Battlefield Losses Pale Against Industrial Carnage

While the capitalist media occupy workers’ minds with the deprivations of politicians, and debate how to get the most advantage from an immoral war against Iraq, 2003, for example, there were 44,994 million “total recordable cases” of injury and illness, 1.3 million of which involved “days away from work.” But the BLS’s National Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries that year reported “A total of 5,559 fatal work injuries,” fewer than in 2005.

In fact, rates of death, injury and illness on the job have always fluctuated according to the volume of production and overall employment. But the government’s figures are hardly a reliable indicator of the real extent—or rate—of carnage in capitalist industry in any period.

Some industries are exempt from record-keeping. Employers are not required to record all illnesses. And all BLS figures are based on reports from capitalist enterprises themselves—the proverbial fox guarding the chicken coop scenario. According to the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health, a union-sponsored educational foundation, “The extent of occupational illness and injury is much greater than government statistics indicate. Some researchers suspect that...”

Cuts at Ford a Sign of the Times for U.S. Workers

By Ken Boettcher
Ford Motor Co. announced plans in September to both accelerate the timing of and add to its previously announced job cuts and plant closings. All totaled, as many as 44,000 jobs at Ford in North America will be cut by the end of next year, and 16 North American plants will be closed by the end of 2012. The cuts will reportedly reduce Ford’s North American workforce by more than a third. Buyouts and early retirement will be offered, but if enough workers fail to leave, involuntary cuts will follow. Output will be slashed by 21 percent in the fourth quarter.

The cuts are much deeper than previously announced. Last December the company’s plans included cutting 25,000 to 30,000 jobs and closing 10 plants in North America within five years. Those announced cuts were also “much deeper than earlier reports, which initially had Ford closing as few as three assembly plants and cutting...about 7,000 positions,” as CNN-Money.com put it at the time.

The company’s massive job cuts will bring tragedy to the lives of workers in many American communities where losses are the greatest. Michigan, where many of the plant closings and job cuts will occur, will be particularly hard hit. The state’s official unemployment rate is already 7.1 percent.

Wall Street, however, still hasn’t seen enough blood. “They’ve got to get 40 to 50 percent of the [workers] out the door,” said Bradley Rubin, an analyst for European banking firm BNP Paribas. “It’s just got to be a lot smaller company.”

Some blame the company’s insufficiently problems on the mistakes of Ford executives who, despite intensifying foreign competition, have garnered obscene wealth.

It is true that the company’s executives have made decisions that resulted in the company losing ground to other manufacturers. It is also true that Ford excels rake in millions for their role in better fleecing the workers they do not hire into the unemployment line. The compensation package for Ford’s new CEO Alan Mulally, for example, reportedly totals $20.5 million in the first year.

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(Continued on page 5)
Coming Soon: War World

By Michael J. James

The three Rs once were the building blocks for the education of American schoolchildren—reading, writing and arithmetic. Now, some are suggesting that a fourth “R” to U.S. pedagogy “revolver.”

The Associated Press reports that recent school shootings in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Colorado have prompted a Wisconsin state legislator to call for the presence of police administrators “and other school personnel.” “To make our schools safe for our students to learn, all options should be on the table,” the legislator says.

Our young ones certainly need protection. In spite of the recent spate of school shootings, however, teachers and students generally do not carry weapons. If they do, it need not be the police, but fired-up, trained citizens. What is needed is more than a light sprinkling of common sense to accept that more guns in more hands can only lead to more shootings and more deaths, not the other way around. For those in need of statistical support, however, the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence has published a 112-page “briefing book” to its website with enough statistics to reassure anyone who doubts their own capacity to throw the common sense conclusion.

Citing a “national vital statistics report” published in 2002 by the National Center for Health Statistics (HCSH), the coalition said “gun deaths in the United States, the majority (16,586) from suicides...” That was for the year 2000, when 10,801 additional deaths were from homicides and 1,276 from “unintentional shootings.”

Drawing on the same HCSH report, the coalition said that “3,365 young people ages 19 and under were killed by gunfire—an average of nine each day”—in 2000. From an earlier study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP), the coalition found that “The firearms-related death rate for children under 15 years old in the United States is nearly 12 times higher than that of the other 25 industri- alized countries combined.” (Our emphasis.)

