

HEALTH CARE NOT WARFARE

Phil Benjamin

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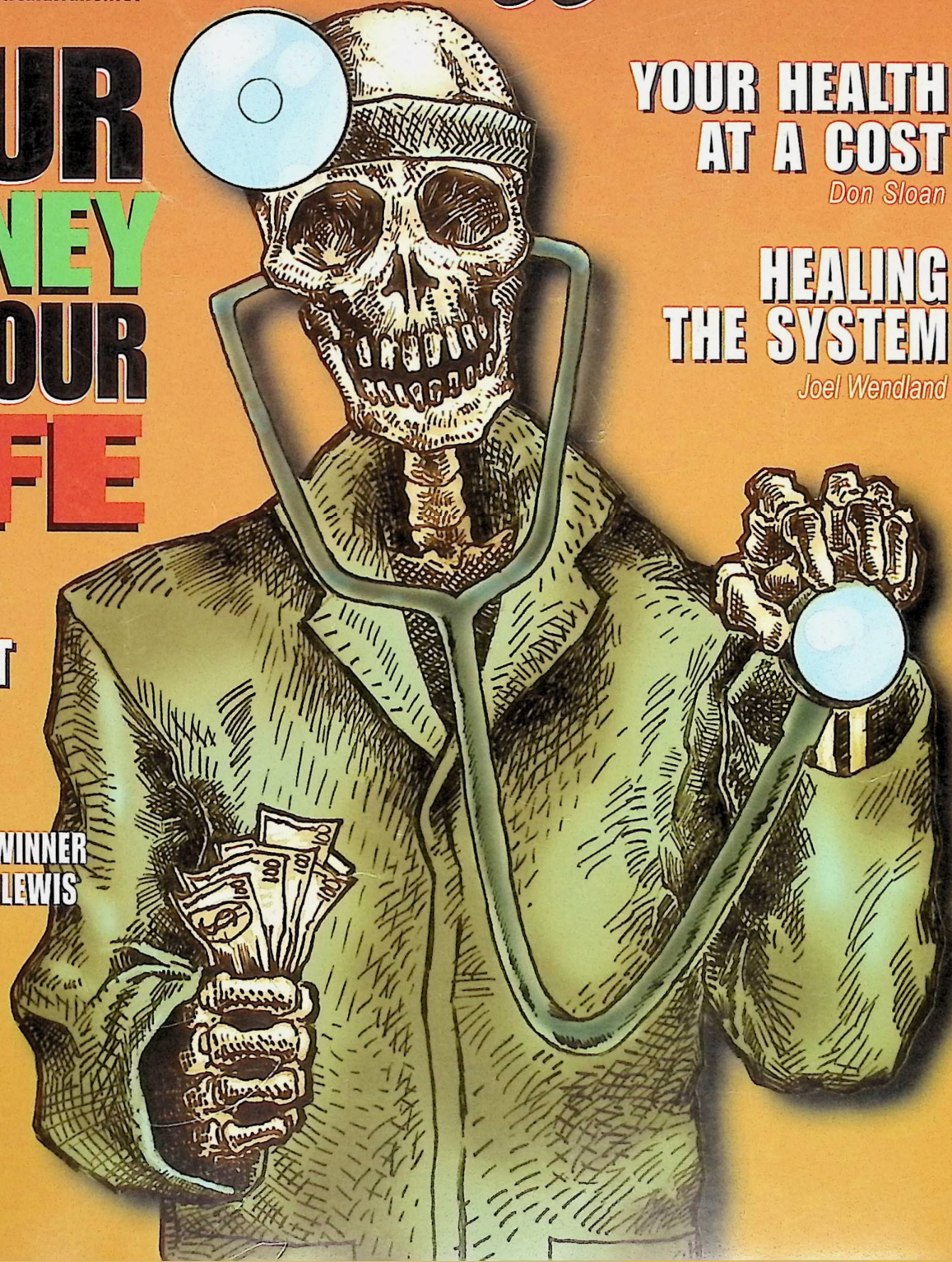
**YOUR
MONEY
OR YOUR
LIFE**

**YOUR HEALTH
AT A COST**
Don Sloan

**HEALING
THE SYSTEM**
Joel Wendland

**THE COST
OF WAR**
David Lawrence

**PULITZER PRIZE WINNER
DAVID LEVERING LEWIS**



2003

June

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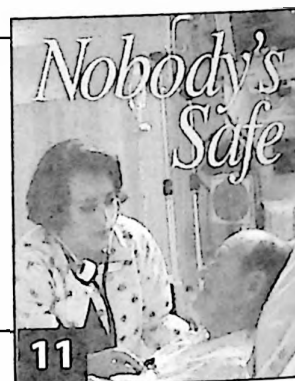


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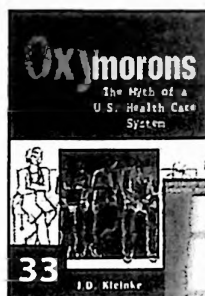


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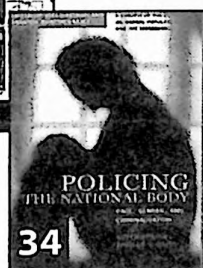
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**More, More, More
Los Angeles, California**

Just a quick note to you on PA. I see the improvements with each issue. I would suggest to try more interviews with union leaders, political activists and leaders of Communist or socialist parties all over the world. The book reviews are excellent. You may want to review more publications from International Publishers.

A Iaco



**A Must Read
Glendale, New York**

Thank you PA for your direct and thought-provoking questions. Mr. Kushner raises issues I'm sure many people have thought about and discussed. An example: how should we struggle for socialism in the US? Mr. Kushner articulates my feelings and the feelings of many others I'm sure on this issue. While left forces raise the consciousness of the people through struggle and direction, the process of evolution is a major force and is con-

stantly at work.

This interview proves once again that politics and art can be thought-provoking, exciting and a learning experience. The interview is a must read.

Gabe Falsetta



**Marx was an Environmentalist
Hartford, Connecticut**

"at every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature ... like someone standing outside nature - but that we, with flesh, blood, and brain, belong to nature, and exist in its midst."

- Frederick Engels

The column, "The Free Trade Scam" (January) made an important contribution to understanding the class aspects of so-called free trade. It was particularly strong in delineating the unrelenting attack on the environment. The author pointed out the description in *The Communist Manifesto* of the bourgeoisie's "need of a constantly expanding market for its products." The need of the same class to export capital, and the imperialist armed forces that follow in its train, would make another good

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Dear PA Reader,

The fund drive has gotten off to a good start. Because of your support, we have been able print this issue with a glossy cover and an extra four pages. Be aware that the glossy cover alone costs an extra \$1000.00 per issue. But it's worth it because we want PA to look its best. As important as good image is good content. And here too we are continuing to make innovations. This special issue on health is no exception, with important articles on the fight for universal health care. Also included is an interview with David Levering Lewis, Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer of the great W.E.B. Du Bois.

Next month we will continue our series of interviews with a conversation with environmental activists from India familiar with Bhopal disaster. Our focus in this issue will be war, globalization, and the crisis of capitalism.

Stay tuned for the latest in combating Bush's forever war and rising people's peace movement. Meanwhile keep those contributions coming in.

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commentary piece.

However, the statement that these developments – new world order, globalization and free trade – represent nothing new, is contradicted by the very data presented in the column. The author correctly points to the rate at which world forests are disappearing. The 34.6 million acres per year is just the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Intricate ecological relationships between birds, bats and other animals that pollinate these trees are destroyed. As the biodiversity of these areas plummets, local inhabitants lose the ability to live sustainably and are forced off their land. Guatemala is just one of many examples. With a biodiversity ranging from 3,000 to 5,000 species per kilometer, the dams alone scheduled to be constructed there will wipe out 725 square kilometers of forest and drive people to the cities and beyond.

There is much classic Marxist literature on the environment. Karl Marx himself loved to hike through the Karlsbad forests in what is now the Czech Republic. It was here that he noted, "Deforestation has reduced it (a local river-NB) to a sorry state; at times of heavy rain it floods everything, in hot years it disappears altogether." He also noted with concern the absence of birds. It influ-

enced both his research and his writings. Nevertheless, he and his contemporaries could never have predicted the scale of the destruction of forests and other aspects of the environment promulgated by capital today.

There is also a tendency to treat the environment as something separate from people and the working class. The statement, "But it is not just the physical environment that is under attack" goes in that direction. Again, statements in the commentary, such as, "40 percent of the world's people lack adequate fresh water" belie this artificial separation.

These are not just some theoretical musings. It is important to see what is new and developing as well as the interconnections, particularly here between the environment and people's lives. It will help many more to see the imperative of a much broader and deeper labor/environmental unity.

Nick Bart

We welcome your comments

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Letters may be edited for clarity and length. Include your name and address.

check out your Marxist IQ

Each month we pose five questions from the Marxist classics and other sources. With the Bush administration on the loose globally, understanding Lenin's theory of imperialism has rarely been more important. The following questions come from Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism (1916).

See answers on page 21.

1. Modern imperialism is the foreign policy of a new stage of capitalist development, finance capital, characterized by

- (a) capitalism's commitment to establish international law
- (b) the creation of the IMF and the World Bank
- (c) the merger of bank and industrial capital
- (d) the greed of financiers like J. F. Morgan.

2. Modern imperialism is different than earlier forms of imperialism because

- (a) it spreads democracy through the world
- (b) it is centered on the export of investment capital
- (c) it is centered on increasing trade
- (d) it is created by violent stupid politicians.

3. Imperialism represents the decay of capitalism because

- (a) it is immoral
- (b) it gives power to government bureaucrats as against businessmen
- (c) it leads to higher taxes
- (d) it erodes liberal democracy born centuries of bourgeois revolutions as it increases military and police power.

4. Imperialism is capitalism's last stage because

- (a) it creates a "global society" where the working class is replaced by social movements
- (b) it grows into "ultra-imperialism" where the great capitalist companies and states work together to rule the world and make capitalism the only world system
- (c) it produces greater wars between the imperialist countries and revolutions among the workers in the imperialist countries against capitalism and the masses in the colonies against imperialism
- (d) it brings politicians like George W. Bush to power who think that foreign policy comes from Western movies like *High Noon*.

5. Which one of these is not a major characteristic of imperialism

- (a) the concentration of industry
- (b) the search among capitalists for extra profits
- (c) the creation of alliances and wars to re-divide the world among the great capitalist states
- (d) the use of such unscientific concepts as Intelligence Quotient (IQ) to discriminate against working class and minority students.

WAR CRIMES

By Julian Kunnie

In an October issue of *Profil*, an Austrian weekly magazine, the columnist, Georg Hoffman-Ostenhof, raises the question: "Is Bush a War Criminal?" Such a charge may sound outrageous, yet Hoffman-Ostenhof painstakingly points out that the UN Charter drafted by the United States and other allied nations in 1945 explicitly decreed that "the threat or use of any force against the territorial integrity or political independence" of any sovereign state was illegal. Hoffman-Ostenhof goes further to contend that during the Nuremberg trial of Nazi leaders pre-emptive war was declared a war crime.

While many would balk at the charge of pre-emptive war being a distinctive war crime since interventions by nations have occurred often over the past 50 years, Hoffman-Ostenhof cites the instance of Bush embarking on pre-emptive war on Iraq as extremely dangerous, because it would set a precedent for pre-emptive wars around the world, by more powerful nations against smaller ones and by those governments eager to control the resources of their neighbors. He also issues a caveat about the arrogance of pursuing the principle of *Pax Americana*, warning that it could trigger further instability and exacerbate regional and national conflicts to the point of having a war-infested world for the future.

At a rally celebrating the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. and protesting against the US planned

war against Iraq in Washington DC on January 18, former Attorney General Ramsey Clark publicly called for the impeachment of George W. Bush for usurping the powers of the Constitution by threatening to use nuclear weapons, calling for the overthrow and assassination of a foreign leader and ordering US troops into war without the approval and support of the US population. Clark declared that Bush had contravened US law by engaging in hostile acts against a sovereign nation that did not threaten the United States and argued that since the Congress had voted for the impeachment of former President Bill Clinton, for far lesser wrong-doings, the call for the impeachment of George W. Bush ought to be amplified.

In a recently published book on Iraq entitled, *Iraq Under Siege: The Deadly Impact of Sanctions and War* edited by Anthony Arnove (which I urge all readers to read so that they do not believe the propaganda and lies emanating from the Bush White House to justify attacking Iraq), author after author, including scientists, journalists and medical doctors, painstakingly document and factually substantiate the genocidal effects of the UN-led sanctions (spearheaded by the US) on the people of Iraq after 12 years of restrictions. Dr. Peter Pellett, Professor Emeritus of Nutrition at the University of Massachusetts, notes that children under the age of five have died as a result

of sanctions according to UNICEF. Huda Ammash, an environmental biologist, notes that infant mortality has doubled from 47 per 1,000 in 1989, to 108 per 1,000 in 1999, and death of children under five has increased from 56 to 131 per 1000 children in a ten-year period in Iraq. Ammash states that because over 300 tons of depleted uranium shells were used by the US and Britain in Iraq in 1991, new types of cancers are now widespread in the Iraqi population, especially lymphoma and leukemia. This is similar to the effects of Agent Orange and pesticide-use in Vietnam, where 20 million gallons were sprayed on forests during the war against that country.

A Yugoslav scientist, Dr. Ljepovic, estimates that "external and internal exposures of Iraqi and non-Iraqi Gulf War veterans ... could be 3,000 to 21,000 additional cancers for every 100,000 veterans." Dr. Salma Al-Hafith observes that there has been a record increase in the number of children born deformed, with missing limbs, eyes and ears. Ammash concludes that "the impacts of depleted uranium, electromagnetic pollution, and the destruction of the Iraqi infrastructure – combined with malnutrition and lack of medical care due to the



Bush and his lap dog Blair prepare war on the world.

