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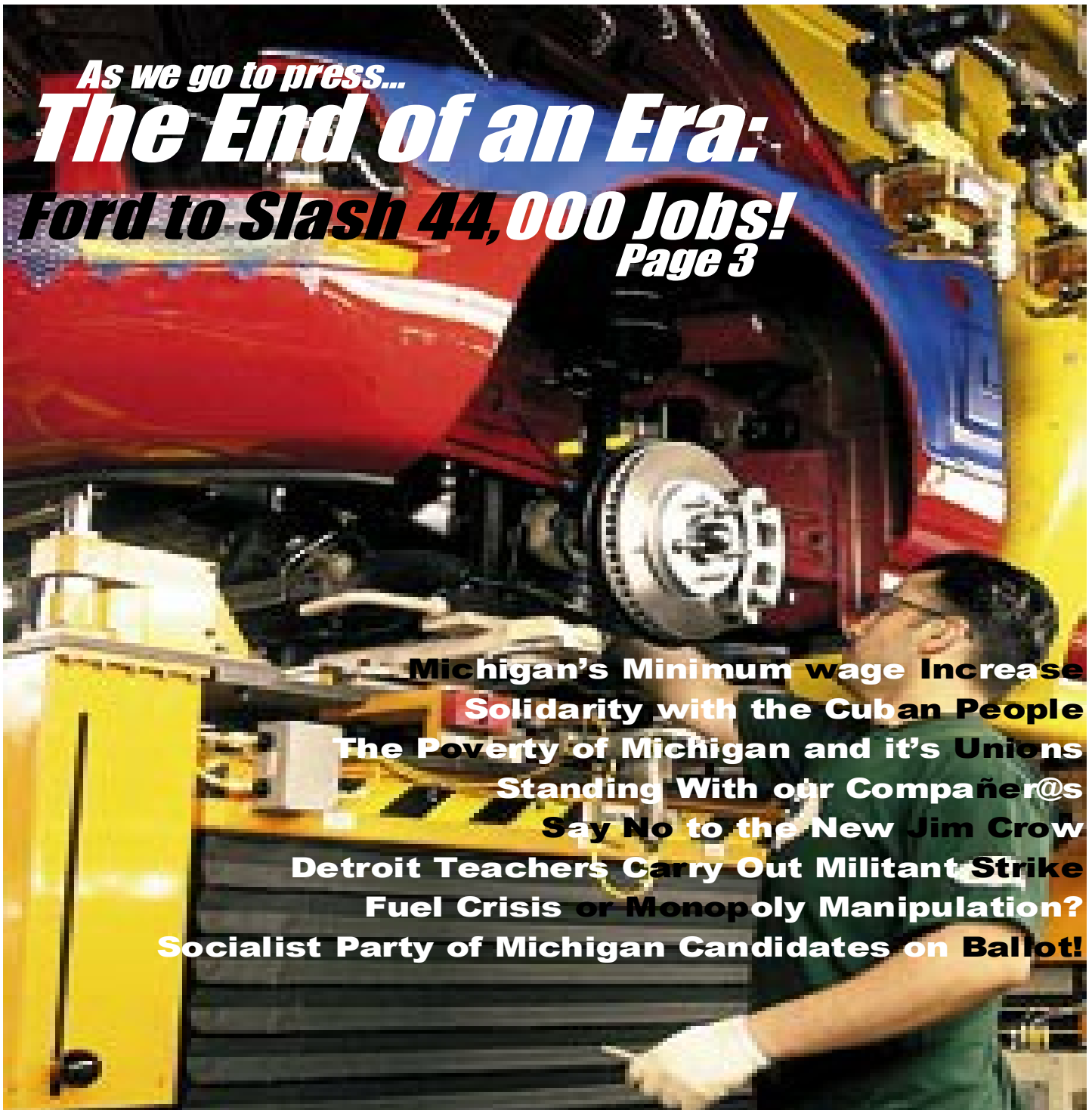
Voice of the Socialist Party of Michigan

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FALL 2006

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The Michigan Socialist is the publication of the Socialist Party of Michigan (SPMI), affiliate of the Socialist Party USA. P.O. Box 3285 Kalamazoo, MI 49003; email: [spmichigan.org](mailto:spmichigan.org); WWW: <http://www.spmichigan.org>

All submissions to the Michigan Socialist can be sent by email or snail mail. Submissions sent by email should be sent to: [spmichigan.org](mailto:spmichigan.org). Hardcopy submissions should be sent to: SPMI P.O. Box 3285 Kalamazoo, MI 49003.

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## Michigan's minimum wage increase:

# A paltry placation

**By MATT ERARD**  
Chairperson, SPMI

On March 28th Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm signed legislation that will increase Michigan's minimum wage from 5.15 to 6.95 per hour- the first increase in Michigan's minimum wage since 1997. The increase is expected to impact 30% of all Michigan households.

The legislation followed a largely union-based petitioning effort by the Michigan Needs a Raise Coalition (MNRC) to place a referendum to increase the minimum wage on the state ballot in the November elections. It was not until the MNRC was projected to obtain a sufficient number of signatures to ensure that the proposal would appear on the ballot that the state legislature decided to enact the legislation.

The raise passed by the state legislature and Governor Granholm lacked a number of critical aspects of MNRC's proposed ballot initiative. Although the legislation increased the minimum wage a meager ten cents beyond what the initiative proposed, the state legislature's increase did not lock the increase into the state's constitution nor mandate an annual minimum wage increase as the ballot proposal would have done. The political implication of raising the minimum wage ten cents beyond what the petition drive proposed was far more significant than that of the measly extra dime. By continuing the petition drive, petitioners would be forced to collect signatures for decreasing the minimum wage. According to the pro-capitalist National Federation of Independent Businesses, whose stated objective is to fight "big labor," the action by the legislature resulted in the "lesser of two evils."

The state legislature's intentions in finally passing the increase could not have been clearer. For nine years the Michigan legislature has overwhelmingly blocked any attempt to increase the state minimum wage beyond the \$5.15 an hour mandated by the federal Fair Labor Standards Act. The recent legislation was a decisive attempt to bring an end to the coalition of workers organized around the petition drive.

