



Workers of the World, Unite!

The MICHIGAN

socialist

May Day in
America
page 5



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Voice of the Socialist Party of Michigan

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The Anglo-American occupation of Iraq...



**Tyranny
gets a
makeover**

*Michigan state
budget battle*

*Marines threaten
high school*

*Detroit City
Council election*

The Michigan Socialist is the voice of the Socialist Party of Michigan (SPMI), affiliate of the Socialist Party USA. Party address: 907 Walwood Ct., No. 2, Kalamazoo, MI 49007; e-mail: michigansocialist@hotmail.com; 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.

editorial Stop the war against Iraq!

The following was adopted unanimously by the monthly meeting of the Socialist Party of Michigan (SPMI), March 22, 2003. Even though, technically, the war is over, and the occupation has begun, we believe this statement is important for people to better understand what separates the SPMI from the other political parties in Michigan. — Editor

The Socialist Party of Michigan (SPMI) opposes and condemns the attack on Iraq in the strongest possible terms. We stand with the majority of people in the United States and around the world in opposing this unilateral war of aggression and conquest.

This war is illegal, immoral and unjust. It is a predatory war for the benefit of American and British petroleum companies, many of whom have close ties to the Washington government.

The Bush regime, the Republicans and most Democrats in Congress have joined together to bring misery and death to the people of Iraq. It is no coincidence that the first casualties of this war were civilians — mostly women and children.

Bush and his cohorts have chosen to spend billions of dollars of taxpayers' money to invade and occupy Iraq in order to "stimulate" the bottom lines of capitalist industries, many of which have close ties to the Republican Party.

Meanwhile, critical social services like education, housing, healthcare and local infrastructure are ignored and allowed to collapse.

At a time when there appears to be no end in sight to the economic recession and crisis, Bush and his generals are spending billions in a cynical oil and land grab.

Cost projections for the first year of war and occupation range between \$90 and \$300 billion. At the same time, the State of Michigan estimates its current budget deficit at around \$2 billion.

The money that Bush is pouring into this war could easily alleviate the financial shortfalls in the budgets of every state in the Union, including Michigan — money that would go to fund school arts programs, college scholarships, fixing roads and highways, job training and

unemployment benefits, and providing healthcare for every resident.

Washington claims this is a war of "liberation," and that "democracy" will be product of the American occupation. The SPMI rejects this argument as pure propaganda.

We do not forget that Bush came to occupy the White House through a coordinated campaign to rob African American voters in Florida of their rights.

No government that came to power through such undemocratic and illegitimate means could ever export "democracy."

Because of this, we also reject the idea that the United States has the right to demand "regime change" in Iraq or any other country. It is the sole right and responsibility of the people of Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein from power.

They are the ones who have suffered for decades under his regime, itself the product of a U.S.-sponsored coup in the 1960s. "Regime change" begins at home — whether your home is in Baghdad or Detroit.

The Socialist Party of Michigan calls on all those opposed to war to join and build the antiwar demonstrations happening across the state in the coming days and weeks.

These protests represent the real democracy that we are all taught embodies "America." They are the main obstacles at the moment to the Bush agenda of endless wars, unionbusting, racist repression and destruction of our democratic rights.

It is the people's organization and democracy against the capitalists' police state and misery. One must defeat the other. The SPMI will work with anyone who wishes to achieve the people's democracy. ★

Tyranny gets a makeover

By **MARTIN SCHREADER**

Editor, the *Michigan Socialist*

SADDAM HUSSEIN'S regime is gone. Good riddance to bad rubbish.

If it had been the result of a mass uprising for democracy and independence, then we all would have something to celebrate. However, we really have nothing about which to cheer. One unelected, repressive dictator has been replaced by another — appointed by Washington, accountable to no one.

“Meet the new boss ... same as the old boss,” as the saying goes.

After three weeks of ground combat operations, a massive bombing campaign dubbed “Shock and Awe” and the near-total incineration of the Iraqi armed forces, American tanks rolled into a four-block section of Baghdad and declared the city of 5 million “liberated.”

