Gulf Coast ‘Reconstruction’ Still Lacks Unified Plan

The public record is now crystal clear. This summer, hundreds of thousands of poor and working poor in New Orleans and across southern Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama were deserted by authorities at all levels in their worst time of need to face the fury of Hurricane Katrina. Weeks later when Hurricane Rita blew ashore, hundreds of thousands of mostly working-class residents of Louisiana and Texas suffered somewhat less catastrophic effects thanks to the only marginally less criminal “planning” by the officials of capitalist government. Over 1,300 Gulf Coast hurricane victims paid for official incompetence with their lives. When the going got rough during one of the worst natural disasters in U.S. history, the tough-talking, office-holding adherents of “the market” as the panacea for society’s problems had precious little to offer the victims of Katrina for almost a week—and only chaotic assistance since. Their rabid aversion to any meaningful social planning that might even incidentally restrict the freedom of their capitalist-class sponsors made the double whammy of hurricanes Katrina and Rita far worse than might have been the case if the workers themselves collectively owned the economy and democratically operated it for the benefit of all.

To be sure, as The Washington Post reported on Sept. 15, President Bush “vowed from the heart of the Hurricane Katrina disaster zone...to rebuild [New Orleans] and the rest of the Gulf Coast with ‘one of the largest reconstruction efforts the world has ever seen.’ But Bush has—more than a month later—offered little in the way of concrete plans or schedules. He has merely promised a cornucopia of “free enterprise” potions and conservative elixirs to address the vast problem of reconstructing the Gulf Coast’s cities and towns and the lives of several hundred thousand residents torn asunder in the tragedy.

In fact, his potions pale in comparison to the task. Grants of $5,000 were promised to help (Continued on page 11)

A Greater Shame Than Hurricane Katrina Response

By Michael James

The Village Voice is America’s largest “alternative” weekly newspaper. The Sept. 7-13 issue carries a large photo of a New Orleans evacuee sitting on a curb on a bridge, holding her head in her hands in despair, her worldly belongings in a supermarket shopping cart beside her. The caption reads “American Shame.”

The story that accompanies the cover photo is entitled “My Flood of Tears: Shame for My City, Shame for My Country.” The writer, Anya Kamenetz, grew up in New Orleans: “The people who have suffered the worst, the people who died for a lack of basic compassion, are my neighbors.” She correctly identifies the counterrevolutionary class interests that determined the levees would eventually give way and permit the poor to be swallowed. Rescue efforts, forced by circumstances, served as capitalist-class public relations and propaganda campaigns, designed to obscure the reality of decades of neglect, inequality and injustices.

Americans should be ashamed. However, there is something even more shameful than the economic and logistical abandonment of the New Orleans poor. The truly shameful thing about America is the lack of widespread revolutionary class consciousness. Our corporate, criminal class enriches itself at home and abroad, diverting social wealth away from schools, libraries, health care and levees to pay for war, while the working class slumbers in a deep political sleep. The working class continues to believe that capitalism can be the foundation for a just, humane and democratic society. The working class, told by corporate pundits that socialism is dead, has no vision of an alternative to capitalism. A service

(Continued on page 3)
‘Democratic Prerogatives... May Strangle Capitalism’

By Michael James

The Oct. 3 issue of Newsweek has an editorial with a candid and intriguing title: “Capitalism Vs. Democracy.” The article did double-duty when it also appeared in the Sept. 28 issue of the Washington Post. It is not often that two such corporate rags as Newsweek and the Post bother to mention or discuss capitalism. Corporate ideology just smugly assumes the legitimacy of capitalism.

The two articles, being identical, naturally had the same author—Robert J. Samuelson, who admitted “the uneasy relationship between capitalism and democracy.” He conceded that there are “deep conflicts” between the two, and actually cautioned readers against too much democracy: “If democratic prerogatives are overused, they may strangle capitalism.”

Exactly. In other words, real democracy is bad for business. This is why capitalist America perpetrates the illusion of democracy. Genuine democracy would be a material and economic democracy, with all citizens having access to the social wealth of society, such as education, health care, secure and meaningful employment, and housing. Look “democracy” up in Webster’s and you will see that “equality” is always part of the definition. In reality, however, “inequality” is probably the word that best defines capitalist America.

Samuelson, as a corporate propagandist, did an astonishing thing. He revealed the truth. He confessed, “Capitalism... and democracy need each other” because democracy “cushions capitalism’s injustices and, thereby, anchors public support.”

Well, there it is. Capitalism needs the illusion of democracy to conceal the criminality of an economic system designed to enrich the few at the expense of society and the environment.

Corporate news and entertainment, government spokespeople and public school curricula all maintain this illusion of democracy. It is dredged up in talk of the Founding Fathers, the Bill of Rights, the Constitution, the right to vote, entrepreneurship, and other star-spangled flag-waving, chamber-of-commerce freedoms which really don’t have much meaning in a society chronically plagued by poverty, crime, inequality, injustice and war.

