



No more empty promises!

The health plan must cover everyone

Everyday there is another story about what Clinton will propose for a national health plan. Everyday another change. The proposal is scheduled for release in mid-June, but it may be further delayed.

A national health care plan is desperately needed. Without it, there is no solution to the escalating cost of medical insurance, the loss of clinics and hospitals in many communities, or the inability of sixty million people to obtain meaningful health coverage, and sometimes any health coverage at all.

But one thing seems certain.

Clinton doesn't intend to give full and equal coverage for all. His plan may not even cover everyone for two years, or three, or eight, or not until the budget deficit is solved. And his advisers have even floated the idea of a two-tier system where tens of millions of people will be saddled with an inferior plan.

Yes, his task force on health care has plenty of rhetoric about health care for all. But it will all be for the future.

No more empty promises! A health care plan that doesn't cover everyone is no national health plan at all. It cannot provide peace of mind to those who are covered, and it leaves millions of people desperate. It cannot solve the public health problems of today, which require attention to the entire population.

Moreover, there is talk about high co-pays and deductibles. Clinton's advisers say this is to discourage overutilization of health care. But what's the use of a health plan designed to be too expensive to use? What's the point of all the talk about preventive care if millions of people hesitate to see a doctor unless they already know that something is seriously wrong?

The plans they are talking about are half-way measures at best. Some people may get some relief. But the overall price will be continued misery.

This is because Clinton and Congress are motivated by the growing financial burdens on the corporations, but not primarily by the health problems of the

people. This is because Clinton and Congress want to preserve the insurance companies and their profits, instead of establishing a direct system of national health care as in Canada and eliminating the role of private insurance. This is because Clinton and Congress won't even get to the Canadian system, to say nothing about going beyond it to deal with other powerful entrenched health profiteers.

It's necessary for the workers and poor to stand up to demand universal coverage. No one's going to do it for us. Don't let the corporations and the insurance companies and the politicians monopolize the discussion. Don't let them divide

us by promising different things to different sections. Let's stand together and demand a health care system worthy of the name.

It's time for national health care. But Clinton only wants to give us the same old insurance companies repackaged as "managed competition." It's time for universal coverage. But Clinton wants to give us promises about the future. It's time for serious action on the health care problems of today, from work place safety and environmental issues to AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. But Clinton and Congress are marking time.

Workers! Youth! Minorities! It's time for us to have our say. Health care for

all, including the immigrants and the poor! No two-tier system! Let the corporations and the privileged elite bear the financial burden of the health care problems they have inflicted on society. ■

