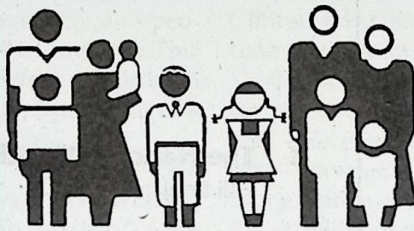


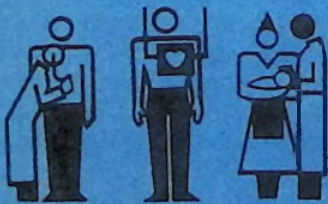
Political Affairs

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FREE NATIONAL HEALTH CARE FOR ALL!



■ Healthcare - Benjamin

■ Reflections on *Brown v. Board* - Gordon

■ Clinton's Crime Bill - Della Piana

■ Electronic Front - Irwin

■ Racism and Immigration - Schepers

■ Foster's Legacy - Bonosky



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November 1994 Vol. 73 No. 11

- 1 The National Health Care Debate of 1994**
Phil Benjamin
- 7 Reflections on the 40th Anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education***
Lewis Gordon
- 11 Clinton's Crime Bill**
Liberio Della Piana
- 16 The Electronic Front**
Chris Irwin
- 19 Racism and Immigration**
E. Schepers
- 21 Foster's Communist Legacy**
Phil Bonosky
- 28 Bookends**
- 41 International Notes**

The National Health Care Debate of 1994

Phil Benjamin

Advocates of reforming the health care system – promised by President Clinton in the 1992 elections – have been successful in preventing the corporate health care industry from enacting anti-people health legislation in the 1993-94 Congress. This must be seen as a victory, not a defeat. While such an assessment may seem to make a positive out of a negative, the facts speak for themselves.

Let's look at the history of this health care reform effort. As the old adage says, "those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it." After extensive public hearings, the Clintons introduced their very "moderate" health bill in the fall of 1993. Progressives immediately saw the weaknesses in this bill, especially its pro-insurance company bias, but publicly withheld their criticisms.

This period of time required having a flexible approach to the Clinton program, even though everyone knew the president's legislation must be improved. While continuing to garner supporters for the single-payer legislation, they struggled to improve the Clinton bill through intensive lobbying and political struggle. But by early 1994 it became clear that the Clintons and their congressional supporters were hell-bent on passing any legislation, regardless of its content. By that time, the handwriting was on the wall.

That "compromise for passage" approach of the White House and congressional leaders sent a very clear message to the health care profiteers. "We won't fight you," rather, "we will work with you in getting a bill that you favor passed." In fact, the White House, along with the Senate's collection of George Mitchells and Pat Moynihans, would not pass any legislation that did not have monopoly's support. Significantly, the House Democrats, with the exception of the single-payer leaders, took a back seat during the whole process. Each of these House members knew they had to face re-election in the fall of 1994. They were caught between health industry campaign contributions and the desires of their constituents.

By this time, Clinton had revealed his true colors with the crude tactics he used to win passage of NAFTA. As the summer of 1994 approached, the Clinton administration's reputation was at an all-time low among labor and community people.

From late winter through spring, the mad grab for profits and power became painfully clear when Met Life combined its health-profit business with The Travelers. Metrahealth, the new corporate name, anticipates a customer base of 13 million and \$17.6 billion in revenue. Two of the "Big 5" leaders in the insurance industry saw the future and acted accordingly.

The "smaller" insurance carriers in the Health Insurance Association of America, who are not among the Big Five, scrambled for their market share. Fearing they would be left out of legislation, they conducted an advertising campaign against the White House proposals. This campaign, which cost over \$15 million, was credited with putting a lethal knife in the heart of health care reform.

It is important to understand the reasons why the campaign succeeded. The ad campaign demagogically raised legitimate questions in people's minds such as how do you guarantee universal health care in a system run by the insurance and drug monopolies? The ad campaign cleverly played on this sentiment.

The campaign of the "smaller" insurance companies was effective with the mass media and some leading members of Congress. It galvanized the anti-reform forces to increase their activities against any government involvement. The "Big Five" didn't shed any tears, since they knew they were on the winning side in any game being proposed by the White House. They would garner the lion's share of the profits, regardless of the current legislative outcome.

It appeared that the Big Five would have settled for a Medicare-style bill that would guarantee these giant corporations super-profits. As third-party intermediaries, the insurance carriers do very well under a program modeled after the current Medicare program. In order to gain their support, the White House assured these insurance monop-

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lies a level of super profits, similar to their third-party role in Medicare.

In spite of the attacks on health care reform, polls continued to show the people's confidence in government involvement in health financing and delivery. Opinion polls expressed satisfaction with government insurance programs such as Federal Social Security, Federal Social Disability Insurance, Medicare, Unemployment Insurance and even, to some extent, Workers' Compensation. Many veterans still rely on their federal veterans benefits, including what is left of the veteran hospital system. Compared to their horrid experience with the private insurance company system, the choice was obvious. The hatred of the private insurance carriers remains at an all-time high. These polls were deliberately kept out of the public eye.

Editorialists from the *New York Times* to commercial television continually supported the most conservative congressional legislation. They constantly heaped uncritical praise on privatization proposals. Politicians, however, were well aware of the public sentiment for national health care. While they wouldn't stand up to their friends in the corporate health care industry, they also feared incurring the wrath of the voters. This was the main reason for the failure of Congress to act. Even with all the power and wealth of the transnational health monopolies, Congress was forced *not* to pass a monopoly bill.

MONOPOLIZATION ■ All during this period, major consolidation moves in the profit-making hospital field were taking place. Columbia Health Care (CHC), the country's largest profit chain, bought the Hospital Corporation of America (HCA) for \$5.6 billion. That chain became even bigger when the *Wall Street Journal* reported that, on October 6, Columbia/HCA bought Health/Trust Inc. for \$3.6 billion in newly-issued stock. This deal, if it holds up, will increase Columbia/HCA to 311 hospitals with 170,00 employees and an estimated \$15 billion in annual revenue. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that the Federal Trade Commission will review the transaction, but there is little doubt that it will be approved.

A week after the Columbia/HCA transaction, National Medical Enterprises (NME) bought American Medical Holdings for almost \$2 billion. This keeps NME as the second largest for-profit hospital chain with 71 hospitals, 63,200 employees and rev-

enues over \$5 billion. NME recently paid a record \$380 million to settle federal criminal charges after pleading guilty to six counts of paying kickbacks in the referral of Medicare, patients and one count of conspiracy to make illegal payments.

With these previous and current dealings, the profit-making hospital system is clearly yet another monopoly influence peddler throwing its weight around in Congress and in the Clinton administration.

FIGURES DON'T LIE, LIARS FIGURE ■ Another feature of the great health care reform period of 1993-94 was the barrage of facts and figures that every side used to push its point. Think tanks on all sides were busy grinding out studies that supported their positions. Clearly, if the playing grounds were level and logic had its day, the objective situation presented by the progressive forces would have prevailed. The extensive public hearings held by Hillary Clinton's Administrative Task Force, during the first part of 1994, pointed the congressional debate toward a progressive conclusion. If there was ever any truth to the adage "Figures don't lie, liars figure" this was the year.

But figures were not the only weapons being misused. The redefinition of words took on a whole new level when every player in the game said that their program was "universal." Those assertions were not adequately challenged.

When it became clear that everyone in Congress was trying to include a benefit to senior citizens in the form of a Medicare prescription drug program, the transnational drug corporations sprang into action. Since any Medicare prescription drug program would be significantly determined by government regulation, each drug transnational vied for an advantage. One way to gain the most profit was by eliminating the competition. Thus the increasing monopolization of the international drug cartels had a profound effect on the health care debate.

The drug transnationals Eli Lilly (PCS Health Systems), Smith Kline and Beecham (the British transnational), Diversified Pharmaceuticals, and Merck (Medco Containment) bought drug purchasing companies so that they, as manufacturers, could control the flow of their drugs. These purchasing companies were set up to arrange the purchase of drugs at discounted prices for employers, labor unions and other large consumers. Billions of dol-

lars changed hands in these transactions. For example, Lilly purchased PCS for \$4 billion. This is all the more remarkable since PCS had profits in the low millions. This acquisition will affect over 51 million people or 20 percent of the U.S. population. Lilly's intention was quite clear.

Smith Kline and Beecham purchased Diversified for \$2.3 billion, and Merck paid \$6.6 billion for Medco. In another major drug company transaction, Roche Holding bought Syntax for \$5.3 billion. To top off this orgy of billion-dollar transitions, American Home Products bought American Cyanamid for an incredible \$8.5 billion.

All of these drug manufactures have honed their extensive kickback schemes to physicians and hospitals/health centers to gain an even greater competitive advantage. These kickbacks are the subject of Senate investigation. In the meantime they continue to take place and the general public, especially senior citizens, are being taken advantaged of.

The business sections of newspapers were replete with articles about these transactions. To boost this profit direction, the *Wall Street Journal's* (August 25, 1994) front page story stated, "With Congress Stalled Health Care is Shaped by the Private Sector." To put some brakes on this movement, once the barn door was closed, the *Journal* cautioned that anti-trust laws were certainly being violated.

Therefore, while the insurance companies are often pointed to by some as the culprit for the high costs of health care, other members of the transnational health monopolies are also involved. That includes the drug monopolies, profit-making hospital chains, medical equipment and supply companies and international financial organizations.

SELF-DESTRUCTIVE COMPETITION ▣ All of these outfits were united to kill any progressive legislation. Once they were assured that the White House was *not* advocating a progressive health bill, each corporation and industrial association set about gaining their own advantage within the context of some kind of federal health legislation. This competitive advantage lobbying sent members of Congress and their staffs into a tizzy. Hundreds of millions of dollars were spent in lobbying Congress. Millions were spent in contributions in the 1994 congressional elections. This period of time became a bonanza of money for elected and aspiring politicians and "Beltway" consultants.

A September, 1994 Citizen Action report found

that the health and insurance industry gave candidates \$13.6 million from January through June, 1994, a 96 percent increase over the previous comparable period. This compares to a 10 percent jump in non-health related industry contributions.

This new situation gave a conservative compromiser like Clinton headaches. It seemed that a new bipartisan proposal, engineered by combinations of monopoly capital, was coming down the pike every month to satisfy the profiteers. Each proposal pushed the health care debate further to the right and against the health care of everyday people. This bipartisan, monopoly effort contained more Democrats than Republicans. Who said there isn't a dime's worth of difference between the two parties of monopoly?

Republican Party policy, led by Senate leader Bob Dole, after initially beginning with the then-obligatory allegiance to "we also want health care reform," easily settled into their more comfortable pro-monopoly position. In this instance, however, the Republicans could sit back and watch the Democrats kill themselves.

Contradictions in the drive among competing corporate interests in the drug, insurance, profit-making hospital chains, medical supply and equipment and financial corporations to gain advantage over each other contributed to their own legislative downfall.

PEOPLE'S POWER: THE DECISIVE FACTOR ▣ The main ingredient in this anti-people, profit lobbying mix that proved to be the decisive factor was the people themselves. As indicated, polls showed the overriding sentiment for a national (universal) system of health care. The single-payer movement developed to carry the fight into the halls of Congress. The leaders of that movement came from important sections of the labor movement and major community groups. It was and remains a broad and effective political movement.

Representative Jim McDermott of Washington State (one of only two physicians in Congress) in the House and Senator Paul Wellstone from Minnesota, gave congressional leadership to the movement. Labor and community leaders were relentless in lobbying members of Congress in their home offices or in Washington. Rallies were held in Washington and in every large town voicing the cry, "no profits in health care." The people's message was heard. The movement didn't get what we wanted, but it

did stop the health care industry from enacting its own legislation. Given the balance of forces, this must be seen as a peoples' victory.

From the outset, the labor movement had two general viewpoints. These viewpoints reflected the two political strains in the organized labor movement in the U.S. One trend generally fights for its members by struggling against monopoly capital, and the other collaborates with big business. The basic difference in the approaches is between class-struggle trade unionism and class collaboration.

The collaborationists were led by AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland. They helped organize and/or joined joint labor and management committees as the way to gain health care reform. Some of these committees even included the insurance companies. White House and Congressional leaders loved this collaboration strategy. They knew that ultimately, after some loud talk, these labor leaders would agree to anything the White House and its corporate supporters would put forward.

But progressive and left-of-center international unions did not agree with the Kirkland sellout and fought against it. Kirkland and his right-wing allies fought hard against the anti-profit health care group. While the single-payer movements strength came from the progressive unions, Kirkland's collaboration stopped a united front against the monopolies from being formed. Votes in the AFL-CIO's Health Committee were routinely divided down the middle, eight for single-payer and eight against. There are opportunities to win a few of the latter group away from Kirkland.

SINGLE-PAYER: A COMPROMISE ITSELF ■ In his September 5, 1994 speech, McDermott called for an end to the congressional health reform effort since the debate had moved too far toward an anti-people health bill.

In his remarks he made an impassioned plea to his corporate constituency. While his stand for the single-payer legislation was more than admirable, he showed his limitations when he said that corporations had nothing to fear from the single-payer proposal. After all, he said, only the financing would be government organized. The delivery of health care, he assured, would remain in private hands.

McDermott as much as said that his legislation was not the same as socialized medicine. This is not Great Britain, he argued, it is just like the Canadian

system. Physician fee-for-service and private hospitals and clinics were to be preserved. Clearly, he is sending the wrong message – being unfairly critical of a superior health program in order to sell yours is the wrong path to go down.

At the turn of 1994, the single-payer movement felt that large corporations, such as the auto industry, would benefit from a single-payer-style approach. The auto manufacturers were looking for a way to reduce or unload their health benefits, averaging about \$800 per car, onto the federal treasury. While those positions were stated behind closed doors, these same corporate giants never had a mass media campaign to win their point of view. There are probably too many health industry monopolists on their boards of directors. The argument for socializing the financing of health care carried some weight. And since a significant number of people in this country are already covered through a government-run financing mechanism, this would not be perceived as a radical solution. It all seemed to make sense.

The debates at this time were among health-care advocates who were part of the health-care scene for years. The debating lines were drawn and logic seemed to be carrying the day. But a new feature came through in this period when a group organized in 1992-93, called the "Jackson Hole Group," came into the fray. Named for a corporate retreat in Wyoming, the "Jackson Hole Group" represented the concentration of profit power in the health industry. While it seemed to have a distinct U.S. tinge, in fact, it also represented the combined power of transnational health profiteers.

At first they were not taken seriously. At the time their crude profits-above-all-else approach seemed so obvious as to render them without any credibility.

The "Jackson Hole Group," which brought the crudest form of lobbying to the halls of Congress, saw all too well the logic and effectiveness of the single-payer compromise. Although they saw its value in nudging out the far more progressive and logical method of delivering health care, that is, the British National Health Service (the financing and delivery system of the BNHS is in government hands, not insurance companies), they waged a fierce campaign to defeat single-payer.

Progressive health care advocates remember that in the 1970s Congressman Ronald V. Dellums had proposed a national health service for this coun-

try. The largest health care organization in the world, the American Public Health Association, endorsed that proposal. Practitioners in the health care field supported this proposal because it began to deal with the discrimination in the delivery of health care which leads to wide disparity of health status. It also dealt with the unfair financing of health care. Prevention of disease is a main ingredient of a national health service. This legislation is still alive and well.

The Communist Party, USA has long endorsed and fought for a fully government-run and financed health care system.

But, all of these pro-people forces coalesced behind the single-payer movement, given the tactical and strategic position that it was in. The single-payer proposal was a giant step along the way toward the goal of national health service (at least for those who have that as their goal).

The staying power of Congressman McDermott and the almost 100 congressional single-payer supporters was made possible by labor and the grass-roots movement. There was an understanding of the limitations of a single-payer approach, but they realized its power in deflecting the organized profit group led by the "Jackson Hole" mob. The failure of that profit group to win congressional approval for its program is a real victory.

The single-payer strategy proved to be an effective one. But in the upcoming struggle a more advanced strategy will be required. Indeed, the legislative solutions have to be expanded to meet the health care crises that continue to escalate.

THE CIA FACTOR ■ Another factor which also must be included in the health debates is the fact that the U.S. government, through its CIA operatives, has been successfully overturning governments throughout the world on the basis that government programs do not work. The privatization taking place in the former socialist countries and in Western Europe are cases in point. These same forces could not allow the U.S. to go in a direction that increases the government's responsibility to take care of its people. Government sources say well over \$100 billion would be saved by not having the insurance, drug, profit-making hospital chains, medical supply and equipment companies and finance capital involved. It doesn't matter how logical a government-run program might be, government funded people-serving programs don't fit into the grand

scheme of international capital. Because of the drastic results it brings, privatization is now being rejected here in the U.S. and throughout the world.

While privatization brings profits to corporations, it leaves a steady stream of death and dying in its path. This is not being lost on those in the line of fire.

REMEMBER THE AMA ■ A word must be said about the American Medical Association and other segments of organized medicine. Remember when they were the power brokers in national health policy? Now they are relegated to a "pawn in the game" status. When the health industry monopolies say its time to cry about "free choice of physician" and "quality of health care," they hold a press conference. The AMA is caught in a contradiction. Single-payer legislation would maintain the free choice of doctors like in Canada, while the Clinton and Republican plans would put physicians under the control of the insurance carriers and other profiteers.

Because the Democratic Party betrayed its campaign promises, the November elections brought more Republicans into office. The Clinton administration has failed to deliver on any substantive campaign promise, especially to labor and community forces.

The mass media will report that this more right-of-center Congress will mean death to any health care reform. That need not be the case. On the contrary, the failure of the for-profit industry to win their victory in 1994 will give single-payer advocates energy to continue the struggle. Our side must increase the stakes by broadening the legislative health agenda. After all, the crisis in health care has increased, so the solutions need to be more far reaching.

Since immunization and other preventive programs will continue to be cut, infectious diseases will escalate. Pneumonia, measles, sexually transmitted diseases (gonorrhea and syphilis) and AIDs will intensify at a dramatic rate. This is already happening.