Samuelson revealed some truths but he was wrong in saying that capitalism and democracy need each other. Capitalism needs the illusion of democracy as a veneer of legitimacy and respectability. However, democracy does not need capitalism. Democracy is much more compatible with a genuine, classless, socialist society. It is similar to the fact that capitalists need workers but workers do not need capitalists.

The real point for working-class readers is that capitalism and democracy are not the same things. Capitalism has taken democracy hostage, using it as a shield, much like a criminal who takes a hostage and hides behind that hostage.

Anyone who claims to be in favor of democracy should wake up to the fact that democracy in America is a hostage of capitalism. Fight for democracy! Join the SLP and help create a sane, democratic, socialist society.

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By Nathan Karp

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Truth Also a Victim Of Hurricane Katrina

By Ken Bookter

Truth was another victim of Hurricane Katrina. The capitalist news media were full of lurid reports of rapes, murders and other violence in the storm’s wake, ostensibly committed by folks involved in looting many of whom had black faces. The resultant hysteria served to justify a military response to the crisis—a response that may have far-reaching consequences. Turns out that most of the reports were either exaggerations or completely untrue, and news sources—from the New Orleans Times-Picayune to The New York Times—have found it necessary to publicly acknowledge the inaccuracy of their initial reports, but, of course, without front-page placement or sensationalized headlines they gave to their original reports.

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The Times-Picayune observed after first contributing to the hysteria, “Following days of internationally reported killings, rapes and gang violence inside the [Super] Dome,” a doctor from FEMA “came prepared for a grisly scene. He asked him about his reports of rapes and murders, he admitted, “We have no official reports to document any murder. Not one official report of rape or sexual assault.” Compass’ act of contrition was to resign, which he did shortly after his confession in the Times. Mayor Nagin, who may have instigated Compass’ resignation to protect his own political hide, is still on the job—although he told the truth about the victims of Katrina has been victimized itself. It has been hijacked by those amongst the ruling class who wish to further the truth about the victims of Katrina has been victimized itself. It has been hijacked by those amongst the ruling class who wish to further

New Orleans Police Chief Eddie Compass fed the hysteria. On Sept. 4, The New York Times quoted him on conditions at the convention center. “Tourists are walking around there,” Compass said, “and as soon as these individuals see them, they’re being preyed upon. They are beating, they are raping them in the streets.” He told Oprah Winfrey that babies were being raped.

The Times-Picayune Superdome, where several thousand victims took refuge. Hundreds of the crimes reported at the time never happened.”

The truth about the victims of Katrina is that were innocent suffered further. The capitalist news media not only defamed the overwhelming majority who did not participate in any violence. The wild, irresponsible stories they spread were also the cause of many of the delays in relief, as aid workers and shipments were halted and helicopters grounded for fear of the "animalistic" crowds. More victims that were innocent suffered further as a result.

These fraudulent stories provided justification for state and federal authorities to order the militarization of the region and virtual martial law across the Gulf, wasting valuable time on largely useless "law and order" operations when search-and-rescue operations should have been the first order of the day. Democratic Gov. Kathleen Blanco seemed particularly bloodthirsty as she fed the media frenzy, observing after putting in a request for 4,000 troops, “They have M-16s and they’re loaded and loaded...These troops know how to shoot and kill...and they’re more than willing to do so if necessary and I expect they will.”

The Bush administration seized the opportunity to suggest that future national disasters might call for further and more immediate use of military force. President Bush hinted that his administration would like to see changes in the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878, which prohibits active-duty military forces from engaging in domestic law enforcement. The military’s Northern Command announced that it is developing a proposal for an active-duty domestic force that could be rapidly deployed in case of “disasters.” Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is pushing for even more widespread use of such a martial force “to better address threats from terrorists and drug traffickers, as well as natural disasters.”

The truth about the victims of Katrina has been victimized itself. It has been hijacked by those amongst the ruling class who wish to further victimize the victims of Katrina. The truth about the victims of Katrina has been victimized itself. It has been hijacked by those amongst the ruling class who wish to further victimize the victims of Katrina.

...Shame

(Continued from page 1)

and collaborative working class, instead of building socialism, may allow degenerate American capitalism to bring about irreparable catastrophe such as environmental ruin, world war or corporatheatocentric fascism. This is the real shame of America.

“Even during this deluge,” Kamenetz noted, “Signifiers of New Orleans class structure have stayed intact.” Indeed, it takes more than a flood to alter class relations. It takes class struggle. It takes agitation, education and organization. It takes revolution. Capitalism drags the poor of New Orleans a long time ago. We owe them dignity and belonging. They deserve a socialist society that gives them full access to social wealth such as health care, education, safe housing and meaningful employment. Kamenetz should heed the old worker adage: “Don’t mourn, organize.”

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Across the ‘ Bloody Chasm’

We conclude our celebration of the 1905 founding of the original Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) by reproducing two speeches delivered on the third day of the founding convention by Eugene V. Debs and Daniel De Leon.

These two speeches, as De Leon expressed it, were delivered across a “bloody chasm” in what ultimately proved to be a futile attempt at reconciliation and to bring unity to the socialist movement.