White House Photo

Julian Kunnie is Professor and Director of Africana Studies and author of the forthcoming book, *Indigenous People's Wisdom and Power*.

continuation of sanctions – have already claimed hundreds of thousand of Iraqi people and threaten many more.” Pellett charges the UN for violating its own principles, contravening the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, by administering sanctions that decimate a population, particularly children. Only two countries have refused to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child: the US and Somalia.

Robert Fisk of the *London Guardian* asks why nothing is done to determine what is causing the deaths and ruin of the people of Southern Iraq and our own military veterans. Blaming Saddam Hussein does not answer the question, Fisk retorts. Why does not the UN carry out a serious inquiry into the cancers, heart failures and deaths that have occurred since the inception of the New World Order in Iraq, just as they so thoroughly scrutinize the Iraqi landscape for “weapons of mass destruction,” Fisk wonders?

There are numerous ironies in the Bush onslaught towards war against Iraq: The US has over 6,000 nuclear weapons, stores thousands of agent tons of chemical weapons in Anniston, Alabama, Pine Bluff, Arkansas and other sites across the country and has refused to allow the International Atomic Energy Agency to examine its chemical and biological weapons plants on the grounds of “national defense,” while insisting that Iraq dismantle its chemical weapons. The Commerce Department authorized sales of equipment to Iraq by companies like Kodak, Hewlett Packard and Bechtel (of which former Secretary of State George Schultz was a board member) that manufactured mustard gas and other contaminants. Donald Rumsfeld met and shook hands with Saddam Hussein in the late 1980s

shortly after Hussein used mustard gas against the Iranians and the Kurds. Bush claims Saddam Hussein is fabricating lies to hide weapons of mass destruction, while strenuously lying to connect Al Qaeda to Hussein, even though the CIA itself has rejected such links. Bush claims Hussein is a dictator who has violated human rights, while thousands of Muslims living in the United States have been denied their civil rights due to detentions, deportations or harassment, solely for being of Arab or Asian descent. Bush claims that he desires a peaceful solution while he orders the largest build-up of troops in the Gulf since 1991. He insists that Iraq is a threat to the world’s peace and security while he engages in military threats, including using nuclear weapons against Iraq. He excoriates Hussein for being an international outlaw because he disregards the UN and the global community, while Bush has declared that the US could wage a war against Iraq without UN approval and daily coerces and bribes other nations in the region like Kuwait and Turkey to become international outlaws and support an illegal war. Bush has established a national security state in the United States and terror abroad, in the name of freedom, democracy and fighting terrorism, even though most of the world, including 37 percent of Canadians, now believe that the US is the greatest threat to world peace, even more than Al Qaeda. Tony Blair is willing to wage war in defiance of the British public and his own party, 80 percent of whom are against any form of unilateral military action against Iraq.

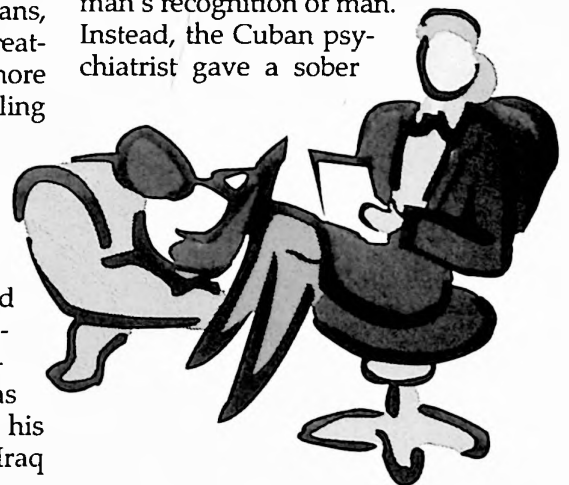
If George W. Bush has lied about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq (since he has not produced any evidence as he has repeatedly said he would) then his motive for pursuing war against Iraq

is not for peace and justice as his regime claims, but for another reason: oil perhaps?! It’s time that we took a hard look at what really is happening in the US and understand why the Bush regime is so isolated in its policing and colonizing of the poor peoples of the world. No blood, be it of US soldiers or Iraqi people, is worth shedding for the gluttonous oil companies. Let the UN weapons inspectors do their job, and dismantle the weapons of mass destruction right here.

Ideology and Mental Health

By Ken Knies

A reporter from the BBC recently interviewed a Cuban psychiatrist about the innovative treatments being employed at his hospital. She asked him why, given that so many neuroses and psychoses result from living under capitalism, people develop mental illness in Cuba. This was bait. No doubt she expected him to say that because the revolution was not yet complete, and a Communist world order had not yet been achieved, lingering mental illnesses were bound to arise from social conditions that did not yet fully reflect man’s recognition of man. Instead, the Cuban psychiatrist gave a sober



(continued on page 30)

COLLATERAL DAMAGE



Iraq Communist Party (www.iraqcp.org)

A victim of the sanctions. Will she also be a victim of Bush's war?

By David Lawrence

When does "regrettable collateral damage" become a deliberate and calculated war against families? This is an important question to consider now.

Seven percent of all bombs dropped during the Gulf War in 1991 were so-called smart bombs. In total, three-quarters of the 80,000 tons of explosives dropped by coalition forces during the Gulf War missed the intended target. As

a result, numerous hospitals were damaged, 9,000 homes were destroyed and approximately 3,500 Iraqi civilians were killed. The use of inaccurate dumb bombs is one explanation for civilian slaughter, assuming that some of these civilian targets were not deliberately targeted. But, in fact, we know they were.

One widely publicized example involved a bomb shelter in

Baghdad that harbored the families of an entire neighborhood. Hundreds of these people, entire families, were incinerated when the United States deliberately targeted, bombed and destroyed this neighborhood bomb shelter. The United States admitted that this shelter had been deliberately destroyed because it was believed to be a military communications center. Subsequent inspection of the

David Lawrence is a contributor to PA.

The researchers documented that 70,000 children under age 15 died in 1991, most of them victims of economic sanctions.

bombed-out facility by reporters from international media found no evidence of any military communications. They found just incinerated bodies – the ashes of neighborhood life. The United States military never apologized.

In any case, by war's end, more than 50,000 Iraqi soldiers were dead, as were several hundred soldiers of the coalition forces. Immediately after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, an international trade embargo was enforced upon Iraq, severely limiting what it could sell or purchase. The embargo is still in effect and has had a far more damaging effect on the health of the Iraqi people than the actual war itself.

Before the Gulf War, 70 percent of Iraq's population lived in urban areas served by sophisticated electrical grids and modern water and sewage systems. Nearly three-quarters of their food was imported, as were most of their medicines and medical supplies. The sale of oil produced 90 percent of all export earnings and paid for the commodities that formed the basis of a modern society.

The deliberate bombing of the nation's electricity-generating plants condemned all Iraqi families to terrible hardships, illnesses and for some, death. The electrical pumps that delivered water to homes across the nation ceased operating. The electrical equipment that moved and processed sewage in towns and cities across the nation no longer functioned. As a result, water is no longer pumped through the distribution system and sewage is left untreated. Post-

war economic sanctions have made repair of these facilities impossible.

Meanwhile cholera, polio, typhoid, hepatitis A and diarrhea sicken and kill children in home after home by the tens of thousands. Bombed power-generating stations cannot power refrigerators and freezers in hospitals. Desperately needed vaccines and medicines spoil on the shelves and have not been replaced. Severe shortages of medicine and medical equipment persist in the years after the war because of the economic sanctions.

In part these shortages exist because of the extreme poverty Iraq has experienced as a result of the sanctions. In other cases, the international manufacturers and suppliers of critical medical supplies simply refuse to deal with potential Iraqi buyers. Vendors fear difficulties collecting payment, and they fear intimidation by the United

States, which threatens sanctions against companies that deal with Iraq, even in commodities that are not prohibited by sanctions.

In the summer of 1991, a Harvard-based group of researchers conducted a comprehensive, nationwide investigation of child deaths during and after the war. They found that the rate of infant mortality tripled during the first half of 1991, resulting in 33,000 additional dead babies during that period. The researchers documented that 70,000 children under age 15 died in 1991, most of them victims of economic sanctions. This pallid, carefully crafted phrase fails to conjure up the image of tens of thousands of small burial caskets and grieving families.

Moreover, the Harvard group determined that an additional 35,000 civilians died during the postwar civil violence. In summary, 30 times as many civilians died of



Will the global peace movement be able to avert the health crisis threatened by Bush's war on Iraq?

JW Information Services

postwar health effects as died during the war itself. A 1995 United Nations study found that approximately 500,000 children died in the five-year period after the war, from both war and sanction-related causes. The evidence clearly indicates that this has been a war against the people – families, mothers and children, the infants of Iraq. A savage slaughter of the innocents, and the United States has been the driving force.

In the years after the Gulf War, various United Nations agencies have repeatedly warned that the

The children of Iraq do not believe they will live to be adults.

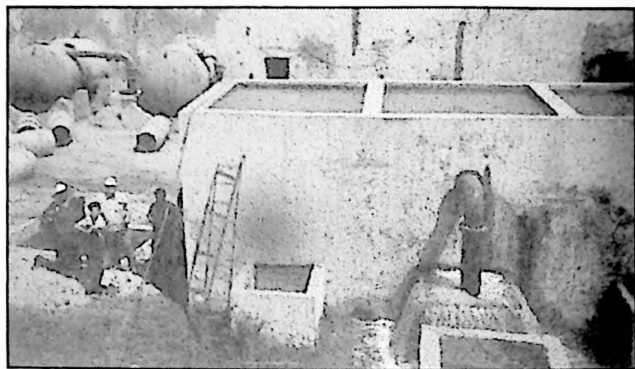
majority of Iraqis are suffering psychological and behavioral problems, such as "extreme deprivation," and "severe hunger." As victims of economic sanctions, malnourished mothers cannot sustain healthy pregnancies. Unhealthy low-weight Iraqi babies increased from 4 percent in 1990 to 22 percent in 1995. The Harvard team found that half the families surveyed suffered from heavy debts, and that 60 percent of the women interviewed reported psychological problems, often complicated by anxiety-related physical problems. Researchers who interviewed more than 200 primary school age children in the months

after the war found extremely high levels of psychological stress. Two-thirds of these unfortunate children did not believe they would live to be adults. If the United States drops bombs on their neighborhoods

again, how many thousands of these Iraqi children will have their worst fears realized?

Bush's military opinion makers have launched a massive "PsyOps" campaign to make the American public, and the people of all potential "allies," for that matter, believe that the new, improved weaponry will be precise and accurate. The idea is that "smart weapons" such as laser-guided missiles and smart bombs will only kill the enemy and will leave neighborhoods and families unscathed. The theme is that this will be a humane war with only "minimal collateral damage." As an analysis by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences entitled *War with Iraq* points out, this may make for convincing pro-war propaganda, but it is military nonsense:

On April 3, 2002, as part of its reprisal operations on the West Bank, Israeli forces entered the town of Jenin (and the adjacent refugee camp). After a week of occasionally ferocious fighting, 23 Israeli soldiers and 52 Palestinians (some of them civilians) were dead. For Israel, Jenin turned into a nightmare of ambushes, booby traps, and door-to-door fighting in a densely populated urban maze. Israel's losses were high, civilian casualties were unavoidable, widespread and visible destruction of civilian infrastructure took place, and politically damaging television footage of the devasta-



Above: Iraqi water plant.

tion flooded the world. In this combat context, Israel's enormous military superiority – its advantages in technology, heavy equipment, air power, and trained military personnel – were undermined, neutralized, or irrelevant, and could be employed in this heavily populated urban environment only if Israel were willing to cause enormous casualties among civilians.

War on Iraq will be much the same, bloody and full of unknown dangerous consequences for Iraq, the United States and the world. Despite the "PsyOps" blitz, the repeated use of lies and jingoistic patriotism, Bush's war on Iraq is a criminal, murderous assault on Iraqi families. Moreover, it is a tragic waste of the lives of American soldiers who are just cannon fodder for the new imperialism and the corporate lust for Iraqi oil.

However, the breadth and depth of the international peace movement is a weapon with far more potential than all of Bush's smart bombs and guided missiles. The explosive growth and consolidation of the worldwide peace movement is the only weapon that can defeat militaristic imperialism. Ultimately only the peace movement can save the domestic economy of the United States.

The children of Iraq do not believe they will live to be adults. We must prove them wrong. ■

HEALTH CARE

NOT



WARFARE

By Phil Benjamin

As much as anything else, we need to turn the 2004 elections into a referendum on whether all Americans should finally be able to get affordable, high quality health care with their right to choose their own doctor. AFL-CIO Executive Council, February 2003.

This policy statement by the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO, along with its resolution in opposition to the war drive in Iraq, has sounded a clarion call to everyone that the labor movement is back and ready for action.

Phil Benjamin is health editor for PA.

The AFL-CIO Executive Council is responding to a growing movement among individual unions and state and local affiliates. State labor councils in Wisconsin, Oregon, California and others are putting forward stopgap state-based plans to stem the growing tide of escalating health care costs and increases in the uninsured. International unions and individual locals are fighting tooth and nail to maintain and possibly improve health benefit packages.

The Executive Council's resolution pays particular attention to the

growing right-wing attack on the federal Medicare system, the health program for people over 65 years of age. It also cites the attempt by the Bush administration to convert the Medicaid program from a health service program for people with low or no incomes into a pork-barrel financial gift for state governors.

The new position is the most important statement by labor on health care since 1994.

