Globalization? Will Your Job Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed "American Theocracy: The Perils and party in U.S. history." Kevin Phillips, the his party has become "the first religious tie at home. Now even a prominent conser- fied war in Iraq and threatened civil liber- ties at home. Even now a prominent conser- vative Republican has voiced concerns that his party has become "the first religious interest in U.S. history." Kevin Phillips, the architect of the Republican Party's southern strategy in 1988, has written a book enti- tled "American Theocracy: The Perils and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Bor- rowed Money in the 21st Century." An article by him written for The Washington Post (April 9) explores some of the points made in that book.

The conditions that Phillips cites for an American theocracy are: "an elected leader who believes himself to speak for the Almighty, a ruling political party that rep- resents true believers, the certainty of many Republican voters that government should be guided by religion, and a White House...that adopts agendas seemingly ani- mated by biblical worldviews."

He claims domestic and foreign policies are "driven by religion's new prowess and its role in projecting military power in the Middle East." U.S. military posture, he notes, is organized around "protection of oil fields, pipelines and sea lanes." But in addition to concerns about oil and terrorism, "the White House is courting end-times theologians andelectronics for whom the Holy Lands are a battleground of Christian destiny."

He notes that the Bush family's interests over multiple generations have "been linked to a politics that conjoined finance, national security and oil." Now they have added "close ties to fundamentalist power brokers of many persuasions." The Bush Republicans have become "the vehicle of all three interests—a fusion of petroleum-defined national securi- ty, a crusading, simplistic Christianity, and a reckless credit-feeding financial complex."

These developments, he comments, have muted democratic voices and "become a threat to America's future. No leading world power has become a captive of the sort of biblical inerrancy that dismisses modern knowledge and science." He likens America today to failed empires of the past that also thought that God was on their side.

Mr. Phillips' conclusions that the current Republican policies are pushing the United States to a state of national decline may be correct, but his warning is to save a capital- ist system that is in a state of perpetual cri-

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Central Issue Ignored In Immigration Debate

Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in March and April to demonstrate their opposition to various proposals to reform the country’s immigration laws and to tighten control over the border with Mexico. The proposal that did most to spark the demonstrations of at least 500,000 people in Los Angeles in March and Dallas in April, and dozens of a lesser size in cities across the coun- try, would have branded undocumented immi- grant workers as criminals.

That measure, which Republicans pushed through the House of Representatives last December, included a number of features that aroused widespread opposition. It “would build hundreds of miles of fence along the U.S.-Mexi- co border, mandate that businesses verify the legality of all employees through a national database, fortify border patrols, and declare ille- gal immigrants and those who help them to be felons.” (The Washington Post, April 12)

A similar Republican measure failed to win approval in the Senate before Congress recessed on April 10 for its two-week “Spring District Work Period.” Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona offered a somewhat less draconian com-promise, in cooperation with Democratic Sen. Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, and the Bush administration has a proposal of its own. Regardless of the particulars of the measures proposed in Congress or by the administration, however, it would be wrong for workers to con- clude that they have any stake in the debate. Even if capitalists were to replace all of their employees with immigrant workers, for exam- ple, it would not follow that the immigrant would be the cause of declining wages, living standards and unemployment. Unemployment, and what- ever pressure immigrant labor places on wages, is a direct result of the competitive capitalist sys- tem itself. It is a byproduct of the system of wage labor, which forces workers to compete for their livelihoods on the basis of the conditions laid down by the capitalist system.

Though capitalists, their politicians, academ-

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Who Are the Lobbyists In Washington, D.C.?

By B.G.

The ongoing lobbying scandal of Jack Abramoff recalls the dubious rectitude of some other noteworthy personalities who have entered the lobbying business.

A few years ago, when Republican Sen. Bob Packwood of Oregon was much in the news because of his numerous sexual affairs, which he had studiously recorded in his diary, he had already become somewhat of an embarrassment to the members of the U.S. Senate, particularly its Republican members. The affairs in them- selves were not so much the embarrassment as was their revelation to the public at large, and the fact that Packwood had publicly lied about them and evidently had directed his secretary to change certain of his diary entries when the senators demanded that he surrender his diary to the inspection of the Senate.

Packwood escaped further embarrassment and probable censure by the Senate by abrupt- ly resigning his seat. Not to worry. He just as promptly rented an office in Washington, D.C., and set himself up as a lobbyist who had an enormous amount of government contacts. Some senators at least still held him in high regard, despite what they considered pri- vate peccadilloes. For instance, Democratic Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York announced that he would gladly see anyone Packwood sent to his office.

Another example of a politician with dubious ethics and morals was the case of the Louisiana Republican Rep. Robert Livingston, who was overwhelmingly chosen to replace the resigned Newt Gingrich as speaker of the House of Rep- resentatives. That change of leadership came just after the House of Representatives had completed its impeachment proceedings against former President Bill Clinton, much of which involved extensive inquiry into his extramarital affairs.

Lo and behold! Livingston was not speaker of the House much more than a day before women began coming out of the woodwork claiming to have had sexual affairs with him. Nor could Liv- ington adequately rebut their charges. Embar-
True Nature of Obscenity

By Michael James

On March 29, the Associated Press carried a story citing a recent poll that found obscene language is on the rise in our society. Seventy-four percent of the 1,001 adults surveyed in the AP poll said that they encounter obscene language or profanity in public "frequently or occasionally.

Yes, profanity is vulgar, rude and distasteful. It suggests a lack of refinement, lack of vocabulary, lack of control or lack of respect for others. It is an antisocial act, without sensitivity or thought regarding the rights or needs of others. It even suggests a breakdown of community. But there is a context to this verbal obscenity.

It is hard to imagine a greater obscenity than American capitalism. It is hard for the imagination to even construct a greater affront to genuine human community, to civility, to humanity, to decency than capitalism. For example, U.S. military spending is a gross obscenity. Health care, denied to millions of Americans is a huge obscenity. The percentage of our population in prison is a tragic obscenity. The war in Iraq is a gross obscenity. The percentage of our population in care denied to millions of Americans is a huge obscenity. For example, U.S. academics who call the word 'integrity' to describe themselves and their work are undigested by the highest bidders.

The point is that capitalism abounds with structural or systemic obscenity. And it is interfering and empowering to see how certain apologists for capitalism, certain mystifiers and bewildeers who serve the bourgeoisie, use words and language to conceal capitalist crimes or obscenities. Consider a recent Newsweek interview with the Rev. Billy Graham. He has long served capitalism by befriending U.S. war criminals and guiding them spiritually while they commit mass murder against peasants in places like Vietnam. Graham spoke to Newsweek about Hurricane Katrina and said that "God has allowed it, and there is a purpose that we won't know maybe for years to come."

He went on to say that he was of two minds about the human race: "I don't see much improvement in man's heart. The whole thing is in man's heart: his desire, his greed, his lust, his pride, his ego. All of these things meshed together bring about sometimes a world war and sometimes a small war, but wars are going on everywhere..."

Graham's words are obscene! The suffering, destruction and death caused by Hurricane Katrina, according to Graham, have nothing to do with America's abandonment of the poor, neglect of levees and other infrastructure, or draining of money away from human beings and into the bloody coffers of the Pentagon. God allowed Katrina and we are not meant to know why! And he cynically dismisses the human race as sinners, pretty much doomed by our inner shortcomings. He breathtakingly fails to see that capitalism is an antisocial and violent economic system that aggressively promotes and encourages the very traits he criticizes people for: greed, lust, pride and ego. Likewise, he blames us flawed humans, with our evil hearts, while they commit mass murder against peasants.