Republicans particularly feared the ballot proposal's potential to bring large numbers of low-wage workers to the polls on Election Day. Democrats had the benefit of courting already mobilized union workers. Had these workers not already proven successful in getting the proposal slated for the November ballot, however, neither party

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As We Go to Press...

## **The end of an era: Ford to slash 44,000 jobs!**

By **MATT ERARD**  
Chairperson, SPMI

On September 15<sup>th</sup> the Ford Motor Company announced that it has revised its “New Way Forward” plan to slash 44,000 union jobs and close sixteen North American auto plants by the end of 2008. Ford’s announcement has come on the eve of widespread layoffs and pay cuts that have permeated throughout the automotive industry in the past few years, particularly affecting workers in Michigan. While the company has attempted to soften its public image from this attack by offering workers buyout packages

ranging from \$65-\$140,000, one is pressed to find a single instance in the corporate press where this has been contrasted with the \$10-20 million salaries of its top executives who directly benefit from this cut. The argument that the company lacks the money to maintain these jobs is an utter deception. The “New Way Forward” is in reality the way to keep Ford executives’ extreme concentration of wealth going forward as the lives and communities of thousands of workers who created this wealth are shattered.

Many writers and historians have referred to Ford’s decision as

the “end of an era:” the end of the time in history when a blue collar worker had a chance at what is so often referred to as ‘the American dream.’ Ford’s recent move, however, also marks the end of another era: the post-Depression economic era where Keynesian reforms still had the potential to setback the economic degeneration of the capitalist system. The economic decline of the American auto industry in the current period is the product of escalating economic crises endemic to the capitalist system. The widespread moves toward increased automation within the auto

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## **Detroit teachers carry out militant strike –**

**Massive pressures against them: Socialist Party of Michigan statement on the Detroit teachers’ strike**

The Detroit Federation of Teachers, influenced by deteriorating conditions and a long term educational effort by militant rank and file teachers, recently took an heroic stance in their two week long strike against the Detroit Public Schools district management, a gang of liars and manipulators and wasters of money. The teachers said very clearly that, regardless of any court orders and injunctions, they **WOULD NOT** go back into the schools until there was an acceptable contract agreement that

was then ratified by the membership. And so, even after a court injunction against them from supposedly "liberal" judge Susan Borman to return to the classrooms during negotiations (an age old ploy to weaken strike struggles and disunify strikers), the teachers held strong and remained on the picket lines. Many rank and file teacher spokespersons are comparing their struggle to the US civil rights movement, the fight for Indian independence led by Mahatma Gandhi, the Underground Railroad, the union struggles of the



**Striking Detroit teachers picket outside Cass Technical High School.**

1930's, and the American Revolution itself. They are saying clearly that unjust and oppressive laws must be broken, violated, disobeyed. That this is a well established American tradition;

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# The Poverty of Michigan and its Unions

By **JOE DENEEN**  
The Michigan Socialist

Michigan has undergone some serious transformations in the past few decades. It was once the beacon of industrialization and the auto industry in general where folks with nothing more than a high school diploma (or none at all like my maternal grandfather) could get work with good wages and retire with comfortable pensions, like my maternal grandparents. Today much of this has been severely crippled and such jobs no longer exist as college degrees are required and knowing a current employee is really the only sure way to get hired. Union membership among Michigan workers has declined from 26% to 20.5% in just the past fifteen years and most of union workers in Michigan are employed by the state, leaving the vast majority of us out in the cold on our own.

Based on absurd poverty standards (\$19,971 for a family of four is the cut-off?!), the poverty levels have been increasing across every city in Michigan. Flint has outpaced Detroit in the last five years jumping from 26.4% in 2000 to 32.5% in 2005 in becoming the city with the highest poverty in Michigan. One can only imagine what horrors these statistics would express if the poverty standard were adjusted to current living standards. We already know the minimum wage is decades behind inflation. Sure, Michigan recently increased its state minimum wage

to a measly \$6.95, a boost from \$5.20, but a far cry from a living wage projected to be at least \$12 an hour.

Throughout all this decay, you have multi-billionaire corporations like GM looking for all sorts of concessions each time a union contract comes up. My mother has worked for GM as a temp worker via Kelly's Services for the past twelve years and has witnessed GM's restructuring, particularly the laying off of GM

***“Workers should work to organize themselves independently of the established corporate unions; after all, unions are the people in them, not the AFL-CIO label.”***

workers and their replacement with temp workers who are non-union and aren't considered GM workers, per se, and can be sent packing for any reason at any moment.

It is in this scene that the Detroit School Board is attempting to bully the teachers into accepting \$90 million in concessions, which amounts to at least \$10,000 in yearly cuts per teacher in salary and benefits. The teachers have since gone on strike this week, but it has little effect at this point since Michigan doesn't begin school until after Labor Day. It is likely the school board, in conjunction with the union bureaucracy, will

use this time to bully the teachers to accept a lesser concession, perhaps \$60 million. If the strike continues once the school year begins, one may see the union bureaucracy break from the rank-and-file and attempt to unilaterally break the strike on behalf of the school board.

In a Detroit News survey, approximately 60% oppose the strike, though how many of those polled actually live within the Detroit school district is unknowable. The media tends to echo this view by stressing that striking is illegal in Michigan, and I've read comments suggesting the teachers should be rounded up and jailed accordingly.

Indeed, there is tension, if not resentment and reaction towards unions. Much of it centers on the perception that union workers are overpaid and lazy; really, union workers, at least state ones, are paid a living wage that every worker should receive. It is upsetting to hear people taking the opposite position that instead of raising everyone up, we should bring others down to our level, to our socioeconomic misery. Lately I have witnessed the occasional airing of anti-union ads put out by The Center for Union Facts that aid in anti-union attitudes. Although the group's points regarding union corruption, incompetent bureaucracy and misuse of union funds (like funding Democrats) are not entirely inaccurate, these criticisms of union leadership

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# Say no to the new Jim Crow!

