



Magazine of the Socialist Party USA

The **Socialist**

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Screenwriters picket "The View"

INSIDE: BRIAN MOORE 2008! * DIGITAL REVOLUTION * NYPD "BROKEN WINDOWS" * MARCH ON BURGER KING * HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS IN U.S. * VT IMPEACHMENT MOVEMENT * SCREENWRITER STRIKE SUPPORT

THE SOCIALIST

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Stewart Alexander and Brian Moore - 2008 Presidential Campaign

The Socialist is always looking for interesting, insightful, well-written material. In particular, we are looking for work that highlights the struggles and triumphs of the working class. We will accept news articles and stories about organizing and protests, but we are also looking for short fiction, poetry, and music/arts/theater/film review. Articles should be 950 to 1250 words. Please mark all letters to the editor as such and limit letters to 250 words. Submit as email attachments in text, PDF, or .doc format to natsec@socialistparty-usa.org, or by mail to: *The Socialist*, 339 Lafayette St. Room 303, New York, NY 10012.

Brian Moore for President - '08 SP-USA Nominee

Introductory Statement

Brian has been a civic activist and a political volunteer all of his adult life. Brian was selected by the Socialist Party USA, at its national convention in St. Louis in October, 2007, as its official presidential nominee for 2008. Brian was also endorsed for the U.S. Senate in 2006 in Florida by consumer activist and former presidential candidate Ralph Nader. Brian also visited Cuba during the 2006 Senate campaign to study the country's health system and impact of the U.S. economic embargo.

Moore is a strong critic of capitalism and American corporate power. In turn, he is an advocate of socialism, including a national health plan, guaranteed annual income for all adult citizens; plus, worker ownership and local citizen control. In his political and civic activity, Brian has consistently demonstrated integrity and courage over long periods of time against the powers that be. He favors equality over rugged individualism, and communal responsibility over aggressive self-interest and greed.

Brian was a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer in Latin America for three years and worked eight years in South America in health programs for the poor. He is fluent in Spanish. His American wife and adopted 10-year old son both have Hispanic heritages. Brian has been a long-time antiwar activist; he protested the Vietnam War; and since 2002 lead a local Florida peace and justice coalition against the Iraq War, the Patriot Act and has called for President Bush's impeachment.

Socialist Moore has been a citizen activist for 25 years, working in inner cities to assist low-income populations, mostly in Washington, DC.

Moore attended California Catholic schools in Oakland and Sacramento, the Franciscan seminaries in the California Missions, St. Mary's College in Moraga and graduate school at Cal-State, LA. He earned an MPA from Arizona State University and worked 25 years for health maintenance organizations in California, Utah, New Mexico, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia and Washington, DC. He also spent five additional years for a non-governmental organization

deworming children in Latin America and Tanzania, Africa.

Brian has run or volunteered in congressional, gubernatorial and presidential campaigns throughout the country over a twenty year period, many times volunteering for minor party or independent candidates.

Brian played college and semi-pro baseball in California and was MVP his freshman year. He also has worked as a laborer for the Southern Pacific Railroad cleaning boxcars and as a carpenter's apprentice; and spent summers working for a metal fabrication company in Sacramento, California, earning his way through high school and college.

Brian ran for city council and mayor in Washington, DC (1980's & 1990's) and for Congress in 2002 and 2004 and for the U.S. Senate in 2006, all in the state of Florida. He mostly ran as an Independent candidate against the establishment and the status quo. He is a tenacious warrior for equal rights and justice, and is as antiwar as they come.

Brian married a widow, Peggy Espejo, in 2003. Peggy and Brian adopted her ten year old grandson, Juan Carlos, four years ago. Juan is in the fifth grade. He attends a local public school. The Moore's reside in Spring Hill (Hernando County), Florida, approximately fifty miles north of Tampa Bay/St. Petersburg/Clearwater and three miles east of the Gulf of Mexico.

Brian turned 64 years old on June 8, 2007, and is still physically active. He plays adult baseball many Sundays with college-age youth, and swims and bikes almost daily. He is six feet tall and weighs 235 pounds. He is in very good health.

Brian's Vice-Presidential running mate is Stewart Alexander, a member of the Peace and Freedom Party, who was selected by the Socialist Party USA, at its annual convention in October, 2007.

Brian Moore for President, 2008

Socialist Party USA Nominee

Moore-Alexander Ticket

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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. •

The Digital Revolution From a Radical Point of View

By Christian Fernandez

In this day and age, Internet technology is available to nearly all households from low income to middle and upper class, and to all ethnic groups and cultures across the world. The unlimited information access enables self education, personal development, and efficient, low-cost communication for everyone.