The CDCC study, as cited by the coalition, also found that “Gun violence is the number one killer of African-Americans ages 15-34” and “the second leading cause of death for Hispanic youth ages 15-24.”

Gathering together conclusions from these and other studies, the coalition said it is “four times more likely that a person will die in the home with a gun than in an unintentional shooting” that be used for self-defense. It is “seven times more likely” that a gun in the home will be used in a criminal assault or homicide than for self-defense. “A person who owns a gun is twice as likely that a gun kept at home will be used to commit a suicide than to be used in self-defense.”

In its “briefing book,” the coalition also cited “a study published in The American Journal of Public Health,” which “found that 20 percent of police officers shot and killed in the past 15 years were killed with their own ‘firearms.’”

Although these statistics are from six to 10 years old, no one today is suggesting that gun-related violence and deaths are on the decline. Indeed, the “debate” on what to do about it rages on in superficial and absurd fashion. Some, such as the Wisconsin politician, say the answer to gun violence is more guns.

It should be noted that the Coalition to Stop Gun Violence is not itself a research group, but one organized in 1981 in promoting “pro-ressive gun laws.” Other concerned persons call for more gun laws, but we can only hope to understand the problem and discover its solution by looking at the economic base of American society.

At the root of U.S. gun violence is our violent economic system. Capitalism allows a small rul- ing class to own and control production and dis-tribution. It sets one class against the other. It uses war as a tool for accumulating and maxi- mizing profit. It requires exploitation and degra-dation of the working class. Capitalism alienates one another and from true social wealth. More- over, capitalism is devoted to the ruthless pursuit of profit with absolutely no regard for peace, the natural environment or simple justice.

And so it is that the broken and outraged that the murder of schoolchildren must rad-icalize him or herself and comprehend the vio-lence of the material base that shapes and drives our society. For example, U.S. history con-firms that capitalism means constant war or preparedness for war. Those who wring their hands over school shootings should consider the link between U.S. militarism and violence in our streets, homes and schools. Is the U.S. corporate, ruling class not now committing the global equivalent of armed robbery by invading and occupying Iraq? The ruling class daily diverts millions in tax dollars away from programs of social uplift such as health care or education and straight into the bloody coffers of the Pen-tagon. Is it not obvious that massive military spending is from our own labor from one another and from true social wealth. Moreover, capitalism is devoted to the ruthless pursuit of profit with absolutely no regard for peace, the natural environment or simple justice.

Militarism, exploitation of the working class, abandonment of the poor and pollution of the...
Trucking Industry Barreling Out of Control

BY B.B.

Mass transportation is a product of the capitalist era. Before that, our ancestors got around by foot, by straddling a donkey, mule or horse, or by riding in a cart, a buggy or a wagon. The only exception that predates the capitalist era is transportation across wide expanses of water, when many of our ancestors traveled as soldiers, sailors or galley slaves.

Capitalism, however, gave rise to the nation-state and roads connecting one end of a country to the other to facilitate commerce, and only incidentally human travel. Commercial coaches, then passenger trains, followed by today's airliners are all products of the capitalist era.

With the invention of the internal combustion engine and the automobile, however, capitalism began to tear down what it had built up. Gone, at least in America, are the trolleys that once crisscrossed, and sometimes connected, our towns and cities. Gone are the passenger trains, except for a few "commuters" in highly congested areas and the badly neglected AMTRAK.

In its place, the individual travel of our ancestors, but instead of driving buggies drawn by a horse or two we drive in cars powered by engines propelled by a power equal to 200 horses or more. The technology has changed, and so have some of the hazards. We rarely ride for highwaymen, but the tollgates on the approaches to some roads and bridges are reminiscent of the tollgates and tolls that travelers once paid at the point of a sword to cross the收費s of feudal times. Rocks still fall across roadways and a flood will occasionally wash out a bridge. But our modern reversion to individual travel also has brought along new hazards--such as drug addicts, alcoholics and felons--that were not present when our ancestors facetted, except in perhaps those of the few of us who can trace their lineage back to the time when Hannibal brought his elephants across the Alps. Today's elephant on the highway is the big rig, the "18-wheeler," the truck pulling a semi-trailer, and sometimes one or two more trailers hocked on behind--"elephants" locked trunk to tail of such size and numbers that they would overwhelm the Carnagian conqueror.

