



## RACISM IN THE U.S.

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## ANTI-WAR FORCES ON ALERT

# Bush seeks pretext for unpopular war

By Deirdre Griswold

Signs of disarray in the U.S. capitalist system and its political leadership are piling up, even as the Bush administration continues with its adventurous course toward a new onslaught against Iraq.

Another huge company—Conseco—filed for bankruptcy on Dec. 17. This insurance and financial giant is the third-largest corporation ever to seek Chapter 11 reorganization. A good part of the debt it handles is mobile-home mortgages. The company's failure is a sure sign that many poorer workers are unable to pay their bills.

The forcing out of Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill and Bush's chief economic adviser, Larry Lindsey, has not restored the "confidence" of Wall Street in the economy or the stock market.

Unemployment has jumped to 6 percent.

States are cutting social programs to the bone as declining tax revenues—the rich are virtually exempt now—tip their budgets into the red. This means many more layoffs to come.

The racist roots of the political system in the U.S. are showing once again in the Trent Lott scandal.

Around the world, the U.S. is seen as a rogue state on everything from the environment to threats of endless war.

And what is the Bush administration doing about all this?

The cabal in the White House has a single focus: It is moving inexorably toward launching its long-planned war against Iraq. Everything is being subordinated to that.

#### Creating a pretext for war

As this is written, the National Security Council has just met. The media expect Bush to announce that Iraq has not adequately answered questions about its weapons—despite the 12,000 pages of documentation it submitted to the UN and its agreement to allow UN inspectors access to all its facilities.

This is the strategy that Washington has been honing for months now. Agree to having the UN send inspectors to Iraq, but then preempt them with a unilateral judgment that the Iraqis have "fooled" the inspectors and concealed

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"weapons of mass destruction" and/or the capacity to produce them.

Bush's real goal is a war to conquer and occupy Iraq as a key step in gaining unchallenged domination over the oil-rich Middle East. He has found it difficult, however, to line up support in the world or among the people of the U.S. for "regime change." So the excuse has turned to "disarming" Iraq—a country whose capacity for self-defense has been flattened ever since the Gulf War.

It should not be ruled out that the hawks in Washington may engineer something even more dramatic in the way of a pretext to justify their buildup to war.

When it will start cannot be predicted, but tens of thousands of military personnel, a huge amount of planes, ships, weapons and other war materiel continue to be rushed to the Gulf area. It is known that the military consider the weather in January the most favorable for an attack.

The U.S. and Britain, which once held colonial sway over much of the Middle East, including Iraq, have just organized a conference of Iraqi puppets in London. This motley bunch is to form the core of a "free" Iraqi government—in other words, a fig leaf for U.S. military occupation once the Pentagon has blasted its way into Baghdad.

#### Mass opposition keeps growing

Meanwhile, the opposition to this war among the people in the United States and around the world continues to grow. A huge national demonstration will rally and march in Washington on Jan. 18, called by the ANSWER coalition, which organized the largest U.S. protests to date on Oct. 26. Local actions are taking place almost every day.

Tens of millions of people are questioning why this

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Transit workers faced vicious attack from NYC bosses and media.

WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

## Answering O'Reilly & Corn

# Red-baiting, private property and socialism

By Deirdre Griswold

*"Workers World Party ... wants to abolish private property. I mean, these are hardcore commies, OK?"*

—Bill O'Reilly, Fox TV's host of "The O'Reilly Factor," Nov. 18

To the right-wing followers of Bill O'Reilly, there can be no greater sin than that.

And, maybe not so surprising, O'Reilly's view matched that of his guest, David Corn. A Washington editor of the liberal Nation magazine, Corn was on the show to redbait the anti-war movement with "revelations" that WWP members played an important role in organizing the Oct. 26 demonstrations against the U.S. drive to war on Iraq. Corn wrote in an exchange of letters posted on the Nation's Web site on Dec. 4 that WWP "calls for abolishing all private property"—proof that the party is an ultra-left "sect."

From the tone adopted by these two figures—one a reactionary, the other a presumed liberal—you might think Workers World wanted to nationalize everyone's toothbrushes, or at least their homes and cars.

However, these two should know that that is nonsense. The real issue is what to do about the tremendous accumulation of property in the hands of a very small class of millionaires and billionaires. And not just "personal" property, like their yachts and mansions, but their private ownership of society's means of production—everything from factories and mines to offices and stores, from railroads to fiber-optic cables, from giant hog farms to supertankers full of petroleum.

For at least a century, the size of the class of super-rich owners of the means to produce all that people need has been shrinking as capital is concentrated through mergers and acquisitions. Small farmers, who once made up half the U.S. population, are a dying breed, wiped out by giant

At one time, the idea of abolishing slavery—a system of private property in human beings—was just as subversive as communism is to O'Reilly and Corn

agribusinesses. Those who remain really work for the banks that hold their mortgages and lend them money. Mom-and-pop stores have gone the same way—either rolled over by the big chains or pulled into a franchise arrangement that passes the risk onto the little guy but keeps real ownership in the hands of big capital.

Some economists used to argue that the middle class in the United States was expanding and the extremes of wealth and poverty were melting away. Anyone claiming that today would be laughed at. Every year brings new statistics on the growing polarization of society.

Downsizing capitalist enterprises and outsourcing work were supposed to generate a new middle class of entrepreneurs. Now that hard times are coming back after eight years of boom, many self-employed people are finding that they have no security, pay a fortune for health care and a pension plan, and own nothing of lasting value except a depreciating computer and work skills that are getting harder and harder to sell. They're just unemployed or underemployed workers, in other words.

Nor can the millions of workers whose hard-earned savings are invested in mutual-fund pension plans be considered owners of this economy. As has been made very clear through the recent scandals at Enron and other corporations, these small shareholders have no power at all. The executives and big shareholders make sure to keep them in the dark about what's really going on. If you have savings in a bank, does that make you a banker? Small investors are not the owners of the companies that took their money. They don't even have the security of depositors in a bank.

Capitalism, the system that has created a world economy based on whatever brings the highest profit—be it flowers, high-tech weapons or narcotic drugs—is a particular form

of private property. It replaced feudalism and slavery as a form of private ownership of the means of production.

At one time, the idea of abolishing slavery—a system of private property in human beings—was just as subversive as communism is to O'Reilly and Corn.

Likewise, the feudal nobles whose fortunes depended on owning the land and all the "souls" who worked it could not conceive of turning the land over to the people. Centuries of peasant revolutions, however, eventually made feudalism obsolete in most of the world.

Private property has not been eternal. In fact, for 99 percent of human existence property was communal and human needs were satisfied through sharing and cooperation. An article entitled "The Biology of Benevolence" in the Dec. 2 issue of Psychology Today reported on a study showing that cooperation is hard-wired in our brains. "The choice to cooperate stimulates pleasure centers in the brain and can even overcome the urge to strive for increased financial gains," wrote Dan Schulman. "This reward circuitry may provide a biological basis for altruism, selfless behavior that is unique to humans."

Workers World Party believes that the only system able to replace dog-eat-dog capitalism and lift human society to a higher level is socialism. The class struggle of the workers, combined with all the other progressive forces in society, can bring down the repressive state controlled by the capitalist class. The main task of a workers' revolution is to liberate the means of production from private ownership and reorganize economic life to produce for human need instead of private profit.

In the small minds of David Corn and Bill O'Reilly, this is sheer hell. How odd, then, that no one has ever suggested that private property rules in heaven. □

### Important notice

To comply with postal regulations, Workers World newspaper will skip publication next week.

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JOIN US. Workers World Party (WWP) fights on all issues that face the working class and oppressed peoples—Black and white, Latino, Asian, Arab and Native peoples, women and men, young and old, lesbian, gay, bi, straight, trans, disabled, working, unemployed and students.

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### WW CALENDAR

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##### Sat., Dec. 14

Anti-War Teach-In. Stop the war against Iraq. Featuring speakers and topics from a diverse group of presenters. Sponsored by International ANSWER Coalition. 7 p.m. at Horace Mann Middle School, 3351 23rd St., near Valencia. For info (415) 821-6545.

#### WASHINGTON, D.C.

##### Sat., Jan. 18

National March on Washington, D.C. No war on Iraq. Assemble 11 a.m. at the West Side of the Capitol Building. Become a volunteer. Endorse. Help get the word out. Bring people to D.C. Send a donation to the mobilization. For info on the Web internationalANSWER.org or phone (202) 544-3389 in D.C. or (212) 633-6646 in NYC.

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# Lott opens a curtain on lots of racism

By Monica Moorehead

The recent statement by U.S. Senate Minority Leader—slated to be Majority Leader—Trent Lott praising arch-segregationist South Carolina Sen. Strom Thurmond at his 100th birthday party may yet lead to Lott's ouster. It continues to make headlines as Lott made his fifth televised apology Dec. 16 in a Black Entertainment Television interview.

Civil-rights advocates have expressed their outrage and demanded Lott's ouster. Even some of his right-wing peers are urging him to resign from his position as the most powerful figure in the U.S. Senate.

These closet racists are afraid that his too-candid remarks might call attention to the Senate's own role as a segregationist club mainly made up of millionaire white men. This club has had only two African American members since the days of Reconstruction following the U.S. Civil War, and none since 1998.

Others, including some Democrats and President George W. Bush, have demagogically referred to Lott's remarks as "unfortunate." So far, Bush has stopped short of openly calling for Lott's resignation, but all reports say that he wants Lott to pull back as the Mississippi senator has become a burden to the White House.

For Bush, the Lott controversy is an unwelcome diversion from his administration's plans to attack Iraq. About 40 percent of the rank-and-file troops and 20 percent of officers and non-commissioned officers in the U.S. military are people of color, most of them African American.

The last thing Bush wants is his record of coddling racists like Lott to stir up morale problems with these troops, many of whom joined the armed forces only for their economic survival.

Right-wing journalists like William Kristol and Charles Krauthammer, worried that their association with Lott will expose and discredit their own racist opposition to affirmative action and other programs encouraging equality, have criticized the senator. They want someone in who can put a better face on a reactionary, racist program turning back civil-rights laws.

On Dec. 5, Lott paid tribute to the longtime racist Thurmond by stating: "I want to say this about my state [Mississippi]: When Strom Thurmond ran for president, we voted for him. We're proud of it. And if the rest of the country had followed our lead, we wouldn't have had all these problems over all these years, either."

## What Thurmond represents

Thurmond ran for president back in 1948 on the States Rights Democratic Party ticket. Also known as the Dixiecrats, the SRDP broke away from the Democratic Party to protest that party's platform, which included some pro-civil-rights points.

President Harry Truman, who backed this platform in order to win over the Black vote, defeated Republican Thomas Dewey in 1948 in a close vote to recapture the presidency. The pro-slavery, pro-Confederate Dixiecrat Thurmond ran on the platform of "Segregation Forever." He won Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana and South Carolina with 56 percent of the vote of Southern whites.

