Sweatshops Still Flourish In U.S. Garment Industry

By B.G.

Despite labor unions, despite federal labor laws, despite the courts, sweatshops continue to flourish in America. When one such labor grogery is exposed, the company habitually closes up, goes bankrupt and reopens nearby under a new name. This process may be repeated many times. Big fashion houses that purchase goods from these sweatshops—goods that are made according to their specifications—deny knowledge of any illegal activities on the part of their suppliers. When one of their suppliers is accused of cheating its employees, these fashion houses simply drop the accused factories and move on to the next sweatshop.

A class-action suit filed in June against one of New York City's best known fashion houses, Donna Karan, has taken a new approach. Local 142, a union representing Donna Karan itself of running the sweatshops and cheating workers out of millions of dollars.

The lawsuit has been filed by the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund. It seeks to prevent the usual tactic of sweatshop disappearance and reappearance under a new name when a lawsuit is filed by holding the contractor, Donna Kanan, responsible for what its major subcontractors do.

A pattern of extortion is revealed, for instance, in Jen Chu Fashions, one of Donna Karan's several suppliers. Jen Chu forced its employees to work overtime, sometimes as long as 73 hours a week, and never paid them overtime wages. One worker said she regularly worked 11 hours a day Monday to Friday, 10 hours on Saturday and 8 hours on Sunday. Since she was paid piece-work, she often received less than the $5.15 an hour minimum wage. "I was too scared to miss a day because I was worried that if I did, I would lose my job," said the woman, Feng Jiang, a resident of Long Island.

Jen Chu workers made overtime pay claims in May, and the factory abruptly closed up shortly thereafter. It then reopened under a new name, still doing business with Donna Karan. Donna Kanan is represented by the union UNITE. A union spokesman expressed surprise and claimed no knowledge of wage and labor violations because no grievances had been filed by the workers.

We do not know enough about UNITE to say for certain that its members are not being paid. But the unions are not alone in their efforts to push wages and conditions beyond the legal minimum. The situation is desperate. The state of the national labor movement has undermined the real wages of "well paid" workers, and to that extent have nullified "high wages" and caused the purchasing power of all wages in the valley to plummet. Silicon Valley workers, in search of any more affordable housing, are moving into surrounding areas. Daily commutes of 30 to 80 miles and one to two hours each way from apartments and homes as far as Las Vegas and other "bedroom communities" in the San Joaquin Valley to their Silicon Valley jobs have become harder for workers to compete with. The Silicon Valley has grown dramatically. Silicon Valley and of workers needed to staff them has grown dramatically. Silicon Valley workers have secured the country and the world for workers with high-tech training. Thousands upon thousands of programmers, hardware and software engineers, and other workers with the training and skills coveted by the high-tech industry have been lured from India, Taiwan and elsewhere around the globe by promises of better salaries than they could expect at home and potentially lucrative stock options.

As this influx of "well paid" high-tech workers grew to overtax the local Chinese supply, landlords, real estate speculators and the building industry naturally took full advantage of the situation to cheat by jacking up rental, home purchasing and construction prices far above the real value of the housing commodity. Today, the rental vacancy rate in the valley is less than 3 percent, according to the Santa Cruz Sentinel, but less than 2 percent according to the San Jose Mercury News. The median price of a single-family home has risen above $577,000. Rent increases of 20, 30, even 50 percent are commonly reported in news stories.
The ‘Teacher Shortage’

By Bill Mahan

The capitalists manipulating the economy are in evidence in every sector as they exploit workers. No job is immune unless one is lucky enough to hold a skill that cannot be duplicated, and how many of those are there?

One area that is currently under pres- sure is the teaching profession. To control the labor supply the press and the politicians are drawing attention to the “national teacher shortage.”

The media and the Clinton adminis- tration are proclaiming that this is a crit- ical problem with dire consequences. Teachers, and on June 16 agreed bonuses are offered in hundreds of school districts, teacher retention is becoming increasingly difficult.

Temporary teacher credentials are be- coming the norm for desperate districts, and some districts are asking teachers to submit their own work schedules. This sounds too good to be true. It is.

There is no national teacher shortage. There is a regional shortage of teach- ers in specific subjects. That has been the case since the late 1960s when the enormous numbers of baby boomers were leaving high school and universities. The supply of elementary and high school teachers fi- nally leveled off. Since then no shortage has been reported.

A tour of school district Web sites, publications by personnel directors for districts and observations of local educa- tion organizations bear this out. If in- dustry is proclaiming that this is a crit- ical problem with dire consequences.

