



In the spirit of Dr. King: STANDING UP TO REPRESSION

CENTERFOLD:

- **NOW censured
for backing Braun**
- **Kevin Cooper:
Fighting 'legal' lynching**
- **Racism, repression
and the state**

EDITORIAL:

- **King's legacy:
uniting the struggles 10**

PAUL O'NEILL

Spilling the beans 5

JOBLESS 'RECOVERY'

Happy days for whom? 4

ROE V. WADE

Taking it to the streets
April 25 4

FROM DEATH ROW

Mumia on Iraq occupation:
'Feelin' safe yet?' 8

THORNS IN THE ROSES

U.S.-backed Georgian coup 9

HEALTHCARE IN THE AMERICAS

A tale of two systems 11

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Another giveaway to the bosses

Bush's immigration policy denounced as servitude

By Teresa Gutierrez

An empty piñata. A major gift to employers. The new bracero program. A huge pool of temporary workers. Indentured servitude.

These are some of the responses to President George W. Bush's major policy announcement on immigration.

On Jan. 7, Bush proposed what the mainstream media described as "a sweeping overhaul of the nation's immigration law." Bush said in part, "Today I ask the Congress to join me in passing new immigration laws that reflect [four] principles that meet America's economic needs and live up to our highest ideals."

The principles he claimed to be upholding were: "1) America must control its borders; 2) new immigration laws should serve the economic needs of our country; 3) we should not give unfair rewards to illegal immigrants in the citizenship process or disadvantage those who came here lawfully or hope to do so; and 4) new laws should provide incentives for temporary foreign workers to return permanently to their home countries after their period of work in the United States has expired."

Bush's announcement was denounced within hours. Labor activists, immigrants and their advocates immediately condemned the policy as anti-immigrant and pro-boss.

For weeks, immigration advocates, various Latino organizations and some members of Congress had anxiously waited to hear what stance Bush would take on immigration.

Bush's announcement was key to a meeting to take place this week in Mexico between himself and Mexican President Vicente Fox. Like other Mexican presidents before him, Fox intensely reviews U.S. immigration policy. Over half of the 8 to 12 million undocumented workers in this country are from Mexico.

If any of these forces had naively expected a fair or just policy for immigrant workers, they were sadly disappointed.

The White House's immigration proposal amounts to an election-year ploy that will mainly benefit the bosses. Chances are it won't even be enacted this year.

It does nothing to alleviate the dire sweatshop conditions immigrants face in this country.

The Bush plan callously defies the sentiment of immigrants who in the last few years have heroically stood up to decades of

exploitation and said "Basta ya"—enough is enough. As never before, from California to Illinois to New York, immigrants are changing the face of labor and organizing to defend their interests.

Bush's announcement is especially a slap in the face of the historic Oct. 4, 2003, Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride and demonstration in Queens, N.Y.

Over 100,000 immigrants came forth that day—at risk of deportation and loss of wages and jobs—to demand dignity and rights.

The main slogan on Oct. 4 was amnesty. In his immigration plan, Bush pointedly came out against this demand.

Bush said, "I oppose amnesty, placing undocumented workers on the automatic path to citizenship."

A Mexican immigrant in New York City said after Bush's announcement: "I have suffered years of abuse. My father died in Mexico last year and I could not attend the funeral. I am separated from my wife and children. I earn less than most other workers.

"I have earned my citizenship."

Bracero vs. amnesty

One of the key features of Bush's proposal is a temporary worker program. While the mainstream media has already sown confusion by saying that this "effectively amounts to an amnesty program" (New York Times, Jan. 7), that is far from being true.

The temporary worker provision of Bush's new policy amounts to a new "bracero" program.

"Bracero" refers to a policy enforced during World War II and through the early 1960s. The program allowed Mexican workers to come to the United States legally for a specific time and for a specific industry.

The term stems from the Spanish word for arm—"brazos," as in "to embrace."

The bracero program of the 1940s brought in cheap labor to work the fields of Texas and other states at the mercy of the bosses. It was rife with abuses. Workers reported horrible conditions, often not getting paid—and after serving their term of

Continued on page 3

In Honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

***By standing up for civil Rights for immigrant workers
and their families in Freehold, N.J.,
you defend everyone's rights***

The Mayor and Town Council of Freehold have implemented a campaign of lies against immigrants and measures whose purpose is to expel immigrants from Freehold. These measures violate important rights and liberties granted under the Constitution to all people. Immigrants should be recognized as equal participants in society and be granted permanent residency.

We the residents of Freehold and Monmouth County cannot be an accomplice to this injustice. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. taught that the rights of all should be defended regardless of race, national origin or economic position. We honor his dream and his teaching that the struggle cannot end while any group of people is oppressed.

Immigrants and citizens are working together in this cause and we invite you to join us.

El Comité de Trabajadores Por el Progreso y el Bienestar Social Monmouth County Residents for Immigrant Rights
732-345-8400 Email : mcimmigrantrights@yahoo.com

(The International Action Center and NY Answer are organizing transportation to Freehold from New York. Tickets are \$15.00. To sign up for transportation and to support the struggle of immigrant workers, call the IAC at (212) 633-6646.)

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★ **National**

Bush immigrant plan denounced as servitude 1

LA event raises funds for strikers 3

What good is a ‘recovery’ without jobs? 4

March to defend women’s right to choose 4

O’Neill spills the beans. 5

The state, racism and repression 6

NOW attacked for supporting Black candidate 6

Kevin Cooper slated for next execution 7

Mumia: Feelin’ safe yet? 8

★ **International**

Washington and coup in former Soviet Georgia 9

WW editor speaks on China 10

Venezuela brings in Cuban doctors 11

SF forum on popular movements in Latin America . . 11

Health care in the Americas 11

★ **Editorials**

King’s legacy: uniting the struggles 10

★ **Noticias En Español**

Wall Street celebra alza económica 12

WW CALENDAR

BUFFALO, N.Y.

Sat., Jan. 17
The Coalition Against Police Abuse plans a noon march from NFTA Station at Main & Utica to MLK Park regardless of weather. Speak-out at 3 p.m. in commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr’s birthday.
For info (716) 479-3799 or www.CoalitionAgainstPoliceAbuse.com

LOS ANGELES

Every Friday
Workers World Party weekly meetings at 7:30 p.m. Dinner at 7. At 422 S. Western.
Phone (213) 500-0529 for info.

NEW YORK

Fri., Jan. 16
Workers World Party meeting. Hear Berta Joubert-Ceci, a WWP leader in Philadelphia and a long-time fighter for Puerto Rican liberation, on “Bush and the Summit of Americas: Imperialist pressure meets resistance.” 7p.m. Dinner at 6:30. At 55 W. 17 St., 5th Fl., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

Sat., Jan. 31
Socialist Forum: Imperialism and self-determination in the Middle East. 1 p.m. At Chelsea

Auditorium, 281 9th Ave. & W. 27 St. Same day: Classes on Socialism, 10 a.m.-12 p.m. and 3:30 p.m.-5:30 p.m., followed by dinner and a party. Sponsored by Workers World Party. For info (212) 627-2994.

Every Friday
Workers World Party weekly meeting. 7 p.m. (Dinner at 6:30) 55 W. 17th St., 5th fl., Manhattan. For info (212) 627-2994.

SAN FRANCISCO
Mon., Jan. 19
Join an ANSWER anti-war contingent in the Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom March. Gather 10:30 at 4th and Townsend at the San Francisco CalTrans Station. For info (415) 821-6545 or answer@actionsf.org.

Every Sunday
Workers World Party weekly meetings. These educational meetings cover current events as well as struggles of peoples from all over the world. 5 p.m. At 2489 Mission St, room 28. For info (415) 826-4828.

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LOS ANGELES

Cultural event raises funds for strikers

A benefit performance for the 70,000 striking and locked-out grocery workers packed a club in North Hollywood on Jan. 6. Performers included alternative singer/songwriter Michelle Shocked, hip hop artist Will B, The Blazers, Cisco, and Lowen and Navarro.

The owner of the non-profit club, often used for progressive causes, commented that it was a record crowd. The performances are regularly streamed onto the Internet, so that union supporters from all over were able to log on, enjoy the music, and send in donations using Paypal.

Nearly \$1,000 was raised, and a similar performance is planned for the near future. In addition to raising funds, the event reached across the Internet and helped to build solidarity for this historic strike.

As the strike enters its thirteenth week, strikers and locked-out workers have remained strong on the picket line in spite of financial hardship. All Vons stores are being picketed, as well as a large distribution center in El Monte, Calif., which delivers to Vons.

Support from union members and community organizations is increasing. Community Action Project to Support Labor—a project of the Los Angeles ANSWER Coalition—is continuing fundraising efforts and a food drive. Other support actions are being planned, including a citywide march.

—Scott Scheffer



WW PHOTO: J. LA RIVA

Michelle Shocked and Will B performed at a Los Angeles fundraiser for strikers.

Bush immigration plan denounced as servitude

Continued from page 1

near-slave-labor, they were kicked out of the United States.

These kinds of abuses continue today. An immigrant advocate said on Jan. 8 that agriculture workers in the U.S. often report that bosses pay them for half a day although they worked a full day. Workers are told they must “donate” a week’s pay in order to come back the next summer.

The policy emanating from the White House will only aggravate this situation.

Bush said on Jan. 7, “I propose a new temporary workers program that will match willing foreign workers with willing American employers when no Americans can be found to fill the jobs.”

Immigrants, the White House said, might be able to obtain temporary legal status for three years, and could reapply once. They must pay a one-time fee to register for the program and their name will be entered into a national database.

“This program expects temporary workers to return permanently to their home countries after their period of work in the United States has expired,” Bush said.

According to the New York Times, “An undocumented worker and employer would have to apply for the guest worker hand in hand, with the employer serving as the sponsor for the worker.”

Janice Fine, a researcher from the Economic Policy Institute, wrote in the Boston Globe Jan. 11 that one reason Bush’s plan is extremely flawed is that bosses get too much power with the plan.

Fine reported on a national study she conducted that documents the same abuses that “depressingly” occur over and over across the country: “Unpaid wages, forced overtime, sky-high rates of injury on the jobs, discrimination, sexual harassment and unjust firings. Workers who speak up are fired and blacklisted. Employers routinely ignore government regulations, and government monitoring in most of these industries is terribly inadequate at best.”

The researcher went on to point out that a huge number of immigrants will not even be able to tap into the program because they work mainly in the informal sector of the economy. Employers of gardeners, day laborers, domestic workers,

dishwashers and so on will not be inclined to participate.

Why should they when the profits are so generous and the source of labor so vulnerable?

Fine also pointed out that there is little incentive for the workers to participate in the program, since citizenship is not guaranteed.

The program would result in workers “outing” themselves, with the possibility, in return, of being deported at the end of the guest worker program.

Immigration policy for the capitalist class

Bush’s announcement led to a flurry of media accounts that referred to U.S. immigration policy as a “broken policy.”

But the policy is far from broken. It may be underfunded and understaffed in the opinion of some. And it may be ridiculously and inhumanely bureaucratic.

According to a former counsel of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, for example, since 2001 Bush promised to reduce the delays in processing of immigration applications. Just the opposite has occurred. The backlog has grown from 3.9 million to 6.2 million in the past two years. (Washington Post, Jan. 11)

And ominously, the Department of Homeland Security inherited the duties of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. This makes immigration a highly political issue tied directly to imperialism’s so-called war on terror.

