Justin is a one-year-old. Well, he was a one-year-old. No, Justin didn’t have a birthday. He’ll never have another birthday. One was all he got. You see, Justin is dead. He died in a fire in October. Justina died, too. She was Justin’s sister. She was nine. She was in charge while Kim was at work. Kim was Justin’s mom. Justin’s, too. Now she’s no one’s mom. Now she may go to jail, and for a long time.

That’s nearly all we know about Justin, Justina and Kim—but not quite all. We know the kids had a dad. We know Kim said the dad was supposed to be there. We know he denied it. Someone’s wires got crossed, or someone lied, or someone got scared. Who can tell?

But we do know that Kim wasn’t one of those welfare moms we hear such bad things about. No, Kim was saved from the shame of it by two good friends of the people. You’ll remember them—Bill Clinton and Newt Gingrich.

Well, now we’re speculating. For all we know, Kim never was a welfare mom. We’ll just say she didn’t have the option.

But we do know that Kim wasn’t out with her boyfriend. She wasn’t doing dope when the fire broke out in her basement apartment there in Brooklyn. She was looking after things. Not her kids. No, she was looking after the cash drawer down at McDonald’s.

Kim was a working mom. Her boss must have liked her work, too, because she just got promoted to assistant manager. Bosses are too busy to look after cash drawers and such, so Kim did it. No one said so, but we guess that means the boss thought she was honest and a hard worker. She didn’t dip into the till. She was reliable. But she wasn’t paid much. All this we know from a very reputable source.

Our source is not one of those unnamed mysterious ones who give their information to the newspapers—no anonymous whistle blower. Our source is not shy in that way. In fact, it is a newspaper—The New York Times.

Now newspapers are “objective.” That might not count when it comes to editorials. That’s where the newspaper gives its opinion. But not in its news columns—unless the facts leave no choice. Oh, yes, choice. We almost forgot about that. We almost forgot that Kim had a choice—Kim and the moms and dads who leave “more than 3 million children—some as young as 5—to care for themselves for at least a few hours a week on a regular basis, according to…”

According to whom? Well, not according to the Times. According to some study cited by the Times, The Times reports the news, it doesn’t make it, and it certainly doesn’t take any responsibility for it. But the paper has its own headlines. And the headline it chose for this story was: “Daily Choice Turned Deadly: Children Left On Their Own.”

Look after McDonald’s cash drawer or look after your kids—it’s a “choice.”

Work to feed, house and clothe your kids, or stay with them, play with them, bounce them on your knee, tickle them, and starve with them. It’s a choice. Some call it “freedom of choice.” Some call it “free will.”

‘Jobless Recovery’ Fuels Greater Class Division

By Ken Boettcher

The inability of the U.S. working class to recognize that its material interests are diametrically and irrevocably opposed to those of the wealthy elite that constitutes the U.S. capitalist class stands as one of the greatest ironies in history. That recognition could put the working class, which alone produces all the vast wealth in this society, on the road to solving virtually all the economic and social problems which increasingly plague the nation.

Lacking it, the overwhelming majority in society, the working class, has no hope of escaping the grim economic realities of the present “jobless recovery”—let alone any other of the multitude of worsening social, economic and environmental crises the capitalist system produces. The litany of economic insults cracking over the collective back of the working class like a bullwhip is a long one.

According to the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), “the current recovery is the worst on record since the Bureau of Labor Statistics began tracking employment in 1939. Employment is down over 1 million since the recovery began.” (Emphasis added.)

Counting the actual recession, as well as the “recovery,” job losses have been even greater. “Since March 2000,” noted an article in the Boston Business Journal, “some 4 million jobs have been lost.” According to the EPI, that is “the worst hiring slump since the Great Depression.”

Unemployment has wavered between an understated official rate of 6.2 and 6.1 percent for the last three months. But as the EPI report noted, “The decline in the growth of the labor force has partially suppressed the growth of unemployment, as an estimated 2 million workers have given up the search for work and are thus not counted” as part of the labor force. (Emphasis added.) Had the labor force’s growth kept pace, the report continued, “unemployment would likely be closer to 7.0 percent.”

“So many people are discouraged,” observed the Boston Business Journal article, and “have stopped looking for work at all, [it has caused] the labor force to experience its largest drop in 40 years.”