## Socialist Party of Michigan statement on the Michigan “Civil Rights” Initiative

On November 7th Michigan voters will be asked to decide on a state Constitutional amendment to eliminate much of the still grossly insufficient progress that has been achieved in recent decades in the ongoing struggle against the systems of institutional racism and sexism. The deceptively named Michigan Civil Rights Initiative will not only eliminate all public sector affirmative action programs in the state of Michigan, but will also likely eliminate gender specific services such as women’s healthcare. The MCRI is the Michigan version of the 1996 and 1998 California and Washington Civil Rights Initiatives, all three of which have been led by millionaire businessman Ward Connerly. The MCRI is supported and funded by a litany of corporations, millionaires and white supremacists from right-wing media mogul Rupert Murdoch to the Mystic Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

The consequences in California and Washington have been devastating with drops in minority representation wherever the proposal took effect, particularly in employment and education. After the California initiative passed, dozens of employment programs pertaining to minority and female recruitment, appointment,

promotion, transfer, training, and career development were immediately eliminated. Similarly educational and financial aid programs for women and minorities were abolished and minority enrollment in Washington and California universities has rapidly declined. Despite the fact that Michigan’s college-age population is nearly 20% African American, African Americans compose only 5.9% of the student body at the University of Michigan, even with the meager affirmative action programs that exist today. Judging by its effects in other states, the University of Michigan successfully argued in the 2004 Supreme Court case Grutter v. Bollinger, the elimination of affirmative action is expected to cause minority enrollment to drop by an additional 75%.

Like the anti-gay marriage amendment of 2004, the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative is yet another attempt by capitalists and extreme reactionaries to divide the working class in the struggle against its common oppressor and to rollback the victories against systematic discrimination that it has achieved. The Socialist Party of Michigan calls for the expansion of affirmative action programs and the establishment of reparations in both the public and private sector as part of the struggle to abolish

the real system of racial preferences in our society: the statistically indisputable white privilege that remains omnipresent throughout all of our institutions. We call on all Michigan workers to unite against this proposal and continue the struggle for the social equality. ■



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## **Solidarity With the Cuban People**

**By MATT ANDREWS**  
**Co-Vice Chair, SPUSA**

The Socialist Party USA defends the right of the Cuban people to self-determination.

While undergoing surgery, Fidel Castro has ceded power to his brother, Raul Castro, and the future of his health is uncertain. Fidel Castro is almost 80 years old and has been the Cuban head of state for 47 years. Even if Castro recovers his health and returns to power for now, Cuba must soon develop a plan for life after Castro. Imperialist policy makers in Washington DC and Cuba's old exiled ruling class are salivating at

a possible opportunity to return Cuba to its pre-revolution condition of subjugation under US hegemony. A survey of other Caribbean nations proves that this is not a path to prosperity, security or freedom. Capitalism will only continue to cause misery for the majority of the world's marginalized and working classes.

The Socialist Party USA is prepared to protest and take action to ensure that the US government does not intervene in Cuba's domestic political affairs. We believe that independence from foreign governments, foreign capital, and economic equality are prerequisites to self-determination.

## **Standing With our Compañer@s**

**By RAUL CANO**  
**Co-Chair, SPUSA**

Deep in South Texas, in the lower Rio Grande Valley, the "border" is nothing more than a river that once roared with fury but now only manages a whimpering flow. For those of us who live in this nether land known as the Frontera, it's a speed bump in the constant traffic of people, culture and goods. Realistically the geographical "border" no longer really defines where one country begins and another ends. In a wider scope, the same can be said of the concept of nations. Politicians know this, but are not beyond using the issue for their own benefit.

Throughout the history of the United States, the immigrant issue has been a convenient political ploy. Fueled by overt and covert racism, fear mongering and scapegoating, immigrants once again come to the forefront as a wedge issue to distract the American people from the real problems. HR 4437 proposes to criminalize those that are undocumented, to build a fence along the border and to impose heavy fines for employers who hire undocumented workers. In the typical "good cop bad cop" game meant to reflect a democratic process, this act panders to the extreme right. The senate plays the voice of reason and returns with the more sensible guest worker

**HANDS OFF**  
**CUBA!**  
**HELP DEFEND CUBA'S INDEPENDENCE**

At the same time, freedom of speech, the right to organize, and multi-party elections are equally important. The Socialist Party USA stands in solidarity with democratic socialists in Cuba who seek to push the revolutionary transformation of Cuba forward against US imperialism and the regressive tide of the global market system. ■



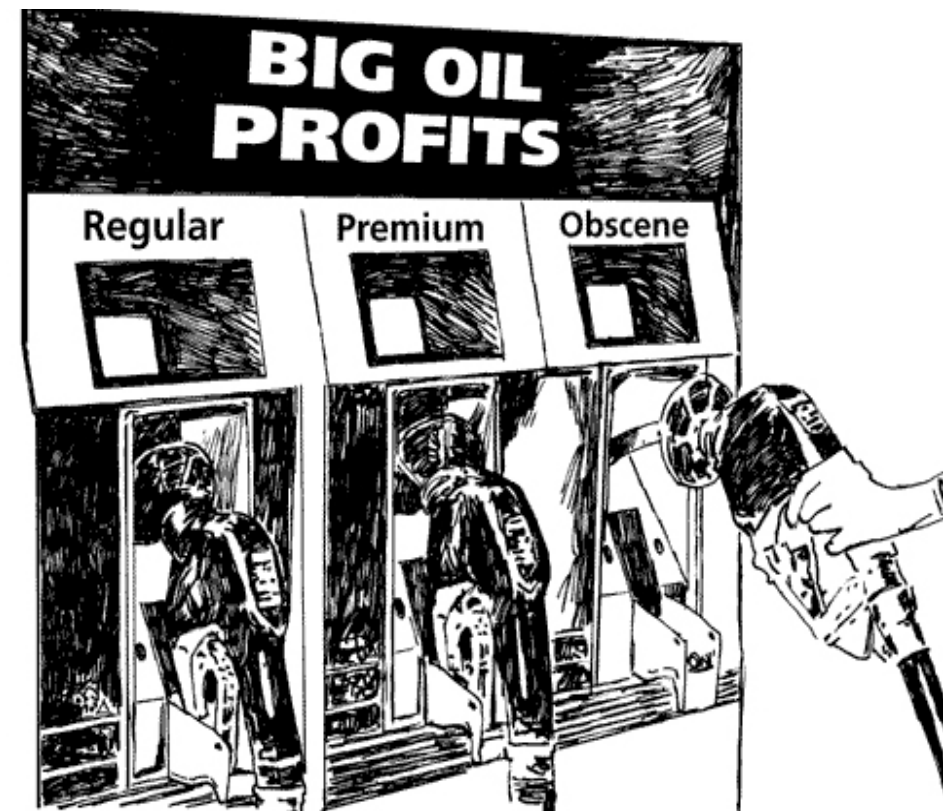
program and the further militarization of the border. The Democrats will grumble, as usual, and then will accept the guest worker program and a cumbersome legalization process as the "best we could do" option. The ruling class will get points for compassion and continue to have a reserve pool of exploitable labor.