Since the Clinton health policy was put forward in 1993-94 the Democratic Party and the labor

No piece of socio-economic legislation has been enacted by Congress that was not led by or strongly supported by organized labor.

movement had agreed to keep health policy "off agenda." This was the result of a complete misreading of the failed Clinton efforts. Rather than targeting the Medical Industrial Complex as the enemy of national health legislation, they tacitly agreed with the right wing that the Clinton proposals were too complicated and ill conceived. They were complicated, but the policy debate was a good one, even though it was lost to the power of the insurance carriers, drug companies and right-wingers in Congress led by Newt Gingrich.

The vacuum created after 1994 was rapidly filled by profiteers. Their promises that the marketplace would solve the health crisis utterly failed. But, with each passing congressional and presidential election, the opportunity to respond to the crisis was thwarted by the right-wing agenda within the Democratic Party and unfortunately followed by labor.

Changes in the Democratic Party leadership and the AFL-CIO position open a window of action that everyone has to fill. But in this new period the mistakes of the past must not be made.

In US history no piece of socio-

economic legislation has been enacted by Congress that was not led by or strongly supported by organized labor. The following principles must guide the mass people's movement for a national health program that truly encompasses everyone:

- labor must lead the fight and draft the policy;
- civil rights groups must be at the table to make sure that Black, Latino and other oppressed people are assured their health rights. Racism is pervasive in the health care system.
- women activists in the pro-choice movement must be at the table;
- public worker unions must be guaranteed a major role;
- rural health organizations must be included to guarantee true universality of access to health services;
- health care unions must be at the table to prevent employment dislocations;
- public health care research must have a priority in funding.

Legislation Drafting Principles

The formulation of the legislative drafting process should guaran-

tee that the gains of the past are protected for the future. This is a major bone of contention among advocates of sweeping health legislation. Too many non-labor, non-Medicare activists are ready to discard past gains in favor of future promises.

This all-or-nothing approach is faulty on its face. But more importantly, it has made sure that most labor unions along with Medicare leaders would *not* be part of the process of new congressional legislation. It was the death knell of all legislative efforts from 1994 to the present.

These organizations should be encouraged to drop their slogans and quick-fix legislation solutions and allow labor and Medicare leaders to flex their muscles. Labor unions and their members must have the opportunity to maintain their own programs regardless of any national program. (This is the way legislation was initially enacted in France, Canada and other countries with national health insurance programs). Medicare must be maintained (federalized with full benefits, again) so that all recipients can be assured they will not be getting less

UKC



As many as 75 million Americans lack adequate prescription drug coverage.

under a new national program. All civil rights and right-to-choose laws must be strictly enforced.

Over the years, most unions and to some extent the AFL-CIO have worked closely with national and local public health and community-based organizations on major social and economic issues. There is growing trust between many of these groups to draw upon. This is the time to act.

Some anti-labor forces will try to drive a wedge between organized labor and the community over some aspects of this strategy. But labor will make it clear that while they want to maintain the right to keep their own benefit programs, they will fight for a health benefits package for everyone else that is as good or better than most unions have negotiated with their employers. This would be the same for Medicare rights organizations.

Labor-led Coalition for National Health

The Executive Council resolution, in addition to signing a new approach, fortunately makes no mention of an ill-conceived coalition with big business insurance carriers and financed by drug company foundations. State and local labor coalitions have been forming in Wisconsin, Oregon and California. These federations, before the enactment of the new labor position, were pressing for a state solution. But, as the AFL-CIO resolution makes clear, this a national health crisis. It is a crisis that confronts all labor unions

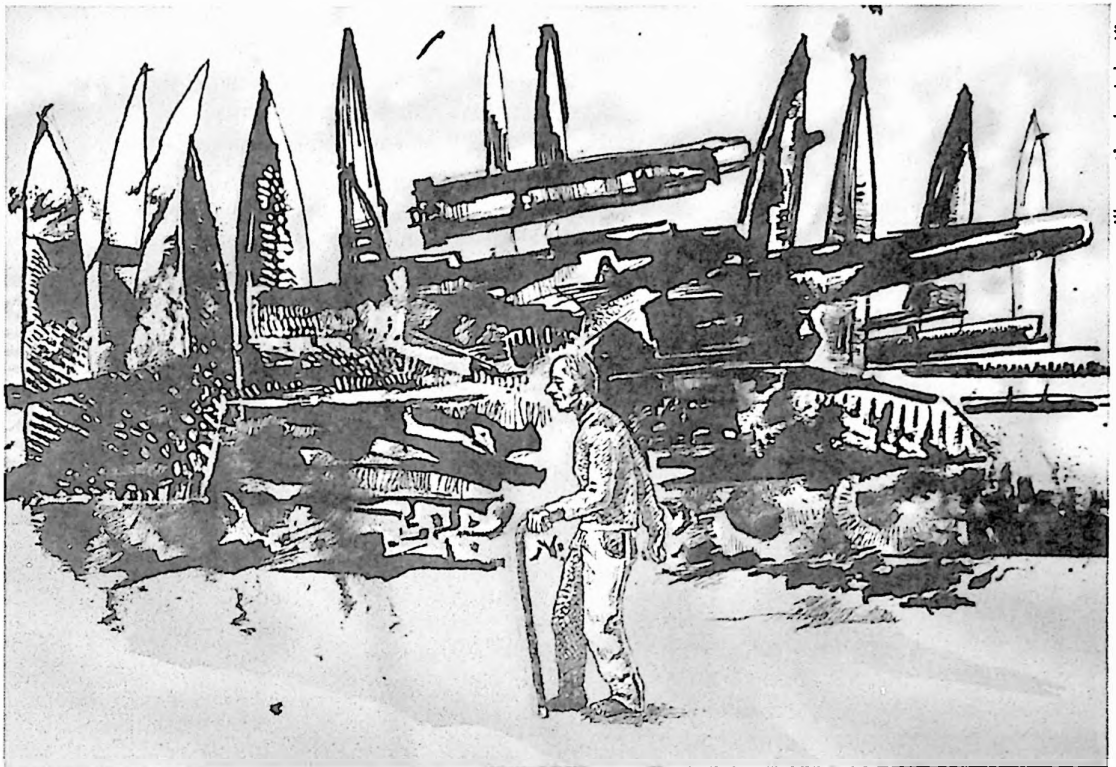


Illustration by John Kim

and the growing number of unemployed workers who are without insurance. (Insurance policies required following unemployment are simply too expensive to buy.) The crisis is national and does *not* conform to state lines.

The time for state experiments is past. During the period of retrenchment, state experiments made sense. They not only showed what is possible, but also kept people in motion. Combining these experiences with national movements to get Congress to act is the next strategic step. A good idea is to pressure state and local government to memorialize Congress to begin enacting universal health care coverage.

Special Role for Medicare/Medicaid

The Bush administration is aiming its salvos against two of the most important entitlement programs: Medicare and Social Security. Privatization, in whole or in part, is their primary goal. But these entitlement programs are the

building blocks of a national health care system.

While Medicare was enacted to provide health services for people over 65, it also provides important health services for the disabled. Since enactment, it has unfortunately been administered by insurance carriers. That was the price Congress had to pay. It was a big mistake. In the 1990s Medicare has been privatized, to some extent, into so-called HMOs run by different insurance companies. But, this partial privatization has not been enough for the Bush ideologues. They now demand, as the price for prescription drug, the full program be privatized into for-profit insurance carriers.

This carrot-and-stick approach must be militantly opposed. It is already being opposed by all Medicare activists and the labor movement. As the AFL-CIO resolution correctly notes, these changes in Medicare would mean that "insurance executives rather than Medicare" would decide its future.

In most industrialized countries, health care is a human right, not a privilege.

governors. Block grants carry few restrictions for use. This proposal would have fallen mostly on deaf ears, but Bush ideologues are more than aware that governors are in terrible financial shape and are crying to Washington, DC for help.

To sweeten the pie, Bush is offering more Medicaid money to those governors who take it.

Stopping Bush

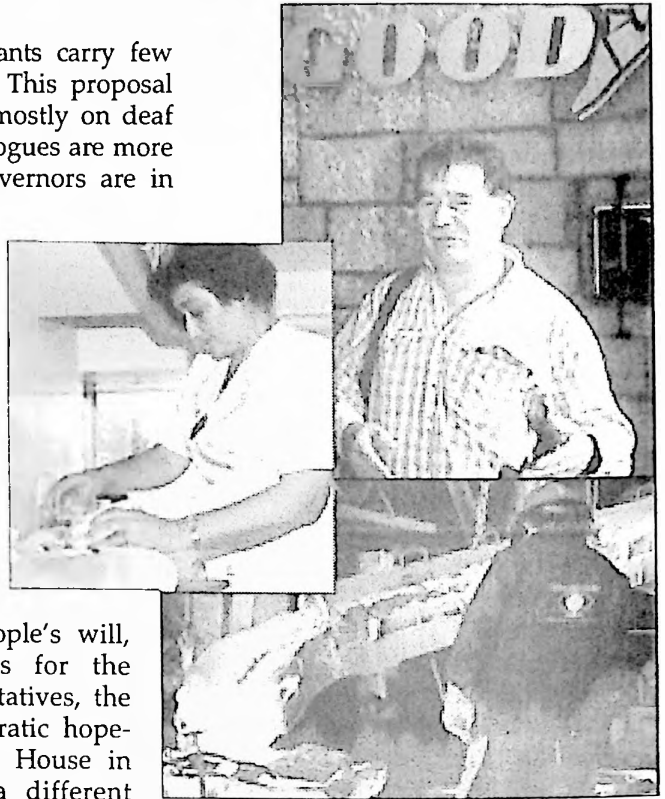
Bush may not care about the people's will, but all candidates for the House of Representatives, the Senate and Democratic hopefuls for the White House in 2004 must have a different agenda. Even the Republicans' allegiance to the ultra-right and their bogus think tank ideas are tempered by reelection efforts.

Every candidate for Congress and the Senate must be approached and pressured to save and improve Medicare and Medicaid; and, now, under the leadership of the AFL-CIO Executive Council's resolution, to fight for a national health program.

Labor put the question squarely: "Now, even more than in the past, the AFL-CIO believes strongly that universal coverage is the best and ultimately only way to achieve the goal of extending affordable, high quality health care to all Americans."

By making health care a priority and beginning the process

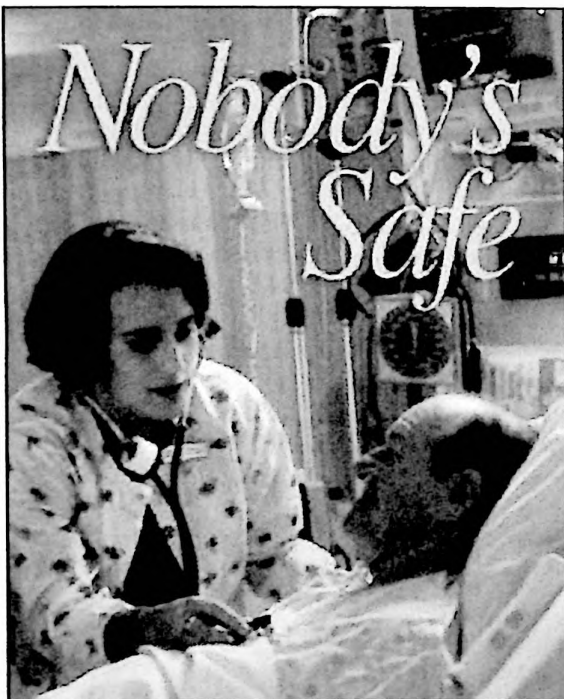
of an expedited legislative struggle to enact a national health program, labor and its allies are making it clear to all politicians that our country must join the rest of the human race. In most industrial countries, health care is a human right, not a privilege. This goal is fully achievable, but it will require the broadest peoples' struggle under the leadership of labor. Advocates from every mass struggle in our country must be included. We can leap frog over traditional national health insurance schemes and achieve the full comprehensive system that is called for in the national health service program (HR-3080) introduced each year by heroine Barbara Lee, Congresswoman from California. This makes practical sense since to adequately implement a real national health program there must be more trained health professionals; public facilities for the delivery of health services; and health planning to make sure it all works. ■



Medicaid

The most insidious attack is in regard to Medicaid. Medicaid is a life-and-death issue to millions. It has too little political support as its recipients are not powerful enough to protect their own interests. This is a cutthroat effort to stop Medicaid as an entitlement program and turn it into a so-called block grant to state

USWA



Skyrocketing costs and shrinking coverage mean that working people aren't safe in the health care system.

YOUR HEALTH at a COST

The Medical Supply Industry at Work

By Don Sloan, MD

The world was glued to the TV screen last February as a teenager was victimized by a tragic error at a major medical institution and given a mismatched heart-lung transplant. The frenzy that followed to find yet another organ donor captured our imaginations and hopes until it came to its tragic end. It was barely mentioned, as to who was going to pay for her procedures and the use of the array of medical equipment. The public assumed both the medical center and philanthropists, via their tax-deductible donations, were bankrolling the whole venture. After all, how could money ever be an issue when the life and health of a young girl was at stake? True in theory; not so in practice. Indeed, the health-care-for-profit system generates huge returns for drug and medical equipment companies, matching those made from the latest purveyors of health care – the insurance complex that controls health care through its health maintenance organization (HMO) system.

The burgeoning medical care



Medical students in training.

equipment industry grabbed a new brass ring on the merry-go-round that is US health care. Totally privatized, and rather highly specialized, it becomes almost an automatic monopoly. In just one typical example, a company in Dallas, Texas makes not the actual parts or components of medical prostheses but only materials, like the screws, bolts, and nuts that are vital to the units' applications. This one factory is capable of handling the world's

business needs. Without any cost controls from either competition or government, it is only hoped their prices are within reason. No one is quite sure. There is no watchdog.

The pharmaceuticals, with a markup at least 40 times greater than any other industry in the world, including major industries like automobiles, appliances, computers and even some retailing, have resorted to consumer advertising in all major media to attract new

Don Sloan is assistant editor for PA.

