The Pork In Terror

By Paul D. Lawrence

Headline writers work under tighter deadlines than reporters do. They need to quickly read an article, sum it up and compose a headline that will fit in the space available. Every one of us has read headlines that contradict the article. On the other hand a headline in the Aug. 7 Washington Post went beyond anything specifically reported—but caught the real essence of the situation: “Bioterrorism Response Hampered by Problem of Profit.”

In 2000, the Pentagon’s Defense Science Board determined that the United States would need 57 drugs, diagnostics and vaccines to protect against a bioterrorist attack. There was only one. Now the number has doubled to two.

“Senators are aggressively promoting legislation that would grant companies unprecedented entitlements to work on meeting the bioterrorism defense needs on the classified list,” the Post reported. One key incentive would be extending by 18 months patents on the most profitable drugs of companies that participate in the war against bioterrorism.

“Thirteen sponsors, including Senators Orrin G. Hatch (R-Utah), Joseph I. Lieberman (D-Conn.) and Sam Brownback (R-Kan.), say that bipartisan response would be extended by 18 months patents on the most profitable drugs of companies that participate in the war against bioterrorism.

Whether one calls this extortion or bribery makes little difference. The bottom line is that the pharmaceutical companies place profits before patriotism.

Strange Bedfellows

It’s not often the United States finds itself in the company of Lesotho, Papua New Guinea and Swaziland. In a survey of 168 nations last year five nations provided no paid maternity leave.

The fifth, Australia, however, provides one year of job-protected leave. That’s how the world’s most powerful plutocrats treat their wage slaves.

AFL-CIO Split: What It Means for U.S. Workers

In the recent split in the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations fought with danger for workers or ripe with possibilities? Will it strengthen workers’ position in the class struggle with the employing class or advance the interests in the least? The details show the split to be much ado about nothing as far as workers’ interests are concerned.

In July four major union affiliates boycotted the 50th anniversary convention of the AFL-CIO. The Teamsters and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) went a step further the day the gavel opened, the convention, disaffiliating from the federation. Four days later, the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) also disaffiliated.

Seven unions with 6 million members have at last count joined the “Change to Win” reform coalition, which was founded in June. The Change Coalition includes the Teamsters SEIU, UFCW, three AFL-CIO affiliates—the Laborers International Union of North America (LIUNA), the United Farm Workers of America (UFW), and UNITE HERE (formed in 2004 from the merger of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees and the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union). It also includes one non-AFL-CIO affiliate, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America (CJA).

The coalition’s preconvention platform included, among other things, demands that the AFL-CIO direct half its budget to organizing, and that it “actively support mergers that unite workers by industry,” “assume the role of the overall coordinator of labor’s efforts to unite workers to build bargaining strength,” “unite workers’ strength across borders” and elect “leadership committed to building a movement.”

When it became apparent that AFL-CIO officials weren’t likely to implement the coalition’s demands and that John Sweeney would not retire, the Teamsters and the SEIU walked, followed by the UFCW.

In his keynote remarks to the convention, federation president John J. Sweeney claimed that the split is “a tragedy for working people” because “a divided movement hurts the hopes of working families for a better life.”

In fact, Sweeney and the Change Coalition’s fakers must know how little they really have to offer workers. The history of the procapitalist labor movement is well known to the fakers involved. Both the “reformers” and the Sweeney “old guard”—which was the “reform” element in 1985 when they came to power—must be aware that everything they are enforcing or proposing has been tried and has failed to rejuvenate the U.S. union movement. The AFL was founded to coordinate a lot of individual trade unions in the service of capitalism, was then opposed by a “more aggressive” Congress of Industrial Organizers that wanted to organize industrywide for a “better deal” and failed to do so, then was “united” with the AFL in a “federation” both thought would stave off the decline that followed. Now the “more aggressive” elements have split off again, in search of more effective rear-guard action to defend their retreat.

The labor fakers know this history. They know that their brand of unionism turned its back on the real class interests of long ago, leaning on the capitalist state for “labor laws,” and on the class enemy of the workers for “labor contracts.” They have always howled when their capitalist-class masters periodically kicked those props from under them, in lock step with capitalist class interests. They despair now because the capitalist system they have supported all along is kicking them in the teeth and taking away the duespayers they bled to feather their own nests. With only 8 percent of private sector workers and 12.9 percent of all workers now members of unions, their desperation is reaching new levels.

A UFCW statement on its disaffiliation from the AFL-CIO says that, “The UFW and the Change Coalition unions are rapidly moving forward to develop a national organizing, bargaining and political program based on our vision and strategy for the future.”

But even if every reform demand of the Change Coalition had been embraced by the whole AFL-CIO, the end result for workers would have to be more of the ongoing long slide into joblessness and insecurity for increasing numbers of U.S. workers.

Why? The thing most baffling the existing unions is that they accept capitalism in the first place, and nothing the Change Coalition has to say changes this in the least. They want the best deal capitalism has to offer for their members.

For the first half of the 20th century U.S. capitalism was on the ascendent, eventually dominating the globe after two world wars destroyed most of the productive capacity of its strongest competitors. Under such circumstances the capitalist class generally bought the labor fakers’ “product”—labor “peace”—and bargained with the fakers over the terms of workers’ exploitation, sprinkling some concessions to workers to fend off dissent. “Organizing” unions with the goal of getting the best deal capitalism had to offer (Continued on page 11).
When BBC Radio 4 announced the results of a listeners' poll on the "greatest British philosopher" in July, Karl Marx came out an easy winner. Marx polled nearly 28 percent of the 30,000 votes cast, more than twice the number received by the second place finisher, 18th-century Scottish philosopher David Hume, who came in with less than 13 percent of the total.

