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The MICHIGAN
socialist

END of YEAR 2007

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Moore / Alexander

2008 Socialist Party Presidential Ticket

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Editor:

Stephen Tash

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**Socialist Party USA
Outline of Principles:**

THE SOCIALIST PARTY strives to establish a radical democracy that places peoples' lives under their own control; where working people own and control the means of production and distribution, through democratically-controlled committees and assemblies; where full employment is realized for everyone who wants to work; where workers have the right to form unions freely, and to strike and engage in other forms of job actions; and where the production of society is used for the benefit of all humanity, not for the private profit of a few. We believe socialism and democracy are one and indivisible. The working class is in a key and central position to fight back against the ruling capitalist class and its power. The working class is the major force worldwide that can lead the way to a socialist future – to a real radical democracy from below.

The Socialist Party fights for progressive changes compatible with a socialist future. We support militant working class struggles and electoral action, independent of the capitalist-controlled two-party system, to present socialist alternatives. We strive for democratic social revolutions — radical and fundamental changes in the structure and nature of economic, political and social relations — to abolish the power now exercised by the few who control the economy and the government. The Socialist Party is a democratic, multi-tendency organization, with structure and practices visible and accessible to all members.

from the editor

This is the first issue of the *Michigan Socialist* for which I am the Editor; as such, I feel it is my duty to put forth my vision for this quarterly magazine and its purpose.

The *Michigan Socialist* is a mouthpiece of the working class. Too often people want to separate themselves from the working class; they want to believe that their interests are one in the same as the Gates', the Hiltons, the Fords, huge international corporations. Perhaps they're right: Hegel did theorize that in the slave's emancipation, his master is also freed from the binds of that relationship. However, one merely has to read *Pygmalion* to realize that our ideal of using *proper* yet nonsensical grammar and words as unknown as "mastication" or "tenebrous" are but attempts to emulate aristocrats. People with unwanted habits are suddenly looked down upon as "low class." People think of themselves as "ladies" and "gentlemen," terms historically used for the gentry or lower aristocracy. We shy away from using vulgar language, vulgarities if you will, though a quick search in the dictionary shows you that "vulgar" just means "common." The masses strive to buy expensive clothes, homes, and cars to show that they aren't as poor as the next guy. Why would we rather trust a man in a suit than a man in jeans? Don't used car salesmen wear suits? Doesn't President Bush? We often forget where we stand in society.

The interests of the working class are poorly represented in American society thanks to an American dream that turned into an American nightmare in the 1880's. Despite evidence to the contrary, we think that even though shit rolls downhill, it will be our shit that rolls downhill one day. The mass media requires massive funding so those with massive bank accounts choose what is broadcast or printed. ABC is owned by Disney, NBC is owned by General Electric, CBS is owned by Viacom, and FOX is owned by a sociopathic billionaire who would probably broadcast tributes to Hitler and Nazi Germany if he didn't happen to be Jewish. Seven corporations own 90% of the US Media, funded by other corporations and political candidates who buy advertisement with corporate dollars.

This quarterly is an important counterweight to the corporate bias pressed the residents of Michigan through daily media consumption. The views that you are not regularly exposed to are at your fingertips. Every attempt will be made to use *vulgar* language: "amusing" rather than "jocular," "witty" rather than "waggish" or "piquant," and you'll find "truth" rather than "verisimilitude." However, there are times when traditional socialist terms which may not be readily known may have to be used because the English language lacks a vulgar counterpart. In such cases, you can expect a definition of the term on the same page.

This publication is not simply a news journal, it is a mouthpiece for socialist theory, working class artistic endeavors, and we hope to find a working class comic willing to be published.

The Socialist Party USA and the Socialist Party of Michigan are multi-tendency parties, which means that though we have central principles we see other issues in various ways. This quarterly will accordingly voice many thoughts that not everyone in the party will agree with. Please keep in mind that the views published here are not necessarily the only views. ■

In Solidarity,

Rev. Cde. Stephen Tash

Socialist Party USA Picks its Presidential Ticket for 2008

By STEPHEN TASH

The Michigan Socialist

Socialist Party members from across the nation converged upon St. Louis, MO from October 20 - 22 to attend the 91st annual national convention. Various issues made their way onto the convention floor from changes in the national platform to the status of the Socialist Party of Wisconsin's charter. However, the most exciting and important development coming out of the 2007 National Convention is that the Socialist Party USA has decided once again to run a presidential campaign and from a fine list of candidates nominated Brian Moore for President and Stewart Alexander for Vice President.

Presidential campaigns for the Socialist Party historically have not been an issue of getting elected. Even at its strongest point, the Socialist Party only received 3.4% of the vote with Eugene Debs in 1920, coming in third place. Certainly, the Socialist Party is not expecting Brian Moore to be taking the presidential Oath come January 20, 2009. Traditional presidential campaigns of the Socialist Party exist for the purpose of spreading the socialist message, for recruiting, which may ultimately lead to an honest attempt to win the presidency. In light of the goals of a presidential campaign, the Socialist Party could not have chosen two better candidates for the job.

Brian Moore, 64, of Spring Hill, FL is a stay-at-home dad Brian

Moore being nominated for President with a Masters degree in public administration from Arizona State University and plenty of campaigning experience. He served in the US Peace Corps in Latin America from 1969 -1972 for a slightly over 3 year tour before involving himself in healthcare industry between 1973 and 1992. From then until 1997 he continued his healthcare track record fund-raising for INMED, a nonprofit international health organization as well as an international consultant for public health projects in Latin America and Africa. Since 1998 he has been with an executive recruitment firm for the healthcare industry. That certainly sounds like an ideal resume in a campaign where both immigration and healthcare are key issues.

Moore is not a campaign virgin by any means: he ran for city council and mayor of Washington, DC between 1984 and 1998; in 2002 and 2004 he ran for Florida's 5th district US house congressional seat and then for the Senate in 2006. None of these campaigns led to his election, but that should not suggest that he is unfamiliar with Washington. He testified before the US Congressional Committee on the District of Columbia during the 1990's and in 1992 he testified before the US Civil Rights Commission. Neither should this suggest that he has no executive experience; he has been president, vice-president, or chairman of several local organizations throughout his life.

Stewart Alexander, 56, of Los Angeles, CA is a long-time community activist and has the



Brian Moore being nominated for President.

distinction of being the first member of an ethnic minority group to be on the Socialist Party Presidential Ticket. However, this was almost not the case; in the 1960's there was talk within the party of running a ticket of Norman Thomas and Martin Luther King Jr. Yet, no ticket was run and at this date no one is sure whether or not King was involved directly in the discussions. Stewart is also a prominent member of the Peace and Freedom Party, a party very similar to the Socialist Party, founded in 1967 in part by the Black Panthers.

The trials of capitalism are nothing new to Alexander, he has felt the sting of racism since birth when he and his mother were sent down into the hospital's basement right after labor. His family moved to New Boston, MI in 1953 where they were unable to find a trailer park that would allow black tenants; his father bought land to put their trailer on only to be evicted by Wayne County officials for zoning violations. He has seen employment discrimination firsthand as a boss informed him they would only hire a black man if he was

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Mobilize to Support Autoworkers!

Socialist Party of Michigan / Socialist Party labor Commission Joint Statement on the 2007 UAW Strike on General Motors.

The statement below was distributed by Socialist Party members across the country at the picket lines during the national UAW strike on GM on September 24th and 25th. Despite immense opposition by numerous UAW locals, the UAW bureaucracy, actively working against the interests of its own membership, succeeded in pushing through a new contract dismantling many of the hard-won achievements of UAW workers over many decades. We continue to call for social ownership and worker control of the automotive industry and for rank and file workers' committees to organize independently and oppose sell-outs from the union bureaucracy.

On Saturday September 24th over 73/000 UAW workers across the country walked out in the first nationwide GM strike in 37 years. The Socialist Party USA calls upon its members and allies to demand a decisive victory for striking UAW workers and upon the entire labor movement to mobilize in solidarity.