Though Lott made these remarks on Dec. 5, much of the big-business media ei-

ther ignored or downplayed his comments until Dec. 10. This includes the CBS, NBC and ABC evening news broadcasts, plus "Nightline" and "Meet the Press." CNN's "Inside Politics" host Jonathan Karl interviewed Lott on Dec. 6 and did not confront him even once about his remarks.

But once Lott's comments gained national prominence, more and more people were justifiably shocked and outraged that such an avowed racist has had a significant voice in shaping U.S. policy. This includes millions of immigrants, a number of whom are just becoming aware of the U.S. segregationist past. Many people of Arab descent are now considering how the unequal application of repressive immigration laws especially since Sept. 11, 2001, fits into this history.

## Lott's racist record

Lott's praise for the notorious Thurmond was no mere slip of the tongue.

Lott delivered a similar message over 22 years ago when as a member of the House of Representatives from Mississippi, he told a Republican crowd that if the country had elected Strom Thurmond "30 years ago, we wouldn't be in the mess we are today." That's according to the Nov. 3, 1980, edition of the Jackson Clarion-Ledger.

In 1984, Lott was a keynote speaker at the Convention of the Sons of Confederate Veterans in Biloxi, Miss. One of his comments was that "the spirit of Jefferson Davis lives in the 1984 Republican Platform."

Davis was a president of the pro-slavery Confederate States of America before the outbreak of and during the Civil War.

During the 1970s, Lott spearheaded a campaign to have the citizenship of Jefferson Davis retroactively restored.

Trent Lott was a close friend and ally of the Council of Conservative Citizens, an outgrowth of the ultra-racist, anti-Semitic White Citizens Council that worked hand and hand with the Ku Klux Klan. To this day, the CCC characterizes interracial marriage as "white genocide."

According to the Institute of Southern Studies, Lott addressed the CCC in 1992, stating that the group stood for the "right principles and right philosophy." Although Lott said that he had no association with the CCC, one of the group's spokespeople said in 1998 that Lott was a dues-paying member.

During Lott's 16 years in the House of

Representatives and 14 years in the Senate, he has consistently opposed civil-rights legislation. He voted against extending the 1965 Voting Rights Act, desegregation in housing and schools, affirmative action in federal contracts, a federal holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and guaranteeing fees for lawyers whose clients win civil-rights lawsuits.

Lott opposed Bush's nomination of Roger L. Gregory, a conservative judge, as the first Black person to serve on the United States Court of Appeals of the Fourth Circuit in Richmond, Va.

Lott has voted for a design patent on behalf of the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

Not only is Lott a neo-fascist, he is rabidly biased against gays and lesbians. Lesbian/gay/bi-/trans organizations and AIDS activists have organized significant campaigns against Lott for many years because of his anti-gay comments along with promoting legislation against the funding of domestic partner benefits and AIDS prevention.

## Close ties to big business

While Lott's racist past is all out in the open, very little is known about his close associations with big business. In order to bankroll the election campaigns of Republican candidates starting in 1993 during the Clinton administration, Lott was instrumental in raising millions of dollars for the New Republican Majority Fund.

Those who contributed to this fund included the American Financial Services Association, BellSouth, the Edison Electric Institute, FedEx, Glaxo Wellcome, Massachusetts Mutual Life, Philip Morris, R. J. Reynolds, and U.S. Tobacco.

Lott also has links to the CEOs of Verizon Communications, Inc., WorldCom, AT&T, Blue Cross & Blue Shield, National Association of Wholesaler-Distributors as well as the gambling industry.

All these magnates of finance capital should be exposed for their complicit roles in supporting KKK politicians in three-piece suits like Lott, Thurmond and Jesse Helms from North Carolina.

The Democrats are not immune from charges in these events either. Sen. Joseph Lieberman, who ran for vice president in 2000 and announced Dec. 16 that he is a contender for the 2004 nomination, said of Thurmond, "He's a man of iron with a heart of gold."



## THE KLAN & THE GOVERNMENT

What is the Klan? Just another right-wing group—or a secret terrorist organization? This book examines the special relationship with the state that has allowed the Klan to exist for over a century despite its history of lynchings, murders and intimidation

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By Mumia Abu Jamal  
from death row:

## BERRIGAN

Post-war peace and anti-war activist and former priest Philip Berrigan has passed into the realms of eternity.

His history, and that of his brother, former Jesuit priest Daniel Berrigan, has been a consistent ethic of peace over war, community over chaos and justice over injustice. Their struggle against militarism took them into draft-board offices, military bases and courtrooms to bring forth a vision of the sacredness of life. Inspired by the civil-rights movement bubbling up from the blooded soil and people of the South, Philip Berrigan became convinced that wider areas of American life needed the fresh air of change. Popular historian Howard Zinn in his acclaimed "A People's History of the United States" would recall Philip's earliest days:

"In the fall of 1967, Father Philip Berrigan (a Josephite priest who was a veteran of World War II) joined by artist Tom Lewis and friends David Eberhardt and James Mengel, went to the office of a draft board in Baltimore, Maryland, drenched the draft records with blood, and waited to be arrested. They were put on trial and sentenced to prison terms of two to six years." (p. 479)

In May of 1968, Philip would be joined by Daniel in an action at the draft board office in Catonsville, Md. There they, joined by others opposed to war, would scoop up records, smear them with blood, or burn them. They came to be known as the Catonsville Nine, and would be imprisoned for their protests. Daniel would write of that action, in prophetic tones reminiscent of King's oratory, calling it his "Meditations":

"Our apologies, good friends, for the fracture of good order, the burning of paper instead of children, the angering of the orderlies in the front parlor of the charnal house. We could not, so help us God, do otherwise. ... We say: Killing is disorder, life and gentleness and community and unselfishness is the only order we recognize. For the sake of that order, we risk our liberty, our good name. The time is past when good men can remain silent, when obedience can segregate men from public risk, when the poor can die without defense." (Zinn, p. 479)

Philip and Daniel Berrigan would become the nucleus of a divergent and dynamic anti-war, peace and social-justice ethic that spread far beyond them, and radiated into the hearts and minds of many.

Philip Berrigan, radicalized by the times, would come to view all of American history through a new, clearer vista:

"The revolution in this Country was led by a nucleus of tradesmen, bankers, shippers, big shots who were uptight and furious about the imposition of economic control of their wealth by a foreign power. They knew the resources of this country. They knew its possibilities. And they didn't want foreign control and refused to submit to it. They led the nation into a fight for almost purely economic reasons. ... It was an economic reshuffling rather than a true revolution." (from James, Joy, "Prison Intellectuals," forthcoming, 2003).

Philip Berrigan, at 79, leaves this planet just as one of the most-feared global wars is about to begin.

His cause has not died with him. It remains in the hearts of countless many, whose flame has been lit by his passionate adherence to the crucible of life.



# Bush's endless war hits airline workers

By Michelle Quintus  
Council 5 Representative, Association  
of Flight Attendants

Driven by an "endless war" drive abroad, President George W. Bush's war against workers in this country deepened in December as the world's second-biggest airline, United Airlines, was forced into Chapter 11 bankruptcy reorganization. The airline continues to operate while workers' jobs and union contracts are threatened under a restructuring plan in a Chicago bankruptcy court.

On Dec. 4, the Bush administration via the federal Air Transportation Stabilization Board denied a \$1.8 billion loan guarantee to UAL Inc. The ATSB had demanded billions of dollars in givebacks from United Airlines' workers. When workers conceded in order to get the federal funding, the ATSB denied the loan guarantee anyway, driving UAL and its 80,000 workers into bankruptcy court.

The Executive Committee of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, adopted a resolution stating that the ATSB's federal loan guarantee program has "grossly unrealistic demands for employee wage and other concessions." The TTD noted that "for example, the ATSB tried to impose a seven-year wage freeze on the employees of America West as a condition for granting a loan guarantee."

"The entire industry is collapsing," says Barbara Sakin, Association of Flight Attendants Local Council 5 Government Affairs chairperson. "But the real problem is the Bush administration and their neglect of the national economy and the realization that the air transport industry is crucial. The abuse of power by the ATSB and economic advisors to the president is shameful and is going to cause the destruction of many good airlines and destroy many good employees and their families in the process."

There is incessant talk in the corporate

media and the bankers' boardrooms about how to "save the company" from slipping further into a Chapter 7 liquidation bankruptcy. This turns into a threat against the workers that we'd better take even deeper wage and contractual concessions to save the company and our jobs.

## 'Save the company' or hurt the workers?

But saving the company for the corporate owners, UAL Inc., does not save our jobs. Having already laid off over 20,000 workers, UAL has shown no interest in saving our jobs.

Instead, upper management guarantees its own interests.

For example, there have been no demands that former UAL CEO Jim Goodwin give up his nearly million-dollar annual salary until 2004.

When Glen Tilton accepted the position of CEO at United Airlines this fall, he also accepted a \$3.2 million signing bonus along with a salary of over \$83,000 per month.

A first-year flight attendant at United Airlines makes about \$15,000 per year. The company, the banks and the U.S. government expect to take more concessions from these workers' wages.

The debtor-in-possession financiers—Bank One, J.P. Morgan Chase and Citibank—are demanding an annual labor cut of \$2.4 billion as a condition for funding. They require that these concessions be accomplished by mid-February 2003 as part of the "United Airlines Restructuring Plan."

Sam Marcy wrote in his 1986 book "High Tech Low Pay" that "the policy of concessions flows directly and inevitably from the acceptance of the capital-labor relationship, from the acceptance of exploitation as the permanent condition of the working class. The idea corresponding to this can only be that of class collaboration." Accepting the dogma of

the capital-labor relationship, workers believe we must accept concessions to keep the company in business.

## Who owns UAL Inc.?

Not only do United workers still own 55 percent of the company regardless of the current value of the stock, but as of Dec. 9, UAL Inc. is no longer the legal owner of United Airlines. The current owners are the creditors—everyone that UAL Inc. owes money to.

That includes the workers.

The bankruptcy court trustee, Ira Bordenstein, has named a Creditors' Committee of 13 major creditors that now have voting rights regarding the company's operations. This includes the three major unions: the Machinists, Flight Attendants, and Air Line Pilots. This means over 68,000 United Airlines workers represented on the Creditors' Committee.

Other Creditors' Committee members include: Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, Bank of New York, Airbus North America Holdings Inc., Pratt & Whitney, HSBC Bank USA, US Bank National Association, R Squared Investment, LDC Deutsche Lufthansa, AG Goodrich Corporation, Galileo International Inc., and one non-voting member, the city of Chicago.

The main difference between the worker-creditors and the bank-creditors is this: Only we the workers create the airline's value—present and future.

Banks and other lenders take a share of the value we workers produce by charging interest on loans. Now, in bankruptcy court, the banks are demanding that they get paid before and at the expense of the workers.

We should demand that Bank One, J.P. Morgan Chase, Citibank and all the corporate thieves—not the airline workers—take the concessions. We build the airline's value each day we work. We do not need to give any more than we already do because without us the airline ceases to operate.