As had happened in cities like Umm Qasr and Basra in the days and weeks preceding the capture of Baghdad, one of the first things that U.S. soldiers did was to hoist their flag over the conquered region (only to take it down later because it was bad publicity).

The sight of a bronze statue of Saddam Hussein, a symbol of the repressive state built by his Ba’athist party, with the face obscured by the Stars and Stripes, is a fitting metaphor for the new phase of the conquest of Iraq. As invasion turns to occupation, the “new” regime of military governors and Iraqi puppets of Washington will rely increasingly on the old state apparatus.

This has already been seen in the last few days, as the old Ba’athist police forces have been recalled to active service to silence the growing anger and frustration over the brutal treatment of civilians by the American and British occupying forces.

IF ONE BELIEVES the statements from the propaganda arms of the American government (commonly known as the “free press”), these much-hated police forces were brought back into service to stop the looting and pillage of the major cities of Iraq.

However, by the time these police were



U.S. Marines put their flag over Saddam Hussein's face. How ... umm ... fitting.

actually assembled and put back on the streets, it was already too late. Not only shops and stores had been stripped clean, but also hospitals, libraries and Iraq's National Museum of Antiquities — which contained over 4,000 years of culture and history.

Watching the scenes of amused American soldiers standing by as centuries of civilization were smashed and burned seems all too fitting. Coming from a society like ours, where such things as culture and history are bought, sold and repackaged like commodities, it comes as little surprise that the destruction of the artifacts of one of the most ancient peoples on earth would not warrant the lifting of even one finger.

When this horrific and barbaric scene is compared to a recent raid by Marines to stop a bank robbery, we can see the real priorities of Iraq's occupiers.

No, Iraq's hated police were not brought back into service to stop looters. They have been re-armed and re-organized to stop people from expressing their outrage over the occupation. This can be seen by the brutal treatment anti-occupation demonstrators have received by the armed agents of the “liberators” — of both the Iraqi and

Anglo-American types.

From the day that the Marines entered Baghdad, hundreds of Iraqis have gathered at the Palestine Hotel — where the occupiers have established their military command — to call for their withdrawal from the country.

In Nasiriyah, where Washington's hand-picked “opposition movement” was meeting to decide on the division of the spoils, over 20,000 demonstrated against the occupation and called for real democracy and independence. Armed soldiers met their peaceful protest.

In Mosul, in the north of Iraq, hundreds gathered to express their anger at the appointment of a military governor for the region. When the new lord of Mosul grew tired of the jeers and cries of anger from the protest, he retreated inside his new headquarters. Shortly thereafter, the American troops protecting the building opened fire on the unarmed crowd, killing seven and wounding over 100.

This is the face of “liberation.”

IT HAS ONLY been a few weeks since the fall of Baghdad, and the honeymoon is over. Those few Iraqis who showered the invad-

ers with cheers and kisses now do so with jeers and rocks. "Go, go, USA," has now become "no, no, USA."

As the occupation of Iraq settles in, there is little doubt that the protests and clashes will continue. The United States is about to get a taste of what Israel has been dealing with since the latter occupied Palestine. A new *intifada* (the Arabic word for "uprising") is taking shape in the "Cradle of Civilization" — now a Texas-sized Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, all eyes now turn toward Syria. The Bush regime has already begun to claim that Damascus is allowing former Iraqi leaders to stay in the eastern parts of the country, and that it has been secretly building "Weapons of Mass Destruction." The U.S. has already cut off a pipeline that was sending thousands of gallons of oil to Syria every day, claiming it was "illegal" (even though it was allowed under the UN's "oil-for-food" program).

A recent televised statement by Bush demanding that no Ba'athists be harbored in Syria reflects at once the blatant arrogance and rank stupidity of the regime in Washington.

Apparently, no one in the government is aware that there are over 400,000 members of the Syrian Ba'ath Party, a fraternal organization to the Iraqi Ba'athists, and they are the leaders of the internationally recognized government.

Of course, it is not like any of that would ever stop Bush's moves for "regime change" there too.