Infant mortality and longevity rates will worsen. Cancers that are confinable through early detection programs will increase.

In each of these instances, the anti-working-class and racist edge will be more apparent than ever before, with racially and nationally oppressed and rural people bearing the brunt of the attack. The

sharp distinctions in the two-class system of health care that is growing in the U.S. will further widen.

We must get back to putting the health and welfare of people above profits. The popular slogan, "health care is a human right" will lead us in the next period. Its simple message will reach millions of people. That means the funding of public hospitals and community health centers is a top priority. Recruiting people-orientated physicians under strictly observed affirmative action guidelines, to work as salaried doctors to provide medical care is a realizable goal. Public health service physicians have done that in the past and they can, with proper funding, do it in the future. Nurses, social workers and other health care workers need to be recruited into health care in the same manner. The communities who suffer the most must be the venue of this recruitment drive. They are also far more interested in community service and not using their medical degrees to reach mega-buck life styles.

The agenda for the next phase of health reform must be expanded to fit the needs of the people's health, not the financial statements of the health monopolies. For example, guaranteeing full prevention services and long-term care is desperately needed. Also, every person in the U.S. must be covered, not just the 85 to 95 percent being talked about. In Canada, they refer to all patients being covered, not citizens. Given the large number of immigrants, with or without papers, the U.S. needs the same approach.

Highlighting these elements will increase the value of the already active seniors movement and bring millions of immigrants into the struggle.

To defeat the health monopolies will require this kind of mass, people's movement. The single-payer movement is an excellent starting point from which to build a broader movement. Involving organizations like Jobs With Justice is an example of how this movement can be broadened.

It is never too late to increase our demands. At the same time, Congress must be pressured to hold the widest possible hearings into the monopolization of the health industry. Congressional hearings must also investigate the massive financial contributions monopoly gave to members of Congress. This legalized extortion must be revealed for its anti-democratic goals. This kind of congressional action can be part of a one-two punch strategy to knockout the monopolies.

A big word of caution on moving toward a state-by-state solution. This has been seen as a fall-back position by activists. State-plan advocates point to Canada as an example for the U.S. However, Canada has just 7 provinces, not 50 states. There are entirely different histories associated with these national divisions. The current monopolization of the industry precludes a state-based solution, even for tactical reasons. Once states with strong unions take this action, states where labor is weak would never see these benefits. The experience of Medicaid in different parts of the country is a case in point. The monopolies will play one state against the other, just as they do with labor organizing.

When the *New York Times*, on September 30th, devotes a front-page story to the California referendum on single-payer – after the death of the national reform effort – it should give cause to worry about this direction.

This does not, however, diminish the value of state and local referenda to dramatize the crisis in health care and the need for national reform. On the contrary, these kinds of local actions make perfect tactical and strategic sense.

Any labor negotiator knows that you never end up with what you start out with and if you start out with a basic compromise, the final result will be less. Even if we are to end up with the single-payer compromise, let's increase the stakes now and negotiate from a higher vantage point. The last round showed that by starting out with the single-payer public/private mix, with some profit monopolies in key positions, we almost ended up with a total disaster. Let's not repeat that mistake.

Mass actions must be increased so that the sentiments of the people can be heard. Rallies in Washington D.C. and at home will be necessary. Direct actions at the offices of politicians and in the offices of corporate America must be increased. Referendums, petitions and similar mass actions need to be stepped up. The mass-struggle experiences of the last two years will be invaluable as we head toward the next period. A people's health movement, more successful than ever, can emerge from these struggles. □

Reflections on the 40th Anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*

Lewis Gordon

This year marks the 40th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas*, the case in which not only state-mandated segregation on the basis of race was ruled unconstitutional, but also the case in which the phrase "with deliberate speed" was disseminated into its place in history. Here is how the *New York Times* responded to the decision in a May 18th, 1954 article:

Probably no decision in the history of the Court has directly concerned so many individuals. At the time of the *Brown* case, segregation in the schools was required by law in seventeen states and the District of Columbia. In this area there were over 8,000,000 white and 2,500,000 Negro children enrolled in approximately 35,000 white schools and 15,000 Negro schools.¹

The response was not, however, very speedy, and its slowness was very deliberate. A decade after the decision, only 2.14 percent of approximately three million Black children in Southern schools were receiving anything close to a desegregated education. Although the courts commanded desegregation, it ultimately took the courage and determination of a great number of extraordinary "ordinary" people to go out there and make the effort to seize it. As many of us across the nation now take a retrospective glance at the past 40 years, the importance of those people should not be forgotten. In remembering them, we shall, without doubt, gain some perspective on what *Brown* meant, then and now.

Let us begin with the popular version, which, like many popular tales, have both elements of truth and falsehood.

LEGAL GRADUALISM ■ *Brown* emerged on one level out of a legal strategy developed in the Howard University School of Law and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The idea was to develop an overwhelming legal argument "indirectly" through breaking down the

fringes of segregation itself. Through a succession of small victories in the courts the cases would begin to mount up until, in a grand gladiatorial contest of legal skill, the monster of segregation, the infamous *Plessy v. Ferguson* case was struck down.

The victory was stupendous and it signaled a new day, not only in the expectations and fears of various sectors of the USA, but also in the strategies that were to dominate the course of change that was to follow. For out of this victory emerged the domination of a certain interpretation of the struggle itself.

It is a sign of victory that today the popular symbols of that struggle are the lawyer and the minister. Unpopular as those figures may have been at one time in the nation's history, they emerged as leading articulators of the civil rights upsurge. Yet one must be cautious at this transposition. One must understand why such figures were able to emerge at the time they did. For, as Frederick Douglass once astutely put it, "Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did and it never will." The extent to which at least a particular conception of the lawyer and a particular conception of the minister have been conceded by the powerful, raises the question of what were the real reasons behind the granting of these concessions? Did they in fact hide other motives?

CIVIL RIGHTS AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS ■ It was clear after *Brown* that the Civil Rights movement reigned supreme as the recognized dimension of the struggle for freedom in the U.S. And that articulation of the struggle continues to dominate, as though the only struggle of significance is that which pertains solely to civil or legal concerns. This was not always the case.

In American political history, the question of rights has been historically battled out between the classical liberal or bourgeois notion of legal rights on the one hand, and the socialist demand for the inclusion of economic rights on the other.

The battle hasn't been limited to the U.S. as is well known. Marx's *On the Jewish Question* is, for example, an effort to warn against struggling for a

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conception of society that treats legal institutions as though they were independent of the socioeconomic conditions in which people actually live. He warns that by the time the powerless is assured a right, it is probably because such a "right" no longer functions as a threat to the security of the powerful. Thus, as he points out in *The Manifesto* of the Communist Party, property rights are assured in modern capitalist society at a time in which home-owning no longer functions as capital except in very specific circumstances (for example landlords, slumlords, and commercial leasing).

We can update this observation with our cities. Black mayors have become heads of a number of American cities at the moment when the resources of power has shifted to the outskirts of those cities. When cities became Black and Brown, congressmen and women began to speak as though their constituencies only live in suburbs.

We should then ask: Why would a legal and spiritual recourse be so palatable to a society in which social inequities rule supreme?

WHAT PATH TOWARD FREEDOM? ■ The course faced toward the end of the 1940s was the question of which path to take: the path of a struggle for human rights or a struggle for equal recognition under the law, that is, civil rights. The human rights side was represented primarily by the International Legal Defense (ILD) and the Communist Party, and it received its most poignant expression in Paul Robeson and William Patterson's efforts to effect a case holding the U.S. accountable for genocidal efforts against people of color. In the post-war years, lynchings and other forms of violence against Blacks escalated and many Blacks were being booted out of their jobs in the constant effort to destabilize union organizing. This attack on people of color was characterized well by Benjamin Davis when he wrote of the Monroe, Georgia lynchings:

The FBI issued its usual whitewash; it was, of course, 'investigating to see if any federal law had been violated.' Four American citizens, two of them World War veterans, had been foully murdered; local and state officials had refused to act, the constitution had been trampled upon – and the FBI was investigating. The lynchings could have had no greater encouragement than J. Edgar Hoover's criminal failure of duty. No indictment, no prosecution. The war against Hitler was won in Berlin but lost in Monroe, Georgia.²

In the midst of this butchery was the mounting anti-Communist terror that would culminate in witchhunts, murder and the devastation of many community organizations in Black and working-class communities.

It was clear that the struggle for liberation was a human rights issue that involved a full-scale response to the very structure of the U.S. society itself: it was not only the legal structures that called for attention, but the very conditions of power that governed them.

With one struggle, there was not only the face of segregated children with inadequate educational resources. There were also the charred, mutilated bodies that swung as "strange fruit" from so many trees; there were also the serfdom of sharecropping and the terror that met any resistance to it; there was also the daily rape of house workers in a stratified economy that offered women of color very few options; there were also the "experiments" that introduced and charted the progress of debilitating diseases into Black communities. With one, struggle was full consciousness of a system to be defeated.

We should note at this point that the proponents of these two approaches to the struggle for liberation rarely made good bedfellows. They were roughly divided between the ILD and the NAACP. NAACP lawyers were often vehement anti-Communists – sometimes to the point, as in the initial stages of the Scottsboro case – where nine Black youths were nearly lynched for the accused rape of two white women, of even preferring attorneys who were klansmen to ILD attorneys.³

CHANGE THE LAW OR CHANGE THE SYSTEM ■ The ILD lawyers were mass organizers. Law, for them, was not an independent feature of society. Law was at its core political and was consequently treated as a matter calling for collective political responses. The ILD's strategy was always to make sure that the community was present and mobilized to respond. For them, legal defense wasn't a matter of legal interpretation. It was a matter of struggle. Many of them, like Davis and Patterson, paid their dues in contexts where success was simply to keep an innocent human being alive. Paul Robeson summed up their view when he wrote, "The slave-masters were never converted to liberal philosophy: they were crushed by the overwhelming force that was brought to bear against their rotten system."⁴

The divide centered, then, on the question of

what was to be “converted.” For the radical lawyers, represented by the ILD, the system was to be held into account and there needed to be conversion on the level of society itself – its sites of power. Such conversion will affect the very meaning of law in such a society. The bourgeois lawyers, represented by the NAACP, saw the law itself as a fundamental site of change. Thus, as long as the law was made correct, the social circumstances could remain the same and be legitimate. Although this was certainly not Thurgood Marshall’s view, nor the sociologists who provided support for thesis of de facto inequality, it was certainly a reality of that legal approach. (Marshall effectively showed that equal resources cannot be available in places that were not equally recognized as deserving the same resources.) But whatever the motivations of the members of each group, one thing was for certain: their common enemy was watching.

By 1957, President Eisenhower – the same Eisenhower who gained a good standing in the Hoover administration by leading troops onto protesting, unemployed veterans in Washington, D.C. during the first Great Hunger March – made it clear what legal philosophy best represented his class:

During the past several years, many communities in our southern states have instituted public school plans for gradual progress in the enrollment and attendance of school children of all races in order to bring themselves into compliance with the law of the land. They thus demonstrated to the world that we are a nation in which laws, not men, are supreme.... The overwhelming majority of our people in every section of the country are united in their respect for observance of the law – even in those cases where they may disagree with that law.... A foundation of our American way of life is our national respect for law... At a time when we face grave situations abroad because of the hatred that communism bears toward a system of government based on human rights, it would be difficult to exaggerate the harm that is being done to the prestige and influence, and indeed to the safety of our nation and the world.⁵

He ends this hypocritical speech with the following: “Thus will be restored the image of America and of all its arts as one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

With the operative word “gradual,” we can see why Martin Luther King, Jr. was found writing a letter from a Birmingham jail in which he explains

why “we” – the rest of us who are supposed to constitute the “indivisible” as well – can’t wait.

A FAUSTIAN BARGAIN ■ We also find the role of red-baiting here. In a single stroke, a particular significance of *Brown* was laid bare. *Brown*, as the model of political action, must succeed so people can leave the streets and leave the forces of power to work themselves out behind closed doors; and in the effort to make *Brown* work, models of compliant, nonviolent patience must be extolled.

By 1961, the verdict from the depths of the oppressed emerged. Listen to Abbey Lincoln:

Straight Ahead
The Road keeps winding
Narrow, wet
And dimly lit.
For some, this road
Is smooth and easy
Traveling high
Without a care
But if you’ve got to use
The backroads
Straight ahead
*Can lead nowhere.*⁶

Black America was being asked to take a “straight” road, but as is well known, such a road is tortuous and filled with police brutality and all the forces of repression. In American legal history, the “straight” road is truly a road that led and continues to lead nowhere.

Given the wide ideological divide between President Eisenhower and Abbey Lincoln, the message should be clear: the conception of law and political “progress” embraced by Eisenhower is one of which Abbey Lincoln should be suspicious. The abstraction of legal allegiance and abstract justice promised a world of what the psychiatrist and philosopher Frantz Fanon once characterized as “free slaves.” This is because there was the mistaken notion that in changing laws, one changed the world. What should have been understood is that law is but one dimension of the world in which people live, and in changing laws, one changes a formal consequence of the human world, but not necessarily the causes of that world itself.

The writing was on the wall. A dialectic was emerging to drag the course of history from a human agenda to a more abstract, legalistic agenda

whose purpose was to maintain oppressive conditions. We need only to look around us today to see the consequences of the legalistic turn. Think of the distribution of educational resources. We have already mentioned the situation of economically abandoned cities. Although the cities have the largest numbers of the nation's populations of color, capital, which dominates the resources available to people who inhabit the cities, is now fleeing outside. This is evident in the use of homeowner taxes to fund educational resources. More money is thus spent on the children of people who own land, and those people generally do not live in inner cities, but live, instead, in what has become known as "vanilla suburbs."

RACISM AND UNEMPLOYMENT ■ But education and miseducation aren't the only sites of distribution and maldistribution; think also of employment. As sources of employment increasingly relocate to the suburbs, the consequence of structural unemployment emerges, as Tony Monteiro points out in the February 1994 issue of *Political Affairs*). In addition, the level of employment achieved by Blacks has suffered a marked shift with an insidious dimension of permanent replacement. Writes Monteiro,

Black job loss was greatest in Florida. African American job loss was at a rate of more than five times the overall work force reduction. In Illinois, 43.4 percent of jobs lost were held by Blacks, though in 1990 they were only 13.4 percent of the work force. Black workers were devastated in New York where they lost one in four of every job lost. Similar results were reported in California.

And then there is the contemporary, racist presentation of crime. In a racist society built upon the exploitation of labor, the notion that law is procedurally just in spite of the socio-economic system, is one that should give any sane person reason to pause. How can Blacks be treated justly when accused of committing crime when, in the final analysis, "Black" means "crime?" Although by 1990 the rate of personal crimes fell by 24.5 percent and the rate of household crimes by 26.1 percent, the contemporary propaganda of "Black crime" has enabled the powers that be to make more profits in the continued business of keeping Blacks "in their place." Not only are Blacks, who are 12 percent of the nation's population, 50 percent of the prison population; there is also, as Gerald Horne points out

in the same issue of *Political Affairs*, the reality of huge profits to be made from the prison business. He writes,

The privatization mania, the insane rush to dispose of the public sector (a poisonous snake oil that has been sold to great effect in the former Soviet Union and then, across the globe), is also afoot in the realm of prisons and is accelerating the growth of this complex. There are dozens of for-profit companies in the marketplace competing for the right to build, own and operate jails and prisons throughout this country. Privatization in juvenile correction (recall the Black youth are the target here) has grown at an even faster pace. Even public sector jails and prisons have turned to the private sector for a host of services, including food, health counseling, vocational training, psychological counseling, education, etc.

In short, there is profit to be made. Segregation was fiercely protected at the time of *Brown* because someone profited from it. The forces of exploitation and abuse that accompanied segregation continue today and segregation itself continues for the same reason. Although the dimensions of specific cases have a number of reasons, one element seems to always lurk within as the peons battle it out: the profits forecast looks good.

At the time of *Brown*, President Eisenhower urged folks to follow the law and avoid the Communists. Today we have President Clinton, an obvious ruling-class lawyer, telling us to follow the law and not the Communists. He wants us to do this as he and the complex political network with which he is associated put the squeeze on a country like Cuba. And what is the President's claim to legitimacy here? That he wants the Cuban people to have an election in which Castro isn't affirmed as president.

In the midst of all this, there are stupid discussions of the so-called failure of socialism in Cuba - as though Cuba is not an island with a U.S. embargo cutting off many of its well-needed resources - and the importance of transforming the globe into a sophisticated, updated form of capitalism in which there are colored materials (which are, in reality, people) to be exploited for the sake of more wealth.

That there are Black and Brown people attempting to integrate the "nationhood" reveals the serious similarity of U.S. international policy and its domestic

Continued on page 15

Clinton's Crime Bill

Libero Della Piana

November 19, 1993, the U.S. Senate passed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1993, the latest of a series of anti-crime legislation Congress has passed since the 1960s. The original bill passed the Senate floor quietly, without public fanfare, with hardly a peep from the press or the Clinton administration. But within just a few months of passing, the Senate crime bill would launch the current wave of American crime hysteria. It became clear that this was no ordinary crime bill.

The National Office of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) wrote in a December, 1993 memo that the original Senate crime bill included:

the proliferation of crimes subject to the death penalty; provisions transferring youth as young as 13 years of age from the juvenile justice system to an already overburdened adult criminal system; mandatory life imprisonment for persons convicted of a third drug or violent felony; a proliferation of mandatory minimum sentences, and problematic gang provisions.¹

The final bill is an even worse example of the trends the ACLU highlighted in the earlier version. Its passage is a set back for democratic forces in the U.S. today. The experience of the crime bill's development sheds light on the current crisis of capitalism, the rise in open racism, and the inability of liberal reform to address people's problems with solutions.

Several questions help guide an understanding of the crime legislation and its implications: How is this crime bill different from previous criminal legislation; are more police, increased incarceration, and more prisons going to solve crime; and finally, what exactly is in the crime bill? Most importantly what are its implications for the working-class movement?