Without the machinists, there would be no working planes to fly. Without pilots, air traffic controllers and flight attendants, not a single plane could take off or land. Without reservationists and customer service representatives, there would be no way

for customers to get tickets.

And without passengers, there would be no need to operate. The service of air transportation should exist to serve people's needs, not to exploit labor power to create mega-profits for banks and corporate owners.

Yet according to the Chapter 11 bankruptcy procedures, the capitalist courts are "not interested in justice"—that is, saving workers' jobs, wages, conditions and contracts, or serving people's needs. Their main interest is in protecting the profit of the corporate owners, UAL Inc., the banks and Wall Street.

A legal consultant to the Association of Flight Attendants advised that "bankruptcy court does not exist to exact justice. The bankruptcy court only cares about returning the company to profitability." Primarily on the backs of the workers.

But our union contracts are just as legal as any contract the company has with banks and other lenders. Why are our contracts the only ones up for renegotiation in the courts? UAL Inc is now petitioning the court to scrap all the contracts.

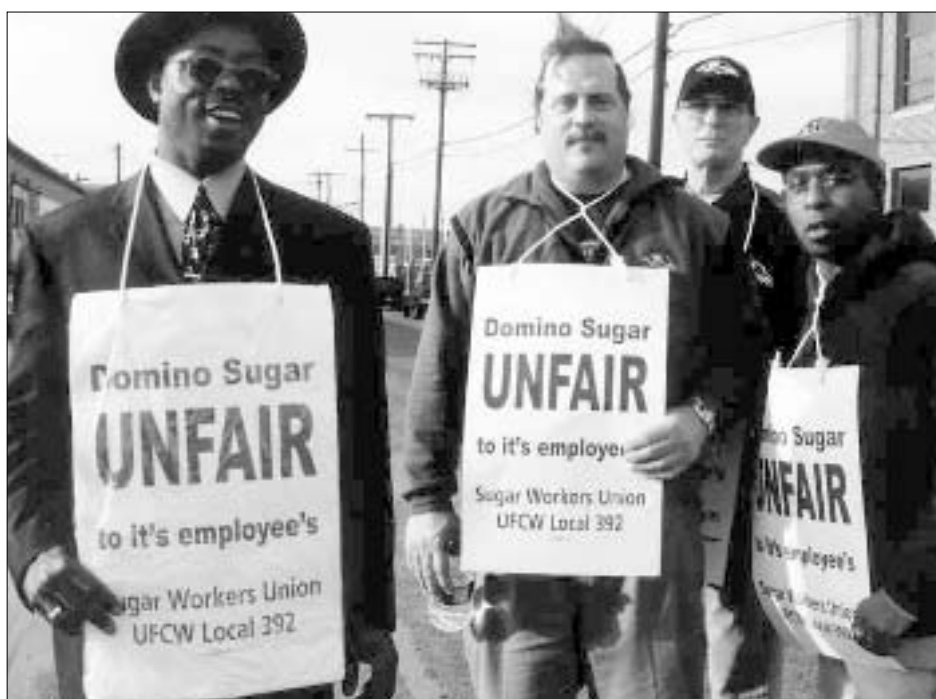
## Public support is vital

We know from the legal cases of political prisoners from Nelson Mandela to the Chicago 8 that the most decisive verdicts are delivered by the people in the streets—or in this case, in the air and in the airports. Capitalist courts may not be about justice but courts of public opinion are.

The case of United Airlines is in the newspapers daily. The traveling public supports the workers and that support is essential now if there is to be any kind of justice.

In the midst of this protracted capitalist economic crisis, it is clear that we at United are not isolated or alone in our struggle. Our own safety, health and living wages do not need to be compromised in order to provide safe transportation for everyone. The unity of all transportation workers is needed to replace a system that puts profits before the needs of the workers and all people.

To contact us, email  
airlineworkersunite@yahoo.com □



## Baltimore meeting to support sugar workers

The holiday season turned bitter and cold for 330 Domino Sugar workers when the company forced workers on strike here in Baltimore. The workers, members of Food and Commercial Local 392, began picketing on Dec. 8 to protect their health insurance and retirement security. They are also fighting to stop the company from reducing wages and benefits for new hires. Local union and community activists plan a support meeting at the All Peoples Congress Hall on Dec. 17. To find out how to support the striking workers call Local 392 at (410) 837-0848 or the All Peoples Congress at (410) 235-7040.

—Story and photo by Sharon Black



WW PHOTO: ANNE PRUDEN

## 'Down with sweatshop labor'

Hundreds of youth and workers of many nationalities marched in a drenching, cold rain in New York City on Dec. 11 to protest sweatshop exploitation. Demonstrators targeted Disney, The Gap, Coca-Cola, Nestle, Nike and other notorious mega-corporations as they marched from the soft-drink giant's headquarters to Rockefeller Center.

—Anne Pruden

## TWU struggle

# Are workers who strike 'criminals'?

By Milt Neidenberg  
New York

On Dec. 16 a tentative settlement was reached between the Metropolitan Transit Authority and Transport Workers Union Local 100. Local 100's 47-member Executive Committee ratified the agreement with 75 percent approving.

There will be much discussion on the merits of the settlement among the 34,000 members before a vote is taken.

It's a three-year contract with a one-time thousand-dollar bonus for the first year, followed by a 3-percent annual increase based on productivity increases for the next two years. Health care and pension benefits will be better protected. An overhaul of the harsh disciplinary practices and provisions that the MTA contribute to a new child-care fund round out the highlights of the tentative agreement.

TWU Local 100 President Roger Toussaint, who signed the tentative agreement, characterized it as modest. He is right, since it was achieved under the most difficult conditions.

What must be thoroughly discussed is how this tentative agreement was reached. It can only be described this way: At the bargaining table, MTA President Peter Kalikow pointed a loaded gun directly at the head of Local 100 President Roger Toussaint. The gun had been handed to Kalikow by a shadowy figure in black robes who never attended a single bargaining session.

This figure is Jules L. Spodek, a State Supreme Court judge in Brooklyn, NY. About 48 hours before the contract expired, Spodek issued an injunction against Local 100, whose membership had democratically voted to withhold their labor if necessary to get a decent contract. The workers made this thoughtful decision to defend their union against a powerful array of bankers, investors and political conspirators who were determined to protect their financial interests at the workers' expense.

### Violates the Constitution

The gun Spodek handed the MTA is the Taylor Law. Passed in 1967 under Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, the Taylor Law criminalizes public-sector unions each time they seek to withhold their labor to win a decent wage and benefit contract. The law includes huge penalties, like limitless fines for unions.

Under the Taylor Law, workers are fined two days' pay for each day they are on strike. The law provides for additional penalties, such as prison terms for members who "instigate, encourage or condone" a strike.

This is clearly a violation of free speech rights under the U.S. Constitution's First and 13th Amendments. The latter eliminated involuntary servitude and slave labor after the Civil War.

So what, says one person—a judge—who has the backing of the ruling class and its repressive institutions. According to the rulers, the workers are criminals if they decide to strike for a decent contract.

Remember, these transit workers labor around the clock through bitter cold and stifling heat, working in the most dangerous, dirty and stressful conditions, providing safe, efficient service to over 7 million bus and subway riders daily.

Recently two union members were killed within 48 hours. Four have died in the last six months. It's all due to speedup, unsafe conditions, and cuts in work crews.

The president of the 34,000 "criminals" of Transit Workers Local 100 is

Roger Toussaint, a Trinidadian by birth. Two-thirds of the union's members are workers of color, with a heavy representation of African-Americans and of Caribbean immigrants. At the union hall, TWU women and men have said that racism is a dynamic in the contract dispute.

Toussaint began work as a track cleaner and maintenance worker. He rose to become president of the union. He chaired the union's Track Maintenance Unit starting in 1995. In 1998 the MTA fired him because of his militant leadership. He was reinstated in 2001, following his election as president.

Across the bargaining table from Toussaint and the other TWU leaders was the MTA's Peter S. Kalikow, packing the Taylor law. Kalikow's personal fortune includes assets of over \$400 million. (Forbes, May 2002) His family holdings, which exceeded his own, came from wheeling and dealing in Wall Street real-state development. Kalikow has broad and intimate connections with the banking establishment, which has a substantial stake in getting loans paid off.

Both the union and the city comptroller are calling for the MTA to open its books. There is a growing suspicion that MTA management is covering up surpluses to justify demands for both concessions from the union and a fare hike.

Rockefeller was New York governor when the MTA was created in 1967 by combining the Long Island Railroad, Metro North, the Triboro Bridge and Tunnel Authority, and the New York City Transit Authority. It is a transportation monopoly born out of a Rockefeller/J.P. Morgan plan to control the flow of huge amounts of borrowed money. The MTA, a politically appointed board, has the legal standing to sell bonds, which incur debt, without oversight from the public and the unions.

The MTA is behind every fare hike, causing hardship to workers and the poor whose only transportation is subways and buses. The fares that mass-transit riders pay make up 54 percent of operating funds, contributing more to keeping the system going than fares in any other major U.S. city.

With the Taylor law at its disposal, the MTA had been stonewalling the union and taken it to the brink—the Dec. 15 contract expiration date. Since last spring the union had been asking that bargaining begin. At the time, the MTA offered zero pay raises for the first year of the new contract and possible wage increases in the second and third year, contingent on productivity increases.

The MTA demanded that workers pay a \$22 monthly increase for health insurance and a 2 to 3 percent increase in out-of-pocket pension fund payments. Retirees would lose their prescription benefits.

In contrast, the union demanded a 6-percent annual increase for each of three years, no out-of-pocket health-care or pension costs, better working conditions, and changes in the discipline procedures. Currently there are over 16,000 disciplinary actions on the books.

These earlier proposals can be compared with the tentative agreement.

Gov. George Pataki's early threat to call in the National Guard and his statement that a strike would be "a horrendous act of disloyalty to the people of New York" had added fuel to the fire. Mayor Michael Bloomberg had even sought penalties harsher than those under the Taylor Law. He asked for \$1 million in fines against the union on the

first day of the strike, doubling each day, and \$25,000 from each worker, doubling each day. Would these attacks and the intransigent position the MTA took at the negotiating table provoke a strike?

The MTA-Pataki-Bloomberg partnership has heaved a sigh of relief now that the Toussaint leadership signed on to the tentative settlement. They were afraid that their racist, hard-line approach would backfire. They had publicly criminalized the TWU members for their reasonable efforts to get a decent contract and leveled wild charges that the rank and file were "urban terrorists" simply because they voted to give the Toussaint leadership a strike authorization as a last resort.

As the final hours of the Dec. 15 expiration date approached, the anti-union rhetoric cooled down considerably. A deal was in the making.

### Target the Taylor Law

New York City's million-fold labor movement and the subway- and bus-riding public should be outraged at the

MTA and the shameless and arrogant display by the billionaire parasites. The tentative agreement should be viewed as a phase in labor's overall struggle to get economic and social justice.

