



Workers of the World Unite!

# The MICHIGAN **socialist**

Summer 2008



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# The MICHIGAN **socialist**

**Editor:** Stephen Tash

The *Michigan Socialist* is the official publication of the Socialist Party of Michigan (SPMI), an affiliate of the Socialist Party USA.

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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 demo-cratically 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 to 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 that socialism and democracy are one and indivisible. The working class is in a key and central position to fight back against the ruling capitalist classes and 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 provide 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 structures and practices visible and accessible to all members.

## **From the Editor**

A lack of submissions over these last few months has unfortunately postponed the publication of this magazine for an extra 3 months. However, we were able to get some great articles over that time to make the wait worth your while.

Our cover story, by Hugo “Alex” Hernandez, takes us back over half to the beginning of Saddam's reign in Iraq and how the United States created the brutal Ba'ath dictatorship which pulled heavily from fascist ideology. I cover the ruse both the Republicans and Democrats are trying to push through under the name of climate change, all the while offering nothing to alleviate the situation. Matt Erard gives a scathing critique of Barack Obama's campaign and makes it clear exactly why he does not serve the needs of the working class, a clear majority of Americans. This is only scratching the surface: we have an interview with Stewart Alexander, Vice Presidential candidate of the Socialist Party, position statements, a campaign statement from Dwain Reynolds III and, of course, our proletarian poetry.

Due to expressed interest, we are also now offering a year's subscription, mailing included, to the *Michigan Socialist* for only \$10. With recent publication issues, we are guaranteeing that this is 4 full issues, so if we only publish 3 for the year, you will still receive the 4 you paid for. We are also looking into other initiatives, including an article sharing program with other state party publications and reminding you, the reader, that you do not have to be a member of the party to make submissions.

We would also like to remind our readers that the Socialist Party USA 2008 National Organizing Conference is being held in Ann Arbor, MI at the ICC Education Center: 1522 Hill St; Ann Arbor, MI 48104. The conference is open to the public and the registration fee is \$25. We encourage all interested parties to attend and consider joining the party.

In Solidarity,

*Rev Cde Stephen Tash*

Editor

## Iraq: A Brief History and an Observation

### **Hugo Hernandez** **The Michigan Socialist**

In Iraq, where circa 3500 BCE the world's first known civilization developed in Sumer, today, unfathomable carnage and brutality take place on a daily basis. But how did Iraq get to this point, aside from the obvious effect of the latest United States invasion and military occupation? Perhaps it would be best to start at the birth of modern Iraq.

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, at the end of the first world war, Britain was given mandate over Iraq by the League of Nations. When it gained control in August of 1921, they set up a new government and chose prince Faisal to be named King Faisal I. Britain, however, remained in control of Iraq's military, politics, finances and oil reserves.

Finally in 1932, after eleven years of growing calls for independence, Britain ended its mandate over Iraq. However the Iraqi people continued to live under an indifferent monarchy for another twenty six years. That is until in July of 1958, when army officers overthrew the monarchy and declared Iraq a republic.

For a period of time, after the fall of King Faisal II, Iraq was governed by a three-man Sovereignty Council consisting of a Shiite Arab, a Sunni Arab and a Kurd. Abdul Kassem, who led the revolution, became premier. He started land reform programs, sought to narrow the gap between the rich and poor, developed Iraqi industry and also utilized aid from "Communist" countries.

In 1963, the Ba'ath Party, which Saddam Hussein would later join, and officers of the Iraqi army assassinated Kassem under the direction of the U.S. CIA. The Ba'ath Party took control of the government and appointed Abdul Arif president and Ahmed al-Bakr prime minister. Later that year, Arif broke away from the Ba'ath Party and, through a military coup, took control of the government. Arif died in 1966 and his brother Abdul Rahman Arif became president. The Arif brothers followed Socialist economic policies. In 1968, the one time prime minister, Ahmed al-Bakr, overthrew Arif and reestablished Ba'ath Party control. Al-Bakr supported further Socialist economic reform and stronger ties with the Soviet Union.

It was during al-Bakr's presidency that Saddam Hussein, who held important party and government posts, gained influence within the Ba'ath Party.

Even before this, Hussein had support of the U.S. government while he was still in his early twenties. According to a former senior State Department official, in 1959, Saddam became a part of the U.S. plot to assassinate Iraqi premier Abdul Kassem. This source stated that Saddam was moved into an apartment in Baghdad directly opposite Kassem's office in Iraq's Ministry of Defense, to watch his movements. This was done with full knowledge of the CIA. During the assassination attempt of Kassem, which was a failure, Saddam was shot and wounded in the leg. After the failed coup attempt, Saddam fled to Cairo, Egypt where he attended law school. It is alleged that he kept in contact with the CIA there and was actually given monetary assistance. After the successful assassination of Kassem in 1963, the U.S. supplied the names of Communists to the Ba'ath, which rooted them out and killed them. Saddam Hussein was brought back from Cairo as an interrogator and quickly rose in the ranks and became head of Ba'ath Intelligence.

Several years later, in July 1979, the Ba'ath Party movement had gradually come under the control of Hussein, who then acceded to the presidency after the resignation of al-Bakr and gained control of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), then Iraq's supreme executive body. Hussein had many of his personal and political opponents killed in a move that would ensure his grip on power for years to come.

Much of this was orchestrated by the CIA from Kuwait; anything to have an ally in power in the oil-rich gulf state.

The war against Iran went poorly for Iraq.

Luckily for Saddam Hussein, the United States came to the rescue yet again. Ronald Reagan sent his special envoy to the Middle East, Donald Rumsfeld, offering aid to Iraq in the form of weapons, military intelligence on Iran, and allowing five billion dollars worth of loans from an international bank to Iraq. The

reason for all of this? the U.S. also sought to destabilize Iran, as Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was fiercely anti-Western, had deposed the shah who was an ally of the U.S. government and feared the spreading influence of the Iranian Revolution. The extent to which the Reagan administration provided assistance to Hussein can only be categorized as direct support to a brutal regime, which they, in fact, had removed from the list of terrorist countries. Later in 1983 a national security directive stated that the U.S. would do whatever was necessary and legal to prevent Iraq from losing the war against Iran.

The effects of this directive by the Reagan administration can be seen in several ways; among them; in October of 1983 the U.S. secretly allowed several Arab states to ship American made weapons to Iraq.

Here it may be best for us look at the U.S. involvement in helping Saddam Hussein obtain weapons of mass destruction (WMDs): biological and chemical, in the 1980's as one of the Bush administration's rallying cries for war against Iraq was the false belief that Hussein still possessed these WMDs in 2003, though by that time the weapons Hussein once possessed were no longer a threat.

In November, the Secretary of State,, George Schultz, was given intelligence reports showing that Iraqi troops were using chemical weapons against the Iranians daily, and yet there is no protest by the Reagan administration. In fact in July 1984, the CIA began giving Iraq the intelligence necessary to calibrate its mustard gas attacks on Iranian troops. In March 1986, the U.S., along with the government of Great Britain, blocked all Security Council resolutions condemning Iraq's using of chemical weapons. Later that month, the U.S. became the only nation to refuse to sign a UN Security Council statement condemning Iran's use of these weapons. And so in

May the U.S. Department of Commerce licensed seventy biological exports to Iraq between 1985 and 1989, including at least twenty-one batches of lethal strains of anthrax and weapons grade botulin poison.

Hussein later used these biological weapons in February of 1988 during the "Anfal" campaign against the Kurds in northern Iraq, killing over 100,000 civilians and destroying over 1200 Kurdish villages. During major battles, between April and August, the Iraqi military used massive amounts of WMDs to defeat Iranian troops. In the last major battle, before the end of the war, 65,000 Iranians were killed. Nerve gas and blister agents, such as mustard gas, were used; all of which was in violation of the Geneva Accords of 1925 and yet by this time the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency was working very closely with Saddam Hussein in forming battle plans and gathering intelligence.

The war between Iraq and Iran came to an end in 1988 when both sides agreed to a ceasefire. The war had taken a heavy toll on both nations. Still, Saddam Hussein took Iraq to war again in 1990 when the Iraqi military invaded and occupied Kuwait.

During Iraq's war with Iran, Kuwait loaned Hussein's government an estimated \$14 billion dollars. When the war was over Iraq was unable to repay the loan. This lead to tensions between the two nations. Further deterioration of relations continued when Iraq attempted to increase its income from oil production through OPEC's oil production cuts. However Kuwait, a member of OPEC, blocked this move to increase oil petroleum prices by increasing Kuwaiti petroleum output, thereby actually lowering oil prices. Also Iraq coveted Kuwait's vast oil reserves and ports that were among the most trafficked in the Persian Gulf. Taking control of these would seemingly bring vast economic growth and boost Iraq's prestige in the region. All of these factors combined to make Kuwait a prime target for an Iraqi invasion

And finally in July of 1990 American Ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, stated that "We have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts" and that the U.S. did not intend "to start an economic war against Iraq". Hussein no doubt felt that the U.S. government would not take action against Iraq in retaliation for the invasion of Kuwait.

In November UN Security Council authorized use of "all means necessary" to eject Iraq from Kuwait and on January 12th the U.S. congress authorizes use of force.

On February 24th of 1991 the ground



**Rumsfeld and Saddam  
December 20, 1983 CE**

attack began. U.S. coalition forces were commanded by Gen. Norman Schwartzkopf. On the 26th the Iraqi military fled Kuwait city. Later that same month the military coalition of 34 nations, which consisted almost entirely of U.S. troops, defeated the Iraqi military and pushed them out of Kuwait. A ceasefire ending the war took effect 8 am February 28th. Still on March 2nd, the 24th Infantry Division fights Hammurabi Division as it flees; destroys six hundred vehicles. This action would, in effect, break the ceasefire signed two days earlier. Three months later on June 8th a victory parade was held in Washington D.C.

And so Saddam Hussein had once again brought death, destruction and defeat to the people of Iraq.

Finally, after another twelve years of Hussein's grip on power, human rights abuses and oppression of his own people, his time as president of Iraq was drawing to a close.

The attacks on the World Trade Center gave the Bush administration the excuse it needed to invade Iraq, topple Saddam Hussein and attempt to gain greater control on the nation's oil reserves. All of this despite there being no evidence that Hussein had any role in the September 11th attacks. Even the allegations of Iraq possessing and developing WMDs were proven false by intelligence reports from the CIA under George Tenet. Still, the Bush administration went ahead with preparations for war against Iraq.

**Continued on page 7**

# A May Day to Remember

**Courtney Campbell**  
**The Michigan Socialist**

I had just a little over a month left in the country that has been my home for the last five years and the region that has sheltered me for the last seven. Each day slowly became an ever-growing reservoir of anxiety and excitement, to-do lists and preparations. I decided to take advantage of the national holiday to make some last minute changes to my dissertation and to start organizing my apartment in preparation for my trip home. *Should I take this book, or donate it? Which of my friends should I give this shelf too? Should this sentence end in a period or a question mark? Oh no! I have a typo on the very first page!*

A friend came over and brought with her some relaxation. We chatted between moments of study, put our feet up and reveled in how wonderful it is to have a day off of work. As darkness approached, I prepared some tea for us and was returning to the living area of the apartment I rent when fireworks started to sound throughout the city. I walked outside, looked up at the sky and smiled.

May Day fireworks always fill me with emotion: satisfaction for what has been achieved; hope that more can and will be realized; contentment that at least in some countries May Day is recognized; and yet, sadness that in the country where the general strikes of 1886 were held, this kind of celebration is marginalized, only recognized (or even known of) by certain sectors of the “left”.