A few days ago...we shook hands over the bloody chasm.” Later, with obvious reference to Debs, he said that whoever took the position that Debs had taken “will find nothing but fraternal greetings from me as an individual, and from the organization which I represent here...”

A few months after the IWW convention, Debs came to New York for a series of meetings in behalf of the new organization. He shared the platform with De Leon on two occasions. One of those speeches was before an audience at Grand Central Palace. A stenographer recorded that speech and, together with an essay by De Leon, the SLP published it in a pamphlet on industrial unionism.

Debs’ Grand Central Palace speech constitutes an endorsement of SLP principles and its program—and by implication a repudiation of the reformcraft unionism of the Socialist Party. However, Debs remained a member of the SP. Later, as the IWW got into rough water, his revolutionary IWW ardor seemed to wane. Even before 1908, when the IWW fell to the anarchists, Debs had ceased to agitate its principles. That year, although he had the reputation of being a “revolutionist” in the reformist SP, he accepted the SP’s nomination for president. Thus, he was able to present the reformcraft unionism as “positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...positively reactionary, a thing that is...
Without Solidarity Nothing Is Possible

Eugene V. Debs being called by the conven-
tion said:

Fellow Delegates and Comrades: As the pre-
liminaries in organizing the convention have been
disposed of, we will get down to the real
work before this body. We are here to perform a
task so great that it appeals to our best thought,
our united energies, and will enlist our most
loyal support. The task is to form a labor
movement which weak men might falter and despair,
but from which it is impossible to shrink without
betraying the working class. (Applause.)

I am much impressed by this proletari-
an gathering. I realize that I stand in the
presence of those who in the past have
fought, are fighting, and will continue to
fight the battles of the working class eco-
nomically and politically (applause), until
the capitalist system is overthrown and the
working class are emancipated from all of
the degrading thraldom of the ages. (Applause.
In this great struggle the working class are often defeated, but never van-
quished. Even the defeats, if we are wise
equipped to prevent them, hasten the day of
the final victory.

In taking a survey of the industrial field of
today, we are at once impressed with the total
inadequacy of working class organization,
with the lack of solidarity, with the widespread
demoralization we see, and we are bound to
conclude that the old form of pure and simple
unionism has long since outgrown its useful-
ness (applause); that it is now not only in the
way of progress, but that it has become positive-
ly reactionary, a thing that is but an auxil-
yary of the capitalist class. (Applause.) They charged us
with being assembled here for the purpose
of disrupting the union movement. It is already
disrupted, and if it were not disrupted we
would not have the spectacle here in this very city of
a white policeman guarding a black scab, and a
black policeman guarding a white scab (applause),
while the trade unions stand by with their
hands in their pockets wondering what is
the matter with union labor in America. We are
here to-day for the purpose of uniting the work-
ing class, for the purpose of eliminating that
form of unionism which is responsible for the
conditions as they exist to-day.

The trades union movement is today under

...‘Bloody Chasm’

(Continued from page 8)

This day De Leon and the SLP are either vilified
or ignored by “historians” and other literati,
which, in the nature of things, may be taken
as a substitute and a compliment. As for Debs, in
1895 he was done the honor of being postum-
ously elected to the capitalist’s “Labor Hall of Fame” (read
infamy), with the following inscription:

“Labor leader, radical, Socialist, presidential
candidate, Eugene Victor Debs was a home-
grown American. He formed the American Railway
union, led the Pullman strike of the 1890’s in which he was jailed,
and emerged a dedicated Socialist. An idealistic, incorruptible,
fighter for economic and social justice, he was brilliant, eloquent and
eminent—human. As a ‘radical’ (note the quotation
marks) he fought for women’s suffrage, work-
men’s compensation, pensions and social security— all commonplace today. Five times the
Socialist candidate for president, his last cam-
paign was run from federal prison where he
garnered almost a million votes.”

Debs would have been ashamed.

There is much to be learned from the
 careers of the two men whose IWW convention speech
we reproduce here.

“…”

(Continued on page 10)
‘The Giant Labor. Lies Fettered by the Lieutenants of Capitalism’

Daniel De Leon being called by the convention said:

Fellow Delegates: From the time the Mani- festo was issued, it was dear to me that the mission of the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance was about to be done. The eloquent speech we just heard was a challenge to each of us. In this convention I came absolutely without any private ax to grind or any private grudge to gratify. In fact, during my whole activity in the labor movement I have had but one axe—and I think that my worst enemy will not deny my statement—and that axe is the capitalist class. (Applause.) Not a line that I have ever written, either speech or essay, has been guided by that star, proceeding from the principle of the class struggle; proceeding from the conviction that the emancipation of the working class does not only must be their own work, but—what is of infinitely more importance—is possible. In having this convention come togeth- er here, we, of the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance, indulge in the vainglorious belief that we have contributed our share; and Brother Debs will, I think—I am sure of it—admit that our literature has contributed toward that end. (Applause.) I am not going into a discussion or speak of that one feature which he said was turned aside. This I can imagine not simply the prophecy to him and to you, that, standing now where the Alliance stood, he will also become what the foe says I was—a fanatic; that as he sees the thing clearer to-day than he saw it when the American Railway Union was organized, he will find it clearer also who the foes of the labor movement are. I shall not go into that. All I wish to say, all I wish to go on record as saying, is this: I can imagine noth- ing more weak, more pitiable from a man’s standpoint than to aspire at an ideal that is unrealizable, and I have overhauled my position again and again answering this question: “Is this the position that you have undertaken as one of so many—is it a problem that is solvable?”

