

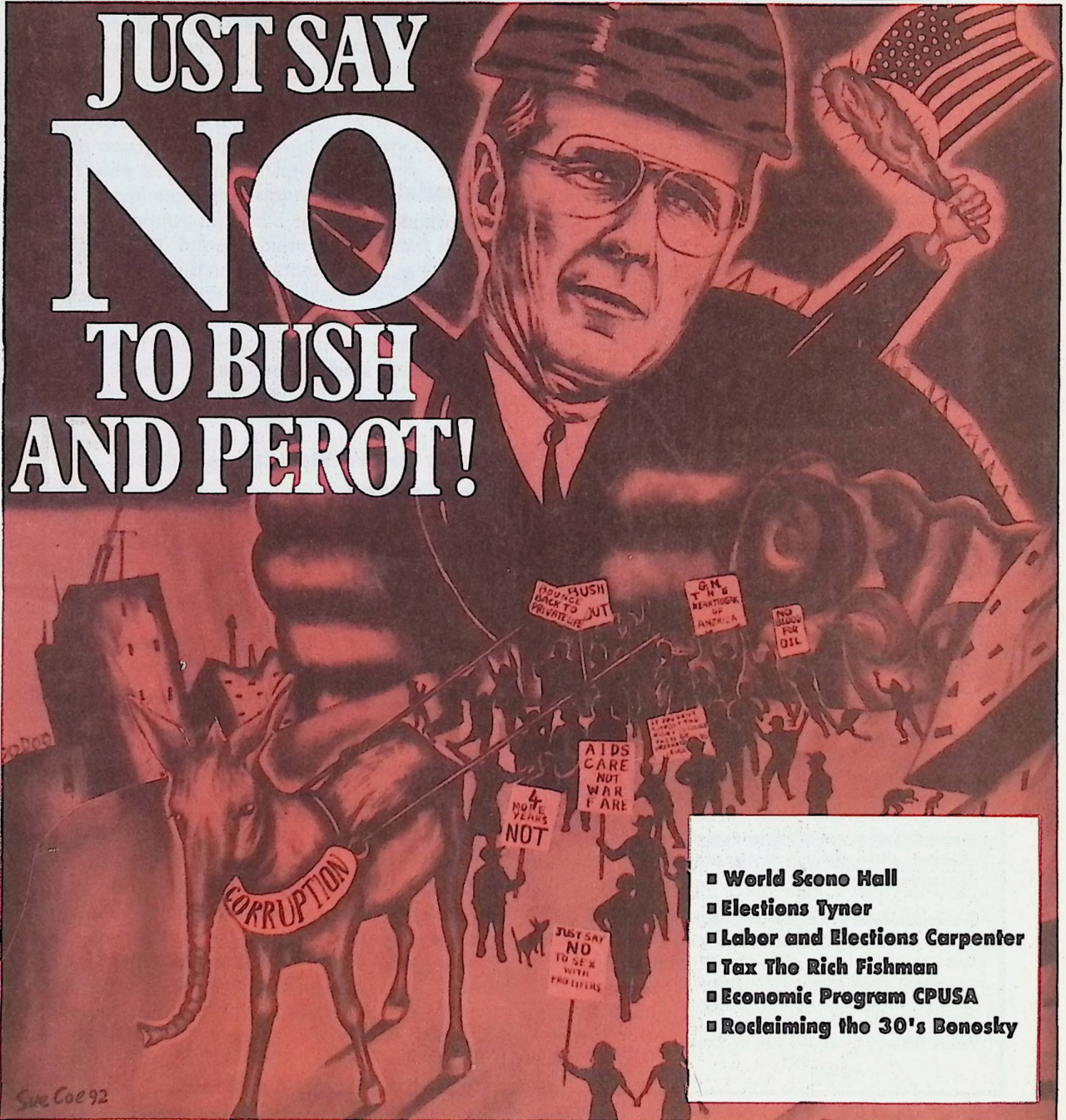
Political Affairs

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JUST SAY
NO
TO BUSH
AND PEROT!



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- Elections Tynar
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- Tax The Rich Fishman
- Economic Program CPUSA
- Reclaiming the 30's Benosky

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The October Revolution Lives On!

An event which liberated nearly 200 billion people on a sixth of the earth's surface cannot be obliterated. Led by V.I. Lenin and the Communist Party, the socialist revolution exploded onto the world scene 75 years ago in Russia. The Soviet Republics became the second government of workers' rule in history: the first, the Paris Commune of 1871, lasted less than a year.

For nearly three quarters of a century the Soviet Union was a beacon of light and hope for the world's exploited and oppressed. This formerly backward country created a socialist society free of unemployment, hunger, homelessness and illiteracy. Where before there was the infamous prison of nations under Czarism, now there was friendship, equality and cooperation among nations and races.

All this it was able to do without capitalists and bankers, indeed, because there were no exploiters and oppressors to steal the fruits of their common labors.

The Soviet Union's example stimulated the rise of national liberation movements in the colonial world and shook the foundations of imperialism. It inspired revolutionary workers in the capitalist world to establish their own parties of scientific socialism. The specter of Communism of Marx and Engels' time became the reality of socialism arising in Lenin's time.

The capitalists of the world sought to stifle the young socialist state in its cradle and threatened it with annihilation ever since. Despite hostile encirclement, the Soviet Union was able to build powerful, basic mass production industries, create modern farming and spur the flowering of science and culture. With a solid socialist foundation it was able to forge a military power mighty enough to defeat the awesome Nazi war machine and save the world from fascism.

Emerging from the Second World War with a tremendous loss of life and material wealth, the Soviet people restored and expanded their cities farms, factories and institutions. They launched the world into the Space Age. They accomplished all this in the face of the hostile Cold War opposition of the major imperialist powers led by U.S. imperialism.

At great cost the USSR gave unstinting support

to the struggles for freedom around the world. It trained tens of thousands of doctors, scientists, engineers, educators and skilled workers from colonial and newly liberated countries. Their industries and infrastructure benefited from the know-how and material aid extended by the USSR. Workers' struggles in the capitalist world received the fraternal support of the Soviet Union. Tens of thousands of class war victims from the four corners of the earth were restored to health with Soviet medical care. No country ever was able to come so far and achieve so much for the liberation and advancement of mankind. These great accomplishments are imperishable. No amount of calumnies and lies can eradicate them.

The words "Soviet Union" have been removed for the time being from the Atlases, but not from the hearts and minds of progressive people. Tremendous lessons are to be learned – in fact must be learned – from the history of the Soviet Union and the disaster which overtook it. That is why the Communist Party, USA and its theoretical journal, *Political Affairs*, along with fraternal parties throughout the world, will continue to study and analyze this epic experience, its great merits as well as its shortcomings. U.S. imperialists and their class brothers abroad gloat over the demise of the Soviet Union. Yet they know full well that they haven't killed the idea of socialism nor the historic record of its accomplishments. Nor can they. It is capitalism itself, all the more so in its imperialist stage, which generates the objective conditions for the advances to socialism, a superior society. This is still the age of the transition from capitalism to socialism.

The Soviet Union will ever remain in the hearts of progressive humanity as a shining example of the wonders that can be created by people freed from the yoke of capitalism. It proves that human beings, led by the working class and a Marxist-Leninist Party, can mold a society of free and equal peoples unfettered by capitalism's dog-eat-dog savage exploitation, racism and inhumanity.

There need be no doubt that socialism will rise again on the territory of the USSR. The heritage of November, 1917 lives on, there and around the world. □

The World Scene

Gus Hall

It seems life on this planet of ours is passing through an extremely turbulent period. Both nature and human affairs have taken an unusually violent turn. There is room for speculation about how much of the earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, droughts, floods and forest fires are related to human activity. The destruction of the environment does not appear on the surface to be as violent as it actually is.

In the total picture of environmental destruction, pollution and the poisoning and plunder of nature and natural resources cannot be laid at the door of "natural disasters." The culprits are the corporations and governments.

However, there is no need, nor is there room for, any speculation when it comes to the cause of turbulence in the economic and political spheres of life on our planet. The economic-political crises are man-made.

ROLE OF NATIONALISM ■ The shock waves resulting from the implosion in the socialist world, and especially in the Soviet Union, continues on a world scale. In fact, there is no event that is historically comparable. The human tragedy that is still taking place in the dismembered Soviet Union, in terms of social progress and socialism, is nothing less than disastrous. It is now clear that the strategic and tactical aims of world imperialism have been and continue to be to splinter the socialist world and, following that, to establish and consolidate anti-socialist political power in each of the separate and isolated parts.

It is now undeniable that the main political-ideological weapon of imperialism is narrow petty bourgeois nationalism. Petty bourgeois nationalism, in most cases, is anti-working class and is the instrument for destroying socialism and planting the seeds of capitalism everywhere. The fact is that until now this ideological and tactical weapon has worked only too well in the Soviet Union.

A word of explanation: In many cases, national-

ism has played and continues to play a positive role. It serves as a unifier and mobilizer in the struggle for equality. Nationalism plays a role in the struggles for national liberation. Especially since World War II, nationalism and national liberation have been in a single orbit. But after liberation, the capitalist nationalist elements in most of the countries have moved into another orbit, away from a progressive or socialist path. Nationalism then becomes the ideological base for reaction and imperialism.

It is difficult to believe that millions in the republics of the Soviet Union who were born and raised under socialism are now slaughtering each other under the flag of nationalism. The blame for this fatal flaw cannot be placed at the door of the socialist system. In fact, nationalism was always a drawback in the building of the Soviet Union. The attempt was made to transform national pride and ethnic diversity into pride of nationhood and unity—the idea was to give both a socialist content. While retaining the history, traditions and richness of many cultures, the idea was to turn the country into a healthy unified nation of many cultures, languages and peoples. This was a monumental task. But imperialism knew only too well how to exploit weaknesses and turn national pride and old rivalries into a fiercely destructive force.

In the case of the Soviet Union, nascent backward nationalism, especially in a country with so many nationalities, ethnic and religious groups, was let loose. With the collusion of Gorbachev, Shevardnadze, Yeltsin and company, nationalist rivalries, feuds and even fratricidal wars and secessionist movements were allowed to mushroom. These movements brought on secession in one republic after another and ultimately fragmented the union into separate, isolated and weak states constantly in a state of turmoil and crisis. An ideology based on nationalism can only lead to disunity.

In our continuing study of the reasons for the crises that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union, it is important to take into consideration a number of factors and their interconnections: There was the concept that the class struggle was "withering away;" that imperialism had become a friendly,

Gus Hall is National Chairman of the CPUSA. This article is excerpted from the Report to the Party's National Committee.

peaceful and even progressive partner; that privatization, private profit and competition was the only solution and the basis on which to get people to produce. These policies took away the power and weapons of the working class. As the working class was pushed to the side severely limiting the growth of democracy, the petty bourgeois, anti-socialist elements came into power. The Party grew more and more bureaucratic, more privileged, more stagnant, more ideologically weak and opportunistic. All these weaknesses fed each other.

The truth is that the mobilization for the building of socialism, even in the factories, was based on an appeal to nationalist sentiments. An ideology that is not rooted in the internationalism of the working class, even while building socialism, is vulnerable to the resurgence of backward nationalism, including great power chauvinism.

The lack of ideology based on the class struggle opened the door to many other evils. It became a justification for privatization and for capitalism itself. And, as we have seen, it led to right opportunism. Right opportunism is a phony petty bourgeois, unprincipled evasion of the realities of the class struggle. Opportunism and nationalism feed each other.

Obviously, the internationalism and unity of the Soviet Union was much more fragile, underdeveloped and vulnerable to subversion than many of us thought. The weak ideological work in the republics produced but a veneer of working-class internationalism and socialist consciousness.

Once the anti-socialist, nationalist forces surfaced and were let loose, socialist internationalism fell prey to narrow, petty bourgeois nationalism. The most backward nationalist elements became the main force in destroying the union and socialism.

The tactic of splintering by using the ideology of nationalism worked in the Soviet Union. It is working in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. And it is working in Somalia and Ethiopia.

The disasters in the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and East Germany condemn in the first place the poor ideological and educational work of the Communist parties.

EAST GERMANY ■ In eastern Germany, the people are suffering unemployment, poverty, homelessness and a reign of terror from a resurgence of Nazism based on the most backward, virulent form of nationalism. Organized gangs of brownshirts, skinheads and misled youth are attacking refugee camps

and neighborhoods of refugees and immigrants – many of them fleeing socialist countries – in a vicious racist campaign to blame “foreigners” for all the problems. The people of eastern Germany are learning the hard way the lessons of capitalism and imperialism. Even Kohl now says he thinks unification was a mistake, that Germany cannot handle the economic and social crises of both the West and the East. Needless to say, the Bonn government does not discourage the Nazi hordes and uses the conditions in the East as an excuse for Germany’s many problems.

The prosecution and imprisonment of Erich Honecker, which we have protested, is a testament to the relentless drive to destroy all vestiges of socialism and to criminalize the Communist parties and their leaders.

YUGOSLAVIA ■ Like hyenas, the multinationals of the United States, France, England and Germany are moving in for the kill to take over parts of a divided Yugoslavia, while the people continue to sink into poverty. There is an inter-imperialist struggle between these capitalist hyenas over who will get the lion’s share of the former Yugoslavia.

The Muslim countries, like Iran, are playing the role of arms merchants to Muslims in Yugoslavia, providing weapons for a war that is devastating the land, resources and people. Here too, the situation today is a result of a distorted development of socialism. Tito set up a political-economic situation that stimulated nationalism. He abandoned centralized economic planning and prevented real workers’ control, which led to a growing petty capitalist class, a situation in which nationalism took over. The rich republics got richer, the poor got poorer. The growth of national sentiments continued to spread, together with the capitalist class. Today there are the usual class and national differences, but also religious differences.

Yugoslav socialism was put forth as “a third way” for everyone to emulate. And it fell apart.

Our position must be one of opposition to the very real danger of military intervention by the United States and Germany. And we must defend what is left of Yugoslav socialism.

As things have developed, relations between the ex-socialist countries and imperialism are increasingly relations between imperialism and colonial countries. The ex-socialist countries, including the severed states of the Soviet Union, are sinking into ever deeper debt to capitalism. More and more of

their resources are going into paying the interest on loans. And more and more concessions to capitalism, away from socialism, are a condition for these loans from imperialist banks. Profit-hungry capitalists are buying people and countries at bargain prices.

These developments also have to be placed in the framework of imperialist designs to fragment the socialist countries and to destroy all vestiges of socialism.

In many ways, the devastating setbacks show most clearly in the functioning of the United Nations. Without the peacekeeping progressive role of the Soviet Union, the Security Council especially is much more vulnerable to the designs of the imperialist powers. The UN as a whole is negatively effected by the collapse of the socialist community of nations. It could not be otherwise.

For example, Japan has been seeking to break out of its World War II restrictions, especially the McArthur restrictions. A week ago the UN in the name of keeping peace, literally gave Cambodia to Japan. Within days a fully equipped Japanese military force landed on Cambodian soil. In whatever way the imperialist powers want to use the United Nations for a cover, all they have to do is ask.

RESISTANCE TO CHANGE ■ It is now also clear that the backward changeover from socialism to capitalism is going to be much more difficult than the Gorbachevs, Yeltsins and Wall Street thought it would be. The resistance is greater than they expected. In the republics there is a widespread system based on crime, corruption and gangs. The numbers of corruption-created gangster-like millionaires continues to grow.

This lifestyle and psychology, based on corruption, was set by the Gorbachevs and Yeltsins who have personally profited in the tens of millions from their capitalist promoters. There is a new conflict developing between the corrupt and the growing numbers of their victims.

The people of the ex-socialist countries are going through a process of learning the hard lessons the hard way. Because they were born and raised under socialism, for the first time in their lives they are experiencing what it is like to live in a society that takes no responsibility for human welfare.

They are now forced to live in a society in which a job, a decent place to live, stable prices, free education, health and child care are no longer human rights, no longer guaranteed by society, but the pri-

vate responsibility of each individual. Prices and costs have skyrocketed. Unemployment, inflation, price gouging and crime are rampant. This is a shocking and traumatic awakening. They will be forced to learn through their struggles to survive that capitalism is an ugly, inhuman way of life. They will have to re-discover that socialism, with all its shortcomings, is first and foremost a caring, people first, advanced, progressive form of society. Once convinced of this, then they must learn that they can have socialism only if it is fought for.

The present generation has lived under socialism and has no history of militant struggle. Thus, it seems logical that their struggle to return to socialism will most likely take place by way of the electoral process, mass demonstrations and strikes. The present struggles going on for democratic elections and the legalization of the trade unions and Communist parties are critical for a return to socialism. It may be a long, hard road – longer and harder in some countries than others – but it is an inevitable road. Capitalism makes it inevitable. Already, in all the ex-socialist countries support for the anti-socialist elements is declining.

And we must keep in mind that the socialist societies in China, Cuba, North Korea, and Vietnam continue to give the lie to the death certificate issued by capitalism and its lackeys that pronounce socialism dead. We must especially accelerate the building of the Cuban solidarity movement because socialist Cuba is on the agenda of imperialism in their plans to eliminate socialism from the face of the earth. A word on South Africa. The September 7th massacre of more than 30 peaceful marchers in South Africa is gruesome evidence that the apartheid regime will not hesitate to continue the bloodbath to stay in power. The terror campaign is state sponsored. And without doubt the CIA and Bush Administration are directing events in South Africa. The ANC has, until now, in spite of provocations, continued negotiations. We must protest the rising level of terror and brutality. We must call for the reimposition of international sanctions. We must call for the immediate breaking of all diplomatic ties between the United States and South Africa. We must demand freedom for all South African political prisoners. We have a special obligation in the United States because apartheid and the DeKlerk regime get their main support from the Bush Administration and U.S. monopoly capital. Thus, we must accelerate our solidarity work against apartheid and racism and for majority rule. □

Defeat Bush and Perot!

Jarvis Tyner

This election is not only about Democrats vs. Republicans. As we see it this election – perhaps more than most – basically involves a class confrontation. We look at this election from the perspective of how to utilize it to advance the interests of the working class and oppressed.*

The question before us is what can we do to help advance the agenda of the working class? How can we win on those issues that favorably affect the life and well being of the majority of the people and the working class in particular?