Indeed, nowhere is the absurdity of "free enterprise" more evident than the wrecking and deadly dramas played out on the nation's streets and highways. It's chaos and anarchy, and as such wash out a bridge. But our modern reversion to individual travel also has brought along new hazards--such as drug addicts, alcoholics and felons--that were not present when our ancestors facetted, except in perhaps those of the few of us who can trace their lineage back to the time when Hannibal brought his elephants across the Alps. Today's elephant on the highway is the big rig, the "18-wheeler," the truck pulling a semi-trailer, and sometimes one or two more trailers hocked on behind--"elephants" locked trunk to tail of such size and numbers that they would overwhelm the Carnagian conqueror.

These trucking fatalities were the subject of a series of articles published recently by The Dallas Morning News, Texas, the newspaper reported, "consistently leads the nation in fatalities, in part because it has more roadway miles and the second-highest number of registered trucks."

The state topped the national list of fatalities in 2003, with 419, but Florida and California were close contenders with 314 and 311 such fatalities respectively. Among the causes cited for fatal accidents were:

- A lack of experienced and competent drivers willing to work for bare bottom wages, unpaid down time, in bad weather, through long hours away from home and harsh delivery schedules;
- The hiring of alcoholics, drug addicts and felons and a failure to verify work histories;
- The hiring of drivers with low English language skills who are unable to read signs;
- Employers ignoring drivers' complaints about faulty maintenance of tires, brake pads, or other parts;
- Law enforcement officers overwhelmed by the soaring volume of truck traffic on roads and highways;
- Companies pressuring drivers to deliver loads at a specific time and something called "just in time inventory" with "trucks as rolling warehouses."
- Paying drivers by the hour rather than by the load, which encourages speeding and fatigue when drivers press themselves to complete a run in time to start another; and
- Drivers distracted by computers and e-mailing devices used to receive instructions and directions while driving.

According to Dallas attorney Frank Branson, trucking companies will continue to pay and the mutlivations and deaths as the cost of doing business. Similarly, when state trooper Randy McDonald ticketed an overweight big rig working overtime, he explained to his superiors that the driver, according to the accident report, "was looking at his boss that he could write all the tickets he wanted and it wouldn't change a thing. The state trooper said he had been around "a long time and they've been saying the same thing for a long time." The article concluded that truck owners broke "safety rules to maximize profits."

Truck accidents have spawned a veritable litigation industry as survivors and families have retained legal counsel to claim punitive damages from trucking companies. As a reaction, companies routinely " falsify records and destroy documents that federal law requires them to keep."

The Morning News reported Branson saying that companies spend more time "covering up fault than they do screening drivers and training drivers."

Branson may have had in mind the fatal accident in which a Werner Enterprises truck rear-ended a passenger vehicle because the driver was distracted by an e-mail device mounted on his steering wheel while the truck was moving. The driver of the car burned to death.

Werner, one of the nation's largest truckers, reportedly destroyed the records and logs, then claimed they had been lost. According to one attorney, however, "90 plus percent of drivers were using it [e-mail] while they're driving" in previous cases involving the Werner firm. The Morning News also reported on a number of similar cases to demonstrate how trucking companies use obstructionist tactics to prolong court cases and wear down opposing litigants.

All this comes as no surprise to Socialists, who recognize that this system of legalized robbery of the working class is steeped in perpetual misconduct, corruption and crime. None of this would be possible under socialism, where the profit motive will no longer prevent rational methods from being devised to facilitate travel and the distribution of goods with much less expenditure of energy and resources in our society. That is why these methods are being studied and are receiving the highest level of consideration. We will democratically determine what new and better facilities for mass transportation are constructed and how safely and efficiently and convenient methods for individual travel are developed. The industrial unions involved in the construction of roads and vehicles of all kinds will democratically determine how best to serve our needs without the insane drive for profit to prod them into fools-hardly and dangerous decisions such as those that today jeopardize our safety and well-being every time we step out of the door.