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# Fuel Crisis or Monopoly Manipulation?

## Socialist Party Statement on the Rising Gas Prices

The retail prices of basic fuels and gasoline have reached ever growing crisis levels for the average working class, poor, and even middle class American. In an economy that is largely dependent on petroleum-based products of all kinds, this trend threatens to swamp the American people in a spiral of budget-busting inflation in the prices of most of the necessities of life. This winter, the costs of fuel oil and natural gas may lead to thousands of utility cut-offs and real emergency survival conditions for millions of working and oppressed people. We are constantly told by the big oil monopolies that there is a "shortage" of this and a delay in oil production and all other phony excuses to justify the price gouging that they carry out against us. The truth is that the energy industry does not even operate according to any "laws" of supply and demand. It is made up of a handful of close knit, giant corporations with interlocking owners that manipulate the "market" to suit their aim of controlling the entire world's energy production, and profit. They, to a large extent, control the US government and push for wars of conquest to gain control and ownership of the world's resources, such as in Afghanistan and Iraq. They even have the cold audacity to take advantage of an extreme disaster like hurricane Katrina to cry



"shortage" and increase prices to boost their already obscene profit margins. Temporary price reductions do not change this picture, and are only part and parcel of the manipulation of the market and public opinion. We of the Socialist Party-USA are fed up. We know that the ultimate solution to the so-called "energy crisis" is the complete social takeover and ownership of the entire energy industry and all natural resources, including petroleum, under the democratic control of the energy workers, the working people in general, energy

technology and production experts, affected communities, and the consuming public. But this will take nothing short of a revolutionary upsurge of the people to accomplish.

In the mean time we demand the following as immediate steps, which both deal with the immediate problem and point the way toward a socialist solution:

- 1) By emergency legislation and federal government decree, roll back gasoline and diesel prices to pre-Katrina

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# Both 2006 Socialist Party of Michigan candidates to appear on November ballot

**By The Editorial Collective**  
**The Michigan Socialist**

The Socialist Party of Michigan is fielding two candidates in the November 2006 elections: Jacob Woods who is running for State Board of Education and Matt Erard who is running for 53rd District State Representative in Ann Arbor. Woods and Erard are running on full socialist programs based on public ownership, worker control, and democratic economic planning; giving Michigan workers an alternative the ever increasing war mongering, outsourcing, union-busting, falling wages and benefits, growing inequality, and attacks on essential social programs that have characterized conditions in the state and nation since the last elections in 2004.

As a result of Michigan's obscenely undemocratic ballot-access laws designed to keep socialist candidates off the ballot, the Socialist Party of Michigan has been so far unable to achieve ballot access in the state since it was re-chartered by the Socialist Party in 2000. Despite this obstacle, however, the Democrats and Republicans who designed these laws have been just as unsuccessful at keeping SPMI candidates off the ballot in 2006 as they have been in the preceding

two elections.

SPMI State Representative candidate Matt Erard became qualified for the November ballot on July 19th after an extraordinarily arduous four-month petitioning effort to be placed on the ballot as an independent. Despite his nomination and affiliation with the Socialist Party, Erard's name will be listed on the ballot as a candidate with "No Party Affiliation" due to the fact that Michigan is among a minority of states that does not allow candidates from parties without ballot access to designate a party name on the ballot once they have qualified as independents.

The 2006 campaign of Matt Erard will mark the first time in decades that a Socialist has qualified for State Representative in the city of Ann Arbor. "Whether or not we win the election in November, the fact that Ann Arbor voters will have a Socialist alternative on the ballot for this office is a victory in and of itself" Erard said.

Although Erard noted that Ann Arbor has historically been an overwhelmingly Democratic city, he argued that rampant capitulation and participation by the Democratic Party in recent years in war mongering and attacks on democratic and economic rights have caused widespread



disillusionment with the Democratic Party among progressive voters and increased recognition of its status as a corporate appendage.

SPMI State Board of Education candidate Jacob Woods became qualified for the November ballot on August 6th after getting the nomination of the Green Party of Michigan at its 2006 state nominating convention. Unlike Green-Socialist relations in a number of other states, the Green Party of Michigan has traditionally been very friendly to the Socialist Party of Michigan out of solidarity with many of the party's demands and recognition of the anti-democratic nature of Michigan's ballot access laws. For the past three elections, the Green Party of Michigan has allowed Socialist Party candidates to have spots on its ballot line even while campaigning as dual-Socialist Party candidates on socialist programs. In 2002 the Green Party of Michigan nominated SPMI candidate Dan D. Karam for 26th District State Representative. In 2004 the Green Party of Michigan nominated SPMI candidates Ben Burgis for Michigan State

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# A Few Additional Candidates to Consider:

## SPMI Statement on Other 2006 Campaigns of Potential Interest to Michigan Working People

The Socialist Party USA Constitution requires approval from the Socialist National Committee for state affiliates to endorse non-Socialist Party candidates. Since the SPMI did not receive such approval from the National Committee this year, we are providing a critical analysis of some of the non-Socialist Party 2006 campaigns in Michigan which we feel come closest to providing a working people's alternative to the capitalist candidates in their respective races. While numerous Socialist Party of Michigan members have individually endorsed these campaigns, we as a party cannot endorse any candidates this year who have not been nominated by the Socialist Party.