But whether the system is efficient or not, U.S. immigration policy functions exactly as it should—because it represents a capitalist government that in turn represents the ruling class. It is this class that ultimately sets policy—on immigration, on war in Iraq, on every question.

This is the class that respects no borders. It is free to travel around the globe creating the kind of economic and social conditions that force workers to come here in the first place.

Bush said that it is wrong for “employers to turn to the illegal labor market.” But it is not the “labor market” that is illegal.

The truth is that the thousands of cockroach capitalists and the unaccountable multinational corporations that employ undocumented workers will never close

their sweatshops or stop paying below-standard wages. It is a cornerstone of the profit system.

The capitalist system—whose only drive is for war and profits—must have at its command the ability to super-exploit immigrants. There is so much profit to be made from their labor power.

That is why Bush’s immigration policy is a gift to the bosses. It will bring workers out of the shadows with the promise of temporary legal status but at the beck and call of the employer.

The U.S. economy would not stand one hour without immigrant labor. Who would deliver the food, cut the grass, build the offices, paint the fingernails, chop the lettuce, pack the meat or take care of the children?

In 2001, the Pew Hispanic Center estimated that the “unauthorized labor force” totaled about 5.3 million workers. This included 700,000 restaurant workers, 250,000 household employees and 620,000 construction workers.

Clearly, the capitalist system thrives on the labor of immigrants. It depends on an immigration policy that creates a pool of cheap labor that can be easily manipulated, paid as little as possible, where workers can be brought into the country or deported as the economy demands and at the whim of the bosses.

Solution to Bush’s policy: solidarity

Behind George W. Bush’s immigration policy is an attempt to divide workers. It will inevitably mean a rise in racist, chauvinistic, anti-immigrant backlash.

A climate of fear among U.S.-born workers will surely be fostered. Workers will be forced to compete for jobs at a time when unemployment is high and underemployment even higher.

This climate will be favorable for the bosses who will count on fear to drive down wages. If Bush and the bosses prevail, living standards will be lowered even more for all workers, here and around the world.

One immigrant told a reporter that he had no documentation, worked a construction job paying \$10 an hour but lost the job to a recent immigrant willing to take \$8. This immigrant expressed anger

towards newer immigrants, according to the article.

This is but one example that illustrates that the solution to U.S. immigration policy is to organize. The solution is to wage an independent campaign of solidarity among all workers.

Instead of workers being pitted against each other—by nationality, by country of origin, by sexual orientation and so on—the answer is to organize a multinational movement to demand an end to exploitation once and for all, a movement that declares that there are no borders in the workers’ struggle.

In the short term, the progressive and working-class movement in the United States should take to the streets in record numbers and demand amnesty now for all immigrants. It should demand a major increase in the minimum wage as well as jobs for all. Protecting the sovereign rights of the nations of Latin America, Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and so on must be a cornerstone so that oppressed nations are free of International Monetary Fund and imperialist intervention.

The time has come for labor, immigrants and the progressive movement in the U.S. to conduct the kind of rich class struggles that led to the glorious foundation of May Day and International Women’s Day.

There are tremendous examples of struggles in this country we can look to for inspiration.

The Latinos/as in California who recently led a major walkout to protest the repeal of driver’s license rights and the grocery workers fighting for health care in Los Angeles are two such examples. Their victory will be a victory for all workers.

On the East Coast, everyone is urged to converge in Freehold, N.J., on Jan. 18. The mayor and a racist group want to push Latinos/as out of Freehold and have carried out a chauvinistic campaign against day laborers. But the workers are fighting back.

By taking a stand in Freehold on Jan. 18, U.S. and foreign-born workers, African Americans, Latinos/as, whites, Asians, women and men, young and old, will give George Bush exactly the kind of response his recent immigration announcement deserves. □

What good is a ‘recovery’ without jobs?

By Milt Neidenberg

Cheerful thoughts about a boom economy in the foreseeable future have been seriously dampened by the December job-growth figures reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Far from the 150,000 new jobs predicted by just about every high-priced Wall Street analyst and bourgeois economist, they turned out to be a miniscule 1,000. When the figures were released, the Dow Jones industrial average dropped 133.55 points and the NASDAQ 13.33.

How could they have gone so far off target? Do they lack the data to predict so significant an economic statistic as job growth?

They went astray because the economy is unpredictable and expanding out of control, even while there are signs of stagnation and crisis.

The Wall Street Journal on Jan. 9 rounded up a group of Wall Street economists for a consensus. There was none. “The payroll gain of only 1,000 is ... quite shocking. ... I would certainly not have expected anything resembling that,” said Bill Cheney, chief economist at John Hancock Financial Services. And there was James Glassman, a J.P. Morgan economist: “We’re at least three to four million jobs below what we should be.”

Then there were the optimists. “Over the next few months, all the signs are that payroll employment will rise dramatically,” stated Ian Richardson, chief economist at High Frequency Economics. But the chief economic officer at Wells Fargo, Sung Won Sohn, thought otherwise: “Neither business nor potential employees have confidence in the economy.”

The current fear is that the economic expansion, which began around November 2001, is running out of steam. It has

been a jobless recovery. Overall the economy dropped by 74,000 jobs in 2003. Since President Bush took office in January 2001, over 2.3 million jobs have disappeared. More than 300,000 workers were permanently dropped from the job market, and the index of hours worked fell below the 1998 level.

The traditional unemployment rate does not count various segments of the working-age population—people not looking or working part-time. More “discouraged workers” explains why the unemployment rate dropped from 5.9 to 5.7 in December, but the Bush administration put a positive spin on it.

Consumer confidence is on the decline. Consumer spending represents two-thirds of the Gross Domestic Product. People can’t continue to spend when there is no income. Consequently, under the most relentless, unprecedented rise in productivity, the markets have become glutted with goods and services.

Intense exploitation of the workers and the oppressed sections of the population also has drawbacks for the capitalists. As Karl Marx explained, if the capitalists are exploiting fewer workers, there’s less unpaid labor, less extraction of surplus value, and consequently less profit for the boss class.

Echoes of 1930s

This is no normal recovery. A Jan. 10 New York Times article, headlined “As Far as Jobs Go, Bush Can Only Wait,” said: “Both the White House and the Fed [Federal Reserve Board] are confronted by a recovery unlike any other in history. Economic growth has been soaring for months, corporate profits have shot up, and the stock market has regained much of its ebullience. Yet job creation has been slower than in almost any previous recovery

and wage growth has slowed to a crawl.”

Today more than one out of every 10 workers is unemployed. This rises to three out of 10 among Black and Latino teenagers and over two out of 10 in the Black adult population. The unofficial rate is even higher. These brutal facts expose the so-called trickle-down theory: that good times bring good jobs.

Is this a recovery unlike any other in history? No. It is like the 1930s. Edmund S. Phelps, professor of political economy and director of the Center on Capitalism and Society at Columbia University, commented in the Jan. 5 Wall Street Journal that “The technological developments and overseas tensions that slowed and limited the 1930s recovery have clear parallels in the economy’s present situation.” The unemployment rate then was one out of every four.

Prices briefly dropped during the most acute stage of the economic crisis of the 1930s, but the upward spiral of prices soon resumed. Today, prices of commodities are on the rise due to runaway deficits and rising interest rates, but even more because of the monumental war expenditures that are causing the devaluation of the dollar.

According to Robert Pollack, professor of economics at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, “Five percent more money is being pumped into the economy than taken out in tax revenues ... and 60 percent of the 3.3 percent growth in the GDP is attributed to the military.”

Military spending a depressant

Military spending of the astronomical dimensions required to pay for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars has diverted hundreds of billions of dollars from much-needed social programs. Sam Marcy,

chairperson of Workers World Party, said in a 1975 discussion bulletin, “Instead of acting as a stimulant to capitalist expansion and accumulation [military spending] turns into its dialectical opposite and becomes a depressant. Like any drug, it may operate to accelerate recovery from illness, but if administered on an ever-continuing and ever-increasing basis without letup, it becomes toxic and poisons the organism.” This is even more true today.

Dark clouds loom for the capitalist system. If there is no job growth in the coming months, the Bush reelection will be in trouble. A number of Democratic presidential candidates, as the 2004 election grows nearer, will present proposals that they promise will bring back jobs, peace and prosperity. Promising won’t make it so. These candidates support the system of monopoly capitalism and the exploitation of labor for profit.

The occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan have not brought Wall Street and Washington spoils from their wars of aggression. At home, the capitalists believe the cure lies in layoffs, cutbacks in social programs, and intolerable productivity and poverty.

To the multinational workers and oppressed nationalities, recovery means jobs for all and insuring work opportunities for the oncoming generation. It means a rise in the standard of living for them and their loved ones. There is a conjuncture of class-wide interests with other movements—the anti-war activists, the civil rights/civil liberties and anti-globalization resisters. And most important, the struggle must be elevated within the labor movement, especially building solidarity with immigrant workers. The crisis requires joining forces and taking the independent road to fight back. □

Roe v. Wade anniversary

March to defend women’s right to choose

By Sue Davis

Thirty-one years after the Supreme Court affirmed women’s right to have an abortion if they so choose, that right is under serious assault in courts and legislatures all over the country. The good news is that more than 570 groups are mobilizing for a fight-back march and rally on April 25.

Called by the Feminist Majority, NARAL Pro-Choice America, the National Organization for Women and Planned Parenthood Federation of America, the march is being co-sponsored by the Black Women’s Health Imperative, Center for Reproductive Rights and hundreds of other groups representing women, people of color, labor, lesbian/gay/bi/trans, civil rights, campus and religious constituencies, as well as health clinics and service providers.

Emboldened by passage of the ban on “partial birth” abortions last October, anti-choice forces in Congress have introduced the “Unborn Victims of Violence Act” which would make it a crime to damage a fetus or cause a miscarriage. The bill defines the fetus, not the woman, as the victim of violence. The pregnant woman

is not mentioned in the bill; nor are there penalties for harm inflicted on the woman.

This bill would not in any way protect women’s right to have children. Its limited wording exposes the bill’s real purpose: to assert that fetuses, from the moment of conception, have the full rights of an adult person. If the courts were to accept this definition of “fetal personhood,” that would totally negate women’s right to abortion.

A Florida appeals court ruled against “fetal personhood” on Jan. 10 when it decided that the state could not appoint a guardian for the fetus of a mentally disabled rape victim. The case created controversy last spring when Gov. Jeb Bush, who is as adamantly anti-choice as his brother, supported an Orlando woman who sought to become the fetus’s guardian.

“When you set up a guardian for a fetus, you’re creating a situation with the mother and the fetus having competing legal rights,” said Howard Simon, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida, who argued the case before the appeals panel. “There was no masking that this was a crusade to



change the law, to limit the rights of women and bring to the Supreme Court something that would overturn or alter Roe v. Wade.” (New York Times, Jan. 11)

The same tactic is being tried in California in response to the murder of Laci Peterson, who was eight months pregnant when she was killed. Her husband is being charged with two counts of murder: one for her death and one for the fetus’s.

This anti-abortion strategy, however, is not limited to the United States. A case that would grant an unborn fetus the same rights as a person is currently before the European Court of Human Rights.

But that isn’t the only strategy right-wing zealots are trying to use to stop women’s right to control their own bodies. Opponents of reproductive rights in states like Kansas are targeting adolescents’ access to abortion and contraceptive services and pumping millions of dollars into abstinence-only education programs at the expense of comprehensive sex education.