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A De Leon Editorial

An International Plague

Long before Abu Ghraib, even before My Lai, there was Bud Dahu, where American soldiers slaughtered 900 men, women and children during U.S. capitalism's colonial war in the Philippines. Last March marked the 100th anniversary of the crime—of many atrocities committed for the sake of power and profit.

No Quarter

(Daily People, July 17, 1908)

When Adam Smith wrote his chapter on colonies he did not have the benefit of the United States colonial system in the Philippine Islands, and of the effect thereof upon the colonial practices of other and older colonies and foreign countries. Spicy would have been the paragraphs that Adam Smith could then have added to his quite interesting chapter on colonies, especially after reading Gen. Leonard Wood's recent advocacy of "no quarter" for colonial insurgents, to be male or female, adults or children. Colonies are peculiar institutions of capitalist rule. At home, religious tolerance must be practiced, but in the colonies it is expected that all the natives be treated in the same way. It was an admission of the failings of Adam Smith that he was not able to see far enough into the future to realize that the nations were not as under capitalism, for sale and profit. 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 industries and social services by the workers through workers' government based on their national and international economic organization.

Under socialism, all authority will originate from the workers, united in Socialist Industry Unions. Under this system, the rank and file will elect whatever committees or representatives are needed to facilitate production. Within each shop or office division of a plant, the rank and file will participate directly in formulating and implementing all plans necessary for efficient operations.

Besides electing all necessary shop officers, the workers will also elect representatives to a local and national council of their industry or service—and to a central congress representing all the industries and services. This All-Industrial Congress will plan and coordinate production in all areas of the economy. All persons elected to any post in the socialist government, from the lowest to the highest level, will be directly accountable to the rank and file. They will be subject to removal at any time that a majority of those who elected them decide it is necessary.

Socialism does not mean government or state ownership. It does not mean a closed party-run nation. It does not mean that a few men can monopolize a country's or the world's wealth. Socialism is the collective ownership by all the people, for the people and by the people. Socialism means that government of the people, for the people and by the people will become a reality for the first time. To win the struggle for socialist freedom requires enormous efforts of organizational and educational work. It requires building a political party of socialism to contest the power of the capitalist class on the political field and to educate the majority of workers about the need for socialism. It requires building Socialist Industrial Union organizations to unite all workers in a classconscious industrial force and to prepare them to take, hold and operate the tools of production. You are needed in the ranks of Socialists fighting for a better world, to end poverty, racism, sexism, environmental disaster and to avert the still potent threat of a catastrophic nuclear war. Find out more about the program and work of the Socialist Labor Party and join us to help make the promise of socialism a reality.
Texas Leads the Nation
In Producing Greenhouse Gases

By B.B.

Texas lost its bragging rights to being the clean Alaska that it had claimed its star to the flag in January 1959, but keeping a bragging down is hard to do. Texas is back with something else to boast about, if so far its star state claim now has the dubious distinction of leading the nation in the burning of global warming fossil fuels.

A report in The Dallas Morning News lists the state as number one in the production of greenhouse gases, the wrong kind of carbon in Texas, in the list of the top ten. To make about it, they want to hold “sustainable governance” and “the financial, legal and business interest.” (Times, Sept. 21)

Corporate capital is the real force behind the push to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases that cause global warming” (Times).

This reluctance brings to mind a recent demand by the Royal Society, Britain’s highest scientific association with 1,400 members counting Newton and Einstein as members, that Exxon Mobile stop putting out misrepresentations about global warming. They charged that the oil giant promoted a “false sense somehow that there is a two-sided debate” going on in the scientific community regarding the basis of climate change. The society further charged that it was “very difficult” to reconcile the misrepresentations of climate change science in “documents disseminated by Exxon Mobil with its “claims to be an industry leader.” The company spent $2.9 million sending disinformation to 39 groups “including the Competitive Enterprise Institute, the International Policy Network and the Center for the Study of Carbon Dioxide and Global Change.”

There is only one way to rid society forever of all this dissembling posturing is in line with that of other capitalist outfits. Indeed, TXU came out with a full-page propaganda piece on the very day that the Morning News published its report. TXU is the national producer of greenhouse gas. The utility giant claimed it is going to reduce emissions by 20 percent while continuing to burn Texas lignite while reducing costs to the point that it is back with something else to boast about.