The medical equipment industry is totally privatized and rather highly specialized. It has almost become a monopoly.

customers. The drug houses are busy hiring Madison Avenue agencies and celebrity spokespersons to entice viewers to implore their doctors for this and that. It apparently helps the bottom line. We are seeing more and more such ads. The medical appliance industry is following suit, making appeals to the medical community and plying them with all sorts of enticements, from four-star restaurant dinners to weekend golfing or tennis jaunts or a cruise of your choice. Costly and exorbitant? No need to fret. The mark-up more than allows for such practices.

Obstetrics is particularly ripe for such shenanigans. Home monitoring and pre-labor documentation with paraphernalia that fill up an average-size living room all appeal especially to first-time, mothers-to-be. Besides, who can resist the smiling sales people who add, "After all, we want what's best for your baby." They suggest you may be an abusive parent if you refuse or even question their validity.

The consumer is not the only target. Hospital services, especially in this highly litigious era of medicine, do not want to be without the latest state-of-the-art devices. One new father visited his wife and baby son on the delivery night and looked through the windowed nursery filled with gurgling and healthy newborns. "My," he remarked, "I didn't know if I were in my son's nursery or the NASA ground control center in Houston. I couldn't see the nurses for all the stainless steel machinery." This is more real than imagined. Many

nurseries and hospital rooms are now being monitored by electronic equipment plotting vital signs and patient-attached Rube Goldberg devices rather than live nurses. I leave it to your imagination as to who is paying for all this. One noted professor of obstetrics recently published his impression of modern-day university OBGYN training in a major journal entitled *The Modern Day Obstetrical Resident - A Marvel in Hi-tech Medicine*.

Medical investigator Hal Strelnick pointed out in his HealthPac review some years ago, while pharmaceuticals have to undergo reasonably extensive laboratory animal and human testing for their Federal Drug Agency (FDA) approvals, despite concerns about fast-shuffle tests and inside lobbying for necessary sanctions, marketers for new medical technology have a minimum oversight. There is more and more talk on Capitol Hill

of tightening regulations, but for the most part, none have been put into effect. Stay tuned. The rumbles are getting louder.

Just as major conglomerates, like Proctor & Gamble, Colgate-Palmolive and Bristol Myers, have gotten into the drug business, their counterparts and giants in other industries have jumped on the medical machinery bandwagon. And not coincidentally, they are also major suppliers of the Pentagon's needs. The roster coincides with the upper echelon of the Fortune 500 - McDonnell-Douglas, General Electric, General Dynamics, Lockheed Aeronautics, Hewlett-Packard, Honeywell, RCA and Raytheon. And like the pharmaceuticals and the HMO/insurance combines, the list is getting smaller, as one gobbles up the others. As HealthPac documented, Revlon, for example, has quite a monopoly on eye care, from mas-



Without coverage, the choice between rent or a doctor's visit is real.

JW Information Services



Medical supply companies push up the cost of health care with price gouging.

cara to intraocular lenses. McDonnell-Douglas, the Pentagon's major supplier of F-16 jets, has now expanded into the medical supply industry, with all sorts of hospital monitoring and computer systems. This list goes on and on.

Just how big is the medical equipment industry? Interestingly, for reasons that are still unclear, those figures are somewhat vague. Standard & Poors, the New York Stock Exchange and even a variety of world almanacs report different statistics, probably because much of the equipment gets buried in other parts of the parent company or conglomerate. It is well upwards of a \$45 billion business: and its gross doubles every decade. It passed the pharmaceuticals back in the mid '70s and is still climbing rapidly. Based on HealthPac statistics, hospitals supplies and equipment hit \$15,000 per bed nationwide. With a shrinking number of outlets and the acquisitions and mergers of whatever is left, the industry has been an investment banker's dream. Like everything else in the market, capitalism's recession hits them all, but the medical supply commercial outlets are holding on better than most others.

Yet another facet of this industry is what are considered disposables - equipment in which replacements are the mainstay of the business. Disposable needles,

syringes, catheters, trocars, scoping sleeves and shields, specula and even scalpels and other surgical instruments are now produced in all forms of plastics - another boon-doggle for suppliers. In this area, there are obvious kingpins. HealthPac listed Hewlett-Packard, the computer people, as the runaway producer of patient monitoring

devices, from fetal to cardiac. By far, needles and syringes are the domain of Becton-Dickinson (now almost all disposable). Other industrial giants such as Boeing, Microsoft, IBM, MacDonald's, Wal-Mart, Proctor & Gamble, Exxon-Mobil, Goodyear and GM and Ford have entered the highly contested field of medical equipment and supplies. Competition, the only hope left for a needy public in a free enterprise system to keep costs at affordable levels, becomes more and more of a dinosaur. As long as the industry remains privatized, the buying public is at its mercy.

The medical supply industry is so secure that it has seemingly even survived the rule of thumb that says with volume, costs decline. That is obviously how chains and franchising have squeezed out mom and pop stores and small businesses. Fast food, office supplies and hardware/household outlets are just three obvious cases in point. The corner drug store is no more; the downtown diner has gone by the wayside; the local hardware merchant is difficult to find. The medical supply people have overcome the volume-is-cheaper adage. As hospitals merge and become medical empires as they try to stay afloat in the era of the HMO and banking takeovers that slash their reimbursements daily, the suppliers are still in

charge. The costs of equipment now sold to combination buyers of merged hospitals have been nudged just a tad. The industry has held the line, knowing its product is life demanding. Hospitals, no matter how humongous their buying power, are still captured by supply and demand. Many an investigative reporter has been impressed by the nature of the medical supply industry. With its usurpation by major conglomerates, the competitive protection that mirrors the pharmaceutical industry has it going one better. The field is narrowing as we speak.

The HealthPac report also described the internationalization of production that is marking the industry. The globalization that Gus Hall described as the final stages of capitalism is marked by certain traits it calls "accomplishments." One is that as the computer and air travel have made access all the easier. Mergers and acquisitions have made survivors all the more powerful. Factories and *maquiladoras* degrade wage scales and have working conditions that are near subhuman, and with general worker, exploitation that surpasses the developed world manyfold. The medical supply

As long as the industry remains privatized, the buying public is at its mercy.

industry is no exception.

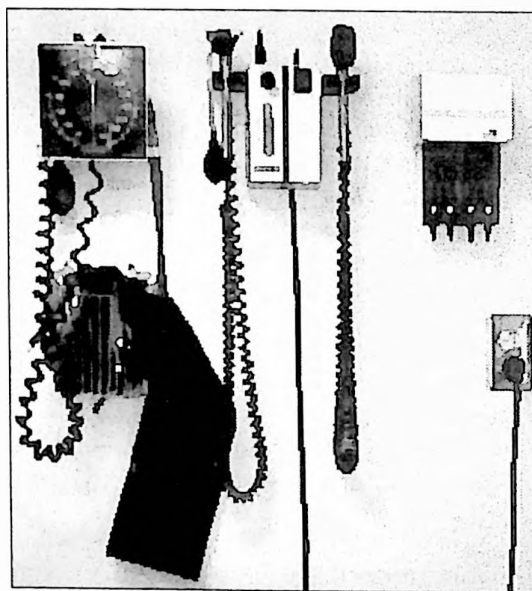
Domestic regulations have forced a relatively high standard for products. These have essentially kept foreign competitors from gaining access to the US market. As a side benefit, many of the world's physicians-in-training pass through US hospitals and medical centers for specialty training. They become familiar with the hi-tech equipment, making for an added demand when they return home. Blue jeans, rock and roll and McDonald's quarter-pounders are not the only legacies of middle America's affluence and influence.

The medical equipment supply industry stands out from the rest of the Fortune 500 in certain aspects. It enjoys the impression of being an "ethical" industry via its association with health care, and therefore a step above the crowd. One major manufacturer of suturing materials and other surgical instrumentation took advantage of that public image and calls itself Ethicon, since snatched up by Johnson & Johnson.

An often accepted myth ballyhooed by these corporations' PR departments is that much of the need for the high markup is the funding needed for research and development (R & D). They always remind an unaware public that for every successful medication or piece of medical equipment there are many more that took time and personnel but failed. We are not told the vast bulk of financing for such ventures was either allocated by the Congress through various governmental agency grants from the National Institute of Health (NIH) on down to tax write offs. Because of this finding Wall Street has described the industry as near "recession proof," similar to the banking and insurance enterprises. Today's recession is an example of that very

occurrence.

Then there is built-in obsolescence. Car models and household appliances usually become outmoded not so much because of vast improvement in technology but from cosmetics and bourgeois appeal. The pace of medical technology is moving along so quickly that x-ray cameras, cardiac monitors, dialysis units, CAT scans, electronic tomography devices (PET) and nuclear devices (NMR) become archaic when morbidity and mortality are improved with replace-



JW Information Services

Private corporate control over medical equipment supplies increases costs.

ments. The public demands such updating, even when they are sometimes not real advancements, and the industry responds. But then come more R & D federal funding and more profits. Astoundingly, taxpayers shell out for failures, but when devices become successes, patents and profits are turned over to the private corporate entity lock, stock and barrel.

Part of the campaign that denies health care as a right is to continually orchestrate programs that keep it within the private sector. The industry is resisting those who are working to create a single-

payer federally financed and managed health care plan. Such a plan must include a strict socialization of the nation's pharmaceutical and medical supply industries. They must go hand in hand.

It was back in 1942, as the US was readying for a full-scale war against fascism, that the Department of Defense (then called the War Department) awarded a major contract to the Picker X-ray Corporation, the then leading manufacturer of radiological equipment. It was for the construction of the Norden bombsight, the state-of-the-art unit that was an integral need of the US Air Force and attributed to being a major contributor to the victory over fascism. It was Harvey Picker who came to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in a famous White House meeting and informed the president that no contract was needed. The Picker Company CEO stated he would convert the major portion of its facilities away from x-ray needs to the Norden contract. The price would be tabulated strictly on a cost basis. War against fascism, Picker told FDR, is not a time for profit.

That vignette has been told many a time, and has been cited as a reason why many aware medical buyers and physicians have remained loyal to the Picker Company. Regrettably, this was the exception that makes the rule. The profit-before-people philosophy that guides the medical supply industry has contributed so mightily to the shameful way health care is now delivered in the US. This year, it is hoped that the Del-lums bill calling for a government-run single-payer plan will gain momentum, and with it strict control on the pharmaceuticals and medical equipment needs of a grateful nation. ■

Healing^{the} System

By Joel Wendland

Rent, food, or a doctor's visit: a daily choice for millions. For all of its wealth, 42 million people in the US don't have any health care coverage and 70 million don't have prescription drug coverage. Eight of 10 uninsured Americans are in working families and about 10 million are children. About eight million more are unemployed or are retirees. In 2001 alone, two million people lost their insurance.

Clearly, private insurance is just too expensive. This trend has many in the labor movement looking for new ways to promote a comprehensive solution.

While the number of people covered shrinks, the costs of premiums skyrocket. According to the AFL-



Can we stand for corporations making billions from the suffering of our children?

CIO, prices rose about 10 percent in the first year of Bush's presidency. By the end of 2002, Americans saw a 23 percent rise in the cost of health insurance premiums. A Jobs with Justice report indicates that some health care consulting firms are predicting as much as 15 percent to 20 percent inflation for 2003. Excruciat-

ing inflation is reflected in other indicators, such as a 17 percent increase in prescription drug costs in 2000 alone. Meanwhile, workers and their collective bargaining units are finding that employers are using "cost shifting" to gradually increase the share of health insurance costs to workers, while decreasing their own contribution. Another employer solution to price hikes is to ask employees to use their plans less. "Look for alternative forms of

staying healthy, rather than going to see the doctor," one human resources newsletter read.

Unions are also expressing a growing willingness to push to the fore the question of universal coverage in politics. The recent meeting of the executive council of the AFL-CIO called for making "2004 elections into a referendum" on whether or not affordable health care coverage would be made available for all. Further, the labor movement's renewed efforts are reflected in the majority of American households. Recent polls conducted by both Gallup and Harris show that three-fourths of Americans are dissatisfied with the costs

Most Americans believe universal health care is affordable and necessary.

Joel Wendland is managing editor of PA.

and the quality of health care. At least two-thirds feel that the federal government has a responsibility to ensure that everyone has access to health care, and this same number feels that we can afford it.

When Andrew Stern, president of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the largest union in the country, told an *ABC News* reporter in February, "No one will get out of New Hampshire [referring to the presidential primaries] without a plan for universal coverage," he reflected the deep-rooted concern in the labor movement over the costs of staying healthy. Stern expressed some sympathy for the views of former Vermont governor Howard Dean on the issue. Dean favors a universal single-payer plan. (Other candidates who support national health care legislation are Dennis Kucinich and Al Sharpton.)

Controlling Prices

Stern's opinion also reflected the labor movement's growing influence on this issue as well as his union's decision to join a growing nationwide effort by the labor movement to publicize universal coverage and build lobby movements for its passage. SEIU, along with the AFL-CIO, joined a coalition of business and health professional associations and labor unions called Covering the Uninsured Campaign designed for that purpose. The members of this coalition feel that the biggest problem in health care coverage is the skyrocketing costs of treatment and drugs. The AFL-CIO and numerous international, state and local labor bodies have pointed to the control over prices as the main priority.

To gain control over prices, unions are proposing several solutions. Almost all agree with the need to strengthen existing public programs that provide coverage for low-income families and the unemployed, such as Medicare, Medicaid, the State Children's Health Insur-

ance Program (S-CHIP) and other public programs. This means that for those least able to pay, health care will be available. The largest public employees union, AFSCME, passed a resolution at its convention in 2000 urging that public insurance programs become the basis for universal coverage in a national health care

As many as
625,000
steelworker
retirees have lost
or face losing their
benefits.

system. AFSCME committed itself to educating its members on how to gain access to public insurance plans. A number of union-sponsored or supported campaigns that mirror the diversity of the universal health

care movement in general are underway in Florida, North Carolina, Maine, Illinois, Vermont, Oregon, California, Wisconsin, and Washington State.

