**Millions Reject Gore Bush Even Before Election Day**

In the presidential elections next month, the question of whether workers would be better off voting for the Republican candidate, George W. Bush Jr., or for the Democratic candidate, Albert Gore, is never really asked—or answered—in the major media.

Many workers know the answer. If the under 50 percent voter turnout for the election is any indication and there are those who say even fewer eligible voters will turn out for this year’s election—vast numbers of workers will no doubt be voting with their feet for “none of the above.” The Socialist Labor Party has an option for these workers: Why not work for a real change?

Workers know that the politicians’ promises to make their lives better if elected have been made so many times in their lifetimes. In an article about eligible voters in one town, The New York Times described their feelings: “People here look at Al Gore and George W. Bush and see two men born to the country club, men whose family histories jingle with silver spoons. They appear, to people here, just the same.”

“I don’t think they think about people like us, and if they do care, they’re not going to do anything for us,” said a Greyhound bus depot cashier. “I don’t think either one of those men running for president has ever had to worry about where their next paychecks are coming from,” she added.

“They look the same to me,” said a shift manager at a McDonald’s restaurant who struggles to support herself and her three children on $5.15 an hour. “I don’t even pay attention to those two, and all my friends say the same thing. My life won’t change.”

When one gets past all the rhetoric, disillusioning and vague, often meaningless promises issuing from the mouths of the “trending intelligents” the capitalist class has chosen to finance as its major-party candidates this year, there really isn’t much difference between the Democratic and Republican parties. They both support the capitalist system and serve the wealthy capitalist class that owns and controls the nation’s industries and services. These two parties of capitalism have only minor differences of opinion to best serve capitalist interests. But those differences have little or no effect on the problems plaguing the majority of Americans who belong to the working class—because the capitalist system is itself the root cause of those problems.

Under capitalism, a worker’s very livelihood depends on the hiring and firing decisions of the capitalist minority that owns the means of production. But employing workers is not the capitalists’ goal. Their goal is to make the greatest possible profit, and they employ workers only to the extent needed to produce goods and services that will generate a profit. Yet capitalists can only make a profit by paying workers a wage worth only the cost of living.

**Support The SLP!**

By the time most readers of The People receive this issue, our editorial offices and the national offices of the Socialist Labor Party will be packed up and ready for the impending move to the party’s new National Headquarters in San Jose, Calif.

Moving the offices will be a time-consuming proposition. Not only is it necessary to pack all the party’s files and records, its literature supplies and library, the desks, other furniture and office equipment, but to unpack it all again to set up the new offices. And we will have to piece it all back together and have the new offices in working order far enough in advance to devote the time and attention needed to prepare for the November issue of The People.

That means we have our work cut out for us. It also means there won’t be much spare time to attend to many other things that normally make up the daily routines of the editorial office, the subscription department, the business office, the shipping department or the national office.

But we aren’t complaining. The move, which was forced on us by the whopping 90 percent increase in rent reported in our last issue, may well prove to be a blessing in disguise.

Indeed, the new facilities are superior to the present ones in many important ways, not the least being that they are one-third again as large and will cost the party one-third less in rent.

While the new offices with their lower rent will help to reduce the strain that other rising costs have placed on the party’s financial resources, those savings alone will not be sufficient to eliminate the monthly deficits that have accumulated during the year. Those deficits have made it virtually impossible for the SLP to expand its activities, replenish its savings, place ads in the November issue of The People.

By Ken Boettcher

Last month a 15-day strike by 86,000 telephone workers ended at Verizon Communications, the nation’s largest telecommunications employer. The company was created this summer by the merger of Bell Atlantic (BA) and GTE. The New York Times reported that the contract signed between Verizon and the unions involved indicated “that organized labor still has a place in the New Economy.” The unions involved in the strike were the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW).

The problem for workers is that the place the unions have in the so-called “New Economy” looks a lot like the place they had in the “Old Economy.” If this strike is any example, that place is to promote the false concept that the labor contracts the unions broker serve the interests of both capital and labor. As a press release from the CWA itself put it, “This agreement assures Verizon workers the advantages of a stable work force of the most highly skilled and experienced people, and in many ways it gives our members the ability to do their jobs even better.”

