



# The MICHIGAN socialist

Workers of the World, Unite!

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Voice of the Socialist Party of Michigan

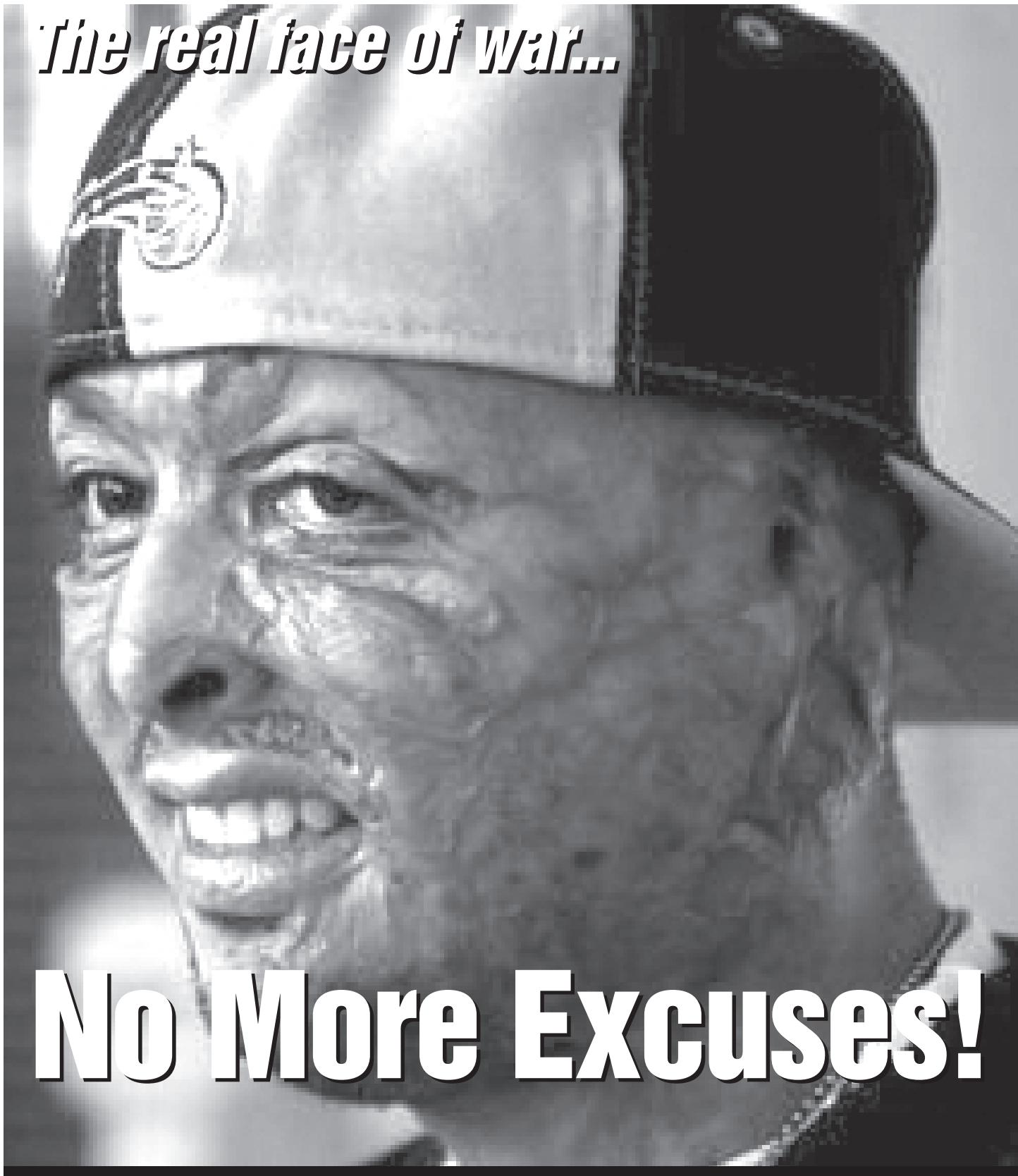
## Feature

269 words:  
What were they?  
What did they mean?  
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50¢ (\$1 Solidarity)

## *The real face of War...*



# No More Excuses!

# The MICHIGAN socialist

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The Michigan Socialist is the voice of the Socialist Party of Michigan (SPMI), affiliate of the Socialist Party USA. Party address: 909 Walwood Ct., No. 2, Kalamazoo, MI 49007; e-mail: michigansocialist@ameritech.net; WWW: www.michigansocialist.net/news.

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## Socialist Party USA: Outline of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY strives to establish a radical democracy that places people's 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 Socialist Party fights for progressive changes compatible with a socialist future. We support union and electoral actions — independent of the capitalist-controlled two-party system — to present socialist alternatives. We strive for democratic 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.



## party notes SPUSA National Convention

THE SOCIALIST PARTY USA held its 2003 National Convention on October 17-19.

Delegates from across the country met for three days at the Omni Ambassador hotel in Chicago, Ill.

The main issue on the agenda was the 2004 election. Altogether, six candidates ran for the nomination throughout the pre-Convention period, with two of them dropping out before the balloting.

In the end, former Democratic State Senator Walt Brown of Oregon was narrowly chosen to be the national Party's candidate for president, after he won the support of those who initially opposed running a candidate at all.

Mary-Alice Herbert of Vermont, a member of the Liberty Union Party (a Vermont party that has close relations with the SP), was elected as the vice-presidential candidate.

A handful of the resolutions submitted to the Convention were considered; most proposals sent to the Convention never made it past the commissions chosen on the first day.

The Socialist Party of Michigan sent a full, gender-balanced delegation to the National Convention. The delegation

included Lisa Weltman, one of the candidates for the Socialist nomination for president.