The first Brazilian May Day celebrations, organized by socialists, took place in Santos in the state of São Paulo, in 1895. In 1925, May 1<sup>st</sup> officially became known as the national holiday of “Worker’s Day”. Between these dates, however, were held annual protests and marches on the first day of May in favor of work-

er’s rights, with the largest being held in Rio de Janeiro in 1919. Rallies and protests were even held during the dangerous and oppressive years of the military dictatorship, under the banner of ending the dictatorship and fighting for better wages and the right to negotiate. Now, May Day is celebrated throughout Brazil with a day off of work to attend parties, festivals, protests, or even, a day at the beach.



May Day Celebration – May 1, 1941 CE  
Source: Último Segundo

As the election of the current president of Brazil, Luíz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Labor Party, suggests, labor issues are never far from the foreground in this country, and for good reason. Minimum wage is frighteningly low, unemployment is suffocatingly high, and class disparity goes well beyond the simple manifestations we often see in photos of sprawling favelas against the backdrop of high rise apartments.

However, this country is also rich in labor conquests, with a mandatory extra month’s salary for each worker (that is, if she or he has legal working papers), a special account held for each worker guaranteeing severance pay, 30 days of paid vacation, and four months of paid maternity leave that will soon even increase to six months. In Brazil, the struggle is alive, confronted with innumerable challenges, but by all means, fruitful and ongoing.

A friend of mine likes to characterize

American culture as a state of constant amnesia. Listening to and watching what may be my last May Day fireworks for quite awhile, made me think of how, so often in our schemata of the dominators and the dominated, of the center and the periphery, of the north and south, 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, developed and non, industrialized and in process, the focus is almost always on what the latter countries could learn from the former. Let May Day celebrations in Brazil represent what we can relearn from several other cultures of the world – our own memory. ★

*Read...*

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# SPUSA International Commission

## Statement on Bolivia

The Socialist Party USA expresses its solidarity with the workers, campesinos and indigenous communities of Bolivia who are struggling to create a new vibrant socialist project in their country. The possibilities of achieving such a goal were greatly accelerated by the election in 2005 of the government of Evo Morales, representative of the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) party. Now, two years into Morales' first term, the MAS government faces serious challenges from the right delivered in the form of a movement for "autonomy" coming from a bastion of the old oligarchy in Santa Cruz.

The historical legacy and theoretical traditions of socialism make it difficult to publicly declare opposition to a genuine movement for autonomy expressed by a nationally-oppressed group. We reaffirm the notion that oppressed groups, minority or majority, have, when facing oppression by a state apparatus be it capitalist or ostensibly communist, the right to self-determination. For example, claims by Aymara communities in the north of Bolivia prior to the election of the MAS government were clearly just demands for the liberation of a majority grouping from the shackles of a political economy directed by a thin layer of capitalist elite taking direction from the IMF/World Bank. The above definition has little to do with the current crisis in Santa Cruz.

The claims by the property-owning elites in Santa Cruz, commonly referred to as Crucenos, have nothing to do with the right to self-determination or even the desire for autonomy. They are, instead, part of a concerted nation-wide effort to re-articulate a right-wing movement in the country capable of retaking state power. The Crucenos are at the epicent-

er of this attempt since they have managed to maintain key elements of power from the pre-MAS era – access to property, access to local state-power and access to external funding from US sources.

However, it would be a serious mistake to see Santa Cruz as the last bastion of right-wing power in Bolivia. Aspects of a resurgent right-wing project are appearing all over the country. Because of the manner in which it was dispersed in 2003, this new conservative trend is forced to wear different colors in different regions. In some cases, such as the Santa Cruz-based Union Juvenil Crucenista and its counterparts in other cities, the right acts in an openly violent quasi-fascistic manner. In other circumstances, they march in urban areas under the cover of the Feminine Civic Committee to defend the "family-basket" against supposedly inflationary MAS policies. In the case of La Paz, a probusiness elite works through the nominally social democratic party dubbed Podemos (Social Democratic Power) which is led by loser of the 2005 presidential elections, Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga. Taken together, these forces represent a coherent attempt to reorganize the right in Bolivia.

There is much for socialists in America to learn from the Bolivian Revolution. The mobilizations of the early 21st century, the construction of popular organs of political decision-making and the ability to dispose of successive right-wing governments demonstrates the capacity of the working class and peasantry to transform political reality. Confronting the elites based in Santa Cruz, a region which produces 60% of Bolivia's yearly GDP, is a crucial step to neutralize the resurgent right-wing yearly

GDP, is a crucial step to neutralize the resurgent right-wing, thereby securing the future of the Bolivian Revolution. The Socialist Party USA supports efforts to extend the democratic-socialist project to address the historical inequities which have defined class relations in Bolivia. ★



Evo Morales

**"We reaffirm the notion that oppressed groups, minority or majority, have, when facing oppression by a state apparatus be it capitalist or ostensibly communist, the right to self-determination."**

# Capitalism and Climate

**Stephen Tash**  
**The Michigan Socialist**

Your car may expel significantly fewer greenhouse gases in the near future; unfortunately this won't slow down global warming. Algae blooms in the seas, consuming large swathes of carbon dioxide from our atmosphere; sadly this won't dent climate change either. Wherever we look we can find the market finding solutions to the planet's climate problems brought about by human industrialization. The problem is that none of its solutions seem to work; many, in fact, are actually making things worse. This should be no huge surprise though: private enterprise rarely exists to solve problems; it exists to make profit.

Global warming, aptly renamed climate change as warming is neither universal in all areas nor the only effect, has finally been accepted by nearly everyone in United States after decades of fighting. Sure, detractors still exist, claiming that an increase in the Sun's output accounts for all warming, despite the fact that the warming effects of various gaseous industrial waste products (Carbon Dioxide [CO<sub>2</sub>], Methane [CH<sub>4</sub>], Nitrous Oxide [N<sub>2</sub>O], etc) are well known on Earth as well as elsewhere (e.g. Venus) and that it is unlikely that solar warming accounts for more than 20% of warming in the past 250 years. In all likelihood it is much less; since direct measurement of solar output began in 1978, it has varied through its 11-year cycle, but has not changed overall. The major party presidential candidates have all accepted climate change as a fact, not a question. Still, their solutions echo the ignorant howl of market interests, not science.

John McCain's campaign website boasts: "He has offered common sense approaches to limit carbon emissions by

harnessing market forces that will bring advanced technologies, such as nuclear energy, to the market faster, reduce our dependence on foreign supplies of energy, and see to it that America leads in a way that ensures all nations do their rightful share." This harnessing of market forces is a cap and trade system.

Barack Obama is kind enough to actually list out his policies, which include a market-based cap and trade system, public investment in clean energy for private profit, though he is luckily wise enough to call for second generation biofuels rather than corn-based ethanol.

The issue of climate change is no longer ignorable for the capitalist parties, so they try to delay real change now and attempt to leave us with a much larger crisis down the road. A clear knowledge of the basics of climate science is a vital tool for any member of the working class wishing to protect their interests and the interests of their loved ones, born or unborn. The flaws of the capitalist parties' plans for handling climate change are many and hold a clear private profit motive.

Beginning with cap and trade systems, part of the Kyoto Protocol the U.S. has thus far been unwilling to sign, the results in practice (such as in the European Union) are quite disappointing. The system calls for there to be national caps on greenhouse gas emissions; industries are given quotas and people begin trading in carbon credits, because the other gases have not yet been regulated. Companies who are going to emit more than their quota are able to invest in green technology projects in return for carbon credits to offset their own emissions. Fred Pearce, writing for *New Scientist*, gave a powerful critique of this system.

The first issue of his I'll bring up is that

it is unprofitable to invest in green technology, which is in defiance of Silicon Valley investment firms, such as Kleiner, Perkins, Caufield and Byers, considering green technology the next untapped market that can make them billionaires. Green technologies are rapidly getting to the point where they are more cost-effective and profitable than their fossil-fuel counterparts. In some cases, they already are, leading to companies receiving carbon credits for projects that would have happened just the same. The result: these companies to simply get away with polluting more.

He also points out that a lack of monitoring often allows for corporations to emphasize the environmental benefits of their investments and ignore the detriments. For example, a corporation investing in the growing of biofuels and taking credits for the reduced net carbon emissions from the fuel itself while ignoring the resulting deforestation. Companies have also recently begun dumping iron into the oceans to trigger algal blooms, an immediate threat to marine life. Algae uses photosynthesis to turn carbon dioxide into sugar and water into oxygen; however, it rarely sinks to the bottom and is instead consumed and rereleased as carbon dioxide.

A cap and trade system means that corporations can bypass attempts to turn back climate change for a little extra profit. They can continue to pollute at the same rate while merely pretending to offset their output. A cap and trade system is not a market solution to climate change, it is a market solution to a populace trying to turn back climate change.

Another important issue to keep in mind is exactly how clean energy is. First generation biofuels, made from corn, sugar cane, etc have been long touted as

a green fuel as it absorbs as much carbon from the atmosphere as it releases back in. Recent studies have shown that though sugar cane may have a slight net environmental benefit, corn ethanol is actually worse for the environment than fossil fuels because of the amounts of nitrous oxide released from the fertilizers. Though there is less nitrous oxide molecules released per unit of fuel than carbon dioxide in fossil fuels, it is much more potent of a greenhouse gas. Furthermore, the focus on these first generation biofuels have accelerated deforestation in the name of farmland and a dangerous hike in global food prices. Second generation biofuel production focuses on plants and eukaryotes that do not require fertilizer, such as switchgrasses and genetically engineered algae. Though Barack Obama can be said to be aware of these pitfalls, the exact opposite can be said of John McCain who expresses an agricultural solution (read: corn ethanol).

One must also be wary of misleading marketing. Toyota markets their Prius model as emitting only water vapor, giving the wrongful impression that hydrogen fuel is always carbon-free. The truth is that hydrogen fuel is created by using other energy sources. If it is created using wind or solar power, it very well may be clean; if it is created using energy from a coal plant, it could be a very dirty fuel.

There are plenty of economical solutions ahead of us beyond biofuels. For example, Gabriele Centi of the University of Messina created a solar cell that can take carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, release oxygen, and convert it into hydrocarbons. A mere 5800 square kilometers of desert (2240 square miles) could fuel 100 million domestic vehicles. Currently, 135,000 square kilometers (52,120 square miles) of suitable and unused desert are available in the southwest U.S. alone, not to mention vast expanses in China's Gobi desert and Africa's Sahara desert and of

course much of the Middle East. At that rate fossil fuels could be literally replenished and reburied. We've spent \$845 billion on the war in Iraq so far, a war for fossil fuels; with those funds we could have put climate change behind us and still had enough for a single-payer universal healthcare system and other vital programs.

Economic production caused the danger of climate change and capitalism failed to react properly, it is putting forward dead ends rather than solutions. American socialists have been calling for major funding to solve our environmental problems for decades, producing for the good of the people rather than profit. Wouldn't it have been nice to have had cheap fuel, fewer climactic crises, and avoided costly wars? Let's take action now so we don't have to look back 30 years from now and think the same thing about 2008. ★

### Iraq (cont from page 3)

Even before the September 11th attacks, when George W. Bush took the election in 2000, the U.S. began to look for ways to implement "regime change" in Iraq. Bush advisors, among them vice president Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Rumsfeld's deputy Paul Wolfowitz, were long time advocates of invading Iraq. After leaving the Bush administration, treasury secretary Paul O'Neil said that an attack on Iraq had been planned since the inauguration.