Building a movement to defend women’s rights is sorely needed to counter all such right-wing attacks. The April 25 demonstration in Washington, D.C., billed as the “March for Women’s Lives,” projects a broad agenda, including women’s reproductive health, justice and freedom as well as family planning and the right to have children.

As the organizers noted in a recent press release, “We will not allow women’s lives to be lost or ruined by unjust laws and insensitive regulations promulgated by those who put women last.” □

O'Neill spills the beans

Iraq war plans began day Bush took office

By Fred Goldstein

As the old saying goes, when thieves fall out, truth comes into its own. This popular adage is being dramatized on an international stage as controversy mounts over former Secretary of the Treasury Paul O'Neill's revelation that the Bush administration planned to conquer Iraq from the moment it took office.

The revelations are contained in the book "The Price of Loyalty: George W. Bush, the White House, and the Education of Paul O'Neill" by Ron Suskind, which hit the bookstores on Jan. 13. In preparation for the book, O'Neill turned over 19,000 documents and 7,300 diary entries to Suskind, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author and former international editor of the Wall Street Journal. Suskind interviewed hundreds of people, including present government officials, beginning in February 2003. It was the best-selling book on amazon.com well before being published.

O'Neill was a standing member of the National Security Council, a long-time friend of Vice President Dick Cheney and a protégé of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld during the Ford administration. He met one-on-one with Bush weekly during his two years as secretary of the treasury before he was fired for objecting to Bush's tax cuts. Rumsfeld called O'Neill beforehand and warned him not to publish the book.

The controversy flared even higher when CBS, on the program "60 Minutes," aired interviews with O'Neill and Suskind by Leslie Stahl. Excerpts from the transcript speak for themselves.

"From the very beginning, there was a conviction that Saddam Hussein was a bad person and that he needed to go," says O'Neill, who added that going after Saddam was topic "A" 10 days after the inauguration—eight months before Sept. 11.

"From the very first instance, it was about Iraq. It was about what we can do to change this regime," says Suskind. "Day one, these things were laid and sealed."

"It was all about finding a way to do it. That was the tone of it. The president saying 'Go find me a way to do this,'" says O'Neill. And it came up at the first meeting.

Plans to occupy Iraq and seize oil

In the book itself, Suskind recounts those early NSC meetings. On Jan. 30, 2001, at the first NSC meeting of the Bush administration, which lasted less than an hour, the first topic was about how the administration was going to side with Israel and openly let Ariel Sharon have full freedom to attack the Palestinians without any restraint from Washington.

Then Bush turned to Condoleezza Rice, his national security adviser, and says, "So, Condi, what are we going to talk about today?"

"How Iraq is destabilizing the region, Mr. President," she replied in what was described as a "scripted exchange." Then CIA head George Tenet pulled out his infamous photos of an alleged chemical weapons plant and they all huddled excitedly around the photos as though they had found the smoking gun. These were the same meaningless photos of a factory with unidentified trucks standing by that Colin Powell tried unsuccessfully to sell to the UN Security Council in the final stages of

war preparation.

Two days later, on Feb. 1, the second meeting took place. Secretary of State Colin Powell had been assigned the task of tightening up the sanctions regime at the first meeting. Says the book:

"Powell began by discussing the new strategy for 'targeted sanctions.' But after a moment Rumsfeld interrupted.

"Sanctions are fine," he said. 'But what we really want to think about is going after Saddam.

"Imagine what the region would look like without Saddam and with a regime that's aligned with U.S. interests,' Rumsfeld said. 'It would demonstrate what U.S. policy is all about.'"(p.85)

At another point in the book, Suskind recounts that "One document, headed 'Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oilfield Contracts,' lists companies from 30 countries—including France, Germany, Russia, and the United Kingdom—their specialties, and in some cases their particular areas of interest. An attached document maps Iraq with markings for 'supergiant oilfield,' 'other oilfield,' and 'earmarked for production sharing,' while demarking the largely undeveloped southwest of the country into nine 'blocks' to designate areas for future exploration." (p.96)

Suskind recounts that at the start of 2001, "Actual plans, to O'Neill's astonishment, were already being discussed to take over Iraq and occupy it—complete with disposition of oil fields, peacekeeping forces, and war crimes tribunals—carrying forward an unspoken doctrine of preemptive war." (p. 129)

At the present time O'Neill appears to be backing away from his charges and trying to give the impression that he was only referring to a continuation of the Clinton policy of regime change, which was officially sanctioned in the Iraq Liberation Act of Oct. 31, 1998. But it is too late to put the genie back in the bottle.

ABC News of Jan. 13 ran an exclusive story that a government official had confirmed O'Neill's account. According to the transcript, "The official, who asked not to be identified, was present in the same National Security Council meetings as O'Neill immediately after Bush's inauguration in January and February of 2001.

"The president told his Pentagon officials to explore the military options, including use of ground forces,' the official told ABC News. 'That went beyond the Clinton administration's halfhearted attempts to overthrow Hussein without force.'"

What the ultimate meaning and political fallout will be as a result of these revelations remains to be seen. The revelations create contradictions for all factions and parties in the ruling class establishment. They have to decide whether to foment a scandal or to gradually bury it. They could go either way, depending upon the outcome in Iraq.

Those who are angry and disillusioned with the Bush administration for all the false assumptions having to do with the ease of conquering Iraq are in a difficult position. On the one hand, the O'Neill revelations give them extraordinary ammunition to condemn Bush. On the other, even those in the ruling class who oppose Bush desperately want the Pentagon to succeed with the brutal colonial occupation, crush the Iraqi resistance, stabilize

Iraq and grab the oil wealth.

Thus, they are all holding their breath in the hope that, with the capture of Saddam Hussein, they have turned the corner. But all signs show that the vital and determined resistance to the occupation is continuing strongly.

O'Neill took cover off war

Bush gave the ruling class a cover for the war in Iraq—eliminating the nuclear threat (which did not exist); eliminating the threat of biological and chemical weapons (which have not been found); and breaking the ties between Baghdad and Al Qaeda (there were none). All these pretexts were seized upon by the capitalist parties, the capitalist media and the entire corporate world to railroad the country to war—with the resulting death and devastation for untold numbers of Iraqis and the thousands of U.S. casualties.

When the occupation began facing resistance, the networks that had sent embedded reporters to grind out Pentagon propaganda, as well as the editorial page writers who urged the war, began to turn on the Bush administration. They accused it of "misleading" them and stoked an exposé of some of the lies about uranium from Niger and other myths about weapons of mass destruction.

But now O'Neill has totally taken the cover off the entire war. And who is he? He's the former head of Alcoa, the exploiter of 140,000 workers in 36 countries, and former union-busting president of International Paper Co. He did not act out of any progressive motives. Yet he has laid out the truly imperialist character of the war in black and white.

The lies told after Sept. 11 were not a heated reaction to an attack or made under the influence of the drumbeat of war. They were not part of an overzealous, impetuous, misguided effort.

This was a cold, calculated conspiracy by the Bush administration from day one to conquer Iraq, set up an occupation and a pro-U.S. regime, take control over its oil and dominate the Middle East. They made no bones about that in the National Security Council. This was a totally criminal war for totally imperialist purposes.

Bush & Co. belong on trial

But what is going on right now? Who is under investigation? O'Neill! The Democrats will, of course, try to use the revelations to get themselves elected. But that is hardly the point. Instead of O'Neill being under investigation, these revelations call for a trial of the entire Bush administration. There should be congressional investigations and the whole lot of these war criminals should be bound over for trial.

What the Bush administration did, from the point of view of legality, should land the entire administration in jail for conspiracy to provoke and carry out a war against an oppressed people. They should be tried, not only for the war crimes they committed in Iraq, but for the crime of secretly plotting this war.

But when it comes to wars where the interests of the imperialists are concerned, the question of right and wrong is judged from a ruling class point of view. If it strengthens their profit interests and their strategic position in the

The O'Neill revelations create contradictions for all factions and parties in the ruling class establishment. They have to decide whether to foment a scandal or to gradually bury it. They could go either way, depending upon the outcome in Iraq.

struggle for world domination, then it's right. If it ends up in a disaster for the bosses, then it's a mistake. The consequences for the workers and the oppressed, who have to fight and die in their wars, is of no concern to them whatsoever when it comes to an evaluation.

Not one member of the establishment will say the truth, although it is totally borne out by the O'Neill revelations, that this was an illegal, unjust war and that justice requires that the U.S. pull its forces out, make restitution to the Iraqi people, and leave them alone to determine their own destiny.

The working class and progressive movement should learn the proper lessons from these revelations. But that can only be done in the context of understanding imperialism. These revelations should not be used to single out the Bush conspiracy to go to war as some type of aberrant behavior by an extremist administration. It should be seen in the light of imperialism as a system.

Imperialist war and conspiracy: A history

Every war they unleash is carried out under a fraudulent pretext of one sort or another. Every one is done in a cold and calculating way based on serving the corporate and strategic interests of finance capital.

What is unusual about the O'Neill revelations is that they are directed at an in-office administration, fighting to stabilize a brutal colonial occupation.

The Pentagon Papers revealed a similar cunning conspiracy by Lyndon Johnson and his administration, including Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, to escalate the Vietnam War. In 1965 they concocted a non-existent "incident" in the Gulf of Tonkin. A Vietnamese P-T boat was supposed to have attacked a mighty U.S. warship in the waters off Vietnam. Of course, even if it had happened, it was no reason to send 500,000 soldiers to Vietnam. But the incident did not happen, as the Pentagon Papers showed.

After World War II President Harry Truman carried out a repressive, provocative policy in South Korea to deny the Korean people unification and the right to self-determination. He carried out mili-

Continued on page 8

NOW attacked for supporting Black candidate

By Kathy Durkin

The National Organization for Women has formally endorsed the candidacy of Carol Moseley Braun for president of the U.S. By taking this step, this major national women's group has put itself solidly behind the campaign of a well-known and leading African-American woman.

Moseley Braun has consistently fought for civil rights, women's equality, social programs for women, children, poor, working, oppressed people, the lesbian/gay/bi/transgendered community and the elderly. She has been an outspoken critic of the Bush administration on many domestic policies, including the Patriot Act.

Moseley Braun is well-known and admired by millions of oppressed and progressive people for her courageous stand and defeat of Sen. Jesse Helms's pursuit of federal recognition of the racist United Daughters of the Confederacy emblem. This was, in essence, a struggle about flying the Confederate flag and the heinous legacy of slavery.

Moseley Braun was the first African-American woman ever elected to the U.S. Senate, and has held other offices since she successfully ran for the Illinois State Legislature in 1978. She has always, however, had to deal with criticism and racist, sexist attacks by right-wing politicians and the establishment media, going back to the days when she first ran for office.

In 1998, Moseley Braun's defeat in her second bid for the U.S. Senate was engineered by Karl Rove, current Bush administration political strategist, who was hired to mount a smear campaign on behalf of her multi-millionaire opponent, Peter Fitzgerald. Though she was exonerated, media attacks have continued.

Her presidential campaign has been

marginalized, trivialized, ignored and assailed by the establishment media from the beginning, which, as usual, singles out and criticizes oppressed people who run for political office. The corporate media promote wealthy, white, male, mainstream candidates and push under the rug or make light of allegations of their financial or other wrongdoing.

In research conducted by NOW over six months in 2003, Moseley Braun was the candidate least likely to receive mention in the press, yet her rating in the polls is higher than some of the white, male candidates (see www.nowpacs.org). Despite her experience, she is rarely quoted on the issues or interviewed about her views. Often her name is omitted from lists of candidates.