In the months prior to the Convention, the SPMI approved a series of amendments to the platform and constitution of the Party, as well as a number of resolutions aimed at moving the SP nationally in a more activist direction.

Only the SPMI's resolution on the United Left Front was adopted.

Debate at the Convention was heated and sometimes quite sharp. Because of comments and statements made by some delegates attending, working class members of the Party announced the formation of the Workers Unity Caucus.

The incoming National Committee of the SP was charged by the Convention to compile the amendments to the platform submitted into a final document to be voted on by the Party membership in a national referendum.

The SPMI's proposed platform amendments, as well as our other submissions to the National Convention, are available publicly at the SPMI's website — [www.michigansocialist.net](http://www.michigansocialist.net) — or can be requested by writing to us.

Martin Schreader

**lead article**

# No more excuses

**By BEN BURGIS**

The Michigan Socialist

ONE-BY-ONE, the lies that justified the invasion and occupation of Iraq have come crumbling down.

No “weapons of mass destruction.” No Iraq/al-Qaeda link. No throngs of grateful Iraqis throwing flowers at the conquering American troops. No freedom and no democracy.

Nothing, zip, nada.

In his State of the Union address, Bush claimed that Iraq had tried to buy uranium “from Africa.” (Does he really believe that the earth’s second largest continent is a single nation?)

Now, it is a matter of public record that the official investigation into that particular rumor had already been done and come back with a resounding negative *before* the State of the Union speech.

The best that the regime’s hard-core apologists could come up with was to claim that it wasn’t a very important lie because it was such a small part of the speech, “just 16 words.”

Throughout the lead-up to the war, we were assured that Iraq was a clear threat to the safety of Americans because it possessed “weapons of mass destruction.” Since that point, the facts on the ground have left Bush and his loyal hacks with an interesting problem.

Why on earth did the Iraqis build WMDs, continue to produce them after the first Gulf War, go to the absurd efforts that Bush and Powell claim that they went to in order to hide them from the UN inspectors for 12 years, and then *not actually use them* when the U.S. invaded?

Please explain in 16 words or less.

Of course, chemical weapons have been found in Iraq. In fact, they were used during the fighting between Iraqi and American troops.

Shortly after the invasion was over, U.S. military spokesmen admitted to pestering reporters that the U.S. had used Mark 77 Firebombs in Iraq, which are basically napalm.



Spc. Jose Martinez received third-degree burns on his face, head, arms and legs after being trapped for 20 minutes in a burning ammunition truck in Iraq. His disfigurement stands as a monument to those trapped in the bloody occupation of Iraq ... on both sides.

The military doesn’t use napalm itself any more, because all of the bad publicity caused by television images of burning Vietnamese villages and screaming little girls.

Mark 77 Firebombs use a different chemical compound (benzene instead of kerosene as the starter fluid), but the effect is identical. Given the importance of the chemical warfare issue in the build-up to the invasion, it’s amazing that Rumsfeld and Cheney haven’t been shouting the news from the rooftops.

OF COURSE, anything goes in a “war on terror,” because this is a “War against Absolute Evil.” Period.

Right-wing talk radio hosts still rail at any listener who dares to criticize the sordid little adventure in Iraq by reminding them that “something called 9/11 happened. We we’re attacked!”

The problem is that not the slightest shred of evidence was ever presented to any one that Saddam Hussein (a secular autocrat with a history of heavy-handed suppression of Islamic fundamentalism) and Osama bin Laden (an Islamic “Holy War-

rior” who has never made a secret of his desire to overthrow Hussein in favor of a Taliban-type regime) were anything but the deadly enemies that every one who knew anything about the region always took them to be.

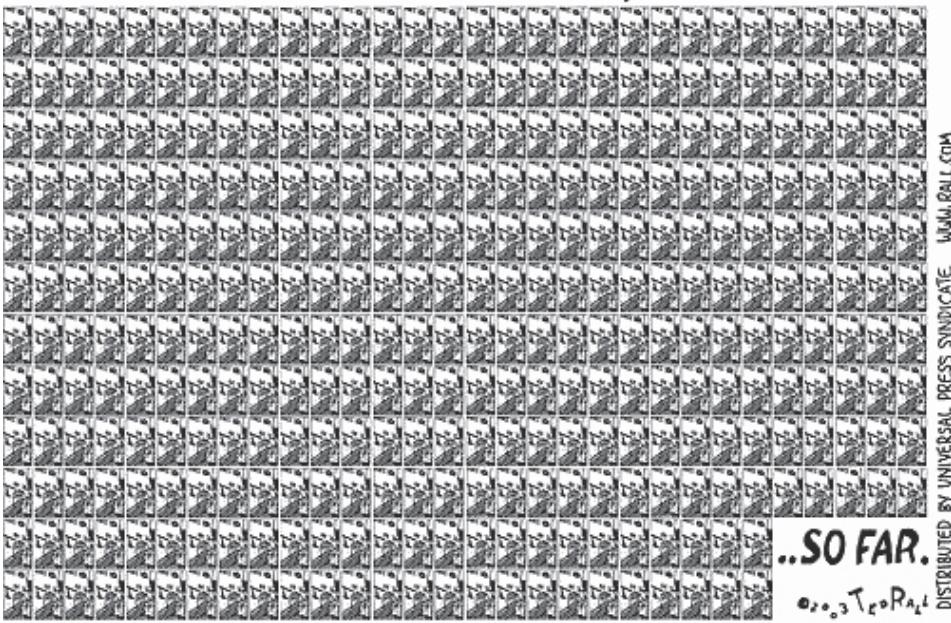
At this point even the Liar-in-Chief has been forced to admit that Iraq had nothing, absolutely nothing, to do with the September 11 outrages. Still, his more shameless apologists have kept up the pretense that “Iraq is a front in the war on terror” by simply altering the meaning of words.