The Taylor Law is still on the books. Without an organized, sustained and militant campaign to overturn this slave-labor law, the same loaded gun will be held on the next set of public-sector unions that seek a decent contract for their members.

Whatever the final vote of Local 100 members, the slave-labor Taylor Law must become the issue of the day. It is not enough to lobby for change. It must be overturned.

Only a mass campaign that enlists tens of thousands in the street can bring this about. Public-sector workers must be freed from the punishing restraints denying them their legal and constitutional right to withhold their labor. The splendid turnout of thousands of workers and allies on the eve of the tentative settlement could be the spark for the demise of the infamous Taylor law. □

## Thousands of NYC workers shout: Union power!

By G. Dunkel  
New York

Thousands of Transport Workers Local 100 members marched across the Brooklyn Bridge in the early evening of Dec. 16. They chanted: "Who's got the power? We've got the power!" and "What kind of power? Union power!"

The deal to avoid a transit strike in New York, which would have disrupted the city's economic activity and put a big dent into holiday sales, was reached shortly after a militant rally of transit workers and their supporters ended.

The workers chanted, "Make the crooks open the books," referring to the Metropolitan Transit Authority's budget deficit that ballooned from \$400 million in October, before the elections, to \$1.1 billion in November. The MTA is a state agency that controls the buses and subways in New York City, the Long Island Railroad, the Metro North commuter railroad to the northern suburbs, and some bridges and tunnels.

As they marched around City Hall, they also chanted: "Shut up, Mike. Where's your bike?" Michael Bloomberg, the billionaire mayor of New York, had ostentatiously bought a fancy bike to ride during the threatened transit strike.

At the rally after the march, workers spoke bitterly of anger at the way management treats them, and its lack of respect for them. Leaders from other unions—from firefighters to university professors and teachers—brought messages of solidarity.

Barbara Bowen, president of the Professional Staff Congress, which represents professors and professional staff at the city university, pointed out that tax cuts, mainly for the rich and wealthy, had cost the city and state \$13 billion in the 1990s. She proposed solving the fiscal crisis by taxing the rich instead of trying to squeeze the workers and the poor.



WW PHOTO: G. DUNKEL

### Transit workers had community support.

The tentative contract must still be ratified by the union's executive board and the membership. The MTA's original proposal was zero raises over three years in addition to pension and health-care givebacks that would have cost the members about \$10,000 each.

The tentative contract provides a \$1,000 lump sum in the first year, followed by a 3-percent raise in each of the next two years, a reported \$280-million payment to the workers' health plan, and improvements in discipline procedures and sick-leave policy. □





Los Angeles, Dec. 14.

WW PHOTO

## ANSWER's scenario for Jan. 18 DC protest

# Movement grows to stop U.S. war

By Heather Cottin

The International ANSWER Coalition announced on Dec. 12 its latest scenario for the national demonstration against war on Iraq to take place in Washington, D.C., set for Jan. 18.

On that day, people from across the United States will converge at the West side of the Capitol Building and then stage a mass march to the large Washington Navy Yard on the Anacostia River. ANSWER will demand the immediate elimination of U.S. weapons of mass destruction. A people's inspection team will call for unfettered access and a full declaration of U.S. non-conventional weapons systems.

The participants in this action, like those going to San Francisco on the West Coast, will be young and old, Black, Latino, Asian, Muslim and white. Calls and emails to the ANSWER offices show they are militantly against the expenditure of trillions for war and angry that the Bush administration is cutting social programs while threatening

small countries with nuclear weapons and germ warfare. Their numbers are growing rapidly in rural areas and in the urban regions of the United States.

Jay is 18 years old and has founded Sagem Student ANSWER in a New York suburb known for its racist repression of migrant workers. He is organizing working class youth to go to Washington on a bus leaving from a park-and-ride on the Long Island Expressway. He carries VOTENOWAR.org petitions everywhere, and is selling tickets like hotcakes.

A Howard University student working in the Washington, D.C., office of ANSWER is going home for intersession to North Carolina. She will help organize in her state, which already has five organizing centers preparing to send buses to the No War on Iraq march.

In northern Michigan, a group of over 150 key organizers convened to work statewide to go to the Jan. 18 march; their keynote speaker was from ANSWER.

A first-year college student in Austin,

Tex., has organized a bus for the march on Washington. An Ohio junior high school teacher is filling a bus with youth against the war.

Savannah, Ga., hasn't had an antiwar movement before. Organizers are preparing to send a bus to the ANSWER march in Washington to commemorate Martin Luther King. In central Colorado an organizer has convinced 75 people to fly to Washington on Jan. 18 to march against Bush's war on Iraq.

A Long Island ANSWER organizer visiting his daughter in Hollywood, Calif., turned a corner on Dec. 14 and found 3,000 people gathering to march against the war. Seeing the ANSWER placards "was like coming home," he said. Carrying signs, candles and huge banners calling for "Jobs, not war," the militant gathering demanded the elimination of "U.S. weapons of mass destruction." It received a tumultuous response from passers-by, who honked and waved in solidarity. The protest was covered on many local television channels, all-

news radio and CNN.

The demonstration was a building action for a mass march and rally in Los Angeles on Jan. 11 and for the national marches the following week. The Coalition for World Peace, the Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace, and the Not In Our Name Project cosponsored the march with ANSWER.

In Jeffersonville, N.Y., activists from Delaware and Sullivan Counties and Pennsylvania's Wayne County are organizing a bus to Washington, and invited ANSWER organizers to come and participate in their activities. They are planning teach-ins on Civil Liberties and the War, using Peoples Video Network videos to help with their outreach.

Groups in rural counties along the Hudson River in New York held 38 peace vigils this month.

In New York City, on Dec. 14, Uptown Youth for Peace and Justice gathered members of the community, antiwar and youth groups and marched in force



New York, Dec. 15. Harlem protest against the war.

WW PHOTO; G. DUNKEL





PHOTO: BERNIE FOX, IAC-SF

Gloria La Riva and ILWU's Clarence Thomas at S.F. teach-in Dec. 14.



## on Iraq

through the streets of Washington Heights and Harlem. Upwards of 1,000 people turned out to demonstrate despite cold, wet weather.

Their message was clear: "We demand an end to the Poverty Draft. We demand an end to the looting of our schools and communities to fund an unjust war. We demand an end to continued murder of innocents around the world. We see this as an important moment in our efforts to bring thousands of talented, powerful young people from a state of inactive anger and frustration into collective, focused action."

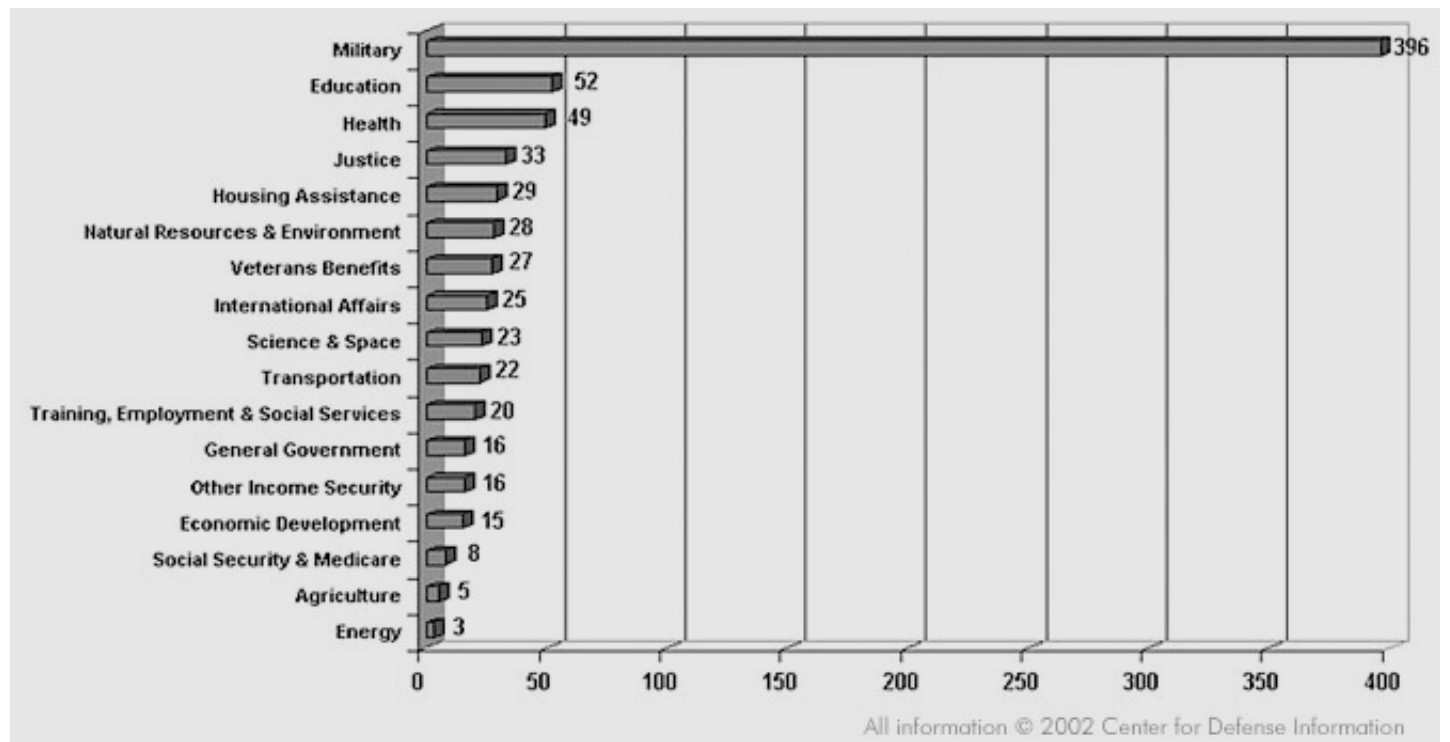
The first Bedford-Stuyvesant Peace March on Dec. 8 attracted several hundred Brooklyn residents. Many New York area anti-war organizers came to a meeting at Brooklyn's House of the Lord Church on Dec. 15 to organize their neighborhoods to get on buses from Brooklyn and the New York metropolitan area for the march on Washington Jan. 18, during the Martin Luther King birthday weekend.

Marches and vigils are proliferating all over the country. Students are holding teach-ins at colleges and neighbors are gathering to protest Bush's war agenda in churches and mosques, in living rooms and libraries. And everywhere people are buying tickets to get to Washington or San Francisco to protest the war.

The International ANSWER.org website has recorded hundreds of thousands of hits as organizers across the country download fact sheets, organizing tactics and leaflets to build this massive antiwar movement.

ANSWER has postponed until the spring a proposed People's Peace Congress after its Steering Committee, weighing feedback from around the country, decided there would be more effective organizing and participation if it takes place after the Jan. 18-19 weekend.