In only micro seconds families and organizations are able to communicate what before would have cost a fortune through 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 eighties and nineties, this medium was partially free. The community that built the original network came from Fidonet and BBS where the hacker culture, and anarchist and social atmosphere 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 that protect them.

In the beginning, each computer connected to the network was among a thousand 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 peeked through the window of this virtual utopia. Commercial stores and multi-national conglomerates began to appear. Thus, the laws of physical life as we all know, spread across the network and started to enforce themselves in the net as in real life, private property. But, it's important to note that property of virtual materials did not exist until new copyright laws were fabricated

by private corporations to enable ownership, control, and profiting from what was intended to be public and free.

At the same time the Internet grew, software companies like Microsoft were born. When no one was making a profit out of the public Internet, Microsoft masterminded how to privatize virtual data. With the advent of making enormous private profit at the cost of something that was free a couple years ago, people blindly accepted that this practice was logical and normal. Meanwhile other companies followed suit.

There are several problems with companies selling products that are not physically real. You don't know what they are selling you because



Image from www.binaryfreedom.com

the base code is preciously closed. Thus 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, to monopolize ideas. Another curious aspect is that they impose several limits in how to use 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, but with the private software you cannot because in reality it is not yours and has very strict rules. 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. Who loses? The people and the intelligence and creativity of the advancement of humanity as a whole.

Many youth that inspired the networks today, rebelled against such

exploitation in the nineties because there was no other option. These companies took control of the computers and of the virtual networks. The people started to attack the products of these virtual companies be it with viruses, virtual protests, or breaking the security codes that limit the new emerging information society. Unfortunately, many people have been jailed because they did not conform to the software occultism and excessive secrecy and monopoly of ideas by four or more giant corporations. By 1997, these corporations started controlling all the world's computers by legally and illegally spying on their customers. Corporations were selling and studying the information and behavior of customers, and the

customer's consent was mandatory because the programs require that the user accept a clause before using it for the first time. The people have no choice but to use this closed software and trust these companies with their personal data.

The Revolution Knocking at the Door

A notable hacker from MIT in Cambridge, MA, saw all of this coming and imagined the worst back in 1982. This is why he decided to create an operating system for computers that was free for everyone. People thought he was crazy, but he left his job at MIT and created the GNU project. He realized that if his software was free and community created, corporations could use the code that he wrote, close it, and manipulate it for their own purposes. Therefore with the help of lawyers, he founded the Free Software Foundation and a licensing system called copyleft or GPL (general public license). GPL protects the community software, programmer, and user from exploitation and privatization. If private software

and copyright laws did not exist, you would not need a GPL.

The Revolution Has Arrived!

By 1992, many programmers had become involved in the project, but the GNU operating system still needed a final piece for completion. A young programmer from Finland, had that piece, the Linux nucleus. Once the Linux nucleus was delivered to the GNU project, the name became GNU/Linux. The number of users started to grow exponentially. First to get involved, were the anarchist and social milieu of the network community, followed by information professionals. Thanks to the evolution of this community with thousands of programmers working around the world, GNU/Linux and other free programs are used by millions of people.

In fear of public software fame, private software giants launched marketing campaigns against free software to stop its growing success. Additionally, several private companies made their software incompatible with world standards so their products would not function with free software. Even the U.S. government has taken action against free software. Microsoft and U.S. diplomats have united to convince governments and organizations to not join the free software revolution.

Unfortunately in many capitalist countries, the big fist of the empire has won this battle. However, countries such as Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, and Cuba are adopting free software architectures because of the many advantages, and no one likes to feel spied upon by the U.S. The success of the free software in these countries is huge, people are using materials created by social collaboration, and also encouraging citizens to become active in this revolution by learning to take part in the development community, be it through documentation, support, or learning programming.

Why Haven't I Heard About This?

Well there are many reasons, the principal ones are that these com-

munities are not corporations and do not have 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 dismantle because some wanted to collaborate community-developed software with the private business spectrum. Some gentlemen that helped this happen decided to even change the name of free software. Their reasoning was that the term free also means without cost, and does not solely mean freedom. Additionally, these people were not idealists and did not want any relation with socialism. They thought that many people wanted to earn a living with this type of software ethic (and that the GPL permits this if



the rules of the community are followed). This new apolitical community follows the license but justifies working with the private system (for example, MS Windows) rather than revolutionizing it towards free software. Bit by bit they abandoned the ideology of free software creators and focused on the use of free software as needed by corporations. The name they gave it was Open Source.