The Socialist Party of Michigan gives critical support to the program of the following Green Party of Michigan candidates running on the 2006 Stop the War Slate: David Sole for U.S. Senate, Kevin Carey for State Board of Education, Lauren Elizabeth Spencer for State MSU Board of Trustees, Michael Merriweather for WSU Board of Governors, Kristen Hamel for 1<sup>st</sup> District State Representative, Lloyd Clark for 32<sup>nd</sup> District State Representative, Kyle McBee for 13<sup>th</sup> District State Senate. We particularly take note of the candidacy of Kevin Carey who is running along with our own

candidate, Jacob Woods, for State Board of Education due to the radical demands in his individual campaign platform, his past educational work with the SPMI, and his support of the SPMI's call for United Left Front discussions and activism. The Stop the War Slate is running on a decisively pro-working class platform that emphasizes many of the most urgent common struggles of working people in the current period.

The stop the war slate platform does not limit itself to the imperialist wars abroad but also offers concrete demands in opposition to the domestic wars on civil liberties, oppressed peoples, immigrants, the environment, and the American working class. The Stop the War Slate succeeds in providing an alternative to the disenfranchisement of the working majority by the Democratic and Republican parties whose candidates would never dream of raising any of the demands in the Stop the War Slate platform. Unfortunately, however, it provides the illusion that simply voting for an alternative party willing to raise these issues can bring forth genuine change. While the Stop the War Slate attempts to link the sections of its platform in opposition to various forms of war, it fails to provide any analysis or denunciation of the system of which all of these wars are merely

a product.

The platform immediately calls into question who is waging these interconnected wars. One is pressed to wonder if the framers of the Stop the War Slate platform simply assume that they're coincidental. Unfortunately the Stop the War Slate has chosen not to provide the class-based systemic analysis to answer this question. The several Stop the War Slate candidates who are members of the Workers World Party warrant particular criticism for this opportunistic omission since they cannot claim ignorance or disagreement with such a connection. No where does its program make clear that is the *capitalist* class that is waging these wars against working people at home or abroad nor does it ever mention the potential of the working class to collectively resist. No where does its program call for the international unification of working people against the *capitalist system*, or even for social ownership and worker control of major industries. The program highlights many elements of the problem, but does not provide real solutions. It is a list of symptoms that fails to acknowledge the disease or the cure. The Socialist Party of Michigan fully supports the platform of the Stop the War Slate, but we urge its candidates stop hiding their underlying socialist convictions.

Transitional demands, which compose the entirety of the Stop the War Slate platform, are severely limited when those who propose them relinquish their duty to connect them to the revolutionary path that can truly lead to their realization.

The Socialist Party of Michigan also critically supports the program of the campaign of Green Party candidate James Wolbrink for 5<sup>th</sup> District State Senate. Wolbrink's is particularly deserving of acknowledgment as the only Green Party of Michigan candidate calling for social ownership and worker control of the economy. The first plank in Wolbrink's platform states "Businesses should be either publicly owned or owned by employees, but should always be run by employees (yes, this can and does work)." Wolbrink additionally highlights that the owners of industry control all of society's dominant institutions including the state and calls for an extensive restructuring of political, economic, and social institutions in the interests of working people.

Despite his rather cogent analysis of the capitalism at the macro-level, however, an explicit analysis of the class struggle cannot be found on his website. While his campaign expresses opposition to the captains of industry and support for workers who he correctly identifies as anyone who must work for a living, at no point on his campaign website does he identify either the owners of industry or working people as social classes. It therefore goes without saying that

his campaign platform is lacking in any analysis that the working class is the only social force that lead the way toward the central demands in his platform. One similarly must wonder why a candidate who is calling for economic democracy and worker control of all businesses is ostensibly afraid to use the term *socialist*.

Wolbrink's platform is also weak on issues of civil rights and the liberation of women and oppressed peoples. While Wolbrink's platform calls for full human and civil rights for all people, it says nothing about the issues of racism or sexism and lists no demands or support for movements that address these issues. For a candidate who seeks to represent working people in Detroit, a city that is 80% African American and plagued by systematic racism, this is particularly neglectful. To say nothing about affirmative action or a woman's right to choose at a time when both these rights under widespread attack is also an inexcusable oversight.

While we commend Wolbrink for making economic democracy and workers' rights the cornerstones of his platform, we urge him to recognize that socialist candidates will never be more successful by opportunistically hiding what we are or where we stand on the potential of the working class for self-emancipation. We additionally encourage Wolbrink to reevaluate the Civil/Human Rights Section of his platform and make sure from now on that such vital issues are never overlooked in any future

campaigns. The Socialist Party also gives critical support to the campaign program of Jerome White who is running as the Socialist Equality Party candidate for 12<sup>th</sup> District Representative in Congress.. White is running on a full socialist program which provides a systemic analysis that clearly makes the connections between economic exploitation, imperialist war, and the fundamental assault on democratic and economic rights that characterize the current stage of the capitalist system. Additionally the SEP 2006 electoral program shows a clear understanding of the need for an independent, international working class movement as the only solution to the attacks on working people around the world that result directly from the current social order.

While the 2006 program of the Socialist Equality Party candidates claims that it "opposes every form of nationalism, ethnic and religious chauvinism, and racism," however, it condemns what it refers to as "racial politics" and "racial constituencies" and subsequently expresses opposition to all affirmative action programs. During a year when a state ballot proposal seeks to roll back a tremendous amount of the progress that working people have achieved against against institutional racism and sexism over the course of decades, such a position could not be more backward or reckless.