Every few years since 1968, the federal government has assessed the national crime rate and law enforcement's response. Each time Congress meets they make the same decision: punitive measures and more money for cops. Never has the federal

government addressed the startling rates of police brutality in communities of color, and rarely have they acknowledged the police's slow response rates in poor neighborhoods, biased hiring practices, or law enforcement's complete inability to curb crime. Today, over one million people are behind bars with a disproportionate number being Black, Latino and Asian. In California last year, one out of every four African American men were under the control of the criminal justice system, highlighting the complete racism in police practice.²

Notwithstanding these problems, law makers have posed their most severe, expensive, and useless crime package yet. That's no accident. Although legislators would have us believe that they were responding to public outcry when they drafted the bill, the November legislation preceded the frenzy on crime. In fact, it can be said that the crime bill, with aid from the bourgeois press manufactured the country-wide interest in law enforcement and violent crime.

A January, 1994 issue of *Time* compared two public opinion polls on national issues. When asked what their main concern in the country was, respondents in February, 1993, some 13 months into Clinton's administration, stated the economy and jobs with 22 percent and 13 percent responding respectively. Crime was almost negligible with only 4 percent stating it as their main concern. Less than one year later, in January, 1994, respondents flip-flopped, putting crime at the top of their list with 19 percent, and nearly forgetting about jobs and economy (10 percent and 11 percent responding). No wonder President Clinton loves the crime bill! It is the magical potion which wipes away promises of economic recovery, jobs and health care for all. The federal crime bill is Clinton's Gulf War.

The crime bill is yet another example of the ability of the right in America to set the agenda of public debate and policy-setting. With Clinton in the White House, and the longest Democratic majority in Congress in the history of the U.S. legislature – that is, until the November election – Republicans were still able to win on every major point of the bill. It even took the right-wing National Rifle Associa-

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tion to scuttle the legislation which the Congressional Black Caucus, and other progressive forces could not do. Conservative control of the crime and public safety agenda meant that when it went for final revisions in the House and Senate, it came back a worse bill than it was in the beginning, not better.

The Racial Justice Act (RJA) was first introduced several years ago and has failed to gather more than a few supporters since then. The popular and sweeping crime bill gave Black representatives a window of opportunity to slip the Act in. The measure would allow the use of statistical evidence to prove racial bias in the enactment of the death penalty. It would allow inmates of color to stay or even overturn executions in the face of overwhelming evidence. Democrats and Republicans alike saw the RJA as a slippery slope to erode the death penalty completely. In fact, the first time the crime bill passed the floor of the House, it barely passed, because the CBC voted against the bill's racism, and the Republican right-wing voted against the Racial Justice Act. It must be noted that it was Clinton's "middle-of-road" Democrats which passed the most brutal crime bill of all time.

RIGHT DOMINATES CRIME DEBATE ■ "Experts," police chiefs, and politicians blame crime on a moral crisis in the U.S. According to the voices of and on the bourgeois press, it is the "break up" of the family and the abandonment of Christian values which have bred a generation of degenerate youth who plague our streets. But the solution to the real concern of poor people for safety in their communities is jobs not jails. The "War on Drugs," some ten years old has not lessened one iota the rate that drugs flow into U.S. neighborhoods. Billions of dollars, thousands of airplanes, border patrols, satellite photos, and covert operations in Colombia later, and drugs are on the rise.

What the capitalists know all too well, is that crime and drugs are alternative economies. Where the infrastructure of the nation breaks down, criminal activity replaces legitimate markets with its own. Where indigenous leadership is absent or ineffectual, gangs and posses emerge to organize youth for good or bad.

Republicans, led by Robert Dole, attacked the "pork" in the proposed law. Prevention, counseling, rehabilitation, jobs creation, alternatives to incarceration, education and youth programs were all attacked as old-fashioned pork-barreling in disguise

as criminal justice legislation. In fact, scrap that ended up on the floor of the Senate butcher shop was the only meat in the bill.

In a classic Republican maneuver, a bill which is for the most part drafted by GOP leaders and researchers, is later attacked for being too "moderate." Republicans withdraw from the very bill they initiated and refuse to pass it, which by that time had become a key piece of Clinton's domestic policy. Clinton and the Democrats then run to defend the bill which they have publicly supported and hung their reelection hats on. The Republicans then agree to support the bill if the Democrats will remove the Racial Justice Act, cut the "pork," and add several hundred exceptions to the gun control measures.

On August 20th, in a race to finalize the bill before the Congressional recess, Democratic leaders "compromised" with conservatives on the question of crime prevention *vs.* punishment. Democrats cut the deal. As a result, the agenda of the debate moved to the right, and the bill is worse than ever as it goes to Clinton to be signed.

The other day, Clinton spoke on National Public Radio. He said that the Republicans should see him as a "good Republican president," since he was doing all the things they had promised: lower taxes, cut social spending, and "getting tough on crime." That's the first thing one could agree with Clinton on.

LIBERALS CAPITULATE ■ A telling example of liberal capitulation was the example of Representative John Lewis (D-GA). A former civil rights leader who has had many personal run-ins with the police, he opposed the bill because of his hatred of the death penalty. But as House deputy whip, and fearing voter revolt on the question, Lewis flip-flopped, allowing the bill to go to the floor for a vote. "It was much easier to march across the bridge in Selma or go on the freedom rides. Everything then was clearly black and white," said Lewis.³ While the distinction between right and wrong may be blurred for Lewis and others in Congress who felt compelled to vote for the bill in order to improve it, for young Asians, Blacks and Latinos, who are routinely harassed, assaulted and killed by police, the lines are crystal clear. At the end of the day, Congressional progressives – if there were any to begin with – caved in to the crime hysteria and aided and abetted racism.

The implications of the existing federal crime bill and the mounting tide of crime panic are dire for

communities of color, immigrants, the homeless, and youth in particular, but will adversely affect all working people in this country. In fact, the bill will have deep political and economic implications for years to come. Indeed, it marks another step – along with the assault on civil rights, gays/lesbians, and anti-immigrant legislation – toward the undermining of democratic rights in the U.S.

The legislation is a huge threat to democracy and to the working-class movement. In several major ways, the crime bill will affect everyone's rights under the law, particularly activists and striking workers. It ominously for the first time allows for the use of so-called "secret evidence" for the purpose of opposing "alien terrorism" federally institutes "three strikes, you're out" legislation and other mandatory minimum sentences, and criminalizes youth.

Using the World Trade Center bombing as an example, legislators convinced themselves that there is a huge threat of violent attack on U.S. institutions and people by foreign terrorist organizations. In order to curb this threat, the new law allows for the federal government to more easily deport immigrants and refugees who are suspected of being alien terrorists, or even those suspected of working with groups having once engaged in terrorism. Terrorism, of course, has never been defined clearly by the government. However, an individual who is or was close to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the African National Congress (ANC), the Ferabundo Marti Liberacin Nacional (FMLN), or the Emiliano Zapata Liberacin Nacional (EZLN), and other people's movements, are likely to be a prime alien terrorist suspect. The ACLU gives an example: "... an alien who raises money for the PLO to support the peace process, or for an ANC speaking tour of Nelson Mandela, would be deportable as a terrorist."⁴

Federal prosecutors will be able to use "secret evidence" of the suspect's terrorist activities in the deportation trial. The implications of this law are immense. First, it allows for the reversal of political asylum given to those fleeing right-wing dictatorships because of their political activity. The U.S. government can simply turn around and label as "terrorism" the same activity which asylum is supposed to protect. It also opens the doors for the first time to the unthinkable notion of secret evidence. Such evidence is by definition secret, thereby removing the ability of the accused to defend themselves or refute the evidence because they are not

privy to it themselves.

Furthermore, U.S. citizens and organizations suspected of financially or otherwise supporting organizations which now engage in or may have once engaged in terrorism can be legally monitored under the bill. There is also language to the effect that unnamed "sanctions" may also be taken against these groups. If one imagines the vast thousands of individuals, labor unions, churches, non-profit agencies, student groups, and even government agencies which supported the ANC's struggles against apartheid over the decades, it is clear how devastating this clause could be.

In the end, paranoia is the driving force behind the "alien terrorist" portion of the crime bill. Rabid xenophobia, along with political chicanery led legislators to draft a fundamentally undemocratic law. What is interesting is that the Senate seems to have forgotten its own mining of other countries' harbors and assassination of foreign leaders. Even now, as the alien terrorist law is going into effect, Oliver North, America's home-grown terrorist, was almost elected in Virginia to the Senate.

THREE STRIKES ■ Perhaps the most controversial, and definitely the most widely known of the new legislation is the "Three Strikes, You're Out" provision. The federal three strikes law is based on the three strikes measures first adopted by Washington State in 1993. The bill, along with Clinton's ringing endorsement, sparked off a race around the country to adopt three strikes. In California, five different versions of three strikes went to the floor of the state legislature within weeks of Clinton's January State of the Union Address, fueled by public hysteria over the kidnapping/slaying of 12-year-old Polly Klass. The final version signed by Governor Pete Wilson was one of the harsher ones, giving 40 years without parole for three violent felonies, including felonies committed as a juvenile. In Georgia, the law of the land is: two strikes, you're out. Commit two violent felonies, and go to jail for 45 years without chance of parole!

Part of the problem with the proliferation of three strikes measures is that many of the laws differ in terms of what is considered a "strike," and what is considered an "out." Indeed, there is a comparison of apples and oranges. Some proposals intend to count all felonies (violent or not) against you, some count only violent felonies, some count juvenile crimes, while others don't. Then some law-

makers want an "out" to be for life with parole, or life without parole, or 40 years, etc., etc. Each local law needs to be researched and understood for what it means in its jurisdiction.

What is particularly damning of the three strikes measures is that they don't work anywhere where they have been implemented. In Washington state, anti-crime hysteria and overzealous district attorneys have turned three strikes measures on a group of youth accused of a shooting recently. Local residents were furious over the case of a young man who was given nearly half-a-century in jail without parole for stealing pocket change from his father, and pushing him down in the process.

In Los Angeles County, which has had thousands of three strikes cases since it became law here in February, courts are so over-logged with cases that it has crippled the justice system. Usually rapid-fire hearings have been drawn to a snail's pace by those who wish to avoid a first, second, or third strike on their record.

POTENTIAL USE AGAINST LABOR ■ A case which starkly demonstrates the potential for three strikes to be used against activists is that of the San Francisco Police Force's attacks on Food Not Bombs. Food Not Bombs is a local food distribution and homeless advocacy organization in the San Francisco Bay Area. Mayor Frank Jordan and his cronies are so threatened by the idea of feeding the hungry, that they brutally enforce an ordinance disallowing food distribution without a license (which is, by the way, impossible to get). Also, the organization and its leaders have been continually targeted for police harassment, intimidation, and violence. Food Not Bombs organizer, Greg Henry, has been arrested countless times for the crime of feeding people, and beaten severely on many occasions. With three strikes, there is a very real possibility of getting Greg Henry out of Jordan's hair for good.

It is not a far stretch of the imagination to see the three strikes measure being used against striking workers, civil disobedient activists, *et. al.* Right now, a difficult struggle is raging between striking union members from the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *San Francisco Examiner*. It is already bloody, and the police threat of violence is great. Striking workers, arrested for defending their jobs and livelihoods, could be headed for mandatory life sentences.

The fact that the federal government admits that gangs "accounted for a small percentage of the over-

all crime rate" did little to deter legislators from blaming youth for America's problems.⁵ The crime bill gang ordinances, sponsored by Carol Mosely Brown (D-IL) and Orin Hatch (R-UT), federalize "gang crimes," and punishes individuals for even associating with a "criminal gang." This idea is a fundamental threat to democratic rights in many ways. While street gangs have been a threat to the safety in some urban areas, the crime bill outlaws association with a group, and not illegal activities themselves. Therefore, being around criminal activity is enough to make one a criminal, despite the Supreme Court's assertion that "guilt by association remains a thoroughly discredited doctrine."⁶ Plus, the loose way the legislation defines "gang" leaves almost any organization open to attack.

Gangs were defined on the floor of the Senate as a group "that exhibit at least five of the following characteristics: formal membership with required initiation or rules for members; a recognized leader; common clothing, languages, tattoos, turf where the group is known, and a group name."⁷ To how many gangs does the reader belong? By this definition, this author belongs to half-a-dozen! And proudly so!

These gang provisions come on the heels of a nationwide gang hysteria rooted particularly in the Los Angeles experience. L.A.'s gangs were caricatured in the movie *Colors* almost a decade ago, and ever since, the Crips, Bloods, and other gangs have been bigger than life, from the *Arsenio Hall Show*, to the record store. With this backdrop of gang hysteria, police have targeted their most heinous assaults on youth of color and all working-class youth. Throughout the country, random harassment, summary arrest, brutality and even murder are brought down on young people by the police.

In Los Angeles County, nearly 50 percent of all African American men are listed on the police force's "gang list," even though more than one in three have no criminal record. Being young and Black is guilt enough in capitalist America. Denver, Colorado is home to another infamous gang list. Until recently, the Denver Police maintained, without public scrutiny, a list of suspected gang members. Because the list was secret, and one only had to be suspected of gang activities to be on it, it was almost impossible to be removed from the list for any reason. Being on the list means you are watched. List information is privy to other police agencies, judges, and could even get out to others, meaning the list could take your job or prejudice a

legal case. Two-thirds of all African American youth in Denver were on it as were one in four Latino youth – 90 percent of the list was made up of youth of color. A lawsuit forced the police to purge it. But the list still exists.

REAL SOLUTIONS TO CRIME AND VIOLENCE ▣ If more police and more jails are not the answer, what is the solution to the reality and the threat of crime and violence in our communities? The simple answer is jobs. We need job opportunities to provide hope and sustenance in communities ravaged by poverty and brutalized by an occupying army of police. Jobs will give young people in America's ghettos, slums, and barrios, the ability to feed themselves and their families. Today, the underground market of drugs and crime are the only places where many can find a living wage. The only way to shut down these institutions is to replace them with inner-city infrastructure, development, capital investment and jobs.

But there is more to curbing crime and violence than jobs creation. Our youth need recreation programs, well-funded schools, counseling programs, and other social programs. But ultimately, what will really end the tragic realities of crime and safety in

America's cities is the elimination of poverty and destitution. As long as poverty, and economic violence exists as long a capitalism lives, young Black, Latino, Asian, Native American, and white men and women will have no positive identification with the system around them. What really creates violence is hatred of a system that eats its young.

The role of Communists and all progressive forces should be to capture the imagination of the young generation and the old alike. Socialism, our ultimate goal, offers the only chance of hope in a dog-eat-dog, brother-shoot-a-brother system. With jobs, education, recreation, and hope, we won't need 100,000 new cops, or another one million behind bars. □

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Gordon, continued from page 10

policy. Thus, the "nationhood" isn't a far cry from the neighborhood. When a Black law student tried to register for class in Mississippi nearly a decade after the Brown decision, the governor himself came to block his way. Now, as Cuba's Black, Brown and clearly working-class populations attempt to cross U.S. borders, the president sends a similar message.

September marked the 75th anniversary of the Communist Party USA. The propaganda against Communism today is a sign of the continued importance of an organized battle against the exploitation of working people. *Brown v. Board of Education* was, then, not the end of battle, but as we see today so well, its beginning recognizing that the battle itself is not, and cannot remain one over civil rights alone, but also one over the rights of human beings to live in a human world.

In 1954, Blacks appealed to the nation's highest court. By 1963, it was clear that the people, Black, white and Brown, had to march to the nation's capi-

tal. Here we find a genuine and expressive dialectic. For there has been a transition from the lawyer to the reverend. In Washington, D.C. the civil rights questions fused with the hope of a moral alternative when the minister stood as a moral figure head.

But it's time to move on. As we approach 1995, it is clear that it's time for another transition to be made. For the limitations of judicial, executive, legislative, and moral-guilt resources have been historically laid bare. It is time to see the truth in Angelo Herndon's favorite expression, "Nothing succeeds like organization." It's time for the worker to lead symbolically and literally. □

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A New Arena of Struggle: The Electronic Front

Christopher Irwin

Much has been written recently about the "Internet," the massive link of computer networks and databases which some liken to the invention of the printing press and which others dismiss as nothing more than a buzzword.

For computer users the ramifications of this expanding technology are glaringly apparent; however, non-users may be at a loss to understand the fuss. Put shortly, we are witnessing the first step into the next arena of struggle: the electronic front. The computer revolution is upon us, affecting how we obtain information, how we communicate, and how opinions are shaped.

However, most computer owners are less familiar with the Internet than they are with commercial "online services." While the Internet is a loosely organized central database of files and information, commercial online services are consumer-oriented computer networks offering not only dry data, but also news headlines, movie reviews, games, sports highlights, stock updates, and online encyclopedias. Online services usually tie the whole package together with colorful graphics and easy-to-use selection menus and, more importantly, offer programming that will put computers on the road to becoming as invaluable an information medium as television.

Currently the largest commercial online services are Prodigy, CompuServe, GENie, and America Online (AOL). It is imperative to remember that these services, which together boast over five million American subscribers, are *commercial* services, for which subscribers pay a monthly charge (sometimes with additional hourly fees) and which are owned and operated by large corporations, such as GENie's parent company, General Electric. Just as newspapers and television stations serve their capitalist owners, so too are these online services the tools of capital.

To better understand the electronic class struggle, it behooves us to look at who is using computers, what is being programmed to these users, and

how this affects public opinion.