Wealth as a virtue and the criminal, capitalist class is off the proverbial hook in the eyes and mind of the Rev. Graham. He obscenely puts the blame squarely on God and the human race.

And so we are daily surrounded by capitalist obscenities such as poverty, war, injustice and inequality. Insult is added to injury when bourgeois spokespersons such as Billy Graham blame God and human beings. It is enough to make a person swear.

Earth Day vs. May Day

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Will Your Job Survive Globalization?

By Ken Boettcher

Will your job survive the next decade of U.S. capitalist development? The trend toward increased outsourcing or offshoring of jobs in the industries and services owned by the U.S. capitalist class. The prospects for U.S. workers under capitalism are grim indeed.

Millions—perhaps tens of millions—of U.S. jobs are projected to be lost. Some of the U.S. workers who lose them will never work again. Many will be employed in jobs that pay far less than the going rates in the United States. According to the Council on Foreign Relations’ website, “2 million manufacturing jobs...are estimated to have moved offshore since 1983.” There are at present only about 14 million U.S. manufacturing jobs remaining. Nearly all of those jobs—those not due to be killed off by consolidation, technological advances or other factors under capitalism—are at risk of being offshored.

Is the estimation of Alan S. Blinder, writing in the March-April issue of Foreign Affairs. Manufactory jobs, however, are the smallest part of the offshoring picture. Blinder—who has been described as “the most mainstream of economists”—went much further in his article, entitled “Offshoring: The Next Industrial Revolution?” He believes that virtually all service sector jobs involving “types of work that are easily deliverable through a wire (or via wireless connections) with little or no diminution in quality” could eventually be offshored.

Service-sector jobs already have been seriously affected by offshoring. Massachusetts-based Forrester Research estimated in 2003 that 400,000 service industry jobs had been offshore since 2000. Forrester also predicted that by 2015 roughly 3.3 million service jobs will have moved offshore, including 1.7 million “back office” jobs such as payroll processing and accounting, and 472,000 in the information technology industry, as the Council on Foreign Relations’ website observed.

Blinder says the number will be far higher—something in the 42-56 million range. Whether or not all those jobs are offshored, the very fact that they could be means that “the Americans performing them will be in competition with people who will do the same work for a whole lot less.”

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Clearly, more education is not a solution for workers under capitalism—especially engineering graduates. China and India but also Mexico, Malaysia, Brazil and others—turning out large numbers of well-educated young people fully qualified to work in an information-based economy. China will produce about 3.3 million college graduates this year, India 3.1 million (all of them English-speaking), the U.S. just 1.3 million. In engineering, China’s graduates will number over 600,000, India’s 350,000, America’s only about 70,000.”

Growing armies of skilled workers around the world are increasing the labor supply in many occupations, and the immutable law of markets is that when supply goes up, prices come down.

These competitive pressures are driving globalization and offshoring now, not just in the future. As Fortune noted, “American computer programmers who made $100,000 a year or more are getting fired because Indians and Chinese do the same work for one-fifth the cost or less.” Moreover, “low-cost countries—not just China and India but also Mexico, Malaysia, Brazil and others—are turning out large numbers of well-educated young people fully qualified to work in an information-based economy. China will produce about 3.3 million college graduates this year, India 3.1 million (all of them English-speaking), the U.S. just 1.3 million. In engineering, China’s graduates will number over 600,000, India’s 350,000, America’s only about 70,000.”

Clearly, more education is not a solution for U.S. workers. The defenders of capitalism have often championed that “more education” or “better education” would enable those kicked out of work to find equal or better work elsewhere in the economy. The figures belie the chant.

Fortune says that the answer to the effects of offshoring and globalization is “maintaining technical superiority—continually creating high-value new jobs that workers in the rest of the world can’t do yet.” However, with education in the rest of the world producing the lopsided number of graduates—especially engineering graduates—Fortune itself cited, the magazine admits “the picture isn’t encouraging for America.” “The loss of technology leadership could be historic,” says Fortune. “Without that advantage, there would be little to prevent living standards in the world’s interconnected economies from eroding. The rest of the world’s living standards would rise, and America’s would decline.”

In fact, that decline is already under way. In an April article entitled “Not Your Father’s Detroit,” the American Prospect observed that “A new survey of the nation’s 361 metropolitan areas, which accounts for 86.3 percent of the nation’s GDP, has found that the average wage of jobs lost in the recession of 2001–2005 was $43,629, while the average wage of jobs created in the same time period was $43,547.”

Thanks to many of the forces capitalism has brought to bear upon the living standards of U.S. workers, including globalization, this decline is already longstanding. Measured in terms of 1982 constant dollars, average real weekly earnings have been declining since 1972, with only limited blips upward, for a total decline of 17.15 percent, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics figures.

It is time for U.S. workers to reject the mantra of U.S. capitalists and their representatives in government, the colleges, the pulpits and the media that “good” jobs will miraculously materialize to replace the massive job losses due to globalization already under way in the United States. Likewise with respect to education, it is time to answer to workers’ declining living standards.

Capitalism has no solution to the crisis it is producing for U.S. workers. Workers are facing this catastrophe because the imperatives of competition and the profit motive in production central to capitalism have inexcusably led to it. The crisis has everything to do with private ownership of the means of life and production for profit—and nothing to do with what is possible once workers understand the problem and begin acting in their own class interests.

We still have the natural resources and labor power required to build a society of peace, freedom and plenty. Standing in the way is the ownership of and dictatorial control over the economy by a tiny monopoly class that has no right at all to the industries and services the working class of the country has built.

Workers have a choice. They can fight back against the capitalist system itself. Workers as a class must build a movement to abolish the existing system and build a new one. They must build a system under which they collectively control the industries and services, which must be placed under the ownership of all society, and planned and administered democratically to satisfy the needs and wants of all.

Such a socialist movement will not be easy to build. The capitalist class, its politicians, media, supporting labor bureaucrats and others will resist it.

But the seeming strength of those forces, and the seeming weakness of the workers, consists mainly in the ignorance workers now have of the real source of their problems. Once aware of the socialist answer to those problems, and of their potential strength as the creators of all social wealth, the workers can launch an irresistible movement for real social change.

The Socialist Labor Party’s program of Socialist Industrial Unionism explains what must be done—how the workers themselves can build a new society in which they will possess the power to determine their own future economic well-being. Learn more about it and then join us—help build a better world!
May Day 2006

May Day 2006 sees the globalization of capitalism pitting workers of all countries even more fiercely against each other. This is a global race to the bottom. It is a race in which workers of the advanced capitalist nations ultimately will find themselves competing with workers already struggling to survive with something even less. Capitalism is usually imagined in a globalized labor market, where human labor is bought and sold as easily and viciously as all other commodities on the world market. It is inevitable unless the working class takes back control of the workplace, and it is obvious to win concessions from workers in countries like the United States. In 1966–2001,” a period that saw vast U.S. productivity improvements, “only the top 10 percent of the income distribution enjoyed a growth rate of total real income...equal to or above the average rate of economize productivity growth. The bottom 40 percent saw gains fall behind or even left out of the productivity gains entirely.” Income inequality is growing everywhere. The fruits of workers’ labor are going where they have always gone—out of the productivity gains entirely.” Income inequality is growing every- 

The anti-immigration agitation only distracts the worker from the capitalist agencies who dangle the immigration question, and other questions raised by capitalism, and apt and meant to humbug the workers.