Our Party must be focused on the struggle for national health care, stopping the Free Trade Agreement, fighting racism, fighting for conversion, rebuilding our cities, and defense of socialist Cuba. How can these things be advanced by means of the electoral struggle?

ELECTORAL POLICY ■ In this regard, our focus should be on policies, not just personalities; the class and social forces involved, not only political parties. It is important not to concentrate exclusively on just the election and the vote itself. Communists must have a view of the whole process of struggle – the mass movements, the political consciousness of the people – the basic phenomena that impact on the total struggle against capitalism.

Our electoral policy is not confined to the presidential race nor do we see the defeat of Bush as an end in itself, but as a basic part of what we must do today to advance towards greater independence, including building a mass independent people's party. The end we have in mind today is the movement in the direction of an anti-monopoly and socialist tomorrow.

A defeat for the Bush/Quayle ticket will not mean that the struggle is over, everybody understands that. Strategically speaking, however, it will mean a setback for the ruling class, particularly its ultra-right section. And that objectively will be a victory for progressive forces.

It's no accident that 80 percent of the nation's

CEOs support George Bush. They see their strategic interest in four more years of Bush's pro-Big Business policies. On the other hand, most working people see their interests advanced by the defeat of Bush. In response to the slogan "Four more years" they are chanting "Seven more weeks."

The Communist Party actively stands with the majority of labor, the racially oppressed, women, youth, senior and environmental movements who are united in their determination to bring this people's victory about. This is – if I may use the phrase – the politically correct thing to do. And it is not unlike what the founders of our science advocated numerous times under similar circumstances.

Things are happening faster than we have anticipated. Militant strikes are escalating. Calls of general strikes are growing. These calls, by the way, are coming from forces who are able to deliver. I believe that the "enough is enough" attitude that is being expressed in this election struggle is a reflection of that same attitude that has been growing among workers at the point of production for some time. Through and beyond this election struggle, we must be ready for great, even, historic changes. The point is how do we help make positive changes happen?

CONFIDENCE IN THE PEOPLE ■ Communists have a basic confidence that the people will fight for their interests under any and all circumstances. It is well known that consciousness grows when people are in struggle resulting in the struggle itself moving to a higher level. The role of our Party in these circumstances is to be active with masses, to find ways to help encourage and advance this process. In this election our policy is not premised on any illusions in Clinton or the Democratic Party but rather on a confidence in the people.

Clinton is no savior – far from it. He is not as bad as Bush on most questions. However on some questions he is totally bad – even to Bush's right. The key question is that he can be moved and pushed. Of course under a Clinton Administration,

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* This article is based on Tyner's report to the September meeting of the CPUSA National Committee.

the struggle will also continue but the movement will have more room to fight than under Bush. The progressive class and social forces behind Clinton – or should I say in front of him, pulling him – see him as the only way to defeat Bush, period. The favorite phrase you hear from working people goes something like this, “I don’t know about this Clinton, but I do know, we’ve got to defeat Bush.” There is a lot of tactical wisdom in that statement.

Like most voters we are first and foremost anti-Bush. We are also pro-working class, pro-equality, pro-peace, pro-choice, pro-environment, pro-political independence and pro-socialism USA. We are neither ideologically, politically, nor principally in favor of Clinton.

Life has shown that we were correct in projecting the possibility of Bush’s defeat and electing a more progressive House and Senate. The primary elections have shown an electorate determined to bring about positive change.

The Senate Judiciary Committee’s abuse of Anita Hill set off an explosion among mostly liberal and progressive women. Eleven women in all have won Senate nominations all across the country. This is “the year of the women.”

In general, openly ultra-right conservative candidates did not do well in these primaries. David Duke and Pat Buchanan were defeated among the Republicans and Newt Gingrich barely won his nomination to the House. The Democratic primaries for the House and Senate showed a strong liberal-progressive trend that’s determined to move our country in a more positive direction.

The U.S. people in their majority are determined to reject the old failed policies of Reagan/Bush. Through this election it may be possible to elect not only the first African American woman to the U.S. Senate, Carol Moseley Braun, but along with her a history-making 6 to 10 others. It is possible to elect another 10 additional members of the Black Congressional Caucus. It is also possible to elect a number of Latinos.

PRIMARIES ■ The results of last month’s primary shows that this electorate wants not just change but change in a progressive direction. Potentially as many a 50 African American and Latino men and women could win election to the House. Victories like that of Nydia Velazquez are making this possible. If these new Congressional forces are united with labor and progressive current representatives, a powerful block could be organized which could

play a major role leading towards a new direction for our government. Coupled with a lot of “street heat” from labor, civil rights, women’s, youth, seniors, etc., one can see real advances in job creation, health care, conversion taxing the rich and stopping the aggression against Cuba.

There are also contradictory trends represented in the primaries. The fact that Al Sharpton, with his history of provocations linked with NAP is posing as a progressive and an independent is cause for great concern. He is posing as a man who, this time, has changed and who now supports Black, Brown and white unity. Sharpton, by the way, could receive 130,000 votes in the New York primary for U.S. Senate. This shows something and needs to be examined.

We gave support – key support in some districts – to Ron Daniels. He’s going to be on the ballot in California, and Washington state, and Utah. We helped in the petition effort in Pennsylvania, Missouri and other places as well.

I know that comrades in those states where he is on the ballot are going to want to vote for him. This is fine unless it looks like a tight race – under 5 points – then I think you must discuss collectively what to do. Keep in mind that the vote to unseat Bush is objectively more important than a protest vote for Daniels. The Party needs to collectively decide in those states.

COMMUNIST CANDIDATES ■ It is extremely important that we have many Communist candidates running for office this election year. This is a victory for our Party. It is a source of pride and happiness that we have over a dozen Communists running for office across the country. In addition, many districts have issued a Party program and almost all are active in the election. If there is any self-criticism that we need to make, it is that we do not have enough candidates. Gus has made this point in his report. Clearly, a dozen candidates consistently fighting racism and in defense of the class and people is a great weapon in the struggle.

In some cases, there are breakthrough campaigns. For example in a major New England state, a comrade ran for state representative as part of an electoral coalition the Party helped initiate. The coalition decided to run a multiracial group of candidates on the “Tax the Rich” line. This comrade will run in November on that line. He also ran in the Tuesday primary and received over 30 percent of the vote. Guess what he lost by? Only 80 votes!

David Mirtz, running for state representative in Manhattan not only made it on the ballot but is also receiving broad breakthrough support among students and youth. There is growing support in the community for the campaign. About a week ago he met an active member of a big African American fraternal organization at their lodge in Harlem. He said he would like to help the Mirtz campaign. This person was willing to help David knowing full well our candidate is a leader in the Young Communist League. David also has the support of a well known rap group.

There is still more evidence of deepening receptivity to our campaigns. For instance, John Rummel, who is running for Congress on the Communist Party line, was out tabling the other day at a community fair. He got a great response on his petition calling for a massive public works program that would create jobs. While there he was approached by a young lawyer, (a Democrat) who offered to give John legal help free if he needed it. He said he wanted to thank John for running because he, like a lot of other Democrats, felt that the Democratic candidate who is expected to win needs a left pressure to keep him in line.

Frank Lumpkin's campaign in Illinois is doing very well and enjoys broad support from many non-Party, rank and file workers.

Rick Nagin is building his campaign door to door in his district. Building in the grass roots is one of the greatest benefits in running for local office.

Lou Godina, who is running for Congress, had a real struggle trying to collect signatures to achieve ballot status. He was illegally arrested for trespassing at a local shopping center. His protest of the arrest made the front page of local papers generating a lot of support.

Denise Winebrenner Edwards running for Congress in Western Pennsylvania has received much support from the women's movement, Black and white workers, and rank and file Democrats, so much so that some very influential and well known Democrats came to her with a problem. After offering all kinds of legal and financial support, they wanted to know if elected would she consider, not giving up her party or ideology, but joining the Democratic Party so that she could participate in the committee structure in Congress?

Finally, a comrade running for City Council in the Northwestern part of the country received the top vote in the first round and is expected to be elected in November.

There are so many stories and I hope the candidates who are here will let you in on the exciting experiences they have been having. All of our campaigns are broader this year with very committed and active non-Party support. Our candidates have greater vote-getting and outreach potential. If we understand what is taking place amongst the electorate and build upon it these campaigns can lay the basis for real breakthroughs for the press, the Party and the YCL to say nothing of getting elected. There are some titles that we should start getting used to: Comrade Congressperson, Comrade State Representative, Comrade Councilmember. We had better get used to such titles – our Party lives and is moving forward. Those comrades bold enough and brave enough to run for public office should be commended. They are real heroes and need our strongest support.

PEEK-A-BOO POLITICS ■ It would be a shame to do all of this great grass-roots work and then just walk away – which is what we all too often have done. After the elections, the Communists disappear. This is called peek-a-boo politics. Now you see us, we're very concerned and on the streets and actively seeking your vote up to November, then you don't. No more street presence, no leaflets, no testifying at hearings.

If we use these campaigns to build grassroots movements around the issues, the Party can be built like never before. We are in the midst of a critical moment in this regard. With the economic crisis growing deeper and more long term, the Party must move forward building permanent links and relationships in areas where we are running. Instead of peek-a-boo politics we need the consistent class unity building politics of planning with the Communist plus. This will lead to people's victories. A great opportunity exists to dramatically build our Party and play a big role in building a mass people's anti-monopoly party.

IF BUSH WINS ■ If Bush is reelected it will have a negative impact on every aspect of the struggle and most definitely on the confidence of the people. On the other hand, after actively participating in a resounding defeat of a right-wing president, a greater confidence and progressive momentum will have been created – people will feel there is a basis to go further and win more. Illusions will also exist that will have to be dispelled.

It is a mistake that many involved in the new

growing third party movement are not active in the efforts to defeat Bush. We understand their distaste for Clinton and impatience and desire not to foster illusions. We share their concerns but the immediate effort to defeat Bush is too important to sit out the election. Illusions in this two-party system are a problem but millions have no illusions and are looking for something else, even though they are still going to vote against Bush. This is basically an issue of how to fight. I believe that there is a dialectical relationship between succeeding in the movement to defeat Bush and advancing the movement for a third party. Let's discuss it.

PEROT ■ Well, Perot's back! The fact is he never really left. Since his withdrawal Perot has spent \$12 million on his campaign primarily to get on the ballot in all 50 states. The Perot movement shows that a third party is possible but – and it is a big but – it must be a progressive pro-working class party to be considered positive. The ruling class is ready to build all kinds of third parties on the right. Perot's third party movement if you read their program is no different. While populist in rhetoric, the program is pro-big business in basic outlook and program. Perot's organization "United We Stand America," should be called "United We Stand for American Big Business" because it is on the corporate side on most economic issues. While Perot's forces are good on election reform, as far as they go, they are to the right – even of Bush in many instances – on most basic class issues.

There is a fascist danger here as well. Fascism never comes straight forward, but always wraps itself in populist, democratic, even socialist garb. Extreme pro-big business stances objectively lean more toward dictatorial, fascist policies – this is an objective development. Perot dropped out because his program did not fly with his movement. He has now dropped back in but his on-again, off-again presidential campaign is probably not strong enough to throw the election into the House. He may, however, be the balance of power in some states.

It is most important to point out that Perot will draw anti-Bush votes away from Clinton and is laying the basis for a new party on the right. Perot will be a big pressure to the right on basic economic questions like the deficit. Our Perot pamphlet must be widely distributed in the coming weeks.

Perot is not the only one in the establishment pushing for a third party. Two weeks ago there was

a meeting in Oak Brook, Illinois a Chicago suburb, led by Lowell Weicker Jr., the Governor of Connecticut and head of the Connecticut Party, and John Anderson along with 35 professors, pollsters and politicians to examine the idea of launching a third party that is "centrist." They want to be able to field candidates by the midterm 1994 Congressional elections or by 1996 when a new President will be elected.

Thus, the ruling class is not going to sit by and let the left offer the only independent alternative to the two main capitalist parties. That is why it is very important that when a real people's party is formed, it must be multi-racial, based in the rank and file and grass roots, built from the bottom up with a strong progressive program. Monopoly will do everything to make sure the discontent with the two parties is not turned in a working-class direction.

POST ELECTION ■ We must plan now for the post-election period and develop plans to try to forge greater national unity between the various third party trends: Labor Party advocates, the Greens, 21st Century Party, Peace and Freedom, the various forces trying to build independence in Black and Brown communities across the country, and other regional and national independent electoral formations working for electoral reform. If a lame duck Bush gets reelected the attack on the people will be fierce. Racism and anti-working class ideology will be intensified to rationalize severe budget cuts and other crimes against the people and the environment. The danger of intervention in Yugoslavia, South Africa and Cuba will be great.

Of course we have been through this and must be prepared to struggle. The Party, above all, must help fortify others who may be in retreat if Bush is reelected. No matter who is elected the struggle continues. If Clinton is elected we know we will be marching on Washington before long. We will be fighting for the people's mandate for taxing the rich, meeting the urban and infrastructure crisis, conversion, against racist violence, for national health care. Clinton will be in a far more vulnerable position on many basic questions because people will expect a change with his administration. We must help mobilize them to force the government to change and plan now for the coming struggles. If Clinton is elected don't put away your marching shoes.

Efforts to reform the national electoral laws must be stepped up more while we plan now for the

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POLITICAL AFFAIRS

Labor and Political Independence

Wally Carpenter

Reports from the National and State Boards of the Communist Party analyzing the national elections correctly state the situation regarding candidates, organizations involved, mass sentiment and mass movements, issues, and levels of activity of various components of the electorate. This analysis must lead to action, action which is based on the level of activity of those sections of the electorate which are decisive in leading the whole electoral process in a progressive direction.

The reports and discussions point to the actions of organized labor, African Americans and Latinos and women as having a major impact on the elections, particularly in the Democratic Convention and in influencing some fairly minor, yet important statements by the Clinton-Gore ticket.

While the election of the next president remains within the political orbit of the two big business parties, mass discontent created by a deepening economic and political crisis is attempting to find expression in new ways. Sentiment for a new third party seems to be providing the basis for phenomena such as the Perot candidacy.

The African American community has long provided the mass base for the election of African American candidates to political office, candidates who generally press for a progressive legislative agenda. Mexican Americans and other minorities are moving in the same direction. Women's movements are having an impact in a new way.

Organized labor has yet to move on a broad scale for the election of trade union candidates to political office, but there are important beginnings. The campaign to elect Frank Valenta to Congress in Ohio's 19th Congressional District is a most recent example.

Running trade union candidates is an important next step for organized labor, although there has not yet been adequate preparation on the need to do this. Discussion of the need for trade union candidates has to be linked to the sentiment for something new like the organization of Labor Party

Advocates.

Linking these trends together offers the possibility of some dramatic moves within labor's ranks. A good example is what is being done through the newly established political committee of the Cleveland Federation of Labor, a committee which came into being as a result of local union resolutions which discussed these very issues.

INDEPENDENT STRUCTURES ■ The process of discussing, debating, and organizing in the direction of independent political action, can, should, and is taking place within the framework of the November elections. Movements in the direction of independent political action cannot take place in isolation from the main body of electoral activity. What is new emerges out of what has been done – past political action laid the basis for the progressive developments we see today.

For 20 years or more, organized labor has been developing an independent political apparatus. True, this apparatus has functioned almost wholly within the two-party system, being used to support primarily candidates selected by the Democratic Party. However, much was accomplished. The Machinists union and the Industrial Union Department together with some other more progressive unions, took the lead in organizing within the AFL-CIO a political center for the purpose of encouraging international unions to turn over their membership lists for computerization. These lists were then broken down to ward and precinct levels. The lists are available to local union Committees on Political Education (COPE) committees, showing which members are registered to vote, which wards and precincts they are in, and whether they are registered Democrats, Republicans, or Independents.

Throughout the years many, if not all local unions, have been doing the painstaking work of registering their members, using these lists. Registration is followed up by education and get-out-the-vote activity. State federations and many international and local unions establish phone banks to reach the membership throughout campaigns. While the Midwest states were among the first to

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use these techniques, independent trade union political structures have today spread throughout most of the nation. Thus it was William Winpisinger who was able to tell the first AFL-CIO Executive Board meeting after the 1988 elections that labor wasted 18 million dollars and 10 million man-hours on a candidate who did not want to win and demanded a new approach to political action.

The work of membership registration is a never-ending activity and should right now be absorbing the energies of local union COPE committees. Where no COPE committee exists, it should be established and put to work.

LOCAL STRUCTURES ■ COPE committees in central bodies and local unions are the center of political action within labor. A step forward, however, is the formation of community-based committees such as the Southeast and Southwest COPE Committees in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, and the current project of the Cleveland Federation to establish Eastside and Westside COPEs in Cleveland. Southeast Area COPE, which lies within the 19th District, was an important base for the Valenta campaign, indicating independent political action is a process in which the building of independent political structure and the growth of independent political consciousness go hand in hand.

Communities should be participating to the fullest extent possible in the activities and building of community and local union COPE committees. At the same time we need to be actively pulling together left and politically advanced workers into organized discussions of the need for and how to build a third party. Labor Party Advocates provides a forum for doing this.

Initially at local levels, Labor Party Advocates forums are in many cases limited to fairly narrow left groups, with the broader left and progressive forces staying away. However, the desire of the national leadership of Labor Party Advocates to base the movement on established union leaders who command a following in local unions make it possible, through patient work, to bring in a wide spectrum of forces. The feasibility of local unions formally affiliating with Labor Party Advocates, thus helping to build a broad base for the movement and the election of legitimate union leaders to a proposed National Convention, should be explored. There was unanimous support for affiliation in Cleveland's Painters local. Tony Mazzochi, head of Labor Party Advocates, reports that building trades

locals are coming in with strong support.

Attention to Congressional and State Legislative elections is also part of labor's agenda. A good number of Left-Progressive candidates provide many opportunities for being selective in supporting candidates and developing pressure on issues. Southwest Area COPE ran a labor candidate in an ongoing attempt to unseat the most reactionary, racist legislator in Ohio. The Lorain Club's initiative in organizing a delegation to meet with their own candidate for state office is a good example of what can be done. Steelworkers Local 1164's COPE committee should be in the center of such activity.