Though a publicly owned and operated health care system is ideal, it still hasn't taken hold in much of the rest of the union movement. One main demand of the AFL-CIO and other unions is that employers must pay their fair share for insurance. Some measures, including a proposal endorsed by the UAW and recently put on the legislative agendas in Oregon (strongly supported by the state AFL-CIO), Wisconsin (UAW Region 4A) and Maryland (endorsed by Region 8 of the UAW), would tax employers who fail to provide health insurance for their employees. According to *Solidarity* magazine, the revenue would be used to support public services for the uninsured. This "pay or play" proposal allows employers to avoid the tax by paying an equal amount in premiums. Either way, supporters of this plan say that near universal coverage would be possible. In addition to this benefit, supporters say, the low overhead resulting from combining plans into a single administrative unit would make financing painless for taxpayers.



Health care workers see unions as a way to improve the quality of health care.

Tim Nesbitt, president of the Oregon State AFL-CIO, emphasizes control over costs. "Any successful plan," he remarked to me, "has to appeal to working families. Two-thirds get their insurance through their jobs." The "pay or play" doesn't require more taxes from working people. Additionally, Nesbitt points out that some employers have a clear interest in supporting the plan. "The Wal-Marts of the world will oppose it, because they spend very little on health care coverage for their employees," he suggested. "The challenge is to find ways to get employers to support expanding coverage." But for other employers who seek a competitive advantage, "pay or play" evens out the playing field. By requiring all employers to contribute to the cost of premiums, and by stabilizing these costs (some estimates suggest that premiums will go down for some population groups) through expansion of the number of insured, smaller businesses ("more responsible employers," says Nesbitt) will not be making relatively larger payments. They may even enjoy savings and have the added advantage of reducing workforce turnover.

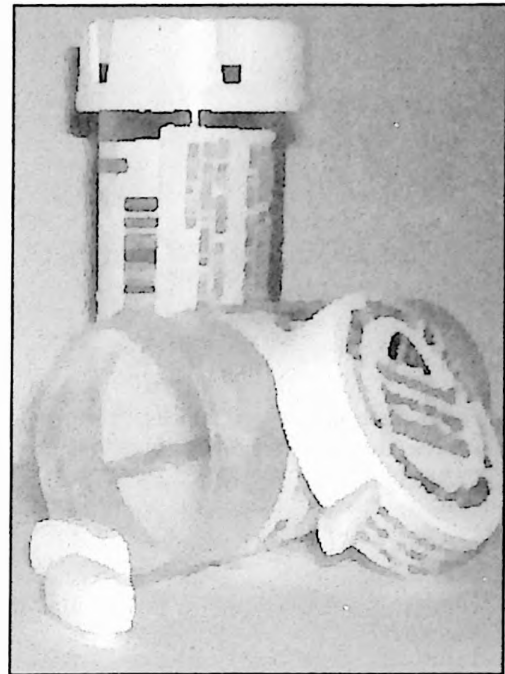
Increasing the number of people in the pool of insured stabilizes costs

because risks even out over a larger population. Because of cost shifting tactics by employers, controlling costs becomes more difficult and complex. UAW President Ron Gettlefinger referred to this problem in his letter of support for the employer tax plan. "The health care crisis," he remarked, "cannot be settled at the bargaining table. The crisis is a national issue and needs a national solution." United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) magazine, *Working Families* (Fall 2002), adopted a similar stance and pointed out that the pharmaceutical industry is the most profitable industry because of price-gouging. Because employers have a legal responsibility to contribute to insurance costs or face taxes, "pay or play" plans prohibit cost shifting.

Price Inflation

Similar in strategy is the effort to control the cost of prescription drugs. With the backing of pharmaceutical companies, the Bush administration has refused to provide any sort of meaningful plan that will allow seniors and other working people to afford drugs. Labor activists say that his "discount card"

plan only makes cardholders more beholden to insurance companies and does not do anything to control prices. In the summer of 2002, a number of local unions and central labor bodies took part in a campaign to highlight the cost of prescription drugs. They filled buses, usually with retirees for whom prescription drug prices hit hardest,



Prescription drug costs are expected to double.

and went to Canada to buy reduced-price drugs. Some saved as much as two-thirds the cost. Activists indicated that seniors and other workers were being forced to choose between drugs and rent or food.

The solution to the problem of drug price inflation, says the AFL-CIO, is to strengthen Medicare and tie to it a prescription drug benefit. In addition, unions such as SEIU, International Association of Machinists (IAM) and the UAW endorse a proposal recently gaining some popularity. A drug purchasing cooperative would link the purchasing power of several neighboring states, allow them to find the lowest prices (even if in another country like Canada), buy drugs in bulk and force pharmaceuticals to lower their prices. Once again, by increasing the pool of those who can participate and by organizing a cooperative purchasing plan, everyone, including the uninsured and underinsured, will benefit with more affordable and stable costs.

In addition to price controls, most of the labor movement endorses a Patient's Bill of Rights to counter the profit motive of health

check out your Marxist IQ

Answers to questions on page 5:

- 1) c
- 2) b
- 3) d
- 4) c
- 5) d

— 'You are what you read'

HOW TO SCORE YOURSELF:	
Each question is worth 20 points.	
0-40:	You need to go to a re-education camp.
50-60:	You are unprepared to withstand bourgeois revisionism.
70-80:	You qualify for a medal.
90-100:	You should be writing articles for PA.

Almost two million jobs have been lost in the manufacturing sector since George Bush was appointed president.

maintenance organizations or similarly organized corporate medical companies. The IAM sees legal protections as important to controlling the excesses of corporations. In addition to protecting patients, unions see protections for workers as central to any health care plan. SEIU (especially its 1199 component) represents the largest number of health care workers in the country. Along with other unions such as the paper and chemical workers union (PACE), IAM, AFSCME, American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and others, SEIU is pushing for strengthening the right to organize and to control mandatory overtime, safety on the job, safe staffing and better pay and conditions for health care workers and related industries. In fact, the concern for quality care is the main motivation many health care workers cite for organizing or joining unions. Throughout the country, SEIU/1199 organizers are winning election battles in nursing homes, hospitals and other medical facilities for this very reason.

A significant reason for the recent decreases in the number of insured Americans is the heavy decline in manufacturing jobs – jobs traditionally with higher union density and better wages and benefits.

Almost two million jobs have been lost in the manufacturing sector since George Bush was appointed president.

For this reason, industrial unions are putting health care coverage first. The AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Council (IUC) says that the

January strike led by Communications Workers (CWA) and Electrical workers (IUE) unions against General Electric was an example of workers putting health care coverage before work conditions. The IUC also emphasized the cost to employers of runaway premiums. In auto, for example, about \$850 in the cost of a car goes for workers' health insurance premiums. This means, the IUC argues, that employers have a big interest in controlling the cost of coverage.

Prescription drug prices, insurance premiums and the inhumane practice of dropping retirees from health care plans (industrial retirees often require better health care plans) has motivated many industrial unions to become skeptical about "market-based" solutions to the health care crisis. The United Steelworkers of America (USWA), hit hard by plant closures, benefit cut-offs due to corporate bankruptcy, cost shifting and concessions, has highlighted its own concerns. According to *Steelabor*, as many as 625,000 steelworker retirees have lost or face losing their benefits. Alternatives that increase coverage, control costs, protect the right to organize and collectively bargain, secure protections for retirees and seniors and protect workers against price-gouging are priorities.

In his State of the Union speech, George Bush scoffed at the notion of a publicly owned and operated universal health care system and pushed the right-wing alternative. According to the recent AFL-CIO

Executive Council statement on health care reform, Bush's Medicare+Choice plan and tax credit scheme are simply subsidies for HMOs, will cause a loss of coverage, decrease choice, open the system to fraud, don't provide enough money for coverage and force people to face down powerful corporations for the sake of their lives. Bush's preference for using resources for war and tax breaks for corporations and the rich is painfully obvious to most Americans. Contrary to Bush's thinking, most Americans consider affordable health care a right. While most unions do not yet endorse a completely public system, many support some form of mixed universal coverage. Together labor's broad proposals are a winning strategy that will save the lives of thousands of working people every year. More importantly, they advance the struggle for working-class power and provide a basis for a break with the inhumane for-profit system of private insurance. ■

For More INFORMATION

Covering the
Uninsured Campaign,
www.coveringtheuninsured.com

Universal Health
Care Action Network,
www.uhcan.org

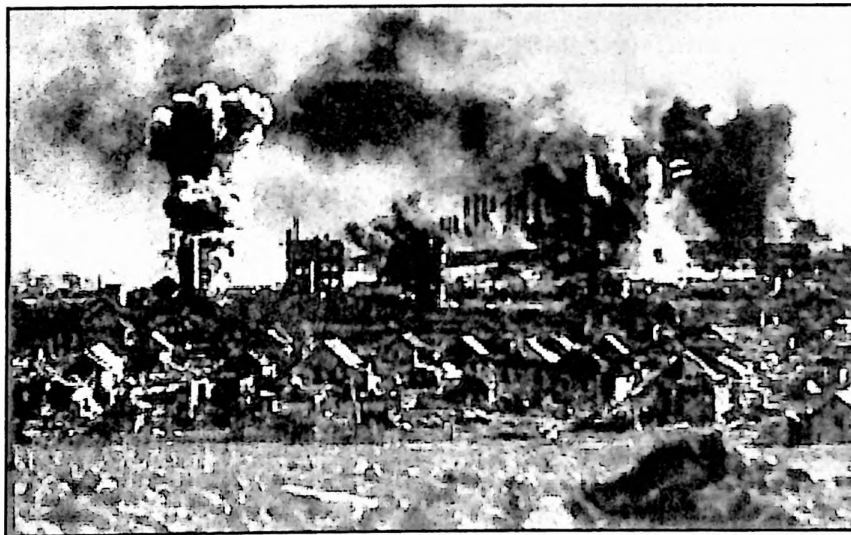
THE REAL STORY

By Norman Markowitz

In the classic anti-fascist Hollywood film of World War II, *Casablanca*, the Czech anti-fascist exile, Victor Laszlo (played by the Austrian actor, Paul Henreid) says simply: "If we fight, perhaps we will die. If we don't fight, the world will die."

Given the menace that global fascism and its Axis alliance represented, this was a reasonable statement in the world of 1942. An Axis victory in the war would have set back workers' struggles and movements for national liberation indefinitely. It would have made the most open and brutal forms of racism and militarism the policy of the world's leading powers. It also would have made the genocide German fascism organized throughout Europe for Jewish minorities a model for the destruction of Slavic peoples, non-whites and others regarded as sub-human.

In Asia, the mass killing carried forward by Japanese militarists against the people of China would have served as a model for the oppression of the peoples of Asia and the Pacific. In the Western Hemisphere, in all likelihood, we would have seen Latin American dictatorships dancing to Hitler's tune. A US



At the battle for Stalingrad the Soviets defeated the Nazis for the first time and turned the tide of World War II.

collaborator government composed of corporate functionaries and domestic fascists would have been the outcome of an Axis victory.

The Communist movement played a decisive role in the victory over fascism in the Second World War. First of all, the Red Army and the Soviet people took on over 80 percent of European Axis forces from 1941 to the opening of the Second Front in 1944, and continued to take on the majority of European Axis forces right up to VE Day. The Soviet victories at Moscow in December 1941, Kursk and Stalingrad in 1943 were the turning points in the European war. In Yugoslavia and Greece, Communist-led partisans, emulating the Soviets, fought a heroic guerrilla war against the Nazis and their fascist allies. In France, Italy and other

countries Communists led in the anti-fascist resistance movements.

In China, the Chinese Communist Party was the leading force in both partisan resistance and in armies that fought Japanese imperialists. In French colonial Indochina, Vietnamese Communists organized the Viet Minh and led the resistance against the Japanese, while the French colonial administration and planter class collaborated openly.

In the US, Communists helped to establish a national umbrella organization, the American League Against War and Fascism in the early 1930s, to coordinate anti-fascist campaigns and education. When Italian fascists invaded Ethiopia in 1935, Communists in Harlem and other communities mobilized Blacks and whites to protest the attack. When

Norman Markowitz is a contributing editor of PA.

the German ship, Bremen, sailed into New York Harbor flying the swastika, Communist activists of the National Maritime Union boarded the ship and tore down the symbol of fascist terror and murder, to the cheers of thousands of protesters on the docks. Although the seamen were prosecuted, the act was an example of those willing to oppose people who wanted to do business with Hitler.

Beginning in 1934, French Communists and Socialists formed a united front against French fascists, who, emboldened by Hitler's victory in Germany, sought to seize power in France. At the Seventh Congress of the Communist International (Comintern), which served as the strategic planning center for the global Communist movement, a general policy of building broad-based united fronts (coalitions of the left) and peoples fronts (broader center-left coalitions) to fight fascism was adopted by the participating national parties. The domestic strategy of the united front in all countries was to strengthen labor, build alliances of the center-left and thus keep fascists from becoming the mass force they became in Germany. This would prevent ruling classes from putting them into power against a weak and divided anti-fascist movement.

In the US, Communists took this campaign forward in building the industrial unions of the CIO, in giving critical support to the reformist New Deal government, whose campaign to save and reform capitalism logically led into a center-left coalition. Communists exposed and organized against local fascist groups like Father Coughlin's Christian Front, the German-American Bund, the KKK, the Black Legion, the Hitler-imitating "Reverend" Gerald L.K. Smith and others who sought to use racism and anti-Semitism to divide the working class. The Communists also showed the connections between these organizations and the "Park Avenue fascists,"

including prominent industrialist Henry Ford, who funded activities to fight New Deal labor and social legislation. In 1935, Nobel Prize winning novelist Sinclair Lewis captured the dangers of an incipient American fascism in a best-selling novel, *It Can't Happen Here*, which Communists and other anti-fascists helped to popularize in local labor theater plays.