The Socialist Labor Party points out to the worker the absurdity of raising a hand-and-arm cry against the insignificant inroads of labor by immigration, as against the wholesale displacement of labor by the privately owned and controlled production.

The anti-immigration cry comes from the felon class of capitalism who suffer it as a sort of pretense of sympathy for the workers. No longer able to deny the suffering and misery of the people, they now try to put the responsibility for it anywhere, so long as it is away from themselves.

Socialism is the collective ownership by all the people of the factories, mills, mines, railroads, 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 control and management of the instruments of production through a democratic government based on their nationwide economic organization.

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Marx and Religion

(The following article originated at www.socialistworker.co.uk on March 4 and is reprinted here by permission of the publisher.)

By Anindya Bhattacharyya

What is Karl Marx’s best known quote on religion? Many people know that Marx described religion as “the opium of the people.” But far fewer know the whole quote: “Religious suffering is, on one hand, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.”

A careful examination of Marx’s writings on the subject reveals that while he certainly criticized religion, he was equally scathing about liberals who elevated criticism of religion over all other political concerns. As with so much of Marx’s work, to understand his analysis of religion we have to take a closer look at the political struggles he was involved in throughout his life.

Marx was born in Prussia, now part of Germany, in 1818. One defining political struggle during Marx’s early career revolved around religion. Jews in Prussia faced systematic discrimination and laws that discriminated against Jews. Bauer’s comments prefigure the arguments put by some today for downplaying, ignoring or colluding with Islamophobia.

First, Marx noted that the restricted “political emancipation” called for by Bauer—effectively, the demand for a secular state—was nowhere near enough. In fact, it wouldn’t even get rid of religious nationalism, which was supposedly Bauer’s main target. Marx noted that the U.S. Constitution was avowedly secular, yet the U.S. was “pre-eminently the country of religiosity,” teeming with all manner of sects and cults peddling their wares.

Social Struggle

More fundamentally, Marx argued that religious faith was primarily an effect, rather than a cause, of a much more general oppression. Focusing on the religious question served to obscure this wider picture, diverting energy away from real social struggle and into sterile theological debate.

Marx also noted that liberals viewed human society as rigidly divided between a public “political life” and a private “civil society.” Political reform should be restricted to the former, they claimed, leaving untouched economic arrangements such as private property and wage labor that fell into the category of “civil society.” Marx proceeded to tear down this artificial opposition. He explained how the supposedly atheistic demands of the Young Hegelians in fact served to uphold their own quasi-religious assumptions. Specifically, they believed in a vision of human society composed of atomized private individuals that owned property and were motivated by self-interest—a kind of Thatcherism before its time that bore no relation to how society actually worked.

The irony here, as Marx notes, is that Bauer accuses Jews precisely of “egoism,” of deliberately isolating themselves from society, of being obsessed by money making and colluding. Bauer is himself guilty of the sins he accuses Jews of and Judaism acts as a convenient scapegoat for his own political failings.

In contrast to the liberals, Marx argued for the general radicalization of “political emancipation” into a “human emancipation” that would revolutionize economic relations and the whole of society, as opposed to merely tinkering with the nature of the state. And this socialist political project would be based on a consistently materialist understanding of the world, not just an atheistic one.

While this argument superficially seems to treat all religions as “equally bad,” it was rapidly backed up by another that clarified what was really at stake. In a second essay attacking the Jewish emancipation campaign, Bauer argued that while all religions were equally bad, some were more equal than others.

Specifically, Bauer now claimed that Christianity was in fact superior to Judaism: “The Christian has to surmount only one stage, namely, that of his religion, in order to give up religion altogether. The Jew, on the other hand, has to break not only with his Jewish nature, but also with the development towards perfecting his religion, a development which has remained alien to him.”

Here the parallels with arguments over Islam today are striking. Liberal secularists often insist that they are against all religion, and have no specific issue with Islam. But the specific religion that most exercises them, the one they hold predominantly responsible for social evils from terrorism through to homophobia, is Christianity. It’s not Islam.

Marx, who was already rethinking his relationship with the Young Hegelians, responded forcibly to his former mentor Bauer in a polemical essay called “On the Jewish Question,” published in 1844. Rather than join in the attacks on “Jewish backwardness,” or issue simpering pleas for “tolerance,” he turned his guns on the failings of Bauer’s liberal politics.

Marx argued that religion was the main enemy, and therefore to support Jews demanding emancipation as Jews would be tantamount to capitulating to religion and the special pleading of a religious minority. Jews should first renounce their religion, he insisted, and only then would they deserve the support of liberal atheists.

“As long as he is a Jew, the restricted nature which makes him a Jew is bound to triumph over the human nature which should link him as a man with other men, and will separate him from non-Jews,” wrote Bauer in one essay on the question.

But not all liberals followed suit. In sharp contrast to Marx, Bauer came out against Jewish emancipation, mobilizing in his defense a seemingly left-wing argument. Many of Bauer’s comments prefigure the arguments put by some today for downplaying, ignoring or colluding with Islamophobia.

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Mark Twain, Daniel De

Mark Twain

Typically, the 15,000 remaining Spanish troops only surrendered to U.S. forces in August. The United States and Spanish imperialists reached an agreement whereby the Filipino independence fighters were not allowed to have anything to do with the surrender. The U.S. administration then refused to recognize the newly independent Filipino Republic. In October of the same year, it declared its plans to annex the Philippines. To justify this position, President McKinley apparently said that “God Almighty” had ordered him to transform the Philippines into a U.S. colony. No doubt, today’s Bush has similar delusions. However, it had not been a war of liberation, but one step in the building of the U.S. empire! In 1899, to back up this decision to annex the Philippines, U.S. troops moved against the Filipino fighters and went on to crush them in blood.

The U.S. was expanding its domination in the Caribbean and in the Pacific. The Filipinos were seen as a gate into the Chinese market. (In fact, later, in 1900 the United States used the Philippines as a base from which to send troops into China to help put down the Boxer Rebellion.)

Tragically, the Filipino fighters were no match for the military might of the U.S.A., but they fought bravely and gave the Americans a lot to think about. In 1899, 126,000 U.S. soldiers were sent to the Philippines. At least 250,000 Filipinos, in large part civilians, were killed. The number of U.S. soldiers killed was 4,200. As Gen. Arthur MacArthur confided to a reporter in 1899:

“When I first started in against these rebels, I believed that Aguinaldo’s troops represented only a faction. I did not realize that the whole population of Luzon—the native population that is—was opposed to us and our offers of aid and good government. But after having come this far, after having occupied several towns and cities in succession...I have been reluctantly compelled to believe that the Filipino masses are loyal to Aguinaldo and the government which he heads.”

The Filipino guerrilla struggle was supported by the overwhelming majority of the population. The U.S. military responded brutally. They resettled whole populations in concentration camps. They burnt down their villages, carried out mass hangings. They combined all this with systematic raping of women and girls, and used torture. One of the U.S. generals, Jacob Smith, ordered his soldiers to “kill and burn” and to “transform the island of Samar into a howling wilderness.” Another U.S. general, William Shafer, was so far as to say that it might even be necessary to kill half the Filipino population before “perfect justice” could be granted to the other half.

Although eventually the U.S. forces defeated the Filipino fighters, fighting continued for years, especially in the south. Then as now, the U.S. government declared the rebels as “bandits.”