An essential aspect in working with candidates is to make sure that everything possible be done to get the endorsement of the Federation COPE Scanning Committees. Candidates often have to be walked through the procedures necessary to get the endorsement. Many locals have candidate nights when the best labor and pro-labor candidates can be invited to membership meetings and educated on what issues the membership favors.

Mass actions are needed to bring forth real issues in the course of the elections. A demonstration of 24,000 people supporting national health care greeted Clinton-Gore in Columbus. Two hundred demonstrators led by the Cleveland AFL-CIO had an influence both inside and outside of the Cleveland meeting of the Democratic Party platform committee on the same issue. Unions should be initiating similar actions supporting the anti-scab bill and public works jobs programs.

Linking up Party and other left or independent candidates with organized labor has some important beginnings in the campaigns of Frank Lumpkin in Chicago and Denise Winebrenner in Pittsburgh. Important work in this regard was done in Evelina Alarcon's campaigns in Los Angeles. These and other Communist Party candidates are making important and fundamental contributions to building a mass base for third party movements. The lessons of these campaigns need to be studied for the benefit of future candidates throughout the country. □

Tax the Rich

Joelle Fishman

The Reagan-Bush agenda used tax policy as a primary means of bringing about a huge transfer of wealth from low and middle income families to the richest one percent of the population. The results have been devastating for workers, children and the cities.

From 1982 to 1988, the number of Americans worth over \$10 million more than doubled from 39,000 to 82,000, while each year two million more Americans fell into poverty.¹ In order to accomplish their goal, the corporate right unleashed vicious ideological warfare, blaming the unemployed, unions, and workers; and by evoking racist and anti-woman stereotypes, pitting one nationally and racially oppressed group against another.

The line was that high spending on social programs was the cause of the economic crisis and that creating jobs required more sacrifice from the workers themselves so that industry could be competitive. The line was that the rich needed tax breaks as an incentive to invest. The devastating results of trickle down economics has left no question in the minds of those who are suffering that there must be big change, fast.

The question is, what kind of change? What direction? The vacuum and confusion makes this a dangerous time. The populist right is working overtime on the airwaves, in the electoral arena, and in the religious community, to appeal to those no longer able to expect a better future for their children. They are singing the tune of the ultra-rich, the transnational corporations, and the military industrial complex who are determined to hold onto the billions they have appropriated.

It is also a time of great potential for people's struggle and victories. More and more sections of labor and its allies the nationally and racially oppressed, women, young people, and seniors are committed to "whatever it takes" to break out of the political and economic stranglehold. Widespread disillusionment with the political system is merging with growing anger over deteriorating living condi-

tions. In this environment, independent political forms are not only more possible than ever before – they are increasingly necessary to provide the opportunity for advanced demands to be expressed and won.

CONNECTICUT BUDGET CRISIS ■ Connecticut is a small state geographically with a population of three million. It has a relatively large amount of industry, much of it military related. It has sharp contrasts of wealth and poverty, being first in per capita income in the nation yet home to the 4th, 7th, 20th and 25th poorest cities.

The impact of the economic crisis on the working class has been devastating. Over 100,000 workers lost jobs to plant closings in the past ten years and new, huge layoffs are announced almost daily. The unemployment rate has risen above the national rate for the first time since the 1970's, with the rate for African American and Puerto Rican workers three times higher than their proportion of the population. Last year over 18,636 different people stayed in emergency shelters, about ten percent families and 19 percent holding low wage jobs. There are 300,000 residents with no medical coverage at all. More than 70,000 children in Connecticut live below the federal poverty level, most of whom live in ten of the state's 169 towns.

During the Reagan and Bush administrations, Connecticut residents with incomes over \$200,000 have enjoyed a \$3 billion per year in tax breaks. This is the same dollar amount the federal government took away from the state for human needs and services. In addition, last year \$9 billion of Connecticut taxpayers' money went to the military more than the entire state budget.²

Until last year, Connecticut had no income tax and relied on the two most regressive taxes: sales and property. Labor and progressives had long called for a progressive income tax to ease the burden on low and middle income people and raise the contribution from the upper income groups. This struggle came to a head during the current term of "independent" Governor Lowell Weicker, when the loss of federal funds reached a crisis point and the

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budget was in the red by a third. By then, Connecticut had the 5th highest taxes on the poor in the country. It ranked first in the country amongst states that "cut taxes on the rich while raising taxes on almost everyone else" from 1985 to 1991.³

In 1991 the Connecticut Legislature, anticipating California by a year, failed to meet the July 1 deadline to pass a state budget. The right wing proposed decimating state services, raising regressive state taxes, firing state workers and reducing the wages and benefits of those who remained. The governor proposed a flat-rate income tax, while pressing state unions for concessions.

Progressive state legislators were caught in a bind. They were just able, with the help of the Governor's veto, to block the most reactionary measures. They did not have the votes to pass a really progressive "\$100,000-plus" tax to close the budget gap and, indeed, the best proposals did not go far enough. They were trying desperately to save programs vital to their poor and working-class constituencies.

As the long, hot summer advanced, pressure mounted for a solution to the crisis – any solution. State parks closed and were reopened. State workers were threatened with layoff, not knowing from day to day what the future would bring. The media and right-wing demagogues encouraged a widespread feeling that "the politicians in the State Capitol" are responsible for this crisis. In this atmosphere, a deal was made. A budget was passed that included an income tax and a reduction of the sales tax from 8 percent to 6 percent. The price of the deal included concessions from state workers, cuts in state services, and pulling the teeth of the new income tax: at the high end (over \$100,000), the tax was frozen at a flat-rate 4.5 percent.

The result was devastating. The heaviest direct burden was placed on middle-income families in the \$40,000 to \$80,000 range. At lower incomes, the tax rate was less, but anything taken from the paycheck of a family struggling to survive was too much. The slight reduction in taxes on the poor was more than eaten up in skyrocketing local taxes and reduced services. For example, the cancelling of the five percent cost of living increase (COLA) for AFDC families is effectively a tax on the poor.

The richest 1 percent, however, are not affected by the services that were cut and tend to live in towns with low local tax rates. Their average state tax increased only slightly, and many actually found their taxes reduced because the old dividend and interest tax (top rate 14 percent) was replaced with

the 4.5 percent income tax. The tax was implemented in a way almost designed to maximize resentment. Because of the long delay in passing the budget, four months' taxes had to be collected in three months. To make matters worse, there was a complicated system of exemptions and credits that was not reflected in the withholding tables. As a result, many workers had far too much taken out of their paychecks.

If the new tax was devastating economically, its political impact was just as great. Many who voted for the tax faced widespread anger from voters. Granted that this was due in part to media disinformation and political demagoguery by right wing politicians – it was also due to the "sticker shock" of seeing yet another deduction from a hard-earned paycheck.

At the same time, layoffs and cuts in services resulted in a competition for survival between vital programs, and created divisions among different sections of the working class. State workers were blamed for rising costs and "waste," while welfare recipients, mostly long term unemployed workers, were expected to sustain substantial cuts.

ULTRA-RIGHT DEMAGOGY ■ The ultra-right organized quickly to try and use the outrage among working-class families in a racist and opportunist way by placing the blame on the poorest sections of the working class, instead of on the rich and corporations where it belonged. The spearhead of this "Ax the Tax" movement, former state senator Tom Scott (R), already had national connections with the ultra-right. He had been the point man in the Legislature for the reactionary English Only movement. Within days of the levy of the income tax in October, Scott called for the biggest demonstration in state history at the capitol, to "Ax the Tax." The demonstration was aimed not only at furthering his own political career, but also at targeting progressive legislators and shifting the political debate to the right.

Scott's approach blames the victims of the crisis for its cause. It would require a layoff of workers, measures that would destroy union contracts, and a severe cut in spending to balance the budget. This message – based on fear, hatred and division – ultimately resulted in death threats and shootings into the homes of progressive legislators who had voted for the tax.

The October rally was massive: 30,000 turned out, mostly white suburbanites who were angry and

saw no other means to express their feelings of betrayal. However, it was clear that only about a third of those who participated consciously supported the thrust of Scott's program. Another third of the crowd was confused and so angry that they were opposed to any taxes on anyone at all. The rest of the demonstrators were more attracted to an alternative message brought to the grounds of the state capitol by a handful of union and community activists: "Tax the Rich." This message represented exactly what at least a third of those approached felt they wanted to say, and the response was overwhelming. Several hundred "Tax the Rich" buttons, posters and petitions were grabbed up enthusiastically within minutes, and collection cans were stuffed full of dollar bills.

TAX THE RICH ■ "Tax the Rich" is the only unifying position in the budget battle. Any other position

leaves workers fighting against each other over taxes jobs and whose services will be cut. "Tax the Rich" is the only position which addresses both tax and spending policy.

Even after the institution of the income tax, people of middle income are paying twice the top income, and lower income families are paying three times the top income in state and local taxes. Even after the income tax, the state budget had a \$1 billion shortfall, and huge cuts were made into health, education and welfare programs severely affecting thousands of Connecticut residents and causing thousands of state workers to be laid off.

The Taxpayers Alliance to Serve Connecticut (TASC) came into being in 1991. This coalition of unions, mostly public sector and social service providers, has grown into a significant force for repairing the income tax. TASC's proposal, communicated in radio and newspaper ads and door-to-

THE TAX THE RICH PROGRAM

The core of the Tax the Rich (TTR) campaign is a program that would eliminate or greatly reduce income taxes on 95 percent of Connecticut families, while providing property tax relief, restore cuts in jobs and services, and fund needed new programs for affordable housing, universal health care and equal education. The plan would raise an additional \$3 billion, increasing state revenues by one-third, by replacing the present state income tax with a steeply progressive tax on the rich. The plan's tax schedule provides:

- If your income is under \$50,000, you pay nothing.
- From \$50,000 to \$125,000, you pay from 0 percent to 4.5 percent.
- From \$125,000 to \$200,000, the rich pay 4.5 percent to 12.2 percent.
- From \$200,000 to \$500,000, the very rich pay 12.2 percent to 20 percent.
- From \$500,000 to \$1 million, the super-rich pay 20 percent to 25 percent.
- Over \$1 million, the ultra-rich pay 25 percent to 40 percent.

Under this proposal, most families would see a big reduction in state income taxes. A family with an income of \$35,000 would save \$321 per year; families with incomes from \$45,000 to \$80,000 would save about \$1,000 per year. On the other hand, someone with an income of \$1 million would have to pay an additional \$204,000 in taxes.

The proposed tax cuts on working people would cost the state about \$850 million. The increased taxes on the rich would yield an estimated \$4.1 billion. The state's budget (now at \$8 billion) would increase by over one-third – enough, for example, to double state aid (including education aid) to cities and towns, provide substantial property tax relief and still meet other needs.

TTR points out that under its plan, the rich would still pay less than they did 20 years ago in combined state and federal taxes. A person with an income of \$200,000 would be left with \$144,000 after federal and state income taxes; a "typical" ultra-rich person with an income of \$2.6 million would be left with over \$1 million. "If they can't get by on that," says the TTR program, "there are plenty of people who would be willing to change places." The big corporations, like the rich, have benefitted from federal tax reductions and giveaways. However, on a state level, Connecticut currently has among the highest corporate income tax rates in the country. Restoring corporate taxes must be addressed at a federal level to prevent big business "whipsawing" one state against another.

door canvassing, would relieve low and middle income taxpayers, but would not raise additional revenue for the budget. The wealthiest taxpayers would still be contributing a small fraction of what they did 20 years ago in combined federal, state and local taxes. The rest of the population would still be left to compete over limited services. While the TASC proposal to repair the tax begins to take the burden off of working people, it does not fully accomplish that objective. Without raising new revenues for the state budget from the rich, it is not possible to restore much-needed jobs and services.

In 1990, the Connecticut Communist Party put forward a Connecticut Economic Bill of Rights. This program for the 1990s would guarantee housing, health care, education, employment and equality for all as basic human rights to be paid for by those responsible for the economic crisis: the big corporations and the military industrial complex.

While calling upon Congress to declare an economic disaster and initiate massive public works and funds to the cities, the Economic Bill of Rights focuses on proposals to the Legislature and Governor. It calls for state action to end inequality and poverty in Connecticut's cities and towns laying the foundation for a stable peacetime economy, a clean and safe environment, and a secure future for every resident. Included are specific proposals for progressive tax reform; protection of workers during layoffs, plant closings, strikes and unemployment; economic conversion to save and create jobs; equality by the year 2000; universal health care for all.

The generally positive response to the Economic Bill of Rights is a reflection of a growing attitude among workers and unemployed to demand "what we need, not just what we can get." This more militant attitude was very clear during the march across Connecticut in August 1991, led by Rev. Jesse Jackson.

Walking from Bridgeport – the first city in the U.S. to declare bankruptcy since the Great Depression – to the capitol city of Hartford, "Tax the Rich" signs were very popular and received applause from passersby in cities, towns and rural areas. Touring the impoverished North End of Hartford with Mayor Carrie Saxon Perry, Rev. Jackson asked her what difference the best of the tax proposals would make for an unemployed family they visited. When she replied that the best proposal would not make a difference for this family, Jackson answered, "Then this proposal is not our agenda." He repeated the story during the march, stopping in town after

town along the way.

When Tom Scott formed the Connecticut Taxpayers Alliance and called the October "Ax the Tax" demonstration at the capitol, the media seized the opportunity to play up this divisive movement and diminish the "Keep Hope Alive – Rebuild America" march led by Jesse Jackson two months earlier. The media editorialized against the August turnout on the basis that it was smaller, and portrayed the October crowd as if it were all of one mind.

Those who had brought the "Tax the Rich" alternative to the capitol during the October demonstration proved the correctness of refusing to cede direction of the anti-tax sentiment to Tom Scott. Despite the media, the fact that another, sensible and fair alternative existed began to take hold in people's thinking.

TACTICS ■ In November, at the State Convention of the Connecticut Communist Party, the tax issue was singled out as a key arena of class struggle within the Economic Bill of Rights. Convention preparations had been geared toward working out the tactics to build at the grass roots, support coalitions and elect representatives with the aim of winning the Economic Bill of Rights.

The public debates and confusion over the tax issue were reflected in the discussion at the convention. A couple of speakers supported the new, unjust income tax. One argued that workers earning \$50,000 per year should pay in order to reduce taxes on the poor. Another argued that not to support the tax was the same as not supporting progressive legislators under attack. After a healthy debate on these questions, the convention reaffirmed the "Tax the Rich" approach.

Karl Marx showed that the tax system is used by the capitalist class to take a greater portion of the surplus value created by workers. In this way the responsibility for public education and services is carried disproportionately by workers, letting the capitalists off the hook. The slogan, "Tax the Rich – Not the Workers" developed in the months after the convention, speaks to the fact that workers are paying more than their share every day as the wealth they produce by their labor is taken by the employer for private profit.

The report at the Connecticut Communist Party convention which opened the workshop on the tax battle and the Economic Bill of Rights quoted the *Communist Manifesto*. Among the demands that Marx and Engels put forward for Communists to

make in advanced industrial countries was "a heavy progressive or graduated income tax," and programs such as free universal education, government owned banks, state run communication and transport systems and work for everyone."

It was brought out that to achieve socialism in the United States, the Communist Party must heighten the class struggle and unite the working class to struggle for its interests as a class. This is the intention of the Connecticut Economic Bill of Rights. Many workers speaking at the convention strongly supported the "Tax the Rich" concept, relating the budget struggle to their daily lives. For example one stated:

I feel betrayed. Weicker, the candidate, promised us: "I'm not going to balance the budget on the backs of state workers." We thought the progressive income tax was the best way for everybody to pay their fair share. I encouraged and we brought buses of people up to the state capitol to fight for and try to get the tax reform done. And when it came down to the wire, it's reform, but it's not progressive. The budget is being balanced on the backs of state workers.

Another argued:

Those that hurt the most are people on welfare. It's hard enough for most of us to make it from check to check, week by week. So imagine yourself living from one welfare check to the other, especially when your state is in the crisis our state is in. Weicker doesn't realize or care what happens to these families. They are already living below the poverty level and now there is a freeze on their raise. Situations like these cause people to be very angry. There's no faith anymore in this system.

Still another related:

The working class always suffers from taxes. The right wing is capitalizing on that. David Duke and the ultra-right take the position that we should not have welfare. The people on welfare are being attacked. In the long run taxes are being used to make the working class suffer and the rich are not affected by it. We have to fight any tax on workers that comes out. We have to explain that to a lot of people who are misled.

The Main Resolution adopted unanimously by the convention, "Winning A Connecticut Economic Bill of Rights," states in the introduction:

Given the conditions of this moment, a "Tax the Rich" movement to repair the income tax and exempt all incomes under \$100,000 could be key in moving from the defensive to the offensive. The fair tax movement should be linked to economic conversion and the peace dividend, to the struggle against racism and for equality, and to strengthening the organized labor movement and building the labor-African American-Puerto Rican alliance.

The section of the Resolution on taxes concludes:

We want to help develop a coalition of public and private sector workers unions and unemployed, seniors, youth, AFDC families in support of the "tax the rich" and "no layoffs, no cuts" solution to the budget crisis. Such a coalition could support incumbent legislators who vote and work for this program, and run candidates on a human needs or economic bill of rights platform.

State jobs and services, "saved" by the income tax in 1991, came under fire within a few months as a new \$1 billion deficit was revealed for 1992. Exhausted by the income tax battle, the governor and legislature shifted their attention to cutting expenditures to balance the budget. New concessions and layoffs were demanded of state workers; new cuts in welfare, recreation, education and other services were proposed with increases only in the number of prison beds. Some of the cuts were blunted by the struggle of state workers, the homeless and tax repair advocates.

In testimony to the state legislature in April, one director of a community agency insisted, "We do not agree with the cuts as a way of avoiding a deficit. With no jobs program and such high unemployment, people will have no place to go. We have heard it suggested that they should leave the state. But we are the wealthiest state in the nation - all other states would be worse!"

After embracing proposals to protect those unemployed the longest, the agency argued for the alternative to "increase the income tax of Connecticut families with incomes over \$200,000 a year.... The state income tax bill could be repaired to raise this extra money and avoid these inhumane cuts."