Fact is that the capitalist system operates only to increase profits. Private material interests militate against even the most pressing of social needs. Few social needs are greater, few threats more urgent to meet, than the environmental disaster that capitalist-induced global warming almost makes inevitable. “Almost,” we say, because there is a way to stop that disaster from happening. The American working class must organize itself under the banner of the SLP to declare they have had enough of a system that disregards their safety and the future of their very survival for the sake of making money. It must organize itself economically to hold and operate the industries and services of this country democratically. It is the only solution, and it is a good one, because not only will it restore control over our destiny to our own hands—the only safe place for it to be—but also because it will guarantee that our children and their children will live out their lives in a clean and beautiful world.

Capitalism has turned America into the world’s leading threat to our survival. The American working class can yet inspire the workers of all countries to unite and put an end to the madness that places property and profit above life itself. First, however, it must set the example that will tell the world Capitalism is lunacy; socialism is sanity; the choice between the two is yours to make.
...Industrial Carnage

As Dr. Linda Rosenstock, former director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, once put it, “We have tools for prevention here, in the workplace, that sometimes just don’t exist for other illnesses.” “These are all inherently preventable illnesses and injuries,” Rosenstock noted.

Sam Mannan, the head of Texas A&M’s Mary L. O’Connor Process Safety Center, once told U.S. News & World Report, “Most of safety is not rocket science.” We “don’t have to research another 100 years,” he said, “or even 20 years, to figure out the right way to do things. Why accidents keep happening is because we don’t do the things that we know how to do.”

The problem is systemic. Production under the terms and conditions laid down by capitalism is against safety at every turn. Capitalists “don’t want to stop the equipment” when profits are to be made. They invest in a lot of relatively cheap insurance and as little maintenance and worker safe- guards as possible.

This case against capitalism is no mere allega- tion, but a fact well established by both his- tory and the daily experiences of workers on the job. Most workers know that, if they were in charge, workplaces could be made safe. They know they are pressured to take short- cuts, ignore safety procedures, neglect repairs, put off maintenance and so on, for the sake of profits.

Many workers know that government regula- tory agencies charged with occupational safety are worthless because they are in league with the capitalists. Inspections rarely happen. According to one industry safety analyst, OSHA’s 2002 budget would allow its staff of 2,236 federal and state inspectors to inspect the nation’s 8 million workplaces once every 119 years. Inspections that do happen are sometimes legally announced in advance thanks to looph- holes written into a general prohibition against notifying capitalists in advance of inspections.

Many workers also know their union leaders are prone to compromise and collaborate with the capitalists and government agencies.

All too many workers, however, are resigned to accepting all of this. All too few realize that things need not be this way. In their collective hands is the power to change things.

Properly organized, workers can take hold and operate all the industries and services of the land—the entire economy—in their own behalf. With those doing the work in charge of safety, safety will no longer come first. For with capitalism abolished, production won’t be carried on for the benefit of a class of vam- pires that profits from its reckless disregard of workers’ lives and health. —K.B.

...50 Years

The workers are the wellspring whence flows the essence of socialist freedom. Marxism teaches further that it is the task of a socialist party to arouse the workers to a consciousness of their class interests, to show them how to organize to fulfill these interests. But Lenin, Trotsky and the rest of the Bolsheviks—this is an idea that leaves—and Marx’s reliance on the workers. We are not con- cerned here with the overwhelming and com- plex problems that the proletarian revolution in all historically backward country faced. Unquestionably these problems were enor- mous, and they seemed to Lenin to justify the expedient policies that, in the name of the “dictatorship of the proletariat,” led to the creation of a dictatorship over the proletariat. The point is that very early in the life of the Soviet regime the Russian workers were reduced to a nega- tive, subservient role. By the time the Soviet Army “liberated” East- ern Europe, the communist movement was thoroughly conditioned to the idea that the mass of workers had not to be enlightened, but only to be manipulated. Socialism would be the work of “leaders.” It was the duty of the workers to follow the leaders and accept unquestioning-ly their explanations and rationalizations.

This was the concept of “socialism” that the

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Luxemburg in China?