Over half of computer users have household incomes seven times greater than the poverty level, and a whopping 91 percent are employed in "a business or profession," indicating that the large share of computer users are not working class, and most certainly not poor. Larry Magid, a computer columnist for Prodigy and *The Los Angeles Times*, recently noted that despite the falling prices of computers, the technology is not getting into the hands of the poor:

Personal computers have been called the "great equalizers" of this era, making it possible for rich and poor to share in the wealth of our information society. Yet, because it will be financed by private industry, it is not clear whether it will be truly affordable to the vast majority of people.¹

The August 1994 issue of *PC Magazine* noted similar trends:

The spread of technology in America is uneven. A college graduate with a family income of \$50,000 a year is ten times as likely to own a computer with a modem [the device used to access online services] than a non-graduate who earns less than \$30,000.²

Given that an average computer runs \$1000 to \$3000 per unit, and that publicly-owned computer "libraries" are almost completely nonexistent, it is not hard to see why computers remain out of the reach of low-income families. Learning to use a computer can also get expensive: an average night course on basics runs \$60, and usually more than one course is needed (see chart page 17).

For those who do own and understand their machine, access to the online services doesn't come cheap: an average monthly bill for an online service can total between \$16 and \$75, in most cases more than a cable TV bill. Making access more selective is the fact that of the four major online services, only Prodigy allows for payment of the monthly fee by conventional billing methods: users are sent a bill

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every month and pay by money order or check. CompuServe, GENie and AOL each offer only two methods of payment: credit card and "automatic electronic withdrawal." The latter is a fast-growing method of payment which enables a business to automatically deduct funds from your bank account (via computer) without ever sending a statement or bill; the entire transaction occurs automatically and "invisibly," showing up only on your monthly bank statement. This puts online services out of the reach of those who do not have or use credit cards, and who either do not have checking accounts or would prefer not to allow unlimited access to them by businesses. To add insult to injury, America Online actually charges users a \$2 per month surcharge for the privilege of automatic electronic withdrawal, an unmitigated outrage since such a transaction means AOL does not have to buy paper, envelopes, postage or even pay someone to process the bills!

Analyzing these trends and statistics allows us to see who is using computers and commercial online services: people who can afford the technology. Let us now look at what online services are offering those users. Since Prodigy is the only service with conventional billing (although they are expected to change that soon), it is the best one suited for an analysis of the programming trends of online services.

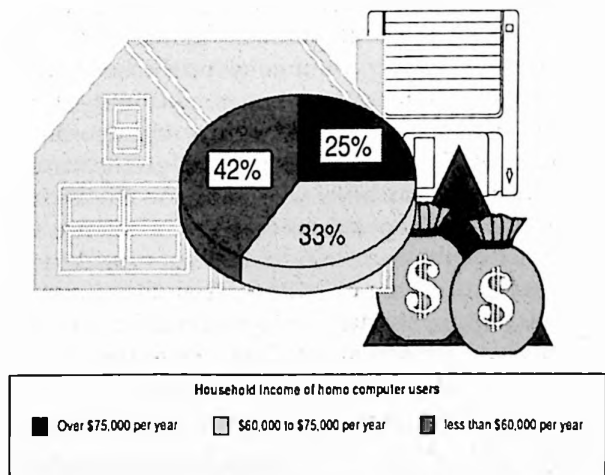
Prodigy, co-owned by Sears and IBM, has gained in popularity due to the boom in personal computer sales and through clever TV advertising. As reported in *PC Magazine*, Prodigy currently serves 2 million subscribers, and is the largest of the major commercial services (although AOL is quickly gaining). Access requires that Prodigy software be

loaded into a person's computer; this software is usually sent free by Prodigy as an enticement for signing on. Using the computer's modem and a household phone line, a local phone number is dialed from the keyboard which connects the computer to the Prodigy network. Within a few seconds, the Prodigy main screen pops up and you have begun using the online service; you've also begun being billed at Prodigy's minimum \$15-20 per month rate. The entire process is similar to cable TV subscribing, except that the information is transmitted over phone lines into your computer, with your computer monitor displaying the information. Most of the information is type, although there are colorful graphics and (most recently) some sound bites. There is, to date, no full-motion video, making the experience quite different from television.

SHAPING OPINIONS ■ The main screen of Prodigy tells its corporate roots, and as such displays a glaring affinity to coerce subscribers' opinions towards corporate aims. Beneath a bright yellow and black Prodigy logo are three of the day's top headlines, some service information, a semi-weekly poll question, and a menu of other choices, such as "Entertainment" or "Sports." Typing a selection causes more detailed information on the selection to pop up on the screen, such as full-text news stories or poll results.

While Prodigy's news is culled directly from Reuters and AP, it undergoes snipping by a Prodigy "newsroom" before being posted on the screen. The newsroom staff also assigns the headlines that will appear on the opening screen, much the way the editorial staff of a newspaper decides the front page. The results are typical: the headlines for March 29 read "Somalies Looting & Shooting as UN Troops Struggle" and "Is Russia Making New Bio-Weapons?" To pursue further reading, you have to "turn the electronic page" by selecting the headline; of course, the body of the story supports the slant offered by the headline.

Prodigy's "user polls" are even more obvious in their attempts to alter and misrepresent American public opinion. Under the guise of offering subscribers a means to "voice off" about current issues, the use of clever graphics and skewed questioning undermines any attempt at fair polling. For example, the recent poll question "Can Russia Be Trusted?" (loaded enough as *that* is) was accompanied by a graphic of a bear peeking menacingly through a



keyhole at an unsuspecting Uncle Sam, his back to the bear, busily signing an important document.

The question of whether or not the insanity plea should be abandoned was accompanied by a graphic of the scales of justice emblazoned with the word "insanity" and a bright red line scratching the word out. The use of these graphics perform the function of steering an opinion before the user even takes the poll: your mind is made up for you. Not so curiously, within a six-month period, not a single Prodigy poll resulted in a different opinion than that expressed by the graphics.

Poll questions are equally slanted. In a recent poll on healthcare, users were treated to a series of questions on their preferences and views. When the question of "which healthcare plan would you prefer?" popped onto the screen, only two plans were presented: the Gephardt Plan and the Mitchell Plan. Not only was there no mention of single-payer, there was not even a "none of the above" choice. Users who wanted to complete the poll could not even opt to skip the question!

Prodigy recently exposed its deviousness and was publicly slapped when a recent joint venture with Atlanta-based news publisher Cox Newspapers started to smell funny. As reported in the May 1994 issue of *Direct* (a direct marketing trade journal), Prodigy and Cox set up "Access Atlanta," an electronic town hall where subscribers could sign on and discuss issues. Casual participants were unaware that Prodigy was "watching" by collecting data from the discussions to develop database information on subscriber demographics, lifestyles and interests for future marketing purposes. For example, a user writing a note about his interest in automobiles might have soon found his mailbox filled with auto dealership flyers, or answer the phone only to hear a pitch from an automotive magazine salesperson. Close reading of the customer service agreement exposed the scam and consumers launched a wave of complaints to protect their electronic privacy. As a result of the public outcry, the program was soon dropped.

ELECTRONIC SOAPBOXES ■ Generally safe places to express opinions, such electronic town halls, or "bulletin boards services" (BBSs) are the most popular feature of online services. Prodigy's bulletin boards come in the form of menus, for which you first select a main subject (such as "Arts" or "Politics") and then select a more specific topic (such as

"Movies" or "Bombings in Bosnia.") You are then able to read postings by other subscribers on the topic, and reply with your own. It is a new way to publicly communicate ideas, and the single most important area of involvement. Simply put, these BBSs are "electronic soapboxes" on which users can shout rallying cries.

While some progressive topics thrive, the fact remains that most of the discussions and notes are noticeably to the right. It is not a coincidence that the attitudes of Prodigy subscribers are "in sync" with the attitudes put forth by Prodigy's editorial policies. In a recent poll of over 3700 users, it was revealed that 50 percent consider themselves "conservative," 39 percent consider themselves "moderate," while only 8 percent refer to themselves as "liberal." On line services attract conservatives who can afford computers but tricks, such as those used by Prodigy newsroom and pollsters, tend to push people into the conservative camp, making it difficult for left forces to express themselves.

But here is where the CPUSA's recent call to computer action comes into play. Prodigy subscribers may have no direct control over the editorial slant given news stories, or what graphics are used to illustrate poll questions, but they do have the power to communicate ideas to a large number of people simultaneously. Progressive forces must act strongly to "counterprogram" the continuous onslaught of pro-corporate and sometimes outright fascist, propaganda. The technology makes it a remarkably simple thing to do, assuming one can afford it.

In addition, there are other things Communists can do at the keyboard. Recently, a Prodigy user posted a topic called "Communist BBS" under the "World News" subject. He suggested the notion of having a place to discuss Marxism-Leninism on the Prodigy service, and within one week the board had filled to over 100 communiques. Despite many attacks from right-wing conservatives and neo-libertarians, months later the topic was still going strong. In fact, the *PWW* has been advertised on the board, enabling the newspaper to reach a new audience via "electronic distribution."

News topics, such as "South African Elections" or "Invasion of Haiti," may be analyzed from a socialist perspective. Comments may be made on films, sports, education, etc., all from the point of view of Marxism-Leninism. The potential is unlimited.

Continued on page 40

Racism and Immigration

E. Schepers

This is in response to the invitation contained in the July *Political Affairs* to comment on the article "The Fight Against Racism Today." Racism in its modern variants serves at least four purposes for the ruling class: it creates an imaginary enemy for whites so that the role of international monopoly capital in creating their unhappiness is hidden; it divides the working class and therefore weakens labor and impedes the class struggle; it allows the realization of extra profits from the super-exploitation of African American and other oppressed minority workers; and it provides an ideological basis for the actions of imperialism in non-white, Third World countries.

One of the special features of the present moment is the combination of increased racist oppression of immigrant workers with a new, aggressive imperialistic stand in the Third World. Immigrant workers in the United States have always suffered some degree of discrimination, as well as playing a key role in the advances of the working-class struggle. But at the present moment, you have a convergence of several important factors that produce a situation of particular danger for, Latinos, Caribbean, African, Arab, and Asian workers and their families in the U.S.:

- The advancing crisis of capitalism makes the need of the ruling class for scapegoats more urgent. With all the talk that "socialism has failed," it is harder and harder to conceal the fact that what has failed is capitalism. So one after the other, new scapegoats are presented: inner-city youth, welfare mothers, and especially, immigrants.

- After a temporary setback, the Third World countries super-exploited by the transnationals are poised on the brink of greater struggle. The empire sees that it is going to have to intervene in many areas of the world, and wishes to prepare the public for military actions in Latin America, Asia, the Caribbean, the Middle East and Africa. As it happens, the largest number of new immigrants in the U.S. today are from these areas. To present them as "the enemy within" makes it easier to fight against

the same kind of people as "the enemy without." A special urgency comes from the increasing solidarity between U.S. and Third World labor.

When the major immigration at the end of the last century was occurring immigrants mostly came from Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe – economic spheres of interest of the economic competitors of the U.S. such as England, France and Germany. Now, the immigrants are coming precisely from those areas of the world in which the penetration of U.S.-based transnationals is most disruptive. For example, the Mexican Ministry of Agriculture calculates that there are 134 million "superfluous peasants" in that country, and that NAFTA will have the salutary effect of driving them off the land (because using hoes and ox-drawn ploughs, they can not compete with highly mechanized U.S. agribusiness).¹ As Mexico's cities are already horrendously overcrowded, it is inevitable that this will set in motion waves of immigration to the U.S.

Further, 19th-century immigration was mostly white, while today's immigration is mostly non-white. Existing racial prejudices can be mobilized against the immigrants.

The immigrants heading northward to the U.S. from Mexico and other Third World countries will arrive and already are arriving, in a U.S. wherein jobs are becoming more scarce and foreigners, specifically Third World countries, are being blamed by demagogic politicians such as California governor Pete Wilson and H. Ross Perot, for unemployment. We would certainly expect a sharp rise in anti-immigrant hysteria in this set of circumstances, and of course we are already seeing it:

- California's Governor Wilson started the ball rolling with his proposals to deny citizenship to the children of undocumented workers and to cut off vital public services to undocumented immigrants.

- Attorney General Janet Reno instead of denouncing this, also jumped the bandwagon as did a number of important Democratic Party officials and officeholders.

- The Republicans presented a welfare reform package that would strip even legal resident non-citizens of many benefits. The Clinton administration's

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counter proposal was only slightly better.

- Now, the National Commission on Immigration headed by Barbara Jordan has come up with an atrocious plan of keeping track of all workers by giving their bosses direct computer access to Social Security files. In spite of vociferous objections by the ACLU and immigrant rights groups, the media immediately jumped on board.

At local levels, cruder methods are brought into play, including especially increased police harassment of immigrant workers. Here in the Chicago area, suburban police are stopping immigrant workers on their way to factory jobs and are demanding to see their immigration papers, forcing them to hand over money to avoid being handed over to the INS. It is only a matter of time until the level of immigrant-bashing reaches the point that vigilante violence will begin to occur with bloodshed and fatalities. And both the Republican and Democratic parties are enthusiastically participating.

The English-only movement is getting a new lease on life from the anti-immigrant hysteria. In Illinois, the Republican State Senate President, "Pete" Phillip, has added attacks on bilingual education to his repertoire of anti-minority rhetoric.

It should be added that the anti-immigrant campaign has a sharp impact on U.S.-born Latinos, Asians, etc. as well as on naturalized citizens. In Chicago, we have heard several cases of police stopping Puerto Ricans and demanding to see their "immigration papers" (some years ago, INS agents actually did this to a member of Mayor Washington's cabinet while she was in a city government building). A GAO report three years ago demonstrated that 20 percent of Chicago area employers are unwilling to hire any "Hispanics" because they might be illegal immigrants. The new developments will intensify this discrimination.

A major aim of the anti-immigrant campaign has been to prevent the unionization and militant labor activism of immigrant workers. Here in Illinois, a large proportion of industrial workers in certain industries are first generation immigrants from Mexico, Latin America and the Caribbean. They are a key element in the goal of "organizing the unorganized" but via anti-immigrant persecution, the ruling class aims to make sure that they stay unorganized.

What is our Party's role and duty in this extremely dangerous situation? We have a fundamental duty to organize for the defense of immigrant workers and their families among the working

class and the masses, just as we have a fundamental duty, which we have not shirked, to defend African-American workers and others against racist terror and discrimination. And it is not enough just to warn of the danger and issue verbal denunciations. We should lead organizationally.

- We should organize a national struggle against the computerized registry.

- We should give more emphasis and energy to our campaign against employer sanctions, trying to win more workers, and more of the leadership of labor to a progressive position on this issue.

- We should issue more materials, e.g. one of our hard-hitting pamphlets, on the issue of the rights of immigrant workers, denouncing the anti-immigrant hysteria and the English-only movement.

- We should work to create immigrant defense committees in every city and region, based on the trade unions and working-class communities and arm these committees with literature and other tools for militant street action, so that when immigrants are threatened, beaten or killed, and when the INS begins to increase its raids, we can respond.

On the last point, currently, the immigrant defense organizations in many areas are largely composed of attorneys and social service agency people, with some admixture of religious activists. We need to either increase the working-class presence in such bodies, or create new bodies that can communicate better with workers. The problem with the professional and blue-ribbon types of immigrants rights groups is two-fold: In the first place, they are tied to corporate and foundation funding that limits their capacity for constructive hell-raising, and in the second, they are utterly incapable of communicating with working-class white and African American people to do the educational work needed.

This should be organized at the national level, and state/district Party organizations should be subject to check-up to make sure that it is carried out, especially in the four states which are targeted for the computer registry. □

Reference Notes:

1. *The Specter of Rural Development, NACLA Report on the Americas*, by David Barkin, 1994, vol 28, #1, July-August 1994, p. 32.
2. General Accounting Office, 1992, Report on the impact of IRCA.

On Foster's Communist Legacy

Forging American Communism, Edward P. Johanningmeier, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey 1994 pp. 498, \$29.95.

I was three years old when my father came home from work with his head streaming blood. He didn't tell us what had happened. Years later I caught on to the fact that the steel mills had been on strike, that the strike was the Great Steel Strike of 1919, and that my father in all probability was not one of the strikers (he already had six children and we lived in two rented rooms). In any case, only 50 percent of Duquesne Pennsylvania's workers (contrasted to the near 100 percent walkout in nearby Homestead and Braddock) had gone out.

Once the Great Steel Strike was defeated, total silence descended on our town regarding any reference to that or any strike. It was only later that I was to learn the name of William Z. Foster, or that he, with Mother Jones and L. Beaghen, had tried to make a speech in Duquesne during the strike, and had been promptly arrested by order of mayor "Toad" Crawford, who immortalized himself – at least in labor history – with the unforgettable words, "Jesus Christ himself could not speak in Duquesne for the AFL."

Twenty-two strikers were killed by U.S. Steel during the strike. So much for elementary democracy in the coal and steel towns up and down the valleys radiating from Pittsburgh and everywhere else across the country. To enforce the prohibition on Foster and his friends, the mills were saturated with spies and informers for decades to come. The name of Foster was obliterated, at best, reduced to a whisper. Only when the Depression (1929-1940) broke, was the cloud finally lifted and I got my first full look at the man, who I already considered a fantastic hero for having the courage to challenge the great power of the Mellons, Fricks, Morgans and, earlier, the Carnegies. These moguls literally had the power of life and death over thousands who they treated as serfs and held in total bondage. Anyone who even mildly questioned their right to such absolute rule

lived – if he lived – to rue the day he let his thoughts find expression. Not many did; this giant of a man Foster did and he lived to see the workers organized.

I did not meet him in person until years later when I had what I considered the great honor of introducing him to a meeting of steelworkers in McKeesport. It seemed incredible to me that this man, who had been fighting for my liberation from steel monopoly bondage from when I was in my crib, should still be fighting for the liberation of the steel workers in the late '30s, as they strove to set up and consolidate the CIO. I was a member of the CIO as was my brother, who joined it "prematurely" and was forever blacklisted (as later I was). It was a greater honor years later to have Foster write the introduction to my biography of Bill McKie, and when Foster asked me how I understood the feeling of extreme physical labor on Ford's speedup system, I told him I'd learned it working for U.S. Steel.