Any and all armed resistance to the empire is now “terrorism,” and so naturally Iraqis involved in guerilla warfare against the invading and occupying army are “terrorists.”

By this definition, the partisans that fought the Nazis in World War II are terrorists; the National Liberation Front (“Viet Cong”) that defeated the United States in Vietnam was a terrorist organization; etc.

Our Glorious Leader can solemnly say that he will never give in to terrorism, and the desire to spill more American and Iraqi blood to stop Iraq’s oil reserves from falling

# SINCE THE PENTAGON HAS BANNED PHOTOS OF FLAG-DRAPE COFFINS, HERE'S WHAT THE WAR IN IRAQ LOOKS LIKE...



..SO FAR.

••••• T e R a l l  
11-6-03-C

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into the hands of Iraqis takes on the contours of a noble crusade.

Of course, the slightly more sophisticated school of apologists for the rape of Iraq never attached much importance to the phantom al-Qaeda link or to the WMD issue.

New York Times columnist Thomas L. Friedman, perhaps that newspaper's loudest supporter of the war during the buildup, advises the administration in his columns (with no apparent sense of shame) to stop talking so much about the "fake reasons for going to war" and do more to build confidence in the "real" reasons.

The "real" reason, of course, was to free the Iraqi people from the despotic rule of Saddam Hussein and build a model democracy.

Of course, this is nonsense. After the first Gulf War, there was a popular uprising against Hussein. Not only did the U.S. government not support it, it aided and abetted the Ba'athist dictatorship's counter-insurgency efforts, allowing helicopter gunships into the no-fly zones to suppress it.

Apparently, the war-planners decided that a strong-man who sometimes disobeyed American orders was a lesser evil to the "instability" and lost profits that could come from a democratic uprising.

WASHINGTON HAS hardly warmed to the value of freedom and democracy in third world nations whose natural resourc-

es and strategic value it covets since then, and everything that has happened in Iraq since March has confirmed that.

Local elections have been cancelled around the country because the wrong people might win. American troops have frequently fired into demonstrations against the occupation.

A Governing Council has been hand picked by the colonial administrators, and no one seriously believes that it has the slightest popular legitimacy or that it would survive a day without American protection.

Independent journalists have been harassed or even shot.

Die-hard supporters of the occupation may pretend that these are just birthing pains of democracy. We are told that some day, when the Iraqis are ready, they will be allowed to elect their own leaders and determine their own destiny. This is utter nonsense.

Brent Scowcroft let the cat out of the bag on this question in the New York Times around the time that the invasion was launched.

Far from being a democratic socialist or militant antiwar protestor, Scowcroft was the current "president's" father's National Security Adviser during the first Gulf War, and a spokesperson of the mainstream consensus of American foreign policy.

Scowcroft posed the question of what happens "if you hold the first election in Iraq and the radicals win. Do let them take

over? Surely not."

This pretty much sums it up.

It takes only a very little knowledge about the Middle East and Washington's goals there to guess what it takes to be considered a "radical" in the eyes of people like Scowcroft.

Surely any politician who was opposed to the privatization of Iraq's oil reserves (11 percent of the world's supply) would be considered a "radical," particularly as the Bush gang have said over and again in speeches on Iraq that the goal of regime change is "democracy and a free market economy."

As the U.S. continues to fight what we are told is a front of the "war on Terror" in Iraq, it pretty well goes without saying that any Iraqi who wanted to ask U.S. troops to leave — or even opposed setting up permanent American military bases on Iraqi soil — would be considered one of "the radicals."

And it surely goes without saying that any one who had reservations about immediately diplomatically recognizing Sharon's Israel — even as the land-grabbing on the West Bank and the dirty war against its Palestinian inhabitants continue — would be considered one of "the radicals."

Even the most die-hard Republican would have to admit that, most likely, the majority of Iraqis have the "wrong" view on all three subjects.

That is to say, they think they should be able to drive around their own country without having to stop at checkpoints and (for fear of their lives) convince foreign soldiers that they aren't terrorists ... and they think that their elected representatives should be able to ask said foreign soldiers to leave.

They don't think their country's natural resources should be sold off to foreign robber barons. And they certainly join the rest of the Arab world in sympathizing with the Palestinians' plight.

SO, TO SUM UP, Iraq's new colonial masters will not let any Iraqi government take power that sides with the overwhelming majority of the people of Iraq on basic questions of foreign and domestic policy. Some democracy.

The fact is that you in the real world you can't kill tens of thousands of Iraqis directly — and over 1 million from sanctions

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# Teaching a lesson

## Bush continues covert war on Venezuela

By MATT ERARD

The Michigan Socialist

VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT Hugo Chavez made a smart choice in late September when he decided to cancel his trip to the United Nation's General Assembly's opening debate, where he was originally scheduled to give a speech.

Only a week before, Venezuelan intelligence was able to intercept overwhelming evidence of a potential terrorist attack to sabotage Chavez's plane as he left from Caracas to New York City.

The terrorist in question was not Osama bin Laden or anyone from a Latin American militant group. It was U.S. Commander-in-Chief George W. Bush.

Such a threat comes as no surprise to President Chavez, particularly after the new information that recently arose about the background of last year's coup against him.

On April 12, 2002, Chavez was forcibly removed from office by a right-wing segment of the Venezuelan military and replaced by a junta under business leader, Pedro Carmona.

Upon coming to power, Carmona wasted no time in issuing a decree dissolving the country's national assembly and supreme court.

The Bush regime immediately responded by recognizing the military junta as the legitimate government, with White House Spokesperson Ari Fleisher stating, "The situation will be one of tranquility and democracy."

