

Labor Militant

INSIDE...

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| • Contract on America | 6-7 |
| • Italian Workers Bring Down Gov't | 8 |
| • Build Labor Party Advocates | 3 |
| • War on Women Continues | 5 |

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1995

SOLIDARITY PRICE \$1

FOR LABOR & YOUTH • WORKING CLASS UNITY & SOCIALISM

ISSUE 40



RIGHT WING DECLARES WAR on workers, poor, women, kids...

ORGANIZE & FIGHT BACK!



Newt Gingrich and the new Republicans were celebrating their victory, but for Mrs D. the Christmas light was not burning so bright. Her man had left and Mrs D. was left behind, in a decaying apartment with four growing kids in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. When the teacher of her young son met Mrs D. in January, she said: "My credit for food in the neighborhood has reached its limit. I am hungry and the kids are suffering. Some people at school are helping out with food." Mrs D. did not qualify for emergency funds, welfare, food stamps, nothing. Far from the shining lights, the private clubs and the high security gates of mansions, millions of children and working class families face the prospect of devastating cuts from health care to food stamps, to welfare benefits.

The Republican "Contract With America" is a declaration of war against everyone who is not rich. No one is safe from the attacks planned on just about every program that affects the life of working people. Health, education, safety, public services, welfare, the environment are threatened. At least half the welfare families could be removed from welfare rolls. Others could be forced to work for less than half the minimum wage. Several programs including housing, food assistance and aid to the elderly and the disabled are threatened with cuts and funding will be capped, so that even when needs increase, the money will not be there.

Programs that provide a scant safety net for millions of poor women and children could be slashed and hundreds of thousands of social services and public sector workers could lose their jobs. Almost 40 million people are officially poor, (in reality, the number is much greater) the majority women and young children.

Target: Social Security

Social Security, Medicare and other entitlements that workers and their families take for granted will continue to be undermined, with the politicians waiting for an opportunity to destroy them.

It is not only the very poor that are being

attacked, but workers and unions as well. Despite the glut in profits for the corporations, wages have declined by 10 percent since 1979. Companies are looking to bust unions in order to drive down wages even further. For example, Firestone/Bridgestone announced at the beginning of January that they are hiring scabs to permanently replace their workers who have been on strike for 6 months. The strikes of the workers in Caterpillar and Staley continued after months on the picket lines in the Midwest.

But for the rich and the corporations, the Contract is proposing further cuts for the capital gains tax.

The Democrats are in agreement with the Republicans on the fundamental issues. The difference between Clinton and Gingrich is that when Gingrich squeals that he wants \$100 million cut of the spending for a program, Clinton and the Democrats will Bray that there should be only a cut of...\$95 million. That's the extent of their differences. The Democrats and the Republicans may seem to argue about something on TV but they have no real differences. They are servants of the big corporations, which are now dictating an all-out war against wages, benefits and conditions of workers and their families.

A mandate?

Gingrich makes enough noise to make you think that there "must be" a powerful feeling in the country to cut government spending and throw millions women and children on the streets to beg or in camps for the poor. But where is the mandate for these cuts? A recent survey published in the Philadelphia Inquirer indicated only 21 percent of those asked were in favor of cutting welfare spending!

The Republicans won a "resounding" victory, capturing the imagination of a full 19 percent of the eligible voters in the country in November! Over a hundred million people turned their back to the politics of the Democrats and the Republicans and yet these people insist they have a popular mandate for their policies!

What to do

Working people have the power to change this situation. WE CAN STOP GINGRICH AND HIS GANG if we take the initiative and organize! The only thing that benefits Gingrich and his backers, the rich, is the absence of an mass movement of workers and youth armed with a clear alternative to the agenda of the Contract. The labor movement has enormous resources at its disposal to begin to work with community, youth and women's organizations to organize, pickets, rallies and demonstrations in every city across the country to explain what is Gingrich's agenda and what needs to be done. Demonstrations must be organized to defend welfare centers, prenatal clinics, and schools from the cuts that will be implemented. Such a mobilization would send a clear message to Congress about what working people need. Solidarity begins with the slogan that an injury to one is an injury to all.

The war Gingrich and the Republicans have declared could provoke a firestorm of anger and protests. In the run up to the campaign against the racist Proposition 187 in California, a rally of two hundred thousand people took place in Los Angeles and thousands of high school students participated in student strikes and demonstrations. It was the largest rally ever in Southern California. It shows that the mood to fight back is there.

A demonstration to defend women's rights has been called to show that women will not be intimidated by the cowardly attacks on clinics and the murders of innocent

victims. At the last rally in Washington DC, hundreds of thousands of people marched to defend the right of choice. The rally called for this April could be even bigger.

In Italy, a mass wave of militant protest and strikes by workers and young people brought down the right-wing government of Berlusconi in November when he tried to cut pensions and social security benefits. We must draw the lesson that only mass, militant action can stop the attack that Gingrich and Congress are planning in the next few months.

Fight Back!

The only alternative to the priorities of big business and the rich is for the labor movement to organize and fight against the cuts, and demand full funding for education and healthcare, a \$12.50 minimum wage or \$500 guaranteed income, a 30-hour work week without loss of pay to create jobs for young people and the unemployed, a public works program to provide jobs and to rebuild the crumbling infrastructure, and to make the rich pay for the crisis of their system. The labor leaders have the main responsibility to ensure this fight back is organized.

Capitalism is a system that can no longer provide decent jobs, wages and a way forward. A fighting democratic socialist alternative and a political party that represents working people and Labor Party is needed to stop Gingrich and the Republicans in their tracks.

ALAN JONES
Member, UAW Local 1981

Cash Drive for '95!

Labor Militant supporters collected over \$5,000 in fighting fund in the last quarter of '94. Over twelve hundred dollars was raised on the streets through various campaign work, the majority raised in just four days. This is the record we need to follow in 1995.

Congratulations to Manhattan and Chicago supporters who surpassed 100% of their targets and a big thanks to our supporters in the 14 states where Labor Militant is currently sold. To our readers: If you didn't contribute to our appeal, remember: Labor Militant is the best socialist paper in the movement. Send your checks to Labor Militant, P.O. Box 39462, Chicago, IL 60639.

EDITORIAL

BOND MARKET CRASH SHOWS CRISIS OF GLOBAL CAPITALISM

The US bond market suffered a crash bigger in magnitude than the stock market crash of 1987 in 1994. The Securities Industry Association estimate that the crash whacked over a trillion (that's a thousand billion) dollars in market value from the bond market. The effects of this development will have very direct consequences for millions of workers as world capitalism goes deeper into crisis.

The collapse in bond prices was prompted by the increase of the US interest rates in February, 1994 and it continues to "reverberate leaving many governments with unsustainably high real borrowing costs" in order to finance deficits. Already, the effects are felt in the collapse of the peso in Mexico, and the run of investors away from Latin America which seems to prepare the way for a deep recession in the region and further impoverishment of workers.

But the effects of rise of interest rates which triggered the crash will be felt globally: "As long as the real rates of interest exceed real growth in the more heavily indebted first world countries, default is an issue that becomes harder to ignore..." warned the *Financial Times* about a number of countries (Spain, France, Italy, Sweden and Canada are the most vulnerable) which could face the prospect of massive devaluations of their currencies or even defaults leading to an escalation of class struggles.

The factors that led to the crash were the enormous amount of financial speculation that was going on and the huge increase in public debt and in the advanced capitalist countries (including the US) over the past 15 years. Between 1977 and 1992, net public debt as a percent of gross domestic product has increased from 21.2% to 36.7% and is projected to grow to 43.9% in 1995. The need for governments to finance those debts (along with the interest for the coupon clippers and the banks) as well as the world increase in demand for capital creates the pressure for the real world interest rates to go up.

In the US, the Federal Reserve kept interest rates artificially low since 1990 in order to get the economy going after the recession of 1990-91. The banks and Wall Street investment banks took investors' deposits and speculated with higher-priced US treasury bonds and investments in the stock markets of Mexico, China, India, Argentina, etc. Part of the speculation frenzy was the record wave of mergers and buyouts between companies in the US reaching \$339.4 billion in 1994.

The consequences of the crash are already felt in the bankruptcy of Orange County in California. The full effects are still hidden by the book-keeping methods of several regional banks and municipalities that were speculating and could face serious losses or even bankruptcies. But the real impact in the US could be felt if there is a sharp correction (a crash) in the stock market which, along with the impact of higher interest rates, could send the country into a recession or slump in 1995 or 1996. Already, most economists of big business forecast the rate of growth of the economy in 1995 to be half of 1994. A front page article in the *Wall Street Journal* warned that "there may be another shoe waiting to drop" in the stock market in 1995.

"It's not a question of whether the US will slow down, but when and how much. The next issue will be how much that will take the steam out of the recoveries around the world..." warned David Hale, chief economist at Kemper Financial Services.

World capitalism remains mired by mass unemployment, crises, sharp attacks on living standards and increased exploitation which show that we live in a period of depression with sharp turns and changes in the class struggles.

It is this crisis and decay of the system that is creating the need for all-out attacks on the wages, conditions and social benefits workers have won internationally. Gingrich's "Contract With America," the union-busting attacks of the employers, the cuts in social spending, the deepening social crisis are all flowing from this crisis of a decaying system. However, implementing such programs is much more difficult as this increasingly provokes the anger of the working class and the youth. Part of the reason why the public debt has grown so much since 1977 is the resistance of the working class against cuts in social services especially in Europe. This was the point that Berlusconi in Italy forgot at his peril when he tried to implement the program of massive social cuts demanded by international capital. He was forced to resign after a massive movement exploded in his face. This is the lesson that Gingrich will have to learn also about the power of the US working class. Only the socialist transformation of society can provide a solution to the social, economic and political decay of world capitalism.

A WORKING MOTHER SPEAKS:

"We Have to Change the Whole System to Make Life Better for our Kids..."

Barbara, a nurse, is the mother of two young children in Philadelphia. She spoke to *Labor Militant* about the experience of working-class people trying to raise kids:

Kids don't work, they don't contribute to profits anymore, so the bosses couldn't care less about them. Not that the bosses did care about children when child labor was legal and widespread. It's amazing to me that there was no national law restricting child labor until 1916—that's not that long ago when you think about it.

I read that the SPCA campaigned for and won animal welfare rights 9 years before child welfare laws existed! All that money they spent trying to get that lost whale out of the Delaware River reminded me of this. They had marine biologists flying around in helicopters looking for it, who installed loud speakers in the river with noises to try and drive it toward the sea. The whale made *Inquirer* headlines every day for about two weeks. What do kids get? Their picture on a milk carton. Nobody sends helicopters looking for them on a daily basis. Kids aren't worth the money. If 20 million youth will have no place in this society by the year 2000, the bosses don't even care if they grow up anymore.

There's nothing in society for parents with children either. The most obvious thing is child care. I have no good options for child care. The rich can hire live-in nannies to give their kids the stability of staying in their own homes, someone paying attention to them all the time. They have a lot of control over who takes care of their kids and what they do with them all day. What's my recourse? What can I afford? The babysitter I used last year had a house that was dirty and crowded. But I knew my kids were safe with her, and she lived right across the street from the school. Safety is the number one thing for me. I was forced to look the other way about the other things. Then I feel guilty for looking the other way, for not being able to give my kids the care I want them to have. As it is, I have to get the kids up by 5 to get them to the babysitters by 6, so I can be to work by 7. If I didn't have a car, I'd be getting them up at 4 to take the bus to the babysitters and on and on.

"Professional" child care costs \$120-\$175 per week per child in this area. Most places charge a flat rate for the week, no matter how many hours the child is actually there. They charge you for days the kid is sick, but won't take sick kids. I don't know what I would do if I didn't have family close by to fall back on. And then I feel guilty too, leaving the kids with my mom. My mom never had to leave us with my grandmother, she stayed home with us all day when we were small. My dad's job with the phone company supported us all and it's just not like that anymore.

And there are no concessions in the workplace for parents. The bosses don't want to know that you have "outside responsibilities." I'm a nurse. An employer doesn't want to hear that you can



only take a day shift position because your child care provider doesn't have night shift or an evening shift hours. After not getting a job because I have kids, I no longer list them on my résumé, even though I fully believe that some of what makes me a good mother also makes me a good nurse. Hospitals and nursing homes don't want to hire women with small children because want to be able to call you and say, "We just got a call out, can you be here in an hour?" and expect you to say yes!

I can't work. Welfare would mean poverty for my kids. I feel like the bosses just want kids locked in the house by themselves until they're old enough to work.