One of the main issues in the strike was Verizon’s attempt to keep unions out of the expanding area of wireless and Internet communications services—an effort it inherited from BA and GTE. As Myles Calvey, of Boston IB EW Local 2222, put it, “The companies’ (BA and GTE) core business—wireline—is going the way of the blacksmith. Meanwhile, we’re shut out of wireless.”

With the signing of the new labor contract, the unions are no longer shut out of wireless—at least not as shut out as they were before. They now have cardcheck recognition and neutrality rights for gaining representation in Verizon’s wireless and Internet services. Those rights ostensibly make it easier for the unions to gain a foothold in the new services and harder for the company to intimidate employees seeking to join a union.

But what of it? For argument’s sake, assume that all workers in the new visions were members of the existing unions. What could workers expect? Clearly, they could expect no more than the settlement just negotiated.

The new contract, which the CWA has called a “path-blazing settlement,” locks Verizon’s workers into a three-year term during which wage increases will barely keep up with the rising cost of living. It does provide for incrementally increased health benefits, increases to pensions that will barely keep up with the cost of living, a “cap” on four hours of overtime and 7 hours per week for some workers and 10 hours during per week for others, a profit-sharing plan with a $1,000 annual limit, and 30 minutes a day during which customer service representatives and telephone operators can do less stressful work.

The contract also promises that the company will have no layoffs, no job downgrades and no forced transfer of workers during its term.

The company can well afford to make these promises at a time when its business is booming. But like the auto companies and many other capitalist
Research Points to Possible Source of Veterans’ Ailments

For years after the Persian Gulf War, the Pentagon and its British equivalent, the Ministry of Defense (MoD), denied the existence of any Gulf War Syndrome that has caused mysterious illnesses and hundreds of deaths among Gulf War veterans. Recently, they have acknowledged that something is causing illnesses, but have maintained that exposures to chemical or biological weapons were not significant enough to cause them. They continue to refuse to test Gulf War veterans for the presence of radioactive depleted uranium (DU), another possible factor in the syndrome.

A recent report in The Times of London reveals the reasons for that refusal.

During the war, British and U.S. forces reportedly fired more than 700,000 shells tipped with DU to help them penetrate enemy armor. In a study of 17 Gulf War veterans, Dr. Boas Durakovic, professor of nuclear medicine at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and former U.S. military physician, said the veterans’ medical facilities in Delaware, life-threatening levels of DU were found in the bones and urine of 70 percent of the veterans studied near 10 years after the war. Durakovic contends that tens of thousands of veterans are dying slow deaths from DU radiation poisoning.

Results of the study were verified by four independent experts. Army engineers who removed damaged tanks and other equipment (armored with DU) from battlefields, and radiologists who cut off the dusty clothing of wounded in field hospitals, found DU to be disproportionately affected.

Durakovic said, “I doubt whether the MoD or Pentagon will have the audacity to challenge these results. I can’t say this is the sole cause of Gulf War Syndrome, but we now have clear evidence that it is a leading factor in the majority of victims.” They may not challenge the results. But it’s not likely they will embrace them quickly either. The ruling classes of Britain and the United States have much to lose if the role of DU in Gulf War Syndrome is ever accepted as fact. Iraq is not the only country littered with DU; so are Kosovo, Serbia and testing grounds in the United States.

Field Reports

SLP Backs Ohio Steelworkers

On Aug. 11, we drove down to Mansfield, Ohio, to distribute leaflets and The People at the AK Steel mill where the United Steelworkers have been on strike for nearly a year. The members of the union, working under contract expired in early March, were locked out after the union contract expired. The lockout occurred even though the union members agreed to work without a contract. A few days after the members were locked out, UAW full of strikebreakers were brought in “accompanied by security guards in military-style clothing with guns,” and media who cut off the dusty clothing of wounded in field hospitals, found DU to be disproportionately affected.

Durakovic said, “I doubt whether the MoD or Pentagon will have the audacity to challenge these results. I can’t say this is the sole cause of Gulf War Syndrome, but we now have clear evidence that it is a leading factor in the majority of victims.” They may not challenge the results. But it’s not likely they will embrace them quickly either. The ruling classes of Britain and the United States have much to lose if the role of DU in Gulf War Syndrome is ever accepted as fact. Iraq is not the only country littered with DU; so are Kosovo, Serbia and testing grounds in the United States.