Ever since he joined the Communist Party, which was soon after the end of the Steel Strike in 1919, Foster played an active role in the labor movement both as a theorist and an organizer. It is important to emphasize Foster's contribution to theory, since it is precisely as a theorist that his critics have faulted him, contrasting the man as thinker to the man of action. In fact, Foster was uniquely a meld of both, very much in the mold of Lenin himself (though admittedly he did not attain Lenin's theoretical stature).

Long before his contemporaries in the labor movement had any grasp of it, Foster had solved several key questions that had been logjams holding up the further growth of the working-class movement. Most importantly, he saw the need to organize industry on an industrial basis instead of sticking to the crippling and confining practice of segregating workers by craft. His theory that workers could be better organized industrially, in mass rather than craft by craft, triumphed dramatically among the stockyard workers and would succeed again among the steel workers. As organizer of the Trade Union Educational League and then the

Trade Union Unity League, he kept before the eyes of all labor the continuing goal of organizing all workers on the same industrial basis. He was opposed to dual unionism, and it was not necessary for the Comintern to tell him so.

Foster was head and shoulders above the intellectual level of most labor leaders of his day. Take Samuel Gompers, for instance. Gompers was the kind of labor leader favored by the establishment for statements like this: "If the great industrial combinations do not deal with us they will have somebody else to deal with who will not have the American idea."

This statement expresses the main thesis of Edward P. Johanningsmeier in his book *Forging American Communism*. In it he claims that Foster, too, did not have the "American idea" and that this constituted his "tragedy."

At the Chicago Federation of Labor convention, Foster had persuaded the delegates to pass a resolution for organizing steel. You had to be "crazy" to think of organizing steel, John Fitzpatrick, the president of the Chicago AFL, told Foster who had confided his "dream" to him. But by the time he raised the question in Chicago, Foster had become quite famous as the "crazy" organizer of Chicago's stockyard workers, and on his reputation as the resourceful and intrepid doer of the impossible, he was able to push the resolution through. Foster carried the resolution to the AFL convention in St. Paul, on June 17, 1918, and there - he would tell me in conversation later - by tactfully allowing Gompers to think that it was he, rather than Foster, who had originated the idea, managed to get Gompers' support.

Gompers had no real idea of what he was "supporting." Not only was he wedded to the concept of craft unionism as the be-all of unionism itself, but he saw unions as a kind of club, open only to males, white and native-born. If he consented to organizing steel, it was because he thought the whole idea was hare-brained and that a spectacular failure there would cook that upstart Foster feller's goose. (Gompers could spot a possible rival a mile down the road.) It never occurred to him, that to organize steel you had to do it on an industrial basis; you couldn't do it on a craft basis which would only affect a small fraction of the work force. Foster knew but kept mum about it. You could sum up Gompers' intellectual reach by his opinion of the foreign-born workers, who repre-

sented more than 60 percent of the work force in steel. Here's a vintage Gompersism: foreign-born workers were "untutored, born in lands of oppression ... reached manhood without the full mental development which makes for independence and self-preservation."

As for African Americans, he saw them as nothing but strikebreaker. And he was four-square behind the immigration quota system which limited the entry of Asians to 800 a year (and no women).

The AFL's policy of keeping African Americans out of "white" unions were the chickens that came home to roost in the 1919 steel strike. U.S. Steel, with Bible-quoting Gary as head of it, deliberately recruited African Americans from the South and brought them in (often in closed box cars) to take the jobs of the strikers. This presented the organizers of the strike with a serious problem. It is the measure of the man that Foster, on the whole, grasped it correctly, seeing the men brought in by stealth as workers first (not just strikebreakers). In summing up the lessons of the strike, he drove home the idea that future organization of workers would be impossible if the unions closed their doors to African Americans. This policy paid off 15 years later during the great CIO upsurge when the staunchest support for the CIO came from the African American community.

Every decision to act involved a theoretical question. Marxists are not divided into "thinkers" and "doers," but are both in one. As an activist who put his ideas constantly to the test, Foster made mistakes and he freely admitted it. One might say of him and his "mistakes" what Lenin said about Marx's and Engels' "mistakes," that they stood so high on the mountain theoretically that the distances before them were foreshortened: the goal seemed closer than it was in reality. But Lenin also added that the "mistakes" of Marx and Engels were more productive, more "right" than volumes from professors whose every pedantic comma was in the correct place. If there was one abiding weakness that Foster shared with other revolutionaries it was this revolutionary impatience, the feeling that the climax was closer than it really turned out to be.

However, whatever mistakes Foster made he did not make the main one: he never capitulated to the enemy as so many "wiser," "more sophisticated" political Pied Pipers did before and after him.

No doubt, one of the severest and most critical

testings of his political integrity came when Earl Browder, the general secretary of the Communist Party, launched a major attempt to destroy the Communist Party from within, and in the process pollute the theoretical basis for socialism (which Gorbachev was to do 50 years later). Combined with the political attacks were the police and court attacks, also launched to drive the same idea home. Again, Foster found himself in an almost absolute minority in holding his position as opposed to Browder's. His position, that the post-war world would not usher in an epoch of cooperation between imperialism and socialism and between labor and capital, eventually won out.

Hardly a decade later, he was again on the ideological barricades, (Johanningsmeier doesn't like the use of "military" terms like "class war," etc., but they have a spontaneous life of their own) facing combat with the reemergent Browderites with slightly-refurbished faces, led by the editor of the *Daily Worker*, John Gates. Gates' theoretical emptiness was quickly exposed, and the opposition, which he ostensibly led, having found itself all dressed in "more revolutionary" garb and nowhere to go, disintegrated.

Already ill with a heart condition, Foster paid for that clash with Gates by suffering a stroke which left one of his hands useless. Confined to bed in his Bronx apartment by a later stroke, he once again showed himself to be an incredible fighter. In a few years (before and after his confinement) he wrote four important books and numerous articles, and constantly conferred with leaders of the Party on strategy and tactics.

I interviewed him several times while he was bed-ridden. I was profoundly impressed by his courage and the calm with which he confronted his paralysis as though it were no more than another obstacle. Millions throughout the world grasped the heroism of this man's struggle and understood he was "on their side." Lying imprisoned in his bed, Foster was still able to command forces all over the world. Ironically it was Foster, the outlaw, who was defending the honor of his country in upholding its profoundest democratic ideals, and if America is ever to gain the confidence of the world again, it will be because of men like Foster.

It gratified me that I was able to report to Foster, after a trip to China and the USSR, that his name was known everywhere, and at the Third

Writers Congress in Moscow (1959), Mikoyan had spread his arms wide and cried: "Yes. Send him to us!"

After his death I stood with others as honor guard to his bier lying in Carnegie Hall, conscious that an irreplaceable quality had left our life. A handsome man, he had a gallant and even jaunty way of looking at you. He was a man utterly without pose, interested in what you had to say, freely interruptible, inviting argument, and even after a sharp polemic with you he still looked for ways to ensure your point of view was heard. Always courteous, his main weapons were persuasion and logic. If your logic was superior to his, he had no vanity to defend in conceding the fact. There was a touch of the Wobbly about him, the rank-and-file delegate, the self-taught highly educated man who understood more about life and mankind from hands-on experience than any professor who swallowed an encyclopedia whole and suffered from permanent intellectual indigestion thereafter. In fact, as the author of numerous books and pamphlets, all scrupulously researched and painstakingly supplied with the proper reassuring footnotes, indexes and cross references, this public school dropout inadvertently exposed the entire mystique surrounding academic scholarship acquired at the cost of tens of thousands of dollars and the sacrifice of the best years of a young man or woman's life.

With all this as prologue, I am hardly prepared to accept Edward P. Johanningsmeier's promise, that in his new book he will show us a Foster as a "deracinated figure tragically out of touch with the native oppositional tradition that had nurtured his career ..." or the further judgment that he "was not suited to the new politics of labor that emerged in the 1930s." And finally, as a kind of coup de grace, the bald assertion that Foster was the man who brought the Communist Party back "toward sectarianism" in defeating Browderism and Gatesism and that he championed a line that followed the "logic of decline, isolation and helplessness... (leaving) a legacy of complex and often negative lessons for later generations of activists."

In other words, his life is a cautionary tale. The author, to mitigate somewhat the Papal finality of it all, sets out with the promise that in this study of a leading American Communist - and therefore of the Communist movement - he was breaking with the anti-Communist tradition of portraying Foster

(and the movement) "as an adroit factional in-fighter and opportunist, a politician more in tune with the ideological requirements of the Comintern than with the needs of the American working class."

Stephen F. Cohen, in what for academic circles was a shocking break with anti-Soviet studies of the past, dismissing some 70 years of "Sovietology" (which had made a living and reputation for an entire generation of professors) posed in his book, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience*: "How did an academic field that drew upon diverse intellectual disciplines to study the most controversial political history of the 20th Century reach such an arid consensus and then maintain it for so long?" The "arid" consensus was that the Soviet Union was a monolithic totalitarian state about which only one attitude was acceptable: denunciation. This "consensus" was further fortified in 1953 "by the firing of at least 600 professors and teachers across the country."

We know what passes for courage in the academic world and are hopeful that the time when the Communist Party could be charged with a plot to abduct the Statue of Liberty and hide it in Grant's Tomb has definitely passed into limbo along with Elizabeth Dilling's *The Red Network*, Louis Budenz's *My Story* (which he dedicated to the Virgin Mary) and Whittaker Chambers' nightmare aberrations along with his pumpkin papers.

We are told nothing about Johanningsmeier's qualifications other than he "teaches courses in modern history at the University of Delaware. He promises us that he, too, has broken with "tradition" in his field and offers us a kind of menu other than the well-gnawed bones of anti-Communism the world is only too familiar with.

Unfortunately we're going to find in reading the book itself that Johanningsmeier is more like an intellectual head waiter who provides a mouth watering menu for you to look at, but you find that there are more flies in the soup than there is soup itself. One almost has the feeling, for example, that he's taken the name of the godfather of anti-Communist tracts, Theodore Draper, to task, only to discover that this is an illusion. He merely divides up the field with Draper, leaving Draper in possession of his turf while he, Johanningsmeier, will take his rake to change the image a bit and hoe elsewhere. Instead of seeing Foster only as a clone of the Comintern, as Draper did, the present author

will begin his search for Foster's soul on native grounds. Although he has promised us this (which sounds logical enough), he practically takes it all back by assuring us that "this study pays particular attention to the history of Foster's rhetoric," and goes on:

He and his generation of radicals, after all, are often remembered for their distinctive political grammar. Foster was an eclectic thinker and improvisational activist whose rhetoric borrowed from American trade unionism various currents in American and European syndicalism and anarchism, prevailing notions of gender, and to a certain extent, the ideologies of American corporate enterprise. He was not a learned or original theorist by any means, and it is tempting to dismiss much of Foster's writings as mere propaganda or factional posturing. There is a lack of veracity in his public speech that many found repellent, but there is another sense in which his language was profoundly honest.

This passage is typical of the book in which he takes two steps forward, bows, and takes one step back. We marvel at a writer who can call his subject a liar ("lack of veracity," "repellent") and in the same breath allow that his "language was profoundly honest."

He did, after all, believe that he lived in a world of large economic imperatives and ubiquitous capitalist power; the terminology of Communism (as well as its 'Aesopian' evasiveness) did, in this sense, fit much of his experience. It was a world, he believed, in which dialogue was not particularly valuable. Nonetheless ideas useful to Foster, and the public presentation of his politics was closely related to his successes and failures as a radical.

So Foster's "honesty" therefore consists of his sincere belief in delusions and lies! This style of saying the opposite of what one presumes to be saying carries through with the impressive sounding "public presentation of his politics," etc., which, taking a second look, reveals absolutely nothing.

In referring gratuitously, as though it were an established feature of Marxism, to "Aesopian evasiveness," the author slyly echoes the testimony of the arch informer Louis Budenz in his appearance at Foley Square in 1948 in helping to frame the 11 leading American Communists. In fact, despite his demurrals, Johanningsmeier manages to ring about

every hoary anti-Communist charge. In citing testimonies to Foster's character, he quotes not only Foster's personal enemies, but men long discredited in any serious field of social inquiry: Jay Lovestone, an out-and-out CIA agent, and Earl Browder, who might as well have been. To cite these two men as character witnesses for Foster is like asking a colony of diphtheria germs what they thought of Louis Pasteur.

Unfortunately, this profoundly corrupt way of thinking will dominate everything in the book until one wonders why a man of such little ability and integrity writes a book about Foster at all.

Johanningsmeier goes even further. Foster was known to be a man of even temper, a quiet conversationalist who was averse to pomposity or the pulpit style of oratory. He cultivated no persona and there was not an autocratic bone in his body. Nevertheless, in off-the-hip characterizations spread throughout the book, Johanningsmeier manages to inform us that Foster "ranted" more often than not, that he was the prisoner of a "deep and unrelenting rage against 'society'," and that he was the helpless victim of "alienation and anger that lay at the center of (his) personality." With his "rage" coupled to his "immodesty," the author says Foster worked not to organize but to "inflare" a strike, and despite all that, he was nevertheless a "loner" who at the same time composed "reams" of practically worthless writings, and then to top it all off it seems that he asked for a priest to attend to him on his deathbed in Moscow. This final statement is totally unsubstantiated. For a man who has promised us that he's broken with the ongoing anti-Communist school of impacted slander that Cohen refers to, it's hard to see where he draws the line. While claiming that he was not aping the "Moscow-agent" line, nevertheless Johanningsmeier can blandly say: "Foster was never trusted by the Comintern with a confidential overseas assignment, a rite of passage for most Communist leaders."

I suppose that only in the field of anti-Communist table-rapping could such a statement pass by unchallenged, unable to meet even kindergarten requirements for proof. Just what proof is there that the "Comintern" put people like Italy's Togliatti, Spain's Dolores Ibarreau, France's Thorez, and Germany's Thaelman through such tests and if they passed, were presumably promoted to positions of leadership in their home parties? Would such peo-

ple stand up to fascist torture and cruel imprisonment as Thaelman did for 13 years in Buchenwald where he was finally murdered in cold blood and knew all those 13 years that he would be murdered?

Nor does Johanningsmeier pass up the "Moscow gold" canard. Typically, he couples two incompatibles in which the slander is used to undermine what could otherwise be interpreted as a virtue. He casually says: "Although the Communist Party itself had received significant subsidies from the Soviet Union since its founding ..." Quite a statement to make with nothing but an "although" to back it up; but then comes what is surely not consciously a comical anti-climax: "... such payments were not enough to provide a comfortable standard of living for even the highest official of the Party." You can say that again. At Foley Square, the government revealed that all of the defendants were, in effect, paupers. Surely Moscow could have done better with them; perhaps inviting them to their dentists and slipping in a bit more gold in their fillings!

Indeed, Foster's "life style" could only have aroused contempt and laughter among the world's "winners." His apartment in the Bronx, according to Johanningsmeier, "was always badly in need of painting." (I didn't particularly notice during my visits there just what the state of the painting was.) His income was never more than \$3,500 a year as a Party functionary, and he was just as likely to give it away to anyone who asked (he turned all his royalties for his books over to the Party.) If there is such a thing as a secular saint, Foster came closest to it, inspiring Marc Blitzstein to say of him in one of his songs that he "was the purest kind of a guy."

When one is so categorical in one's denunciation of an idea, a practice, a policy, it's assumed that one knows what the correct way is. Johanningsmeier certainly flays about in his denunciations of what he takes to be Foster's gross mistakes, i.e., the Party's. He promises "original theorizing" and "new thinking." It seems that, strain as he will, he can come up with nothing more "daring," "more innovative," more "theoretically original" than warmed over Browderism.

According to Johanningsmeier, the "American Communists could have benefited from original theorizing on questions of labor and electoral politics, and the relationship of the Party to state

power. He says that the unique and deeply rooted character of the two-party system in the United States required, on its face, an innovative approach. (In Europe the "innovative" approach brought disaster to several parties.) The "innovative" approach was tried here too: Browder tried it by liquidating the Party.

First of all, there is nothing "unique" about a two-party system in a bourgeois state. Its persistence is not due to its "deep-rootedness" alone but also to the ability of corporate power, which controls both parties, to manipulate them in a now-you-see it, now-you-don't alternative of personalities and issues. At the same time, it maintains a death grip on the political process itself, making it extremely difficult for a third party to get a hold. If ever the breach is made in the two-party system, the people will flood through and all hitherto "solid" assumptions about how deeprooted this or that institution is will be swept away with the flood. Johanningsmeier grossly distorts Foster's philosophy and practice when he tries to shrivel it down to a kind of shame-faced syndicalism, charging that, "In essence, he was foreseeing a situation in which the unions would take over or supplant one of the major parties."

Moreover, Browder did not commit "heresies" (Marxism is not a religion) but profound political mistakes. Johanningsmeier dwells with particular fondness on his notion that Foster was wed to the idea that the revolution would be brought into being by an elite group of workers who, "boring from within," would eventually take over control of the trade-union movement, and from there going into socialism would be no more than passing a trade-union majority vote motion to do so: "the ayes have it." "Foster's laborite perspective, and above all his belief in the historical progression of the union movement, absolved him from offering a cogent explanation for the rejection by American workers of socialist politics" says the author. But charging that Foster was a syndicalist to the end, nailed to the idea of the "one big union" forever, absolves the author of the necessity of explaining why, if he was such a syndicalist, Foster ran for president on the CP ticket several times, and why he fought so fiercely for the integrity of the Party against Browderism. Summing Foster up:

He was first attracted to Communism, not because of the Messianic faith that Bolshevism promised for some

activists, but because his power and efficiency appeared to at least match that of the modern corporations that seemed to rule the world. Quite simply, he believed that Soviet power could be enlisted in the fight for social justice in America. At its most effective his outlook was adaptive, experimental, and innovative; at its worst it could be crudely bureaucratic and aridly unhistorical. However, his aggressive modernism was not an alien, 'Un-American' mentality, its seeds were first planted into his consciousness in turn-of-the-century Philadelphia, where his family's powerlessness gave birth to his peculiar cynicism about working-class culture, tradition, and faith.

