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Depression Election

A capitalist economy is like the weather: everybody talks about it but nobody can do anything about it. The talk is especially wordy — and deceptive — during election campaigns. For capitalist politicians, lying is part of their job. Still, although we can't believe what the candidates say, we can decipher the lies to learn who they appeal to and what they hope to do with the government when they run it.

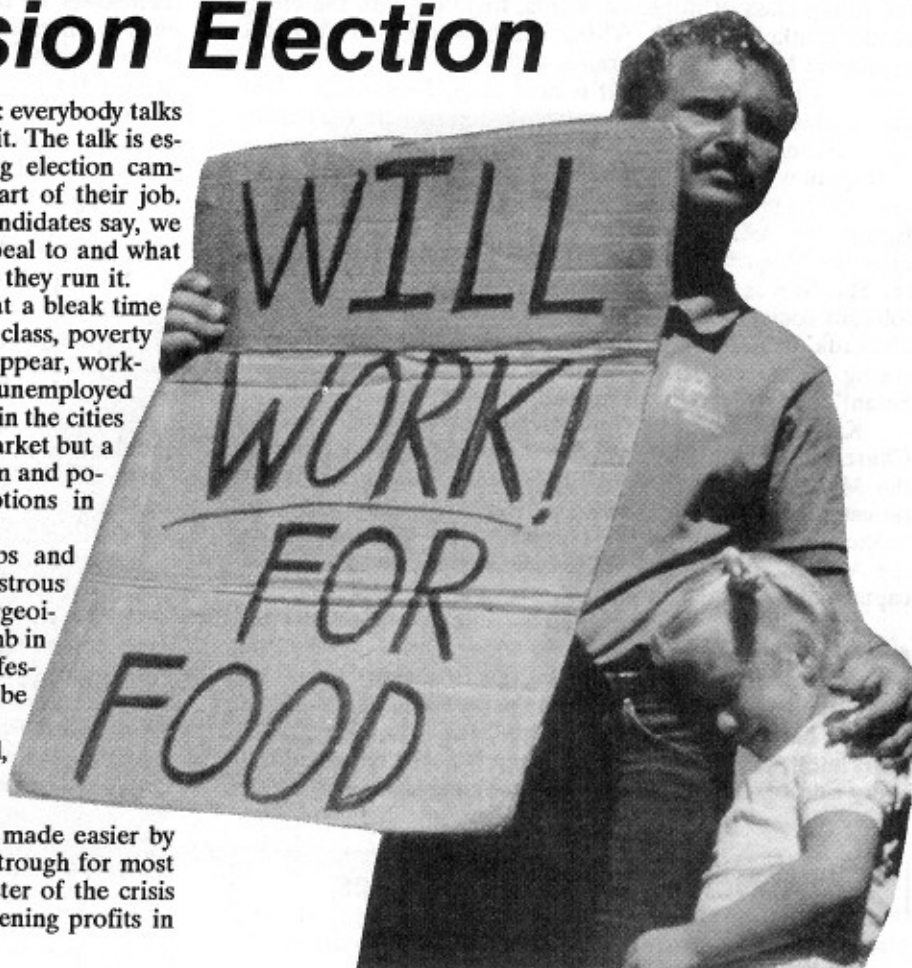
The 1992 presidential campaign came at a bleak time for all classes in the U.S. For the working class, poverty figures have reached record levels, jobs disappear, workers' incomes continue to fall and armies of unemployed live in the streets. Black and Latino workers in the cities contemplate not only a disintegrating job market but a deepening plague of crime and drugs. Racism and police brutality have already produced eruptions in Los Angeles and New York.

Better-off workers also are losing jobs and financial security. All wage-earners face monstrously escalating health-care costs. The petty bourgeoisie is traumatized, as small businesses succumb in huge numbers to a dying economy. The professional middle strata are being polarized between the classes above and below them.

Even the U.S. ruling class is frightened, and with good reason. During the 1980's the bourgeoisie worried about the tensions underlying the economy, but their life was made easier by policies that allowed them to pig out at the trough for most of the decade. But now the essential character of the crisis cannot be sidestepped. It is not only threatening profits in the U.S. but deranging the world market.

THE BOURGEOISIE'S CHOICES

The capitalists know that the only way they can solve their crisis of profitability is by squeezing more out of the workers. That means not only lower wages (see Bill Clinton's program below) but social spending cuts. For starters, social security and Medicare will have to be slashed dramatically,



instead of being snipped away as they are now. Unions, already knocked down, will have to be flattened.

But the bourgeoisie is not sure who can do the job for them. The day after George Bush's speech accepting the Republican nomination, Wall Street markets fell sharply and the
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500 Years after Columbus

The 500th anniversary of the start of the European conquest of America has engendered a vast industry of imperialist celebration in Europe and the U.S., along with a radical reaction condemning the whole business. Understanding its true significance requires a brief historical overview.

'DISCOVERY,' SLAUGHTER AND SLAVERY

In 1492 Western Europe was struggling out of the Middle Ages. Across most of the continent, peasants and serfs toiled under primitive conditions to keep themselves barely alive. Any surplus product in cash or in kind went to support the ruling class of noble landlords, together with the clergy of the Catholic church. These rulers worked to keep the producers laboring in ignorance and fear. In a few cities and towns — especially in what is now Italy, Belgium, Holland and England — merchants and workshop owners were rising up to claim a share of society's slowly increasing wealth.

Spain was blessed with one of the most backward economies, benighted nobilities and fanatical clergies in Western Europe. In 1492 they had finally won a centuries-long war to drive the Moorish Muslim rulers out of the Iberian peninsula. The Moors had a technically advanced and religiously tolerant society. The Duke who led the Spanish army into Granada, the Moors' last city, is supposed to have said, on seeing their great irrigation network, "This is the work of Satan!" and ordered it destroyed.

King Fernando and Queen Isabela, with the help of the Church Inquisition, immediately proceeded to expel most of the Moors and all Jews from Spain, burning at the stake thousands who didn't leave or convert. They also looked to bolster their economy by financing a voyage westward across the Atlantic seeking new trade routes to Asia and loot. The captain of the expedition was Christopher Columbus.

Columbus was an excellent mariner but a poor organizer, as well as a dishonest, self-serving and lethal exploiter of the peoples he "discovered." He led the first expeditions that established a permanent European presence in the Americas. He and his crew landed first in the Caribbean Islands. Fifty years later the Spaniards had managed to exterminate almost every one of the indigenous Arawak and Carib peoples by forced labor, imported disease, and outright massacre. Only

a few thousand of the descendants of these peoples, intermarried with Europeans and Africans, survive today.

In the mid-1500's, the Spanish priest Bartolomé de las Casas, appalled at the mistreatment of the "Indians," as the Europeans called them, campaigned for a way to save them: bring Blacks from Africa as slaves to do the work. By this time all the West European powers were rushing to settle and loot the Americas, and they enthusiastically implemented this idea.

After barely 150 years, the Spanish, Portuguese, English, Dutch, French and other Europeans had firmly established themselves in the Americas, completely making over two huge continents. They destroyed great indigenous civilizations in what is now Peru and Mexico, enslaving the peoples there to work the mines and plantations whose wealth poured into Europe. They set up plantations the size of some European countries to grow cash crops new to Europe, like coffee, cotton, sugar and tobacco. They captured millions of Africans and shipped them across the ocean as slaves.

THE BIRTH OF CAPITALISM

In the process the colonialists completely remade Europe as well. The enormous wealth produced in America, never before imagined, flowed into the hands of merchants and nobility. In Spain, the mountains of gold and silver went largely to the nobles, enabling them to prop up the backward feudal system and prevent the growth of an independent merchant capitalist class which could develop industry. Thus the productive forces in Spain stagnated, and other European powers overtook and outstripped them.

In England, Holland and France the effects of their exploitation of the Americas were literally revolutionary. Large and powerful merchant classes already existed in the cities and large towns — the bourgeoisie. The wealth from American mines and plantations made this the richest social class in history.

In Holland and England the bourgeoisie faced weakened feudal nobilities who already were working their European lands in a capitalist way: through wage labor. In Holland in 1588, the bourgeoisie and some capitalist nobles led the poor people of the towns to overthrow Spanish rule, which blocked full freedom for commerce. In England in the next century, a similar class alliance overthrew the last vestiges of feudal rule. Both countries established capitalist monarchies under which they more efficiently exploited their farms and workshops in Europe and their slave plantations in America.

In France the bourgeoisie confronted a strong feudal nobility. Both social classes drew power from American wealth, particularly from the slave plantations of Saint Domingue (now Haiti). When the feudal monarchy entered

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Racist 'Justice' in Washington Heights and City Hall

This article is adapted from a leaflet distributed in September by LRP supporters working at City College and Presbyterian Hospital, both in the Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City.

The grand jury found no reason to indict Police Officer Michael O'Keefe for killing José (Kiko) Garcia in Washington Heights on July 3. Meeting in secret as usual, where only cops, cop lawyers and prosecutors had access to them, they claimed O'Keefe had acted in self-defense when he shot the Dominican immigrant in a building hallway. They also decided that Dagoberto Pichardo was not murdered by the cops who chased him off a roof.

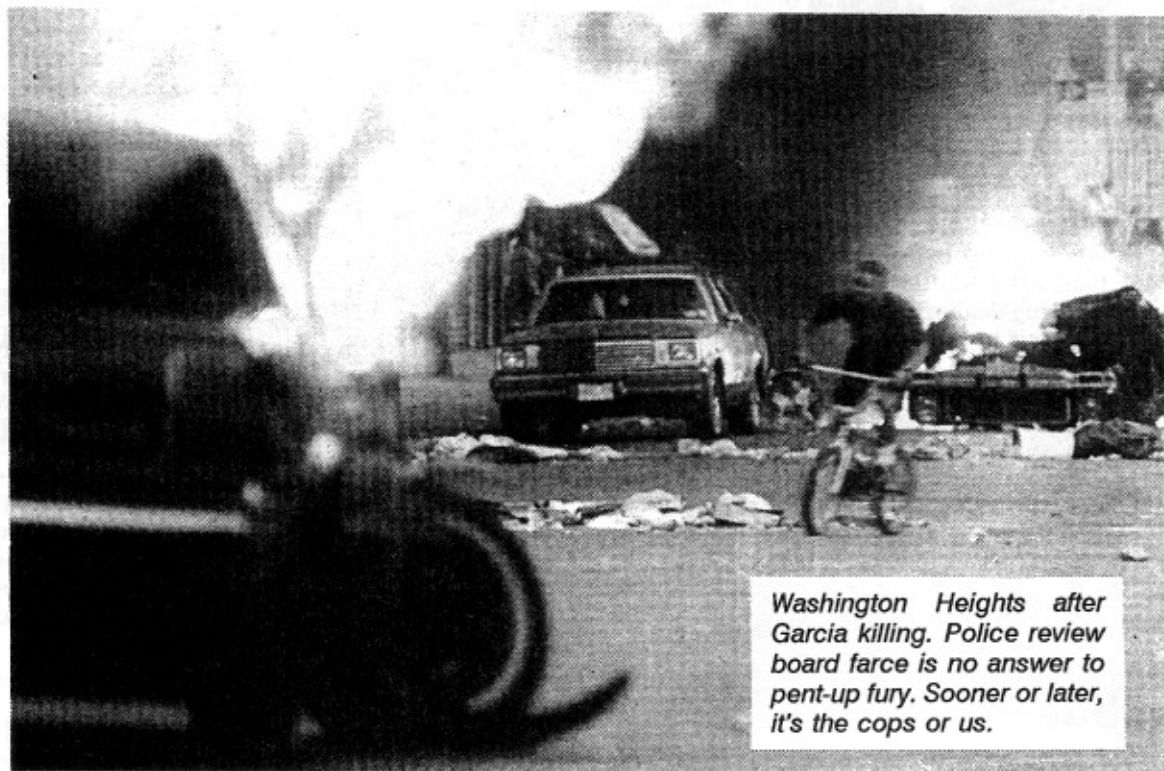
A week later thousands of cops at a rally broke through barricades and stormed City Hall and the Brooklyn Bridge —

and get worse. The only practical answer is the one the experts say is impractical: get rid of the capitalist system that breeds racism and cop brutality. This means starting now to build the revolutionary proletarian party before it is too late.

THE 'MOUNTAIN' OF EVIDENCE

We don't know exactly what happened on July 3. But we do know that the "mountain of evidence" exonerating O'Keefe isn't anywhere as airtight as the media claim.

The media say that Kiko Garcia's corpse wasn't bruised enough to prove that O'Keefe had beaten him as badly as witnesses say. Yet the D.A.'s report says that O'Keefe was "dripping with blood from Mr. Garcia's wounds." The D.A. says the two women who saw O'Keefe shoot Garcia told the



Washington Heights after Garcia killing. Police review board farce is no answer to pent-up fury. Sooner or later, it's the cops or us.

a rampage encouraged by the exoneration of O'Keefe. Armed, beer-swilling rioters brandished placards with racist lampoons of Mayor David Dinkins and called the mayor and Black bystanders "nigger." No arrests were made. Afterwards a handful of the 10,000 cops present were suspended.

No worker should be surprised at these examples of capitalist "justice." Cops all over the U.S. have been beating and killing poor and working-class people, especially people of color and immigrants, for years — and getting away with it. The whole world saw the tape of L.A. cops beating the hell out of Rodney King, yet a carefully selected jury let them off. Is it any wonder that a hand-picked grand jury wouldn't believe two Dominican women who they smear as drug dealers along with Garcia?

IMPRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

What can be done about such racist "justice"? The so-called practical answers are community control, police review boards and electing minority politicians like Dinkins and Guillermo Linares. But these "solutions" are now proved to be impractical. Attacks on workers, Blacks and Latinos go on

first cops who showed up afterwards that they hadn't seen the shooting. Maybe they remembered that the 34th Precinct has been investigated three times for brutality and for collusion with neighborhood drug dealers. Is it so surprising that neighbors who see a cop killing someone would keep quiet to an army of cops afterwards?

The D.A. has tried to discredit and threaten with perjury charges the two women who claim they saw O'Keefe beat and shoot Garcia in cold blood. But there are *no witnesses whatever* for the cops' version. And recall what the media is not reminding us of: O'Keefe dropped out of sight for a week after he killed Garcia and re-appeared at his leisure. If the situation were reversed, do you think that an immigrant worker accused of killing a cop could go on vacation for a week without a massive manhunt, then show up with a story about acting in self-defense and be thought credible?

Finally, the gun O'Keefe says Garcia pulled on him was apparently shown to the grand jury. But the D.A., the cops and the capitalist media aren't saying much about the only piece of evidence that justifies O'Keefe's claim to have acted in self-defense. Despite the voluminous media accounts, we

haven't even been told whether it had fingerprints on it.

COPS RUNNING RIOT

The official line on police brutality, repeated countless times by politicians and the news media, is that it's an aberration: cops exist to protect ordinary people against criminals who prey on them. Many workers see through this lie. The police — local, state and federal — exist to protect the property and persons of the rich, the capitalist class, from the working class and other oppressed. The cops do this not just by slapping us down whenever we "get out of line" but by generally intimidating us whether we're doing anything or not — especially young people of color.

For twenty years workers' standard of living, especially of Blacks, Latinos and immigrants, has been sliding downhill. The capitalists have nothing to offer but unemployment and homelessness. The cops step up their oppression to bully us into accepting bad conditions. They have been even more outrageous than usual lately. In the Bronx a cop shot a pregnant Black woman, apparently for fare-beating. Cops continue to beat and arrest people protesting attacks on the homeless in Tompkins Square Park. In Newark cops have killed at least four young people accused of car theft. But even suspected criminals have a right not to be shot in cold blood.

Some of these cops are themselves Black or Latino, but that's a pretty thin cover: Black cops and politicians like Dinkins are better able to attack and oppress Black and Latino workers than open white racists. Cops of all colors allow massive, open drug dealing in poor neighborhoods and take forever to respond to complaints of theft, assault or other crimes. They don't care if we're robbed and killed — some profit from it. More news comes out all the time about cop protection of dope dealers and partnership with them.

Supposed Marxists like Amiri Baraka in Newark and the Workers World Party push the tired old illusion of "community control" of the police. But Newark already has a Black mayor, an overwhelmingly Black city council, a Black police chief and a majority Black police force. These all oppress and even kill Black youth in the interests of the capitalists who really run the city. Would another layer of bourgeois

minority politicians on a community board change anything?

New York too has a Black mayor and has had Black police chiefs. Mayor Dinkins boasts that he has "done more for the Police Department than anybody in recent years," and so he has: police rolls have risen sharply, while every social service has been slashed. No wonder his administration didn't control the police rampage. Would there have been no arrests if a community, labor or student protest were half as riotous? Hardly: Dinkins put Washington Heights under virtual martial law to prevent any expression of mass anger against the freeing of O'Keefe without trial.

THE WAY FORWARD

In an editorial, the *Amsterdam News* said that the September 16 police rally and riot reaked of fascism, and so it did. Cops have always been a chief bulwark of fascist groups, and their racist riot shows that the thugs whom the bourgeoisie gives badges and guns to haven't changed. The *Am News* also said that the only real fascist was Republican politician Rudolph Giuliani, a speaker at the cop rally — because he is challenging Dinkins for the mayoralty. Further, it advised Blacks to stay non-violent and leave their defense to elected officials. This passive electoralism means letting racists off the hook. It is a formula for suicide.

Many working-class people have no confidence in reform schemes. But there is a way forward, the revolutionary way. If a revolutionary party existed, it could lead the working class in building a massive and well organized response to police attacks: *mass armed self-defense*. Latino and Black workers could bring the fight for workers' guards to their unions and get the whole organized working class to support the struggle. This also means a fight to oust and replace the union leaderships who are weak reformers at best, racist "law and order" lovers at worst.

It's not easy and it can't be done overnight. Rather than wasting time on illusory reform programs, we should work on grouping together those who see through reformism and are ready to begin the long hard work of building a revolutionary party to fight for the leadership of the working class. ●

Columbus

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its final crisis in 1789, the revolution to overthrow them had to be harder, longer, more radical and more inclusive of the poor masses of the cities. In 1791 the slaves of Saint Domingue rose up as well. With this added impetus the radical Jacobin faction of the bourgeoisie in 1794 abolished slavery in all French territory by law — the revolutionary slaves had already abolished it in practice.

Though the Blacks of Saint Domingue finally established independent Haiti, destroying slavery there forever, France under Napoleon restored slavery in their other American colonies. Slavery in the British colonies of North America actually spread and grew stronger after they broke from British rule to establish the bourgeois republic of the United States of America. The U.S. and the European colonialists in North and South America increased their oppression and massacres of the remaining Indian populations. But not without resistance: in the U.S. alone there were hundreds of "conspiracies" and revolts by slaves, as well as insurgencies by outgunned Indian forces.

Outright slavery eventually became more and more an obstacle to the development of capitalism. After a series of

earth-shaking wars and revolutions, it was finally abolished throughout the Americas. But terrible oppression of Blacks and Indians continues. So does the outright extermination of some Indian nationalities, particularly in South America. There has also been the super-exploitation of Latin America and the Caribbean for the profit of U.S. and European imperialism — plus the concomitant destruction of natural resources and beauties that once made the world marvel.