1. Strike!
2. What’s Wrong With the Labor Unions?
3. National Platform
4. What Is Socialism?

In total I spent about two-and-one-half to three hours on my feet talking in depth with several of the strikers and strike leaders as well as helping them in their verbal attempts to turn people away from the MoMA and its book and design stores.

I was also briefly interviewed by a journalist from a Dutch newspaper named de Volkskrant. The nature of the interview (which lasted about five minutes) had to do with what the SLP is, and that the bulk of our supporting the striking UAW workers was not only a show of solidarity against management but an attempt to get the workers to see the bigger picture beyond their own small battle.

SIU Principles were discussed as well as workers’ democracy and the decisions of minority reforms. I also gave her a copy of Facts About the Socialist Labor Party of America, a leaflet packet and a Socialist Industrial Union: The Worker’s Power leaflet.

John-Paul Catacuso
National Member-at-Large

Apartheid As ‘Trivia’?

At a recent news conference, Republi- can vice presidential candidate Richard Cheney defended his voting record on apartheid.

Apartheid was South African capitalist’s system of racial separation and oppression. Under capitalist apartheid, white people (regardless of class) lorded it over blacks and “coloreds.” Worse, under capitalist apartheid whole generations of black South Africans were oppressed, and uncounted numbers were tortured and killed.

In response to a reporter’s question about his 1985 vote against a House resolu- tion that urged the release of Nelson Mandela, the president candidate for South Africa, Ch- eney got his feathers ruffled. He branded those questions as “trivia,” then quickly qualified his remark by saying that he voted against the resolution because it was attached to recognition of the African National Congress, which at the time was branded as a “terrorist” organization by the U.S. government.

Cheney apparently “forgot”—and continues to forget—that the system of apart- heid itself was organized terrorism com- mitted daily against the majority in South Africa. Cheney, together with the leader- ship of the Republican Party in Congress, showed his real colors by voting—at least 10 times—against economic sanctions that would have punished, if only trivially, the capitalistic ruling class of South Africa for continuing its campaign of terrorism.

Do You Belong?

Do you know what the SLP stands for? Do you understand the class struggle and why the SLP calls for an end of capitalism and of its system of wage labor? Do you understand why the SLP does not advo- cate reforms of capitalism, and why it calls upon workers to organize Socialist Industri- al Unions?

If you have been reading The People steadily for a year or more, you have read the literature recommended for be- coming Socialists, and if you agree with the SLP’s call for the political and econom- ic unity of the working class, you may qualify for membership in the SLP. If you qualify to be a member you probably should be a member.

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

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To Our Readers

The imminent SLP headquarters move will cause some delay in processing subscriptions, literature orders, correspondence, etc. The patience and understanding of our readers will be appreciated.

ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

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Profit Motive Pushing Workers to the Edge

By R.B.

Recent attention has been focused on outbursts of frustration and anger by airline passengers, usually vented at the ticket counter or on flight crews, but even against pilots when airplanes are still airborne. Charges and countercharges have been leveled by travelers to transportation officials, flight attendants, and others that the phenomenon of air rage offers another example of the degeneration of the social atmosphere.

A spate of letters on the subject was published in The Dallas Morning News. Some letters cast aspersion upon supposedly unfriendly and lazy flight attendants. Others ruled against restrictive baggage rules, blaming loud speakers, narrow and cramped seating, long runway waits, full-wrapped ham and cheese sandwiches on four-hour flights, early arrivals only to find gates occupied, and numerous other inconveniences that turn airline work and travel into harrowing experiences.

One former “customer service” worker and occasional air traveler wrote to say, “I have seen and heard it all. Air spicksy or uncaring and lazy flight attendants,” but also to criticize those who laid “all the blame...at the feet of flight attendants...” A contributing factor, in his view, is “a definite increase in surliness, demanding attitudes and an inability to exercise...courtesy to travelers.”

One 25-year veteran flight attendant came closer to the mark in a letter giving a generally fair analysis and accounting of the situation. “The fault for so-called ‘bad service’ does not lie with the flight attendants,” she said. “Today’s intelligent society and unceasing competition with the employees have escalated to our current atmosphere.”

Concerning her work experience, she added: “I have had people ask me to lift suitcases filled with books to an overhead bin because it’s too heavy for them. Do these people know I am a 5’3” woman and that bag is too heavy for them to lift, I know I can’t either...I now carry some of the smaller bags with bags and my company fought hard not to pay me my compensation when I was hurt.”