The White House statement followed a similar statement from the State Department proclaiming that the coup was a result of undemocratic actions of the Chavez administration and that Chavez (who was being held prisoner at the time) had resigned from office, and had dismissed his vice-president and the president of his cabinet just beforehand.

It was quite an embarrassment for Bush when loyal members of Venezuela's military returned him to power two days later on



Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez speaks to his supporters at a rally in Caracas.

April 14, destroying any U.S. credibility to its claims of a resignation.

Despite the sweeping support given by Bush to the coup government, it never admitted involvement in the coup taking place.

Information that has come out after the coup, however, has made direct involvement by the Bush regime undeniable.

CARMONA HAS SINCE admitted to being visited in Venezuela by U.S. Ambassador Charles Shapiro immediately after the coup.

Shapiro was a key player in the Nicaraguan *contra* war, as well as the U.S. support of the Salvadorian junta in the 1980s, as it waged one of the most gruesome attacks in history on its own working-class population.

Carmona also admitted to having gone to the United States in November 2001 to meet with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Otto Reich, a ringleader of the 1980s U.S. propaganda campaigns in Latin America, and an unrelenting activist for the overthrow of Cuban President Fidel Castro.

It was subsequently revealed that many

of the main participants in the coup had visited the State Department in the months prior to getting approval for the operation.

The Bush regime responded to these accusations by claiming that State Department Officials were instead trying to talk the coup organizers out of overthrowing the Venezuelan Government.

If the Bush regime's explanation of these meetings is correct, however, one can only wonder why it failed to warn Chavez about its direct knowledge of the coup and immediately supported the coup after it took place.

Last January it was discovered that the U.S. is permitting the "Venezuelan Patriotic Junta" to openly operate a 50 member-strong anti-Chavez terrorist training camp in Florida under the leadership of Luis Eduardo Garcia, one of the first Venezuelan officers to storm the presidential palace during the April 2002 coup.

The allowance of this camp on U.S. soil by Bush and his brother, Florida Governor Jeb Bush, is a prime example of their level of dedication and consistency in the so-called "war on terror."

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# 269 WORDS

By MARTIN SCHREADER

Editor, the *Michigan Socialist*

AMERICAN HISTORY is a history of extreme contradiction. It is, at once, a history of revolutionary progress and barbaric backwardness.

Often times, these contradictions are bound together throughout whole episodes of history. However, there are also moments when one of these two stands out so prominently as to overshadow all that surrounds it.

Many radicals, revolutionaries and socialists are content to dwell almost exclusively on the history of barbarism and backwardness we see throughout American history. But to do so is as problematic and politically restraining as concentrating equally exclusively on the progressive elements.

That is why it is sometimes necessary to take a step back into history, to see what it is that shaped both the positive and negative elements of “the American experience” — and, most importantly, how they helped create each other.

IN THE AUTUMN of 1863, the United States was feeling that a new breath of life had been taken. Only six months before, the armies of the rebel Confederate States of America had successfully kept the forces of the United States from winning any decisive battle.

In the western areas, Confederate forces had kept the armies under the command of Ulysses S. Grant from driving into Mississippi and taking the key city of Vicksburg. In the east, the Army of Northern Virginia had managed to thwart all the plans of the Union, culminating in the rout of the Army of Potomac at Chancellorsville.

These victories led the Confederate military and political leaders to once again stage an invasion of the northern states. Their view was that, if the Confederate forces could defeat those of the Union north of Washington, they could force a peace settlement on the basis of independence.

The strategic goal for the Confederacy was the seizure of Harrison, Pennsylvania,

and an attack on Philadelphia.

But the plan was executed poorly, with Confederate cavalry — the “eyes and ears” of the army, in an age without aircraft or electric-powered reconnaissance — being too far from the main force to communicate. The result was that Confederate forces were dragged into a battle with a Union force of unknown size and ability.

For three days, Union and Confederate forces slugged it out on the lush fields and rolling hills of southern Pennsylvania. When the battle was over, close to 53,000 soldiers — both Union and Confederate — had been wounded or killed.

The battle of Gettysburg was a decisive Union victory — arguably the first decisive victory the Army of the Potomac had won since the Civil War began.

The day after the last shot was fired in the battle, Lee began withdrawing his forces from Pennsylvania. On that day, July 4, Grant received the surrender of the garrison at the city of Vicksburg, thus re-opening the Mississippi River to Union traffic and trade.

IN THE FOUR MONTHS following the battle of Gettysburg, Union medical teams combed the battlefield for the remains of the tens of thousands of soldiers who died. Almost immediately after the battle, the first cemeteries were laid out for the fallen soldiers.

By autumn, those first gravesites had grown into a sprawling cemetery, taking up dozens of acreage. In addition, the Gettysburg battlefield had been set aside as an historical site by Congress (a lesson they learned after speculators bought up the land where the first battle of the War, around Manassas, Va., was fought).

In November, the National Cemetery at



The stone wall on Cemetery Ridge at Gettysburg, Penn. The monument is to the II Corps of the Union Army of the Potomac, which defended the ridge during Pickett's Charge.

Gettysburg was ready for opening to the public.

The main speaker at the dedication ceremony for the Gettysburg National Cemetery was Edward Everett, one of the best known and respected orators of the age. Everett spoke for nearly two hours (which was common at the time), invoking the cause of the Union and praising the bravery of the men (and women) wounded and killed.

After Everett finished, another well-known speaker stood and addressed the crowd. This person had been invited almost as an afterthought, and was not prepared to make a long and studied speech.

He spoke only 269 words, and only for about two minutes.

After he was finished, there was only light applause. The speaker, when he sat down, told his confidant that he felt his speech had been a failure.

Indeed, he was not the only one. The Chicago Times, for example, called the speech "flat" and "dishwatery." The pundits that haunted the European press felt similarly, chiding the speaker for his "gift of mediocrity."