However, not all Americans were blind to what was going on. Among these stands the famous Mark Twain, who made a name for himself as author of Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer. What is less known—or less highlighted at least—about Mark Twain is that he was one of the founders of the New England Anti-Imperialist League, which was set up in Boston. In George W. Bush’s America, he would no doubt be classed as an unpatriotic traitor. He was, in fact, a progressive and a defender of basic democratic rights.

Twain turned his attention—with his renowned razor-sharp wit—to what was happening in the Philippines and wrote a satirical letter “to the person sitting in darkness.” By this he meant the oppressed peoples of the colonial world. He turned his attentions to what the British were doing in the Boer War, and wrote the following:

“Mr. Chamberlain manufactures a war out of materials so inadequate and so fanciful that he makes the house laugh and he tries hard to persuade himself that it isn’t a private raid for cash but has a dim vague respectability about it somewhere, if he could only find the spot; and that by and by he can scour the flag clean again after he has finished dragging it through the mud and making it shine and flash in the vault of heaven once more.”

By Fred Weston

At the beginning of December 2004, the Pentagon’s Defense Science Board issued a statement that President Bush would not want to be widely publicized. The statement was frank and to the point. “Coalition forces are combining the battle for Iraqi ‘hearts and minds’ but ‘may also have achieved the opposite of what they intended.’

Occasionally, reality gets a look-in among U.S. Pentagon analysts! But Bush carries on regardless. He continues to spout lies and distortions. He may even be so limited in his understanding of what is going on that he believes his own propaganda. He is helped in this by the corporate media, especially the major U.S. TV channels who try to convince everyone that everything is going according to plan, the elections being a further step in transforming Iraq into a “normal” country.

In this world turned on its head, what is real becomes unreal and what is unreal becomes real! Experts in the Pentagon can see what is happening but the media present the exact opposite.

We are presented with a view that so-called Iraqi “insurgents” are the criminals, while the invaders, the imperialists, are the legitimate force of law. This is like a police officer arriving at the scene of a burglary and declaring the thief the rightful owner of the house and the owner the criminal.

This is not the first time in history that we have seen this kind of reporting. It is always the method of imperialism to present itself as “helping,” even “civilizing,” the people they are oppressing. They want to convince people at home, and their own troops on the ground, that what they are doing is right.

If we go back 100 years to the beginning of the 20th century, we had a similar scenario in the war of the U.S.A. against Spain which led to the Spanish being thrown out of the Philippines and the U.S. replacing them as imperialist masters. The U.S. government, of course, presented the whole thing as “liberating” the Philippines, as they say they are doing for the Iraqis today. In the same period, the British were “liberating” South Africa from the Boers. In reality, they were rounding up the Boers, women and children included, and herding them into concentration camps where they were systematically raping of women and girls, and used torture. One of the U.S. generals, Jacob Smith, ordered his soldiers to “kill and burn” and to “transform the island of Samar into a howling wilderness.” Another U.S. general, William Shafer, was so far as to say that it might even be necessary to kill half the Filipino population before “perfect justice” could be granted to the other half.

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America was then beginning to emerge as a world power. In the Spanish-American War of 1898, the Philippines colonies in the Caribbean and the Pacific. A national liberation struggle had been going on in the Philippines (as also in Cuba) against Spanish colonial rule. The U.S. government skillfully exploited this to its own ends.

The Americans destroyed the Spanish fleet at Manila, but to take the interior they used the Filipino rebels. They brought the exiled Filipino revolutionary leader Emilio Aguinaldo from Hong Kong to the Philippines. Aguinaldo had the advantage over the Americans in that his supporters were the Filipino people themselves, and thus he could muster an army on the ground. The bulk of U.S. troops were still to arrive.

As in all wars of independence, the local people fought bravely and overwhelmed the Spanish forces. In just under two months, they had practically defeated the Spanish on the main island of Luzon. What remained of the Spanish troops was bottled up in Manila. In June of the same year, the Filipino rebel leaders issued a Declaration of Independence based on the U.S. model.

The U.S. was expanding its domination in the Caribbean and in the Pacific. The Filipinos were seen as a gate into the Chinese market. (In fact, later, in 1900 the United States used the Philippines as a base from which to send troops into China to help put down the Boxer Rebellion.)

Tragically, the Filipino fighters were no match for the military might of the U.S.A., but they fought bravely and gave the Americans a lot to think about. In 1899, 126,000 U.S. soldiers were sent to the Philippines. At least 250,000 Filipinos, in large part civilians, were killed. The number of U.S. soldiers killed was 4,200. As Gen. Arthur MacArthur confided to a reporter in 1899:

“When I first started in against these rebels, I believed that Aguinaldo’s troops represented only a faction. I did not realize that the whole population of Luzon—the native population that is—was opposed to us and our offers of aid and good government. But after having come this far, after having occupied several towns and cities in succession...I have been reluctantly compelled to believe that the Filipino masses are loyal to Aguinaldo and the government which he heads.”

The Filipino guerrilla struggle was supported by the overwhelming majority of the population. The U.S. military responded brutally. They resettled whole populations in concentration camps. They burnt down their villages, carried out mass hangings. They combined all this with systematic raping of women and girls, and used torture. One of the U.S. generals, Jacob Smith, ordered his soldiers to “kill and burn” and to “transform the island of Samar into a howling wilderness.” Another U.S. general, William Shafer, was so far as to say that it might even be necessary to kill half the Filipino population before “perfect justice” could be granted to the other half.

Although eventually the U.S. forces defeated the Filipino fighters, fighting continued for years, especially in the south. Then as now, the U.S. government declared the rebels as “bandits.”

However, not all Americans were blind to what was going on. Among these stands the famous Mark Twain, who made a name for himself as author of Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer. What is less known—or less highlighted at least—about Mark Twain is that he was one of the founders of the New England Anti-Imperialist League, which was set up in Boston. In George W. Bush’s America, he would no doubt be classed as an unpatriotic traitor. He was, in fact, a progressive and a defender of basic democratic rights.

Twain turned his attention—with his renowned razor-sharp wit—to what was happening in the Philippines and wrote a satirical letter “to the person sitting in darkness.” By this he meant the oppressed peoples of the colonial world. He turned his attentions to what the British were doing in the Boer War, and wrote the following:

“Mr. Chamberlain manufactures a war out of materials so inadequate and so fanciful that he makes the house laugh and he tries hard to persuade himself that it isn’t a private raid for cash but has a dim vague respectability about it somewhere, if he could only find the spot; and that by and by he can scour the flag clean again after he has finished dragging it through the mud and making it shine and flash in the vault of heaven once more.”

[The following article originated at www.marxist.com on Feb. 17, 2005, and is reprinted here by permission of the publisher.]
Leon and the War in Iraq

Replace Chamberlain for Bush or Blair and the same words could be used to describe what these imperialist blood suckers are doing today in Iraq! Then as now atrocities were committed, all in the name of “saving,” “liberating,” or even “civilizing” the colonial peoples. Surrendering Beers were bayoneted by British soldiers, as were Filipino “insurgents” by the Americans.

In the Philippines, as we have seen, the U.S. invasion was not confined to the help of Filipino independence fighters, who had been struggling to oust the Spanish, only to betray them later by taking over the country for themselves. The Kurds in Iraq should draw a lesson from this, as should all oppressed minority peoples today who think that an imperialist power can be trusted to defend their interests. Whole countries have been conquered throughout the ages by imperialists using local conflicts to play one group off against another in order to subdue all of them. After they had used the local Filipino nationalists to oust the Spanish, the Americans turned on them. As Mark Twain satirized the whole thing with these words: “There have been lies; yes, but they were told in good cause. We have been treachery; but that was only in order that real good might come out of apparent evil.”