Education

It takes money to educate kids. They push kids through school without taking the time to say what's going on with this one kid. But how can the teachers do that when they have 30 or more 5 and 6 year olds in a class? Kids are pegged as "behavior problems" and that's what they'll be until they leave the school system. A teacher might be able to pick up a developmental delay or other problem, but what can they do about it? They can't take the time with one child to really find out what's wrong. These kids are casualties of the system, they fall by the way side.

Everything is blamed on the parents. Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled during the day. How many parents have the leisure to be home in the day? Then they complain that parents don't go or aren't involved in education. You get out of work, pick up the kids from child care, get their homework done, make dinner, get them in the bath tub, just in time to collapse into your own bed and start all over tomorrow. Who has time to go to a meeting of the Home and School Association at 8 pm, and once again, you have the problem of child care. One of the schools in the neighborhood says it provides child care, but who's going to get the kids all ready to go out again at 8 at night when you've gotten them out of bed at 5 to get to the sitters? You're overworked, tired, and out of energy and then made to feel guilty.

They want you to volunteer to work in the school library or to be the crossing

guard on the one corner where someone retired and the city hasn't replaced her yet. You don't have the right to say anything about your child's education if you don't volunteer. That's how they try to make you feel.

What is the solution? Fully fund the schools. We need smaller classes, number one, and the basics. Bring the kids back in who are being shoved under the rug.

Child care needs to be taken seriously. Free, on-site child care is the answer. It needs to be federally funded, regulated and professional. Kids are a full-time job. They have the right to be taken care of 24 hours a day, adequately. Parents can't be holding two full-time jobs. One person working can't support a family anymore. If child care were free, parents may not have to take a second job—it's a vicious cycle, you need more money to pay for child care, so you get another job but need more child care.

The question of kids brings up all the other issues. Wages and hours—if wages were higher and hours shorter, parents wouldn't have to work as much and need so much child care. Transportation—with out a car, you have to get the kids up at an ungodly hour to get to the sitters. Money—and why the city doesn't have it for education and crossing guards. They build prisons to hold teenagers and young adults instead of educating them when they're small. Relationships—it's even harder with a partner, to care for the kids, to make enough money to support them, to deal with the daily frustration. Child abuse—no one wants to look at the problem of why parents abuse their kids. Look at DHS (Department of Human Services), how many cases does each social worker have? It's like the teachers, they might know something's wrong, but they don't have the time or resources to deal with it. How can they really help families?

I have no good options. *Parents Magazine* and the rest of the big media says I should be able to do it all, spend my "quality time" baking cookies with my kids. What am I supposed to do, read to them on the bus? The bosses' solutions always ignore the main problem. They try to throw us a bone. I can't do it all, this isn't my fault. We have to change the whole system to make life better for our kids.

Better Sorry Than Safe?

Workplace health and safety is one of the main targets of the Republicans in Congress when they speak about deregulation. The Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) will be on the "top 10" hit list for spending cuts.

Meanwhile, the epidemic of repetitive strain illnesses and injuries of workers increased to 281,000 in 1992, up from 22,600 ten years ago.

A Tough Choice...

What's the difference between the Republican and the Democrats? "It's like the difference between a toothache and a headache," said Bob Wages, international president of OCAW. "You're going to hurt, either way."

Get relief: Build a Labor Party!

THEM & US

Good for Whom?

Business Week is forecasting an "excellent" year for 1995 in the economy. But a closer look at manufacturing reveals the true story: with the exception of auto, where the big three forecast growth in employment by 60,000 workers, every manufacturing industry will lose jobs! Altogether, half a million jobs are expected to be chopped this year. Meanwhile, *Business Week* also calculates production value per worker in manufacturing is expected to rise by 16% in 1995. How about a 16% pay raise, too?

Secret Weapon

"A labor party could mean salvation to many workers, organized and unorganized. Many do-nothing union

leaderships are very opposed to a labor party or disavow any knowledge of need for one because they are aware that they will lose their powers. A labor party will be like the rank & file's Kryptonite to Superman for these "know-nothing" leaderships..."

Quote from a union member armed with Kryptonite in New York!

More available from P.O. Box 5447, LIC, NY 11105

It's the system...

For those who still keep count:

"358 billionaires in the world have a net worth of \$760 billion, equal to the wealth of 45% of the world's population.

"The 200 largest multinational corporations control over 25% of the world's economic activity.

Build Labor Party Advocates!

Support is growing for the building of a Labor Party. The Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, the United Electrical Workers and the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees have endorsed Labor Party Advocates (LPA). LPA chapters and recruitment committees have recently gotten off the ground in Boston, Los Angeles and other cities.

Last December, 350 labor party supporters—members of 60 unions and several community groups—attended a midwest conference in Toledo, Ohio. Lisa Hane, LPA member from Chicago, told the conference that if the movement is taken forward in the next year to establish a labor party, the meeting taking place could be remembered as historic. Other meetings are happening across the country as union activists come together to discuss and plan the building of a working class party. 120 people attended the first LPA meeting in Boston. In Los Angeles, 150 showed up.

An important development is taking place in the San Francisco Bay Area. There both the Alameda County and the San Francisco Labor Councils have endorsed LPA, as have the San Francisco Building Trades Council, the Bay Counties District Council of Carpenters, and numerous local unions. This has given LPA an important credibility among union members. However, it only scratches the surface, as far as potential support from union leaders and official union bodies. While in San Francisco the leadership of the regional bodies helped initiate the support without direct pressure from below, this has not been the case in Alameda County (the East Bay), where a persistent campaign from just one or two LPA members within the Central Labor Council is now starting to bear fruit.

The LPA leadership should now mobilize its members for a campaign with the official bodies of organized labor, from the local unions on up to the internationals, to support the idea of a Labor Party and endorse LPA. Support and cooperation from the officials should, of course, be sought out. However, this in no way precludes also openly raising the idea and provoking discussion and debate on it within these bodies.

In addition, there is the question of activities for LPA and its members. There are several issues around which all wings of organized labor are in agreement. For instance, the campaign against NAFTA and for labor law reform. Support the AFL-CIO's policy for a 35 hour work week. Perhaps most critically, LPA must be involved in strikes and organizing drives. LPA should be mobilized to participate in such campaigns and link them with the question of a Labor Party.

LPA is calling for a founding convention for a Labor Party in late 1995. At this convention, several issues will have to be discussed and debated out in order for a Labor Party to be established and in order for it to solve the problems of U.S. working people. Up to now, LPA has accepted that union officials can both support LPA and support the Democrats. Historically, a wing of the labor leadership in the past has supported the idea of a Labor Party in words while in action they supported the Democrats. Their verbal support for a Labor Party served to put off decisive action on the question. At its founding convention, a Labor Party should issue a clear, unequivocal call on the labor movement and its leaders to once and for all break all its links with both parties of big business.

In addition, there is the question of participating in elections. Even before the convention, there is no real reason why LPA should not participate in running genuine, independent worker candidates even at the present. Once a founding convention is held, there should be an open commitment to running its own candidates and should call on the labor leaders to put all the resources of the labor movement behind them.

Finally, there is the question of the program, of what a Labor Party will fight for. In the last analysis, this is the key issue. The question of a shorter work week, of guaranteed jobs and income, of education, health care, etc.—a Labor Party would have to raise concrete demands on these if it is to succeed. But we must not forget that millions of workers would raise one simple question: "How are you going to pay for any advances? Are you just going to raise my taxes?" If we lack a clear answer to this, in the end a Labor Party will not be able to solve the problems. The only really practical solution to this question is to be committed to taking the 500 multinationals, who really control the U.S. economy, and place them under public ownership and to then democratically plan the economy, based on what the people need, not on the profits of a tiny minority.

All this and more will have to be discussed at the founding convention. However, it must be emphasized that the creation of a Labor Party on any program would be a huge step forward. It would break the political monopoly of the bosses' parties and challenge the greed of big business.

JOIN LPA!

BUILD FOR A LABOR PARTY FOUNDING CONVENTION!

Contact LPA at P.O. Box 35177, Washington, DC 20009-3177 or the chapter nearest you.

FRAN KARAS
Steward, GCU Local 1-P

Break the Political Monopoly of Big Business!

Newt Gingrich, the Republican Congress, the big corporations and Clinton are planning a massive attack on working people. The widest gap between rich and poor since 1947 now exists in this country. As *BusinessWeek* put it, "Top fifth families now rake in 44.6% of income, vs. 4.4% for the bottom fifth." 37 million people and 22% of children in the U.S. live in poverty, the highest since 1960. This revolting inequality is the result of a concerted effort by corporations, Wall Street and big-business government to amass profit by hacking away at wages, jobs and funding for social programs.

The leadership of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organization (AFL-CIO) met the passage of NAFTA and GATT, the defeat of health care reform and the strike replacement bill with a whimper. President Lane Kirkland and the rest of the conservative tops of the AFL-CIO officials are seeking to turn the labor movement into an indentured servant, by chaining themselves to the big-business Democrats.

After the Democrat-controlled Senate let the anti-scab bill die, Kirkland wrote to Clinton: "On behalf of the AFL-CIO, thank you for your efforts on behalf of the Workplace Fairness Act, legislation to prohibit the 'permanent replacement' of workers who exercise their legal right to strike. I know that you, the Vice President, Secretary Reich, and others in your administration did everything possible to persuade members of the Senate to allow this bill to come to a vote." Contrary to Kirkland's fawning praise, Clinton didn't even bother to put pressure on the two senators from his home state of Arkansas to bring the bill to a vote.

Big-Business Assault

Kirkland and most of the top AFL-CIO leadership did not lift a finger to seriously challenge the policies of Clinton on any issue that concerned workers. They are blind to the assault against workers by big business and their politicians. They have spent the last 15 years complying with concessions and have neglected the unorganized and the unemployed for decades. This has given confidence to corporations such as Caterpillar, Staley and Bridgestone/Firestone which are conducting all-out union-busting campaigns. They let heroic stands against these companies remain isolated. They stand by as Democrats and Republicans try to destroy gains won by struggles of the working class while handing over "entitlements" worth billions of dollars to the rich and the corporations such as interest to the banks, tax breaks for the rich and defense contracts.

Electoral Vacuum

The November elections were another reflection of this process as workers had no alternative to the priorities set out by Gingrich and Clinton for the next two years. Speaking after the election, Ron Carey President of the Teamsters called for a "broad coalition" of all those opposed to the corporate agenda.

John Sweeney, President of Service Employees International Union recently told a union conference that the labor movement needs to reconsider its political strategy because "we are not getting anything out of the Democrats."

The unions need to make an immediate and decisive break with



CORNERS
NO
MEXICAN MIGRANT

CONGRESS

NO

</

TEAMSTERS

Carey Goes on the Offensive

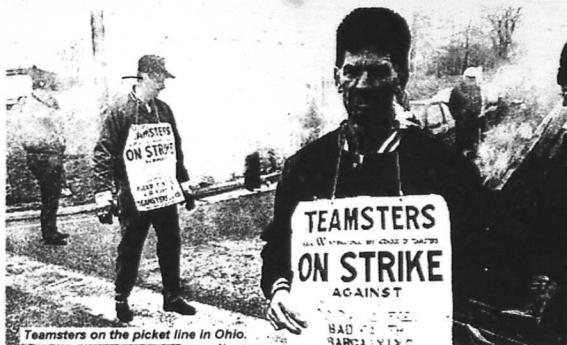
In the next two years, members will elect delegates to the Teamsters Convention, and will re-elect the top leadership of the union. If the union is to be kept from falling back into the disastrous policies of the past, then the Old Guard is going to have to be defeated in these elections.

The first salvo of this battle has been fired. The attempt of the Old Guard to use their control of the Regional Conferences to sabotage the union has been defeated. Members in over 30 locals who faced a virtual dictatorship by the Old Guard have seen Teamster president Ron Carey sweep these leaders aside and start to reform the locals. A major organizing drive has been launched with a campaign involving the rank and file, and funding of multiple pensions for union officials has been ended by the International. Also, there has been an increase in victories in local elections by reform candidates.

At the recent well-attended Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) convention, union activists applauded Carey when he spelled out his intention to fight the Old Guard.

Carey explained how in the first period of his administration he had "tried to reach out to union officers who didn't support us in 1991. Many of them took the olive branch, and they're working with us today. But there are others who took the olive branch and shoved it know where. They undermined the safety strike at UPS. They hid behind an injunction. What would labor be today if every time corporate America said: 'you're in violation of the law,' we surrendered? You wouldn't have a labor movement in this country!... So I say, Ron, the olive branch hasn't worked budgy, get out that two-by-four, and you can bet I am!..