Overall, the absence of any tax the rich legislation during that session severely limited the scope of the fightback struggle. By the end of the session, an unprecedented number of legislators, including some fine spokespersons for labor and progressive positions decided not to seek reelection.

1992 ELECTIONS ■ The Spring of 1992 saw a concerted right-wing drive to take over the Connecticut legislature and to replace the liberal Democrat Rosa DeLauro in Congress (3rd CD) with Tom Scott. The pressure from Scott was pushing DeLauro to less progressive positions, making it difficult to excite strong support from labor and the inner city, which would be needed in a tight race.

Discussions were initiated about how to influence the debate and how to bring out voters when so many felt unrepresented and disenfranchised. The idea of running candidates for state office on a strong "Tax the Rich" program within the geographical boundaries of the 3rd CD sparked interest. A program which shifted the debate away from, "How can we cut spending" (i.e., cut services, wages, jobs) to, "How can we provide the services we need at the same time we cut taxes on working people?" could help to expose Tom Scott's anti-worker positions and build grass-roots support for an ongoing movement.

Note was taken of a strong and growing anti-politician, anti-incumbent feeling which, in a vacuum, could be exploited by the likes of H. Ross Perot in a dangerous direction. At the same time, the atmosphere provided an unprecedented opportunity for grass-roots candidates and campaigns truly independent of big business.

In June, a letter was sent out calling for a meeting to discuss a Tax the Rich campaign. It was signed by 30 community, labor, human services and grass-roots leaders. The first meeting, held at the Central Labor Council, was attended by 25. The composition was impressive. Almost half were African American, half were from the labor movement. Many others, unable to attend, expressed their support. Each participant brought to the coalition a rich history of activism and cooperation that has emerged over the years as New Haven has fought back against runaway industrial shops and withdrawal of federal funding to the cities.

The meeting agreed to form a coalition and launch a Tax the Rich campaign. This would include development of a program to be presented to organizations for adoption, and fielding Tax the Rich candidates as well as seeking support for the program from other candidates. In this way, the maximum number of people could be involved and the basis would be laid for building an ongoing grass-roots movement that would continue after election day. A labor and a community leader were selected to serve as co-chairpersons.

The Tax the Rich program was developed in a matter of weeks, by analyzing the state budget figures. Its main points include:

- Eliminate or reduce state income tax on working people, while steeply increasing taxes on incomes over \$125,000;
- Give property tax relief for cities;
- Restore all cuts in services, jobs and benefits;
- Provide massive additional funding for jobs and economic conversion, education, housing and health care. Government contracts should be for housing, transit systems and environmental protection instead of unneeded military weapons systems.

A candidate search committee approached unions, tenant, peace and homeless organizations for nominations. Four candidates for State Representative and Senate – all grassroots activists, two African American and two white – came forward and were endorsed: A housing and youth activist who lives and works in one of the city's housing developments; a construction worker active in peace and solidarity work; a civil rights and community activist; a recently homeless person active in homeless organizing.

Having selected candidates, Tax the Rich was faced with the problem of getting them on the ballot. Due to a quirk in the state election law because of redistricting, the normal rules requiring one percent did not apply. Instead, it was necessary to collect signatures from about ten percent of those who voted in the last election. There was neither time nor money to challenge this law. The committee went to work, and in two weeks collected over 2,500 signatures.

There was an advantage to the petitioning – it threw Tax the Rich supporters into the streets, talking to hundreds of people in the neighborhoods. When told, "This is a petition for taxing the rich," a big smile would spread over people's faces. Many times people would call their families or even neighbors, "Hey come here and sign! These people want to tax the rich!" The strongest responses came from the African American, Latino and white residents of poor, working-class neighborhoods.

Faced with huge property tax increases on top of the state income tax, the same story was told over and over: "I don't know how I can keep the house. Each month I juggle the tax bill, the phone bill, the gas bill. If I pay one, I can't pay the other. If I pay them all, I can't eat. If I could afford it, I'd move – in five years, this city will be a ghost town." Faced with this situation, the response is often a militant:

"You want to *soak* the rich? That's a great idea!" and even, "Tax the rich? Hell, we ought to jail the bastards." The response from the streets reaffirmed the decision to run candidates in these New Haven districts. There had been some questions about this. The original strategy had been scaled back.

It wasn't possible, with the time or resources available, to field candidates in suburban towns, or even in one very important New Haven district whose incumbent is a Republican supporter of Tom Scott. Tax the Rich candidates were running for open seats in overwhelmingly Democratic districts whose incumbents had stepped down but whose Democratic candidates, in most cases, were regarded as progressive.

But the response in the neighborhoods showed the need to give voice to a much more militant and advanced program, to voters who haven't seen any reason to go to the polls. These are districts with a negligible Republican vote. It would be a great step forward for Tax the Rich to succeed in becoming the major contending viewpoint. This could change the whole context for political debate and lay the basis for a progressive third party movement.

In the end, Tax the Rich was able to sustain only two of the original campaigns. The candidacies of Seth Godfrey in the 93rd District and Dalzenia Henry in the 96th District are moving ahead strongly. And it is not surprising that Tax the Rich is moving ahead in two of the districts with large concentrations of poor, nationally oppressed and working-class people. Although Tax the Rich hopes to build unity between cities and suburbs, and between all sections of the working class and middle class, its natural base is in the areas where the crisis is being felt most sharply.

The Tax the Rich program was tested on primary day. In an unusual tactic – Seth Godfrey, who had been a Jerry Brown delegate to the Democratic National Convention as part of Peace Voter – collected signatures both for the Democratic primary and for the independent Tax the Rich line. In this way, he would be able to continue on as a candidate through November no matter the outcome of the primary. The advice of some Democratic Party regulars was to stay away from Tax the Rich on the basis that it would send "mixed messages." The campaign believed that it was in fact the Tax the Rich content that would attract voters.

After achieving ballot status, the primary campaign started only 12 days before election day, with almost no money. Godfrey's two opponents were

well funded with strong political connections. Nonetheless, Godfrey came within 72 votes of victory, gaining 31 percent of the vote in a three-way race, and finishing first in half of the polling places, representing the poorest wards in the district.

While the other candidates' literature emphasized their personalities and endorsement, voters in the neighborhoods and at the polls would stop and read Godfrey's entire flyer, which was packed with information about the Connecticut tax system and the Tax the Rich proposal. Even the opposition's poll workers, mainly unemployed and homeless workers hired for the day, were wearing "Tax the Rich" buttons by the end of election day. The experience primary day again shows that the Tax the Rich message is needed and that the time is right for it.

Incumbent State Senator Charles Allen III, faced with a three-way primary in his district encompassing half of New Haven – including most of the 93rd State representative's district – and a small portion of West Haven, had participated in the initial meetings of the Tax the Rich coalition. Allen endorsed the Tax the Rich plan as practical and realizable. When the coalition endorsed Allen in return, he explained that "The people of my district and in our state need a legislature that will take action on behalf of the everyday economic needs of families. That's why I will work to bring this Tax the Rich program to life. If we don't pass it this session, by organizing at the grass roots we can win it in the future because it is fair and just."

Many voters in the 93rd cast their ballots for Allen and Godfrey. Unfortunately Allen, who had minimum funds and organization, narrowly lost the September primary. While the tax issue was not key in that race, of 17 primaries in the state focused on the income tax, 14 pro-repair candidates won. Six of seven pro-repair Democratic incumbents carried the primaries, and two incumbents favoring repeal were defeated by a pro-repair challenger. The concerted effort by the right to defeat legislators who support a progressive tax structure failed overwhelmingly in the primaries.

The new experiences of Dalzenia Henry and Seth Godfrey campaigning door to door in the general election further show that their program speaks to the anger of working people, retirees, unemployed, students and shopkeepers in working-class neighborhoods. "Tax the Rich – it's great!" said one elderly gentleman standing at his gate watching campaign workers make their way up the block. "Somebody has to do it!"

Through its campaigns, Tax the Rich is already becoming a serious political force in New Haven, and the Tax the Rich program will have to be reckoned with in the new State Legislature.

Leading the way is the key industrial union in the area whose members are being battered with speedup, overtime, subcontracting and massive layoffs to satisfy corporate greed. The fact that this union's endorsement of the Tax the Rich program was among the first to be received lays a solid foundation for further expansion and growth of this movement throughout the state.

POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE ■ When Lowell Weicker left the Republican Party and ran for Governor on his own "A Connecticut Party" label in 1990, the Communist Party was quick to develop a definitive approach to the concept of political independence. A candidate tied to business interests running outside the Democrat and Republican parties is not really independent. Weicker is not independent of corporate interests.

Ideologically, the Connecticut Party is a mixed bag encompassing the political spectrum. Its presence has changed the political landscape in the state. A Connecticut Party, with the top line on the ballot this year, chose to endorse all incumbents in the state legislature who had voted for an income tax – practically all are Democrats.

This included Lynn Taborsak. Therefore, when the only blue collar worker in the legislature was narrowly defeated in her Democratic primary bid for Congress in the 5th CD, she had an option. Taborsak's decision to utilize that line on the ballot instead of dropping out is challenging many Democrats, including union leaders, to let go of old ways and support a progressive labor candidate on the basis of the issues, rather than choosing on the basis of party line.

This struggle was fought through several years ago in Hartford with the formation of People for Change. This progressive coalition, working with progressive Democrats, has now replaced the Republican Party on the city council. However, without a redistribution of wealth the ability to deliver a better quality of life to the residents of the fourth poorest city in the country is severely limited.

The Tax the Rich campaign does not take place in a vacuum. It is part and parcel of the growing number of national and local examples of political independence over the past number of years. The Tax the Rich program speaks to the needs of all of

the cities; it speaks to the need for economic conversion to guarantee jobs with affirmative action, rebuild the infrastructure, clean up and protect the environment; it speaks to affordable housing, universal single-payer health care and equal education. The Tax the Rich campaign speaks to the need for grass-roots, progressive political structures that represent the needs of employed and unemployed.

Addressing the State AFL-CIO convention last year, after the great victory of the Pittston strike and huge solidarity demonstrations at Pittston's Greenwich Connecticut corporate headquarters, United Mine Workers president Richard Trumka spoke about what cultural tradition will shape the future of our country. He asked: Will it be "a working-class culture that teaches tolerance and fairness, that puts human need before corporate greed, that believes the institutions of government exist to advance economic and social justice"....Or will it be a scab culture "where individual greed is the only common value...that tells working people that it's not only acceptable, but even a virtue to put their own separate interests before the common interests of their families and their communities and their brothers and sisters on the job?"

He called dramatically for a new movement for economic justice, "to reclaim our future, because it's our lives, it's our hopes, it's our kids, it's our dreams, it's our country and it's time we take it back from big business for the American worker!"

In Connecticut, "Ax the Tax" Tom Scott represents scab culture that can only benefit the corporate power structure. The Tax the Rich program is specifically aimed at replacing divisions and individualism with unity and community interests. It is aimed at demanding "what we need, not just what we can get." The power of this program and campaign is evident in the tremendous energy it has unleashed in a very short period of time.

The challenge in the post-election period will be how to maintain the momentum and generate the fever into a winning multi-racial, grass roots movement as part of the broader developments toward labor and peoples independent politics in Connecticut as in the nation as a whole. □

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Reclaiming the Thirties in American Culture

Phillip Bonosky

Every vital social movement, even every phase of such a movement, especially if it wins state power, "succeeds," i.e., attracts to itself a variety of adherents, all kinds of opportunists, "supporters," militant champions, "enthusiasts," and political chameleons, each with an ideological ax to grind, each with his own agenda. Victory tends to sanction the means by which it was won and raise those means into a dogma. The opposite also occurs; defeat discredits the means and road that led up to it, and the baby is forthwith poured out with the bath water.

True of all successful causes, Marxism has also not been spared. In fact, one can almost sum up the history of Marxism as a struggle not only against the bourgeoisie, but equally against some of its most ardent promoters, against the fatal consequences of its successes and the kind of "friends," who, if you have them, you don't need enemies. Even Marx was driven by such "friends" to cry: "All I know is that I'm not a Marxist!"

In the present period when such "friends" are falling over each other in their mad stampede to disown principles they had maintained (some of them) all their adult lives, we can at least say that this ill wind does blow some good. As all the intellectual parasites disconnect themselves from Marxism, the essential, what might be called, without yielding to sectarianism, "pure" Marxism, emerges from the shambles even more clearly. Saving the baby from going out with the bath water is an heroic rescue.

Among the benefits of this period, otherwise so destructive, is that it offers Marxists (perhaps compels them) to return to sources, re-root themselves to the healthy body of Marxism, and to continue much wiser, far more seasoned, much closer as thinkers to the science of society's reality where it ceases to be, variously, a one-sided "system," a "philosophy," a "method," but is thought itself at its highest, most conscious level. Like Moliere's *Gentilhomme* who was surprised to discover that he was speaking prose, "ordinary" people will automatical-

ly find themselves thinking dialectically, already having absorbed the fact that life has a materialist base. As Sean O'Casey reminded William Butler Yeats: "Think deep as you can, think long as you may, life depends on low reality." (*Rose and Crown*, Macmillan, 1952)

One of the benefits of this period is the opportunity it gives us to return critically to the field of art, specifically to literature, and begin the process of straightening out the distortions that the Marxist theory of art has been subjected to. In this respect, the appearance of James F. Murphy's *The Proletarian Moment*, University of Illinois Press, 1991, could not be more timely. It provides us with a useful starting point. Subtitled "The Controversy over Leftism in Literature," the book deals mainly with the literary scene in the USA in the early '30s, when Marxism represented the dominant literary trend in the country. But it also goes into the same problems that rose in the Soviet Union at that time as well as in Germany before Hitler. It does not deal with the literary Left in France, which was quite rich, nor in Spain, particularly in the period leading up to the Franco putsch, nor in England, which produced a number of brilliant Marxist literary theoreticians like Christopher Caudwell and Ralph Fox, both of whom died fighting in Spain. But it does offer documentary material from all three countries considered, showing how the Marxists in each country dealt with the literary problems that rose with the revolutionary times.

ROOTS IN ECONOMIC CRISIS ■ In order to understand why the entire intellectual community in Western Europe (with echoes in China, Japan and what we now call the Third World countries) "went Left" in the early '30s, it is necessary, if only summarily, to recall the main elements characteristic of the period. First of all, the revolutionary "ten days that shook the world" really did shake the world, and the Russian generation that stormed the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg was still very much alive in 1929, still charged with revolutionary elan, still transformed by the sense of glory – I repeat, sense of glory – that history had chosen precisely them to

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"change the world."

However, up until the Stock Market crash of 1929, "mainstream" intellectuals in the West on the whole stood aloof from politics, and at most watched with greater or less curiosity to see how the "experiment" in Russia would turn out, many doubting it would make it through the winter. Of course there was also an intellectual current in the West that espoused socialist ideas, some of whom heard in the shot fired from the battleship *Aurora* the opening shot of the world revolution. Of course others abhorred the Revolution, condemning it as premature, contributing to the historic split in the working-class movement between Marxists-Leninists and Social Democrats that persists to this day.

But, just as the Marxists predicted, the permanent crisis of capitalism erupted in the spectacular economic breakdown heralded by the Stock Market crash in New York City in October, 1929. The devastation that followed the event – not so remarkable in itself since the Stock Market was always rising and falling – might have made sense as the aftermath of a bitter war on American soil. Whole industries shut down, farms were abandoned, millions of workers lost their homes and roamed the country (about 16 million in two years), 2,600 schools closed leaving over 3 million children without schooling. In 1932 some 273,000 families had their homes foreclosed, and for the first time in America the sight of children searching through the garbage cans of the rich for something to eat became commonplace. (Remember, there were no "safety nets," no social insurances, just the charity of the rich.) But the war with guns, which might have explained this devastation, had ended for the USA in 1918. And what was more important, it took place on foreign, not native soil, and all of 11 years before.

So what explained it? We can understand a war, an earthquake, a hurricane, a plague. But how to explain a phenomenon of such proportions as to paralyze the industry of a nation, throw millions of people out of work, and yet show no outer signs of its cause? There was no great wind, no great rain, the earth did not shake, no bubonic plague assailed the people. Literally nobody in power knew the answer. In fact, the ostensible leader of the nation, President Calvin Coolidge, looking the scene over, reported to Congress in December, 1928, the very eve of the Market collapse:

In the domestic field there is tranquility and contentment, harmonious relations between management and

wage earner, freedom from industrial strife, and the highest record of years of prosperity.... The great wealth created by our enterprise and industry, and saved by our economy, has had the widest distribution among the people, and has gone out in a steady stream to serve the charity and business of the world.... The country can regard the present with satisfaction and anticipate the future with optimism.

These complacent, banal words were uttered just ten months before the onset of the worst economic collapse in American history. Even as Coolidge spoke, 21.5 million of the nation's 27.5 million families made less than \$3,000 a year and 6 million families made less than \$1,000 in a time of prosperity. A family of four needed an income of a minimum of \$2,556.62 to get by with no possible savings. The 27,500 richest families in America meanwhile had as much money as the 12 million poorest families.

This was the gigantic, overwhelming reality and literally nobody in power could explain what had happened, and their pathetic attempts inspired Will Rogers to comment wryly: "It's almost worth the Depression to find out how little our big men know." And, "It makes a dumb guy as smart as a smart one."

A MOVEMENT IS BORN ■ But to at least one young writer (who would become legion), the destruction of bourgeois values, the bankruptcy of ideas, was his liberation. "O Revolution," Mike Gold wrote as an epilogue to his *Jews Without Money*, 1930, "that forced me to think, to struggle and to live, O great beginning!"

For thousands of disinherited and ideologically orphaned intellectuals, Mike Gold's later cry, "Go Left, young man!" – echoing Horace Greely's earlier, "Go West, young man!" – was a bugle call which they responded to en masse. ("Young man" implicitly included young women of whom many were outstanding).