Teacher shortages can be bought for $21,000? A first-year teacher $35,000 when a first-year teacher could be hired for $21,000?

In some states, Massachusetts for ex- ample, the NEA is rethinking its push to force local districts to pay a veteran teacher, upon joining another district, for every year the teacher has taught in an- other state rather than the customary five to nine years of service. Local dis- tricts, in no need of recruiting teachers, simply adopt a silent policy of not hiring veteran teachers. Why pay a veteran teacher $35,000 when a first-year teacher can be bought for $21,000?

Mississippi Hanging Renewed Lynching Fears

By Earl Ofari Hutchinson

The discovery of Raynard Johnson hanging from a pecan tree outside his Kosciusko, Miss., home on June 16 alarmed blacks and whites. That 1991 poll found two out of three blacks neither “favored nor opposed” interracial marriage, and nearly one in 10 women, with two out of three opposed to a marriage between black men and white women, with two out of three opposed to a marriage between black men and white women.

Civil rights leaders quickly raised a clamor over his death. Jesse Jackson flatly said it had the earmarks of a lynching. The NAACP hired a private investigator, and the Southern Poverty Law Center noted that the Klan had long used white feared black men rum-oring white women to terrify blacks. The U.S. Justice Department launched an investigation.

Advertisements have vivid memories of the Lynchers’ murders of 14-year-old Em- met Till for allegedly whistling at a white woman in 1955 and Mack Charles Pettigrew, the alleged rapist of a white woman in 1959. No one was convicted for the killings.

There is no tangible evidence that Johnson was murdered. Indeed, many— blacks and whites—find the idea that he was lynched for dating a white girl ab- surd. They point to a sevenfold increase in black and white marriages since 1960. The number of interracial married cou- ples today is about 1.5 million. However, these account for only a tiny fraction of total marriages, and the overwhelming majority of interracial couples live in the South.

Nonetheless, as late as the mid-1950s interracial marriage was a felony offense in 30 states punishable by heavy fines and prison terms. Six years after the Supreme Court struck down school deseg- regation in 1954, 29 states still outlawed black-white marriages. Maryland and Nevada—the latter despite its legalized prostitution in several counties—went further by banning all sexual contact be- tween blacks and whites.

The civil rights movement and the politi- cal emergence of Asian and African nations made antimiscegenation laws a political lia- bility, and in 1967 the Supreme Court fi- nally dumped them. However, this did not solve the underlying problem of miscegenation. Though legally unenforceable, bans on in- terracial marriages stayed on the books in 12 states until 1979, and a 1991 poll by the National Opinion Research Center found that one in five white Americans still be- lieved that interracial marriage should be illegal. They feared that more mixed marriages between black men and white women, with two out of three opposed to a close relative marrying a black man.

One bizarre sidelight to all this is that it is known that blacks also resent interracial marriage. That 1991 poll found two out of three blacks neither “favored nor opposed” interracial marriage, and nearly one in 10 thought it should be illegal. As late as 1996, an informal survey in Ebony maga- zine found 40 percent of black women and 25 percent of black men saying they would not date a person of another race.

Do You Belong?

Do you know what the SLP stands for? Do you understand the class struggle and why the SLP calls for an end to capitalism and of its system of wage labor? Do you understand why the SLP does not advocate reforms of capitalism, and why it calls upon workers to organize Socialist Industri- al Unions? If you have been reading The People steadily for a year or more, if you have read the literature recommended for be- gunning Socialists, and if you agree with the SLP’s call for the political and econom- ic unity of the working class, you may qualify for membership in the SLP. And if you qualify to be a member you probably should be a member!

For information on what membership en- tails, and how to apply for it, write to: SLP, P.O. Box 218, Mountain View, CA 94042-0218. Ask for the SLP Membership Packet.

Use of Scabs Fought

(Weekly People, Aug. 23, 1975)

Refugees from South Vietnam have been brought in to scab on agricultural workers in Egg City, Calif., the world’s largest asparagus town.

The strike began last April when 350 workers, then under Teamster contract, walked off their jobs when one of their numbers didn’t show up for a night shift for pro-UFW (United Farm Workers) activi- ties. The Teamsters refused to represent the striking workers, who instead helped the growers recruit scabs. The strikers then contacted the UFW, which has been representing them since.

Recently the “Food for the Hungry” or- ganization, which has been placing South Vietnamese refugees, began sending them to Egg City where the growers enthusiastically welcomed them. The growers obviously had not found enough scabs to replace the strikers.

