, women and children slaughtered to make the Middle East safe for American oil companies. They have joined the antiwar movement in the belief that their opinions count and that their voices will be heard. They believe that public sentiment will be enough to deter the administration and to stop the war before it starts.

The Socialist Labor Party also opposes the administration's war plans. Indeed, the SLP has stood up and spoken out against every war since the 1890s.

The SLP, however, knows from experience that public sentiment has little influence on the foreign policy decisions of the government. History shows that similar movements preceded every major war of the 20th century, but succeeded in stopping none. Even

now some within and close to the Bush administration are advising the president to ignore the massive antiwar sentiment, presumably on the theory that it will



Carol * Simpson

disintegrate once the bombs start to fall. "Mr. Bush's advisers are telling him to ignore them [the demonstrations] and forge ahead, as are some leading prowar Republicans." (*The New York Times*, Feb. 17)

President Bush has taken that advice. He has

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Joblessness Booming in Texas

By B.B.

"The last cause of all real crises always remains the poverty and restricted consumption of the masses as compared to the tendency of capitalist production to develop the productive forces in such a way, that only the absolute power of consumption of the entire society would be their limit."

—Karl Marx, *Capital*

Unemployment is rising across the country, Texas not excepted. Much of the increase in unemployment nationally comes from the manufacturing sector, where massive layoffs occur with increased frequency. That holds true for Texas also; and despite efforts by the Federal Reserve to "stimulate" capitalist investment by reducing interest rates, some capitalist economists are thinking that the recent losses may be permanent.

From March 1992 to September 1998, Texas manufacturing companies reportedly added 147,000 jobs to their operations. The total of manufacturing jobs topped out at 1.11 million at the height of the "boom," just shy of the state record of 1.13 million reached in September 1981. However, 82 percent of the manufacturing jobs added during the 1990s have already disappeared.

"Texas has lost all but 26,600 of the manufacturing jobs it had added during the economic boom, according to the latest figures from the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas," the *Dallas Morning News* reported recently. "And with few signs of any rebound in hiring, the number could drop further."

Some capitalist economists think that lost manufacturing jobs will never come back. "Our economy is shifting to one in which the highest value is services," said Lori Taylor, a senior economist with the Federal Reserve Bank in Dallas. "I am not looking for manufacturing to be an employment growth center."

Taylor's skepticism is ironic. After all, the Federal Reserve has lowered interest rates to a 40-year low of 1.25 percent precisely to "stimulate" the economy. The theory is that the reduction of this rate will induce capitalists to borrow more to invest in plants and equipment, and thus create jobs. Capitalists, however, have not responded in the expected way. Manufacturing plants continue to slow down, close down and shed themselves of unwanted, because not needed, workers.

The idea that capitalist crises can be overcome by lowering interest rates to make credit

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Sick Days Under Attack

Are you employed by a company that claims to offer the "benefit" of sick days off? About 84 percent of companies reportedly do. But that doesn't mean you actually get to take the sick days they offer—or that you should if you value your job.

"Employees who do that [take sick days] too often might be fired," according to an article in the Feb. 7 issue of *USA Today*.

In its most recent study, CCH Inc., which *USA Today* calls a "human-resources information provider," shows that U.S. employees who ostensibly have sick days available are allotted, on average, 8.8 sick days per year.

They only use, on average, 4.7 days. But even that is apparently too much for many U.S. employers. According to the *USA Today* article, "Employee absences have become such an epidemic that companies are going on the defensive."

Going on the offensive is more like it. Use of the sick-day "benefit" is increasingly an issue in job performance reviews, and some companies are cutting down the number of sick days allowed before an employee is fired. Other companies pay a small bonus for those not taking the sick days allotted to them.

Regardless of the means a company uses to cut back on the use of sick days, the message to workers is clear: "Don't get sick, and if you do, come to work anyway, you lazy bum!"

United Airlines Executives Propose New Company

When United Airlines filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy reorganization in December, many workers voiced concerns that the court proceedings might become a tool to bust the airline unions—whose members ostensibly "owned" the company. Industry analysts claimed the company—or rather, the executives and bankers that run it—would probably not move too rapidly in that direction because bankruptcy law requires an attempt at negotiation, and the workers' rejection of the "offer," before court-ordered cuts can take place.

The workers may be more on the mark than the analysts. The company had not publicly revealed details of its reorganization plan by press time, but unions for both UAL pilots and flight attendants were already aware that UAL executives are "going for the throat" of the unions.

In a letter to the membership of the Air Line Pilots Association at United, the chairman of its United chapter wrote that executives had proposed "giving away some of our most modern narrow-bodies to another company and allowing that company to operate a large part of the United network with non-United [nonunion] employees," as *The New York Times* reported. Flight attendants received a letter from their union stating that "United was proposing to shift 20 percent to 40 percent of its flights and workers to the new carrier." The new company would reportedly operate with different "pay scales, work rules and seniority rights."

United had already announced that it wanted its five unions to concede \$2.4 billion a year for five years.

According to one observer, the company's approach "increases the probability that the whole thing goes to a meltdown in Chapter 7."

That may be exactly what the financiers and capitalists that run the "employee owned" company want. Faced with vast overcapacity and billion-dollar losses in the airline industry, they may just want to take their money

and run. If not, they certainly seem willing to risk that in putting the gun of economic necessity to the unions' head.

Ex-Police Commissioner Named To Head Longshoremens Union

Associated Press reported on Jan. 30 that "a former New York City police commissioner was appointed...to take over a New Jersey-based union that prosecutors said was corrupted by mob influence." "U.S. District Judge John S. Martin Jr.," the report continued, "designated Robert McGuire to guide Local 1588 of the International Longshoremens Association" away from the racketeering and association with mobsters the union had reportedly become involved in.

