



Workers of the World, Unite!

The MICHIGAN

socialist

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Vol. 2, No. 1 • January 2004

Voice of the Socialist Party of Michigan

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Support Borders workers!

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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.



world India, Pakistan sign tentative peace deal

By BRIAN McAFEE

The *Michigan Socialist*

THERE MAY YET be peace on the horizon between "Third World" nuclear powers India and Pakistan, as the recently signed cease fire in the disputed Jammu and Kashmir region appears to be holding.

Most of the recent violence has come from terrorists entering the disputed region from Pakistan and attacking Indian civilians.

The current "peace" seems largely to do with Pakistani President Perez Musharraf reigning in the fundamentalists within his country.

Meanwhile, the Bush administration plays the role of arms merchant, providing weapons to both sides. The U.S. remains one of the leading arms traders in the world.

Much of the weaponry sent to Pakistan and Afghanistan during the 1980s was for the U.S. sponsored *mujahedin*, later to evolve into the Taliban and al-Qa'ida, and its guerrilla war against the pro-Soviet government in Kabul.

India's altercation with Pakistan goes back over 50 years, since India was parti-

tioned in 1947 by the British.

In October 2003, Pakistan conducted at least three tests believed to be related to their nuclear program.

India is believed to have more than twice the amount of missiles and armaments Pakistan has.

However, the fear is that if Islamic fundamentalists in Pakistan were to take over the government, there would be a greatly heightened possibility for their use.

Many in the region and throughout the world are critical of the U.S. participating in arms sales in South Asia and profiting from them.

The region's population of 1.3 billion, with significant numbers living in poverty, in no way benefits from these deals.

Numerous non-governmental organizations point out that what both countries need to alleviate poverty and improve social stability are investments in water, agriculture, education and health care.

A refocus on these areas would likely decrease the level of poverty in the region, thus reducing the number of potential terrorist recruits, and bringing hope to the people of South Asia. ★



The myth of 'hippie capitalism'

Ann Arbor Borders workers wage unfair labor practice strike

By MATT ERARD

The Michigan Socialist

IF YOU'VE SEEN the film, *The Big One*, by Michael Moore, you probably remember the success of the Des Moines, Iowa, Borders workers as one of the film's highlights.

Moore appears at the local Borders to sign copies of his new book, *Downsize This!*, and is handed a note by an anonymous Borders employee. The note states that workers were forbidden from attending his book signing and asks him to meet them in a parking lot after dark.

When Moore arrives at the parking lot, the workers inform him of their turbulent efforts to unionize and by the film's end, the workers have formed their union.

The Des Moines Borders workers today, however, have neither union cards nor living wages.

Despite organizing drives at over 24 Borders locations, only the Ann Arbor, Mich., and Minneapolis, Minn., stores currently have unions.

The complaints and organizing drives by workers across the country make it strikingly clear that the lack of unionization within the retail goliath has nothing to do with satisfactory working conditions or compensation.

Instead it can be attributed to a practice which is as common as ever, but that we hear so little about in modern times — unionbusting.

Borders, Inc., has been in the practice of busting unions ever since they began to

form in the mid-1990s.

On June 15, 1996, a bookseller at the Philadelphia, Penn., store named Miriam Fried was fired for insubordination after she tried to organize a union.

Fried had always received good reviews from management in the past and had never been disciplined or given warnings.

Since the firing of Fried, Borders' union-busting tactics have ranged from traditional to unique.

Traditional tactics have included harassment, selective discipline of pro-union employees, and harsher working conditions.

Less traditional tactics have primarily involved a combination of intimidation with guilt-tripping, and portraying unionization as a personal attack upon management.

During a union drive in Seattle, Wash., the company's anti-union campaign involved visits from Borders President Tammy Heim, Director of Employee Relations Jim Lathrop, and former CEO Bob DiRomualdo.

Heim allegedly cried in every meeting, with assistant managers joining in, while Lathrop played the truculent role.

BORDERS' ANTI-UNION CAMPAIGN has consistently continued even after workers have successfully formed unions, including the continued intimidation of union organizers.

Unionized workers have also been met with frequent stalling by the company and refusals to bargain over economic issues.

Most revealing about the company's to-

tal unwillingness to negotiate in good faith was its decision to hire Jackson Lewis LLP as its law firm for labor negotiations.

Jackson Lewis is one of the many law firms that specialize in representing management exclusively in labor disputes, particularly in fields that are primarily occupied by women and minorities.

According to the AFL-CIO, Jackson Lewis is the second most active unionbusting law firm in the country.

The firm has over 20 offices in 11 states, more than 300 lawyers, and annual revenues of nearly \$40 million.

To say that Jackson Lewis wrote the book on modern-day unionbusting is not a metaphor. The firm, founded in 1958, recently published the fourth edition of its book, *Preventing Unionization through Preventative Employee Relations Programs*.

"Be good parents," the firm told the audience at one of its notorious anti-unionization seminars that it holds for corporate executives.

"A three year-old sees a pretty, red stove top and she wants to touch it. And you have to tell her how it will sizzle her fingers and be terribly painful. The use of fear is just as appropriate with your employees as it is with the three year-old."

At the same seminar, the audience was told that it is perfectly alright not to tell the truth in labor disputes, and how unions should always be portrayed as third parties that want to come between employees and management.

On Nov. 8, after nearly a year of failed negotiations, workers at the Ann Arbor



Borders workers and supporters rally in Ann Arbor, Mich., November 7, 2003.

Borders launched an unfair labor practice strike.

The Ann Arbor workers, represented by United Food and Commercial Workers Local 876, began picketing at 8:30 a.m. and maintained the picket line everyday of the week since.

Strikers were regularly joined on the picket line by members of the Socialist Party of Michigan, Solidarity, and Industrial Workers of the World.

The Ann Arbor union was formed in December 2002, when workers voted 51-4 in favor of unionization.

THROUGHOUT THE STRIKE, Borders relied on managers and workers being brought in from other locations to keep the store running.

According the union, however, sales at the Ann Arbor store dropped 75 percent.

On the first day of the strike, workers were met by a manager who came outside to tear up picket signs.

Despite management's illegal conduct outside the store, Borders called police on the picketers over 21 times during the first two days of the strike alone.

On the evening of Sunday, Nov. 16, the local Einstein's Bagels, located only a few blocks from Borders, was robbed at gun-point while police were tied up at the picket line due to the management's frivolous complaints.

One month before the strike began, Borders settled an unfair labor practice charge by the National Labor Relations Board over unlawful conduct at the Ann Arbor store, including its usual tactics of instituting

harsher working conditions, interrogating workers about the union drive, threatening employees with discipline if they discuss discipline with other employees and unlawfully firing a union supporter.

Nevertheless, the company continued its unionbusting activities as well as its refusal to negotiate a fair contract.

What was portrayed by Borders executives as an unscrupulous demand for compensation that exceeds basic retail standards was really nothing more than a demand for fair benefits and wages that are adjusted for inflation.

According to Ann Arbor workers, Borders had not changed its wages in over a decade.

Full time workers receive a starting salary of \$6.50-7 an hour, and do not receive benefits for six months after beginning work.

The Ann Arbor living wage ordinance, which does not apply to private-sector workers, calculates that a minimum wage adjusted to the costs of living for workers with benefits in Ann Arbor is \$8.50 an hour.

A look at the company's earnings quickly refutes any claim by Borders executives that even a significant wage increase could prevent the store from staying competitive.

Borders made over \$125 million in profits last year. All top executives currently have over \$1 million in unused stock options, while CEO Greg Josefowicz, who earns over \$500 an hour, has over \$6 million.