This drew sharp protests from the UFW, which said the Vietnamese were being used as “pawns” in the dispute and had been hired because they would be easily coerced into supporting the Teamsters in upcoming representation elections.

John Rogers, vice president of the egg farm, says the government was the one who brought the refugees to the farm and “We hired the Vietnamese because we needed people.” For their part the Team- sters claim they’re doing a “good deed” by helping the refugees find work—even though it means scabbing on employees once sup- posedly “protected” by Teamster contracts.
By Richard Rodriguez

According to The New York Times—this nation’s “newspaper of record”—as we are encouraged to call it—a discussion of U.S. race relations, even at this date, can only mean a discussion of U.S. race relations, even at this nation’s “newspaper of record,” as well. But the Times is famous for.

The brown future is also our past.

Then, on July 4, The New York Times proclaimed that California will soon become the first “big state in the nation in which non-Hispanic whites will no longer be the majority.” To tell its readers what that might mean, the Times quoted the opinion of three white guys and one nervous gray. Gov. Gray Davis was steadfast and refused to panic. After all, “leadership requires one to look on the bright side....”

These two brown sightings from London and California quickly dissipated. And the Times turned again to serious concerns.

In an article after article, whites were portrayed as at the very center of contemporary American life. Persons of liberal disposition and political. Rather like the readers of the Times.

So with every article, white readers were reassured that they remained at the center of our national life—which is exactly where they expect to be.

Accordingly, nothing was said in the Times about Korean/Mexican relations in L.A. or how (East Asian) Indians are fuming in high-tech North Dallas, or Haitian/American/African-American relations in Tampa. Any drama where whites are absent can be of no interest to New Yorkers.

Hillary Clinton, who surely reads The New York Times, spoke of a vast right-wing conspiracy in America. The vast liberal conspiracy in America, by contrast, is a benign and relatively harmless business. Each spring, liberal and right-wing sorts of ideas are given the brotherhood awards and statuettes.

Surely the Times is in line for some distinction for such breathtaking fatuousness.

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The New York Times—this nation’s “newspaper of record”—as well. But the Times is famous for.
"The surest way to enforce a factory order is to appoint a factory inspector. Before his appointment only the employer profits by the wrong. After his appointment the worker finds himself under his account, and the factory inspector will see to it that factory wrongs are not absolutely stopped. It is by no means expected that the worker's occupation would be gone. That is the long and short of 'labour legislation' aproach factoring—anything goes.

—Daily People, Aug. 8, 1909

The last time Phillips Petroleum's Plant 5 in Pasadera, Tex., blew up it destroyed more than half of the 800-acre facility. It threw metal and concrete debris as far as 12 miles away. Its 12,000-gallon storage tank with volatile chemicals inside spontaneously combusted.

However, neither explosion was caused by human error. They were ignited by a nearby spark or flame. This year, an inadequately cleaned 12,000-gallon storage tank with volatile chemicals inside spontaneously combusted.

It is not rocket science. "We don't have to know how to do it," says the company. "We don't have to know how to do things. Why accidents keep happening is because we don't do the things that we know how to do."

The plain fact of the matter is that reformers don't want to stop the exploitation when there are big profits to be made. They invest in a lot of relatively cheap insurance and as little maintenance as possible.

Production under the terms and conditions dictated by capitalism cannot be safe at any cost. This case again shows that capitalism is no mere allegation, but a fact well established by both history and the damage of all accidents.

Most workers know that, if they were in charge, workplaces could be made safe. For they know they are pressed to take shortcuts, ignore supposed safety procedures, neglect repairs, put off maintenance and so on.

Many workers know that agencies like OSHA are worthless because they are in league with the capitalists. And many more know that their leaders are content to compromise and collaborate with the capitalists.

All too many workers, however, are resigned to accepting all of this. For all too few realize that things need not be this way. In their collective hands is the power to directly control and manage the industries and social services by the workers themselves.

Socialism is the collective ownership by all the people of the factories, mills, mines, railroad lines, land and all other instruments of production. Socialism means production to satisfy human needs, not, as under capitalism, for sale and profit. Socialism means direct and meaningful control of the industries and social services by the workers through a democratic government based on their nationwide economic organization.

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Abolish the Wages System!

Years ago I was a party member. I’ve lost touch. But reading your union pam- phlet on your Web site, it turned out there was a genuine worker’s movement, and a real socialist, wasn’t it? The De Leonist movement is nevertheless the least im- plausible of all socialist ideals.