The UAW has shut down production at more than 80 facilities owned by GM in 30 states. An economic ripple effect will likely spread through the industry up and down the supply chain causing more stoppages at other North American facilities which either supply or depend on GM components. The eminent large-scale halt of production

brought on by the strike marks a watershed moment for class struggle in the US not seen since the Teamsters struck UPS in 1997. The outcome of this strike will impact not only the quality of life for workers at GM, but the disposition of workers toward militant class struggle throughout the United States and Canada.

This strike repeats the themes raised in recent years by other major strikes, namely job security, the cost of health care, and equality for new employees. The Socialist Party supports the UAW's demands at a minimum in order to hold on to hard won wage rates and job security. In particular, the Socialist Party condemns GM's attempt to offload its responsibility for retiree health care to the UAW through a notoriously insecure Voluntary Employee Benefits Association (VEBA), while funding it at only 60-70% of the total cost. We urge striking UAW workers to reject any contract that includes VEBA, two-tier wages, supplements to be negotiated after ratification, or any cuts in payor benefits whatsoever.

In the 1940s, the UAW led the union movement by winning full health care benefits from auto industry employers. Today, that incentive to join a union is quickly evaporating as employers roll back decades of struggle. The Socialist Party USA joins UAW workers to demand that GM honor its commitment to provide complete health care insurance at no cost to its employees and retirees. We also call for the labor movement to join us in demanding universal socialized health



United Auto Workers walking the picket line at the General Motors Powertrain Plant in Warren, MI.

care for all.

We applaud the Teamsters for their speedy pledge to not cross or work behind UAW picket lines. For this strike to succeed, collective action must not be limited to GM employees. The labor movement's history has shown us that major battles are rarely won without support from fraternal labor organizations and popular forces in affected communities.

The US auto industry has suffered from a competitive disadvantage in the increasingly global market for various reasons. Cheap labor in Korea, our lack of a universal single payer health care system, and the failure of US automakers to innovate are just a few of the major causes.

As GM's market share dropped, the company shed employees to only a fraction of the number it employed a decade ago. Nevertheless, in the past year GM has rebounded with \$207 billion in revenue while paying \$10.2 million a year to its CEO alone.

The large shareholders and executives of GM should not be allowed to fleece such profits from the labor of GM workers.

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ILO Report Unveils Increasing Exploitation of U.S. Workers

By **MATT ERARD**

The Michigan Socialist

In its bi-annual, Key Indicators of the Labor Market Program (KILM) report, the International Labor Organization shined a remarkably bright light on the increasing exploitation of U.S. workers to anyone who cared to look. The finding most cited from the report, released in September, is that U.S. workers now lead the world in productivity as a measure of value added per person employed per year.

Taking into account the regular cries of scarcity and cutbacks from top U.S. officials and employers, the ILO report's findings on the value of U.S. labor output paint a

disgraceful picture of rising exploitation and social inequality. While U.S. workers individually produce more wealth than workers anywhere else on the planet, they, at the same time face the most lacking social safety net in the industrialized world and a substantially lower standard of living. According to a recent study by the Economic Policy Institute, middle-income workers have seen their real hourly wages rise by 3% since 2001 with no increase since 2003. At the same time, those in the 95th percentile and above have seen their incomes rise by an average of nine percent in the same six years.

The 2007 Labor Day Report from United for a Fair Economy found that the average CEO pay is now 364 times that of the average U.S. worker and that the top twenty

private equity and hedge fund managers now earn an average of 22,255 times the pay of an average U.S. worker. The report further found that despite the recent paltry increase in the federal minimum wage, the inflation-adjusted value of the new minimum wage stands seven percent below where it was a decade ago while CEO pay has increased over inflation by 45% in the same decade. While the U.S. corporate media has reported on a number of the ILO report's self-proclaimed "highlights", no notable mention has been made of the report's scandalous finding that the average U.S. worker produces \$63,885 of wealth per year in contrast to the increasingly devastating social and economic conditions faced by workers throughout the nation.

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Thoughts on Columbus Day

By **MAX KANTAR**

The Michigan Socialist

Cristobal Colon, Christopher Columbus: a hero to America, the founder of our native soil, the "New" World, a good Christian man, with good Christian morals.

At this time of year, I often sit and reminisce of some of the most popular lies I was force fed as a sponge-like child, ready to soak up whatever I was told in school. I mean it had to be true, my teacher said so....

Say I was to stumble into your backyard, and then have the audacity to stick flag in the ground and give this "new land" a name I see fit. That's ridiculous. So is celebrating Columbus Day.

Christopher Columbus made

several voyages to what are now called Central/South America, landing in the Bahamas, Jamaica, Honduras, Puerto Rico, etc. In his first voyage, in 1492, Columbus landed in the Bahamas, where he came in contact with Lucayan people, who had been living there for several thousand years prior to his visit. He presumptuously exploited them for their natural resources, such as gold, and for human resources, such as slavery. Of course, he also had to "resolve to make them Christians." Due to enslavement, diseases, and "other hardships" Columbus' arrival marked an end to these peaceful indigenous people's (population estimated at 40,000 upon arrival) existence by 1517. That is what we call "genocide" today.

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Working & Oppressed People – Smash Fascism & Capitalism

The following statement was drafted by the Socialist Party of Michigan for the counter-demonstration against the fascist rally in Kalamazoo on August 14th. SPMI members distributed hundreds of copies of an abridged version of this statement in leaflet form at the event. A copy of the leaflet distributed can be downloaded on the SPMI website.

In the wake of the failure of the capitalist system to provide what is promised, and the rise of opposition to the antiquated system: a lowered quality of life for the masses, their struggle and feelings of insecurity, a rise in the poverty-driven crime rate, lower wages, harder hours, and higher unemployment, a sense of urgency to correct these problems emerges. Traditionally, the result of this is a rise in support between two rivals in ideological opposition: fascists and socialists. Both ferment within the working and middle classes, the former through the elite of the former system, the latter through the oppressed. They view the cause of the problems in two completely different ways: fascists attempt to muster hatred against oppressed peoples to deflect attention from the ruling class; socialists blame the mechanics of a system which naturally lead to the breakdowns present, regardless of the society it is embedded in. On August 4th the fascists march; and on August 4th we socialists stand to dispel their lies.

While the local corporate media and police encourage the



Kalamazoo residents and university students marching in response to the invasion of their community by nazis and other hate groups.

general public to ignore this mobilization, the result of such passivity is only to deepen the potential of fascists to realize their immediate ambitions. Fascist groups like those rallying on August 4th seek first and foremost to build a movement to target labor struggles, oppressed peoples, and all movements of social progress as scapegoats for the disastrous social policies and economic conditions that the capitalist class continues to impose upon working people of all colors and creeds.

To whatever extent these fascist groups attempt to portray themselves as a movement of social rebellion is a direct inversion of reality. From Italy to Germany to Spain, to the prior development of fascist movements in the United States, fascism at all times develops as a movement to brutally suppress working class populations who are no longer willing to tolerate the attacks

on their lives and living standards by the ruling capitalist class. Generally the development of such movements directly coincides with the intensification of imperialist war – such as the current war of aggression and conquest in Iraq. It is no coincidence that these groups are attempting to build a mass movement at the same time that the capitalist media and politicians have attempted to make anti-immigrant and anti-homosexual demagoguery as well as attacks on affirmative action among the central issues in legislative and public discourse. Whether openly displaying their swastikas or not, fascist groups, like the capitalist police, are potential henchmen for the ruling class to uphold the capitalist system during periods of extreme social unrest. The extent to which reactionary forces are mobilized by the ruling class and their propaganda becomes dominant within its culture industry corresponds directly with

the extent to which they are needed to preserve capitalism against the uprisings of working and oppressed peoples.