Carey warned of how the "Royal" Teamster Old Guard were trying to sabotage the union, siphon funds from the members through the Joint Councils into their Real Teamster Caucus, and warned members to be vigilant: "The Royal Teamsters are out there. They're organizing to take this union back...We're going to have to organize twice



Teamsters on the picket line in Ohio.

as hard as they do. Well, that won't be a problem. We'll have to do that everyday on the job. We'll have to do it at every local union meeting. Anywhere where we can talk to Teamsters we will be there. And brothers and sisters, we're going to beat them again."

In the coming battles, members will be looking for a defeat of the Old Guard. This task will become a lot easier if Brother Carey recognized that the inaction of the last two years and the concessions given in a number of contracts were a mistake. This lesson must be drawn in order to take the union forward. Where locals have been taken into receivership, there need to be honest elections held, where the members can elect their own leaders. This would send a signal to the members that there is a real difference between Carey and the Old Guard.

Most importantly, Carey needs to put forward a fighting program on jobs, wages, work hours, health coverage and other essential issues where the companies have been on the offensive against the members. Brother Carey must also clearly put the weight of the union behind the demand for the formation of a labor party and behind

Labor Party Advocates.

Such a program needs a concrete plan of action to make it effective. Several important steps have already been taken, such as marches and rallies of the rank and file, organized by representatives of the International. However, these are only the first steps; a systematic campaign of the national officers and their representatives to get out to the members where they work, to speak to them, explain what Ron Carey is doing and fighting for, and how, they, the members should get directly involved. As part of this, Carey and the International must directly intervene to build a powerful defense of members who are victimized by the employers and/or the Old Guard.

To do this, Carey needs to call for the formation of a caucus and rank-and-file committees to defeat the Old Guard at the Local level in preparation for the upcoming 1996 delegate elections. It is in this way that the Old Guard can be defeated in 1996, and the union can be transformed.

DINO LOUCAS
Member, Teamsters Local 807

FIGHTING TEAMSTERS FOR THE TRADITIONS OF 1934

The attempt of the Old Guard to return to power in Teamsters Local 174 in Seattle was defeated. In a very sharply contested election, which was decided by under 100 votes in the 6,000-member local, the Old Guard slate, headed by the Pete Coates, was defeated by the P.R.O.U.D. slate of incumbent Secretary Treasurer Bob Hasegawa, a leading figure in Teamsters for a Democratic Union for over ten years.

In this election, both slates failed to offer any policies that could inspire the members. In the last three years, Bob Hasegawa has failed to deliver his promises to end the practices of the past and reform the local. Also, the members did not show any enthusiasm for a return to the Old Guard.

In this election, for the first time, members were given the choice of a fighting candidate, Doug Frechin, a former local leader of TDU, who saw the failures of TDU to implement their promises of reform. Doug ran as a candidate for Trustee on the Fighting Teamsters for the Traditions of 1934 slate. He put forward a fighting program that addressed the needs of members, and campaigned for a labor party and for all union officials to be on the same wage as the members.

In a campaign, built around early morning and late evening one-on-one discussions with members against the heavily funded campaigns of the other two slates, Doug won 171 votes, 7% of the total. His call for the defeat of the old guard slate, and for a return to the traditions of the Minneapolis Teamsters of the 1930s gained a very sympathetic ear from members. A new tradition has been set in Seattle in the Teamsters.

Seattle Fighting Teamsters

TELECOMMUNICATIONS WORKERS

Wildcat Strike at Bell Atlantic

On November 23, 1994 over 1,100 Bell of PA Atlantic technicians were suspended for 2 days without pay for wearing (and refusing to remove) T-shirts the company found "offensive." The T-shirts showed a graphic image representing Bell Atlantic employees as "road kill on the info super highway." The shirts were worn in protest of the company's insistence in negotiating a new job title at 60% of our wage to install the fiber optic video network, or to contract the work out.

When technicians showed up for work that day wearing the T-shirt, they found management employees suited up to go out on the street. They were told to remove the shirts or turn them inside out. They refused and they were sent home without pay and docked for the Thanksgiving holiday as well. The managers where sent out to cover the work. When personnel in the test center and the central offices found out they were working with management scabs, they refused to work with them. The union rep in the test center was ordered to work with the scabs and to counsel others to do the same. She refused and was suspended for five days. When this happened the remaining test center techs wildcatted, walking off the job and travelling downtown to join a rally in front of Bell headquarters in Philadelphia.

On Friday, November 25, all employees returned to work. Some techs who were not on duty on the 23rd wore the T-shirts as an act of solidarity and got their two-day suspension.

These events show the willingness of workers in the telecommunication industry to fight to defend their jobs, wages and working conditions.

The contracts between Communication Workers of America (CWA) and the Baby Bells and the large independents are expiring this year. The industry is prepared to go on the offensive against us, demanding wage reductions, new titles, and the right to contract out work. At Bell Atlantic, the company wants to replace the current common issues agreement with seven separate contracts, one for each "line of business."

The CWA won national bargaining with the Bell System in the early '70s. That was lost in 1983 with the breakup of AT&T. The industry desires further fragmentation of our contract and conditions, and holds the specter of competition over our heads.

CWA must begin preparing NOW for an effective fightback. The union should use its resources to expose the fraud of competition, to show who really controls the telecommunications industry, how the wealth is concentrated, and who really benefits from deregulation. It must mobilize and educate its membership to defend the gains that have been won through 50 years of struggle. We must show the industry we will fight to defend our jobs, wages and conditions and organize the unorganized--and we are willing to do whatever it takes.

The union must launch this campaign on a clear program of demands, including one industry-one contract, a public works program to build the Information Super Highway at union wages and benefits, and the public ownership of the telecommunications industry under democratic workers' control and management!

JUSTIN HARRISON
CWA 1300, Philadelphia

SUPPORT U.R.W. WORKERS!

As we go to press, the United Rubber Workers is entering its sixth month of its strike against Bridgestone/Firestone Tires (BFT). On January 4, the company announced it was going to start hiring permanent replacements for all 4,000 strikers. The URW and the AFL-CIO should immediately start mobilizing to ensure that nobody goes through the picket lines. They should call an international rubber workers' conference to shut down BFT internationally, and add new contract demands for a shorter work week in order to win over the unemployed.

ORANGE COUNTY DECLares BANKRUPTCY**Make Rich Bondholders Pay!**

When Orange County California declared itself bankrupt on Dec. 6, one irate taxpayer came into the county Treasurers office and threatened to return with a gun if a picture of the Treasurer wasn't removed from the wall. This southern California county, long the stronghold of wealthy conservatism, was also a center for the Savings and Loans speculation and fraud of the previous decade. Now it's paying for its previous sins. Caught up in massive speculation in "derivatives," those extremely risky deals that even many of the players involved don't understand, the county treasurer tried to beat the system indefinitely. He had been gaining large returns on the county's investments, but the greater the returns, the greater the potential risk, and it all came to a close on Dec. 6.

However, it won't be the county Treasurer and his wealthy backers who will end up having to bear the brunt of the cost, it will be those in the county who depend on it for services as well as the county workers, as the county is demanding \$40 million in cutbacks and planning to lay off hundreds of workers. Nikki Niznik, President of AFSCME Local 2076, which represents 1,300 county workers, said the county has "imposed martial law on us as far as our contracts are concerned." County leaders passed a resolution freezing wages and threw out the

layoff procedure, taking for themselves the right to lay off who they want regardless of age or seniority.

The county's public sector unions have formed a coalition to deal with the crisis, which is a step forward. However, for this coalition to succeed, it must have a clear program, which starts with a total rejection of any attempts to alter the contract, to lay off workers or to cut county services. They should point out that if the county officials think they can change the contracts with the workers, then why can't they change another "contract"--that with the wealthy bond holders. These are the ones who should be made to pay for the crisis, and the labor movement has the power to make them do it.

This is doubly important because it is very possible that Orange County will not be the last of such cases. As the crisis there unfolded, news started to leak out about dozens, possibly hundreds or more of other public bodies--local school districts, municipalities, other counties--throughout the country that have been suckered into making similar such risky investments by smooth-talking salespeople. Where will the "derivative" crisis hit next?

RICHARD MELLOR
AFSCME Local 444
Oakland, CA

WHAT WE STAND FOR

All the gains the working class have been made through the independent movement of the workers themselves. The labor movement needs a fighting program to defeat big business and its system, capitalism.

FIGHT BACK

- Mass pickets and workplace occupations to stop union busting, plant closures and layoffs; organize the unorganized
- A \$5.00 per hour wage increase and a full, uncapped cost of living increase.
- A 30-hour work week with no loss in pay
- Guaranteed real, full-time jobs for all; a \$12.50 per hour minimum wage and a \$500 per week minimum income.

DEFEND SOCIAL SERVICES

- Cancel the national debt with no repayment to the rich investors. Use the money to rebuild the inner cities and the infrastructure, under union conditions and wages.
- No cuts in any public services; full funding for all community needs.
- Free higher education for all high school graduates.
- End pollution and environmental destruction by big business.
- Free socialized medicine.

WORKING CLASS UNITY

- End all forms of racism, sexism, discrimination and division within the working class. Equal pay for equal work.
- End attacks on immigrants.
- End police brutality and harassment through labor-community committees to control all aspects of public safety.

LABOR PARTY

- The union leaders to break with the big business Democratic Party and build a mass Labor Party.
- All union officials to be paid the same as the average worker they represent.

SOCIALISM

- Public ownership of the "Fortune 500" and a socialist plan of production under the democratic management and control of the workers themselves. For a society based on the needs of the majority, not the profits of a tiny, unelected minority.
- For a democratic socialist world to end hunger, war and environmental destruction.

LABOR MILITANT

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

6 issues \$10

12 issues \$17

Postage included

Checks payable to Labor Militant
P.O. Box 39462
Chicago, IL 60639

Brookline Murders

STOP TERRORISM AGAINST WOMEN'S CLINICS!

As news of the shooting at the women's clinic spread through the Harvard Community Health Plan clinic where I work, more and more people were afraid to venture outdoors. As I thought of my friend who occasionally rides the bus to work with me, I was hoping she would be safe. She works as a receptionist at the main entrance to our workplace, a few blocks away from where one of the shooting victims lost her life. As I watched and read about the shootings in the news that evening tears came to my eyes when I found out that Shannon Lowney and Leanne Nichols were dedicated to helping women get the help they needed when they needed it.

No woman should fear for her life when seeking the help of the trained personnel of a reproductive rights clinic. When Operation Rescue threatens to take action, women's organizations, community groups and the labor movement must be mobilized to defend clinics. The trade union movement, with all of its resources and experience, must be called upon to link up with these demonstrations and put forward bold demands for safe access to clinics and for legal, free and safe abortions and contraception on demand. It should also fight for a free national health care system, on-site child care, one year fully-paid parental leave with no loss of position, seniority or benefits and full funding of shelters for battered women and children. In the past, mass movements defeated Operation Rescue from at-



tempting to siege clinics. In Wichita, Kansas and other cities, massive demonstrations led by young militant women drove away Operation Rescue.

With the passing of the gavel to the new conservative Speaker of the House of Representatives, a door has opened for raving lunatic elements spawned by Operation Rescue and the Christian Right to take matters in their own hands. The weakness of the right's strategy and policies are shown in the fact that they have called for a moratorium on demonstrations at women health clinics. Far from being strengthened, the bombings, assassinations, arson and death threats are an expression of weakness and desperation of the anti-abortion movement in the face of the determined resistance of women to defend their rights. However, this desperation has strengthened the fringe elements who

have started a campaign of violence which has killed five people so far.

Newt Gingrich's "Contract with America" promises to end welfare benefits after two years to those receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children and cuts in other programs. These attacks will provoke anger among millions of women. Already, a massive rally for women's rights has been announced for April in Washington D.C. which could attract over one million people.

Under a profit system, the rights of women and workers and democratic rights will continue to be threatened. We have to organize to defend these rights and for a democratic, socialist society.

MARTHA ROOT
Executive Board Member,
SEIU Local 285,
Boston

NEW YORK CITY

ORGANIZE AGAINST GIULIANI AND THE RICH!

War is being waged on the people of New York City, and Mayor Giuliani is leading the frontal assault for big business. He is ramming through \$800 million in cuts on top of the \$1.1 billion he cut in June. This is only the tip of the iceberg. There is still a \$500 million shortfall projected for this fiscal year and another a \$2 billion next year.