The EPI report also noted that in July underemployment, “a broader indicator” of what it called the “real unemployment rate,” was at 11.8 percent. (Continued on page 7)

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Massive Unemployment Strikes Southern Mill Workers

By B.B.

Nearly half of all production jobs in southern textile plants have disappeared since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into effect in 1994, and further losses are almost certain.

The capitalist hoped to profit handsomely from NAFTA. The theory ran something like this: U.S. textile mills would supply American garment manufacturers who moved their production plants to Mexico to take advantage of cut-rate wage levels there. From Mexico finished garments would be exported to markets throughout the hemisphere and textile production jobs back in the United States would be secure.

Huge profits were anticipated and, for a time, that aspect of the plan appeared to work. Sales boomed from 1994 to 2000, according to The Dallas Morning News, as the market value of U.S. textile exports more than tripled from about $1 billion to about $3.7 billion.

By implication the benefits that the textile and garment industries derived from NAFTA during its first five or six years were also to rest on the shoulders of U.S. textile workers. That is the inference that Dallas Morning News writer Katherine Yung made in the opening paragraph of her article on NAFTA and the textile industry.

“When the North American Free Trade Agreement burst onto the scene,” she wrote, “many of the men who ran the country’s textile mills envisioned a dazzling future for their long-suffering industry and its nearly 500,000 workers.” (The Dallas Morning News, Sept. 28)

Did employment and wages also increase during this same period? Did American textile workers also gain something while mill capitalists reaped all the benefits? Not according to the Dallas Morning News. As exports increased the number of mill jobs declined.

One of two graphs printed with Yung’s article indicates that the number of production jobs held steady at about 483,000 between 1990 and 1994. Between 1994, when NAFTA took effect, and 2000, however, jobs declined to about 375,000. Since then the decline has continued until reaching the current level of about 260,000. The decline is not only because of the impoverishment of millworkers, but because it suggests that textile industry productivity increased as jobs fell, tending to devalue the mythic surrounding NAFTA job-creating attributes.

For example: unionized millworkers in North Carolina, where 50,000 jobs have been lost, attribute their plight to NAFTA despite a rise in textile exports to Mexico. One recently fired worker with 35 years at one company said, “I think NAFTA is one of the worst things that happened to a lot of people. It makes you ill.” (The Dallas Morning News, Sept. 28)

The flies in the NAFTA ointment were many. As exports increased the number of production jobs back in the United States would be secure.

Textile workers need to recognize that their interests are not served by clinging to the outmoded capitalist system. What is needed is a labor movement in the hands of workers, providing for social needs, not profit, and organizing all industries into a democratic governing body replacing the outmoded political government we currently have. This in its bare outlines is socialism—a system in which innovative technology will not dispense with jobs but will eliminate working hours from the day and in which the working class will enjoy the full benefit of the bounty that it alone produces.
The Schwarzenegger-Davis Tussle

On Oct. 8, the day after California’s highly publicized special recall election, the San Jose Mercury News proclaimed the result a “BLOWOUT!” 

“In a stinging rebuke of politics as usual,” the Mercury News declared, Gray Davis became only the second governor in American history to be recalled, as a tidal wave of voter anger swept the unpopular Democrat from office Tuesday and carried multimillionaire Arnold Schwarzenegger into California’s top job.”

The Silicon Valley newspaper was right, but not in the way it meant. The election was a blowout, but not because more people voted to remove Gray Davis from office than voted to keep him there, and not because Schwarzenegger got more votes than any of the other self-proclaimed aspirants after Davis’ job. The special election was a blowout because only 8.4 million of the state’s 15.4 million registered voters turned out on Election Day, while another 6.4 million who were eligible to register failed to register and didn’t vote to return or to relocate to the state.

The special election followed a recall petition drive that had languished for months until a multimillionaire California capitalist politician—Congressman Darrell Issa—saw it as an opportunity to make a name for himself. Issa jumped aboard with the money to hire signature gatherers to collect the 2 million needed to qualify the recall proposal for the state ballot, and he promptly declared himself a candidate to replace Davis. The ambitious multimillionaire eventually withdrew when a small army of equally ambitious would-be governors also proclaimed themselves candidates and paid the $3,000 fee demanded by the state to have their names printed on the ballot. Schwarzenegger was only one in a field of 135 when the special election rolled around on Oct. 7.