She related that she had seen “passenger refusals to put their seats back up for takeoff and landing, get verbally abusive when we run out of choices of meals. I’ve been handed dirty diapers, tissues that were used to blow noses and air sick bags that are filled with vomit. I’ve seen first-class passengers clip their toenails, put their bare feet on the seats, use our hand towels to wipe their hands and then hand the dirty towels to me.”

She further added, “The flight attendants...are not the only people on the plane. The company calculates from the time the aircraft parks at the gate.”

As one worker put it, “We do our best to keep a smile on our face, but it’s getting harder and harder when management tightens the purse strings and our pay doesn’t go far enough.”

Thus, airline passengers and airline workers are depicted as two conflicting forces flinging charges at one another without a resolution seen.

What this particular group of letter writers fails to take notice of is that these very flight attendants are people who are also concerned that their co-workers are not given proper and adequate vacations. Of some who are given the requisite one and two weeks time off per year, only a few are able to get the full amount of time off. As a result of the way these invitations are handled, the French rulers of Indochina have decided to withdraw from their frontiers outposts, abandoning large areas to the “Democratic Republic of Viet Nam.”

Editorializing on “the seriousness of the situation in Indo-China,” The New York Times, Oct. 17, attempts an apologetic explanation for American policy in Indo-China. This policy is one of supporting the French by giving them “all the arms they need or can handle,” but refusing to intervene with American troops.

The Times admits that there are “genuine elements of nationalism and civil strife in the Indo-China situation. It also admits that there is no assurance that a regime can be changed by democratic processes...one that will have a firm Communist lid put upon it.”

The Times, of course, is a “citizen politically.” The American pharacy—but the Times is its leading mouthpiece—knows that the true situation is a change “by democratic processes” in French Indo-China as there is in Stalin’s Russia. Indeed, an important reason for the fervor of Viet Nam revolutionaries is the fact that their demands in the past have always been answered with arrests, torture and machine guns and bayonets.

The real reason for American intervention, the Times therefore, is not preference for “a regime that can be changed by democratic processes,” but simply the fact that Indo-Chi-na occupies a strategic place in Southeast Asia, and its loss to forces allied with Communist China and Soviet Russia “would be a severe blow to the West.” This policy is in fact one of supporting a reac- tionary colonial power and one that is thoroughly hated by its colonial subjects and slaves. The fact that this support extends only to arms of nations, and not to the dispatch of troops, is the result of a convenient political calculation, among which following the which the following deserve mention:

1. Sending American soldiers to fight in Indochina would be extremely unpopular here at home.

2. Incidents have occurred, such as attacks on American sailors on the streets of Saigon, that have made the outbreak of another world war even more likely than before. The most universal hatred of all white friends of the colonial oppressors by the Viet Namese people. Bao Dai has no following among the anvil elements of nationalism and the French colonial oppressors by the Viet Namese people. Bao Dai has no following among the socialists, and the anti-French uprising is likely to spread.

3. To be unequivocally identified as the supporter of French imperialism would tend to give the lie to American claims of being anti-imperialist.

FBI Trains Against Repression?

FBI Director Louis Freeh has reportedly begun a new program designed to “teach the failure of law enforcement to workers to people with a very narrow people. Many of the questions will be settled by the People’s friendship, or at least, most environmentally friendly and socially useful trans- portation technologies. Many see it as a way of squeezing the most profits out of work- ing class-lives.

But as long as workers fail to recognize the tension and the anger they express by thrashing out aimlessly and pointlessly at their fellow workers in short order, and thereby reduce the actual effectiveness of squeezing the most profits out of working class-lives.

In the interest of the capital- ist class, the FBI has routinely trounced the trade unions and the working class-majority in general and of mi- norities in particular. It is now public knowledge that FBI agents—often paid by the KKK did its dirty work in the 1960s and 1970s—sometimes even assume, as its undercover agents did in the KKK— the role of racist discriminators, and act as antiafocal of the civil rights movement—of thousands of citizens over the past few years.

The agency’s “virtues” apparently do not include a lack of hypocrisy.—K.B.
The antisocial behavior of "corporate" power robs the working class of the majority of the wealth workers create. It is at the workplace where workers are deprived of their product. The response of class-conscious workers is to build the workplace struggle, extending the fight against the employer to the total process of production and the disposition of its product.