And I have concluded that it IS. (Applause.) I drew a line, and on the other side of that line I placed, if I may say so, the whole class of those who deny that the working class can emanci- pate themselves, and who consequently propose to follow their own interests to the best of their ability and opportunity.

When three years ago the miners’ strike took place, it was, as far as I was concerned individu- ally, an epoch in my existence. Before that I was certain that the emancipation of the work- ing class could not come but through them; I was also certain that it was a possibility; but I did not know how far removed the land beyond them might lie. I knew that Columbus upon record as saying, is this: I can imagine noth- ing more weak, more pitiable from a man’s standpoint than to aspire at an ideal that is unrealizable, and I have overhauled my position again and again answering this question: “Is this the position that you have undertaken as one of so many—is it a problem that is solvable?”

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Automation and Material Interests

The testimony of capitalist spokesmen and labor leaders before the joint congressional subcommittee studying the social and economic effects of automation shows that they do not differ greatly on the subject. The capitalist spokesmen tend to point out that the new situation constitutes a technological revolution, while the union leaders are emphatic upon the point, asserting that automation is a revolutionary and decidedly disruptive in its effects. But both groups of witnesses accept the idea that automation under capitalist auspices is a pretty wonderful thing and that it holds great potentials for improved conditions for the workers. The only reservation of the union leaders seems to be that they believe “business and government” should assume some share of the responsibility for the changeover. As James Carey, president of the CIO Electrical Workers, told the committee:

“It is morally and economically wrong to expect the working people of America to bear the entire burden.”

Viewpoints of individuals may deviate from those of the group to which they belong, but influences by moral conviction and a vision resulting from greater understanding. But viewpoints of groups are invariably shaped by material interests. This will be found to be true of the labor fakers’ viewpoint on the subject of automation. The continuation of capitalism is the sine qua non—the indispensable condition of the labor fakers, or labor merchandising, business. Automation is an evolutionary development in the tool and production technique. And, since it is occurring while capitalism still holds sway, the labor fakers cannot do anything about it. They can only accept that the situation exists and work to improve it.

The situation is one not welcomed by the union leaders, for automation is new, revolutionary and distinctly disruptive in its effects. But both groups of witnesses agree that they do not differ greatly on the point—and that is the significant position of the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance—which tells for and not against Castro. (Weekly People, Nov. 5, 1955)
U.S. Leads the World in Mental Illness

By Paul D. Lawrence

The United States likely ranks first in the world in the rate of mental illnesses, according to a yet incomplete study. Within the past year, 25 percent of Americans met the criteria for having a mental illness. One-quarter of them had an illness so severe that it disrupted daily functioning.

The problem is far worse than that. The survey excluded schizophrenics, who likely suffer the most severe mental illness. Many are hospitalized; others are homeless and walk around talking aloud to themselves.

Less than half who need treatment get it, and what that half gets is generally inadequate. Barriers to treatment include inadequate health care insurance and the still lingering stigma of “mental illness.”

Effective treatments for many disorders exist. However, many sufferers fail to seek professional help. “You wouldn’t rely on your priest for treatment if you had breast cancer,” said Thomas Insel, chief of the National Institute of Mental Health, which is funding the study. “Why would you go to your priest for a major depressive disorder? These are real medical and brain disorders, and they need to be treated that way.”

In a way, these statistics are not surprising. The United States is the world’s foremost capitalist nation. Capitalism is an insane system. Therefore, there should be many mental illnesses. “Mental illnesses caused or aggravated by capitalism will disappear with the madness of capitalism itself,” Tinsel’s reference to “capitalism itself” notes.

Patients with schizophrenia, a disease characterized by hallucinations and disorganized thinking, recover sooner and function better in poor countries with strong extended family ties than in the United States, two long-running studies by the World Health Organization have shown.”

In the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels noted “the practical absence of the family among proletarians.” As in many cases, they foresaw tendencies that would grow to maturity with the ripening of capitalism. Single parenthood, divorce, relocation of family members to other parts of the country, often due to economic necessity, have left little of the traditional family that might give support.

The biological model has made advances in the treatment of mental illness, in particular the development of medications that can alter brain function. But few of these are completely effective.

Another case would be alcoholism. Alcoholics have a biological inability to metabolize alcohol as efficiently as the nonalcoholic does. That eventually leads to uncontrolled drinking unless the disorder is successfully treated. Yet, a person unable to metabolize alcohol growing up in a society that discourages or forbids alcohol, such as Saudi Arabia or, in the United States, Utah, would not likely develop alcoholism.