Not surprisingly, the New York Times blasted NOW for endorsing Moseley Braun in a Sept. 14, 2003, editorial headlined "NOW's Woman Problem." The piece stated that NOW "trivialized the important role women will play in the coming election, and made themselves look silly to boot" by this endorsement. It called her campaign a "vanity affair," and said she had a "personal quest to return to the limelight." The Times referred to her reputation as "clouded" and "tarnished," referring to unfair charges initiated by Rove.

The editorial also said her campaign is "symbolic," and that there isn't a "principle that distinguishes Ms. [Moseley] Braun's candidacy..." In addition to the fact that NOW was supporting her very sound record on women's rights, and her high level of qualifications and experience, doesn't an African-American woman have the democratic right to run for the highest elected office and doesn't the media have the duty to take such a campaign seriously?

To NOW's credit, its leaders and mem-

bers strongly replied to the New York Times. Gay E. Bruhn, Ed.D., Illinois NOW president, stated, "In this race, Carol Moseley Braun—Black, female, credible, qualified—is another rock in the stream. She deserves our support, we are proud to give it to her, and we will not be moved."

NOW launched a letter-writing campaign to this allegedly liberal newspaper supporting Moseley Braun's candidacy. Letters were also sent by members of the National Women's Political Caucus, which had endorsed her campaign.

NOW's six-point reply to the New York Times editorial, which can be found at its website (www.nowpacs.org), states that the newspaper "assumes that the candidacy of an African-American woman cannot be serious," and points out that the newspaper rarely mentions Moseley Braun's campaign but is eager to make space for a critical piece, "after declining requests to meet with NOW or Moseley Braun."

But this is certainly not the first time, nor will it be the last, that a major establishment newspaper like the New York Times has assaulted the serious campaign and character of an African-American candidate for president or other office.

The Rev. Al Sharpton has come under frequent criticism by that newspaper and other establishment print and electronic media. As a case in point, in a total slur on Rev. Sharpton's campaign, the New York Times of Jan. 9, 2003, ran a front-page article attacking him on alleged financial irregularities and "unreasonable" campaign expenses.

Not only is Rev. Sharpton a representative of the oppressed communities, but, unlike Moseley Braun, he has strongly opposed the Bush administration's war and occupation in Iraq and has spoken at many national anti-war demonstrations. He has also spoken forthrightly for work-



Carol Moseley Braun

ing, poor and oppressed people on a multitude of issues in direct opposition to the government's policies.

What kind of scrutiny have the wealthy, white, ruling-class candidates been under? Vice President Cheney's financial ties to Halliburton have not been criticized in the establishment media as reasons to keep him out of office, nor were these connections strongly criticized when he ran with Bush. And that is but one example. The history of capitalist elections in this country is rife with financial wheeling and dealing, hidden assets and donors, bribery and corruption. The 2000 presidential elections exposed the disfranchisement of thousands of oppressed peoples in Florida and elsewhere.

It is only when an oppressed person, a woman, or someone with views considered too radical runs for office that the media carry out this type of virulent attack.

None of this, however, changes the fact that imperialist war, economic crises, poverty, unemployment and cuts in social services will not be stopped by voting for candidates of either capitalist party, Democrat or Republican. Only the class struggle, people's movements and mass mobilizations can make real social change. And, ultimately, the profit system that generates all these ills must be exposed and defeated. □

The state, racism and repression

From a talk given by Betsey Piette at the Dec. 6-7 New York conference on reviving the struggle for socialism.

To rebuild the movement for socialism, we must honestly examine the barriers that stand in our way. We must challenge the ideology that says things will get better if only we exercise our right to vote, because the U.S. claims to be a democracy—no matter how exploitative, how politically repressive, how widespread the denial of basic human rights.

It's not by chance that the income gap in the U.S. between the wealthiest 1 percent and the rest of the population grows wider by the hour. Let's not harbor any illusions about which class calls the shots.

"One of the most democratic republics in the world is the United States, yet nowhere is the power of capital, the power of a handful of billionaires over the whole of society, so crude and so openly corrupt as in America." Lenin wrote these words in 1919 in a short essay entitled "The State."

Lenin defined the state as a machine for maintaining the rule of one class over another by force. In "The Origin of The Family, Private Property and the State," Frederick Engels described primitive communal society when there was no



WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

Betsey Piette

state. The state developed as society formed into classes—slave owners and slaves; feudal lords and serfs; capitalists and workers—based on the evolution of private property.

Engels wrote: "The state is a product of society at a certain stage of development—an admission that the society is so divided into irreconcilable, antagonistic class interests that the class in power needs a force to stand above society for the purpose of keeping the con-

flict in check. The very existence of the state is proof that the class differences can not be reconciled."

The state serves as a special apparatus for the systematic subjugation of people by force, coercion and violence. Prisons, police, courts, armies and laws codifying discrimination work to exploit and oppress the working class and poor. The names of ruling class families and corporations may change, but the core of U.S. "democracy"—the rule of capital—remains the same.

Political repression, racism, sexism, homophobia and xenophobia are all cornerstones of this system. The "founding fathers" of the United States even penned a Constitution that allowed slavery and denied political and economic rights to all but property-owning white men.

The U.S. capitalist state has always fostered racism to maintain its power. I'm from Philadelphia, the so-called cradle of U.S. democracy whose symbol, the Liberty Bell, now sits atop the site where George Washington enslaved Africans. The U.S. Constitution was signed in Independence Hall, which was built by unpaid slave labor.

Philly is notorious for its brutally racist police force. During the 1970s, Mayor Frank Rizzo's police raided the Black

Panther Party office, handcuffed and stripped Panther members for the press to photograph. Years later this same police department dropped a bomb in West Philly, murdering 11 MOVE members. Philly's police force originated in the 1830s—recruited from gangs of white goons to terrorize immigrants, striking workers and the movement to abolish slavery.

The struggle to free political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal has focused world attention on Philadelphia as the "death penalty" capital. In the 1970s Mumia was the target of the federal COINTELPRO program. This fall, the FBI targeted the incumbent African American mayor, John Street, in the midst of his re-election campaign.

When it comes to racism and repression, there is nothing unique about Philadelphia.

Capitalism uses the illusion of "free" elections to maintain its domination, offering the best candidates money can buy. The capitalist media tells workers which candidates are "legitimate" and which issues really count. Is the candidate "tough on crime"—for more cops and prisons? Does he put down welfare moms, oppose gay marriage, and attack affirmative action and abortion rights? Then he's

California's prison-industrial complex

Kevin Cooper slated for next execution

By LeiLani Dowell
San Francisco

As people gather on Jan. 19 in San Francisco to honor the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., banners and placards will be raised in support of Kevin Cooper.

If the state has its way, Cooper will be executed Feb. 10. The African American man was convicted of murdering three members of the Ryen family and their houseguest in Southern California in 1985. In his time on death row, Cooper has spoken and written against the racist death penalty and prison system.

Several recent articles in the big-business press have highlighted the crisis of the U.S. prison system. Nowhere does this have more impact than in California. According to the Legislative Analyst's Office, California annually spends more on prisons—\$5.1 billion—and incarcerates more people—over 160,000—than any other state.

California has built 23 prisons since 1980, but just one university.

While the 65 executions that took place in the United States in 2003 were exclusively in the South (89 percent) and Midwest (11 percent), California has the distinction of having the largest number of people on death row—640. Even Texas has fewer prisoners on death row.

Prison labor is big business

What motivates California to invest so heavily in its prison-industrial complex? The answer lies in the excessive amount of profit to be made by private corporations—all on the backs of prisoners.

A map on the State of California Web page lists some 60 service, manufacturing

their man—usually a white man.

Democracy, the hallmark of ancient Greece, existed only for the slave-owning class. Capitalist states may have parliaments; they can be democracies, republics or even fascist dictatorships. But all exist solely to protect the profit system.

When Bush calls the U.S., Britain and Israel “models of democracy,” he really means they provide unfettered opportunities for imperialism. Who could miss the irony that it took 7,000 bodyguards to protect George W. Bush, the “leader of democracy,” from British anti-war demonstrators in November?

Will there be a need for a state apparatus under socialism? If we understand that the state functions to provide a means for the class in power to keep the class conflict in check, it makes sense that for a period of time the workers and oppressed will need a state to solidify and maintain their rule over their former oppressors.

For the slaves in ancient Greece or those in the 19th century U.S., rebellion was the only way to end their oppression. The same holds true for workers today. However, it's not enough for workers to just take over the capitalist state; we need to abolish it and replace it with a socialist state designed to eliminate every vestige of capitalism's legacy of exploitation and oppression.

Only then will we be on the way to eliminating the need for a state once and for all. □

and agricultural industries that use prison labor in California: license plates, coffee roasting, knitting mills, meat cutting and laundry services, to name a few. You can even order prisoner-made goods and services from the California Prison Industry Authority's online catalog!

Another example: “PIA's Digital Services Enterprise provides a variety of custom global position maps and related services to help governmental agencies to plan for a variety of contingencies”—vivid evidence of the connection between the war at home and abroad.

While the PIA touts these as “productive work assignments to reduce idleness and improve job skills,” it really is nothing but slave labor, especially when you consider that in 2002 California's prison population was 73.7 percent people of color.

Prisons as ‘mental health clinics’

The Nov. 1 New York Times reported that the Los Angeles County Jail, with 3,400 mentally ill prisoners, serves as the “largest psychiatric inpatient institution” in the U.S.—yet it's really more of a holding pen, where illnesses are not treated and are allowed to fester.

The harsh conditions of prison life only exacerbate prisoners' mental illnesses. Frequently the response of administrators and prison guards isn't treatment, but solitary confinement.

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's proposed budget for 2004-2005 would cut \$438 million from youth and adult prisons—the first time in years that a cut in prison spending has been proposed. However, it also proposes a moratorium on the creation of new Adult Day Health Care centers and the expansion of current ones.

According to the State of California site, these centers “provide programs ... for developmentally disabled and/or mentally disabled adults in a day care setting. ... Persons served are at risk of being placed in a facility or an institution if services are not provided.”

In addition, cuts in prison spending will likely amount to cuts in services for the prisoners. On Jan. 1, inmate visitation days were cut in half in most California correctional institutions. Already sparse prisoner health services are endangered.

The cuts in prison spending accompany a long list of cuts in social services proposed by Schwarzenegger.

As fewer social services are available for people on the outside, and desperation grows, so does the likelihood of more poor people and people of color ending up in prison.

The crowding of prisons with mentally ill people—as many as one in five, according to a Human Rights Watch study—is a national phenomenon.

Given this state of affairs, the Jan. 6 legal lynching of mentally ill Charles Singleton was not surprising. With court permission, the state of Arkansas forcibly medicated Singleton to make him “sane” enough to execute. (Sunday Times of South Africa, Jan. 10)

Next victim: Kevin Cooper

The state of California is set to make Kevin Cooper its next victim on Feb. 10.

The case for Cooper's guilt was dubious from the start. Joshua Ryen, the sole witness to his family's murder, told police there were three killers and that they were all white or Latino men. One of the victims, 10-year-old Jessica Ryen, was found with a clump of blond hair in her hand. Both Joshua and his grandmother have questioned Cooper's conviction.

An expert from the American Board of Pathology stated that it was impossible for the 159 wounds, 28 fractures and two amputations to have been inflicted by one person. But the prosecution insisted that Cooper used a hatchet, ice pick and knife to commit the crimes, all in 60 to 90 seconds.