Such groups are additional gangsters to work alongside the existing repressive apparatus of the capitalist state – a fact that the fascists marching on August 4th know all too well. Hal Turner, the organizer of the Kalamazoo rally who routinely calls on his radio show for the police and border patrol to attack and kill minorities, stated in his flyer for this event that “the cops KNOW who the bad guys are; turn the cops loose! Take the handcuffs OFF the police and let them do their job without fear of being smeared as "racists." When the smears of "racism" happen (as they always do) stand up for the cops at City Council meetings.” Turner additionally stated in his instructions for this event “If you see any kind of scuffle break out involving the police, our natural inclination would be to assist the police but we must refrain from doing that.” In only the past week, Turner has praised an anonymous letter of support he received from a police officer, called on “white cops to bust [black] savages,” and accused the Mexican teachers union of “attacking the cops.”

The Neo-Nazi National Socialist Movement, also invited by Turner to attend the August 4th rally, likewise routinely insinuates that the American police support their cause.

Do not let fascists tell you that they are for preventing gang violence. Historically, fascists have gained power precisely through gang violence. The Nazi party in Germany gained power through the SA and SS and their use of gang violence to subdue anyone they saw as an enemy, particularly proponents of democracy and workers rights, such as socialists and unionists. Italian fascists gained power through the use of Black Shirts, who, like the early German

Nazis, would violently break up strikes and assault socialists, communists, and unionists. Formative fascist groups are better known as paramilitary groups, but are fundamentally the same as gangs, only more political and more violent. The true racially motivated violent gangs operating in Kalamazoo are those rallying before us on August 4th.

The claims made by the rallying fascists groups about rising

“black gang violence” are utter distortions. Claiming an upsurge in racially motivated attacks against whites, the groups rallying today cite a recent attack on a white homeless man by allegedly black gang members, but entirely ignore the seven incidents (as of July 14th when their flyer was posted) where non-white homeless men suffered the same fate.

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Party Notes: Drop All Charges Against Sasha Acker & Emily Roth!

On Saturday August 4th, SPMI members Sasha Acker and Emily Roth were arrested at the end of the Kalamazoo anti-fascist demonstration in Bronson Park. Acker was arrested while standing on the park’s public stage when local and state police began to swarm the park in an attempt to disperse the crowd. Roth was arrested moments later while holding the Socialist Party of Michigan banner. Both comrades were bailed out of Kalamazoo County Jail later that evening and given the trumped-up charge of "interfering."

Police refused to give an answer when asked what exactly the two counter-demonstrators were "interfering" with, but the answer isn't difficult to discern. By expressing their First Amendment rights, the counter-demonstrators at the rally were "interfering" with the desire of police to suppress popular opposition to the fascists' attempt to build a movement in Kalamazoo on the bandwagon of "supporting the police" and "turning them loose." Demonstrating both the crudemendacity and the political basis of the arrests, the arresting officer later wrote in his report that he was concerned that Roth, who was not even speaking at the time, might "incite a riot." Acker and Roth were



Police arresting Emily Roth at Bronson Park in Kalamazoo, MI.

arraigned on Friday August 17th at the Eighth District Court in Kalamazoo and have since attended two pre-trials where they have been represented by an ACLU attorney. Their attorney will file a motion for dismissal on First Amendment grounds on October 24th at the Eighth District Court in Kalamazoo. If the case is not dismissed, they will face a jury trial on October 25th. We encourage all SPMI members and supporters to attend the trials to show support for our comrades. You can view a video ending in Emily's arrest at <http://tinyurl.com/2axb87>. ■

Put the Flashlight in the Micro and What Do You Get?

By COURTNEY CAMPBELL
The Michigan Socialist

It has been stated that one can imagine international trade in this day of “globalization” as a network where each exchange that takes place is a little piece of silk forming one glorious shiny transparent spider web. That sounds nice, doesn’t it?

From 2001 to 2003 I was a Peace Corps volunteer in the Paraguayan Chaco. I lived in a quiet community of 65 families sprawled out along a dirt road that extended about 17 kilometers in either direction. My little wooden one-room house was in the middle of a field. In the evening, I would walk to my neighbors’ house just to chat. To get to this house, I walked along a path trodden by my own feet through pasture grasses and then, through a wooden gate that either kept the cows in or out depending on the time of day. At night, the cows were corralled so the gate was always left open.

It’s amazing how fast a group of diligent spiders can create a well-established web. Between the two gateposts, an incredibly ugly breed of spider would spin webs of silk as strong as cables – hence the importance of flashlights. With a flashlight, you could spot their little white wax-like bodies (little that is, in comparison to cows) scurrying along their web and so knew to duck through another area of the fence. But one night, I didn’t have my flashlight

with me – all that I could do is to walk fast and hope for the best.

So, I did it. I picked up speed and walked right between those two posts ... and was trapped immediately. I held back panic and pushed through, and I’m not sure if everything just appeared to go in slow motion, or if I really had to exert as much force as it seemed to get to the other side, but soon, the web snapped and wrapped itself right around me. Frantically I picked big white juicy spiders from my head and shoulders and tried to unwind the silk that had attached itself to my body. It was nearly impossible. There was one piece of sticky silk here, another there, and I couldn’t find where it all started or where it ended or if, in fact, it ever did.

I admit that my metaphor sounds a little silly, but I employ it for good reason – this is often how it feels when we try to understand trade relations, how they work, who is in power, who benefits and who is helpless to change their position in the web. It’s a big never-ending tangled web that seems impossible to understand let alone explain when you walk into it without a flashlight.

But this community that I referred to can lend us more than just a spider web metaphor – it can lend us a flashlight metaphor into the micro that might help us to understand better the greater global super duper set of trade relations – the macro.

The community was formed in the mid ‘70s on land expropriated

by the state from a large landowner. Now, don’t get all excited – the land was expropriated for political reasons, not for social benefit, by the late and far from great General Alfredo Stroessner. Soon after, the land was settled first by one family, then by others into the large plots of land necessary for dairy farming. The Paraguayan Latinos (as Paraguayans of mestizo, or “mixed”, ancestry are referred by in the Paraguayan Chaco) produce milk that is then collected by a milk truck (the only motor vehicle in the community) and transported to the nearest town where it is then carried to the Mennonite communities that process the milk, package it and ship it out into the vast dairy spider web.

At the time that I was in Paraguay, the Latino dairy producers were paid a whole whopping 407 Guaraníes per liter in the summer (when milk production was at its highest due to healthy forage) and maybe up to 600 Guaraníes in the winter (when milk production was at its lowest due to poor forage caused by frosts). The average family produced about 50 liters of milk a day in the summer, which means that the average family with an average size of 5 people received about 20,350 Guaraníes per day. In the winter, that number could drop to as low as 9,000.

That sounds like a lot of money, doesn’t it? Not when you factor in that one dollar at that time was worth almost 7,000 Guaraníes. This income provided the families with the most basic of amenities – there was a constant lack of protein in the diet due to a lack of meat and instability in any other family crops due to droughts and saline soils. There were also no running water, no electricity, no phone lines, no motor vehicles, primarily school only up to our equivalent of fourth grade and, to top it off, most people could plan on

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A Few Words About the Children of Palestine

By MAX KANTAR

The Michigan Socialist

What will become of the children of Palestine?

They will remember the thundering of Israeli tanks and gunfire, rampaging and ripping through their joyous cries of play and the still of night as they lay awake in bed. They will remember their fathers, many of whom were killed indiscriminately by the occupying power. They will also listen to stories of their mothers, which they never grew to know, who died at military checkpoints giving birth to their stillborn brother or sister. They won't forget their 9 year old schoolmate and friend, Raghda Alassar who endured a fatal bullet in her little head while studying in her Gazan classroom. The children of Palestine won't soon forget Rachel Corrie or Tom Hurndall either, and how they sacrificed their lives resisting home demolitions and killings of innocent women and children.