Following the September 11th attacks, president Bush spoke to a joint session of Congress, where he announced a new War on Terrorism. This was followed by the idea of 'preemptive' military action, later termed the Bush doctrine. Bush would eventually seek U.N. authorization for the invasion of Iraq, while retaining the option of invading unilaterally. According to President Bush and former U.K. prime minister Tony Blair: the reasons for the invasion of Iraq were "to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, to end Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism, and to free the Iraqi people."

In October 2002, days before the U.S. Senate vote on the Authorization for "Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution", senators were told in a closed session meeting that Saddam Hussein had the means of delivering biological and chemical WMDs by unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) drones and that they could be launched from ships in the Atlantic to attack U.S. cities along the East Coast. Colin Powell stated in his speech to the U.N. that UAV's were transported out of Iraq and could be used against the U.S. In reality, Iraq had no offensive UAV's nor any capability of putting them on ships. The UAVs that Iraq did have were made up of a few obsolete Czech training drones. If the U.S. Air Force agency most familiar with UAVs denied that Iraq had any off-

## Brian Moore & Stewart Alexander 2008



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ensive UAV capability.

Critics of the invasion have alleged that the U.S. and the British fabricated evidence concerning Iraqi weapons programs and ties to terrorism. Most notably: the accusation that the Bush Administration of relying on knowingly fraudulent evidence in asserting that the Saddam Hussein had attempted to purchase yellow cake uranium from Niger. However no WMDs were ever discovered. In January 2005, the Iraq Survey Group stated that Iraq had shut down its WMD programs in 1991 and had no WMDs when the invasion occurred. Although some lost or abandoned remnants of pre-1991 production were discovered, U.S. officials would confirm that these were not the weapons for which the U.S. invaded Iraq. In fact the invasion was opposed by some U.S. allies, including France and Germany, as their leaders argued there was no real evidence that Saddam Hussein had WMDs. With evidence supporting the U.S. and British claims about Hussein's WMDs and links to terrorism weakened, proponents of the Iraqi invasion shifted their argument to the human rights violations of the Hussein regime. Human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch have argued that they believe human rights concerns were never a central justification for the invasion.

Along with its effort in the U.N., the Bush administration looked for domestic support for the invasion. And in October 2002, the U.S. Congress passed a "Joint Resolution to Authorize the Use of United States Armed Forces Against Iraq". The resolution authorized the president to "use any means necessary."

In November 2002, after considerable debate, the U.N Security Council adopted resolution 1441 which authorized resuming weapons inspections and promised "serious consequences" for noncompliance. Bush proceeded and decided to invade Iraq without UN auth-

orization, which was of questionable legality under international law.

This decision was immensely unpopular worldwide. And on Feb.15, 2003, a month before the invasion, there was an anti-war protest that attracted between six and ten million people in more than 800 cities, the largest such protest in human history. According to the French academic Dominique Reynié, between January 3 and April 12, 2003, 36 million people across the globe took part in almost 3,000 protests against the Iraq war. In Rome, a rally of 3 million people was listed in the *Guinness Book of Records* as the largest ever anti-war rally.

On March 20, 2003, the invasion of Iraq by the United States, the United Kingdom and their allies began, without UN support. Major coalition military operations were once again led almost entirely by the U.S. military. The Iraqi military was quickly overwhelmed and in April the coalition declared the invasion effectively over. Saddam Hussein was captured in December, put on trial and hanged a year later. Bringing his 24 year rule over the Iraqi people to an end. After the invasion the nation of Iraq plunged into sectarian violence, insecurity and instability. And today the U.S. military's occupation may in fact be the only force propping up the current government led by Nouri al-Malaki, which presents itself as keeping Iraq from descending into full scale civil war and thereby being torn apart as a nation.

Five years after the 2003 invasion, close to four thousand U.S. troops have died or been killed and an estimate by the organization IBC (Iraq Body Count.org) puts the number of Iraqi civilians killed by violence at between eighty five and eighty nine thousand, with the number of civilians and U.S. military deaths growing day by day. To make matters worse the Turkish military's incursion into Northern Iraq to battle the PKK, or Kurdistan Workers' Party, rebels in February of this year, only adds to the nations instability.

So was the involvement of the United States in the toppling of Saddam Hussein worth it for the American middle class whose sons and daughters are the ones fighting and dying every day? Not to mention the horrors endured by the Iraqi people during five years of war. Was it not in fact the sole responsibility of the Iraqi people, who had their nation devastated and destroyed by Saddam Hussein, to overthrow the oppressive Iraqi regime that ruled them for 24 years?

From the moment Hussein gained power he brought the Iraqi people nothing but oppression, persecution and disastrous war. Surely the seeds of discontent were growing among the poor, the working class, the intellectuals and perhaps even among moderates in the military and government. All that was needed was for the proper conditions for these elements of Iraqi society to come together and drive Saddam Hussein, along with his henchmen, from power.

Then there could have been the spirit of reconciliation and solidarity among the self-liberated Iraqi people. And perhaps the Sunnis, Shias and Kurds could have united to form a fairer society by choosing a government who had the will and the well being of the people and the nation of Iraq at the forefront of their actions; or the Iraqi people could have allowed someone just as tyrannous as Saddam Hussein into power. In any case, the choice should have been that of the Iraqi people. the choice of self-determination. And not the unwillingness to endure more destruction and death brought to them by foreign occupiers, who only sought to dominate and to strip the nation of Iraq of its wealth.

But, the U.S. invasion of Iraq did occur. And the occupation will no doubt continue for many years to come in one form or another. But hopefully the key to Iraq's future will ultimately lie in the hands of those who deserve it most: the Iraqi people – through their collective struggle against all forms of imperialism and subjugation. The choices they make and the actions they take, will either bring Iraq a bright and better tomorrow or destroy the hope of a fair and just society. ★

## We're Gonna Win!

### If the Left Were More Like the Red Wings

**Aaron Petcoff**

I've come to the startling realization that few people outside of Detroit and Canada know or care about hockey. So I would understand if you didn't know about Detroit's recent return to glory as the National Hockey League champion. So let me fill you in for a moment on what it was like after we won.

I haven't seen people so happy in all my life. The streets of Detroit were filled to the brim with cars, motorcycles, and people parading, throwing their hands in the air, cheering, holding up issues of the next day's paper reading "Champs!" It reminded me of something a friend told me. He's a Romanian guy who was 20 when the country's "communist" dictator was overthrown. "There is nothing in the world like a revolution," he said to me, "the people are just so happy."

The victory was warmly welcomed here. Many people here in the city's metro area needed something to be happy about. Detroit is one of the cities hardest hit by the nation's economic downturn, only adding to the city's already poor reputation. A news article recently mentioned that the Red Wing's success is offering some small bit of hope during the hard times. While many regard us as "America's punch-line," we can find pride in our ability to nail anybody on the ice rink.

In the second to last game of the playoffs, my friends and I ran downtown to celebrate what we thought would be our inevitable victory. The hundreds that we joined shared that sentiment of inevitab-

ility. "I know the Wings are going to win," said one fan as we entered into the third period of overtime, "but will they just get this over with already?"

We stood outside, exhausted, nerve-racked, and soaked from the near torrent of rain falling down on us in the final period. People rarely act like this. It's not often that hundreds of people get together to put our passion and energy into something. Some friends of mine later told me that when they saw all the commotion they felt upset. "This is so stupid," they told me, "I know it's fun and all, but these people are putting so much into something that isn't really important." But it is important. Aside from the fact that it's the Stanley Cup playoffs, the game is giving people hope.

Looking at crowds of excited and impassioned people and saying, "No, this

is wrong, they're not caring about the right thing," is not only alienating, but it's missing the point entirely. The people on the streets wanted the championship and they believed that we would win it. Thousands of people turned out to support them. If we're frustrated that people turn out to support sports teams instead of our movement, then we need to ask ourselves why we're not getting that kind of support.

Most people desire a more peaceful world, one that is more equitable and just -- just like most folks in Detroit who want their hockey team to win the league championship. Who wouldn't want that? But people know that the Red Wings can win. Our challenge comes in convincing massive numbers of people (and ourselv-

**Continued on page 15**

www.reynolds2008.spmichigan.org



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DWAIN  
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**SOCIALIST / GREEN**

*for*

*State Board of Education*

**"Education is not a privilege, it is a right!"**

Authorized by the Committee To Elect Dwain C. Reynolds III

# Socialist Party Presidential Candidate – Brian Moore – Trespassing Controversy in Vermont

**Stephen Tash**  
**The Michigan Socialist**

On January 6th, 2008, Democratic candidates and their campaigners encountered no problem as they campaigned in the streets of Keene and Moreland, NH. A mere 7 miles away from Moreland and 14 miles away from Keene, across the border in Brattleboro, VT, the story was not the same for Brian Moore, Socialist Party Candidate for President, and three colleagues.

Moore was soliciting signatures for a petition to put him in the primary race for the Liberty Union Party of Vermont whose primary falls on March 5th, 2008 in a strip mall parking lot on Saturday and Sunday. The largest traffic flow was through the doors of the Hannaford Supermarket and naturally Moore focused his attention at that end of the strip mall, remaining in the parking lot. On Saturday, Moore had no problems and collected over 200 of the necessary 1000 signatures he needed. However, on Sunday he had a run-in with a Hannaford manager who demanded in a hostile voice that they leave the mall parking lot as it was store property and accused Moore of trespassing. Moore and his colleagues refused to leave the premises on the basis that they had a constitutional right to participate in the democratic process in a public area, regardless of whether or not it was on private property.

Within minutes, the Brattleboro police were involved: Lieutenant R Kirkpatrick and Sergeant Mike Gorman. The Hannaford manager used the time to pin himself with a vintage Eisenhower / Nixon button, which he apparently had on hand. The officers were forceful at first and demanded that the petitioners “leave or they would get a trespassing

order, and would arrest them if necessary,” “under no uncertain terms,” according to Moore. The four persisted to refuse to leave and Peter Diamondstone, Socialist Party member, a leader of the Liberty Union Party, and an attorney informed the officers of their constitutional right to solicit signatures in a public place. Once informed, Sgt Gorman consulted with the lieutenant and they called headquarters who in turn deferred to the Windham County State’s Attorney’s office run by Tracy Kelly Shriver. In his official statement, Moore mistakenly referred to the office as being run by Dan Davis, who retired on October 1st. The mistake has since been corrected. While headquarters waited to hear back, Moore asked if he could continue soliciting signatures while they waited and the officers obliged.

When word came back, at the last minute, the State Attorney’s office agreed with Diamondstone that the petitioners had a constitutional right to their actions. Despite the fact that many

of the people Moore spoke with came from nearby New Hampshire and could not sign the petition, he managed to collect nearly 500 signatures and leave a good impression on many more.

Moore’s response to the police was that they were “belligerent” at first, but ended up taking “the right actions” and were quite “gracious” towards him by the end of the confrontation. It is a credit to the town of Brattleboro that the officers were willing to change their tune rather than become more aggressive.

Moore considered the store manager out of place. However, he does note that he had spoken to a Republican couple and an irate Democrat approximately two minutes prior to the manager coming out. He assumes that one of the two decided to complain to the store after expressing to him that he did not belong there, “especially not a Socialist.” The store, when contacted, deferred comment to Hannaford spokeswoman Caren Epstein. Despite a cordial e-mail asking for Hannaford’s side of the story, she never contacted me back.



A campaign poster for Matt Erard. On the left, a vertical black bar contains the website [www.erard2008.org](http://www.erard2008.org) in white text. To the right of this bar is a black and white profile photograph of Matt Erard. To the right of the photo, the text reads: **ELECT** **MATT** **ERARD**. Below the photo and name, it says **SOCIALIST / GREEN** *for* **53rd District State Representative**. At the bottom, it features the slogan **“Another Michigan is possible!”** and the text **Authorized by the Committee To Elect Matt Erard for State Representative**.