However, many others disagreed, including Everett himself, who wrote the speaker a note expressing his hope that he "had come as close to the central meaning of the occasion in two hours as you had in two minutes."

Today, almost 140 years after that cold, windy November day in 1863, only those 269 words remain as something other than a footnote in American history.

WHEN ABRAHAM LINCOLN delivered his Gettysburg Address, the Civil War had been transformed from a constitutional conflict over Union to a revolutionary conflict over the meaning of freedom. The clash of social and economic systems, which lay at the heart of the Civil War, had yielded a socially progressive movement.

It came as little surprise to those who were most affected by the success or failure of the Confederate rebellion, the millions of Africans held as slaves, that the War had moved in this direction. They knew, before the first shot was fired, that the War would be about the freedom or slavery of African peoples in America.

But, for the majority of pro-Union

*Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.*

*Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met here on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.*

*But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate — we cannot consecrate — we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far, so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion — that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain — that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom — and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.*



Americans, it took years of hard lessons to even begin to understand what the meaning of the Civil War was about.

Among this mass of pro-Union Americans can be included Lincoln. When he first ran for president in 1860, he expressed many of the same white supremacist views that were common for the time, and, while he personally thought slavery immoral, he only called for slavery's containment to areas where it existed.

For abolitionists of the day, Lincoln was a "cold" politician, "tardy" to the idea of slave liberation, and, in the words of one prominent anti-slavery orator, "a first-rate second-rate man."

But as the War progressed, Lincoln displayed his ability to learn and develop politically. By the summer of 1862, he was ready to issue a preliminary emancipation order (which, incidentally, did not free a single slave). The stalemate at Antietam in September 1862 gave Lincoln the "victory" he needed to issue it.

Throughout 1863, he continued to ex-

plore the role that slavery played in the maintenance of the Civil War and Confederacy. Spurred on by abolitionists like Frederick Douglass and Wendell Phillips, Lincoln began to see the need to transform the War into something more — to understand the "higher object" for which the forces of the Union fight.

Since the middle of 1862, Union forces had hired runaway slaves as laborers and teamsters. The Emancipation Proclamation allowed for the enlistment of Black men as soldiers, but it took another six months before the first Black regiment saw action at Ft. Wagner, in South Carolina.

At the same time, Lincoln had to fight off criticism that he was, in fact, transforming the War. "You say you won't fight for Negroes," Lincoln wrote to his critics in 1863. "Some of them seem willing to fight for you."

Clearly, his opinion was changing. All ideas of repatriating Blacks to Africa, repeating the process that led to the formation of the African state, Liberia, were dead.

It was now a question of establishing a formal equality between Black and white within the borders of the United States.

THIS IS THE CONTEXT in which the Gettysburg Address was delivered, and it gives us insight into why he chose the words he did.

Lincoln consciously chose to link the struggle for this equality to the Revolution of 1775, which freed the American states from British colonialism. By doing so, he declared quite openly that this War was a second, democratic revolution aimed at resolving the problems that had remained from early years of the Republic.

For Lincoln, the question was no longer one of *preserving* the Union, but *rebuilding* it. That is, it was no longer a case of “the Union as it was,” as was the line of his opponents; now, it was a case of the Union as *it must be*, purged of its “original sin” of slavery.

This was the meaning behind Lincoln’s call for the United States to undergo “a new birth of freedom.” If the Union was to be restored, it would not be based on the old forms of power and privilege. A fundamental transformation was necessary.

At the same time, though, he did not wish to detract from the struggle that had been waged by 90,000 Union soldiers at Gettysburg, and the nearly 2 million Union soldiers who served throughout the conflict. In his view, the men (and women) who died for Union had done more to resolve the outstanding problems of America than any other group of people — including Lincoln and his government in Washington.

But the democratic revolution Lincoln led was not going to be carried out solely by the soldiers in blue. It was up to the people of the United States to do its part and do what is necessary to see that the democratic principles that now guided the Union’s effort in the Civil War were not wasted — that “these dead shall not have died in vain.”

In a sense, Lincoln’s speech was meant to make Americans aware of the great tasks that were to confront them in the following years, as War became Reconstruction, and African Americans, freed from the bonds of slavery, were to be brought into the body politic.

THE NOTED WRITER, William Faulkner, once quipped that history is not “was,” but



The only known picture from the Gettysburg Military Cemetery dedication ceremony where Lincoln (inset, in center) delivered his Address.



“is.” That is, history is not a disconnected series of events, dates and names, but an ongoing experience. What has been done throughout “history” affects us always; what we do today, will affect the “history” and contemporary experience of those who come after us.

For us, as citizens of the United States, living and being affected by that history, the Civil War is not “was,” but “is.” The Civil War did not end with the surrender of the Confederate armies, or with the end of Reconstruction. The Civil War continues, and we have a role to play in it.

This is not mere hyperbole or poetic flourish. The Civil War was more than a military or constitutional conflict. It was a political debate about freedom — what it means, who it applies to, and, most importantly, how far it extends — that was resolved, momentarily, through the medium of shot and shell, at the tip of a bayonet.

But the debate did not end. It continues today.

As long as there is inequality in society, the Civil War continues. As long as there are those who exploit, and those who are exploited, the Civil War continues. As long as there are those who oppress, and those who are oppressed, the Civil War continues.

The only difference is in the form of slavery underlying the “irrepressible conflict;” instead of *chattel-slavery* (humans as property), it is now *wage-slavery* (humans as commodities).

As the 21st century unfolds, we are once again confronted with an “irrepressible con-

flict” that can only lead to one of two outcomes: revolutionary liberation or reactionary barbarism.

Socialists worthy of the name stand firmly on the ground of revolutionary liberation from wage-slavery, exploitation and oppression. Even though we advocate such a revolution take place in the most peaceful and non-violent way possible, it is still a revolution we seek, as opposed to petty reforms that give capitalism a makeover.