The poll results set off a flurry of commentary in newspapers around the world, particularly in the British press, but more particularly in the Scottish homeland of the snubbed runner-up. The Sunday Herald of Glasgow, Scotland, for example, printed a column by Ian Bell under the heading of "Karl Marx, who was voted Britain's favorite philosopher last week, never offered answers. But his questions are still worth asking." Among other things, Bell had this to say about Karl Marx:

"Neither the man himself, nor those who subsequently claimed his name, ever got around to explaining what you, me or anyone else might do with the consequences of the question. How is power to be exerted in an authentically socialist society? The 20th Christian century suggested that ceding all rights to the latest sociopath might not be the way to go. After so many corpses of people murdered in the name of the people, it is pointless to argue. Logically, for democracy to be perfect, we would all have to vote, always, for the same thing at the same time; always. All in favor of that? Possibly not."

Almost immediately after this article appeared, SLP supporter James Plant of England sent a letter to the Sunday Herald in response to Bell's column, with special emphasis on the passages quoted above, which was printed on July 24 in what Plant described as "a very truncated, emasculated form."

The editors of the Sunday Herald not only "emasculated" Plant's letter, they showed themselves to be bad losers, soreheads and truncated, emasculated, form."

Dear Editor,

Ian Bell (Sunday Herald, 17 July) correctly acknowledged that Karl Marx was right on the ball in showing that the great majority within capitalist society— the working class— are exploited, or to use Bell's terminology, they "get screwed." Marx, of course explained the process in scientific detail, demonstrating that workers produce "surplus value" over and above that which they receive in wages, and that this surplus value is appropriated by the minority capitalist class.

Bell is right on an important point when he avers that neither Marx, nor any subsequent Marxist, ever explained how power would be exerted in a future socialist society. Marx was not a utopian. He was no St. Simon or Plato who thought he could blueprint the future with his "Republic" as if it was a prefabricated house. Marx, of course, explained the process in scientific detail, demonstrating that workers produce "surplus value" over and above that which they receive in wages, and that this surplus value is appropriated by the minority capitalist class. Marx knew that ceding all rights to the latest sociopath might not be the way to go. After so many corpses of people murdered in the name of the people, it is pointless to argue. Logically, for democracy to be perfect, we would all have to vote, always, for the same thing at the same time; always. All in favor of that? Possibly not.

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The following is the text of the National Platform of the Socialist Labor Party adopted by the 46th National Convention in Santa Clara, Calif., July 9-11. The platform is subject to ratification by a special convention of the party. SLP members are urged to read the text carefully before marking and returning their ballots to the National Officer for tabulation by a special committee for ratification by the National Executive Committee. The general vote closes on Friday, September 16.

Few can deny that the world today is in a constant state of upheaval. That is reflected in the widespread anarchy, turmoil and conflict not only in the developing industrial nations but also in developing nations throughout the world. The fact that such conditions prevail generally throughout the world, and have prevailed for a long time, logically suggests the presence of a dominant common social factor. That common social factor, the Socialist Labor Party has repeatedly demonstrated, is the capitalist system that does not and cannot work in the interests of the majority. It is a social system in which society is divided into two classes—a capitalist class and a working class. The capitalist class consists of a tiny minority—the wealthy few who own and control the instruments of production and distribution. The working class consists of the vast majority who own no productive property and must, therefore, sell their labor to work for the class that owns and controls the means of life in order to survive.

The relationship between the two classes forms the basis for an economic tyranny under which the workers as a class are robbed of the major portion of the social wealth that they produce.

The beneficiaries and defenders of this economic dictatorship never tire of declaring it the “best of all possible systems.” Yet, today, after decades of new deals, fair deals, wars on poverty, civil rights legislation, government regulations, deregulations and a host of other reform efforts, capitalist America presents an obscene social picture. Millions who need and want jobs have been outsourced. Others are underemployed. The relationship between the two classes forms the basis for an economic tyranny under which the workers as a class are robbed of the major portion of the social wealth that they produce.

The Socialist Labor Party raises its voice in emphatic protest and unqualified condemnation. It declares that if our society is to be rid of the economic, political and social ills that for so long have jeopardized the world's most advanced capitalist system of private ownership of the social structure and the bloated wasteful energy demands of capitalism have added to the social malaise enveloping the world. Thus wars for the domination of oil sources and spheres of influence in Afghanistan and Iraq are serving to satiate capitalist appetite for profit and survival. Meanwhile, new emerging threats to U.S. hegemony have arisen in Iran, Korea and elsewhere. The workers not only to resist the ever-increasing encroachments of the capitalists more effectively, but ultimately to provide the essential power to enforce the decisive leverage to “swing” the revolution.

Moreover, they have the structure that provides the necessary foundation and structural framework for socialist society. It is the workers who will fill out the new social framework and make the people's ownership, control and administration of the new social structure a reality. Despite the many threats to workers lives, liberty and happiness today, despite the growing poverty and misery that workers are subjected to, a world of peace, liberty, security, health and education for all is within our grasp. The potential to create such a society exists, but that potential can be realized only if workers act to control their own lives by organizing, politically and industrially for socialism.