Hannaford states in its Community Services FAQ:

***Our current solicitation policy gives any interested community organizations an opportunity to solicit donations through our community giving kiosk, which is positioned at the front entrance of our stores. In addition, organizations can receive bottle and can donations through our bottle redemption areas in those states where applicable. All the organization needs to do is speak to the store manager.***

It at first seemed likely that the manager misunderstood this to include common property and political solicitation. However, that turned out to be the store's official position. His attitude in trying to wrongfully enforce this policy was far from professional.

However, this story is not just about improper actions by a store manager nor is it about police harassment of third party candidates. This story is an upsetting look into how average Americans perceive the democratic process. Brian Moore noted, "How ironic that these close-by major party candidates are campaigning effortlessly, while minor party candidates face obstruction after obstruction, in many states, just to gain ballot access." Average Americans, supporters of the two major parties, decided to take it upon themselves not to speak out against the candidacy of Brian Moore, but rather to silence him.

This reflects in ballot access laws across the United States. Texas requires 74,101 valid signatures to be placed on the ballot; North Carolina requires 69,734; Oklahoma requires 43,913 and Georgia requires 42,489. In my home state of Michigan, where 38,084 signatures are required, it is estimated that it would cost any candidate or party \$50,000 in paid petitioners to get on the ballot. The system is set up in most states for only the Big Two to be able to afford to participate in the democratic process successfully.

As Americans, if we believe in the mythic ideals of democracy and liberty, we have to stop trying to silence all dissident views. Most of the people Brian Moore spoke to Sunday very well may have believed in these ideals, at least one did not. That individual, in conjunction with the apathetic, at best, stance of Hannaford Supermarkets, was able to cause great disturbance in the democratic process. Ballot access laws have shown themselves to be much more disruptive to the process; the mass media is no better with ABC denying even a dissident member of the Big Two, Dennis Kucinich, entrance to the Democratic Party Debate. If we see more of the same old that we've been complaining about for years in 2009, we will know who is at fault: Americans who only pretend to love democracy.



**Moore (left), Diamondstone (right), Gorman and Kirkpatrick (center)**

As to Caren Epstein's decision to not even decline comment: to give absolutely no response to such an inquiry is outright disrespectful, and their disdain for the solicitors' constitutional rights is shown in the fact that they decided to take it up with their legal department (according to the police report), who in turn decided that their store policy overrides the Constitution of the United States of America. They decided to make the slanderous statement that Brian Moore was "harrassing customers unduly" while being unable to offer any state-ment of any specific example whatsoever, as per the police report. Dan Barcomb, the store manager, was asked at the scene and once again invited to provide any example and could not.

If anyone would like to complain or comment to Hannaford about the situation, you may contact them at:

Hannaford Bros. Co.

PO Box 1000

Portland, ME 04104

For customer concerns or questions – (800) 213-9040

or you may contact their spokesperson, Caren Epstein, and likely be ignored as well: cepstein@hannaford.com ★

**“[W]ho in turn decided that their store policy overrides the Constitution of the United States of America. “**



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# Barack Obama and the 'Disownership' of the Disenfranchised Majority

**Matt Erard**

## **The Michigan Socialist**

By the beginning of last March, “Obamania” was in full force. Hillary Clinton, who had become increasingly tarnished by the aggressive mudslinging of her former-president husband, had fallen behind in the polls, Obama had thus far won the most pledged delegates, and both a substantial section of the corporate establishment and a new generation of progressive-minded young people had enthusiastically lined up behind a candidate who claimed to represent change, while consistently reassuring the American ruling class that he will fully represent the interests of big business and imperialism if elected.

The campaign that had appeared to be on a nearly invincible trajectory toward the White House came to a sudden impasse following ABC News’ broadcast of carefully spliced excerpts of sermons from Barack Obama’s longtime pastor Rev. Jeremiah Wright at Trinity Church in Chicago. The rest of the American corporate media and both the Clinton and McCain campaigns soon centered on Obama’s association with Wright as a means to both fuel white bigotry against the Obama campaign and to portray Obama’s past overtures to the American corporate establishment as merely concealing an underlying radicalism.

Within the sermons that were broadcast in constant rotation on cable news networks throughout the day during the following weeks, Wright highlighted a litany of U.S. atrocities from the most shocking details of Iran-Contra to the to the U.S.’s massacre of Cambodian civilians, from the U.S’ past support of Osama bin Laden to the U.S. imperialism in the Middle East that led to the 9/11 attacks, from the U.S.-sponsored Tuske-



gee Syphilis Experiment, to the realities of institutional racism in America, Wright spoke on the very issues which the same media companies giving him so much air time had utterly failed to cover in their own reporting. Rather than risking the embarrassment of exposing either the systematically propagandistic censorship that characterizes their reporting or bringing off-limits issues to light, the major media was certain to limit the excerpts to Wright’s most vociferous, but least factually illustrative lines.

Among the statements from Wright that had made it past the networks’ editors, however, was Wright’s pronouncement that the September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon were, as Malcolm X said, “the chickens coming home to roost.” Although Wright’s observation that decades of brutal U.S. imperialism through covert overthrows of Middle Eastern governments, reviled puppet regimes, genocidal sanctions, land-grabs, and U.S.-sponsored Israeli terrorism led to the 9/11 attacks was unquestionably accurate, the acknowledgment of such a fact remains a prohibited topic in mainstream media and political discourse. Although such realities have

for long been obvious to anyone with remote knowledge of the history of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and even vehemently stressed in the numerous video-messages from bin Laden and his associates (now unavailable for U.S. broadcast due to “national security concerns”), the acceptable explanations for the 9/11 attacks within corporate political and media discourse remain confined to the hijackers being evil, hating freedom, or being jealous of U.S. prosperity.

In allowing excerpts of Wright making such an observation to air repeatedly in an attempt to discredit Obama by association, the American corporate media was likely far more cynical than it should have been about the current full extent of the American public’s ignorance toward such foreign policy realities. Although otherwise representing the program of a deeply reactionary neo-confederate constituency, the presidential campaign of Republican hopeful Ron Paul received its unexpected explosion of support from across the political spectrum directly following the outcry from politicians and major media outlets over Paul’s statement of the obvious in a Republican debate that “they attacked us because we’ve been over there.”

Although highlighting Obama’s apparent association with radicalism was primarily an effort to raise questions within the ruling class about Obama’s continuously promised subservience, the strategy in this case represented a wider embrace within the media of an emerging form of demagoguery. A few political pundits on the extreme right of the corporate media spectrum, such as Bill O’Reilly and Sean Hannity, have made careers in recent years of focusing their coverage on the

on the more leftist of mainstream critics of existing policy, generally widely out of context, for the purposes of making them appear outlandish and questioning their sanity. It was primarily the same analysis of the 9/11 attacks on the part of former University of Colorado professor Ward Churchill that brought O'Reilly to lead the campaign to have Churchill fired from his academic post. Although the recently augmented trend among media pundits to directly cover and distort left-wing critiques may be indicative of increasing concern within the corporate elite over Americans' decreasing level of trust in official political lines, it also may have the potential to backfire. Similarly to the unexpected support for the Paul campaign, such distorted attacks resulted in the NAACP, which has for long abstained from radicalism in favor of racially diversifying the American bourgeoisie, inviting Wright to be the keynote speaker at its Freedom Fund Dinner on April 27th, at which Wright received thunderous applause.

While Wright's comments on foreign policy were perhaps most offensive to the media and major parties' corporate backers, Wright's comments on race were particularly exploited by both the right-wing and the Clinton campaign to pursue a more blatant "Southern strategy" than had been witnessed in decades. Portraying herself openly as a white people's candidate, Clinton stated in an interview with USA Today that, "[a recent AP poll] found how Senator Obama's support among working, hard-working Americans, white Americans, is weakening again, and how whites in both states who had not completed college were supporting me." Such a comment, which one might better expect from the likes of George Wallace, was not the only example of such an effort on Clinton's part. In repeatedly invoking Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan against Obama as a result of Wright refusing to denounce him, Clinton sought to use not only guilt by association, but guilt by an

associate's association in order to take every measure to exploit white racism in her favor. In essence, the 2008 campaign of Clinton in its final efforts had no qualms with openly relying on the prevalence of racism as the basis of her ticket to the nomination.

Prior to the Rev. Wright scandal, Obama had determined that his best strategy would be to downplay, if not utterly deny, the prevalence of racism in the United States. As Obama stated in his address the 2004 Democratic National Convention and was praisefully quoted throughout the beginning of his 2008 campaign, "there's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America." Obama's desire to posture himself as a candidate who recognizes the 'obsolescence' of racism, was further intensified in his soon to become infamous speech at an April 6th fundraiser in which he stated, "when people tell me they're all stressed about racial discord, well, you know, try slavery for a while."

Through his regular employment of such statements, Obama had precisely calculated as far back as 2004 that he could make a more palatable appeal as a black presidential candidate by fundamentally differentiating his politics on the issue of race from past African American presidential candidates such as Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, and Carol Moseley Braun, who made their long histories of civil rights and anti-racist activism central components of their campaigns. While supporting the standard Democratic Party positions on minimal affirmative action and hate-crimes enforcement, Obama sought to distinguish himself politically from the black presidential candidates that had come before him by effectively denying the existing system of white privilege permeating nearly all American institutions and calling on not only white, but particularly black Americans, to become as "transcendentally" colorblind to social

realities as he is. Newsweek for example, praisingly reported that Obama "is sometimes described as post-racial." U.S. News and World Report similarly praised Obama for his "non-confrontational post-racial approach."

While concurrently presenting the potential election of the first black president as a historical milestone, Obama's political strategy on the question of racism may ultimately result in more harm to the anti-racist struggle than even the past Southern strategies embraced by Clinton and other white Democrats alike. Obama has carefully aimed to give white American voters the opportunity to feel alleviated from confronting their own racial privilege by electing a black candidate, who rejects the very existence of such privilege, to the nation's highest office. With an African American in the White House who already views racism as something that has been primarily overcome, white Americans can then point to the achievement of such a candidate as a means to dismiss all remaining grievances among people of color over institutional discrimination. The underlying message is that the final step for whites to prove that racism has been fully eradicated and the playing field made equal is to elect him as the next U.S. president.