Businesses saw the potential since these people were not radical, and used a much more business friendly approach. However, outside the U.S. and English-speaking countries, the term Open Source and this new community have not been very successful. This is because these countries are not afraid of social communities, and the U.S. has less

influence. For example in Spain and South America, the common name is still free software. In the U.S. unfortunately this Open Source community, without ideals, is significant. Businesses that now profit off of what used to be free software, gleefully use the Open Source name to immediately separate themselves from any social ideals. It is now very rare to hear about free software in the U.S.

Why Should We Use Free Software?

Everyone can identify with free software in some manner or another. 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 are the first to join the virtual revolution because it is low-cost, without cost in most cases, and is ethically and morally enticing. For a socialist, this type of community and the socialist ideal have common parallels in many aspects. For example, when was the last time you have been part of a worker's community (in this case informational) that socially worked for the mutual benefit of all (worker's communes)?

Free software is one of the great examples that humanity has today—that it is possible to work without needing monetary reward, at the same time leaving a technological legacy with high quality. A forum where all citizens have the same opportunity of self learning without cost. At last 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
Democratic Socialist
Activist in the Digital Liberation
Fora Socialist World without Borders
Translated by: Erik Carlos Torén •*

On "Broken" and Other Windows

By Billy Wharton

The 1997 sodomization of Haitian immigrant Abner Louima at the hands of the New York Police Department (NYPD) was reportedly preceded by the claim that it was now "Giuliani-time." Now, a decade after the attack, New Yorkers are still experiencing Giuliani-time, this time without Giuliani, as the 37,000 person NYPD continues to use the zero-tolerance "Broken Windows" policing introduced in 1994. For many in the city, Giuliani-time has meant little more than an attack on civil rights through the use of racial profiling.

Broken Windows is an analogy developed by sociologists James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling in the early 80s. Wilson and Kelling argued for a connection between minor manifestations of social disorder--graffiti, empty houses...--and larger patterns of serious criminal activity. To curtail such a culture of lawlessness they recommended greater community and police efforts to achieve social order and regulation. Disorder of any kind, even the aesthetically displeasing sight of a broken window, was, they argued, an invitation for more serious criminal activities.

This theory was quickly appropriated by then Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, and re-formulated into a strategy dubbed "Order Maintenance Policing" (OMP). OMP was introduced to the now expanded police force in Police Strategy Bulletin No. 5, which claimed that the NYPD would "reclaim the streets" by cracking down on low-level "quality of life offenses" such as graffiti, pan-handling, fare-beating, drunkenness, and public urination. This strategy was accompanied by the implementation of COMPSTAT, a computer program which uses statistical data about neighborhood crime to assign concentrations of police.

However, Giuliani saw fit to jettison Wilson and Kelling's emphasis on community-police relations. Instead, relying on COMPSTAT's statistically driven assignments, they swamped poor and working class communities of color with aggressive cops intent on waging a "full-scale

strategic attack on all crime and disorder." The favorite tactic of OMP is stopping and frisking any person suspected of even the most minor offense. This allowed cops to bypass reasonable cause restraints and use governmental power to enforce a racial mindset.

These policies amounted to little more than a policy of racial profiling as evidenced by the almost immediate high-profile cases of brutality. One early victim of the new OMP Antoine Reid a "squeegee-man" was shot by an off-duty cop for attempting to clean his windshield. Another came as African-immigrant Amadou Diallo was gunned-down in a hail of 41 bullets outside his Bronx apartment as he attempted to identify himself. Perhaps the greatest example



Protestors march in response to the 2000 NYPD shooting death of African immigrant Amadou Diallo

of the brutality of the hyper-intensive policing of everyday life came when 29 year-old Anthony Baez was choked to death by the NYPD during an argument precipitated by his football hitting a police cruiser. Though the rhetoric has been moderated, little has changed under the administration of Michael Bloomberg.

A more recent analysis (September 2007) of complaints against the police indicates a constant, racially motivated and increasingly violent pattern of behavior on the part of the NYPD. Persons of color are responsible for 80% of complaints filed with the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB). Overall, only 5% of these complaints were substantiated as actionable. While victims have

had some success in extracting funds through civil suits against the city, only a handful of police officers have received jail time for offenses.

Beyond the excesses of the implementation of OMP, recent sociological studies have challenged the utility of the broken windows theory. Sociologists Robert Sampson, Stephen Raudenbush and Felton Earls filmed neighborhoods throughout Chicago with an eye towards signs of social disorder. This information was compared with police crime statistics. Their conclusion was that little connection exists between the outward manifestations of disorder and actual criminal activity. Instead, they linked criminality to the unequal distribution of wealth (particularly the concentration of poverty) and community fragmentation (lack of community organizations or collective social life).