In addition, Borders Inc has only 81 million shares of stock outstanding, out of

the 200 million shares that it is allowed to issue.

The union has called for a national boycott of all Borders stores, including its subsidiary, Waldenbooks, and affiliate Amazon.com.

The boycott was officially endorsed by over 2,000 individuals and organizations, including the SPMI.

TWO DAYS AFTER the strike began, Borders spokeswoman Anne Roman told the *Michigan Daily* that "we remain open to negotiating at any time and would love to resolve this quickly."

Nearly a month later, on Dec. 3rd, Borders gave workers the opportunity to put Roman's words to the test by scheduling negotiations.

During the session, a manager told the workers that they represented the worst store in the company, and that as a result, management could not understand their desire for higher pay and better benefits.

Workers were then given no opportunity to negotiate a concrete proposal other than compiling a list of prioritized items and handing it to management.

Borders indicated that it would present a proposal at the next bargaining session on Dec. 15th, but cancelled the negotiations on the morning of due to vandalism at the store the night before, despite the union's denial of any involvement.

The union again met with the company on Dec. 23rd. Borders' attorney initially promised to stay as long as it took, but the company then employed its usual maneuver of walking out of the negotiations as soon as it was time to discuss wages.

According to the union, Borders stalled the entire day, promising to discuss wages later. When the time came, the attorney abruptly closed the session to leave in his chauffeured limousine.

On Dec. 31st, the union's bargaining committee negotiated a contract and officially ended the strike and boycott.

Details of the new contract have not yet been disclosed to the public, but the committee has stated that the contract is satisfactory and will strongly recommend ratification at the meeting in early January.

The tentative victory of the Borders union is likely to be an example for the other 436 Borders stores nationwide, particularly the Minneapolis store, which is still

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Democracy flatlines

Bribery, threats push Medicare bill through Congress

By **L. MEYERS**

The Michigan Socialist

SUPPOSE YOU READ in the newspaper, or saw on television, that the ruling party in some country broke all the rules of parliamentary procedure, bribed legislators, forced members of the opposition to go into hiding, threatened the livelihood of politicians and their families, etc., in order to get a piece of legislation passed.

Your first assumption would be that this country is a dictatorship, right?

The last thing in the world you would think is that such a country could be considered the pinnacle of democracy, right?

Well, this exercise in political gangsterism did take place. These events did happen, and quite recently.

This is how the narrow Republican majority in the U.S. Congress rammed through the Medicare bill.

Under the direction of the George W. Bush regime and Republican leaders in Congress, the House of Representatives narrowly passed the bill, 220-215.

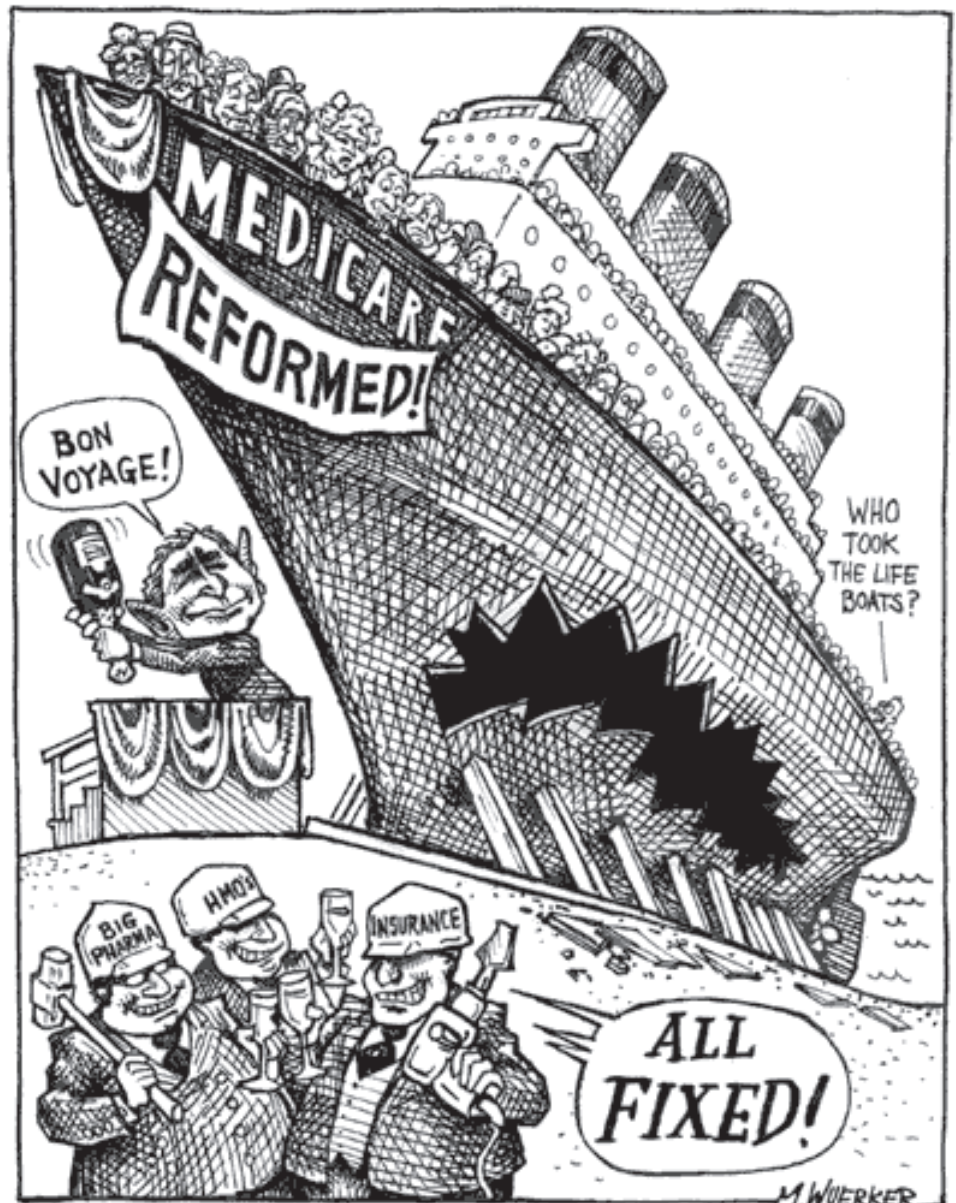
The story of how this bill was pushed through the House is an important example of how far removed the current government is from its Constitutional origins.

On the evening of Friday, November 21, members of the House narrowly defeated the proposed bill by a roll-call vote of 218-216.

However, Republican House leaders, including Speaker Dennis Hastert and Majority Leader Tom DeLay, refused to close the vote, as required by the standing rules.

Instead, the Republican leaders went to work, carrying out an organized campaign to bully and bribe wayward Republican representatives that voted no.

In another clear and conscious violation of the standing rules of the House, members of Bush's cabinet, most prominently Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson, were found in the House chamber, twisting arms and lining pockets.



The threats and bullying were so intense during the night, that more than one Republican Congressman could be found hiding in the Democratic cloakroom, trying to escape the wrath of their "esteemed colleagues."

Meanwhile, on the floor of the House, Republican lawbreakers (err, I mean, lawmakers) were openly bribing their fellow representatives.

Rep. Nick Smith, a Republican Congressman from southern Michigan, was offered over \$100,000 for his son's Congressional campaign if he switched his vote from "no" to "yes."

Smith is leaving his position as a Congressman in November 2004 due to a self-imposed term limit.

His son, Brad, is running for the GOP nomination in that district.