In other words, workers can build the industrial democracy of socialism. In such a society, a given economic motive to produce would not be private profit but the meeting of the people's needs and wants. Workers would have the freedom to use the power to eliminate exploitation, unemployment, poverty, race and sex discrimination, militarism, pollution, etc.—directly through their own governmental bodies based right where they work.

Workers can have a socially responsible economic system when they themselves take control of the economy. The reform proposals of Nader and the Greens have nothing to do with such a change, and everything to do with trying to find ways and means to extend the life of a system that must be completely abolished if workers are ever to have effective access to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Nader and the Greens stand at bottom for the same narrow agenda and class interests as the Democrats and Republicans. Nader's and the Greens' programs are tools owned by some capitalist to develop all individual capacities and potentials within a free community of free individuals.

Socialism is the collective ownership by all of 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 direct administration of the services by the workers through a democratic government based on their nationwide economic organization.

Under socialism, all authority will originate from the workers, integratedually with Socialist Industrial Unions. In each workplace, 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 congres representing all the industries and sectors. This all-important impetus will build plans 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 accountable to the rank and file. They will be removed at any time that a majority of those who elected them decide it is necessary. Such a system would make possible the fullest democracy and freedom. It would be a society based on the most primary freedom—economic freedom.

For individuals, socialism means an end to economic insecurity and exploitation. It means workers cease to be commodities bought and sold on the labor market and forced to work as apprentices in the tools owned by some capitalist. It means a chance to develop all individual capacities and potentials within a free community of free individuals.

Socialism does not mean government or state ownership. It does not mean a state bureaucracy as in the former Soviet Union or China which is being worked on all, no matter what the power surrenders his purse to the highwayman, who covers him with a bludgeon! The many-headed and many-tentacled monster, being open to all, as the property of all, whoever contracts shall be at a par with whomever he contracts with! And in the meanwhile the many-headed monstrously carries its monstrous impudence to the point of setting up artificial fortifications, which it unpatronizingly names "unions" and from behind which it seeks to restrict the freedom all along enjoyed by the employer! Of course, such impudent assumptions are enough either to disgust or to en- courage the liberty-loving employer. His one-time "bargaining partner" is now his slave. The worker's share out of his helpless workmanship is threatened to be put in chains, and even his one-time dearly cherished liberty of saying the terms that he dictates to his employer, "a contract," is being questioned!
Joe Hill Was a Skewer By PBS Documentary

Joe Hill was the subject of a television documentary produced by KUED-TV, the Public Broadcasting System's outlet at the University of Utah. The documentary was produced last year, but feared was never broadcast—until now. PBS is going to televise it for Labor Day 2000.

Joe Hill was a member of the Industrial Workers of the World, the organization that was the original and genuine IWW founded in 1905, but of the anarchist IWW that usurped the organization's name in 1908 and proceeded to proceed with the做到了 the class struggle. That is, it has become a legend and martyr to anarchists.

The KUED documentary claimed that Hill's execution was the crowning act of industrial unionism, but of the anarchist IWW that usurped the socialist movement in 1899. (A recent attempt to raise the tone of the country, the IWW has frequently depicted as an “enigma.”)

The KUED documentary followed the work of the Bummery in the Chicago area. It claimed that the Bummery was willing to become the executioners of industrial unionism, which took place in the IWW meeting in Chicago, where the IWW’s fourth convention was held, and provided the claque and strong-arm boys to back up the capitalists. Thereafter, it stated that they would have helped the capitalists to drag the country through the pit of capitalist-class conspiracy, that he was a man who represented the International Workingmen’s Association. He was a man of letters, a poet and a labor leader who represented the International Workingmen’s Association.

To the Editor of the Daily People:

Josephine Bates was for several years secretary of Local 86, and was published in the Daily People of Sept. 28, 1908, De Leon in detail how one Walsh, an IWW organizer in the West who was an advocate of anarcho-syndicalist concepts, organized the execution of Joe Hill.

Walsh brought this “brigade” to the convention of the IWW in Chicago, where the IWW’s fourth convention was being held, and provided the claque and strong-arm boys to back up the capitalists. Thereafter, it stated that they would have helped the capitalists to drag the country through the pit of capitalist-class conspiracy.

The actual place of the KUED’s latest act of these Bummeryites is to raise the tone of the country, the IWW has frequently depicted as an “enigma.”