It knows what it is about. Give yourself no uneasiness; it is all right.”

Mark Twain was what we could define as a genuine bourgeois liberal of his time. But there was another American whose anger at what U.S. imperialism was doing was revealed in this line: “We can have just our usual flag with the white stripes painted black and the stars replaced by the skull and cross-bones.”

Mark Twain found the idea that Filipino independence fighters could be classed as rebels as an absurdity. For him, they were not criminal or bandits in the eyes of the Church. He was an American Socialist theoretician and political leader. He had studied the works of Marx and Engels and tried to apply them to the struggle for the defense of the rights of American workers.

We will end this article by quoting what he said in an editorial, written in response to the U.S. Army’s repression of the Filipino struggle in 1899. The editorial had the title “Ramrodding Freedom.”

“Last week’s battle of Manila is said to have cost the lives of over 5,000 Filipinos. These men had a notion that the country of their birth was their own. Arms in hand, they resisted the Spanish yoke, and succeeded to the extent that Spanish sovereignty over the whole Archipelago never was more than a nominal fact. A quarrel broke out between their tyrant and a foreign nation. They looked with joy at what seemed divine interposition, and aided the United States to drive out Spain. But while the Filipinos were fighting for the right to govern themselves, America’s honor and blackened her face before Christendom and 90 per cent of every legislature in the world: Not so. Our capitalist Government forthwith claimed possession by ‘conquest,’ and assumed the role of a dispossessor of freedom in a style quite its own. These Filipinos, our Government claimed, ‘do not know what freedom means; we must teach them.’ The teaching is now going on; the first lesson has been given. With the ramrod as instrument, ‘Freedom’ is to be jammed down the throats of the insurgent patriots whom our expansionist capitalists insult with the name of ‘insurgents’.

“But the freedom ramrodding process is not going on in the distant Philippines only. For every Filipino slaughtered beyond the Pacific a workingman is slaughtered, or the foundation of being laid for his being slaughtered right here in the United States. Over the prostrate bodies only of the ‘insurgent’ Filipinos can our Government march to the establishment of its peculiar ‘freedoms’—promoting suicide, the same thing that Archipelago. The establishment of American factories in the Philippines is equivalent with a leveling process of wages here that will be given the same name, which in fact spells MURDER.”

[From The People, Vol. III, No. 46, Sunday, Feb. 12, 1899.]

These eloquent words can equally be applied today to what U.S. imperialism is doing in Iraq. Just as then, while the U.S. administration wages war on the people of Iraq it also wages war at home against the American workers.

(Continued on page 8)
Resolution on Racism

At its 23rd National Convention in 1952, the Socialist Labor Party of America declared that property interests, fear and insecurity make the social soil of capitalism fertile for the seed of poisonous race prejudice.
As the Socialist Labor Party of America meets at its 24th National Convention in the City of New York, on May 7, 1956, it is evident that the above statement has been fully confirmed by the reaction to the Supreme Court's decision against segregation in public schools and elsewhere.
The decision intensified the already existing racism of the South. The results of that intensification include the following:

- The creation of the White Citizens Councils as a new form of Ku Klux Klanism. Economic reprisals against Negroes who sign pleas for school integration. The use of economic and social pressures against whites who express opinions even mildly in opposition to segregation. The acquittal of cold-blooded murderers of Negroes, providing white supremacists with a license to kill Negroes at their pleasure. And so forth.

The fact is that the intensification of the South's racism, like racism itself, is the work of the beneficiaries of the system of exploitation. The policy-forming members of the White Citizens Councils are capitalists, bankers, landowners, lawyers, militarists, ministers. The anarchistic moves of the state legislatures and governments in contempt of the Supreme Court are directed by such ultra-"respectable" capitalist politicians as James P. Byrne, former governor of South Carolina and former secretary of state under Roosevelt; and U.S. Sen. Harry F. Byrd, agricultural capitalist and political boss of Virginia.

A due to the cause of racism was furnished by William Faulkner, Mississippi plantation owner and Nobel Prize winner in literature. In an interview with the London Times, Mr. Faulkner declared: "To produce cotton we have to have a system of peonage. That is absolutely at the bottom of the situation." Mr. Faulkner was then asked: "Are the psychological rationalizations for prejudice something grafted on to the economic root?" He replied: "Yes, I would say that a planter who has a thousand acres wants to keep the Negro in a position of debt peonage and in order to do it he is going to tell the poor class of white folks that the Negro wants to violate his daughter. But all he wants at the back of it is a system of peonage to produce his cotton at the highest rate of profit."

The evidence substantiates the Marxian analysis of racism by the Socialist Labor Party of America. The social soil of capitalism is indeed fertile for the flourishing of poisonous race prejudice. In the light of the foregoing be it therefore Resolved, That the Socialist Labor Party of America reaffirm its stand that the race question is but a part of the larger social question, that the fundamental division in society is along class lines (exploitors and exploited), and that the workers of all races have a common interest in solving the larger social question. And be it further Resolved, That all the evidence proves that the social question arises from the exploitation of the many by the few and that it can be solved in but one way, by the socialist reconstruction of society. And be it finally Resolved, That the Socialist Labor Party of America appeal to the workers of all colors, creeds and national origins, and to all persons who recognize the evils of capitalism, to join with us in our efforts to bring a speedy end to the criminal capitalist system and to create the economic and social conditions for freedom, equality and universal brotherhood by establishing the free society of socialism, thereby eliminating the cause of racial prejudices.

...De Leon

These gentry, too, are the very ones who brought and continue to bring the immigrant here, and so long as immigration serves their purposes a new law passed, even if they would relieve the labor market, would be enforced.

Anti-immigration as an issue is one that is wonderfully calculated to cover up the real sore. If the worker can be sent scurrying to work and thereby lowers its condition by low-wage labor and thereby lowers its condition by low-wage

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MAY-JUNE 2006
Railroad Automation
Rolls Over More U.S. Jobs

By B.B.

The past 50 years have seen a dramatic increase in the number of workers employed in the nation’s rail industry, largely because of the increased productivity allowed by automation. Now the second largest railroad company in the nation, the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF), wants to reduce train crews to a single engineer on all of its lines. Should they succeed, it is a veritable certainty that all other companies will follow suit. The United Transportation Union (UTU) and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLE) are vehemently opposed to the idea and have filed suit against the rail companies, claiming they cannot act nationally because of existing local crew agreements. If the past is any indication, their long dysfunctional opposition will will and capital will have its way.

BNSF’s incentive for single-operator trains is obvious—increased profits. The firm estimates single-operator trains could “save” rail capitalists “billions of dollars annually.” At stake for workers employed in this $42 billion industry are dwindling jobs and the accompanying poverty against the movement of dramatically increased freight and profits. Since 1955, the volume of freight has increased from 624 to 1,693 trillion-ton miles (one ton of freight moved one mile).

This dramatic increase in tonnage is largely the result of American and European capitalists’ having shifted production to China, resulting in enormous increases in manufactured goods being shipped to the United States and sent to market for local consumption by rail from various U.S. ports. Ironically, at least in some cases, these shipments reach their final destinations along routes where Chinese workers laid down the first rails more than a century ago.