A few statistics will tell the tale. In 1929, 721 publishing houses had a gross income of \$182 million. Four years later, 1933, the number of publishing houses had fallen to 410 and their gross income to \$32 million. In 1929, books made a profit of \$44 million; by 1932, down to \$22 million. In 1933, the New York City Library cut its annual purchase of books from 250,000 to 50,000, which were mostly replacements of classics. At the same time that book purchasing fell, book borrowing from libraries

jumped 40 percent. Publishing new titles fell dramatically. Scribner's – which published Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald and Thomas Wolfe – profits fell from \$289,309 in 1929 to \$40,661 in 1932, cutting the royalties of established writers in half, and taking on no (or almost no) new writers at all. Other publishers fared no better.

With the Crash, labor “unrest” rose dramatically with thousands of workers going out on strike to stop wage cuts and plant shutdowns with sharp clashes with the police everywhere. Between August and October, 1933, 15 workers were killed on picket lines. In 1934 the number jumped to 40 and to 48 in 1935-36. Between 1933 and 1934 state troopers were called in to break strikes in 16 states, and 18,000 strikers were arrested between 1934 and 1936.

STRIKE STRUGGLES ■ That revolution was imminent in the USA was taken for granted, not even so much in the Communist ranks as it was in the disenfranchised strata of intellectuals who, already in the late '20s, were profoundly affected by the struggle of the most oppressed: the Gastonia strike of textile workers of North Carolina in 1929, for instance, which produced six novels alone. Writers had organized committees to defend the arrested strikers in the bloody clashes between miners and troopers in Harlan County. They came to the defense of the nine Scottsboro Youth in 1931. They had already participated (some of them) in defending Tom Mooney and Sacco and Vanzetti in the '20s.

Radicalization speeded up and broadened with the Market Crash. The proliferation of the John Reed Clubs, reaching a total of 30 branches across the country with at least 1,200 member writers, systematized the left-radical current. Fifty-two of the leading writers in America signed a statement supporting Foster and Ford as the Communist Party candidates for the presidency and vice presidency in the 1932 election. Among the 52 were Edmund Wilson, John Dos Passos, Sherwood Anderson, Theodore Dreiser, Lincoln Steffens, Langston Hughes, Malcolm Cowley and others.

As late as 1935, 70 prominent writers, among them Nelson Algren, Erskine Caldwell, James T. Farrell, Lewis Mumford, Nathaniel West, and Richard Wright, issued a call for a writers' congress with the casual introduction: “The capitalist system crumbles so rapidly before our eyes that, whereas ten years ago scarcely more than a handful of writers were sufficiently farsighted and courageous to stand for proletarian revolution....” Similarly, the

statement issued in 1936 for an artists' congress, written by Max Weber, declared that,

...While the serpentine Nazis and treacherous Fascists and traitors are sending bombs and other implements of destruction and war to the miserable traitors and agents under the despicable Franco, the working classes and the forward-looking masses of this and all other countries send their comradely greetings and good cheer to the fighting and bleeding masses of Spain and their elected democratic government ... in the hope ... that a sister Soviet Government will be born of this historic struggle in Spain.

The final call came militantly out against fascists at home and abroad, and was signed by literally all the leading and aspiring artists of the time – 378 of them. A later call to come to the aid of Spain was signed by almost all of America's leading cultural workers – musicians, actors, dancers, etc. – with only a few notorious exceptions.

With the conviction that the world had entered its revolutionary stage, it's not surprising that this sense of urgency and of being on the verge should find a corresponding expression in statements and manifestoes. In the USSR, which had had its revolution, revolutionary elan still persisted, up until the early '30s, and found its extreme expression in V.D. Alexandrovsky's poem whose opening lines read:

*Blow up
Smash to pieces
The old world!*

IDEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS ■ Organizations, most notably RAPP (Russian Association of Proletarian Writers), which had emerged as the victor in the furious polemics which it had conducted with groups ranging all the way from the Futurists, Constructivists, etc., to LEF (Left Front), all vying to be the voice of revolution, arose like mushrooms after rain. Most of these organizations not only embraced the revolution but saw it as a fire storm which swept away the hated past completely. For the new world there had to be a new art. Mayakovsky, in newly-born revolutionary Russia, was declaring:

The new must be spoken of with new words. A new form of art is wanted.... The Revolution, which has divided Russia into two camps, has drawn a boundary also between right and left art.... The Proletariat alone, and only in our land, will create new art.

This extreme and "militant" statement, alarmed Lenin. Indeed, Mayakovsky was so exclusive as to who could qualify as a "proletarian artist," that, while commending the Russian revolutionaries for disposing of the White Guardists, he also asked: "Have you forgotten Raphael?" and, "But why isn't Pushkin attacked?" (Making Lenin, who loved Pushkin, shudder).

This extreme, truly "leftist" attitude, had to be corrected and was corrected by a resolution of the Soviet Communist Party which deflated RAPP's "revolutionary" formulations, and blocked its attempt to monopolize and dictate what was to be acceptable as true revolutionary art and literature. Lenin pointed out that socialist art had to master critically all past art, not "blow it up," but absorb what was good in it (for socialism) and what was bad. It was impossible, and not desirable if possible, to invent a whole "new" culture. "We must take over the entire culture left from capitalism and out of it build socialism," he counseled.

But this extreme "leftist" attitude, which had a short life in the USSR, found expression in other countries as well; in Germany, France, but what should be particularly noted – never to an equivalent extreme in the USA, though Marxism dominated literary theory. Earl Browder, then General Secretary of the Communist Party, invited to speak before the first Writers Congress (1935), though no other political leader was, stated the Party's position on art and literature clearly:

...The method of our work in this field [culture] cannot be one of Party resolutions giving judgment on artistic, esthetic questions. There is no fixed 'Party line' by which works of art can be automatically separated into sheep and goats. We do not want to take good writers and make bad strike leaders of them.

And,

The new literature must help create a new society in America – that is its main function – giving it firm roots in our traditional cultural life, holding fast to all that is of value in the old, saving it from the destruction threatened by the modern vandals brought forth by a rotting capitalism, the fascists, combining the new with the best of the old world heritage.

Despite Browder's later defection, this position, which was the Party's, remained in force then and remains today. In his introduction to *Proletarian Lit-*

erature in the United States (1935), Joseph Freeman repeated: "No party resolution, no government decree can produce art, or transform an agitator into a poet." But he also reminded his readers, "The Communists say frankly: art, an instrument in the class struggle, must be developed by the proletariat as one of its weapons."

So what precisely is the relationship of the artist to the Party? Mikhail Sholokhov, at the Third Writers Congress (1955) in Moscow, would put it this way:

Malicious enemies abroad say of us, the Soviet writers, that we write by orders of the Party. The fact is somewhat different. Everyone of us writes as our hearts direct us, but our hearts belong to the Party and the people whom we serve with our art.

It is one of the virtues of Murphy's book that he exposes the long standing canard that it was the Party itself which championed the "artists in uniform" concept, which became the standard – one can even add, obligatory – charge against it. As Murphy sums it up:

Leftism referred to the disregard for esthetic values, the limitation of literary criticism to sociological analysis, and the demand that proletarian literature be narrowly agitational in character, addressing events of the moment. In criticism of individual works the term ('leftism') was directed against tendentiousness, which included the stereotyped portrayal of workers and capitalists as heroes and villains, the insertion of abstract propaganda into fiction, poetry and drama, and the general distortion or coloring of reality for political ends.

It was the editors of *Partisan Review* who championed the extreme Leftist approach to "proletarian literature." After becoming Trotskyites and stealing the magazine, they did a turnabout and accused the Party of espousing the very extreme position which they had championed and which, in fact, the Party had opposed. (From this point to where, in the mid-50s, they helped sponsor the CIA-funded Committee for Cultural Freedom, made a straight line.)

PORTRAYAL OF WORKERS ■ This was the caricature. But even then and certainly later it became clear that what bourgeois critics of Marxism really objected to was not even the literary caricature as much as to the reality of which the caricature was a gross distortion. For the fact was that for the first time in

American literature, the worker, present hitherto only as background, or as the object of the good-hearted philanthropy of the rich, was brought forward center on the political and social stage, not in the humble role of pleader for charity or decent treatment but (as Gropper characteristically pictured him) as lusty, powerful, generous-hearted youth with the hammer who demanded not "justice" rationed by the courts, but his rights as the creator of all social wealth and values. Revolutionary, in short.

Even drawn with all the subtlety of Henry James or Marcel Proust, this picture of the working class hero was not acceptable! It was not the clumsy art of proletarian literature that drew the critics' scorn, but what it tried to say. Even so, what it tried to say was true. It was a fact that the struggle against capitalism took an open form, especially capitalism in its fascist stage, and battles were fought out not only on the picket lines but in the trenches (as in Spain).

And it was right to say so in books, poems and film, as Hemingway did. It was a fact that in the course of struggle many workers "had my eyes opened," became conscious of their roles in society, and found that the logic of the struggle led them into the Communist Party. It was a fact that in factory after factory, in the fight to establish unions, workers voted en masse to go on strike, marching out of the union hall and onto the picket line, as Clifford Odets showed them in *Waiting for Lefty*. And it was a fact that, as they did, they often burst into song; usually it was "Solidarity Forever," and even sometimes "The International." And as they sang it was a fact that workers spontaneously raised their fists in a clenched salute. It was also a fact that in the march Black and white workers, who weeks or months before scarcely spoke to each other, were now locked arm in arm.

All such facts were dramatic and soul-stirring and the natural material for writers, who along with Mike Gold were sick of the "lavender tragedies" featured by writers like Thornton Wilder, and asked, with Gold, "Where are the cotton mills, and the murder of Ella May ... the child slaves of the beet fields ... the stockbroker suicides, the labor racketeers, or passions and deaths of the coal miners?"

BOURGEOIS CRITICS ■ The dominant literary position in the universities before the Crash was best expressed by Professor Irving Babbitt who (along with Paul Elmer More) as the ruling literary Brah-

min, declared that "there is no necessary connection between an author's historical influence and significance and his true worth." He championed a literature that reflected "permanent human values," which translated, meant "classical," i.e., bourgeois, or, as T.S. Elliot would sum it up for himself, it meant to be "a Royalist in politics, a classicist in literature, an Anglo-Catholic in religion." Put even more crudely by Benjamin DeCasseres, in his introduction (1930), to the arid and self-consciously ornate *Painted Veils* by James Huneker, the proletarian writers were nothing but "the illiterate recorders of the obvious. Literature has forsaken the luminous breasts of Aphrodite to buzz around the rump of Karl Marx...." (DeCasseres later became a notorious hustler for Hearst who had a preference for the actress - not his wife - Marion Davies).

It was against this "luminous breasts of Aphrodite" school that Mike Gold was protesting. This did not mean that he thought all literature - even proletarian literature - should deal only with "the child slaves in the best fields." He was merely urging writers to turn their eyes to this totally ignored area of American life, real life, away from a literature concerned with "one duchess" right to enter a door before another. "Besides," he emphasized, "the working class is the ruling class of the future."

Three great forces emerged in this period, internationally and nationally, that would "change the world" permanently, despite the current setbacks. First, of course, was the monumental breakdown of the system itself. Connected with it was the rise and threat of fascism. Countering fascism was the heightened consciousness and organization of the working class, headed on an international level by the USSR which the whole world understood was the main bulwark against the spread of world fascism. Not unimportantly, the progressive world was newly-awakened to the events in the East: the invasion of Manchuria by Japan in 1931 (prompting Broadway actresses to boycott silk stockings), and the heroic resistance of the Chinese workers and peasants whom the Communist Party of China welded into a unique people's army.

RISE OF CIO ■ In the USA, the rise of the CIO (1936) was an event of enormous importance, not only for the working class but for intellectuals as well. The CIO organized AFL-neglected industrial workers, but also intellectuals whose traditional stand-offish, "superior" attitude toward the working class was

given a terrific blow by the depression itself. Students who graduated philosophy courses had to mull over the fact that there were no jobs for philosophers except the one Marx assigned them, melted on the soup line. The Communists led them off the soup line onto the picket line and into the CIO; journalists, under Heywood Broun's inspired leadership, joined the CIO, as did other intellectuals ranging from theater to architects. This "marriage" of intellectuals and the working class gave the decade its unique color. Never was the cause of workers reflected in as many books, poems, plays, etc., as in this decade, to be known as the "Red Decade" and the "Proletarian Thirties." In addition to the rise of the CIO, two other forces enhanced the character of the times and gave it its unique quality – the WPA art projects and the Spanish Civil War.

The existence of the John Reed Clubs that changed the social role of the artist and the new militancy of the working class involving many intellectuals, laid the groundwork for what was to be an historic departure in the government's bourgeois approach to artists; this was the recognition that artists had the right to work as artists. The WPA did not give an impoverished painter a pick and shovel and tell him to dig ditches.

Under the influence of the Left, breaking with that tradition, the New Deal (1935) through the WPA, took 25,000 artists, writers, musicians, actors, teachers, etc., off the welfare rolls (they had to be on welfare, that is, be paupers, to be eligible for the WPA), and gave them work in their own profession at subsistence "wages." In New York City, some 3,500 writers on welfare applied for the WPA which could only "hire" 447. Nevertheless, all told, (6,000 nationally), the WPA writers produced 378 books, including the famous "Guide" books (still reprinted), and gave work to Nelson Algren, Conrad Aiken, Saul Bellow and many others.¹ WPA Theater, in its short existence (1935-1939), employed 10,000 pauperized actors, directors, etc., who supported an average of four people on their meagre "wages," but produced 830 plays, some of them like *It Can't Happen Here*, with 22 productions simultaneously in 18 cities, sent 17 new plays on tour to cities never before having seen a live play, pioneered in setting up an African American theater, children's theatre, and invented a new genre, the Living Newspaper.²

Artists (10,000 of them nationally) produced "48,000 oil paintings and water colors, 3,562 sculptures, 84,000 prints, 850,000 posters and 1,300

murals,"³ decorating public post offices, buildings, libraries, etc., taking their cue from the great Mexican muralists, Orozco, Siqueiros and Rivera. The last two were members of the Communist Party. The Art Project fed Paul Cadmus, Thomas Harg Benton, Regina Marsh, Saul Levine, Isaac Bishop, Alice Neel and countless others.

People who had never seen a live professional musician before, now attended full blown concerts and even operas like the ones created by Marc Blitzstein, *The Cradle will Rock, No for an Answer*, etc., and inspired the ILGWU (CIO) to produce original plays, one of which *Pins and Needles* demanded: "Sing me a song of social significance...all other songs are taboo...." Jay Gorney and Yip Harburg shocked Tin Pan Alley by asking "Brother Can You Spare a Dime?" The rediscovery of the "common man" led researchers to the rich fund of folk music that was literally out of sight and hearing, and "created" along with them the reputations of Pete Seeger, Josh White, Leadbelly and Woodie Guthrie, among others.

This decade also marked the rediscovery of the world of African Americans. Except for a brief moment in the '20s, during the "Harlem Renaissance," when Black people were still considered to be "exotic" to white intellectual slummers, the vast world of African Americans was largely unknown to the white upper-class intellectual world, of course. But, in the '30s, with the rise of working class revolt, dramatized in the case of the Scottsboro youth and the Herndon case, they came into their own: Langston Hughes, Richard Wright, Theodore Ward, Claude McKay, Margaret Walker, etc. Jazz became recognized as the only genuine music ever produced by America and accepted as such by the world.

The third major influence on the decade was the Spanish War to which 3,000 Americans volunteered to fight, and in which over 1,500 gave their lives. Most of the volunteers (as from other countries) were Communists. But the cause attracted many intellectuals, some of whom like the USA's Jim Lardner (son of Ring Lardner) died there, and some like the poet Edward Rolfe, survived. The war was to inspire many writers, from Dorothy Parker to Ernest Hemingway, while the anti-fascist cause in general inspired plays like Lillian Hellman's *Watch on the Rhine*, to name only one.

THE RED DECADE ■ Thus, the decade of the '30s, the "Red Decade," the "Proletarian Decade," richly

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deserved its name. American culture was in the hands of its paupers (25,000 on WPA), and in the hands of men and women who hated fascism and saw in the USSR (not in the USA which connived at supporting Mussolini, Hitler and Franco), the only reliable obstacle to the worldwide struggle for democracy, a democracy whose content was anti-fascism. In this entire decade, the Communist Party played a leading role and its cultural organ, *The New Masses*, was the most influential force in the country. It could not have played this role if it had been hide-bound by dogmatic, sectarian concepts. On the contrary, while embracing all truly democratic trends in the arts, it held fast to its fundamental, principled position that the entire logic of the anti-fascist struggle led inevitably to an acceptance of socialism. The *Daily Worker*, as well, reflected this flexible, non-dogmatic approach to the arts and the first works of men and women who later would become prominent in American culture – from Langston Hughes to Aaron Copland – were hailed in its pages. Writers as varied as Jack Conroy, *The Disinherited*, to Raphael Hayes, who wrote the verses to the song about Joe Hill, not forgetting Woody Guthrie, Ted Tinsley – some subsequently famous writers wrote under pseudonyms – were proud to be published by the *Daily Worker*.

To this day, when the world thinks of American culture, the chances are that the books, plays and art work that come to mind were born in that period. Not a solitary artist remained unaffected, and most of them came out “on the side of the people” (understood in its fully democratic sense). John Steinbeck, for instance, was introduced by the Communists to “Okie” land and was personally led to relevant material and the necessary facts. For days in the early ‘30s, Communists led Sinclair Lewis through “underground” Western Pennsylvania, introducing him clandestinely to miners hiding from the police to help him gather material for the labor novel he never managed to write; to depict a Communist hero was beyond Lewis’ powers.

All the foregoing, incomplete as it must be, clearly shows why this period has left an indelible mark on American culture and why it has been doggedly neglected by academia, and when that was impossible, caricatured by it, and rebaited.

An early indication of the poisonous new wind that would succeed in smothering the American mind for 40 years to come, occurred with the Ezra Pound case in 1949. In what amounted to a conspiracy, a committee of writers including T.S. Elliot, E.E.

Cummings, W. H. Auden, Allen Tate and others persuaded the Mellon family, which funded the Bollingen Foundation, to offer a \$1,000 prize for the best poetry published in 1948. Pound’s friends hurried to get his book *Pisan Cantos*, which nobody wanted to publish, into print, and lo and behold it was precisely that book which the committee, on which, again by coincidence, T.S. Eliot, Allen Tate, etc., sat, that won the prize in 1949.