A racist frenzy surrounded the trial. Crowds near the courthouse hung a toy gorilla in effigy and held signs with racial epithets.

At the very least, there is evidence that Cooper's case should be immediately reopened and the execution halted.

For example, Diana Roper in Chino approached police with a pair of bloody coveralls that her boyfriend, Lee Furrow, came home in the morning of the murders. She stated that a brown t-shirt found near the murder scene matched one that he owned. Furrow's hatchet was missing from her home as well. Police assigned to the case threw the bloody coveralls away.

A prison inmate who was not incarcerated when the murder took place confessed to his cell mate that he had participated in the murders, and had accurate information that had not been reported in the press. This prisoner had Diana Roper listed as his emergency contact.



Kevin Cooper

Cooper won the right to a DNA test after a three-year fight. The blood tested was determined to be his. But Cooper and his lawyers were unaware that a portion of the evidence had been removed for 24 hours by a criminologist who admitted to changing test results. Despite this blatant tampering, the state has used Cooper's DNA test to seal his conviction in stone.

On Jan. 11, Cooper petitioned Governor Schwarzenegger for new DNA testing to prove his innocence. To learn more about Cooper's case and to get involved in the struggle to free him, visit www.savekevincooper.org.

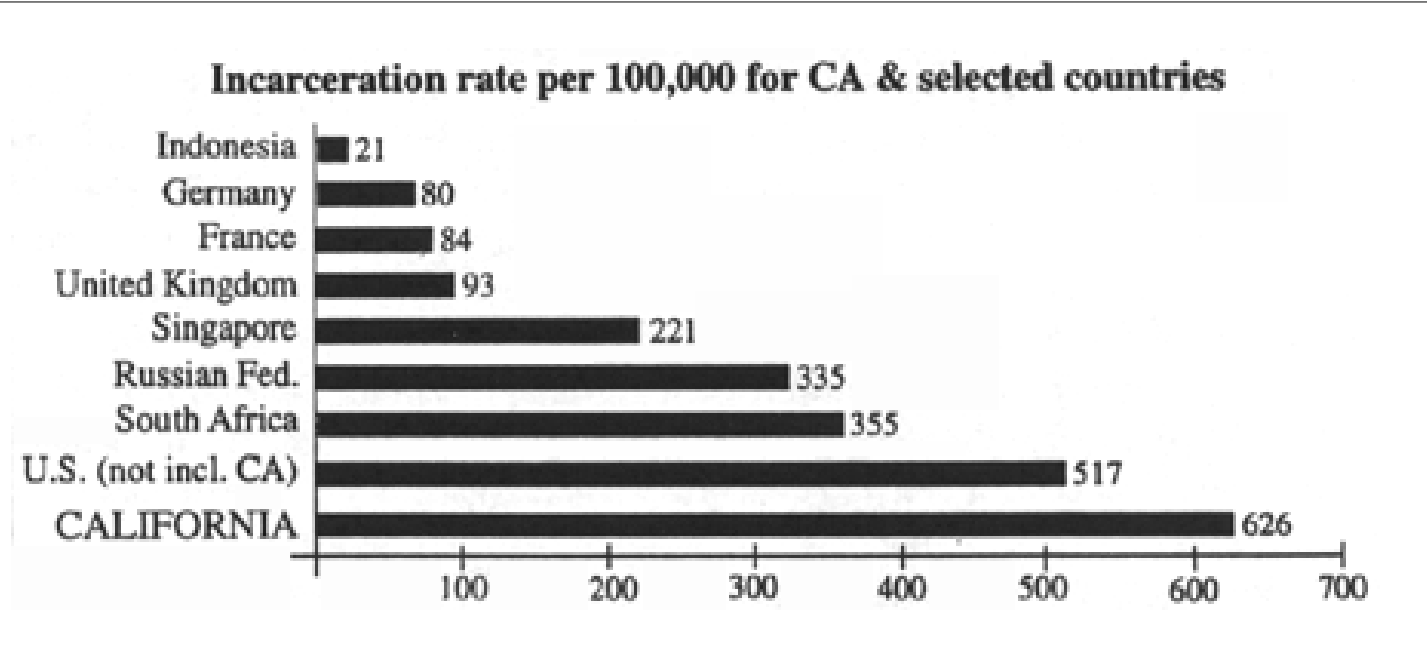
Legal lynching epidemic

The Death Penalty Information Center's 2003 Year End Report states: “As has been the case for many years, those executed [in 2003] were almost exclusively guilty of murdering a white victim—only 18 percent of those executed were convicted of murdering a black person—despite the fact that blacks are victims in about 50 percent of murders in the U.S. In 2003, no white person was executed exclusively for the murder of a black person.”

The prison system and death penalty show that the U.S. government's domestic policy mirrors its foreign policy of making people of color and the poor disposable.

By criminalizing those with mental illnesses, taking jobs away from union workers and replacing them with prison slave labor, and committing modern-day lynchings through legal executions, the prison system is a fundamental part of the domestic war on the poor, people of color and the whole working class.

Dowell, a Workers World Party member, is the Peace & Freedom Party candidate for the 8th Congressional District in San Francisco. □



By Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row

Feelin' safe yet?

It's been eight months since the Americans marched into the deserts of Iraq as part of the triumph of the West in the now-classic "Clash of Civilizations."

Since that time, the Iraqis have staged a resistance that has cost the lives of hundreds of Americans, sent the United Nations into retreat, and caused several nations to refrain from even attempting to intervene in the region.

Americans started the Iraq War on a series of false pretenses; a) the war on terrorism; b) Iraq's role in supporting the jihadis of 9/11; and c) Iraq's "imminent threat" posed by weapons of mass destruction.

The capture of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has sent the American media and politicians into paroxysms of joy. It's kind of like the second invasion of the country. The Hussein capture is of a piece that is a U.S. attempt at "nation building."

One of America's chief architects of the Cold War found this aspect of Bush's new "preemptive strike" doctrine wrong-headed. George Kennan called it "a great mistake in principle." In a little-noticed item in the congressional newspaper The Hill, Kennan offered the opinion that a study of history teaches us "that you might start a war with certain things in ... mind," but inevitably, nations turn to fighting for things "never thought of before." Of the second Iraqi war, Keenan noted it "bears no relation to the first war against terrorism." (From Bruce Cumings, "Is America an Imperial Power?," Current History, November 2003, p. 360)

Further, Kennan was harshly critical of the Congress, upon whom rests the awesome responsibility to declare war, but he was particularly dismissive of congressional Democrats, whom he called "shameful," "shabby" and "timid" in the face of Bush's plans for war. Kennan, 98 years old at the time of the September 2002 interview, was the formulator of the U.S. "containment" policies of the past 50 years, and was U.S. ambassador to Moscow during the Soviet regime (ca. 1952) and ambassador to Yugoslavia in the early 1960s. That this unabashed nationalist, conservative thinker is so critical of the present U.S. course is telling.

Clearly, Kennan sees "imminent danger" from the administration's present course of action.

Even with the capture of Hussein, does anyone seriously believe that the armed resistance to the U.S. occupation will cease? Saddam Hussein, president of the Iraqi state for over a generation, was not the engine nor even the spark of the Iraqi Resistance. That Resistance is fueled by the presence and the behavior of Americans in a foreign land. The Resistance is fueled by Iraqi nationalism, not love for the Hussein family. We shall see if this event dulls the fires of resistance; time will tell.

According to one scholar who has examined the present situation in Iraq, the U.S. has done almost everything wrong. Alan Sorensen, associate editor of Current History, has observed:

"The U.S. military failed to deploy enough force to establish security, permitting looting and lawlessness to continue unchecked. It initially appointed (then dismissed) a low-key, low-profile coordinator to oversee reconstruction. It grossly underestimated the costs of restoring services and rebuilding infrastructure. It attempted to promote an emigre political figure with little experience in his native country. It failed to secure critical facilities, including arms caches, many of them still unguarded. It diverted significant resources and manpower to a failed attempt to find weapons of mass destruction. It consigned the Iraqi Army to resentful unemployment. It emptied the government of knowledgeable technocrats. It invited Iraq's former imperial masters from Turkey to join the occupation. It favored select American businesses in the distribution of no-bid contracts. It failed miserably to engage in effective public diplomacy. It ignored a pre-invasion State Department report that has laid out with startling precision many of the challenges now bedeviling authorities." ("The Reluctant Nation Builders," Current History, December 2003, p. 409)

And Americans wonder why things are going so badly there.

The reason things are going so badly is because it was ill-conceived from the get-go. Sold as the "next step" in the "war against terrorism," the Iraq Adventure is not really that, nor even nation building. It is empire-building, with Iraq chosen to serve as demonstration model. The subjugation of Iraq is meant to teach other regimes in the region the meaning of American imperial power. Those are the real stakes in Iraq. □



Iraq war plans began day Bush took office

Continued from page 5

tary provocations and then launched a three-year war which was simply aimed at rolling back socialism and the liberation of the country.

It took years to bring to light the fact that the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt planned a U.S. war in the Pacific with the dual purpose of conquering new territory and at the same time lifting the country out of the second phase of the Great Depression, which had resumed in 1938. Roosevelt cut off all oil to Japan, which had only a 30 days' oil supply, knowing and counting on the fact that this would precipitate a conflict in Asia.

In April 1917 the U.S. entered the conflict in Europe on the side of the imperialist Allies. Woodrow Wilson used the sinking of the British ocean liner Lusitania by German U-boats in May 1915, two years earlier as a pretext to whip up war fever and carry out pre-existing war plans. Some 128 U.S. citizens had been aboard the ship. Wilson was protecting and expanding U.S. capitalism's growing investments in Europe.

And, of course, there was the infamous beginning of U.S. imperialism, the so-called Spanish-

American War of 1898, by which Washington colonized Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines and Guam under the guise of "liberating" those people from their suffering under Spain's rule. The war fever was whipped up by a national campaign in the Hearst press, which sent the well-known artist Frederic Remington to Cuba to produce heart-rending sketches of "gentlewomen" being abused by leering Spanish soldiers.

Republican and Democratic administrations alike have served the imperialist ruling class for over 100 years, pursuing their interests abroad. The idea of a venal conspiracy to go to war by the grouping around Bush should surprise no one who understands imperialism and should not be used as a justification to support the Democrats, who have historically been a party of war.

This conspiracy should be used to expose the ruling class as a whole, not just the Bush administration, and to fuel the anti-war movement. The only lesson that should be taken from the O'Neill revelations is that they confirm that the only way to stop war is to put an end to imperialism. And the only way to do that is through mass struggle. □

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Thorns in the ‘roses’

Washington and the coup in former Soviet Georgia

By Leslie Feinberg

Has Washington just installed its first hand-picked president through a coup in one of the former Soviet Republics in Central Asia?

Based on results from a Jan. 4 election in Georgia, Mikhail Saakashvili successfully deposed the formerly-U.S.-backed party of Eduard Shevardnadze. Shevardnadze had been re-elected in November. But he was quickly forced to resign after the opposition, led by Saakashvili, organized large demonstrations charging ballot fraud.

Imperialist media reports characterized the coup as a “rose revolution,” a spontaneous revolution from below, symbolized by the red roses that opposition figure Saakashvili handed out to followers. But Shevardnadze and Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov accused Washington of orchestrating the coup.