The children of Palestine haven't forgotten the Intifada, or their peers in Israeli prisons. They won't soon be free of the nightmares, or free from the everlasting image of their strong parents weeping in despair over a heap of rubble that was once, their proud home. They won't look back fondly either, at their bruises from the settlers' stones. They'll remember not to forget the pain of hunger in their empty stomachs and their friends, whose feet will never touch the ground again.

But will the rest of us



An Israeli soldier holds a Palestinian family at gun point.

remember?

While childhood is supposed to represent the blissful innocence of experiencing everything for the first time and the absence of serious thought and responsibility, the children of Palestine know nothing of this western fairy tale. For Palestinian children, going to school and playing outside constantly prove to be life threatening activities. Learning this lesson was little Iman al-Hams, who took 17 brutal bullets into her thirteen year old body as her crime was carrying a back pack home from school near the Gaza/Egyptian border. The world may never learn their names, meet their families, or even hear what they wanted to be when they grew up. Most will never shed a tear for the young Palestinian boys, dead, who never kissed a girl or the shy, self-conscious little girls; gone, who never met their fathers. And for

the children of Palestine who make it to see adulthood, the ones who have seen and lived it all; will they be conditioned to resist oppression and occupation nonviolently and diplomatically? Will they be concerned about Israel's right to exist and the next generation of Israeli children? Or perhaps, these former children of Palestine, will have no more room for compromise in their hearts.

The Israeli government and its political allies are molding a generation of Palestinian youth into fighters whose wide eyes will never lose sight of the trouble they've seen and the people they've buried. Yes, another generation of Palestinians, alienated from the world, to whom "justice" is only a word found in books, and "peace" was never meant for them. ■

The Question of a Nuclear Iran

By **STEPHEN TASH**

The Michigan Socialist

In 2003, President Bush accused Iraq of attempting to start a nuclear program by acquiring yellowcake from Niger; it was pretext to war. America was stricken with fear that Saddam Hussein would use weapons of mass destruction on the United States or its allies; which one they feared depended heavily on how much they knew of Iraq's missile range. Nearly five years later, at the prompting of Israel, he echoes the same fears with Iran. The difference is that this time Iran admits to its nuclear program.

For many, the same fears apply. Meanwhile, the stresses of war with Iraq make many others wary of diluting US forces any thinner than they already are. Saddam Hussein, despised by Osama bin Laden as the primary reason for US forces in Islamic holy land, was drummed up as an Al Qaeda mastermind and close confidant. Similarly, Iran's President Mohammed Ahmadinejad was reviled by New Yorkers when he attempted to lay a wreath upon Ground Zero with a vague sense that he too was behind this plot. Such feelings lack the understanding that Sunnis and Shiites hold great mutual animosity; and accordingly, a radical form of Sunni Islam (Al Qaeda) is not going to, and did not, work closely aside a theocratic and periodically fundamentalist Shia state (Iran). In fact, Iran denounced the attacks and its citizens were outraged at the attack, even if it was upon the "Great Satan." One way or another, however, few believe that another nuclear armed state would have a positive



effect upon world security.

The United States was once loved by Iranians. They were under brutal imperialist rule of Great Britain for decades and the United States seemed the model of freedom, democracy, and overthrowing colonial British rule. When President Truman was approached by British diplomats requesting help in overthrowing the popular, nationalist and democratically-elected government of Mohammed Mossadegh who dared nationalize the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, he turned a deaf ear. However, the same was not to be said of President Eisenhower shortly thereafter. In 1951, a CIA operative named Kermit Roosevelt Jr, grandson of Teddy Roosevelt, successfully overthrew Mossadegh's government in Operation AJAX. Mohammed Reza Shah, son to the previous Shah, was installed and led a brutal, extravagant, and pro-Western reign. Radical Islamic mullahs deposed of the Shah in the 1979 Iranian Revolution and formed a semi-democratic and theocratic Shia state, holding American diplomats hostage until the day Jimmy Carter left office. A once

beautiful relationship turned bitter.

Within the Middle East itself, several Sunni-dominant states are deeply concerned about the prospects of a nuclear-armed Iran. King Abdullah of Jordan has stated concern about Iran attempting to bring about a Shiite Crescent by supporting Shiite militants in Iraq. Saudi Arabia has stated that they will arm Sunni militants in Iraq if the US withdraws and is believed to likely attempt acquiring nuclear arms if they believe Iran is equipped. Israel, which is believed to already be nuclear armed, has already threatened military action against Iran despite the verification process; a military action which Sunni-dominant states have expressed an openness to.

On an international scale, the proliferation of nuclear weapons has raised concerns world-wide as India, Pakistan, North Korea, and several ex-soviet states have been added to the recognized nuclear powers. Such tensions have made it possible for the United States to invade Iraq despite a lack of international support and deter current nuclear powers from engaging in nuclear disarmament. If it weren't for the insubordination of a soviet

naval officer, the United States would have begun a nuclear war in 1962. Both the prevention of the rise of new nuclear-armed states and the disarmament of those states which already possess nuclear weapons are of vital importance to the security of the entire world.

Now Iran wishes to build a nuclear program, something the United States had promoted as late as 1973 as vital to the Iranian economy's well-being, while under the Shah. In fact, the Arab League has strongly promoted the idea of all its members forming nuclear programs for just that peaceful purpose. This is not a trend unique to the Middle East either; European Commission president, José Manuel Barroso, has been speaking up for European nations to enter a "third industrial revolution" towards a carbon-free economy via peaceful nuclear programs despite the fears of some European states. President Bush and Israel are immediately accusing Iran of being motivated with a desire to be nuclear armed, while Iran defends its program as peaceful purposes. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) turns out to be a vital tool in navigating through the storm of misinformation.

Signed July 1, 1968, the NPT was the child of a world where promising nuclear energy was desired by various non-nuclear states and various nuclear powers feared the proliferation, or spread, of nuclear weapons that would diminish their own power, much like today. Brokered by the UN and with the support of the United States, a signatory, the treaty outlines how nations may exercise their "inalienable right... to develop research, production, and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination" without endangering the hegemonic power of the preexisting nuclear states.

The NPT holds signatory

nations, in general, subject to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and requires specific agreements to be reached between the IAEA and the non-nuclear states. It printed off in a mere 5 pages. The agreement between Iran and the IAEA, cleverly named The Text of the Agreement between Iran and the Agency for the Application of Safeguards in Connection with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, prints off in 27 pages. Some highlights are the strict set of protocol as to how Iran shall account for every bit of radioactive uranium, plutonium, depleted

HEGEMONY— noun, plural -nies.

1. *leadership or predominant influence exercised by one nation over others, as in a confederation.*
 2. *leadership; predominance.*
 3. *(esp. among smaller nations) aggression or expansionism by large nations in an effort to achieve world domination.*
-

uranium (used in US bombs), and thorium within its borders, every concerned facility, the rights of both inspectors to be unimpeded and Iranian facilities to be uninterrupted, periodic checks with little to no notification to Iran, and reasonable suspicion rights of inspectors to seek out suspected facilities. Use in ceramics, yes it does happen, and minute quantities used in scientific measurement instruments must also be accounted for, contact information of the scientist included.

Close examination shows that there is little leeway for Iran, and only as reasonable for their ability to operate efficiently. The only possible loopholes are if the agency lacks the funding to properly operate in Iran or the amounts of nuclear material that are allowed to go unaccounted for.

For example, one kilogram of special fissionable material may go unaccounted for, it takes 4 kilograms to make a nuclear chain reaction in a fission bomb according to the Department of Energy, and that's a small bomb. Fusion bombs, which are much more advanced, require less fissionable material but are not likely to be any nations initial nuclear weapons. With very careful years of plotting, Iran might hoard enough fissionable material and successfully produce a single, small, nuclear weapon which would likely prompt a war when tested. The less refined uranium or plutonium is useless as fissionable material must be in the form of Uranium-235 (92 protons + 143 neutrons) or Plutonium-239 (94 protons + 145 neutrons).