For every agency that is cut, hundreds of workers lose their jobs. For every cut made on services hundreds of people lose essential health benefits, as meager as they may have been. They lose food stamps that families rely on to make ends meet. Youth programs have been shut down, communities get dirtier, homelessness increases... Life for everyone (except the rich), gets harder.

The economy in the region has remained stagnant, despite the so-called recovery on a national level. Since July, New York State has lost 13,000 jobs. Manufacturing in the Northeast has not seen even modest growth as defense-related companies have announced tens of thousands of new layoffs, due to military budget cuts.

The continued economic crisis, paired with the huge tax cuts to big business—and those carried over from the '80s—have kept the tax revenues in the city low. As a result, there is a constant budget crisis, and big business wants working people to pay for it. For the last few years, the state and city administrations have engaged in layoffs, early retirement incentives, buy-out packages, etc., to reduce the public workforce. There has been a devastating effect on services, from sanitation to school class sizes, to services for the poor and disabled. Whether in job losses or loss of services, it is working people and the poor that has been bearing the burden of the crisis.

Working people in New York should launch a counter-attack against Giuliani before he and big business run the city into the ground. During the last round of negotiations, the only reason Giuliani was able to pass through the cuts was because the municipal union leaders didn't mobilize their members or organize massive demonstrations against the cuts. Their whole strategy

was to lobby the Democratic City Council. The Council, showing their allegiance to big business, voted for the cuts. In the absence of an effective fightback, Giuliani now feels confident to go after more.

Giuliani's priority is to lower the budget deficit and cut living standards. The union leaders' priority should be gaining a decent living standard for every person in this city. The rich and big business have their priorities—we have ours. Giuliani wants to make working people pay for the budget deficit. The unions should demand that those who created the problem should pay for it: big business, not us. If Pataki wants to slash welfare benefits—we should demand decent jobs at union wages or a guaranteed income of \$500/week for everyone.

The only way to stop Giuliani/Pataki and big business in their tracks is with mass demonstrations and pickets. Community organizations, youth groups, student groups, senior citizen organizations, etc., should join together with the unions in the war against layoffs and cuts in services.

BEN URIBE

SOLIDARITY CONVOY IN DECATUR

Solidarity Action Needed To Defeat Union Busters

On December 20, hundreds of union members converged on Decatur, Illinois. A convoy of vehicles streamed into town, horns blaring, to deliver gifts of food, clothes and Christmas toys to locked-out Staley workers and their families. Teamsters hauled a semi full of donations from unions in northern Indiana. Workers came from Chicago, St. Louis and other regional cities to bring cash from locals and a message of support for members of UPIU 7837 (check number) who have been fighting Staley Corporation since they were locked out in June 1993. Several people were moved to tears, overwhelmed by the expression of solidarity. Despite being financially wrung dry by months of struggle, UPIU members provided a potluck feast to supporters who filled the union hall.

Over the months, Staley workers and strikers at Caterpillar and Bridgestone/



Firestone have displayed a fierce determination to resist union-busting and the destruction of their communities by corporate greed. The support they receive from other workers has helped them hang tough. But it is becoming clear that despite their stamina and dedication, unless their fight is taken up with a joint, militant strategy by the United Paperworkers' International Union, the United Auto Workers, the Rub-

bers Workers Union, and the AFL-CIO, they could face defeat.

Jerry Tucker, a leader of the New Directions opposition in the UAW who has been assisting the Staley workers, argues that "Caterpillar could be a test case for a global union." He explains that "the Caterpillar struggle has been undernourished largely because it's been kept in-house." The UAW should use its power to spread the strike to Italy, South Africa, Belgium, and other places where there are Cat workers as well as other UAW members. Along with militant mass pickets that defy injunctions and other solidarity actions, the company could be brought to its knees. A victory at Cat would remove the possibility of major blow to the labor movement and would give confidence to workers to fight back. It would also be decisive in the unions winning against Staley and Bridgestone/Firestone.

"LIVIN' IT UP" ON WELFARE IN 1995:

EXAMPLE: Single mother with two children who can't work because she can't afford child care. In Illinois, she gets a flat-rate \$377, plus \$236 in food stamps. With one bed room apartments running at \$350-a-month that leaves the mother \$7-a-week for non-food items such as shoes, clothes, bus fare, toilet paper for the three of them.

Under the "Contract with America" if this mother is unable to get a GED she will be docked \$75-a-month. She may be forced onto a workfare scheme which can pay as low as 78¢-an-hour, but how can she afford child care? If she's teenage and she's not married, this mother and her family will get nothing, forcing her into homelessness, drugs, crime or prostitution. Family values 1995-style.

REALITY CHECK...

They say...

- Welfare takes a huge chunk out of the federal budget.
- Welfare recipients live a life of leisure on their benefits.
- Welfare recipients keep having children in order to get more benefits.
- Welfare recipients don't want to get off benefits.

...AND FICTIONAL PUBLIC OPINION

They say, most people...

- don't think society has any responsibility toward the poor
- don't want the government to foot the bill for the poor
- want to cut current spending on welfare
- want to eliminate welfare altogether
- don't think increasing welfare payments would benefit society

...but

- Less than two pennies out of every federal tax dollar goes toward welfare.
- The national average for state and federal welfare payments is \$366/month for a family of three.
- Over 75% of families on welfare have only two children.
- Most recipients stay on welfare for less than two years.

*Center for the Study of Policy Attitudes, cited in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

TRANSPORTATION: PROFIT OR SAFETY FIRST?

After each of the recent tragic airplane crashes, airplane executives declared that their companies' primary concern is safety. This is not the case. As long as airlines are privately owned, their primary concern must be to generate profits. Without profits, there could be no private companies to be concerned with safety or anything else. As long as profit remains the primary concern, safety cannot be the primary concern.

Neither can service to the traveling public be of primary concern to private transportation companies. Travel arrangements are made with primary focus on private companies' need to generate profits by filling as many seats as possible rather than with primary focus on providing convenient service to travelers. The chaotic nature of the market economy is reflected in the current state of public transportation in the U.S. Travellers are seeking to get to or from points other than major market centers find public transportation a real challenge to use.

Just as in the case of the railroads, which at their beginnings attracted major investment and generated huge profits, so airlines at one time seemed to "work" as private companies. But increasing competition and the "maturing" of the industry brought the usual falling rate of profit and along with it the failure to reinvest. The recent trend of airlines' use of smaller aircraft with less strict safety standards followed.

High fares, inconvenient connections and fear generated by the many recent accidents cause some to seek alternative public transportation. But new cuts in services, including the total elimination of service on some major routes, and the huge

layoff of workers on Amtrak make taking the train more difficult and raise fears over safety as well.

In the case of intercity bus lines, the market produced a monopoly. Now the only remaining nationwide bus service has been teetering on the brink of bankruptcy for the second time in a few years. Greyhound Lines operates with less than a third of the buses and bus workers as before bankruptcy. Deep cutbacks in service have made taking the bus at least as daunting a proposition as other means of public transportation.

Relying on the market to provide public transportation will bring only more chaos, more crashes, and more grief. The alternative, a national transportation plan, must be vigorously fought for by the labor movement. Only the working class has the interest and the power to overcome the chaos of the market in transportation. A labor government could quickly move to nationalize all public transportation under the democratic management of transportation workers, with compensation to current owners only on the basis of proven need. A North American transportation plan could then set out to link all forms of public transportation in a system that for the first time really would be primarily concerned with safety and service. Excellent jobs for transportation workers would make both providing and partaking of transportation service a pleasure. Safe, convenient, efficient, comfortable, inexpensive transportation would become among the basic rights to be enjoyed by a population freed from the horrors of the market.

BRUCE HAMILTON
Member, ATU, New York



CONTRACT
ON AMERICA

The Republicans were the recipients of the anger and disappointment felt towards the Clinton Administration. They also won through their careful presentation of their "Contract with

"The election showed that people are just disgusted with the alleged two-party system we have."

Public sector shop steward, Chicago.

ELECTIONS

Voters threw out Bush in 1992 and elected a candidate who promised to cut defense spending and initiate job creation, health care and a plan to rebuild America. The Clinton Administration's refusal to implement any of its major campaign planks, including rewriting NAFTA, created the anti-Democrat backlash of last November. Over 125 million eligible voters refused to even participate in the elections, with the Republicans winning only 19% of those able to vote.

"..the notion that the public is increasingly pro-business is a mirage."

Wall Street Journal 1/5/95.

America." Gingrich and Co. didn't win on expounding the virtues of direct handouts to the rich, such as increased defense spending and a capital-gains tax cut, but through their demagogic criticism of corruption, bureaucracy and the deficit. The fact that both Republicans and Democrats were accomplices in each of these areas for decades were omitted details.

The Republican agenda was swiftly welcomed by President Clinton who admitted much of the "Contract On America" as many workers call it, was entirely in line with the Administration's policy direction.

STEPPED-UP ATTACKS

All over America community activists, union stewards, young people and many others are weighing up what the first 100 days of the new Congress will bring and are preparing for the fight.

The bosses want to accelerate the process of the rich getting richer off the poor. The Republicans' war begins against single mothers, especially immigrant women. Welfare is already



Two hundred thousand people demonstrated against racist Proposition 187 in Los Angeles. It was the biggest rally ever in Southern California.

CONTRACT ON ERICA

extremely limited, the "Contract" threatens to restrict eligibility further and outlaw *all* immigrants from applying. This would be an attack on the poorest to try to encourage the idea that poverty is a lifestyle choice, not a product of this system. The philosophy behind this argues poverty as an individual problem not a social one and therefore the burden of caring for the elderly, the sick and the unemployed, should be on relatives, not the government.

All public services and public sector workers will be facing the axe. The Republicans want to cut \$700 billion. (That is \$700,000,000,000 in cuts.) Public services in the US are already the worst in the industrialized world. Targets for cuts will be: jobs, job-training, housing, transportation and energy

65%-to-24% believe that corporate restructuring, or downsizing, is bad for the country.

NBC/Wall Street Journal Poll,
December 1994.

programs. The "Contract" could more accurately be called the "Dismantle America Program."

As workers are further impoverished, \$10.5 billion will be set aside for building bigger prisons to cope with the rising discontent.

The new Congress' job creation scam is the regurgitated Reagonomics of cut taxes to the rich and they will reinvest their cash, creating jobs. The first time around many workers were skeptical, this time it will be seen more clearly as a direct handout to the corporations.

THE REPUBLICANS' STRATEGY

Some workers may feel the new agenda in Congress is going to bring down the deficit and leave a little more in their pockets. The new conservatism is new packaging of old ideas. Unable to win an election by openly arguing for more deregulation and for the business to be free to loot as it wishes, the Republicans have been forced to give their rich get richer policies a populist shell. Talk of "revolution" is necessary as confidence in capitalism's major institutions are at an all time low.

The "Contract" talked of introducing term limits, cutting pork-barrel committees, while leaving big business lobbyists and campaign financing untouched. To appear as the defender of the average citizen, the Republicans have argued for a tax cut to the better-off workers, paid through cuts in services, which inevitably effect all workers.

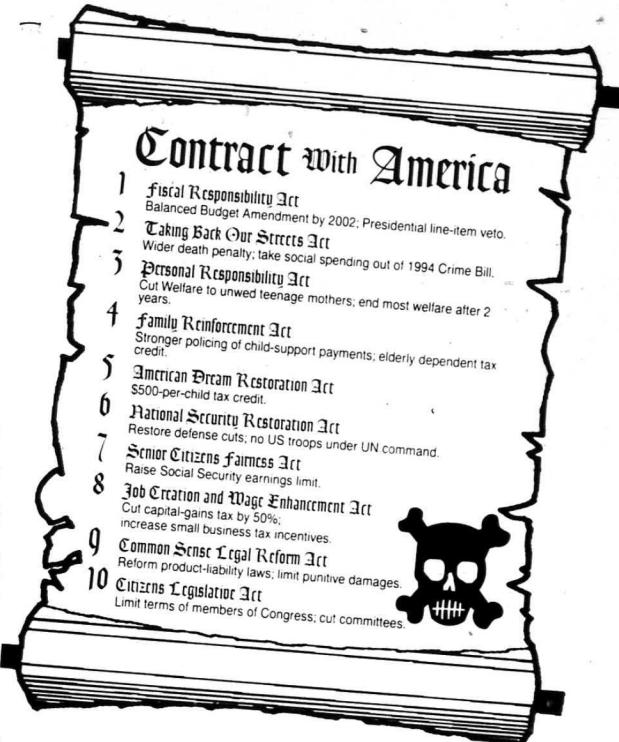
The old Republicans see the danger in Newt Gingrich's "revolutionary" rhetoric. They can see the deficit going through the roof by a middle class tax cut, they also don't want the subsidy spotlight shining on big business' array of tax breaks. The Senate and House Republicans have already clashed on the so-called farm subsidy, which in reality is a subsidy for big agro-business.