Cultural factors may be extremely significant. The Washington Post reported:

“E. Gentry for The People

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New Orleans Undermined
By Engineering Failures

A Region so exposed to the furious Assaults of Tempest is to be avoided, as the very worst of all...."
—Leone Batisti Alberti, Ten Books on Architecture, 1485

W
ether capitalism can fix the engineering failures that brought catastrophe upon New Orleans remains to be seen, but if its past performance is any indication of the future, there is every reason to doubt success. Indeed, two centuries of "fixing" have undermined nature's defenses against tidal flooding so that today the Mississippi River is elevated above the city as it passes through to the gulf, while all but the oldest sections of the city lie below sea level and below Lake Ponchartrain. The whole city is sinking inches per decade because of saturation.

The Mississippi River has an unusual estuary into the Gulf of Mexico. It does not spill into a bay but into an extensive marshland where the waters of the river diffuse into many small shallow streamlets. This posed a challenge to develop a port where ocean and coastal vessels could moor or dock. Eventually, canals cut into the marshes could accommodate sea-going vessels. The relative high points in the surrounding marsh became the site of New Orleans.

This unlikely location for a city established in the early part of the 18th century was impelled against all reason by the early development of capitalism and the need to control the resources carried inland by the river. The relative freedom of New Orleans became the site of New Orleans.

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Following the devastation, calls to rebuild resounded from numerous quarters, usually embellished with allusions to the hype about how great New Orleans was. Besides a few streets where tourism was centered, the city, like many other American cities, was shabby and slum-ridden, but good enough for wage slaves.

There are compelling capitalist reasons for wanting to rebuild the ravaged city, none of which have to do with culture or nostalgia. For another, a horde of contractors, homebuilders, hotel owners, casino interests and real estate developers are "chomping at the bit" for lucre. Despite the potential of pestilence, chemical contamination, sinking land, mold, vermin and weakened levees, not to mention future hurricanes and issues of basic infrastructure, the potential for profit is enormous.

Free enterprise is eager to descend onto the hundreds of billions of insurance and federal funds that will be used to rebuild, accompanied, no doubt, by strains of angelic piety. In consideration that the delta and adjoining coastal areas contain not only the world's busiest seaport complexes, but also sprawling petrochemical complexes, the very lifeblood of industrial capitalism, New Orleans and coastal Louisiana must be rebuilt and repopulated.

To protect capitalist investment, the Army Corps of Engineers has long been employed to erect a vast contrived network of dams, 350 miles of levees, walls, spillways, channels, pumping stations and other structures. But the chaos of conflicting material interests of various capitalists, plus the corporate mentality of refusing to spend on infrastructure in order to demonstrate to investors a profitable bottom line, have often undermined the state's efforts to protect overall capitalist assets. Thus Alfred C. Naomi, a senior project manager for the corps in New Orleans, indicated that the flood control system was an outdated mess. "This storm was much greater than protection we were authorized to provide."

Lt. Gen. Carl A. Strock, commander of the corps, soft-pedaled capitalist parsimony in stating that costs and protection levels were a "complex process involving the interaction of a lot of people from the local, state and national level." As Adam Hughes of OMB Watch noted, however, political and bureaucratic resistance was "a classic example of what underfunding infrastructure can do." Meanwhile, scientists and meteorologists had warned of the dire consequences of hurricanes of high intensity for decades, using New Orleans as the perennial case study.

Meteorologist Bob Sheets, former director of the National Hurricane Center, stated that some local officials pooh-poohed the risks. His simulations showed how Lake Ponchartrain and adjacent waters "could swamp the platelike city, wedged between a great river and a broad lake...The risk obviously in New Orleans was greater than in any other community."

During the Hurricane Andrew threat, despite numerous prior evacuation drills with city officials, and even with specific evacuation advisories from the center, "Essentially they [officials] did nothing." Dr. Sheets noted, "The conventions and other business went on."

There's the rub! The irresponsibility of the capitalist system dwarfs Nero's fiddling while Rome burned. The problem in New Orleans reveals the malaise affecting the entire country, one that cannot be solved with more civil engineering works. Such a profound social problem requires ending the economic system that has degenerated into a massive death machine and unfit to manage its own industrial apparatus.

This raises the question of how socialism will address such natural threats. Surely, socialist society will inherit a capitalist world, a world that had been subservient to the profit motives it will inherit the environmental degradation that has made New Orleans vulnerable and caused the global warming suspected of increasing the fury and intensity of recent hurricanes. It will inherit the warped way technology has been used, the wasteful suburban growth and strangulating highway systems, the immense buildings that serve sprawling commercial and government bureaucracies, and the slums and bad housing of the working class. The list goes on to infect every aspect of life.

Change the principle and the rest will take care of itself such that, with the establishment of socialism's principles of production for use, democratic industrial government and the end of exploitation of the working class through the wages system, a new social infrastructure will form the foundation for an exclusive focus on the well-being of all society. That is socialism's promise. It awaits an aroused working class organized to put an end to the insane capitalist system.