Iran correctly points out that the state threatening to strike immediately, Israel, has refused to submit to the treaty or similar treaties for WMDs and is commonly believed to have a nuclear arsenal of its own, by its enemies and allies alike. They, however, have submitted to a treaty along with the United States and various other political states to be heavily inspected. Dr. Mohammed ElBaradei, IAEA Director General, has spoken to UN General Assembly on October 29th about Iran, noting that they have been able to verify that Iran has not diverted any declared nuclear material and that Iran has been very forthcoming with information and cooperative in working with the IAEA to discover the full scope of its nuclear operations.

There is no reason to assume that Iran is attempting to obtain nuclear weapons through its nuclear initiative. Protocols are already in place as recognized to be both prudent and proper by the international community for all states, not only those who are friendly to American interests.

Continued on page 20

Noted

By KRISTY WALKER-TREACY
The Michigan Socialist

I am not a cynic,
I am not bitter,
I am angry!

Why do we work so hard for nothing?
Where is my American Dream?
In my open and educated mind I have found a worm.

I am prejudiced.
I am a bigot.
I am a classist pig.
I hate rich people.

I hate people who don't have to worry about getting sick
or immunized.
I hate the people who don't have to worry about cavities
or teeth cleanings.
I hate people who don't have to worry about eye exams
and glasses.
I look around and I wonder,
How many others I know have stolen food, baby formula,
and medications
from local grocers because their children were hungry or
feverish?
I have on many occasions and it doesn't feel good.
But what feels worse is waiting in line at F.I.A for food
stamps and health care benefits
and being denied because of an annual amount of
\$689.00.
Or waiting in line at the W.I.C office for four hours
with two bored children
for milk, cheese, cereal and juice.
Or waiting in line for child care assistance while I am in
school
and my case worker telling me that they only help pay for
work,
not school.

Or waiting for your financial aid check...
and trying to receive aid from support services and
then being told to start breast-feeding more.
I try to explain that I have to be in class sometimes.
Or putting the paychecks from two jobs in the bank
realizing there is no way it is going to feed a family of four
for a week and pay the bills.

I am prejudiced.
I am a bigot.
I am a classist pig.
I hate the rich.

The difference between them and us grows daily,
the rich get richer
and the poor get poorer,
the right side of the tracks
is shrinking!

There is no middle class anymore.
Now, there are three classes:
One, the poor
Two, the working poor
Three, the rich.

I want people to know what is going on.
Upon occasion I breech these topics.
Everyone knows what I am talking about,
Everyone I know is there.
And those that aren't there,
tell you; if you don't like it change it.
And to this I say

I hate! I hate! I hate!

Because what they don't get is that when you are poor
Every minute of your day is accounted for
Between school, children, work, my husband's work,
dinner,
Housework, laundry, bath time and bed time
exhaustion hits hard at 9 PM and still homework to do...

Where do I find time to change the world?
Where do I find time to change the world?
I am prejudiced.

I am a bigot.
I am a classist pig.
I hate the rich.

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I Do Not Exist. Neither Do You.

By COURTNEY CAMPBELL
The Michigan Socialist

i do not exist. neither do you.
i know this for a fact because i flip only
at commercials and all of the major newspapers
land directly in my inbox at precisely 5 a.m. every
morning. no, i do not miss a thing.
i don't miss anything.

for example, i know for a fact that
martín almada was not arrested for intellectual terrorism.
this did not happen in 1974 nor in any other year.

martín almada's wife was not killed because
her husband "incited the people to think critically."
how could she? she didn't exist.
martín almada doesn't exist either.

and he definitely did not find the terror
archives of operation condor in 1992. after all,
there was no operation condor. (but, boy! a lot did
happen in 1992! what a busy year that was!)

i know this for a fact because i flip only
at commercials and all of the major newspapers
land directly in my inbox at precisely 5 a.m. every
morning.

martín almada does not exist. so obviously,
he did not speak in buenos aires about paraguay's
new present to washington.

this did not happen last month nor any other
month. not in january or march or december.
not in august or october or february. not in
november nor april nor september. and absolutely
not in may july or june. june. no not, june.

i know this for a fact, because especially in
june i only flipped during commercials.

i also know for a fact that paraguay does
not have a patriot act. no, paraguay does
not have a patriot act. of course, even if it did,
it would not be called the patriot act. it would
be called la ley terrorista or some such thing.

but there is no ley terrorista in paraguay.
all the same, there probably should be.

because what i know, what i know for a fact
is that there are terrorists everywhere. i know
this because i flip only at commercials and all of
the major online newspapers land directly in my
inbox at precisely 5 a.m. every morning.

terrorists here, terrorists there. terrorists, terrorists
everywhere. even in my inbox.
martín almada knows about terrorism.
but martín almada does not exist.
if he did, he'd be from paraguay, a country
that does not have a patriot act in any language
because paraguay also does not exist.

i know this for a fact because it was not on the news.
neither was i. neither were you.
and i only flip at commercials.

Fire

By COURTNEY CAMPBELL
The Michigan Socialist

as if to convince myself that
i am not on fire
that each step is not a flicker of flame but
loyalty to the science of recipes
i pay my taxes
and go to work
i respect deadlines
water the plants
eat vegetables
call my family
on birthdays and thanksgiving
pay for my internet and electricity

and i don't even complain
about the heat

i don't even complain
that we are not here
that there is not an ash of us anywhere
that there is no smoke coming from the 3rd floor window

i take the same path everyday
trust the same shaken hands
make the same arguments
give up in budgeted increment

what is expected as if to convince myself
that i am not on fire

but i am on fire
and so are you

Unconditional

(subject: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi)

By **STEPHEN TASH**
The Michigan Socialist

Tears stream down her cheek,
the Tigris and Euphrates flood her face.
The anguish burns her soul
as her heart drowns in emotion.
Her son has died,
his body recovered,
but she cannot see it.
The cops, nay vigilantes
hunted him down.
He was wanted.
This man had his cause
to protect his neighbors.
So many suffered,
so many were slaughtered.
The soldiers blinded by grief for their fallen
comrade
slaughtered a village.
Blindly, he too slaughtered
fooled by grief.
She still sees her innocent child
scarred by his first memories
of oppression.
She still loves her child,
she is proud.
Across the ocean they celebrate
while she mourns.
They do not see
his beauty,
his love.
Even those who have done horrors
have that angel inside;
that innocent spark of childhood innocence.
She is blind to his errs
and they are blind to his virtues.
They do not think of her tears
or the tears of so many mothers
for they are tears of the enemy.

Review: Living for Change

by Grace Lee Boggs

The Autobiography of One of Detroit's Most Influential Activists

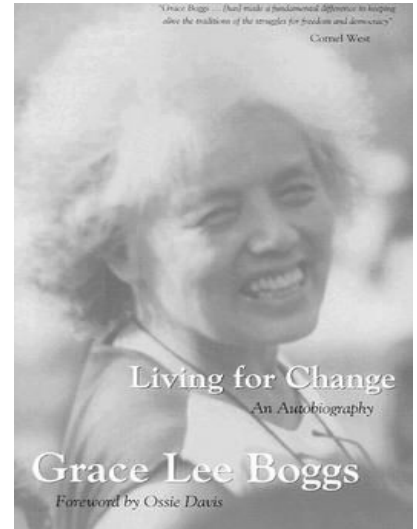
By **MATT ERARD**
The Michigan Socialist

In her recent auto-biography, legendary Detroit activist Grace Lee Boggs, now age 92, tells the story of many of the great social movements of the mid-to-late the 20th Century as they, each time, intertwine with her own life as an organizer. From her remarkable tale of her early life as the daughter of Chinese immigrants in North East during the early 20th Century to the inner dynamics of the labor, socialist, and black power movements, Boggs presents a profound analysis of the humanistic aspects of self-emancipation as well as lifetime lessons that are indispensable to modern social movement activists.