PERSPECTIVES

Economically, if the Democrats' failed policies of the 1970s could be characterized as tax and spend, then the present Democrats and Gingrich's Republican policies could be called borrow and spend. The spending is in tax breaks for the rich and contracts to the arms industry. The balanced budget amendment which is scheduled for 5 years away will tend to be delayed and delayed.

In 1994, GNP grew by 4%, inflation was low and there was some jobs created, mostly part-time and temporary. Big business expects a worse year in 1995, possibly a recession. In the event of an economic downturn all tax cuts for workers will probably be dropped. Increased unemployment will put more pressure on government services as the massacre of services and benefits is just kicking-in.

This year's federal budget will include massive cuts. While each Congressman is in fear of cuts that effect his or her own voters, they are hoping the so called middle class tax credit will sweeten the cuts. They will also try to pass on the cuts to the states by reduced federal outlays. Nonetheless, Clinton and Gingrich are committed to severe federal cuts which will only increase the mood among workers that the country is heading in the wrong direction and something needs to be done.



STORM BREWING

In April, the National Organization of Women is organizing a "We Won't Go Back" march on Washington, which will probably be one of the biggest demonstrations in US history. Community organizations are bracing for the attacks and preparing local marches against the Right's agenda. Jobs With Justice are trying to increase the bond between the community, the unemployed, the unorganized and the unions. The electric workers union, IBEW, has put 40,000 of its members through its organizing program.

Working class activists are preparing for a confrontation. The labor leaders, instead of proposing a fighting pro-

gram and strategy, seem the least prepared for the looming battles.

Organized labor needs to invest its resources in helping to bring together the mounting anger, transforming it into a movement against the cuts, for a public works program and to defeat big business. Labor must also establish a political party for the millions that oppose the corporations' dictatorship over this society. This would be the first step on the road for workers in preparing themselves as a collective force to challenge capital and establish socialism in America and across the planet.

ROB ROOKE
Chicago

GETTING TAXED-TO-DEATH

January through April is tax season. As wage hikes have fallen to a dribble, many families will be eager to tally-up, hoping for a refund. In 1948 the tax exemption for a worker was \$600 that would equal \$7,781 today, as opposed to the tax exemption of \$3,100 in 1993.

Thirty years ago two-thirds of America's tax burden was on the corporations. Today, two-thirds of taxes fall on the shoulders of the workers. For workers who own their own homes, property taxes have risen at almost twice the rate of inflation. Meanwhile the richest 1% of Americans saw their taxes decline by a whopping 24% between 1977 and 1989.

Gingrich's tax break for workers will be wiped out by increased local, state and sales taxes. Their essential aim is deep tax cuts for the rich. Some election-intoxicated Republicans are even arguing for a flat tax!

Bush was unable to slash capital-

gains taxes because the public outcry. Now the new Republicans want to go for it, but they should read their history books! This country was founded through a revolution over taxation without representation. People feel Congress is entirely unrepresentative of America. They also feel that both Democrats and Republicans represent the rich.

In 1776 poverty-ridden farmers stormed state buildings in Massachusetts over the tax burden. Shay's rebellion was crushed after it failed to seize the armory. In 1795, the Pennsylvania Whiskey Tax Rebellion was put down by federal troops under Washington himself.

Since 1973, real annual taxes on the rich have fallen by \$60 billion, while taxes for workers increased by \$70 billion, thanks to the Democrats and the Republicans.

Gingrich's attempts to free the rich of taxation could be more dangerous than he foresees.

ITALY

Movement of Workers & Youth Brings Down Italian Government

Up to 1.5 million workers and youth marched in Rome on November 12th. One participant described it in these words: "A sea of red, a red demonstration, red flags, red shirts, red banners. It was more of a slow moving political rally than a march. All the old left revolutionary songs were once again heard on the streets of the city. The youth, new to such demonstrations of working-class power and consciousness, learnt the words from older workers and infused these anthems with their energy and anger. Before my eyes I could see the youth emerging through struggle to take up the socialist banner. Far from being dead as the bosses' media claim and the union leaders believe, socialism was on the march with its new reinforcements from the youth."

One month before this demo, on October 14th, 10 million workers took part in a general strike and 3 million workers, pensioners and students marched in 90 demonstrations across Italy.

Throughout October and November the Italian working class and youth were moving into action. The October strike and the November demonstration were not isolated responses to calls by trade union leaders. Workers contributed set amounts from their wages to cover the costs of travel to Rome. Schools and colleges moved into action and united with the trade unionists. In Florence each high school selected a factory or workplace in its area and twinned itself with it. Students marched to help workers and workers to help students. "We're marching to protect our parents," high school students explained and the workers said, "We're marching to defend the children." On the day after the November demo school students were attacked by police in Naples. In over 50 cities workers marched out of workplaces and students out of schools and merged into united demonstrations of protest, singing revolutionary songs. The government decided then to use more force



against the movement. Two of the three government coalition partners called a demo to support the government which was under siege by the workers and youth--only 7,000 took part.

The movement in Italy took place to oppose cuts in health care and increased costs of education to students. Those were the main ways in which the right-wing coalition, elected in March 1994 to great cries of victory by big business, was attempting to cut the budget deficit.

The right-wing coalition government was composed of Forza Italia, the newly formed party of Berlusconi, the TV network capitalist; the National Alliance, a front build around the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI) and the Northern League, the North Italy based party. In the March election these parties won 43% of the vote, in the June European elections they won 50% but

by the time of the November 19th local elections their vote had collapsed to 26%. The movement of the Italian working class and youth reflected in the general strike, the Rome demonstration, school and college strikes and demos and in the strikes in the state-run TV networks, airlines, auto, chemical some government sectors had crushed the government's political base. In December the Northern League fled like a rat from a sinking ship and the government fell and Berlusconi resigned as prime minister.

There are many lessons for US labor and youth in these events. The most obvious is that political parties, such as the Republicans in this country, which come to power on a wave of rejection of the previous governing parties and move to attack the living standards of the working class, can go from seeming strength to defeat in very short periods of time. The second lesson is that

the working class and youth have retained their power intact in spite of the events of the past two decades and the lack of a lead from the labor leaders. When faced with open assault on its past-won gains, a powerful movement from below can be built in a matter of weeks. And out of this the ideas of socialism can rapidly emerge.

The *New York Times* was typical of the mass big business media in its coverage of the Italian events. In its December 24th issue it covered the fall of the Italian government and its prime minister Berlusconi in an article which took up over 1/4 page. There was not one single word about the movement of the Italian working class. It ascribed Berlusconi's fall to his own personality, his unreliable allies and the corruption investigation into his companies. The conspiracy of silence by the big business media to deny US workers knowledge of the victories of their brothers and sisters internationally continues.

The conclusion that flows from this is the need for a labor movement mass media and to buy, sell, and support *Labor Militant*.

Sean O'Torain

"Before my eyes I could see the youth emerging through struggle to take up the socialist banner. Far from being dead as the bosses' media claim and the union leaders believe, socialism was on the march with its new reinforcements from the youth."

MEXICO

The "Free Market" Collapses

As 1994 came to an end and the new year came in, workers in Mexico were "celebrating": As they saluted and hugged each other, they said "Happy devaluation," and, "have a happy new year, but I know you won't." This was the response to the 40% collapse in the Mexican peso.

A general mood of uncertainty fills the air. People are worried and wondering what will happen next. A retired school teacher commented: "I've lost half my bank account. I never thought something like this would happen."

Shared Sacrifices"

Businesses were quick to take advantage of the situation. Although their costs didn't immediately rise, their prices did, by up to 30%. Workers who had travelled to see family and friends over the holidays were stranded, as they found that their return trip home would suddenly cost this much more. Basic foods -- eggs, beans, etc. -- also jumped in price. As a businessman in Monterrey said, in commenting on his price increases: "We have to be realistic; we now live in a market economy."

For the workers, it is to be different, however: Towards the end of 1994, the government reached an accord with the CTM (the official labor movement) that raises would be limited to 7%. Now, despite the fact that prices are already starting to climb, the labor leaders have agreed that they won't ask for anything greater than this. This is the answer to Mexican President Zedillo's talk about everybody having to sacrifice -- everybody as long as they are workers or peasants!

This is the "marvelous" result of ten years of the "free market" in which the state industries were sold off, thousands of work-



Mexican workers will suffer from peso's devaluation

ers fired, real wages slashed by as much as 60% and even more, and Mexico was opened up to foreign investment in the hopes that the economy would grow. Now, after over a decade of sacrifice, Mexico's workers, peasants and youth are once more being told that they will have to "sacrifice" for the good of the country.

Basically, what happened in the recent years is that weak Mexican capitalism has proven itself unable to compete in the world market. While there was increased investment into Mexico, the overwhelming majority of it was pure speculation (on the Mexican stock market, etc.) rather than in building new factories, etc. The Mexican balance of payments ran huge deficits and the foreign debt reached record levels. In order to prop up the peso, the Mexican government spent huge amounts, further decreasing their foreign reserves.

Workers in both Mexico and the U.S. were told for years that the free market

would solve the problems on both sides of the border. Towards that end, all had to accept wages 50% lower than 1960, higher taxes, less regulations over business, etc. However, just as soon as the "free market" goes into crisis, what happens? The U.S. government steps in to bail out Mexican capitalism, pledging to spend billions of dollars to prop up the peso.

U.S. Labor Leaders

The U.S. labor leaders should immediately call attention to these facts. They should demand an explanation to what happened to all the promises of George Bush and then Bill Clinton after him about how NAFTA would help the Mexican economy develop. What happened to the prediction that Mexican workers' wages would rise and thus eliminate the pressure to cut wages here in the U.S.?

The U.S. labor leaders should now launch a real campaign -- in deeds, not just in words

MEXICAN WORKERS NEED SUPPORT!

Bus drivers of Omnibus de Mexico were on a limited strike in December 1994. Over a thousand workers have been fired in the past year in a struggle to democratize their union. And though many have been blacklisted, they have organized into a committee to challenge the leadership of their union affiliated to the CTU. Send messages of support to the Omnibus de Mexico workers to fax #011-525-532-1304 in care of SITUAM.

-- to link up with the labor movement in Mexico, to demand an end to wage cuts, to demand free trade union rights and an end to repression there. Recently, the Teamsters Union was contacted by a bus drivers union in Mexico. They wanted the Teamsters' support for a strike they were planning throughout Mexico. Teamster President Carey's response was that it was AFL-CIO policy to only work through the CTM, the extremely corrupt, bureaucratic repressive Mexican labor federation. The Teamsters and all other unions must immediately demand the end of this policy and unilaterally break from it themselves. The U.S. labor movement should also immediately convolve a continental labor congress of democratically elected labor delegates from all three NAFTA countries to establish a minimum living standard in all three countries and a concrete plan of united action.

JOHN REIMANN
Carpenters Local 713

Tenemos que desafiar el monopolio político de los capitalistas

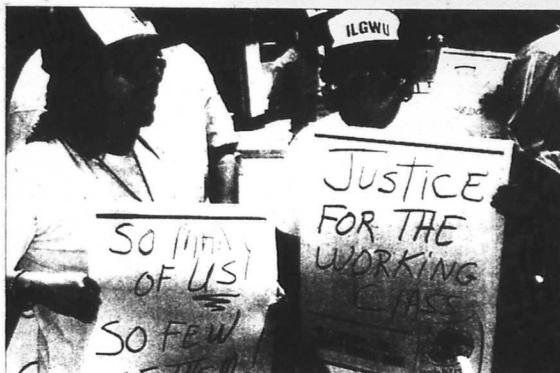
Newt Gingrich, el congreso de mayoría republicana, las grandes corporaciones y el presidente Bill Clinton planean un ataque en masa contra la clase trabajadora. La diferencia entre ricos y pobres es la más grande desde 1947.