Even studies which attempt to defend elements of the Broken Windows theory indicate that the NYPD has moved dangerously beyond Wilson and Kelling's model. As Jeffery Fagan and Garth Davies suggest, OMP "... does seem to create a racial classification of 'suspicion.'" Further, they suspect that the resurgence of community organizations, and not aggressive police tactics, are responsible for the decline in the overall rate of crime in New York City.

Thirteen years of OMP policing are enough to recognize the everyday racialized brutality of the NYPD. If the sodomization of Abner Louima, the shooting of Antoine Reid, and the execution of Amadou Diallo are not sufficient evidence of its failure, then certainly the academic rejection of Broken Windows theory should be acknowledged.

Despite these clear failures, Americans face the very real possibility of having Giuliani-time extended to the national stage. Rudy Giuliani's presidential campaign promises to enlarge the military and intelligence service, and to create a program of Terror-stat and Border-stat should be understood as an extension of the racial terror he imposed upon New Yorkers. •

March on Burger King

By Darius Engel

A warm afternoon starts in Miami, the skies clear from clouds and the breeze flows. I arrived at Curtis Park to join the Coalition of Immokalee Workers march already underway.

Burger King is the most resent fast food conglomerate in a steady campaign by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers; which had already successfully made deals with McDonald's Corp and YUM Brands Inc to pay an extra penny per pound of tomatoes picked.

Few people are at the park due to my early arrival, but not long after a few trucks began to arrive. They contained much needed supplies and lunch for the marchers; who started their trek that morning. The march started in downtown Miami at the Miami headquarters of Goldman Sachs, one of the private equity firms that own a large stake in Burger King. Following the nine mile march, of nearly a thousand protesters, many wearing yellow T-shirts that read "Exploitation King: Burger King Exploits Farm workers." Yellow flags waved in the air; flags reading "Esperanza" (Hope), and signs reading "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. How much toil have these shoes seen I wondered?

Not long after my arrival, I could hear the faint sound of music. A sound that grew louder and louder as the march approached its half way point, then the music and chanting began to overtake the semi-quiet afternoon. The Music and voices of Social Change and Hopes for the lives of the farm workers whose unfair wages and working conditions have left them feeling isolated, and alone. However they are anything but alone. 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.

After a break for lunch and rest, 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. The crowd was enormous and good spirited despite the heat, 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. Rather than being oppressive,



Protestors march on Burger King
Photo by Darius Engel

the local authorities helped keep the marchers safe from traffic and other hazards of a march of this size.

We continued through Miami, chants of "What do we want? Justice!" rang out, along with music and other noise makers to bring attention to our cause. A great sense of comradeship was felt, the marchers were not merely disjointed groups loosely organized, and they were unified in a goal that will affect the lives of thousands of more who could not attend. Along the way, a number of school vans packed with returning students cheered the march on, and in doing so reinforced our resolve, and warmed our hearts.

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 Coalition 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.

As of yet, Burger King has refused to negotiate or accept the one cent increase. Steven Grover, Burger King Vice-President in charge of food safety and quality assurance, said the "door is open," to negotiation, but little if any real dialogue has been offered by Burger King. Instead, obstacles, dismissiveness, and even attacks on past successes are what they offer. 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-social and anti-union stand, FOX News reported the event as merely symbolic; even going so far as to outright change the number of attendees from nearly thousand (if not more) to "about 300," a figure that can be quashed with a

simple look at event photos. Included in the "unbiased" report was more than a lions share of quotes from Burger King damning and dismissing the march and its goals. As to the large shoe display, Burger king espouses that the reason those workers were not in attendance was because, "most field pickers are illegal immigrants," in one breath both slurring those that toil for the corporations profit, but also seemingly unmoved by the anguish of their own workers. 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 angles." Further, Grover said "this protest is a colossal waste of resources

and time...” much more likely his efforts to help the workers are the waste of time. He also claims that the issue “failed to provide any solutions for the real issues facing farm workers.” As if he or his corporation has done anything at all to aid farm workers and their struggle. The CIW said the extra penny would raise pickers’ wages (unchanged for over 30 years) to 77 cents for each 32-pound bucket of tomatoes they picked, effectively a 71 percent wage increase.” If that is not a step towards improving conditions, I do not know what Burger King considers helpful efforts.

The march culminated outside the Burger King headquarters. The large stone building towering over the massive crowd. Small faces are seen in the building windows watching the rally, and hopefully listening to their plight. Many speakers took their turn talking to the enthralled crowd. On the stage truck, religious groups, union members, independent activists, and even a Letter from President Jimmy Carter, 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.” •

A New Doctrine

By 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 barbecued 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. •

SP-USA Support for the Screenwriter Strike

Labor Commission of the SP-USA

When the irreverent early 20th century comedian W.C. Fields was once caught reading the bible he explained that he was “looking for some loopholes.” On Monday November 5th, 12,000 members of the Writers Guild of America (WGA) took a bold strike action to sew up some of the loopholes which have allowed the entertainment industry to make exorbitant profits from their labor. The Socialist Party USA (SP-USA) stands with the WGA and calls upon the Association of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) to concede to the WGA's demands for a just contract.