The Socialist Labor Party calls upon all who realize the critical nature of our times, and who may be increasingly aware that a basic change in our society is necessary, to building class-consciousness among workers and projecting a program of organization that the workers could implement toward this end. That program also is called for the organization of revolutionary socialist unions. These are essential to mobilize the economic power of the workers not only to resist the ever-increasing encroachments of the capitalists more effectively, but ultimately to provide the essential power to enforce the decisive leverage to “swing” the revolution.

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We interrupt our series of articles on the 100th anniversary of the original Industrial Workers of the World, to take notice of another annuity from the annals of the labor movement—the merger 50 years ago of the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations. The following prognosis of what the AFL-CIO merger would mean for American workers is timely, not only as a test of the accuracy of what The Picone and the SLP anticipated, but also with near-term relevance to the organiza- tions from the AFL-CIO in mind. Then it was merger, now it is dismem- berment, but neither was more than a principle. Berment, but neither was more than a

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SLP Still ‘Full of Fight,’
Bills Tells Delegates

The following is the text of National Secretary Robert Bills’s opening remarks when convening the 46th National Convention of the SLP, held July 9–11 at the Holiday Inn hotel in Santa Clara, Calif.

Greetings, and Good Morning—

Two years ago, there was reason to believe that this day might never come. The SLP was confronting a major financial crisis that seemed too formidable to be overcome. However, due in large measure to that generosity of spirit that ever guides the hearts of those who are dedicated to a great cause, we are here this morning to carry on with the great purpose to which the SLP is dedicated.

I recently received a letter from a long-time supporter of the SLP—a letter with which he enclosed a sizable contribution to the New Publications Fund, but in which he also expressed the belief that the SLP had failed.

The identity of this good, if somewhat disheartened, friend of the SLP does not matter. His letter was as brief as his contribution was generous, but it gave me opportunity to respond, as follows:

‘I do not believe it is correct to say that the SLP has failed,’ anymore than I believe it would be correct to say it has succeeded. It has done neither, although it has failed and succeeded in certain important respects. It has not failed because it has succeeded in surviving the repeated onslaughts of many formidable forces that have wiped out entire movements and even nations. Long before I began to read it 11 years before I was born, the opponents and enemies of the SLP and its Marxist–De Leonist principles had nailed shut the lid on the party’s coffin. It was said that the SLP was De Leon and De Leon alone when the Socialist Party came along and built up its sand castle of a million votes. Only Eugene Debs had the insight and presence of mind to caution his SP compatriots that the SLP was not to be counted out. Debs was wrong about many things, but he was right about the tenacity, vitality and viability of the SLP.

‘Look at all the storms the SLP has weathered well enough to allow you to send such a generous gift as the one you just have, and for someone like me, elected by a body of dedicated men and women, to be here to acknowledge its receipt and to express gratitude and appreciation, not for myself alone, but for that body of devoted men and women who don’t know how to quit. I could not even start with a comparison—’

‘Here is the rose, here dance!’

‘How can we rectify this sad state of affairs?’ Well, I do not claim to know the full answer to that, but I do know that the answer is not to give up on what we know to be right. New conditions demand new thinking, but new thinking based on sound principles. It is as Marx said in his Eighteenth Brumaire: ‘...Proletarian revolutions...criticize themselves constantly, interrupt themselves continually in their own course, come back to the apparently accomplished in order to begin it afresh, decide with unerring thoroughness the inadequacies, weaknesses and patrimonies of their first attempts, seem to throw down their adversary only in order that he may draw new strength from the earth and rise again, more gigantic, before them, and recall again and again from the indefinite prodigiousness of their own aims, until a situation has been created which makes all turning back impossible, and the conditions themselves cry out: ‘Hi, Rhodus, hi saltar!’

‘Here is the rose, here dance!’

The SLP has not failed. It is struggling somewhere between its Bunker Hill and its Yorktown. I do not know if it has hunkered down at its level of Valley Forge or is crossing the perilous ice flows of some Delaware on its way to some new ‘Battle of Trenton.’ What I do know, however, is that the SLP is still here, still fighting and still has plenty of fight in it. Failure is guaranteed only to those who buckle under the pressures of adversity. Success is never guaranteed, but success always lies within the realm of possibility, and sometimes closer to hand than we dare to think.

‘Do not give up on the SLP!’

Our friend responded to this by sending a second contribution to the New Publications Fund to match the generous contribution he had sent with his first letter, and with a brighter attitude, thanked me for my thoughts.

This morning we have gathered here to take up the work that has inspired thousands of working-class men and women for generations. Your deliberations over the next few days will have the effect on the SLP because they are convinced of its worth. It is a large responsibility, but it is a challenge that can be met with success by hard work and dedication to duty. We go forward with confidence in our deliberations, and I hereby call this 46th National Convention of the Socialist Labor Party to order.
De Leon's Seminal Address

Socialist Reconstruction Needed More Than Ever

The following is the text of an address delivered by National Secretary Robert Bills at the 46th National Convention Banquet of the Socialist Labor Party on July 30, 1905, the night before the convention adjourned. It was that evening that a portrait of De Leon was formally presented to the Socialist Labor Party. It was done with the capitalist and Republican senator way of referring to Samuel Gompers and the AFL-CIO. By 1995, Kirkland and his closest confidants, notably American Federation of Teachers president Albert Shanker, had established it as a man named Paul Buhle. His reason was to show that the Republican propaganda poster demonstrated something different from the impression it was designed to create. In truth, American workers had not grown more prosperous, but being exploited, robbed, by the capitalist class, and their condition was in decline.