In what was repeatedly characterized by the corporate media as the most profound and frank speech on race ever given by a presidential candidate, Obama chose to use the opportunity of a March 18th speech to denounce the entirety of Wright's foreign policy critique and to repeat the same mantra of blindness to racism's most prominent manifestation through its institutional character. Although alluding to the "complexities" of racism and deigning to acknowledge that, "current incidents of discrimination, while less overt than in the past -- are real and must be addressed," Obama continued to portray racism as primarily

**Continued on page 15**

# MOBILIZE TO SUPPORT AMERICAN AXLE WORKERS

## Joint Socialist Party of Michigan/Socialist Party USA Labor Commission Statement on the 2008 American Axle Strike

*Socialist Party members in Michigan and New York distributed a leaflet of the following statement while participating on the picket lines of the recent American Axle Strike in Michigan and New York. While American Axle workers heroically kept the strike going with far greater militancy than either the company or the UAW leadership had anticipated, the strike's final outcome, pushed by the fear-mongering of both latter entities, will result in the decimation of American Axle workers' former wages and living standards and the elimination of over one-thousand jobs in just Detroit alone. Like the outcome of the 2008 national UAW strike on General Motors, the final result of the American Axle Strike demonstrates that success in defeating the continuation of such attacks in the current stage of global capitalism will require a grassroots movement of working people to re-claim control of our hard-won organs of collective working-class power and to radically transform the existing structure of organized labor to represent both the immediate and the wider political interests of working people, which the existing union establishment long-ago abandoned.*

*Such a movement must center on a return to the militant tactics that led to the birth of the American industrial unionism, along with the added outreach, solidarity, and support of the whole working class, both nationally and internationally. With no faith in the existing national union leadership to any longer represent the interests of its working members nor any hesitation*

*toward labor organizing both within and outside such established apparatuses, resurrecting the compelling power of organized labor in the United States will necessitate decisive rank-and-file rejection of all provocations toward "sacrifice" and nationalism from above in favor of an internationally unified struggle that fears neither our employers' falling profits nor our fellow workers across national borders. The mass-based waging of such a collective struggle by the working class to take back control of the organizations established to represent our interests will place us concretely on the path toward the political struggle necessary to permanently end this escalating cycle of attacks – to use the unassailable power of unified and directly accountable workers' organization to lay-off not only the labor bureaucracy that partners with it, but the ownership class altogether - to take control of our own workplaces once and for all.*

The Socialist Party USA stands behind the American Axle workers as they fight to protect the hard-won gains of the American working class. American Axle Corporation has attempted to reduce employee wages to \$14/hour from \$23/hour and cut retiree pension benefits. An almost 40% wage decrease is intolerable under any circumstances, but in a time of financial surplus –when American Axle is able to pay a hefty dividend to its shareholders- it is simply unconscionable. This episode is the most recent example of the overall offensive waged by corporations against manufacturing workers in America.

Though the corporate entity known as American Axle legally owns the means of producing these sought-after automobile components, it is the labor of the workers which creates the value. Without workers willing to labor there would be no production or dividends for Wall Street investors. The Socialist Party fully supports the American Axle workers' struggle to sustain their livelihoods. We see this conflict as another example of the manner in which CEOs, Boards of Directors and Shareholders live off the backs of workers.

Thus far negotiations have provided no avenues toward meeting the workers demands. Instead, management has attempted to use collective bargaining as a means to squash the aspirations of these workers. American Axle executives, like their partners at General Motors, have shown little concern for the plight of their employees, viewing them as workhorses rather than human beings. Strike and direct action is the only language these corporate fat-cats can potentially understand.

We urge striking American Axle workers to decisively reject any contract that includes cuts to wages, cuts or "cost-sharing" of healthcare or a reduction of pensions. It is rank-and-file American Axle workers, not UAW officials who are making the financial sacrifices in this strike, and it is the rank-and-file workers through their strike committees who ultimately have the power to determine where the strike will lead. As the current period demonstrates, making more concessions will not stop the overall concessionary trend – it will only re-enforce it. The only way to stop the cycle

is for the American automotive industry to once again feel the collective strength of the working class.

We further call on all workers whether organized or not, to actively join our brothers and sisters at American Axle in their struggle. The attacks by American Axle on its workers are one part of an escalating crackdown on the living standards of working people by an obsolete system that puts private profit before human need. The particular struggle of the American Axle strikers affects every worker in every industry. A victory in this strike would be a victory for the whole working class. We must keep the momentum going!

The Socialist Party supports this strike and calls for a more comprehensive program centered on democratic social ownership through worker's control of the automotive and other industries. Social ownership will allow for the development of vehicles for the use and human needs of workers and consumers, rather than the private profit of a tiny few. Further, we stand for the right of all manufacturing and service workers to retain the full value of their labor time and all that they produce. Our program also calls for publicly funded universal healthcare for all, a 100% tax on corporations engaging in capital flight, and mandatory union-recognition based on card-check. We support militant, united labor action including hot cargo agreements and boycotts, factory committees, secondary and sympathy strikes, sit-down strikes, general strikes, and ultimately the democratic control of workplaces. We encourage all UAW workers who agree with these demands to join us today! More generally, we want to work with all those who are prepared to confront the corporate bullies that are oppressing us. ★

**“The Socialist Party USA stands behind the American Axle workers.”**

### **Red Wings (cont from page 9)**

es) that change is possible with their participation. A team that win believe they can win. They take their goals seriously and go into action to meet them.

To keep going through the long season, a winning team keep their eyes on the prize and sees their mission as something long-term. Our mission is harder than winning a championship (imagine if all we had to do was beat the jerks in a hockey game!). Building a new world is an infinitely complex task, so, to build and sustain our momentum, we find markers for our progress. Rather than celebrating momentary skirmishes, a winning team in social change looks toward the movement.

A coach or captain of a team asks, "Okay, are we passing better than before? Are we shooting better? Are we playing better defense?" We're a part of a movement that rejects that kind of hierarchy, so asking these questions becomes everybody's responsibility. Are we building our skills? Radicalizing more people? Building more militancy? Are we sustaining involvement? Winning teams know that the stronger they get, the more likely they are to win what they're after.

The Left has won before when it knew that it could. We've ended wars, won the right to organize unions, women's suffrage, and civil rights. The draft ended for a reason.

Strong activists always believed in our movement's potential for success. Can you imagine if the people you look back on for inspiration believed that we couldn't win? It's ludicrous, right? I couldn't believe in Pavel Datsyuk saying he didn't believe that the Wings could win.

Our movement has so much to offer. We offer a world that is classless and democratic. A world that is feminist and inclusive of people from all backgrounds and cultures. A world that is peaceful and

sustainable. We can win it!

1. A hockey team from Detroit.
2. I've been informed recently that Boston also likes Hockey. For those who don't know, hockey is a game played on ice with sticks and is considered by many to be a sport.
3. Granting it immediate importance.
4. See Wikipedia. Search for Hero. ★

*Aaron Petcoff currently lives in Detroit where he studies History and Peace & Conflict Studies at Wayne State University. He is a member of Students for a Democratic Society and the Student Environmental Action Coalition and he would love to play hockey with you. You can find him on Facebook. He runs his own blog at <petcoff.wordpress.com>*

### **Obama (cont from page 13)**

relegated to the past and capable of being overcome by a coalition around his campaign.

As Obama was most quoted from the speech,

“I can no more disown him than I can disown the black community. I can no more disown him than I can my white grandmother -- a woman who helped raise me, a woman who sacrificed again and again for me, a woman who loves me as much as she loves anything in this world, but a woman who once confessed her fear of black men who passed by her on the street, and who on more than one occasion has uttered racial or ethnic stereotypes that made me cringe... This is the reality in which Rev. Wright and other African-Americans of his generation grew up. They came of age in the late fifties and early sixties, a time when segregation was still the law of the land and opportunity was systematically constricted.... We would be making the same mistake that Rev. Wright made in his offending sermons about America -- to simplify and stereotype and amplify the negative to the point that it distorts



reality... For the men and women of Rev. Wright's generation, the memories of humiliation and doubt and fear have not gone away; nor has the anger and the bitterness of those years."

To maintain the "post-racial" image of his campaign, Obama would have white Americans interpret Wright as just another aging throwback to the historical period when racism led to "opportunities being systematically restricted." From this line of argument, both the recent comments of Wright and the past remarks of Obama's white grandmother were equivalently racist and archaic. Obama was indeed careful to make the speech as a whole sound ostensibly progressive, but such forward-thinking rhetoric has little substance when stemming from a fundamentally dishonest assessment of where we are in the present.

Following Wright's final waive of publicity through his appearance at the National Press Club and the mocking of Clinton's likely perceived white entitlement to the presidential nomination by Trinity Church guest Rev. Michael Pflieger (an extreme understatement in consideration of Clinton's blatantly racist remarks on white support for her nomination), Obama had a sudden change of heart. Although he predictably could still not disown the racism of his white grandmother, Obama spared no mercy in now wholly denouncing and disowning his former pastor once it became a political necessity. In a public speech on April 29th, Obama proclaimed:

"[Wright's] comments were not only divisive and destructive, but I believe that they end up giving comfort to those who prey on hate and I believe that they do not portray accurately the perspective of the black church... They rightly offend all Americans. And they should be denounced. And that's what I'm doing very clearly and unequivocally here today... Let me just close by saying this: I -- we started this campaign with the idea

that the problems that we face as a country are too great to continue to be divided, that, in fact, all across America people are hungry to get out of the old divisive politics of the past. I have spoken and written about the need for us to all recognize each other as Americans, regardless of race or religion or region of the country."

A political consideration that likely impacted Obama decision to lambaste and disavow the pastor he previously claimed he couldn't disown, was a new contrived scandal that had arisen between Obama's first speech on racism and his speech to denounce Wright entirely. At the same aforementioned April 6th fundraiser where Obama made the "try slavery" remark on the subject of contemporary racial oppression, Obama, responding to a question about reluctance of some voters to support him, commented that many working class voters focus their political attention on religion, guns, and protectionist and anti-immigrant notions rather than economic issues due to their bitterness over economic and political disempowerment.

As detailed in works ranging from Kevin Phillips 1969 reactionary playbook *The Emerging Republican Majority* to Thomas

Frank's 2004 best-seller *What's the Matter With Kansas*, Obama only understated a fact that has been long and widely recognized by political scientists for many decades. It therefore likely came as a surprise to Obama, who had only served for three years in federal office, that not only the rival Clinton campaign, but nearly every section of the American mainstream media centered its political coverage on Obama's "inflammatory" comments for the next several weeks - even more so than on the controversy surrounding Wright. Obama was not alone in assuming that his stating of such a generally accepted observation would not reasonably be the subject of a political storm of reaction. As stated by Obama supporter Mayhill Follower, who broke the story in the Huffington Post with the first article mentioning the remarks, "we recognized it was a politically volatile story and thought it would create news. We had no idea that the controversy would reach this magnitude."

Although Obama referred only once to "small towns" in his response to the question that the media quickly came to refer to as "bittergate," he referred twice to voters from the "working class." Nevertheless, in nearly every subsequent

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"Another Michigan is possible!"

Authorized by the Committee To Elect Jean Treacy for Congress

reference to Obama's remarks from the American political and media establishment, whether in Clinton's disingenuous attacks or in the commentary of mainstream media pundits and reporters, Obama was reported to have made such comments solely about "small-town voters." A significant element of the real controversy that had so deeply offended the American ruling elite was that Obama had made the critical mistake of acknowledging the American working class' very existence, and, more egregiously, in a context of disenfranchisement.

Although the subject of social class is not unmentionable for Democratic Party politicians, Democrats have been among the primary architects and promoters of the now commonly perceived mid-to-late 20th Century notion that class is simply a description of income and that the middle class simply refers to the average of the income range. Such a notion as been instrumental in limiting American workers' attention to the irreconcilability of interests between themselves and their employers by leading them to broadly identify themselves as members of the same class as their immediate bosses who enforce the dictums of those above. The final result is to separate the point of production from perceived class divisions among the American working class. Consequently, one hears the Democrats refer to their defense of "the middle class" in nearly every campaign speech and advertisement on economic issues, while rarely if ever making reference to the working class.

As the Democrats and their allied functionaries in the corporate media would have it, the terms 'small town' and 'working class' would be nearly interchangeable and reserved for scarce references to modest and undereducated whites, in order to avert the danger of correctly using the latter term to describe the vast majority of the population, regardless of town-size or the color of an

individual's skin or collar. Obama's combination of the nearly forbidden classification with the notion that those the term describes share a political interest led astray by the exploitation of its perceived powerlessness, however, went much farther than the ruling establishment was willing to tolerate without a harsh corrective.