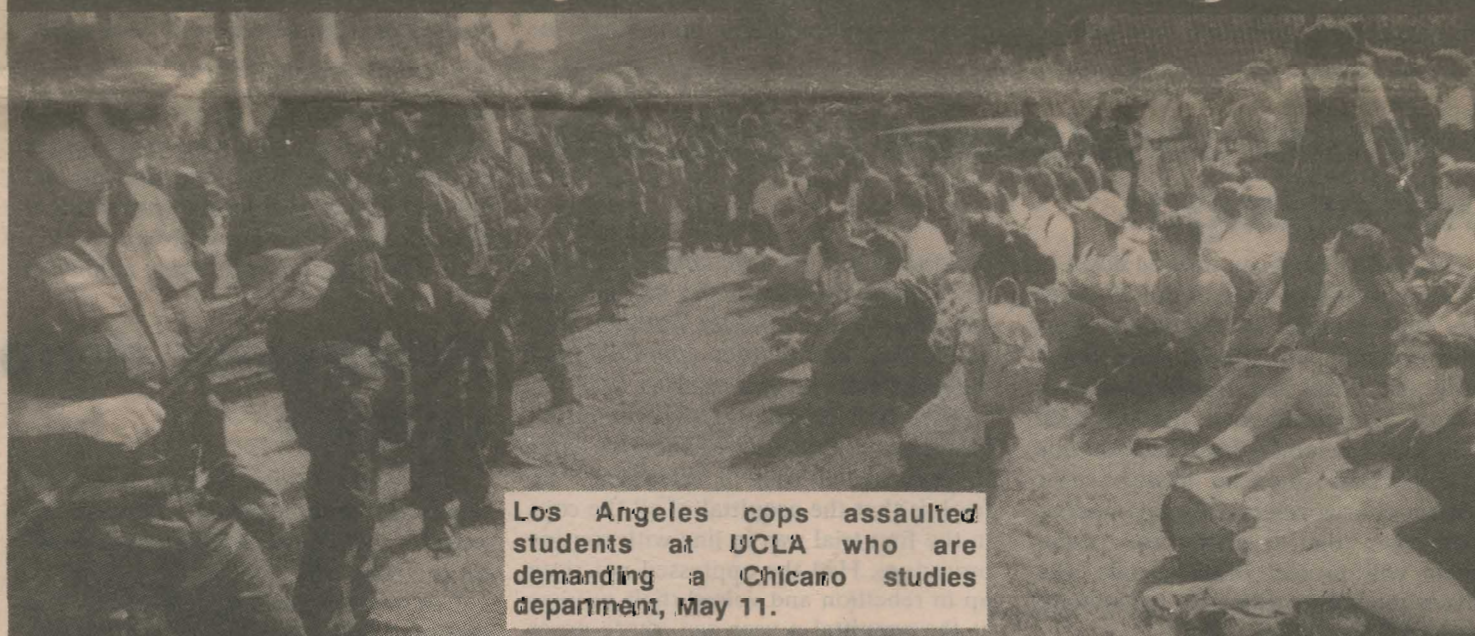
More articles on health care:

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- Watch out for Clinton's 'managed competition'.
- Health care in crisis.
- What would socialism mean for health care?

Killer cop acquitted in Florida

There is no justice in this system



Los Angeles cops assaulted students at UCLA who are demanding a Chicano studies department, May 11.

Two of the 27 cops involved in the beating of Rodney King were finally convicted in mid-April. And everyone

from President Clinton to Jesse Jackson were shouting, "The system works, the system works."

But now, only a few weeks later, another trial has proved that's a lie. A Miami cop — who had been convicted of killing two young black men back in 1989 — was given a new trial and let off scot-free. This case shows the lengths to which the system goes to absolve killer cops, and the racist prejudice that underlies so-called "justice" in America. (See articles on the Lozano trial and other cases of police brutality around the country — pages 2-3.)

Today police brutality has become a nationwide epidemic. Every politician from Clinton to city mayors calls for more police and the cops are given a free hand to hold down the restive masses in the inner-city ghettos. Capitalism is in crisis and has nothing to offer millions and millions of people but unemployment, poverty and homelessness. African Americans, Latinos, and other oppressed nationalities are being hit the hardest. And their racist oppression is used to split up and hold down the entire working class.

But the anger of the working people is growing. And that is fuel to energize a new, militant movement against racism and against the system that produces it. ■

Clinton turns his back on the jobless

There are 16.5 million people unemployed or half-employed. And joblessness is actually growing in the country's 30 largest cities. But President Clinton has bowed down to the conservatives and turned his back on those suffering without a job.

Clinton lied

Back when Clinton was running for election he promised to create more than a million jobs a year.

But by the time he took office he had already slashed that promise in half.

And then it came out that most of those 500,000 new jobs he promised were only to be part-time or temporary summer jobs — amounting to the equivalent of only 200,000 full-time jobs for a single year.

Compromising away jobs

But even this piddling jobs program was too much for the avowed spokesmen of big business from the Republican Party. They launched a filibuster, which was supported by a section of conservative Democrats, and blocked Clinton's bill.

So did Clinton fight them? Did he bypass the Washington elite and go directly to the masses of waiting people to mobilize their support? He has to no.