The foreign policy of anti-fascism, as put forward by Soviet Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinoff, was to build a system of collective security against fascist military aggression. For collective security to work, the big non-fascist capitalist states, particularly the British Empire, France and the United States, would have to work with the Soviet Union to keep the peace. When Spanish reactionaries launched a military coup against their democratically elected popular front government in 1936, England pushed France into a "non-intervention policy." This left the Soviet Union alone to aid the Spanish Republic, while Nazi Germany and fascist Italy poured in weapons and troops to the Spanish Fascists.

In the US, Communists established the Abraham Lincoln Battalion, part of the International Brigades of anti-fascist fighters that came to the aid of the Republic. US Communists and Spanish Republic supporters raised money for war relief. Communists went to colleges, trade union halls and community centers to educate millions of Americans about the need to fight fascism in Spain. Public opinion polls show that American support for an anti-Fascist position on Spain grew as the war continued, even though the Roman Catholic Church joined the secular right wing in the United States in attacking the Spanish Republic as a "Communist front."

Communists also launched "Hands off China" campaigns and called for an embargo against Japan when it launched a full-scale war against China in 1937.

Unfortunately, the campaigns for collective security had little effect on leading American corporations, which continued to sell oil to Italy during its brutal conquest of Ethiopia, oil and scrap iron to Japan, and engage in extensive business dealings with German cartels. The early punch-card technology used by the Gestapo to catalogue information about anti-Fascists and Jews, for example, came from IBM, and Otis built the elevator in Hitler's Berlin bunker.

Although he expressed sympathy for the Spanish Republic and made a gesture toward collective security in 1937 when he called for a policy to "quarantine" the aggressor states, Franklin Roosevelt did nothing substantive to challenge fascist aggression. Nor did he voice opposition to the appeasement policy of the British empire, led by Neville Chamberlain. Chamberlain thought that it was better to appease Hitler than join with the Soviets against him. Better to give in to Hitler's expansionism eastward and let him act as a "defense mechanism" against Communism.

However irrational this policy was, it was implemented in the summer of 1938. Chamberlain and the French Premier Daladier met with Hitler and Mussolini at Munich to dismember Czechoslovakia. After Munich, all of the restrictions against German militarism established at the end of World War I were destroyed. Nazi Germany launched a massive illegal rearmament program, re-militarized the Rhine region, annexed Austria and now carved up Czechoslovakia. The Soviet leadership, which had made many concessions to win British and French support for collective security, including downplaying its anti-colonial commitments and even agreeing to a withdrawal of all foreign forces from Spain, now stood betrayed along with Czechoslovakia. The Soviets had a treaty with the Czechs and stood ready in 1938 to defend



Stage version of Sinclair Lewis' anti-fascist novel *It Can't Happen Here*.

Czechoslovakia. The British-French appeasers at Munich consulted neither the Soviets nor the Czechs, whose country was being destroyed. The British openly adopted the policy, in the language of the time, that you can do business with Hitler – and better Hitler than Stalin.

In the US, Communists denounced the Munich agreement at a time when center forces saw it as avoiding war. Communists continued to organize and educate against fascism as Spanish fascists triumphed, as Mussolini invaded Albania in 1939 and Hitler was driven triumphantly in his Mercedes through Prague. Hitler's early victories did not satiate his territorial demands on the right-wing military dictatorship in Poland.

For the Soviet leadership, it soon became clear that collective security had failed to thwart the appeasement policy of the British Empire. Britain hoped that it could save its colonial possessions and avoid European revolutions by giving Hitler Eastern Europe and letting him attack and destroy the Soviet Union. As the Soviets were rethinking collective security in the face of a greater Nazi threat (Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria had become German satellites), Hitler came forward with an offer to the Soviets of a non-aggression treaty. The Nazis had such a pact with Poland at the time,

and the Soviets had no illusions about their good faith. But the treaty would give the Soviet Union some time to arm after the resources of the country had been spent in the difficult economic period of the 1930s.

For Hitler, who used British ruling-class anti-Communism to leverage territorial conces-

sions, the treaty was a device to get what he wanted in Poland. If he wasn't going to fight against the Soviets, Hitler reasoned, the British and the French wouldn't fight him. But the strategy backfired, as the treaty led the British and the French to declare war against Germany. Appeasement failed to push Hitler to fight the Soviets and no longer served a purpose. But it was a war that England and France had no plans to fight. As Hitler brutally conquered Poland and the British and French boasted about the lack of casualties, the American press called the conflict a "phony war."

For anti-Communists through the world, the German-Soviet non-aggression treaty seemed to be a propaganda godsend. The total capitulation of European capitalist classes to the Nazi blitzkrieg of spring 1940 and their ultimate collaboration and even alliance with the Nazis, underlined the Soviet fear that even non-fascist capitalist states were more interested in fighting them than fascism. Only when it was faced with invasion and conquest did the British empire turn to Winston Churchill. An American version of reluctance to decisively defeat fascism was expressed by Senator Harry Truman, during a debate in 1941 on extending lend-lease aid to the Soviet Union, which the Roosevelt administration supported and

The early punch-card technology used by the Gestapo to catalogue information about anti-fascists and Jews came from IBM, and Otis built the elevator in Hitler's Berlin bunker.

conservatives and isolationists opposed. "If Germany is winning we should help the Russians," Truman said, "and if Russia is winning we should help the Germans and that way let them kill as many as possible."

While anti-Communists in the United States blamed the coming of the war on the "Hitler-Stalin" pact, collective security, which Communists had advocated through the 1930s, became the main policy with the Anglo-American-Soviet alliance, the global center-left coalition of states that ultimately defeated the fascist alliance.

In the end, as Rick (Humphrey Bogart) in the film *Casablanca* would, Americans stood against the racist, militarist aggression of the fascist alliance. Communists played a very big role in helping that to happen. ■

The Dialectics of History

AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID LEVERING LEWIS

Editor's Note: David Levering Lewis won two Pulitzer Prizes for his two-volume biography of W. E. B. Du Bois titled, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919* and *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century, 1919-1963*. Lewis also authored the noted study of the Harlem Renaissance, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*. He also wrote the widely read biography of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., *King: A Biography*. Additionally, he has written a book on the scramble for Africa, *The Race to Fashoda*, and a study of the Dreyfus affair, *Prisoners of Honor*. He is a Martin Luther King, Jr. University Professor in the Department of History at Rutgers University. He sits on the board of directors of *The Crisis* magazine in New York. This interview was conducted by Joel Wendland.

PA: How did you become interested in studying history, more specifically, writing biography as a form of writing history?



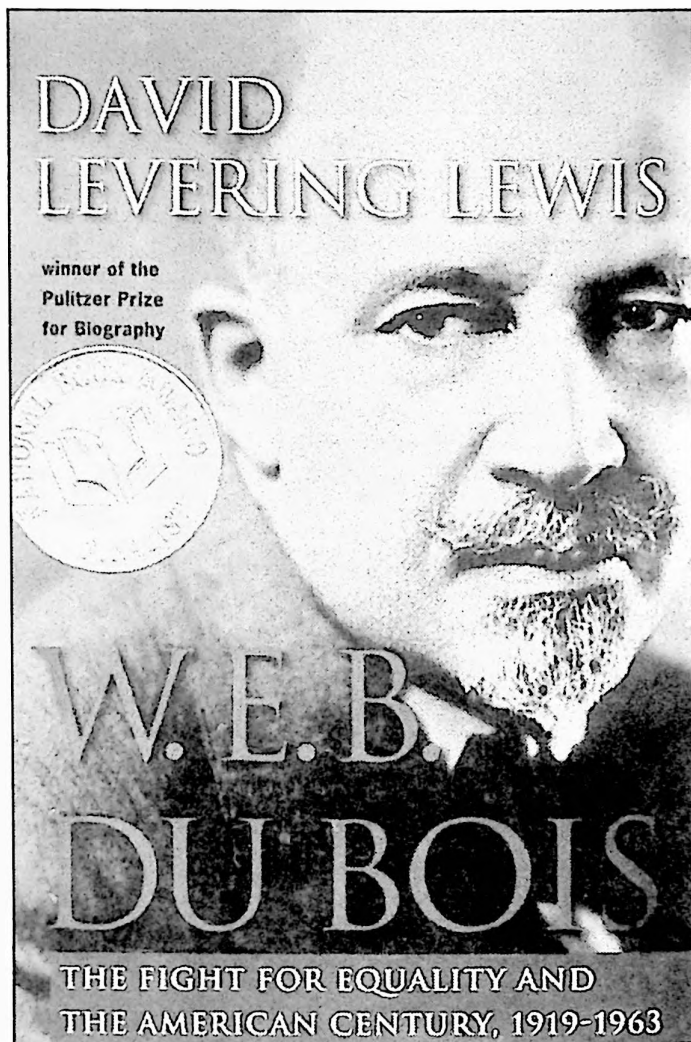
David Levering Lewis.

DLL: History has always been a love of mine. Somewhere early on, in my father's study probably, I picked up a big book that engrossed me. Around the dinner table, we were

always talking about issues of civil rights, the world, and culture. I should add that my mother had a considerable appreciation for European history. She had taught Latin and was fluent in French. That was very much a part of the atmosphere. The reason I went to law school was that, of course, you can make more money. That was my parents' view. But I decided that if the choice was less money and more congeniality in terms of what I was doing, I'd choose the latter. Clio was always the muse whispering in my ear.

But I didn't think I was going into biography, and it is only now that when I answer questions like the one you've just posed, [I realize] that my master's thesis was in a sense a biography because it was a

study of the important politics of John Fiske and the movement he pushed along. I had not intended to become a biographer. Indeed my Ph.D. was biographical as well. It was on the leading French liberal Catholic Emmanuel Mounier and that critical period of French Catholicism in the 1920s and 30's, when it seemed that there could be a synthesis of Catholicism and Marxism. These fellows tried that, and eventu-



ally the Vatican notified them they were in error. But it was an exciting moment in French thought and politics. But it's true, I got through the issues through the life of Mounier. That has been the strategy. It does seem I use lives as windows to a period and its issues.

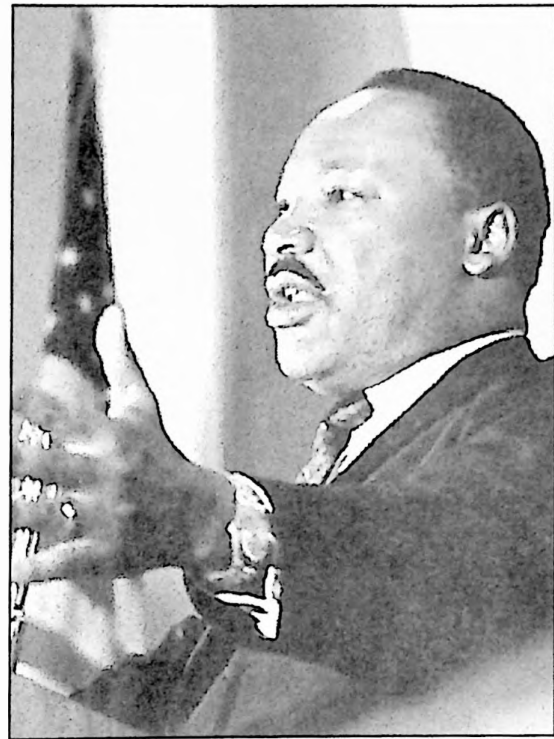
But the King option, that was quite serendipitous, because I was working on a book I called *The Clerks in Politics*. In the middle of writing the early chapters, I was asked if I'd be interested in writing a biography of Martin Luther King for a Penguin series called *Great Leaders of the 20th Century*. I thought I shouldn't do it. One, because King was 39 years old, and by the time I finished, his life might have taken a very different track. I had just returned to the country, so there were others far more knowledgeable. And then, did I wish to leave the area that I was hoping to make my name in? But the assassination of King almost immediately after the invitation decided for me that that life does have a conclusion. So I wrote that biography. After then people began to think of me in terms of biography.

But the next book was not biographical, although of course again central to the monograph was Alfred Dreyfus. It was a new look at the Dreyfus affair based on some new archive information. From that point on, I used lives. But only when I got to Du Bois did I think, "Well here we have a life, and it's so fascinating in its personal aspects but also in its public resonance – so terribly significant – that you have to do both." So the other lives I just rather dutifully got them born, married and dead, and then went on to the big issues that brought me to them in the first place. But with Du Bois, this was a real biography because what's going on with him, almost from the cradle, is so interesting in terms of the formation of personality, but on the other hand, of course, what he launched.

PA: *On writing history, in your contribution to the book *Historians and Race*, you write "that ambivalence [of academics toward writing or understanding Black history] derived from the assumption (subconscious) that the cardinal value of African American historiography was what it revealed about the classist, sexist and economic hegemonies controlling the American past and present." I think you're referring to historians that view African American history as only worthwhile if it reveals something about America. Can you explain this more fully?*

DLL: I have since changed 180 degrees, but, I thought there is something called "the quest for universality:" that is what knowledge is all about. If you begin to look at the social scene and focused on women or labor or minorities, I felt that you were fragmenting and obscuring the universal of the human experience. I thought what was significant about Black history was that the goal was not that it should turn itself into an independent, autonomous field of research, but that it should be an integral part of history. It should simply look at the universal from the particular perspective. I felt that was true of women's studies as well.