It is therefore not without a degree of tragedy that Boggs' final conclusions revert to primitive, archaic conceptions that many of the movements she helped to lead struggled so hard to transcend. Louis Tsen, who Boggs quotes in her introduction, wryly remarked in a letter that "it is right for [Boggs] to call herself a revolutionist because she has always revolved and never ceased to revolve." Unfortunately Boggs' final revolution in her personal thinking seems to have brought her back almost full circle to where she and many other young activists began. Despite the lessons that Boggs' biography can convey to activists today, it is also a study of how the frequent disappointments and slow pace of change experienced by any social revolutionary can sometimes lead to a pessimistic decline in political consciousness as much as they can contribute to its growth and vitality.

In her later years Boggs' focus was transformed from a systemic analysis of the class struggle toward an almost exclusive focus on interpersonal development and community self-reliance. While the subjects of this latter focus are by no means reactionary, the result of this transformation for Boggs has amounted to advocacy of class collaboration toward common political goals, and the backwards notion that individual development not only can, but must precede social and political development. In a recent lecture at the University of Michigan, Boggs dismissed the centrality of the class struggle in favor of "win-win situations," ostensibly meaning situations beneficial to both workers and capitalists. The final chapters of Boggs' biography are filled with similar arguments. Praising Lyman Paine's recycled conception of "dialectical humanism," Boggs writes,

"we could not just reject Marx's concept of revolution without replacing it with an equally powerful new philosophy as well as an



equally powerful but fundamentally different concept and scenario of revolution...If those victimized by capitalist exploitation are not inherently revolutionary, if morality and choice play a critical role in making a revolution, if a revolution represents a leap to a new stage of being a more human human being, then the role of revolutionists is profoundly different from that which radicals have played. Recognizing the damage that a highly developed capitalist system...has done to the humanity of all of us, victims [workers] as well as villains [capitalists], revolutionists have a responsibility to create strategies to transform ourselves as well as the victims of oppression into human beings who are more advanced in the qualities that distinguish human beings..."

Later Boggs embraces the idea that "workers are urged to go beyond seeing themselves only as workers demanding more for themselves and to accept responsibility as citizens and human beings..." While Boggs' statement may sound intuitively progressive, it is painfully the opposite when put in the context of both Boggs' argument and existing social realities. Rather than arguing that workers should strive to reclaim the dignity and individuality that capitalism robs from their lives, Boggs, in essence, argues that workers should less identify as a class (to the extremely limited extent that American workers consciously do in the current period) and instead embrace a more individualistic analysis than they already do.

Such a notion could not be more antithetical to the socialist viewpoint she once helped to champion in the American radical movement. Not only are workers encouraged to neglect the importance of a class consciousness but, are also encouraged to prioritize their role as citizens in their respective capitalist

states. While Boggs portrays this view as a "new way of thinking," it is in reality the basis of the earliest and least developed currents of socialist thought: the utopian socialism characterized by figures such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Robert Owen, which Marx struggled for decades to move beyond. While Boggs' recognizes the intensified harm that transnational capitalism has unleashed upon the world, she has apparently forsaken the fact that it is social class which forms the basis of the system.

Capitalism, whatever characteristics may be attributed to it, is in reality nothing more than the inherently exploitative class domination of the capitalist class. For the working majority to politically collaborate with a class fundamentally based on its exploitation is no more possible than slaves finding common interests with slave masters. While clearly chattel slavery was far more brutal to its producing class than the wage slavery that characterizes capitalism, the irreconcilability of interests between the classes is the same in both systems of class society. Each time such an effort of class collaboration has been attempted in history, it has, in the final analysis, only represented the interests of the ruling class since its interests are diametrically opposed to those of the working class – the very existence of the former is entirely based upon the exploitation of the latter. Boggs rejects the notion that "beyond the material, everything else is superstructure," but she fails to question whose superstructure it is. This superstructure is not a random melting pot of all social classes; it is the superstructure of the ruling class and any attempt at class collaboration keeps the ruling class' superstructure intact.

Boggs gives a number of indications of the experiences in her life that may have influenced her to

take this backward turn. One likely factor is that, through her early academic study of philosophy, she was unusually introduced to Marxian influence Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel before Marx. Boggs' writes at length about the early influence on her thinking from Hegel, who, like Marx, emphasized human development through the conflict of intrinsic opposites, but relegated his analysis to the ideas of individuals rather than social and material realities. At least in her subconscious mind, Hegel's idealism may have remained more attractive to her than Marx's materialism.

Another likely factor was much greater focus on the individual liberation of workers than on transforming property relations; the reason that she was so fascinated with Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts which dealt with workers' alienation. While Boggs, throughout the book, stresses the importance of thinking dialectically, however, she fails to conceptualize the dialectical relationship between these two central goals of Marxism and therefore ultimately seeks to prioritize the individual liberation of workers while neglecting the importance of transforming property relations.

Finally one it appears that Boggs, like so many other revolutionaries simply grew tired. The many failures and limitations she encountered in revolutionary and social movements may have caused her to more or less give up on them and focus on micro-level reformist and interpersonal struggles. While she portrays this transformation as based upon "moving from rebellion to revolution", it is, in fact, clearly the opposite.

In the final chapters of the book, Boggs emphasizes community self-reliance through volunteerism as the best means to turn the City of Detroit's economic decline. This has

been most exemplified with her founding of Detroit Summer, a community service organization seeking to improve conditions in the city through volunteer work, especially by young people. While projects like Detroit Summer have provided a progressive, and even potentially radicalizing, exercise in grassroots community activism, neither it nor Boggs' vague new thesis which underlies it can seriously revitalize Detroit. Detroit Summer's efforts to expropriate vacant lots and plant gardens in their place can provide great benefits and can help foster solidarity among city residents, but only the expropriation of the city's economic institutions, closed and operating, can truly lead to the city's revitalization and self-sustainability in the interests of the working and oppressed people who compose the great majority of its population.

Detroit may have become increasingly de-industrialized in the current period while other regions and nations are becoming increasingly industrialized, but the current level of industrialization and job growth in individual municipalities represents only the temporary whims of internationally mobile capital as it searches for ever more exploitable labor. The basic problems facing Detroit residents are not fundamentally different from the problems facing workers throughout the world. They are international problems requiring international solutions and the only social force that has the potential to provide these solutions is an internationally unified working class. Cooperative work in the community should certainly be encouraged as a means of building solidarity, but the only long term solution is the international victory of working people in the class struggle. This is an analysis that Boggs' unfortunately seems to have pessimistically forsaken. ■

Presidential

Continued from page 3

twice as good as a white man. Stewart was one of two black employees in an organization of two-hundred. He has even been accused of criminal activity and experienced the racial bias of the California justice system, run up on numerous false charges only to be acquitted of all charges.

Alexander had been a political talk show host on KTYM Radio in Inglewood, CA for many



Stewart Alexander speaking to Delegates at the National Convention.

years, discussing local issues to the Los Angeles and Southern California areas, promoting the reinvestment of the funds generated in downtown Los Angeles into the poorer areas of the city. This led to his run in 1989 for Mayor of Los Angeles, focusing on responsible development and fighting urban decay at its roots with social programs. In 2006 he ran for Lieutenant Governor of California under the Peace and Freedom Party, drawing in 43,319 votes.

Despite the fact that 2008 is unlikely to be our year (that is unless Americans decide to speak out against the inequities inherent in a corporate-driven "free" market economy right away), the 2008 ticket is still singularly exciting. In an election where efficient health care for all is driving on the minds of the voters, it is the Socialist Party that is willing to call out for socialized medicine on par

with our European neighbors and put out a candidate with more healthcare experience, specifically in its administration, than either of the two capitalist parties. While the two capitalist parties ignore the plights of the inner city: the Republicans focusing on recruiting the rich and the socially conservative; the Democrats the middle class; the Socialist Party has a candidate who has experienced those plights firsthand. We continue our long tradition of being ahead of the pack: before our time with women's suffrage, civil rights based on ethnicity and sexual preference, social security, and opposing the War in Iraq.

