



The Socialist

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Taking on
THE KING
PAGE 4



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CIW protest, Miami

SOLIDARITY

The Power of Class Solidarity and the Return of May Day

Editorial

Photo: Shira Golding

May Day celebrations in the United States (U.S.) have been resuscitated. Notes on May Day's demise proliferated following the collapse of Soviet bloc in the late 80s and 90s. Commemorations in the U.S. limped along held together only by the noble yet not particularly effective efforts of anarchists and socialists. Workers mostly disregarded the day while trade union leaders remained married to the Macarthyite inspired September Labor Day.

This situation was transformed rapidly, and perhaps permanently, in 2006 as immigrant workers moved onto the national scene through mass rallies in cities throughout the U.S. This new May Day celebration was dubbed "A Day Without Immigrants" and amounted to a mass strike of millions of immigrant workers operating outside of the structures of organized labor.

With May Day back on the political map, socialists have a duty to attempt to synthesize the experiences of the past and the present. The writings of early socialists are particularly helpful since they capture the manner in which May Day served to focus the rising militancy of the working class.

Particularly noteworthy is a letter penned by Socialist Joseph Coldwell and published in the *Daily Worker* (May 1924). After experiencing numerous May Days as a "class-war prisoner," in U.S. jails, Coldwell understood the day as the highest expression of "...the power of class solidarity."

Coldwell argued that the commemorations provided workers with a sense of commonality in the global struggle against capitalism. For one day each year the typical divisions fomented by capitalism based upon "land and language," "on land or on the seas, sick or well, imprisoned or at liberty," were replaced by a collectively shared desire for liberation. Despite attempts of varying severity to eliminate May Day celebrations by what Coldwell described as the "master class," wage-laborers emptied their worksites en-masse for parades, meetings, picnics and dances.

May Day celebrations were portable; any venue small or large would do, and were open as any worker could spontaneously participate. Coldwell and his imprisoned comrades, including Eugene Debs, did not need celebrations "...in gaily decorated halls." One year when Coldwell was the only radical in jail a red ribbon sufficed as a commemoration. In another, a smuggled violin allowed for a performance of "The Internationale" and "The Red Flag." A revolutionary slogan written in the sand in the prison courtyard, along with the music, alerted other prisoners to the meaning of the day.

Finally Coldwell argued that May Day managed to freeze historical time. Writing about May Day reminded Coldwell that all of his fellow prisoners had been released from jail, less the anarchist Nick Zogg (released in July 1924). He further recognized the importance of supporting the new class-war prisoners including Mooney and Billings and Sacco and Vanzetti. The day linked the heroes of the past, with actors in the present who were determined to transform the future.

Now in 2008 both Joseph Coldwell and the immigrant workers who engineered the recovery of May Day offer important lessons to the left in the US. For the day to thrive we must find ways to encourage a sense of common purpose across capitalist borders, to increase the number and locations of commemorations and to unite our collective past and present to build a progressive future. To accomplish this we would do well to recognize that May Day was created, "not by the grace of God, or by act of parliament, but by the power of class solidarity."

Joseph Coldwell was a member of the Socialist Party active in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Coldwell led many militant actions including the 1913 Draper Textile Strike and was the Socialist candidate for governor of Rhode Island in 1934 and for the U.S. Senate in 1936.

FEATURES



Taking on "The King"

Darius C. Engel

Burger King is the most recent fast food conglomerate target in a campaign organized by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW). Thus far, CIW workers have won an increase of one penny per pound of tomatoes picked from McDonald's Corp and YUM Brands Inc (KFC, Pizza Hut and Taco Bell). CIW members and supporters organized a mass demonstration in Miami in December 2007 to focus efforts for a positive resolution with the burger serving conglomerate.

The march started in downtown Miami at the Miami headquarters of Goldman Sachs, one of the private equity firms which owns a large stake in Burger King. The nine mile march consisted of nearly a thousand protesters, many wearing yellow T-shirts that read "Exploitation King: Burger King Exploits Farm workers." Yellow flags were waved in the air reading "Esperanza" (Hope), and signs read "fair wages for farm workers." The march was headed by a ten foot tall Burger King puppet crying "Liar Liar."

The truck was preceded by a flat bed. Many of the workers, fearing for their jobs and livelihood could not attend; however, they sent their shoes which filled the flat bed, displaying a sign reading, "Doubt our Poverty, Walk in our Shoes." The display was poignant, and moving by its simplicity. I wondered how much toil these shoes had seen.

Not long after my arrival, I could hear the faint sound of music. The sound grew louder and louder as the march approached its half way point, until the music and chanting began to overtake the semi-quiet afternoon. Along with the hundreds of CIW marchers, many others joined the rally. The event brought together hundreds of Union members from such organizations as the I.W.W, AFL-CIO, Teamsters; as well as, the Socialist Party USA, student activists, religious groups, and many other migrant workers; all of them unified in labor solidarity.

The march continued on its way to the Burger King Headquarters. This time, I was in the lines of workers; my crimson flag unfurled in solidarity. Despite the heat, the crowd was enormous and good-spirited, with organizers diligently keeping the march in order to maintain safety. Along with the designated organizers, the winding crowd was accompanied by dozens of Miami police; some on bikes, others in squad cars.

The coalition's demands include a one cent increase per pound picked, a new code of conduct that guarantees no abuse of workers' rights, and dialogue between Burger King, the CIW and the agriculture companies who sell tomatoes to the fast-food giant. Farm workers currently earn only 45 cents per bucket of tomatoes. Their days are regularly 10 hours long with no overtime pay, no health insurance, no right to organize, no sick days, no holidays, and no benefits whatsoever.

Burger King has refused to negotiate. Steven Grover, Burger King's "vice-president" in charge of food safety and quality assurance, said the "door is open," to negotiations, but little if any real dialogue has been offered. Instead they have responded with obstacles, dismissiveness, and even attacks on past successes. CIW spokeswoman Julia Perkins said "Burger King has been actively working to undermine and ultimately end the Yum and McDonalds' pacts reached through fair negotiations in 2005. Workers are demanding Burger King to stop immediately. It's like stealing, just stealing what they won," said Perkins, "they are actually working to take those gains away."

Taking its usual anti-union stand, FOX News went so far as to change the number of attendees from nearly a thousand to "about 300," a figure that can be quashed with a simple look at event photos. Included in this "unbiased" report was more than a lion's share of quotes from Burger King Management damning and dismissing the march and its goals. As to the large shoe display, Burger King argued that the reason those workers were not in attendance was because, "most field pickers are illegal immigrants." Steven Grover explained that the one-cent increase (which would only cost Burger King around \$250,000 more a year) was "obscure and legally questionable from a numbers angle." Further, Grover said "this protest is a colossal waste of resources and time." He also claims that the CIW agenda "failed to provide any solutions for the real issues facing farm workers." This is laughable since neither he nor his corporation has done anything to aid the struggle of the farm workers. The CIW said the extra penny would raise pickers' wages (unchanged for over 30 years) to 77cents for each 32-pound bucket of tomatoes they picked, effectively a 71 percent wage increase. This would be a real step towards improving conditions.

The march concluded outside Burger King Headquarters. The large stone building towered over the massive crowd. Small faces were seen in the windows watching the rally, and hopefully listening to the plight of the workers. Many speakers took their turn on the stage - religious groups, union members, and independent activists. Ex-President Jimmy Carter sent a letter praising the CIW efforts stating; "Burger King and others are continuing to support a market system that keeps workers in sub-poverty conditions and stand silently as modest gains are deliberately rolled back."

"They keep denying what the truth is. They deny the abuses," says Cruz Salucio, 23 year-old Immokalee worker. "But they are just lying."

Find out more about the campaign:

<http://socialistparty-usa.org/campaigns/immsolidarity.html>

Remembering Ralph

David McReynolds

This afternoon, February 1st, I got a call from Ruth Benn that Ralph DiGia, 93, had died at St. Vincent's here in New York City. I had visited him this past Saturday and sensed he was losing his battle – he had fallen and broken a hip about two weeks ago, got an infection in the hospital, and despite rallying several times, died.

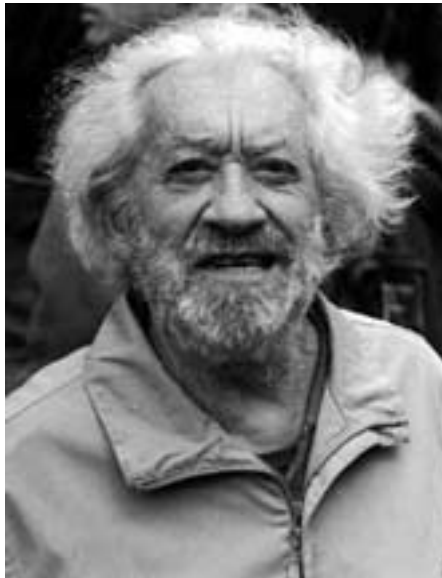
One of the posts I have gotten on email was from a Muslim who had met Ralph when he was, with his wife, Karin, doing some relief work in Bosnia. In the post the writer referred to Ralph as a “hidden saint” – a term which would have bothered Ralph, but to which there is more than a germ of truth.

Ralph DiGia was of an Italian family, a second-generation Italian anarchist. His father was a friend of Carlo Tresca. When the Second World War came, Ralph refused military service and was imprisoned, taking part during that time in the hunger strikes that desegregated federal prisons. Very soon after his release from prison, Ralph, along with Dave Dellinger, Roy Finch, Roy Kepler, and a handful of others who had been in prison or alternative service camps, took over the War Resisters League as a kind of band of “young Turks”, seeking to explore Gandhian nonviolence, and to deepen the program of WRL from resisting war to changing the society that produced war.

It is not a surprise that Ralph was drawn to WRL, which, because it was a secular pacifist organization, had become a home for young anarchists and socialists. Ralph was a qualified accountant and became the “financial guy” for all the various groups that formed, keeping track of the money. If the term “hidden saint” has a certain truth it was because Ralph did the scut work of the organization. He was not the speaker, not the writer, but always at the center of the work of WRL, a kind of radical conscience for it, a man who hated internal conflicts, faction fights, who wanted, above all else, to make sure the daily work of the organization was done.