Opposed to us are all those who wish to maintain the vicious circle of war, repression and exploitation — from the lowliest manager on the workplace floor to the highest circles of power, not the least of which is the existing government.

(And it should not be taken as mere coincidence or merely “bad politics” that so many of those in the highest seats of power look to the rebel Confederacy as ideological inspiration.)

Fighting for a Third American Revolution, which seeks to abolish wage-slavery and the class system that perpetuates it, is how we, today’s generation, play our part and “take increased devotion to the cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion” — how we make history “is.”

The Civil War continues; on this 140th anniversary of the Gettysburg Address, we must all recommit ourselves to bringing about “a new birth of freedom” and carry forward the pledge of Lincoln, and his generation of radical and revolutionary democrats, “that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” ★

# Iraq

*continued from page 4*

tions — and expect them to welcome you with open arms.

Revenge for friends and family members torn apart by cluster bombs or blown away at roadside checkpoints, resentment of degrading house-to-house searches, a sense of humiliation at being ordered around on the streets of your own country by heavily armed 18-year olds who don't speak the language and probably won't be disciplined if they kill you for "looking suspicious", and general resentment against colonial rule have all combined to provide a powerful motivation for armed resistance.

Probably there is not as of yet any central coordinating body, but a great many spontaneously formed cells, perhaps loosely cooperating with one another when they become aware of each other—more or less the model of much of the resistance to the Nazis in occupied Europe in WWII.

Writing in the UK *Guardian* on November 3, writer Tariq Ali says, "According to Iraqi opposition sources, there are more than 40 different resistance organisations. They consist of Ba'athists, dissident com-

munists, disgusted by the treachery of the 'official' Iraqi Communist Party in backing the occupation, nationalists, groups of Iraqi soldiers and officers disbanded by the occupation, and sunni and shia religious groups."

To these must be added people like "the fisherman" interviewed by the Associated Press, who was not an ex-soldier (although his resistance cell did procure weapons from sympathetic ex-military source) and was not motivated by any of these ideologies, but was simply reacting in anger to the humiliating experience of occupation.

What is overwhelming clear is that attempts to "pacify" the country and stamp out resistance while the colonial occupation is still in place are doomed in advance. Occupations look much the same in Iraq and Palestine today as in Algeria or Vietnam a few decades ago.

Already there have been incidents of where farmers have had their groves of fruit trees bulldozed by the occupying forces as "collective punishment" for failing to inform on the resistance.

This is not an isolated incident, but a typical example of the arrogance and brutality of the occupation. In turn, this sort of heavy handed repression fuels anger.

Already, there are 30-35 attacks a day. The U.S. (and the British, and their other junior partners) are so heavily armed that the proportion of American deaths in these attacks is comparatively slight, but the death toll of Iraqi resistance fighters and civilians who happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time is staggering.

Journalists are not allowed into the hospitals, but the UK *Independent*'s Robert Fisk estimates that the weekly death toll on the Iraqi side is in the hundreds.

THE AMERICAN death toll is not that high, but any price is too high for this.

Several hundred Americans — mostly working-class kids suckered into the military by economic incentives and by lies about its real purpose — have already come back in body bags for the sake of oil revenues and Halliburton reconstruction projects.

The cronyism and corruption of the occupation is such that while money flows freely into the coffers of corporations with such contracts, the troops are often left without adequate water or protective gear in 100-degree heat.

Many soldiers and their families have *continued on page 11*

# Venezuela

*continued from page 5*

Governing party legislator Nicholas Maduro said that the CIA had also trained the dissident soldiers responsible for the February and April bombings in Caracas.

Terrorist bombing has once again begun to continue in recent months. These revelations, however, are only the tip of the iceberg for U.S. involvement in terrorism against Venezuela.

Most damning was a video filmed in June and released on October 22 that shows CIA operatives training municipal police and military officers in espionage and terrorist tactics.

The video also reveals plans to blow up viaducts, vital bridges, and election centers during the days in late November and early December which the National Electoral Council has designated for the collection of signatures for the recall of Chavez.

The video was given to the Venezuelan government by a police officer who left the CIA training program.

THE BUSH REGIME'S newest weapon against Venezuela appears to be making baseless accusations that Chavez is linked with Islamic terrorist groups.

This may be the pretext for launching a full-scale war on Venezuela, similar to the war in Iraq, if all covert operations to oust Chavez fail.

The Bush administration's reasons for such a persistent commitment to ousting Hugo Chavez are far from indeterminate.

Chavez is the popular left-wing president of the world's fifth largest oil-exporting country, who not only speaks out against U.S. policy, but also has consistently enacted the type of economic reforms that imperialist states fear most.

Chavez was elected twice consecutively with the largest vote totals in Venezuelan history. One of his first acts as president was to put the Venezuelan constitution on referendum to give Venezuela's eighty-percent impoverished population a voice in how their country would be run for years to come.

Since then he has turned over privately owned unused land to poor peasants, re-

fused to privatize the Venezuelan oil industry despite heavy pressure from the U.S., and has greatly increased rural development and funding for cooperatives, social housing, healthcare, and education.

Chavez has also come out against the U.S.'s wars against Afghanistan and Iraq and refused to allow the overflight of U.S. warplanes in Columbia.

In addition, he has maintained friendly relations with Fidel Castro, refusing to stop exporting oil to Cuba and has referred to Venezuela, Cuba, and Brazil under left-wing president Lula as the "axis of good."

While the Bush administration continues to deny involvement in these attacks, the most telling statement about its motivations can be heard in Bush's all too unwise statement after Chavez returned to power after the April 2002 Coup.

"I hope he learned his lesson," Bush said.