However, a youth meeting will convene in D.C. on the day after the march. For more information, contact the D.C. office at (202) 332-5757. □



# U.S. MILITARY BUDGET— root cause of deepening budget cuts

By Monica Moorehead

Adapted from a talk given Dec. 6 at a Workers World Party meeting in New York

The Dec. 11 Washington Post carried a front-page article headlined "Pre-emptive Strikes Part of U.S. Strategic Doctrine; 'All Options' Open for Countering Unconventional Arms."

The article announced that current U.S. military strategy includes using nuclear weapons pre-emptively, if the White House decides that states or even groups "are close to acquiring weapons of mass destruction or the long-range missiles capable of delivering them." The Post commented that this "breaks with 50 years of U.S. counterproliferation efforts."

"In a top-secret appendix," the Post reported, "the directive names Iran, Syria, North Korea and Libya among the countries that are the central focus of the new U.S. approach."

A look at the amount these so-called rogue countries spend on war making, compared to that spent by the United States, puts the "threat" to U.S. national security in perspective.

The Center for Defense Information is a non-profit organization that provides up-to-date data on military spending budgets of the United States and other countries. The following figures for 2001 military spending are provided by the International Institute for Strategic Studies and the Department of Defense.

Iran spent \$9 billion on its military. Iraq, Libya and north Korea each spent less than \$1.5 billion. Cuba, Syria and Sudan each spent less than a billion dollars.

The combined military spending of these "rogue" states was around \$15 billion.

The projected 2003 U.S. military budget—\$396 billion—is more than 26 times that of these countries' military budgets combined.

To date, the United States has 11,000-13,000 strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons. That's more than the weaponry of Japan and Europe put together.

According to the CDI, the United States possesses the second biggest stockpile of chemical weapons in the world, even though it is "committed" to destroy those stockpiles by 2004.

If any inspections of weapons of mass destruction should take place, no one has to look any further than inside the United States.

Except among U.S. military contractors or Pentagon officials, these numbers should justifiably arouse great consterna-

tion. They do, among everyone else around the world.

### Militarization of U.S. economy deepens

How is all this military spending affecting the people at home?

Every state, large and small, faces unprecedented deficits. New York state faces a \$10 billion deficit and California a \$21 billion deficit.

State officials have responded to the crisis by increasing property taxes and making tremendous cuts in social services. Yet there seems to be more than enough money to spend on war.

The Center for Defense Information provides graphic illustration of the 2003 U.S. federal budget breakdown. Out of the close to \$800 billion projected federal budget for 2003, over 51 percent or \$396 billion is allocated for the military. Coming in a distant second is \$52 billion for education, then \$49 billion for health care and so on.

This is not just a question of an administration being insensitive to people's needs, especially the elderly, children, workers and people of color. This is not just an administration that is obsessed with going to war with any country that dares to

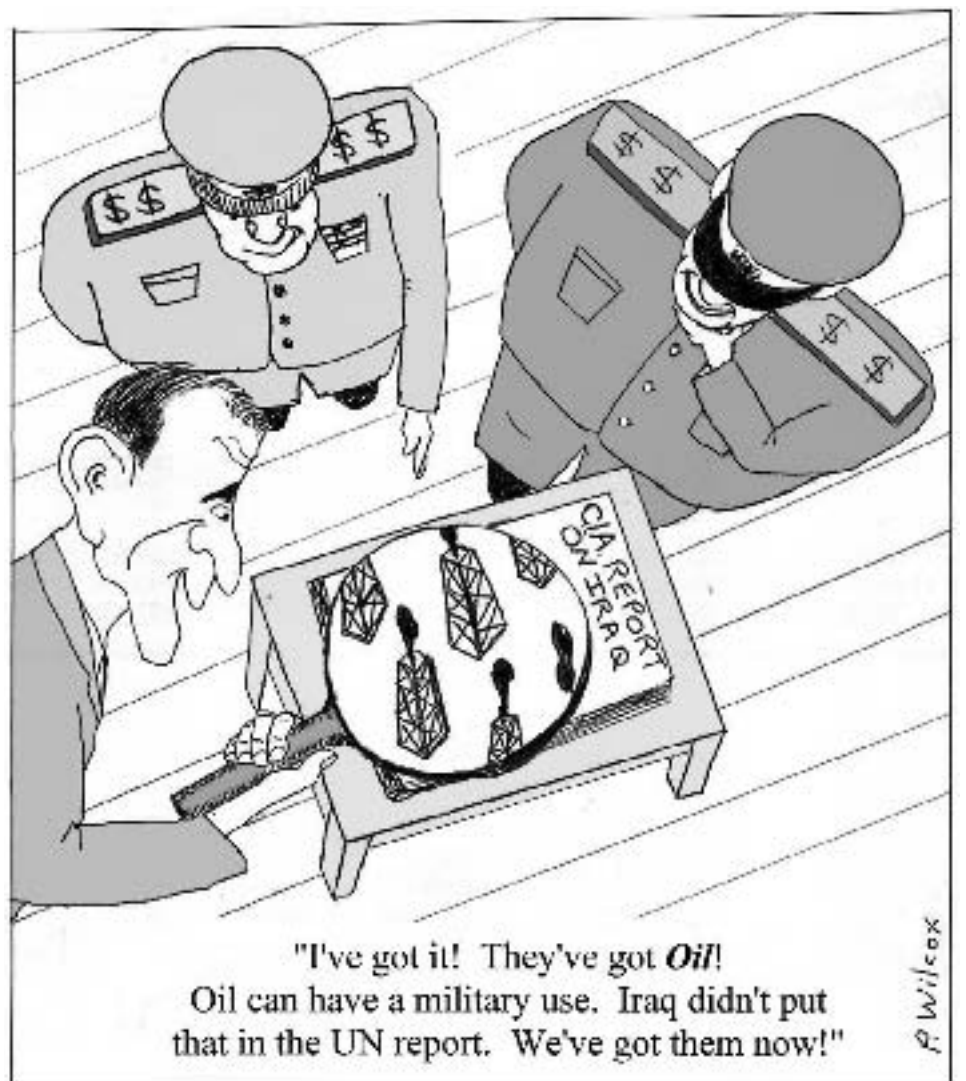
defend its sovereignty.

U.S. society has become thoroughly militarized because the U.S. economy has become a war economy based on capitalism's innate need to make profits no matter the extent of human suffering.

The Bush administration is projecting that \$200 billion will be spent on a war against Iraq. This figure does not include a plan for the U.S. military to occupy Iraq and the Persian Gulf region indefinitely, which is likely to occur. It is conceivable that even \$1 trillion could be spent on this military campaign. That's 10 percent of the \$10 trillion-per-year U.S. economy.

More now than ever, it is imperative for the people in this country to come out against a U.S. war on Iraq. The International Act Now to Stop War and End Racism—ANSWER—coalition has initiated a national march to take place Jan. 18 in Washington, D.C., from the Capitol to the Navy Yard.

Jan. 18 is part of a holiday weekend commemorating the great civil-rights leader and anti-war activist, Dr. Martin Luther King. Marchers will show that the money is there to begin the process of funding human needs, not war. □





# The resignation of Dr. Strangelove

By Leslie Feinberg

When the door to the Sept. 11 commission of inquiry hit Henry Kissinger on his backside, President George W. Bush was compelled by the Dec. 13 resignation to hang out the "help wanted" sign again. Kissinger, the president's appointed chairperson, was the panel's second senior member to bail out. Just two days earlier, former Sen. George Mitchell had bolted.

In January, the 10-member panel is supposed to start scrutinizing circumstances surrounding the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. Democrats can choose five members. House Majority Leader Dennis Hastert and Trent Lott of Mississippi—Senate GOP leader as of this writing—each selects two. Bush handpicks the chair.

The Commander in Chief had dragged his heels on convening the panel for more than a year, before signing an Act of Congress that brought the Joint Commission into being on Nov. 27. He reportedly relented under the weight of widespread accusations that his reluctance was due to the fact that the commission is to release a report less than six months before the 2004 election. That could very well leave his administration with egg on its face.

The panel has been mired in strife since its onset. Partisan wrangling broke out when the Oval Office issued a missive mandating a majority of at least six votes to issue subpoenas to impede Democrats from being able to serve the powerful summonses on their own.

United Press International reports that, according to unnamed White House sources, the day before Kissinger jumped ship the commission still had no offices or

desks—not even a telephone number.

Kissinger, who was secretary of state under Richard Nixon, came under fire from Senate Democrats who demanded he disclose his international consulting firm's client list. The White House countered that Kissinger needn't comply because he was just a part-timer appointed by the president. After locking horns with Democrats on the Senate's so-called ethics committee, Kissinger stepped down.

He had been at the helm for only 16 days. He resigned just 24 hours after fruitlessly trying to guarantee loved ones of Sept. 11 victims that his wining and dining with the corporate and banking elite who have direct interests in U.S. international policy would not conflict with his task.

National columnist Robert Scheer noted in the Dec. 16 Los Angeles Times that Kissinger Associates is an "ultra-connected consulting firm" that has engaged in financial wheeling and dealing with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The firm employed both Brent Scowcroft, who became national security advisor for President George H.W. Bush, and Lawrence Eagleburger, secretary of state in that administration.

"That those ties crisscross with other suspicious activities of close Bush family advisors—including Poppy Bush's consulting role with the Carlyle Group that took him to Saudi Arabia to drum up business—makes Kissinger's selection as understandable as it is dishonest."

No wonder President Bush wrote that he accepted Kissinger's departure as head of the commission with regret. It's a tough job to fill, calling for an adroit applicant skilled in the art of cover-up.

In fact Scheer headlined his article: "Want a Cover-Up Expert? Kissinger's

Your Man." He wrote that Kissinger was "the member of the Nixon White House most bent on destroying Daniel Ellsberg for giving a copy of the Pentagon Papers, the government's secret history of the Vietnam War, to the New York Times. His obsession with preventing all government leaks, except those of his creation, is well documented in the Nixon tapes."

Scheer also recalled that Kissinger lied about the bombing of Cambodia, the Watergate break-in of Democratic Party headquarters and the death of the democratically elected leader of Chile.

Another columnist, Andrew Greeley rhetorically asked in his Dec. 13 Chicago Sun-Times article why Bush saw fit to appoint a man with such a "legendary reputation for deception." He queried: "Does he expect that Kissinger will add credibility to the report? Or rather, does he hope that Kissinger will cover up what needs to be covered up?"

Top Republicans certainly must have hoped that such a prominent and prestigious statesperson as Kissinger would bring a shovel of credibility to help clean up this Augean stable. But when the opposition made a stink about his role, it became clear he wasn't up to the Herculean task.

A Dec. 14 New York Times editorial lost no time heralding Kissinger's resignation, stressing, "The only way to conduct such an inquiry is if all the commission members are free of business interests that could influence their work."

It might be easier to locate the Holy Grail.

For now, Bush has reportedly drafted a Republican with a much lower profile—former New Jersey Gov. Thomas H. Kean—to fill Kissinger's wing-tip brogues.

## Terrorist, war criminal

The problem is not just Kissinger's mendacity, not that he's a closed-mouth, sneaky kind of guy with business conflicts of interest.