That would be cause enough to call this a special occasion. I skipped over it, but for 1870, it was just over $2,000 in 1900. Wages that represented 22 percent of gross domestic product had increased in every year from 1860 to 1900. Wages were paid to the workers who manufactured those goods in each of the years listed. He limited himself to the decennial years of 1860, 1870, 1880, 1890 and 1900.

I will not take you through all of that. Suffice to say that the poster put the value of the goods manufactured in 1870 at $4 billion and the $73 billion worth of goods manufactured in 1900. Wages for those two years totaled $700 million and $2.3 billion, respectively. In short, wages amounted to 17.5 percent of the value of the goods manufactured in 1870 and 17.7 percent in 1900.

What these Republican figures demonstrated was that the increased productivity of labor over three decades had not brought prosperity—and not much progress—to the working class. Over that 30-year span, labor's share of its product had increased by two-tenths of a percent.

What "Uncle Sam's Balance Sheet" did not show, however, was how many workers produced the $4 billion worth of goods and shared in the $700 million paid out in wages in 1870, or the $73 billion worth of goods manufactured in 1900. Wages paid to the workers who manufactured those goods in each of the years listed. He limited himself to the decennial years of 1860, 1870, 1880, 1890 and 1900.

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Bureau, the Labor Department and the Federal Reserve slice, dice and totes things together in ways that serve capitalist purposes, not labor or socialist ones. Nonetheless, something doesn’t sit right with me. What columns he found between the two time periods in the last five decades. That number increased from 12 million in 1960 to 34.5 million in 2000, with a number of undulations in between. As for wages, they rose from an annual average of $4,700 in 1960 to $28,000 in 2000. The impression that the numbers create is that production workers were much better off five years ago than they were in 1960, but were they? Without going into too much detail, this is what I mean. In 1960, when 12 million workers produced goods valued at $125 billion, when wages totaled $54 billion and wages averaged $4,700, the average worker produced worth about $10,400, or $5,700 more than the average wage. Wages represented 43 percent of the workers’ product—at least according to these numbers. By 2000, when 12.4 million production workers manufactured commodities valued at $1.2 trillion, when wages totaled $345 billion and averaged $28,000, the average worker was producing $252 billion worth of goods, or $72,000 more than the average wage. The average wage represented 34.5 percent of the average worker’s income—an increase of 17.5 percent, not over 50, but over the last 100 years! De Leon, however, did not base his case entirely on the increased rate of exploitation. There were other factors to take into account. I will not go into all of them. He mentioned the “cost of living” and the degrading quality of goods, which made it necessary for workers to replace clothing and other household goods more often than they could easily afford. When putting together all of the things De Leon had in mind we might say he was talking about the quality just as much. One thing he singled out, however, was food. Here is part of what he said:

“There is hardly an article of food, especially for the working class, that the working man can’t buy, that is not adulterated, consequently, that has not deteriorated in quality. Essays galore are cropping up upon the extent to which these bad things have gone. These essays show that health is thereby undermined, even if life itself is not thereby speedily snuffed out. One of these essays of recent date which De Leon’s work of 1900 is directly responsible for the death of over 400,000 infants a year; and it traces the sickness and death of thousands upon thousands of adults to this cause alone.”

De Leon then quoted briefly from a speech by Sen. William Stewart of Nevada, which he found in the Congressional Record. Stewart said:

“I do not think the country has any idea of the extent of the poisons that are administered in the food that is sold and eaten in this country. I think it is sapping the foundation of the constitution of our people. If we had to raise soldiers now as we did in 1861, I do not believe that throughout the country we could find as large a percentage of young men fit for hard service as there were at that time.”

De Leon described the effect of this injection of poisonous substances into the food supply as starvation, slow starvation, because it deprived millions of workers and their families of the nutrition required to maintain their health. Today, many more such substances are in our food than either De Leon or Sen. Stewart could imagine. I do not know how many, but the FDA posts a “Glossary of Pesticide Chemicals” to its marketing alias of “food.” The problem is endemic and its effects are pervasive.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, “Approximately 127 million adults in the U.S. are overweight and 36.5 percent are severely obese.” Today, “64.5 percent of U.S. adults, age 20 and older, are overweight and 30.5 percent are obese.” Is this what De Leon was talking about? Is this what Sen. Stewart lamented, for his own reasons? Do children still starve in America? Are obesity and the health undermining effects of diet the same socialist or Marxist analysis that De Leon quoted a U.S. senator who was worried about the number of poor people who were overweight and obese. According to that story, 36.5 percent of young men, and what do we find? Well, several days ago, on July 5, the Associated Press circulated a story about how obesity is taking its toll on the military and officials being “worried about troops being too fat to fight.” According to that story, 36.5 percent of the teenagers that the U.S. Army lures into its ranks are either unfit or overweight. That’s how one Army official described them. But we know that this pound of flesh exacted from the nation does not come out of a special class of warriors, bred to the purpose. We know it doesn’t come out of the ruling class, either. It comes out of the working class, and mostly out of the poorest, and most deprived layers of the working class.

Indeed, the same AP report added: “43 percent of women and 18 percent of men in prime working ages exceed screening weights for military service” by federal standards.

It isn’t just young working-class Americans who have been fattened for slaughter by the health-depressing garbage served up under the name of “food.” The problem is endemic and its effects are pervasive.

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...Banquet Address

That manufacturing accounts for a much smaller proportion of workers now than it did then. More than that, many workers don’t even receive hourly wages. They are on fixed salaries, and whether on salaries or hourly wages, that is not all that workers receive—or are said to receive. According to the Labor Department's Report on the American Workforce, by the year 2000 a “typical worker received more than 25 percent compensation in the form of benefits” that “consisted of employer-provided items such as health, life and unemployment insurance, retirement and savings; and holiday and vacation leave.”