Ivanov said in an interview with *Komsomolskaya Pravda* newspaper: “There are enough facts proving that what happened in those days wasn’t spontaneous, it didn’t arise suddenly. Of course there were preparations and the U.S. ambassador was involved, as Shevardnadze himself admitted.” (The Independent, Jan. 2)

Shevardnadze reminded the media that Richard Miles, the U.S. ambassador to Georgia, had also been posted in Yugoslavia before the U.S.-engineered overthrow of President Slobodan Milosevic.

Shevardnadze, a faithful U.S. ally, appeared stunned by Washington’s betrayal. “I was one of the staunchest supporters of the U.S. policy,” he moaned. “When they needed help on Iraq, I gave it. I don’t have an explanation to what has happened here.” (The Hindu, Dec. 31)

With strong backing from Washington, Saakashvili was elected president on Jan. 4. He is described as the closest U.S. ally of any national leader in the former Soviet republics outside the Baltic states. He graduated from Columbia University Law School and briefly worked for a Manhattan law firm.

Platinum piece of real estate

Central Asia and the Caucasus are the gateways to the vast oil and gas reserves in the Caspian Basin. The value of these, the world’s biggest untapped oil and gas reserves, is estimated at up to \$4 trillion on the capitalist world market. But the fossil fuels are landlocked.

Washington’s war against the impoverished nation of Afghanistan—a corridor through which first energy cartels Enron and later Unocal planned to pipe Caspian Basin reserves—resulted in the U.S. appointing a president and an ambassador for Afghanistan who had both worked as Unocal consultants.

By the time the smoke from the merciless aerial bombing had cleared, under the cover of the “war on terror,” the Pentagon had quietly established military bases in the former Soviet republics of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

And through an infusion of money and political manipulation, Washington and Wall Street have created client governments in the former Soviet republics of Azerbaijan, Kazakstan and Georgia.

The BP cartel—a consortium of petroleum giants in which U.S. monopolies own a huge share—is well underway in constructing a more than 1,000-mile pipeline,

known as the BTC, to carry oil from the vast reserves in Azerbaijan to the Turkish port of Ceyhan. Tens of billions of dollars have already been sunk into the project as capital investment.

That oil pipeline will snake right through Georgia.

In 1991, Georgia broke with the Soviet Union, declaring itself independent. Georgia is strategically situated—bordered by Turkey to the south, Russia to the north and adjacent to Chechnya.

Soon after Georgia declared independence, it became territorially splintered after two of the richest regions broke away in secessionist movements: Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Immediately after Shevardnadze was removed, Bush immediately declared his support for Georgia’s “territorial integrity.”

Although Russia is still Georgia’s biggest trading partner, the U.S. has pumped some \$2.3 billion in official aid into Georgia in the decade since the defeat of the USSR.

The Pentagon officially sent military advisors there two years ago after Shevardnadze cut a deal in May 2002 with the U.S. that allowed Special Forces to train some 1,500-2,000 Georgian soldiers in a \$64-million program.

Washington’s shift in loyalties towards Shevardnadze’s opponent, former Justice Minister Mikhail Saakashvili, was no secret. According to the Dec. 15 Daily Star, “Several analysts seized on U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell’s quote that ‘an unstable Georgia automatically results in an unstable Caucasus,’ to conclude that, faced with supporting an ally who was deeply unpopular with his people, the U.S. ditched him to ensure stability.”

Two weeks after Shevardnadze was forced to resign, U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld visited Georgia and Azerbaijan on Dec. 5 for meetings to discuss long-term access there for Pentagon forces. The U.S. secretary of defense “demanded Russia withdraw its troops from Ajaria and the other secessionist areas, and suggested the United States might be ready to send its own troops to the Caucasus. The next day, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell denounced ‘break-away elements seeking to weaken Georgia’s territorial integrity.’” (AFP, Dec. 7)

The moment Shevardnadze stepped down, acting president Nino Burjanadze didn’t waste a second: One of her first calls was reportedly to bigwigs from BP—the oil

cartel building the pipeline.

“Between calls from U.S. Secretary Colin Powell and others on her first day, Burjanadze met with Ed Johnson, BP’s Georgia manager, to assure him Georgia’s revolution wouldn’t affect the project.” (Calgary Herald, Jan. 3)

And immediately after Shevardnadze was forced out of office, Saakashvili publicly announced his support for the pipeline. And he is also continuing to push, as did his predecessors, for Georgia to join NATO.

Instant coup—just add oil

Georgia is the first of the former Soviet Republics where the U.S. has been able to outright install a hand-picked leader through a coup. But Washington hopes this is just the beginning.

The Hindu newspaper in India did an extensive exposé of this effort on Dec. 31. “According to the former head of Russia’s Federal Security Service, Nikolai Kovalyov, Georgia’s young opposition leaders, including Mr. Saakashvili, had been trained in U.S.-funded camps in Serbia along with representatives from Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and a few other former Soviet republics. They studied the Yugoslav experience of removing the president, Slobodan Milosevic, with the help of massive public protests organized by Serbia’s student movement Otpor.”

The counter-revolutionary student organization Otpor—Resist—used a leftist-sounding name and clenched-fist symbol. The Washington Post reported on Dec. 11, 2000, that Otpor was trained in tactics by State Department operatives.

“We are working with civil movements in several countries, and I don’t want to name them. But Georgia is the first success story,” Otpor’s leader, Slobodan Djinnovic, told the BBC.

But is the prospect for a stable pipeline just a pipedream?

From bread basket to bread lines

Georgia, a nation of 5.5 million about the size of West Virginia, is today the poorest of the three countries that the pipeline will pass through.

What was once an oppressed nation under the rule of czarist Russia became the bread basket of the Soviet Union after the Russian Revolution, enjoying one of the highest standards of living of the for-

mer Soviet republics. Its vineyards were famous for the wines they produced. Tourism flourished on its Black Sea beaches.

But 13 years after the USSR was overturned, the economy of Georgia has plummeted further than any other of the former Soviet republics. Industries collapsed. The country is mired in joblessness and acute poverty. The budget cupboard is bare and the economy is saddled with \$1.8 billion in foreign debt. (AFP, Dec. 29)

Pensions are as low as \$7 a month. Lack of government services has left many without heat or electricity this winter. (Guardian Unlimited, Jan. 2)

The “rose movement” was not the popular revolution it was touted to be, but billing it as such helped raise expectations among the impoverished of Georgia.

Worker Dato Bashidze said of Saakashvili’s electoral victory, “He’ll have a little time. That’s why we elected him, to get to work on our demands.” (New York Times, Jan. 5)

However, workers who collectively recall the rights of labor during decades in the socialist federation didn’t even wait for the Jan. 4 election.

On Dec. 15, about 200 workers laying pipe for the BTC in Georgia went on strike for the third time in a week. The workers, employed by a subcontractor near the city of Rustavi—18 miles southeast of the capital—demanded back wages.

“We are not getting our salaries on time,” said David, a striking worker and a resident of Rustavi. “There are problems with the contracts—they offer us to work for a few days, theoretically as a trial period and then dismiss us without pay.” (AFP, Dec. 16)

One day earlier, some 500 workers demonstrated in the Gardabani region, 36 miles east of the capital.

Two days earlier, workers protested in Tsalka, about 20 miles southwest of Tbilisi. “The [striking] workers at Tsalka were mainly women who cook for the workers,” a Petrofac official who requested anonymity told AFP. In order to press their demand that salaries be paid—and fast—“They practically held our representatives hostage for three hours.”

On a plateau in the Georgian uplands, farmers are unhappy with the pipeline construction because, they explain, it blocks access to their fields, the excavators create choking dust and they have not been given enough compensation for their lost land.

The Jan. 5 New York Times explained, “They had hoped that with up to a million barrels of oil a day flowing beneath their feet all their problems would somehow be solved: they would get gas and electricity for the first time in years, their potholed road would be fixed and people would have work.”

As an opposition leader, Saakashvili had run on a demagogic platform, decrying corruption. He assailed the health care system in Georgia as “one of the most barbaric in the world.”

However, now he’s stressing, “We cannot restore the old social-welfare system” of the Soviet era. (AP, Jan. 6)

His prescription is to develop the capitalist economy. But that’s what led to widespread poverty and the rising tide of anger in the first place. □

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King's legacy: *uniting the struggles*

“During the lifetime of great revolutionaries, the oppressing classes constantly hounded them, received their theories with the most savage malice, the most furious hatred and the most unscrupulous campaigns of lies and slander. After their death, attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons...”

So Lenin wrote about Marx and Engels in his preface to State and Revolution. But a quite similar statement could be applied to the way the ruling-class media in the United States now treat Martin Luther King Jr., and especially the way they treat his holiday.

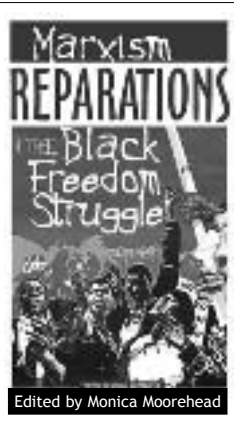
King, even though he represented the wing of the Civil Rights movement that sought liberation while rejecting armed struggle or indeed any militant response to the most severe racist provocations, was certainly no passive icon. King was immersed in the struggle for economic and political rights. He was in the forefront of many of these struggles.

He led a powerful movement. He, along with Malcolm X and Medgar Evers and others who gave their lives in the struggle for freedom, brought people into the streets. Hundreds of thousands—millions, eventually—were mobilized for action. These millions sat down at lunch counters, walked into universities, marched across bridges, facing down KKK sheriffs and governors or the organized racists of Cicero, Ill., marching forward despite water hoses, nightsticks, rabid dogs and bullets. They took over Washington, D.C., for the great 1963 march.

King was especially associated with a struggle for the democratic rights of African American people. And he himself was in continual development as a leader. In 1967 King had come out completely in opposition to the U.S. war against Vietnam, although this brought him in direct conflict with the Lyndon Johnson administration, and in conflict with imperialist liberals who refused to break with the U.S. war policy. He was willing to take the risk of this isolation from power in order to stand by his principles of combating an illegal war of conquest in Southeast Asia.

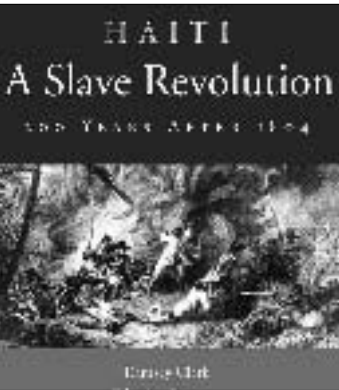
In the months before his assassination in 1968, he connected the fight for Civil Rights and that against the Vietnam War with the struggle for the U.S. working class and poor. He laid out the plans for a Poor People’s March on Washington. In April 1968 he stood in solidarity with the strike of the sanitation workers of Memphis. Before he was to address a meeting of those Black workers and their supporters on April 4, King was assassinated.

To honor King’s memory is not just to spend a day saluting his image, but to go on with struggle, organization and the construction of class-wide unity against war, racism and exploitation. That’s what the Jan. 15 protest in New York against this summer’s Republican National Convention and the war/occupation in Iraq will be doing. And on March 20, the ANSWER coalition, along with many Arab and Muslim groups in the United States, has called for a demonstration to bring the troops home now from Iraq, to end the occupation immediately, to stand in solidarity with the struggle of Iraqi and Palestinian people for liberation, and to demand jobs and social services at home instead of war abroad. To make this a real mass movement will be the best way to honor King’s memory this year. □



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Left to right: speakers Page Getz, Deirdre Griswold, John Parker, Muna Coobtee. WW PHOTO: J. LA RIVA

WW editor speaks in Los Angeles

‘Why U.S. banks can’t tell China what to do’

By John Beacham
Los Angeles

The editor of Workers World newspaper, Deirdre Griswold, spoke at a special Workers World Party forum on China here on Jan. 9. The title of Griswold’s talk was “The Great Challenges Facing China Today.”