The National Carriers Conference Committee, representing all train companies, is ingeniously pleading the threat of competition as justification for reducing crew size to single-operator trains. The enabling technology, called “positive train control,” is being promoted as a safety net for engineers when eliminating the conductor. A version developed by the Wabtec Corp., and called the Electronic Train Management System, consists of on-board computers that control a train’s speed, a global positioning system, and various other devices that otherwise would require a conductor. In a pilot program tested in Illinois, Wabtec reported that 1,300 error-free runs had been made as evidence that the program is safe. The data is being used in BNSF’s quest for federal approval to try the system out on trains from Fort Worth, Tex., to Arkansas City, Kan.

The unions argue that safety is at stake and that the pilot program was faulty one-third of the time. They point out that trains—some carrying toxic substances such as chlorine—are frequently over 100 cars long and require two people to operate. They insist that more testing is needed. Moreover, it is an invariable item appearing on the UTU website entitled “Fatigue,” it is reasonably argued that fatigue “is the number-one danger facing transportation workers today,” a risk that obviously would be exacerbated by a single worker bearing sole responsibility for operating freight trains.

On this point, the UTU and BLE agree, despite an amorphous merger dispute that has helped to impede unified action against the rail companies. Decades ago train crews consisted of two brakemen, an engineer, a fireman and a conductor. Indeed, in 1917 the railroads employed 1.8 million workers and in 1955 employed 1.24 million, as opposed to 260,000 now. Yet four times the amount of freight is being moved! In fact, we may see the day in the not-too-distant future wherein trains will be fully automated and controlled from a central command point by remote monitors requiring no crews, in much the same manner as model trains are controlled. Indeed, this may be the next stage as capital continues its incessant drive to increase productivity. We can imagine that the issue will then be how those controllers can be made more productive. Having gotten rid of train crews altogether, the focus will be how can the remote operators be reduced or how can their working hours be extended?

UTU President Byron Boyd stated that the members of both unions “indicated they wanted a single operating-employees union to match the bargaining strength of a rail industry that has seen more than three-dozen major railroads merge into just six mega systems.” “We structured the merger so that BLE dues would be reduced and BLE heritage would be preserved,” he added. Deciphered, this means that the turf battles over membership dues between opposing union hierarchies would end in favor of just one “bargaining” outfit haggling over the sale of rail workers’ labor power to the companies.

Referring to the increase in railroad profits and the effort to reduce workers, Don Hahs, president of the BLE, determined to demonstrate his business acumen, whined, “They are making money hand over fist right now….Will not try to build a business instead of square up employees? We think we are very productive with a two-man crew.” UTU representative Frank Wilner whistled a slightly different tune, insisting, “No union has ever stopped technology” while noting, “We are not opposed to one-person crews when the technology has proven safe.”

Thus, in a single breath, Mr. Wilner conceded the unions’ past failures to protect jobs and proclaimed a willingness to accept more of the same if that is what it will take to preserve his dues-collecting business. He would prefer that things remain just as they are, but, being incapable of mounting anything faintly resembling an effective resistance to further encroachments, he will accept whatever leavings the railroad companies are prepared to concede on their own terms.

The past anticipates the future. It is in the nature of the capitalist system, as Frederick Engels once observed, “that the ever-increasing perfectibility of modern industry is, by the anomaly of social production, turned into a compulsory law that forces the individual capitalist always to improve his machinery, always to increase its productive force”—not for the benefit of society but for the accumulation of profit and self-aggrandizement.

Unions must intervene to play a decisive role to end capitalist domination of technology and tyranny over industry and society. They have the means to insure that the outcome of greater productivity redounds to the benefit of workers and society by reducing the working day, eliminating arduous and dangerous jobs rather than impoverishing lives, families and communities.

However, they cannot accomplish that objective in their present form. The UTU, BLE, Teamsters, AFL-CIO or any such dues-paying businesses. True unionism must repudiate the collaborationist orientation with the owners of industry embraced by the existing unions. They must recognize that workers’ interests are irreconcilable and fundamentally antagonistic to those of capital.

Moreover, they must organize on the basis of integral industrial unions whose makeup will comprise a whole new democratic governmental framework based upon production for use and not for profit, and which are prepared to take, hold and operate the industrial apparatus of the country in behalf of the country itself. Only then can technological change benefit society rather than be seen as a source of dread and impending horror.

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By B.B., a former editor of the Weekly People.
The People
...Immigration Debate
(Continued from page 1)

ics and media pundits routinely deny it, labor is as much a commodity to be bought and sold on the market—the labor market—as any other commodity. Without capitalism and its wage labor system, not only the cause but also the fact of involuntary unemployment would be completely wiped out. There is no reason on earth, apart from the profit-driven system that constantly compels capitalists to hold wages down in order to keep a single worker to live from hand to mouth and in economic insecurity.

The contention of some that immigrant labor is the cause or a source of worsening economic conditions for workers in general is as pernicious as it is false.

This assertion is hardly a new one. When, for example, the Irish immigrant of the late 19th and early 20th centuries felt the competition of the more newly arrived Italian immigrant, and the Italian of the more newly arrived Hungarian, and the Hungarian of the Pole, etc., each immigrant in turn viewed with alarm the influx of immigrants who were taking ‘American jobs.’ Similarly, male workers who are not class-conscious, noting the increasing employment of female workers, still often tend to regard the labor of the more newly arrived workers as a source of misfortune.

It hardly seems necessary to dwell on the obvious advantages to the employers of this view among workers who feel themselves victimized by immigrants or other workers entering the American labor market. Workers whose resentment is directed toward each other are not going to organize against the capitalist master class. If they can be organized at all, it is among workers of each other.

The more important point is that today’s immigrant, no more than the immigrants of our earlier history or the increase in the number of white-collar employment in the labor market since the middle of the last century, is responsible for under-employment, stagnant and falling wages or declining living standards. Their effect on the working class as a whole is illusory, but the illusion is of immense advantage to the capitalist exploiters of labor because it blurs the real cause of unemployment, falling wages and declining living standards.

Liberals and conservatives are agreed on one point: The debate on immigration policy is essentially a debate on labor policy. It is a debate on regulating the elb and flow of labor onto the labor market. Writing on ‘Immigration: Aynetarianism for the poor,’ for example, Stephanie Clifford of Inc.com summed up opposing arguments as follows:

‘Opponents argue this easing of immigration controls might lead to higher health care costs, with uninsured workers crowding hospitals, along with Americans losing their jobs, beaten out by the foreign workers. But supporters say foreign workers are an economic necessity, and that America must handle that reality. Anyone who employs people in lower tech jobs anywhere in the U.S. knows that our companies are already employing hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of foreign nationals who reside here without authorization. And our laws are written in a way where we pretend that we don’t need them,’ says Steve Ladik, past president of the American Immigration Lawyers Association and head of the immigration law group at Jenkens & Gilchrist in Dallas. ‘But the fact is the economies of Texas, Illinois, California, New York and more would collapse if tomorrow we could click our fingers and have every undocumented worker out of the country. Construction, hospitality, the medical industry, manufacturing—all these key segments of our economy are dependent upon these people.’

Clifford continued by noting that businesses employing high-tech workers have a similar stake and worry that more restrictive immigration laws will discourage foreign students from applying to American colleges and universities and skilled workers from accepting jobs in the United States.