Any expectation that things will be made better for the union members with a cop instead of a robber at the head of the union are, however, doomed to dismal failure. Not only is there the question of who might have the better mob connections, there is something more fundamental.

Corruption in these unions is only natural, for corruption has its roots in the premises upon which procapitalist unionism rests. The labor bureaucrat may be honest or dishonest, but the very premise upon which they operate—that there are common interests between the capitalist class and the working class and that the process of exploitation is acceptable—sets up a fundamentally corrupt environment that soon corrupts the most honest labor chieftain.

The fact that some of these labor lieutenants of the capitalist class have embraced mobsters, thugs, racketeers and other schemers to further their own interests and enhance their power is simply an additional and incidental, though consistent, act of corruption.

The rank and file's lack of understanding of the class struggle and of the true mission of unionism—the emancipation of the working class from exploitation and the abolition of capitalism—is the real starting point of corruption and bureaucratization.

State control of the unions cannot solve this problem, although it may help grease the skids for a more totalitarian society in which unions are so encumbered by repressive controls that no real union fighting for working-class interests is possible. Mechanical measures intended to foster democracy in unions whose basic tenets are diametrically opposed to working-class interests are inherently useless. Only the workers themselves can build real democracy and an incorruptible adherence to working-class interests in the unions.

—K.B.

...Texas

(Continued from page 1)

easier for capitalists is absurd. Marx anticipated and debunked the theory long ago.

"In the crisis itself," he noted, "when every one has things to sell, cannot sell them, and yet must sell them, if he would secure means of payment, it is not the mass of the unemployed and investment seeking capital, but rather the mass of capital tied up in his process of reproduction, that is greatest just when the lack of credit is most felt (and the rate of discount highest in banking credit). The hitherto invested capital is then, indeed, unemployed, because the process of reproduction lags. Factories are closed, raw materials accumulate, finished products swamp the market as commodities. Nothing is more erroneous, therefore, than to blame a scarcity of productive capital for such a condition. It is precisely at such times that there is a superabundance of productive capital, partly so far as the normal, but temporarily contracted, scale of reproduction is concerned, partly with regard to the paralyzed consumption." (*Capital*)

Obviously! Why should capital be invested in plant and equipment when throughout the country a huge complex of factories lie idle? What lunacy is behind such recommendations?

Joblessness is booming in Texas and nationwide because the irrational system we live under denies the producers—the working class—the full value of what they produce. Socialism's promise is that all the industries and services will be collectively owned and democratically organized to conduct production—not for the profit of a few but for the benefit of all. Socialism will eliminate involuntary unemployment and all other social ills created by capitalism.

Do You Belong?

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

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

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

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What's a Worker's Life Worth?

By Bruce Cozzini

What is a life worth? Federal regulators have been putting dollar values on lives in cost-benefit analyses for years. Now, if you are 70 or older, yours is being devalued. The White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has told the Environmental Protection Agency to discount the value of your life to 63 percent of a younger person's life in its cost-benefit studies of antipollution regulations. A report by Seth Borenstein in the *San Jose Mercury News* of last Dec. 22 provided some of the details.

According to Borenstein, the question asked by cost-benefit analysis is "if a regulation would cut pollution enough to extend an older person's life, how much would that be worth in dollars, compared with what it would cost the polluter to comply? How many lives would be saved overall, old and young?" To answer such a question it is necessary to place a monetary value on the "benefit," in this case, the health or life of workers in an industry or the general population (also workers).

Researchers and capitalist government regulators perform the cynical task of assigning the value. They often use surveys, such as one cited by Borenstein, that studied workers' attitudes toward occupational risk. The researchers asked workers how much they would pay to reduce the risk of death. They found "no significant difference between old and young" workers surveyed. "You could just as well say life becomes more precious the more you enjoy it, and you don't really want to

cash in your chips," one researcher said. The OMB based its 63 percent discount rate for the elderly on a 20-year-old British survey that, according to its author, is out of date and does not apply to the United States.

The motivation behind all cost-benefit analysis is to control the costs of complying with regulations. Thus devaluation of the life of an older person allows the government to apply weaker rules at lower cost to industry. An apologist for this callous approach rationalized it on grounds

of "limited resources." "If you are extending a life by a year or six months, that's less important than extending a life by 30 or 40 years," said Cass Sunstein, a law professor at the University of Chicago.

Environmentalists and liberal politicians object, as might be expected. One, quoted by Borenstein, characterizes the approach as "a pretext to cut the value of health and safety standards in order to protect industries." Another calls it "faulty science based on bad facts." But they do not object to the underlying assumptions behind cost-benefit analysis, which balances arbitrarily determined values of human life against perceived costs to industry.

The entire idea behind cost-benefit analysis is backwards if we analyze it from a working-class perspective. Capitalists benefit by cutting costs on workplace safety by not protecting workers from hazardous equipment or materials. Likewise they profit by uncontrolled use of the air and water in our environment as a sewer for disposal of industrial and chemical wastes. The cost is to the health and lives of workers and their families.

The injustice is that capitalists, apart from exploiting the labor of workers, can use their power in the political system to assign a value to workers' lives.

By setting the value of the lives of workers over 70 at 63 percent of that of younger workers they are adding insult and injury to the years of exploitation they have suffered in their productive years.



Capitalism's Version of 'Socialized Medicine'

By Donna Bills

"It was capitalism's version of socialized medicine," said James Van Vliet, a retired Bethlehem Steel vice president. "And it was an implied contract. It was the company and the workers saying, 'We are going to take care of each other.'"