If you think about it, however, only a very small fraction of that 25 percent ever benefits workers, and in many instances it never does. A number of important pension funds have collapsed and a number—such as United Airlines—daim to be in trouble. Furthermore, these so-called benefits benefit capitalists more than they benefit workers. Capitalists complain about the costs. I imagine if wages were enough for workers to look after their own retirement needs, their own health needs.

For example: We live longer today than we did in 1905, despite what is being done to the nation’s food supply. One misimpression we are led into is that workers work until retirement age, collect their pensions and full Social Security, then live happily ever after. Indeed, this very idea is what led to the effort to lift the retirement age from 65 to 67. As the Economic Policy Institute reported recently:

“The assumption is that raising the retirement age further would induce Americans to continue working and to postpone claiming their benefits until they hit the new, labor retirement age. If people behaved this way, it would raise revenue and reduce benefits. However—large percentages of both men and women lose employment before they reach Social Security eligibility. Increasing either the early retirement age or the normal retirement age would put more Americans at risk of poverty and would do nothing to make employment opportunities more available to older Americans.”

To this the EPI added:

“Americans over 45 are disproportionately more likely than their younger counterparts to be among the long-term unemployed (those unemployed for 27 weeks or more). Americans older than 45 make up about 14 percent of the labor force but 37 percent of the long-term unemployed. Older workers—even those as young as their late 40s and early 50s—are proportionately more likely to fall into the ranks of the long-term unemployed.”

When De Leon took up the second clause of the IWW Preamble he spent a considerable time on the labor contracts that the AFL signed with employers. There were no “benefits” in 1905, only wages and profits. Such “benefits” were viewed as a danger to the interests of the working and small farmers off the land and into the factories and the mines.

Indeed, the country and the world have undergone a technological revolution since the middle of the 20th century. That revolution has had a profound effect on the country and the world. It has produced dramatic changes in the division of labor and the makeup of the working class. It has removed a majority of workers from the wealth-producing and -distributing class. It has removed a majority of workers, and workers who are directly exploited at the point of production and which De Leon warned—the party and its press have struggled to keep pace with these changes.

To illustrate: There is no more fundamental line that divides the working class and the capitalist class. But within that all-embracing and relatively constant relationship many lesser relationships exist that are in a constant state of flux. That’s where the question of effective or relevant propaganda comes in. That’s where the SLP needs some help to do the job that the times require of it. We need your help, and with your help the SLP will accomplish its mission.

De Leon examines every major argument—pro and con—on the union question, tactics confus- sion on what unions can and cannot accomplish to the source in the American Federation of Labor, and outlines the general principle that any union and effective working-class unions can be built. Ode of De Leon’s best.
All Talk, No Action, Worsens Threat From Global Warming

By Bruce Cozzini

In industrializing the world, the capitalist system carries in its wake environmental degradation and destruction. The most far-reaching example of this is global warming. Despite clear evidence of dramatic effects happening today and the devastating effects global warming will have in the future, the United States, the leading source of greenhouse gases, refuses to take timely action to deal with the problem because such action will adversely affect capitalist profits and economic growth.

The term global warming describes the artificial increase in worldwide average temperatures caused by the generation of so-called greenhouse gases, primarily carbon dioxide, which trap the infrared radiation of the sun in much the same way that the glass of a greenhouse does. These gases are primarily generated by the burning of fossil fuels—coal, gas and oil—that are the principal source of energy used to generate electric power, fuel transportation and provide heat.

Global warming has already led to dramatic changes in the physical environment and ecosystems around the globe. In the last year was the fourth hottest year on record, extending a trend that has registered the 10 warmest years since 1990. It included four category 4-5 hurricanes in the Caribbean, which caused an estimated $43 billion in damages. Numerous typhoons in Japan and the Philippines caused extensive damage and loss of life. Droughts in a variety of places around the globe extended a decade-long trend.

In the meantime, glaciers have been melting at an alarming rate, threatening water supplies in countries that rely on snow packs and glacial melt. Most dramatic have been the shrinking of glaciers in the Arctic and Antarctic. Well-studied glaciers in Alaska have been shrinking at an increasing rate in recent years, and dramatic changes are taking place in fragile arctic ecosystems.

Scientific studies reported this year have clearly demonstrated that changes in ocean temperatures over the past 40 years correspond closely to increases in greenhouse gases, as predicted by computer models. Researchers from a number of institutions showed effects on ocean ecosystems, and suggested that future changes could accelerate melting if marine organisms that absorb carbon dioxide are adversely affected.

In addition, the melting of arctic glaciers has been adding large amounts of fresh water to the North Atlantic, potentially disrupting the flow of warm water from the tropics to the north. Scientists worry that slowing or shutting down this “conveyor belt” could lead to drastic changes in the world’s climate.

In February of this year, 140 nations, accounted for 55 percent of greenhouse gas production as of 1990, approved the Kyoto Protocol to control greenhouse gases. Parties to the agreement include Russia, Japan and the nations of the European Union, which were particularly motivated following warming-induced floods of the last decade. Of these, 35 are expected to reduce greenhouse gas production by 2020 by five to eight percent below levels measured in 1990.

However, the Kyoto Protocol is only a symbolic advance. China and India, the two nations with the most rapidly developing economies, and in the top four in greenhouse gas production, have not only not agreed to any reduction, they have increased their output markedly since 1990 as they push for economic growth and profits. The Kyoto Protocol, signed eight years after its inception in 1997, will expire in 2012, leaving no formal framework in place and little accomplished.