The only thing that can stop Bush and his regime from invading more countries is an organized, mass movement of the people — primarily working people, especially in its leadership — willing to fight for genuine peace and democracy in society.

We Socialists strive to bring about a genuine peace and democracy in the United States — not a phony "peace," which is simply the imposition of order and "quiet;" and not a phony "democracy," which is a cover for repression and robbery. We do this by seeking to pull out the weeds of violence and oppression at their root — the capitalist system — and working to bring about a new birth of freedom and social justice for all humanity.

If you believe it is time to create a truly peaceful and democratic society — if you believe that "regime change" should begin at home — then come and join the Socialists. ★



This is a wide shot of Firdos Square, the place in Baghdad where the scenes of jubilant Iraqis pulling down the statue of Saddam Hussein were filmed. This picture was taken at the same time as the U.S. Marines were hooking up the cables and wires that would eventually bring down the statue. Does this look like the "thousands of cheering Iraqis" that the government's propaganda arms were reporting? No? Well, then you're seeing how lies are turned into "truth."

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feature

Remembering May Day ... in America

By **JOE DeNEEN**

The Michigan Socialist

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS DAY, or May Day, is a day of celebration, remembrance and solidarity.

On the first of May, workers throughout the world demonstrate for better working conditions, socio-economic equality, universal healthcare and education, and the right to unionize and strike.

But, to best understand why workers in America should celebrate May Day, we need to know its history.

The 19th century witnessed some of the worst acts of barbarity in the workplace. Women, children and immigrants were used as a source of cheap and obedient labor, working conditions were outrageous, unions were small and brutally repressed, and workers spent 10, 12 or 14 hours a day making profit for the bosses.

It was capitalism at its *best*.

In 1884, the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions (FOTLU) passed a resolution demanding the eight-hour workday, starting from and after May 1, 1886.

The resolution called for a general strike; by April 1886, over 250,000 Americans had heeded the call. The eight-hour movement was growing rapidly and radically, especially in Chicago.

On May 3, 1886, following some successes, strikers at the McCormick Reaper Works Factory in Chicago faced police batons and bullets. Four workers were killed and many injured.

Immediately afterwards, a local group of



Above: A photo engraving of the police riot against protesting workers in Haymarket Square, 1886. Top: One of the monuments dedicated to the memory of the Haymarket martyrs.

anarchists organized an anti-police brutality rally in Haymarket Square. On May 4, thousands came out for the evening rally without incident.

As the last speaker took to the platform the rally had dwindled down to a couple hundred, and nearly 200 police officers moved in to disperse the crowd.

In the shuffle, a bomb was thrown among the police, killing one and injuring dozens, resulting in police gunfire, which killed or injured an unknown number of workers.

This event became known as the Haymarket Tragedy (or “Haymarket Riot,” as some call it), and saw a sharp increase in police repression of anarchists, socialists and unionists.

Eight prominent Chicago anarchists — August Spies, Albert Parsons, Adolph Fischer, George Engel, Samuel Fielden, Michael Schwab, Louis Lingg and Oscar Neebe



— were arrested, tried and convicted of conspiracy in the Haymarket bombing by a rigged jury and biased judge, with little evidence and even though only one was actually at the rally (and he was a speaker on the platform).

Parsons, Spies, Fischer and Engel were hanged on November 11, 1887; Louis Lingg committed suicide the day before his execution on November 10, 1887; Illinois Governor Altgeld pardoned Fielden, Schwab and Neebe on June 26, 1893.

In 1889, the founding congress of the Second (Socialist) International met in Paris, France, on the one-hundredth anniversary of the French Revolution, and called for a worldwide demonstration for the eight-hour day.

May 1, 1890, saw mass demonstrations throughout Europe and the Americas. Frederick Engels, who attended the first May

Day demonstration in London on May 3, wrote: "As I write these lines, the proletariat of Europe and America is holding a review of its forces; it is mobilized for the first time as *one* army, under *one* flag, and fighting for *one* immediate aim: an eight-hour working day."