CAPITALISM'S RISE AND DECAY

From the point of view of the Indians and Blacks of the Americas, the 500 years starting with Columbus's voyage look like one unrelieved disaster. The Europeans wiped out ancient and advanced cultures, exterminated whole nationalities, and forced millions into slavery, the most oppressive and degrading form of labor.

Ironically, from all the death, destruction and barbarism that Europe brought to its "discovery" of America, there came a world system, capitalism, that developed the productive forces and culture of humanity to their highest point — so far. Without the conscription of the Americas into the European world system, the sprouts of capitalism in the feudal wasteland of 1492 could not have flourished as they did. The vast industry of Europe and North America today, which

produces so many goods and allows one laborer to do the work that formerly needed thousands, could never have come to be. The first 400 years of this bloody conquest created the international working class that produces all this wealth.

Now there is such a working class. In the Americas the working class is Black, white, Asian, Indian and combinations of all these — perhaps the most international selection of workers anywhere. This class has inherited the task of bringing humanity to a new and higher level, by overthrowing capitalism through socialist revolution.

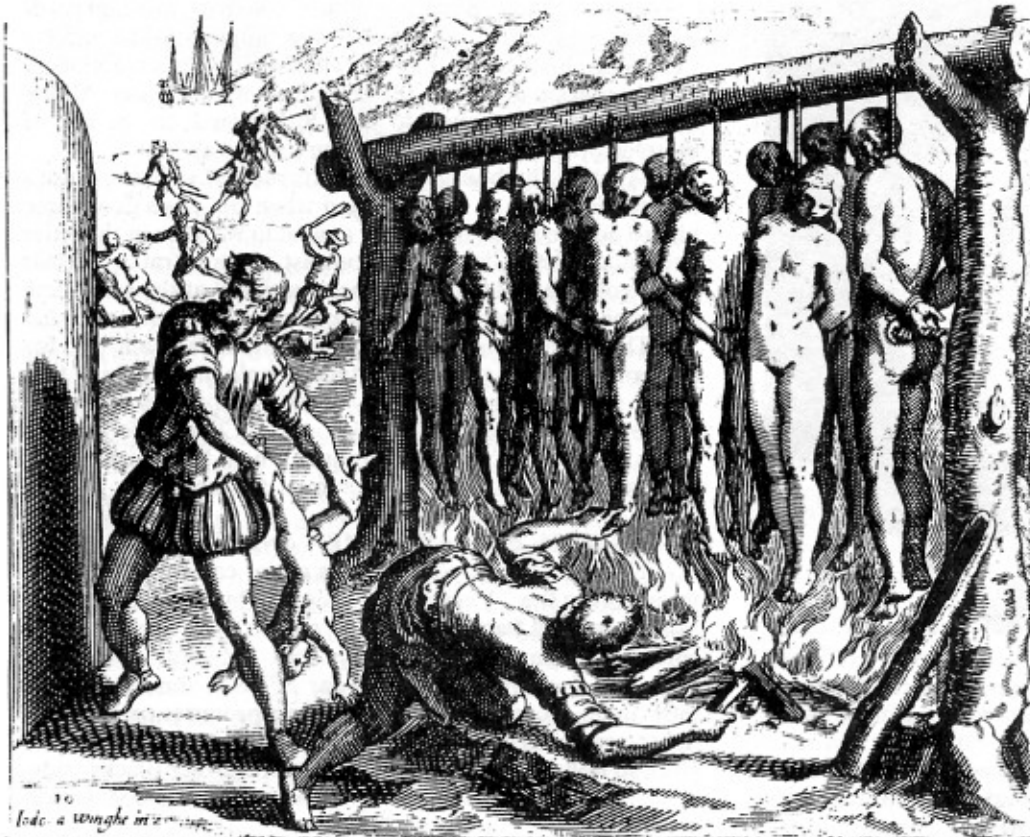
This understanding of the quincentenary based on Marxism in no way glorifies the European conquerors or the capitalist robber barons who succeeded them. They created and maintained a system that developed the productive forces enormously, but they did so with the basest of motives and at terrible costs.

But Marxism does understand that the conquest of the Americas was a critical step in the formation of world capitalism. The whole bloody history could not have been very different. There was no progressive alternative until the second half of the 19th century, with the arrival of the proletariat capable of emancipating humanity from class slavery — and the inspiration it gave for Marx's scientific analysis and program.

However, Marxists support the subjugated peoples' resistance in Africa and the Americas. Their struggles could not halt the overall advance of the productive forces which only capitalism could then accomplish, but regional struggles might have tempered the brutality. Capitalism had to develop and spread to make socialism possible. But the fundamental productive force is the proletariat itself. Every fight against capitalist oppression by the precursors of the working class leaves a legacy of struggle for the modern proletariat.

The last 100 years have shown that capitalism is no longer progressive: it can no longer advance culture and the productive forces overall but must destroy as much as it ad-

vances. Supplanting capitalism is now necessary in order to save humanity altogether. Our century has seen world wars, mass enslavements and genocides that make those of the previous four look pallid. This history must not continue. The preservation of capitalism may leave no people alive to discuss the 600th anniversary of Columbus's voyage. ●



Graphic illustrations made by contemporaries of Europeans' inhuman treatment of 'Indians' and African slaves.

Election

continued from page 1

U.S. dollar hit record lows on currency exchanges. These financial blows meant that even many of the traditionally more conservative members of the capitalist class were saying they'd had enough: Bush had proved again that he wasn't firm enough to find a way out of the crisis.

Indeed, much of the U.S. bourgeoisie appears to have lost confidence in the Republicans. Leading bourgeois spokesmen had begun to reject Bush months before, especially after his failure to respond effectively to the Los Angeles explosion last spring. Two weeks before the convention, some Republican officials were publicly intimating that Bush should dump Dan Quayle or step down himself.

Before the Gulf War, the media claimed that the public saw Bush as a "wimp." Indeed, Bush's upper-class manner plus the extreme caution of a consummate political climber gave rise to such a mistaken characterization. As a class, the bourgeoisie itself is cautious and conservative; it had found its adequate if uninspiring reflection in Bush. But now they face a crunch and want a quarterback who will act more decisively than one who takes a poll before he calls a play.

Some capitalists were drawn to Ross Perot when he made his initial bid for the White House. Perot projected a take-charge image. While undoubtedly sparked by personal ego, he was also obviously driven by contempt for George Bush and a sense of urgency that the government needed to be whipped into shape. Perot's stress on cracking down on



the federal budget deficit — that is, on the social programs that benefit working people — was warmly welcomed by his fellow capitalists.

Perot's toughminded frankness was appealing to the bourgeoisie because he seemed to be able to warn ordinary people about their coming pain while at the same time

evoking their support. If the masses could really be convinced that the only solution to the crisis must be at their expense, then the backlash the bosses fear would be undercut — an attractive prospect. But when Perot's grand economic plan was actually drawn up, he hurriedly withdrew from the race, knowing he couldn't retain his groundswell of support. He came back in in October not because there was a chance to win but because he wants to step up the climate of economic urgency so that the masses will see sacrifice as an unchallengeable necessity.

With Perot sidetracked and Bush unconvincing, more and more capitalists turned to Clinton. Slick Willie is hardly a paragon of frankness but he has made clear that he is devoted to carrying out their program. By mid-summer he had received a record number of corporate endorsements and contributions for a Democrat.

REPUBLICAN HATE-FEST

No tears need be shed for the Republicans. Their convention was a loathsome affair, dominated by threats against Blacks (the "Los Angeles rioters") and workers ("unionized government"), and open attacks on gays, lesbians and women in the name of authoritarian religion. It was a fitting climax to twelve years of guerrilla aggression against the working classes of this country and others. If the attack hasn't been sufficient for the task, certainly the spirit was there.

Why this hate-fest, which some commentators say guaranteed Bush's defeat? Because the bourgeoisie is a small class; to win votes it needs cadres, activists who will get out the vote for its parties, working to convince various middle layers and sections of the working class that its interests are theirs. The Republicans have traditionally used conservative petty bourgeois elements who in recent years, frightened by the economic crisis and rapid social changes, have radicalized to the right. They cling to idols like "the flag," "free enterprise" and "family values" — images of a mythic yesteryear of mobility, prosperity and social peace.

In order to keep the Republicans' activist base and hardcore voters, Bush — the ultimate Washington insider and Ivy League sophisticate — had to swallow his party's reactionary social program and duck the critical economic issues. All the while he tried nervously to send little signals to the rest of the electorate that he really doesn't mean all that.

Much of the bourgeoisie, no longer enthralled by Bush's overcautiousness, is worried that when the crisis does force him to act, he won't be able to appeal to workers in the cities and industries. Clinton in contrast demonstrates a clear degree of removal from mass pressures and at the same time seems able to evoke the necessary level of popular support.

The Democrats are once again building a death-trap for the working class, trying to delude people into thinking that voting them into office will do some good. Quite the opposite: every ounce of public support for Clinton from labor, Black and women's organizations will help legitimize a fresh anti-working-class, imperialist administration.

DEMOCRATS BETRAY WOMEN AND BLACKS

The Democratic convention's major campaign issue was to celebrate the "Year of the Woman" by honoring women candidates and backing abortion rights. They even made an appeal for the support of gays and lesbians — carefully crafted as a charitable concern for AIDS victims. But as we show in an accompanying article, their promises on women's rights are more rhetoric than reality. And the prominence given to bourgeois women was a way of shoving Blacks aside.

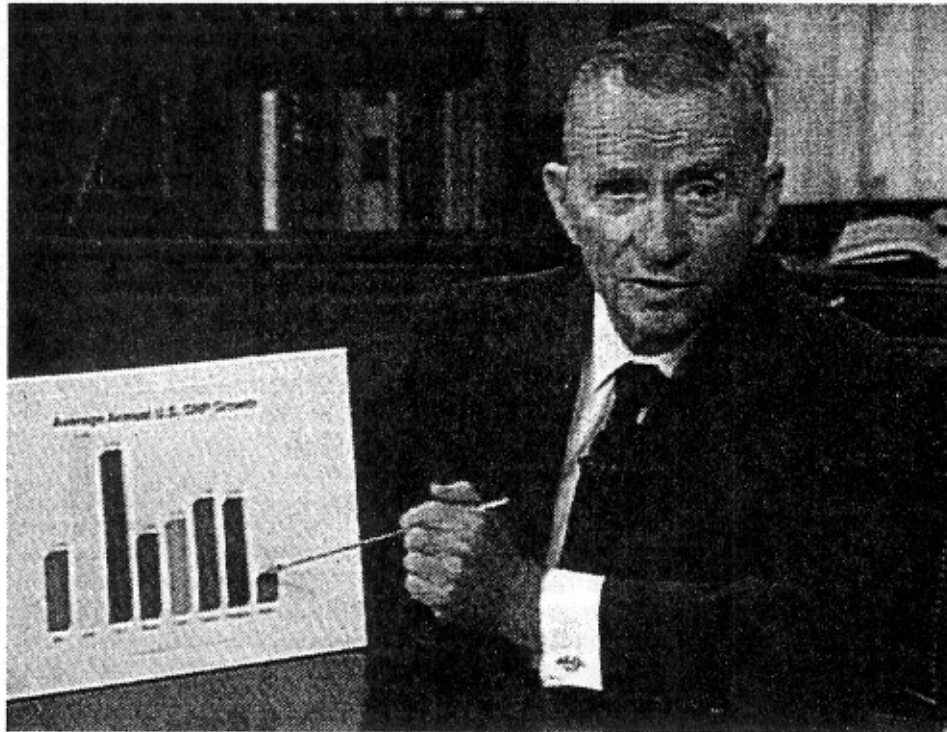
The fact that women were featured at the convention means little for them: in 1988 Jesse Jackson was given a

hero's welcome, only to find his political throat slit afterwards. As we have often argued, the very purpose of the Democratic party is to incorporate mass movements in order to defeat them. (Our pamphlet, *The Democratic Party: Graveyard of Black Struggles*, documents the past decade of U.S. politics to prove the point.)

Clinton's campaign aimed consciously at the "forgotten middle class," a code term for white, suburban, upper-level working-class voters — the so-called Reagan Democrats. These are the people whose fears and frustrations have been detoured into attacks on welfare, crime and even taxes — all demagogically used as code words pointing to Blacks, who

spoke of a re-evaluation of "entitlements," she indicated that a Democratic administration would end up victimizing welfare recipients, above all Black single mothers — even if Clinton, unlike the Republicans, claimed to welcome them into his "family." Like the Republicans, the Democrats have increasingly supported Medicaid penalties for women having more than two babies. Clinton has called for an end to welfare payments after two years, stating "welfare should be a second chance, not a way of life." His tender concern is not with poor people's well-being but with rich people's profits, as the latter increasingly recognize.

Clinton's method relies on showing his class, the U.S.



Perot's plan: workers to sacrifice, pay off banks for federal debt. Workers' revolution would seize the banks and cancel the debt.

are supposedly getting everything and who nevertheless cause trouble. Clinton went out of his way to "disrespect" Blacks during the campaign: supervising the execution of a Black prisoner in Arkansas, playing a televised golf game at a segregated country club, demanding the restoration of "personal responsibility" after Los Angeles, and attacking the rap singer Sister Souljah at a Rainbow Coalition dinner.

Jesse Jackson, the real object of the Souljah thrust, went along with the game with only mild recriminations. He had allowed himself to be persuaded to stay out of the presidential race so that the party could carry out its rightward drift unchallenged. After the convention, Jackson argued in his syndicated column that the new Democratic face was all to the good: unity and a few platform promises meant that the party was once again on the "progressive" road. This nonsense is a desperate attempt to keep Blacks entrapped.

The only consolation to Black people for being ignored is that the same is happening to other constituencies regarded as below the middle class: Latinos, the unemployed, urban workers in general and above all, those on welfare. His orientation to the "middle class," Clinton explained, means "values that nearly every American holds dear: support for family, reward for work, the willingness to change what isn't working." (The latter was another code term, for liberal programs of the past.) The Republicans made a big show of their reactionary "family values," but Clinton got there first.

When a Black Democratic stalwart like Barbara Jordan

ruling class, that he can attract white workers while keeping them divided from and hostile to Blacks. He aims to show the bourgeoisie and white workers that he's tough with Blacks — and at the same time retain enough Black votes to win the election. The capitalists want to keep Blacks back, but they also expect their president to have enough clout among Blacks to prevent uprisings, even while jobs, income and life conditions are being steadily destroyed.

Thirty years ago Malcolm X labeled the Democrats and Republicans "vultures sucking on our blood." They still are.

DEMOCRATIC WAR DANGER

On foreign policy, Clinton has made every effort to distinguish himself only as more belligerent than Bush, who is supposed to have a hammerlock on this field because of his 90 percent popularity after the Gulf War. Clinton ended up opportunistically supporting that murderous adventure. In the campaign he criticized Bush for not supporting Israel enough in its racist persecution of the Palestinians.

Clinton likewise tried to out-bully Bush by calling for U.S. military intervention in the Yugoslav civil wars. He also called Bush "soft" on Cuba, demanding in Florida that "it's time to put the hammer down on Castro." He backs the Torricelli bill to tighten the U.S.'s criminal embargo against Cuba, which Congress passed in late September with little press coverage. Clinton in the White House will in all likelihood try some military adventure to establish his tough-guy

Blacks and the Electoral Game

"A rose by any other name smells just as sweet." But the other name can mislead you into thinking there are no thorns.

Jesse Jackson tried to rename Black people "African-Americans." At first glance this seems unobjectionable; after all, the ancestral home of Blacks is Africa. But that has little to do with the reasons behind the change.

"Black" was a name won in struggle in the late 1960's. Before that, "Negro" was the common term, but it had come to mean acceptance of racism. "Black" as a name symbolizing pride was popularized by Malcolm X and other champions of Black Power. Its real acceptance, however, came when Black power was actually put into practice.

Until the ghettos rose up in rebellion in the 1960's, civil rights protests alone had forced the capitalists to dole out promises and precious little else. Terrified by the mass riots, the ruling class coughed up more jobs, better wages, opportunities for education and more rights — not the end of racism by any means, but some real gains. And some respect — not given out of any moral transformation by Washington and Wall Street, but *taken* by angry Black workers.

The name "Black" was won honorably by mass action. The idea of changing it to "African-American" comes from the conception that Blacks are just like other ethnic groups in the U.S.: "Irish-Americans," "Italian-Americans," etc. Blacks will supposedly get a piece of the action and become mainstream Americans by playing the electoral game. The rules say that ethnic politicians deliver the ethnic vote, and each group gets goodies in proportion to its votes. If "African-Americans" play along, they'll get their share of the pie.

The trouble is, the game requires that all the players accept the system — capitalism — and the size of the pie it says it can afford. When the electoral dice are rolled, all the "ethnic groups" and "special interests" are played off against each other for pieces of this pie. The game is used to distribute gains won by massive class action to divide the working class. Each section is set against the next.

ELECTORALISM BENEFITS CAPITALISTS

Thus the game benefits only those who own the banks and monopolies and load the dice: the capitalist class and the big players who front for it. While the ethnic politicians grow stronger, their voting bases, having traded mass action for the ballot box, lose overall. The best that most "ethnic American" workers got from the electoral game was crumbs.

That's in good times. Today the pie is getting smaller. Groups are pitted against each other to see how much each will give *back* to the bosses so that profit rates can grow again. They are steadily losing jobs, wages and public services. They are vying with each other not simply to hold on to crumbs won at the electoral gaming board: what workers, ethnic and otherwise, are being forced to give up was won by mass industrial action in the 1930's.

If the ethnic-electoral gambit works against white workers, it is deadly for Blacks. In the U.S. when times get rough, they are rougher by far on people of color. Blacks

are not simply used by the system like the various ethnic groupings. First exploiting them as slaves and then as low-paid labor, capitalism in America owes its very existence to the toil of Blacks. By maintaining a discriminatory barrier, capitalism pressures white workers to see Blacks as their enemy instead of capitalism. "*They take our jobs, our taxes, our houses . . .*"

As long as the struggle is confined to the electoral arena, workers will believe that the capitalist pie is all there is to hope for. Since it is shrinking, inevitably the competing ethnic groups and sectoral interests find their chief target in the Blacks. White politicians bolster their power, white workers continue to lose — but Blacks lose more.

Jesse Jackson and the other Democratic politicians convinced millions of Blacks to turn toward electoralism rather than mass action in the early 1980's. It seemed to work: politicians and the media took note of the increased Black vote. But as the numbers of elected Black officials rose, the condition of the Black masses worsened. The cry against mass action was further buttressed by the argument "Let's not embarrass Black elected officials." Today in New York City, for example, Black and Latino workers are warned not to protest and defend themselves against a viciously racist police force engaged in a terror campaign in the ghettos, lest they undermine Mayor David Dinkins.

RACISM QUESTION SUPPRESSED

The "issue" of Blacks and racism is totally buried in the current electoral game. Bill Clinton warns Blacks that there will be a white backlash if race becomes an issue. By avoiding the question, he seeks to capture racist votes while keeping the Black voting base that Jackson and others built up.