Unlike the often inebriated actor Fields, the AMPTP has found many profitable loopholes. While screenwriters are paid industry rates for work aired in traditional media venues such as television and movies, they receive only a small fraction of the profits generated in the “new” media outlets of DVD sales and internet based programming. Writers currently receive only 5 cents per unit for the sale of a DVD. For entertainment delivered via internet streaming video WGA members receive only 1.2% of gross revenue. There is also currently no language in the contract regarding the producer's right to insert product placements into WGA member created scripts.

Such practices amount to a patently unfair pattern of labor exploitation. Demands by the WGA seek minor modifications to the existing contract. Rates for the sale of DVD's would double to 10 cents per unit. Internet based programming would increase to 2.5% of gross revenue and writers would have greater control over the placement of products into their scripts. The AMPTP should return to the bargaining table immediately and agree to these quite reasonable demands.

The potential success of this strike stems on two factors – the internal resolve of the WGA and the solidarity efforts of fellow trade unionists and the community. Although the WGA's own rules regarding strikes do not allow the guild to directly discipline strike-breakers and non-union scabs its leadership has the ability to ban writers from membership. In addition, the WGA has amassed more than \$12 million dollars in strike funds. The SP-USA calls on the strike committees of the WGA to ensure that their leadership and contract bargaining team maintain the resolve to strike until victorious.

Other unions involved in the production of movies and TV should immedi-

ately recognize the need for solidarity with this action. Reports are that some Teamster locals such as Local 399 have instructed their member-truck drivers not to cross WGA lines.

The SP-USA encourages such acts and calls on the International Brotherhood of Teamsters to make this an official policy. Absent this, we encourage locals and individual workers to respect all picket lines.

This strike has many potential educational benefits. If successful it will demonstrate to other workers in “new” media forms that strategies traditionally associated with manual labor are still viable. In fact, the one constant in all forms of labor – mental and manual – is the desire by owners – be they managers, supervisors or producers – to maximize profits at the expense of workers. Unionization, collective action and worker solidarity are still the most effective means to reclaim some part of the profits generated by our work.

Perhaps most important beneficial effect of the WGA strike is the lesson delivered to the millions of television and movie viewers. As the strike continues, patterns of television and movie consumption are sure to be disrupted. This should serve to shatter the illusion that these mediums are exempt from the everyday reality of most working people. Behind the teflon smile of your local newscaster, the witty charm of John Stewart or the precision timing of the humor of David Letterman lays the real human labor of dozens of writers. In this world behind the screen a CEO like Robert Parsons of Time-Warner commands \$22 million in yearly compensation from revenue generated by the labor of a working writer such as Craig Hoetger who struggles to piece together a yearly salary of \$40,000. Now is the time to put aside the remote control for a few minutes and recognize the type of human solidarity necessary to end such gross inequality.

The SP-USA calls on its members to provide solidarity to all WGA picket lines. We also call on television viewers to boycott the so-called “reality-based” television shows which studios have used as a way to avoid the unionized writers of the WGA. Finally, we hope that workers engaged in all sectors of the “new economy” – particularly the service and white-collar professions – draw strength from the example of the WGA workers and make similar efforts to collectively reclaim the fruits of their labor. •

SP-USA Statement on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

International Commission of the SP-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. •

International Day of Action to Shut Down Guantánamo, Jan. 11, 2008

Witness Against Torture

Excerpted from www.witnesstorture.org/jan11_call

January 11th, 2008 marks six years of unjust imprisonment, isolation, beatings, interrogation and abuse for [Guantanamo prisoners]. We must say: no more. We must say: no longer. For our nation of laws, for our democracy, for our humanity and theirs, we demand small but essential steps to help return our nation to the best of our own traditions.

We invite you to come to Washington and participate, either as an individual or as part of an affinity group. If travel is not an option, join or plan an action in your own community. Around the country, groups are planning vigils and actions at courthouses, federal building and public squares. In other countries, the focus will be on U.S. Embassies and military facilities. For a full list of both National and International actions, visit www.witnesstorture.org •



Photo from www.witnesstorture.org

Housing Crisis Could Get Worse

By John Reimann

As a union, we have to recognize that there are a lot of things that affect the thinking and the lives of our members. I think for this reason we have to take into account things that happen outside the work place. One of these developments is the housing crisis. Already, one eighth of the work force at Curbside has gone through foreclosure.