The voters, angry or otherwise, were asked to vote “yes” or “no” on removing Davis from office and, regardless of how they voted on the recall question itself, to go on and choose one among the 135 would-be replacements. When it was over media pundits and the politicians stuck to their story about California’s voters being angry. However, as a look at the official results posted on the Web site of California’s secretary of state suggests unmistakably, the vast majority of who are, to repeat, workers, workers, workers were not impressed by anything the candidates or the circus barkers in the media had to say.

The turnout on Oct. 7 represented only 54.5 percent of California’s registered voters, which was far less than the 60 percent figure that had been widely predicted by the media and the politicians, and only 38.5 percent of the 21.8 million who could have voted if they had all registered and gone to the polls.

What those results show is that neither the politicians nor the candidates nor the working class is thinking, unless it is that workers are not looking to Republicans, Democrats, or to their Green and Libertarian spinoffs, for solutions to the problems that plague the state and the country. The working class remains a “sleeping giant” that $80 million—$9.52 for every vote cast—plus the media’s propaganda “news” blitz could not arouse.

JoinArnold.com

...Freedom

But then we wondered. Who gave Kim that choice? Why didn’t she have other choices? Why was her “freedom to choose” so limited? Did we miss something? No, the Times didn’t say. The Times only prints the news that’s fit to print. Some things just don’t measure up to that standard. Sometimes you just have to think things through for yourself.

This is what happened. We think capitalism gave Kim her “choice.” We think a social system that gives hardworking and loving moms like Kim that kind of choice is a moral outrage. The Times knows all about it. We think its pages cover it over like a derelict on a park bench. We think it’s time that workers thought about making another choice—outside the box, as they say. We’d like to offer them that choice—the choice between the capitalist that squanders our labor, our lives and our wealth, the country. The working class remains a “sleeping giant” that $80 million—$9.52 for every vote cast—plus the media’s propaganda “news” blitz could not arouse.

(Continued from page 1)
October's strikes by 83,000 grocery workers in California, West Virginia and Missouri and 2,000 transit workers in Los Angeles underscore the ascendance of the class struggle over the division of the wage won by the working class. Planned or de facto cuts in health care coverage or benefits figure prominently in the struggles of all 85,000 workers—and promise to figure ever more prominently in the class struggle generally as the capitalist class increasingly abandons the workers to their haves.

According to a September report co-released by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation and the Health Research and Educational Trust, “The amount workers pay toward job-based premiums for family coverage, that they've bought and run all the way to the past three years,” as an APL-CIO account noted. The report also noted that the premium cost for job-based health plans rose a whopping 13.9 percent between 2002 and 2003—and 49 percent over the last three years. At Wal-Mart, the county's largest private employer, more than 60 percent, or 600,000 of its workers, cannot afford the company's health care plan. According to the United Food and Commercial Workers union, over 3,000 U.S. working families are presently losing health insurance coverage every day. During the Bush administration, when workers in every worker sector today is a new, ready-made thing that the 14 million total. While 63 percent of U.S. workers had health care plans at work (essentially as part of their wage a decade ago, only 45 percent have such plans in 2000).

These cuts are the inevitable result of the attack on the social wage and the organizing class is presently attempting to defend itself against. We say “attacking” because the figures show the struggle is clearly not going well for workers. That trend is not likely to change if workers continue to be “organized” as they are by and for the interest and tactics of the organizations.

Today's procapitalist unions just aren't cutting it for workers because they are based on the idea that the union's role is to cooperate with the owners and reach a bargain that leaves the system intact. Their whole approach and their main and increasing pay-solden-use weapon—the strike, which leaves the factories and services in the hands of the employer—are simply inadequate.

What does good collective bargaining do when the owners try to “bargain” with say “Take these cuts or you're cut”—and have the power to enforce that ultimatum thanks in part to the growing army of unemployed their system produces? How effective can a strike be when owners can and do fire and replace strikers en masse or close plants with impunity? How far can a union go in protecting or advancing workers' interests if it accepts capitalism and the “right” of capitalists to make a profit, as do today's create.