Silence in the face of racism is deadly for Blacks. Race is a critical issue — *outside* the electoral game, in the real life of real people. Blacks are well aware of their worsening economic position. Racism and racial attacks are on the rise.

But the issue cannot be pressed, they are told: if Bubba Clinton loses the election, the reactionaries will stay in power. Yet Clinton refuses even to falsely promise any crumbs for Blacks. The "coalition of Blacks and whites" he has put together is as much a fraud as the so-called Rainbow Coalition that preceded it.

Since the threat of racism is growing, it must be answered in the real world, not in the electoral mirage. Black workers retain great potential strength: they work in strategic industries and major cities. They face the need to fight the capitalist attack, demand jobs to do the vast amount of work needed to rebuild the cities and make life livable, and defend working-class neighborhoods from cops and criminals. With such a program they can spark the struggle of all workers, who have a common interest in such a struggle.

Above all, Black workers must insist that racism be fought in order to tackle the real enemy. Blacks will never get jobs for all, personal security and economic equality under this system. For Black workers above all, the revolutionary struggle to overthrow capitalism is a vital necessity.

credentials. It's the Democratic tradition.

The Democrats are also the biggest Japan-bashers in an effort to stir up workers through racism, since they too can't solve any economic problems. At the convention, Clinton had the delegates booing and hissing Japan's prime minister. Clinton's running mate, Al Gore, has a longer foreign policy record as a senator and was selected in part to bolster Clinton's imperialist authority. He endorsed not just the Gulf War but all the Reagan-era adventures: the Nicaraguan contras, the invasion of Grenada, the bombing of Libya.

The main battalions of the bourgeoisie tend for the moment to be less aggressive than Clinton and Gore over Japan-bashing and foreign adventures. Still, they appreciate that Clinton's tough imperialist front helps him play on the sentiments of the Reagan Democrats, whose economic discontent has often been diverted into enthusiasm for racist and patriotic escapades abroad.

DEMOCRATS AND CORPORATIONS

However populist his campaign, Clinton's administration will be no friend of the working class. Indeed, this year the Democratic party has been taken over by its right wing. The Democratic Leadership Council, which both Clinton and Gore are leaders of, wrested control of the party from its labor/liberal wing. Of course, the last few Democratic presidential candidates — Carter, Mondale, Dukakis — did not run flaming liberal campaigns, but the DLC claims that even the appearance of concessions to labor and people of color cost the party several elections.

The shaky economy is the key issue. The dollar's fall stems from the Federal Reserve's policy of lowering interest rates in an effort to stimulate recovery and aid Bush's campaign. But the maneuver hasn't worked, partly because the immense balloon of debt and other fictitious capital (often analyzed in *Proletarian Revolution*) restricts the profitability of major new investments. The capitalists will recover only if they succeed in tightening the squeeze on the working class.

Bush is rightly suspected of proposing tax cuts that indulge only the rich. But increasing numbers of them

understand that this is no longer enough. And the Democratic Party is bankrolled by the same financiers and corporations that fund the Republicans. During its convention big business ran rampant:

They came in full force last week, seizing the decks of the U.S.S. Intrepid and taking over the Temple of Dendur at the Metropolitan Museum of Art . . . Washington's biggest and most powerful lobbyists and corporate interests took their craft to new heights, holding receptions for Democratic lawmakers from one end of Manhattan to the other. . . . Never have so much shrimp, blanketed pigs and half-shelled oysters been lavished so heavily on so many Democrats for one event, most of it supplied from companies and interests with important issues before Congress.

This is not written by a Marxist observer laying out the class nature of the Democratic Party. It's the very bourgeois *New York Times* (July 19) summarizing just what took place. Bear it in mind should you hear Clinton speak, as he does, "in the name of the hard-working Americans who make up our forgotten middle class." If you can't throw a party with stretch limousines, yachts and rented museums, the Democrats aren't in your pocket.

When Clinton in the same speech vowed to "break the stranglehold the special interests have on our elections and the lobbyists have on our government," he wasn't talking about the moneymen but about unions, which have in reality strangled no one but their own workers. But when he promised to replace 100,000 government workers with 100,000 cops, he meant it: strikebreaking and harassing minorities are essential for the rulers know to keep unrest under control.

CLINTON'S ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHY

There are differences between Bush and Clinton over how government should intervene in the economy. But there is no basic quarrel that the goal is to strengthen American capitalism, nor over the class issues that follow from this.

Clinton hypocritically proclaims his sympathy for workers: "I watched the rank and file of this country get mur-

The Democratic Party: Graveyard of Black Struggles

A New *Proletarian Revolution* Pamphlet by Sy Landy

These articles, reprinted from the press of the League for the Revolutionary Party, are primarily concerned with the aspirations and actions of Black people as they have interacted with the electoral process. They analyze political campaigns spanning the decade 1983-1992, ranging over politicians from Harold Washington and Louis Farrakhan to Bill Clinton, with special attention to Jesse Jackson. They detail the role of the Democratic Party in absorbing and derailing struggles for equality and justice.

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dered in the 1980's." But he proposes only small tax cuts for the "middle class" and a modest increase for the richest 2 percent of families (those getting over \$200,000 per year). His maximum income tax rate of 36 percent (it's 25 percent now) is ludicrously low by both historical U.S. standards and international comparison. Like Bush, Clinton likes tax breaks for business that workers never see: investment credits, research and development handouts — and even a version of Bush's favorite, a capital-gains tax cut for the wealthy.

Clinton's "sympathy" for workers can't stand up to his sympathy for capital. Listen:

We are not like Germany and Japan. We have always renewed ourselves through wave after wave after wave of immigrants. And I have always been supportive of this. It's exhilarating to go to Los Angeles county and see people from 146 different ethnic groups. But if that is our strategy, particularly now that many wages are set on a global scale, then we are going to have to reconcile ourselves not to being a hard-work, low-wage country but to having a higher percentage of people at lower wage levels. (Interview in *Rolling Stone*, Sept. 17.)

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR: THE VIEW FROM THE LEFT

Writing about the Spanish Civil War, Leon Trotsky pointed out that the 'witnesses, victims and participants' of the 'innumerable crimes committed on the Iberian peninsula by the international scoundrels in Stalin's employ' would 'carry with them everywhere their testimony', and predicted that the 'truth will become accessible to broad circles of the population in all countries.' Our aim is to let them speak through these pages.

Only one of the accounts in this book has ever appeared before in English. The contributions range across the whole spectrum of the non-Stalinist left, from Trotskyists (both official and dissenting), Brandlerites, the left wing of the POUM, Italian Maximalists, to left-wing Social Democrats, plus a number of studies by modern investigators who do not toe the Stalinist line.

For too long the views of the Stalinists on this issue have remained virtually unchallenged. This book challenges Stalinist orthodoxy by proving that the violence inflicted upon the non-Stalinist left during the Spanish Civil War was an essential part of the Popular Front strategy of the Communist International, and that by strangling the revolution that was occurring in Republican Spain, this strategy was directly responsible for the victory of Franco.

The Spanish Civil War: The View from the Left is an essential book for those who wish to learn the truth about the Spanish Civil War, and for those who wish to combat the baleful influence of Popular Frontism within the labor movement today.

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Very clever. The U.S., Clinton says, will not become a low-wage country, just a *lower*-wage country. This is forced on capitalists by the world market, as if they bear no responsibility for their system. He also points to immigrant workers, hastening to add that he loves them to show he's not whipping up attacks. But that's what he is doing: blaming the system's victims for its crisis and his response.

According to the well-connected *New York Times* columnist Leslie Gelb, two of the leading candidates for the job of Clinton's Treasury Secretary are Wall Street bankers Peter Peterson and Felix Rohatyn. *Fortune* magazine lists Paul Volcker, former head of the Federal Reserve, among others. All three are Clinton brain-trusters and leading ideologues for the bourgeoisie's austerity program.

Peterson, once Secretary of Commerce for Richard Nixon, was a major architect of a capitalist manifesto signed by dozens of ex-cabinet members, bankers and corporate bigwigs that appeared in newspapers across the country in the 1988 campaign. (See *Proletarian Revolution* No. 31.) It demanded cuts in social programs to "discourage consumption and encourage savings and investment." At the time we said this is "bourgeois babble for gouging the workers (those who have no choice but to consume with what they earn) and coddling the capitalists — those who invest if the profit climate is right." Peterson also called for slashing Social Security, Medicare and civil-service pensions.

This year Peterson has joined former Democratic candidate Paul Tsongas in an effort to sacrifice already collapsing social programs in the name of reducing the budget deficit. The goal, says Tsongas, is "to provide a political constituency for the hard choices" — that is, squeezing the masses.

Rohatyn, the brains behind New York City's vicious budget cutting from 1975 to 1992, advocated in 1988 that both candidates keep their economic policies under cover:

The next president . . . won't be able in the campaign to discuss rationally the things he will have to do, because if he does he is going to get killed. . . . This country's standard of living is going to have to be lowered. How it is lowered and for whom it is lowered and whether it will be accepted socially — these are open questions.

That is, Rohatyn knows it's the working class that is going to be attacked — he just wasn't sure it wouldn't fight back. Today he turns up as a friend and co-thinker of austerity spokesman Perot — but in Clinton's camp.

Volcker, appointed to the Fed by Democrat Jimmy Carter in 1979, is famous for having imposed sharply higher interest rates in order to force the burden of economic crisis onto the working class. He did not conceal his aim: "The standard of living of the average American has to decline. I don't think you can escape that." The capitalists loved Volcker's moves then and are looking for similar answers now. The grave danger is that Clinton, without Bush's baggage of too obviously favoring his millionaire friends, can ride to power on working people's votes only to advance the bourgeoisie's more or less open plan of attack.

WILL THE BOURGEOISIE TURN FASCIST?

Outrages like the vote for David Duke in Louisiana and the religious right's domination of the Republican convention and platform are not just signs of evil on the loose. They show that much of the electorate is fed up and wants radical solutions. Labor and the left are offering nothing, so the right is unchallenged when it comes to strong answers.

The bourgeoisie hasn't accepted radical right-wing solutions, in part because the Buchanans, Dukes and Robertsons have no economic alternative to the Reaganomics whose contradictions are now being felt even at the upper levels. The



Today Clinton sucks answers out of his thumb. He'll be trying to suck our blood tomorrow.

right wing is still for "free enterprise." It does not raise a fascist program: that is, a "national socialist" statist policy with a radical facade concealing its pro-capitalist content.

But even if the right did put forward such ideas, the bourgeoisie is not ready for even an all-out attack on the working class, much less fascism. Facing no pressure from the left, the bourgeoisie needs to be tougher but still hopes to avoid open mass confrontations. It will grab everything it can get — short of inviting general strikes, pitched battles in the streets or any serious disruption of production. It seeks a cold war, not a hot war, against the masses.

With Bush or Clinton in the White House, the bourgeoisie has an opportunist who is unlikely to launch a truly giant attack. But that means that it will not get the scale of wage and budget cutting that it really needs. Peterson's manifesto was a plea by the private-sector capitalists for the government to cut workers' wages and living standards to an extent that they themselves couldn't accomplish in industry. As supine as the labor bureaucracy has been and as helpless as most workers currently feel, the bourgeoisie well knows the underlying strength of the working class. The bourgeois mice are afraid to bell the proletarian cat.

But the best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry. Given the depth of the crisis, the chances are small that the new administration can survive the next four years without having to face a huge social explosion. When that occurs, the only thing that is guaranteed is the end of today's faddish "free enterprise" propaganda. The demand will be for the expansion of state power, whether it comes from the right or the left. If the bourgeoisie remains unchallenged by the organized working class, that would mean bringing the reactionary right into the government. The road is being paved.

'LEFT' BOOSTS THE DEMOCRATS

Great efforts are being made to drum up enthusiasm for Clinton, despite his record. Middle-class women's leaders say Clinton is the only chance to save abortion rights — a claim belied by the Democrats' history of betrayals. After the Bush-Quayle renomination, leftists bemoaned the threat of fascism posed by the Republican right to make Clinton seem all the more necessary — ignoring the Democrats' history of imperialism and racial jingoism. The *Amsterdam News*, New York's

leading Black paper, took the same line: "it is the most important election of our lifetime." (August 29.) This serves only to tie Blacks to the Democrats and prevent a Black-led independent working-class movement.

A long-time admirer of "right-to-work" laws in his home state, Clinton was so anti-union that the Arkansas AFL-CIO refused to endorse him in the primaries. Labor leaders claim as always that the Democrats are the only hope for strengthening unions — as if pro-union legislation (which Clinton does not favor and which Democratic Congresses have rejected for decades) could make up for labor's unwillingness to fight strikes to the finish. The complacent, pro-capitalist union bureaucrats have been losing members for longer than anyone can remember, even in better economic times — unionization is now down to 16 percent of the work force, under 12 percent in the private sector.

The collapse of the Democrats' liberal wing has inspired left activists to initiate several new electoral schemes. These include the "21st Century Party" of the National Organization for Women (see our article on the abortion issue) and the "Campaign for a New Tomorrow" of Ron Daniels, former chairman of Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition.

Daniels' campaign, even as an effort to build for the future, is no genuine alternative. It is not even a clear break from the Democrats. The People's Progressive Convention led by Daniels in August did not nominate anyone, so as not to prevent Clinton supporters from having a little fling with "independence." Daniels is critical of the Democrats for moving rightward under Reagan and Bush, not for being a capitalist party that *inevitably* attacks the system's victims. He criticizes Jackson for not adopting an "inside-outside strategy" towards the Democratic Party that would allow Rainbow activists to run as independents. He agrees that this year "progressive Democrats" should be supported. This is a strategy not for independence but for making the Democrats better able to fool more people more convincingly.

Much of Daniels' "progressive platform" is watered-down reformism. It promises a vague "protection of the reproductive rights of women" — not free abortion on demand. Its "domestic Marshall Plan" is based on "community economic development," i.e., support for your local capitalist — not a massive program of *public* works. Its

“economic democracy” means the fiction of “greater control by workers and communities over business, industry, finance and commerce” — not expropriation of profiteering and union-busting firms.

Worst is Daniels’ support for a reformed U.S. imperialism: he proposes to cut military spending by 50 percent and leave world “peace-keeping” to the United Nations. A Pentagon with half its present budget would still be the world’s best armed and financed military power. And the U.N., as in the Gulf War, would still be little but a convenient platform for U.S. imperialism. Daniels’ formula is an attempt to appear “realistic” to middle-class liberals who dream of a truly democratic imperialist foreign policy.

Also in the running is the New Alliance Party, a fraudulent outfit that pretends to be an alternative to the Democrats but in fact embodies the “inside-outside” strategy. In ’84 and ’88 it supported Jackson in the primaries — and then criticized him for sticking with the Democratic Party that it had worked hard to draw voters into. Much of the left labels the NAP a “cult.” So it is, but its real crime is its continued support for the Democrats, a habit it shares with the bulk of its critics. This year the NAP again ran in the Democratic primaries, backed other Democrats, and fought through legal maneuvers to keep other left parties off the ballot.

THE REVOLUTIONARY ALTERNATIVE

“Progressives” talking reformism offer no serious counter to Democratic demagogues. That’s because people convinced that only reforms are possible will settle for smaller gains from someone who can win rather than waste time on marginally better reforms from someone who can’t.

The third-partyists see themselves as “practical” because they offer programs that appeal to the current consciousness of workers or specific oppressed sectors. But as long as they remain committed to capitalism — as long as they do not have a *revolutionary* program — they are thoroughly impractical. The capitalists do not want them and the masses do not need them. When the workers explode they will go far beyond pallid reformism and electoralism.

Even self-styled revolutionaries who claim to know that the working class needs a revolutionary party engage in these maneuvers. The left ignores the communist attitude to bourgeois elections: it is chasing after reformist campaigns instead of fighting to expose the pseudo-democracy of parliamentarism. It carries favor with the lifeless labor bureaucracy rather than posing the stark programmatic alternative that can reach the masses who are demanding real change. The only alternative to bourgeois electoralism is to build a revolutionary party that stands openly for the destruction of the capitalist system and its state, and for their replacement by a workers’ state and a genuinely centralized, planned economy.

A revolutionary party would not hesitate to engage in electoral campaigns. But it would tell its audience that working-class power cannot be achieved through bourgeois elections. Even seeing a distant possibility of overturning capitalism would bring the bourgeoisie to use every weapon, including fascist thugs, against the proletariat. A party of proletarian revolution would use elections to prepare the working class for the violent confrontations ahead. That is the opposite of electoralism.

Even without a revolutionary party, the tiny electoral turnouts and the urban riots and near-riots (Los Angeles, Washington Heights in New York) are already demanding an alternative: not votes but action. Workers are so fed up with their unions that they don’t want to strike: they expect to lose. But that does not mean accepting the bosses’ electoralist deceptions. It means mass working-class activity.

General strikes can succeed where local, divided strikes are too weak to win. They can prevent concessions and layoffs, win decent health care and keep wages ahead of inflation. If a more powerful nucleus of a revolutionary party existed today, it could go a long way toward popularizing the idea of general strikes throughout the working class.

The general strike is a key weapon in this conjecture because it would lead to a political challenge against the state and the bourgeoisie. Thus a general strike is a *political* alternative. Although it begins as a defensive move, it has the potential to make the working class into a challenger for state power. It threatens to paralyze the state apparatus and set up alternative production, transport and communication networks of the workers themselves.

This has been the case with many general strikes. This magazine has covered in detail the Polish workers’ Interfactory Strike Committees in 1980 and the Soviet coal miners’ takeover of their communities in 1989. These actions, lacking even the kernel of a revolutionary leadership, eventually collapsed back into trade union bargaining-as-usual. There were immense strikes in South Korea, including a two-week armed strike at the Hyundai shipyards in 1990. Even the bureaucratically run German general strike of May 1992 frightened the world bourgeoisie with the specter of working-class power.

Communists do not hide the revolutionary implications of a general strike. Workers who now reject “socialism” because of their justified hatred of Stalinism and social democracy will understand the world differently once they see their united strength. Then a working-class upsurge will mean not just a few days of power in the streets but a genuine new world order — the old order turned upside-down — with the oppressed and exploited on top, paving the way to a classless society of abundance, equality and peace. ●

Sweden

continued from page 25

(the right-wing populist party), and then the government would have split immediately.

The SAP tries to make people believe that there is still a vast ideological gap between the parliamentary blocs. Sure there is — in solemn May Day speeches. But when it comes to helping the bourgeoisie throw the burdens of the crisis onto working people, then there is no difficulty at all in coming together. The reason is that the SAP, just like the bourgeois parties, wants to keep the capitalist system, and when this system enters into one of its inevitable, recurring crises, then the bourgeoisie demands more and more sacrifices by the workers. Any party that is unwilling to break out of the narrow framework of the system will then dance to the capitalists’ tune.