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NEW YORK LABOR NEWS
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JOHN DOUGLAS IRVING

John Douglas Irving, national secretary of the Socialist Labor Party of Canada, died July 19, several hours after the pontoon-equipped Cessna he was attempting to put down on a small lake near Ottawa flipped over and became waterlogged. According to reports the Ottawa Sun that Irving survived the crash but was unconscious when pulled out of the air craft. A helicopter rushed Irving to the Ottawa hospital where he died.

The cause of the accident that took Irving's life could not be determined immediately and the Canadian Transportation Board was investigating. Irving was an expert pilot with more than 60 years of flying experience.

Irving was an enthusiastic sportsman throughout his life, and despite his 86 years remained "an avid skier, flyer and fisherman who didn't let his age get in the way of his having fun," the Sun reported.

Irving's real life was fun-loving, and anybody that knew Doug knew him as a "gentleman," said Irving's older brother and SLP comrade, Ted Irving.

"Doug" Irving joined the Canadian SLP in 1919, a 19- or 20-year-old youth. Doug and Ted, together with several other brothers, later established the Alexander Metals firm in Ottawa, but neither Doug nor his older brother ever lost sight of their working-class origins. Doug Irving became national secretary of the Canadian SLP in 1983 when poor health forced his predecessor, George Cameron, to step aside. Apart from his brother Ted, Irving is survived by his wife, Bettie, their children, Carrie and Gerry, granddaughter, Julia, and brothers Bob, Bill, George and Harold. The SLP of America and The People extend their heartfelt condolences to the entire Irving family.

NOTICE: The National Office and past office box of the SLP of Canada are closed temporarily pending the election of a new national secretary. In the meantime, party members or others having SLP business or communications are urged to contact the National Office of the SLP of America. Please see the directory on page 2 for mailing and e-mail addresses.

...‘Without Solidarity’

(Continued from page 5)

speaker who preceded me so clearly expressed it in his carefully and clearly thought-address— the supreme need of the hour is a sound, revolu tionary working class organization. (Applause). And while I am not foolish enough to imagine that what we are aiming at in this convention of a few days’ duration, I do believe it is possible for us to initiate this work, to begin it in a way for the greatest promise, with the assurance that its work will be completed in a way that will appeal with increasing force to the working class of the country. I am satisfied that the great body of the working class in this country are prepared for just such an organization. (Applause). I know their leaders, I know that they are prepared, and they are conscious of that. (Applause). They can already see the handwriting upon the wall, and so they are seeking by all of the power at their command to discredit this convention, and in alliance with the orthodox of capitalism they are doing what they can to defeat this convention. It may fail in its mission, for they may continue to misrepresent, deceive and betray the working class and keep them in the false belief that this is their class and their interests. (Applause). They are hoping that we will fail to get together. They are hoping, as they have already expressed it, that this con vention will, as they phrase it, become just another day in a long series of days in which the working class and the whole of the county is to serve the working class by so organizing and so guiding as to appeal to the motives here is not to use unionism as a foregone conclusion. I have already said the working class are prepared; the organization that shall be the expression of the economic conditions as they exist to-day; that organization for which the working class are prepared; an organization that must be based upon the class struggle, but must express the economic condition of this time. Must have one organization that embraces the workers in every department of industrial activity. It must express the class struggle. It must recognize the class lines. It must of course be a conscious organization. It must be totally unconscious. (Applause). It must be an organization of the rank and file. (Applause). It must be so organized and so guided as to appeal to the intelligence of the workers of the country every where. And if we succeed, as I believe we will, in forming such an organization, its success is a foregone conclusion. I have already said the working class are ready for it. There are multiplied thousands in readiness to join it, waiting only to see if the organization is rightly ground ed and properly formed and forced; and this done there will be no trouble about its development, and its development will take proper form and expand to its true proportions. If this work is properly begun, it will mean in time, and not a long time at that, a single union upon the economic field. It will mean more than that; it will mean a sin gle party upon the political field (great applause); the one the economic expression, the other the political expression of the working class; the two halves that represent the organic needs of the labor movement.

Now let me say in closing comrades—and I have tried to condense, not wishing to tax your patience or to take the time of others, for I believe that in such conventions as this it is important that each speaker shall perform the part that he shall make speeches—let me say in closing that you and I and all of us who are here to enlist in the service of the working class need to have faith in each other (applause), not the faith born of ignorance and stupidity, but the enlight ened faith of self-interest. We are in precisely the same position; we depend absolutely on each other. We must get close together and stand shoulder to shoulder. (Applause). We know that without solidarity nothing is possible, that with it nothing is impossible. And so we must dispel the petty prejudices that are born of the differ ences of the past, and I am of those who believe that if we get together in the true working class spirit, most of these differences will disappear, and if those of us who have differed in the past are willing to accord to each other that degree of conciliation that we feel that we are entitled to, that we will forget these differences, we will approach all of the problems that confront us, with our intelligence combined, acting together in concert and making such a high resolve to form that great union, so necessary to the working class, without which their condition remains as it is, and with which, when made practical and vitalized and renewed, the working class is permeated with the conquering spirit of the class struggle, and as if by magic the entire movement is vitalized, and side by side and shoulder to shoulder in a class-conscious phalanx we move forward to certain and complete victory. (Applause).
...Katrina Victims (Continued from page 1)