When Smith initially rejected this blatant bribe, Hastert, DeLay and Thompson told him that if he did not play ball, his son would never make it to Washington.

Bribery of a public official is a federal crime; United States Code, Title XVIII, Section 201, says that "[giving] anything of value to any other person or entity with intent to influence any official act" is bribery.

Smith, however, stuck to his convictions and did not change his vote.

On the other hand, after hours and hours of browbeating, bribery and bullying, the Republican leaders were finally able to secure a razor-thin majority, finally closing the vote at 6 a.m., Saturday, Nov. 22.

THE TRUE STORY of how the Medicare bill was passed is a reflection of what this "reform" will do to millions of retirees and the elderly.

In both cases, the targets of the act get mugged.

It was not until after the bill was passed and signed that most Americans learned what the Republicans had in store.

Far from the much-needed development of Medicare into a system that can easily

absorb the millions of soon-to-be-retiring members of the "baby boom" generation, this bill was *one of the largest pieces of corporate welfare to ever be signed into law*.

Over the next eight years, U.S. drug companies will reap close to \$140 billion in income as a result of the bill.

Health analysts anticipate that profits for these corporations will go up close to 30 percent.

One of the most hyped up parts of the bill was its provision for prescription coverage.

However, this coverage is to be controlled completely by private insurance companies.

In addition, the bill blocks states from buying prescription medicines from Canada, where they are produced at high quality for less.

This will mean millions of dollars more in corporate welfare for drug makers and suppliers.

Most importantly, though, the bill opens the door to wholesale privatization of Medicare.

In 2006, when the bill goes into full effect, seniors will be given the "option" of signing up for private insurance, funded by

Medicare.

This new, privatized "Medicare" will cover 75 percent of prescription costs, up to \$2,250, with a \$250 deductible and \$35 monthly premium over and above the Medicare subsidy.

After that, recipients will receive no services until they spend another \$2,850, and their out-of-pocket costs total \$3,600. Only then will Medicare cover 95 percent of added cost.

Beginning in 2010, Medicare privatization will be total, as private insurance corporations will be allowed to compete directly with the Medicare system.

Those who stay with Medicare will have to pay an ever-higher premium, with costs based on private insurance plans. Estimates place the rise in premiums at *over 300 percent* what they are today.

In addition, a new provision allowing for so-called "medical savings accounts" means that more affluent and healthier employees will be able to opt out of company-provided health plans, driving up premiums and costs for workers.

The end result of this bill's passage will be the codification and legalization of a

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Borders

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in negotiations.

Despite the company's long unwillingness to bargain, the strike stayed strong all the way through, with 12-hour-long daily picketing in front of the Ann Arbor store, as well as marches to corporate headquarters and Josefowicz's home.

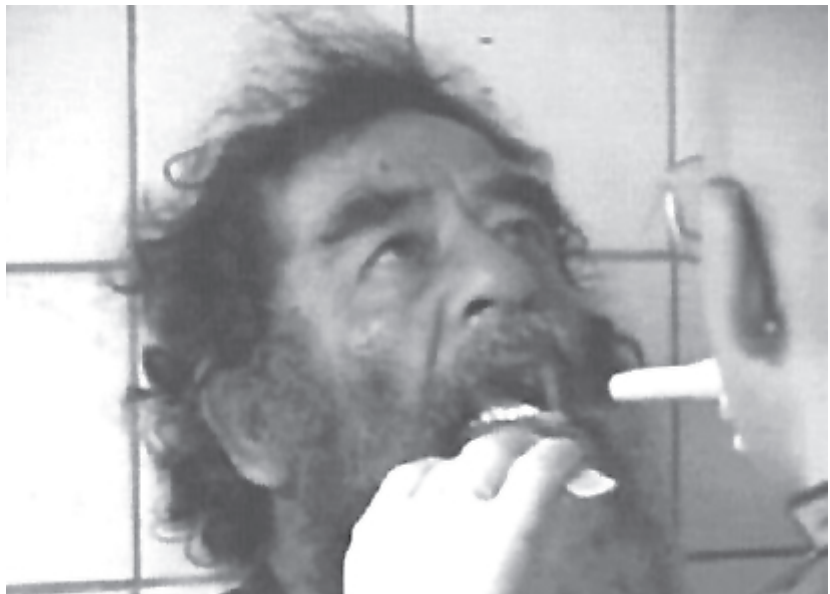
On several occasions, pickets, leafleting rallies and pro-union caroling expanded to other Borders locations in southeastern Michigan, including Detroit, Birmingham, and the Arborland Mall.

However, the company was equally committed to starving the union out for as long as possible.

Borders' attitude toward workers' rights was best stated in a letter by former Borders President Richard L. Flanagan: "While the concept [of a living wage] is romantically appealing, it ignores the practicalities and realities of our business environment."

Practicalities and realities, of course, are really just two abstract words for a much simpler one — greed. ★

Sorry, George!



No WMDs in there, either!

**Sheesh! You guys are getting REALLY desperate!
Did you try asking Rumsfeld where he left them?**

This message brought to you by the staff of the Michigan Socialist

Don't mourn — bureaucratize!

By **HERMAN BENSON**

Special to the *Michigan Socialist*

WHAT JOHN SWEENEY did unto Lane Kirkland in 1995, may now be done unto him.

On Sept. 18, Sweeney announced he would run for reelection as AFL-CIO president, along with Rich Trumka, secretary-treasurer, and Linda Chavez-Thompson, executive vice-president.

But his term of office doesn't expire until mid 2005, almost two years to go. Ordinarily such a premature declaration would seem strange.

Not this time, however, because Sweeney needs to forestall a not-so-subtle drive by five international union leaders to push him out.

They had planted stories in *Business Week* and in the *American Prospect* about his probable "retirement" in 2005 (news to him!); they were already mulling over the choice of his successor. The pressure on Sweeney continues.

When the *New York Times* reported that he would run for reelection, it added, "Some labor officials questioned whether Mr. Sweeney might reverse himself and ... not seek another term."

The five were banding together, they said, because at a time when labor must grow or die, the AFL-CIO remains passive and impotent.

Calling for change, they propose to show the way to organize the unorganized.

And so memories of the 1995 AFL-CIO convention in New York!

That's when Sweeney, at the head of a coalition of international presidents, proclaiming that labor must grow or die, called for change and proposed to lead the federation in a drive to organize the unorganized.

His drive for change succeeded only partially. He was elected AFL-CIO president to head a new leadership; he beat the drums for organizing; he called upon affiliates to put forces in the field; he recruited hundreds of eager students for a demonstrative summer of organizing.



But it didn't work. Now, eight years later, back to square one. Despite his exhortation, the response from the established labor leadership was limp.

There have been some gains in organizing, but the unionized section of the private, non-government, work force remains at the dangerously low 9 percent.

NOW, THE RESTIVE five international union leaders, publicly expecting Sweeney to bow out, have joined together in a formal organization, partially inside the AFL-CIO and partially outside, complete with a name, New Unity Partnership.

Time and tide wait for no one. They intend to reorganize themselves and then demonstrate to the labor movement how to organize the unorganized.

The implication of their message: Lane Kirkland and Tom Donahue, the AFL-CIO old guard and all their predecessors, talked of organizing; but did nothing. Sweeney promised to organize, but accomplished next to nothing.

But this time, really and now, they will organize.

Together, the five international presidents make up an odd combination: Douglas McCarron, Carpenters Union; Bruce Raynor, UNITE; John Wilhelm, Hotel union; Terrence O'Sullivan, Laborers; Andy Stern, Service Employees.