The SAP does not have to be forced to dance: it does so willingly. It long ago ceased to be a real workers’ party. Today it is a bourgeois party, ruled by a middle-class elite which completely identifies itself with capitalism. The party itself is a dead bureaucratic machine and cannot be changed or reformed from within. It is helplessly lost for the working class. When Ingvar Carlsson (the SAP chairman) says that he has not sold out the soul of the party, he is therefore perfectly right. To attack its own voters whenever “the market” demands is in full accordance with the SAP’s soul. That is why we do not think it is enough to call for a general strike to topple the government. The general strike has to be aimed *against every government that attacks the working class.* ●

North American Free Trade Fraud

Since the 1988 Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the U.S. already exists, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) signed in August is essentially a deal between a "third-world" country, Mexico, and the two imperialist powers. Its chief purpose is to permanently undo Mexico's traditional nationalist protectionism.

From the point of view of Mexican capital, both indigenous and U.S.-owned, NAFTA's purpose is to extend the cheap-labor, tariff-free border-industry maquiladora program to non-maquila production throughout Mexico. It will weaken labor and environmental regulations in all three countries.

NAFTA is also meant to guarantee that future Mexican regimes will continue the "liberal" pro-imperialist program of President Salinas. All this represents a sharp attack on the wages and living standards of Mexican workers by subordinating them more directly to imperialist capital.

NAFTA UNDERMINES WORKERS' GAINS

The U.S.-Canada free trade pact already undermines the greater social gains Canadian workers have won in comparison to U.S. workers. NAFTA will be used to further extend U.S. norms against "social-democratic inefficiency." Thus it is an attack on the wages of U.S. and Canadian workers as well. As such it is broadly supported by the U.S., Canadian and Mexican bourgeoisies, including Bush and Clinton.

NAFTA is also another step in the development of hostile international trade blocs, those headed by the U.S., Japan and Germany. It will mean higher barriers against Europe and Japan, raising Mexican tariffs to U.S. levels. It may be a stepping-stone toward a hemispheric agreement including South America. But it is certainly another move toward heightening imperialist rivalry and setting the stage for trade wars and a future world war.

Normally communist internationalists neither favor nor opposed schemes to merge corporations or imperialist capitals. Thus in West Europe today, where the rulers are

debating unification (which is in reality hopeless under capitalism except through conquest), we take no sides. Here,



however, the crucial question is the increased subjugation of Mexico, which must be opposed.

Our opposition to NAFTA has nothing in common with the racist protectionism that guides the opposition to NAFTA by many "socialists" and the AFL-CIO, who complain of exporting "American jobs" to Mexico. We link our opposition to NAFTA to demands for unrestricted immigration to the U.S., full rights to immigrant workers and ending their harassment by government agencies.

The main argument on the left against opposing NAFTA is that doing so means capitulating to the AFL-CIO's protectionism. And so it would, if opposition did not explicitly combat this. But NAFTA itself is protectionist, against the rest of the world. Hence the Lutte Ouvrière group is wrong when it implies that NAFTA is internationalist:

The bourgeoisie's effort to break down barriers between countries of trade, investment, production, is its own half-hearted recognition that national borders are obsolete and that socialism is necessary. (Class Struggle, March 1992.)

Likewise the International Socialist Organization: **NAFTA represents the recognition by the bosses that they are presiding over an international system of production. (Socialist Worker, June 1992.)**

This is nonsense: NAFTA represents another level of nationalism, that of U.S. imperialism. Both groups cited imply NAFTA is progressive, although neither actually supports it. Against such confusion the point is to take the lead in countering this latest attack by capital against our class. ●



May Day banner in Mexico City protests NAFTA.

Iraq: The Struggle in the South

In our last issue we published reports about the workers' councils that seized control of towns in the Kurdish region of Iraq in the aftermath of the Gulf War. We have also analyzed the collaboration between Western imperialism and the forces of reaction in the region, including Saddam Hussein.

Now further reports about the upsurges in the Kurdish North and the Shiite South of Iraq have appeared in publications of the "left communist" milieu in Europe. They also give important details about the imperialists' complicity in defeating the mass revolts. We cannot vouch independently for these documents, but their factual content rings true.

These reports compel us to reverse two positions in our summary of the Gulf War in *Proletarian Revolution* No. 39: 1) that there was no evidence of independent working-class mobilization in Southern Iraq, and 2) that "from the minimal information available to us" we could not give military support to the Southern uprising. (There was a possibility that it was politically dominated by pro-Western politicians or pro-Iranian clerical reactionaries.)

We offer our readers excerpts from these reports, emphasizing material on the Iraqi South. (We are particularly grateful for articles sent us by Motiva Forlag of Norway.) However, we do not accept every political position expressed, notably the notion of a monolithic "world bourgeois state."

TEN DAYS THAT SHOOK IRAQ

The Gulf War was not ended by the military victory of America and the Allies. It was ended by the mass desertion of thousands of Iraqi conscript soldiers. . . . The sheer scale of this mutiny is perhaps unprecedented in modern military history. But these mutinous troops did not simply flee back to Iraq. On their return many of them turned their guns against the Iraqi state, sparking a simultaneous uprising in both Southern Iraq and in Kurdistan to the North. . . .

From the very start the Western media has grossly misrepresented these uprisings. The uprising in the South, centered on Basra, was portrayed as a Shia Muslim revolt. Whereas the insurrection in the North was reported as an exclusively Kurdish nationalist uprising which demanded little more than an autonomous Kurdish region within Iraq.

The truth is that the uprisings in both the North and South of Iraq were proletarian insurrections.

Basra is one of the most secular areas in the Middle East. Almost no one goes to the mosques in Basra. The radical traditions in this area are not those of Islamic fundamentalism but rather those of Arab nationalism and Stalinism. The Iraqi Communist Party is the only bourgeois party with any significant influence in this region. The cities of Basra, Nasiriya and Hilah have long been known as the region of the Communist Party and have a long history of open rebellion against both religion and the state. The "Iraqi" working class has always been one off the most troublesome in a volatile region. . . .

The last thing the American government wanted was to be drawn into a prolonged military occupation of Iraq in order to suppress the uprisings. It was far more efficient to back the existing state. But there was no time to insist on the removal of Saddam Hussein. They could ill afford the disruption this would cause. Hence, almost overnight, Bush's hostility to the butcher of Baghdad evaporated. The two rival butchers went into partnership.

Their first task was to crush the uprising in the South, which was being swelled by the huge columns of deserters

streaming North from Kuwait. Even though these fleeing Iraqi conscripts posed no military threat to Allied troops, or to the objective of "liberating" Kuwait, the war was prolonged long enough for them to be carpet-bombed on the road to Basra by the [British] and U.S. air forces. This cold-blooded massacre served no other purpose than to preserve the Iraqi state from mutinous armed deserters.

Following this massacre, the Allied ground forces, having swept through Southern Iraq to encircle Kuwait, stopped short of Basra and gave free reign to the Republican Guards — the elite troops loyal to the Iraqi regime — to crush the insurgents. All proposals to inflict a decisive defeat on the Republican Guards or to proceed towards Baghdad to topple Saddam were quickly forgotten. In the cease-fire negotiations, the Allied forces insisted on the grounding of all fixed-



wing aircraft, but the use of helicopters vital for counter-insurgency was permitted for "administrative purposes." This "concession" proved important once the uprising in the South was put down and the Iraqi state's attention turned to the advancing insurrection in the North. . . .

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THE MARSHLANDS: TRADITIONAL REFUGE OF RESISTANCE TO THE STATE

Resistance against the state in the South of Iraq, particularly in the marshlands, long preceded the Baath Party government. For centuries this region has served as a refuge for all the hunted, the repressed and the rebels. . . .

A little before the Iran/Iraq war, hundreds of hunted militants took refuge in the marshy plains. These deserters found support among the local populations along the southern frontier with Iran. . . . Among them were former members of the Iraqi Communist Party from the cities of the South and the Center. They were sought for the most part because of their refusal to collaborate with the treaty of alliance signed by the government and their party. In certain cases the Iraqi CP denounced them to the regime.

There were also working-class militants active in agitation and class actions which took place in cities like Basra, Amara and Nasiriya. Finally, there were numerous deserters and proletarians who refused obligatory work in the Baath

Party organizations. . . . When the war with Iran broke out, the ranks of these refugees and deserters increased. . . .

Before and during the [Iraqi] occupation of Kuwait, strikes increased across Iraq: strikes against the war effort, against the increasing austerity . . . As for the army, the soldiers at the front and in Baghdad observed that on the third day of the ground offensive, the majority of barracks in and around Baghdad were practically empty. Desertions, prepared months in advance, were massive. Soldiers took the first opportunity to save themselves. They used false passes and were aided by workers in the cities, who supplied them with civilian clothes, hiding places and food. . . .

On the southeast front, thanks to the existence of nearby cities like Basra, the soldiers could more easily leave the front and reach the city. From the end of January, hundreds of soldiers deserted and took refuge in Basra and its environs. The old forces of the marshlands movement intensified their actions and reinforced their contacts with other deserters and insurgents in Amara, Basra and Nasiriya.

The outburst generalized throughout the country, particularly in Baghdad. . . . The proletarians attacked Baath headquarters, liberated prisoners, stripped governmental offices, attacked the quarters of the security services, executed hundreds of Baath functionaries and torturers of the terrifying secret police.

This explosive situation led the world bourgeois state to organize, through its governments, support for the Shi'ite, nationalist and democratic opposition parties. The Islamicist Dawa party had direct contacts with the Americans and the Saudis. The Kurdish nationalists also made such contacts. Each faction pretended to be the instigator and the vanguard of part of the uprising. But none of them had the influence which they claimed. . . .

The Shi'ite factions ended up denouncing the movement as an uprising organized by anarchists and troublemakers. The world bourgeoisie became aware of what was happening and, given the incapacity of its friends to control the movement, took the necessary measures to stop the Gulf conflict.

Between a friendly but weak opposition and the bourgeois faction in the government, they chose the latter. Saddam Hussein still had the force necessary for dealing with the uprisings, given that the Allies had never destroyed the shock troops of the Iraqi army — contrary to what they had claimed in the early days of the war. Thus, thanks in the end to the Allied operations, the Iraqi army (the Republican Guard) was finally able to concentrate all its forces in the struggle against the proletarians, in the South first and then

of the North. Under the benevolent eyes of the Allied armies, the positions held by the rebellion were retaken step by step. The Iraqi army entered the cities with tanks and armored vehicles and killed thousands of insurgents.

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REVOLUTIONARY DEFEATISM IN IRAQ

In [the South] of Iraq, uprisings started as the Allies' land offensive began. The proletarians' situation became increasingly unbearable, due to massive bombings of Basra, Amara, Nasiriyah, Najaf and Karbala. Organized minorities centralized their activities, and struggles took place around all these cities.

Contrary to everything that has been said about the religious nature of the movement, religion played no part in the proletarian struggle. Najaf and Karbala are sacred cities for Shi'ites, but the uprising had nothing to do with Islam . . . Proletarians used sacred sites to hang Baathists. Mausoleums were riddled with bullets, and angry proletarians pissed in the mosques. Difficult, therefore, to talk of "religious fanaticism"!

The Allies had reached the gates of Najaf and Karbala at the time of the uprisings there. It is clear that they halted the land offensive to permit the Iraqi army to carry out an attack on the insurgents. As the Iraqi army descended on the cities, chaos ensued and deserters fled in all directions. Some asked for asylum and aid from the Allied troops but were told, "we'll give you something to drink if you're thirsty, but only in exchange for your weapons." They were then sent back, unarmed, to be massacred — one example of collaboration between Saddam and the Allies against the uprising.

. . . In order to counter the large-scale uprisings in cities such as Arbil, Kirkuk, Mosul and Suleimaniya [in the North] that started with the launching of the land offensive, Saddam signed an agreement for peaceful coexistence with the nationalists. Jalal Talabani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and Masoud Barzani, leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party, announced publicly in April and May 1991 that they had reached an agreement with Saddam Hussein.

Even more recently, Talabani confirmed that during the war his organization deliberately avoided taking any action liable to stabilize the state "out of national respect," guaranteeing a mutual respect for territory under the violent monopoly of whichever force. We now know that the People's Mujahedin of Iran also took part in these agreements and that their shock troops were used against the proletarian uprising.

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S. Africa: Massacres Bolster Negotiations

The "New South Africa" of "reformed" apartheid is bathing itself in the blood of the Black working class. The continued slaughter of Black workers, culminating in the recent massacres in Boipatong and Ciskei, exposes the negotiations as what this magazine has always said they are: a counterrevolutionary weapon against the Black masses to sustain South Africa's racist capitalism. Socialist revolution, not reform, is the only way to end apartheid.

TOWNSHIP VIOLENCE

More than two years of negotiations between the De Klerk government and the ANC over an "end to apartheid" have delivered the Black masses blow after blow. Almost 10,000 Blacks have died in the township violence, victims of the security forces and their Inkatha and fascist allies. Tens of thousands of workers have lost their jobs, and many more their working conditions, in wave after wave of bosses' attacks. And the ANC has decided not to pursue its previously held basic goals like one person, one vote, nationalization of industry and redistribution of the land.

When the negotiations broke down this May, with the ANC and De Klerk unable to agree upon the shape of a post-apartheid Constituent Assembly, an explosive situation unfolded. The Black masses, their patience and illusions in the negotiations rapidly disintegrating, threatened to break from the grip of the Congress Alliance — the coalition among the ANC, the Communist Party (SACP) and the trade union congress COSATU. A strike wave began to spread throughout the country in response to bosses' attacks, with tens of thousands of workers on strike at any one time throughout June. More and more workers were saying that the negotiations strategy had failed and that it was time to return to the mass struggle for power.

The violence reached an apparent peak on June 17 when South African army units escorted death squads of Gatsha Buthelezi's Inkatha movement into the town of Boipatong, where they slaughtered 48 Black residents. The Boipatong massacre sparked the masses into action. As the *Weekly Mail* put it, it was "One Massacre Too Many." When Mandela visited Boipatong, a mass rally demanded guns and the right to armed self-defense. When De Klerk visited the township he was run out by angry demonstrators. The pent-up anger of the Black masses was threatening to blow.

CONTRADICTIONARY STATEMENTS

The Congress Alliance reacted swiftly: on June 30, COSATU's Living Wage Conference was turned into planning meeting for a program of action including a proposed general strike. On July 7, the Alliance held an emergency meeting to deal with the situation.

But the two meetings produced only contradictory statements, efforts to take the masses' desire to break from the negotiations and fight for power and adapt it to the negotiations strategy. For example, they called for a ban on carrying dangerous weapons and the prosecution of those who participate in acts of violence — thus denying the right of Black workers to defend themselves from attack by the state and its allies. At the same time they passed a paper resolution calling for defense units in the townships. Likewise, the minutes from COSATU's meeting state in one sentence that the aim of the proposed general strike was to "remove De Klerk from power," while in the very next line the aim was

to "force De Klerk to come back to the negotiating table"!

NEGOTIATIONS AND VIOLENCE COUNTERPOSED?

While apparently no two members of the Congress Alliance could agree on a response to the continued anti-working class violence, they all agreed that the township violence is the single greatest threat to the negotiations process. On the contrary: the violence has served as a guarantee for the negotiations that reveals their anti-working class nature.

South African capitalism was built upon the super-exploitation of the Black working class. With the world capitalist crisis demanding brutal attacks upon working people everywhere and the South African profit system in particularly deep crisis, the ruling class must crush the Black workers to save itself. However, with the proletariat undefeated and its struggles on the rise, the ruling class has rightly felt itself too weak to smash the Black masses at this juncture. So it has opted for the strategy of weakening the working class before crushing it.

The white bourgeoisie believes that by conceding a subordinate degree of political power to the leaders of the Black masses it will be able to use the middle-class bureaucrats of the ANC and SACP to discipline workers' struggles. This is the meaning of the negotiations process.

For their part, the Congress allies have sought to prove to the bourgeoisie their credentials as future rulers by stifling the mass struggles. Already, the Alliance has declared its willingness to compromise on the most basic democratic demands. It has curtailed the workers' movement by sabotaging strikes, failing to oppose the bosses' austerity drive and telling all to put their faith in the negotiations process.

The essence of the township violence is that with the constant threat that the working class will break from the Alliance's grip, the bosses must add open repression to the Alliance's bureaucratic sabotage in order to keep a lid on the workers' movement.

BETRAYAL BY COSATU

Working-class members and supporters of the Alliance have been the principal victims of the violence. But the bitter truth is that the leadership of the Congress Alliance shares a fair deal of responsibility for the defeats suffered by the Black masses in the townships.

The reactionary Inkatha movement, which has been responsible for most of the anti-working class pogroms in the townships, has done its job by mobilizing the mass of lumpen proletarians and petty-bourgeois semi-proletarians created especially by the mass sackings over the last two years. It could do so because of their betrayal by the union bureaucrats who control COSATU.

COSATU has done nothing to stop the bosses offensive, agreeing to mass sackings, wage cuts and other attacks and has refused to organize the most oppressed workers in the townships. It has even gone so far as breaking union regulations in order to stop strikes from happening, and organizing for the breaking of strikes as at the Mercedes car factory in 1991 (see *Workers Revolution*, Jan.-Feb. 1991). On the one hand, this has led many of the victims of the bosses' offensive to turn to Inkatha in desperation. On the other, many class conscious workers who have not given up on the unions have been left unable to defend themselves from attack.

For example, in July 1990 Inkatha launched its greatest

wave of anti-working class terror in the townships, while at the same time the metalworkers' union NUMSA was balloting its members on whether they should strike for a wage increase. Despite the horrific violence in the townships where NUMSA's members live, 53 percent took part in the ballot, voting overwhelmingly in favor of a strike (63,000 for, 6000 against). The strike would have mobilized tens of thousands in the hostels under attack from Inkatha and the police, and could have won many workers from Inkatha's "union," UWUSA, to NUMSA. Most importantly, armed picket lines of the striking workers could have crushed the wave of counterrevolutionary violence and smashed Inkatha.

But the union leadership decided to call the strike off on the grounds that a "major industry strike could have sparked

off further violence" (*South African Labour Bulletin*, Nov. 1990.) In the wake of this sabotage, the workers felt a considerable loss of strength; many attempts by workers in the townships to organize for their defense collapsed. Meanwhile, Inkatha was emboldened to escalate its campaign of terror.

BETRAYALS BY THE ALLIANCE

The Congress Alliance's criminal role in relation to the township violence was formalized by the Peace Accords with the De Klerk government, the Bantustan governments (including Buthelezi's) and other forces of reaction. Signed in October 1991, the Accords agreed to the police and army controlling the townships, disarming the workers, jailing anyone suspected of causing a disturbance, merging all community self-defense groups with the local police, and the effective cessation of any political activities in the townships (i.e., strikes, union organization, demonstrations).

The Alliance even agreed to participate in policing the townships by giving the security forces the names and personal details of anybody politically active in the townships (like union organizers and leftists) and by handing over to the police anyone found breaking the Accords. Thus the Accords resulted in disarming the townships, surrounding whole neighborhoods with razor wire, the detention of militants and the continued attacks of the army, police, Inkatha and the fascists.

While the township violence weakens the Congress Alliance and its ability to use the strength of the working class as a bargaining chip in negotiations, the Alliance does not dare to mobilize against the violence. This is because it fears that if the working class were mobilized for its own self-defense, the Black working class will be emboldened to move onto the offense against the whole capitalist system. The Peace Accords were a pathetic plea from the Congress Alliance to De Klerk: in effect, "Please don't force us to defend ourselves via the workers' organizations. This will only awaken the whole working class. Armed and in motion, the workers will break from our hold, and we will both lose."