Even so-called liberals who count themselves as sympathetic towards the millions of immi- grants at the center of the current debate fail to perceive this. They argue that the immigrant does not come into direct competition with most workers because they gravitate into those industries and services where skill requirements are minimal. One example of this comes from Joshua Holland of AlterNet.com and his article, “Toward a Real Immigration Debate,” posted on the website on April 16.

‘The myth is that there is one American ‘labor market’ which adheres strictly to the laws of supply and demand,’ Holland claimed.

‘As Thom Hartmann recently put it, ‘Working Americans have always known this simple equation: More workers, lower wages. Fewer workers, higher wages.’

‘That kind of simplistic view is dangerously inaccurate. It suggests that working people are perfectly mobile, both geographically and socioeconomically. To understand the real picture, you’ve got to disaggregate. There is no ‘American’ labor market—that’s a simplification. There’s a ‘labor market’ for any particular industry or occupation, divided by education and skills levels, as well as by region. Thom Hartmann writes: “Do a little math...there are between eight and 20 million un- and under-employed Americans,” and concludes that natives could fill all the jobs taken by immi- grants. But an unemployed Pennsylvania steel worker doesn’t do anything for a California farmer’s labor needs.”

In this, however, capitalism is organized in such a way that conditions in any industry are bound to have an impact on workers in all industries. As intensified exploitation and declining wages in the production of food and the manufacture of clothing proceeds, for example, the equivalent of what workers in all industries require as a “living wage” is bound to decline. Wages have been stagnant for decades and profits have soared precisely because of advancing productivity. Indeed, the circumstances today do not differ fundamentally from what they were 94 years ago when Daniel De Leon and occasion to write the following in these columns:

“Go back to first principles. What is ‘production’? Production is human labor applied to the conversion of matter. Production continues so long as the human labor is expended. Hence, the human labor necessary in transportation, distribution and communication is part and parcel of production.

“What is exploitation? Exploitation is the taking from the human labor necessary for production any part of the fruit of its efforts.”

Consequently, exploitation extends all along the line, until the wealth so produced reaches the ultimate consumer.

‘The important point in this is that exploita- tion, however seemingly otherwise, is not the act of any individual capitalist, or set of capital- ists, perpetrated upon any individual working- man, or set of workingmen. Exploitation is a class act—the act of the whole capitalist class—perpetrated upon a class—the whole working class.” (Feb. 4, 1912)

The plain and simple truth is that if we did not have the capitalist system with its labor market and production for sale, if instead we had a socialist industrial democracy with production for use, then the more newly arrived people would be available to perform society’s collective labors all the lighter would the burden be on each of us.

There is but one sure way of keeping one’s vision clear and free from the misleading propa- ganda that pulls workers apart rather than helping to unite them. That is through the study of socialism and the SLP’s program of Socialist Industrial Unionism, which proves that the real cause of the manifold social evils that plague us today is the capitalist system.

...Evil Axis’
(Continued from page 1)

sia. He does not consider that the turn to religious fundamentalism and militarism is very likely an effect of the failure of capitalism rather than its cause. Nor does he consider the needs of the working class, how they will be affected by this decline, or what they need to do to save them- selves from its effects. While he mentions the con- centration of wealth that has taken place in recent years, he does not discuss the effects of globalization and increased exploitation of the working class. He doesn’t acknowledge that it is the sons and daughters of the working class who are fighting the war.

While he speaks of the pernicious effects of the new Republican theocracy, he does not consider the use of religion to blur classconsciousness and portray the government’s warmongering, exploitative and environmentally destructive actions in a “moral” light. While he mentions the dismissive attitude towards science and knowledge, he does not acknowledge the Orwellian manipulation of scientific information or creation of Doublespeak terms: “creating democracy” for an imperialist invasion, “climate change” for global warming, “Clear Skies” for increasing air pollution. Lastly Phillips offers no solution. There is none under capitalism. The system is spinning out of control. It cannot respond meaningfully to pre- dicted oil shortages, global warming or the chal- lenges of wars in the Mideast. Workers must realize that the answer is not in religion, but socialism.

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Lenin and Stalin

The “50 Years Ago” article in the March-April issue of The People, “De-Stalinization Couldn’t Save Soviet Union From Its Betrayal of Marxist Principles,” overlooked one big reason why Lenin was forced to bureaucratize the Communist Party shortly after the October Revolution.

Lenin was forced to bureaucratize the Communist Principles,” overlooked one big reason why

Save Soviet Union From Its Betrayal of Marxist

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meeting on Saturday, April 29, 1:30–4 p.m., San Francisco Public Library, Conference Room, Grove & Larkin streets.

IlliNois

Chicago: Discussion Meeting—Section Cook County will hold a discussion meeting on Saturday, May 20, 3–5 p.m., New World Resource Center, 1300 N. Western Ave. Topic: “Socialism: Its Meaning and Promise.” For more information write SLP, PO Box 1432, Skokie, IL 60076, or email alexjs8ass@gmail.com.

Ohio

Cleveland: Literature Booth—Section Cleveland will hold a literature booth at this year’s Hessler Street Fair, May 20–21, noon to dusk. The street fair is located off Ford Drive near Euclid Ave., University Circle, on Cleveland’s East Side. For more information call 440-237-7933.

Columbus: Discussion Meetings—Section Cleveland will hold discussion meetings on Sunday, May 14 and June 25, 1–3 p.m., Carnegie Library, Meeting Room 1, Grant and Ohio streets. For more information call 440-237-7933.

Independence: Discussion Meetings—Section Cleveland will hold the following discussion meetings from 1–3 p.m.: Sunday, May 7, Independence Public Library, 6361 Selig Dr., off Rt. 21 (Brecksville Rd.) between Chestnut and Hilsede; Sunday, June 4, 1–3 p.m., Days Inn Motel, 5555 Brecksville Rd. (just south of R17-Graner Rd.). For more information call 440-237-7933.

Portland: Discussion Meetings—Section Portland will hold the following discussion meetings from 10 a.m.–12 noon at the Portland Main Library, SW Yamhill & 10th; Saturday, May 13, “Can It Happen Here? The Instability of Capitalism”; and Saturday, May 20, 3–5 p.m., New World Resource Center, 1300 S.W. Yamhill & 10th: Saturday, May 13, “Can It Happen Here? The Instability of Capitalism”; and Saturday, May 20, 3–5 p.m., New World Resource Center, 1300 S.W.

Doug Smalley

Indianapolis, Ind.

It is probably safe to say that the Soviet Union was doomed to collapse from the start, but that is a different question from the measures taken to preserve it. Lenin and Trotsky both understood that the Soviet Union could never survive without the direct support of a socialist revolution in Germany, at least, and repeatedly said so. However, that did not justify stripping the workers’ own organizations of their power and of laying the political foundation for a repressive state apparatus.

Rosa Luxemburg certainly didn’t think so, and neither did the SLP. The article from 50 years ago did not “blame” Lenin, however. It merely noted a fact. No one man can be held solely responsible for great historic events, obstacles or opportunities. To do so would be to deny the materialist conception of history. Yet, it would also be wrong to go to the opposite extreme to exonerate others of their responsibilities for their actions. Building up rather than undermining the workers’ organizations is essential for any Russian, nurturing rather than stifling working-class democracy, contrary to the Bolshevik policy on which Lenin incontrovertibly had great influence, almost certainly would have maximized whatever the Soviet Union’s chances for survival really were.

It would have done that by holding up an example more closely resembling what the socialist revolution aspires to, thereby adding some stimuli to the European revolution currently needed, or being necessary for success. To lose sight of this would be to blind ourselves to history’s lessons and leave the working class vulnerable to similar disasters in the future. We can think of no greater disservice to the human race.