Instead Clinton compromised. He decided he had to "refocus" his program on cutting the federal deficit. And that has meant, among other things, slashing his jobs program further.

A new version of his jobs bill has just come out of the House Appropriations Committee. Among other things, it

slashes new funding for the summer jobs program from \$1 billion to only \$320 million. That program accounted for the vast majority of the new jobs Clinton had promised — now more than two-thirds of them have disappeared.

And what is worse, Clinton has agreed to pay for this by slashing other social programs. He agreed to cut \$50 million from funding for job training, to slash \$164 million from funds for housing for the poor, and to trim environmental and other social programs.

Of course Clinton is calling for another \$45 billion to bail out the S&L bankers, but he is not able to find even a billion for the jobless.

Obviously the president has no more concern for the unemployed than Bush. He shows that the Democrats, like the Republicans, are in the capitalists' hip-pockets. The working class will have to stand up independent of both these parties to build the fight for jobs. ■

More articles on the fight for jobs: See page 5.

Miami blacks protest acquittal of killer cop

The black masses in Miami's inner city showed their outrage May 28 with the acquittal of William Lozano, the cop who murdered two black men back in 1989.

At the request of the governor, the judge held up the announcement of the verdict for four hours to allow police and National Guardsmen to get in position. As was done in L.A. with the announcement of the King verdict, the National Guard were stationed nearby so they could act quickly if there were riots. And groups of police officers in riot gear were stationed throughout the inner-city ghettos to prevent crowds from gathering.

Despite the heavy police presence, crowds of people kept emerging most of the night following the trial. They loudly denounced the verdict, and there was sporadic street fighting with the police.

In Overtown, for example, at one point more than 200 residents confronted a cordon of riot-equipped police. Teenagers taunted the police. And rocks and bottles were thrown at the cops.

Meanwhile, in the impoverished neighborhood of Liberty City a group of angry residents set off fire crackers and threw stones at a TV news crew.

Why are the black masses so angry?

A point-blank racist murder

William Lozano was the Miami cop who blew away Clement Lloyd, a 23-year-old black man who was riding by on his motorcycle while apparently fleeing from another policeman. Lloyd died instantly and his passenger, Allan Blanchard, was also killed when the motorcycle crashed.

Lozano claims he acted in self-defense because the motorcycle would have run him down. Even if it were true that he

was in danger, he could have simply stepped out of the way. But eyewitnesses say he lies. Lozano was in no danger, but rather pulled out his revolver, took careful aim, and murdered Lloyd in cold blood.

People in the impoverished Overtown section of Miami saw the killing with



Scene from the rebellion in Miami, January 1989, after killer cop Lozano had murdered two black men.

their own eyes and immediately began to protest. Soon word of the murder spread, and the masses over a wide area came into the streets and engaged riot-equipped police in three days of street battles.

Eventually, in December of 1989, Lozano was convicted of manslaughter of both men by a jury in Miami. Even then he was only sentenced to seven years in prison, an extremely light punishment for

the cold-blooded murder of two people.

Court prejudice demands re-trial

But Lozano was not even to serve that sentence. The verdict was appealed. And in 1991 an appeals judge threw out the earlier verdict and called for a new trial.

Why? The judge claimed that the

people might share his prejudice.

Playing on racist stereotypes

Eventually the trial was moved to Orlando — a city with half the black population of Miami and known for its law-and-order prejudice. A jury in Orlando had already acquitted Lozano's partner of lying to help the killer cop in the earlier trial. Despite these obvious problems to trying the case in this city, those responsible for prosecuting Lozano agreed to it.

And what was put on trial in Orlando was not Lozano but the black masses of Miami.

Lozano's lawyer frequently employed racial innuendo, repeatedly called Miami the U.S. murder capital and the most violent city in America, and portrayed Overtown as a den of criminality and drug use. He claimed the police were under a state of siege and implied anything they did was in self-defense.