breaking out—Modern Industrial Services, Inc. and Healthcare Consulting & Staff Services—that specialize in helping “families” such as Sutter break strikes by offering a chance to those that other “families” toss out to make room for new technology and swollen profits, but who the unions can’t quite manage to organize. The Service Employees International Union in the West affiliates are so helpless to stop them that they recently filed a lawsuit challenging these two companies and Sutter with violating a California law that prohibits the hiring of “professional strikebreakers.”

The dozen or so evaucuees were taken on as “janitorial staff and nurses assistants,” according to the Chronicle, were paid $8 or $9 less an hour than the usual strike, according to the unions, and were gone by Sept. 19, according to local TV station KRON. Where they went and what has become of them we do not know, and neither the union nor the TV station had anything to say about that. However, it appears that there is no shortage of evaucuees, not only from Katrina and other natural disasters, but from the shutdowns, layoffs and other socially transmitted displacers of humanity that are as much spawn of capitalism as floods are of hurricanes.

In short, capitalism is a catastrophe—a social catastrophe that has uprooted and displaced, not thousands, not tens or even hundreds of thousands, as Hurricane Katrina, but millions of workers across the land. Worse, it does not come and go with the seasons. Capitalism is a year round catastrophe, an ongoing, never relenting assault on the working class. It is a catastrophe too late to prevent entirely, but not too late to undo some of the damage it has done and undo much more. The only power great enough to stop it is the working class, and the only force working to undo the ravages of capitalism is workers who organize to sweep capitalism and its catastrophe away, and replace it with the democratic republic of labor.

The alert the working class to its power is the SLP and The People. But the ability of the SLP and The People to deliver the message of Socialist Industrial Unionism largely depends on the financial support of the SLP’s friends and supporters. If you count yourself among them, please use the coupon on page 8 to contribute to The People’s annual Christmas Box Fund.

Funds

SLP Leaflet Fund

J ohn Lambase $10. (Total)

SLP Sustainer Fund

J ohn Davis $800; Bernard Bornick $300; Chris Dobree $400; Robert P. Burns “In memory of John W. Aiken” $160; Robert P. Burns to President of Franklin & Margaret Radeck $160; Lois Reynolds $100; Richard Aiken “In memory of John W. Aiken” $45; to the editors of The People a well-reasoned plan for evacuation and rehabilitation should Mother Nature overwhelm all their well-reasoned plans?

With no profit motive to deter them, with plentiful natural resources and human labor power available, what reason is there to believe that the workers of the Gulf Coast would fail to make the Gulf Coast as prepared for natural disaster as the technology of today makes a well-reasoned plan for evacuation and rehabilitation so necessary?

Only the chaotic, profit-motivated, morally and economically bankrupt capitalist system stands in their way. Speed the day when the working class finally realizes its latent power and organizes to bring about a world in which its catastrophic social effects are away, and replace it with the democratic republic of labor.

—K.B.

ACTIVITIES

CALIFORNIA

Discussion Meeting — For more information call 408-280-7266 or email slpsa@netscape.net.

OHIO

Columbus: Discussion Meeting — Section Cleveland will hold a discussion meeting on Sunday, Nov. 13, 1-3 p.m., Carnegie Library, Meeting Room 1, 1640 North High Street. For more information call 440-237-7933.

Independence: Discussion Meeting — Section Cleveland will hold discussion meetings on Sunday, Nov. 27, and on Sunday, Dec. 11, 1-3 p.m., Independence: Carnegie Library, 3541 Euclid Dr. (off I-71 at West 160th Road) between Cleveland and Westlake.

OREGON

Portland: Discussion Meetings — Section Portland will hold the following discussion meetings from 10 a.m.-12 noon at the Portland Main Library, SW Yamhill & 30th: Saturday, Nov. 2, two book reviews, White-Collar Sweatshops and Death of a Salesman; and Saturday, Dec. 17, “Man’s Theory of Alienation.” For more information call 547-5199 or visit the section’s website at http://slp.pdx.homespring.co.
NIGERIEN FAMINE

‘We Let the Market Determine the Price’

By Paul D. Lawrence

Nearly 2 million people in Niger have received food from international relief agencies since the worst of last summer’s famine, according to the United Nations’ World Food Program. “Even so...a good harvest will only supply a short-term bump from the long-term structural food scarcity that the people of Niger face every year,” the U.N.’s News Service said in a statement posted to the Web on Sept. 30. Avoiding future famines, it claimed, requires fixing “long-term structural issues by working with farmers to help them develop irrigation projects and learn new agricultural techniques.”