By Jim Plant

Against a backdrop of fabulous wealth and privilege on the one hand, and dire poverty and superexploitation on the other, an extraordinary event took place in the Chinese city of Wuhan last March. That event was an international conference on Rosa Luxemburg’s Thought and Contemporary Value.

The conference, which attracted delegates from the United States, Europe, Japan and South Africa, as well as from China, was “extraordinary” because the ideas and life’s work of Rosa Luxemburg were completely antithetical to the theory and practice of the Chinese government and the ruling Communist Party.

Luxemburg—a Polish Marxist who was active in the Polish, Russian and particularly German socialist movements a hundred years ago—stood for the self-emancipation of the working class and the building of a genuine democratic socialist society. She would have been appalled and repelled by the “cult of personality” that surrounded Mao Zedong, by his disastrous “Great Leap Forward” and by the so-called “Cultural Revolution” that he engineered towards the end of his life. The poverty and exploitation in today’s China, coupled with a complete lack of democratic and union rights for China’s workers, would have enraged her.

Yet such an international conference could not have taken place without at least a tad of go-ahead from the Chinese government. Why Beijing gave its consent is not immediately apparent, but it may be part of an attempt to convince some gulible supporters outside China, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that somehow the Chinese government and Communist Party are interested in the creation of a socialist society.

It is especially ironic that a conference on Rosa Luxemburg should have taken place in present-day China because Luxemburg was a passionate opponent of the death penalty. Indeed, one of the first articles she penned upon her release from a German prison in 1898 (she had been imprisoned because of her antivar war activity) was a call for the abolition of the death penalty. “Communist China leads the world in the number of people executed. Amnesty International estimates that in 2005 alone, at least 1,770 people were executed in China, but it also states that the real figure could be as many as 8,000.

Until recently, the most common method of execution in China was a bullet in the back of the head. Now it is becoming less messy and more “hi-tech” with the introduction of smart “mobile execution chambers,” in which prisoners are given a lethal injection. Reportedly, 40 such mobile execution vehicles have been put into service so far.

These ghoulish vehicles put one in mind of the “gas vans” used by the Nazi Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing units) to murder Jews, Gypsies, Communists and Socialists in Poland and Russia during World War II. They are much more sophisticated, however, and are fitted with closed circuit television. That particular innovation permitted local members of the National Peoples Congress to witness one recent execution.

The designer of the execution vehicle, Kang Zhenwen, states that the switch from gunshot to injections is a sign that China “promotes human rights now.”

George Orwell would have appreciated that remark; it could have come straight from the pages of 1984.
Capitalist Profits Behind China’s Environmental Crisis

By Diane Seccor

Hosting the Summer Olympics in 2008 is said to be a matter of pride and prestige for the leaders of “emerging market” China, a sign that it has been accepted as an equal by the other industrial nations. Two other Asian nations, Japan and South Korea, have staged a total of four Olympic Games since 1964, but in 1993 the International Olympic Committee rejected China’s bid to host the summer games in 2000. There were several reasons for the IOC snub. As noted by an Associated Press item on Sept. 15: “Beijing previously had enacted extraordinary measures to reduce the chances of protest or spurnce up the grimy capital’s appearance. In 1993, during its failed bid for the 2000 Olympics, Beijing expelled beggars, forced the handicapped to stay at home and closed smokestack industries when IOC inspection teams visited.”

In short, China threw up a smoke screen to conceal the capital’s worsening social and environmental problems from IOC eyes, but apparently without success. When China renewed its bid for hosting the 2008 summer games six years ago, it promised a genuine cleanup of the city. The IOC gave in, and since then China has spent huge amounts of money to build the facilities needed to hold the games and accommodate thousands of athletes and other foreign visitors. It has also boosted of making great strides toward turning Beijing from a veritable sewer into a “livable” city, in part by relocating some of the dirtiest factories in and around the capital to outlying areas. Nonetheless, in October 2005, and five years into its “cleanup” program, the European Space Agency dubbed Beijing “the air pollution capital of the world.” As reported by the Guardian of London: “Satellite data... revealed that the city is one of the worst environmental victims of China’s spectacular economic growth, which has brought with it air pollution levels that are blamed for more than 400,000 premature deaths a year.”