The Associated Press (AP) quoted Van Vliet in an article circulated on Feb. 10. The "implied contract" that the former steel executive referred to was one in which steelworkers, after decades of arduous and life-endangering work, retired with what they thought were secure pensions and virtually cost-free health care for themselves and their families.

Bethlehem Steel benefited hugely from that arrangement for years until the uncertainties of "the marketplace" caused it to lose out to competitors. It has declared bankruptcy and is seeking to sell what remains to International Steel Group. Until recently, those Bethlehem Steel workers lucky enough to have survived

years of work in the steel mills and make it to retirement felt secure with their retirement dole and Bethlehem's "socialized medicine," as secure as the emphysema and cancer that years of exposure to poisonous materials Bethlehem also gave them would allow.



"We, the old-timers, were part of the industrial revolution," said an 81-year-old quoted by AP. "And now, we are part of the medical revolution. We have the emphysemas, we have the cancers. We have everything."

"Everything," that is, except the retirement "benefits" that were their "reward." For now it appears that the "implied contract" is unraveling, and what little pension and health benefits the steelworkers got is slated to be drastically reduced.

In December "Bethlehem Steel's pension fund was underfunded by \$3.2 billion and would be turned over to a government agency," the AP reported. Now the company wants "approval to terminate health and life insurance benefits for 95,000 retired workers and their dependents March 31" as an inducement for International Steel Group to buy up remaining assets.

Yes, efforts are afoot to preserve something for

Bethlehem's aged workers. What crumbs may be rescued will likely be woefully inadequate to their needs and an insult and affront to them.

There was no report of how Bethlehem Steel's board members, executives, lawyers and the like are faring since the company collapsed. But, then, the news was about those who lose and not those who don't.

Van Vliet hit the nail on the head—Bethlehem Steel was "capitalism's version of socialized medicine." America's workers can't act soon enough to end a system responsible for such cruelty.

Reform or Revolution

An address by Daniel De Leon

De Leon makes clear why reform may be logical at one stage of social development, while at another it may be the worst of criminal nonsense.

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By Daniel De Leon

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Two Tragedies

The news coverage given to two recent tragedies offers a study in contrasts that imparts a lesson on capitalist ethical standards. Both calamities—the disintegration of the Columbia space shuttle and a fatal explosion at a pharmaceutical factory in North Carolina—involved horrible multiple deaths. Yet the media gave short shrift to the factory disaster and the lives it snuffed out while it is still busy romanticizing the lives of the Columbia astronauts.

The Jan. 29 explosion at the West Pharmaceutical Services plant in Kinston, N.C.—a factory that only months earlier was fined a measly \$10,000 by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration for safety violations—killed three workers instantly and injured at least 37. One more worker later died of injuries sustained in the blast or the inferno that followed, and at press time nine remained hospitalized in critical condition, hanging onto life. The blast made the national media for a day or two, but was generally relegated to the back pages or a few short news bites.

Such short shrift is quite natural in a system where the means of information and communication are almost exclusively privately owned and controlled and operated, not in the interests of truth and objectivity, but in the profit interests of their owners. According to official figures for 2001, the latest available, more than a hundred deaths and tens of thousands of injuries occur *weekly* in U.S. workplaces. Yet rarely, if ever, are these tragic deaths and injuries accorded the kind of space and prominence the major media reserve for the sensational murders, crimes and romanticized tragedies they are so fond of reporting.

It takes no conspiracy to maintain this consistency. As the Republican politician and newspaper editor William Allen White noted of the major media of his time during the last century, “The owners of newspaper investments, whether they be bankers, stockholders of a corporation, or individuals, feel a rather keen sense of financial responsibility, and they pass their anxiety along to newspaper operatives whether these operatives be superintendents known as managing editors, foremen known as city editors, or mere wage earners known as editorial writers, copydesk men, reporters, or what not. The sense of property goes thrilling down the line. It produces a slant and a bias that in time becomes—unconsciously and probably in all honesty—a prejudice against any man or any thing or any cause that seriously affects the right, title, or interest of all other capital, however invested.”

That slant and bias is what determines whether stories about rising unemployment and poverty, occupational deaths and injuries—or about murders and horrendous crimes and other sensationalized reports get the “top of the news.”

It is the reason why the Feb. 1 disintegration of the space shuttle Columbia, which killed all seven aboard, galvanized capitalism’s leading defenders in the media. Rather than a paucity of information, as in the case of the deaths of the Kinston, N.C., workers, yards of copy have been produced on every front page on the Columbia tragedy. Every network is replete with background stories on the lives of each and every one of the astronauts killed.

Like the deaths of those aboard the Challenger in 1986, those of the astronauts aboard the Columbia have been repeatedly portrayed as a chance occurrence that all “pioneers” realize they may face in exploring the unknown for the benefit of humanity.

Of course, NASA’s shuttle program—like the whole U.S. space effort—was never intended to serve the interests of science and humanity.

It is designed, first and foremost, to strengthen U.S. military and intelligence capabilities, to help stimulate the crisis-ridden U.S. economy like all other military spending, to find new sources of raw materials, and to research and implement new manufacturing and communications processes for the benefit of U.S. capitalists.

The shuttle program has another attribute that helped thrust it to the forefront of the U.S. space effort. Human space flight—with its risks and occasional deaths—provides just the right fodder for the chauvinistic expressions of national pride the ruling class and its defenders in the major media use to obscure the real nature of the U.S. space program. It helps divert workers’ attention from the earthly social, economic and environmental problems created by capitalism.