Kissinger came onto the stage of U.S. politics as a trusted aide to the Rockefeller oil and banking dynasty. And he proved as secretary of state and national security advisor that his business and political objectives were not at odds.

Kissinger and Nixon's secret bombing of Cambodia was an act of terror that massacred an estimated 500,000 people.

Under the Nixon administration, Kissinger became synonymous with the escalation of U.S. military aggression against Vietnam, a war that claimed an estimated 3 million lives in that country. He reportedly menaced the North Vietnamese with weapons of mass destruction many times, repeatedly threatening to drop nuclear weapons on the Asian socialist nation while at the "peace" negotiations in Paris.

When the Nobel Peace Prize was bestowed on Kissinger in 1973, brilliant political satirist Tom Lehrer announced he was retiring his musical performances. "It was at that moment that satire died," Lehrer observed. "There was nothing more to say after that." (BBC, Dec. 16)

The Machiavellian premise of Kissinger's book "Nuclear War and Foreign Policy," published in 1957, was that limited atomic war was winnable. Many people believe that Kissinger inspired Jewish Hollywood director Stanley Kubrick's movie character "Dr. Strangelove," whose arm spasmodically stiffened into "hail Hitler" salutes. It was a razor-sharp condemnation that cut to the bone. And it was well deserved.

Kissinger worked hand-in-glove with Nixon, a notorious anti-Semite, to bolster the Israeli garrison state, protect Big Oil interests in the Middle East and crush Palestinian resistance.

Kissinger engineered the 1973 CIA coup that carried out a "regime change" in Chile, resulting in the death of President Salvador Allende, the slaughter of some 30,000 worker organizers and torture and exile of tens of thousands more.

Kissinger carried out these and other high crimes against humanity while orchestrating U.S. international policy from 1969 to 1976. That is why he is in the upper echelons of the Empire that Washington wants to protect from any international criminal court.

Kissinger has stepped back from the commission on Sept. 11. Not good enough. He should be receiving a subpoena, not handing them out, because he himself has been so instrumental in fanning the flames of rage against the United States that contributed to that disaster.

People all over the world and across the United States would rejoice to see Kissinger in the docket of a genuine people's war crimes tribunal. □

## Famine in Ethiopia

# Coffee grows bitter for world's farmers

By Deirdre Griswold

How much are you paying for a cup of coffee these days? Half what it cost a year ago? Or a higher price than before?

If what the coffee companies paid the farmers determined cost to the consumer, you would be paying less than half what you used to. World coffee prices have declined by almost 70 percent since 1997. But instead, you are probably paying a lot more, especially if you are buying your container of coffee at a national chain.

There's a tale of utter desolation and even starvation connected to this.

In Ethiopia, which has been growing the finest Arabica coffee beans for hundreds of years, farmers are in desperate straits because they are getting paid only half what they used to for their product. IRIN, a United Nations press agency, reported in September: "Third world farmers receive a paltry one percent of the final price of a cup of coffee. Yet the big coffee sellers are making annual profits in the region of 26 percent."

Starbucks, of course, comes to mind, since it's more likely to use Arabica beans in its specialty coffees than the other chains. A cup of Ethiopian coffee there is likely to cost two dollars or more, of which the farmer is lucky to get two cents.

The collapse in world coffee prices has created a terrible crisis in Ethiopia. A million people there depend directly on coffee for their income. Children are already

dying of starvation. In a country where the people go shoeless and in tatters even in "good times," farmers are now selling the tin roofs off their mud houses to survive.

The Western media aren't paying much attention to the famine in Africa—mostly they attack the government of Zimbabwe for taking over land owned by white settlers and distributing it to Africans. The countries of southern Africa have been in the grips of a prolonged drought, which threatens millions. But East African countries like Ethiopia and Kenya are also suffering. Drought is only one factor. The other is the "free market," which in fact is a market dominated by a few powerful capitalist corporations, most of them in the imperialist countries.

Coffee-producing countries are suffering from the cruelest of all the capitalist paradoxes: Productivity has risen, more coffee is being produced around the world, the market has become glutted and therefore prices have fallen.

Back in the 1970s, after a terrible famine, Ethiopia had a revolution. It tried to get out of the capitalist world market and set up a socialist economy with the help of the Soviet Union, Cuba and Eastern Europe. The United States organized a full-scale subversion, including clandestine operations and instigating several wars against it. Now Ethiopia is once again at the mercy of the capitalist world market—and famine. □

## Gift Idea from Leftbooks.com

<http://www.leftbooks.com> has just added seven beautiful 2003 calendars, five sets of Knowledge Cards and Anti-war Tee Shirts to our inventory. These items are perfect for holiday gifts. Get your shopping done early on the internet. [http://www.leftbooks.com/online-store/scstore/c-Gift\\_Calendars.html](http://www.leftbooks.com/online-store/scstore/c-Gift_Calendars.html)

### Full color calendars!

Spend the year learning African American history with your own wall calendar. These lovely calendars contain 365 days of important information about the unique history of African Americans. See glorious "Guatemalan Rainbow" or "Molas: The Art of Layered Fabric" full color calendars. Also check out the "Indian Paintings of the South West" calendar for some compelling images from Native American artists and the "Images in Stone" wall calendar that documents ancient carved stone images from early Native cultures in the U.S. One of the most beautiful calendars contains 12 vivid reproductions of the paintings of Alfredo Ramos Martinez.





## SOUTH KOREA

# Hundreds of thousands protest U.S. occupation

By Deirdre Griswold

The biggest protests to date against the U.S. military occupation of South Korea took place Dec. 14.

In the capital, Seoul, an estimated 100,000 people gathered in front of City Hall. They tore apart four large U.S. flags, then raised a huge Korean flag over the crowd while chanting, "We don't want war in Korea!"

All told, organizers said 300,000 people took part in the day of protest in 57 Korean cities, plus Korean communities in the United States, Japan, Germany, France, Sweden, Russia, Great Britain, Australia, Ireland, Canada and New Zealand.

The Rev. Han Sang Ryol led the huge crowd in Seoul in chanting, "Let us take back Korean self-determination!" Han had just returned from Washington, where he led a delegation that attempted to hand President George W. Bush petitions signed by 1.3 million people. The White House refused to receive the delegation, so people picketed outside, surrounded by a heavy police presence.

The petitions demand a change in the Status of Forces Agreement between the United States and South Korea, a trial in a Korean court of U.S. soldiers who drove a 50-ton tank over two Korean schoolgirls in June, and an apology from Bush over the soldiers' exoneration by the U.S. military.

The two young girls, Shim Mi-sun and Shin Hyo-soon, were crushed by the speeding tank while walking to a birthday party.

A U.S. military court wouldn't even find the soldiers guilty of reckless manslaughter. When angry protests erupted all over South Korea in November after the acquittals, Bush made a half-hearted apology, but the Korean people saw it as too little, too late.

The anger in Korea since this incident has been volcanic. Anti-U.S. demonstrations have erupted all over the country, including at U.S. bases where, for the first time in years, Molotov cocktails were thrown. Restaurants started posting signs



Dec. 14, Seoul. Huge crowd demands Korean self-determination.

reading "Americans not welcome."

Politicians have been forced to endorse the mass demand for changes in the SOFA agreement, which has allowed Pentagon courts to have jurisdiction even when U.S. soldiers commit assault and murder against Korean civilians.

More and more, the demonstrations are calling for the removal of U.S. troops from Korea. There have been at least 37,000 stationed there ever since the Korean War, and the United States has opposed signing a peace treaty with North Korea that would end a permanent state of war now over 50 years old. The Bush administration's intensified hostility against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the north—Bush has called it a "terrorist state"—came right after the north and south held historic talks on normalizing relations and reuniting families that have been divided ever since the war.

The Korean people passionately want reunification, and increasingly understand that it is the U.S. occupation that prevents it. Now, for the first time, the demonstrators are outnumbering the troops.

Two students in the city of Daegu, 200 miles southeast of Seoul, broke into a U.S. military base on Dec. 14 and climbed onto

a 100-ft. water tank. Television footage showed the students, draped in South Korean flags, shouting, "Retry them in our court," before being arrested by South Korean police.

Participants in the Seoul protest included survivors of the Nogun-ri massacre—three days of infamy during the Korean War when U.S. soldiers machine-gunned to death hundreds of civilian refugees who had tried to take shelter in a railroad underpass. Details of that horrendous event were unearthed by Associated Press reporters two years ago and publi-



cized last year in a BBC documentary.

Korean groups have unearthed the sites of many similar massacres during the war. Survivors have come forward and told their stories. An international tribunal in New York in June 2001, organized by the Korea Truth Commission and the International Action Center, heard from some of them. The tribunal then indicted the U.S. government for war crimes.

As the Bush administration continues its demonization of North Korea, using that as an excuse for its continued occupation of the south, the movement to get the troops out vows to intensify its efforts. □



## Bush seeks pretext for war

Continued from page 1

government is hell-bent on a war that will cost hundreds of billions of dollars when it claims there is no money to stem the rising tide of suffering at home.

From the point of view of weaponry, the war hawks are Goliath. No one in the world has anything like their awesome firepower. But they are a small band of outlaws in the eyes of 95 percent of the world's people.

The strategy of the Bush cabal is to keep the mass opposition off balance by seeming to cooperate with the United Nations in a multilateral approach to the "problem" of Iraq, while at the same time feverishly preparing for a war of aggression. They hope that as the inspections drag out, the perception that this process will avoid war will restrain the mass anti-war movement.

Addressing this, the ANSWER coalition put out a statement on Dec. 17 that concluded, "It is urgent that the anti-war movement not be lulled into a false sense of optimism because Iraq and the UN are cooperating. Various governments are reporting that they are hopeful that the inspec-

tions process can help avoid war. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan went out of his way to say that war is not inevitable.

"However, the extent to which the world is voicing cautious optimism about a peaceful solution is also the extent to which the Bush foreign policy team is racing to dash all hope for such an outcome. There is now an almost perfect inverted ratio between the worldwide clamor for restraint and peace and the Bush administration's eagerness to publicly announce that war is certain.

"There is really only one restraint that can block the war. It lies within the people themselves. Neither Congress nor the Security Council will stop Bush's dangerous war drive. The optimism of the anti-war forces must be premised on reality. If we can mobilize the millions—in the U.S. and around the world—and ignite a firestorm of activism, then the political climate can be changed, and changed dynamically."

In the stodgy halls of Congress, the political climate seems frozen in a bourgeois time warp. But on the streets, momentum is gathering for bigger and better struggles. □

## Japan tribunal charges Bush with war crimes in Afghanistan

A standing-room-only crowd of 400 people packed the meeting hall all day in Tokyo Dec. 15 to hear detailed testimony at a tribunal charging President George Bush with war crimes in Afghanistan. The Afghan war and the threatened war in Iraq are drawing wider interest in Japan since the country's military supported U.S. military operations in Afghanistan and is being set up for support operations against Iraq. This marks Japan's first open military intervention since World War II.