The packed meeting was chaired by John Parker. Muna Coobtee energized the crowd with her call to make the upcoming March 20 demonstration as big as possible. Its demands are to end the occupation in Iraq, Palestine and everywhere and bring the troops home now.

Page Getz from the Community Action Project to Support Labor, a project of the ANSWER coalition in Los Angeles, gave an update of the Southern California grocery workers’ struggle, urging everyone to continue to join the picket lines. She said that community support is needed now more than ever.

Griswold, who has written extensively on China, put the gains and problems of the Chinese Revolution in the context of the great challenges it has faced trying to hold off imperialist aggression and build socialism while lifting one-fifth of the world’s population out of extreme poverty. For hundreds of years, every imperialist country, but especially the U.S., has had as one of its primary goals the subjugation of the Chinese people and control of the markets of Asia.

“Controlling China was the U.S. object in World War II, the Korean War and the war in Vietnam,” said Griswold. “But the U.S. imperialists, even though they defeated Japanese imperialism, did not achieve their goal. Something bigger than U.S. air power, bigger than A-bombs and bigger than Wall Street, with all its wealth, intervened—the political power of millions of Chinese workers and peasants organized into a Communist Party and a Red Army.”

To this day, U.S. imperialism is still unable to control China. Considering the poverty and underdevelopment of China in 1949 and the all-out assault by U.S. imperialism, it is truly incredible that many of the social and institutional gains of the working class and peasants have endured.

After the Deng grouping won out over the Maoists, China’s leaders turned to the market to spur development. This allowed the growth of a capitalist class. However, foreign capitalists “are not able to walk right in to China and tell the banks what to do, as they can in other parts of the world. There are still many mechanisms by which the party and the state hold the reins [of the economy] in their hands,” said Griswold.

As an example, she referred to China’s recent decision to transfer \$45 billion from its foreign exchange reserves into a bank that finances state-owned industry. This move, which can save the jobs of millions of workers, was not decided on in New York or London or Paris, she stressed. The imperialist banks cannot tell China what to do, in the way they dictate economic and financial policy to countries under their domination.

She also pointed out that China has canceled debts owed it by the African countries, who can now use this as leverage to demand that imperialist banks and institutions do the same.

In China, corrupt officials and capitalists who bribe them often face harsh punishment, including execution. Members of ruling class families in the U.S. never go to jail, and their high-paid executives who steal millions can plea bargain for sentences light by comparison with what the poor and oppressed get. As for bribing officials, Griswold pointed out that George W. Bush’s biggest political contributions came from the Enron Corporation.

Griswold concluded, “A lot of people here think China is now a capitalist country. We don’t agree. While there are many aspects of capitalism in China, and the growth of a capitalist class presents a real danger to socialism, it is not yet the dominant class. It has not defeated the workers’ state created by the revolution. And most Chinese agree with us.”

Those who want to aid China’s socialist development should build the struggle here against U.S. imperialism, Griswold said. “When the workers in the developed, actually rotten ripe, imperialist countries fight for social change, the biggest burden will be lifted from the oppressed countries, too.” □

Venezuela brings in Cuban doctors while Washington fumes

By LeiLani Dowell

As resistance to U.S. imperialism grows in Latin America, Washington is intensifying its war of words against Venezuela. The U.S. government views Venezuela's "Bolivarian Revolution" as a distinct threat.

On Jan. 9, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice said: "There are roles that Venezuela has played that have not been very helpful. ... The best thing that [Venezuelan President Hugo] Chávez could do at this point is to demonstrate that he believes in a democratic future for Venezuela by carrying out the wishes of his people in this regard."

Rice was referring to a referendum that

the business class has submitted for a recall vote on Chávez's term. The bosses claim they have garnered 3.4 million signatures, but the Venezuelan National Elections Council is still reviewing the petitions.

Since Chávez took office in 1998, his progressive agenda has brought about changes to improve living conditions for the 80 percent of Venezuelans in poverty. The National Assembly has created one of the most inclusive constitutions in the world, including the right to strike, Indigenous rights and lesbian/ gay rights.

Chávez has included poor and working people in the creation of Bolivarian circles to defend these progressive measures and perform necessary social services.

The imperialists in the White House are fuming because their first two attempts to unseat Chávez—a coup in April 2002 and a national lockout in December 2002—were defeated by the mobilization of poor and working people to defend the president.

Washington and Wall Street see Chávez and Venezuela as bad examples for the rest of Latin America to follow. Indeed, an article in the Jan. 8 New York Times warned, "The United States, which has often viewed most nations of Latin America as reliable and docile allies, is increasingly facing resentment over security and trade policies that some of them view as inimical to their interests."

"U.S. Decries Venezuela's Ties to Cuba" headlined a Jan. 5 Associated Press article. It reported: "Administration officials say Cuba and Venezuela are working together to oppose pro-American, democratic governments in the region. ... Chávez's actions have worried Washington for some time, but U.S. officials have said little publicly."

Cuba has sent thousands of doctors and literacy volunteers to Venezuela in an act of international solidarity.

The anti-imperialist movement in the U.S. should pay close attention to developments in Venezuela and be prepared to stand in solidarity with the Venezuelan people. □



WW PHOTO: BILL HACKWELL

Pierre Labossiere, Haiti Support Committee representative speaking at forum on Resistance to Imperialism in Latin America

Popular movements growing in Latin America

By Bill Hackwell
San Francisco

An overflow crowd attended a Jan. 10 meeting in the Women's Building here to hear about recent developments in the struggle against imperialism in Latin America. The forum, sponsored by the International Action Center, comes at a time when the level of threats emanating from Washington against the entire region is on the rise. The emergence of progressive governments in Venezuela, Brazil and Argentina, coupled with the solidarity of revolutionary Cuba, is worrisome to the Bush administration. Anti-imperialist movements are emerging in many countries of Latin America as opposition to the Free Trade Area of the Americas and neo-liberalism in general grows.

Nati Carrera, a youth organizer with the ANSWER Coalition, talked about the struggle of the Indigenous people in Chiapas, Mexico. Carrera, KPFA radio contributor to the "La Onda Bajita" program, explained how the Zapatista Army of National Liberation in the highlands of Chiapas launched the struggle against the North American Free Trade Agreement on Jan. 1, 1994. The Zapatista movement remains today in the forefront of the struggle of the Indigenous against transnational corporations.

Jackie Santos, who was born on the island of Vieques, gave a historical analysis of the Puerto Rican people's resistance to U.S. imperialism since 1898. "Even though the U.S. Navy has been forced out of Vieques, which they had used for bombing practice for decades, Puerto Rico can never be a sovereign country until there is not one U.S. soldier left on its soil," Santos said.

Pierre Labossiere of the Haiti Support

Committee, who just returned from his homeland, gave an account of the developments there on the 200th anniversary of Haiti's independence. Labossiere explained how the popular movements are growing in Haiti and so is the consciousness of the people concerning U.S. attempts to destabilize the Aristide government. He said there are gross inaccuracies in the reporting by the corporate media here, who have downplayed the size of the demonstrations in support of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Alicia Jrapko, a member of the National Committee to Free the Cuban Five, spoke about the solidarity that Cuba has shown to the world. "Roger Noriega, the U.S. assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, has accused Cuba of playing a destabilizing role in Latin America. It is the U.S. that has been the destabilizing element in the region by backing governments that have allowed U.S. corporations to exploit their human and natural resources," stated Jrapko.

LeiLani Dowell, a student organizer for the ANSWER Coalition and Peace and Freedom Party candidate for the 8th Congressional District in San Francisco, spoke on the situation in Venezuela. Dowell, who traveled to Venezuela last year, talked about the mass support for President Hugo Chávez and the struggle to use the country's great oil wealth for health and education instead of profits for the wealthy.

IAC activist Nathalie Alsop gave a report on the trade union movement in Colombia and the recent agreement of guerrilla forces there to work together in the struggle against the dominant role that the U.S. plays in Colombia.

The meeting was chaired by Peruvian activist Patricia Chase. □

Health care in the Americas: A tale of two systems

By Heather Cottin

The Bush administration has accused Cuba of "destabilization" for providing free health care and education to Venezuela.

Some 10,169 Cuban doctors, mostly women, are currently working in Venezuela, mainly in the most impoverished neighborhoods of Caracas. "It is a battle for life. The munitions are medicines," said Venezuelan Ambassador Julio Montes.

The Bush administration has characterized this humanitarian campaign as an attempt to "destabilize parts of the region," according to U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell. (New York Times, Jan. 9) The top U.S. official on Latin American affairs, Roger Noriega, said, "We have sources of information that paint a disturbing picture of Cuban involvement in supporting elements in various countries that seek to destabilize democratically elected governments."

Washington fears that this international solidarity will enhance Cuba's stature in Latin America and increase working-class support in Venezuela and Latin America for the Bolivarian Revolution led by President Hugo Chávez.

Providing health care for the poor is part of the Bolivarian Constitution adopted in 1999. The Venezuelan state "consecrates rights of citizens to health and medical care, as well as other social rights, while increasing state responsibility."

For decades health care for the poor languished in Venezuela. Only 7 percent of government expenditures went to health care. Some 14 percent of children suffer from stunted growth, according to Unicef.

Cuba is the only nation in Latin America and the Caribbean that provides free, quality health care to its people. Cuba's infant mortality statistics are the lowest in the Western Hemisphere. Washington, D.C., has an infant mortality rate twice that of Cuba, a small developing country. In 2000, Cuban President Fidel Castro even offered to send doctors to poor communities in the U.S.

While Cuba is helping to improve health care in Venezuela, the number of people in the U.S. with access to medical insurance is declining. There were 43.6 million uninsured U.S. residents, or 15.2 percent, in 2002. That's up nearly 6 percent from the previous year.

A Census Bureau analyst said last September that 18-to-24-year-olds experience a high rate of "uninsurance." He also noted that "one-third of all Hispanics, one-fifth of Blacks, and one-tenth of whites in the U.S. were uninsured." (CBSNews.com, Sept. 30)

The U.S. Census Bureau said that health premiums increased 13.9 percent between 2002 and 2003. A family policy, on average, cost \$9,068. The Department of Health and Human Services reported that health care spending shot up 9.3 percent in 2002, the largest increase in 11 years, to a total of \$1.55 trillion. That represents an average of \$5,440 for each person in the United States. (New York Times, Jan. 8)

This money goes to HMOs, hospitals and the other corporate fiends sucking the blood of people dependent on the U.S. health care system. Health expenditures account for almost 15 percent of the Gross Domestic Product. Health insurance premiums have gone up precipitously in the past year, with increases ranging from 45 percent in New Mexico and 31 percent in North Carolina to 20 percent in Nevada and 50 percent in California. (Public Citizen, Congress Watch)

Last year health care moguls lobbied for, and won, a bill that weakened Medicare while guaranteeing that drug prices would remain high. The bill prevented low-priced pharmaceuticals from Canada or elsewhere from interfering with U.S. drug industry profits.