The lawyer even went so far as to denounce the residents of Overtown for destroying evidence in the case. "The mob took over the whole scene and destroyed the evidence forever," he said, so that "there is no way scientifically to determine the truth." Of course there were five eye-witnesses explaining the truth of what happened, but they were apparently part of this terrible mob the lawyer so hated and were not to be believed.

Lozano was essentially acquitted by racist stereotype — he was portrayed as one of the heroes standing guard over the supposed mobs of black criminals and drug fiends threatening the respectable people of Florida. ■

The two convictions in L.A. are not enough!

The verdict has been handed down in the second trial of four of the 27 racist cops who brutally beat Rodney King. Officers Koon and Powell were found guilty and Wind and Briseno were acquitted. The media and the capitalist politicians (including Jesse Jackson and other African-American leaders) have raised a chorus celebrating this verdict. They claim that it shows the justice system will protect black people. But what is the reality of justice in capitalist America?

In the poor communities across the country, the people are saying the truth:

racist atrocities like the beating of Rodney King happen every day of the week and this verdict changes nothing. The police beat and murder minorities and the poor and get away with it.

The truth is that there never would have been a first trial of the L.A. cops if there hadn't been a videotape. The truth is that the acquittal of all the cops in the first trial was in line with routine procedure. Had the oppressed not risen up in rebellion and voiced their outrage at the acquittal a year ago, there never would have been a second trial. Now we have to see if Powell and Koon ever

spend a day in jail. Don't count on it! Meanwhile, what does it say about justice in America that Wind and Briseno and the rest of the lynch mob in uniform that beat Rodney King are scot-free!

It says that to gain even a hint of

justice in capitalist America will take a powerful struggle.

(From the May 2 "Bay Area Workers Voice," paper of the MLP-S.F. Bay Area Branch.) ■

Protesters denounce lenient verdict

"The system doesn't work, it took a rebellion!" shouted demonstrators in Los Angeles the day the verdict was released on the cops who beat Rodney King.

L.A. was an armed camp that day. The thousands of police in riot gear patrolling all the "trouble spots," the National Guardsmen close at hand, and the hundreds of cops surrounding the federal courthouse downtown were all a threat against any protest of the verdict. Nevertheless, some 50 people defied the repressive atmosphere to protest at the federal courthouse. An open mike was held, and one after another, the protesters came forward to denounce the verdict. Although people were happy that two cops were convicted, they emphasized that that was the result of the struggle of the masses, and they called for jailing all the cops who beat Rodney King.

Meanwhile, a demonstration of 125 people marched from San Jose State

University to police headquarters. Marchers chanted "No justice, no peace!" They linked the King beating to a continuing struggle against police brutality in San Jose. At the police headquarters they lit a bonfire, torched an effigy of a cop, and blocked traffic. The police moved to disperse the crowd. Demonstrators threw rocks, surrounded and tried to overturn an unmarked police car, and blocked the path of a light train. Over 40 protesters were arrested.

A protest was also held in San Francisco. About 300 people came out to a speakout in the Mission District. They emphasized that the guilty verdict for two cops did not mean the system works. Rather, it was stressed, police beatings are an everyday occurrence for blacks, Latinos, and other minorities and a mass movement has to be built up to fight it. The protesters then marched through the streets of the city for several miles. ■

Police brutality denounced in Detroit

A spirited march took place against police brutality on May 9 in Detroit. It began at Kennedy Square with about 60 activists who raised banners, placards, and shouts for justice. The activists, and family members of victims, stopped to picket at Police Headquarters and rallied at the Courthouse.

Throughout the march, protesters demanded justice for Malice Green and a series of other black men who have been killed by Detroit police in the last few months.

At the rally family members of Ricar-

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No to new anti-immigrant bills in California DEFEND IMMIGRANT WORKERS!