In 1904, the Second (Socialist) International declared May 1 an annual day of demonstration "for the legal establishment of the eight-hour day, for the class demands of the proletariat and for universal peace."

Unfortunately, May Day began to lose importance in the United States, its place of origin.

In 1894, the U.S. government declared the first Monday in September as Labor Day, with the aim of pulling the young American labor movement away from the radical

nature of May Day.

The American Federation of Labor (successor to the FOTLU) was becoming one of the largest unions in America and, by 1905, had gone with the government in supporting Labor Day and disavowing May Day altogether.

To add insult to injury, the American Bar Association declared May 1 a celebration of the principles and practices of capitalist "law and order" — Law Day. Then-President Dwight D. Eisenhower established Law Day by proclamation in 1958.

That such a day of international workers' solidarity can be turned into a celebration of capitalist "justice" is a disgrace to the women, men and children who struggle under exploitive conditions, and the Haymarket martyrs who lost their lives in the

pursuit of justice in America.

Today, International Workers' Day is celebrated throughout the world and is recognized as the official workers' holiday in almost every country, except the United States.

Each year, millions of workers demonstrate, wave flags and carry banners, sing and dance, educate, organize and agitate for a better, peaceful tomorrow.

As workers of the world, it is our duty to remember our past and to use that strength to carry our class into the future.

As the great socialist and unionist, Eugene V. Debs, said in 1907, "This is the first and only International Labor Day. It belongs to the working class and is dedicated to the revolution."

Workers of the world, unite! ★

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Detroit City Council elections: Nothing to smile about

By MARTIN SCHREADER

Editor, the *Michigan Socialist*

MANY PROGRESSIVES throughout the Detroit area are celebrating the victory of JoAnn Watson in the recent Detroit City Council election.

Watson, a liberal community activist and the first woman to serve as director of the Detroit chapter of the NAACP, edged out longtime Detroit politician and former cop, Gil Hill.

Watson's victory was clearly an upset; most political analysts saw Hill's stature as being able to carry him past his opponent fairly easily.

However, they did not count on Watson running a strong grassroots campaign, and successfully lining up several popular local politicians in her corner.

What likely tipped the balance in favor of Watson was, in fact, the endorsement of Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick ... of Hill.

The endorsement by the mayor, whose popularity has sunk to an all-time low due to allegations of nepotism and corruption, was effectively a "kiss of death" for Hill.

Since taking office, Kilpatrick has become infamous for his frontal attacks on city workers, as well as firefighters and police officers.

But Watson's election, hailed by mainstream liberals and radicals throughout the

city, is really nothing about which to smile or celebrate.

In fact, it would be fair to say that Watson's victory was Pyrrhic.

First, only about 12 percent of eligible voters went to the polls, and Watson only received a little more than half of those ballots cast.

This means that Watson can count on a "grassroots" base of, at the most, only about 6 or 7 percent of the voters in the City. Certainly, that's nothing to celebrate.

Second, many of Watson's votes came as a result of (or, in spite of) a negative campaign that saw a new low in sleaze and attacks.

Instead of focusing on those issues that separate her politics from Hill, Watson ran commercials pinning on him responsibility for a rise in crime and corruption (a responsibility that cannot be ascribed to any one political figure in Detroit, Michigan or even the U.S.).

Watson will be finishing out the term for the late Brenda Scott, who died last September after complications from elective surgery, and will face re-election in 2005.

She will be the all-important ninth member of the City Council, which is currently divided into two factions — one firmly in the pocket of the mayor and the state government, and another, which seeks more "home rule" for Detroit. ★

Budget

continued from page 8

take the biggest loss. A \$15 million grant, a “consolation prize” for the city coming out of the bipartisan effort to strip its residents of the right to vote, was eliminated. House Republicans were clear that the main reason for eliminating the grant was the current effort to place a referendum on the ballot in November to return to an elected School Board.

At the same time, while some of the poorest school districts in the state are expected to have even less than the paltry funding they have received over the last decade, the state Republicans have managed to preserve full funding for the so-called “Merit Scholarships.”