In 1951, Ralph, along with Dave Dellinger and several others, tried to ride their bicycles across Europe, from France through the “Iron Curtain”, to Moscow. They failed to make it through the “Iron Curtain” but it was one of the early efforts, internationally, to use the methods of Gandhi to question the insanity of the Cold War.

In 1955, in the first protest against the Civil Defense Drills by which the government hoped to give the public some confidence they could survive a nuclear war, Ralph was among those arrested, along with A. J. Muste, Dorothy Day, Bayard Rustin, and a number of others, for refusing to take shelter in City Hall Park.



When I came to New York from Los Angeles in 1956, there were just two people full-time on the WRL staff, Bayard Rustin and Ralph DiGia. Jim Peck acted as a part time volunteer. The small staff worked from a single office at Beekman Street, across from City Hall. I was to join the WRL staff in 1960, but I had already gotten to know Ralph from the weekly meetings of Liberation magazine, which had offices in Greenwich Village.

Ralph left the drama of the movement to others – something he shared in common with the late Norma Becker, who was so important to the Vietnam Peace movement, but so little-known. He felt

that stuffing envelopes was as important as speaking to college students. Keeping the books made the organization go around.

There were times when, I know, he felt impatient at this. In 1961 he and Jim Peck and I took part in the Civil Defense Drill protest in City Hall Park. The three of us were arrested and jailed for 25 days (poor planning on our part – it meant the entire staff was in jail for nearly a month, not the sort of thing Ralph approved of!). In 1964 he joined the Quebec to Guantanamo Peace Walk, organized by the Committee for Nonviolent Action. This was long before Guantanamo would become infamous as an American site of torture. It was then a symbol of a US military base in Cuba, a country which had become the target of wrath for the American establishment because it had had a revolution which wouldn't go away.

Ralph never got close to Cuba – the team

of walkers, which included the late Barbara Deming, was arrested in Albany, Georgia, beaten, and held for, I think, a month, during which time they took part in a serious and prolonged hunger strike.

I remember those nervous days as Dick Gilpin and I, working from the office at 5 Beekman, busily phoned contacts all over the world to bring pressure on the officials in Georgia (and on the State Department) to get our friends released before they died. It was a rough experience for the marchers, an inter-racial team in a state that was fiercely resisting challenges to Jim Crow. Ralph came back to the office and returned to the routine of keeping the books and, of course, of counseling draft resisters.

Last year there was one of the large demonstrations in Washington DC against the war. Ralph was determined to go down there and asked if I would go with him, which I did. At 92 he covered almost all the march, before we finally headed back to Manhattan.

Ralph was a kind of “non-denominational” radical, who kept on good terms with a range of folks in the midst of the ideological wars of the left. But he was not without clear opinions on key issues. In 1965

when there was the first major student demonstration against the Vietnam War, organized by the Students for a Democratic Society, Bayard Rustin was alarmed that SDS had accepted the endorsement of the Communist Party's youth group and had called a meeting of a small group of us – A. J. Muste, Ralph, Bayard, Charles Bloomstein, myself, Robert Gilmore – at Gilmore's home, to see if we could agree on a statement warning SDS against a "united front" with the Communists. A. J. did sign, under pressure from Bayard. I didn't sign, less because I favored united fronts (my views were to change, but not yet) than because the statement wasn't clear that we demanded unconditional US withdrawal from Vietnam. Ralph also didn't sign – one of the few occasions when he quietly broke with Bayard and A.J.

Ralph was one of the few people who could "morally intimidate" Bayard Rustin. Once, I think the occasion was Ralph's birthday, some of us plotted to get him a stereo set. I was the chief organizer of the plot; the event was to be at Norma Becker's apartment in Greenwich Village. We used the excuse that Bill Sutherland, a man WRL had sent to Africa in 1953 to help train people there in nonviolence, was in town and we should have a reception for him. A ploy Bill was happy to go along with. But as Ralph began to find out about the list of people I was inviting he got furious with me, saying "David, half of these folks don't even know Bill – you are screwing up the event". I kept my peace and kept on. I phoned Bayard, who by then had broken politically with WRL, and told him we wanted a contribution for the stereo set and wanted him present. Bayard said of course he would send a check but he wasn't sure he would be free. I said "Bayard, this isn't for WRL – it is for Ralph, and if you aren't there none of us will speak to you again". Bayard showed up. And Ralph forgave me for the duplicity of my invitation list.

Ralph loved baseball. Ruth Benn used to take Ralph with them to the ball games – up to the end of last year's season. Ralph loved beer. He could get high on two bottles of beer, his whole personality changing and expanding, as the worries of the ever-present deficits faded, and a party blossomed. He was popular with women and in this I felt he had to carry an unfair burden because of those of us in leadership posts at WRL. For a time we had three homosexuals in key posts – Bayard Rustin, the Executive Secretary, Igal Roodenko, the Chair, and myself, the Field Secretary. It was a matter of accident, not a gay plot, that briefly led to the straight man – Ralph – being so outnumbered. He bore that problem with dignity.

There were occasional political struggles in which, in my view, Ralph took the right side.

In the 1960's WRL voted to fund *WIN* magazine, a nonviolent "hippy" publication that had been started by a group of young New York pacifists. The Executive Committee was very skeptical about a group of pot-smoking, free-loving youth running our magazine. But Ralph and I were able to carry the day – though at least two members of the Executive Committee quietly resigned.

And on the matter of "united fronts", as the Vietnam War went on Ralph and I felt that WRL should take a role in the broad coalitions which included the Communists and Trotskyites. Again there were some tense moments by older members who thought we were giving up our nonviolence. In large part because of Ralph, WRL went on to play a central role in all of the Vietnam peace coalitions and Ralph, along with Grace Paley, was arrested on the first day of the 1971 Maydays in Washington DC, a time when over 15,000 people, most of them very young, were arrested in a three day period, while the smell of tear gas wafted over the capital, including Georgetown.

Ralph used to work at the office each day long after the rest of the staff had left. He came in on weekends to make sure mailings went out. He was the "boss" of the loose group of us who made up the staff, but a "boss" in such an indirect and gentle way that he held his authority over the rest of us simply by working harder than any of us, and shaming those, including me, who hated the routine work of stuffing envelopes.

Fairly late in life he met and married Karin, and became a family man, trimming his time in the office to a more reasonable burden. When I saw him in the office three weeks ago (and he was still coming in almost every day) I asked how he was doing. "David, I feel so tired. And my memory – it's lousy". Shortly after that he fell and broke his hip, entered the hospital and is now gone.

There will be a memorial – though when I do not know. I do know that a great spirit has moved on. One without pretensions, one who wore his radicalism in his life, not on his sleeve. I am among the hundreds – if not thousands – of people who are lucky enough to say we knew Ralph DiGia.

David McReynolds was on the staff of War Resisters League from 1960 to 1999, is retired, lives in the East Village with two cats. He was the Socialist Party candidate for President in 1980 and 2000, and the Chair of War Resisters' International.

"The workers are at the bottom of civilized society. That civilization may endure they ought to push upward from their poverty and misery until they emerge into the full sunlight of freedom. When the fruits of civilization, created by all, are enjoyed in common by all, then civilization is secure. Not till then."

A War for Civilization - James Connolly - 1915

**May Day Greetings from the New York City Local
of the Socialist Party USA**
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Children as "Collateral Damage" in the War on Iraq

Dan Jakopovich

*Western journalist: What do you think of Western civilization?
Mahatma Gandhi: Yes, that would be a good idea.*

Great is the hypocrisy of capitalist "civilization". On the one hand, big business and its media boast of their "democracy" and "freedom," while at the same time in today's world they commit the greatest crimes. They spread rhetoric about human rights while stifling human dignity in a myriad of ways. Although several tens of billions of dollars would be enough to eliminate extreme hunger in the world, **the USA annually spends approximately 600 billion dollars on its military budget, while approximately 15 million children are dying from starvation every year.** It appears that it is still not in the interest of the system to eliminate poverty. War is profitable, and the profits coming from the war in Iraq are evidently more valuable than human lives.

The First Gulf War, equally absurd as other wars before and after it, started at the beginning of the final decade of the last century. Approximately 90,000 tons of bombs were dropped on Iraq and Kuwait. Nonetheless, Saddam was not deposed. As Sami Ramadani, an Iraqi dissident and professor at the London Metropolitan University, points out, the United States even helped Saddam quell a military rebellion against his authority.



CRIMINAL SANCTIONS

"We Think The Price Is Worth It"

The sanctions that were later imposed against defeated Iraq did not undermine the power of the autocrats but severely afflicted the lives of ordinary people. The sanctions were all-encompassing, perhaps the most restrictive and broadest in history - applying also to food, medicines and other humanitarian necessities. Even chlorine, needed for disinfecting water, was prohibited due to its alleged "dual function" in the potential manufacture of weapons. **UNICEF (<http://www.unicef.org/newsline/99pr29.htm>) estimated the number of children under five years of age who died as a consequence of the sanctions at 500,000 (five hundred thousand).** In 1996, that great liberal, the tastefully attired lady Madeleine Albright (secretary of state under Bill Clinton, whom the stupid, hypocritically moralistic public pilloried for oral sex with Monica Lewinsky and not for aggression waged against numerous countries), responded to a question asked on 60 Minutes as to whether the price of the lives of 500,000 children was worth it as follows: "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price - we think the price is worth it."

Denis Halliday, the former UN humanitarian coordinator for Iraq (appointed in 1997 as an assistant to the Secretary-General of the UN), **estimated the total number of deaths due to sanctions at 1 million** (an inconceivable number of human lives destroyed). In

October 1998, after a 34-year career at the UN, he resigned in order to be able to criticize these cannibalistic sanctions freely and stated: *"I don't want to administer a program that satisfies the definition of genocide."* Halliday's successor, Hans von Sponeck, also submitted his resignation after two years in protest (i.e. revulsion) as did Jutta Burghardt, head of the World Food Program for Iraq. The corporate mass media ignored these events as much as they could. The corrupt Oil for Food program has only somewhat alleviated the suffering of the population. In addition to sanctions, this exploitative program is one more stain on the history of the modern UN.