A simple look at the motivations behind the United States' long history of coups against democratically elected governments in Latin America during the last half a century makes it quite easy to infer what that lesson is. ★

# Water

*continued from page 12*

done, seized control of the Detroit Police Department, and placed them under the control of John Ashcroft's Department of Justice.)

To crown their achievements, they managed to get a new mayor elected who would "play ball."

Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick is so beholden to the bosses and tied in to the rightwing powers in Lansing and Washington as to be nearly indistinguishable in his actions from his Republican allies.

At the same time, though, he is someone who can relate to the "hip-hop" crowd, and can make the attacks more acceptable. This makes him the perfect combination.

However, it is becoming increasingly clear that the City still has too much power, as far as the bosses and their politicians, locally and statewide, are concerned.

So, it is now time again for the state to sit down and binge on the City's assets.

**THE DETROIT WATER** and Sewage Department is one of the few public utilities remaining in the City's hands.

It was built primarily to serve the City, but as the suburbs have expanded, the DWSD has expanded its role and now provides services for much of the metropolitan region.

New water mains; new sewer pipes; new pumping stations; more personnel; more construction (mostly underground). All of this costs a lot of money in a capitalist society.

Who should pay for all of this? It almost seems like a silly question. By all rights, those who are moving farther and farther out to get away from the City should ante up for their new water and sewage service.

And so they have been, indirectly. By previous agreement, the DWSD passes on the cost of this new construction to the regional (usually countywide) boards, which then pass it on to their customers.

But the suburbs are now upset with this arrangement. They want a new deal.

Some of the older suburbs, which have been connected to the DWSD system for a long time, are a little tired of having to help foot the bill for their fellow county residents living on the margins of the area.

Now, these suburbs, through their most-



Community residents and anti-privatization activists protest outside of public utilities in Detroit in protest of mass shutoffs of lights, heat and water.

ly-Republican state legislators, are planning to introduce a bill that would make the Detroit water system a City service in name only.

The bill would establish a seven-member board to oversee DWSD billing practices. Most of these board members would be from the suburbs or the out-state area.

The current board is composed of five people appointed by the mayor that are drawn mainly from the City.

**WHY ARE THEY** doing this? The answer is not so straightforward.

To a certain extent, the anger and frustration many suburban residents — mainly those in the "inner suburbs," many (if not most) of whom are current or former auto-workers — is legitimate.

They are being forced to foot the bill for their managers and bosses as the latter move out into their new subdivisions and gated communities.

They have seen substantial rate increases over the last decade, as the once-rural communities of upper Oakland and Macomb counties have been developed, and million-dollar homes began to dot, and then black out, the landscape.

They have been paying disproportionately for the bosses' "urban sprawl," and are a little sick and tired of it. You cannot blame them.

Enter the Republicans, who represent those who "sprawl." Their constituents, mainly the people we all have to call "sir" or "ma'am" for eight hours (or more) a day, are also angry. But their anger is quite different.

Their rates are higher, and they begin to whine that it is "unfair," even though their running water and sewer system seems to say something else.

What is "unfair" about it? To put it simply, and bluntly: from their point of view, it is "unfair" because they have to pay more than the residents of the City.

Construction costs are factored into a formula used by the DWSD to calculate rates for suburban customers. It is this formula that the bosses, through their Republican agents, consider "unfair" and want eliminated.

More to the point, they want the whole region covered by DWSD to pay the costs of the new water and sewer lines. They want to shift the burden from themselves on to the residents of the City.

SINCE THE REPUBLICANS control most of the seats in these counties, they are able to channel the discontent of working people in the suburbs into this reactionary power grab.

Thus, the battle lines are drawn: City vs. suburbs; Black vs. white; poverty vs. priv-

ilege.

There is little doubt that the Republicans, as they push this legislation through the State House and Senate, will play the "race card."

It is a tried and tested standard, and still works quite well for mobilizing their voting base. It may not have worked completely the last time they used it, during the gubernatorial election in 2002, but it is still an effective tool.

There is little doubt that, as the debate over the reorganization of the DWSD heats up, the fact that City residents are not paying for suburban capitalists' waste removal will be twisted into some kind of form of "welfare."

If that doesn't work, they will use more coded language, saying that the City is being "divisive" because they have the audacity to think they should control their municipal services.

Certainly, when confronted with this, the City government will do what it has done for the last decade: roll over and die for it.

There is little room for doubt that Mayor Kilpatrick will go along with the Republicans' proposal. He may try to "compromise" by co-opting hand-picked suburban representatives for the existing DWSD board; but if Lansing objects he will toe their line.

After all, he has done it before — with Recorder's Court, the School Board and the capitalist developers.

## Iraq

*continued from page 9*

began to see through the lies that undergirded the invasion and occupation, and to realize that the Iraqis see them as conquerors, not as liberators.

Hundreds of military families, getting angry letters and e-mails from children and siblings whose lives are being thrown away in Iraq, have gotten involved in the anti-war movement. They are in the advance guard of the increasing number of ordinary Americans wondering how much blood and treasure will be wasted in Iraq, as the death toll mounts and as basic social services are cut across the nation.

Antiwar sentiment in the Black and Chicano communities — which, as super-oppressed castes within the American

WE SOCIALISTS OFFER a fundamentally different approach.

Instead of bickering over the composition of the DWSD board, we would propose a whole new structure for the administration of the area's water.

First, we would immediately declare the whole water and sewage system public property, run not for profit but for human need.

Second, administration of the water system would be directed by local bodies of water department workers and representatives elected on a neighborhood or citywide basis (depending on the size).

Those local bodies would elect a new executive board or council that would oversee the administration of the whole system, and would be democratically accountable to the local bodies and the community as a whole.

This system offers two distinct advantages for working people who need public water and sewage. The most immediate advantage would be lower rates.