I've changed my mind, because, while I think objectively and theoretically I was on solid ground, realistically, it's a no go to have that point of view. That is because my position ignored the politics of scholarship. This is to say, that history departments have been and continue to be very much over-represented by white males very much imbricated in founding fathers stuff, and in majoritarian views of the American narrative. So by privileging, or promoting, or buying into histories that were fragmented or that were con-



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love of mine.

testatory – the role of women, the role of Blacks – you began to transform the larger narrative. It may well be true that the universal quest I had, we're much closer to achieving in this parallel way that the academy now has embraced. I am still a little on my guard against too much separation, because once again we're talking politics. If these feudal fiefdoms are created, then the business of tenure and promotion, self-judgment, self-monitoring, those issues become a bit troubling.

So I suppose, at the end of the day, I have a dialectical view of the academy. I think that is a statement of how things have evolved. You start with the consensus, the reaction to the consensus, and we're moving toward a new consensus or the syn-

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"The march in Washington is the beginning. The campuses are beginning to become restive."

thesis because it's true now no one writes a book about anything without the obligatory trinity of race, class and gender. We now think of it as so commonplace and obvious, that we, and certainly my students coming along now, have to be reminded this is a recent [development].

PA: Relating this dialectic that you see in the universities to society, where there are similar kinds of struggles, at the end of the 1978 re-publication of your King biography, you noted with optimism the successes of the civil rights struggles and pointed to the possibilities of affirmative action. Have things changed since 1978, in light of the present challenges to affirmative action? Are you still optimistic?

DLL: I'm not sure. Basically it's about being an American. If you put a question like that to a Frenchman or an Englishman or another European, whatever he or she would say would very well comport with what was

thought two decades earlier. Whereas the peculiarity of the United States is that things change between commercials. And though in 1978, I was optimistic, I thought that all those vectors of good benign change were well under way. Two years later Ronald Reagan was elected. Of course that's one of the fault lines, a before and after moment in American history. Reagan and his group changed American history. Not that they were that radical; what they did was simply embrace what had not been the prevailing paradigm. They did say government was useless and indeed inimical to the good society, and the market was the solution to social problems. Taxes should only serve the rich. It was pretty radical, in that it became the ruling ideology. For a moment there, with Clinton, there was a break. We're still on the path to the kind of America I thought we were saying good bye to. The neo-con America, of course, is now the America that I'm the new minor-

ity in, in that my point of view about the social contract is the one that lost out in the elections. So, affirmative action, one of those things I thought would simply be part of the warp and woof of American society, is being now acrimoniously revisited and cynically contested.

I guess I am, if not optimistic, I am not yet ready to despair, because of this dialectical view I have of things. My guess is that this administration is riding for a major fall, as its hubris captures it. By 2004, there will be so many negatives with this regime that probably we could say goodbye to it. But I am not quite sure what will follow. That's because to have a good dialectic, you have to have an antithesis. And if the antithetical force is the Democrat Party, well, then one is very close to despair, as it now manifests itself. Of course, a third force in American politics is only the luxury of clinical scientists and people in New York who can afford to vote for Ralph Nader without actually voting against the Democrat.

I think today [January 18th] is a very good day. The March in Washington is the beginning. The campuses are beginning to become restive. I think, whether he intended it or not, when Charles Rangel said that he wanted a national debate about the draft, I think that that was something students heard. It's the first time they shifted from MTV, saying, "What's this?" Mind you, I'm not sure we should not have a draft, taking my own experience in the Army, which was very democratizing. It may well be that six months from now, enough will have gone wrong under the aegis of the Bush people, that the opportunity to talk again sanely and smartly about how to make America work will be there.

PA: Elsewhere, you have written about moving from Eurocentrism to polycentrism. Could you define polycentrism and its value in historiography and politically?

By 2004, there will be so many negatives with the Bush regime that probably we could say good bye to it.

DLL: It may be a synonym for comparative history, which is how I describe myself. I fear that the politician who said that all politics is local could have said that about history – that all history is local. Increasingly it's quite clear that the local only make sense in the global context. And if there is a great deal of rhetoric about globalism and the interconnectedness produced by the internet and the market, then it must reflect itself in the academy. We are at a point where the best of us really have to say goodbye to the comfort of simply doing the same thing over and over again, looking at the same issues in a parochial sense. I think that languages again are going to be required, although English is the lingua franca. One has to look at other national experiences, the better to make sense of our own.

PA: *So basically, we don't start to understand our present or even our past without knowledge of others?*

DLL: Yes. George Bush, in the wake of September 11th before the Joint Congressional Session, asked, "Why do they hate us?" This put us in another path of self-knowledge that is much to be regretted, because it immediately put us as the innocent American, doing our best to save the world. And to be churlishly and viciously misappreciated, well.... Even the British knew [empire] was quite an exploitative thing, and they gave civil servants the idea of rules. The British weren't horrendous like the Belgians. But the American insistence on our innocence and good intentions has made it, if we embrace this kind of screen through which we see things, [impossible to] understand the world and therefore we have to demonize. That is the neces-

sary response to George Bush's, "Why do they hate us?" Why? They must hate because they don't understand how good we are. He and his epigones speak to a mal-educated American public now, whatever the SAT scores of the kids who go to the elite schools, that is really devoid of a good class in civics, of any kind of geography, and, for the most part, totally tone deaf to language. Today knowledge consists of internet, quick access and the sound bite. Of course the whole point of it is to give you a six-figure income as quickly as possible. So education, insofar as historians have a contribution to make, needs to combine the local and the global in a way that gives not only the scholar but the people who pass under our nose a real sense of the complexity of the world and the state of the domestic world.

PA: *Can you talk about your background?*

DLL: I grew up in a number of places because my family was somewhat itinerant. I was born in Little Rock, Arkansas. We left at a pretty early age, I guess [I was] perhaps three, and moved, to a rural academic community, Wilberforce, Ohio. I finished my teens in Atlanta, Georgia, which is really the ancestral birthplace of both my parents. My father was a college president, and, at one point, a high school principal.

I went to Fisk in Nashville, and did not finish high school because of the special program pioneered by Fisk copying the early entrance program at the University of Chicago. I had two years of high school, went to college, finished at age 19. There was law school briefly at the University of Michigan. I was unhappy with the law. I did well enough aca-

demically, but I decided that I didn't want law as a career. And over my parents' vociferous objections, I left law school and took a bus ride to New York, and talked my way into graduate studies at Columbia in the history department. I worked my way through Columbia, getting a master's in US history, writing a thesis on the American historian and intellectual John Fiske, the leading Social Darwinist of the late 19th century, early 20th. I moved on to the London School of Economics and a doctorate in modern French history.

And then I was drafted. I got out of the army through a special program that would reduce your draft term if you were going to do something socially useful. My choice was to go to the University of Ghana as a lecturer in history. I intended to stay two or three years, but did not remain due to a combination of factors: my mother's illness and the rapid deterioration of the political situation. The university was basically under the gun, suspected of un-Ghanaian activities – opposition to the then-President Kwame Nkrumah. It was a wonderful university with superb students, but the handwriting was on the wall.

At the end of the day I have a dialectical view of the academy.

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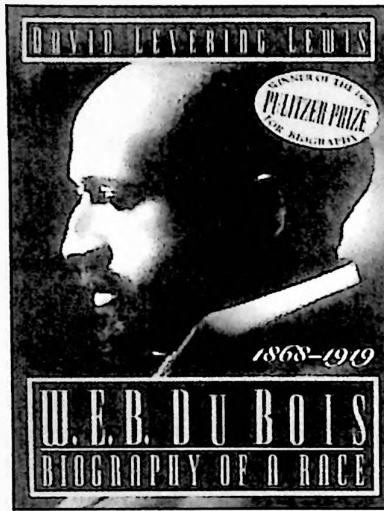
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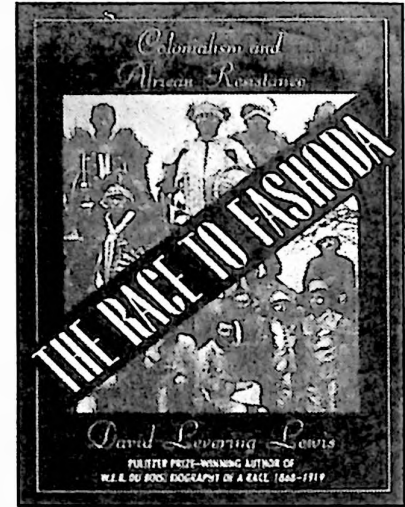
The economy was going south. The United States felt that this was a country that should be red-lined, as it were. There was a great deal of paranoia. I returned and went to Howard University, to Cornell and then to the University of Notre Dame, teaching my specialty, which

was Third Republic France.

PA: What project are you currently working on?

DLL: I was in Rabat Morocco, when the twin towers fell, in the kasbah with my wife, as part of the first leg of the recreation of the invasion route of the Berbers and Arabs. In 711, they crossed the Gibraltar Straits and invaded Spain. Six months before 9-11, I signed on to do a book on the moment when Islam and Europe made contact.

The book is called *The Invention of Europe: Islam in the 8th Century*. It deals just with a 60-year time frame, between the occupation of the Iberian Peninsula and the interface with France. It deals with the kind of cultural dynamic that produced a Europe that was exclusionary, misogynist, feudal and not pluralistic, as opposed to the experiment on



the other side of the Pyrenees, which was a foretaste of the good society: pluralism, Jews, Catholics and Muslims in collaboration, although there certainly was a political hierarchy to mindful of. It's only 150 pages, because I don't think people can read more these days. ■

Mental Health ♦ (continued from page 7)

response. He replied that schizophrenia, for instance, is the same everywhere, but that it takes different forms depending on the social context. He gave the example of a delusional patient who was convinced that he was a heroic guerrilla fighter, commenting that in the US such a patient might fancy himself a millionaire or a CEO. This difference, however, did not make one man healthier or sicker than the other.

The answer given by the Cuban doctor seems to contradict recent bourgeois ideology on mental illness that has influenced some thinking on the subject from the left. Some discussions about depression have been particularly cavalier and irresponsible. The thinking goes that treatments for depression serve to reconcile the patient to an exploitative and oppressive society, and that to be "healthy" or "happy" in a sick and depressing society is not to be healthy or happy at all. Though it

has its source in bourgeois self-loathing, this ideology also seems to have support in certain strains of Marxist literature (particularly the writings of Marxist cultural critic Herbert Marcuse). Here, the insistence is that psychological problems cannot be divorced from political or social problems, and that it is not enough to cure the mentally ill by preparing them to become docile fodder for the economic system. But there is no need to move from this position to the conclusion that to treat mental illness clinically and scientifically means to give in to the status quo.

The chief problem under capitalism is not that people are getting treatment for mental illness and reconciling themselves to capitalism. It is that people cannot afford, or do not have access to, quality treatment that can enable them to lead a life that is productive (not only economically, but socially, politically,

culturally and emotionally). It would be romantic and utopian to believe that mental illness will disappear under Communism. In fact, it seems likely that the number of diagnosed and treated cases would go up. This does not mean, of course, that we should temper our criticism of a psychiatric establishment whose every facet is subservient to the demands and logic of the capitalist market. It does mean, however, that these criticisms should be directed toward the establishment of better, more comprehensive and more creative methods of treatment, not toward the abolition of psychiatric care itself.

This is the direction in which Cuba is moving. The BBC interview centered on using active participation in the performance of Cuban music, in addition to more standard medical techniques, to treat long-term patients. ■

Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal
 Eric Schlosser, New York, Houghton Mifflin, 2001.

Reviewed by Carla West

“There’s shit in the meat,” Eric Schlosser declares in *Fast Food Nation*. Much of the product used in the typical hamburger sold at any McDonald’s, Burger King, Taco Bell, etc. is likely to be contaminated. Schlosser, a writer for liberal publications such as *Mother Jones*, has produced a well-researched and thoroughgoing indictment of the fast food industry.

Fast Food Nation shows not only the environmental hazards of the production of fast food but also the severe hardships that the industry places on workers. Milkshake and apple pie flavors are more likely to have been concocted in a laboratory than a kitchen. Cheap hamburger comes from high volume meat plants with few safety or health regulations (or at least enforced regulations) that result in regular disease-carrying meat, sickness for consumers and injuries for meat workers. Factory farms regularly emit huge amounts of waste into local environments and push family farmers out of business. In addition to this, people who work in fast food joints experience long hours, coercion, low wages, high turnover, no benefits and intense attacks when they try to organize labor unions. Corporations such as McDonald’s have spent millions breaking union efforts, opposing increased minimum wages, weakening food, safety and health statutes (deregulation), undermining child labor laws and using bought political influence to rake in huge amounts of government subsidies.

Schlosser argues that these characteristics of the fast food industry are general to the retail sector as a whole. “The basic thinking behind fast food has become the operating system of today’s retail economy, wiping out small business, obliterating regional differences, and spreading identical stores throughout the country.” This process is related closely to an out-of-control consumerist culture and to the growing inequalities between the rich and poor. Schlosser views “McDonaldization” as the standardization of culture through commodification of every aspect of our lives. To support this assertion, he looks at the entry of fast food and the big cola companies into public schools. In order to offset funding cuts fueled by the right-wing onslaught against public services, schools turned to big companies like McDonald’s and Coca-Cola and sold advertising space and the rights to sell their products on public school campuses. This opened up the lucrative child market for consumption of these standardized goods, if it didn’t actually generate more revenue for schools.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this book, aside from its striking resemblance to Upton Sin-



clair’s exposé, *The Jungle*, of nearly 100 years ago, is his study of the men who built the fast food industry and with it the fast food culture. People such as Carl Karcher (Carl Jr.’s), Ray Kroc (McDonald’s), Thomas Monaghan (Domino’s Pizza) and even Walt Disney (closely related ideologically and

materially to the fast food industry) were ultra-right, anti-union, religious fundamentalists who fuelled the rise of the extreme right in post-World War II America. Schlosser shows a close link between their brand of cultural conservatism and ideological justifications for ripping off tax dollars in subsidies, dismantling union protections, eroding public services, cuts in real wages for most Americans, rise of monopoly capital and the standardization of commodities and culture.