In 1995, the Carpenters and UNITE

The NUP in brief

1. An extended reaffirmation of the truism that everyone already accepts: unions must organize the unorganized.
2. A lengthy visual defense of this point in the form of charts, graphs, and statistical tables.
3. A plan for bureaucratization of the labor movement.
4. A statement that the five internationals intend to put massive resources into organizing and forge ahead without waiting for the rest of the AFL-CIO.

both voted the old guard against Sweeney the reformer. The other three backed Sweeney.

When McCarron pulled the Carpenters out of the AFL-CIO, Sweeney announced that Carpenter locals would be barred from AFL-CIO state and city federations.

In a serious rebuff, an unusual coupling of the building trades and the New Unity Partnership defeated Sweeney and blocked his move.

Wilhelm and O'Sullivan head two unions once heavily infiltrated by organized crime. Their unions, at least at the national level, were freed from organized crime, not by internal insurgency and reform, but by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Wilhelm and Stern, who have both earned reputations as modern, progressive leaders, are allied with McCarron who exchanges mutual public expressions of admiration with President Bush.

Unlike Sweeney, the Partnership starts out with a scientific plan scrupulously worked out on paper by research workers, complete with graphs and statistical charts.

The NUP program is inspired by a 44-page analysis prepared by Stephen Lerner of the SEIU organizing staff.

The key aim of any organizing effort, according to this plan, is for unions to win a decisive market share in industries by increasing "union density" and controlling

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Dissecting the Doctor

Howard Dean and the 'Southern Strategy'

By **MARTIN SCHREADER**

Editor, the *Michigan Socialist*

IN THE MONTHS prior to the first primaries taking place, former Vermont Governor Howard Dean seems to have catapulted himself into the pole position for the upcoming Democratic presidential nomination campaign.

With an aggressive campaigning style, effective (and relatively unprecedented) use of Internet technology, and a well-staged range of emotions, Dean has captured the imagination and attention of millions of Democratic voters.

Of the nine candidates for the Democratic nomination, Dean regularly outpaces his rivals in fundraising and media coverage — both positive and negative. Even his fellow candidates have commented on the unevenness of this coverage.

But Gov. Dean is not without his "skeltons." Over the last six months, questions regarding his son's criminal record, his service (or lack thereof) during Vietnam and his verbal gaffes have from time to time caused storm clouds to briefly gather over him.

And yet, he seems to parry these media-driven thrusts with the skill shown by previous "Teflon" presidents: Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton.

Of the aforementioned verbal gaffes, perhaps the one that has shown the greatest longevity was his comment on the need to appeal to "poor whites that have Confederate flag stickers on the back of their trucks."

This statement repelled many people,

ELECTION 2004

Over the next year, the *Michigan Socialist* will be looking at the candidates and issues that will shape the 2004 election, through the lens of Socialist analysis. As part of this coverage, we encourage our readers to send us comments and questions. You can write to us at the addresses on page 2.

including some of his more adamant supporters. It looked like Gov. Dean was pandering to the base backwardness of racial chauvinism and white supremacy in America.

However, a recent speech by Dean in Columbia, South Carolina, has allowed people to find a new context for those statements.

At a supporters rally in the S.C. capital, Dean sought to appeal to the similarities in position found among poor whites and African Americans in order to win some of the former to his banner.

Liberal commentators from all corners lined up to praise Dean's carefully crafted comments. Many called it "inspiring," "uplifting" and even "historic."

Among those subscribing to the latter are the editors of *Black Commentator*, a weekly newsletter and Internet website.

The BC editors boldly proclaimed that Dean made "racial-political history" with his comments. His speech in Columbia was "the most important statement on race in American politics by a mainstream white politician in nearly 40 years."

HOWARD DEAN'S SPEECH in Columbia was, in fact, historic — not necessarily because of any kind of positive program he put forward, but rather for the topic that framed his statement.

Instead of attempting to paraphrase,

here is how Gov. Dean opened his comments:

In 1968, Richard Nixon won the White House. He did it in a shameful way — by dividing Americans against one another, stirring up racial prejudices and bringing out the worst in people.

They called it the "Southern Strategy," and the Republicans have been using it ever since. Nixon pioneered it, and Ronald Reagan perfected it, using phrases like "racial quotas" and "welfare queens" to convince white Americans that minorities were to blame for all of America's problems. ("Restoring the American Community," *Howard Dean's Blog for America* — <http://blog.deanforamerica.com/archives/002565.html>)

Commenting on this statement, the *Black Commentator* wrote:

For four decades, the primary political project of the Republican Party has been to transform itself into the White Man's Party. Not only in the Deep South, but also nationally, the GOP seeks to secure a majority popular base for corporate governance through coded appeals to white racism. The success of this GOP project has been the central fact of American politics for two generations — reaching its fullest expression in the Bush presidency. Yet a corporate covenant with both political parties has prohib-

feature

ited the mere mention of America's core contemporary political reality: the constant, routine mobilization of white voters through the imagery and language of race.

Last Sunday, Howard Dean broke that covenant. ("Dean Makes Racial-Political History," *Black Commentator* — http://www.blackcommentator.com/68/68_cover_dean.html)

Unquestionably, this is a strong vote of confidence from one of the better-known voices of the African-American press. But is such praise deserved?

We can find the answer to that in the columns of the BC article itself, when the editors compare Dean's Dec. 7 speech to the remarks of former President Lyndon Johnson at Howard University in June 1965.

Johnson's speech is considered one of the landmark statements by an American president on the question of civil rights — and arguably one of the strongest and most comprehensive of such statements since the days of Reconstruction.

Freedom is not enough. You do not wipe away the scars of centuries by saying: Now you are free to go where you want, and do as you desire, and choose the leaders you please....

Thus it is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates.

This is the next and more profound stage of the battle for civil rights. We seek not just freedom but opportunity. We seek not just legal equity but human ability, not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result....

Negro poverty is not white poverty. Many of its causes and many of its cures are the same. But there are differences — deep, corrosive, obstinate differences — radiating painful roots into the community, and into the family, and the nature of the individual.

These differences are not racial differences. They are solely and simply the consequence of ancient brutality, past injustice, and present prejudice. They are anguishing to observe. For the Negro they are a constant reminder of oppression. ("To Fulfill These Rights," *Official Website: Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum* — www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/650604.asp)

In 1965, Johnson was the highest representative of mainstream American liberalism, taking over from the recently assassinated John F. Kennedy. Thus his speech represented what was then the bedrock upon which the liberal wing of the capitalist class rested and ruled.

IN COMPARING THE words of Johnson to those of Dean, however, we find that the coupling of these two high-profile Democratic politicians as like minds is unwarrant-

ed — and potentially dangerous.

More to the point, while Johnson was certainly a mainstream liberal, arguably even a moderate, in his day, when his remarks are put side-by-side with those of Dean, the former president sounds like a wild-eyed idealist.

We see this difference in what each of these men emphasized in their appeal for racial unity.

For Johnson, it was not enough to simply guarantee equality; it was necessary to understand the basis for the existing inequality, and to come together to overcome it through united efforts.

Whatever one can say about his subsequent actions (and, believe me, there is plenty to say) on this and many other issues, the liberal vision laid out by Johnson not only acknowledged the inequality between Black and white, but also sought to change the existing material situation that fostered the inequality.

This is the meaning behind Johnson's admonition that he seeks "not just equality as a right and a theory, but equality as a fact and equality as a result."

And Gov. Dean? Here is his vision and appeal for unity:

There are no black concerns or white concerns or Hispanic concerns in America. There are only human concerns....