Adequate health care—and much more—could be gained by a working class class differently for the contest. Suppose that workers organize a different kind of union with a different form, different tactics and a different goal. Such a union would start by recognizing a basic fact. Since all capitalists are in business to reap as great a profit as possible—or face failure at the hands of some competitor who more closely follows this principle—the owners of the industries, the capitalists, as a class, constantly strive to keep labor costs as low as possible. That means displacing workers, forcing down wages and cutting benefits to the bone. Workers, as a class, resist least in conditions between these two extremes.

But since capitalists own the industries and therefore have the power to shut them down, move them and lay off or replace workers at will, and workers must sell their ability to work to the capitalists in order to live, the capitalists have the upper hand in this class struggle. To be more unappetizing, the more leverage the very capitalists have over workers, the more the capitalists have over workers.

Proposers unions aim to challenge the capitalists' power itself—unions that recog- nize the whole working class, as a class, to organize and fight for the nation's industries and services. The industrial property that today's capitalists own is an accumulation of wealth stolen from the working class over the years through the process of exploitation—paying workers wages equal to only a fraction of the wealth they alone create.

Suppose we build a new kind of union—a union that recognizes that workers don't need a minority class of parasitical owners in order to run the industries, a union that aims not to bargain with the capitalists but to dispossess them.

Whereas today is a new, revolutionary, industrial union move- ment that aims to organize the entire working class—employed and unemployed, blue and white collar—along industrial lines for the express purpose of taking control of their jobs from the capitalists and setting them through a collective, democratic process to meet society's wants and needs. Along the road to that goal such a labor movement would force more concessions from the capitalists—and better defend such things as health care benefits—than a procapitalist union ever could.

In the socialist society which is the goal of such a movement, a worker-controlled health care industry would be part of a new social system in which all of society's productive efforts would be democratically planned and administered to meet human needs.

Such a classless industrial society would be able to realize the potential that already exists in advanced industrial nations to provide excellent health care for all. It would be a simple matter of the people voting to allocate the resources and labor needed to do so.

This is the essence of the Socialist Industrial Union program of the Socialist Labor Party—a program through which society as a whole can control the economy to satisfy the needs of all, not reaped profits for a few. As today's trends toward falling real wages, increasing labor time and accelerating cuts to benefits like health care plans demonstrate, the alternative to such a revolu- tionary movement is really nothing less than submission to capitalism's own brand of slavery.
Megaburbs’—Another Capitalist Blight
On the Social Landscape

By B.B.

"Suburban sprawl has become so extensive and taken on so many new dimensions in recent years that some new terminology has come into vogue to describe it. Some of the new descriptive terms are "megaburbs," "edgeless cities" and "megapolitan sprawl."

Russell S. Smith is a well known architect and writer who is concerned. Writing for a recent issue of Architectural Record about this chaotic sprawl of ranches, subdivisions, hammerheads, commercial buildings and straggling expressway networks that now engulf the cities of the nation, Russell argued that “Americans have not fully come to terms with the dissonance between the historical suburban dream and what is emerging as a megasuburban reality.”

Russell deplores the lack of coordinated transportation and development planning, encouraging "edgeless cities" of dispersed residential densities and advocates rigorously enforced bans on agricultural and forest land encroachments.

“Megaburbs is what happens when three-quarters of a 282-million-person nation live in what we are used to calling suburbs,” Russell wrote. “Many are places that have grown a hundred or a thousandfold over the past 30 years. They are the places that have nurtured high technology, research and advanced manufacturing. Now the belated burbs and centerless low-rise cities overshadow the central cities in both population and economic activity. Silicon Valley, in California, the pharmaceutical belt of northern New Jersey, and the bistate suburbs of Washington, D.C., have built economies comparable to entire nations.”

Combining his own observations with some of other concerned observers—such as Robert E. Lang whose recently published Edgeless Cities: Exploring the Elusive惘age models that engage suburban fears while describing the true physical impact of anarchistic capitalism. That, and that revolutionary socialism rectify the grave "megaburbian" problems.

Here is how the selling of the “American Dream” worked. It was simple: The population is told what they will like and then are asked: “Now, what would you folks like?” This is the giving of market orders, the capitalists' tool to market orders, the capitalist's tool to the working class has chosen. It is a contrivance instigated decades ago with the promotion of racist attitudes and “Jim Crow” prejudices to drive white workers from older neighborhoods into new development areas. An unholy alliance of real estate, automobile, appliance manufacturers, homebuilders' associations, oil companies and banking interests—in other words, the entire capitalist class—were provided the basis of the manufacturing era and ultimately the era of modern industry. Workers' consent was not sought then, and is not sought now.