THE CURRENT BESTIAL WAR

Victims of the 1999 Bombardment of Iraq

Although periodical limited bombardment of Iraqi targets continued throughout the 1990s (without any great interest from the corporate mass media), the US and its allies announced a new war on Iraq in 2003. The leading British medical journal, *The Lancet*, estimated through scientific methods in October 2006 that **655,000 (six hundred fifty-five thousand) people had perished** in the war by July 2006, this was also confirmed by the elite *Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health* in the US.

Dan Toole, director of the Office of Emergency Operations of the United Nations Children's Fund, recently stated: **"Children today are much worse off than they were a year ago, and they certainly are worse off than they were three years ago."** He added that Iraqis no longer have safe access to the basic food basket established under Saddam's regime in order to survive international sanctions. At UNICEF there are concerns regarding a potential cholera epidemic because two-thirds of the Iraqis do not have access to clean water. The prominent sociologist and professor at the Sorbonne Jean Ziegler, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, stated in 2005 that the rate of malnutrition among Iraqi children had doubled since the beginning of the war in 2003. Nutritional and health indicators have significantly worsened since the beginning of the occupation. According to a study commissioned by the BBC, ABC News, the ARD of Germany and USA Today, 64% of interviewed Iraqis described their family situation as somewhat poor or very poor, which represents an increase in comparison to 30% in 2005. Access to electricity is described by 88% as somewhat poor or very poor, while 65% thought so in 2004. Although 48% described their access to clean water as poor or very poor in 2004, 69% feel this way now.

According to UNICEF, half of the 4 million Iraqis who have fled their homes since the beginning of the war were children. Tens of thou-

sands of children have lost one or both parents. Deprived of many of their rights, frequently exposed to psychological, physical and sexual violence and potentially harmful forms of labor; the future of these children does not appear overly promising.

WOUNDS BELOW THE SURFACE

Professor Kholoud Nasser Muhsin of the University of Baghdad points out that approximately 60-70% of all Iraqi children suffer from psychological problems. Many of them have also survived traumatic experiences. Psychological wounds are difficult to heal and post-traumatic stress disorder is very common. **"New generations, especially this one, will be aggressive,"** points out the Baghdad psychiatrist Bilal Youssif Hamid. Many children whom Hamid has tried to treat have witnessed or participated in murders and death. Although parents are frequently too afraid to take their children to a clinic for a medical check-up, much less to school, even the children who go to school have great learning difficulties, as well as anxiety, depression, aggressiveness, nightmares, bedwetting etc. War is always catastrophic for the human psyche.

How can new generations acquire an awareness of the preciousness of each individual when human life is so cheap, the dignity of all people so blatantly ignored and human potentials so suppressed? How can a country be democratized when the most basic rights, such as the right to strike, are prohibited, and the call for vengeance and voice of despair drown out more rational alternatives to imperialism? How to popularize the philosophy of nonviolence?

Dan Jakopovich is the main editor of the left-wing magazine on the territory of ex-Yugoslavia Novi Plamen (www.noviplamen.org).

A SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE? GOING FROM GREEN TO RED

Rev. José M. Tirado

The recent election primaries have stolen much of the progressive thunder-badly. Barack Obama's stentorian voice and uplifting rhetoric, two qualities often passed off as "progressivism" in the United States, gets incredible press while the personal venality of the Clintons and their surrogates, (which mask serious policy choices anathema to a truly progressive agenda) is overly analyzed. Some substance!

Both candidates are imperial Democrats, supporting the 800 or so military bases around the world, and the hegemonic dominance that assures. Both candidates will not support an end to insurance company mobsterism in health care, and instead opt for what most modern Western democracies have: a single-payer health system. Both candidates talk only in the vaguest of generalities about the importance of unions (but neither support an end to Taft-Hartley), the environment (yet both support nuclear power and neither will reign in destructive corporate agriculture), or "working families" (but neither supports a living wage). What all this means is that, simply put, a progressive agenda is once again relegated to the backburner in exchange for the maddeningly inevitable mantra of "change", which in American politics means changing the prison guards and keeping the Left locked away from mainstream debates.

Here in Iceland where I live, the Left-Green Movement, a Green-Socialist-Feminist coalition, is part of the government, and its leader Steingrímur Sigfússon delivers the most impassioned and inspiring speeches, winning respect from even opponents for his integrity and vision. But they represent only 14.3% of Parliament. The Socialist Alliance, a Social Democratic, center-left coalition (perhaps the equivalent of a more liberal version of New Deal Democrats) holds 26.8% of Parliament and so between them, almost half of the total seats. Together they get attention and more importantly, some legislation passed that fits a progressive description. While this is not the place to recommend a proportional system of representation for the US (though I do) or a whole new way of configuring movements and political parties (which I do), I think it time some of us on the US Left reassess our choice of words (and fear of others) and earnestly support where we can an openly socialist agenda electorally. What this means is giving a new look to an old friend, the Socialist Party-USA (SP-USA).

Even as large numbers of progressives, including socialists joined the Green Parties in the 80's (and technically there still remain 2, without counting the arcane mergers and configurations within individual states) the Greens have been hobbled by infighting and crass manipulation by Dems in Green clothing. And while Communists (CPUSA) and other socialist parties exist,

they have neither the traction (organization or ballot access) nor the independence (the CP, for example, supports the Dems as a tactical, and "practical" endeavor) to make more waves than a pond ripple. For progressives, these are disheartening signs.

In addition, we have seen the movement of radicals, Leftists, and other progressives drift towards the Republican candidacy of Ron Paul. His unswerving opposition to American imperial adventurism and undeclared wars, and strong support of the Constitution make him appealing. Yet many of his other positions are questionable, to say the least. Why aren't we reassessing a group that has always opposed wars, imperialism and unjust policies at home and abroad?

The Socialist Party is the US's oldest socialist party, does not favor top down "democratic centralism", is adaptable to distinctly American political realities and has a platform remarkably consistent with progressive (and Green) views without the nutty baggage that hampers any Left discussion of politics. At one time, in its heyday, the Socialist Party had numerous elected officials in office and Eugene Debs once received almost a million votes—while he was in jail! By openly supporting the Socialist Party, we would be making a statement loud and clear that can push the debate much further to the Left than it is at present.

Yet, if history teaches us anything it's that movements matter and that unified struggle beats divisive sectarianism. Hopping from one political party to another is now an unfortunate, inevitable consequence of US ballot access laws. Thus, a socialist may have to vote Green in order to have her vote count (or in order to simply be able to vote) or a Green to support an Independent candidacy in order to be heard.

But what if we simply agreed that what we want, at its most basic, is found pretty squarely inside that SP-USA platform and that, wherever possible, by voting Socialist we are helping a noble party get back into the consciousness of Americans and giving an alternative vision the chance it needs to compete. While I have for 20 years committed myself to Green politics, I think it may be time to shift back to where my heart says I should go for me to feel I am not wasting my vote, or my time—to the Socialist Party. And if, and when we can form our version of a Left-Green Alliance, in whatever name, I'll be right there too.

Rev. José M. Tirado is a poet, priest and writer finishing a PhD in psychology while living in Iceland. This article was originally published by the website Dissident Voice and is re-printed with their permission.

Letter 1

The Making of the First "Super Max"

Pablo Pina

Pablo Pina is currently serving a sentence of 35 years to life at the maximum security Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, California. Pablo has been imprisoned since being convicted of murder in the 1st degree in 1986. This conviction was made possible by the suppression of evidence by both the police and District Attorney. Since 1986 he has fought a one-man battle to have this evidence released often filing self-made handwritten legal briefs. He has also become an advocate for greater rights for prisoners including access to books, personal items and educational programs. Pablo has developed a passion for reading - especially works of Native American history - and art. Below is the first of a three-part series of letters which document his travels through the California penal system and his two-decade long struggle for justice.

Pablo Pina #D-28079
P.O. Box 7500 #D-4 102
Crescent City, Calif. 95531

In December 1989, the Security Housing Unit (SHU) Pelican Bay State Prison (PBSP) was opened at Crescent City, California. At the time, I was at another SHU in Kern County, California called Tehachapi SHU serving an indefinite term due to gang membership. Tehachapi was also a newly opened facility. When it opened in January 1987 thousands of prisoners were transferred from San Quentin, California. Until then, San Quentin housed gang members from all over the state of California.

I had arrived at San Quentin after being sentenced in 1986, but by 1987 I was one of those headed to Tehachapi. This exodus was designed to stop gang violence and assaults in jail.

Because it was one of the oldest prisons in the state, San Quentin was wide open. It had bars instead of the steel doors of the new facilities, and had fewer yards for all the prisoners. Each group of prisoners, or gangs, in San Quentin had to be segregated to prevent violence. This meant that only a few prisoners were allowed outside while the rest sat in their cells.

San Quentin was also dangerously overcrowded. Each block had about 500 prisoners, which is a very high concentration. Each block was like this. The noise on the blocks was so loud, day and night, that the prison distributed ear plugs.

The block was locked down every day in response to prisoner violence. In fact, I cannot remember one day when there weren't gunshots as soon as the first group of prisoners headed to the yard. Every morning our day began with someone being stabbed or hit over the head with a weight. Even prison guards were routinely assaulted as they walked the tiers.

This violence occurred despite the severely restricted program in the SHU and the security measures. Prisoners were handcuffed and escorted where ever they went. Still the assaults and killings continued.

Many prisoners were shot with birdshot from guards using shotguns from gun rails in the yard. Early in my stay I was in a fight and, expecting to be shot by the guards, kept my face away from the gun rails so they didn't shoot me in the face. The BB's in the birdshot can quickly pop your eyes out. Since you cannot get those replaced you

want to be shot anywhere but the face. One of my friends was not so lucky. He took the birdshot in the face and was permanently blinded. He was serving life and now he must live in darkness.

A lot of other prisoners were shot by mini-14 rifles. The guards received these after they figured the shotguns weren't lethal enough. The mini-14, if it didn't kill you was sure to tear you up or paralyze you. I think the prisoners who were shot and killed were singled out. The guards are supposed to be marksmen so they can hit what they aim at. Usually a prisoner who wasn't involved in the fight - a bystander or even someone across the yard - was shot. It is hard to believe that marksmen trained to use firearms are such bad shots.

To slow down gang activity we were all sent to Tehachapi. This was a more controlled setting. They built smaller yards and the cells on a tier went from 50 to 5 on the top and 5 at the bottom. Altogether, a section in the new facility was made up of 20-cells. Contact with other prisoners was restricted - you could only see or speak with another person in the yard.