David Vapur
Indiana, Ind.

Dear Mr. Vapur:
I do not believe that any comparison can be drawn between the policies and aims of the early British Labor Party and what you call the “De Leonist plan,” by which I understand you mean the Socialist Industrial Union program. The BLP dates from the 1890s, as does the SLP, but the BPU pro- gram was an abortive failure. The Socialist Industrial Union did not even approach the BLP in size; the De Leonist program was an entirely different one. To say that both movements were deluded is generous.

The socialist revolution demands, among other things, the public ownership of all the means of transportation. But, in itself, the question of ownership affects only ex- ternal forms: The post office is the common property of the people, and yet the real workers in that department are mere wage slaves. In the mouth of the Socialist, the state is superior, is a tool of the machinery of state, to exploit the working class as long the capitalist class, i.e., that it is their right to exploit the working class as long the capitalist class, i.e., that it is their right to exploit the working class as long as they have the means of doing so. This is the definition of the socialist revolution.

The standpoint from which they proceed is that of middle-class interests as against the interests of the upper capitalist class. The socialist revolution is not a class revolution in the American sense; it is a class revolution in the European sense. The socialist revolution demands, among other things, the public ownership of all the means of transportation. But, in itself, the question of ownership affects only ex- ternal forms: The post office is the common property of the people, and yet the

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We need to flip that equation. How can anyone say that they are on the capitalist merry-go-round, going nowhere? Capitalism has failed them. The working-class struggle for betterment must be a collective effort to bypass a binding article. 

...Sweatshops Still Flourish

Outdoor sculpture garden, which was surrounded by WW-II style barricades to dim the voices of the striking workers who represent the true museum. 

Wants His Own

I would like to inquire about taking out a paid advertisement in your newspaper. A friend of mine has sent it to me and I have read some of his copy online. I am interested in inquiring about the particular situation of the American worker. We are not told often enough of our country's many ordinary working people in the U.S. Everyone seems to think it is some kind of paradise. This we get from the media. 

Barney Richards
National Secretary
Peace Council of Aostastra
Wellington, N.Z.

Radio Talking Book Network

I received a notice today that our complimentary subscription to *The People* is expiring. Can we please keep it going? The Minnesota Radio Talking Book Network is a nonprofit radio reading service for people who can't read the printed page. We serve over 8,000 people in our own state via closed circuit radio and provide programming supplements for dozens of other public radio reading services across the country via satellite, serving communities from Honolulu and Los Angeles to Washington, D.C. We use The People for our program Monday Commentary, a program that covers a variety of political bases; we consider it an important publication for our purposes. Could you please keep our complimentary subscription going? I hope you will be able to continue helping us provide this alternate reading method for the blind and visually handicapped communities.

Mark Vidas
Acting Program Coordinator
Radio Talking Book Network
St. Paul, Minn.

Looking for a Model

I am really interested in getting *The People* page not after your last article "What is Socialism"? I live in Jakarta, Indonesia, and work for a U.S. mining business. I need to know more about the concepts and activities of SLP since we, the Indonesians, are just waking up after a long sleep under the Suharto era. We are looking for suitable model for labor unions. 

Anang SK
Jakarta, Indonesia

...Museum of Exploitation

It is not clear, either, if UNITE's leaders of reluctance to represent the workers strongly. Leaders of the Chinese Staff and Workers Association, an advocacy group which is loud in its denunciation of strikes and understood the logic the president is the country. It is not clear if UNITE's agreements with these sweatshops enable it to follow them from place to place as they drop the skin of the sheep to bypass a binding article. 

We need to flip that equation. How can anyone say that they are on the capitalist merry-go-round, going nowhere? Capitalism has failed them. The working-class struggle for betterment must be a collective effort to bypass a binding article. 

...Wages System!

You can help provide for the long-term financial security of *The People* by including a properly worded provision in your will or by making some other financial arrangement through your bank. Write to the Socialist Labor Party, publisher of *The People*, for a free copy of the booklet, *Steps You Can Take*. Use this coupon.

Socialist Labor Party
P.O. Box 218
Mountain View, CA 94042-0218

Send a free copy of *Steps You Can Take* to:

NAME ________________________________
ADDRESS ______________ CITY ___________ STATE ____ ZIP ________

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Of Wage Slavery, Workers Need Socialist Education.

To help support *The People*, please enclose your contribution of $ ___________ and I want to help support *The People*. Please send me your complimentary subscription.