Recently the INS has been making daily arrests of immigrant workers in San Rafael. Meanwhile politicians in Sacramento are escalating the racist war against immigrant workers in a big way. Nearly two dozen pieces of legislation have been introduced recently in the California State Legislature attacking undocumented workers and their families. The proposed laws would deny the immigrants health care, education and other social services. The laws would try to turn teachers and health care workers into snitches for the INS (Immigration and Naturalization Service). Other bills would increase repression against these workers by local police and authorize the deployment of the National Guard to patrol the border with Mexico.

The authors of these bills say they are trying to stop the undocumented workers — the so-called "illegals" — from "draining the economy." The politicians claim these workers don't pay taxes, use too many social services and are a big reason for California's economic crisis. This is

nonsense.

First of all, it's the rich who have caused the economic crisis. It's their capitalist system that has landed us in the bust of its boom-and-bust cycle. Plants have closed and businesses have dried up. This has drained state revenues. At the same time, one huge tax break after another for the corporations and the wealthy have produced the budget crisis.

The fairy tale about immigrants "draining the economy" is a racist lie. The rich have made billions of dollars in profits by exploiting immigrant labor in the fields, hotels, restaurants and sweatshops of California. The labor of immigrant workers has been a source of enormous wealth.

As well, most immigrant workers pay sales, income and social security taxes just as other workers do. To avoid persecution by the government many avoid filing for their tax returns and end up paying more taxes.

Many undocumented workers can only find work off the books in the growing

underground economy where they are paid less than minimum wage. For example, Asian immigrants working in garment sweatshops in Oakland and San Francisco are forced to work for a dollar an hour. In some cases they are forced to work for free part of the time as virtual slaves in order to keep their jobs. While their incomes (and income tax levels) are minimal, sweatshop workers pay the same high sales taxes as everyone else.

Persecuting the immigrants has been "good for business." As well, driving the immigrants into more desperate poverty has helped the rich to drive down the livelihood of all the workers. It has provided opportunities to create divisions among the working class and strengthen repressive measures against all the working people.

Governor Wilson launched a racist

campaign against the immigrant workers as soon as he stepped into the governor's office. He went coast to coast with his lies that scapegoat the foreign-born as the cause of California's high unemployment and state budget crisis.

Now it's the legislatures' turn, as politicians outdo themselves with new bills to drive immigrant children out of the schools, and to deprive them of essential health care and other services. The undocumented are the first target. But all working people will suffer the consequences of this type of scapegoating. Our best defense is the united mass resistance of the working people — immigrant and native born, legal and undocumented — for equal treatment for all.

(From the May 2 "Bay Area Workers Voice," paper of the MLP-S.F. Bay Area Branch.)

Chicano students take over UCLA building

The notorious LAPD struck again in May, this time at students at the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA).

On May 11, about 500 UCLA students marched on the Faculty Center. They demanded that Chicano studies be upgraded to full departmental status. And they opposed fee increases, class cutbacks, and a 70% cut in the Chicano campus library.

More than 100 students marched into the building and took it over. Hundreds of others continued to protest outside.

Vice Chancellor Andrea Rich called out the police on the students. Some 200 LAPD cops in full riot gear dispersed the students rallying outside the building. Ten were arrested. Then the cops stormed the occupied building. More students were arrested, chained together, and

dragged to paddy wagons. At least 83 were initially charged with felony vandalism and held on \$10,000 bail each. Many charges were reduced to a misdemeanor a few days later.

The next day, more than 1,000 students rallied to protest this outrage. Joining the students were campus workers and some faculty members. As well, a contingent of 100 janitors from the Janitors for Justice campaign joined the march. They came from their own picket of the federal building, saying they were returning the solidarity students had been showing them in their fight for union rights and against police repression.

Demonstrations continued each day. On May 21, some 2,000 people came out to a noon-time rally.

600 march for education in Los Angeles

About 600 people participated in a march for education through downtown L.A. on May 15. Marchers denounced Governor Pete Wilson's public education

cuts and fee increases at community colleges and universities. Half the protesters were students who especially brought a militant spirit to the march.