Russell is not oblivious to the capitalist origins of the problems he identifies. “The suburb had historically acted as a residential refuge from the city, which was the dynamic focal point of capitalism, perpetually tearing itself down and building itself up to respond to the market's incessant demand and ever changing whim,” he wrote.

Curiously, his article is accompanied by the statement that "The suburb had historically acted as a residential refuge from the city, which was the dynamic focal point of capitalism, perpetually tearing itself down and building itself up to respond to the market's incessant demand and ever changing whim.”

However, there is no indication that Russell has even considered the socialist alternative, in which informed citizen consent will be the basis of all social planning and industrial activity.

How will the working-class majority in socialist society rectify the grave "megaburbsian" problem capitalism has created? It will do so by introducing a comprehensive change in the mode of production, thus ending production for profit and ensnaring production for use. It will also establish the goal of achieving a balance between the natural world and the manufactured world.

This task will be informed by democratic control of production and the most advanced scientific techniques, and planning methodologies toward the goal of safe, healthful human and animal habitats. We only imagine what socialist communities will look like. However, unlike capitalist cities that are fragmented agglomerations of hillbilly-like structures, where discord reins supreme and that compete with one another for sales identity, socialist cities and communities will reflect harmony and integration.
called “labor market distress” (the misery of millions of workers) “was in double digits, at 10.2 percent.”

“For the second consecutive year,” an article in the Chicago Tribune reported in October, “the number of Americans living in poverty has gone up. Almost 1.7 million fell into poverty last year, the U.S. Census Bureau reports, which pushed the official poverty rate up to 12.1 percent from 11.7 percent in 2001.” The new (and also understated) official total was 34.6 million, including 12.1 million children.

Moreover, real wages are again falling after a few years of small gains in the late 1990s that failed to make up the previous two decades of fall. According to the Chicago Tribune, “more than 30 million (or one in four) American workers now work in jobs that pay poverty wages, provide lit- tle or no health benefits and allow little flexibility in family-leave time for quality child care.” The Census Bureau also reported in October that 43.6 million Americans had no health insurance in 2002, up 2.4 million from 2001.

Such figures show the U.S. working class is under deep and sustained attack; its living standards are undergoing a vast change for the worse thanks to the choices—most of which are being forced by competition and the profit motive—of a tiny class that controls the means of life.

That tiny ruling class, on the other hand, is raking in more wealth than ever. The net wealth of the nation’s richest 400 persons, for example, “rose 10 percent to $955 billion this year from 2002,” according to Forbes magazine. And, as the October Boston Business Journal article noted, “With 88 percent of companies in the S&P 500 reporting so far, average profit growth has come in at 13.1 percent” over the same quarter (ending March 31) last year.

This vast shift is taking place at the same time as, and thanks to, a many-faceted attack on working conditions that has employed U.S. workers working longer hours than those in any other advanced industrial country while millions more languish in unemployment. With the capi- talist class siphoning off not only the bulk of any increases in the value of the goods and services produced by workers due to increased productivity—and U.S. workers are the most productive in the world—but also the bulk of the total product of their labor, it’s no wonder the capitalist class is getting richer while the working class is getting poorer and poorer.

The division between the two classes has never been more apparent. Yet there are few signs that many workers recognize it. In the coming months, the exploitation of labor by capital will intensify, but will more workers begin to recog- nize that this class division cannot be resolved without a fundamental change in how our socie- ty is organized? Hollywood, proclerics, academicians and pundits in the media can be counted on to promote the illusion that the growing disparity between the wealthy and the working class can be mitigated by tinkering with such things as the tax laws or with the regulations governing for- eign trade.

As in the past, these defenders of the capitalist system of exploitation will continue to work tirelessly to inculcate the idea that government can be altered in ways that will ease the effects, or even resolve, the economic crisis that capital- ism has created. Such nonsense undoubtedly will continue to deceive a majority of workers unless it is countered by a more vigorous and determined effort by members and supporters of the SLP. Workers more than ever need a voice that can help them begin to fight back against the capi- talist system that exploits and oppresses them. Under that system, workers have produced the means to liberate all of society from want and the fear of want. But those means—the facilities of production—are owned by the minority class that parasitically lives off workers’ labor.
...‘Marshall Plan’ for Iraq

(Continued from page 1)

of Alabama) has spoken of the loss of these markets of Western Europe. Of course, if Russia takes over Western Europe, we shall have permanently lost these markets. But does the senator think for one moment that if we lose our historic markets in Western Europe, we shall be able to maintain the private enterprise (capitalist) system in the United States....