It's time we had a new politics in America — a politics that refuses to pander to our lowest prejudices. (*ibid.*)

What an incredibly ignorant and narrow-minded statement to make!

In Johnson's day, the road to unity was paved by an understanding that it was necessary to recognize how racism and white supremacy made the formal, legal equality guaranteed by the Constitution and federal law a sham.

For Dean, however, the road to unity is to be laid in silence, by papering over differences and ignoring the very real inequality between Black and white.

But it does not end here. We can also note a fundamental difference between Johnson and Dean on the role that whites have in creating this unity.

In his speech, Johnson stressed the need for whites, especially Southern whites, to "accept responsibility" for the "centuries of



Eight of the nine Democratic candidates for the presidential nomination (left to right): Rep. Dick Gephardt, Sen. Joe Lieberman, Rev. Al Sharpton, former Amb. Carol Moseley-Braun, Rep. Dennis Kucinich, Sen. John Edwards, former Gov. Howard Dean, and Sen. John Kerry. Not pictured is retired Gen. Wesley Clark.



Former Vice President Al Gore (left) endorsed Dean for the Democratic presidential nomination. Both Dean and Gore represent a re-emerging populist wing of the Democratic Party.

oppression and persecution” of African Americans.

That is, the rights of the oppressed can only be secured when the actions of the oppressor are changed.

On the other hand, Dean stressed the need for whites to ... do nothing, in regards to their role as oppressor. In fact, Dean consciously avoids many of the basic issues that Johnson addressed directly 38 years before.

Counterposed to Johnson’s appeal for oppressors to recognize and address their problems, as part of a united effort to end discrimination and prejudice, Dean appeals to the oppressed to put aside their “concerns” and come together in a united effort to ... put him in the White House.

Only a movement of citizens of every color, every income level, and every background that can change this country and once again make it live up to the promise of America. (*ibid.*)

FOR THE EDITORS of *Black Commentator*, Gov. Dean’s comments are a “straight-forward, anti-corporate message that does not pander to white racism.” Nothing could be further from the truth.

In fact, looking at Dean’s comments, it is clear that, far from being “anti-corporate,” he calls on capitalism to take on the role of benevolent patriarch of the poor and subscribe to an agenda “that says we’re all in this together.”

(For the moment, I will leave aside the issue of his call for Black, Brown and white workers to join hands with their exploiters

and oppressors in the capitalist class.)

Moreover, far from promoting a “message that does not pander to white racism,” Dean’s comments alibi this very same white racism by not challenging the institutional and ideological practices that have kept African Americans, Latinos and every other oppressed race and nationality in the United States from achieving any measure of meaningful equality.

In fact, Dean’s comments are peppered with the anecdotal comments that often fuel racist stereotypes and demagoguery. For example, Dean says:

Every time a politician complains about affirmative action in our universities, it’s because he’d [sic] rather not talk about the real problems with education in America — like the fact that here in South Carolina, only 15 percent of African Americans have a post-high school degree.

When education is suffering in lower-income areas, it means that *we will all pay for more prisons and face more crime in the future.* (*ibid.*; emphasis mine)

The implication here should not be lost on anyone: because African Americans are poorly educated, they thus commit more crime and will be a financial burden on “us all”.

This variant on “white man’s burden” — the belief that the oppressors must lift up and civilize (“educate”) those “less fortunate” — fits well with the current colonialist ideology of the capitalist class. After all, more than once has the Bush regime re-

ferred to its occupation of Iraq as a “civilizing mission.”

That the editors of *BC* cannot recognize the political agenda and ideology guiding Gov. Dean’s comments is a testament to the desperation (and bankruptcy) of the pro-capitalist “official” voices of the African American community.

Gov. Dean’s statements, far from being a “clear and definitive break” from the policies of the ruling class (either in the form of the Republican or Democratic party leaderships), are little more than a tactical shift from the more overt paeans to white racism that have motivated figures from both main political parties since the 1970s.

Instead of obvious appeals to media-driven racist oppression, Dean prefers a “liberal” racism that shuts its eyes to the reality of American capitalism (which is in many ways predicated on racism and national chauvinism) and, in turn, does nothing to resolve those problems.

To be “color blind” in a racist society is to capitulate to racism, if not aid in its continuance.

In an ideal world, it would be nice to be able to place the societal constructs of race and nationality behind us and go forward.

But we do not live in an ideal world; we live in a world where race and nationality are maintained by capitalism in order to keep workers from uniting in a common struggle to end exploitation and oppression.

IN THE FINAL analysis, Gov. Dean’s Columbia speech represents little more than a *tactical shift* away from the more overt racism that has been the hallmark of the American government since the days of Nixon and the rise of the “Southern Strategy.”

The same prejudices, stereotypes and ignorance continue to dominate the agenda. The only difference is on the extent to which those racist tendencies are moderated for the sake of the “community” (no, not the Black community; the “American community”).

At this point, another hallmark of Dean’s politics must be addressed. Much is made about his appeals to poor whites, and his view that programs like affirmative action should be based on “class,” not race, nationality or gender.

Many have seen this as proof of Dean’s left-liberal “credentials.” Again, nothing could be further from the truth.

While it is, unfortunately, outside of the



Gov. Dean shows off a t-shirt printed to commemorate the SEIU bureaucracy's endorsement. Were the members consulted about the endorsement? Was there a vote — on the endorsement, and on wasting union members' money to print these shirts? Inquiring members want to know (but will never get an answer).

scope of this article to expand on this point further, it should be pointed out that there is a re-emerging populist wing of the Democratic Party, acting in opposition to both the pro-capitalist "moderates" of the DLC and the social-democratic "Progressive" wing.

In 2000, this wing began to show signs of renewed life in the form of former Vice President Al Gore.

This renewed movement has since

grown into a powerful "swing" faction in the Democratic Party, capable of influencing the direction of the organization (though not by very much) through mobilizing the voter base.

The populists now occupy a "center" position, between the liberals/social democrats (which operate as a bloc) and "moderate" pro-capitalists, and are able to use that position as a way to play both ends against each other.

Medicare

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multi-tier health care system, where the wealthy (and healthy) get decent treatment while working people get sick and die.

THE PASSAGE OF the Medicare bill has to be seen in the context of everything we've seen happen since Bush and his far-right "neo-conservatives" took power illegally after the 2000 election.

Over the last three years, the Bush regime has systematically destroyed what remains of the limited "democracy" — primarily the democratic rights of working people — traditionally practiced in the United States.

In addition, the White House, Republican-led Congress and the rightwing "judicial activists" on the Supreme Court have joined together to attack and eliminate the

threadbare social safety net that was won through decades of struggle.

All of the social gains achieved during the New Deal of the 1930s, the Great Society of the 1960s and even the "Gilded Age" reforms of the late-19th century have been rolled back.

In this ongoing battle of democracy, special note must be taken of the consistent failure of the "opposition" Democratic Party to challenge the attacks waged by the Republicans on behalf of their corporate masters.

Time and again, regardless of the issue, the Democratic Party, under the leadership of the rightwing Democratic Leadership Council, has appeased the GOP and given it a free hand (or tacit support) to attack democracy.

Whether it was sanctioning the ascension of Bush to power, the wholesale shift of financial burden for the state onto the shoulders of workers, the acceptance of end-

In turn, this populist wing is developing its own "Southern Strategy" to counter the "moderates," pacify the liberal/social-democratic coalition and steal the thunder of the Republicans.

The crux of this new "strategy" is an economic appeal to poor whites as a "class" ("pleading the pocketbook"), combined with a "color blind" liberalism that papers over the reality of racism in America while formally criticizing it.