The deaths of those aboard both ill-fated flights, while not intentional, served capitalism well. They do so precisely because, as sensationalized news, they help keep the minds of workers diverted from the daily savagery of the capitalist system that routinely produces the likes of the Kinston tragedy virtually every day here on Earth.

—K.B.

A De Leon Editorial

War and Peace

Ruling classes are not always united on questions of war and peace. History shows that conflicting interests on the field of “business” often divide ruling classes on such crucial questions. It also shows that both sides to the controversy appeal to the working class for support.



International Arbitration

(The People, March 7, 1897)

The Arbitration Treaty, like a strong fire under a big pot of dirty water, has boiled to the surface all the lightweights whose mission in life is to serve as makeweights for the ruling class. These lightweight makeweights are just now hustling to get up mass meetings to urge the “peaceful settlement of international disputes.”

When two competing capitalist concerns, inside of one and the same country, decide upon war or peace between themselves they do not proceed upon any abstract principle of ethics, religion or morality. War, that is to say, a more fierce cutthroat competition, or peace, that is to say, a pooling of their joint interests, is decided on upon the matter-of-fact principle of dollars and cents. If both can see more money in “peace,” they fall in each other’s arms and become partners, fellow stockholders or the like; if both, or either can see more money in “war,” the competitive hostilities are resumed with ardor. As with individual capitalist concerns, so with capitalist nations.

The governments of capitalist nations are essentially executive committees of politically successful capitalist interests in each. Each is looking out to sell its own goods, and smoke the other or all others out of the world’s markets. These capitalist governments are nothing but “business” heads. The principles that guide individual business heads, guide also national ones. If a dispute arises—and all their disputes can be boiled down to the level of the disputes that arise between individual competitors—these governments, whatever their pretenses, decide upon war or peace according as war or peace may bring more money.

But capitalism, united though it is against labor, is still very much of a house divided against itself. All the capitalist interests of any one country never are at any one time in control of the political powers, except upon labor questions; on such questions they are all “in it.” Gold bugs and silver bugs, protectionists and free traders, prohibitionists and free rumists—all these warring capitalist interests will ever be found united to administer the rifle diet to the working class. Upon their own specialized interests the capitalists of any country are split up. Thence it will happen that sometimes one set and then another is in political power, and the set that happens to be on top politically runs things to suit its own business interests. The effect of this upon the attitude of each of these sets on the question of international peace or war is interesting to the watchful, though it upsets the lightweights.

If, at a given time, the capitalist interests that happen to be in political power see more dollars and cents in war with their foreign competitors, they invoke “patriotism” to their aid: Brutus and Patrick Henry pale before them; “the flag” becomes their symbol and the gun their weapon.

Simultaneously, however, with such outbursts of “patriotism,” one will regularly perceive a counter outburst of sanctimoniousness. The capitalist inter-

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what is socialism?

Socialism is the collective ownership by all the people of the factories, mills, mines, railroads, land and all other instruments of production. Socialism means production to satisfy human needs, not, as under capitalism, for sale and profit. Socialism means direct control and management of the industries and social services by the workers through a democratic government based on their nationwide economic organization.

Under socialism, all authority will originate from the workers, integrally united in Socialist Industrial Unions. In each workplace, the rank and file will elect whatever committees or representatives are needed to facilitate production. Within each shop or office division of a plant, the rank and file will participate directly in formulating and implementing all plans necessary for efficient operations.

Besides electing all necessary shop officers, the workers will also elect representatives to a local and national council of their industry or service—and to a central congress representing all the industries and services. This all-industrial congress will plan and coordinate production in all areas of the economy. All persons elected to any post in the socialist government, from the lowest to the highest level, will be directly accountable to the rank and file. They will be subject to removal at any time that a majority of those who elected them decide it is necessary.

Such a system would make possible the fullest democracy and freedom. It would be a society based on the most primary freedom—economic freedom.

For individuals, socialism means an end to economic insecurity and exploitation. It means workers cease to be commodities bought and sold on the labor market and forced to work as appendages to tools owned by someone else. It means a chance to develop all individual capacities and potentials within a free community of free individuals.

Socialism does not mean government or state ownership. It does not mean a state bureaucracy as in the former Soviet Union or China, with the working class oppressed by a new bureaucratic class. It does not mean a closed party-run system without democratic rights. It does not mean “nationalization,” or “labor-management boards,” or state capitalism of any kind. It means a complete end to all capitalist social relations.

To win the struggle for socialist freedom requires enormous efforts of organizational and educational work. It requires building a political party of socialism to contest the power of the capitalist class on the political field and to educate the majority of workers about the need for socialism. It requires building Socialist Industrial Union organizations to unite all workers in a classconscious industrial force and to prepare them to take, hold and operate the tools of production.

You are needed in the ranks of Socialists fighting for a better world. Find out more about the program and work of the Socialist Labor Party and join us to help make the promise of socialism a reality.

Bush's 'Plan' Can't Solve Growing Homelessness

By Ken Boettcher

Rising homelessness is a growing concern for the U.S. working class after over two years of recession and the beginning of a new "jobless recovery." On the minds of many is the subject of what can be done to address the problem.

Unemployment has leaped by at least 50 percent since November 2000, even by official figures, but housing prices are still at or near historic highs. *Time Magazine* recently observed that "the number of homeless appears to be at its highest in at least a decade in a wide range of places across the United States." Statistics cited by *Time* also show that the fastest growing segment of the homeless population is composed of families.

In his State of the Union address, President George Bush claimed that a goal of his administration was "to apply the compassion of America to the deepest problems of America," including homelessness.

Yet the administration's plan, according to sources cited in the *Time* article, is to target only the most visible segment of the homeless—the disheveled and sometimes malodorous street dwellers found most offensive by detractors of the homeless. Reports have it that even the funding for this approach is mostly a shell game.