"I shall not think so. I support the Marshall Plan...."

"Mr. EASTLAND. American industry could not profitably operate with the loss of these markets, as American industry today runs at capacity to such extent that it cannot profitably operate unless it can run at capacity or near capacity. Foreign markets are essential to that...So when we support this [Marshall Plan] program and follow it by armed force if necessary, we are saving the capitalist system in the United States, because Russia knows that she could destroy our economy and our system without firing a shot simply by refusing to do business with us."

American capitalism today is confronted by new competitors, such as China, Japan and the European Union, and with a new and potentially greater economic crisis. Although few have ventured to come today’s situation with the Great Depression of the 1930s or to the Cold War, the parallels are there.

The crisis that threatened world capitalism with total collapse before the Second World War, for most of the post-war world, was fundamentally a crisis of “over-production.” The working classes of the industrialized nations had produced too much for markets to absorb and production ground to a virtual halt. The attack on Pearl Harbor and the war that followed changed all that. The American industries were placed on a war footing and the widespread unemployment of the depression years quickly disappeared. Millions of workers were drafted into the military and the ensuing “labor shortage” free-range farmers were drawing millions of women into industrial jobs.

Marshall Plan

Something similar is occurring today. As a front-page article on industrial “overcapacity” in The New York Times of Oct. 19 summed it up: “Not since the severe recession of the early 1980s has capacity use in manufacturing stayed so low for so long as government data shows. Production as a percentage of total capacity fell precipitously in the aftermath of the last recession, which ended in 2001, and 23 months into the recovery, the upturn has still not come. On average, manufacturers are using less than 72 percent of their capacity.

“Struggling to rid of this costly glut, many companies continue to shut plants and lay off the workers, as the Toledo Blade and Rubber Company is doing in Huntsville, Ala., where it is closing a tire plant that employs 1,100 people. Or they have consolidated operations in one or two sites instead of a dozen, as Procter itself has done in the production of detergents, eliminating workers in the process. Other companies, notably the nation’s automakers, have discounted prices and offered rebates to sustain production at respectable rates of capacity — a tactic that squeezes profits and discourages hiring.”

Democratic opponents of the Bush administration’s “reconstruction” program for Iraq claim that it cannot be compared to the Marshall Plan, because of the “bureaucratic” pretenses, but because Congress was not consulted to the same extent as the Truman-era program for rebuilding Europe. However, it is neither the pretenses nor the method that makes them similar, but their purpose. As The Times added in its article of Sept. 27: “Bremer [Paul Bremer, the U.S. administrator in Iraq] and other administration officials say the funds need not immediately be spent. The investment is necessary to prevent Iraq from returning to the kind of tyranny that can breed terrorism.”

“But Larry Blaud, the editor of General Electric’s Marshall’s papers, said the primary purpose of the European reconstruction program was not a guarantee of safety or pure altruism but rather American and global economic needs. ‘The primary emphasis of the Marshall Plan was on restimulating trade,’ said Blaud, who has produced four volumes of the former secretary’s state for the Marshall’s papers.

“The countries of Europe...had no money to buy anything from us, so trade was dead. The idea was to stimulate their economy so they could buy goods again,” he said.

“Some Republicans, like Senator John Warner of Virginia, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, said the comparison to the previous plan was apt, predicting that the reconstruction of Iraq would eventually pay for itself many times over.”

It remains to be seen what the Bush administration’s $87 billion package will do to help U.S. capitalism out of its current economic predicament. What is certain, however, is that economic arguments for the new fund in addition to millions of workers and that multiply the chances of new conflicts over markets, sources of raw materials and strategic advantage will continue as long as capitalism is permitted to survive.
The ‘Silk Road of Oil’
And the U.S. Occupation of Iraq

By Diane Secor

Facing clear evidence of peril, we cannot wait for the final proof—the smoking gun—that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud.