Now that we've taken away just about everything, let's give a bit of it back:

It is impossible, though, to dismiss his alienation as based simply on narrow experience of a sullen, wounded memory. His wide and complex experiences as a worker and trade union organizer both contributed to his visceral hatred of capitalist society and led him to embrace vital aspects of the world-view and methodology of his opponents. Part of the irony and tragedy of his life is that he never understood America in this way, fully a product of the society he so disposed.

Even in his account of Foster's boyhood, Johanningsmeier misses the boat, just about as grossly as he misses any real understanding of the personal and social motives governing Foster's actions at any point in his life. He's so intent on establishing the foundation on which to launch his later claim that Foster abandoned his native roots and so ensured his "tragedy" that he totally neglects to explain how it was possible for this boy, surrounded by Irish Catholicism, deep poverty, ignorance and superstition, crime and vice, with a mother who actively practiced her religion (though his father was an active Fenian) to have evaded the worst consequences of all that and to have struck out, still no more than a boy, along the road that led him to Marx.

Foster didn't have to "discover" the class struggle; it laid rough hands on him practically the day he was born. He was, in fact, quite a remarkable boy. Simply to have broken with religion so early in life took enormous moral effort and courage. To have escaped the traditional pitfalls of the poor - alcoholism and petty crime - was also a tribute to his remarkable character. He was an omnivorous

reader, a key factor in his self-education and intellectual independence. No, bargain basement psychology will not help us here. Normal people do not need a "peculiar cynicism" to learn to hate injustice. In fact, children are very sensitive to injustice and "it isn't fair" is a commonly heard expression among them both in play and in "serious" life. If they learn later to accommodate themselves to injustice, this is due not to their failure to perceive it but to the punishment "society" deals so mercilessly on them if they actively oppose it. It is noble to help the poor, but a crime to try to eliminate poverty.

To understand Foster's motives in becoming a "radical" – he is correctly defined as a "revolutionary" – one need seek no further than his early awareness of injustice and his humane reaction to it. Deep dives into arcane psychological caves are not necessary. Foster survived. How many "Fosters" were destroyed then and now?

As Marx has said before him, he could have been "an ox" and looked after his own skin, and no doubt profited. But it really takes a petty bourgeois merchant's mind to judge a life like Foster's a "tragedy." Would success have been to be another Gompers, James B. Carey, Emil Rieve, David Dubinsky, John L. Lewis or even Phil Murray who died alone in his hotel room as he watched his union, the CIO, dwindle into a shadow of itself as he rebaited it to death?

For a man who pretends to so much authority on his subject, it hardly bolsters confidence in his command of his subject to be told not only that Mike Gold was the head of the Furrier's Union (when it was of course Ben Gold), but to confuse Dimitrov, world famous as the courageous Bulgarian Communist defendant in the Nazi court at Leipzig in 1933, with "the powerful Soviet official." His book is strewn with logical non-sequiturs like, "Despite a solemn ceremony before the Kremlin Wall, where American Communists John Reed, William D. Haywood, and Charles Ruthenberg were interred, Esther (Foster's wife) finally accompanied his ashes back to the United States." Is one supposed to read that "despite" to mean that somehow Foster was also supposed to be interred in the Kremlin Wall, and it was some kind of downgrading to send his ashes home to be buried with many other Communist leaders in Chicago? And is it really necessary to be told that the fascist scum at his memorial meeting at Carnegie Hall carried signs like "We Hate Reds?" More important were the innumerable messages of condolences from

practically every Communist Party in the world, as well as prominent working-class leaders everywhere, who noted with sorrow the passing of one of our century's genuine great men.

It is also typical of the author that, in noting the "failure" of Foster and the Party to prosper in the Cold War years, he practically ignores not only the width and scope of repressive legislation like the Taft-Hartley law, but accepts the cynical frameup trials of Communist Party activists, friends and functionaries that continued for 20 years. The author never pauses to ask how it was possible to send dozens of American Communists to jail under a law titled Alien Registration Act, intended to register and fingerprint aliens in wartime? Not a word as to the frameup of the whole caper!

Even President Roosevelt, in signing what he took to be an alien registration act, warned against using it unjustly against aliens "who are all of us at one time." How did an act designed to register aliens become the "Smith Act" which drove a jagged hole through the Bill of Rights and deprived dozens of innocent citizens of their liberty, and drove thousands, if not millions of others, into a state of fear and uncertainty for decades to come? A governmental threat that if you joined the Party this act would make you eligible for 10 years of jail is a powerful astringent calculated to keep you in place and inconspicuous! Could that possibly be a factor in the Party's apparent "decline" as surely as the execution of tens of thousands of French, German and Italian Communists during the war contributed to their parties' "decline?" And isn't the fact that the courageous resistance of the Communists to the Smith Act has gained for them an even more solid foundation for further growth, based on trust of their fidelity to principle? People know that in times of trouble the Communists do not run for the hills!

The history, nature and character of the Communist Party cannot be left to the mercy of professors, most of whom work in universities, which, if the CIA or the Defense Department cut off their subsidies, would collapse overnight. However well intentioned their own motives, the product, poisoned at the source, can only come out skewed. It's not enough to know how to read a book and reproduce what's in it. One keeps asking: on what picket line of pain, did you pay your dues that qualified you to speak of the struggle of the people for true freedom? □

Phillip Bonosky

Land of Idols, Michael Parenti, St. Martin's Press, New York 1994, 208 pp. \$18.66 paper.

“The demand to abandon illusions about our condition is a demand to abandon the conditions which require illusion.” With this quote from Karl Marx, Michael Parenti begins an important new book examining the controlling myths that operate in U.S. society and (to varying degrees) in all countries under capitalist rule.

Those who know Parenti's other major works, ranging from *The Anti-Communist Impulse*, to *Democracy for the Few* and the recent *Inventing Reality*, will find a familiar debunking of capitalism's recycled conventional wisdom presented once more with the insight and verve that has characterized his work as a people's intellectual. While respecting the debates among social scientists and theorists in their own right, Parenti looks at ideas for their use value, their relevance to an understanding of social reality that will empower the working class and class conscious activists to change social reality.

In part one, Parenti deals with the wide variety of assumptions that depoliticize people, ranging from the old, cynical “you can't fight City Hall,” which continues to be a powerful force in working-class life, to “new age” philosophies of personal empowerment and New Right formulations of religion and “patriotism.” But he does more than debunk, which has its limitations for class-conscious activists, in the U.S. where capitalists have used both their control over mass media and the divisions among the masses of working people to identify their system with “America,” “freedom,” “democracy,” and “progress,” and socialism with “utopia,” “a failed system,” and “dictatorship.”

Rather, he gives his readers positive alternatives to the political and spiritual hired guns of capitalism, counterposing “real patriotism” based on internationalism and inclusion of diverse views and a real socially conscious religion – the religion of liberation theology, which also presents a democratic alternative to the clerical interference runners of monopoly capital. “Religious belief,” Parenti argues:

today often serves as an adjunct to state idolatry and superpatriotism. We must struggle to enlist it in the cause of social justice, as progressive religious elements have advocated. Only then will God be an inspiration for human betterment rather than a rationale for human injustice and class privilege. (p. 52)

In this section Parenti might have brought more material from *Inventing Reality* to show how the media frames reality for the masses of working people, portraying the “real world” of the cities and working-class life as a crime-infested jungle and how the media provides a wide variety of escapist “choices” in all mainstream areas of culture. He might have also looked at how the Republicans, marketing their core appeals to upper-income groups and the Democrats to lower-income groups function, in effect, as political corporations owned by the same ruling class stockholders and committed to the same equation, democracy equals capitalism.

It would have been interesting to look at third party and independent left parties and leaders. Important leaders like Eugene Debs, Ben Davis, Vito Marcantonio, and William Z. Foster, developed in their political campaigns and writings popular and still useful responses to the myths and illusions fostered by capitalist rule. Parenti might have examined the radical social gospel and Christian Socialist traditions in the United States that long preceded liberation theology on the world scene, and which led capitalists among the laity to finance the fundamentalist movement in the early twentieth century as a political backlash to these trends. It also would have been good to have looked at the African American church from this standpoint.

Parenti examines monopoly capitalist culture in Section 2 of his work, providing readers with a cogent and witty defense of the relevance of Marxist definitions of class and Marxism itself, from the sniping of “orthodox anti-Communists” who have played class against social status group, ethnic group, gender group, etc. Parenti shows that the predictions of Marx and Marxism have been much more right than wrong about the development of

POLITICAL AFFAIRS

capitalism and class struggle, and that:

Most Marxists are neither chiliastic nor utopian. They dream not of a perfect life and a flawless society, but of a better life and a more just community, making no pretense at eliminating all suffering ... certainly, some people are seriously flawed and given to wrongful deeds at times. But this is all the more reason why we do not want to see power accumulating in the hands of a favored and unaccountable few, which is the central dedication of capitalism. (p. 84)

Furthermore, Parenti shows that monopoly capitalism in the U.S. has been pursuing policies of massive real wage reduction, detaxation of the rich, reduction of education and health services to the working people – in essence making class oppression more visible and acute – at a time that its myriads of apologists and interference runners seek to deny the relevance of class and class struggle.

In his third and final section, Parenti deals with the central role of racism in U.S. history, from its roots in slavery to its present manifestations in the Reagan-Bush era, connecting it to the institutional inequalities and anti-humanistic forms of thought and life fostered by monopoly capitalism. In this regard, he carefully separates the systemic analysis of capitalist hegemony put forward by Marxists and others on the left, from popular conspiracy theories of the right, and others who see minorities and hidden groups dominating the society to promulgate their ideas or provide wealth and power for their members. He challenges the smug assumptions of both the academic establishment and mass media popularizers that the “extremes” of right and left represent comparable “onesided” views.

Indeed, he makes one of the most incisive arguments for the relevance of Marxism when he writes:

The conservative goal has been the “Third Worldization” of the United States: An increasingly underemployed lower-wage work force; a small but growing moneyed class that pays almost no taxes; the privatization or elimination of human services; the elimination of public education for low-income people; the easing of restrictions against child labor; the export of industries and jobs to low-wage, free trade countries; the breaking of labor unions; and the elimination of occupational safety and environmental controls and regulations. Far from becoming passe, class issues are taking on a greater urgency as class oppression becomes more virulent. (p. 69)

“All science,” Parenti quotes Marx, “would be superfluous if outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided.” (p. 173) In monopoly capitalist society, essences are routinely ignored or actively denied in the name of objectivity, scholarship reduced to “thick description” of detail, and mass information media processed according to advertising and entertainment formulas. *Land of Idols* carries forward Marx’s understanding that the road to freedom is through science, through a recognition of real social processes and an ethical commitment to the struggle of the working class for emancipation from a system that robs and wastes the wealth it produces. It is a valuable tool to raise and focus the consciousness of working people and all activists in people’s movements. □

Norman Markowitz

Stalin Over Wisconsin, by Steven Meyer, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, N.J. 1992, 231 pp. \$45.00 cloth.

Stalin Over Wisconsin, is the story of the rise and fall of a militant local union, UAW Local 248 at the Allis-Chambers plant in West Allis, Wisconsin, an industrial suburb that borders Milwaukee. The author Stephen Meyer, takes his title from a political cartoon of the same name that appeared in the Sept. 23, 1946 issue of the *Milwaukee Sentinel*. The cartoon “vividly depicted a large drooling Stalin-headed spider overreaching a webbed glove, implanting a flag with the words ‘Wisconsin, District 18 on the Communist world map.’” (p.1) The cartoon initiated a two-month series that attacked Local 248 for its supposed Communist domination. The series, which was written by a fictitious “John Sentinel,” who in reality was an Allis-Chambers speech writer and researcher by the name of Ellis Jensen, came in the middle of a bitter 11-month strike. (p. 168)

The author describes his book as a work-place study that rests “on my conviction that we still know too little about the hidden terrain of production and its connection to larger social and political issues.” (Preface)

But what *Stalin over Wisconsin* really does is to chronicle one of the most important battles in Amer-

ican labor history. The real battle as Meyer points out throughout was not alleged Soviet or Communist control of American industry, but whether workers could build a union that would give them an equal say on the shop floor in order to combat absolute management control. Furthermore, it illustrates the battles the CIO had to wage against the backwardness of the AFL in order to build industrial unionism in the 1930s. And finally, it details the capitulation of the Reuther-led UAW and the CIO after the war to the Cold War policies of anti-Communism.

The book begins with a history of the corporation and its mergers and acquisitions of smaller companies. By the late 1920s, Allis-Chambers was the third largest producer of agricultural equipment in the U.S. and at its peak employed over 11,000 workers. They included a large percentage of skilled trade workers along with semi-skilled and unskilled workers. For most of its history the work force was predominantly white and male, though some change in composition would occur as a result of African American and women workers coming into the work force during WW II. (p. 21)

Efforts to unionize began with the AFL trying to build craft unions among the various skilled trades. The first organizing attempt began with the machinists union in 1901. Then came a long and bitter strike among the International Molders Union in 1904 that collapsed due to other craft workers crossing their picketlines and goon squad tactics used by the company. During World War I, another attempt was made by the machinists with the principle demand being the abolishing of the piece-work system in favor of general wage increases and wage rates. This too failed. (p. 34)

It wasn't until the 1930s that unionization began again in earnest. The Depression and the New Deal labor legislation as a response to it, opened up room for organizing. Huge layoffs and wage cuts in 1930 and 1932 added fuel to the fire. Initially workers in the different AFL craft unions tried to organize and win a contract for themselves. Failing at this, they then tried to organize along industrial lines with the AFL Federal Labor Union (FLU). By this time Harold Christoffel had emerged as the leader of the Allis-Chambers workers and the idea of industrial unionism – one union for all the workers at Allis-Chambers had taken hold. However, the more conservative policies of the AFL were making it impossible for the industrial union leaders to stay with the

AFL. Not only was the policy of the AFL to discourage industrial unionism, it also had a policy of outside business agents doing the negotiating for the workers. So while Christoffel and other rank-and-file workers were organizing the union from the inside, AFL leaders were secretly trying to negotiate a contract with management. Though unable to get a contract, the effect of these efforts was to further alienate the workers from the AFL.

In February, 1937, the local leaders began to prepare to affiliate into the CIO, which had recently won some dramatic victories among industrial workers, first in Flint, Michigan where the sit-down strike of GM autoworkers captured world-wide attention. At a March 1937 meeting nearly 2000 union members voted to affiliate with the CIO and became UAW Local 248. Within four months membership nearly quadrupled and when the local held a mass meeting in early May, 7,500 workers attended. The result was that on May 28, the union and the company signed the first collective bargaining agreement. In January of 1938 the NLRB conducted a representation election where the UAW won exclusive bargaining rights.

Meyers makes it very clear that from the beginning the strength of the leadership was a strong shop steward system that would guarantee shop-floor democracy and activity. For example, during the first set of negotiations with the company the stewards were in on the drawing up of demands and were part of negotiations the whole time. Their direct connections to the immediate interests of the rank and file was key to maintaining support for the union. Whether it was wearing buttons, attending meetings, coming to victory dances or anything else pertaining to the union, this loyal and committed network of shop stewards was the base of the union's strength. In future years it was the steward's ability to win grievances on the shop floor that made for a strong union.

The first major strike took place in 1939 and involved issues that were to remain at the center of contention for a long time. The local had signed up over 90 percent of the members and was demanding a closed shop. But the company adamantly refused and viewed this question as a fundamental challenge. Part of the union's reasoning was that even though the union won an overwhelming victory in the NLRB election, the AFL and other conservative unionists in the plant continued their factional efforts to oppose the militant leadership of Local 248 by

organizing the Milwaukee Workers Industrial Organization (MWIO). From the beginning they used anti-Communism as one of their main weapons, along with appealing to the craft instincts of some of the skilled tradesmen. However the union responded with a militant show of force that was touched off by a shop-floor demonstration of several hundred union members demanding the removal of one of the MWIO leaders. A violent, bitter 26-day strike ensued with union security the major issue. Mass picketing of upwards of 5000 members took place with workers defending the picketline as "stones, eggs and fists greeted nonstriking office workers attempting to enter the factory." (p. 80)

Although the union failed to win its key demand it did win greater control over the grievance procedure and the right to strike during the contract.

Factional warfare between the UAW and the AFL continued with organizing efforts by anti-UAW workers to maintain membership in AFL craft unions. The UAW responded by challenging the right of those workers to work in the plant and repeatedly held shop-floor demonstrations. Tensions exploded in 1941 in what was to be known as the 1941 "defense" strike. In a January 1941 mass membership meeting, President Christoffel declared that management was out to break the union and was aiding the dissident AFL unionists. On January 11, the workers voted 5,958 to 758 to strike.

The main issue was the right of the union to defend itself against non-union and company interference in its functioning. However by 1941 Allis-Chambers had significant orders for the defense industry. As the conflicts between the AFL and the CIO intensified across the country, the AFL along with the corporations and the media charged that strikes like Allis-Chambers were called not for trade union reasons but as part of a grand scheme of the Communist Party to weaken the defense industry.

The strike began to take on national importance, not so much for any strategic defense products it might produce, but for the political nature of the fight between the CIO on one side and the ruling class and AFL on the other. Meyer reveals the real trade-union nature of the strike when he describes a meeting held in Washington with the company and the CIO to arbitrate:

Deeply divided, the reluctant representatives went to Washington with totally different agendas. The UAW

leaders wanted a union shop or some other form of union security. The corporate officials maintained their open shop position and articulated a philosophy of management control. (p. 94)

During four days of mediation the whole issue discussed was the UAW demand for union security. Nonetheless, during the whole strike the press and AFL opponents referred to the issue as a political strike. Despite a company organized back-to-work movement and violence on the picketlines the union held out for 78 days and eventually won the right for an "impartial referee [that] provided the important wedge that eventually ensured union security against AFL and company provocations." (p. 102) However the essence of the strike was turned on its head by those interested in destroying the CIO. Louis Budenz who later was to become a professional informer on the Communist Party, later testified that the Allis-Chambers strike was called by Communist Party Chairman William Z. Foster "in order to stop all of the national defense, and also any aid to Britain." (p. 205)

The result of the 1941 defense strike was to give the union an opportunity to consolidate its gains during the next five years. What is significant about the structure and functioning of Local 248 was their ability to continually agitate and win on shop floor issues that moved in the direction of a more democratic workplace. Issues that might seem trivial to an outsider are often as important to workers as wage increases. This is especially true in regards to the issues of respect and dignity, as well as work rules. The strategic use of the grievance procedure allowed the local to gradually infringe on management's exclusive right to control the workplace. During the New Deal era when the political climate was favorable or at least neutral towards labor, left-led unions like UAW 248 were able to make progress. But when Truman replaced Roosevelt the political winds shifted, the Cold War began and this important battleground in the class struggle became more difficult to score victories on.