However, the betrayals by the Congress Alliance have not gone unnoticed by many workers. Indeed as an ANC organizer reported, many Black workers have been fighting the Alliance's capitulation to the violence since the very

beginning of the negotiations:

Unfortunately, the more reports of police misconduct [read: violence] reached us, the more we urged our people to work in consultation with them. The result was that we were often booed . . .

During our visits to the townships, a desperate call for arms became deafening. And at our meetings, unless a speaker said something very specific on the question of self-defense and arms, his message fell on deaf ears.

Some ANC workers even became reluctant to come face to face with comrades in the conflict-ridden areas. They had no answer to the demand for arms. . . . Instead people felt the ANC was displaying a political paralysis and had fallen prey to De Klerk's sweet-talk.



(Andrew Mapheto, *Work in Progress*, September 1990.)

THE AUGUST 'GENERAL STRIKE'

No class-conscious workers, then, could afford to be surprised by the Alliance's response to the Boipatong massacre. Having vowed to return to the mass struggle after the breakdown of talks with De Klerk, the Alliance's hand was forced by the mass upheavals after the Boipatong massacre. The ANC Youth League initially talked of a 2-to-3 week general strike against De Klerk, and COSATU declared its intention for a one-week strike. The Alliance then announced its plan for a two-day stayaway in August, allowing some weeks for the anger over Boipatong to dissipate. Worst of all, COSATU invited the bosses' organization SACCOLA to join hands with it in a joint strike!

While SACCOLA refused to join the "national day of

reconciliation," the stayaway went ahead. Its purpose was accurately described by the *New York Times* (August 4), which wrote that the strike had been "scaled back until it became more of a cathartic ritual aimed at letting off steam in the townships before a resumption of talks." With the working class weaker and more confused after the "strike" than before, Mandela predictably announced his intention to return to talks with De Klerk as soon as possible.

But once again, the Alliance was to lead its supporters into a massacre. This time, it occurred in the statelet of Ciskei, a formally independent state but in reality an artificial creation of South Africa enabling it to use Black agents to control the Black masses. When the ANC led an unarmed demonstration of 50,000 into Ciskei with the aim of "peacefully" toppling its military dictator, Ciskei troops predictably opened fire, killing at least 28 and wounding many others.

REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP

There is an alternative to the cycle of defeats plaguing the South Africa masses. Class-conscious Black workers are fighting the Congress Alliance's betrayals, but what they lack is a communist program that can lead an effective struggle against both the reformist misleaders of their class and the armed bands of Inkatha, the fascists and the security forces.

Revolutionaries in South Africa would argue for building an armed militia of workers for the defense of the working class from reactionary attack and would demand that COSATU organize such a militia. Some attempts to organize self-

defense groups in the townships have failed because they were unable to use the strength of the Black unions. As well, after every strike sabotaged by the bureaucrats — from the metalworkers' in July 1990, to the "national day of reconciliation" of August this year — massacres have increased.

Key to the struggle against the anti-worker violence is a strike strategy that can bind together the entire working class against its enemy. For this reason, revolutionaries in South Africa would fight for a general strike by the South African working class, and demand the the unions organize it.

The huge power of the working class displayed by the general strike would teach many workers revolutionary lessons. The armed picket lines of the strike at every workplace would give an organized form to the struggle for working class self-defense, and revolutionaries would argue for their linking up into a militia. A general strike thus holds the potential to crush Inkatha and the other armed bands.

However, for as long as the working class is misled by the reformists, it will be open to betrayal and defeat. While the bureaucrats will never organize an armed militia of workers or lead a general strike to the overthrow of apartheid-capitalism, raising these demands upon them will expose them in the eyes of the workers who hold illusions in them.

The crucial task in South Africa is the construction of a revolutionary communist party, part of a re-created Fourth International. Only this leadership can link today's mobilization of the working class to the aim of socialist revolution and guarantee victory. ●

Abortion

continued from page 32

key battleground, the Eastern Women's Center. Despite the warnings of the leadership, the large crowd of defenders on the first day was angry and loud. Orders to avoid verbal confrontations were ignored as people took on O.R. It was also clear that the police were there to protect O.R. members from the crowd, not the clinic from O.R.

On Monday the cops were even more aggressive in controlling the defenders. When a group of praying right-to-lifers marched over, angry demonstrators swarmed into the streets to confront them, verbally and physically, until pushed back by the police. The defense leaders, too, were straining to control the crowd. They relied on the cops to enforce their "guidelines" and sent defenders away to other clinics in a clear effort to keep things under control. By late morning the "defense" had become a listless demonstration.

The next day the leaders made their intentions even clearer. The cops were to be the real clinic defenders; the crowd was there as a backdrop for politicians from the Democratic convention who dropped by to show support for "choice." Although it was now known that O.R. was not sending a large contingent to New York, "defenders" were mainly called on to appear for publicity purposes. And word that 50 O.R.'s had attacked one clinic was held back so as not to excite serious abortion defenders.

Another betrayal was the march protesting violence against women on July 13. Over 5000 women took part, and the march ended up at the Democratic convention. It had been announced at the clinics that morning that there would be a counter-demonstration at a big rally that O.R. leader Randall Terry was holding that evening at St. Agnes church. But this was called off in favor of a platform more appropriate for Democratic speeches. Had masses of women faced off

against Terry and his trademark embryo-in-a-jar outside the church, it would have been a major victory. Instead, the crowd was diverted away from a decisive confrontation. The LRP was the only group to picket Terry that night.

The Democratic Party spirit dominated the week's events. The trendy Women's Action Coalition held a demonstration down upper Fifth Avenue to "remind" the Democrats of the power of women's votes. The main chant was "WAC is watching, we'll remember, we'll be voting in November." And when the AIDS Coalition held the single biggest march of over 15,000 people, ACT-UP leafleted the crowd with its slogan, "Vote as if your Life Depended on It" — that is, for the Democrats.

Other "actions" included a civil disobedience protest to block the Holland Tunnel, where a number of arrests took place, as planned in advance. There was an even sillier blockade of St. Agnes church by Refuse & Resist, the Revolutionary Communist Party's front group, the night after Terry's rally. A few R&R people got arrested for no good reason, after the cops had given them an hour to move away.

THE TROUBLE WITH CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

One reason NOW argues so stridently against aggressive actions to counter Operation Rescue is that they want the laws and injunctions against O.R. to be enforced. NOW has a case pending before the Supreme Court challenging O.R.'s right to block clinics. Relying on these legalities requires choice proponents to behave as law-abiding citizens so that the laws aren't enforced against them.

Significantly, Kansas lawmakers have passed, and anti-abortion Democratic Governor Joan Finney signed, a bill increasing penalties for blocking access to abortion clinics. But the bill also requires parental consent and an eight-hour waiting period for all abortions, as well as drastically restricting third trimester abortions.

Apparently the anti-abortionists aren't worried about giving the "choice" side a little sop. No wonder: the courts

have merely slapped O.R.'s wrists for years. On July 21, for example, a Kansas judge overturned the sentence of a right-to-lifer previously convicted of criminal trespassing at an abortion clinic. He stated that the "wrongful act is forgiven in the eyes of the law under the doctrine of justification by necessity." That is, since the crime was perpetrated in order to prevent a greater crime — an abortion — it's okay.

These are the kinds of "victories" NOW's strategy produces. After its defeat in Wichita, NOW backflipped. Despite its desire to hold to bourgeois law 500 percent, it had to respond to mass pressure for action. So it adopted civil disobedience on paper as the official feminist policy.

Civil disobedience is the most passive form of action and therefore a particularly problematic training to offer women in the name of self-defense. Worse, it is a bourgeois strategy, teaching that the cops can be friends. The pro-choicers' civility makes police commissioners happy but miseducates the movement dangerously. The reactionaries' "non-violent civil disobedience" and phony "prayer vigils" cover the fact that they are actively terrorizing women and have an increasingly violent program.

This is a class question at heart. Very few workers, people of color in particular, are impressed by a leadership whose claim to militancy is that it knows how to get arrested along with its supporters. This is a big reason why this movement only attracts middle-class adherents.

NOW has also made it more obvious that civil disobedience is a weapon *against* militants who want genuine mass action. For example, NOW President Patricia Ireland wrote in a recent mailing:

I want to stress that our civil disobedience actions are non-violent — both physically and verbally. We will respect the rights of others. We abhor the uncivil disobedience practiced by the Operation Rescue terrorists at clinics, and we won't tolerate such behavior in our campaign.

Of course, these self-appointed policewomen have not actually led any mass civil disobedience. Nor do they want to. They know that such actions are hard to control: when masses are involved the gut reaction is not to lie down and play dead. In the face of pro-life aggression, a desire to actually fight back might take over, and this would *not* be respectful of the rights of the O.R. thugs!

NOW clearly hopes to use civil disobedience as a publicity stunt without giving up its main strategy of bourgeois electoralism and lobbying. Consider its pitch for its new fund-raising scheme:

As the civil disobedience component of OPERATION FIGHT BACK captures the public attention and thousands more abortion rights supporters join our ranks to fight back, we must be prepared to seize the political momentum that will be generated. And that means having the funds on hand for hard-hitting ads, massive phone banks, and letter-writing campaigns aimed at passing the Freedom of Choice Act and the Reproductive Health Equity Act.

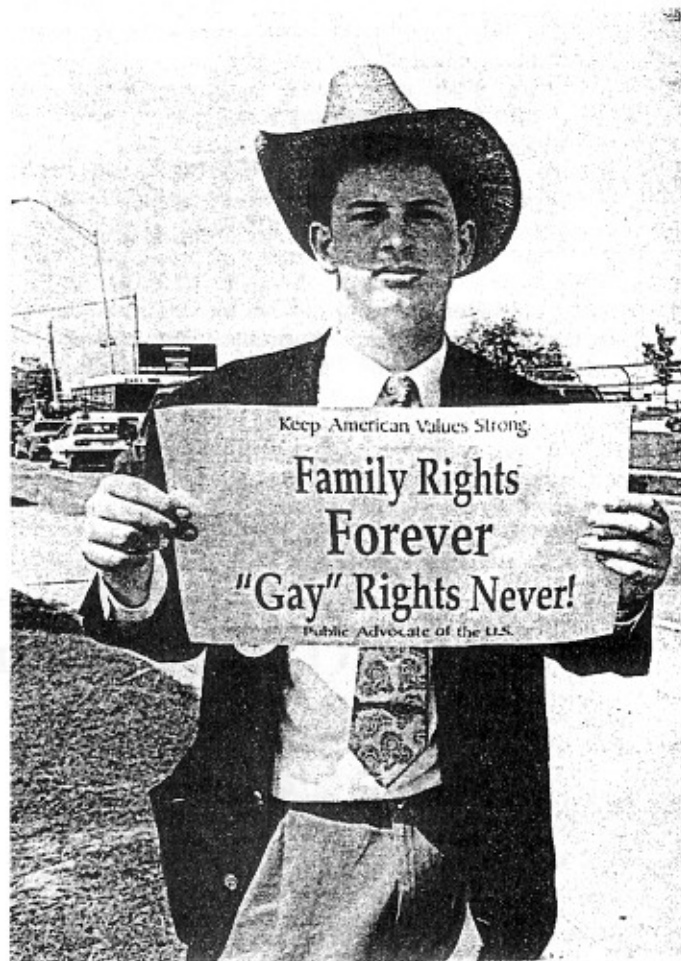
WHO'S DEFENDING ROE v. WADE?

The Casey decision was a bad defeat for abortion rights. But not bad enough for the mainstream feminist leaders and their congressional co-thinkers, who would rather have seen abortion outlawed altogether! NARAL and the ACLU had pressed the Supreme Court to decide the question because they wanted a major decree *against* abortion during the campaign — in order to gain anti-Bush votes in November.

Can there be a more dramatic example of the cynicism of the legal/electoral strategy? The more time that could be

bought to build active support for our side, the better — one would think. But for those who preach voting rather than struggle, an election is the most critical thing. Similarly, the test case involving Leona Bente's bringing RU-486 into the U.S. from Europe was purposely scheduled for the eve of the Democratic convention, not because it was considered a good time to win such a case. NOW & Co. exploited the Supreme Court decisions to build support for the Democrats.

The June 29 decision on Planned Parenthood v. Casey,



Bush-Clinton 'family values' inevitably means bashing gays.

on a 5-4 vote, "upheld" Roe v. Wade, the 1973 ruling that overthrew state laws banning abortions. But it okayed requirements that women wait 24 hours before having an abortion, that anti-abortion pamphlets are given to all women before the procedure and that young women must get parental consent in advance. A big boost to O.R. and other terrorists (who prey on physicians and their families as well as patients) was the Court's approval of mandatory public records on all doctors who perform abortions. The only restriction rejected was a provision requiring a woman's husband to consent.

The ruling moved further down the road of the 1989 Webster decision, where the Court upheld a Missouri statute declaring that life begins at conception, prohibiting abortions in public institutions and requiring physicians to test for fetal viability. The trend is to enforce more restrictions without overturning the nominal right to abortion. In Casey, Justices Souter, O'Connor and Kennedy, Reagan-Bush appointees all, wrote a highly political statement motivating their vote:

An entire generation has come of age free to assume

Roe's concept of liberty in defining the capacity of women to act in society, and to make reproductive decisions. . . . A decision to overrule Roe's essential holding under the existing circumstances would address error, if error there was, at the cost of both profound and unnecessary damage to the Court's legitimacy, and to the nation's commitment to the rule of law.

These conservatives said in effect that overturning Roe would have heightened the anger that millions of women already feel over the issue into a social explosion. With all the hype about Democrats being the only ones who guarantee choice, it has been mass public opinion that has restrained the Court from overturning Roe completely.

The Democrats are part of the problem, not the solution. Clarence Thomas could never have been confirmed without the Democratic worms on the Senate Judiciary Committee who helped persecute Anita Hill. Democratic-run Senates approved *all* the sitting Justices. Byron White, the only Democratic appointee, was one of those who voted to *abolish* Roe v. Wade. And Democrats have been backing restrictions across the country like those the Supreme Court upheld.

A current example is the "pro-choice" referendum in Maryland. A bill opposing all restrictions on abortion was introduced last year. But its Democratic sponsors dropped it in favor of another requiring parental consent, in the hope of gaining broader support. All the liberal pro-choice groups are supporting a referendum in the November elections to enact this miserable bill.

In the July 17 ruling upholding the confiscation of RU-

486, the vote was 7-2. This verified that the real line up is against abortion when the question of overtly overturning Roe is not posed. The Federal Drug Administration has allowed unapproved drugs for AIDS and cancer treatment into the country, but in the case of this abortifacient pill the agency issued a "special alert" and didn't follow its own procedural norms. Disallowing an easier abortion method follows the bipartisan trend of increasing restrictions to make sure that abortion is as punitive and painful as possible, even if it remains formally legal.

'FREEDOM OF CHOICE' AND THE DEMOCRATS

NOW has been pushing the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA) as a supposed antidote to the anti-women Supreme Court and the series of state moves to restrict or re-criminalize abortion. But because Democrats as well as Republicans wanted many compromises, the act had to be ditched. Even in its original form, FOCA upheld the original Roe v. Wade notion of defending a woman's right to terminate her pregnancy only as long as the fetus is not "viable."

Two dangerous concessions — one allowing state parental consent laws, another protecting states from demands for public funding for abortion — were pushed by Democratic Senate leader George Mitchell, who refused to support the bill without them. These "compromises" made the act an insupportable concession to conservatism. There is no reason to believe that if FOCA is resurrected under a Democratic administration, it won't contain the same restrictions and therefore represent a grave step backwards.

O.R. Beaten in Baton Rouge

Operation Rescue attacked the Delta Women's Clinic in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in July and was badly defeated. The victory illuminates the betrayals of pro-choice liberals.

In the weeks before the attack, a clinic defense coalition called Louisiana Choice was formed in New Orleans. Its liberal policies were exemplified by its president's public statement that LA Choice wanted no "pierced youth," "queers" and strange-looking people on defense lines. As well, people who called for information were told that there were enough defenders and therefore they should stay away.

LA Choice's defense strategy was bankrupt and nearly disastrous. They wanted to rely on the cops and appeal to "public opinion" by looking like victims. Only liberals could conceive of disarming themselves in the face of battle against religious bigots and fascistic thugs.

A more radical wing split off to form the Coalition to Reclaim Our Abortion and Reproductive Rights. C-ROARR included Queer Nation, Refuse & Resist, ACT-UP and NWROC. The LRP's representative on the scene joined in a bloc with NWROC in support of their main slogans and tactics. We argued for defense lines to be large and militant and for mass nightly meetings where the tactical leadership of the struggle would be decided. NWROC's slogans were "Mass Militant Defense of Abortion Clinics" and "No Reliance on the Cops and Courts."

The rest of C-ROARR took positions in between. NWROC raised a motion to condemn LA Choice's anti-gay exclusion policy; it passed but was bureaucratically killed by C-ROARR, which resented NWROC's challenge to its leadership. Refuse & Resist offered a counterproposal to condemn the president of LA Choice but not the group as a whole. R&R and ACT-UP later put out a leaflet condemning both LA Choice's president — and NWROC, for

supposedly trying to stack the meeting.

The decisive battle on July 9 proved the correctness of NWROC's tactics. LA Choice had told its forces to show up at the clinic at 5:00 in the morning, but it had been learned that O.R. planned to attack at 4:00 a.m. So NWROC urged defenders to be there by 3:00 a.m. LA Choice had the same information, but only its leadership showed up early.

At 3:00 we arrived and were prevented from joining the picket line by LA Choice, backed up by the police. About 30 NWROC people went to the door, but LA Choice (and the C-ROARR sectarians) picked out individuals and handed them to the cops to be escorted away. That left 20 of us on the line, along with another ten "respectable" types. Since this squad was facing a march of 1800 O.R.'s, the balance of forces looked hopeless. NWROC decided to leave the line to form a new defense perimeter outside the police barricades.

This turned out to be the decisive move. NWROC's new picket line split the O.R. leaders from their followers. When O.R. showed up in force, the police did not allow additional defenders to approach the door, so hundreds joined the NWROC lines throughout the day. That force successfully confronted the O.R.'s, 500 of whom tried to storm the clinic. As a result, the clinic stayed open and all scheduled abortions were performed that day and the rest of the week.

Some O.R. marchers ran off when they got pushed around a little. But there were also genuine thugs who did their best to kick and shove, hurling threats of violence and rape at clinic defenders. Willingness to fight was necessary to defend the clinic, to discourage wavering O.R. supporters and to protect ourselves from bodily harm. The struggle made clear that it was crucial to resist the anti-militant and anti-gay perversions of establishment feminism.

It has been almost kept secret that NOW, NARAL & Co. found both amendments acceptable. In its desperation to find compelling arguments for voting Democratic, NOW has been mute on the sell-out over parental consent because it was Democrats who cut the deal. And this was the issue NOW had railed *against* in order to prove that the "Republican" Casey decision was a nightmare.