In short, drought and a plague of locusts were not the real causes of the famine in Niger. “Structural issues” did as much or more to cause it than nature. Contrary to the U.N.’s assessment, however, those structures are not the agricultural techniques of Niger’s farmers. It takes social, economic and political factors to create famine. Indeed, there is evidence that there was no food shortage, even at the height of the famine.

“The usual contributors to famine elsewhere, like war, dictatorship or ‘crackpot economic theories,’ are notably absent,” The New York Times editorialized. “Niger’s government is democratically elected and President Mamadou Tandja’s orthodox budget-balancing and market-opening policies are regularly praised by Western leaders and international lenders.”

More than 3 million Nigerians who faced and still may face starvation might disagree about what constitutes “crackpot economic theories.” “Longer term economic policies may be working against a solution, according to some observers,” The Washington Post reported on Aug. 17. “In 1993, the government scrapped price controls at the urging of the World Bank and stopped heavy-handed interventions in grain markets by an import-export agency.”

“In a country adopting free-market policies,” the Post went on, “there is a suffering caused by a poor harvest has been dramatically compounded by a surge in food prices and, many people here suspect, profiteering by a burgeon-

ing community of traders, who in recent years have been freed from government price controls and other mechanisms that once balanced market forces.”

By Aug. 11 of this year, the reservoir held 3 million gallons of milk and cow manure in a reservoir held in by earthen walls. The next day, the reservoir burst, sending most of the flowing manure into the Black River, a recreational and fishing area and a water source for the local villages along the river. Tens of thousands of fish died from lack of oxygen and the ecoli ruined the water for human use.

These industrial farms are often forced on local communities despite their objections. When a community in New York State has complained of an industrial hog or cattle farm moving in, the State Department of Agriculture and Markets invariably uses the state’s Right to Farm Law to sue or threaten to sue the community and to force the area to accept an unwanted, malodorous, and often risky and polluting mega-agribusiness to their local community.

Does this make sense? To capitalism it makes perfect sense. The “comfort of the market” it makes profits, at whatever cost, and it tramples to mention. It is driven by the compulsion to make profits, at whatever cost, and it tramples underfoot anything that stands in its way. The Niger famine showed capitalism at its worse. The Post told the story of 30-year-old Radsida Abdou. She sold all three of her dresses for $6 and set out, with her emaciated children, on a five-day-long journey to Maradi. There she found food. After bus fare and having her son seen at a clinic, she had $2 left. She used that to purchase six pounds of millet that used to cost $1.50. After consuming that, she remained in Maradi, unsuccessfully begging for food, with her son continuing to waste away.

The availability of food— for those who could afford to pay—indicates that the crisis in Niger was not just a result of supply and demand, but also of out-and-out profiteering to take advantage of human suffering and need. The elimination of government price controls and other mechanisms was an immense aid to that unpalatable enterprise. The U.N. World Food Program said prices had shot up because of such profiteering. Some traders raised prices because they expected aid groups would buy grain locally.

Yet government spokesman Ben Omar Mohamed could say, “We let the market determine the price.” He admitted “traders are making money because the demand is very high.”

In addition, the introduction of Western bourgeois political “democracy” is eroding traditional values that might have provided a defense against the personal calumnies heaped on people jostling for scarce relief supplies,” the Times observed in its notorious editorial.

A free-market economy is a capitalist economy, something both the Times and the Post neglect to mention. It is driven by the compulsion to make profits, at whatever cost, and it tramples underfoot anything that stands in its way. The Niger famine showed capitalism at its worse.

“Today market stalls in Maradi, a major trading center of Niger, are piled high with food for the few who can afford it, while elsewhere in the same city thousands of starving and desperate people jostle for scarce relief supplies,” the Times observed in its notorious editorial.

The plight of the Nigerien people, however, is one more reason that U.S. workers need to carry out their own socialist revolution. Socialism would not only improve the lot of the useful productive workers, but it would enable them to enjoy all their wealth. It would also allow undeveloped economies to develop rapidly with the concomitantly assistance of the socialist societies.

The Dangers of Megafarming

By B.G.

Large-scale agribusiness has come to dominate farming in the United States, pushing out the small family farmers and even the large independent farmers, all of whom have trouble competing against large capitalist agriculture. But isn’t this just the law of progress, the inevitable ejection of competing against large capitalistic agriculture? That is if you buy into the idee of the free market. According to the critics of the free market, the market policies responsible for the famine would be met with the full power of imperialist finance capital, and possibly a convenient coup to establish a new “democratic” pro-Western regime.

The plight of the Nigerien people, however, is one more reason that U.S. workers need to carry out their own socialist revolution. Socialism would not only improve the lot of the useful productive workers, but it would enable them to enjoy all their wealth. It would also allow undeveloped economies to develop rapidly with the concomitantly assistance of the socialist societies.

KARL MARX: The Man

By Paul Latefque

A sketch written in a spirit of veneration and appreciation of Marx’s historic and scientific greatness. Lafaque’s Warrenian sketch is an charming portrait of Karl Marx serves as a defense against the personal calumnies heaped upon him. (64 pages) $1.50 postpaid