Today's Wall St. Journal has a front page article on this issue. It is clear that this crisis will get worse before it gets better. The background to the crisis is the artificially inflated prices of homes in the US. Ironically, this price inflation actually provided a huge boost to the US and world economies, as it artificially inflated the wealth, and therefore the buying power, of tens of millions of homeowners in the US.

Up until now, according to this article, the majority of defaults on loans were from those who simply made a financial commitment that was beyond their means. In some cases, there was outright fraud involved on the part of the lender. This was just the froth on the top of the wave, though. It was the result of the inevitable speculative frenzy that occurs whenever there is a boom in one or another sector of the market. The line between speculation and outright fraud is never very clear, so the fraud, too, was an inevitable part of the process.

As buyers started to be unable to pay their notes, house prices stalled and then started to fall. This was a self-reinforcing process, as foreclosed homes started to hit the market. The lending agency that repossessed the home typically would sell it for 20-25% below comparable prices, which of course drags down the price of all other homes. This, then, leads to even more foreclosures, as those who just got into a home find that they have "negative equity" - what they owe on the home is more than what the home is worth. It is estimated that some 1.35 million

homes will enter foreclosure process this year and some 1.44 million next year. (In 2005 that number was just 705,000.) This projected number is equal to some 45% of existing home sales, which means that it will massively depress the market, leading to even more foreclosures.

What we have seen so far appears to be the wind squalls that warn that a larger storm is on its way. The reason for this is based on how many of the home loans are structured. Many of them are "adjustable rate mortgages" or ARMs. These mortgages may start out with a relatively low interest rate, perhaps 7%. Typically, after 2 or 3 years, the rate resets to 9% or so. This means a sudden increase in the payment of hundreds of dollars. According to today's WSJ article, "Now the real crest of the reset wave



is coming..." In 2008, interest rates are set to reset (increase) on some \$362 billion of subprime loans. This means only of loans that are considered to be a bit more risky. Of all loans, that reset figure is over \$500 billion.

It is interesting that what the capitalist politicians are pushing for is that the mortgage holders agree in some cases not to reset the loan. In effect, this really means lowering the price of the house, and lenders are already doing this. It is nothing more than recognizing market realities.

I think we should factor in the issue of oil prices here. I think those prices have already had an effect on the housing market as they take

away some disposable income from buyers. There is a little question as to whether those prices are artificially inflated a bit for the present. It seems that there is a certain amount of speculation here, with many oil companies holding huge stocks of oil, apparently waiting till prices rise still further. However, at its heart the rise in prices simply reflects supply and demand. This speculation, if that is what it is, would not be possible if there were not already fundamental pressures driving up oil prices. There does not appear to be any major new sources of fossil oil around. On the other hand, demand is increasing. Inevitably, in this situation, prices will rise in the capitalist market. The speculation is just a part of this process but not the heart of it. Any significant increase in oil prices will have a serious effect on the housing crisis.

I think that it's possible that the economic expansion of the last decades still might continue for a time. One possibility is that new technologies will be developed to deal with global warming and this could give a huge boost to the world economy. This is possible, but I don't see any such development on the immediate horizon. (I tend to be pretty skeptical of the single magic bullet solutions that are raised from time to time, such as helium 3. I'm no expert, but it just doesn't seem likely to me that some simple, single source of non-polluting energy will solve the whole problem.) It's possible that this could develop, though. It's also possible that other aspects of the US and world economies could be strengthened to drive things forward further still. But if this doesn't happen, and if the present process continues, then I think that there could be a very serious deterioration of the US and world economies as a whole in the coming year or two.

John Reimann is a member of the Industrial Workers of the World in the BayArea •

Homelessness in America: A Socialist Perspective

By Todd Vachon

What's the Problem?

Homelessness, as defined by Wikipedia, refers to “the condition and societal category of people who lack fixed housing, usually because they cannot afford a regular, safe, and adequate shelter.” 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 far 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 falls 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.

Lets Look at Three Major Causes of Homelessness

Number One: The Lack of Affordable

**2.5 to 3.5 million
Americans experience
homelessness each year...
only 27% of eligible
families are actually
receiving housing
assistance.**

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 wages down and jobs to be eliminated 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 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 period. (The SPUSA calls for a minimum wage of \$15 per hour, indexed to the cost of living).

Capital and workers are always at odds: Just watch the stock price rise when a company lays off a few thousand 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 profit 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?

(Excerpts from the 2006-2007 Socialist Party, USA Platform)

Housing:

The Socialist Party recognizes the right of all people to high quality, low cost housing. We call for a vast increase in Section 8 housing subsidies as one element of major public investment in the construction of low cost, scattered site, community-based, high quality housing. We call for rent control for all rental units, and the right of tenants to organize.