The plan is, ostensibly, to find permanent housing for the "chronic homeless"—those helpless cases, usually the mentally ill, substance abusers or very sick—who will probably be homeless for life." According to a study cited by *Time*, this segment takes up 50 percent of beds in temporary shelters each year, while making up only 10 percent of the homeless population. Getting them permanently off the street would decrease homeless traffic around temporary shelters by half and cost much less than putting this 10 percent up in temporary shelters, which can average as much as \$1,800 a month per person in some cities.

The other 90 percent of the homeless—more than 35 percent of whom *Time* says are members of families—"will have to weather the storm in a shelter, if it can be built fast enough." Yet temporary shelters are *not* being built fast enough, and the administration's plans reportedly may involve robbing funds from temporary shelters to benefit permanent housing for the chronic homeless—if overall funding levels aren't actually cut.

No matter what happens, it is important for workers to understand that homelessness simply cannot "go away" under capitalism. There are economic factors that deem this impossible—factors that cannot be overcome by compassion, even if the ruling class had any, nor by throwing billions of dollars at the problem, if it was so inclined. Neither can they be overcome by working-class volunteers—who have

plenty of compassion but few resources—working within the constraints of a capitalist economy.

Aid for the homeless or to agencies ostensibly acting in their interest can no more permanently halt homelessness or lift the poor out of poverty than all the other "urban renewal" or "antipoverty" programs that have historically served to line the pockets of business owners and landlords rather than bring jobs and prosperity to the poor. Past failures prove the point—but historical evidence, while useful, is not essential to prove that any such program is doomed to failure. Economic facts do the job nicely.

tending to be higher in more developed countries.

If the cost of production of labor power goes down due to cheaper availability of the necessities of life, decreased educational requirements in industry, an increase in supply of labor power, a decrease in the demand for labor power or changes in historical standards, etc., the price of labor power will go down. Conversely, if the cost of production of labor power goes up, wages will go up.

Aid to the poor and homeless, while more humane than letting them die from exposure to the elements, therefore cannot be a permanent solution to homelessness, or for that matter to hunger or poverty in general. It can only affect such problems temporarily.

As Frederick Engels wrote in *The Housing Question* in 1872:

"Every reduction in the cost of production of labor power, that is to say, every permanent price reduction in the worker's necessities of life is equivalent 'on the basis of the iron laws of political economy' to a reduction in the value of labor power and will therefore finally result in a corresponding fall in wages.

"...What has been said above applies to all so-called social reforms which aim at saving or cheapening the means of subsistence of the worker. Either they become general and then they are followed by a corresponding reduction of wages, or they remain quite isolated experiments, and then their very existence as isolated exceptions proves that their realization on a general scale is incompatible with the existing capitalist mode of production."

Whether one looks at objective history or the economic laws that drive the contradiction-ridden capitalist system of production for private profit, it is crystal clear that capitalism is utterly incapable of permanently

halting growing homelessness, hunger and poverty. In the long run, it is only capable of reproducing those problems and compounding them as every improvement to the means and methods of production and every new depression tosses more workers out of their jobs and into poverty.

It is equally clear today, more than ever, that the means exist for abolishing poverty, hunger and homelessness forever. Vast numbers of workers are unemployed and underemployed. Nearly 25 percent of the nation's industrial capacity, and much of its agricultural capacity, lies idle. The labor of millions of workers and much industrial capacity are wasted on producing shoddy, unnecessary or even harmful commodities. Workers have but to organize politically and economically to abolish capitalism and bring these immense resources, and the resources that are still in use, under the control of a collectively owned, democratically administered socialist society to banish these social plagues from human society.



Sam Bortnick for *The People*

One of the primary economic facts that all such attempts to deal with poverty fail to take into account is the commodity status of labor under capitalism and the economic contradictions set in motion by the exploitation of wage labor by the capitalist class. Necessarily so, since taking them into account would require the repudiation of the capitalist system itself by the politicians and other defenders of capitalism who come up with such programs.

Under capitalism, the labor power of workers is a commodity, purchased by capitalists according to the economic laws that dictate the purchase price of any other commodity. What determines the value of a commodity is the amount of socially necessary labor time required for its production, including the amount of labor time required for the production of the machinery, facilities and materials used in production. In the long run, the price of a commodity is equivalent to its value, but in the short run prices are modified by supply and demand.

For workers, this means that the value of their labor power is equivalent to the cost of the necessities of life—food, clothing and shelter, in amounts necessary not only to furnish reasonably healthy workers for the capitalist class but also to allow the reproduction of similarly healthy future workers—plus the costs of transportation, education enough to meet the requirements of the capitalist class, and so on. The price of labor power—wages—is modified by supply and demand and by historical standards in any given country, with wages

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...More Than Oil at Stake

(Continued from page 1)

already expressed his contempt for the antiwar movement. "Size of protest, it's like deciding, 'Well I'm going to decide policy based on a focus group,'" he said after the demonstrations on Feb. 15.

The president also expressed his contempt for democracy. "Democracy is a beautiful thing," he said. "People are allowed to express their opinion, and I welcome people's right to say what they believe." In short, the beauty of "democracy" is that it allows people to blow off steam.

Credit where credit is due. President Bush understands that opinion does not decide policy.

President Bush did not mention Saddam Hussein by name in his State of the Union address on Jan. 28. He did not mention oil. But he referred to both when he said: "A brutal dictator, with a history of reckless aggression, with ties to terrorism, with great potential wealth, will not be permitted to dominate a vital region and threaten the United States."