Tehachapi was alright but they had strict limits on a lot of things such as what kind and how much property we could have. Also, it snowed a lot. The new yard did include a handball and basketball court which we could use.

We did have to complain when breakfast was served. It included green-colored eggs and powdered milk. I am sure that there were no nutrients in that imitation breakfast. Eventually they started giving us the real stuff.

Like San Quentin, Tehachapi had no real programs for the prisoners - just the yard for 3 hours a day. The rest of the time was spent sitting in the cell. There were no educational programs at all. Also, the guards began to take advantage of some of the prisoners usually the small or weak ones. They'd start an argument with the prisoner then a handful of cops would run into the cell and beat him down. Even though the yards were segregated and there was not much trouble (some gang violence still occurred but far less than in San Quentin), the guards were still shooting guys for playing out in the yard.

One day these two prisoners were shadow boxing, not fighting but pretending to hit each other. The guard on the gun rail shot one of them in the foot. When he looked down he saw that his toe had been shot off.

At Tehachapi the prison guards decided that they would be the aggressors and began assaulting prisoners every chance they got. One day I was being taken to see the dentist. On the way I saw three guards with one prisoner. The prisoner was handcuffed and one of the guards was hitting him with a club around the kidney area. They were yelling that he had lied to them. When they saw me and my escorts they stopped until we passed. When I came back from the dentist they were gone.

In January 1988 I went back to court to contest my conviction. When I returned to Tehachapi, a rumor had spread that yet another facility was being built in the mountains and we're all headed there.

Part two will appear in the next edition of The Socialist.

FREE TRADE AND TRANSPORTATION: THE TROUBLE WITH TRADE CORRIDORS

Michael Yoder

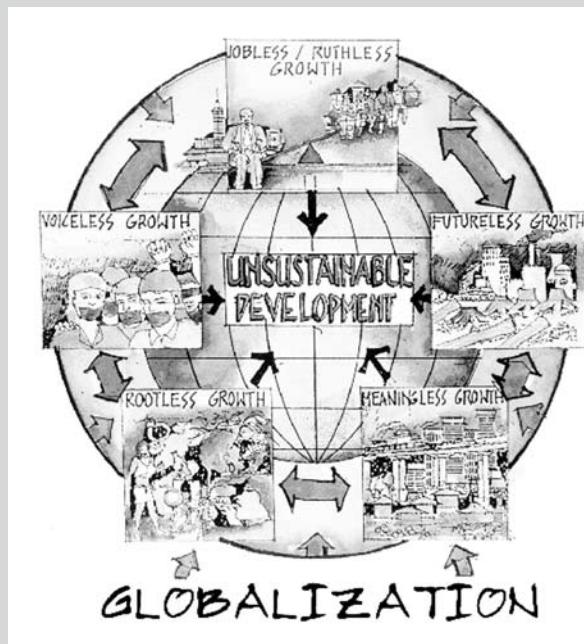
The proposed Trans-Texas Trade Corridor, or TTC, a major priority of Governor Rick Perry, has received a lot of press and is no doubt familiar to most readers of *The Socialist*. It's a multi-billion dollar intermodal project designed to link different parts of Texas with other states. Its main routes roughly parallel Interstates 35, 45, and 69. The project also promotes improvements to highways that link the Lower Rio Grande Valley to the main corridors as part of an overall expanded transportation network. The mainstream media have tended to focus on the growing opposition to it on environmental grounds, not to mention high costs to taxpayers and the dramatic loss of productive farmland that would result from its construction. The 400 meter-wide corridor would include several rail lines, separate toll highways for commercial and passenger vehicles, utility lines, and easements.

One rationale the governor uses for the corridor, and one I will address in this brief essay, is growing trade between the U.S. and Mexico, and between the U.S. and Asia. Trade has certainly increased between the U.S. and Mexico since the implementation of NAFTA, as the corridor's proponents point out, but not sufficiently enough to justify such a huge and damaging project. Mexico's GNP is still comparable to that of the State of Ohio. The real "prize" is the anticipated increase in cargo shipments from Asian ports such as Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Singapore to the southern latitudes of the U.S. via Mexican ports and the corridor.

While the long queues at Los Angeles and Long Beach are the primary justification for seeking alternative maritime ports, proponents of trans-Mexico shipment of goods originating in Asia, including officials of the State of Texas, have confirmed their desire to undercut unionized port workers in West Coast ports of the U.S. For their part, the Mexican government and their allies in the business community are promoting such ports as Lázaro Cárdenas in the state of Michoacan, Manzanillo in the state of Colima, and Mazatlan in the state of Sinaloa as preferred sites to bring in Asian cargo, predominately containers, for shipment by rail or truck to Texas and points beyond. The proposed port at Punta Colonet, Baja California, which would be the neo-liberal Mexican government's largest transport-related infrastructure project ever built, is conceived as a direct competition to L.A. and Long Beach.

As *The Economist* reported last year, transportation is an increasingly valuable part of the global supply chain of consumer and industrial goods, and Mexican businessmen and public officials want to cash in on this. In typical neoliberal fashion, Mexico's national maritime port system is largely privatized and union presence is weak at best. The private companies who own and run the ports stand to make huge profits by handling the US-bound cargo. Two US companies, Kansas City Southern and Union Pacific, own the Mexican rail lines in question. There is much discussion about the anticipated role of private companies receiving the concessions to operate highways linking the ports to Texas. Once again public-private initiatives are set up to ensure that companies profit handsomely, while few to no strategies are in place to ensure that employees share in the windfall. Local governments on the Texas side of the Rio Grande, and state governments on the Mexican side, would benefit from the tolls generated by cargo rolling over international bridges, so they have remained deafeningly silent on the pitfalls of the corridors.

For their part, Mexican officials tout plans for improving trade corridors linking the Pacific Coast to Texas. One example I saw in June



is an intermodal transshipment facility under construction on the outskirts of Gómez Palacio, the second largest city of the state of Durango. The municipal government is changing its "Plan Director" (master plan) to accommodate the facility, bearing in mind the increase in trucking between Mexico's maritime ports and Texas.

There are three major problems associated with the economic rationale for the TTC and corresponding plans in Mexico. First, although Asia-US and Mexico-US trade are increasing, such dynamism is not sufficient to justify the exorbitant expense of the Trans-Texas Corridor. Second, the people of Panama passed a referendum last fall to enable the widening of the Panama Canal. That project will take several years to complete, but that would serve to diminish the profitability of corridors linking Mexican ports with the proposed Kansas City Inland Superport and points beyond. To illustrate, containers from Southeast Asia could more easily reach the East Coast of the U.S. via the Panama Canal. Third, Leigh Boske of the University of Texas calculated that the tolls of the corridor would amount to more than fifty cents per mile for passenger vehicles, which would be burdensome to most potential users, thereby limiting its usefulness.

One of the most interesting aspects of the TTC project is that it is an exercise in strong central conservative governance that silences the voices of elected officials at the local level and their constituents throughout the State of Texas. Another fascinating outcome is that it provides further proof that capitalism cannot exist without the state providing infrastructure and footing the bill for dubious projects to keep the system afloat. Unfortunately, this particular project is far too costly a lesson in neoconservative policy and neoliberal economics for nature and for people to endure.

Michael Yoder is conducting research on transportation infrastructure related to US-Mexico trade and is presently residing in Laredo, Texas. He currently serves as Vice President of the Board of Directors of the Webb County Rural Rail Transportation District.

Health Care is a Right! Act Up!

Brent Nicholson Earle

I address you today not only as an activist but as someone who has been damaged by America's dysfunctional health care system. I am here to add my story as one more piece of testimony in the indictment against the unfair profiteering of the private health insurance industry.

I have been living with HIV for almost 20 years and have been receiving anti-retroviral therapy for over 15 years through New York State's AIDS Drug Assistance Program or ADAP. New York has probably the best-funded and most comprehensive ADAP in the country. Over the years, the side effects from all of my AIDS medications have made it almost impossible for me to maintain a full-time 9-5 job. I am extremely fortunate to have a health insurance policy with Empire Blue Cross/Blue Shield that is paid by an expanded program under New York State's ADAP. In 2007 the premium for that policy rose to over \$14000 a year - more than half my annual salary. Obviously without this state program I would be completely without health insurance.

At this point in my life, HIV is not my only health challenge. I have major disc degeneration in my upper and lower spine from an excessive amount of running. 20 years ago this month I finished a 9000 mile Run around America to raise funds and awareness about AIDS, followed by two more ultra-marathons for AIDS in 1990 and 1994. Since then I've undergone three surgeries on my spine and three surgeries on my feet, plus years of steroid injections into my spine, physical therapy and a hell of a lot of pain medications. I'm often asked whether the problems with my spine are HIV-related and my answer is always - only to the extent that if it hadn't been for AIDS, I never would have run all those damn miles around America!

One of the worst side effects of my pain meds is a condition known as "dry mouth." Not only is it unpleasant and annoying, it creates a very hospitable environment for tooth decay. Although my Empire Blue Cross/Blue Shield policy is pretty comprehensive, it does not include dental care. Over the years the only way I was able to pay my dentist was by putting the charges on a credit card. My dentist was willing to stretch out the payments but it was still \$350 going on the card every month, until I had amassed well over \$30,000 in credit card debt because of my teeth and was forced into medical bankruptcy. I was prepared to let all the teeth in my head fall out before I put myself in that kind of ruinous situation again and I went more than two years without any dental treatment after my bankruptcy filing - until once again ADAP came to the rescue. I'm thankful to say that I am now receiving dental care under another one of ADAP's expanded programs at the Callen-Lorde Community Health Center. I wasn't really surprised to read in the New York Times recently that dentists in America are making a killing while the dental health of the nation and its children is declining at an alarming rate.

For almost ten years I've managed to keep my HIV-related wasting at bay through injections of testosterone and steroids and differ-

ent drugs to stimulate my appetite. I was hovering at around 15 pounds underweight until my third spinal fusion a year ago this past June. It was my toughest operation yet, with four rods having to be inserted into my neck. Following the surgery my wasting became more aggressive and I lost an additional 18 pounds, which I could ill afford to lose.