For the SEP to deny the legitimacy of a working class "racial constituency" is to deny the existence of white privilege

altogether. At every economic stratum white working people, while oppressed as members of the working class, are entitled to an unspoken privilege which their brothers and sisters of color are denied. While the Socialist Equality Party argues that affirmative action divides the working class, it fails to recognize that the alternative is a working class immensely more divided by the lack of any institutional measure to counter white racial privilege. It is a backwards logic that holds that racism can only be countered through a unified working class and socialist transformation without recognizing that every measure to combat racism and white privilege must be realized before such a unified movement to lead this transformation can ever come into being. While the Socialist Equality Party notes that modern affirmative action programs often disproportionately benefit the more economically privileged among oppressed minority peoples, the solution is clearly to strengthen such programs, not to abolish them! As long as the white segment of the working class is willing to divide themselves from oppressed minorities over affirmative action, it is too socially backward to ever join the working class movement that can lead a socialist transformation. The capitalist class fears the strengthening of affirmative action programs, just as it does reparations, because these programs will help to break down the barriers of institutional racism that truly divide the working class

in the long term. It is precisely this reason that capitalists have chosen to put the elimination of public sector affirmative action on the November ballot.

The Socialist Equality Party's 2006 electoral program is also weak on the issue of feminism and women's liberation. As with racism it fails to recognize patriarchy as an interconnected, but independent system from capitalism that must be combated directly through feminist movements and direct institutional measures such as affirmative action. Although the SEP's program at least expresses opposition to racism, instead of expressing opposition to sexism, it only expresses opposition to discrimination on the "basis of sex." The program is therefore devoid of any recognition of sexism as a system of *male* privilege or the deep interconnection between gender and power that permeates throughout society's institutions.

We urge Jerry White and the rest of the Socialist Equality Party to renounce its reactionary position on affirmative action and to recognize the direct struggles toward the elimination of racial and gender privilege as essential components of a socialist transformation. ■

## **Minimum Wage**

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would have likely given the increase a serious chance. Despite the fact that proposed minimum wage increases in Michigan have

failed to get even a single hearing in the last several legislative sessions, the recent legislation following the petition drive passed unanimously in the Senate and passed by 73 to 34 in the House.

What was most threatened the puppeteers of both capitalist parties, however, was not the petitioning campaign's potential to increase the number of low wage workers voting in November, but the potential for a continuation and possible deepening of a class-based political struggle on the part of working people. While both the Democratic and Republican parties realize that the working class will never achieve political expression by voting for either one of them, both parties understand that independent movements of working people based along class lines have historically been the most effective means of achieving radical change and of building class consciousness.

Despite the crucial components of the ballot initiative that the legislation lacked, the union bureaucrats and Democratic Party "activists" who supported the petitioning campaign did not fail to perform their duties. Under pressure from its supposed leaders, the Michigan Needs a Raise Coalition dropped the ballot initiative almost immediately after the legislation was passed. As stated by MNRC Director and former Democratic State Representative John Freeman, "We think it makes sense to stop the campaign and accept credit."

Although the increase does not go into effect until October, Michigan legislators have already

begun to draw up plans to undermine it. Michigan House Commerce Committee Chair Bill Huizenga wrote that he plans to introduce legislation that will allow non-high school graduates under the age of 18 to be paid \$1 under the minimum wage and college and university employed students to be paid only 85% of the minimum wage. Such efforts would not be possible if the petition campaign had been successful in amending the State Constitution to include the minimum wage. As stated by House Republican Spokesman Matt Resch, "[legislators] decided to pass it quickly and deal with the consequences later."

The recent increase of \$1.80 an hour does not come close to bringing essential relief to hundreds of thousands of Michigan workers. Michigan's increase came only weeks before the \$400 million retirement package given by Exxon-Mobile to its former chairman Lee Raymond, despite skyrocketing gas prices impairing millions of American workers. Although the United States remains the wealthiest nation in the world, over forty percent of its wealth is owned by the capitalists at the top one percent of its population. Not only will the recent increase do nothing to limit outrageous social inequality, it fails to even make serious progress at ensuring access for all workers to the basic costs of living.

Socialists call for immediately implementing a minimum wage of \$15 an hour, indexed to inflation, and a maximum wage of no more than

ten times the minimum. Ultimately, however, socialists call for the abolition of the wage system itself, which exists to enrich the capitalist class on the backs of workers by paying them only crumbs of the wealth they produce to keep them generating profits for their paymasters. The key to ending wage exploitation lies not with capitalist politicians but with the organized direct action of the working majority. ■

## End of an Era

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industry during the past half century have exemplified one of the capitalist system's greatest contradictions. As workers have been replaced with machines in order to maximize short term profits, the ability of the industry to profit in the long term through the exploitation of labor has been reduced. As a result Ford has lost tens of millions of dollars in recent years and as a for-profit oligopolistic entity, it is willing to sacrifice the livelihoods of its workers to ensure that its owner's bottom line continues to be inflated to the greatest possible extent. The only viable solution to this vicious cycle of decline is to place the auto-industry, like all other industries under social ownership and worker control. Only then can the economic crises leading to the industry's demise be rectified and only then can the industry be made accountable to the workers who created its wealth and to the public at large. The transformation necessary to prevent the ultimate

collapse of the American automotive manufacturing can only be realized if its workers are able to decisively break from the UAW bureaucracy and take action into their own hands with the widespread solidarity of the rest of the working class. The potential for tinkering reforms to extend the system's life has clearly run dry. ■

## Detroit Teachers

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a right and DUTY in order to defend Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. These rank and file leaders are absolutely right.

Then, during a secret, closed negotiation "meeting" on September 11th, the union President and executive board were bullied and threatened by Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick ( a notorious would-be union buster, privatizer, and corporate servant), by "liberal" governor Jennifer Granholm, and by a host of other "dignitaries", and they tentatively approved what is reported by rank and file spokespersons to be a contract proposal that is filled with concessions and surrenders that will continue the hostile and crisis ridden reality for teachers and students in the Detroit school system.