The principal industrialized nation holding out against Kyoto is the United States, which produces about one-fifth of the world’s greenhouse gases and is the world leader in increasing its production. As of 2002, the British Royal Society calculated that U.S. production of greenhouse gases was about 13 percent above that of 1990.

The Bush administration, with its ties to the petroleum and electric power capitalist-class and its need to bolster a faltering economy, is clearly unwilling to act to control global warming. It prefers to study the matter and has ignored, blocked or thrown pennies at efforts to develop renewable sources.

However, there is no time to delay. Scientists estimate that to reverse the existing buildup of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, the world will need to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 40 to 70 percent by the end of this century. Such changes will require restructuring the world’s energy and transportation systems.

Such changes require massive investment and represent a threat to existing capitalist industries, their growth and profits. Capitalism requires profit and economic growth to survive. Capitalists want their profits now. The future has little meaning in a profit-driven society.

Environmental reforms are not the answer. Capitalism has eroded even those feeble efforts of the past. The Bush administration has been so ineffective at rolling back environmental regulations and increasing fossil fuel consumption, that capitalism is now metaphorically in the driver’s seat. The Bush administration, to use its own phrase, is the principal source of greenhouse gas production.

International agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol are not the answer, either. Similar agreements on disarmament, on peace, on torture, on Bhopal, as they do the bleached bones and broken bodies of tens of millions whose fate proves just what such agreements are worth. If the future is not to be played out against the floods, droughts and other catastrophes predicted related to global warming, the political and economic system of capitalism must end.

Accordingly, the Socialist Labor Party urges workers to organize to abolish capitalism and institute socialist production for use. Society will then have the means to employ the renewable resources we now have available and develop new ones, but only if society’s focus is on the common good rather than capitalist profit.

Capitalist Ethics

By Bruce Cozzini

Freedom of speech means one thing in the Bill of Rights and another in the world of commerce. Indeed, commercial free speech rights for advertising are generally so broad that it is extremely rare that courts ever rule against free advertising.

A judge in Humboldt County, Calif., seemed bent on proving the point in June when he threw out a suit brought against Pacific Lumber for submitting false data on landslides when lobbying for logging permits in the late 1990s.

District Attorney Paul Gallegos filed the suit in 2002. He claimed that the lumber company “submitted faulty data to get access on steep slopes it would otherwise have been unable to touch.” (San Francisco Mercury News, June 28)

Superior Court Judge Richard Freeborn evidently did not dispute the point. Nonetheless, he decided “the company is immune from prosecution because of the argument based on free-speech rights which makes a company immune from liability when lobbying the government to do something.”

Gallegos intends to appeal Freeborn’s decision to the California Supreme Court. He characterized that decision as follows: “Yes, guess what, you’ve got the right to lie when you’re going through a government agency asking for a permit, even if you’re doing it for the purpose of asking for vast amounts of money.”

For its part, Pacific Lumber did not like Gallegos exercising his rights to act against them. The company helped fund a recall election against him in 2004, but he survived.
Technology Still a Job Killer

By Carl Miller

Computers, cell phones and the Internet are just a few of the technological marvels created over the last few decades that have brought tremendous changes into our lives. Now we can connect to our coworkers from anywhere at anytime just by picking up a cell phone or connecting to the Internet.

And other new “consumer” technologies unquestionably have eased the lives of millions of people in many ways. New technology, however, has not been restricted to consumer items. Indeed, it has been seen by its share of advances with effects that have devastated the lives of millions of workers.

There is no secret about who and what is responsible for the “downsides” of modern technology. Capitalism has turned these technological marvels into so many means of destroying jobs, increasing the exploitation of human labor and accumulating profits.

That should not surprise us much. That is how capitalism works, and how it has always worked. Indeed, it would be impossible for capitalism to survive if it steadfastly refused to use labor-displacing technology into the workplace.

“Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones,” as Karl Marx and Frederick Engels explained in the Communist Manifesto more than 150 years ago.

Capitalists have no choice in the matter. They must seek out every method of reducing the costs involved in producing commodities. The introduction of new technology into production reduces the amount of labor needed and lowers the cost of production, thereby increasing profits.

Increasing profits and holding wages down is what counts, for capitalists. For millions of workers, however, new technology in the workplace leads only to harder work—except for the millions more tossed onto the streets and into joblessness. That, however, is not what concerns the enterprising capitalist.

Not so long ago capitalists and their lickspittles in politics, the universites and the media promised that automation and new technology would bring better jobs, better pay and better lives to all Americans. Now they tell us we are not competitive enough, which is just a longer word for what they used to say about the American workers—“lazy.” However, American labor is still the most productive on earth, despite millions of us being unemployed or channelled into useless or even antisocial occupations. Capitalism wastes human labor with the same abandon that it squanders our natural resources and fouls our environment.

Labor-displacing technology is becoming more evident even in our everyday lives. Self-service grocery checkout lanes are replacing clerks. ATM machines are replacing bank tellers and automated airline kiosks are replacing ticket agents. The driving force behind these technological advances is the elimination of labor. You can’t get away from it, we know, that ruling class that “earns” its living by destroying yours it knows too. Here is a bit of the evidence straight from capitalism’s “newspaper of record” for the New York Times:

“Eager to save money on labor costs, businesses are stepping up the pace of automation. Nearly 13,000 self-checkout lanes have been installed in American retail stores like Kroger and Home Depot by the end of this year, more than double the number in 2001, according to the market research firm IDC. Delta Air Lines has reduced millions of dollars’ worth of service per year to line 81 airports with chest-high automated kiosks: 22 million of its passengers—40 percent of the total—checked in by touch-screen this year, up from 350,000 in 2001.” (Nov 17, 2003)

The benefits for the firms that use these machines are plain—a machine does not require a wage, it never calls in sick and it does not need health insurance or a pension. A machine would certainly never organize with its mechanical brethren for better working conditions.