Total health care spending in the U.S. rose \$212.5 billion in 2002. Out-of-pocket spending on prescription drugs rose \$6.1 billion, to \$48.6 billion. (New York Times, Jan. 8) That year the drug industry raked in profits five-and-a-half times greater than the median for all industries represented in the Fortune 500. (Congress Watch, June 2003)

While Cuba offers state-of-the-art medicine for free to all Cubans, and provides its well-trained doctors to the poor people of Venezuela, the Bush administration fumes. Granma newspaper asked in a front-page editorial defending Cuba's support for Venezuela, "Since when has promoting education and culture been seen as destabilizing nations?"

But it is destabilizing to the imperialists if the people of the Americas realize that capitalism rewards corporate greed while ignoring human need. □



Wall Street celebra alza económica; obreros no comparten el entusiasmo

Por Milton Neidenberg

Boletín de última hora: *Un reporte por el Fondo Monetario Internacional dice que los déficits de los Estados Unidos están amenazando la economía mundial. Este extrañísimo paso de una institución controlada por los bancos de Wall Street seguramente tendrá amplias repercusiones. A continuación ofrecemos un análisis e historial sobre el potencial catastrófico de la actual alza económica capitalista.*
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Gritos de alegría se oyen de los líderes en Wall Street diciendo: “Estamos de nuevo en el camino.”

La rápida tasa de expansión económica en el año 2003 amplió la meta de hegemonía global por parte de los Estados Unidos. La industria manufacturera alcanzó el mayor aumento en 20 años en diciembre, iniciada principalmente por la caída del dólar que dio un gran impulso a las exportaciones estadounidenses.

El Instituto del Control de Abastecimiento (ISM, silgas en inglés), el cual recopila información sobre los gastos de compra de ejecutivos en más de 400 compañías industriales, reportó un aumento a 66.2% en las compras de diciembre, de un 62.8% en el mes de noviembre. Una lectura de más de 50 “demuestra señales de expansión y diciembre fue el sexto mes consecutivo de crecimiento. También fue el nivel mensual más alto desde 1983” (BBC New World Edition, 2 de enero)

El ISM, que tomó una encuesta a 17 de 20 industrias en la manufactura, dice que el aumento de órdenes nuevas reflejó el mismo optimismo. Todos los principales índices del mercado de acciones—incluyendo a Dow Jones, Estándar & Poor’s 500 y el NASDAQ—se han mantenido elevados en este último mes. El año pasado fue el primero de los últimos cuatro años que terminó en una nota positiva.

No hay júbilo entre los obreros

El alza en las ganancias corporativas y la expansión de la productividad a una velocidad inhumana sin precedentes produjo este estado de júbilo. La intensificación de la explotación ha producido masivas pérdidas de puestos de trabajo y recortes en los salarios y beneficios. Los recortes en los costos de la mano de obra sin una correspondiente lucha organizada por el movimiento sindical ha ayudado a crear esta euforia. El pequeño grupo de multimillonarios se ha apropiado de las ganancias. Pero eso no es nuevo.

Los Marxistas ya lo saben. Federico Engels resumió los ciclos capitalistas de alzas y bajas hace más de un siglo en su libro, “Socialismo: Utópico y Científico.” Él describe la parte ascendiente del ciclo capitalista, la cual llega después de un período de estancamiento económico capitalista: “Poco a poco el paso se apresura. Se torna en trote. El trote industrial se torna carrera, y la carrera a su vez se convierte en una perfecta carrera con obstáculos de la industria, el

crédito comercial y la especulación, la cual finalmente termina, después de un salto rompecuello, exactamente donde comenzó—en el hoyo de una crisis”.

Después viene el desboque, cuando la crisis ocurre. “El comercio está paralizado, los mercados están repletos, los productos se acumulan sin poder venderse, el efectivo se desaparece, el crédito de desvanece, las fábricas se cierran, la masa obrera está necesitada de los medios básicos de subsistencia—porque han producido demasiados medios de subsistencia”.

“Las fuerzas productivas y los productos son desperdiciados y destruidos en gran cantidad,” dice Engels. “[L]a maquinaria se torna en el arma más poderosa en la guerra del capital contra la clase obrera”. Engels concluye, “que los instrumentos de trabajo (de propiedad privada) constantemente arrebatan los medios de subsistencia de las manos del trabajador; que el mismo producto del obrero se convierte en un instrumento para su propia subyugación”.

A comienzos del año 2000 la bolsa de valores se vino abajo. Los mercados se saturaron mientras la sobreproducción dejó una cifra oficial de 9 millones de desempleados, y muchos millones más sin contar. Los ingresos familiares cayeron precipitadamente porque los obreros, en particular aquellos con destrezas especializadas y con salario alto, se vieron forzados a trabajar en empleos de menos paga. Las fábricas cerraron y muchas compañías huyeron al extranjero a explotar mano de obra y materia prima más baratas. La pobreza se intensificó entre la gente de color extendiéndose también entre los obreros blancos.

La explotación crece más intensamente

Debido al inmenso avance de la revolución científico-tecnológica, la intensificación de la explotación ha causado desplazamientos masivos de millones de obreros a escala global—tal y como lo describió Engels.

Pero la clase gobernante dice que no fue tan malo. He aquí como Alan Greenspan, presidente de la Junta de la Reserva Federal, vio ese mismo período. En la conferencia anual de la Asociación Económica Americana (AEA), ante una amplia audiencia de prestigiosos economistas capitalistas, él minimizó el daño. “A pesar de la caída del mercado de acciones, los ataques terroristas, los escándalos corporativos, y las guerras en Afganistán e Irak, nosotros hemos experimentado una recesión excepcionalmente leve, aún más leve que la de hace una década”. (New York Times, 3 de enero)

¡Qué disculpa para la administración de Bush que ha llevado a la economía capitalista al borde del desastre!

El departamento conocido como el Reloj Nacional mantiene el récord de la deuda pública. Esta se acerca ya a los \$7 billones de dólares (EEUU), o \$7.000.000.000.000. El déficit del presupuesto actual agregará un trillón más, y eso sin contar con el costo secreto de las guerras contra Afganistán e Irak. Además está el déficit anual de \$500 mil millones

resultante del comercio global de este país.

Tomando préstamos al exterior para cubrir estos gastos podría tumbar esta casa de naipes, según Robert Rubin, ex secretario del tesoro en la administración de Clinton y socio poderoso de la empresa de Goldman Sachs en Wall Street. En la misma conferencia de la AEA, Rubin presentó un reporte sobre las consecuencias de una situación fiscal y financiera desordenada que podría conducir a una crisis en la confianza económy a un “potencial de catástrofe”. (Columnista liberal Paul Krugman en el número del New York Times del 6 de enero)

De hecho, esta es la época de los ciclos de altas y bajas. La inestabilidad y la crisis capitalista están en la agenda. En un artículo del Wall Street Journal del 5 de enero titulado, “Crash, Bang, Wallop”(“Choques, Estallidos y Fuertes Golpizas”) Edmund S. Phelps, profesor de economía política y director del Centro sobre el Capitalismo y la Sociedad de la Universidad de Columbia, dibuja varios paralelos entre la década de los años 1930 y hoy. “El período del alza económica de los años 1990, luego la baja y la reciente recuperación, se parecen mucho al período del alza de los años 1920, el declive precipitado durante el principio de la década de los años 1930 y la recuperación inicial ... cada alza la causó la llegada de una nueva tecnología de aplicación general”

Omitido del análisis estadístico y detallado de Phelps de los años ’30, es la participación masiva de los trabajadores en la lucha social que desafió los derechos de propiedad del capital, seguido de la entrada de los Estados Unidos en la Segunda Guerra Mundial, lo que puso el fin a las huelgas heroicas de ocupación de las fabricas que había comenzado en los años treinta.

Un pájaro no significa que ha llegado el verano

Este ciclo de alta puede ser de corta duración. La clase trabajadora no puede comprar lo que ha producido. En un artículo de Prensa Asociada titulado “El Mercado De Empleos Disminuye La Confianza De Consumidores” Lisa Singhanía escribió el 30 de diciembre recordándole a los inversionistas optimistas de Wall Street que la confianza de los consumidores cayó en diciembre. Los gastos de los consumidores representan dos terceras partes de la economía. Una encuesta de 5.000 hogares indicó que los consumidores todavía se sienten preocupados por los empleos. Sólo para mantenerse a la par con los despidos, la creación de nuevos empleos tiene que alcanzar un nivel de entre 150.000 y 200.000 empleos nuevos cada mes. Optimistamente hablando, el nivel de desempleo ha disminuido un poco, pero los nuevos empleos sólo aumentaron en 55.000 al mes durante este período de supuesta “alza”.

Además, la Junta de Conferencias (Conference Board) una junta consultora, dijo que la venta de casas por dueños previos, bajó un 4,6 por ciento en noviembre. Singhanía notó que ambos reportes son vigilados con mucha atención, porque las viviendas y los gastos de los consumidores han sido los aportes principales soste-

niendo la economía desde el fin de la recesión en noviembre de 2001.

El periódico Wall Street Journal del 6 de enero reportó que el nivel de apartamentos desocupados en el mercado de estos a través de los EE.UU. a fin del año 2003 fue el más alto en 15 años. Mientras tanto, familias sin techo están llenando los albergues para desamparados porque no pueden pagar los alquileres exorbitantes que demandan los dueños de edificios.

Oportunidad de poca duración para trabajo

¿Intervendrá el movimiento laboral en este período de altas ganancias corporativas y de expansión en la manufactura y en la industria? ¿Lucharán para obtener una medida de justicia económica y social?

La AFL-CIO debe tomar esta oportunidad y tomar la ofensiva. No es que al movimiento sindical le falten recursos.

“Los sindicatos de los EE.UU. tienen recursos enormes: 15 millones de miembros, miles de millones de dólares en cuotas, y cientos de miles de millones de capital en pensiones.” (Tres Pasos Para la Reorganización y Reconstrucción del Movimiento Laboral”, por Stephen Lerner, Director de Servicios de Construcción del SEIU –Sindicato Internacional de Empleados del sector de Servicios)

Es la falta de voluntad o la ausencia de una propuesta unificada entre los lideres de la AFL-CIO. Están en un estado de confusión mientras que discuten cual entre los candidatos del Partido Demócrata deben apoyar económica y políticamente, desviando a los trabajadores de una lucha verdadera.

Mientras tanto, la huelga/paro patronal de 70.000 miembros del Sindicato de Trabajadores Comerciales y de Alimentos (UFCW por las siglas en inglés) ha comenzado su tercer mes. Es una lucha clave sobre los gastos de salud que afecta a todo miembro de sindicato. ¿Cuántos de los 15 millones de miembros la AFL-CIO están involucrados y cuántos recursos de los 66 sindicatos internacionales confederados han sido movilizados?

No suficientes, de lo contrario los arrogantes patrones de los supermercados estarían en la mesa de negociación.

El momento ha llegado de adelantar la lucha de esta huelga/paro patronal a un nivel más alto de lucha militante. Una victoria para los 70.000 heroicos trabajadores de alimentos será una victoria para todos los trabajadores.

El movimiento laboral multinacional no ha desarrollado todo su potencial para poder resistir el apetito voraz de Wall Street por la conquista global. Para tomar el camino de la lucha independiente de toda la clase trabajadora aquí en los EE.UU. se necesita la participación del movimiento en contra de la guerra y otros partidarios. Tal solidaridad está basada en una coyuntura de intereses de clase. Obligando al gobierno de los EE.UU.a acabar con la ocupación de Irak y no hacer más guerras imperialistas va ligado a la resistencia contra la guerra que están librando contra los trabajadores y los oprimidos aquí en casa. □