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precedent prosperity." Imagine in Orwellian fashion called "un-
candidates and other pundits have
together. This period of "busts" has always
capitalism because they are
inherent in the system's class
division and production for profit.

Production for profit and com-
petition between capitalist firms
also fuel unemployment as each
firm strives to lower its "labor
costs" by automating, otherwise
stepping up productivity—and
"permanently displacing" work-
ers. And as unemployment climbs,
the resulting "oversupply" on the
"labor market" gives capitalists
the leverage they need to drive
down the wages of the workers
still employed.

Thus, the capitalist system is
the root cause of the persistent
unemployment, growing poverty,
falling wages and worsening economic
inequality now assaul-
ting U.S. workers—an economic
tomorrow that the two major
candidate's campaigns have
in Orwellian fashion called "un-
precedented prosperity." Imagine
a prosperity that includes the loss
of 416,000 manufacturing jobs
since 1998 and real wages that,
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the whole world painted Martha other plants, too. Then it seemed because she tried to help them at and a Communist, and she was democratize the unions tried to democratize the union at Sony, to adorâs] and others tried to de- would get fired, or other bad groups, but they evolve and get everyone else.

Martha, address, Frederick Engels not only gives the historical back- ground for the speech, but also outlines the commercial and in- terests carried on, there will always be a able the conditions under which the exchange of commodities is or training, or too mild liberal a class that exploits and a class that is exploited.

Until something goes wrong, that is—their favorite ploy is to blame the workers. Whether it be a railroad disaster, a plant or mine explo- sion, a Bhopal or a Three Mile Is- land, their “leadership” is not to blame for the lack of safety classes or training, or too mild or training, or too mild liberalism, which would emerge the social revolution and true freedom. In breaking down national bound- aries, and heightening the con- flicts in capitalism that will lead to its self-destruction, free trade hastens the social revolution and the breakup of the existing order.

Visit the SLP’s Web site (www. slp.org) to read or download Marx’s text, and watch for new ti- mely—K.B.
Maquiladora Worker Tells His Story

FNS EDITORS’ NOTE: Omar Gil has been a worker in several industrial plants on the U.S.-Mexico border since he was 19. A life of mind-numbing work under unhealthy and incessant conditions, eventually convinced him that he must work to change things. He tells his story to FNS associate editor David Bacon, who translated it from the Spanish.

Omar Gil, as told to David Bacon
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NUEVA LAREDO, TAMAULIPAS—I come from Mexico City. My father had a business there, a small bookstore. Then, because of the devaluation of the peso, his store went broke. I was 11 years old. My parents looked for work in Mexico City, but they couldn’t find any, so they came here to the border, to Nuevo Laredo.

So I went to school on the border. My plan was to go back to Mexico City, to the university, to study physics and mathmatiques or law, but I didn’t have the money so I had to go to work.

At first I began taking classes in air-conditioning repair, and started to work in a clothing shop. My job didn’t interest me at all, so I wanted to try something different.

But working in the maquiladoras, it’s not really possible to go to school, mainly because of time. Also, the pay is low, and my job is very insecure. I haven’t lost hope yet, but I’m not 100 percent sure anymore. Now there are other factors as well. I don’t have any time to rest, and I’m getting physically exhausted.

I’ve been in these factories since I was 19. Now I’m 26. I don’t have time for any kind of personal life—I have work so tired that on the weekend I don’t want to go anywhere. All my personal development has been put on hold so that I can just rest. I feel like my youth has passed me by. I got my first job in a maquiladora back in 1990, at Delphi Auto Parts. They paid 300 pesos a week (about $43). We worked 12-hour shifts, and they said it was the same pressure for production as at Delphi.

Now, I’ve been at TRW for about a month and a half. There’s really no difference in the conditions—if anything, my situation now is even worse. You could say it’s a forced labor, considering how the foremen talk to the workers, and how much psychological pressure they put on people. We work an average of 14-hours a day. There’s no transport service, and we get off at 4 in the morning. Usually we have to wait until 7 AM before we can catch a public bus. And getting home costs 20 pesos. That makes a very big dent in your take-home pay.

My job is bending steel cables for seat belts for GM, Ford and some European car models. The cable is about a centimeter thick, and I have to bend about 3,500 car models. The cable is about a centimeter thick, and I have to bend about 3,500