This is unacceptable, pure and simple, and many Detroit teachers saw it that way, said so, and voted as such at the mass teachers' meeting on the night of Tuesday September 12th, even though the union brass tried time and time again to close debate

before everyone, especially militant rank and file leaders, had said their piece. Rank and file militants made it clear that teachers have fought too long to let this concession ridden contract go through now, and that it would only make their problems and the problems of students and the community worse. However, many teachers at the meeting, a SLIGHT majority, felt that if the strike went on they would be intensely up against the whole political machine/corporate media/repressive apparatus in their struggle to get a just and livable contract. They obviously felt, tragically, that the proposed contract was about as good as they were going to get, and so the next day the teachers went back into the schools, awaiting a formal balloted vote to soon be completed.

We of the Socialist Party of Michigan feel that the slim majority of teachers have more than likely made a serious error here and that the arguments of the militants should have been given more consideration by them. But it is not our call. It is up to the teachers themselves. And given the array of forces against them, and the cowardly surrender by the "leadership" of the Detroit Federation of Teachers (and the silence of the other "leaders" of other unions, whose main occupation for years has been ramming concessions down the throats of their own members), the rank and file teachers can't be fairly seen as having been too timid themselves.

The stark fact is that in order for teachers or any other

workers to make significant gains in this day and age there is going to have to be a deep going sea change in the nature of the unions, peoples' movements, and the political/attitudinal orientation of social struggles. It's going to take the united, militant, class struggle motivated mobilization of THE ENTIRE LABOR MOVEMENT (made up of fully democratic, mass, rank and file controlled unions), THE WORKING CLASS IN GENERAL, THE COMMUNITIES AT LARGE, all progressive social activists and forces, students, the poor and unemployed and all popular layers of society working together and in tandem. If there was going to be a real victory for the Detroit teachers, these kinds of multiplied forces would have had to come to their aid and support. Only then could the majority of teachers have felt strong enough to persevere as they fought on against the anti-labor atmosphere that permeates today's society. Otherwise, some kind of sell out or concession contract was almost inevitable. And so it happened.

However, even though it only went so far this time, the Detroit teachers have provided an example, in mild form, that unions and workers everywhere must begin to emulate, extend, and deepen--- We must build the forces to massively violate the anti-union, slave-labor laws of this country, such as Taft-Hartley. TO HELL WITH INJUNCTIONS AND COURT ORDERS! Pickett massively. Shut down struck facilities. KEEP SCABS OUT! Carry out support strikes,

secondary boycotts and hot cargo agreements and actions. OCCUPY STRUCK FACILITIES. DEMAND THAT CORPORATIONS AND ALL EMPLOYERS OPEN THEIR BOOKS TO THE WORKERS. NO BUSINESS SECRETS! If they're really "too poor" to meet just worker demands, let's see the evidence. If the capitalists and their fellow travelers in the social services can't run things in a rational manner, LET THE WORKERS CONTROL THINGS THEMSELVES, and do it all regardless of what judges, two faced union hacks, politicians and police and so on say. If the system cracks down, attacks people, jails people, fines unions, accuses them of being "criminal enterprises", etc., for fighting for their rights, then CALL GENERAL STRIKES and bring the whole country to a standstill. MAKE ANTI-LABOR LAWS UNENFORCEABLE. Write our own labor law in the streets. We're a long way from all that, but every example, even modest ones, help to make the point over time.

But business as usual thinking and acting among union officials will not carry out such a militant approach. ONLY RANK AND FILE CONTROLLED UNIONS AND STRIKE COMMITTEES, taking part only in COMPLETELY OPEN NEGOTIATIONS, will have a chance of carrying the day. NO SECRET NEGOTIATIONS! And only complete solidarity, in MILITANT DEEDS, not just words, involving the whole labor movement, can bring to bear

the muscle to back it all up.

The days of concessions and give backs and surrenders must now be over, for all workers everywhere. IT HAS GONE TOO FAR! IT SHOULD NEVER HAVE STARTED AT ALL! Ultimately the whole working class -- skilled, and "unskilled", union and non-union, employed and unemployed, white and blue collar, industrial, service and agricultural, public and private sector, the homeless marginalized, and super-poor. -- must be united and become organized and mobilized to fight back and take back/create anew what is ours by right: Decent employment at good living wages/salaries, good health care for all, full union rights and the full right to strike, full democratic rights, real economic democracy and workers' power, decent and safe neighborhoods, GOOD AND FULLY-FUNDED SCHOOLS, an end to imperial wars of conquest, good and affordable housing for all, and a host of other basic HUMAN RIGHTS.

It will all take a huge, massive struggle in this country to get these things. It will take the spirit and militancy of the 1930's and the 1960's combined to even have a crack at it. But we can do it if we unite and fight together and don't give up or give in. The Detroit teachers have given us a courageous and heroic example of where to start. Let's join with them and with all working people everywhere.

VICTORY TO THE DETROIT TEACHERS! NO DECENT, LIVABLE CONTRACT NO WORK -- PERIOD!■

## Michigan Unions

*continued from page 4*

cannot logically or ethically lead to a condemnation of unions as a whole. It is rather the present union leadership that must be opposed as class traitors and allies of the corporate elite. The fact an UAW logo is found next to a GM logo is a symbol of how wedded to capitalists union bureaucrats have become. Unions have unfortunately become an utter failure at carrying out the purposes for which they were created. Modern union leadership is intertwined with the capitalists the unions are suppose to struggle against; after all, unions should represent exclusively the interests of working people, not corporate profiteers who are only interested in generating the maximum profit out of workers at the lowest expense. The radical element within unions has decayed to the point of near-death with the likes of the AFL-CIO which is primarily concerned with maintaining its current membership figures, or more appropriately minimizing its decline, while engaging in anti-worker campaigns like "Buy American" and opposition to workers and unions in other countries on the basis of "anti-globalization" and "anti-outsourcing", when we should be in solidarity with workers the world over and together struggling against the global corporations that exploit us all. Additionally the unions spend millions upon millions on Democratic candidates who rarely, if ever, provide any benefit to the unions or workers in

general.