Según *BusinessWeek*, "...la quinta parte más afluente de las familias del país recibe el 44.6% del ingreso total; la quinta parte más pobre, el 4.4%." El número de personas que vive bajo el nivel de pobreza es el más alto desde personas 1960: 37 millones, y el 22% de todos los niños. Esta repugnante desigualdad es el resultado del esfuerzo concertado de las grandes corporaciones, las firmas de Wall Street, y el gobierno para amasar fortunas a costa de los salarios, los empleos, y los programas sociales. Y esta campaña se propone bajar los salarios y el nivel de vida a uno comparable al de Brazil o México.

El liderazgo de la Federación Americana del Trabajo-Congreso de las Organizaciones Industriales (AFL-CIO) no reaccionó como debió a la ratificación de NAFTA (el Tratado Norteamericano de Libre Comercio) y GATT (el acuerdo mundial sobre tarifas y aranceles), y a la derrota de las propuestas legislativas de reformas del sistema de salud y leyes laborales. Después de que el Senado, entonces controlado por los Demócratas, dejara expirar la propuesta contra el uso de "rompehuelgas," Lane Kirkland, presidente de la AFL-CIO, le escribió al presidente Clinton: "De parte de la AFL-CIO, gracias por sus esfuerzos a favor de la Workplace Fairness Act (Acta de Justicia en el Trabajo), propuesta legislativa que prohibiría el 'reemplazo permanente' de los trabajadores que ejercen su derecho legal a la huelga. Yo sé que usted, el vicepresidente, el secretario Reich, y otros en su administración, hicieron todo lo posible para convencer a los miembros del Senado a permitir que se pusiera a votación tal propuesta." Contrario a lo que harían creer los elogios serviles de Kirkland, Clinton ni siquiera se tomó la molestia de poner presión sobre los dos senadores de su estado, Arkansas, para que la propuesta fuera llevada a votación.

Ataque contra la clase trabajadora

Kirkland y la plana mayor de la AFL-CIO no movieron un dedo para desafiar ninguna política de Clinton en nada que tuviera que ver con asuntos laborales. Están ciegos al



asalto contra los trabajadores de parte del capitalismo y sus políticos. Se les han pasado dando concesiones los últimos quince años, y han olvidado a los no sindicalizados y a los desempleados, por décadas. Esto ha dado confianza a compañías como Caterpillar, Staley and Bridgestone/Firestone para iniciar campañas para destruir sus uniones. Los líderes de AFL-CIO permitieron que huelgas heroicas contra estas compañías quedaran aisladitas, y permanecen inactivos mientras Demócratas y Republicanos tratan de destruir los logros de la clase trabajadora, dando ventajas en impuestos, intereses, y contratos bilionarios a las corporaciones.

Las elecciones de noviembre último reflejaron muy bien el estado de cosas: los trabajadores no tenían alternativa entre lo propuesto por Gingrich y lo propuesto por Clinton para los próximos dos años. Luego de las elecciones, Ron Carey, presidente de los Teamsters, llamó a la formación de un "frente amplio" de todos los que se opongan al programa de las grandes empresas. AFL-CIO tiene 55 mil locales y más de 13 millones de miembros, y recibe billones, de dólares en cuotas anualmente. Solamente activando las locales a que se unan con grupos comunales, desempleados, trabajadores sin unión, y grupos juveniles en una campaña para conseguir poder político, se podría construir un partido trabajador lo suficientemente fuerte como para enfrentar al capitalismo. La cuestión de una acción política independiente de la clase trabajadora

es crítica para combatir el programa capitalista.

Acción Política

Labour Party Advocates (Propagandistas de un Partido Trabajador) es una campaña que trabaja en el movimiento trabajador para desafiar el monopolio político de los capitalistas. Tres sindicatos nacionales le dan su respaldo: Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers; United Electrical Workers, y Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees. Varios Concilios Centrales de Trabajo, la California State Federation of Labor (federación estatal del trabajo), y algunas locales han votado para establecer comités de reclutamiento y capítulos de la organización donde no existan.

Una encuesta reciente de *Times Mirror* mostró que un 53% de los preguntados, y un 60% en el caso de los menores de 30 años, apoyaron la creación de un nuevo partido político. Esto muestra el descontento existente con los dos partidos capitalistas. Todas las encuestas realizadas en las uniones muestran lo mismo: la mayoría de miembros apoyan la idea de un Partido Laboral.

Una campaña para apoyar y construir LPA y un Partido Trabajador debería iniciarse en las locales y en los concilios de trabajo, junto con la demanda de que se paren las contribuciones monetarias a los Demócratas. Pero el llamado a la formación de tal partido

tiene que ir más allá de los sindicatos. En Decatur, Illinois, Dave Watts y otros miembros del sindicato UPIU local 7837 en Staley echados de sus empleos han llevado la lucha al anfiteatro electoral y soñado candidatos al gobierno municipal. Este tipo de iniciativas debería ser tomada por miembros y capítulos de LPA para llevar a la práctica la idea de una acción política independiente.

Esta acción debe basarse en la lucha contra el racismo, por los derechos de la mujer, por la defensa de la educación y los servicios sociales, contra el envenenamiento del ambiente de los vecindarios y contra la matanza contra nuestros jóvenes. Cuando sea posible, debería candidatizarse a representantes de los trabajadores.

Las derrotas sufridas bajo Clinton, y ahora bajo el nuevo congreso Republicano, hacen aún más urgente la construcción de un Partido del Trabajo.

Al tomar la iniciativa en la movilización de un movimiento político de masas, miembros de LPA y los sindicatos sentarán las bases para una exitosa convención de fundación del Partido Laboral. El liderazgo de LPA tiene en sus manos el potencial de transformar la organización en un movimiento de masas que lleve a millones de trabajadores. Lo que se necesita es un programa que incluya un sistema nacional de salud sin fines de lucro, cuidado infantil gratuito, una semana de trabajo de 30 horas o un ingreso garantizado de \$500 la semana, que se triplice el salario mínimo y un programa de \$500 billones para obras públicas pagado por los ricos, y, por supuesto, el establecimiento del Partido Trabajador. La formación del partido y la experiencia del poder político traerán a colación la cuestión de quién en realidad maneja el país, la clase trabajadora o los capitalistas. La necesidad de un gobierno laboral que legise en favor de los trabajadores se hará clara, lo que iniciará una lucha entre la clase trabajadora y la capitalista por el control político. En la convención que funde el Partido Laboral habrá que discutirse y votar sobre un número de cuestiones lo definidas, incluso la necesidad de un programa que incluya la demanda de la nacionalización y propiedad pública de las 500 corporaciones más grandes, bajo un control democrático de los trabajadores, para así terminar con el capitalismo, y la miseria desigualdad que lo acompañan.

Por LORRAINE DARDIS
Miembro UAW Local 2324

INTERVIEW

African Freedom Fighter

Serge Mukendi is a leader of the Movement of Workers and Peasants of the Congo (MOP), the organization which is at the center of the battle against the Mobutu dictatorship in Zaire. The MOP wants to oust the rich countries from exploiting the people and to establish a workers' democracy in the Congo region of Africa. By 1989 the MOP had liberated 12% of Zaire. Last year the MOP increased its liberated zones to 20% of the country.

Serge recently toured the US sponsored by Youth Against Racism and Poverty and Labor Militant. He spoke with *Labor Militant*:

LM: What's life like in Zaire for ordinary people?

SM: Workers often earn only \$3-a-month. He or she can only eat once every 48 hours. If you have young kids you cannot ask them to wait two days to eat. We are organizing under the most brutal regime in Africa. A dictatorship supported by troops from all over the world, including the USA.

LM: As an activist, tell us how the Mobutu dictatorship deals with opponents?

SM: For all people, daily life is an experience of arbitrary arrest and torture. On demonstrations they will spray you with ink, then they hunt you down afterwards. Many people are kidnapped and disappear. Troops are often used against students, workers and peasants.

Since 1961 over 3 million people have been killed by the regime. They will come in the night with machetes and massacre sometimes hundreds. How do you think they learn this in Rwanda? (Mobutu backed the regime which led the genocide there--LM.)

Activists are raped or sodomized by the military.

LM: Does the dictatorship show any signs of crisis and how has this effected your movement?

SM: The ruling class has started to crack as they see their days numbered. They have organized an opposition party of Mobutu's people. They lured many people into believing that they will replace Mobutu, and the exploitation of the people has got worse.

Mobutu has been our best organizer. He is identified with international imperialism, which people hate. In the rural areas we continue to expand and we are growing among the urban unions also. We have made important inroads into unions that were controlled by the government.

LM: How do you see the movement coming to power?

SM: We struggle for the working class to fight under its own banner and its own program. We have risen many times before and have been crushed in a blood bath. This time we want to give armed support to the upris-

ing of the working class. We are fighting for a united socialist Africa. This will allow us to integrate and develop the economy.

You have to change the state structure and expand beyond your borders. Many socialist movements in Africa didn't do that, they entered into the neo-colonial structure. Many thought independence was the first stage then socialism would follow, but the revolution has to be one uninterrupted process.

LM: How can our readers, here in the US, help your struggle?

SM: Firstly you must organize against the bosses here. Secondly, we need medi-

cine, we need to train "barefoot" doctors and midwives to reduce our infant mortality. We want to democratize medical knowledge and make it popular. Thirdly, we want people to support the OST, the genuine trade union in the Congo, and support its fight to defeat the government which does not allow workers to organize without having soldiers come and kill us. We request the help of all workers. Forward to socialism!

To support the freedom movement in the Congo/Zaire contact Labor Militant or National Congo Support Committee, PO Box 2919, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10017.

The Horror in Chechnya Continues



Thousands of people are dead from the war in Grozny, in the former Soviet Union

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

INTERVIEW WITH A FORMER BLACK PANTHER

Over the centuries, millions have fought, sacrificed and even died in the struggles against racism, exploitation and oppression — unsung heroes whose names never go down in the history books, but whose sacrifices have made possible what rights we have today. This year, for Black History Month, "Labor Militant" interviewed Bob Bowens, one of the unsung heroes of the black liberation struggle. In this, the first part of a two-part series, Bob explains how he went from being a typical, non-political teenager to a revolutionary in the Black Panther Party, and what lessons he feels youth of today should draw from the experience of the Panthers.

"I graduated from high school in Richmond, California in '65 very unconscious, not very political, very confused. My family was migrant workers, poor and very transitory."

When I came out of high school, my first job was with Port Chicago Naval Weapons Station, loading ships with munitions on the way to Vietnam. Then, I was drafted and I was on my way. When I got drafted, there was this guy standing on the outside passing out anti-war literature I can remember now looking at it, and it didn't mean anything to me.

Probably the main thing was that I was getting the hell out of Richmond. And out of that job. Here was an adventure, something to do. And somebody else was paying for it and all I had to do was follow instructions I didn't have to do a goddamn thing! I just went along with the program and I was moving. I was doing something different from what I was doing at the time working my ass off filling up these boats up with bombs and bullets going to Vietnam.

One thing that did happen, before I left, there was an incident that took place in North Richmond. And I later realized what it was, it was Bobby Seale who was standing on a bus I think it was a Peace and Freedom Party bus, having a rally around the Black Panther Party and recruiting. I just looked up and there was these guys standing on this bus trying to organize, and I just passed on by.

One other incident that remained in my mind, and that was when Malcolm was assassinated. I was in my last year in high school, and I remember a lot of black students were very upset, and I was like, "who the hell is Malcolm?" And here were all these other black students who were conscious, but I went on through with my life.

I came back home in '67, and my father at that time was reading the Autobiography of Malcolm. Somehow, I remembered something about the assassination of Malcolm X from when I was in high school. So I picked it up and started reading it. And by the time I put that book down I was a member of the Black Panther Party.

In finishing reading the Autobiography of Malcolm X, my whole perspective just ignited. It exploded. My whole sense of self esteem and consciousness who I was, where I was from, what my history was about. It just opened up all of these avenues and desire to pursue and investigate this history.

About the same time, the Panthers were organizing. They were in the press. So I went over one day and started buying newspapers and just jumped straight into it with both feet. Eventually I became the Defense Captain of the branch. So that started me, that was the beginning, how I came into the movement, political activity, studying Marxism, dialectical materialism, studying Capital -- was through that process.

What was the general atmosphere in the community at that time?

"We were selling 1000 papers a week in Richmond, but we could never organize a rally. We would give rallies and pass out flyers and announce that Bobby Seale, David Hilliard, the leadership of the Central Committee was going to be there. And the day of the rally, we'd all be standing out there by ourselves. Nobody would show. There was not much activism."