These scholarships, set up by former Governor John Engler in the 1990s, are given mostly to students in wealthy districts whose school funding is not being cut, and whose state representatives are usually Republicans.

Within all this “slash-and-burn” economics of the state Republicans, though, there is a small silver lining. The budget restores a little more than half of the \$10.2 million Democratic Governor Jennifer Granholm had cut from the funding of math and science centers around the state.

The math and science centers are used by many school districts, including many poor and struggling areas, to supplement the standard teaching curriculum and help teachers with turning students on to these subjects.

House Republicans have also targeted the Michigan Economic Development Corporation for massive cuts in order to fund its “Merit Scholarships.” The MEDC has two main tasks: doling out corporate welfare, and coordinating job training and vocational education in inner-city areas.

While few would likely have a problem with taking the ax to the tens of millions in corporate welfare handed out every year by the state government, the Republicans’ plan will also leave thousands of unemployed workers with no means of receiving the

training needed to get a decent job.

If there is anything we can learn from the budget fight, it is that the working people of Michigan — to say nothing of the people of the state in general — should not place any faith or reliance on these “representatives” to pass a budget that benefits us.

Obviously, the Republicans have no interest in drafting a budget that would place people’s needs before those of the corporations. But, as the case with the math and science centers shows, the Democrats are really no better.

Moreover, the “fight” between the Democrats and Republicans is not whether or not the school funding should be cut, or whether or not “Merit Scholarships” are preserved, but how much of the school funding will be cut, and how much of the “Merit Scholarship” funding will be preserved.

It is a question of degrees for them, not fundamentals.

Everyone in Michigan should keep this in mind for next year, when there will be independent Socialist candidates on the ballot running for the state legislature. ★

Marines threaten Mich. high school

By A CORRESPONDENT

The Michigan Socialist

FROM THE HALLS of Montezuma, to the shores of ... Hemlock?

It does not take much to put the U.S. Marines in the mood to invade a small, defenseless region. When the recent U.S. invasion of Iraq began, at least one of them was looking at action closer to home.

When the first members of the American military set foot into Iraq, officials in the Hemlock Public School District implemented its long-standing policy of asking military recruiters to leave the high school campus for the duration. Their goal was to keep students from falling prey to the war fever and make an impulsive decision to enlist.

The Army, Navy and Air Force recruiters were all respectful of the school district’s policy. The Marines, on the other hand, geared up for a fight.

Under the Bush regime’s “No Child Left Behind” Act, military recruiters are allowed unfettered access to exploit and prey on young people. Sensing the need for fresh blood, the Marine Corps recruiter who cov-

ers the Hemlock area, Staff Sgt. Michael Lustri, began a one-man operation to get his claws into the youth of this small mid-Michigan town.

First appealing to the local media, and then taking his case directly to the Hemlock Board of Education, Lustri complained about how an “injustice” had been done to the military because they were not allowed to rope in more cannon fodder.

However, as soon as the media flashed the images of the “mass” toppling of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad [see photo, page 4 — *Ed.*], the school officials in Hemlock once again opened the doors and let in the wolves of war.

Hemlock is a small, semi-rural community in the Tri-City area of the middle lower peninsula. Most of the students are sons and daughters of workers in the various industries in this region, which includes Saginaw, Bay City and Midland.

Like most small towns, ruthless military recruiters seeking to fill coffins and capitalist bank accounts prey upon it.

The Hemlock Public Schools Superintendent, Clifford Crossett, made this apparent. “As the law goes, we always have

been giving [recruiters] students’ names, addresses and phone numbers.”

Recruiters “come to the school far more often than university recruiters,” Crossett added.

Like the now-famous Prisoner Of War, Jessica Lynch, most of the young people from Hemlock that join the military come from relatively poor backgrounds, and have likely never traveled more than 50 or 100 miles from their home.

The armed forces seek out such youth, which have been kept politically and socially backward by the conditions under which they live, because they know many of these young men and women take the civics lessons about “democracy” and “freedom” as good coin.