Unions should be focusing their energy and money on organizing the unorganized. Almost 80% of us Michiganders are non-union, and it would seem a huge benefit to unionize us. Of course, unions would have to create a backbone and fight for solid contracts instead of the crap that passes in the UFCW's contracts I've witnessed, at least in the grocery sector, as Kroger and Meijer are both unionized, yet their workers make less than Wal-Mart workers. Obviously no one is going to rush to join a union if the nearby Wal-Mart is paying more (even if they can also fire you for any reason). All the millions wasted on Democrats can be thrust into a massive unionization effort, not to mention supporting strikes and other actions by current union members.

Of course the fundamental structure of unions would have to change, and probably isn't likely in the near future. The union bureaucrats have a vested interest in maintaining the status-quo where they can continue to line their pockets, wine and dine with the big boys, and pay lip service to labor. Workers should work to organize themselves independently of the established corporate unions; after all, unions are the people in them, not the AFL-CIO label.■

## Compañer@s

*continued from page 5*

working class will get a sub class of workers at the mercy of both state and capitalist. It would have been business as usual, if it

wasn't for millions of workers finally rising from the shadows of exploitation and taking to the streets to protest the proposed legislation. The secret army that has for decades propped up the illusion of a prosperous capitalist economy can no longer be ignored. Posturing and pseudo solutions will no longer work and the "immigrant problem" is there for all to see.

As a political Party, the SP USA has been active in this issue, with many of our locals and at large membership working with and leading the immigrant rights struggle. We fight for an amnesty program for all who are currently in this country. We stand against a guest worker program and instead propose an immigration policy that is reflective of a mobile work force. All who work in this country should have full protection under our laws and are entitled to the full benefits of citizenship.

We understand that that the unity of workers throughout the world is essential in fighting transnational capitalism. While we fight for grassroots roots democracy at the national level, we also understand that the fight against capitalism requires a struggle without borders. As such the immigrant issue here in the United States is the national expression of a worldwide rebellion by a mobile working class. The objective of the Party should be to stand with our compañer@s as workers, as an oppressed minority with a right to self determination and as participants in a worldwide anti-capitalist movement.

## **Fuel Crisis**

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levels -- the lowest level within the three months before. Roll back prices at all levels, stages, and branches of the industry, not just retail. Do the same for crude oil, lubrication oil, home heating oil and natural gas.

2) Monitor fuel and other petroleum prices and enforce price controls through democratically elected price control councils organized in every area, with power to seize and operate offending fuel outlets and companies. Prosecute price gougers to the fullest extent of the law, especially petroleum and natural gas executives.

3) Declare a national energy emergency and federalize the entire gasoline and fuel industry, top to bottom. Operate it through elected and representative committees, councils and assemblies of workers at all levels of the industry, plus consumer and community representatives. Include union representation and consumer organization representatives. Tap the skills and expertise of working engineers and other energy and fuel experts in and out of the industry, plus lower level, non-politically appointed working employees of the Department of Energy. No inclusion of energy executives or boards of directors of energy corporations. Bring in their staffs, but freeze executive authority.

4) Monitor fuel supply levels through the above kinds of popular representative bodies. End phony "shortages" and market

manipulation. Prosecute stagers and reporters of false shortages.

5) Stop the price inflating trading in petroleum futures. Our energy needs should not be subject to the gambling of speculators.

6) Enforce environmental standards aimed at the energy industry and sharply improve them.

7) Dramatically increase public investment and mandate massively greater private investment in the development of renewable and other alternative energy sources.

8) Promote huge increased investment in mass transportation systems and fuel-efficient vehicles.

The above changes are absolutely necessary to even begin to solve the extreme energy emergency that engulfs us. None of these have a chance of being implemented, however, without the building of massive movements of working and oppressed people organized to demand it. The Socialist Party-USA will be a part of building such movements, and we call upon all popular forces and the whole progressive community to join us. In the end, the energy industry must be the common property of the whole people. ■

## **SPMI Candidates**

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University Board of Trustees and Lisa Weltman for 14th District Representative in Congress. The nationally-defunct Natural Law Party of Michigan similarly allowed the Socialists Party ticket of Walt Brown for President and

Mary Alice Herbert for Vice President to appear on its Michigan ballot line in 2004.

Woods hopes to use his campaign to tie the crises facing the Michigan educational system to the economic crises and inherently undemocratic nature of the capitalist system. A socialist system would not only guarantee free quality education from cradle to grave, but would radically change the current structure of our schools to emphasize democratic cooperative decision making by teachers, students, faculty, and community residents

and free our educational system from the corporate interests who seek to privatize and underfund our schools while keeping them structured as standardized and indoctrinating intellectual assembly lines.

The website of the campaign of Matt Erard for 53rd District State Representative can be found at <http://www.erard2006.org>. The website of Jacob Woods for State Board of Education can be found at <http://www.woods2006.spmichigan.org>■

### Socialist Party Outline of Principles:

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

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

### Join the Socialist Party USA

**Yearly Dues (based on annual income):**  
**Full-time Student:** \$15  
**Under \$20,000** \$25  
**\$20,000-35,000** \$60  
**\$35,000-50,000** \$125  
**\$50,000** \$250 (plus 1% of net income over \$50,000)  
**Waiver for long term unemployed**

I, the undersigned, desiring to bring about, by democratic means, a new society based upon democratic socialism, hereby apply for membership in the **SOCIALIST PARTY USA**, and subscribe to its principles.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Other Organizations to Which I Belong (Political Groups, Unions, etc.)**

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**Special Concerns (e.g., anti-racism, feminism, labor, etc.)**

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Please Send Me More Information About...  
 Young People' Socialist League  
 Women' Commission  
 Labor Commission  
 Faith and Socialism Commission  
 Socialist National Committee (electoral)  
 Other (please specify)

\_\_\_\_\_  
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**Send to:**  
 SPUSA, 339 Lafayette St., Rm. 303, New York, NY 10012