This presidential pronouncement of Oct. 7, 2002, and other Bush administration warnings of Saddam Hussein’s “weapons of mass destruction” were widely reported throughout the U.S. capitalist media as a justification for the invasion and occupation of Iraq. The administration now is on the spot, since no such WMDs have been found.

Why was the administration so desperate to sell this war and to take over Iraq? Is it just to get Iraq’s oil?

There is much more at stake than just the oil found in Iraq. Iraq is a key segment along what is known as the “strategic cross-continen”“Silk Road of oil.”

This was summarized in an Aug. 18 report for euasianet.com by Mevlut Katik. According to Katik, “an official with Botas, Turkey’s state pipeline company,” explained that the part of Ceyhan in Turkey is the “junction of Middle Eastern and Caspian energy basins” along the vast “Silk Road of oil,” stretching from Azerbaijan to Iraq.

Ceyhan is also the junction of two major oil pipeline routes. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline will begin in Azerbaijan, pass through Georgia, and terminate in Ceyhan. This pipeline is under construction. The Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline transports oil from northern Iraq to Ceyhan. U.S. control of key portions of this huge “Silk Road of oil” means windfall profits for American capitalists. This also would secure overall U.S. strategic advantages in the global struggle for raw materials and markets.

There is a considerable amount of evidence that U.S. military operations have been aimed at securing control of segments of these two large “Silk Road” pipeline routes. For example, long before the U.S. invasion of Iraq was officially announced on Aug. 15, 2002, Frank Shor of commonmdeans.org reported that U.S. Special Forces and 5,000 Turkish troops were already fighting to seize the oil-rich Mosul and Kirkuk regions of northern Iraq. The Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline passes through this territory.

Shor also noted that “U.S. oil companies, such as Chevron and Exxon-Mobil, have been purchasing crude oil from Kirkuk through various Russian sources for the last few years.”

A total U.S. takeover and direct military occupation of Iraq would totally change this picture and put the United States in control of this Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline, in addition to the rest of Iraq’s oil infrastructure.

Moreover, U.S. military forces have moved into other countries along this “Silk Road” path to defend the route of the projected Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline.

“The most important mission of the U.S. military deployment will be the enhancement of the security of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan route,” analysts say, according to the Turkish Daily News (March 7, 2002).

There have been numerous attacks on the infrastructure in U.S.-occupied Iraq, including the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline. There have also been guerrilla attacks on U.S. troops, who have not exactly been idolized as “liberators” by the Iraqi people, notwithstanding such statements from Washington propaganda mills. But with substantial U.S. capitalist material and strategic interests on the line, it is unlikely that the troops will be coming home any time soon. American workers and their sons and daughters will be sacrificed as pawns in these ruling-class chess games to defend U.S. capitalist interests as long as this system exists.

Slave Labor in Puerto Rico

By B.G.

The socialist contention that the ugly and exploitative nature of capitalism is much the same everywhere it is found is continually borne out by independent studies of the world’s workers and now receives additional confirmation in the 2002 annual report of Amnesty International of Puerto Rico, which describes “slave-like conditions” for undocumented Dominican workers on Puerto Rican farms.

“People might think that slavery was abolished, but the truth is that it is happening on our island,” said Amnesty International activist Carlos Muñiz Osorio. “Dominicans working in farms are being treated like slaves,” he emphasized. (The San Juan Star, March 26)

Common names—all owners’ refusal to pay undocumented immigrants for their labor, and failures to provide decent housing and adequate food for these workers.

The owners well know that these undocumented immigrants have no recourse at law because of their irregular status and so feel at liberty to exploit them and to squeeze every bit of profit out of them possible. Humanity has nothing to do with the treatment of these workers who are enriching the employers by their labor.

Amnesty International has sought redress of these conditions by submitting a proposed bill to the legislature that will amend the penal code by “creating a mechanism to process any person engaging in actions to enslave.” Also, the organization has submitted a draft of a bill that will further amend the penal code by bringing to justice persons “involved in acts of torture and related disappearances.”

The Workbook/ JFK

Columbus
Discussion Meeting—Section Cleveland will hold a discussion meeting on Sunday, Nov. 30, beginning at 1 p.m., at the Columbus Main Library, Conference Room 1, 96 S. Grant [at Oak Street]. For more information please call 440-237-7933.

Independence
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