Last fall my doctor wanted me to start taking a drug called Serostim, which is a form of human growth hormone and is being used as a "salvage therapy" for wasting. It has to be injected daily and costs about a thousand dollars a week. I'm sure you've already figured out that Empire denied me coverage for the drug. And although my wasting and weight loss was well documented, they continued to deny coverage through two more appeals over the past year. My last hope was in mounting a final appeal through the pharmaceutical company that produces the drug. I think what ultimately tipped the scale in this fourth appeal was a letter from my surgeon stating that test reports showed my cervical spine was stabilized but that I had significant muscular deterioration in my neck caused by the severity of my wasting. Obviously Empire realized that if they didn't pay now, they'd probably end up paying a lot more later when I became permanently disabled - so they finally approved coverage for Serostim - but only until the end of December, when I'll have to go through the entire approval process all over again.

I've been injecting myself for a little over a month now but I think it's too soon to tell whether it's going to arrest the wasting. Of course, I'm very grateful to be able to receive this drug, but I'm also really angry about the muscle tissue I lost over the more than nine months that Empire denied me coverage. I can't help but think of how much further ahead I'd be in this battle for my health and my life if Empire had approved coverage for the drug when my doctor first prescribed it over a year ago.

And yet in spite of all with which I'm challenged, I am one of the lucky ones. Think of the millions of American children and adults without any health insurance whatsoever, whose only option is President Bush's answer to health care - overcrowded hospital emergency rooms! Think of those poor kids in the South who died from infections caused by lack of dental care! Think of every person in this country who has suffered and continues to suffer by the private health insurance industry putting cost before care. We've got to fight for single-payer national health coverage! We've got to fight for House of Representatives Bill 676 and we've got to keep our leaders' feet to the flame, especially the Presidential candidates', until we get it!

Health care is a right - health care is a right! Act up!

This speech was delivered at a demonstration for Single-Payer National Health Care held in front of the Aetna Insurance Company building in New York City in October 2007.

HOMELESSNESS IN CAPITALIST AMERICA

Todd Vachon

What's the Problem?

Homelessness refers to "the condition and societal category of people who lack fixed housing, usually because they cannot afford a regular, safe, and adequate shelter." (Wikipedia) According to The Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio, 2.5 to 3.5 million Americans experience homelessness each year.

In its annual report on homelessness, HUD reported that on any given night an estimated 754,000 persons will experience homelessness throughout the U.S., leaving approximately 300,000 more people homeless than the total number of shelter beds. At the same time the latest census report for the first quarter of 2007 estimates that 10% of rental apartments are vacant and 2.8% of privately owned houses are vacant. In other words, there is more than enough housing available for every person in this country.

What's the Cause?

Why is it that some people are unable to afford housing? The answer lies within the system itself. Capitalism puts profit before people, always!

Don't believe the corporate media hype, it's not just a few greedy bad apples, it is the nature of the beast. Larger than any individual player, capitalism is like a giant profit-seeking virus that lays waste to any and all that fall in its path, especially those most vulnerable—the people at the bottom of the economic spectrum. These are the very same people that experience or are at risk of experiencing homelessness at any given moment.

Why Blame Capitalism?

Isn't it the person's own fault for becoming homeless? Don't we all start on an even playing field of opportunity? Aren't they all just drug addicts and alcoholics anyway? If they wanted to work, they could get a job and afford a home, right? Wrong!

The Three Major Causes of Homelessness

Number One: The Lack of Affordable Housing

As defined by HUD, affordable housing costs less than 30% of annual income. A third of Americans spend more than 30% of their income on housing and 13% spend more than half. More than 1 million households are awaiting HUD assistance and only 27% of eligible families are actually receiving housing assistance. Recent news coverage has exposed the practice of predatory lending by mortgage companies that leave working class Americans with enormous payments they cannot afford. Why isn't there more affordable housing? Because there is far greater profit in building and selling brand new 3, 4, and \$500,000 luxury homes, which in turn, artificially inflate the value of everything around them, including rent. This price ballooning makes it even more difficult to find affordable housing, even with a full time job, which leads us to the second major reason for homelessness.

Number Two: The Lack of Living Wage Jobs

As capital is constantly moving from industry to industry in search of greater profit, competition constantly drives prices down ever closer to production cost. This process of accumulation forces down wages and encourages job elimination to ensure "reasonable" profit margins. With minimum wage at an abysmal \$5.15 an hour and part-time jobs replacing full-time employment, poverty and homelessness are "on the march." At the current minimum wage, a full-time worker brings in \$10,300 annually. The Federal Poverty level for an average family is \$16,800, which requires a full-time wage of \$8.29 an hour. The real value of minimum wage is 18% less than it was 25 years ago, while CEO's have seen a 300% increase in salaries over the same pe-



riod. (The SP-USA calls for a minimum wage of \$15 per hour, indexed to the cost of living).

Capital and workers are always at odds: just watch stock prices increase when companies lay off workers. How many of these now unemployed eventually end up on the street? The landlord is not going to let them slide, and most homeowners don't actually own their homes, the bank does. The recent changes in the bankruptcy laws, enacted immediately after Bush "won" the 2000 election (with enormous campaign contributions from MBNA), ensure that creditors and lenders get their money back first. And even worse yet, what if this laid-off person or a family member comes down with a health condition? That leads us to the third major cause of homelessness:

Number Three: The Lack of Health Care

A National study in 2004 showed that 13% of homeless individuals became homeless due to health problems. Approximately 4% of all Americans have serious mental illnesses, that number is 5-6 times greater for the homeless population. The current privatized health care system generates enormous profits for pharmaceutical and insurance companies. These same companies gouge prices and waste resources to make big-ticket designer prescriptions for privileged customers, but leave the poor lacking basic treatments for real health problems.

What's the Solution?

The Socialist Party USA (SP-USA) recognizes the right of all people to high-quality, low-cost housing and advocates universal healthcare. These demands include a call for an end to home foreclosures. In addition, the SP-USA believes that quality healthcare can best be dispensed through a fully socialized medical system which includes public ownership of hospitals and the pharmaceutical industry. For our complete platform visit www.sp-usa.org or contact your state or local party.

Conclusion

Homelessness is a major problem in the United States. It can be attributed to three main causes, all of which are derivatives of a capitalist economy. The quest for profit leaves many people out in the cold. In the richest country in the world—health care should not be a privilege. The minimum wage must be a living wage and housing must be a basic human right. There is a large systemic problem, namely our political/economic system, which fails to ensure justice and equality. And until these root causes of homelessness are addressed, the problem will continue to get worse.

Sources: *The Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio* (www.cohio.org), *U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development* (www.hud.gov), *National Coalition for the Homeless* (www.nationalhomeless.org), *Socialist Party, USA* (www.sp-usa.org), *Wikipedia* (www.wikipedia.com)

GHI/HIP Privatization Threatens the Healthcare of Millions of New Yorkers

Billy Wharton

Two Jaguars, a \$7,000 a month apartment in Miami and a \$600,000 increase in salary are not enough for Anthony Watson. As the top executive of the not-for-profit Health Insurance Plan of Greater New York (HIP) Watson embarked on a spending spree in the 1990s focused on both his personal enrichment and the expansion of the company into the for-profit healthcare arena. Today, nearly two decades later, Watson is attempting to merge HIP with Group Health Incorporated (GHI) and then convert the new entity, Emblem Health, into a privatized for-profit corporation. This process puts at risk the nearly 4 million customers of these two plans, threatens to bankrupt the budget of New York City and shifts 40 years of public funding into the hands of finance capitalists.

HIP's creation in the 1940s by reform-minded New York City Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia was an early recognition of the hazards of exposing healthcare to the marketplace. The plan was intended to provide affordable coverage and has since served to insure Medicare and Medicaid recipients of access to care. In return, both HIP and GHI were granted non-profit status and have received yearly tax deferments. As a result of this privileged access to state funding, the two plans now cover nearly 93% of the more than 500,000 municipal workers (including retirees) in New York City. Overall, the existence of non-profit alternatives has shielded many New Yorkers from the worst effects of the national healthcare crisis.

Watson's proposal for merger and privatization, now under consideration by the New York State Superintendent of Insurance, seeks to transcend the restraints placed upon HIP and GHI. Non-profit status ensures that no more than 15% of company funds are spent on administration (i.e. lower salaries for CEOs) and places limits on the ability to increase premiums. State supervision also prevents the providers from denying access to care or sharply dividing consumers into "low-risk" and "at-risk" categories with different benefits and premium payments. Finally, GHI and HIP are restricted from receiving finance from capital markets thereby theoretically insuring that providing quality affordable healthcare receives priority over profit accumulation. The approval of the merger is sure to reverse all of these policies at the expense of millions of policyholders.

The political response to this privatization scheme has produced some surprising bedfellows. Foremost among opponents of the plan is the administration of right-wing New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg. While normally a reliable friend of finance capital, even Bloomberg understands the hazards of giving a for-profit company access to the healthcare plan of 93% of municipal workers. Each 1% increase in premiums would result in a \$27.5 million dollar charge against the city budget. The mayor's office has filed a lawsuit arguing that the merger is illegal based on existing anti-trust laws. Simultaneously, several progressive healthcare rights organizations,

including Healthcare NOW and Physicians for a National Healthcare Program, the trade unions representing HIP and GHI workers and the Socialist Party USA have issued public statements condemning the merger and privatization. If the bedfellows seem odd those that have fallen out of bed are truly disturbing.

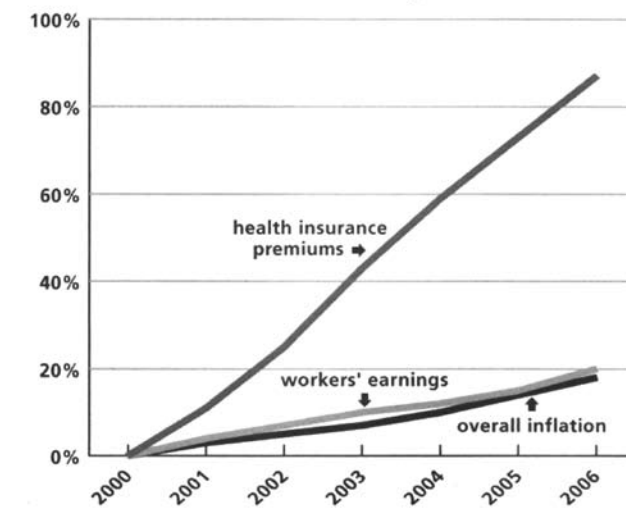
The trade union leaders of the municipal workers, particularly the Transit Workers Union Local 100 (TWU), the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) and District Council 37 have all spoken in favor of the GHI/HIP privatization. In addition ex-Democratic Party Governor Elliot Spitzer and lower party officials, despite the launching of their "putting patients first" initiative, gave indications that they will support the plan. Both Albany and

the trade union leadership are seeking to secure payouts from the estimated \$5 billion dollar one-time windfall created by the privatization. Albany intends to use the funds as a one-year patch on the state budget while the union bureaucracy will quickly consume the remaining funds at the expense of the long-term healthcare prospects of rank-and-file workers and retirees.