During the course of the second political firestorm, Clinton appeared unphased by the contradiction of attempting to portray Obama both as a black power radical and an aristocratic elitist. Although the complete lack of radicalism as well as blatant concessions to racism and imperialism in Clinton's campaign at least spared her of any degree of hypocrisy in making the former accusation toward Obama, it could not be more the opposite in her making of the latter one. While Obama grew up on food stamps before becoming one of the poorest millionaires among recent presidential contenders, Clinton, who formally sat on the Board of Walmart and grew up in an affluent business-owning family, has made \$109 million dollars in only the period since the end of her husband's administration. In a political climate in which great wealth is a prerequisite to even begin a serious federal candidacy, however, Clinton had little difficulty in refashioning her image into the common people's alternative to Obama's upper crust elitism, once focus groups indicated the utility of such a strategy.

In repeating the emerging Fox News-style of punditry in which otherwise unmentionable left critiques are briskly raised for the purpose of casting them into a category of absurdity, some pundits and political figures attempted to reconcile the intuitive ingenuousness of the two incompatible caricatures of Obama by raising the question, in no such direct terms, of whether Obama could in fact be making a challenge to American capitalism's key mechanisms of reinforcement for established public

opinion. In his New York Times column on April 14<sup>th</sup>, iconic neoconservative Bill Kristol, a product of an inverted strain of the former Marxist movement himself, (see: *The dialectics of neoconservatism: From the old left to the new right*, TMS May 2004 issue), wrote an article complaining that Obama's bitter remark, ostensibly within the climate of the explosive Rev. Wright association, sounded too much like Karl Marx's views on religion, if not, in coming from a bourgeois presidential candidate, even worse. As Kristol wrote, "it's one thing for a German thinker to assert that 'religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature.' It's another thing for an American presidential candidate to claim that we 'cling to ... religion' out of economic frustration."

Following the cue from Kristol, Fox News host Andrew Napolitano asked Senator Joseph Lieberman, while a guest on his "Brian and the Judge" radio show the day Kristol's article was published, whether Obama may in fact be "a Marxist as Bill Kristol says might be the case?" As only one example of Obama's consistent strategy of presenting himself in a general sense as an anti-war candidate, while almost always supporting the war in the context of concrete decisions, Obama made sure to emphatically endorse Lieberman in the sharply contested 2006 Connecticut Democratic Party primary. Lieberman, a long-time Democrat in the Senate who has never even made pretensions of opposition to the war or occupation lost the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senator in the 2006 Connecticut Primary to nominally anti-war candidate Ned Lamont on account of his lack of sufficient anti-war posturing for a Northeastern Democratic politician.

By the time of Obama's race for the presidency in 2008, he was not, however, willing to return the favor. In response to Napolitano's question on Obama's alleged Marxism, Lieberman responded, "Well, you know, I must say that's a good

question... **I've learned some things about him, about the kind of environment from which he came ideologically. And I wouldn't...I'd hesitate to say he's a Marxist, but he's got some positions that are far to the left of me and I think mainstream America.**" Underlying both the Democratic Party's presumed ability to rake in all sections of expressed anti-war sentiment within its ranks as well as the lack of grounding in such convictions among even the politicians who most center their campaigns around them, Lamont ironically, but not unpredictably, endorsed Obama for the presidency two years later in 2008.

Obama was quick to correct his statements which led to the manufactured 'bittergate' hysteria - commenting that "I didn't say it as well as I should have" and taking the cue to paraphrase his own controversial comments as referring to "folks in small towns" rather than the "working class." Within his response to the outcry over his statement, Obama contended in his own defense that individuals who aren't being listened to take refuge in the issues that "they can count on" and those that "bring them comfort." As with the issue of race, Obama, in doing so, sought to eliminate the point of greatest potential concern within the ruling class by erasing the pretense of any notion on his part that there could be any institutional basis for such reactionary social policies increasingly grasping the attention of American workers. Rather than confronting the intensified strategy of corporate politicians and media to systematically target immigrants, non-heterosexuals, and contrived threats to guns and religion to distract the working class from war and attacks on living standards, and more importantly - to divide it, Obama sought to portray the nearly unprecedented escalation of social demagoguery as simply a natural reaction.

Following the outcry over his bittergate statement, Obama addressed the issue of

the working class in his victory speech in the Minnesota primary on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, but from a far more politically refined angle. In the speech, Obama proclaimed, "change is building an economy that rewards not just wealth, but the work and workers who created it. It's understanding that the struggles facing working families can't be solved by spending billions of dollars on more tax breaks for big corporations and wealthy CEOs, but by giving a the middle-class a tax break... It's understanding that fiscal responsibility and shared prosperity can go hand-in-hand, as they did when Bill Clinton was President."

Had Obama not elaborated beyond the first line, it would have perhaps been among the most radical and honest statements ever made from a Democratic Party presidential candidate. In noting that it is in fact the American working class who created the wealth now hoarded by the American corporate elite, Obama alluded directly to the very essence of capitalism: a system of exploitation in which the vast majority of the value created by workers' labor time is robbed from us in the form of private profits for the owning class. But Obama was this time careful not to repeat his past political mistake. In consciously refraining from using the term "working class" and calling for a "middle class tax break" as a potential solution to rising class antagonisms, Obama insidiously employed the standard Democratic Party lingo to conflate the class of workers with the class of their bosses.

Moreover, in calling for "shared prosperity" Obama left no ambiguity about which parties were to do the sharing. Obama argued, in essence, that if he is to be elected to the White House, the interests of both the workers and the CEO's he referenced can be mutualistic, rather than marred by the antagonisms that capitalism has increasingly and relentlessly unleashed in recent years from its own systemic degeneration. In doing so, Obama engaged in the most

historically utilized co-optation tactic of the past century. Obama alludes to the increasingly perceived systemic contradictions that make the interests of both classes irreconcilable, while proclaiming that he, despite being thoroughly bankrolled by the very corporate structure he feigns to challenge, can somehow overcome such a fundamental irreconcilability of interests if working people will simply elect him to office.

As with his implicit proclamations that his election to the White House can make institutionalized racism disappear, so, he implied, can it rectify the essential contradictions of capitalism. And what is Obama's example for a period when such "shared prosperity" between contending classes existed? The period of the Clinton presidency - the period in which the income gap between rich and poor grew to the largest extent since the Great Depression and in which the most drastic recent attacks on job security, union leverage, and the welfare state we face today (NAFTA, WTO, Welfare reform) were enacted. Obama perhaps made the same statement even more bluntly in a speech to Wall Street investors on September 17th. "From CEOs to shareholders, from financiers to factory workers, we all have a stake in each other's success because the more Americans prosper, the more America prospers," Obama sophistically asserted.

Among Obama's most flagrantly preposterous lines in his final speech on Wright following the bittergate scandal, was his statement that, "if Reverend Wright thinks [such an expression of offense is] political posturing, as he put it, then he doesn't know me very well." While denying his willingness to engage in either posturing or disownership, however, such political posturing and disownership of every oppressed constituency and every substantive call for the change he claims to represent is exactly what has characterized Obama's campaign from its beginning.

Only further demonstrating what Obama meant by the 'shared prosperity of the Clinton presidency,' Obama was quick to instruct his Chief Economic Policy Advisor to instruct the Canadian Consul in Chicago that his recent attacks on NAFTA in campaign speeches, "should not be taken out of context and should be viewed as more about political positioning than a clear articulation of policy plans" a leaked memo from a Canadian consulate noted.

While posturing as an anti-war candidate, Obama immediately began to disown the anti-war movement by consistently voting to continue and expand funding for the wars even before he began his presidential bid. When questioned on the reality of his stated ambition to end the war, Obama, like Clinton, refused to promise to withdraw troops from Iraq even by the end of his second term in the White House, while centering his most recent criticisms of the war on the so-called failure of the Iraqi government to take sufficient responsibility during the course of the U.S.' unrelenting slaughter and occupation of its people.

Opposing any cuts whatsoever to the bloated military budget, Obama's foreign policy debate with Clinton throughout the primary was primarily a contest over the biggest hawk toward Iran and other U.S. targets. Although Iran has never attacked another country in its history, Obama has been no less relentless than McCain or Bush in fabricating propaganda to present it as an imminent threat, and is, thus far, the only presidential candidate to directly threaten the use of nuclear weapons against it. As with the anti-war in Iraq and Afghanistan movement, Obama, a former moderate supporter of the Palestinian struggle, showed no hesitation whatsoever in wholly disowning it as well in favor of unbridled support for Israeli aggression and rejectionism.

While posturing as the candidate who

will bring the interests of working people to Washington, Obama has no substantive proposal to bring even a remote degree of relief to the American working class nor any proposal to transform or dismantle the U.S.-led international institutional apparatuses that have in recent years entrapped American workers in a vicious cycle of insecurity and desperation. Unlike even Clinton in his first term, Obama opposes single payer universal healthcare and has no objections to the U.S. remaining the only Western industrialized country in the world without such a basic human right.

While posturing as a candidate who will restore and expand civil rights and liberties, Obama provides no proposals to bring substantive relief to people of color, whether through reparations or the expansion of affirmative action. While opposing same-sex marriage and supporting Bush's proposed guest worker program to allow capitalists to bring in and deport the most exploitable labor at their whims, Obama supports the death penalty, fully supports the war on drugs, including marijuana criminalization, and voted in favor of reauthorizing the USA PATRIOT ACT.

The one constituency, however, that Obama cannot be led to disown by political pressure is the American ruling class and its corporations which finance both his campaign and the party that nominated him for the highest office. Barack Obama first entered corporate party politics in the Illinois State Senate by successfully disqualifying every one of his Democratic opponents from the ballot, including the incumbent, through bad-faith challenges to their petitions. From his subsequent establishment of a reputation for being a highly charismatic but politically reliable bourgeois-progressive to his prepresidential campaign authorship of *The Audacity of Hope* in order to fully establish his corporate credentials, Obama has made an unwav-

ering effort to persuade the ruling elite that he can most effectively carry out its corporatist and imperialist political agenda while utilizing his unique background and identification with change to reign in the growing militant opposition to existing conditions among millions of dissatisfied working people and youth.

The "change" represented by Barack Obama can realistically amount to no more than a perpetually shifting change of strategy within the American ruling class to superficially pacify mass indignation and rekindle the illusion of democratic efficacy through a candidate who will pursue an identical agenda to the preceding capitalist administration on nearly all issues of great substance. An essential prerequisite to the change so many millions of Americans are now demanding is the widespread realization that such change cannot be arrived at by supporting any section of, or rhetorically uplifting newcomer within, the constraints of the twin corporate parties. ★

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# Interview with Socialist Party Vice Presidential Candidate Stewart Alexander

## Stephen Tash The Michigan Socialist

**Who have been your personal role models to get where you are today?**

I would say for a large part, it has been my dad over the years. He took me to various political activities, visiting politicians and campaigns; going to one such event I first met Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley. Politically, I would say my dad got me interested in politics at a young age, which has been an influence upon me throughout my entire life. As far as my personal life, my mother was the stronger influence.

**You say that your discussions with Kevin Akin brought you to the conclusion that socialism is the answer. Why is capitalism unable to solve society's problems?**

Probably because capitalism is only for capitalists, does not serve needs for the working class. It only puts the working class into bondage and ties them up so they can be servants in society. Socialism offers equity where the working class enjoys collective benefits sharing on equal basis. Kevin Akin, when I met him, presented socialism to me from the frame of reference of my own life experience. Capitalism has not worked for me; working hard in life doesn't get you anywhere, only to next step where you work harder and that's it. What Kevin did is present the platform of the Peace and Freedom Party. I felt it offered many things that were of a strong benefit to working class people, such as sharing rights. I was very attracted to that part. I felt that it was a platform that advocated peace rather than the capitalist system we live in: a military system which advocates imperialism and



the exercise of war to achieve gains in that society. Because of this, I became a member.