It may be arguable that, in today's context, the editors of the *Black Commentator* are formally correct when they say that Gov.

Dean's speech is the "most important statement on race" since Johnson's 1965 speech.

However, it is apparent that even the "most important statement" of the idealistic populist Howard Dean cannot hold a candle to the sober, tempered liberalism of Lyndon Johnson.

No one should be fooled: Gov. Howard Dean's Columbia speech does not represent any kind of fundamental break with the pro-capitalist program of today's DLC-run Democratic Party.

Instead, it is the statement of a vacillating populist seeking to appeal to both wings of his party to ignore and/or bury their differences and unite behind a new "Southern Strategy," which will preserve the basis of racism while modifying its presence. ★

less war (including the invasion and occupation of Iraq), the tax cuts, the elimination of social services or the privatization of Medicare, the Democrats have proven conclusively that they are incapable and unwilling to defend democratic rights and social progress.

Thus, even though we are a relatively small movement, it falls to us Socialists and our allies to fight for democracy and progress.

Whether it is at the ballot box or in the streets, Socialists have to present a genuine alternative to capitalism, and its attacks on our rights and livelihoods.

We have to show through our actions that another America, and another world, is possible, and that it will only come about through the victory of democratic socialism.

Now more than ever, we must rise to the challenge facing us.

The alternative is unthinkable. ★

Bureaucrats

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the "labor supply" and so gain the ability "to take wages out of competition and raise standards."

According to Lerner, here's the problem: "The current structure of the labor movement stands in the way of organizing workers and building increased strength for workers at every level of the labor movement."

And so, they would reorganize the labor movement, but really reorganize it: Unions must stop taking the lazy way out; no more picking up whatever is easy to organize; and so no more "general workers unions" that reach out for anyone who will pay dues, from laborers to nuclear scientists.

They must concentrate on increasing that "density" in their assigned basic markets. We have to get rid of that clutter of little organizations, those "corner store" unions which are happy with a tiny, selective membership so long as they pay enough dues to sustain the officers' salaries.

The graphs and charts demonstrate that American industry is shaped into 15 great segments: Services, Government, Manufacturing, Mining, etc., etc.

And so, we have to get rid of that useless proliferation of impotent unions and organize into 12-15 big, powerful unions, each in its defined industrial segment.

To get there, we must eliminate the defectives, merge some, swap locals and members, and end with those powerful few, each with its authorized clearly defined sphere of influence.

THE FORMATION OF the NUP has been compared with the rise of the CIO within the old AFL, but differences are more striking than similarities.

The CIO arose in response to the turbulent, spontaneous, often uncontrollable initiative of thousands of workers. The NUP arises out of the brain of well-meaning idealistic union staffers.

The ideological flavor of the plan recalls the old-fashioned disputes of yesteryear; a weird combination of old AFL conservatism with its strictly assigned jurisdiction and the old radical industrial unionism with its imaginary unions concocted out of wheels and charts.

The five in the NUP promise to plunge

forward. Success, they say, will induce others to join in. It will be interesting to see how they solve their own immediate problems.

One of the five, the SEIU, has many of the characteristics of the "general workers" union they want to abolish. Will it swap away all its government workers and other incidentals?

Will the Laborers union fork over its 500,000 mail handlers and the millions of dollars in federal insurance money that goes along?

Will the Laborers and Carpenters merge into a single construction union and convince, say, the IBEW electrical workers to join and surrender the autonomy it now enjoys in its limited field?

UNITE has nothing to swap; its basic industry is in collapse. Who will define the limits of its ultimate imperial domain?

Such questions, limited when confined within the NUP five, would be magnified a thousand-fold if extended to the rest of the labor movement.

Like many a grand plan emanating out of the minds of great thinkers, the NUP project requires that its leaders be endowed with extraordinary authority.

Naturally, they are impatient with questions of union democracy. Not necessarily hostile to the idea as an abstraction, but impatient with anyone who would focus on the subject as a practical need.

"It is too narrow to talk of union democracy only," writes Lerner. (Would it not be "narrow" to talk only of anything?) "If only 10 percent of workers in an industry are unionized it is impossible to have real union democracy because 90 percent of the workers are excluded."

An elusive formulation which implies that the 10 percent, we who are organized, must wait for our union democracy until that 90 percent come along, which could be a long, long time.

Actually, as AUD insists, union democracy can be a spur to organizing by making the labor movement more attractive to recruits.

But the NUP seems to see union democracy as an inconvenience, even an impediment; in any event, its whole program is permeated with that "narrow" spirit.

Those few massive unions, with their exclusive jurisdiction, would allow no refuge for workers who, fed up with a high-handed officialdom, seek more congenial

representation.

This is the no-raiding pact elevated to the point of fanaticism.

The NUP proposes to eradicate any element of autonomy for state and city AFL-CIO federations; all delegates would be selected by the internationals not by affiliated locals. State and city federation presidents could serve only part time.

The federations would be ruled by full time executive vice presidents, not elected by the delegates, but appointed by the national AFL-CIO.

The local federations would lose control over their own money; all per capita payments would go to the national AFL-CIO.

These organizational trappings are never explicitly justified; they are simply enunciated and shoehorned to fit into the NUP conception of a newly bureaucratized labor movement.

THIS VISION OF a highly centralized labor movement which restrains membership initiative in an authoritarian straightjacket is no mere bad dream, no reverse utopia. The model is already in operation.

The Carpenters union has already been reorganized to show the way. Its locals have been reduced into impotent units.

Merged into sprawling regional councils, locals are not permitted to pay any officers or staff members; their main source of income, the work tax, is taken over by the councils. Locals have lost all control over collective bargaining.

No member can hold any paid staff position in the council or any local without the permission of an all-powerful Executive Secretary Treasurer. Local delegates, who elect the EST, cannot hold a paid union job without his or her endorsement.

Support for the NUP comes from divergent sources: From a younger generation of union leaders, social idealists (for want of any better term) who are impatient with the slow pace of progress and will let nothing to stand in the way.

With them are the congenital authoritarian types.

What binds them together, at this juncture, is the conviction that if they could be relieved of the "narrow" restraints of democracy all power placed in their hands, they could save the labor movement.

Unskilled, low-wage workers, immigrants, and even undocumented workers make up a large part of the membership of

four of the five NUP unions: Laborers, SEIU, Hotel, and UNITE.

Huddled masses yearning to be free, make way for the experts and idealists!

The five unions are already reaching out to others who they feel share their values, in particular, the Teamsters and the United Food and Commercial Workers.

They hope for support from liberal Republicans and from Karl Rove, Bush's chief advisor. They are not likely to reshape the whole labor movement.

Extensive resistance is unavoidable: On the one hand, from grassroots local leaders and rank-and-file activists who would welcome an effective program to organize the unorganized but want a voice in running their own unions; on the other hand, from complacent, entrenched office holders who simply distrust any program of action, good or bad.

In any event, given the current political and economic trends in the country and in the world, even the best program of organization will continue to run into heavy employer resistance.

If AUD is correct, and a major breakthrough for the labor movement requires cultivating the spirit of freedom in unions and in the nation and not its stifling, this plan is off the track.

But it does seem clear that the NUP will put substantial resources into organizing. If they follow through, we can expect progress. Bureaucracy at its best, spiced with a dash of idealism, is bound to chalk up some real achievements in organizing the unorganized.

If they fail, it will be another in a line of disappointing and discouraging efforts.