So, where does this leave you and your neighbors who may also be replaced by these technological wonders?

“No, you have to go back to the beginning,” as a Kiskipatrick Sale, author of several books on technology, wrote, “It is indisputable that automation has eliminated vast numbers of jobs across all sectors of the economy in all industrial nations, maybe 35 million of them in the last decade. The example of the United States, still the leading economic power in the world, is revealing. From 1988 to 1994 the number of jobs lost was estimated to be 6.5 million, far higher than in any other post-war period, and fully 85 percent of them are thought to have been lost to machines and overseas transfers. Automation is held to be responsible for the loss of half a million manufacturing jobs every year in this period and close to 3 million in the decade before—the completely automated factories are only a few quarters away—but it has also begun to make deep cuts into service jobs and seems likely to make its biggest future impact there.”

Worse, no one seems to know what to do with the workers displaced. The propaganda about retraining displaced workers to service and support the very technologies that replaced them was only that, propaganda. It was only a diversion from the truth to lead workers off the scent.

Millions of workers did retrain, but the training was either autodidact by the time they finished with it or the jobs never materialized. Now high-tech firms dump workers as fast as any auto plant or steel mill ever did. Many “retrained” workers displaced by technology end up in low-paying or part-time jobs or with no jobs at all.

Why is it that these great advances in technology, which could be made to benefit the working class, is instead ruining lives and creating a massive problem that seems to have no remedy? The answer is simple: capitalism utilizes this technology to increase profits. Today, the capitalist class that owns and controls this technology has only one view in mind: to cut costs and swell the bottom line. They could not care less what detrimental effect the profit motive has on society so long as profits are rolling in. Besides, who is there to stop them?

Well, you, to start with; then there are millions in the same leaky boat you are. The American working class has the power, but changing society takes some knowledge and training, just like any other job.

It is obvious that current trends are leading the working class further into poverty and destitution. Workers, however, can avert this by recognizing that they constitute a class with its own interests and objectives.
who help control them cost more than the deal presented by offshore production in countries where wages are much lower and technology makes workers almost as productive as they are here.

In short, the labor fakers are today peddling an outdated product. Capitalism has no deal to offer U.S. workers. As we noted on a previous occasion:

“Since the first wave of automation in the 1950s, which correspond closely to the merger of the AFL and the CIO, the grizzlies have steadily cut out, frightened under the fear of trade union-based industrial unionism. Union membership has declined in lock step with the forward march of technology. The CIO has not only used many of the skills and dramatically altered the nature and reduced the number of jobs in many industries. Displaced workers were dropped from the membership rolls in droves, and some unions completely disappeared as the old trades were swept away.”

The AFL-CIO's split really makes these facts no worse, nor better, for workers. What would make it worse for workers would be if the work- ing class looked on the wreckage and concluded that unionism itself was a failure. As we have also said before: “Now is the time for every class conscious worker to step forward to ensure that no such tragedy occurs. The first step toward building a genuine union movement—a movement to embrace all workers, employed or unemployed—can be taken only by those disconsolate readers of The People who are prepared to take it. You know that Socialist Industrial Unionism, as advocated by the Socialist Labor Party, is needed if workers are to successfully repel the attacks of the capitalist class while simultaneously organizing their strength to eliminate the capitalist system of exploitation. You know that Socialist Industrial Unionism stands out as the only viable alternative to the disastrous policies of the AFL-CIO. Now is the time for you to step forward and make it known to others”

K.B.

OECONOMY

The Meaning and Origin of Labor Day

(Weekly People Sept. 3, 1955)

American Labor Day—the first Monday in September—is traditionally a day for buttering up the American workers and telling them about the wonderful gains they are supposed to be making under the capitalist system. This is a logical use of Labor Day. The holiday is not something labor wrested from capital through struggle. On the contrary, it represents a gift handed to the workers, free, gratis and for nothing by the capitalist politicians.

This is how Labor Day became a legal holiday. The labor fakers of the AFL had pleaded in vain with the politicians to give them a legal holiday. Then, in 1889, the Founding Congress of the Socialist International declared the first of May a day for workers in all countries to observe as a holiday. Then, in 1894 Congress made it a national holiday. September Labor Day was a failure as an antidote for labor's own May Day. Every since the first Labor Day the “organized” workers have furnished “captive” audiences for capitalist politicians posing as “friends of labor.” Indeed, for the labor fakers who run the job-union trusts, Labor Day long ago became an occasion for displaying their voting caste and for making political deals.

Labor Day was inspired by the fear that the workers, heading the message of socialism, might wake up to their true status as wage slaves. It is logical, therefore, that it be used to keep labor in capitalist blinders.
Mysterious Doings at Guantanamo Bay

By B.G.

What is going on at the U.S. military base at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba? We know from general press reports that the military is using the facility as a prison for large numbers of captives from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. We know further that some of these prisoners have been "captured" as a result of the military's offer of generous monetary rewards to Afghani and Iraqi citizens willing to turn in "terrorists" without any verification as to whether the informants were telling the truth or lying to obtain much needed cash. We also read in various news reports that these prisoners at Guantanamo are harshly treated in their heavenly repose in the Guantanamo prison.