The "vital region" is the Middle East, of course, and oil is what makes it vital. American capitalism's dependence on foreign oil sources has grown steadily since the end of World War II. The United States now imports half of the oil that is consumed on American markets, and one-third of what it imports comes from the Middle East. The stake that U.S. capitalism has in the flow of oil from that part of the world is an established fact that even the Bush administration would not deny. Indeed, that growing dependency is behind efforts to open up new areas for oil exploration in Alaska and for development of offshore oil operations.



If by imperialism one understands the forcible subjugation of another nation or nations, for whatever alleged purpose, then the United States is an imperialist nation bent on dominating markets and controlling resources for the benefit of its ruling class. For despite all the lip service to peace, democracy, international law, human rights, etc., the stakes in Iraq and the Middle East generally are grossly materialistic. Markets, spheres of influence and sources of raw materials vital to the industries of all nations have been at the root of every major war of modern times, and the present situation is no exception.

What brings on these economic rivalries that are the root cause of war in today's world? Under the capitalist system the workers receive in wages only a fraction of the product of their labor, hence can buy back only a fraction. What the workers cannot buy back, and what the capitalists cannot consume in extravagant living, or use up in expanding industry, or in willful destruction, must be sold or bartered in foreign markets. This is the reason capitalist nations will do anything, even to the point of waging war, to preserve and extend their foreign markets and spheres of influence, and to dominate sources of raw materials and cheap labor. As the *Guardian*, an English newspaper, recently put it:

"The underlying problem the U.S. confronts is the one which periodically afflicts all successful [sic] economies: the over-accumulation of capital. Excessive production of any good—be it cars or shoes or bananas—means that unless new markets can be found, the price of that product falls and profits collapse. Just as it was in the early 1930s, the U.S. is suffering from surpluses of commodities, manufactured products, manufacturing capacity and money. Just as it was then, it is also faced with a surplus of labor, yet the two surpluses, as before, cannot be profitably matched. This problem has been developing in the U.S. since 1973. It has now tried every available means of solving it and, by doing so, main-

taining its global dominance. The only remaining, politically viable option is war."

Obviously it is ludicrous to describe as "successful" a system that produces such contradictions and has no better way of coping with them than war. Apart from that, however, this evaluation is essentially correct.

The *Guardian* continued by citing some of the advantages the U.S. hopes to gain by resorting to its "solution" to its problems—another war on Iraq.

"Attacking Iraq offers the U.S....means of off-loading capital while maintaining its global dominance. The first is the creation of new geographical space for economic expansion. The second...is military spending (a process some people call 'military Keynesianism'). The third is the ability to control the economies of other nations by controlling the supply of oil. This, as global oil reserves diminish, will become an ever more powerful lever...."

Under the overriding competitive profit motive inherent in capitalism, and in the reaching out for control over sources of oil and other raw materials so vital to modern industry, clashes are inevitable.

Considering the basic cause and real factors that have produced the wars that have plagued a world dominated by capitalism, it is obviously irrational to blame international disputes and wars on this or that individual or group of individuals. Capitalism means war.

Saddam Hussein and his government may be utterly crushed by another war, but at a horrendous price in human blood and suffering. None of the basic problems that beset the Middle East and its long-suffering peoples will be solved. It will not resolve the contradictions of capitalism or make the world a safer place. For when the war ends, the identical process will start again, leading to new clashes of interest and in time to the next greater and more destructive war.

Can we do anything about that? The SLP believes we can.

We believe that the American working class must at last come to recognize that the competitive capitalist system of private ownership of the land and plants of production, means of transportation, mines, etc., is in fact the basic cause of the present state of world anarchy, and of wars, declared and undeclared. To avoid future wars, therefore, the capitalist cause must be abolished. Society must be reorganized on socialist lines, replacing private (and state) ownership and competition with social ownership and cooperation. We must make the factories, mills, mines, railroads and all the other means of social production the collective property of society so that we can produce things to satisfy human needs instead of for the profit of the few. Only then can the competitive, war-breeding struggle for international markets, spheres of influence and sources of raw materials be ended. Only then will the nations of the world have an economic foundation for lasting cooperation, harmony and peace.

Socialism—genuine socialism—is literally the hope of humanity.

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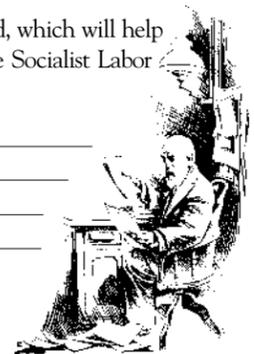
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...De Leon

(Continued from page 4)

ests that are not in political power and that can see more dollars and cents in peace, are seized with a religious and moral spasm; they will hold mass meetings and otherwise pronounce for "humanity."

Yet the farce does not end there. By a turn of the industrial wheel, the very capitalist interests that just before saw more money in peace, may find that their profits now lie on the side of war. Forthwith the two sets change sides; the former "patriots" become "saints," the former "saints" turn "patriots." At each turn, the lightweight makeweights fill the halls, and do the scurrying, and like the flies on the wheel imagine they are doing great things, whereas, as a matter of fact, they are being used alternately and played for suckers.

The classconscious proletariat wants peace, but wants it as intelligent men. It knows peace is an impossibility while capitalism lasts, and that is the upas tree at the very root of which it feels its blows with the ax of the Socialist Labor Party ballot.

A selection of De Leon editorials dealing with various aspects of war, its capitalist cause, and how the working class can bring peace.



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NEW YORK LABOR NEWS
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Downsizing Means Working Harder and Longer

By Carl C. Miller Jr.