The 2008 presidential ticket stands to make great strides towards building the Socialist Party into a recognizable force in future elections, creating an awareness amongst the United States working class of their common interests. The Democrats and Republicans are short on time before the American public realizes that they are both pushing a failing proposition: a corrupted and outdated economic system. ■

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Autoworkers

Continued from page 4

their reckless mismanagement of the company and its finances is just one more reason to remove these parasites and let the workers manage production for themselves!

Accepting the framework of the modern capitalist economy severely limits the ability of trade unions to make substantial gains of any kind. The UAW's leadership has openly recognized this fact, agreeing to many concessions in recent years in the vain hope of bolstering the competitiveness of GM as well as Ford and Chrysler. The UAW's impressive \$900 million strike fund has done nothing to encourage militant collective action. While

corporate mismanagement and US government policy each have a share of the blame, as socialists we recognize that capitalism places an inevitable downward pressure on workers, beyond the control of any particular institution. Only a movement that abolishes both markets and the private ownership of production can ensure full economic security for workers.

Because of the central role of the automotive industry in the US, GM employees have the potential to

pave a new way forward for the US working class. We must unite behind this strike to take initiative away from the bosses and reinvigorate the union movement with the basic principles and demands of socialism. The Socialist Party's Labor Commission will coordinate Party solidarity and serve as a clearinghouse for information and analysis about the strike. We also suggest supporters contact your nearest Socialist Party local for details on particular actions in your area. ■

“[T]he clamour and sophistry of merchants and manufacturers easily persuade them that the private interest of a part, and of a subordinate part of the society, is the general interest of the whole.” – Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*

Exploitation

Continued from page 5

According to the 2004 U.S. Census, the average per capita income of U.S. individuals is \$33,050 per year – over thirty thousand dollars less than the average amount of wealth workers produce per year according to the ILO report.

What the report inadvertently demonstrates at the macro level is the most characteristic feature of the capitalist system. While wages and salaries deceptively correspond with the amount of labor time provided, they actually represent only a portion of the value that workers create. Under capitalism, a worker's time at the workplace is divided between the time necessary to create the value that is retained by the worker in the form of a wage or salary and the time necessary to create a private profit for the corporations and capitalists who employ us. Taking both the ILO and Census data into account reveals that U.S. workers are, on average, robbed by their employers of more than half

the monetary value that their labor creates.

The escalating exploitation of the U.S. workforce has hit workers hardest in Michigan as industries created by Michigan workers continue to slash wages and relocate in a race to the bottom to states with cheaper and less organized labor. With over 336,000 jobs lost since 2001 and one in 100 Michigan homes now facing foreclosure actions, Michigan, like post-Katrina New Orleans is quickly becoming a presage to the realities of a rotten and degenerating system. On September 14th, Michigan-based auto parts supplier Delphi, a central actor in the most recent attacks on Michigan workers' living standards, asked a bankruptcy court to allow it to pay \$37.6 million dollars in bonuses to its top executives for the second half of 2007 in order to “stay competitive.” Delphi's urgent need for executive bonuses comes at the same time that it insists its workers' wages must now be cut in half for the same reason. During the same weekend as Delphi's petition to the bankruptcy court for executive

bonuses, the Democratic Party controlled Michigan House of Representatives refused to consider the implementation of a graduated income tax as State Representatives instead demanded an increase in the state sales tax to increasingly place the tax burden on low income families. The refusal of Michigan Representatives to balance the state's budget on anything but the backs of the state's working poor has coincided only with demands for increases by Democrats and Republicans alike to the billions of dollars of tax-payer funded corporate welfare handed out to corporations every year through institutions like the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

The International Labor Organization is by no means a true friend of labor. Founded in 1919 as a placatory anticommunist outfit to allow business and labor to “cooperate” and discourage radicalism and strikes, the ILO has notoriously been used as instrument by corporations and governments alike to sanction labor abuses.

In a recent local example, the University of Michigan was persuaded to end its boycott of Coca-Cola, due to the systematic killing of union organizers, after the Coca-Cola Corporation agreed to an investigation-free inspection by an ILO body that includes a Coca-Cola executive. Even the ILO's latest KILM report primarily focuses its findings on whether workers are being "underutilized" rather than on their rights and living standards -which in the ILO's view amounts to little more than whether they're formally enslaved.

Despite the ILO's lack of benevolent intentions, however, the latest KILM report provides figures that can only lead to a systemic analysis among those who work for a living. In the current period, Michigan workers in particular should read it as a call to action. ■

Columbus

Continued from page 5

On his second voyage, to the Caribbean, Columbus enslaved the natives to mine for gold he was stealing, where many of them died. In Haiti, native kids as young as 14 were forced to return from gold mines with a certain "quota" of gold hanging from their necks. If they returned with an undesirable amount, he ordered their hands to be chopped off. Alas, when it was time to bid farewell, his ship would only hold 560 slaves, so he packed them in like sardines and sailed them pack to Spain, although only 360 survived the hellish voyage.

Accounts of Columbus' death voyages, like the aforementioned, are virtually endless. The National Council of Churches summed up Columbus' existence best by issuing this statement, among other similar statements, in 1990: "For the indigenous people of the Caribbean islands, Christopher Columbus' invasion marked the beginning of

slavery and their eventual genocide."

Columbus: a hero? Yes, for slavery, colonization, genocide, racism, religious fanaticism, and human and environmental exploitation. Yet we do not only condone Christopher Columbus in the United States of America, we honor his life by celebrating and observing a holiday in his name. On second thought, though, slavery and genocide are as American as apple pie. ■

Fascism

Continued from page 5

The true cause of any rise in crime in Kalamazoo is the increase in poverty and social insecurity endemic to a degenerating system whose economy is controlled by a ruling class and its corporations with no loyalty to the communities of working people that created its wealth. It is caused by a system which is not run on community values or any kind of democratic accountability, but rather on greed and private profit. The fascists portray themselves as protectors of law and order, but their law and order is not the law and order of freedom, it is not the law and order of democracy, it is the law and order of the existing parasitic ruling class.

Fascist groups must be confronted wherever and whenever they attempt to mobilize in order to crush their attempts to build a movement that can be utilized by the American ruling class. Whenever a fascist movement arises, it comes as the direct result of a failure of working people to stand up and defeat it. At the same time the long-term means to prevent the formation of such movements requires a much greater mobilization on the part of the working people to confront the economic, political, and social conditions that fascist groups feed from. The defeat of poverty, violent crime, exploitation, discrimination, and imperialist war will require a

multi-racial mass movement of the working majority to overthrow the fascists' prospective puppeteers in the ruling capitalist class and bring forth a socialist transformation. ■

Flashlight

Continued from page 5

going through life without ever having seen a doctor from conception to death, unless it was a volunteer from Cuba living in a nearby town.

The community came together and decided that what they wanted me to work on with them as a Peace Corps volunteer was (in my own words) little ways to beat the system. They wanted to find a way to produce more vegetables for family consumption, to incorporate high protein trees as forage in the cows' diets and to fight the frost and thereby increase milk production when the prices were at their highest.

For the purposes of this article, let's focus on the latter – increasing milk production to take advantage of high prices. We worked with another organization in the Chaco funded through the European Union to find frost resistant forage (black oats) and even, through the hard work of one engineer in particular, installed a forage rotation system with electric fencing powered by car battery. Milk production not only increased, it was higher than it had ever been – even in the summer.

That's it! We beat the system, right?

Unfortunately, no. Just as milk production never went down that year, milk prices never went up. The word that trickled down to this community, the last on the rungs of the vast shiny spider web, was that this year no changes would be made in prices to Latino farmers due to overall low milk quality. Was it an excuse? Was it the true reason? Was it simply supply and demand? Does it matter?