If they do succeed, the danger is that they, like the Carpenters union, will deepen the trend toward bureaucracy and authoritarianism in the labor movement.

And so while we can't wish them well in their drive to bureaucratize the labor movement, we can only hope for successes in their effort to organize.

In any event, defense of union democracy will remain more relevant than ever. ★

Nuggets

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"Impress his friends?!" Certainly, if Struck wanted to impress his friends, he could be more creative or audacious.

Eating a chicken nugget is not exactly on a level comparable with graffiti art or bringing a weapon to school — a point Struck's mother, Hope Sauer, made clear to the media repeatedly.

NEVERTHELESS, for capitalism, such "crimes" as that innocently committed by Struck are to be treated as if they are a mortal threat to the fragile fabric of civilized society.

Why? The answer to that can be found in the so-called "expert" sought out by the bosses' *Detroit News*: Roger Stollak, psychology professor at Michigan State University.

According to Stollak, teenagers need to be able to accept the fact that some kids will have better food, better clothing, better housing, etc.

"Are our children so fragile they can't handle that?" Stollak pointedly asks.

That's not the point, Professor Privilege.

In fact, teenagers from poor and working-class backgrounds not only accept but also fully understand the fact that they will not have the same kind of future as their fellow students from wealthy or privileged families.

However, school teaches them something else.

Schools, as distributors of capitalist propaganda, build a mythology around the idea that if poor people "pull themselves up by their bootstraps" they will be able to get ahead.

Traditionally, this is called the "Horatio Alger" myth — Alger being one of a number of literary characters used by hireling scribblers to bolster capitalist ideology.

But in 21st-century America, there is no longer any room for Horatio Alger or any kind of mythology that allows poor and working people any thought of a better or decent future.

Nowadays, public schools are nothing more than holding cells for young people, a way station on the road to minimum wage McJobs, workfare and/or prison.

To better prepare them for their bleak future as modern slaves, as per the "rules of

society," capitalism has to crush their desire for a better life.

Deprive them of good jobs, health care, decent food, proper education, adequate housing and democratic rights.

And if they dare to step out of line, punish them ... severely. Keep them "in their place."

That is the ideology of today — a modern, class-based version of the same theories and concepts that justified slavery, segregation and second-class citizenship.

CAPITALISM CAN NO longer afford to hold out the "carrot" of a better future for poor and working people.

The kind of social security that has been offered for decades is now far too expensive (i.e., unprofitable) for the ruling class.

Capitalist "lean production" and globalization have made millions of workers (and their families) little more than "surplus population," to be discarded like a broken or rusted tool.

At best, these millions can serve capitalism as an army of unemployed, to be used to keep wages low and working conditions miserable.

At worst, young men like Struck are to be cannon fodder for one of capitalism's new wars of colonial conquest (in the same way another teenager from a poor background, Jessica Lynch, was used in Iraq).

In the 1840s, a young Karl Marx commented that if social progress were only partial or half-hearted, then all the "old crap" would come back.

This is what we are seeing today. Capitalism tried a partial and half-hearted attempt at social progress with the New Deal and Great Society programs.

Now, because these social advances left capitalism in place, all the "old crap" — social barbarism, fascism, corporate slavery — is coming back.

The case of Robert Struck provides us with many valuable lessons, the most important of which is that capitalism cannot and will not offer a better future for working people.

Instead, it offers second-class citizenship, punitive class-based "rules of society," and a future as bleak and unappetizing as the "mystery meat" Struck was forced to eat.

This is why capitalism cannot be reformed; this is why socialism is the only road that leads working people to a real, meaningful future. ★

The following article originally appeared in the December 2003/January 2004 edition of *Union Democracy Review*.



On the Internet:
www.uniondemocracy.org

Schools

continued from page 16

Needless to say, the complete failure of the “reform board” to do anything but enrich themselves has bolstered cries of outrage.

As the residents of Detroit come closer to the day when they can elect a school board that will be ostensibly accountable to the voters, these cries of outrage get louder and clearer.

ENTER KWAME KILPATRICK. Now the mayor of Detroit, Kilpatrick has staged what can only be described as a cynical power grab.

In his plan, voters would be able to elect a nine-person board that would have very limited power, while the mayor would have the power to appoint the schools CEO.

Kilpatrick, when he presented his plan, was clear that the intent is to prolong the disenfranchisement of Detroit voters. “This new system,” Kilpatrick said while lobbying state legislators in Lansing, “will ensure the reforms now under way will continue.”

Under Kilpatrick’s plan, the school board would be able to review budgets (but cannot set them), monitor student performance (but cannot create policy) and evaluate the CEO (but cannot replace him or her).

In other words, the “elected school board” would be little more than an advisory rubber stamp for an unelected and unaccountable CEO, appointed by the mayor, who would control the daily operations of the district.

Mayor Kilpatrick pitches his plan as the “best chance” to maintain “stability” in the district. Joining him is a chorus of politicians from both parties, many of whom helped strip Detroit of its voting rights in 1999.

An aide to State Senate Majority Leader Dan Sikkema (R-Wyoming) said Kilpatrick’s plan “has some good ideas.”

State Representative Bill McConico (D-Detroit), who helped Kilpatrick draft his power grab proposal, attempted to pass off the right of Detroiters to elect a rubber-stamp board as Lansing “providing an option.”

Of course, the capitalist media chimed in their support for the proposal.

Both the *Detroit News* and *Free Press*, for



Detroit teachers protest outside the state Capitol against more charter schools, March 2003.

example, have been falling over themselves to present Kilpatrick’s plan as a “compromise” meant to counter the “‘us-versus-them’ mentality” coming from those who have the nerve to demand the right to vote.

In this context, it should not come as a surprise that these mouthpieces for the major capitalists in the region, first and foremost the Big Three, present those fighting for basic democratic rights as “playing politics,” and deriding them as the “power-to-the-people crowd.”

Karl Rove would be proud of these bargain-basement hirelings.

HOWEVER, NOT ALL of those involved in the City and state governments are keen on Kilpatrick’s proposal.

The day after Kilpatrick presented his plan to keep Detroit residents effectively disenfranchised, the City Council voted 7-1 against the plan.

Councilwoman Kay Everett, who served on the last elected school board, called the proposal a recipe for “dictatorship.”

Nine of the 16 members of the Detroit delegation to the Michigan State Legislature, including all five state senators, came out against the plan.

Even Governor Jennifer Granholm has balked at the plan, making her signature of the proposal conditional on attaining a “majority of support from the Detroit delegation” — which does not exist at this time.

In addition, community activists who have fought to restore voting rights to Detroit residents since 1999 have called Kil-

patrick’s plan a “betrayal.”

“The legislators should keep their promise, but they are fearful,” said Helen Moore, a spokesperson for the Keep The Vote No Takeover Coalition. “The main issue here is they want to make sure that Detroiters don’t turn out en masse for the presidential elections.”

Sister Moore certainly has a point. All sides in the dispute recognize that the 1999 state takeover of the Detroit Public Schools has been the most divisive issue in the City for the past four years.

A survey done recently by the NAACP found that 71 percent of City residents want an elected school board, and 57 percent want the board to have full power over the district, including the power to appoint a superintendent.

The vote by Detroit residents to restore the elected school board is scheduled for November 2004, as part of the general election.

There is little doubt that the school board vote will bring hundreds of thousands of voters out to the polls that otherwise would not bother.

This mobilization of voters could easily influence the outcome of the other election races being settled at that time, including federal Congressional seats and the presidency. After all, over 90 percent of Detroit residents vote for the Democratic Party in elections.

Moving the vote from November to March 2004 would mean that mobilization would not take place.