Meyer argues that the Cold War attack on the labor movement began in Milwaukee in 1946 with the 11-month strike against Allis-Chambers and the successful efforts of the CIO Political Action Committee (CIO-PAC) to run its own candidates in the 1946 Democratic primary. The strike began on April 30 with the underlying issue being efforts by management to take back control of the grievance proce-

dure and re-establish its right to transfer workers and determine their wage rates. During the war a series of decisions had been made in the union's favor by impartial referees and the company saw an opportunity to reverse those decisions. The strike would last for 329 days and was one of the most bitter in labor history. It ended in defeat for the union, but only after Local 248 leaders were viciously red-baited and attacked in the press day after day. As a result of the lost strike, 91 stewards, committeemen and officers were fired and many were blacklisted.

The year 1946 also saw the emergence of Joe McCarthy on the national scene. In 1946 the Progressive Party of Senator Robert LaFollette dissolved and he decided to run in the Republican Party primary. At the same time the CIO-PAC decide to field a slate of candidates. As a result progressive support and votes that would have normally gone to LaFollette went into the Democratic primary and that allowed McCarthy to win the primary. By the time the general election came around, the CIO had been so severely red-baited for the Allis-Chambers strike that the Democratic Party backed away from the union candidates and the Republican Party swept the first post-war elections, with McCarthy leading the way.

Stalin Over Wisconsin, is an important lesson in history. Local 248 was brought into being on the backs of a working-class upsurge in the 1930s and '40s that saw some of the most important class battles ever fought by workers in the U.S. Most importantly they won many of the battles. What is significant about the book is that the author shows how the union was built from the bottom up and was able to challenge and defeat management's claim to exclusive control of the shop floor. It is extensively documented by the author that trade-union issues were what the strikes and struggles were all about, not phony charges of Communism. Communists and the Communist Party were sympathetically viewed by members and leaders of the union because they earned the respect of the workers. For example, during the organizing of the union Meyer credits Eugene Dennis, then the secretary of the Communist Party in Wisconsin, and later to become its General Secretary with playing an important role in the building of the CIO. "In the mid-1930s, the presence of Eugene Dennis certainly shaped Wisconsin and Milwaukee industrial unionism."¹⁰ (p. 10)

Stalin Over Wisconsin, shows how the ruling-class attack on labor and the capitulation by the

CIO, and specifically Walter Reuther moved the CIO away from a more militant class-struggle unionism to a class-collaboration approach that brought short term "peace" to labor relations but resulted in retreats in the long run. For example, after the militant leadership was defeated, Allis-Chambers management still fought the union over union security and forced a series of strikes over the next thirty years until bad management decisions and the structural crisis forced the giant manufacturer to close its doors in 1987. And one of the first concessions made at Allis-Chambers was the replacing of the grievance procedure with a formal complaint structure and the gutting of the militant shop steward system. Allis-Chambers had finally won the battle over management's rights with the union getting little in return except "respectability."

There are several important lessons in this useful book. One is that the author has continued the process of refuting the Cold War lies that there were sinister and ulterior motives driving the militant actions of the left-led unions. Secondly it shows how the beginnings of the Cold War and the rise of Joe McCarthy and McCarthyism were based on the desire of corporation to reverse the gains made by the CIO in the previous 10 years.

And finally it showed how these workers were able to join together and under difficult conditions win important concessions. Although the company and the ruling class eventually won the battle in 1946 and afterward, the legacy of those and other struggles isn't lost. As working people look towards a way to rebuild the labor movement, the heroic example of Local 248 can both inspire and illuminate the path. □

Steve Noffke

Privatization in Eastern Europe: Is the State Withering Away? Roman Frydman and Andrzej Rapaczynski, New York: Central European University Press, 1994, 221 pp., \$19.95 paper.

The word "privatization" reverberates like a drum roll in the ears of Western economists. The very thought of returning socialist property to private control fills them with anticipation and accelerates their heartbeats. The call is out to sell off state-owned enterprises, and consultants of every sort are eager to contribute and cash in on this attempt to

dismantle socialism. An advertisement in the *Economist* urges specialists to serve as advisors in Russia and Eastern Europe, while a recent bulletin from a prominent midwestern business school features a lead article on "Crusaders for Capitalism" as those intrepid individuals are labeled. Plans for "privatization" – a euphemism for the restoration of capitalism – have become more plentiful than rosaries at the Shrine of the Black Madonna.

One new book devoted to this subject, *Privatization in Eastern Europe: Is the State Withering Away?* by Roman Frydman and Andrzej Rapaczynski, represents the ideas of two economists who found themselves drafting memoranda to the Polish Ministry of Finance in early 1990 when privatization was being pushed by a deputy prime minister, Leszek Balcerowicz, whose approach was the wholesale imposition of the British model under the Thatcher government. (His plan, incidentally, was co-authored by "consultant" Jeffrey Sachs of Harvard, the much acclaimed architect of "shock therapy" in Russia.)

The background to this movement lies in the development of Eastern Europe in the last twenty years. By the end of the 1970s, countries such as Poland and Hungary were burdened with massive foreign indebtedness. Their economies were subsidized by the Soviet Union and the governments were, in turn, trying to subsidize the welfare of their own populations. In desperation, the leadership looked to the West for a way out. In April, 1980, Poland played host to a delegation of Western bankers who pressured the government to decrease food subsidies and increase exports to ensure a more efficient and rapid debt repayment. The social and economic repercussions of these measures led the regimes to introduce elements of decentralization and flexibility to curb rising discontent. Before the so-called "collapse of Communism" in 1989, relinquishing control over some of the state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and introducing market mechanisms, were seen as absolutely necessary for survival. Initial efforts led to runaway inflation (over 800 percent in Poland in 1991), a significant decrease in industrial production and an alarming drop in the GNP.

Enter Frydman and Rapaczynski with their proposal for a privatization model which has apparently been adopted at least in part by the current Polish government. In their analysis, the primary obstacle Eastern Europe faced was that the basic concept of private property had to be reintroduced into society.

In their view, all socioeconomic orders have to

deal with the allocation of available resources and must choose between some sort of communal decision making, on the one hand, and on the other, the amount of resources society will reserve for the exclusive use of certain members at the expense of others. Thus they argue that having attempted a measure of collectivity, Eastern European economies would have to return to individual domination, a process that would involve a political struggle and reeducation of the population. Right now, they complain, there are no resources supporting the notion of property rights. No mechanisms exist, either legal or self-enforcing, which would assure property owners that their rights to exclusive control would be guaranteed. What a pity!

The authors identify the emerging class struggle as pitting a group they call the "insiders" (workers and managers of enterprises) against another group, the "outsiders" (the State and investors – either domestic or foreign). In the early stages of privatization in Eastern Europe, they report, the "insiders" made considerable gains in this tug of war and succeeded in establishing their control over a substantial portion of the state-owned enterprises.

The goal of Frydman-Rapaczynski is to get the insiders out. The problem with giving plants to employees, they argue, is that it is inequitable. That is, some enterprises are more valuable than others, and therefore it wouldn't be fair if the workers at the more valuable plants got control over them when other workers would be stuck with enterprises of lesser value. In place of insider control, Frydman and Rapaczynski would use state control, but only as a temporary measure. In the final stage the state, too, is eliminated (in a process they call the "privatization of privatization") and all property is safely returned to private control for private profit.

The key element of their proposal is the creation of national enterprise or investment funds which would serve as intermediaries and attract more capital. They would function like mutual funds, allowing the management group of the fund to invest widely in companies of its own choosing. A significant block of shares (ten percent) in any enterprise would be allotted to a single investor. Critical to the plan would be speed, i.e., to move as quickly as possible to a genuine private property regime before inefficient management (currently operating in their opinion) could cripple viable enterprises permanently.

The authors do recognize some problems with the implementation of their plan: 1) The state which

needs to dominate in the first stage of privatization may not want to relinquish control in the second stage; 2) What they call "special interest bureaucrats" may retain too much power; 3) Currently dysfunctional industrial organizations (translate as worker groups) may stand in the way of "new arrangements" of ownership and management.

The authors hope to solve some of the transitional problems with the introduction of a voucher system in which vouchers would be distributed to the population who could use them to buy shares in auctioned SOEs. Employees also could buy a set percentage of the enterprises (now set by law at 20 percent). But the real solution, according to them, is in the creation of a "private property regime" which establishes a legal framework, provides a state regulatory system, teaches people how to negotiate assets and instills commonly accepted expectations of property rights. "Privatization," they write, "is a comprehensive reform intended to liberate the productive forces of a society."

But liberate from whom, we might ask, and for what purposes? The answer is not hidden. What is really being restructured by Frydman, Rapaczynski, Sachs, *et al*, is the nature of social relations and the objective is corporate governance. In Chapter 2, the authors clearly state that it would be "simplistic" to view the process of privatization merely as the state's withdrawal from managing enterprises in favor of a market economy. What is needed, they maintain, is a "control structure" that is "internal and external mechanisms which coordinate responses to market demands."

Their argument about the inequity of giving plants to employees because the value of the enterprises differ is specious. It masks their real objection to insider control which is their fundamental opposition to worker ownership or influence of any kind. Frydman and Rapaczynski insist that we deal with the context of private property. What about the context of unemployment and poverty, the absence of safety nets and the growing disparities of income?

In Hungary, according to the International Labor Organization, unemployment is now 17 percent and estimates for Poland are now up to 20 percent. When General Electric bought the Hungarian light bulb company Tungaram, in 1989, for \$150 million, it downsized from 36,000 to 9,000 workers. To lure foreign investors and buyers of state-owned enterprises, companies are being offered enormous tax breaks with profit taxes deferred up to ten years.

In the shops of Budapest and Warsaw, prices equal those of Western Europe and the United States, while the average worker makes \$250 to \$300 a month. At the same time, managers at the new GM Opel plant in Hungary make Western salaries. A modest, one-room apartment in Budapest costs \$300 and no worker at the Opel plant can afford to buy one of the cars he assembles.

Privatization in Eastern Europe ignores important questions about the social costs of this counter-revolutionary economic "reform" and fails to address such issues as the failure of Eastern European agricultural products to compete with Western European products, the dismantling of heavy industry, and the rebuilding of the infrastructure. The proposal overlooks the price the workers of Eastern Europe are personally paying for the introduction of capitalism.

There are signs that "privatization" is not going well. Popular support for the program, as reflected in public opinion polls in Poland, has dropped from 60 to 30 percent. Major strikes at the steel works in Poland indicate serious worker dissatisfaction with the new owners.

In response, the newly-elected social democratic governments of Hungary and Poland have slowed the process of privatization which remains at about 30 percent of all previously state-owned enterprises, in spite of early claims that 50 to 60 percent of that property could be privatized in three to five years. (Some Western observers anticipate it will take three generations to return Eastern Europe to a system of private property.)

The plans for privatization and the restructuring of the Eastern European economies, such as those put forward in *Privatization in Eastern Europe* are devoid of social guarantees. They seem to resemble the unbridled, rapacious capitalism of the nineteenth century without any of the social welfare measures won by the persistent struggle of workers. The danger of such proposals is that their success would signal the West that those countries can be treated like Third World nations to be exploited for resources and used as markets for Western goods.

But this is not the nineteenth century and economic liberalism even under capitalism is tempered by social protection won through hard fought working-class battles. In spite of setbacks, the situation in Eastern Europe is not without hopeful signs. The workers of Poland and Hungary sense what they stand to lose in a capitalist economy and are begin-

ning to resist changes that would undermine their social welfare. Indeed, the fight against privatization is taking place within the context of the effort to preserve the social gains of socialism. Much depends on its success. □

Ann D' Orazio

The Tyranny of the Majority: Fundamental Fairness in Representative Democracy, by Lani Guinier, The Free Press, a division of Macmillian Inc, New York, 1994, pp. 324. \$24.95.

In her new book *Tyranny of the Majority: Fundamental Fairness in Representative Democracy*, Lani Guinier tells the story of how her son answered a math problem posed by *Sesame Street Magazine* in an unexpected but insightful way. If there are six children, the magazine asked, four of them want to play tag and two want to play hide-and-seek, which will they play?

"They will play both," the boy replied. "First they will play tag. Then they will play hide-and-seek."

Certainly the child's answer represents the fairest approach, the one that any good parent or teacher would recommend. Yet, it is not the answer the magazine was looking for, nor is it the conventional answer under the the strict principle of "majority rule," in which the winner takes all, and the minority gets nothing.

This story illustrates the problem that Guinier grapples with in her writings. The promise of the Constitution and the Voting Rights Act is that each person may have a say in the democratic process. But, too often, African Americans and their political representatives find themselves shut out and out-voted, and their interests ignored. "In a racially divided society," she says, "majority rule may be perceived as majority tyranny."

Guinier maintains that it is not enough for African Americans to vote, or even to get elected to public office. The law and the structure of our legislative bodies must guarantee the opportunity for their interests to be represented and to carry the day a fair proportion of the time. For this anti-racist, pro-democratic position, Professor Guinier last year became the subject of one of the most vicious campaigns of racism, sexism, and political vilification, after her nomination to be assistant attorney general

in charge of the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department.

By now we have come to expect waffling, backtracking and betrayal from Bill Clinton as a matter of course. His acts of racism and insensitivity to African Americans and Latinos who overwhelmingly supported him at the polls, come as no surprise. But in early 1993 when Clinton had just ridden into the White House on a wave of opposition to 12 years of reactionary Reagan/Bush policies it still seemed possible that the president would fulfill his mandate to move the country in a better direction. That is why it was particularly disheartening when Clinton in the kind of betrayal that would become his trademark, withdrew his nomination of Guinier in the face of a mounting right-wing attack.

Guinier's nomination had been lauded by civil rights and peoples leaders. The Reagan/Bush years saw an unprecedented attack on civil rights gains, including attacks from the very federal agencies that were charged with enforcing the laws. It was hoped the nomination would signal a new era.

Right-wing forces apparently feared that this was the case, because they launched a fierce campaign of smears, misinformation and racist innuendos. The opening shot in this attack was fired by the *Wall Street Journal*, which published an article by conservative Clint Bolick under the now infamous racist and sexist headline, "Clinton's Quota Queen." Soon the attacks were coming from all quarters, accusing her of being "anti-democratic," "a radical," "out of the mainstream," and "a reverse racist." Red-baiting was utilized in a not-so-quiet whispering campaign. Her sophisticated ideas were oversimplified and distorted in such a way they never received a fair hearing.

Most shamefully, the trial Guinier received in the press was to be her only one. The White House never lifted a finger to support its nominee, to organize a campaign to defend her. Instead, President Clinton withdrew the nomination. As a result no Senate confirmation hearings took place, and Guinier never got the opportunity to explain and defend her views.

Tyranny of the Majority is aimed at rectifying that situation. The book is a collection of essays, most written before the nomination, explaining her view on how to expand democracy by increasing the influence of minority voting groups. Most of the essays were originally law review articles aimed at a small audience of specialists, and therefore they can

be quite technical and difficult. But her powerful critique of the history of racist denial of voting rights to African Americans, and her innovative and challenging proposals for changing the structure of voting and representation in America, make it a worthwhile read.

The essay "Keeping the Faith," written at the end of President Reagan's tenure, tells the story of that administration's attack on civil rights, led, in true Orwellian style, by its Civil Rights Division. In it Guinier notes the limitations of the two-party system on the ability of African Americans to have their interests represented in the political process.

While criticizing the Republicans for their open hostility to Black people, she takes the Democratic Party to task for "snubbing its loyal Black constituency." She notes that while Michael Dukakis received almost 90 percent of the Black vote, "the vision Democrats offered in 1988 hardly mentioned even indirectly, problems of race, and it deliberately ignored the connection between racism and poverty." Today, of course, one must say that the Clinton administration is even worse.

In another chapter "The Triumph of Tokenism," Guinier argues that the election of Black elected officials alone does not guarantee that the interests of African Americans will be represented in political decisions of legislative bodies. She points out that simply because an elected official is Black does not mean they will adequately reflect the needs and opinions of Black people in legislative actions, because the official may respond more strongly to white constituents, or may become "an assimilated member of the political establishment." And, if a Black representative does support what Guinier calls the "original civil rights vision," they may be iced out by a hostile majority in the legislature, and therefore rendered ineffective. Significantly, Guinier argues that the strategy of electing Black officials to office must be expanded to a strategy that focuses on winning victories in policy.

The author explains how modern attempts to marginalize African American voters and weaken their ability to effect change fits into the long history of the struggle for voting rights. It is a history of perpetual struggle for the right to vote and be represented and perpetual racist attempts to roll back each gain. Gus Hall has said that racism is like a virus that mutates and changes its form each time a new antidote is developed to eradicate it. This is clearly true in the field of voting rights. The author

tells the story of how each new generation of voting rights "antidote" has been met with new mutated strategies of racist exclusion.

The first generation of voting rights, as she identifies it was the passage of the 15th amendment to the Constitution. But with the defeat of Reconstruction new procedural mechanisms such as poll taxes, literacy tests and grandfather clauses were introduced, which effectively disenfranchised African Americans for nearly a century.