The bourgeois women's groups say the Democrats are the lesser of two evils when it comes to abortion rights. This shaky proposition is the only way to promote a candidate who is no hero in the fight for women's rights. As Governor, Bill Clinton supported Arkansas Right to Life's "Unborn Child Amendment" in 1986; a revised version passed in 1988. He signed a parental notification bill in 1989. Arkansas, a state with one of the highest poverty rates in the country, won't fund abortions for women under any circumstances.

NARAL's president Kate Michelman argued that Clinton's past is "much ado about nothing," since "1986 was light years ago." Aides to Clinton state, however, that "Mr. Clinton has always personally opposed abortion but agreed with the 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* that made abortion a constitutional right."

Clinton's running mate, Al Gore, has voted several times against abortion rights. He supported the Hyde Amendment barring federal funding for abortions. The National Right to Life Committee reported that his votes in Congress from 1978 to 1985, were "pro-life" 80 percent of the time.

Most women's groups admit that abortion rights have already been drastically eroded for working-class women, yet they conclude that it is vital to vote for Clinton to save *Roe v. Wade*. Their claim that "choice" is the decisive question in the elections shows their class bias. For working-class women the question of legal abortion cannot be separated from their general situation. Plans for austerity, concessions to racism, attacks on unions and support for imperialism — positions which Clinton and Gore hold to more loyally than abortion rights (as we show this issue's lead article) — are conveniently not defined as "women's issues."

As well, the situation hardly bodes well for middle-class women under a Democratic Administration. The Republicans handed their convention over to the fundamentalist right; the Democrats made no parallel concessions to their parallel constituency, the bourgeois women's groups. Their platform in this "year of the woman" didn't even endorse the Equal Rights Amendment. Hillary Clinton was forced into a bake-off, and Tipper Gore was welcomed as a conservative housewife to balance the ticket. When a supposedly friendly convention occasionally pauses in its hailing of "family values" to say a few patronizing words about career women and gays, there is good reason not to feel safe.

NOW AND THE DEMOCRATS: NO DIVORCE IN SIGHT

Despite the efforts of NOW's leaders, many members have justifiably become fed up with the Democrats. Since NOW's 1989 conference there has been an internal push to build a new party. It culminated this summer in the formation of the "21st Century Party."

The idea of breaking with the Democrats could under some circumstances be an opening for a movement that could really fight all oppression and exploitation. In the hands of the NOW leadership, however, it's a shell game. The moves toward the new party are nothing more than a tactic to keep restless members, especially young women, tied to the Democrats in the present — by giving them false hopes that there will be a real third party in the future.

After the April 5 Washington D.C. march of 30,000 people, a meeting of only two hundred that most demonstra-

tors knew nothing about was held to launch the new party. In August, its convention drew similarly meager numbers, since most NOW activists were too busy campaigning for Democrats. The conveners insist that the party would not endorse any Democrats or Republicans in November but urged people to vote for "pro-choice" and women candidates individually. And despite the lack of an official national endorsement, NOW has spent big bucks on "pro-choice" Democratic as well as Republican candidates.

The 21st Century Party's platform calls for abortion rights, a decent standard of living, a clean environment — and for "freedom from all violence, including the violence of war." This last provision implies opposition to liberation struggles, class-struggle actions against scabs and events like the Los Angeles riot. It meshes perfectly with NOW's opposition to mass militant defense against O.R. Overall, there is no doubt that if NOW were ever to build a real third party, it could only be another bourgeois party.

ABORTION AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

In the early 1970's millions of women were electrified by the heady idea that they no longer had to accept a lifetime of submission. The women's liberation movement, inspired by the Black upheaval and other struggles, won a number of meaningful victories. Yet today there is very little that is radical about what passes for the women's movement. There is also far less basis for illusions that the situation could be turned around by a Democratic government.

The landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision was made by a conservative Supreme Court led by Nixon-appointed Warren Burger. Then as now, the mass social struggle, certainly not the Democratic Party, was responsible for the legalization of abortion.



Despite *Roe's* limitations, it was touted by NOW and the other conservative groups as the real solution for abortion rights. NOW actively opposed the fight for free abortion on demand and the repeal of all abortion laws, demands that radicals and socialists favor because we want to guarantee the right to abortion for working-class

women and deny the capitalist state's "right" to control reproduction. We also oppose forced sterilization and support free contraception.

NOW not only supported just the most minimal reform demands. It also did a lousy job of defending what had been won. Three years after *Roe v. Wade*, under President Jimmy Carter, the Democratic-controlled Congress passed the Hyde Amendment. A year later the Supreme Court ruled that states could also deny funding for abortion; this had the approval of Carter and Democrats at large. The Democrats' long history of supporting schemes to restrict abortion was initiated with the attacks on poor working-class women.

NOW virtually hid the attacks on abortion rights coming down on working-class and poor women. Instead it went into full gear for years to get its middle-class constituency to vote Democratic in order to pass the Equal Rights Amendment. It refused to make public funding of abortion an issue. It

didn't call its first national demonstration in defense of abortion rights at all until 1986, *ten years* after the Hyde Amendment and a multitude of other attacks on women.

NOW's electoralism and its pushing of the ERA rather than mass action killed off the women's movement. The ERA failed because capitalism was too afraid to give women even a phony semblance of equality. The disappearing right to abortion is just one piece of the picture. The "backlash" is the fault of the middle-class feminist leadership, NOW above all, which fostered the illusion that capitalism could provide permanent gains for women.

NOW'S RACISM

It is no surprise that NOW, with its poor record on defending working-class women in general, would be particularly tainted by racist notions against Black and other non-white women, the most oppressed layers of the working class. For example, NOW always cites the gender gap in electoral politics while ignoring the far more striking racial gap. While 57 percent of men voted for Bush in 1988 as compared to 50 percent of women, only 9 percent of Black women did so, compared to 56 percent of white women! As well, NOW and other mainstream feminist organizations have advocated racist population control theories. At the 1989 National Conference, former president Molly Yard said:

The population bomb is accelerating rapidly and, if not checked, will destroy this planet. There is a direct connection between the environment, population explosion and the need to stabilize population growth. We must have a two-child family worldwide, and to achieve it we must have family planning and birth control.

Some feminism, which blames women rather than profiteering for destroying the environment!



Patricia Bowman. Dot or not, women get raped twice, the second time by the system.

Before the mass April 5 march in Washington, seven groups of women of color, including the National Black Women's Health Project and the Latina Health Organization, distributed a protest statement against NOW's refusal to consult them or place women of color in a prominent position in the march. According to *Ms.* magazine, the day after the protest letter, "NOW — in a search to find more women of color speakers for the march — was on the phone with Congresswoman Maxine Waters. (Previously NOW had said no one from Capitol Hill would be invited.)"

This only proves that NOW feels perfectly comfortable with Blacks on the podium as long as they are certified Democrats as well. But even were NOW to give Black and Latina feminist groups due respect, it can't attract the masses

of oppressed women to its liberal program. One Black NOW leader admitted, "Women of color like the issues feminists talk about, while not trusting the organizations themselves."

The point is that it is a class difference, not only a racial difference, that keeps the flocks of Black women away from developing this "trust." Working-class women, especially the most oppressed, will never join a middle-class led women's movement in large numbers. And anything more than token representation would be too much of a threat to NOW.

CAPITALISM AND THE FAMILY

If the women's movement in this country remains a middle-class movement, it is doomed. An ideology that says women can achieve liberation under capitalism is a lie, whether its rhetoric is moderate or radical. The very nature of capitalism, not just isolated aspects, underlies women's oppression in the modern world. Understanding the forces behind the attacks on women's rights requires understanding the capitalist system's dependence on the oppression of working-class women and their role in the family in order to maintain and heighten exploitation under this system.

It is no coincidence that women's rights are being attacked at the same time that past gains won by the working class are being eradicated. Capitalism itself has destroyed the nuclear family. The average male working-class salary alone hasn't supported a wife and 2.2 children for decades. Current statistics indicate an unprecedented drop in the income and living standard of families where *both* parents are working! Nevertheless, the "ideal" family is promoted as an ideological weapon. The message is to blame working-class women, especially Blacks, for not upholding the family. The scapegoating of single mothers, Blacks, "uppity feminists" and gays is aimed at diverting the once well-off layers of the working class from the fact that capitalism is now forced to go after them as well.

As the actual family breaks up, the capitalist state increasingly tries to intervene. Thus the "family values" orgy of the electoral campaign and attacks on abortion took the forms both of strengthening the power of the state over women and, as much as possible, "strengthening the family" as well. Parental consent enforcement is a prime example.

As we have pointed out in past articles, the feminist leaders who describe legalizing abortion as "pro-choice" reveal their class bias. Many working-class women are forced to abort out of economic necessity. Whatever their decision, under capitalism it is not a result of "free choice." And although abortion must be defended as a right for all women, it is hardly the contraception of choice for anyone. Posing abortion as a matter of "choice" trivializes the question and lets the system off the hook.

Nor does it attract working-class women to say that policies should be based on "individual choice." Working people, especially women, want a society that supports their social needs, not one that denies all obligations. After all, the rhetoric of "free choice" and "privacy" is used to undercut child care programs and other basic needs. It also justifies allowing cops to protect union-busting scabs and the "private" propagation of racist policies.

For working-class women, their oppression as women cannot so easily be separated from their exploitation. In daily practice, the two are tied up together as one predicament. In a period in which working-class struggle has been deadened by years of bureaucratic unionism and Democratic betrayals, few working-class women are being radicalized. As well, they may not so easily reject the old notions of family, despite its oppressiveness as an institution. With no even promise of an alternative of "fulfillment" through a "career," working-class

women understandably cling to some notion of the family as representing the human and meaningful side of existence.

Yet when the working class does begin to rebel against this system, it will open the path for great struggles that will put the defense of women's rights together with demands for the end of class exploitation. One example was the British coal miners' strike in 1984-85 which, despite its defeat, saw enormous strides toward sexual equality in the coal regions. This was due to the powerful efforts by working-class women in joint struggle against the capitalists.

Despite the low level of class struggle in the U.S. at this time, revolutionaries try to find opportunities to fight the attacks on women in the trade unions — as a way of raising

the issue among workers. For example, at a Delegate Assembly of the hospital workers' Local 1199 in New York, an LRP supporter criticized union head Dennis Rivera, hailed as a progressive by most of the left, for his failure to take a stand in favor of legal abortion. Although he presides over a union of 100,000 workers with large female and Black and Latino majorities, his position in reality doesn't differ from that of Lane Kirkland and the other hidebound labor bureaucrats.

The communist program to free women from the chains of the family and capitalist oppression remains the only way to lay the material basis for women's liberation. Mass struggles in the near future will give revolutionaries great opportunities to demonstrate our program if we are prepared.●

NWROC: Marxism or Middle-Class Radicalism?

NWROC, the National Women's Rights Organizing Committee, deserves a lot of credit for the successful defense of abortion clinics against Operation Rescue reactionaries in Buffalo this spring and Baton Rouge this summer. These victories were gained through the tactic of mass militant action — in contrast to the defeat in Wichita in 1991, where mainstream women's groups had refused to organize any fight at all. Thus the defeats of O.R. were also setbacks for conservative groups like NOW and NARAL, known for their pandering to the Democratic Party, the courts and the cops.

NWROC also stands out because of its composition. It is a youth group that emphasizes recruiting gays, lesbians, and Blacks. It has a political program chiefly contributed by the Revolutionary Workers League (RWL), which calls itself Trotskyist. Differences between the RWL and NWROC are said to exist but are not spelled out.

THE CLASS QUESTION

The chief problem with NWROC is its class nature and that of the movement it seeks to build. NWROC describes itself as the "leading left-wing national women's organization" and the "left-wing, militant leadership." It pursues a youth and gay/lesbian orientation directed towards middle-class organizations rather than the oppressed sectors of the working class, which are not represented by these groups. Despite its leadership's "Marxist" baggage that makes it formally define itself as working-class, NWROC does not pose a decisive political break along class lines with the middle-class women's leadership. It serves instead as a left-wing pressure group attempting to push that leadership to be more militant.

For example, NWROC advocates building caucuses in NOW, allegedly in order to help move the struggle to the left. That is, NWROC accepts NOW as the center of women's struggles rather than understanding NOW's role as a bourgeois formation. But the fact is that NOW has a conscious and sophisticated political strategy dictated by its support of capitalism. What's wrong with NOW is not simply its lack of militancy and its reliance on the courts and the Democrats. Its politics are not simply errors made by bad leaders; they flow from its social position.

Bourgeois or middle-class radicalism, no matter how militant, are not answers to the oppression of women, blacks, gays, lesbians and youth. Capitalism cannot end racism, sexism and gay oppression. These are necessary in order to keep the working class divided and because capitalism in crisis cannot expand and provide gains for the masses of people. Indeed, capitalism must attack and destroy gains made during periods of prosperity after World War II. NOW cannot even represent the needs of middle-class women, who

are also oppressed by the system.

It is of course necessary to fight alongside middle-class organizations for abortion rights and other issues. But revolutionaries must not sacrifice the primary task of building a workers' revolutionary party, which can organize working-class women independently of all pro-bourgeois forces. There is a big difference between tactical blocs with middle-class reformists and actually building political outfits like NOW. The first means concrete steps forward; the latter strengthens obstacles that hinder the struggle.

MIDDLE CLASS AND WORKING CLASS

Why do revolutionaries insist on the central role of the working class in the struggle against exploitation and oppression? Why can't we call on the middle class to build the revolutionary party and lead the socialist revolution? To begin with, the term "middle-class" is not an accusation. It describes a specific class position in bourgeois society. Petty capitalists and better-paid salaried employees all see society dominated by the powerful forces of the bourgeoisie and proletariat. On the one hand, the middle class plays a critical role in maintaining the political order. On the other, its social position makes it both dependent on capitalism and also subject to the shocks and crises of the system. Thus it is prone to radical mood swings to both left and right.

Despite its importance, the middle class cannot create a new social order. In the absence of a revolutionary working-class movement, it inevitably becomes an instrument in the hands of the capitalist order; it cannot substitute for the working class. Only the working class has the social power to defeat capitalism. Indeed, this is understood by many middle-class leftists who advocate an "orientation" to the workers. Without abandoning their own class outlook, these leftists look to the working class as a battering ram to knock down the obstacles to their radical ideas.

The working class is the only revolutionary class not simply because of its social power, its ability to stop production. Central to the Marxist understanding of capitalism is that the system is based on the domination of capital over labor. Whereas the capitalists own the means of production, the proletariat is a propertyless class forced to labor to survive. The class struggle itself propels the proletariat in the direction of socialism. It is the historic task of the proletariat to seize the means of production through socialist revolution. But the proletariat can only own property collectively. With the elimination of private property, the basis will be laid for the elimination of class society and all forms of exploitation and oppression.

Objectively, the workers' struggle leads in a revolutionary direction. This is why Marxists hold that communism is the

movement of the proletariat. The revolutionary program is not simply a series of good ideas but the objective expression of the interests of the proletariat. Revolutionaries cannot bring a socialist program from outside to the working class. Rather, the role of the vanguard party is to struggle inside the class to defeat bourgeois ideology and to raise fellow workers' awareness of their class interests.

WORKERS PARTY OR REVOLUTIONARY PARTY?

But the RWL and NWROC call repeatedly for a "workers' party." Doesn't that mean that they recognize the centrality of the working class? It does not. Ironically, the workers' party slogan demonstrates precisely that the RWL/NWROC have no proletarian perspective, despite their claim to Trotskyism.

NWROC poses a "workers' party" as the solution to the struggles of women and other oppressed people. A typical example is the RWL's proposal addressed to NWROC's 2nd National Conference last March.

Women require a political party completely committed to the struggle for women's rights. . . . Only a workers' party, committed fully and deeply to fight for women's liberation, can secure the political victory of the defense of abortion rights and the overall victory of the fight for women's liberation. Only the organized labor movement has the power to counter the power and wealth now committed to the preservation of a sexist system. . . .

Despite its surface appearance, this call for a "workers' party" is not a demand for a labor party based on the trade unions or any other section of the working class. Workers are just a small part of the constituency NWROC appeals to. Instead, at virtually every turn the emphasis is on the middle-class organizations of the oppressed.

ABSURD HOPES IN REFORMIST ORGANIZATIONS

NWROC specifically calls on organizations like NOW, ACT-UP and the NAACP to build its workers' party — all of which make no pretense to be workers' organizations. ACT-UP has an activist record but is a "white middle-class organization" by NWROC's own admission. Significantly, its contribution to the AIDS Unity March this summer was to put out masses of flyers saying "Vote as if your life depended on it!" — that is, for Clinton and the Democrats.

The NAACP, on the other hand, is far from militant. It is a fading conservative reform group with little participation from militant Blacks. It doesn't even have a nominal stance in defense of abortion rights, and it steers clear of criticizing the church's oppression of women, never mind gays.

NWROC sees NOW as a chief player in the potential workers' party. For example:

While maintaining its own independent organization and activity, NWROC should fight within NOW . . . demanding that NOW break with the Democrats and Republicans as sexist parties and commit itself to building a party of the workers and oppressed to defend the rights of women. NWROC should make clear that such a party must be based on and built by trade unions and other workers' organizations fighting unemployment and exploitation in the workplace, abortion rights organizations, anti-racist and black community groups, lesbian/gay activists, militants of the AIDS-action movement and other organizations of oppressed people actively fighting their oppression.

NWROC observes that NOW may very well not do this and may even form a third *capitalist* party. This would be a correct insight — if NWROC could only bring itself to exclude the possibility of the very bourgeois NOW ever break-

ing with the Democrats or having anything to do with a workers' party!

Why these absurd hopes in such non-proletarian organizations? Because it's hard to see any alternative reformers: labor union officials today are hardly harbingers of anything progressive. No wonder RWL/NWROC never specifies which "militant" locals or "progressive" unions will form the supposed workers' ingredient in their party. Perhaps they are thinking of liberal favorites like Dennis Rivera of the New York hospital workers' Local 1199. But Rivera is completely immersed in the Democratic Party. Moreover, he champions his relationship with the reactionary Cardinal O'Connor as the way for hospital workers to win contracts from Catholic hospitals, and therefore refuses to let 1199 take a position in defense of abortion rights.

A party led by such union leaders would not lift a finger for the rights of women, any more than the AFL-CIO does today. A call for a labor party, even if seriously addressed to the working class, would not mean bringing militant unions onto the political stage but rather pointing demoralized workers toward electoralism. It would do exactly what the labor bureaucrats want: avoid head-on confrontation.

PHONY TROTSKYISM

The Trotskyists used the labor party slogan in the 1930's (and may well do so again when the union struggle revives) in order to popularize the revolutionary party by bringing the revolutionary program to the working class and openly fighting for it. (See our article on the labor party tactic in *Proletarian Revolution* No. 40.) In contrast, the RWL/NWROC slogan is an extension of their failure to draw the class line with NOW and other middle-class groups.