The tribunal was initiated by Akira Maeda, a professor of international law at Tokyo Zokei University, and a broad group of people in Japan from labor unionists to members of the parliament. Experts in international law, journalists and members of a fact-finding delegation that had traveled to refugee camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan all testified at the hearing. Japanese photo-journalists who had traveled throughout the country at great risk told how they had to take their pictures clandestinely. They were threatened with arrest or even being shot for violating the U.S. military-imposed censorship. A videotaped message of support from former U.S. attorney general Ramsey Clark was also presented.

—Gary Wilson





# Venezuela— it's no strike

As the latest attempt by the U.S.-backed Venezuelan oligarchy to overthrow the popular Hugo Chávez government enters its 17th day, it takes a struggle to get even a piece of the truth about what is happening there. Both the big-business media in Venezuela and the imperialist-controlled media here lie and slander the Venezuelan government and distort all the events.

Perhaps the single greatest distortion is the media's use of the word "strike" to describe this right-wing coup attempt and sabotage of Venezuela's oil industry.

A strike is an action by workers struggling for their economic and/or political interests. When the New York transit workers even considered striking, the local media and politicians slandered them as the closest things to "urban terrorists."

That's because the workers were confronting the bosses.

In Venezuela it is the rich oligarchy, along with some active and retired top army officers, attempting to mobilize middle-class shopkeepers, managers, supervisors and other privileged elements—including some police and ship captains—to wage war on the Chávez government. Their main target is the vital oil industry.

They want to get rid of Chávez and wipe out the popular forces that support him. The oligarchs failed in a coup attempt last April. At that time they seized Chávez, held him for two days and tried to hunt down other progressive political and union activists. The current tactic of the rightists is to demand "early elections," despite the fact that it violates the Venezuelan Constitution.

Last April, U.S. imperialism publicly backed the coup from day one. Two days later Bush administration figures had to eat their words because a mas-

sive uprising by the workers and farmers and other poor people of Venezuela restored Chávez to power and stopped the coup dead in its tracks. Unfortunately, the coup-makers remained free to continue their plotting.

This time the White House and U.S. State Department kept their support covert during 10 days of class struggle in Venezuela. But the arrogant Washington gang finally moved from secret to public support of the Venezuelan rich by publicly stating that Chávez should hold early elections.

Chávez gave them the best answer: "I'm sure President Bush is not telling the world that Venezuelans must violate the Constitution," he told U.S. reporters. "Here, there is no power that can convoke an early election, so I have asked Washington to review our Constitution."

Chávez has expressed confidence that he will ride out the conflict. But the rich right-wingers are continuing their attempt to sabotage the economy and bankrupt the popular government. These forces are a small minority of Venezuelans. But their threat should not be underestimated, as they have great wealth, completely control the media in Venezuela and enjoy the backing of U.S. imperialism and its media machine.

Meanwhile the head of the Venezuelan army has declared allegiance to the Chávez government, and the pro-Chávez poor and workers have continued to mobilize against the oligarch's coup attempt.

Whatever the lies in the media—in Venezuela and here—there is no doubt that progressive and working-class organizations worldwide have the duty to back the Chávez government and the popular organizations in Venezuela in whatever steps they take to stop this attempted reactionary coup. □



## Louise Ellis Merrill fighter for social justice

By Liza Green

A long-time fighter for social justice, Louise Ellis Merrill, died on Dec. 15 in Oakland, Calif., after complications from cardiac surgery.

She lived her life consistently and tenaciously as a socialist feminist for almost half a century.

Louise had been part of a group of socialist internationalists in Buffalo, N.Y., who went on to found Workers World Party in 1959. A low-paid restaurant worker, she was close to Sam Marcy and Dorothy Ballan and shared their commitment to build a revolutionary working-class party. She was particularly interested in the political development of women workers and found ways to bring her politics to her co-workers and friends, even in the McCarthyite atmosphere of the 1950s.

Louise later helped organize to free Mae Mallory, a Black woman framed for advocating self-defense against Klan terror in North Carolina.

After moving to California in the late 1960s, she introduced friends and activists to WWP, helping to lay the groundwork for the development of a party branch in that state in 1980.

In the mid-1970s, she edited and published "The Feminist," a newspaper devoted to educating and giving voice to women. She also organized militant support for Berkeley's feminist and anti-racist workers who were fighting to enforce the city's dormant affirmative-action program.

Louise helped lead the Inez Garcia Defense Committee in the mid-1970s. Inez Garcia, a woman of Cuban and Puerto Rican descent, courageously—and eventually successfully—fought murder charges after she shot and killed one of two

men who raped her. The man she killed was from a powerful and influential family that owned the migrant labor camp and the house in which she lived.

Louise, a lesbian activist, was arrested with 31 other lesbians and straight women and six gay men in 1975 for occupying San Francisco's State Building in support of Garcia and other political prisoners.

Shane Hoff, drawn into the vortex of this struggle, recalled, "We were angry young women moved into activism by our rage against women's oppression, but it was Louise who helped us see its class basis."

Louise defended women's reproductive rights and lesbian and gay rights. She organized against the U.S.-backed apartheid government in South Africa.

Louise was also a long-time anti-Pentagon-war activist. She was an early organizer of GIs into the American Servicemen's Union during the Vietnam War.

More recently she continued to be a friend and supporter of WWP and the International ANSWER coalition—Act Now to Stop War & End Racism—both organizations that fight against U.S. imperialist wars all over the globe.

Louise was a fighter to the end. Just days after she had suffered a stroke, she went to one of the major demonstrations against a U.S. war in Iraq.

Louise died in her hospital room surrounded by her daughter, Jody Rivera, and other women who dearly loved her—many of them lesbians, young and old, African American, Latina and white. They brought her messages of love from friends and comrades across the country.

Louise's life of persistent and principled struggle reminds us all to follow labor leader Joe Hill's courageous call as he faced the bosses' gallows: "Don't mourn, organize!" □



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'They have billions to bomb innocent people'

# British firefighters want money for wages, not war

By Bill Cecil  
London

Firefighters, transit workers, dock workers. They all risk their lives every day in hard, dirty, dangerous jobs crucial to society.

Like New York transit workers and California dockers, Britain's 55,000 firefighters are the targets of a hate campaign by their country's corporate-owned news media and serve-the-rich politicians.

Their crime? Exercising the most basic democratic rights: freedom of speech and to strike for a livable wage as they did for eight days in November.

The Fire Brigades Union has called off a planned Dec. 16 strike action in favor of mediation by the Arbitration Conciliation and Arbitration Service. But union leaders warn they will resume a campaign of monthly strikes in January if their grievances are not resolved.

Before the strike, many local councils had agreed to the firefighters' pay demands. But Prime Minister Tony Blair's government intervened to block a settlement.

The top pay for a British firefighter is now the equivalent of \$30,000 per year. Prices in London are higher than in New York City. Some London firefighters commute hundreds of miles to work because they can't afford to live in the metropolitan area.

The FBU is fighting for a pay increase to about \$48,000 a year. They want to stop the state's plan to use "modernization" as an excuse for cutting thousands of jobs. And they want equal pay for fire-control staff and "retained" firefighters.

The fire-control staff are emergency

operators and dispatchers. Most are women. The "retained" firefighters are part-timers who serve rural communities. They get paid at half the rate of full-time firefighters.

"Palpably absurd" is how Prime Minister Blair characterized the FBU's fight for a living wage. Blair, a close ally of the Bush regime, just got a 40-percent pay hike—to \$257,000 a year.

Rather than raise firefighters' pay, however, Blair would use the money to help Bush bomb Iraq. Defense Minister Adam Ingram warned that the British Army is not big enough to scab on striking firefighters—as it did in November—and attack Iraq at the same time. He also said that firefighters are "not fit to lace the boots of soldiers."

## March through London

On Dec. 7 the FBU answered state and media attacks with a march through central London. Twelve thousand union members and supporters marched from Cleopatra's Needle to Hyde Park chanting and blowing horns and whistles. Some came from as far as Wales, the Isle of Wight and the Scottish Highlands.

Marchers made it clear they had little sympathy for the defense ministry's war dilemma. "They have billions to bomb innocent people, but nothing for us who save lives every day," said Kate, a firefighter from the Midlands. She held one end of a banner representing women firefighters.

"Women make up only 1 percent of the fire brigades now, and there won't be any more of us if they do their job cut plans," she said. Lesbian and gay firefighters also marched under their own banner.

Her antiwar sentiment was echoed by every firefighter who spoke up. Many

marchers held anti-war placards distributed by the Stop the War Campaign. STW organized an anti-war protest of nearly half a million people in London in October.

At Hyde Park marchers roared approval when FBU General Secretary Andy Gilchrist defended the union's "right to get political." Gilchrist has been heaped with abuse from politicians and corporate media for "politicizing" the firefighters' struggle. They are outraged because he criticized Blair's plan to join Bush's war on Iraq and suggested the prime minister's "New Labor" government should be replaced by "real labor."

The cheers were even louder when Gilchrist warned that if the government continues its intransigence, "then most certainly we will be back on strike because we're going to win this dispute."

In an interview after the rally, FBU President Ruth Winters, a fire-control worker, addressed the right to "be political." She said: "At our annual conference we debate international issues, and we have always been a union that is pro-peace and anti-war. We feel that a trade union should have political viewpoints, and we are very much anti-war and against an invasion of Iraq.

"We also have a huge lot of progressive policies we've put forward in terms of equality issues," Winters said. "It was the union who instigated the movement for equality, to get more women, more Black and ethnic minority people into the job and also to recognize and make the job a safer place for our lesbian and gay firefighters. The government recognizes that now, but it was the union who pushed that first."

Winters also spoke of the FBU's struggle to keep shift patterns that are favorable



Firefighters in London, Dec. 7.

to women, mothers in particular.

The FBU's struggle has drawn wide support from other unionists and progressive people. A solidarity message from unions in Colombia was read at the rally. A young man from Zimbabwe marched with a contingent from the Socialist Labor Party. "I am here because the same government that attacks the firefighters is attacking the struggle of the people of Zimbabwe to take back our land. Britain has plundered Africa for centuries, so how can they say they have no money for the firefighters?"

Tunde, a young woman from Romania, marched with the SLP's youth section. "I support the firefighters because they are under attack by the capitalists. I saw how bad life became for working people when the capitalists took over Romania, and I feel that workers here are fighting the same enemy." □

## European Union grows Strikes in EU's present and future

By John Catalinotto

While 40,000 anti-globalization activists in Genoa and another 20,000 in Copenhagen marched against a "capitalist Europe" and "Bush's war on Iraq," leaders of the European Union meeting in the Danish capital voted to include 10 new countries from the South and East into the EU as of May 1, 2004.

The 10 are the island nations of Cyprus and Malta, and the former socialist lands of Poland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia and the Czech Republic. The last nine need to have their populations approve EU membership in a referendum sometime before that date.

During the period the countries in Eastern Europe were considered part of the socialist camp, they had some independence from the world capitalist market and the imperialist West. Since the early 1990s, most have seen their industry, commerce and media fall under the control of Western European and U.S. banks.