Dell Computer is one of many large companies that began to "downsize" long before the current recession became official. Apart from tossing thousands of workers onto the streets, the company's move to consolidate its production operations has also impacted its remaining workers. The company aimed to reduce its payroll, but not production levels. Indeed, it has pushed its remaining workers to boost their output. Intensified exploitation has naturally produced something else besides more computers. It has produced more stress for the remaining workers—stress from the increased demands on them, but also from the knowledge that thousands of jobless workers are waiting to take their places should they fail to live up to the company's demands.

Dell began turning the screws on its workers more than a year ago. In May 2001, the company introduced a plan to lay off about 4,000 workers while maintaining its share of the computer market. The only way the plan could work was to increase productivity among the workers who would remain on the payroll.

Dell redesigned its computers to simplify assembly, replaced one factory with another half its size, and then pared its workforce from 40,000 to 34,400 in 2001, according to *The New York Times*. The new plant streamlined the manufacturing process, thus allowing more units to be produced by fewer workers.

The plan appeared to be working. Lower labor cost enabled Dell to lower prices, thereby making its products more competitive on the computer market. But the downside for workers was that Dell only holds enough inventory for four days' worth of sales, so increased pro-

ductivity was the only way to keep pace with demand.

Dell's scheme succeeded as far as it affected sales and profits, but the new production methods and demands for increased productivity took a toll on the workforce. According to one long-time Dell employee, workers felt overwhelmed by the increased speed of production and the longer working hours. Many began calling in sick or simply took days off. Another Dell worker said: "They're putting a lot more load on the remaining people, particularly the salaried employees. Our group is just overloaded with work. They're asking us to put in more time on the house."

Dell ordered more layoffs last October, thereby further increasing the workload on those who escaped the recurring layoff orders. Many workers are questioning their future at the company. "Dell used to be one of the best places to work at," a third long-time employee said, "[Now] everybody's kind of looking at this and saying, 'Why are we still here?' The answer is that there's no place else to go."

The workers at Dell are just one example of how the evolution of the capitalist system affects the working class. As labor-displacing technology and other advances are put in place, workers are being pushed out onto the street. Capitalists must constantly strive for ever greater profits to stay competitive. The results are never favorable for workers.

Workers must realize that capitalism can never work in their favor. They must organize themselves politically and economically to begin building a society which will benefit everyone. The Socialist Industrial Union program of the SLP shows the way.

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letters to the People

Glad The People's Back

I just received my newsletter and was so pleased to read it again. I have been a subscriber for many years. I hope all will be well and the paper can continue. It is my one way to know the truth about what is going on over the years. I am sending a donation to further the work for the party. Good Luck and thank you.

Phyllis Emerson
Fort Myers, Fla.

Pushed by Speedup

I was glad to see your newspaper once again in my mail. When you said you were folding the paper several months ago, I feared that you had gone for good.

I liked your article "Speedups Are Pushing Many Workers to the Breaking Point" that appeared in your issue of January-February 2003. In fact, I can personally feel the effects of this breaking point. Fifteen years ago we used to get one-hour breaks at lunch time. These days, few companies or organizations offer one-hour lunch breaks. These days, 30-minute breaks in most workplaces are the norm rather than the exception. One of the main reasons given for adopting the half-an-hour lunch break was an attempt to emulate the "prosperous" Japan of the 1980s that gave its workers only a 30-minute lunch recess. We all know the current state of the Japanese economy. At one of my job assignments I deliberately decided to take a one-hour lunch break, and when I returned to work I felt so refreshed and eager to work again. This is in contradistinction to the 30-minute break when you feel very rushed and still tired to resume work. Thus, I am not surprised that with the 30-minute break policy we have in most of the workplaces, many workers suffer from a wide range of physical and psychological problems nowadays.

Stephen Isabirye
Flagstaff, Ariz.

Liked Our Web Site

I am a junior at Bishop England High School, Charleston, S.C., and I would just like to thank the creators of this site in aiding me in an AP history class presentation about Daniel De Leon and the SLP. The site proved very helpful in providing so much useful information pertaining to the SLP's history all the way to its ongoing activities that are carried out today. Everything I was looking for was on this Web site, and I did not waste any time on it because everything was direct and clear. I hope that the information I obtained in this Web site will help me achieve a good grade when I present my project in a few days. I know it will! Again, thank you so much. I admire the efforts shown by the SLP throughout the decades.

Valerie Devera
Charleston, S.C.

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict Rages In the Shadow of Imperialist Domination

By B.B.

The elections held in Israel on Jan. 28 gave the Likud Party a majority of seats in the Knesset. That majority, however, is reportedly too thin to give the Likud a free hand in governing the country. Accordingly, the Likud is attempting to build a parliamentary coalition with some of the smaller parties represented in the Israeli legislature, primarily with sectarian religious parties more reactionary than itself.

What the Likud's electoral success did not and could not do, of course, was defuse the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The social forces militating against any resolution to that conflict were, if anything, exacerbated by the outcome.

The Likud Party and its leader, Ariel Sharon—a former general resurrected from political oblivion several years ago after a long and bloody military career—were confronted by the so-called Labor Party, or Mapai, led by Amram Mitzna, another former general with a long and bloody military career behind him and currently the mayor of Haifa.

Several months ago, Mitzna was elected to lead the thoroughly discredited Mapai, which, despite its name, has always enjoyed the support of large-scale capitalist interests in the country. These particular capitalist interests have watched with dismay as the prospects for peace raised by the Oslo Accords of 1993 crumbled, and with them potential trade deals with the Arab countries.

Israeli textile tycoon Dov Lautman is one disappointed capitalist who has watched things spin out of control over the last 20 months. He encouraged and supported Mitzna's bid to lead the Mapai to victory.