We support the formation of non-profit land trusts and of socially owned, tenant controlled housing cooperatives. We call for the organization of a housing rehabilitation program aimed at renovating and remodeling existing homes to bring them up to housing and safety codes, as part of a broader public works program. We call for an end to home foreclosures.

Health Care:

The Socialist Party stands for a socialized health care system based

community control of the pharmaceutical industry. We call for educational programs to help prevent drug addiction; for voluntary treatment programs for addicts and alcoholics; and for the availability of free, sterile needles for those still using IV drugs. We call for the reinstatement of funding to community mental health services so that low-cost or no-cost treatment is available on a voluntary basis, with clients’ rights respected.

(For the 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.cohhio.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) •



on universal coverage, salaried doctors and health care workers, and revenues derived from a steeply graduated income tax. We support a national health program with full standard and alternative medical, dental, vision, and mental health coverage for all, publicly funded through progressive taxation and controlled by democratically elected assemblies of health care workers and patients. The National Health Program should extend, and replace, Medicare and Medicaid. We call for a health care system that emphasizes preventive care. We call for public ownership and worker and

Impeachment Movement in Vermont

By Mary-Alice Herbert

Dan DeWalt, a select board member of the town of Newfane, VT, began reading up on impeachment and was ready to propose an article to be voted on at the 2006 town meeting, the first Tuesday of March. He had gathered the necessary signatures and the following petition became Article 29 on the agenda and attracted national attention to Newfane:

"Whereas George Bush has: 1. Mised the nation about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction; 2. Mised the nation about ties between Iraq and Al Quaeda; 3. Used these falsehoods to lead our nation into war unsupported by international law; 4. Not told the truth about American policy with respect to the use of torture; and 5. Has directed the government to engage in domestic spying, in direct contravention of U.S. law. Therefore, the voters of the town of Newfane ask that our representative to the House of Representatives file articles of impeachment to remove him from office."

Although much of the pre-town meeting publicity had been negative, Newfane endorsed the impeachment resolution resoundingly by a vote of 121-29. In addition, five other towns in Windham county voted to impeach George W Bush at their town meetings. In the following weeks the two largest towns in the area, Brattleboro and Rockingham, also joined in the call for impeachment.

DeWalt's daughter Julia was part of a VT delegation that went to Washington, DC on May 1, 2006 to deliver Newfane's articles of impeachment to Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the U. S. House, in accordance with Jefferson's Rules regarding impeachment. Then Congressman Bernie Sanders signed on to articles of impeachment brought by John Conyers, but nothing happened in the house judiciary committee.

In February of 2007 Cindy Sheehan, John Nichols, author of *The Genius of Impeachment*, and DeWalt toured the state, along with two Iraq veterans, to urge more Vermonters to vote for impeachment—not just for Bush, but for Cheney as well. They handed out hundreds of flyers with an impeachment resolution that could be presented in town meetings when the final item: "Any other business that should come before the town" comes up.

On the first Tuesday of March 2007, 39 towns voted to impeach Bush and Cheney.

On the first Tuesday of March 2007, 39 towns voted to impeach Bush and Cheney. The six that had voted the year before to impeach Bush, voted again to add Cheney to their articles of impeachment. Additionally, the town of St Johnsbury, in the generally conservative "Northeast Kingdom of VT" had a survey exit poll that overwhelmingly favored impeachment of both, bringing the total to 40. Republican Governor James Douglas, also Moderator of the Middlebury Town Meeting, had to preside over a vote in favor of impeachment in his town. VT Senate Pro Tem, Peter Shumlin, VT House Speaker Gaye Symington, and freshman US Congressman Peter Welch all saw impeachment resolutions pass in their towns.

The VT Legislature was slow to act on impeachment but pressure from Dan DeWalt and hundreds of

impeachment supporters brought action. A vote in the VT Senate passed and escaped being tabled by Republican Lt Governor Brian Dubie because Pro Tem Shumlin called the vote after Dubie flew to California to visit Stanford with his college bound son. Gaye Symington called the house vote for the following day, allowing no time for impeachment supporters to lobby their representatives, and it failed by a small margin.

Because it passed in one house of the VT Legislature, a legitimate request for impeachment was forwarded to Democrat Peter Welch, VT's only representative in congress, who has refused to bring it to the floor of the U. S. House of Representatives. Vermont's Progressive Party has given Welch warning that it will field a candidate, possibly DeWalt, to oppose him in 2008 unless he acts on impeachment.