That Pound had been arrested as a traitor bothered none of them. That he was pronounced insane delighted them for it meant his life would be saved. To the anti-Semitic and fascist-sympathetic T.S. Eliot, Pound’s virulent anti-Semitism was a mere detail. (Drs. Frederick Wertham and Windred Overholster, both eminent psychiatrists, denied that Pound was clinically insane).⁴

Awarding the prize raised a storm of protest in the country still triumphant in victory over fascism, but *The New York Herald-Tribune* would praise the award because it “...reaffirmed the principle that the value of art is independent of the actual social character of the individual who produces it, as it may be independent of the subject matter with which it deals.” In this reincarnation of the thesis last seen as championed by Professors Babbitt and Morse in the late ‘20s, “modernism” came into its own, the cult of irrationalism overtook art, the New Criticism laid it to rest. The ideological groundwork for McCarthyism in culture was laid, and for the next 40-50 years realism in art and literature was at bay, except for those few pockets of resistance that courageously persisted. The 600 professors who were driven out of the universities in the ‘50s, left behind a “silent generation” of students for a decade.⁵ The result was a bleak cultural landscape – with few independent exceptions – in a reactionary desert “spiced” with an insolent decadence seen as entertainment. Communists and all committed to an art dedicated to sanity and life have their work cut out for them, starting by reclaiming their authentic past. There can be no more honorable task than that. □

Reference Notes

1. *The Dream and the Deal*, by Jerre Mangione, Little, Brown and Co., 1972)
2. *Arena* by Hallie Flanagan, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, (1940)
3. *Modern American Painting*, by Peyton Boswell, Jr., Dodd, Mead & Company (1940)
4. *The Roots of Treason*, by E. Fuller Torry, Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, (1984)
5. *Rethinking the Soviet Experience*, by Stephen F. Cohen, Oxford University Press (1985)

An Economic Program for Today

There is untold human tragedy behind the words that have become so commonplace: "Economic slowdown." Millions of people losing their jobs, unable to find another that pays even half what they need to maintain their way of life. Millions can find no job at all – most have little confidence in the future; people thrown out of their homes; people denied emergency medical treatment because they have no health coverage; people who can't get a decent education for their kids. Senior citizens slipping further into poverty. Cities in decay. Shattered lives.

There is also growing anger and fightback mood among the majority of Americans. People are demanding change, even when the alternatives presented are not so clear. This anger can be explosive, as the nation witnessed in the Los Angeles rebellion. It has been turned into an organized force on the picketlines of steelworkers at Ravenswood, auto workers in Lordstown, teachers in Detroit, and in thousands of other militant class battles. People's anger hit the bricks and came to Washington in the Save Our Cities, Save Our Jobs march earlier this year.

The Communist Party economic program for today shows that there is a way out, a way to deal with the long-standing crisis of the capitalist system. We can chart the way to improving living and working conditions for the millions of workers who have been victimized in this period of the decay of capitalism.

We hear over and over again that government cannot solve people's problems, that the money just is not there. Our country has the labor, resources and know-how to provide a decent life for all of us – now. This program would radically improve conditions for 95 percent of the population. A united people's movement of the kind needed to win such reforms would put the working class and oppressed peoples into a position of greater strength in the struggle between the classes. Capitalists of course will say that the programs projected here will "harm

the economy." What they mean is that their profits would be reduced – which is true.

Communists are convinced that full resolution of the interlocking crises facing the American people requires that we replace the capitalist system with a higher form of society, socialism. Capitalism is based upon exploitation, where the few get filthy rich off the labors and suffering of the many. This basic fact cannot be "reformed" out of the system; it is the essence of the capitalism. Socialism will be achieved in our country when the majority of Americans are convinced of that.

But even short of socialism, our country has the labor, resources and know-how to provide a decent life for all of us – now. This program for today would radically improve conditions for 95 percent of the population, even within a capitalist framework. And a united people's movement of the kind needed to win such reforms would put the working class and oppressed peoples into a position of greater strength in the struggle between the classes.

FUNDING THE PROGRAM

TAX THE RICH ■ "Tax the rich! Slash the military budget!" These are perhaps the most popular slogans today. The goal of this program is to put these slogans fully into effect. Our program would provide an additional one trillion dollars per year to finance peoples' needs while reducing the tax burden on the majority.

Many of the proposals require the federal government to spend large amounts of money. Government spending is financed by taxes. In the United States, the federal income tax structure is no longer progressive (meaning that tax rates are no longer set according to people's ability to pay.) The overall tax structure, federal as well as state and local, has become regressive, with the heaviest burden falling on workers and low-income people rather than on the rich and their corporations.

Taxes:

- The Communist Party calls for raising individual income taxes on those with incomes over \$100,000, up to a peak rate of 90 percent on incomes

This draft document has been submitted for discussion by Economic Commission CPUSA.

over \$1 million. At the same time, income taxes should be eliminated altogether for people who make less than \$25,000, and cut in half on incomes of \$25,000 to \$50,000.

- Cut interest rates on the federal debt;
- Eliminate tax withholding from workers' paychecks for Social Security and Medicare, which should be wholly financed by employers and the government;
- Lower real estate taxes on homes of workers and the middle class, shifting the burden to estates of the wealthy and corporations;
- Collect the \$100 billion in unpaid taxes which, according to the General Accounting Office, is mainly owed by the rich.

This program increases the tax rate on the capitalists, on all the wealthy, and sharply cuts taxes on the working class and the poor. Taxing the rich in this way will raise an extra \$500 billion each year. Cutting taxes on poor and working-class people will cost on the order of \$100 billion, resulting in a net gain of \$400 billion.

The number of super-rich people has escalated dramatically – partly because they pay so little in taxes. In 1970 there were 642 people who reported annual incomes of a million dollars or more, and that rose to around 100,000 by 1991. Furthermore, as much as half the income of the very rich is now tax-exempt, and not even included as income in tax returns. Closing these loopholes would result in an extra \$100 billion in tax revenues. Raising taxes on estates and luxury purchases of the rich would raise another \$50 billion. Add this to the \$400 billion net gain from reforming tax rates, and the total gain in federal income tax would be \$550 billion per year.

In addition are corporate income taxes. Income taxes on corporations provided about 30 percent of federal revenues in the 1940s and 1950s; now they provide less than ten percent. Restoration of the 30 percent would mean raising the basic rate and eliminating the many loopholes major companies use to avoid paying taxes on profits. Even if, at the same time, taxes on small businesses are cut, the government will still collect an additional \$200 billion per year.

MILITARY BUDGET AND CONVERSION ■ More than \$300 billion is being spent on military and international affairs. This huge amount of spending benefits the capitalist class exclusively – especially the transnational corporations, which use the U.S. military as their battering ram to grab foreign resources

and exploit the underpaid labor of workers in other countries.

There is no threat of military attack on the United States. American workers have no interest in a large military budget; they are victims of it. Not only do we pay for it in taxes, but our jobs are lost when U.S. influence dominates in foreign countries, and transnationals close down here and move production to low-wage areas. We also lose when military power is used to crush or put unbearable pressure – including the financial pressure of the arms race – on socialist and other anti-imperialist governments, strengthening the international forces of capital and weakening the international working class.

Military Budget:

- Reduce military and related expenditures to \$50 billion. Less than half of this is for use to maintain a skeleton defensive armed force and to produce replacement military equipment. The rest of the \$50 billion is to continue and expand constructive projects of the Corps of Engineers and other civilian sectors.

- Close all foreign bases and transfer them, with all properties and facilities intact, to the host governments. Withdraw all U.S. troops from foreign countries.

- Convert from military to civilian production.
- Nationalize the entire military industry and all enterprises primarily engaged in production of military equipment.

- Retool plants for useful civilian purposes.
- Workers losing jobs are to be paid full wages until retrained and reemployed. They are to have priority equal to that of the workers and employees laid off as a result of civilian plant closings.

An example of prime importance, is the research, development and production of a high-speed magnetic rail system for the United States. Many plants can contribute to the urgently needed modernization and expansion of the mass transit system.

Naval shipyards, public and private, would be converted to building commercial vessels. If U.S. oil companies and other transnationals were prevented from having ships built and staffed in countries with low wages, tens of thousands of jobs would open up in the United States. And the industries that supply materials would gain millions of dollars of orders and would hire thousands of workers.

Another million workers at least are employed by subcontractors making identical or similar products for both civilian and military markets. If these

manufacturers cannot survive without the military orders, they should be nationalized – along with the prime contractors – and the civilian production continued and expanded.

THE MONEY IS THERE! ■ These, then are the main sources of additional funding for federal programs:

| Source | Amount |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Tax the rich (individuals) | \$550 billion |
| Tax the corporations | \$200 billion |
| <u>Slash the military budget</u> | <u>\$250 billion</u> |
| Total | \$1,000 billion = \$1 trillion |

The three main sources listed above would provide funds nearly double the government's current non-military outlays, while almost balancing the budget and eliminating the huge Reagan/Bush annual deficits. Roughly similar reforms should be made in most state and local tax systems, which are generally even more regressive than the federal system.

More funds for social needs can be gotten by reducing the number of highly paid bureaucratic officeholders, and oppressive police forces that are characteristic of most state and local governments. Important also will be the simplification of the archaic, multi-layered, largely overlapping complex of state, county, city, township, village, school district and other government forms. Of course, the pattern of reform will vary in each state and locality.

PROGRAM PROPOSALS

LABOR ■ The Communist Party calls for full employment, meaning that jobs would be provided for everyone willing and able to work.

We agree with the AFL-CIO: "Full employment must be a top priority of economic policy. Jobs at fair and decent pay must be available for every person who needs a job and wants a job... If there are not enough jobs in the private and public sectors for all who want jobs, the federal government must be the employer of last resort." (AFL-CIO, "The Pocketbook Issues," November 1991, p. 28.) We would amend this statement in one respect. The federal government must be the employer of *first* resort, regardless of what is done by private employers.

The deterioration in labor conditions – rise in unemployment, reduction in real wages, more worker injuries and deaths, intensification of racial discrimination, weakening and destruction of many

unions, increase in the number of working-class families living in poverty – results from the sharp anti-labor offensive of the capitalist class, which accelerated during the Reagan/Bush years.

The Communist Party economic program for today calls for:

- The right of all workers to join and/or organize unions, with no exceptions.

- Repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act and other laws used against unions, state "right-to-work" laws, anti-labor judicial rulings, and so on.

- Punishment of those who organize scabs to break unions instead of imprisonment of workers who interfere with scabs.

- Imprisonment of capitalists responsible for violating health and safety rules in the workplace and environmental regulations that affect the entire population.

- Imprisonment of those who commit capitalist (financial) crimes – e.g., stock frauds, embezzlement, confidence tricks, etc. – that affect and decimate the savings of workers.

- Changing the personnel of the Labor Relations Board, the Department of Labor and other relevant agencies on the federal, state and local levels to provide for labor domination of these bodies.

- Enlarging the number of health and safety inspectors from the current 2,000 to 100,000 to halt the rising toll of deaths, injuries and job-related illnesses. Workers experienced in the operations of specific industries must be prominent in the composition of the inspection teams. The federal government should require job-site safety committees, elected by the workers, with power to stop production as long as necessary until corrections are made.

The biased capitalist principle that considers property inviolable but labor vulnerable would be reversed. Instead, the following principle would be in effect: the rights and needs of labor are inviolable, and always have priority over property rights; the rights of the whole people have priority over property rights. Currently workers who interfere with property rights are imprisoned, but capitalists who interfere with labor's rights, or with the general public's rights, are almost always exonerated or at most given minimum fines. There must be a reversal of that concept.

WAGES ■ In U.S. industry today, production workers receive less than one-fourth of the values they create, down from 40 percent in the middle of this century and from 50 percent a hundred years earli-

er. To restore the workers' share just to the level of the 1950's requires an increase of more than 60 percent in average wages.

Calling for "fair wages" is misleading: even doubling current wages would still permit employers to appropriate half of what workers produce, and capitalism depends on this exploitation for its existence. Thus it is the system itself that is unfair. Under capitalism, workers must struggle for everything they need for a decent standard of living.

Communists call for;

- Doubling the current minimum wage of \$4.25 per hour.

- Social Security retirement and disability benefits should be raised to a minimum of \$675 per month, sufficient to provide 125 percent of the official poverty line. Also, all benefits should go up annually, automatically, to cover cost-of-living increases.

- All unemployed workers, including those seeking their first job, should receive unemployment benefits for as long as it takes them to find another job. The amount should be raised to whichever is higher: 65 percent of the worker's pay – as recommended by the AFL-CIO – or \$306 per week, equivalent to 90 percent of the proposed minimum wage. Similar increases in all forms of poverty relief benefits would be made.

- Workers losing their jobs because of plant closings would receive \$10,000 for retraining and/or relocation, as proposed in pending legislation, as well as two and a half years' severance pay, as in Western European countries. The cost would be borne by the employers closing the plants or, in case of bankrupt companies, by the federal government.

These are not extravagant demands, considering the fact that real purchasing power of wages has fallen drastically over the past 25 years, and plummeted during the Reagan/Bush years when minimum wages have been nearly frozen. To merely restore the purchasing power of the 1968 minimum wage would require a raise to \$6.75 per hour. To allow additionally for the increase in labor productivity during those years (even as inadequately measured by the Labor Department) would require a minimum wage of \$8.50 per hour. This would mean a wage increase for one-third of all workers, and for half of all Black and Latino workers in particular.

Government action is required to increase two other essential forms of workers' income: Social Security and unemployment insurance. And provisions of the Wages and Hours Act should be extend-

ed to cover the 11 million workers now excluded. The current average Social Security benefit is a little more than \$500 per month, barely reaching the poverty line for persons over 65 years of age. At least half of Social Security recipients get less than that. Red tape and legal exclusions keep the majority of the jobless from receiving any unemployment benefits. And the benefits are too low – a miserly 37 percent of average wages for those who are recipients.

REDUCE THE WORKWEEK ■ American workers were pioneers in the struggle for a shorter workweek. Before World War II this was a constant theme in labor's objectives. In 1938 the Wages and Hours Act was passed, establishing, in addition to a minimum wage, the 40-hour week, 8-hour day as the norm, replacing the previous 44 to 48 hours.

This victory was important for U.S. workers. The law required time-and-a-half for overtime, and double time under certain conditions. U.S. workers won the 40-hour workweek well ahead of European workers, although considerably later than Soviet workers.

Since World War II, the standard U.S. workweek has been frozen at 40 hours, while West European workers have not only been successful in matching that norm, but, in a number of countries, have won further reduction – in some instances as low as 35-hour weeks.

In the United States, however, the 40-hour week has come to mean less and less as employers make more use of compulsory overtime. Savings on fixed costs more than make up for the extra rate of pay. At present, about 44 million workers are on the job just 40 hours, while 22 million work from 49 to 60 or more hours per week.

The Communist economic program for today calls for:

- Reducing the workweek to 35 hours with no cut in take-home pay.

- Overtime should be eliminated except in limited emergency situations.

These steps will result in an average hourly wage gain of 25 percent and a corresponding increase in the number of workers required, assuming no offsetting production speedup. Work will be less exhausting and there will be more time for rest and recreation.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION ■ Inequality resulting from racism exists in every sphere of life in our country.

From colonial days, U.S. racism has been fostered by the capitalist class. Capitalists practiced and profited greatly from the enslavement of African Americans until the defeat of the Southern slavocracy in the Civil War. In different forms, profiteering from racist practices has been and continues to be even more lucrative today.

As of 1992, the minority population in the United States numbered at least 75 million, more than one-fourth of all people in the country. Included in this figure are African Americans, Latinos, Native American Indians and people of Asian origin. That number, 75 million, allows for the acknowledged undercounting by 5 million in the 1990 Census and for population increases since then. The largest group is the 36 million African Americans.

Comparing the situation of African Americans with that of non-Hispanic whites shows that Black people have 40 percent less money income, 2.5 times the rate of unemployment, 3.6 times the rate of poverty, 99 percent less ownership of productive capital, severe and inclusive discrimination in housing, education and medical care, six years less life expectancy, much greater victimization by criminals, and much harsher punishment for real and alleged crimes.

There has been little progress and considerable backsliding since the victories won through the Civil Rights struggles of the 1950s and '60s. Racism on the part of the executive and legislative branches of government and the police has intensified. The Ku Klux Klan has been revived and there are other extremist groups and outspoken politicians aligned with them. Discrimination against African Americans, Latino peoples, Native American Indians and other minority groups and nationalities is prevalent and vicious.

Estimates as of 1990 indicate that minorities lost \$400 billion as a result of discrimination, of which \$150 billion translated into direct superprofits for employers. The standard of living of all working-class people is dragged down by this economic and ideological division within our ranks.

To combat racism the Communist Party calls for:

- Affirmative action to achieve equality in every sector. Real affirmative action requires establishment of goals and imposition of time limits, priorities and quotas in order to reach these goals.

- Affirmative action procedures should be specific for each minority group and women. Legislation would not only require affirmative action, but

set up an effective government agency with responsibility for enforcement and public education. Such an affirmative action agency should have cabinet rank and should employ at least 100,000 enforcement agents. Even so, that is less than the number of employees in the Agriculture and the Health and Human Services Departments, and half the number in the Veterans Department.

- Racism and racist manifestations must be considered criminal. Violators of civil rights and affirmative action regulations, as well as perpetrators of anti-Semitic acts, must be subject to criminal penalties.

The racism of the U.S. ruling class, and the profitability of racism, are proven by their furious denunciation of quotas to end racism. Yet they approve of and apply quotas and priorities in many ways, such as in admission to college of the children of wealthy benefactors and graduates of "good" high schools, in veteran preferences, in immigration quotas from selected countries, as well as in the many and varied forms of nepotism, favoritism, and "good old boy network" that constitute the primary access to jobs and promotions in a large part of the economy.

WOMEN WORKERS ■ Discrimination against women in the workplace is traditional. The struggle for women's equality has given rise to the slogans "equal pay for equal work," and "equal pay for work of comparable worth." Despite years of determined efforts to improve the status of women, the domination of men continues, highlighted by the virtual monopoly of males at administrative levels where only token appointments of women have been made to appease the movement for equality. The subordinate role of women is a reality in the work world. More and more women are working or seeking work. Already the number of women workers is 83 percent that of men workers. Male-female wage differentials have narrowed only slightly. Gains have been minuscule compared to the needs. Some progress, but too little, has been made in hiring women for jobs traditionally reserved for men.