Though the odds seem stacked in favor of the privatization, the fast-track approval sought by GHI/HIP officials hit a roadblock on January 29th. State law requires that the Superintendent of Insurance hold public hearings on the for-profit conversion proposal. These are normally pedestrian affairs as "experts" on either side of the issue provide testimony before an empty room. Limited turnouts are ensured by scheduling the meetings during working hours on a weekday. This was, however, no normal hearing.

People arrived early to the meeting some turning up more than one hour before the start time. Oddly enough and perhaps reflecting the

Chart 1: Cumulative changes in health insurance premiums, overall inflation, and workers' earnings, 2000–06



Note: Data on premium increases reflect the cost of health insurance premiums for a family of four. Source: KFF/HRET, "Survey of Employer Sponsored Health Benefits, 2001–2006," <http://www.kff.org>; Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Customer Price Index, U.S. City Average of Annual Inflation (April to April), 2001–2006," <http://www.bls.gov>.

MAYDAY GREETINGS From The Socialist Party of CT

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state official's assumption that the proposal would pass without resistance, the meeting was held at the offices of HIP. As people spilled into the lobby, many of them retirees fearful of restrictions on care and premium increases which might eat into their fixed incomes, HIP officials announced that the hearing was closed since the room reached its capacity of 200. The assumption was that the nearly 100 people left in the hallway would passively disperse. Instead, people began to both complain loudly and settle in - humanizing the otherwise cold space by setting up knitting circles, spontaneous discussion groups and sharing food and drink.

Finally after nearly one hour of argument and the production of at least one pair of mittens, the hearing was opened to all. For the next five hours, squeezed in between the testimony of experts, working people - currently employed and retired - testified with sophistication and clarity about the hazards of for-profit healthcare. Many called for a single-payer healthcare system and used the movie SICKO as a reference point. One retired teacher actually played out a scene from the movie while testifying and punctuated his remarks by declaring that "we want the French system!"

The decision about the privatization to for-profit status now lies with the Superintendent of Insurance and ultimately the governor. The merger has gone forward on a provisional basis while the Mayor's lawsuit winds its way through the courts. Readers of this article can contribute to the anti-privatization campaign by sending letters and emails to the Superintendent's office (see the SP-USA website listed below), by preparing for the defense of non-profit healthcare providers in their areas and by advocating for universal healthcare.

The GHI/HIP privatization scheme offers clear testimony about the medical and economic need for universal healthcare. Simultaneously it provides the political lesson that only a mass popular movement willing to forgo short-term temptations and keep its "eyes on the prize" will be able to accomplish such a task. The failure to do so will open even more publicly controlled assets to the profit-driven logic of financial capital. Indeed, the desire to accumulate profits may, if left unimpeded, provide more unscrupulous individuals like Anthony Watson with the political power necessary to dispossess millions of working people.

For the source information for this article and information on the campaign please visit:

<http://socialistparty-usa.org/stophemerger/>

Billy Wharton is a member of the Socialist Party USA, active in the NYC local and the Editor of The Socialist.

As The Socialist went to print the Independent Budget Office of New York City estimated that the privatization will result in a charge of \$300 million against the city budget because of health care premium increases.

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Vermont v. George W.

Mary-Alice Herbert

Vermont is the only state George W. Bush has not visited during his presidency and it's unlikely that he'll make the trip. At town meetings in 2007, forty Vermont towns passed impeachment articles, which were forwarded to the VT Legislature. After passage in the state senate, they were sent to Democrat Peter Welch, in the US House of Representatives, who refused to bring them forward. (Welch serving his first term in the house has been threatened with opposition from impeachment supporters in 2008.)

Brattleboro, Vermont, which favored impeachment, has gone a step further and will consider the following resolution on town meeting day, March 4:

"Shall the Select-board instruct the Town Attorney to draft indictments against President Bush and Vice-President Cheney for crimes against our constitution, and publish said indictments for consideration by other authorities and shall it be the law of the town of Brattleboro that the Brattleboro Police, pursuant to the above mentioned indictments arrest and detain

George Bush and Richard Cheney, if they are not duly impeached, and prosecute or extradite them to other authorities that may reasonably contend to prosecute them?"

After the town select-board voted to add the article, which had been signed by the requisite 5% of Brattleboro's registered voters, to the town meeting agenda, a furor began. 7,000 e-mails reached them from all around the country, about evenly divided pro and con. They ranged from congratulations and encouragement to threats. One suggested that the terrorists would do the US a favor if they bombed Brattleboro off the face of the map.

Bush may also have heard about his father's experience. During his tenure as Vice-President George H. W. Bush made a campaign trip to the area and was booed so heartily on the Brattleboro Common that he made a hasty retreat. His aides had assured that was visiting a "rock-ribbed" Republican town.



Rick Perry's Corporate Kingdom

Steve Rossignol

"There are two things a person should never be forced to see---how the sausage makers make sausage and how a Texas politician makes his daily bread."

Money-laced politics in Texas have never been much of a surprise. From its days as a haven for outlaws and adventurers to the current good-ole-boy smoke-filled rooms at the state capitol in Austin, Texas has never seen a shortage of politicians greasing their palms with the public trust.

Governor Rick Perry certainly slides easily into that mold. Perry has been making headlines of late with his repeated endorsements of whomever the current Republican Presidential front-runner happens to be. His continued sucking-up to the national Republican leadership with the intended goal of a Vice-Presidential nod can best be described as sleazy.

A cursory examination of Rick Perry's financial dealings will show that his money matters are also less than honorable.

Of course, this is not to say that Perry is the only one. Recent news reports have documented dirty money tainting Supreme Court

Justice Nathan Hecht, Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst, and several smaller fish in the Texas corporate pond.

But Perry seems to adopt a certain casual, laissez-faire attitude with his corporate politics. He is not in the least abashed by his money dealings. Perry evokes that same spirit as the lobbyist who recently passed out \$100 dollar bills on the floor of the Texas Legislature during a vote. According to Governor Rick "if it feels good, do it."

One may certainly recall the election season after which the Governor received over \$1 million in contributions from the insurance companies. (Texas has few campaign spending laws which restrict contributions). Lo and behold, a new law requiring that all motorists have mandatory insurance appeared. And, no sooner was the law enacted than the insurance companies began jacking up their premiums. Rick was quick to announce in his "State of the State" speech last February that insurance premium rates were "down" in Texas, even while Texas is the most expensive state in the nation for homeowner insurance.

The year 2007 has provided a bumper crop of Rick Perry corporate gaffes. For instance, in early February, after Governor Rick had an-

nounced plans to sell off the Texas State Lottery to a private investment corporation (thus continuing the Perry legacy of trying to sell off every bit of the Texas public infrastructure), it was announced that Perry's son Griffin was hired by the very same company consulting with the Governor for the sale of the Lottery. And this happened about the same time that Perry's dictate for a mandatory vaccination against the HPV virus was made the very same day that vaccine-maker Merck deposited a \$5000 check in the Governor's re-election campaign account.

One could also make the case for the corporate sale of the Governor's Trans Texas Corridor plan, wherein Dannenbaum Engineering of Houston, a major player in the Perry Toll Road initiative, helped pay for the Governor's \$2 million inaugural festivities. Of course, H.B. Zachry and Cinta already get to keep the revenues from their new toll roads. How much did they contribute to the Governor?

And then there was the Governor's fast-track order to build 12 new coal fired power plants in the state to meet energy demands. The winner on this deal: Utility giant TXU, who incidentally also donated \$15,000 to the Governor's inaugural. Add to this Perry's appointment of fat cat campaign contributors to the University of Texas Board of Regents.

The good news is that the lottery sale did not go through, the HPV vaccination was nixed by the Legislature, and a court blocked the building of the new coal-fired plants. But Perry gets to keep the money.

The above situations are only the ones that have come to light in the news media. There is no telling what is still veiled by the smoke-filled rooms. For now, Rick Perry is ruler of this little corporate empire called Texas, and for him, it's good to be the king.

Or maybe just a very high-priced prostitute.

Steve Rossignol is a member of the Socialist Party of Texas.

STARTING NOW TO BUILD A SOCIALIST ELECTORAL FRONT

Peter Moody

In the December 07-January 08 edition of their newspaper, the Freedom Socialist Party ran a short editorial on the Socialist Party USA's attempt to create a united socialist electoral slate for the 2008 elections titled "United socialist electoral front: still a good idea." The title is partially a reference to a forum that the FSP held in summer 2004 on the same topic. According to reports from that event, there was a great interest in building some sort of socialist electoral front, but unfortunately nothing concrete manifested itself from the forum, possibly since no definite plans were made for future discussion. Nevertheless, the attendance and comments of both the FSP and SP-USA at the forum back in 2004 showed that the idea of a united socialist electoral front was something that both organizations thought was a good and necessary part of building a socialist movement in the US.

Back to 2007, the Socialist Party's Presidential search committee started on somewhat more solid ground than just holding a discussion forum; there was a clear goal of nominating presidential and vice-presidential candidates, and a generally articulated idea of how to do that. Interested parties and organizations could either run an SP candidate on their ballot line, or put up a candidate under the SP's name. There was also the more interesting and hopeful option of attempting to run a true united left slate (possibly under a different banner entirely?) if enough organizations expressed interest. However, only the FSP and the Peace and Freedom Party in California responded to the call that the SP put out, and out of those two, and only the PFP put forth any candidates for the presidential nomination. Fortunately one of those candidates (Stewart Alexander) was nominated for Vice-President, so the idea of presenting joint candidates has not completely faltered.