Not really. Let me explain a few other things that don't matter before we wrap this flashlight up and take it out of the micro.

There are quite a few disadvantages to having blonde hair and blue eyes in the Chaco. First, your skin and scalp are much more susceptible to solar rays, burns, skin cancer and premature aging, and then, there are all of those people coming up to you all the time asking if you speak German. However, that last point can turn into a great advantage as well, if you are seeking information.

As I mentioned, the milk was eventually distributed through a Mennonite community. "Mennonite", in this case, is worthy of a loose interpretation – these were people (or their descendants) that had come to the Chaco mostly from Germany, Russia and Canada as refugees in the World War II period, some with resources, others not, but all with a long history of subsisting, by choice, only on what comes from the earth. The culture changed over time, such that, while there are traditional folk who maintain the old ways, walking into a Mennonite community in the Chaco now is like walking into a small town or a small city in the Midwestern United States – vehicles whiz by, electricity hums from wires, peanut butter is sold, etc.

I usually traveled on a hot, dirty bus with Latinos and Indigenous people from the Chaco to the capital city of Asuncion, but on one occasion, I traveled from a Mennonite community with a large number of Canadian ancestors. Most Mennonite communities are linguistically German, but in this particular community, English is commonly spoken. On the comfortable air-conditioned bus, I reclined my cushioned seat and couldn't help but hear the ladies - who by appearance could have been my own relatives - discussing the price they were paid

for the milk they sold. One lady stated "We get 720 Guaraníes per liter," while the other replied "Ah! We only get 700!"

I couldn't resist. I turned around and said "Really? We only get 407!" Their jaws dropped. "My lord, how can you get paid so little?" one asked. "Sister, where do you live?" another inquired. "Fortín Gondra," I replied. "Isn't that a Latino community?" Their expressions showed that they then understood the disparity in price. Now, once again, let's not get all excited – blaming these ladies in their simple dresses and quiet manners for the poverty in Fortín Gondra is akin to blaming my grandmother who sits in her spacious house all day watching soap operas and putting jig-saw puzzles together for the increase in violence between the police and the favelas in Rio de Janeiro. We all have our place in the spider web – the spiders and the flies.

And speaking of spider webs, I think it's time to make the connection. What we can learn from this case and transfer into the macro is the following:

1. The economic system of Fortín Gondra came into existence after the prevailing economic system around it had already been formed, much like many of the "developing" or "third world" or "Southern" countries who were released from colonization at later dates than, say, the United States, into a pre-existing economic structure upon which they became immediately dependent (for more information on this point, I suggest Eduardo Galeano's "The Open Veins of Latin America"). Pulling oneself up by the boot straps is difficult enough for the individual within a system, and almost impossible for a community dependent on the system.

2. As such, any attempts to

"beat the system" are easily defeated by one simple administrative decision made by those who hold the power within the system. This could be a decision to not raise milk prices, to increase or decrease taxes, subsidies or trade tariffs or to demand higher quality goods.

3. There are a lot of things that don't matter. The first is whether or not these changes are made intentionally to keep the impoverished poor (or poorer). The second is whether the people who take part in the upper echelons of the system are good or bad people. The structure that the trade relations are made within are at fault. It's a bad structure and we're all in it and most of us know it. Just as those sweet ladies on the bus dropped their jaws upon hearing the prices that were paid in the community I lived in, if a school teacher from Brazil were to walk into a school in Michigan and state her/his salary, without mentioning first where s/he worked, jaws would drop.

4. Due to this, we have no need for conspiracy theories to give our arguments foundation – it doesn't matter if decisions come from a group of 12 men ruling the world behind secret doors with pyramids and eyeballs painted on them or if they are just logically founded decisions leading to an economic accident, the results are the same. Along the same grain, being angry at grandma and nice little Mennonite ladies is a waste of energy. If we are angry, we might as well direct that anger to the structure, to the system that we take part in, willingly or not. And finally, you can't beat the system from the inside. The only way at it, is to tear the spider web down carefully without getting trapped and hope that we, a group of diligent people, can make a better one, quickly. ■

Iran

Continued from page 5

There is no reason to assume that Iran is attempting to obtain nuclear weapons through its nuclear initiative. Protocols are already in place as recognized to be both prudent and proper by the international community for all states, not only those who are friendly to American interests. Other Middle Eastern states such as Egypt have reinstated their previously abandoned nuclear programs as well. Though there is a valid concern for a nuclear-armed Iran, just as there would be valid concern for the addition, rather than subtraction, of any nuclear-armed states, these protocols are capable of ensuring a peaceful Iranian nuclear program. The motivations of the current detractors: Israel and the United States are much more dubious to the informed.

Israel is likely to feel it has more to be concerned with than a nuclear-armed Iran, a peaceful nuclear program in Iran could mean an economically prosperous Iran as well. The Shiite-Sunni conflict in the Middle East has meant funding of various sectarian religious militias throughout the Middle East, including the Shiite militia Hezbollah, with which Israel has had recent conflict with. The immediate concern of

Israeli leadership is that Iran may increase funding to its immediate enemies. However, police states such as China have been finding, as well as the historical results of economic sanctions, that economic prosperity strengthens the average citizen and poverty weakens them. The theocratic nature of Iran is challenged more and more by its citizens and an economically viable Iran will only empower them to create a lasting secular democracy the only workable way, the old fashioned way, from the inside, from the grass roots. If this indeed catches on among the various Sunni and Shiite states, the sectarian warfare so precisely characterized by Iraq may cease to be in the relatively near future.

The United States is not interested in oil this time. Iraq had the second most plentiful oil reserve and the cheapest to pump; Iran doesn't have nearly as productive an oil industry these days. Iran does, however, possess the world's greatest reserves of natural gas, which the United States quickly took advantage of in Afghanistan in the economically feasible form to transport, liquefied natural gas (LNG). LNG is seen as the likely next step in the energy economy, rather than hydrogen fuel or ethanol. We already know that the Bush Administration was already picking fights with Iran for a long while and would have likely invaded

already by now if it weren't for the failure to maintain order in Iraq.

To threaten a war with Iran over its attempt to develop an economically stable energy source in an exceptionally cooperative manner through an international negotiation process that the United States has agreed to is a clear violation of international law. Of course, the Bush Administration does not care much for international law and cooperation as seen in its failure to adhere to the Geneva Convention, its aversion to working with the Russians on nuclear limitation, and its refusal to sign onto other international agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol. But now is the time for the US to adhere to international law and not repeat the mistake of Iraq. Every step taken by the Bush Administration to ignore international law makes it one step harder to restore the credibility of the US and convince the world to participate in future agreements.

Diplomatic missions must be begun to work with the IAEA and Iran to fully explore Iran with inspectors whom cannot reveal sensitive information not pertinent to a nuclear program. One great way to do this and ensure that the inspectors succeed is to offer to fund both the IAEA and Iran in performing these investigations and inspections. Military Action should not be even considered over this issue. ■

did you know?

● Though the media and Bush Administration have been speaking on and on about Burma, there is no such country. Burma changed its name to Myanmar in 1989. Similarly, there is no longer an Indochina, East Pakistan, Soviet Union, or Zaire.

● Albert Einstein, the much acclaimed Jewish scientist and founder of general relativity, was a professed and vocal socialist who even criticized the actions of a Zionist group led by

Menachem Begin, the Freedom Party, as being "fascists" promoting "ultranationalism ... and racial superiority." In 2005, Begin polled as the leader which Israelis missed the most.

● In the early days of the American republic, corporations were subservient entities which were not often trusted. If they did not specifically work for the benefit of society, their charters would be revoked and the

corporation disbanded. In the 1880's, the Supreme Court ruled that the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution protected the rights of corporations, who for the first time were recognized as "persons" under the law. This brings into question the constitutionality of one corporate "person" being allowed to own another corporate "person" in the wake of the 13th amendment's ban on slavery.