In a recent court decision in Oregon, it was ruled that wages in an occupation filled mainly by women should be raised to the wage rate in an occupation comparable in skill and educational requirements that is filled mainly by men. This principle of comparable worth, applied across the board nationally, would go a long way toward overcoming wage discrimination against women.

There are 20 million working women bringing up children; half these children are less than five years old. About 50 percent of these women are single parents in the difficult position of having to work while caring for their children. One-third of the women with children have to pay for child care; some, who are poor, have to spend up to one quarter of their meager income for that service. A million working women, unable to manage that, have to take their tots to work with them.

To solve these problems the Communist Party calls for:

- Equal pay for equal work.
- Aid for dependent children measures must be expanded to provide full day care for all preschool children of working mothers, and after-school care for older children. Current federal aid is clearly inadequate and scattered among a half dozen different programs. They should be incorporated into a single effective plan, and the funding greatly increased.
- Employers, private and governmental, must be required to give fully paid maternity leave of three months before birth and three months after, with the option of an additional year's leave at half pay. On returning to work, mothers should get their jobs back and receive all improvements in wages and benefits gained during their absence.

MASSIVE FEDERAL SPENDING

JOBS PROGRAM □ People's needs are growing as the deepening crisis of capitalism reduces purchasing power. Incomes go down and prices keep going up in the highly monopolized private marketplace. Existing federal programs for public services and construction – from housing to health and education – are no more than a drop in the bucket compared to what's needed.

The Communist economic program for today calls for:

- An \$800 billion program of massive federal spending on people-helping programs that would create jobs.
- Work is to be done by union labor at union wages.
- Specific affirmative action guidelines are to be followed.
- Priority is to be given to the needs of large cities where poverty and lack of public services are most acute.
- Work is to be organized and carried out

directly by employees hired by the supervising government agency. Use of private contracting firms is to be avoided wherever possible.

The Reagan and Bush administrations have propagandized vigorously against public sector programs and have attempted to privatize – with some success – public sectors. This, in effect, destroys the benefits of public programs and converts them into sources of big business profiteering. Overall social progress over the past half century has been achieved mainly through public programs; regression during the past two decades has resulted from the whittling away at these programs.

The development of the capitalist economy and its structural crisis makes inevitable the increasing role of government. And, despite their protests against federal spending, Reagan and Bush have raised the share of government outlays in the gross national product.

But the crucial point is, what has the government financed? These administrations have used our tax payments to the advantage of their billionaire sponsors – an example is the Savings & Loans bailout.

The following table shows the proposed distribution of major federal government programs, and the total estimated employment that will result. In each case, the amounts are in addition to current federal spending.

| Program | Expenditure (\$billions) | Jobs (millions) |
|--|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Infrastructure | 120 | 2.4 |
| Housing | 250 | 5.0 |
| Education | 150 | 3.0 |
| Health | 200 | 4.0 |
| Child Care | 40 | 0.8 |
| Environment, culture and recreation | <u>40</u> | <u>0.8</u> |
| Total | \$800 billion | 16.0 million |

The dollar amounts are as of 1992 costs and requirements. The jobs created are figured at the rate of one job for every \$50,000 of expenditure. That is within the range used by the AFL-CIO in its program for additional infrastructure outlays and for other job-creating measures. About one-half of the jobs would be directly created by the various programs; the other half represents jobs created in manufacturing the materials and equipment, and in providing the necessary services. In reality, of course, numbers would vary according to the specific pro-

gram, but the stated figures give an approximation of the impact of our programs.

INFRASTRUCTURE ■ We support the AFL-CIO program calling for an additional \$60 billion for rebuilding the nation's infrastructure. But its main focus is on roads, bridges and similar transportation requirements. And according to its program, the additional \$60 billion would provide about 1.3 million more jobs, directly and indirectly.

But much more is needed, even for the accumulated backlog of essential work on bridges and roads, public transit, water works, etc., especially considering the fact that current requirements are going up at the rate of \$40 billion a year. We propose doubling the amount suggested by the AFL-CIO, to \$120 billion a year.

Our program concentrates at least half of the allocation for infrastructure on the central cities and other run-down urban centers, such as Camden, New Jersey and East St. Louis, Illinois. We propose that:

- Priority is given to rebuilding public facilities in the nation's cities;
- Racist patterns be reversed so that communities in which African Americans, Latinos and other minorities live are no longer deprived of decent schools, well surfaced roads, garbage collection and other public services;
- Public transportation is provided to ensure that residents have access to city centers and suburban jobs;
- Affirmative action is enforced in hiring for construction and maintenance of public facilities.

HOUSING ■ The Communist Party calls for the creation of massive construction of new low cost housing:

- New housing units should be spread out, located so that tenants have ready access to shopping centers and suburban jobs.
- Public housing developments should be integrated. As long as real estate taxes remain the principal source of state and local financing, the federal government should pay real estate taxes on public housing developments.
- Rents should not exceed 20 percent of household income.

The run-down condition of some public housing developments is often blamed on the tenants – the main cause is in fact the lack of adequate maintenance and repairs. Our program calls for full main-

tenance of new units. We estimate that over a period of several years, as the stock of public housing increases, maintenance costs will average \$50 billion per year.

With this program the United States will catch up to most industrially-developed countries, where a large proportion of the working class benefits from low rent public housing.

EDUCATION ■ The crisis in education and the movement for a "voucher" system to subsidize private schools are directly linked to the crisis of capitalism and the greed for more monopoly profits. The privatization of public education presents a serious threat.

Organized labor and the African American people fought for and won free public education in the first place, and they will suffer them most if public education is weakened or destroyed. Rising tuition at public colleges has already dealt a blow, especially in this period when higher education is becoming a requisite for acceptable jobs.

Financing public education by school district property taxes has had an adverse effect on the quality of elementary and high school education. Suburban schools in areas of high property taxes are fully equipped and fully staffed and programmed – some provide each pupil with a computer. And yet substandard, inadequate provisions are made for schools in low-income and ghettoized areas – for these students, education is in crisis.

Communists demand:

- Education should be free, federally funded, integrated, multi-lingual and multi-cultural.
- It should be made available to all children from kindergarten through college. Class sizes should be no bigger than 15 students, and less where there are special needs.
- Teachers' salaries should be increased about 50 percent from the present average of \$30,000. The best teachers should be assigned, and paid premium salaries, to teach in schools where test marks and attendance are far below average because of difficult living conditions.
- Scholarships should be provided for teacher college training of working-class youth, especially African American and Latino students.

The cost of this total educational program – including building new schools, modernizing existing structures and supplying modern equipment to schools – is estimated at \$150 billion per year.

HEALTH CARE ■ Most people in the United States are unable to cope with the explosion in medical costs. The price index for medical services has multiplied ten times since 1950, six times since 1970. Most of this increase is profiteering by insurance companies, hospitals, drug firms, doctors and dentists turned capitalist, and medical-form processing bureaucracies.

Over 38 million Americans have no health insurance at all. Medicare and Medicaid cover diminishing shares of needed health services. Workers, especially the racially oppressed, do not receive anything like adequate medical care. All workers rightly fear that if they change jobs or are fired they will lose all medical coverage.

The Communist Party supports:

- A single-payer system like the one in Canada. Essentially, under this system the government would employ, at good but not exorbitant pay, medical professionals and support personnel. It would provide more hospitals and other medical facilities, and sharply cut charges by existing private hospitals. It would supply drugs and medical equipment at prices half or less than half of those now prevailing.

- Medical services must be supplied according to need, not according to a patient's pocketbook.

- Hospitals and treatment centers should be set up in inner city areas, and crash programs for professional education of more African American and Latino doctors would be undertaken.

Under this system the federal government would be responsible for charges currently paid by patients. But the costs for these services plus the \$300 billion currently spent by the federal government for medical services would be cut in half. The net added cost to the federal government for health services would essentially be for expansion of facilities to cover the entire population – an estimated \$200 billion.

Ultimately, the best solution to the mounting and deepening health care crisis, the one that will guarantee equal treatment for all, is a national health service. A version of it exists in Britain and in Cuba, and did exist in the European socialist countries. The movement for national health service goes back to 1940, to the Wagner-Dingell Bill. Currently the bill sponsored by Representative Ronald V. Dellums is the most advanced.

CHILD CARE ■ Our program for today calls for:

- Full day child care available for preschool chil-

dren of working parents, at a cost of \$4,000 a year per child.

- After-school care for older children.

- \$40 billion to fund this program. This is over and above present federal spending for child care.

ENVIRONMENT ■ Concern over the worsening environment is widespread. Since 1980, U.S. spending for environmental regulation and monitoring has declined in real dollars as the national and worldwide crisis of massive ecological degradation continues apace.

- Federal environmental expenditures should be doubled and should include funds for research.

- Federal legislation should prohibit the disposal of contaminated material in areas inhabited by minority peoples – such as by Native American Indians in the Southwest.

- The government must put a halt to the pollution of rivers and lakes, the land and the atmosphere.

- Clean-up of past and current environmental hazards, including the deadly waste from nuclear weapons production, should be expanded and expedited.

- And funds supplied to the United Nations to assist poorer nations to protect their environment should be multiplied.

- Persistent corporate polluters should be punished, not only fined but have facilities that continue to offend shut down. Jail sentences should be imposed on the top executives responsible.

- There should be an immediate stop to private interests exploiting national parks and other government preserves.

- No company should be permitted to mine, lumber, drill or otherwise despoil the natural resources of the American people.

- Added costs to the federal government for these environmental, cultural and recreational programs are estimated at \$40 billion.

Funding for libraries, athletic facilities, museums, theater groups and fine arts projects should be substantially increased, and citizen groups in inner city areas should be consulted as to what cultural and recreational facilities would be best for them.

FINANCIAL CRISIS ■ The financial crisis is an integral part of American capitalism's overall crisis. The Administration has already taken \$150 billion of taxpayers' money to bail out the perpetrators of the Savings & Loans debacle. It is now asking, in

advance, for another \$80 billion to bail out the commercial banks whose failure is anticipated next year. It would be better to use these funds to take over the banks.

The Communist Party proposes:

- A takeover, and nationalization, of all banking facilities with assets of more than a billion dollars. That would establish an integrated national banking network while leaving in private hands the smaller banks serving community needs.

- Interest charges for consumer credit and home mortgages should be reduced to six percent. The costs of the present, overblown, parasitic financial bureaucracy would be drastically cut in administering this nationalized system.

- Nationalized banks would give preference to African American and other minority customers, enabling the neediest to obtain better housing and other goods and services.

- Affirmative action must be enforced in employment of personnel in the nationalized banks.

- The remaining small private financial institutions would be required to follow corresponding policies, with severe penalties for violations.

INTERNATIONAL SCENE ■ The Communist Party supports the following measures on international trade:

- An embargo on the export of productive capital, meaning an immediate halt to the practice by U.S. companies of buying properties and hiring productive workers in other countries.

- The embargo should be in force until there is a substantial rise in productive employment and a major drop in unemployment in the United States.

- Thereafter capital export should be strictly controlled and limited, in any case, to one-fifth of the total investments of the corporation. This would put an end to a major cause of job loss in the United States. It would stop U.S. companies from relocating manufacturing facilities in low-wage areas.

- Representatives of the trade unions and organizations of the oppressed should have a major voice in the exercise of these and other controls over international trade and finance.

- The proposed "Free Trade Agreement" with Mexico and Canada, opposed by the unions of all three countries, should be scrapped.

- Total cancellation of developing countries' debts to U.S. and other capitalist banks, to international monetary agencies and governments.

Previous payments of interest and principal

have paid these debts many times over. The International Monetary Fund has the power to force additional payments and insists on the reduction of living standards of the workers and peasants of the "debtor" countries, plus the opening of their countries to the exploitation of their resources and labor by transnational corporations.

- Unconditional removal of the total embargo on trade with and travel to Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea. These embargoes are vicious measures of economic warfare.

- Sanctions against the apartheid regime of South Africa should be reimposed and strengthened.

These measures are in the economic and political interest of all U.S. workers.

CONCLUSION

The U.S. Communist Party advocates these reforms, and we fight side by side with the growing numbers of Americans who are active in organizing to achieve any and all of these goals.

Along with that, we maintain our vision of socialism as civilization's next progressive and inevitable stage. Ultimately humanity will progress to a communist society devoid of want and inequality. Capitalist politicians and their corporate media boast that "Communism is dead" because of the serious setbacks in Eastern Europe, and especially the former Soviet Union. But – as has always been true of anti-communism – continued repetition does not make their fancy come true.

SOCIALISM ■ Socialist societies abolish capitalist property relations, namely the private ownership of productive property and the use and exploitation of hired labor for private profit. In a socialist society, there is public ownership of the main means of production and a central plan to organize the labor and material resources of a country for maximum efficiency and social benefit. There should be steady improvement in all facets of peoples' lives. The experience of existing socialist societies such as Cuba, and the overall record of the former USSR during its 70 years, show that the system works. Despite the incessant all-out pressure of a still-stronger capitalism, socialism provided – and provides – far better conditions of life for the majority than capitalist societies at a similar stage in the development of productive forces.

The exact structural details of U.S. socialism will

be decided democratically when the U.S. working class and its allies have political power. Economic, social and political features will be determined by the American people according to our traditions and the specific conditions under which socialism is won. We will benefit from the positive achievements of other socialist societies, and learn from their mistakes so as not to repeat them.

SOCIALISM USA ■ We will also benefit from and retain all that is exemplary in the history and traditions of the United States – and there is a wonderful tradition of struggle from which to draw pride and strength, such as the struggles to build the unions and the movements for Civil Rights. But we will discard the evils and corruption of decadent capitalism.

Continued from page 8

municipal elections taking place in most cities next year. And then there are the mid-term congressional elections. Is it possible to elect more independent, labor, racially oppressed, women, youth and progressives to Congress? We have to consider where is it possible to elect Communists to public office in the next few years – this is certainly something worthy of examination. Then in 1996 the presidential elections come again, hopefully on a higher level of independence.

In conclusion, this election is not in the bag for Clinton. The Bush people will have a lot of tricks up their sleeves and it is going to get dirty. A lot of hard work and convincing will be required in order to get a winning vote to the polls. Clinton is not forthcoming with the kind of proposals needed to guarantee his victory. He clearly needs to and can be pushed to take better positions. An example of the problem and the potential to move him is his current effort to find a way to tactically retreat from prior support for the Free Trade Agreement.

The key battleground states right now are in the industrial Mid-West. The working class, especially basic workers, can make the difference in this struggle if inspired and mobilized. We can help make the difference in the labor and African-American people's movements. We know what needs to be done.

The current voter registration drive being conducted by Jesse Jackson and the bus tour with

Because of our vast natural resources, our skilled working class, our scientific -technical advances and productive capacity, we have major advantages over those who have previously undertaken the building of socialism. Our socialism can be built without having to endure the interim hardships that have been necessary in other countries, where the people were forced to construct their socialist societies out of the fires of war and destruction, or under the terrible threats of U.S. imperialism. We are confident more and more Americans will come to understand the need and desirability of revolutionary transformation from our dying capitalist system to a socialist United States.

We hope our program will be used to advocate for the demands and goals we propose. □

Clinton is a way to help overcome the stay-at-home vote and increase the number of voters against Bush. Registering and educating voters is critical. This will be a close race in a number of states, and highly organized efforts to get out the vote can make the difference. This election debate could get even more down and dirty, more racist, anti-women and hysterical. The Republican right-wingers are fighting to continue their dominance on the U.S. political scene. They have no scruples when it comes to elections. With all of the ultra-right demagoguery coming from the Republicans – especially the neo-fascist talk fest that was their convention – it is remarkable that only a small percentage has been persuaded to join Bush's camp. On the contrary Bush and Quayle have lost some ground on the "family values" campaign. A great example of this was seen just after the Convention. Quayle was speaking at a rally in Salisbury, North Carolina, he was hammering away at "family values." Out in the crowd stood one person with a sign that simply said this, "It's about the economy, stupid." That's the mood of a lot of voters.

If the election were held today, the opinion polls all without exception say that Bush would be defeated. There is every indication that with hard work and vigilance this can come true. Bush will be defeated but not without a hard struggle.

The ideas in the report of Gus Hall to the September National Committee meeting will help guide our Party to deeper understanding and greater action. His report is a great contribution and must be studied and put into practice. □

Rivethed: Tales From The Assembly Line. by Ben Hamper. Warner Books, \$9.99.

Rivethed is the story of how one man survived one decade in the inferno that was General Motors Truck and Bus Division Plant in Flint, Michigan during the 1980's. One "rivethed," with humor and honesty, reflects the agony of workers everywhere who find themselves at the mercy of corporate greed.

"I was seven years old the first time I set foot inside an automobile factory," writes author Ben Hamper. On family night Hamper got to see his father work the second shift. "Car, windshield. Car, windshield. Car, windshield. No wonder my father preferred playin' hopscotch with the barmaids: This kind of repetition didn't look like any fun at all." At this early stage in his life Hamper decided that this "car/windshield cha-cha" was not going to be for him. For some strange reason his mind was set on becoming an ambulance driver, which to him was "the most glamorous calling in the world."

But the "car/windshield cha-cha" had a mysterious allure for Hamper. What it was exactly he did not know. Maybe it had something to do with the fact that he came from a long line of "shoprats." His mother's father "put in forty years, from Babe Ruth to the Beatles, as an inspector at the Chevrolet Engine plant." His father's "daddy was a shoprat. His daddy's daddy was a shoprat. Perhaps his daddy's daddy's daddy would have been a shoprat if only Hank Ford would have dreamed this shit up a little sooner."

Hamper's Flint neighborhood was a by-product of General Motors. In the twenties when GM was fast becoming an industrial giant there was a constant need to house the workers who were coming from the South. "In keeping with their [GM's] repetitive nature, all the houses were duplicates." In blue collar Flint, "It was never intended that I grow up to be anything other than a good Catholic man – a steady churchgoer with a steady factory income, a station wagon parked under the elm and a wife with

an automatic door on her womb."