As well it shouldn't. While some socialist organizations that run candidates do so because they hold the sectarian notion that they are the only true vanguard party in the United States,

there are others who recognize the value in cooperation among socialist organizations and presenting a united front at the polls, despite the difficulties in doing so. Clearly it won't be easy, as it requires socialist organizations to allow non-members to influence their decision-making processes, but the attempts at outreach made by the FSP in 2004 and the SP-USA in 2007 definitely show that the interest is there.

The *Freedom Socialist* article ends with a call of "Maybe in 2010!" This is definitely a good call to make, but there are still steps that can be taken for the 2008 elections that could build cooperation for a more cohesive united front in two years. For example, ballot access is very difficult for small parties, and individuals and organizations can help collect signatures needed to get on the ballot in states that the Socialist Party might not be able to do alone. Also, there are a whole host of other elections besides the presidential election that socialists can run in to advocate radical social change, and organizations could put forth united slates of candidates for congressional and state legislature seats. While the presidential search didn't attract as much interest as it might have, what interest that was taken should be kept up and used to provide socialist alternatives wherever there are enough socialists to support decent campaigns.

Where the FSP says "Maybe in 2010!" the Socialist Party should respond with "Yes, but let's start building for that now. Join us to make it happen!"

Peter Moody is the male Co-Vice Chair of the Socialist Party USA, and a student at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania.

May Day

Social Democrats
Democratic Socialists
Revolutionary Socialists
Christian Socialists
all belong in the Socialist Party
as we move toward a world
where our economy is based
on human need, not profit,
where all of us realize there
is only one human family
and each us is a part of it

David McReynolds, New York City

A Digital Revolution on Your Desktop

Christian Fernandez; Translation by Erik Carlos Torén

In this day and age, Internet technology is available to a wide section of the population across class, ethnic and geographic boundaries. Near-unlimited access to information enables self education, personal development, and efficient, low-cost communication.

In micro seconds people and organizations are able to communicate what before would have cost a fortune through the telephone, or taken days with a simple letter. This technology is incredible and effective for diverse purposes, particularly for politicians, activists, and access to the latest news. In the 80s and 90s, this medium was partially free. The community that built the original network came from Fidonet and BBS where the hacker culture and an anarchist ethos allowed people to work in groups for the benefit of the community. The developers were inspired by creativity and motivated to establish freedom of communication without the influence of private corporations and government authorities.

In the beginning, each computer connected to the network was among thousands of others interlocked to create one great Internet. All were equal and all had the same access and opportunities for communication and content development. Unfortunately, capitalism, with its commercial stores and multi-national conglomerates, began to enter this virtual utopia. Thus, the laws of private property spread across the network and were imposed on the net as in real life. The property status of virtual materials did not exist until new copyright laws were fabricated by private corporations to enable ownership, control, and profit from what was intended to be public and free.

Software companies like Microsoft were born at the same time the Internet grew. Microsoft masterminded the technique of privatizing virtual data. People blindly accepted the logic thereby normalizing the idea of accumulating enormous private profits from something that was designed to be free. Other companies soon followed suit.

There are several problems with companies selling products that are not physically real. You don't know what they are selling because the base code is closed. In reality, they are not selling you anything, but merely renting it to you. You cannot make copies or give it as a gift because these are crimes punishable by jail time and huge fines. Even worse, they patent each part of this new "merchandise" as if it were real. Another curious aspect is that they impose limits on the use of these products. If you buy a car, you can sell it, paint it, break it, open it, and take it to whichever mechanic you want. With private software you cannot because, in reality, it is not yours. If something is broken, only they can fix it, not you or a programmer of your choice. This is because the software code is not accessible.

Companies soon asserted total control over computers and virtual networks. However this process was contested by people, particularly young rebellious programmers, who started attacking the privatized products with viruses, virtual protests, or by breaking security codes that limit the new emerging information society. Unfortunately, many people have been jailed because they did not conform to

the software occultism, excessive secrecy and the monopoly of ideas by a few mega-corporations.

By 1997, these corporations launched another effort to control all of the world's computers by legally and illegally spying on their customers. Corporations began selling and studying the information and behavior of customers. Although the customer's consent was mandatory, new programs began requiring that the user accept a clause before using it for the first time. People were left with no choice but to use closed software and trust these companies with their personal data.

The Revolution Has Arrived!

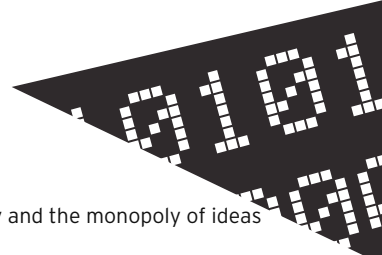
By 1992, many programmers became involved in a relatively new, free and open project (created in the 80s and legally protected from privatization attempts) called the GNU. A young programmer from Finland added a necessary piece to this project - the Linux nucleus. Once the two were successfully married into the GNU/Linux operating system, the number of users grew exponentially. The anarchistic social milieu of the network community was involved first but was soon followed by information professionals. Thanks to the evolution of this community, GNU/Linux and other free programs are used by millions of people.

Private software giants responded by launching marketing campaigns against free software. Additionally, several private companies made their software incompatible with free software. Even the U.S. government has taken action by joining an effort with Microsoft to dissuade foreign governments and organizations from utilizing free software.

The big fist of the empire has largely won this battle. However, countries such as Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, and Cuba are adopting free software architectures. Not everyone likes to feel spied upon by the U.S. Free software is hugely successful in these countries. People are not only using materials created by social collaboration, but are being encouraged to become active in this revolution by learning to take part in the development community, through documentation, support and programming.

Why Haven't I Heard About This?

There are many reasons. The principal one is that these communities do not have corporate publicity campaigns. They collaborate through the Internet and many do it for the love of the art. Another possibility is that in the U.S. in 1997 the free software revolution started by GNU/Linux began to subside as some wanted to associate community-developed software with the private business spectrum. They even decided to eliminate the term "free software." They argued that the term free also means without cost, and does not solely mean freedom. These people were not idealists and wanted to avoid any association with socialism. This new apolitical community follows the free software license but works with private systems (for example, MS Windows) rather than contributing to further free soft-





ware. Bit by bit they have abandoned the ideology of free software creators and focused on corporate utilizations of free software. The name they coined was Open Source.

Businesses saw the potential in this de-radicalized business friendly approach. They gleefully promote the Open Source name to separate themselves from any emancipationist ideals. However, outside the U.S. and English-speaking countries, this new Open Source community has not been very successful. Although it is now very rare to hear about free software in the U.S., in Spain and South America, the common name is still free software.

Why Should We Use Free Software?

Everyone can identify with free software in some manner. In fact, free software in the international community is used by different political parties' not just socialist parties. In general, leftist social organizations and activists were the first to join the virtual revolution because it is low-cost and ethically and morally enticing. This type of community has many parallels with socialist ideals. For example, when was the last time you have been part of a worker's community (in this case informational) that worked for the mutual benefit of all (worker's communes)?

Free software is a great example for humanity that it is possible to work without monetary reward while leaving a beneficial technological legacy. This is a community that confronts a brutal commercial system that jails people for simply copying a piece of material that does not exist in physical reality (software). The revolution has started in the Internet; it's our option to be a part of it. Rather than letting capitalism steal the virtual networks from humanity, let the virtual networks carry the revolution to our lives in the real world.

Christian Fernandez is a democratic socialist activist in the Digital Liberation for a Socialist World without Borders.

May Day Greetings from the Brattleboro, VT Area Local

Celebrating 25 years of International Labor Day observances on the Brattleboro Common

Information:

malherbe@surfglobal.net

May Day Greetings To All Our Comrades From the Re-Chartered Chicago Socialist Party

Local Executive Committee

Art Kazar – Chair

Janet Miller – Secretary

Charles Paidock – Treasurer

A New Doctrine

Jerry Williams

"The grandeur of death is lost in a world of mass murder."

– Terrence Des Pres, from *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps*

Cruise missiles should never miss the target, baby, but sometimes they do.
There's milk to be had if the cow can be secured.
When you bump your head on the corner of a kitchen cabinet, think of sand.
Love of country smells like barbequed paranoia when it's ripping you to shreds.
Apply bumper stickers and ribbons to all wounds.

Stand in the middle of 51st Street with no alternative and hate yourself until the cops come.
Attribute all defiance to a misinterpretation of Jefferson, Jesus and J. D. Salinger.
Now put your wrists together.
Now swallow.

Beloved Palestine

Hugo Hernandez

When the powerful strike at and wound the defenseless;
When they bring fear to those without hope;
When they bring poverty to those without a home;
Those brutalized masses no longer submit,
nor accept imposed daily suffering.

They dare to defy their tormentors, they stand up saying:
"It is much better to die on your feet, than to live a lifetime on your knees begging for the mercy of a homeland."
But it is not death being sought out.
Rather the life of a dignified existence.

A life without being debased and humiliated
by those who would call themselves soldiers of David.
A life without checkpoints, observation posts,
and the midnight banging on the door.
A life without losing those loved ones whose figure
slips out the threshold, only to forever disappear into the streets of eternity.

But take heart children of Palestine!
Children of refugees, of Rafah, of Jenin.
Take heart children of Palestine!
Children without mothers or fathers; without a single defender.
Your brothers, sisters, and comrades will forever take up your cause.
The cause of your homeland. Your homeland of Palestine!!

**Workers of the World!
Remember the Haymarket Martyrs.
Unite for a World Without Wars or Bosses.**

**Socialist Party of Massachusetts
May Day 2008**

Our Hearts are with you On May Day

Our thoughts and prayers
Are with you the rest of the year



Quaker Socialist
of the Americas
2440 North Park Avenue
Indianapolis, Indiana 46205

*In memory of my grandfather, Civil Judge
Richard Elsner, who was a founding
member of Wisconsin socialism by becoming
one of the first members of the Social
Democratic Party on August 7, 1897*

*Charlotte A. Bleistein
Greendale, Wisconsin*

FREE! HAVE A COMPUTER?