Google at Home

I am replying to your article “Do Capitalists Put Profit Before Principle?” in your issue of March-April. While your analysis of Google’s duplicity in acquiescing to China’s restrictions on the search engine in that country is very impressive, nevertheless, such abridgements are taking place against the background of the U.S. government’s attempt to keep the entire domain under the pretext of looking for pornography.

In reality, the main reason for wanting these records is to spy on as many people as possible that use Google and other major Internet search engines, especially in the political domain, as it has been the case since 9/11 (as well as before 9/11). In other words, the main reason for the government’s going after Google is not to look for pornography (local, national as well as international law enforcement agencies already have this power), much as they would to set their tentacles in monitoring what everybody reads as well as all writing.

In this vein, it aims at trying to whittle away at real, imagined or future dissenting voices to both its domestic and foreign policies under the guise of searching for pornographic materials. Once you have state repression is coated with good intentions that are supposed to streamline morality. For instance, after the expulsion of the Asian population in Uganda in 1972, the Amin regime started reading ordinary letters that come in and out of the country. This was supposed to be a temporary edict of ensuring that the departing Asian population was not smuggling money out of the country through the mail. However, that habit was never rescinded after the Asians’ departure from the country. Instead, surveillance of all incoming and outgoing mail became official government policy. In a similar manner, the U.S. government could use the Google records on the pretext of hunting for pornography as a stepping stone into monitoring peoples’ surfing, reading and writing habits. Yes, it is good to point out Google’s self-censorship vis-a-vis China. However, it is also imperative to point out with trepidation, the U.S. government’s attempt at censoring the Internet, as well as intimidating its users, under such lofty ideals as safety at sea.

Steph B. Isabire Flagstaff, Ariz.
New Oil & Gas Estimates Raise Stakes in Afghanistan

By Diane Secor

I n October 2001, U.S. military forces invaded Afghanistan ostensibly to “liberate” its people from the Taliban and to protect the American people from terrorism. After four and a half years of U.S. military intervention, the fighting continues as the U.S.-sponsored regime of Afghan President Hamid Karzai struggles to stay in power.

The future of Afghanistan and the prospects for a prolonged U.S. military presence there took on new importance in March when it was disclosed that the U.S. Geological Survey and the Afghan Ministry of Mines and Industry had discovered that the Afghan-Tajik and Amu Darya basins contain much larger reserves of natural gas and oil than previously estimated.

“Two geological basins in northern Afghanistan hold 18 times the oil and triple the natural gas resources previously thought, scientists said Tuesday [March 14] as part of a U.S. assessment aimed at enticing energy development in the war-torn country.” (Associated Press, March 15)

What that means in terms of sheer volume becomes clear when comparing the new estimate of Afghanistan’s gas and oil reserves to an earlier one published by the U.S. Department of Energy:

“Northern Afghanistan has proved, probable and possible natural gas reserves of about 5 trillion cubic feet....This area, which is a southward extension of the highly prolific, natural gas-prone Amu Darya Basin, has the potential to hold a sizable undiscovered gas resource base, especially in sedimentary layers deeper than what were developed during the Soviet era. Afghanistan’s crude oil potential is more modest, with perhaps up to 100 million barrels of medium-gravity recoverable from Angot and other fields that are undeveloped. Afghanistan also may possess relatively small volumes of gas liquids and condensate.” (“Afghanistan Fact Sheet,” June 2004)

The new estimates came out of a four-year study financed by the U.S. Trade and Development Agency. The oil and natural gas deposits in these two basins may be even more abundant since this study was limited to Afghan territory and did not include the parts of these basins in neighboring countries.

Karzai had reason to welcome these “very positive findings,” as he called them, and which he hopes will lure more foreign investors. More than two years ago, Alexander’s Gas and Oil Connections, an online source of information about the industry, reported that the government of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan had “signed a protocol” for the construction of the trans-Afghanistan Gas Pipeline Project, also called TAP. The Karzai regime promised to provide security for this pipeline route. Reportedly, the United States also offered to safeguard this pipeline route and construction by the “permanent stationing of its troops in the region.”

During the 1990s, the American oil firm Uno-caled an international consortium with similar intentions. That plan also envisioned a gas pipeline that would pass through Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The infrastructure of this gas pipeline and Central Asian Oil Pipeline Project could be linked to the “oil and gas fields of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan portions of the Amu Darya Basin.” Because these pipelines would have to pass through what was then Taliban-controlled Afghan territory, Unocal made overtures to the Taliban regime to try to make them business partners of the consortium.

Negotiations with the Taliban regime eventually broke down. When the Bush administration decided to replace the Taliban regime in 2001, they pledged to provide the new Karzai regime with full “political, diplomatic, military and security support.” In accord with this arrangement, Associated Press reported that Karzai has been promised $1.1 billion in U.S. aid for Afghanistan next year.

The discovery of greater oil and natural gas resources in the Afghan-Tajik and Amu Darya basins in northern Afghanistan, it is possible, may give this new Karzai regime an incentive to “fighting terrorism” and to trying to make Afghanistan more hospitable to foreign capitalists.

What the new discoveries suggest about the future of U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan seems too obvious to explore.

Climate Warming Impacting Polar Ice

In the most comprehensive survey ever undertaken of the massive ice sheets covering both Greenland and Antarctica, NASA scientists confirm climate warming is changing how much water remains locked in Earth’s largest storehouse of ice and snow.

Data from field studies have shown increasing losses of ice in parts of these sheets. This new survey is the first to inventory the losses of ice and the addition of new snow on both in a consistent and comprehensive way throughout an entire decade.

The survey shows that there was a net loss of ice from the combined polar ice sheets between 1992 and 2002 and a corresponding rise in sea level in all the years documented for the first time. This extreme thinning of the West Antarctic ice shelves and an increase in snowfall in the interior of Greenland, as well as thinning at the edges. All are signs of a warming climate predicted by computer models.

The survey, published in the Journal of Glaciology, combines new satellite mapping of the height of the ice sheets from two European Space Agency satellites. It also used previous NASA airborne mapping of the edges of the Greenland ice sheets to determine how fast the thickness is changing.

In Greenland, the survey saw large ice losses along the southeastern coast and a large increase in ice thickness at higher elevations in the interior due to relatively high rates of snowfall. This situation may have changed in just the past few years, according to lead author Jay Zwally of NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, Md. In February, NASA scientists at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, Calif., reported a speedup of ice flow into the sea from several Greenland glaciers. That study included observations through 2003; Zwally’s survey concluded with 2002 data.

When the scientists added up the overall gains and losses of ice from the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets, there was a net loss of ice to the sea. The amount of water added to the oceans (20 billion tons) is equal to the total amount of freshwater used in homes, businesses and farming in New York, New Jersey and Virginia each year.

“The study indicates that the contribution of the ice sheets to recent sea-level rise during the decade studied was much smaller than expected, just two percent of the recent increase of nearly three millimeters a year,” says Zwally.

“Continuing research using NASA satellites and other data will narrow the uncertainties in this important issue.”

NASA is continuing to monitor the polar ice sheets with the Ice, Cloud and land Elevation Satellite (ICESat), launched in January 2003. ICESat uses a laser beam to measure the elevation of ice sheets with unprecedented accuracy three times a year. The first comprehensive ice sheet survey conducted by ICESat is expected early next year said Zwally, who is the mission’s project scientist.