They rely on the hope that these young people will continue to remember that as they go marching into combat for the likes of Halliburton, DynCorp, the Carlyle Group and other major corporations directly tied to the Bush regime.

Socialists rely on the hope that these young people will learn and remember for whom they *really* fight — and then will choose not to. ★



And you thought it would be different under Granholm...

Privilege preserved as state budget goes bust

By **MARTIN SCHREADER**

Editor, the *Michigan Socialist*

THE MICHIGAN STATE legislature is still controlled by the Republican Party. No clearer indication of that can be seen than the new state budget, passed by the State House at the time of this writing, and awaiting debate in the State Senate.

Michigan is facing a budget deficit of at least \$2 billion for the coming fiscal year. Between the economic recession and all the money being poured into useless “homeland security” programs, working people are expected to withstand the worst of the short-fall in the state’s treasury.

Most of the deepest cuts are in education. More than two dozen school districts in Michigan will lose funding under the current budget plan, including Detroit, Flint, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo and Muskegon.

The Republican-sponsored plan reduces per-pupil spending in those districts that had been receiving extra funds to reduce overcrowding in classrooms. In Flint and Grand Rapids, these cuts mean a loss of almost \$1 million in each district. Kalamazoo and Muskegon will each lose about half that much.

By far, the Detroit Public Schools will *continued on page 7*

Some Lowlights of the Republican state budget

- ★ A loss of almost **\$1 million** for Flint and Grand Rapids public schools, earmarked for class-size reduction
- ★ A loss of about **\$500,000** for both Kalamazoo and Muskegon public schools, earmarked for class-size reduction
- ★ Elimination of **\$15 million** grant to Detroit Public Schools, as punishment for attempts to restore the right to vote
- ★ Elimination of funding to **job training** programs run by MEDC.

Michigan’s poor, children face uphill battle

By **BRIAN McAFEE**

Special to the *Michigan Socialist*

MUSKEGON — Michigan’s poor are having an increasingly hard time making ends meet, according to a recently completed study, and numerous social service organizations throughout the state.

According to the 2003 Market Basket Survey (which measures the buying power of the poor), cash assistance and food stamps, which make up all the poor receive, covers only 5 percent of the income needed to pay for food, clothing and housing. One year ago, Public Assistance provided 60 percent.

“That’s a very dramatic drop, one I haven’t seen in the seven or eight years that we’ve been doing this,” stated Ellen Speckman-Randall, executive director of the Michigan County Social Services Association, which conducted the annual survey.

From a *Muskegon Chronicle* article on the

subject: “According to the survey, a family of three would qualify for \$9,830 a year in government cash assistance, food stamps and a back-to-school clothing allowance. That same family would spend an average of \$18,137 in rent, utilities, transportation, food and clothing.”

Cash assistance grants have not increased for ten years under conservative Republican Gov. John Engler. And now, with a new governor, Jennifer Granholm, improvement is unlikely because of the state’s projected \$1.7 billion deficit.

Child and Family Associates see an urgency in the public need particularly for children. One reported suggestion is an added one-cent tax on each can of beer, to generate \$20 Million, with the money to be used to increase the back-to-school clothing allowance from \$25 to \$100 — much more than just this is needed to ensure the well being of poor children.

Michigan’s Republican-controlled legis-

lature cut the clothing allowance from \$75 to \$25 to assist the Republican tax cuts for the rich.

Another aspect to this plan was that lawmakers also trimmed back eligibility, limiting it to school-age children, four years and older on public assistance. Previously infants and toddlers were eligible.

It has been noted that this past winter many children have been going to school without coats, boots or hats!

Gov. Granholm is in many ways an improvement over our now former Gov. John Engler, but she has yet to prove herself an advocate for the poor — particularly poor children.

On a wider scale, west Michigan social activist and advocate for the poor, Father Jack LaGoe said: “A nation willing to put itself into a debt of \$400 billion a year for the foreseeable future, asking only the poor and lower middle class to pay for it, has lost its vision and any hope of peace.” ★