The absorption of the 75 million people in these countries into the EU would be a formal acknowledgement of the re-colo-

nization of the region.

### Class struggle in Western Europe

Since 1990 in Western Europe, the capitalist class has opened an assault on the gains made in the prior era by the working class of those countries. This takes the form of cutbacks in social services and constant pressure to hold back wages.

In early to mid-December this attack has forced major strikes in Italy, Germany and Portugal. The most widespread occurred when 1.7 million Portuguese workers—out of a population of just under 10 million—joined a general strike on Dec. 10, according to an assessment by the General Workers Confederation of Portugal (CGTP).

The CGTP had called the strike to beat back what it calls "a broad and violent offensive" against workers' fundamental rights that have been won through years of struggle and great sacrifice. The union confederation described adherence to the strike as enormous in the productive or industrial sector, very high in public and private transport, strong in public administration and also significant in the service sector.

The right-wing government, made up of the Social Democratic and Popular parties, is trying to carry out a policy of increased privatization of health care and education, cuts in social security and an end to policies protecting workers' jobs.

This strike, only the fourth general strike since a popular revolution overthrew a 40-year-long fascist rule in 1974, also had the support of the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP). Despite the strike's strong turnout, the regime has still offered no significant concessions.

In Italy there was a general strike in the spring and demonstrations of millions of workers to counter an attack on their job rights by the right-wing government of media magnate Silvio Berlusconi. On Dec. 16, some 120,000 workers fighting for higher wages held a 24-hour strike that halted trains, buses and streetcars around Italy. This was one of many strikes in Italy during December.

Meanwhile in Germany, as part of a struggle by the public-service workers, streetcar and subway drivers also went on strike Dec. 16. These workers are demanding a 3 percent wage increase.



In both countries workers not only struck but demonstrated in the capitals. The Portuguese workers had demonstrated Nov. 30 in an action leading up to the strike.

An expansion of the European Union will undoubtedly be accompanied by a continued assault on workers' gains by the EU capitalists. It will require solidarity between the workers in all the countries.

It will especially require an understanding from workers in the wealthier and more powerful nations of the problems of workers in the poorer regions, including solidarity with immigrants. For the class struggle will be inevitable. □



IPROLETARIOS Y OPRIMIDOS DE TODOS LOS PAÍSES, UNÍOS!  
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## Sindicatos contra la Coca Cola en Colombia

# Trabajadores desafían a los escuadrones de la muerte

**Boletín:** Decenas de miles de trabajadores y estudiantes colombianos marcharon cinco millas desde la Universidad Nacional hasta la Plaza Simón Bolívar en la parte céntrica de Bogotá el 10 de diciembre. Los manifestantes protestaban contra el plan del Presidente Álvaro Uribe de reorganizar el sistema educativo y privatizar a la industria colombiana a beneficio de las corporaciones transnacionales. También llevaron pancartas protestando contra el Plan Colombia, el programa de Washington para la intervención militar de los Estados Unidos contra los guerrilleros revolucionarios en el país.

Por Rebeca Toledo  
Bogotá, Colombia

Mientras que una delegación de 22 personas del Centro de Acción Internacional (IAC por las siglas en inglés) de los Estados Unidos se acercó al edificio de la administración central de la Coca Cola acá el 5 de diciembre, un aplauso enérgico irrumpió entre los centenares de manifestantes ya concentrados en el lugar. Miembros de la delegación portaron un pendón con las palabras: “El pueblo de los EE.UU. demanda justicia para el pueblo colombiano. No a la Coca Cola y No al Plan Colombia.”

El Sindicato Nacional de los Trabajadores de la Industria Alimenticia (Sinaltrainal), había convocado la protesta, apuntado para preceder el mismo día, el comienzo de un Tribunal Contra la Violencia en la Coca Cola.

Entusiasmado, la multitud coreaba en voz alta y con mucha energía, “¿Quién está pagando la violencia en Colombia? ¡Coca Cola!” y, “¿Porqué nos asesinan cuando somos la esperanza de América Latina?”

Después de varias intervenciones de solidaridad, los manifestantes marcharon hacia la embajada de los Estados Unidos, donde encontraron guardias armados y policías anti motines. Allí, comenzaron a corear: “No queremos ser una colonia de los Estados Unidos, queremos ser una Colombia libre y soberano,” y “Los trabajadores no son terroristas, el imperialismo estadounidense es el terrorista.”

Mientras que la gente se dirigió a los autobuses, gritos de “¡Que viva la solidaridad internacional!” todavía fue posible escuchar. Colombianos explicaron a los delegados internacionales del IAC y otras partes del mundo que sin la presencia de



Bogotá, 5 de diciembre.

FOTO: STEVEN GILLIS

ellos, la protesta no hubiera sido posible. La policía hubiera atacado y arrestado a los participantes.

La delegación del IAC había llegado la noche anterior para asistir al Tribunal Contra la Violencia de la Coca Cola –parte de la Conferencia sobre las Corporaciones Transnacionales y los Derechos Humanos– y para reunirse con sindicalistas, estudiantes, líderes comunitarios y trabajadores de los derechos humanos.

### Powell en Colombia la misma semana

Irónicamente, el secretario de estado de los EE.UU., Colin Powell acabó de salir de Bogotá cuando llegaron los delegados. Powell había llegado el 3 de diciembre en un aeropuerto militar acá en medio de medidas de seguridad extensivas. Dos helicópteros militares rodeaban en el aire sobre la ciudad mientras más que 50 policías de motocicleta y centenares de efectivos fueron desplegados para vigilar la ruta hacia el hotel.

Por medio de Plan Colombia y la Iniciativa Andina, el gobierno de los EE.UU. ha proporcionado mucho más de mil millones de dólares en ayuda a Colombia desde 2000 –mayormente en pertrechos militares para poner alto al movimiento fuerte por la justicia social en Colombia, que incluye los grupos de insurgencia, sindicalistas, estudiantes, campesinos, y líderes comunitarios y por los derechos humanos.

Durante la visita de Powell prometió verter otro \$200 millones en las fuerzas militares y policiales. Según reportes ya hay más tropas de las Fuerzas Armadas de los EE.UU. en Colombia que estuvieron en Centroamérica durante la década de los 80.

Powell también fue motivado a viajar en la búsqueda de apoyo político más amplio en el Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU por la guerra planificada de EE.UU. contra Irak. Colombia actualmente ocupa el asiento rotativo de la presidencia del Consejo de Seguridad.

Entonces, la llegada de la delegación del IAC fue una muestra importante de desafío en contra de los planes de guerra de EE.UU. en Colombia. Más de dos tercios partes de los delegados de los EE.UU. fueron sindicalistas miembros de las juntas ejecutivas, comités de negociación, o delegados sindicales en el lugar de trabajar. Otros fueron estudiantes, abogados y activistas anti guerra. Fueron jóvenes y personas mayor de edad, mujeres, hombres, latinos, africano-americanos, y europeo-americanos.

El tribunal fue el tercer en una serie de vistas que comenzaron el 22 de julio en Atlanta. El segundo se llevó a cabo en Bruselas el 10 de octubre. Los tribunales fueron convocados para llamar la atención internacional al apuro de los trabajadores de la Coca Cola y todos los colombianos que son blancos de represión del gobierno colombiano, los paramilitares y las corporaciones transnacionales.

Además que celebrar los tribunales, varios sindicatos, incluyendo a Sinaltrainal; el sindicato estadounidense que representa a los trabajadores metalúrgicos, USW; y el Fondo de Trabajo Internacional han entablado un pleito en las cortes de los EE.UU. acusando a la Coca Cola de usar efectivos paramilitares para intimidar y asesinar a organizadores del sindicato.

Los convocantes del tribunal incluyeron a CUT (Centro Unido de Trabajadores Colombiano), la CGTD (Confederación General de Trabajadores Democráticos),

la Campaña Contra la Impunidad-Clamores de Colombia por la Justicia, Sinaltrainal, la Corporación para la Educación y la Corporación para la Educación y el Desarrollo y Instituto Nacional de Estudios Nacionales (Ced-Ins).

Las comentarios iniciales acusaron a no solo la Coca-Cola sino el estado colombiano de terrorismo contra los trabajadores. Los discursos

santes enmarcaron la manera que el los últimos 12 años ocho trabajadores de la Coca-Cola han sido asesinados, 28 han sido desplazados y varios han sido exilados.

Al cerrar él dijo, “Nosotros no pedimos silencio, sino que nosotros sabemos que como querido Ché, estos héroes viven más que nunca en este tribunal.”

Aprecio Atiz, presidente de la CGTD, destacó que “la globalización capitalista y el neoliberalismo crece como un hedor en el mundo.” El declaró que los gobernantes de hoy en Colombia son asesinos. En el 2001, 240 sindicalistas fueron asesinados mundialmente. Doscientos de ellos en Colombia.

En el 2002, mas de 150, especialmente miembros de la CUT, han sido asesinados en Colombia.

“Esto es una masacre de sindicalista activos,” dijo él. Esta es una crisis nacional.” El agregó que no solo los sindicalistas sino los campesinos también y otras fuerzas sociales están siendo asesinadas.

La sala repleta con cerca de 500 personas respondieron a cada hablante con coros como “Organización, unidad y lucha y “El camino a la justicia es el camino a la victoria.”

El líder indígena, Volemín Dupre dijo: “Nosotros también estamos luchando contra las transnacionales por la sobrevivencia, contra el genocidio.” El agradeció a los sindicalistas por su apoyo.

Un senador del gobierno colombiano habló como representante de siete miembros del Congreso que han firmado una letra pidiendo el cese de la violencia contra los sindicalistas. Él habló fuertemente contra la ley “de reforma” que el Presidente Alvaro Uribe Vélez está tratando de imponer. Esta ley desplazaría a 45.000 trabajadores federales, rompería con la libertad y los derechos de negociación colectiva y huelga, impondría más impuestos y congelaría los salarios, los gastos sociales y beneficios.

“Nosotros votaremos contra esta ley,” dijo el Senador. “Y los invitamos a todos los colombianos a boicotear el referéndum que se dará lugar el marzo del 2003.”

Los delegados internacionales que se dirigieron al tribunal dijeron que los que les impresionó más fue que aunque la represión es severa en Colombia, la gente continúa un nuevo espacio y maneras de luchar. El heroísmo es palpable.

Hubieron ocho delegaciones internacionales. Jana Silverman del Comité para la Justicia Social, el cual trajo a seis personas de los Estados Unidos, entregó sus saludos a los abogados que laboran en el caso contra la Coca-Cola en los Estados Unidos.

Un delegado mexicano anunció que el 2003 ha sido declarado el año en solidaridad con los sindicalistas colombianos.

Un representantes de la región Vasca de España hizo un llamado de más acciones de solidaridad internacional. Los delegados de Alemania, Italia e Inglaterra también se dirigieron a los presentes, como los hizo la delegación del Centro de Acción Internacional (CAI). □