Though Schlosser, out of the blue, accuses scientific socialism of many of the problems of the world in the 20th century – perhaps to show his own ideological credentials – this book is well worth reading. It is extremely informative, well documented and is a page turner. This book should be read if only to convince people to stay healthy by staying away from the super value meals. ■

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Stupid White Men ... and Other Sorry Excuses for the State of the Nation

Michael Moore, New York, HarperCollins, 2001.

Reviewed by Florida Appelhais

It seems that most people who have reviewed *Stupid White Men* from a left perspective have focused mostly on the last few chapters that are embroiled in the controversy over the Greens and the Democrats. What is missing is praise for Moore's biting sarcasm, his well-researched criticism and his plucky humor that enable the reader to get through the book psychologically intact. Who could read about the dismantling of democratic rights, the outrageously corrupt Bush Administration, racist violence, economic recession, corporate corruption, male supremacy and so on and feel good about the possibility of democracy? Moore gets you angry, but his humor allows the reader to learn something and keep a stable point of view.

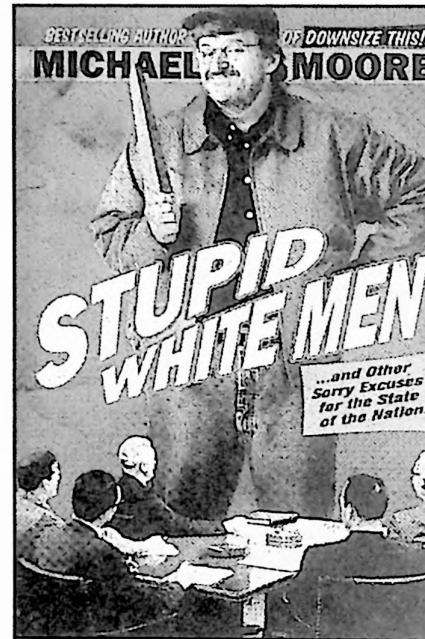
In addition to the Green/Democrat controversy, Moore's book provides investigative analysis of the 2000 election theft by Bush and digs into Bush's background as "a drunk, a thief, a possible felon, an unconvicted deserter, and a crybaby." Moore exposes the wave of corporate corruption before it hit the press. He alerts us to the fact that almost 1300 corporations with assets of \$250 million or more simply pay no taxes. Zero. One of these companies was Cheney's own Halliburton, which moved a subsidiary to the Cayman Islands to avoid US taxes. Not only was this illegal, but it is the norm. Cheney is now the President of the Senate. If only we could all get high-paying jobs for avoiding our taxes.

Moore also takes on the issue of racism. He gets his white readers to rethink their own warped views of

their experience with racist stereotypes. He basically asks, why do white people believe that all the bad people in their world are Black? White people's own experiences should tell them otherwise. He lists the people who have done him harm.

Yes, as I look back on my life, a strange but unmistakable pattern seems to emerge. Every person who has ever harmed me in my lifetime – the boss who fired me, the teacher who flunked me, the principal who punished me, the kid who hit me in the eye with the rock, the other kid who shot me with his BB gun, the executive who didn't renew TV Nation, the guy who was stalking me for three years, the accountant who double-paid my taxes, the drunk who smashed into me, the burglar who stole my stereo, the contractor who overcharged me, the girlfriend who left me, the next girlfriend who left even sooner – every one of these individuals has been a white person! Coincidence? I think not!

How much longer could a list like this be for most people? Readers can look to his book to find out more on his views about how to create racial justice.



He takes on male supremacy. From the masculine culture of domination to personal inequalities between men and women to the structural inequality that provides unequal economic power for men, Moore has some interesting advice. Some of his advice to men for achieving equality:

"Bathe Daily. Tone it down." Don't pretend to be "sensitive." In other words, actually take steps in your personal life to adjust to the needs of women and to listen. He also asks men to participate in activities that bring attention to the economic inequalities between men and women.

The idea that people ought to get involved and make real changes persists throughout the book. Everywhere you turn in this book, Moore asks you to work with organizations, to get involved in the political process, to call or write to representatives, to take personal steps that just might change the entire world. This book is certainly worth reading. And its radically democratic reforms are certainly worth including in any progressive agenda. Its call for full participation by the people makes it clear why the right-wing-dominated corporate media refused to acknowledge this book. ■

Oxymorons: The Myth of a US Health Care System

J.D. Kleinke, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2002.

Reviewed by David Lawrence

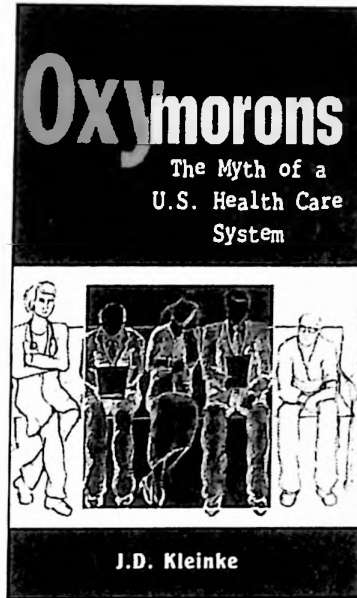
No matter what book you read, it always helps to know something about the author. So, who is J.D. Kleinke? He is currently president and CEO of HSN, a Colorado-based medical software development firm. He was formerly vice president of corporate development for HClA – a major mover-and-shaker in the development of corporate managed health care. Aetna bought that company in the mid-1990s. He describes himself as someone who was “a true believer in the managed care revolution.” A couple of years after the merger his “bubbling enthusiasm” for health maintenance organizations (HMOs) was suddenly undermined when Aetna decided to use heavy-handed monopoly tactics to control the California market of physicians they contracted with.

Kleinke claims his goal in writing *Oxymorons* was to take a hard look at the history and dynamics of health care in America and decide what can be fixed by the magic of private enterprise and what will have to be left to “broad regulatory solutions.” At the same time, Kleinke makes it very clear that he strongly believes that “most Americans do not want a single-payer, government-run system,” and that most Americans “want a health care system financed by private insurance.” Nowhere in the book does he ever explain why he believes this, and, of course, this is his Achilles heel. In the very beginning of the book he rules out consideration of public solutions to the horrors and dilemmas of for-profit HMOs – solutions like the expansion of current federal programs like Medicare, the

Public Health Service and the Veteran’s Administration, to form a National Health Service.

Much of the book is a breezy critique of various players in the health care industry and the problems of government regulation. There is a lot of whining, recounting fictional anecdotes and hurling invectives, but little systematic analysis. He has no problem with the corporate looting of health care dollars as long as it is done quietly. He bemoans the fate of Columbia-HCA, the huge corrupt hospital chain that eventually was fined \$840 million by the federal government, and then was broken up into smaller pieces. Kleinke’s analysis seems to be that making billions of dollars in profits by illegally manipulating “the arbitrary and legal and reimbursement rules created by the federal government” is ok. Just don’t “brag about it” and get caught.

On the other hand, Kleinke’s own analysis of quality of care issues indicates the superior performance of non-profit HMOs like Kaiser Permanente, America’s largest not-for-profit health maintenance organization. He gives an example of a vaccine that can prevent pneumonia in infants. When the numbers are run, and the cost is computed of giving the vaccine to all those at risk, versus the cost of treating infants with pneumonia, it costs more to give the vaccine. Kleinke notes that Kaiser’s mission will probably drive



them to provide the vaccine, but for-profit HMOs will likely not provide the vaccine. They would see it as a “negative return on investment.” Unfortunately, Kleinke does not systematically pursue the differences

between for-profit, and not-for-profit HMOs in his book. If he had, he might have come up with a very different conclusion.

In my opinion the most interesting chapter in Kleinke’s book is an “insider” discussion about the relationship between the Internet and the health care industry. The chapter is entitled “Vaporware.com.” He discusses why the Internet has failed to revolutionize the health care industry as so many promised it would. In Kleinke’s opinion, ignorant software developers were busy developing and marketing software to link major players in the industry, but they eventually discovered that private competitors do not want to be linked. He explains that health insurers do not want the capability of instant claims made and paid via the Internet, because so much of their profits are made on the “float.” The money stays in the corporate investments while all the inefficient claims paperwork swirls around for months.

Finally, in chapter 8, “A Simple Plan,” Kleinke more or less systematically presents his solution to the

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atically presents his solution to the health care problems in America. Here are the main elements of the plan: 1) health care insurance should not be employer based; 2) do away with state regulations, and develop a unified federal health insurance regulation and plan design (in this discussion he speaks favorably of the cost efficiency of the nationwide Medicare program, but attributes it to its size rather than the lack of parasitic profits); 3) extend the tax deductibility of all medical expenses; 4) Place no price controls on health care (leave it all to the private market); and, 5) cut way back on the enforcement of fraud and abuse in the health care industry.

So, it is a curious and muddled finish. Kleinke wants the benefits of a unified national health insurance plan, something like Medicare as he himself points out, but he wants to hand it all over to a few huge for-profit insurers to manage. That would eliminate the very efficiencies of Medicare that he lauds. His "solution" is to abolish the few protections consumers have against parasitic insurers, and jump directly into monopoly control of health insurance. This plan says nothing about underserved regions, communities, or people. It says nothing about 45 million uninsured people in the United States. It says nothing about affirmative action in the training of physicians and other health care providers, and, it says nothing about public health issues such as environmental health, job safety and health, or protecting infants from nibbling lead paint chips. Kleinke's plan streamlines the process of sucking profit out of health care dollars, but it says nothing about protecting the health of the people.

To protect the health of the people, we need a national health service. Nothing less will do. ■

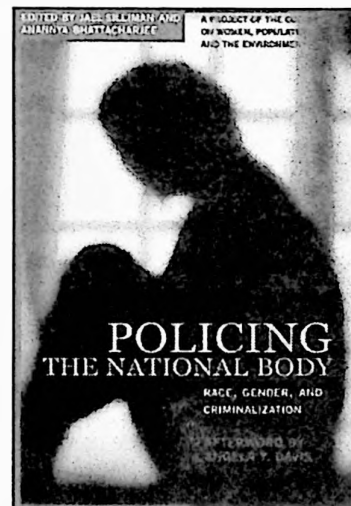
Policing the National Body: Race, Gender and Criminalization

Eds. Anannya Bhattacharjee and Jael Silliman, afterward by Angela Y. Davis, Boston, South End Press, 2002.

Reviewed by Shelly Delos

For some, the curbing of civil liberties started with September 11th. For others, the struggle had been going on long before. There are many complex details to understanding the US government's record on human rights. Along with the complex details, there are many layers – from the legislation that exists, to the welfare system and the masculine "macho" police culture – everything has to be taken into account. *Policing the National Body* does exactly that. It takes the reader through the inside scenes of what really happens in the INS and other prison facilities. From the psychological point of view to the physical treatment and the human rights abuses – depending on whether it is a person of color, a woman, a working poor or simply undocumented – there is a system for everyone. And that system profits from all. *Policing the National Body*, edited by Jael Silliman and Anannya Bhattacharjee, is a must-have reference text and mind-opener for every student of women's studies, law and human rights.

The book, published by South End Press last year also points out that all kinds of activists from all



movements need to unite and start a dialogue with each other. Police brutality is connected to human rights abuses to welfare to poverty and so on. Issues inside the prison are linked directly to the issues outside. And they make up the whole Prison Industrial Complex, an industry that from on the various concepts and culture on the outside. The paperback is available at www.southendpress.org. ■

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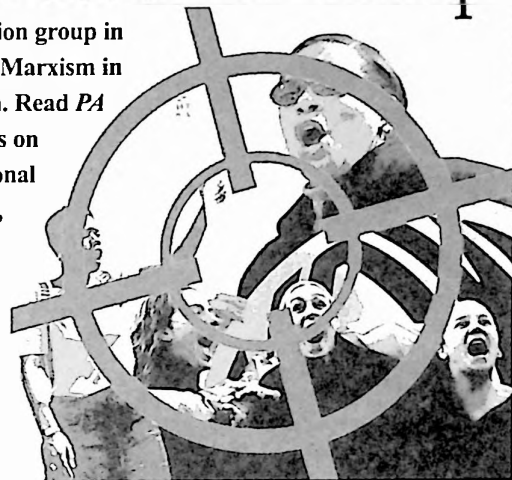
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HOW ABUELITA DIED

*Vapor intoxicates her lungs
Exterminating them slowly
Each day she returns to them
The ironed sheets pressed
Under master irons as they glide down the racks
She inhales some steam with no hotel pool to rinse the sweat off.*

*Outside her wrinkled body expands in her size 12 home ironed dress
She chants and cries out breathable air where she works
Her hair weaved and tangled in tide knots
Ribbons washed in a gentle cycle hang loosely down her back*

*Inside she watches each woman's face gasping for a breath
ironing, drying and burning
Juiced with anger*

*Outside,
She holds her signs in one hand
And bounces her baby in another
In her backpack she carries white bread spam sandwiches or ham and
cheese melts
Flattened with bodega irons.*

*She marches on the picket line
She leads her sisters in protest while Brooklyn trees provide fresh air
English is learned quickly here
When you need to fight
And every instrument of healing is a weapon.*

*The blankets are ready now
Straight, white and flat
Perfect for the pregnant mother
Or her slow murder
Asthma. Tuberculosis. Cancer,
Sound familiar?*

"Who? No sorry she is no longer working with us." The hospital reports.

*The sheets are coming in again
On the rack like soldiers awaiting their crew cuts
Coughing, gasping for air are the workers
They are patiently hung, pressed and made new once more.*