Schooling did not escape the GM influence. According to Hamper, "The education-through-intimidation technique favored [at the local Catholic school] was not unlike the mentality of the General Motors floor lords. Our fathers' overseers were brutes with clipboards, sideburns and tangled rhetoric. Our overseers, the sisters of St. Luke's were brutes with clipboards, sideburns and tangled rosaries."

In his late adolescence Hamper fell in with "a small band of brooding hooligans." He swapped his textbooks for Mothers of Invention albums, grew his hair long and "spent most of my time swallowing or inhaling every type of illegal substance they would pass me." And there was also a failed marriage. "High school sweethearts can make for strange bed partners once the reality of the rent and the groceries and the car payments descend on the doll house."

Because of low wages, Hamper leaves his house painting job and applies at GM. Out of a job and with nowhere to turn to after his wife throws him out, the sinister GM plant a few blocks down begins to lose its malevolent aura. Now he would claim his birthright. "My name is Hamper. Surely you remember that loyal, long-suffering clan. Just show me to my setup and everything will be fine." But the latest recession still held a stranglehold on the industrial city in the mid-seventies, making it difficult for newcomers to enter GM's gate.

After a long and desperate wait, Hamper is finally called in and pronounced "fit for active drudgery." As a soldier in the largest truck-producing plant in the world he was assigned to the Cab Shop where "ropes, wires and assorted black rubber cables drooped down and entangled everything. Sparks shot out in all directions. The noise level was deafening." The workers called the area the Jungle. "It was sorta like Nam without the Motown soundtrack and mosquito netting."

This was the circle of monotony where you could witness the "slow motion injustice of the time clock." At every minute everything seemed to repeat itself. The same body motions, the same truck

parts: "every movement was a plodding replica of the one that had gone before." The only way to deal with this monotonous circle in hell was by numbing all the senses. Drugs and alcohol became part of the process, "tune in, turn on and build trucks." After all, the money was right, "even if we weren't. Shoprat alcohol consumption was always a hot debate with those who just didn't understand the way things worked inside a General Motors plant...Alcohol was a central part of many of our lives."

After a few years Hamper's marriage to the GM Corporation was not faring well. "I was about to be sent packing on another indefinite layoff. Hello Reaganomics, good-by occupation." Welcome to the ranks of the unemployed.

Many days of staring at the TV set followed. Relaxation became its opposite and desperation set in. "At this time I felt like standing out front of the GM headquarters and hollerin' through a bullhorn: Attention! Enough with the fickle bullshit! Are we gonna build trucks or keep playin' hide-the-birthright? Hello! HELLO!"

GM eventually recalled Hamper after they landed a contract with the U.S. Army to build army trucks ("death wagons"). "Besides Smith [Roger Smith, chairman of GM] I now had another man to thank for this swell turn of fate - Caspar Weinberger. It was this man's dogged lust for a few billion dollars worth of military vehicles that pumped new life into my sagging shoprat career." But not for long.

As it turned out, the Flint Truck and Bus Plant was targeted for elimination by the GM Board. The plan was to close the plant and move it south to Pontiac, Michigan, which would mean the eventual slashing of 3,500 jobs. In an ironic twist, the workers were now expected to move south too. "The people in Pontiac were probably headed for the plant in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The folks in Fort Wayne were no doubt being packed off for new jobs at the factory in Shreveport, Louisiana. Meanwhile those Cajuns were being prepared to duck under the border and tinker for awhile in Mexico. Notice a trend here? Precisely! Sooner or later, we were all gonna scrape our heads playin' limbo with the Equator."

This trend in the behavior of the corporation in its pathological quest for profits made Hamper realize his life was going nowhere and that he must find an outlet for his creative energies before it was too late. He began to polish his writing, the craft he originally thought of as a hobby. "Each afternoon

I'd plunk myself down in front of my mom's old typewriter...I pecked away at everything from love poems to hate mail to haikus about spring. It all reeked and I knew it, but I banged away for lack of anything else to do."

Like many of his co-workers, Hamper protested GM's decision to move, but finally relented. After taking stock of the non-availability of jobs in Flint and after a decade of working for GM, Hamper had had all he could take. In July, 1986, he suffered a stroke and afterwards entered a mental rehabilitation center. Meanwhile, he was perfecting his writing skills. In 1987, Hamper left GM and never returned.

Rivethead is not simply a straightforward account of one man's experience at a GM plant. It is much more. Despite the obvious authenticity, it constantly gives the reader the impression that the author and the persona of the "tales from the assembly line" are not one and the same. But we must ask, why would a reader be impressed in this way? Could it be because it is a standard practice of some who tell about workers' experiences to be preachy and didactic? Traditionally, many writers who do not come from the ranks of the toiling masses, though they include in their works hopeful theories of workers' emancipation, tend to over-romanticize. Their books are full of maudlin moments appropriate to melodrama. Depicting workers as people with no vices and who are good samaritans is not the best way to raise the consciousness of the proletariat. Working-class readers will not recognize themselves in this uniformity.

Such homogeneity does not exist in Ben Hamper's story. In *Rivethead* the reader will not find any recipes for liberation. Hamper's concern here is to tell it like it is. It is up to others to tell it like it should be. Like Dante, he is inclined toward the general human dimension and the formal aspect in which his story is told. Unlike the great Italian writer, though, he packs his pages with plenty of proletarian humor.

Noticing that the barbed wire atop the GM plant's fencing is facing inward, Hamper notes: "Silly me, just one look will tell you that GM designed their security fencing with one guarded eyeball on their work force. Maybe [GM] lived in fear that one hot July we'd load up our coolers full of car stereos and carburetors and flee over the West Wall. As we marched on toward freedom, the bullhorn would blare: 'Warning! We command you riveters to halt! Repeat! This is your final warning! Halt

immediately or no microwave popcorn for six months!"

Another important topic in Hamper's book is his concern over the way workers' culture is often depicted by those who are not workers. Being fed up with both the GM bosses and the "flim-flam rock 'n' roll mongers" who set themselves up as the official voices of the working class, Hamper decided to write about what he knew best: the assembly line. "Billy Joel wasn't living here in Allentown. He was twirlin' tongues with Christie Brinkley in some high rise China cabinet." Bob Seger, John Mellencamp and Bruce Springsteen are "goddamn millionaires mewin' all over the dial about how bad the grind was." And then he concludes, "Workers should perform the songs of workers."

Miguel de Leon

The War Against Women, by Marilyn French, Summit Books, New York, 1992

Marilyn French, leading feminist theoretician and author of the best selling novel *The Women's Room* dramatically documents in her new book the oppression of women in virtually every economic, political and social system beginning with the fourth millennium B. C. and continuing to the present.

French's basic theoretical argument is that "man-as-a-caste" (that is, all men, regardless of class) are conducting what amounts to a "global war against women," the aim of which is to reassert or tighten "men's control over female bodies, especially their sexual and reproductive capacities, and women's labor." In the opinion of the author men have had control over women ever since patriarchy became the dominant form of society. Since that time women have borne the chief responsibility for the care of children and the family, for the "well-being of the human race." In recent decades, however, with industrialization, the spread of ideas of equality and freedom, and the development of technology, more and more women are choosing not to take on this "often thankless task," and remain subordinate to men. Men, consequently, the writer contends are in a panic, fearing that if women refuse to continue this role, they (men) will have to do it. To

prevent this from happening men are using every means possible to force women to continue their old role and remain subordinate.

French writes, "Men-as-a-caste - elite and working-class men - continue to seek ways to defeat feminism, by rescinding or gnawing away at the victories [legal abortion], confining women to lower employment levels [putting a "glass ceiling" over professional women], or founding movements aimed at returning them to fully subordinate status ["fundamentalism"]...Men everywhere increasingly fail to support the children they engender, and use violence against females - daughters, wives, lovers, mothers, sisters, and strangers...These actions amount to a global war against women."

It would appear from these lines that French's theoretical position is essentially devoid of class analysis, and simply pits men-as-a-caste against women. This, however, is not the case. In other cases in the book, she makes distinctions between "elite" men or "sophisticated" men and others, sometimes referring to these "elite" men as "capitalists." For example, "Elite" men believe and treat peasants, workers, and women as inferior." And, "The capitalist elite tried to defeat labor and especially socialism." And further, "An elite's primary need in establishing domination is to divide men from women. Sexual harassment of women asserts male solidarity across class lines, dividing working-class men from working-class women, and reinforces class domination." French's view here is essentially identical to a Marxist analysis of the primary reason for the perpetuation of male supremacy in capitalist societies today.

French does not seem to see any difficulty in sometimes placing the issue as "men-as-a-caste" vs. women, and at other times singling out "elite" men or "capitalists" as being responsible for the oppression of women. Her dominant thrust, however, is to see all men, regardless of class, as waging war against women. Perhaps, if asked, she might argue that elite men are simply in a position to do more damage than other men.

A Marxist analysis, by contrast places the primary responsibility for the continuing oppression of women in capitalist society on the capitalist system, dominated overwhelmingly by males. Male supremacy is promoted by the ruling capitalist class, according to Marxists, to keep the working class divided and to prevent effective united working-class struggle against the ruling class. Marxists disagree with feminist ideas that men as such are the

enemy. This line of thinking makes men feel blamed and threatened and it blinds women to seeing and uniting with their potential allies. Thus women and men remain divided and unable to effectively challenge the power of the ruling class. Women acting alone, no matter how united with each other or how militant, cannot win full freedom from oppression and inequality. Nor can African Americans or any other oppressed group. Only the united power of the working class as a whole, allied with movements for African American, Latino and women's equality, and other social movements, can make basic changes in capitalist society and eventually replace it.

Women entered the U.S. work force in unprecedented numbers during World War II and presently compose one half of it. Therefore the potential for joining the struggles of women with the struggles of the working class as a whole has never been greater. Because of this, it does not help move the struggle for equality forward to blame all men for a situation in which all men may participate but which is promoted primarily by the ruling class for its own advantage. In fact, it serves to derail the struggle for women's equality by misdirecting it against men in general and in failing to pinpoint a clear path of struggle against the ruling class.

It would be equally misleading to project the idea that the ending of capitalist society will automatically lead to the elimination of the oppression of women. We have already seen that this has not happened in the socialist societies that have existed, despite the many advances for women that have been achieved. As long as remnants of class society exist – as they will well into socialism – the struggle for full equality for women will remain a goal to be worked toward.

One does not have to agree with French's basic theoretical tenets in order to gain much insight and factual knowledge from the book. As Carolyn Heilburn says on the jacket cover, "If people ask you why women are still complaining after twenty-five years of feminism, tell them to read this book." The book is replete with documentation that informs, shocks, and horrifies the reader. A few examples:

The author documents the widespread economic discrimination against women, stating that women do between two-thirds and three-fourths of the work in the world, including production of 45 percent of the world's food. Yet women earn only ten percent of the world's income, and own only one percent of the the world's property. Furthermore,

50,000 people die each day from starvation and malnutrition, the majority of whom are women and children. Women in the United States are grossly under represented politically, with only two of 100 U.S. Senators, and only 29 out of 435 members of the House of Representatives. Further, the most common cause of death of U.S. women workers on the job is homicide! As an example of the sexual brutalization of women, French states that on the nights before fighter pilots bombed Iraq, they watched pornographic movies full of sadistic violence against women, to pump them up.

French points out that in any society where the sexes are not given extremely unequal care, women outlive men, and the ratio of women to men is about 1.06 to 1. Any society where the ratio favors men can be explained only by the grossly unequal treatment of women – through killing off female babies, starvation of female children and adults, inferior medical care for women, and outright murder. In countries too numerous to mention here, the ratio of women to men ranges from 48.3 per 100 men to 94 women to 100 men. Women, once 51 percent of the world's population, are no longer a majority. Estimates are that 100 million women have died in this "war against women."

The author discusses at some length the practice of mutilation of the female genitalia. This may be limited to removal of the sheath and tip of the clitoris, or it may include the entire clitoris and even the labia minora. Consequences of this horrendous mutilation, done *without* anesthesia, include agonizing pain, fracture of bones (which occurs when the women are held down forcibly during the procedure), hemorrhage, shock, urinary tract infections, blood poisoning, pelvic infections, incontinence for life, excruciating sexual intercourse and childbirth, and more. Scholars estimate that as many as 20 million presently living have been mutilated in this way.

Contrary to popular thinking, female genital mutilation has not been limited to Africa or to Muslim countries. It was widely practiced in Europe and the United States during the second half of the 19th century and up into the 1930's as a "cure" for masturbation, lesbianism, and female sexual pleasure. A 1982 (!) U.S. newspaper magazine advocated its renewal to eliminate promiscuity by teen-aged girls!

French discusses at length the role of religion in subjugating women, pointing out the patriarchal character of all religions. The U.S. Fundamentalist movement, for example, has long preached the need

for women to be subordinate to men. Fundamentalists oppose birth control and abortion. They are the backbone of the New Right movement in the U.S. and have gained enormous influence in the White House during the Reagan and Bush years. Their stamp is all over the 1992 Republican Party platform. "Ultra-nationalist, militaristic, authoritarian, racist and sexist" fundamentalism is the "shape of fascism, American style," according to French.

One could go on. Suffice it to say that French documents systematic discrimination against women in virtually every area of society – jobs, health care, the legal system, education, culture and the arts. She points out that, in every case women of color have borne the worst burden of this discrimination.

French defines "feminism" as "any attempt to improve the lot of any group of women through female solidarity and a female perspective." She lists as goals of the feminist movement: For women to have the right to be treated as human beings; to keep their own wages; to keep their children after divorce; to own property; to acquire an education; to earn wages sufficient to live independently; to have a voice in public decisions; to marriage by choice; to bodily integrity; to live in a peaceful world without social stratification, with a healthy ecology, cooperation and sharing in decision-making.

This book does not offer a clear strategy for how to achieve these goals. Stating that "after millennia of male war against them, women are fighting back on every front," French describes in the closing pages wide-ranging examples of the kinds of struggles women are involved in all over the world – both for women's rights and on broader social concerns as well.

It is not enough for women to feel rage after reading French's book, or to be presented with a list of goals. It is important also to present a direction

for struggle that can lead to meaningful solutions. This French does not do. The lack of a clear class analysis of the oppression of women prevents French and other feminists from seeing the possibilities for success inherent in the union of women with their natural allies – the working class as a whole and all nationally oppressed peoples.

French's treatment of socialism is, unfortunately, superficial and largely negative. She credits the Owenites, the first socialist experimenters, with concern for women's needs. And she acknowledges that working-class women have fought for their needs through anarchist, socialist and communist principles and organizations. She credits socialist states with outlawing discrimination against women. And, she asks, legitimately, why socialist states did not do more to teach men to share responsibility for home and family. But she ends by writing off socialism as a defeated and discredited experiment, saying at one point that socialism was defeated not by capitalism but by "socialist elites as oppressive and exploitative as those they displaced." French shows no real appreciation for what it meant to the lives of women when socialist states outlawed discrimination and opened the door of educational, economic and political opportunity non-existent for women in Czarist Russia and other pre-socialist states.

In posing the questions as she does, French compels us to do more thinking ourselves about the complex issues she raises. In doing so, she performs a service for all women, children and men. Anyone reading this book is bound to think differently about themselves, the persons around them and the larger society in which we live. For, as French points out: "When women are harmed, children are harmed.... Policies damaging to women essentially damage the entire human race." □

Judy Walborn

An Appeal to Our Readers

The Communist Party USA takes this opportunity to appeal to the readers of *Political Affairs* to join in an intensive fundraising campaign to help further stabilize the financial base of the Party at this historic moment.

Throughout the years one method by which the Communist Party, USA, has consolidated its financial base and financed its work is through advance gifts from donors while they are still living and by bequests in wills. Such funds are placed in secure investments and the income they produce is used to support our work. The current campaign is for the purpose of increasing the income-producing base of our investment funds.

In issuing this call to assist in the building of our Party's financial base, we do so with the full knowledge that throughout history the oppressed class has had the support of other sectors of society in the struggles mounted by the working class for their liberation.

Since its inception the CPUSA has won the financial support of the working class and its friends and allies. We have been able to win this support because our Party is a Marxist-Leninist working-class revolutionary Party. It gives the working class and its allies a scientific base for struggle.

In this current period of ever deepening and widening of the capitalist crisis, which does not respond to the usual capitalist doctors' therapy and medication, U.S. state monopoly capitalism finds it necessary to pull out all stops to prevent our Party from playing its historically destined role in the struggle today to put the cost of the crisis on the rich and the corporations.

An objective historic review of the McCarthy period reveals that the Communist Party played a decisive role in mobilizing the people against the nuclear war aims of U.S. imperialism, against home grown fascist developments and threats to our democratic rights and Constitution and to the rights of the trade unions and the working class.

Our Party, its personnel, its scientific analysis of events today and its organizing contributions are welcome allies in ever larger sections of the trade union movement on all levels, in the equality move-

ment, in the peace movement and the movement for socialism.

These are the concepts and contributions the ruling class and the opportunists put under attack inside the Party in the past two years. The opportunists opposed our working-class and class struggle line. They surrendered themselves to state monopoly capitalism because, they say, capitalism cannot be defeated. In any event, they say socialism does not work.

The revisionists differ with Browderism only in the fact that Browder's theory was that capitalism had reformed. The revisionist splitters today say it can't be beaten. But both groups of opportunists surrendered to capitalism.

Having failed to split the Communist Party at the 25th Convention, having been rejected by the Party membership, these elements have now turned to keeping money from wills meant to go to the Party. They have sunk so low in the quagmire of corruption that they are calling Party supporters to change their wills. They have been rebuffed again.

Now more than ever, we must all put on our seven league boots and take those necessary giant steps to build our financial base. We must plan and execute the campaign the same way we carry out our recruiting campaigns, election campaigns, strike struggle support, etc.

We can now continue the fundraising work of the Party which the ruling class and opportunists tried so hard to block for the past two years.

We call upon all members, friends and supporters to help assure the success of this campaign, to strengthen the financial base of our movement which the ruling class and opportunists are trying so hard to disrupt. With your support, we can do so successfully. Our cause is just! □

Communist Party, USA

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