RWL/NWROC does *not* call for a revolutionary party. While the phrase "anti-capitalist" is found in NWROC political documents occasionally, even the RWL doesn't push a revolutionary interpretation of the workers' party slogan. For example, lead articles in the September 1991 and March 1992 issues of *Fighting Worker*, both on the subject of building a workers' party, fail to argue that such a party must be revolutionary and fight for socialism. The furthest they get is to call for a "workers' government based on democratically elected workers' councils." That's a left-wing way of dodging the need for revolution and the overthrow of the capitalist state. The spirit of the articles is democratic and militant, like all NWROC material, not communist and revolutionary.

Despite its youth orientation and subjective revolutionary impulses, NWROC puts forward the same tired old adaptation to middle-class and non-proletarian forces that has for decades plagued all the groups claiming to stand for Trotskyism. Fundamental to the pseudo-Marxist theory that saw counterrevolutionary Stalinism playing a progressive role by creating "workers' states" in East Europe, China and elsewhere is the false notion that non-proletarian forces can substitute for the proletariat in the overthrow of capitalism. Having capitulated to reactionary Stalinism, the phony "Trotskyists" soon found other substitutes for the working class: the youth vanguard, guerrilla movements and left nationalist forces (plus some not-so-left nationalists).

Rather than breaking with the capitulations of the past, the RWL/NWROC approach means continuing the history of degenerated Trotskyism. Their failure to fight openly for a revolutionary party and the independent organization of the proletariat stands counter to their radical beliefs and, militant actions. To become genuine revolutionaries, members of the RWL and NWROC will have to throw off their middle-class outlook and embrace genuine Trotskyism if they are not to repeat the mistakes of their centrist predecessors. ●

Swedish Workers Protest Austerity

Western Europe is in turmoil. The sensational currency crisis in September, plus the French vote barely approving the Maastricht treaty, exploded plans for economic unity by the end of the decade. The European powers are at each others' throats and are desperate to impose further sacrifices on the working classes.

The strongest proletarian response came in Italy. Hundreds of thousands of workers marched in protest in Milan, Florence, Rome, Turin and Naples — furious not only at the bosses and government but against their own leaders. Bruno Trentin, head of the biggest union federation, was pelted with bolts, eggs and tomatoes when he tried to speak at the Florence rally. Bureaucrats were driven from the platforms in other cities. The cause was the union leaders' treachery in accepting budget and pension slashes demanded under Maastricht and imposed by the government.

In Sweden, 40,000 workers held a militant protest march on October 6 against the austerity program of the bourgeois government backed by the social democratic "opposition." (For background, see the article "Swedish Model Crumbles" in *Proletarian Revolution* No. 40.) The rally had been forced on LO, the main trade union federation, against its leaders' wishes. The article below is condensed from a leaflet distributed at this demonstration by our newly founded Swedish affiliate, the *Förbundet för ett Revolutionärt Parti* (League for the Revolutionary Party).

General Strike Against Austerity!

The government and the opposition parties have agreed on a so-called crisis package, whose aim is to throw the responsibility for the crisis upon working people. Vacation days and sickness benefits are being reduced, and taxes are being hiked — a cold shower for all those who voted for the bourgeois parties.

One of the more perfidious elements in the crisis package is the plan to "consider" and thereafter gradually introduce a completely new public insurance system. Health and occupational insurance are to become the joint responsibility of the employers and the unions by 1995. Retirement, unemployment and parenthood insurance are likely to be subject to the same change later. All observers agree that this means that *room for wage increases is practically eliminated*, even if the unions and the bosses contribute on a 50-50 basis.

"This is going to be a sort of wage reduction. There is no reason not to state that frankly." So says Anna Hedborg, former LO economist and nowadays an insurance expert in the social democratic parliamentary fraction, in an interview with the LO newspaper. At the same time she admits that she participated in working out this wage-cutting draft!

As for the package's so-called measures against unemployment, they mean creating only 8500 jobs. The rest of the promised "hundred thousand new jobs" are in fact just time-limited relief work, temporary "jobs" available while the regular worker is on vacation, and the like. Since unemployment is to rise dramatically next year, these measures are sheer bluff. We must have no illusions: everything points to the crisis getting worse. The present crisis package is by no means the last, nor the worst!

LO MUST CALL A GENERAL STRIKE

It is high time for the trade union movement to *immediately* end these attacks. Against the crisis package and its advocates in the government and the opposition, only the language of strength can work. We must answer firmly: LO

must call a general strike against the austerity policies. Together the working people of Sweden have enormous power. We could stop and shut down the entire country; nothing could be done without the labor movement.

Such a general strike would push the government and its lackeys in the SAP (the social democratic party) into a tight spot. They would be forced to back down and slash the crisis package. Of course, they would not do so voluntarily. They would try by all possible means to sabotage and split the strike, for example, by using unemployed workers as scabs. Therefore it is vital that the labor movement mobilize the unemployed in support of the strike. Pickets must patrol outside factory gates to stop scabs. It may also be necessary to occupy some workplaces.

So far, however, the LO leadership has shown no signs of militancy. In the last issue of the LO paper, Stig Malm, the head of LO, admits that wage earners are getting angry, but he still prefers not to demand compensation for the crisis package! "Then there would be only chaos," he says. For Malm, the well-being of the capitalist system is dearer than the well-being of LO members.

The LO secretary in charge of contract negotiations, Tore Andersson, has expressed a similar line: LO is not going to demand 8 to 10 percent wage increases next year — the only thing, according to LO's own estimate made *before* the crisis package, that would help save real wages.

Malm blames his members for his lack of fighting spirit: "In earlier days, workers were demonstrating and protesting. Why haven't people reacted against all the injustices that the 1980's have brought?" Why indeed? Could it possibly be that the LO leadership, elected by members to look after their interests, had not done a thing to mobilize them to fight austerity? The truth is that huge pressure from below was needed to make LO call this day of protest. LO still refuses to call even a symbolic one-day general strike. And now it seems that Malm & Co. are preparing a zero-gain contract, or at best one with marginal wage increases, while the bosses are out for blood and demanding wage cuts!

It is time for LO members to demand that the leadership change its line. LO must take sides! We must organize massive pressure from below in the form of a Congress of Labor. If they refuse, special Congress of Labor Committees have to be set up to send delegates instead. The Congress of Labor must demand that the LO leaders immediately call a general strike across the country against the crisis package.

If the LO leadership chooses to remain loyal to the SAP, and thereby to Bildt (the Conservative Party leader and prime minister) instead of to its own members, then the Congress of Labor has to organize the general strike and elect a new, militant leadership for the labor movement. Either the leaders fight for our interests — or they are fired!

TOPPLE THE GOVERNMENT?

Some are calling "for a general strike to bring down the government." We in the FRP, to be sure, would have nothing against a humiliated Bildt stammering out an attempt to explain the defeat of his policies in a new election. But we must have no illusions in the SAP! The Social Democratic Labor Party is busy participating in the planned attack on the workers; it even brags about it. The fact is that the SAP has saved the bourgeois government: if it had refused to make a deal, Bildt would have had to turn to the New Democracy

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WRP vs. LRP, Part 1:

Marxism and the Class Nature of the Ex-USSR

This article is a reply to Geoff Pilling's review of our book, *The Life and Death of Stalinism: A Resurrection of Marxist Theory*, by Walter Daum. Pilling's review appeared in the March 1991 issue of *The International*, journal of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International, which Pilling edits. Our reply was submitted over a year ago, at his invitation. It has not yet appeared in *The International*.

When Pilling, a leader of the Workers Revolutionary Party of Britain, wrote his review, the WRP/WIRFI considered the Soviet Union to be a degenerated workers' state. By the time we wrote our reply, this was no longer true. The WIRFI had adopted, with some fanfare, the untenable position that the ex-USSR was neither a workers' nor a bourgeois state. Our reply makes clear that the idea of a state with no ruling class is a major revision of the Marxist theory of the state.

Now the WRP has again reconsidered, leading only to greater confusion. On the one hand, the ex-USSR seems to have become a workers' state again! In the May 1992 issue of *The International*, Cliff Slaughter reveals that the imperialists "have not yet dismantled the workers' state, which reaches into the economic foundations in such societies."

On the other hand, Slaughter tries to defend the state-

We read with great sadness Geoff Pilling's review of *The Life and Death of Stalinism*. In his professional career Pilling has written some intelligent, if academic, comments on Marxism. This review, on the other hand, is a pure hack job. Despite its scornful tone, it ignores the main arguments of the book and distorts the few parts it attempts to deal with. And despite its facade of erudition, it falls into outright silliness.

Moreover, the review is useless for the development of theory. Pilling does not openly defend the WRP's deformed workers' state notions — he is content to fire potshots at any suggestion that Stalinism might be capitalist.

Pilling opens his review with the collapse of the Stalinist regimes, events he says our theory of statified capitalism cannot account for:

If such regimes rested on a form of capitalism, if this bureaucracy was an exploiting class with its independent interests in property, this was indeed a strange sight. It is certainly one lacking in historical precedent. For when in the past did a social system and its ruling class simply fade away, or, as Daum would have it, begin to merge with those forces seeking to restore an earlier form of capitalism?

An incredible argument — Pilling annihilates himself! It is he and his cothinkers who believe that "a social system and its ruling class" — that is, the "deformed workers' states" — can "simply fade away," gradually and peacefully, and become capitalist states. This is contrary to all historical precedent and, what's more, to the most fundamental lessons of Marxism — on the difference between reform and revolution. In contrast, we hold that one *form* of capitalism is retreating in favor of another. In scientific terms, for Pilling a *social* transformation is under way to destroy the workers' states, while for us it is a *political* transformation, a change of regime within the existing capitalist social system.

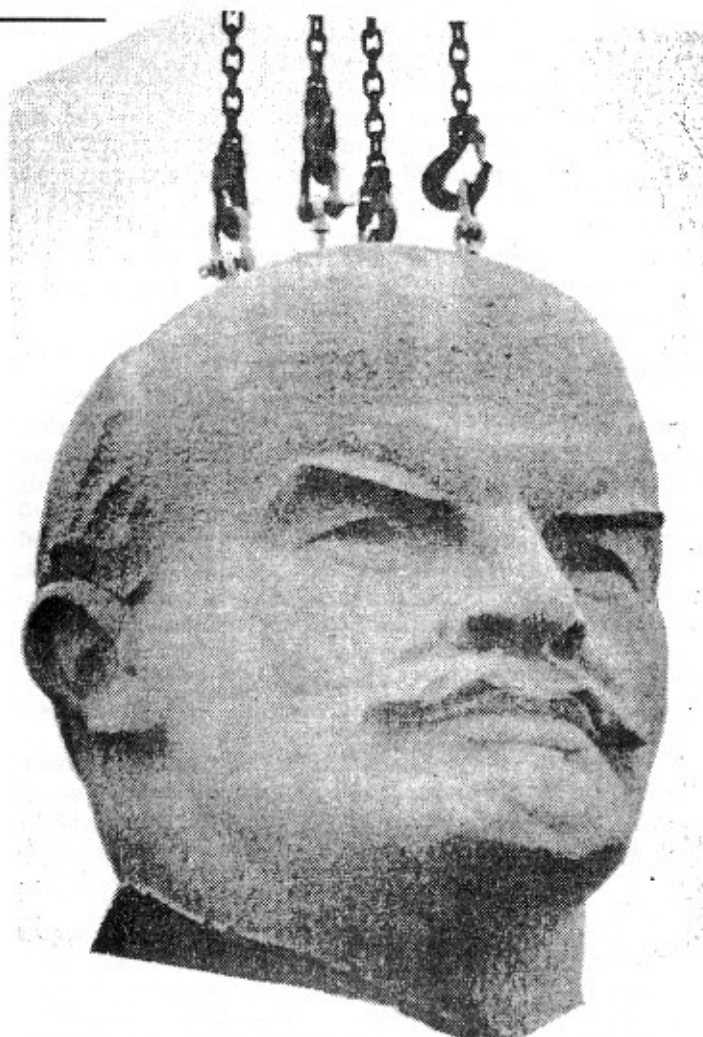
A few lines later Pilling refers to the "capitalist restoration in eastern Germany." It is beyond all belief to pontificate that one form of capitalism can collapse into another at the same time that you insist that a (deformed) workers'

without-a-class-nature travesty. He compares the present situation with Russia after February 1917. What was the class nature of the post-Czarist state, he asks, when the bourgeois regime was challenged by the Petrograd Soviet? "The question could not be answered." That's amazing news to every Leninist and Trotskyist — until now all understood that the Provisional Government ruled a bourgeois state and was waging an imperialist war. Slaughter's floundering over present-day politics leads him to mangle history as well.

If Slaughter is implying that the Russian workers *today* are in a position of dual power, then that too is amazing news. And if the workers' state has not been overthrown, then the WIRFI's line has changed without notice; the previous new theory has just dropped down the memory hole. This Orwellian method is in the Stalinist tradition; it has nothing to do with Trotskyism.

As for the fundamental political issues in dispute, those interested should read our book and decide for themselves. We will send copies of Pilling's review and the subsequent WIRFI articles on the nature of the USSR on request. (Please enclose \$1.00 to cover copying and mailing costs.)

For space reasons our reply is divided into two parts. Part 2 will be published in our next issue.



Berlin statue razed. WRP says "workers' states" became capitalist without revolution: Lenin demolished again.

state — a *different and more progressive* class system — can fade into capitalism with no resistance from its old rulers!

Moreover, in revolutionary situations there is nothing strange about regimes breaking down. Whole sections of the ruling class see that ruling in the old way is no longer viable. Some elements line up with the revolutionary forces — above all to ensure that the revolution remains political and not social, that fundamental class relations are preserved. For that there are plenty of historical precedents: Iran in 1979, Portugal in 1974, Russia in February 1917. Had Pilling asked the right question, the answer would have been obvious.

Pilling proclaims that “we have arrived at a point where Trotsky’s prognosis — either the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy by the working class or the restoration of capitalism — begins to take on flesh and blood.” Note his “begins.” It says that for Pilling, Trotsky’s prognosis was *not* a living question when he raised it in the 1930’s. In this spirit Pilling accuses us of defeatism:

So, just when the battle is joined at a new level, just when unprecedented opportunities exist for the Fourth International, we are told that the Soviet working class was long ago defeated.

An unbelievable remark. Does Pilling deny that the Stalinist counterrevolution of the 1930’s was a defeat? True, on this question we have a difference with Trotsky: he regarded the triumph of Stalinism simply as a political counterrevolution, whereas for us the political counterrevolution went on to become social. But to our knowledge no Trotskyist has yet seen fit to deny that counterrevolution occurred — and a counterrevolution is surely a defeat.

Perhaps Pilling does not think there was a counterrevolution. In another article in the same journal, his “Open Letter” to ex-members of the British Communist Party, he asks, “What went wrong?” What happened to the noble ideals of people who joined the Communist Party to bring about a new world? He begins correctly: “To understand the deeply disturbing developments that now face us, it is essential to understand their historical roots.”

STALINIST COUNTERREVOLUTION

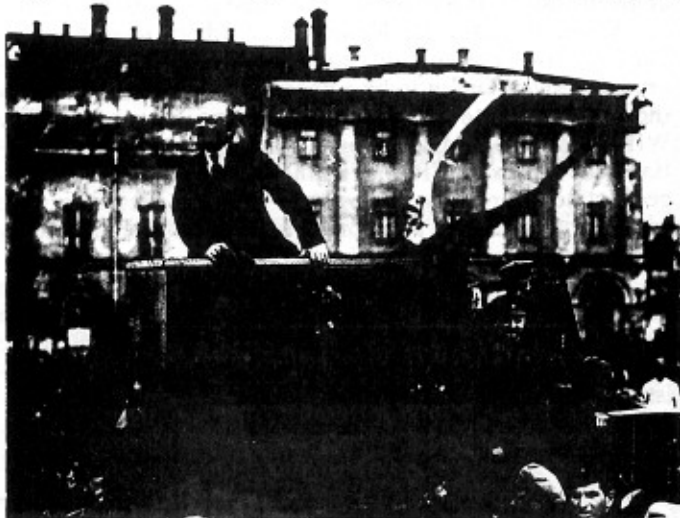
As to these roots, Pilling observes only that it is Stalinism, not socialism, that has collapsed. He denounces Stalin’s theory of building “socialism in one country” and his proclamation of victorious socialism in 1936. But these were words, not deeds. Stalin’s declaration of socialism was, as our book explains, the signal for the actual counterrevolution in action, the destruction of the Bolshevik Party and every remaining vestige of the workers’ state apparatus, the arrest and murder of thousands of workers and Communists, the legal demolition of many of the working-class achievements won through the revolution. Of *this* Pilling says nothing. It seems that for him only the “conceptions” are important. And he, as we will see, accuses *us* of being idealist!

Because we recognize that the counterrevolution already took place, Pilling accuses us of believing that the future of the Soviet working class *today* “has already been decided.” The LRP’s message, he asserts, is that the “struggles against the restoration of capitalism in the USSR and eastern Europe . . . are written off.”

This charge is false to the core. Even though capitalism was restored long ago, there is still a tremendous class struggle taking place. At first it was aimed at overthrowing the oppressive Stalinist regimes. Now that the underlying revolution has been temporarily hijacked by bourgeois forces, the struggle is over whether the rate of exploitation will remain at its low, inefficient Stalinist level or be driven upward by more traditional bourgeois methods. Nothing we

have ever said or done writes off the living class struggle. The truth is entirely the opposite.

Long articles in our press and a 20-page section of our book gave a detailed program for the working classes of the post-Stalinist countries. We presented a condensed version at the founding conference in Budapest of the Workers International. (See “Theses on the East European Revolutions,” *Proletarian Revolution* No. 37.) Our program, based on Trotsky’s Transitional Program, sharply defended the remaining



Lenin 1920. Pilling doesn't know workers were defeated between then and now.

workers’ gains, opposed privatization of state property since that would deepen exploitation, and posed the real question facing the workers of the Eastern bloc: an authentic workers’ state or fascism.

Our program was ignored in Budapest, but not because the WRP offered a better one. Pilling and Co. have no program for East Europe because they have no understanding of what those societies are. That failure refutes their claims to be serious Marxists.

According to the “deformed workers’ state” theory, no social revolution is necessary to smash the Stalinist state; the workers’ “political revolution” only has to reform the state out of its deformities. Such logic led many pseudo-Trotskyists into outright reformist strategies during the Stalinist collapse. The WRP has not gone all the way down this path, but it has taken major steps. We cited some in our article on the Budapest conference. (*Proletarian Revolution* No. 37.) And since then the steps have lengthened, as we shall see. We challenge Pilling and the WRP: Instead of sucking abstract charges out of your thumb, make concrete criticisms of our program for the living struggle, and put forward your own program in counterposition.

WAGES AND VALUE

We turn next to Pilling’s second major criticism: our “mechanical attempt to impose the categories of Marx’s *Capital* onto the USSR.” This again is a false polemic, for Pilling accuses us of adopting the method of bourgeois social science, erecting a “universal political economy that supposedly applies to society in general.”

In fact we do nothing of the kind. We note first that the early Soviet state was compelled to preserve the “categories” of capitalism while fighting against their harmful effects on the working class. For special historical reasons, the bureaucracy, becoming ever more independent of the workers, was able to reverse this fight and adapt itself to the operations of

capitalist exploitation, from which it benefitted. (This condenses a long discussion in Chapters 3 and 4 of our book.)