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8 THE PEOPLE AUGUST 2000
...Out of House and Home

...De Leon Editorial

(Continued from page 4)

putting many up on the rack.

of the past century. An-

many cases, the rape victim

lentless hunt for white female

Nathan Karp Memorial Fund

Total: $25,700

Anonymous $25,000; $100
each from William Lyon, Mary Karp, Harvey K. Fuller, Albert Gold-
berg, Clifton O. Field; $67; $50
each Russell Lane, Bill Bigelow,
Bessie Gahow; Nicholas York

...Hanging

lentless hunt for white female

...Field Reports

(Continued from page 3)

month. Comrade Villareal is also

distributing his copies with good

...Get Subs!

...Closing the Gap

(Continued from page 1)

are being driven out of the county

which represents county workers,

International Union Local 415,

In the meantime, workers in the

the "traditional economy" have

re-established in the border.

An Associated Press article pub-

lished in the Sentinel on July 9

points out that California’s per
capita income has dropped rela-
tive to the rest of the country since

1981 despite the wealth generat-

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The Socialist Labor Party has a twofold program for building a socialist society. What follows is a brief summary of its main points.

**POLITICAL ACTION**

To establish socialism, political unity under the banner of a mass movement of the working class is needed. The role of the party is to educate workers to the need to abolish capitalism, to agitate for the formation of class-conscious industrial unions, and to express the revolutionary mandate of the working class at the ballot box. The party must also aim to capture and dismantle the political state—the present territorial form of government—and thus pave the way for a new form of government, a participatory democracy based on industry.

**ECONOMIC ACTION**

To establish socialism, workers must unite as a class, by organizing new unions. These democratic, rank-and-file-controlled unions, built along the lines of industry, would not only fight day-to-day battles for better wages and conditions. Based on the principle that the working class is involved in a class struggle with the employing, capitalist class, a struggle that cannot be ended under the capitalist system, a Socialist Industrial Union movement would be motivated by a higher goal: replacing capitalist ownership of the industries and services with social ownership and democratic workers’ control.

Thus, while fighting day-to-day battles, these unions would move toward that goal, mobilizing workers’ real strength as the sole productive class in society by building the greatest possible unity and solidarity. When the majority of society is in favor of socialism, the Socialist Industrial Union would back up the decision made at the ballot box by taking, holding and operating the industries and services of the land in the social interest.

Socialist Industrial Unions would then become the governing bodies of socialist society. We would have a truly democratic government in which society’s useful producers would be in control of their own economic security and well-being.

**NOT A BLUEPRINT**

The chart below is not a blueprint. Rather, it is intended to illustrate graphically the principle upon which Socialist Industrial Unionism and the future socialist industrial democracy rest, using the auto industry as an example. A similar chart could be used for any socially necessary industry or service. A chart at the upper right depicts the flow of representation in socialist society.

The Socialist Industrial Union unites workers for the establishment of socialism. And it provides the governmental framework through which to organize and administer social production for the benefit of all the people. Council members at every level of government will be elected from industrial constituencies which coincide with the subdivisions of the integral industrial union of all the useful producers. This industrial self-government of the producers provides a viable means for society to operate the economy collectively and democratically, without social classes or any form of state oppression.

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**THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIALIST INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM**

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**NEW SOCIETY**

After the revolution, the administration of all production and distribution will be the function of the democratically elected Socialist Industrial Union government.

As industry is organized for production, so will be the administration of the new socialist society:

**REPRESENTATION**

You cast your ballot in your shop or office for:

- **LOCAL INDUSTRY COUNCIL**
- **PLANT COUNCIL**
- **ALL-INDUSTRY COUNCIL**
- **ALL-INDUSTRY CONGRESS**

Socialist Industrial Unionism is the only certain safeguard against bureaucratic usurpation. In socialist society, final authority will rest with the rank and file of useful producers.

The useful producers will elect administrators and representatives to all levels of government, and they will have the easily and immediately exercisable power to recall and remove any administrator or representative who, in their judgment, fails to serve their interests in office.

The Socialist Industrial Union, in firm possession of the industries and services of the land, will insure that all power remains in the only safe place for power to be—with the rank and file of society’s useful producers.

Today, in the procapitalist unions, union bureaucrats are almighty, and union members are virtual subjects. But in the Socialist Industrial Union each individual worker will have an effective voice as well as a vote in everything from the operation of the workplace to the administration of society.

This will be a social organization in which the people who do the work will have complete democratic control of their tools and products—thus production will at long last be for use and the benefit of all.