"The reality of our intolerable friction with the Palestinians harms basic values of ours," Lautman said. "Israel will self-destruct if it hangs on to the West Bank and Gaza Strip." (*Dallas Morning News*, Jan. 25)

Lautman advocates entering into immediate negotiations for a final settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and if all else fails he proposes a unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and major portions of the West Bank. He also supports dismantling Israel's West Bank settlements and, presumably, favors relocating their 200,000 residents.

Mitzna, for his part, recognized an issue that has haunted the Jewish state from its inception—that of maintaining a Jewish majority in Israel to insure the Zionist vision of "a haven for the Jews."

"According to Mr. Mitzna, leaving the territories is not a concession to the Palestinians; it is in Israel's most vital and urgent self-interest," *The New York Times* reported on Jan. 29. "If they do not withdraw, Jews will soon be a minority in their own country."

A preelection Israeli incursion into Gaza following a suicide bombing seemed calculated to convince frightened Israelis that security and ultimate peace requires harsh military action, action that the reelection of the Likud almost certainly guarantees. Ziad Abu Amr, a Palestinian legislator, asked: "Why this massive retaliation?" He answered himself by saying it was because it would "enhance his [Sharon's] position and the position of his party, and it does not involve any risk to him." (*The New York Times*, Jan. 27)

Sharon's increasingly bloody confrontations, Israeli Army depredations and repeated incursions into Palestinian towns and villages—actions seemingly calculated to invite more suicide bombings and lend credence to Sharon's

bellicose stance—are buttressed by the irredentist view of a greater Israel founded on biblical legends and bolstered by archaeological remnants from the distant past. When archaeologists dig past layers of Ottoman, Byzantine and Greco-Roman ruins, ancient Hebrew artifacts sometimes emerge. Religious sectarians often justify their territorial claims over lands long occupied by Arabs on these ancient artifacts.

Such nationalistic aspirations and ambitions on both sides of the dispute are generally accepted as being at the heart of the hostilities; but that is a mistake.



Both sides to the conflict are based on systems of class rule, and wherever class rule prevails class struggle is the inevitable result.

The class struggle manifests itself in many ways. Apart from the contest between ruling and ruled classes within a nation, there are international disputes among ruling classes. These disputes ultimately explain all international conflicts, including wars.

What dominating or ruling classes need to succeed in any war is the support of the dominated or ruled class. Ruled classes provide the fighters without which no war could be fought. Accordingly, it is often necessary to manipulate the ruled class with nationalistic and other forms of misleading propaganda to whip up the necessary fervor for the conflagration.

While these factors are rarely noticed or taken into account by "mainstream" efforts to unravel the deadly knot that has entangled the Israelis and Palestinians, they do more to explain the source of the conflict than all the nationalistic propaganda and religious dogma dragged onto the scene combined. In the hands of ambitious ruling classes, love of country and love of God become tools to manipulate people into doing the dirty work of their masters. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is no exception. Indeed, it is a casebook study on how ruling classes exert themselves to control how ruled classes understand the world.

Ultimately, of course, Israeli politics is governed by American capitalism's imperialist prerogatives. The United States inherited the

mantle of British imperialism after World War II and the rationale that came with it. Winston Churchill articulated this in 1920 when he said that a Jewish state under the protection of the British Crown in what was then called Palestine "would from every point of view be beneficial and would be especially in harmony with the truest interest of the British Empire." Those "interests" include markets, strategic military advantages and easier access to the oil resources of the entire Middle East region.

"The terms of reference of Israeli politics are such that it is difficult to put up serious opposition to a prime minister who enjoys the full backing of the U.S. government," the December 2002 issue of *The Other Israel* argued. "In his policy speech of June 24, [2002,] President Bush effectively endorsed the indefinite reoccupation of the West Bank cities and authorized Sharon to use his discretion in 'fighting terrorism,' pending 'reforms' in the Palestinian Authority, i.e., the removal of [Yasser] Arafat."

The Bush-declared "war on terrorism" has become a prop of justification for the Israeli incursions into Palestinian areas. However, the cycle of brutal retaliatory strikes has had the effect of inciting anti-Israeli and anti-American feelings in the surrounding Arab countries just as U.S. planning for a war on Iraq needs the support of Arab regimes. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has become a threat to imperialist interests and power in the Middle East.

This situation has periodically alarmed the Bush administration, and explains its back and forth flip-flops from faint admonitions to acquiescence in the brutal Israeli strikes into Gaza and the West Bank. Thus Secretary of State Colin Powell, in a speech in Davos, Switzerland, criticized Israel's settlement policy, declaring that the Palestinians need a "real state, not a phony state that's diced up into a thousand different pieces," while also calling for Arafat's replacement as head of the Palestinian Authority.

The Likud's electoral success in January may prove a pyrrhic victory because of the need to form a coalition with some of the sectarian religious parties that hold a minority of seats. If it succeeds, it could result in the "narrow rightist government that Mr. Sharon says he wants to avoid—and which would make the Bush administration strain to wring concessions from Israel in seeking an end to the conflict." (*The New York Times*, Jan. 29) This is likely to be a major problem, considering the probability that any Likud-led coalition will be shackled to elements more reactionary than itself.

... 'Justice'?

(Continued from page 1)

surprised him, but he was not the only one who understood the president's meaning.

"One by one," the president said, "the terrorists are learning the meaning of American justice. (Applause.)"

The applause came from the vice president, from the representatives, from the senators, the cabinet members, the military brass—from all the "dignitaries" who gathered to hear the president speak. They understood, and their applause made it clear that they approve of this brand of "American justice."

No wonder millions are raising the cry "Not in our name!"