On the other hand, you could go to Berkeley or Oakland and people would show up. And I could never understand why that was. It was very confusing as an organizer. At the same time, that was what was happening in the community, there was this notion within the Black Panther Party that the Black Panther Party was the revolution. So that anybody who wanted to be part of the revolution, you had to be part of the Black Panther Party in the black community. So we were very perplexed why people were not rallying to us in hordes and droves. Because we were the revolution, we had the answer, we had the leadership. But it wasn't happening, it wasn't



Bob Bowens

taking place."

Do you think fear of the police had anything to do with it?

"Police, Chevron, the church -- the whole political infrastructure that basically maintains containment and control in the city of Richmond. There's the layer of moral extremism that exists in that city. Between the church and the politicians and industry, mainly Chevron -- I mean its an anvil of weight on that community. And everybody's access to resources and power goes through that layer. If you're rocking the boat, that's it -- you don't get access, you don't get resources, you don't get validated."

So being very confused around hawking newspapers and putting out flyers and this and that but not having this surge of support or backing up -- it was like, "what's happening? What is wrong? What do you have to do?" I never understood it then. But I've come to understand it, which facilitates a whole other understanding, that there's a way to do this thing.

Also at that time we had Johnson's war on poverty. There was a lot of money for training programs. A lot more people were working in Richmond too. You had Safeway, Santa Fe Railroad, Marway Steel, another steel company in Richmond, too. There was a lot more employment. Even myself, was part of a CETA program as a Probation Officer trainee."

Would you make any comments on the politics of the Black Panther Party -- lessons, criticisms, its position on the question of socialism and capitalism?

"I think we were clear about our position on capitalism and socialism. We were pro-socialism. We advocated socialism and denounced capitalism. We studied Marxism and we made an effort to be very scientific. I think our newspaper was great, in terms of how it depicted the capitalists as oppressors and the way they utilized and oppressed working class communities. We were exploited around profits and the greed and the elite. That was very educational and I learned a lot and I think a lot of people in the community learned a lot in that regard. And probably what the Black Panther Party will probably be known for more than anything else is the way we did in fact attack the system."

In terms of criticism: I had a young friend of mine call me a couple of weeks ago from jail. He had been studying the Party and he was like "Bob, you guys had it on!" And I said, "well, we had it on, we did a lot of work, but be clear about one thing:

As much as we wanted to change the world, we didn't want to change ourselves." And that's the greatest important experience that I bring out of the Black Panther Party. That we can have all these grandiose notions about the need for society to change, and critique, but if we're not prepared to look at our own practice, our own habits and attitudes in terms of how we deal with each other and how we deal with the community, then it doesn't make a goddamn difference.

The woman question is one issue. I have great difficulty with what happened to women in our organization. I think we were very patriarchal and patronizing on that question. I think it was very bad.

Towards the end of the Party there was a tremendous amount of violence that took place between party members around issues of leadership. The leadership attempted to use physical punishment to bring Party members into line with what they were doing for their own personal agenda instead of having open debate and discussion and democracy within the organization. So that was a tremendous setback in terms of what we felt this organization should be about and how it should conduct itself in an honest, sincere democratic way. So at that point, the notion was that the party was leaving us, we weren't leaving the Party. And many of us walked away."

If there had been more employed workers in the Party and linked with that, if the Party had had more of a focus of also linking up with the issues in the workplace, what effect do you think that would have had?

I think it would have opened up the Black Panther Party much more, made a much more broad based leadership. Around the politics of what was going on in the community and in the country. Our whole thing around guns and having guns and carrying guns, and our newspaper was saturated with illustrations and pictures, and articles about being armed and being prepared to carry out armed revolution. To the extent that many of those labor organizations supported us and we supported them, that was about the extent of it. We were allies together, but in terms of the core of the identity of the Black Panther Party, in terms of the gun and armed revolution, there was a distance. If we had been capable or would have allied our political expression in concert with labor organizations that we could have been in brotherhood with each other. I think it would have broadened our organizing capacity and we wouldn't have been so isolated and left out of what the heart and soul of the community was really doing. And we might have been able to align ourselves with the working class movement and struggle if we had been more issue orientated in terms of what was going on in the community."

The overall picture I get of the Party is that it was an organization of frustrated and angry young black people in this country. And what we did was facilitate that anger and frustration and anxiety and desperation in an organization around that anger and hate. The gun and violence and self defense involved in shootouts with the police. In a philosophical sense, it's growing pains. It's a part of history."

I think that was a crucial point that we missed in our organizing effort is the importance of going out in the community, among the people, and understanding what the issues are.

where they're at, what they're willing to do and see as possible and aligning ourselves to that. As opposed to what we did which was to go out in the community and say, "well, we're the revolution and if you want to be revolutionary you've got to join us because this is what it's about." We are the leadership and if you ain't about that then you ain't shit. You ain't a revolutionary and good-bye." And the community said, "yeah, well, good bye." And there we were, standing out there talking that s---. And folks were listening and buying the newspaper but that was about it."

So I would imagine there was a mixed attitude towards what you were doing: A lot of respect, but not being sure they wanted to get involved.

"When I left the Party, I spent a lot of time working in Richmond. I went back to the community. It was like another planet. Everybody knew me an' who I was and what I had been doing, and folks were distant, it wasn't like I was going to my people, to my community. In fact, I left Richmond and went to L.A. It was cold. I packed up and left. My sense of it is that we really isolated ourselves in a lot of ways."

There was a lot of respect, people honored us and respected us and bought the newspaper and acknowledged us 'cause we were out there; we weren't afraid. We were fearless. We advocated getting your gun and keeping it loaded. Many of us for the past years have been making efforts to sit down and critique the Black Panther Party -- what were the accomplishments, so that people can read that and learn from it and guard against the mistakes that we made."

We must ask, to what extent did the Party participate in its own demise through its mistakes that allowed the FBI and COINTELPRO to be so effective? To one extent, yes, it was J. Edgar Hoover. But on the other hand, it was also Huey P. Newton and other personalities that made it easier for J. Edgar Hoover and COINTELPRO to do what they did.

I'm very proud to have been a member of the Black Panther Party. I don't mean to take away from the view that the Black Panther Party was a very heroic effort. There was a tremendous amount of sacrifice. People throughout the Party died, suffered, in an effort to accomplish, to work towards being revolutionaries, to changing society and bringing tremendous amount of benefit to the black community. I think it can be clearly stated that a lot of the benefits that exist in the black community today exist because of the Black Panther Party. And because we did speak directly to our oppression, the racism, the bigotry. The demagogue that permeates the system.

So yeah, I would hope that we could say that the Black Panther Party was a great black organization. Our position on socialism, on capitalism, our position that you don't fight fire with fire, you don't fight racism with racism, you fight racism with solidarity. But at the same time, the Black Panther Party made a lot of mistakes, and I want to be clear with people about what those mistakes were so that we can learn from them and move ahead.

In the next issue of "Labor Militant", Bob concludes his life story and what general conclusions he has drawn from his experiences for the next generation of young fighters to learn from.

Taking the business out of music

You know the story. They were the band that got too big for basement parties. They stopped playing bars. They got a video on MTV and bam! Now if you want to see their show its, like, 50 bucks a pop.

Does it have to be that way? Nope.

Then came Eddie Vedder and Pearl Jam. They were hoping their first album would top 40,000 copies. It finally clocked-in at 8 million plus. The latest, Vitalogy, sold over a million in week 1. For the last two albums Pearl Jam has refused to make lip sync videos for the MTV CORPORATION, a big finger to the music business, which industry experts say cost Pearl Jam several million sales.

But man, these guys ARE rich aren't they? Eddie explains how they're trying to keep their heads: "Not unless you were raised upper class could you be prepared for this level of fame. If you come from the humble beginnings I did, it just doesn't seem to make sense. Mind you... I'm now in a house instead of a \$400-a-month apartment."

Pearl Jam EVEN got on National Public Radio this year. (No, they didn't make a new age folk album.) They took on the big MONOPOLY. Ticketmaster. Hey, they even brushed

their hair and spoke to Congress, winning themselves a spot on the driest channel on cable: C-Span.

Ticketmaster skims a whacking \$5 off your concert ticket. If you're going to see the Rolling Stone(s) for \$55 that's one thing, but Pearl Jam are trying to keep tickets below \$20. And if you don't go along with TICKETMASTER then you can't play the concert circuit. Vedder and the guys are taking TM to court and are also trying to organize their own tour this summer, through mail order ticket sales, which wouldn't soak the fans.

"We don't want to exclude anyone from the experience, (like) a father taking a son to a concert even though he works at a gas station," says Vedder.

Pearl Jam want to take the EXPLOITATION out of music. No corporate sponsorships, music for youth, for music's sake.

The guys are presently doing benefit for Voters for Choice. Hey, they may not change the world, but it makes changing the world a more colorful experience.

Of course there's a whole bunch of bands fighting for independence. Check them out.

Last word for Eddie Vedder, "It's a frightening thought playing only to people who can afford \$50 a ticket." Right!

LISA, Chicago

ORGANIZE THE UNORGANIZED!

Young Workers' Safety Suffers In Fast Food Industry

When one thinks of the worst occupations in terms of safety and labor violations, fast food would probably not even cross your mind. It seems like working in fast food should be perfectly safe. After all, how can you hurt yourself with a Big Mac (aside from eating it)? However, due to mismanagement and cost-cutting by the pigs who own these establishments, the fast food industry can be as dangerous a place to work as any.

I speak from experience. To put myself through college, I have worked at four different restaurants in the last two years. In every one, I found the same thing: labor violations, unsafe working conditions, unfair wages, and preventable injuries caused by the greed of the owners.

The most dangerous task in these restaurants is "filtering," in which the grease from the fryers is drained and then put back in (grease is changed about once a

week, all other times it is simply funnelled back into the fryers). The grease is 350 degrees during this process and severe injury is always looming with the slightest miscalculation. To make matters worse, a pilot flame is on at all times less than six inches from the flowing grease and most minor handshakes could at any time during filtering incinerate the worker in a massive grease fire.

However, the owners refuse to let the workers turn off the flame, because "it's a pain to relight."

One wonders how much of a pain it is to allow a young employee's life to be ruined by severe burning. Apparently, to the capitalists it's easier to let the injuries continue, than close a fryer for five minutes, since that might lose them a few dollars.

At one point, just before I started working at one particular restaurant, a 17-year-old girl burned herself on her thighs during filtration. To prevent further damage to herself, she pulled down her pants, which were soaked in scalding grease. For her quick thinking, she was fired!

What's more, her burns and many others like it were preventable. During filtration, we were to wear protective rubber gloves, boots and apron. However, they were at least 10 years old and cracked. It is thought one of these cracks (in fact, a six-inch tear)

that the girl was burned. After this injury, we asked the owner dozens of times to replace these defective materials. He refused, saying that he could not afford the \$20, despite a daily profit from our restaurant alone of \$3,700 (he owned eight!) Shortly thereafter, another person burned his forearms due to a hole in the gloves. I myself dropped hot grease on my foot only a month after we last asked for new materials and received second-degree burns. I don't think a week went by that someone did not burn themselves during filtration due to faulty protective outerwear.

A note the r thing adversely affected by cutbacks was the state of the first-aid kit at these establishments. At one point last summer, I cut my hand opening boxes. The manager told me to check if the kit for anything I needed. However, I was surprised to find only a half-used tube of anti-itch cream. There wasn't even a band-aid in a kit supposed to help us in case of a medical emergency! The owner refused to rectify the situation, using the same excuse: we don't have the money. This from a man who always wore the finest silk suits and drove a brand new Jaguar... When I left the restaurant in the fall, the first-aid box was still essentially empty. I pray for the next person who is injured there.

The capitalists also abuse the workers in

fast food with wage unfairness. To start with, in all the places I've worked in, \$4.50-per-hour was the highest starting wage with a 25-cent increase every six months (capped at \$5). Secondly, it is commonplace in these neo-slave shops to actually be taken off the time clock moments before labor laws require a break! In this manner, these thieves can keep a worker in the kitchen (120 degrees on an average day) for hour upon hour without a rest. I myself once worked over seven hours without a break to eat or even sit down.

The danger of these conditions is not so much immediate in the form of injuries on the job (though certainly that danger exists), but rather long-term in the form of a weakened labor class. The workers in the fast-food industry are predominantly teenagers who have never held a job before. The message they get from their employers is, "You are nothing, and I am free to do to you as I wish." They are forced to accept this message on a daily basis and, when they enter the workforce on a professional level, they will take whatever the capitalists dish out. Indeed, they will expect to be mistreated and exploited. We could here be witnessing a demise of any labor movement in America.