“According to the European Space Agency, Beijing and its neighboring northeast Chinese provinces have the planet’s worst levels of nitrogen dioxide, which can cause fatal damage to the lungs.” (Oct. 3, 2005)

try, especially the poorer areas whose populations supply cheap labor to factories, have lax environmental standards. Where pollution laws do exist, fraud and failure to enforce the laws are common. As the director of China’s State Environmental Protection Administration, Zhou Shengxian, explained, this is a “conflict between economic growth and environmental protection.” (International Herald Tribune, Aug. 21) He blames China’s environmental disasters on the corruption of local and regional officials who refuse to comply with environmental laws, and has promised to tighten pollution regulations. Zhou’s and other PRC governmental agencies have been compelled to act to save entire areas of their country. The International Herald Tribune reports that “90 percent of waterways” in China’s urban areas and “75 percent of lakes” have dangerous levels of toxic substances, and “discharges of sulfur dioxide from power plants and industry increased by 27 percent in the five years to 2005 to reach 25.5 million metric tons.” In addition, industrial pollution has endangered substantial amounts of agricultural land. China’s environmental crisis, however, is not a consequence of some corrupt individuals but the direct consequence of a capitalist system’s inherent profit motive. For example, when local or regionall authorities are faced with the choice of closing polluting factories, factory owners simply relocate their plants and carry on business as usual.

This “business as usual” has been devastating to the residents of Hui County in Gansu Province, to cite one example. On Sept. 12, the Associated Press reported that over 800 people in the county, including more than 300 children less than 1/4 years old, were victims of lead poisoning. The source of the poisonous emissions was the privately owned Hui County Non-Ferrous Metal Smelting Plant Co. The plant had the legally required antipollution devices installed, but to cut expenses the company did not use the equipment at night. A government spokesman announced that the company who owns the factory agreed to close down the plant and offer compensation to the lead-poisoned victims, in order to “cooperating positively with the government.”

From the dilemma of keeping capitalists happy while cleaning up its environment for the 2008 Olympics, what is a country to do? According to Xinhua news agency (April 27), the Beijing 2008 Olympics Organizing Committee has hired the prestigious Western public relations company Hill & Knowlton (H&K) to help in “communicating Beijing’s Olympic vision” to the international media. H&K comes with “excellent” credentials. According to Covert Action, some of H&K’s past campaigns include making “sure gas prices were kept low for the American Petroleum Institute,” handling “critics of Three Mile Island’s nuclear catastrophe,” and representing countries known for their human rights abuses such as Turkey, Peru, Egypt and Indonesia.

It remains to be seen how much house cleaning China accomplishes before the 2008 Olympics and how much, if any, the impact will be on capitalist profits. What is certain, however, is that the exploitation of that country’s workers and the degradation of its environment will continue until a truly socialist society exists there.

China’s Emerging Class Struggle

By Jim Plant

The social and economic contrast between China’s burgeoning working class and its emerging capitalist class grows sharper every day, and with it grows the tensions and clashes that are evidence of a sharpening class struggle in the so-called People’s Republic.

Xia Yang is one of China’s nouveaux riches. According to the London Guardian, he is also the founder of the Beijing Suning Xishi Polo Club.

Polo is an expensive sport to indulge in. Among other things, it involves the keeping of thoroughbred horses. Once known as “the sport of kings,” it was a favorite pastime of maharajas, who are flourishing in “communist” China, but who are also the “gentlemen” of today’s class struggle.

Polo is also an expensive sport to indulge in. While Xia can comfortably invest a fortune in a polo dub, Chinese workers have to exist on the most meager of resources. Last summer, for example, a dash occurred in the city of Dongguan between factory workers (producing toys sold by U.S. companies such as Disney, McDonald’s, Mattel and Hasbro) and security guards and police. (International Herald Tribune, July 28) The workers were protesting their paltry wages and unbearable working conditions.

According to the International Herald Tribune, the workers put in 11 hours a day, six days a week for 574 yuan ($72) per month, but in many Chinese factories wage rates are even less. Another example was cited by the British newspaper, the Mail on Sunday, which reported that workers in a plant manufacturing Apple Computer’s iPods are paid as little as $50 (Continued on page 7)