We know also that President George W. Bush has proclaimed that prisoners taken in Afghanistan and Iraq are terrorists and not legally recognized soldiers and, therefore, do not come under the protection of the regulations of the Geneva Conventions to which the United States was a signatory.

The Wall Street Journal, which no one can accuse of being a bleeding-heart liberal rag, began to shed some light on the subject in an article published on Aug. 1 entitled "Two Prosecutors at Guantanamo Quit in Protest." The article details how two Air Force lawyers became alarmed at the prosecution of the case and an original attempt to accuse these "fairly low level" alleged terrorists of massive terrorist attacks such as "the U.S. Embassy bombings in Africa, the USS Cole and the Sept. 11, 2001, strikes on New York and Washington." He stated that these immense charges were toned down after officials in the U.S. justice Department "appeared less than totally comfortable with our theory."

President George W. Bush has authorized the military commissions to try non-U.S. citizens alleged to be involved in terrorist acts for war crimes. He said these trials should be "full and fair" but did not have to give defendants rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, or given to U.S. military in courts-martial trials.

On March 11, 2004, email, Maj. Preston noted, "I lie awake worrying about this every night...writing a motion saying that the process will be full and fair when you don't really believe it will be is kind of hard—particularly when a lot of people want to call yourself an officer and a lawyer."

Chief Prosecutor Col. Borch made the Carr and Preston emails available to his office personnel but attached a note calling them "monstrous lies."

Maj. Carr had also complained that three prosecutors had concealed evidence of FBI allegations of abuse at Bagram, "the Air Force base in Afghanistan where prisoners were kept and questioned before shipping them to Guantamano. These prosecutors, Carr wrote, had learned of the abuse in conversation with the FBI agents but had declined to forward the information to their superiors."

In November of 2004, a trial was held to determine the seriousness of the allegations and resulted in the halting of the military proceedings against the detainees "on the grounds that they violated due process and U.S. obligations under the Geneva Conventions," according to the journal report.

In July a three-judge federal appeals court reversed the findings of the lower court and denied the former military proceedings to be unlawful. John G. Roberts Jr., President Bush's current nominee for U.S. Supreme Court, was one of the three-judge panel that overturned the lower court's findings.

Defense Department officials are glee confirm. "We found absolutely no evidence of illegal violations, no evidence of any criminal conduct," according to Air Force Brig. Gen. Thomas Hemingway, a legal adviser to the trials.

The Bush administration is looking forward to restarting the trials by September of this year. Military lawyers assigned to the task of defense, however, feel that the deck is unfairly stacked against them, as they have been denied access to the investigations of Maj. Carr and Maj. Preston's allegations of corruption and foul play.

One of the current military defense lawyers said of these two men: "I know both of these Air Force prosecutors, they are very ethical, highly respected individuals."

So much for fair play, innocent until proven guilty, the enduring validity of the U.S. Constitution and the eternal blessings of democracy! If the Bush administration is seeking to win friends and influence people in the Middle East by demonstrating the superiority of American democracy, they have made a bumbling start that may undermine any hopes for democratic government in that area anytime soon. Perpetual war, suppression, torture and imperial domination are poor advertisements for democracy—even for the Bush brand of bourgeois democracy.

Misery Equals Opportunity

No sooner is the exploitation of the labor by the manufacturer...at an end...than he is set upon by the other portions of the bourgeois as the landlord, the shopkeeper, the pawnbroker, etc. —Communist Manifesto

But the main secret of making a rational consumer out of the laborer is yet to be told...A reduction of wages and long hours of labor—that is the essence of the rational and healthful processes which are to uplift the laborer to the dignity of a rational consumer, so that they make a market for things showered upon them...by culture and growth of invention. —Capital, II

By Bruce Cozzoni

No one on earth is too poor to escape the attention of the global merchant. That was the central point of a July 6 commentary by David Ignatius of The Washington Post, although that was not exactly the way he said it.

Writing of the recent Group of Eight (G8) summit in Scotland, Ignatius focused on one of the purported aims of the summit, how to address the problem of the "poor nations." The G8 leaders are missing the point, he said. Rather than "treating the poor as wards of the global economy," capitalists should recognize them as a vast market.

Ignotius' source for this viewpoint is a new study by Prof. C.K. Prahalad of the University of Michigan Business School, The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid: Eradicating Poverty through Profits, Prahalad claims that the 4 billion people who live on less than $2 a day make up a huge underserved market: "Four billion people can be the engine of the next round of global trade and prosperity." Prahalad's report offers case studies of how companies have exploited this market.

The tactics begin with the recognition "that poor people are like everyone else—they just have less money." Ignatius explained. They can be made brand conscious, for something like a Procter & Gamble shampoo, but since they cannot buy a whole bottle, P&G learned it could make good money selling shampoo in India in single-serv packets.

Prahalad describes a "single-serv revolution" swamping poor countries where companies market small packets of shampoo, ketchup, tea, coffee, fruit juice or cookies. Prices may vary from one to four cents. "The margins might be low for each item," Ignatius adds, "but when you make calendars, a lot of people can buy them at an unprecedented scale."

The poorest are the targets, those who "earn their money a penny—or a fraction of a penny—at a time." Already cruelly exploited as marginal producers, they are now to be cynically set upon again as consumers—truly a great opportunity from the capitalist standpoint.