What can we do to help our young brothers and sisters in the fast food industry? Spread the word of organized labor throughout the ranks of the employees. If they were unionized, I firmly believe these labor violations would vanish. Second, it is vital to give the younger workers the knowledge that they have rights, both legally and morally. Begin with your children. Third, if they are any others reading this, who have worked in fast food and have had experienced many of the same things, speak up! Write to *Labor Militant* and be heard. Your silence is only helping the capitalists exploit others like you. If we can all raise our voices and bring these disgraces to light, victory is a step closer.

JOE WILSON
Framingham, MA

FREE DEWAYNE HOLMES!

Dewayne Holmes, a main organizer of the LA gang truce, was framed on a \$10 robbery charge and given an 7 year prison sentence. He is a political prisoner, locked away because he was building unity and peace. Help the campaign for his release. Write letters of protest to:

Governor Pete Wilson
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 96814



CONTACT LABOR MILITANT

BOSTON:
P.O. Box 3598, JW McCormack Station, Boston, MA 02101

CHICAGO:
P.O. Box 39462, Chicago, IL 60639

COLUMBUS:
P.O. Box 02192, Clintonville Stn, Columbus, OH 43202-9998

MANCHESTER:
P.O. Box 5831, Manchester, NH 03108-5831

MICHIGAN:
P.O. Box 1741, East Lansing, Michigan 48826-1741

NEW YORK:
P.O. Box 5447, LIC, NY 11105

OAKLAND:
P.O. Box 10614, Oakland, CA 94610

PHILADELPHIA:
P.O. Box 24600, Philadelphia, PA 19111

SEATTLE:
P.O. Box 45365, Seattle, WA 98145

TORONTO:
P.O. Box 148, Station F, Toronto, Ontario, M4Y 2L5

VANCOUVER:
P.O. Box 79006, Kingsway, Vancouver V5R5H0

Call us:
1-800-655-9277

E-MAIL

Cserve: 71412,313
InterNet: lem@netaxs.com

Join Labor Militant's Fight for Democratic Socialism

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Mail to:
Labor Militant
P.O. Box 39462
Chicago, IL 60639

LETTERS

Send us your letters or comments:
Labor Militant,
PO Box 5447, LIC, NY 11105

Crowd Protests Cellular Antenna

Over 150 people crammed into the Ravenna Eckstein Community Center in Seattle to protest the plan by corporate giant US West to build a cellular transmission tower on the roof of a nearby low-income apartment building.

Speakers described their concerns for the health of the tenants from the radiation transmitted from the towers in this working-class neighborhood. The issue of electromagnetic-radiation has exploded in recent years with many workers seeing their immune system destroyed due to working, or living, in close proximity to electromagnetic-

radiation. Despite this shattering of people's lives, the major corporations, the medical industry and the government refuses to acknowledge any risk.

Labor Militant supporters at the meeting called for plans for the tower to be scrubbed. It was suggested that if the CEO of US West thinks they are safe, "He should put one on his own roof, and live there for ten years, and then come and talk to us." There was a very strong mood to take this struggle forward by whatever means necessary to defeat this proposal.

TONY WILLIAMS
Member, SEIU, Seattle

Big Business Takes the Fun Out of National Pastime

Right at the time that life is getting worse for many Americans, the politicians want our attention distracted. That is why there are several bills in Congress to repeal some or all of baseball's anti-trust exemption. Also, the businesses which feed off of baseball cannot afford the strike continuing much longer. Florida, host of spring training, will lose millions. Therefore, some congressmen are attempting to pressure the owners into a settlement. Others in Congress are fully backing the owners, seeing any victory of the players' union as a bad precedent.

Professional sports are part of the huge entertainment industry: This is one of the few U.S. industries that is doing well. This industry not only makes money, it distracts and confuses people, covering up how society is really run.

The intransigence of the owners and the strike it has caused is turning off many fans. One "former" fan told me that he will never follow the major leagues again.

The owners are now talking about bringing in replacement players. Since many corporations are season ticket holders, the owners are hoping to bust the union with the solidarity of the rich. The players are going to need support from working class fans and the Labor Movement to win. The fact that some players make millions for playing a kid's game, and have done little over the years to show solidarity with the fans, such as support lower ticket prices, is something that has to change.

TOM TROTTER
AFSCME Local 154, DC 37

Plenty of Nothing...

Arthur is a 77-year-old man from the neighborhood. He's short and stout and he shuffles when he walks. He's usually somewhat disheveled and chewing on unlit cigar stump. Arthur's favorite expression is "money, money, money!" He says it like the meaning of life is written on the face of a dollar bill. Arthur never had any money. He was a seasonal worker, always living with a friend or relative. For a while he slept in the back of the Bedford Pet Shop; he kept the animals company while the store was closed. Now he lives more securely in a senior citizens' residence; but, he still has plenty of nothing.

Arthur frequents some of the same coffee shops I do. Before the second week of the month has passed, Arthur is sipping "on credit." The shop keepers will wait until the first of the next month to receive payment for his snacks—usually coffee and peanut butter and jelly on toast. He carries around a carefully folded and very worn sheet of paper. Across it, written in careful script—almost like a typewriter—are numbers, numbers, numbers. On top of these, in shaky penmanship are words that describe his financial planning. Arthur discusses these numbers and plans with anyone and everyone. He talks a lot about the three billion the government owes him.

Recently, I saw Arthur with an official letter. It stated that, since his Social Security benefit (I don't think Arthur ever sees his money) was being increased by 4.8%, his food stamp allotment was being cut. Again, I wondered what Gingrich's cutbacks will mean to a life that could never afford any.

MARY MURTHA
Member, UFT, New York

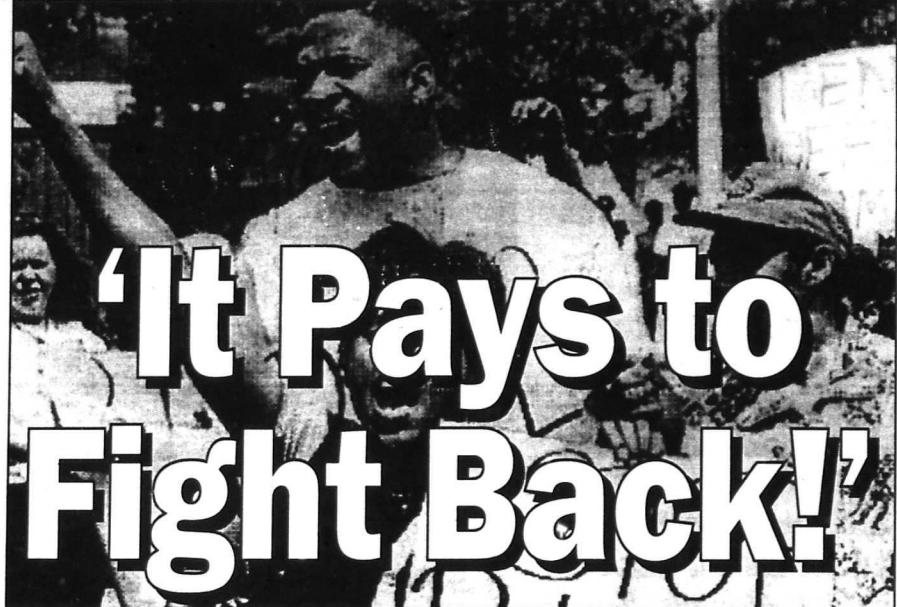
Militant Youth

Like most people going to school these days, I find it hard to make ends meet. You would think going to a large public university might help with keeping costs down, but with the cuts in education, my fees keep going up. Housing is scarce so rents are high. Like millions of other students, I have to hold a part-time job working in a campus restaurant in order to stay in school.

I started as an assistant making \$5.90 per hour for mopping floors, doing dishes, making sandwiches — everything. Sometimes, we didn't finish on time and had to stay over, according to the boss because we were talking too much. But a friend of mine — an older union worker — explained what it really was: The boss was saving money by not hiring enough workers; they were boosting their profits by squeezing my fellow workers and me! Because I was at the bottom of the ladder, one of the lowest paid, they would keep me working the longest, so they could make the most profits.

The next semester, I got a job at a different restaurant on campus. I had been led to believe that I would have a chance to be promoted to cashier, and make \$9.40 per hour. But I found out that these promotions were completely arbitrary, they had nothing to do with how long you worked there. It was based on favoritism. I went to question the restaurant manager about this and he wasn't very happy about that.

Around this same time, I found out that non-student employees earned \$8.45 as starting pay, and they could join the union and get some protection. Finally, I got the cashier promotion, because they knew I would raise enough hell if I didn't. But wasn't it funny: Now I was one of the first to go home on slow days. Hmm... I wonder if it had anything to do with my new \$9.40 per hour wage. Well, I had got a hold of the idea of raising hell and of collective action and sticking with my fellow workers. They had given me the promotion to shut me up, but I



'It Pays to Fight Back!'

kept on raising hell anyway! I started talking with my fellow workers about why we were all part time so that they didn't have to pay for health care. I explained why they staggered our breaks so that we couldn't get together to talk, and about how racism and sexism keep us divided. Also, when customers complained about why "our" prices were so high, I explained that there was a campus monopoly owned by the University of California Regents, and that the service isn't too hot because they squeezed the restaurant staff to boost profits.

As a result of my pro-union activities, I was fired on trumped-up charges. They didn't even follow their own written

guidelines in disciplining a worker, so I went in to talk to the supervisor and explained how much I needed the job. I was frustrated and scared about not being able to pay my bills, but the boss couldn't have cared less.

I talked to the union leaders, but they said they weren't allowed to represent me. Then I contacted a student group for help, but was informed that student groups receiving finances from the university could not represent students in the case of labor disputes with the university. So what good is a "student" group like that?

So I was left to struggle on my own with the help of a few trade unionists in

the labor movement who are trying to link up with under-represented youth. I had to research my rights on my own, but I found that the management had definitely violated their own work rules. I filed an appeal and for three months I had to keep filing new appeals because I hadn't cited the correct policy. (There were something like 780 in their documents!) Finally they couldn't put it off anymore, and they called a hearing. I was up on my s___ and my case was too strong: I was reinstated to my position and got two grand in back pay!!!

It paid me to fight back and believe me when I say, it will pay you to fight back too. And I don't intend to quit fighting now, either.

A student & worker at University of California Member, Youth Against Racism and Poverty

EDUCATION NEEDS: Prayer or Full Funding?

As I sit down and watch the racist big business media saying things like, "It's a new dawn for the Republicans in Capitol Hill," I saw a poster that said, "Capitol Hill under new management."

Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House, and his fellow Republicans are making some of the most drastic cuts in programs for the American people. They would want to cut welfare and public services and now set down prayers in the public school system. Whatever happened to separation of church and state? There is os much diversity of people from different countries, cultures and religions, how would one prayer apply to everyone? It might offend a person's religious beliefs and they would not participate in the prayer, as a result it would cause religious conflicts in the schools. The big business politicians are ignoring not only the separation of church and state, but also the diversity of people from different ethnic backgrounds. Students should make decisions themselves about what prayers are to be said, if any, and they should be student-led. But would prayer solve the cuts and deterioration of education in the public schools? NO! It is just another tricky idea by politicians to deceive us, that they're doing something that they

are not. What are they doing about the fact that classes have 45 students, that teachers don't know student's names, and that many students are forced to stand in class? What are they doing about the fact that the dropout rate in some states is as high as 50%? What about the fact that some schools have no gyms, have ceilings with pieces that have collapsed, leaking roofs and no heat in the winter?

We need more teachers and facilities so that we don't have to sit on the floor in overcrowded classrooms. We need more school service programs available.

Our education is going down the drain because of poor funding for school materials and academic programs. We need more of these things to improve our education. Newt Gingrich and his gang claim that they want to set down moral values for us. But they should look at their own way of destroying morality. They have big plans to the welfare system.

As a result, people will become homeless and try to survive on the streets — is that a good moral value?

KATUSCIA PELERIN
New York Youth Against Racism & Poverty

Black Panther
Speaks to LM
Page 10

Fast Food: Realities for
Young Workers
Page 11

Pearl Jam's Fight with
Ticketmaster
Page 11

LABOR
MILITANT

SUBSCRIBE NOW!
6 ISSUES \$10
12 ISSUES \$17
Postage included

Checks payable to: Labor Militant
P.O. Box 39462,
Chicago, IL 60639

JOIN
YARP!

Youth Against Racism and
Poverty fights for the rights of
young workers and students
at the workplace, the school
and the community.

JOIN THE
STRUGGLE!
Call today:
1-800-655-YARP