The second generation was marked by the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, which banned such obstacles to Black voting rights. African Americans registered and voted by the millions. Blacks were elected to Congress for the first time since Reconstruction. Again, the racists responded by developing new strategies to keep African Americans from voting: gerrymandering, at-large elections, mandatory runoffs, and difficult voter registration procedures.

In many cases when Blacks or Latinos were elected to local government, racist white legislators passed special rules to ensure that they would have no power. In one Alabama county, for example, the county commission had always divided up responsibility equally among its members but after a Black commissioner was elected, they changed the rules so that all duties were shifted to an appointed administrator. In a Texas county, when the first Latina was elected to the school board, the board changed the rules so that two votes, instead of one were needed to place an item on the agenda.

The third generation of efforts to ensure voting rights for African Americans took on these new racist strategies, through the courts and federal agencies. These efforts focused on the right not just to vote, but to have a reasonable chance at winning representation. The courts invalidated discriminatory voting rules; ordered redistricting to create electoral districts that are majority Black, Latino, or Asian; prohibited at-large seats where the effect was discriminatory; and invalidated racist practices like the ones referred to above in Alabama and Texas. The Reagan administration responded to these gains with an all-out attack on civil rights. Reagan's officials dubbed the gain in voting rights "reverse racism," and "a racial spoils system."

Enforcement of the Voting Rights Act ground to a halt as Reagan's Department of Justice held that those bringing a complaint had to prove not just they they were discriminated against, but that the

discrimination was intentional – an impossible task in most cases.

Guinier points out that despite the gains in voting rights, there is still a long way to go. She identifies two major challenges. One is the continuing exclusion of African Americans from positions of power. Although Blacks make up more than twelve percent of the U.S. population, only 1.5 percent of elected officials are Black, most of them mayors of majority-Black towns with populations under 1,000.

The second challenge is that simply electing African American representatives to office does not guarantee that Black people's interests will be adequately represented and reflected in policy decisions. Guinier identifies a phenomenon she dubs the "legislative gerrymander." Blacks are often elected to legislative bodies, only to find themselves cut out of the process by a racist white majority. The Black official's legislation is not taken seriously, their authority is intentionally undermined and the interests of their constituencies ignored. Often, Black elected officials are targeted for prosecution on charges of corruption or other wrongdoing. And there is nothing they can do about this intentional marginalization, because no matter what, they are outvoted.

Guinier argues that a strictly "majority-rule" "winner-take-all" concept of democracy is in practice unfair and discriminatory in a situation where the majority and the minority are relatively fixed and unchanging. When they are more fluid, and individuals go back and forth between the minority and majority depending on the issue, everyone wins sometimes and loses sometimes. But where the groups are more fixed, some people always lose. For example, a minority constituting 25 percent of the population would get its way 0 percent of the time, while a majority of 75 percent gets its way 100 percent of the time. The minority group ends up completely excluded. This, Guinier argues, is what happens to African American voters, since white legislators are often indifferent to their concerns and since Black politicians often have a hard time getting whites to vote for them, particularly for higher offices, while Black voters are more willing to vote for white candidates.

Guinier explores a number of possible procedural changes in the way we organize elections and run legislative bodies. *Tyranny of the Majority* argues that the system of electing legislative bodies on the basis of geographical areas, each getting one

representative, is not the fairest or most effective way of representing the voters and their diverse interests and points of view. An alternative: cumulative voting.

Cumulative voting means that each voter casts multiple votes, one for each seat to be filled on the legislative body. Voters may distribute their votes in any way they choose. So, minority groups may ensure representation by voting as a block, or by concentrating their votes in favor of their representatives. This is not a particularly novel or radical idea. As has been pointed out before, many corporations and municipalities use it as well.

The author argues this form of voting is fairer and more effective because voters are represented by their interests, rather than by arbitrary geographical location. To the principle of "one person, one vote," Guinier adds, "one vote, one value." These procedural changes it is argued would be required under the Voting Rights Act.

Guinier's proposals represent a challenge to corporate control of the politics of our country and to the system of institutionalized racism that is an integral part of it. If implemented, her proposals would help open the doors to Congress and other offices to politically independent representatives. The unity of interests among Black, Brown and white workers provides the basis for making this possible. But this unity must be based on equality. Therefore the need for the kind of special measures Guinier proposes will continue, in order to guarantee African Americans and other racially and nationally oppressed groups an equal seat at the table.

Similarly, the interests of African Americans would be advanced by basic reforms that would increase the political power of all workers by loosening the grip of monopoly corporations on the electoral process. Guinier may have no argument with this conclusion, however, her book does not treat of it. Perhaps this was beyond the scope of her intention, yet it remains a central issue for all concerned with the great issues of democracy and the distribution of power she so admirably handles in *Tyranny of the Majority*.

Clearly racism is a prime motivating factor in the denial of voting and real representation to African American and other racially and nationally oppressed minorities. So too are the issues of capitalist economic power and the imperative of superprofits. In fact capitalism underlies and frames the systematic oppression of peoples of color. Both inter-

mingle and merge to help form the gigantic system of state-monopoly capitalism in the United States. Thus, minorities are excluded from power not only because they are minorities but also because their class interests and their political platforms are most often inimical to the ruling class and their representatives in the institutions of government. Hence a tyranny of a minority rules over the vast majority of people, Black, Brown, Yellow, and white.

The limitations on democracy are rooted in the fact that a handful of huge corporations, with interests antithetical to the majority of the people, has a strangle hold on political power. The anti-monopoly fight of all of the oppressed led by the working class will be necessary to break monopoly's grip. At the same time it must be recognized that the struggle for advanced democratic reforms of the kind advocated by Guinier and others could be of revolutionary significance and a key element in defeating corporate power. And in the final analysis that is why she never got the job and why her views never received a fair hearing. □

Jason Rabinowitz

The CIO's Left-Led Unions, Steve Rosswurm, Ed., Rutgers, University Press, 1992, 250 pp. \$17.00 paper.

Anyone wishing to understand the reasons for the current decline of American labor needs to look beyond corporate restructuring, union-busting and the Reagan-Bush policies of the 1980s. The roots of the current malaise reside earlier, in the purge of the left from the CIO, in the early years of the Cold War. The capstone of this purge was the CIO's expulsion of eleven left-led unions, representing 20 percent of the CIO's membership in 1949-50.

Though *The CIO's Left-Led Unions* is far from a comprehensive history of the eleven unions, it is a good place to start. The eight original essays – by seven historians and one former union staff member – provide an important look at what some of these unions achieved. The weakest part of this volume is the editorial introduction by Steve Rosswurm, whose previous work has been on colonial history. It is difficult to know whether Rosswurm is really an idiot, or just chooses to sound like one so that no one will think that he is a Communist dupe. In any case, after

praising the Left-led unions for the organizing of African Americans and women, Rosswurm quickly wiggles back into the protective dung heap of anti-Communist platitudes. He prattles about Communist subservience to the Soviet Union, their support for the no-strike pledge and incentive pay, their alleged abandonment of civil rights during World War II, their supposed insensitivity toward religious workers, and their “sadly mistaken strategy of secrecy.” (p. 11) The great amusement in all of this is that Rosswurm either lacks the brains to recognize or the courage to admit that none of the book's other contributors offer a whit of support for these canards.

In his essay, Bruce Nelson, the author of *Workers on the Waterfront*, recounts the attempt of the International Longshoremen's Union (ILWU) to expand its base on the West Coast by organizing the predominantly African American longshoremen in New Orleans. This attempt ended in failure in 1938. Nelson makes clear that the ILWU made a valiant and visionary effort waged against great odds. The union simply could not overcome the effects of pervasive violence, local Jim Crow traditions and prejudicial state intervention.

Nancy Quam-Wickham, a graduate student at the University of California, recounts the wartime experiences of the ILWU. “In an extensive series of oral histories of rank-and-file ILWU members,” Quam-Wickham found that “remarkably few recalled any opposition to the no-strike pledge.” (p. 52) Similarly, “few members ... could recall any hostility toward the wartime speedups.” (p. 53) Part of the reason for this was that in spite of the no-strike pledge, the union vigorously fought attempts by the employers and military to undermine union control of the hiring hall. There is not the slightest suggestion that the Communist or ILWU's support of the no-strike pledge and speedups damaged the position of Communists in the ILWU or the economic position of the longshoremen.

The racial situation in the ILWU during the war was, however, complicated. Whites on the docks often resisted working with newly-hired African Americans. Conflicts occurred between whites, African Americans, Mexican Americans and Japanese Americans. The union leadership responded to this situation by opposing racial discrimination on the job, in the union and in the larger society, and condemning and even suspending members and

locals guilty of discrimination. Still, Quam-Wickham believes that the leadership could have done more. Unlike Rosswurm and others like him, however, she does not believe that the union's "limited efforts" were due to a slackening interest in civil rights.

In a personal memoir of his experiences as a business agent, organizer and regional director of the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers Union (FTA), in the South, between 1945 and 1951, Karl Korstad describes the conditions of some of the most downtrodden workers in the country, including African American men and women who worked in the tobacco, peanut, and cotton processing plants. Korstad points out that there were "many" members of the Communist Party in the leadership and on the staff and that under the union's leadership stirring examples of Black and white cooperation in struggle took place. He also says that the union promoted indigenous leaders such as Moranda Smith, the first Black woman to hold the position of regional director in the trade-union movement. The FTA originated the song, "We Shall Overcome," that would later be adopted as the anthem of the Civil Rights Movement.

Korstad gives a moving tribute to Donald Henderson, the Communist leader of the FTA. "He was impressive," Korstad recalled:

He knew how to listen. He made everyone feel free to participate in the discussion. No one was "put down." When he did speak at length, he drew from the consensus that was developing in the meeting as well as from the depth of understanding he had acquired through the years. (p. 78)

In contrast to Rosswurm's driveling abstractions about the "flaw" of Communist "secularism," Korstad offers a concrete and clear description of the union's relations with the Black church. In 1947 Korstad and Moranda Smith met in Suffolk, Virginia, with a group of Black ministers who were concerned about the FTA being accused of "Communism." Korstad recalled that Smith explained the dangers of political purges in unions, and assured the ministers that "the Communists in the union were not, as they were caricatured, bomb-throwing, anti-religious radicals." Korstad recalls that this position was "widely accepted in the Black community" at that time, even though later "after three more years of intensified Cold War pressures, it

became more controversial." (p. 87)

In one of the book's strongest essays, Rosemary Feurer, a graduate student at Washington University, analyzes William Sentner's success as an open Communist leader of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) in St. Louis. Feurer argues that Sentner was able to make the UE the largest union in St. Louis partially because of his idea and practice of "civic unionism." On the one hand, he garnered community support for the union by presenting labor struggles as civic struggles. On the other hand, he led the union into active involvement in all civic matters, including those related to racial and sexual equality. For those like Rosswurm, who glibly assume that all Communists should have been as open as Sentner, Feurer points out Sentner's special circumstances, including the fact that he was a well-known Communist before becoming a CIO official. She also notes the tremendous price Sentner paid for his openness, including a criminal syndicalist indictment in 1939, pressure from James Matles of the International to resign from the Party, a forced resignation from his union presidency in 1948, and a Smith Act conviction in 1954. It is safe to say that the Rosswurms of this world have never paid half the price for their openness, but then open idiocy like theirs is priceless.

Ellen Schrecker, the author of *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities*, contributes an essay on McCarthyism and the labor movement that is worth the cost of the book. Schrecker provides a useful and absorbing catalog of the vast array of federal agencies (including the IRS, FBI, SACB, NLRB, and congressional committees), and the multiplicity of attacks (hearings, indictments, deportations, denials of security clearance, union decertifications, prosecutions, and legal and illegal investigations and harassment), that were used against labor's left. She also explains the ways, subtle and crude, in which the federal efforts aided and legitimized private anti-Communism.

The most unusual entry in this book is by Gerald Zahavi, an historian at the University of Albany. Zahavi offers the transcripts of oral history interviews with two management representatives and two workers, who engineered a successful effort to oust Local 202 of the International Fur and Leather Workers Union from the leather shops in Fulton County, New York, in 1949-50. The interviews

starkly revealed much about the time-of-the-toad temper. The interviews of the management agents reveal the high level of class consciousness and cooperation that emerged among competing capitalists when the Cold War conferred the chance to rid themselves of a militant union and its able Communist leader, Clarence Carr. The interview of John Sutliff, who headed the independent union that replaced Local 202, reveals the personal ambition that led to his self-admitted class collaboration. The interview with Harold Taylor, Sutliff's cats paw, reveals the simple venality ("to get a decent dollar"), that led him and other young vets to throw their lot with Sutliff (even though "he was on the boss's side") and to betray the Communist Carr (even though "he was a good man"). (pp. 179-180)

The collection ends with a study of UE and IUE collective bargaining agreements by Mark McColloch of the University of Pittsburgh. Though bat-

tered by the government, harassed by the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, and raided by the IUE, the UE did better than its much larger rival in collective bargaining with Westinghouse in the 1950s. McColloch shows that the UE successfully resisted such Westinghouse initiatives.

The organizations and leaders described in these essays are outstanding examples of class conscious unionism, as outstanding as any in our history. Unionists interested in understanding the current weakness of labor and in acquiring ideas on how to change it, should read this book. They should also thank these scholars for the work in digging out the facts, and the courage to pierce the well of silence and lies that have too long shrouded the history of the left-led unions. □

John Talmadge

Irwin, continued from page 18

Knowing this, private capital intends to keep the technology from the hands of the poor. Public libraries and schools are desperately under-equipped when it comes to computers, and of the institutions that have computers, virtually none have public access to commercial online services. The famous Internet, formerly a public-access network, is slowly being overtaken by private enterprise "gatekeeper" services, who charge a fee to get into the Internet, again chipping away at free access. While small, progressive online services are cropping up, (usually funded by private contributions), they cannot compete with the billion dollar corporations controlling this new medium.

The counterattack waged on the electronic front must be twofold: first, Communists must counterprogram existing propaganda spread via the commercial online services, giving constant commentary from a Marxist viewpoint. Secondly, all progressives must fight the takeover of this new medium by corporate interests and retain public ownership over the services the technology provides. Initially this can be done not only by sending messages to President Clinton (whose National Information Infrastructure program seeks to privatize the medium), but also by con-

ducting electronic "user strikes" or "modemonstrations" aboard the commercial online services. Such actions might take the form of large numbers of users posting identical slogan messages, drowning bulletin boards with planned counterprogramming, or by tying up live "chat" sessions by repeating certain typed "chants."

As Communists, we must fight against the corporate twisting of information and truth, while defending the right of working and poor people to have access to developing technology. Communists must take on each new form of information exchange and make sure the science of Marxism is properly represented and not lose hold of any new means of promoting socialism to a greater audience. This is what makes it so important for progressive forces, and for the CPUSA, to not only become involved in the "electronic front," but to take an active role in counterprogramming capitalism's slanted information. □

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NIGERIA

A general strike called by the Nigerian Labor Congress shut down Lagos, the capitol city after police killed three demonstrators. Trade unionists barricaded the center of the city calling for the release of imprisoned Mashood Abiola, charging he was fraudulently counted out in last year's presidential election. Oil workers have been on strike since July and have vowed to stay out until Abila is released from prison.

BANGLADESH

A nation-wide general strike began September 11th and shut down all ground transportation. Many schools and offices were also closed down and business was disrupted throughout the country. The Capitol city, Dhaka, was effectively paralyzed on the first day of the general strike which was called after 200 people were injured and 125 arrested in bloody street battles in which demonstrators demanded early general elections for a change in government.

BRITAIN

PMT, the rail union, has been conducting rolling strikes of 24 and 48 hours since June in support of a 5.7 percent wage hike demand. Attempts to bribe striking signal workers into becoming scabs with offers of \$1,600 in blood money failed miserably.

INDIA

Landless peasants in the state of Andhra Pradesh have occupied 25,000 acres of land with an additional 50,000 acres targeted for occupation and distribution to landless peasants for cultivation. The Communist Party of India and the Khet Mason Union (the peasant union) have been leading the land occupation movement since June.

SWEDEN

Fifty four parliamentarians, cultural and business leaders have issued an appeal for the end of the U.S. blockade of Cuba which they denounced as "an attempt to foist U.S. policies on Cuba at the expense of starvation of the nation."

THE FIGHT AGAINST PRIVATIZATION

Europe - A joint study by six European economic research institutes found that further privatization would cost 800,000 jobs by 1998. By country

NOVEMBER 1994

the job loss would include France, 250,000; Italy 180,000; Germany 140,000. By industry, the losses would be: telecommunications, 268,000, 250,000 in energy and 77,000 in transport.

Britain - Since the privatization of 31 water companies in 1989, water bills have risen by an average of five percent a year, overall profits have rise by 125 percent and company chairman's salaries by 135 percent. Gas prices are expected to double. British Gas predicts a 94 percent increase for some domestic customers, the smallest users suffering the most.

Australia - Trade unions are mobilizing their members and mass support for a hard-driving campaign against privatization. In announcing the campaign, the Victorian Trades Hall Council declared "if the union movement does not respond quickly there will be very few public assets of value left." It scheduled a series of mass rallies to be followed, if necessary, by strike action. Strike struggles against privatization of installations a three ports in Melbourne took place in August under the leadership of the Maritime Union of Australia.

A combined meeting of trade union job delegates in Queensland, making plans for a massive rally in mid-September, adopted a resolution declaring that "privatization will result in the monopolization of these enterprises by powerful, wealthy voracious local concerns and overseas multi-national conglomerates." The resolution said "it should be resisted by a united, determined and resolute union movement." Mass solidarity rallies against privatization were announced for South Australia, Canberra and Sydney.

India - At a mass demonstration of hundreds of thousands against the economic policies of the government, the parties which organized the action denounced the governments policies as "anti-people and anti-national." They declared that under the pressure of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund the government "is dismantling the public sector and opening the way to privatization." The four parties which acted jointly are the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Revolutionary Socialist Party and the Forward Bloc.

International Commission CPUSA

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