A system of democratic workers' control would all but completely eliminate the many useless layers of bureaucracy and waste that capitalist entities need (because they need those layers as a buffer between themselves and the workers).

The other distinct advantage would be a more localized method of calculating rates.

With local bodies, the ability to redistrict how rates are determined would mean those places where maintenance and repair

working class, are disproportionately represented in the military — has never been higher.

Commanders in Iraq have had to crack down on their troops making bitterly anti-war comments in the media. As the death toll mounts, and as the lies drop away until there are no excuses left, antiwar comments are liable to turn into out-and-out resistance à la Vietnam.

It is very hard indeed to put a stop to these comments, because the soldiers are simply expressing a reality staring them in the face.

Private Jason Ring, stationed in Falluja, Iraq, put it point blank to a reporter from the *San Francisco Chronicle*. "The people here don't want us to be here. And guess what? We don't want to be here either. So why are we still here?"

That's a damn good question. ★

are the main concerns, and not new construction, would not be forced to pay for the new extensions unless it was agreed to voluntarily.

Other, more long-term, advantages would emerge as well. For example, as these bodies discussed new and better ways to improve service, they would also be free to explore new options for waste treatment and management that could assist with rehabilitating the environment.

Such a system of public ownership and workers' control is the cornerstone of democratic socialism.

But you will never see such a system exist as long as capitalists control society. While much more effective and efficient, it is not "profitable" and therefore cannot be allowed to exist.

THE CAMPAIGN TO attack the working people of the City is already underway.

The recent moves by DWSD to "cut costs" in order to placate the capitalists and their agents in Lansing has resulted in tens of thousands of poor and working class residents of Detroit having their water cut off.

This was the "two" in the "one-two punch" demanded by the suburban capitalists.

First, to try and appease the masters, DWSD raised rates for City customers; when that did not completely work, they started turning off the spigot.

Thus, the dynamic of City vs. suburbs, etc., has already begun. Those workers from the suburbs who are supporting the Republican drive out of narrow self interest are backhandedly aiding in these barbaric attacks.

It is time for working people, in the City and in the suburb, to take a step back and look at what is happening.

If you're not being used as a pawn, then you're being used as a punching bag.

Both situations have to stop. The plan of public ownership and workers' control is the only way left to do this. ★

**Sorry!**  
**No "ad-ed" this issue.**  
**Oh, like you need another**  
**thing to piss you off?**



# Water wars

## Showdown between City, suburbs only latest act

**By MARTIN SCHREADER**

Editor, the *Michigan Socialist*

WHAT IS DETROIT? For the 1 million or so residents of the City (which includes those the Census did not count), Detroit is their home. It is where they want to live, or it is where they have to live.

However, if you ask some people who live outside of the City, you get a very different answer. It is where "those people" live. It is "dangerous" and "wild;" the residents of the City are "animals."

Certainly, if this is how you see Detroit, then it only makes sense to impose control from the outside ... "for the good of the people," of course.

This has to be how the Republican-controlled Michigan State Legislature in Lansing sees Detroit, because they have spent the last decade doing everything possible to make sure municipal functions are under state control.

They began by ramming through the dissolution of the Detroit Recorder's Court,

replacing it with the Wayne County Circuit Court — thus establishing a dynamic where City residents are not tried by their peers.

That was the appetizer. The meal itself was larger, with broader implications: the Detroit Public Schools.

The State Legislature, with the aid of then-Governor John Engler and then-mayor Dennis Archer, stripped the citizens of Detroit of their right to vote for School Board, and turned over the school system to a consortium of area bosses.

THEN CAME A few subtle moves — "between-meal snacks," so to speak. In the name of "boosting business," the City government gave millions in tax breaks and other corporate welfare.

They demolished block after block of low-income housing, occupied mainly by retirees, to make way for new sports stadiums.

They expanded the "Renaissance Zones," where greedy bosses can pay work-



ers minimum wage to do what other workers in the area do for two- or three-times the wage.

Meanwhile, land speculators and developers began bulldozing more low-income housing to make way for condominiums and other properties that few in the City can afford.

(The federal government, not to be out-  
*continued on page 10*

## 'Recovery?'

- ★ One out of 11 Michigan residents receive government assistance to purchase food. The last time it was that high was in 1996.
- ★ Every day, 65,000 people in southeast Michigan (Wayne, Oakland, Macomb and Livingston counties) receive help from just one of the area food banks.
- ★ The average government assistance benefit is \$80 a month for an individual, \$186 for a family; the maximum assistance benefit is \$141 a month for an individual, \$371 for a family of three.
- ★ Fifty-one percent of recipients are children; 9.5 percent are seniors. Sixty percent of recipients are women.
- ★ Eighty percent of benefits went to poor households; 17 percent to households with a disabled person.

## Casino workers get a contract

**By L. MEYERS**

*The Michigan Socialist*

OCTOBER 31 — Unions representing workers at the MGM Grand and Motor City casinos have reached tentative agreements with their respective companies.

Details of the deal are limited, but workers are expected to receive substantial raises over the life of the contract, an improved retirement plan and will not have increases in premiums and co-payments for their health coverage.

The Detroit Casino Council, the coalition of labor unions representing workers at the three casinos in Detroit, first inked their deal with MGM Grand, which had been chosen as the "pattern" for the nego-

tiations.

The Council signed their tentative agreement with MGM Grand on Oct. 24; a few days later, they signed with Motor City.

There is no word on negotiations between the Council and Greektown Casino at the time of this writing.

The Detroit Casino Council is made up of United Auto Workers Local 7777, Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Local 24, International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 372 and International Union of Operating Engineers Local 574.

The three casinos first signed labor contracts with the Council in 2000 and 2001, after they volunteered to recognize the Council as collective bargaining agent. ★