Edwin Laing's popular primer on democratic socialism, "You Don't Have to be a Saint to be a Socialist," is now available for print download in two separate arrangement formats on:

<http://daschiach.homelinux.net/SP/Saint.pdf> and
<http://daschiach.homelinux.net/SP/SaintPrint.pdf>

The updated longer version in audio form
(suitable for serial broadcast) (77 minutes):
<http://www.radio4all.net/proginfo.php?id=14518>

**Greetings
from Andrea
& Quinn
Brisben
on May Day**



From the



Socialist Party of Wisconsin

and the

Socialist Party of Milwaukee

**Remembering the Spirit of
Frank Zeidler**

**MAY DAY Greetings
and
Let's Grow the
Democratic Socialist Movement!!**



AN OPEN LETTER IN SUPPORT OF THIRD PARTY OR INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES AND MINOR PARTIES

America has for too long been dependent on a two-party system that has deprived many citizens of their equal rights and ability to control the quality of their lives. America's two major parties have been controlled by a plutocracy, with the wealthy governing the country through them. The Democrats and Republicans now operate as one party, both heavily dependent on corporate and special interest money, most of the time, from the same sources. Thus, the two-party congress legislates uniformly in favor of oil, automobile, defense contractors, real estate interests and wall street, and, in these latest instances, the Iraq War, to name a few, over citizens' needs. This also assures the incumbant politicians re-election and protection for their own self-interest.

America now finds itself in another quagmire of a war, with no end in sight. We see the middle class shrinking, the lower-class and poverty increasing, and the loss of decent salaries, health and pension benefits and worker rights and protections. Americans work harder, longer and both family partners must work in one or two jobs just to keep up. The American family is disintegrating, with communal and familial social problems growing with the children, learning deficits, divorces, use of alcohol and narcotics and disharmony reign in America.

Poverty still exists to an unacceptable degree in this advanced industrialized society, accessing health care and the quality of our health status has fallen, Americans are more in debt, and the quality of our lives is becoming more unacceptable and difficult.

Historically, minor political parties, sometimes called third parties, have had a major impact on America, despite their small numbers and less familiar images. Men and women of vision and passion have gone against the odds and advocated new or novel ideas, or even unpopular and scandalous propositions to the general population via smaller parties. And ultimately, these new proposals have been embraced by major parties and made law or have become a common practice in a new America. Prior to 1950, in the late 1700's, all through the 1800's and the first half of the 1900's, third parties had a greater influence, even winning congressional and senatorial seats, and in the case of Abraham Lincoln, winning the presidency. When they did not win, their ideas did, with such examples such as child labor laws, women's suffrage, social security, ballot elections, elimination of slavery, promotion of labor unions, better labor laws and practices, etc. Newspapers were less jaded and less dependent on the wealthy or corporate elite, and thus novel ideas had access to the general public.

STATEMENT ON THE 2008 AMERICAN AXLE STRIKE

Socialist Party of Michigan/Socialist Party USA Labor Commission

The Socialist Party USA stands behind the American Axle workers as they fight to protect the hard-won gains of the American working class. American Axle Corporation has attempted to reduce employee wages to \$14/hour from \$23/hour and cut retiree pension benefits. An almost 40% wage decrease is intolerable under any circumstances, but in a time of financial surplus -when American Axle is able to pay a hefty dividend to its shareholders- it is simply unconscionable. This episode is the most recent example of the overall offensive waged by corporations against manufacturing workers in America.

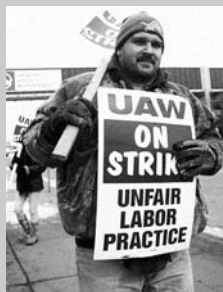
Though the corporate entity known as American Axle legally owns the means of producing these sought-after automobile components, it is the labor of the workers which creates the value. Without workers willing to labor there would be no production or dividends for Wall Street investors. The Socialist Party fully supports the American Axle workers' struggle to sustain their livelihoods. We see this conflict as another example of the manner in which CEO's, Boards of Directors and Shareholders live off the backs of workers.

Thus far negotiations have provided no avenues toward meeting the workers demands. Instead, management has attempted to use collective bargaining as a means to squash the aspirations of these workers. American Axle executives, like their partners at General Motors, have shown little concern for the plight of their employees, viewing them as workhorses rather than human beings. Strike and direct action is the only language these corporate fat-cats can potentially understand.

We urge striking American Axle workers to decisively reject any contract that includes cuts to wages, cuts or "cost-sharing" of health-care or a reduction of pensions. It is rank-and-file American Axle workers, not UAW officials who are making the financial sacrifices in this strike, and it is the rank-and-file workers through their strike

committees who ultimately have the power to determine where the strike will lead. As the current period demonstrates, making more concessions will not stop the overall concessionary trend - it will only re-enforce it. The only way to stop the cycle is for the American automotive industry to once again feel the collective strength of the working class.

We further call on all workers whether organized or not, to actively join our brothers and sisters at American Axle in their struggle. The attacks by American Axle on its workers are one part of an escalating crackdown on the living standards of working people by an obsolete system that puts private profit before human need. The particular struggle of the American Axle strikers affects every worker in every industry. A victory in this strike would be a victory for the whole working class. We must keep the momentum going!



The Socialist Party supports this strike and calls for a more comprehensive program centered on democratic social ownership through worker's control of the automotive and other industries. Social ownership will allow for the development of vehicles for the use and human needs of workers and consumers, rather than the private profit of a tiny few. Further, we stand for the right of all manufacturing and service workers to retain the full value of their labor time and all that they produce. Our program also calls for publicly funded universal healthcare for all, a 100% tax on corporations engaging in capital flight, and mandatory union-recognition based on card-check. We support militant, united labor action including hot cargo agreements and boycotts, factory committees, secondary and sympathy strikes, sit-down strikes, general strikes, and ultimately the democratic control of workplaces. We encourage all UAW workers who agree with these demands to join us today! More generally, we want to work with all those who are prepared to confront the corporate bullies that are oppressing us.

With the advent of television and corporate-run press and the media, third party and independent candidates and their minor parties have been treated with disdain and given little importance. They have been denied access to the public along the conventional ways, and the wealthy and special interest money have blocked and silenced their voices in our modern age.

Somehow we have to take back what is rightfully ours. We have to do it through exposure, grass-roots organizing or through the leadership of courageous members of these small parties who have to stand up for principles and for their god-given and constitutional rights.

*Brian P. Moore – Socialist Party
USA Presidential Candidate*



Socialist Party Presidential Candidate Brian Moore is threatened with arrest while collecting campaign signatures in Brattleboro, Vermont.

STATEMENT ON ISRAEL-PALESTINE

International Commission of the Socialist Party USA

1. The United States bears direct responsibility for the Israeli aggression in the Occupied Territories. It was U.S. military and economic aid that made Israel into one of the most powerful military states in the world. The United States should terminate the five billion dollars a year it gives the Israeli government. At the same time, the United States should end military aid to all of the Middle Eastern countries. It should also stop providing Israel and the Middle Eastern countries with military equipment and logistical assistance. The Socialist Party also supports legislation that would ban investment in the Israeli economy until Israel withdraws from the Occupied Territories. The United States should also end its "special relationship" with Israel.

2. The cycle of violence in the Middle East must come to an end. Israeli state terrorism directed at the Palestinian population, that is the arbitrary seizure of land, the destruction of homes, the jailing of thousands of Palestinians without charging them with a specific crime and the use of torture on those held, is a major cause of the bitterness and hatred that has enveloped the region. On the other hand, the exploding of bombs in Israeli restaurants is pointless, counter-productive and immoral. The Socialist Party believes that the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will not be reached through violence, and it condemns acts of violence directed at civilians no matter who perpetrates them. We support those in Israel and in the Occupied Territories who are working toward a peaceful and equitable solution to the current impasse.

3. The continuing Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is the fundamental cause of the continuing violence. U.S. pressure on Palestinian authorities to accept a partial withdrawal by Israeli forces must end. Negotiations stemming from the recent summit that seek to formulate a 'compromise' solution based on the continued Israeli occupation of sections of the West Bank are bound to fail. The Socialist Party calls upon the Israeli government to immediately

withdraw its military forces from all of the Occupied Territories, and to recognize the authority of a Palestinian state within these boundaries. The five billion dollars in U.S. aid currently going to Israel should be redirected to the education, health care and housing of the Palestinian people.

4. Once Israeli troops have withdrawn from the Occupied Territories, the Arab countries will fully recognize Israel and negotiations will begin on a fair process by which to return the millions of Palestinian refugees to the area. This will require the Israelis to accept some of the refugees into Israel, with others returning to the West Bank and Gaza. The negotiations will have to work out a means by which East Jerusalem can be returned to Arab control, while access to Jerusalem's religious sites is fully guaranteed to Jews, Christians and everyone else.

5. Once Israel has totally withdrawn from the Occupied Territories the two sides can begin to develop a framework that can make it possible for Jews and Arabs to live in peace within a setting that guarantees equal rights for everyone, whatever their religion or ethnicity.

6. The Socialist Party will work with popular forces throughout the Middle East who are working to build democratic secular societies. This holds for Israel, a Jewish theocratic state that persists in discriminating against its Arab citizens, and for the Arab countries, most of which are brutal dictatorships, and many of which are Islamic theocracies.

7. Our ultimate goal remains a Middle Eastern federation of democratic socialist societies. One component of such a federation would be a united, secular and democratic socialist Palestine.

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Who We Are

From the SPUSA Statement of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY strives to establish a radical democracy that places people's lives under their own control - a non-racist, classless, feminist socialist society where working people own and control the means of production and distribution through democratically-controlled public agencies; where full employment is realized for everyone who wants to work; where workers have the right to form unions freely, and to strike and engage in other forms of job actions; and where the production of society is used for the benefit of all humanity, not for the private profit of a few. We believe socialism and democracy are one and indivisible. The working class is in a key and central position to fight back against the ruling capitalist class and its power. The working class is the major force worldwide that can lead the way to a socialist future - to a real radical democracy from below. The Socialist Party fights for progressive changes compatible with a socialist future. We support militant working class struggles and electoral action, independent of the capitalist controlled two-party system, to present socialist alternatives. We strive for democratic revolutions - radical and fundamental changes in the structure and quality of economic, political, and personal relations - to abolish the power now exercised by the few who control great wealth and the government. The Socialist Party is a democratic, multi-tendency organization, with structure and practices visible and accessible to all members. Join us today.



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