MAKE NO MISTAKE, the previous model for administering the school district was not a panacea. The elected, at-large school board was terrible at battling corruption and bureaucratism in the district.

The elected school board was a fountain of waste and malign neglect. Schools often went without essential materials, basic maintenance and decent learning environments. (All three problems persist under the "reform board.")

But it had one distinct advantage over the existing "reform board:" the old school board was elected. The board and its appointees, including the superintendent, were accountable to the people of Detroit.

That difference makes the elected school board a fundamentally better choice over both the existing structure and the one proposed by Mayor Kilpatrick.

As such, Socialists would support the call for a return to the democratically elected school board that was in place prior to 1999, given a choice between it and the other two plans.

We also join with community activists, school workers, residents and all those fighting for the restoration of democratic norms in the City.

The return of an elected school board is a necessary reform, fully supportable by anyone who values democratic rights.

At the same time, the restoration of democratic rights also opens the door to a broader discussion on how democratic control of the schools should look and work.

IN THE EARLY 1970s, during the wave of "community control" that swept through the country, a new structure had been established in Detroit that, for a while, replaced the district-wide school board.

The basis of this structure was the Local School Community Organization (LSCO), a body made up of parents, teachers, school workers and, in some cases, students.

The LSCOs controlled almost every aspect of school functioning, from requisitioning materials to setting curriculum.

The LSCOs met at local, regional (at the time, the school district was divided into eight regions, called "areas") and citywide level.

The All-Area School Community Organization was the highest decision-making body of the district.

During the 1980s, this system was dismantled in favor of Parent-Teacher-Student Associations and a stronger central school board (the traditional model of a school district).

With every step away from the LSCOs, the school district fell further into disrepair and became more and more corrupt — until 1999, when the district was taken over by the state.

We Socialists favor a return to the LSCO system, as a basic model for building real democratic control in the Detroit Public Schools.

Democratically-elected bodies of parents, teachers, school workers and students, coming together to decide how the schools,

and the school district, would function is the best and most effective way of making sure quality education develops.

Such a system, based on real democracy, exercised from the bottom up, would remove the justification for a crushing bureaucracy, luxurious waste and questionable accountability.

The money that would normally feed this monster could then be diverted to such things as building maintenance, hiring teachers (thus reducing class sizes) and purchasing modern educational supplies (new books, computers, lab equipment, etc.).

IN THE COMING election, Socialist candidates will be running for state office across Michigan.

Unlike the Republican and Democratic parties, the Socialist Party of Michigan stands firmly for the restoration of democratic rights to the people of Detroit.

As candidates for state legislature, we Socialists will demand to know what right Lansing has to strip any resident of their basic rights.

Further, we will challenge those current state senators and representatives who have supported stripping

Detroit residents of their rights to justify their actions to the people themselves.

Democratic rights are not negotiable. Any candidate who considers democracy to be a bargaining chip or a needless luxury has no right to hold, or any business occupying, elected office. ★

Parsec

continued from page 16

ally received "in lieu of raises" were not given, due to expiration of the old contract.

As a result, many workers had to tell their children, ranging from less than three months to 16 years old, that there would be a small, or no, Christmas.

Dozens of new toys and hundreds of dollars were donated by SPMI members and supporters, labor activists and friends, for the Parsec workers.

SPMI, WDF and WDC members made the rounds Christmas morning, braving the snow and cold temperatures, to deliver gifts and cards to all the workers and their kids.

Not only the children, but the parents, were thrilled to see these "red" Santa Claus-es at their door, gifts in hand.

"I didn't know what I was going to do," said one Parsec worker to the *Michigan Socialist*. "No bonus meant no Christmas."

Another worker, after seeing the look on his young son's face, just smiled and said, "Good lookin' out. You really came through for us."

The SPMI, WDF and WDC are continuing to work together to build support for the workers at CPR in Detroit, including organizing labor and community support in case they decide to go on strike.

Parsec management has pushed off opening negotiations on a new contract until after the New Year, and it is likely that their offer will not be something on which these workers can live and provide for their families.

Keep reading the *Michigan Socialist* for updates on this small but important struggle. ★



Graphic from Christmas cards given to Parsec/CP Rail workers.



Dictatorship 101

Kilpatrick, GOP move to stop return of democracy

By **MARTIN SCHREADER**

Editor, the *Michigan Socialist*

A LITTLE OVER four years ago, the Republican-controlled Michigan State Legislature stripped the residents of Detroit of their right to vote for the Detroit School Board.

This move, the brainchild of then-Governor John Engler, received support from key Democratic leaders, including Dennis Archer and Kwame Kilpatrick, at the time Detroit Mayor and State House Minority Leader respectively.

The original plan called for the installation of a "reform board," composed of members hand-picked by Engler, in consultation

with the mayor and state legislature. Also, a CEO was to be chosen by the governor, accountable only to him.

In the four years since the imposition of the unelected "reform board," very little has in fact been "reformed:" most classes are still overcrowded; most schools still need basic repairs; MEAP test scores continue to fall; corruption and embezzlement are still rife within the district bureaucracy.

In many respects, the only area of the school district that has seen significant improvements and repairs has been the ... school board offices, which were recently remodeled and furnished with expensive leather couches and chairs.

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Socialists lead Xmas gift drive

By **LISA WELTMAN**

The *Michigan Socialist*

MEMBERS OF THE Socialist Party of Michigan set out to spread a little holiday cheer, and at the same time express their solidarity with workers facing an uphill battle for a decent contract.

The SPMI, along with the Workers' Defense Fund and supporters of the Workers Democracy Caucus of National Production Workers Union Local 707, organized a Christmas gift drive for NPWU members working at the Canadian Pacific Railway terminal in Detroit.

The workers are fighting for a decent contract after four years of low pay, lousy benefits and no raises. They work for a subcontractor of CPR, Parsec, Inc., of Cincinnati, Ohio.

The reason the idea of a Christmas gift drive came about was because the annual \$1,200 bonuses that workers usu-

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Nuggets of wisdom

By **L. MEYERS**

The *Michigan Socialist*

SOMETIMES, it is in the small things we find the big lessons.

Take the case of Robert Struck, a freshman at Anchor Bay High School in. Casco Township, Michigan.

Recently, Struck was suspended for five days for an awful and heinous crime — a crime so horrendous that the school administration made an example out of him.

"One of the things we don't want to teach is that a child can go around the rules of society," said Paul Rogers, director of human resources for the school district.

What exactly was this great crime? How did young Mr. Struck attempt to "go around the rules of society?"

He ate a chicken nugget. Or, more accurately, he ate a chicken nugget that he was too poor to afford.

Struck, like millions of school-age children around the country, receives government-subsidized school lunches.

In the Anchor Bay School District, those lunches are something just above prison

food — formally a "balanced meal," but about as appetizing as the plastic wrappers around the students' drinking straws (or those little pink erasers they sell for an outrageous price).

But, as one might suspect, those kinds of school lunches are not very appealing. So, in order to "jazz up" the lunch line, the school district also offered less nutritious, but more appealing, selections.

Next to the unidentifiable "mystery meat" and corrugated cardboard they call "lasagna" sit freshly-prepared pizza, chicken nuggets, french fries and salads.

But those latter selections are for those who can afford them, not those whose meals are paid for by the government.

The school administrators are adamant about the importance of preserving this class-based division among the students.

That is why they have gone to great lengths to paint this situation in the coded language often reserved for gang activity or other forms of "anti-social behavior."

"He was trying to steal the chicken to impress his friends," asserted Rogers.

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