When I talked with DeWalt recently, he told me about the regional impeachment movement. Maine activists collected 12,000 signatures; 20 towns in Massachusetts voted to impeach Bush and Cheney; and there are active groups in Connecticut and Rhode Island. At the time, DeWalt was helping plan a meeting for regional impeachment activists to be held on July 29, 2007 in Worcester, Mass.

I asked him why the Democrats were so hesitant to impeach Bush and Cheney. He said that it was difficult to understand, unless they are being complicit in allowing the president powers forbidden by the constitution.

Mary-Alice (Mal) Herbert lives and writes from Putney, Vermont, one of the towns which voted to impeach Bush and Cheney. She is chair of the Brattleboro Area Local of the Socialist Party-USA. •

Life in Prison

By 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 also 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.

Letter 1 – The Making of the First “Super Max”

Pablo Pina #D-29079

Housing Unit D-4

Pelican Bay State Prison

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 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 con-

centration of prisoners. 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 wasn'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 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. •

Why I'm a Democratic Socialist

A New Column

To Wave The Red Flag

by *Kieran Braddock*

Our modern world is changing at a rate that we have never before seen in human history. Infinite amounts of information can be transmitted to any place on the planet imaginable for any purpose; we are reaching our hands out further and further into the stars than ever before; our infrastructure can transport us farther and faster than we ever imagined possible; any type of product the human mind can comprehend or ever possibly desire is available for consumption.

But has this come at a cost? We have sold ourselves and our fellow human beings to get that which we desire with no thought to the consequences. Human beings turn on one another like wild animals tearing at a wounded animal because it gains them a few pennies. We sell that which we cannot regain to acquire things we do not need. Our culture is consumed with a baseless desire to accumulate without thinking of the people who constructed the objects of consumer desire.

No thought is given to laborers who toil in sweatshops for less than pocket change because it allows for a greater profit margin at the end of the fiscal quarter. No thought is given to the hazardous, finite, or volatile nature of acquiring the raw materials for products. The sum total of consideration placed on these purchases is monetary cost and the social benefits of owning the latest random trinket that graces the glossy covers of a magazine this week.

This pointless atmosphere of concern with only monetary cost leads to the objectification and exploitation of the working and lower classes as mere draft animals—necessary to complete a task, but ultimately

replaceable and lacking in value. This callous attitude aggravates the class struggle between the capitalists and those who are exploited. Resentment of the workers boils into contempt, which is heaped upon their backs by the capitalists who share the mentality that workers are little more than serfs or animals that exist only to serve their purposes.

I use the term capitalists to describe those who use the capitalist model (in which means of production are privately owned for profit and pricing of goods and services are determined through a free market), to fill their own pockets at the expense of their fellow human beings.

Expressing an opinion, that has not been spurted out of the nearest television or the latest opinion book, is the highest form of heresy in our culture. Self-expression is muted, or even punished, for fear of ridicule or disruption of the continuous process of the indoctrination and sublimation of free discussion. The powers that decry individual's attempts of self-expression also harbor fear that some people will see through their thin veil of artificial reality being taught in education centers and through mass media.

There is no justification, absolution, or validation for silent consent of the ideological powers that seek to hold, above all else, the power to influence people to exist as quiet and obedient consumers. These powers seek to turn the thoughts of the rational person into a frenzy of material consumption and pointless arguing and philosophizing over irrelevant and useless points of culture.

As it stands, the capitalists have the controlling stake of our society and our world. They exist at all levels in society and spread their poison by way of corporate media, entertainment, and news agencies. But there is still yet hope to snatch

victory from the jaws of defeat. We must rise together as one and show the capitalists that we will not be forced into lives of quiet consumption while we slave and sweat to the same industries that hold us prisoner. We will not stand by and watch as our culture, literature, art, drama, music, and other means of free expression are strapped to the plough of profit and whipped until bloody as a means to extract profit and silence them from their truest form.

We can and must rise from the ashes of the pyre where the capitalists have burned our integrity, honesty, loyalty, and honor in sacrifice to the god of profit. We must tell them we will not be bound by fashion, dictated by style, pushed by craze, and lured by profit. Throw your fist in the air and show the capitalists that their world is ending and the world where the people have control is beginning. This is the time to make our presence known, this is the time to reach out and let our rage be heard through the marbled halls paid for with the blood and sweat of the workers. We will not let capitalist rule stand.

Just as evil knows no rest, neither must we. Wherever a human being is being exploited; wherever the truth is being hidden and lies sold in its place; wherever human interest takes a backseat to profit; wherever there is intolerance; wherever there is inequality; wherever there is injustice—we must raise our arms and voices to the sky and denounce it with all our strength and will. We must not allow the capitalists to continue their crimes and propagate lies to the people any longer.

We must stand united and proud...
to wave the red flag. •

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