Pilling claims to summarize our method as follows:

Like so many before him, he takes one feature, one aspect, of capitalism, rips it out of its living relationship with all those other "aspects" that make up the capitalist system. He then transforms his chosen factor into a sole determining one.

Pilling makes this "favored-feature-as-definition" accusation about our treatment of wage labor. But he neglects to mention that we discuss many aspects of capitalism as they operate under Stalinism: the law of value, wages, unemployment, women's oppression, competition, accumulation, overproduction, the falling rate of profit tendency, crises, the nature of property ownership. In fact we do not rip any factor out of its inner connections: we put them together in the context of both Marxist theory and historical events. Pilling, in contrast, rips fragments from the book out of context in order to take potshots.

Pilling's notions about how we supposedly distort Marx's *Capital* are revealing — of his misunderstanding of Marxism, not ours. For example: "Daum . . . wants us to conclude that because wage labor exists in the USSR capitalism necessarily exists." But we said no such thing. Indeed, we detailed the persistence of capitalist relations, including wage labor, in the early Soviet workers' state — who could possibly deny them? Obviously we can't believe that wage labor in itself proves the existence of capitalist rule.

What we did say was significantly different. In fact Marx said it for us. Here is one of the shortest relevant passages (the book cites more):

The essential difference between the various economic social formations, between for instance, a society based on slave labor and one based on wage labor, lies only in the mode in which this surplus labor is in each case

extracted from the actual producer. (*Capital*, Vol. I, Chapter 9, section 1.)

That is, a capitalist society is distinguished by wage labor as its characteristic mode of *exploitation*, of extracting surplus labor from the laborers. Pilling disagrees. For him, it is commodity production, not wage labor, that defines the "basis" of capitalism; Marx, he observes, "traces the growth of this germ . . . to reveal how, under definite historical conditions, this leads to capital in all its various, interconnected, forms."

True. But what are these definite historical conditions? Marx specifies, as we cited in the book:

The fact that it [capitalist production] produces commodities does not differentiate it from other modes of production; but rather the fact that being a commodity is the dominant and determining characteristic of its products. This implies, first and foremost, that the laborer himself comes forward as a seller of commodities [that is, of labor power], and thus as a free wage-laborer, so that labor appears in general as wage labor. In view of what has already been said, it is superfluous to demonstrate anew that the relation between capital and wage-labor determines the entire character of this mode of production. (*Capital*, Vol. III, Chapter 51.)

Superfluous indeed, but not for those who want to deny capitalist relations in their Stalinist pseudo-socialist disguise.

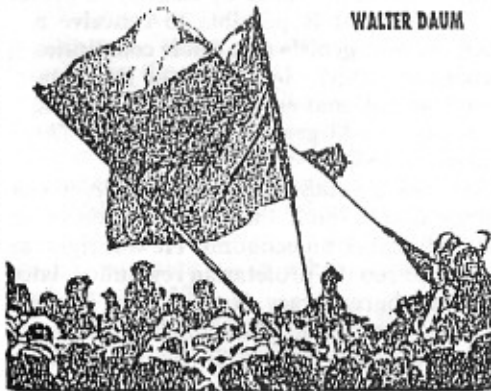
The economy of a workers' state, on the other hand, is not based on exploitation, therefore a workers' state is not a capitalist society. As we wrote of the Soviet state in the 1920's: "The proletarians working for the state still produce value and therefore surplus value. But they are not exploited, because there is no exploiting class, no bourgeoisie, to appropriate the surplus value." (p. 131.)

Pilling quotes this passage from our book, and therefore knows that we don't "define" capitalist society on the basis of wage labor alone. But he uses the quotation for a different

THE LIFE & DEATH OF STALINISM

A RESURRECTION OF MARXIST THEORY

WALTER DAUM



The Marxist analysis of Stalinism that explains today's events and shows the working-class way forward.

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"His aim . . . is not to give Trotskyism a decent burial: on the contrary, he wants to revive the corpse and give it a facelift."
Communist Review

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purpose: to show our "confusion":

First, it is not true that because a society produces values it "therefore" produces surplus value. But second, the creation of surplus value necessarily involves the existence of capital and a capitalist class.

This is not only wrong but absurd. First, Pilling's argument is not just against us but also against Trotsky and the other authors of the *Platform of the Joint Opposition*, the anti-Stalinist Communist program for the Soviet Union written in 1927. In the *Platform* we read: "The appropriation of surplus value by a workers' state is not, of course, exploitation." And a bit later the document refers to "the surplus value created by our state industry." (Both references are on p. 13 of the New Park edition.)

Aside from his misunderstanding of Trotskyism, Pilling's logic is self-contradictory. There can be value and surplus produced, he says, but not surplus value. But if workers in a workers' state produce value, should they happen to produce a surplus beyond their immediate needs, that surplus is plainly surplus value. People who trap themselves into such inanities should avoid calling others confused.

Trying to explain his contortions, Pilling steps into deeper hot water:

The continued existence of "wages", of "value", of "price" in the USSR, like the continued existence of commodity production itself, testifies to the fact that the development of the productive forces, cut off from world economy, remains inadequate to overcome bourgeois norms of distribution, of which these categories are an expression.

One rubs one's eyes on reading this: wages and value are expressions of bourgeois norms of distribution! (And if Pilling's syntax is to be believed, so is "commodity production itself.") This is bourgeois social science in pure form; it reflects the views of the populist underconsumptionists. Any Marxist knows that value and wages are created in production. The whole structure of Marx's *Capital* is designed to establish this fundamental point.

PILLING AND MANDEL

Unfortunately, the view that all capitalist hangovers in a workers' state lie in the sphere of distribution, not production, is common in pseudo-Trotskyist circles. It was popularized by Ernest Mandel, who wrote in his *Marxist Economic Theory* that the Soviet economy is "marked by the contradictory combination of a non-capitalist mode of production and a still basically bourgeois mode of distribution." Mandel had to misread and distort a passage from Trotsky to give this claim its "Marxist" authority. (See our book, pp. 127-9.)

The WRP has criticized the opportunist Mandel on many questions — but never on his anti-Marxist theory of the Stalinist economy, which it shares. In Pilling's version, "Here lay the contradiction in the Soviet state — between two tendencies: the nationalized property relations (the 'socialist' element in the economy) and the bourgeois relations of distribution." Marx refuted them all a century ago,

destroying contemptuously the bourgeois notion that distribution relations can remain at odds with those of production:

If the material conditions of production are the cooperative property of the workers themselves, then there likewise results a distribution of the means of consumption different from the present one. Vulgar socialism . . . has taken over from the bourgeois economists the consideration and treatment of distribution as independent of the mode of production and hence the presentation of socialism as turning principally on distribution. After the real relation has long been made clear, why retrogress again? (*Critique of the Gotha Program*.)

NATIONALIZED PROPERTY

The reason the WRP and Mandel have a non-aggression pact on this question is that it is necessary for the deformed workers' state argument. In Pilling's case, he is compelled to claim that the Soviet bureaucracy operates through "its control of the distribution of the social product and not because it 'owns' the instruments of labor." For if he were to admit the bureaucracy owns the means of production, then there would be no question that it exploits the workers.

His first line of defense is to rely on nationalized property. "Do the means of production exist as capital, that is, are they privately owned by those who extract surplus value from the working class? This is the basic issue." By "privately owned" Pilling means not owned by one class as opposed to another but by some individuals as opposed to others — that is, the means of production are not state property. This "basic issue," however, was already refuted by Cliff Slaughter, who at least understands that the WRP acted "irresponsibly and dangerously" when it "said little more than 'nationalized means of production' in explaining why the Soviet Union was a degenerated workers' state." (*The International*, No. 4.)

Indeed, it is Pilling, not us, who "like so many before him, . . . takes one feature, one aspect, of capitalism, rips it out of its living relationship with all those other 'aspects' that make up the capitalist system [and] . . . then transforms his chosen factor into a sole determining one." And like all theorists of the "deformed workers' states" or any third-system notion, that chosen feature is always individually owned property.

More importantly, Trotsky made explicit his opinion that nationalized property does not suffice to define a workers' state. Contrary to even well-intentioned followers who believe that capitalism is "obviously" defined by individual private property that can be bought and sold, Trotsky rejected such a superficial petty-bourgeois interpretation of Marxism. Mirroring an idea introduced by Engels, he wrote:

Theoretically, to be sure, it is possible to conceive a situation in which the bourgeoisie as a whole constitutes itself a stock company which, by means of its state, administers the whole national economy. The economic laws of such a regime would present no mystery. (*The Revolution Betrayed*, p. 245.)

This means that even a totally state-owned economy can be capitalist! Trotsky didn't think that the bourgeoisie in practice could fully nationalize an economy. He was right: as Russia showed, that required the proletarian revolution, later usurped by the Stalinist bureaucracy. Nevertheless, Trotsky made clear that for him a state with a nationalized economy was not automatically a workers' state. In fact, in 1937 he predicted exactly what did occur:

Should a bourgeois counterrevolution succeed in the USSR, the new government for a lengthy period would have to base itself upon the nationalized economy. ("Not

I would like to receive further information about the LRP.

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Room 201, 170 Broadway, New York NY 10038,

a Workers' and Not a Bourgeois State?")

Pilling taxes us with putting forward "definitions" instead of relationships and the concrete development of historical forces, to establish the existence or non-existence of workers' states. The shoe is on the other foot, as Trotsky's historical materialist view shows. We explain (in a passage Pilling partially quotes and then distorts): "The Stalinist ruling class is properly called capitalist since it embodies the capitalist relation in opposition to the proletariat: it is the exploiter of labor power, 'personified capital' in Marx's phrase." (p. 233.)

Just as Trotsky understood that a bourgeoisie could operate on the basis of state property, we show that Stalinist state property has become an instrument of exploitation, not one that defends the working class against exploitation. *That makes the state capitalist.*

Pilling calls this impossible because the bureaucracy owns no property:

The bureaucracy undoubtedly "controls" the means of production in the Soviet Union and has done for many decades. But its great material privileges occur because of its control of the distribution of the social product and not because it "owns" the instruments of labor.

There he goes again with the pseudo-Trotskyist distribution fetish. And as for the bureaucracy's supposed non-ownership, Trotsky had a different — a more dialectical — interpretation:

The means of production belong to the state. But the state, so to speak, "belongs" to the bureaucracy. If these as yet wholly new relations should solidify, become the norm and be legalized . . . they would in the long run lead to a complete liquidation of the social conquests of the proletarian revolution. But to speak of that now is at least premature. (*The Revolution Betrayed*, p. 249.)

What was premature in 1936 is now an accomplished fact. The state property that then "so to speak, belonged" to the bureaucrats now is theirs without qualification, even to buy and sell — to themselves or to other capitalists. How this happened is described in some detail in our book.

On this issue Pilling commits another of his stupidities. We wrote that the Stalinists "had learned to wield [the law of value] in practice against the working class" (p. 230). He replies that this is an idealist conception:

The law of value can be "wielded" by nobody, be it against the working class or any other class. The law of value is an objective expression of the relations obtaining between people producing wealth in the form of commodities. . . . To overcome the law of value it is first necessary to recognize its source and on that basis strive to create precisely those conditions which render it obsolete.

No one can "wield" the law of value, we are told, but people can "strive" to overcome it. In reality both were possible in the Soviet workers' state: the workers and the original revolutionary leadership strove to counter the harmful effects of value-based production. But the bureaucracy eventually recognized that the law of value worked in its interests. Stalin, for example, denounced and reversed the old Bolshevik campaign for wage equalization among workers. In doing so, he was in effect carrying out the dictates of the law of value — in other words, wielding it. (See our book, pp. 116-17.)

Pilling is playing with words. We can do better by testing the question of nationalized property in practice. If it is the decisive question for determining the nature of the state, then in the East European convulsions where state property has been under attack, any workers' state worthy of the name would defend it. Communists defend state property because

abandoning it will subject the workers to more devastating exploitation. Workers will defend state property (unless they are badly deluded by bourgeois ideologists), as did the Gdansk workers when the Polish Stalinist regime tried to sell off their historic shipyards. But the current post-Stalinist states do not, since they defend the interests of the bourgeois



Minsk: no meat. WRP: no idea.

and ex-Stalinist rulers (*not* the workers), and state property is often an inconvenience for them.

As for the WRP, it evades the issue. At its April 1991 Trade Unionists Conference in London, the WRP rejected a motion to defend nationalized property and planning in the USSR from the threat of privatization, on the grounds that there is no real economic plan in the Soviet Union. This was reported in the rival *Workers Power* paper (May 1991) and denounced as a slander in the WRP's *Workers Press* of June 1, 1991. However, the same point was made in the WRP's own account of the conference:

The term is meaningless — there is no plan. The Soviet economy is in a state of breakdown. If you say to the Soviet workers, "Defend the plan," they will just laugh at you. To defend the "plan" means to defend a Victorian system. (*Workers Press*, April 27, 1991.)

True, there is no real planning — because whatever the bureaucrats plan, their efforts inevitably fall prey to the real economic relations, the struggle between exploiting and exploited classes, while objective factors (expressions of the law of value) counter their best-laid plans behind their backs. This in fact is a major topic analyzed in our book, one that Pilling prefers not to mention, even though he and his comrades have no alternative but to refer to the unexplained fact of the lack of planning in the heat of debate.

It is not enough to know that the USSR lacks real planning. A Marxist must understand what laws *do* in fact regulate the economy. If not planning and not the law of value, then what? Pilling *et al* offer not a clue. We are back at the WRP's blatant lack of a theory of Stalinism. It is no surprise that now, following its method of outright confusionism, the WRP has reverted to the old pieties about defending nationalized property.

[To be continued.]

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

Fall 1992

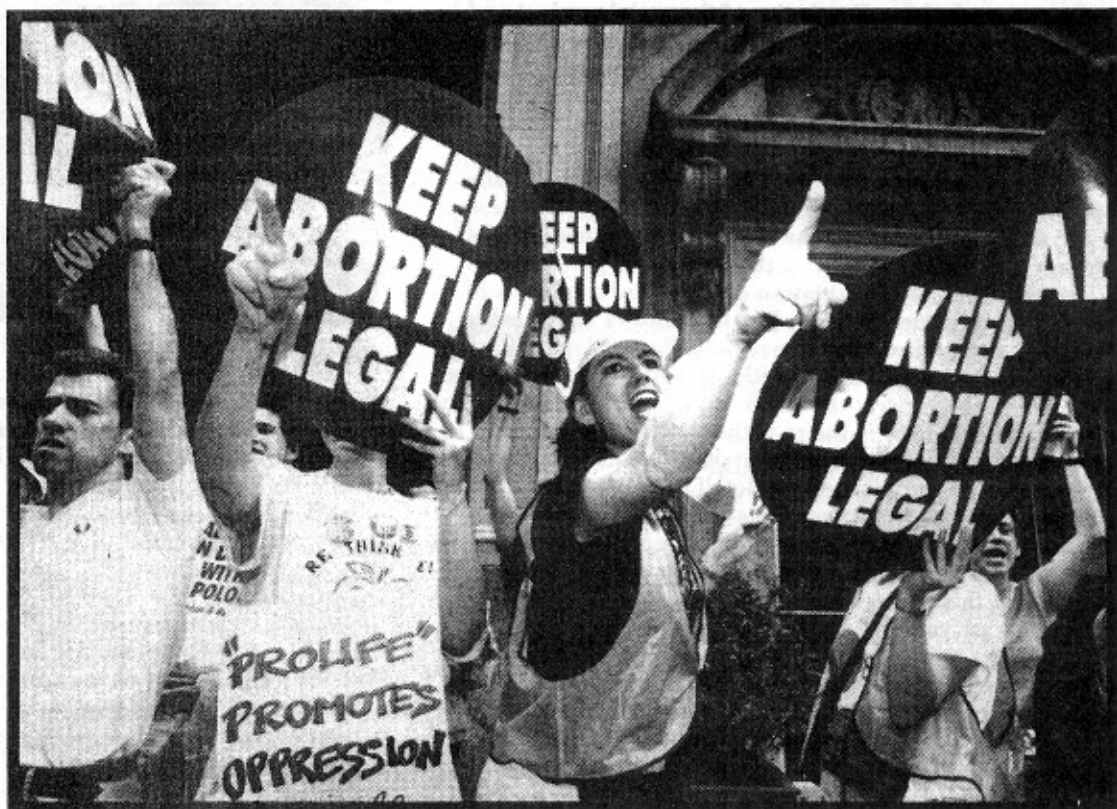
New York 'Defends' Abortion Rights The Happy Marriage of NOW and the Democrats

All eyes were on New York in mid-July over the abortion rights struggle. In the aftermath of the Supreme Court's Casey decision accepting most of Pennsylvania's restrictions on abortion rights, the reactionary Operation Rescue (O.R.) outfit planned to lay siege to New York abortion clinics during the week of the Democratic Party convention.

The "pro-choice" stronghold of New York City seemed to be a good place to hand the so-called right-to-life move-

which last summer had refused to organize even a minimal mobilization against O.R. in Wichita, came to town along with Fund for the Feminist Majority big shots to lead the supposedly grassroots Clinic Defense Task Force. Initially organized by WHAM, the Task Force also included the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) and New York NOW — plus representatives from the "left" (the ISO and SWP) as well as from the offices of Mayor Dinkins and

Working class must fight for legal abortion, free and on demand. Capitalist system forces abortions, makes women pay, then brands them.



ment a major setback. After its victory in Wichita in 1991, O.R. had been badly beaten by militant action in Buffalo in April and Baton Rouge earlier in July. But what started out as a mass mobilization to defend the clinics ended up as a photo opportunity for Democratic politicians.

There were signs even before July that militancy was not what the feminist leaders wanted. WHAM, the Women's Health Action Mobilization, was the central force to the left of the bourgeois National Organization for Women (NOW). It had tried to prevent a pro-choice counter-demonstration against Cardinal O'Connor at the Eastern Women's Center on June 13. O'Connor, a major leader of the mainstream right-to-life movement, was trying to boost the movement in New York City because of the defeat in Buffalo. WHAM argued that a noisy crowd would upset patients, clearly a reason *never* to mount a mass clinic defense. Fortunately, over 700 angry people showed up to counter O'Connor.

In July, instead of militancy we got a charade. NOW,

other Democratic politicians.

The Task Force made sure that the clinic defense ended up as a sideshow to the Democratic circus. While defenders chanted, "This isn't Wichita," the leadership was determined to see that it wouldn't be another Buffalo either. Defenders were told that "our goals" meant that we must not only avoid physical confrontations with O.R. but must also not engage in shouting and arguing.

This passive policy aided the handfuls of O.R. goons and pro-lifers who showed up — and could have easily been swept off the streets. For example, on July 11, the first morning of clinic defense, a lone right-to-lifer ranting on the curb outside the Planned Parenthood Hub Center in the Bronx was enough to frighten off a woman scheduled for an abortion, while numerous defenders stood by "guarding" the clinic silently under NOW's gag rule.

The potential for a more militant defense arose at the

continued on page 18