**Your relationship with your maternal grandfather was strained by violence. How has this affected your views on the use of force?**

On the use of force? Well if you're referring to corporal punishment, I am very much against that. It's not important to use violence on children to enforce discipline. I believe that peace is the answer. We shouldn't solve our differences by force, something we see that out of imperialistic countries who use force for domination over smaller forces, groups or nations. That's what domination is all about; what I saw when I was a kid, [my grandfather] exercising his domination when I was just 10. How much superiority do you need over 10 year old child? I believe peace is the answer. I think it's important we handle things through peaceful negotiations rather than violence. The situation in Iraq is an example of imperialism; what we had in Iran; that's what imperialism is about.

**How has the violation of your civil rights throughout your life affected**

**your view on the violation of civil rights of other groups?**

Well, one of the things I realize is that I hate all forms of discrimination. I recall a customer saying, "We don't want those immigrants over here! Let's take them across the border!" There's only so much I can say to customer in response, but I started thinking they feel the same way about blacks. I listen to some people in my family, agreeing, saying we don't want immigrants here. Agreeing with the people who don't want blacks here either. I remember when they didn't want blacks in certain businesses or on busses. I remember going an extra 10 miles to an all black school. Discrimination is wrong no matter who it is directed toward: whether immigrants, gays, women or whoever. I can see how it has personally affected me in life. However you label it, it's still discrimination. One of the things I'll say is that I was very fortunate in that I was born black. Considering I was born in these shoes I can see how other people, born into different shoes, have same circumstances [of discrimination].

**Given your experiences, race relations are a major issue for you. How far do you think we have come and how far do you think we have to go?**

Well, Steve, we're actually going backwards. I heard Martin L King make a statement in Chicago that he had not seen as much violence in many parts of the South as he saw in the late sixties right there. The two groups were charged against each other and many were throwing bottles and violent towards minorities. Here we are in 2007 and we're losing ground still. When I began working at this company in 2004, I was the only black out of 150 employ-

ees. Now they have four blacks out of over 100. Not only that. In Fresno a couple days ago I saw so many blacks on the street pushing shopping carts; I couldn't believe where we're at in the world today. Why are blacks doing worse than they did 40 years ago? So it's not how far we have gone and where we need to go; we are losing ground. Other groups are also losing ground too. I don't want to say it's just blacks or hispanics. A lot of it has to do with working class people period, working class people are doing a lot worse than 40 or even 10 years ago. What it comes down to is a class struggle; that is what we are dealing with. Now it is not just black and white. It is the working class, poor people. We're not gaining ground. It's like we're starting from square one.

**You have focused on urban development issues in the past. What kind of programs do you feel have to be created or strengthened to help struggling urban areas such as Detroit, Kalamazoo, or Flint?**

I think it's very important that we look at social issues. We have the big elephant in the room that everyone has to deal with: military spending. Hundreds of billions of dollars are wasted unnecessarily there. The Democrats and Republicans, two names, one party owned by special interest groups, from the local level to the federal government. I believe we should be developing social ownership, democratic control, of the large corporations in our society. That's where we need to start; control the economy and agriculture. Those are the programs we need to focus on, where the people are in control, rather than having private individuals and enterprise control our lives. Is it going to take place overnight? I doubt that seriously but would love it. Many people don't understand Republicans and Democrats yet walk around, with chest puffed up, screaming "I'm a Republican" or a Democrat. A lot of people are seeing that their programs are not working, they're all failing, people

can't pay bills, we have the largest debt we've ever had, trade deficit is out of control, everything they have done has failed, everything. So we need socialists in leadership positions and focus on homelessness. We should not have homelessness in this country, there is no reason why there should be any. There should not be anyone left hungry in this society. The money we waste on being the police of the world could feed everyone who is hungry in the country. The money we waste in Iraq could pay for education for every kid who has an intent to attend college. These are programs that we would be using; this is what the Socialist Party and Peace and Freedom Party are offering. What we need to do is stop trying to be the guardians, trying to be the leaders of world, and start focusing once again on human needs; not just human needs here, working class people are everywhere, we need to focus on needs in this country, Mexico, Africa, wherever they're at. We're robbing them of hundreds of billions of dollars; there should be no one hungry in Africa, the whole continent. This is where greed comes in. Think about coal miners, than the mine's owner, in South Dakota, his pockets are bulging while the miners are struggling and, living in poverty. One person who owns has the wealth of several hundreds or thousands of people. Top executives are getting retirement packages with tens of millions of dollars. We need to have programs that focus on the homeless. The money is there. We need direct resources for the homeless, unemployed, students, veterans. But they keep voting Democratic and Republican while we're the ones offering programs.

**What experience do you feel you can draw upon in serving as Vice President of the United States?**

I feel the experience that I can draw upon is personal with the Peace and Freedom Party. I represent hundreds of years of experience with people there. I've been a socialist all my life, knew it for a decade,

and am still learning. When I found the group I realized that this is what I was looking for; it was a light. I can draw from the experience of people in the Peace and Freedom Party. I was listening in St Louis. When I exchanged information, talking to Walt Brown who ran for President, Eric Chester, I'm looking to draw from people like that, speaking people involved in a socialist movement, that's experience I'm drawing off right now. I'm not trying to draw from anything besides the agenda of these two parties. I want to make sure socialism expands from coast to coast. What they have been working for is to make sure what we see is what we have been working towards for a hundred years. These are the means by which I can give back to society as well. Kevin Akin has been a real mentor for me in the Peace and Freedom Party. We haven't always agreed 100%, not even today, but he has been my mentor always, be eternally indebted to him for that.

**What finally made your family decide to leave Michigan?**

(Stewart's family lived in New Boston, MI, a suburb of Detroit from 1953 - 1959)

Well actually, when we started to move to California my dad wanted to, he brought it up several times. For some reason my dad thought construction work was better in California. He did a lot of work with another contractor and thought there would be more work. To the contrary, it was not any different in California; not much changed other than that the conditions for my family were worse in California. ★

This is a selection of the questions posed to Cde Alexander. We could not include them all due to space constraints. To read the entire interview, visit us at:

**[www.spmichigan.org](http://www.spmichigan.org)**

## Reynolds for Michigan's Board of Education

### Dwain Reynolds III The Michigan Socialist

Since childhood we have been told about the "American Dream" in which anyone can become anything they can imagine. What they didn't tell us is that most will not be able to afford the education to achieve these dreams; and the average Americans who do will be in debt for the majority of their lives. Our education is one of the most essential components of living in an ever changing, free, democratic society. In its ideal form it allows all citizens to develop to their maximum potential and make informed decisions that will affect them throughout their lives. However our system is broken and affecting our society, economy, youth, households and future in various negative ways.

My name is Dwain C. Reynolds III and I am running for Michigan's State Board of Education as a Socialist/Green Party candidate in order to provide an alternative to our states deteriorating educational system. I grew up in the small town of Middleville, MI where I attended the Thornapple Kellogg school district (2004 graduate). Currently I am working as a day care teacher for school age kids and attending classes in order to obtain my degree in Secondary Education with a major in U.S. History and a minor in Geography.

I have decided to run for Michigan's State Board of Education because I am currently in the Michigan educational system and see the problems that occur.

While studying this system I came to realize that the people running it come from a very different time and therefore know nothing about our schools, students or teachers and what they really need. So, I figure, it is time to bring new ideas and philosophies to the forefront from someone who is actually submersed within the system.



It is not hard to see the atrocities that are occurring within our educational system. Michigan students are overwhelmingly deprived of essential learning supplies (such as updated textbooks) and classroom overcrowding has become the norm. Our teachers are underpaid while Post-Secondary education costs continue to rise at an alarming rate eliminating the opportunity for many Michigan residents to receive a college education. Furthermore the standardized curric-

ulum is deskilling our teachers, adding to the overcrowding problems that already exists, and stealing valuable knowledge from our youth (such as fine arts and even social studies).

I believe it is time to create a system in which everyone has the ability to make the best of themselves; where everyone starts out on an equal playing field. No

longer should race, gender, disability, age or wealth play a part in how much education one can receive or what anyone can make of him/herself. Overall it should only be hard work and dedication that determines how far someone can go and what they can become. We need a system that is set up to take and progress the entire nation by educating our citizens to discover new ways to improve it.

I have a platform which includes several

proposals I believe will help improve our education system. They include creating an egalitarian educational system with teaching methods that accommodate the wide range of teaching and learning styles; providing all students with the means to obtain education at the post-secondary level. Including a multicultural, multilingual, class-conscious, comprehensive K-12 curriculum that allows for alternative/experimental methods of learning and development with the inclusion of mandatory vocational and fine arts courses at all levels (with curriculum input from parents, students, teachers, and other community members). In the end developing a free, quality and universal public education system (from pre-kindergarten through post-graduate studies) including open admissions with the abolition of tuition and fees at all public universities.

Short term the crisis within our state's educational system can be halted by establishing a steeply graduated state income tax, cutting the hugely inflated salaries of school administrators and executives, and diverting tax money spent on corporate welfare and war to essential social programs/services. In the long run saving our educational system will require us to transform our imploding capitalist system into a system based on economic democracy: a society in which working people own and control the basic means of production and distribution and use the profits for social programs (like education) which meets the needs of all. As a member of the State Board of Education I will do everything I can to work with Michigan's working class to make this transformation a reality. ★

**“In the long run saving our educational system will require us to transform our imploding capitalist system into a system based on economic democracy.”**

# Culture

## *Die Fälscher*

### [*The Counterfeiters*]

## from a Socialist

## Perspective

**Sayan Bhattacharyya**  
**The Michigan Socialist**

The German-language film *Die Fälscher* [*The Counterfeiters*], directed by the Austrian director Stefan Ruzowitzky, and based on the book by Adolf Burger, won the Oscar for best foreign-language film this year (2008) and played at the Michigan Theater in Ann Arbor for the greater part of May. A gripping film set in the Nazi concentration camps, and based on the real-life memoirs of a young Slovak communist who is one of the central characters in the film, *Die Fälscher* poses an vital underlying question that should be of great interest to socialists.

The Internet Movie Database provides a succinct summary of the film: “*The Counterfeiters* is the true story of the largest counterfeiting operation in history, set up by the Nazis in 1936. Salomon “Sally” Sorowitsch is the king of counterfeiters. He lives a mischievous life of cards, booze, and women in Berlin during the Nazi-era. Suddenly his luck runs dry when arrested by Superintendent Friedrich Herzog. Immediately thrown into the Mauthausen concentration camp, Salomon exhibits exceptional skills there and is soon transferred to the upgraded camp of Sachsenhausen. Upon his arrival, he once again comes face to face with Herzog, who is there on a secret mission. Hand-picked for his unique skill, Salomon and a group of



professionals are forced to produce fake foreign currency under the program Operation Bernhard. The team, which also includes detainee Adolf Burger, is given relatively comfortable barracks for their assistance.”

Towards the beginning of the film, Salomon Sorowitsch lies in bed with his lover when the door is suddenly broken open by jackbooted policemen who arrest him on account of being a Jew (in addition to being a known counterfeiting kingpin). Of course, similar events are taking place in southeastern Michigan as we speak, with agents of the ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raids breaking in doors on Hispanic families' residences becoming a common and tolerated occurrence.<sup>1</sup>

It is an ethical conundrum which is posed later in the film, however, that provides the most food for thought in

1. Leung, Kimberly “Next Door Human Rights Abuses: Immigration Enforcement Agents Raid Local Homes”, *The Michigan Independent*, Vol. IV, 3 (Apr 2, 2008)



relation to thinking about how best to act. While Salomon attempts to weaken the economy of Germany's allied opponents through his participation in the counterfeiting operation, Adolf refuses to use his skills for Nazi profit and intends to sabotage Operation Bernhard's aid to the Nazi war effort.

The American writer Joyce Carol Oates once wrote that "...conflict, the establishment of disequilibrium, is the impetus for the evolution of life; so is conflict the genesis, the prime mover, the secret heart of all art." Conflict, indeed, is the prime mover that drives this ethical question which provides this film with its momentum and its pathos: a conflict between two visions of how to live. Literally, "to live" here means sheer physical survival, which is constantly under threat in the concentration camp. To live in such a situation inevitably implicates having to decide how one should situate oneself with respect to malevolent power and malevolent authority. The two protagonists, Salomon Sorowitsch, the "king of counterfeitters", and Adolf Burger, the Slovak communist printer and Sorowitsch's fellow concentration camp resident in Sachsenhausen represent two different visions of life and, by extension, of politics.

The real-life Adolf Burger, who is still alive today at the age of 91, joined the Communist Party in 1933 at the age of sixteen, and was a printer by profession. After World War II broke out, he joined the Resistance and began to use his skills as a printer to secretly print leaflets against the Nazis. When his activity was discovered, he was arrested in August 1942, seven months after his marriage to his wife Gizela, and, following his arrest, the couple were deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp where Gizela was killed later that year. After eighteen months at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Burger was selected to work for Operation Bernhard, the Nazi counter-

feiting operation depicted in the film, and was transferred to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in April 1944.



Markovics (as Salomon Sorowitsch) in *The Counterfeiters*

In the film, Burger believes that the only ethically correct response to a power that dispenses oppression and injustice is to confront it directly and do whatever one can to resist it, even if the asymmetry of forces is so great that doing so would imply instant death and obliteration. Finding himself imprisoned in the "golden cage" of the Sachsenhausen camp, housed in relative comfort, Burger plots open rebellion and, later, sabotage. Much as Mario Savio was to articulate in his famous "Machine" speech on the steps of Sproull Hall in Berkeley, Burger believes that it is his duty as a human being to stop the grinding gears of a murderous apparatus any way he can, resisting with his life and with his body if necessary. Mario Savio, speaking about the Vietnam War in December 1964, had said in that famous speech:

***There's a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart that you can't take part...And you've got to put your body upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus -- and you've got to make it stop! And you've got to indicate to the people who run it, to the people who own it -- that unless you're free the machine will be prevented from working at all!***

[2. A video of Savio's speech](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tcx9BJRadfw) is available on YouTube, at the URL <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tcx9BJRadfw>.

When reminded of the apparent futility of the pointless death that the discovery of his actions by the Nazis would inevitably bring on, Burger's characteristic response is that it would still be a worthwhile *gesture*, at least. A socialist, Burger believes in the power of symbols. Such a self-sacrificing gesture would not really be futile, Burger thinks, because it will "indicate to the people" the indestructibility of resistance, and will inspire others to resist.

Quite different from Burger is Salomon Sorowitsch, based partially on the real-life Salomon Smolianoff. The press booklet for the screening of *The Counterfeiters* at the Berlin Film Festival describes him thus: "Salomon Smolianoff, called 'Sally,' was a Russian Jewish artist and the most notorious forger of art and money in his day. He inspired the lead character in *The Counterfeiters*, Salomon Sorowitsch. Like Sorowitsch, Smolianoff also landed in prison before the outbreak of the war because he let a beautiful woman keep him one night too many in Berlin." In the film, Sorowitsch is depicted as a survivalist who believes in keeping focused on staying alive from one day to another, and does not let abstractions or high-minded ideals distract him into noble but suicidal heroics. An opportunist, Sorowitsch believes that the most effective thing to do is to stay alive and bide his time for the right opportunity, and on several occasions his quick wit and survival instincts enable him to talk the way out of the danger of certain death brought on by Burgers' and others' hot-headed idealism.

Who is right -- Burger or Sorowitsch? Is the right way to confront naked power, frontally and heroically while risking almost-certain failure in the short run, as Burger does? Or should one collude with power and try to resist it incrementally and opportunistically, perhaps even collaborating with it most of the time, in the interest of living to fight another day?

Writing a review of this film in *The New*

Yorker magazine, the film critic David Denby seems to consider this question to be passé. He disdainfully remarks:

*“...the morally intransigent man who refuses all compromise with evil, or the trimmer who partly collaborates with an oppressor in the hope of keeping himself and others alive? These are hardly the freshest questions in the world...”*<sup>3</sup>

I have to disagree with Denby here: I think that the conundrum posed by the ethical dilemma at the core of the film, is a conundrum which we face continually. It is not a question that has become jaded or passé at all. I gave the example of Mario Savio already -- in the sixties, there were those who, like Savio and other members of the Students for a Democratic Society, or the Weathermen, or the Black Panthers, tried to confront power frontally and directly, and many indeed were crushed and destroyed in that attempt. There were others who went a less confrontational route and tried to work for change within the parameters of the political establishment. In the civil rights movement, once again, we can see proponents of direct action, such as Malcolm X, who wanted to bring about change “by any means necessary”, while we also have the example of civil rights leaders like John Lewis or Jesse Jackson who have sought to bring about change by working within the confines of the existing power structure through



From left to right: Adolf Burger (August Diehl), Salomon Sorowitsch (Karl Markovics), Atze (Veit Stübner) and Dr. Klinger (August Zirner) in *The Counterfeiters*

3. Denby, David “Taking Action”, *New Yorker*, March 3, 2008

electoral politics. Even as we speak, we see the example of Ralph Nader, Cynthia McKinney, or the Socialist Party’s own candidates Brian Moore and Stewart Alexander, whose approach to bringing about change is through launching a frontal challenge to the two-party power structure by running a third-party campaign of socialist education -- and also the instance of a Barack Obama, who claims to stand for change but intends to bring it about from within, by colluding with the existing structure of power and running as a candidate of one of the two capitalist parties.



Karl Markovics (as Salomon Sorowitsch) and Dolores Chaplin in *The Counterfeiters*

The lasting impact of this film derives from the drama of this timeless conflict between two ethical visions of change as represented by the world-views of Burger and of Sorowitsch. The film ends by seemingly taking sides, apparently endorsing the cynical, worldly-wise, hard-bitten attitude of Sorowitsch which favors playing it safe and looking for opportunity, and dismissing the approach of Burger as too idealistic and impulsive, and as ultimately less useful. In doing so, the film seems to be in tune with the rather cynical tenor of our times, which, no doubt, made it easier for it to be awarded an Oscar. To its credit, the film acknowledges the bravery and heroism of Adolf Burger and does not try to conceal his socialist beliefs (or the fact that it is his socialism that motivates him). However, it hews to the conventional ruling-class wisdom by dismissing Burger’s approach to life and politics as hopelessly naive and utopian. ★

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# Proletarian Poetry

## Iraq

**Richard Monroe**  
**The Michigan Socialist**

Napalm Fallujah for humanitarian reasons  
Drop thunder  
As a nation falls apart  
Bloody hands reach for a gold ring  
But insist it is a dove  
And oil men and defense contractors insist that they  
Pursue disinterestedly, altruistically  
And the objective independents, conservatives, tough  
Minds hear the truth on AM radio  
And seal the truth, with newscasters  
Who echo them  
And suddenly Jesus is  
The god of prosperity, neocon foreign policy,  
And the good Americans and the good Americans  
As defined by Bill O'Reilly  
While those living outside this godliness  
Rest in hell

## Past Lies and Poverty

**Steven B. Smith**

Old wonders shrink, grow tame in time  
The new fear hangs on  
In quiet desperation, quit of desire  
Like the shadow of a crowded  
Culture in which each  
Declare their innocence  
In straight unfocused silence  
It is there  
The smell of unwashed  
Dishes smug in the stench of our  
Unclean shame  
Like a salesman's underbreath  
Fishy, stale  
The deep teal, the tiled resonance  
Of hungers on top of hungers

## The Other Poem

**Richard Monroe**  
**The Michigan Socialist**

People as units  
in international  
war games, prime time,  
cut throat  
A blood-soaked golden rule  
"The hours leading up to this explosive moment  
had laid bare the churches deep divisions."  
Victory won't nourish rapacious souls  
phantom bombardments  
as likely as any promised land  
"Near the end of the communion service,  
the central symbol of unity in  
Christianity, he felt a powerful impulse  
to step toward the altar,  
raise an empty ceramic chalice high  
above his head and then  
open his fingers"  
Civil wars  
boil at all temperatures  
whether resisting  
royal criminals  
velvet revolutions  
in the Ukraine  
hired warlords  
scalping Taliban zealots  
"What happened after the gut wrenching crash  
however, turned this act of desperation into  
one of the few symbols of hope  
in a global gathering, that by Thursday  
had broken down into calls for schism"  
The body is broken.  
Nixon was impeached in his second term  
" A strong instinct to pick up those pieces,  
to place them back on the altar."  
The impeached President left on Airforce One  
God raptured George W. Bush  
"Each one said, 'I'm a potter, may I make  
a new chalice for you?"

# A BILLION LITTLE GEORGE WASHINGTON MUSHROOMS OR A BIG BONFIRE

**Courtney Campbell**  
**The Michigan Socialist**

You could stack them up like an igloo  
You could make a billion little airplanes  
A billion little George Washington mushrooms  
A billion e pluribus unums  
You could play one billion dollar bill pick-up  
Or a really boring game of go fish  
You could fill a suitcase then another and another  
And another and another and keep on going  
You could line the walls of a cathedral  
You could write on them and send them to congress  
Or add vinegar and wash a billion windows  
Or mark a billion pages  
Or make a big bonfire  
You could hang them from trees  
Or mold little dollar bill bricks  
Or leave them next to the toilet  
Or keep them in the medicine cabinet - just in case!  
You could buy a billion college-ruled notebooks  
(But you couldn't write in all of them)  
You could build thousands of two-room schools  
(But you couldn't study in each one)  
You could buy millions of turkey dinners  
(But they'd expire well before you finish)  
You could buy thousands of vaccinations  
(But who could take that many?)  
A billion chocolate bars or a billion pineapples  
A billion packs of gum or a billion toothbrushes  
You could give three dollars and thirty-two cents for every American  
You could give one hundred forty-nine dollars and ninety-four cents for every Paraguayan  
You could give fifteen cents for every living person on the planet  
But who needs that many people anyway?

## Andrew Barcode Jackson

**Jim D Deuchars**

There's an IN GOD we trust  
More than God green tattooed  
On the back of a president's  
Head.

# Fire With Fear Without Fighting

**Jim D Deuchars**

it's a CON TAME NATION  
now they put it in the water.  
excess wrong sign redirectives  
point us poisoned up we thought  
was gravitating down the drainage  
spirals. Flush your feverish your  
thirsty clench your quench we're  
put upon: your DO NOT USE can  
further no one's best intentions no one  
noticed no one not until the next is  
telephonic bedspread readout  
mucous miniatures engaged  
entanglements of hair: the saga  
of our golden skin cell microwave  
enhancements neon billboard  
eyelash fonts for tickle-tonguing:

in our breakfast ON A STICK  
interrupting not so news BREAKING  
in the transit centers MUST  
on the sidewalks DON'T  
on the highway DELAY  
in our parks KEEP OFF

THIS IS NOT AN EXIT  
and you must not P.