One of the speakers at the rally was Jackie Goldberg — a former school board member who voted for \$130 million in

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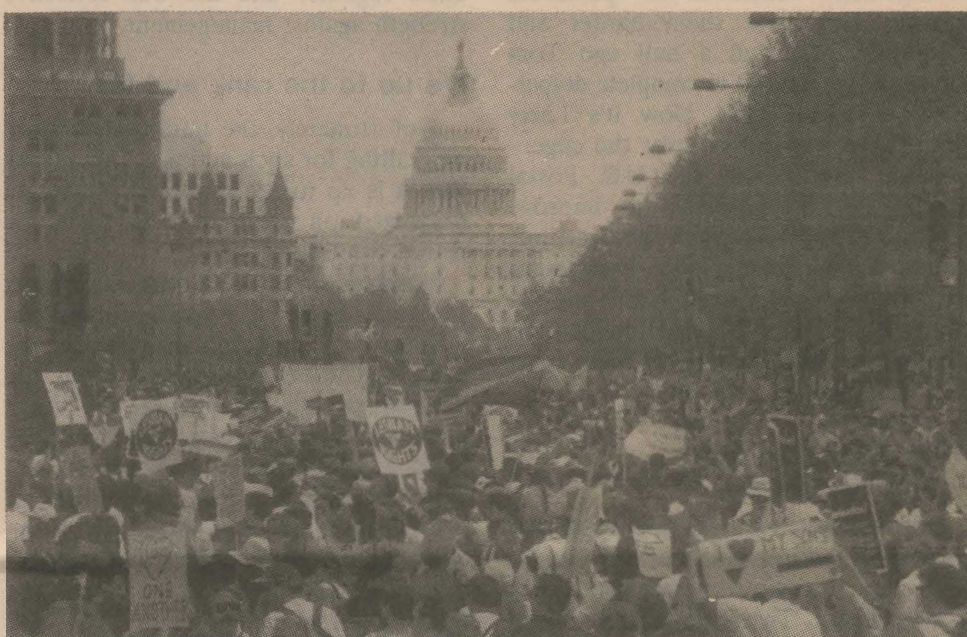
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do Gordy and Cornelius Stanley, who were recently killed by Detroit police, recounted their stories of abuse at the hands of racist police.

Another recent police murder was also denounced. Jose Iturralde was shot six times by police in front of a store after he spoke loudly at police. The police had just completed a sweep of gang members from a park in southwest Detroit. They initially claimed that Jose was part of a gang, as though this justifies pumping six bullets into him. In fact, the man was 44 years old, a poor Cuban immigrant who was unemployed like so many other people in Detroit. This bloodthirsty act by Detroit police is more proof that the anti-gang hysteria is being used as an excuse to brutalize blacks and Latinos.

A black mayor and police chief have not solved the problem. Only the mass actions of the workers, poor and students can limit the racist attacks. On June 2, the trial begins for the three cops who beat Malice Green to death. Activists are planning to picket to oppose any further attempts to move the trial out of Detroit and to demand the jailing of all the cops who were involved in the beating.

500,000 march for gay rights



The right wing is on a crusade against gays, trying to make them into scapegoats for the problems of today's society. And Clinton is busy backing down and trying to appease them. But on March 25, hundreds of thousands of people came to Washington, D.C. to defend gay rights. Many people came to their first demonstration in one of the largest marches ever in Washington, D.C.

It was a demonstration that people weren't going to run away and hide in the face of bigotry, but are determined to meet it head on. And the marchers also showed concern about other problems, some stressing the seriousness of AIDS, while others dealt with racism.

An MLP contingent took part and distributed a leaflet denouncing the

right-wing offensive against gays, as well as *The Workers' Advocate*. The MLP leaflet showed that the fight against homophobia should be made into part of the class struggle. All workers and progressive people must oppose the bigotry against gays and stand up for their rights, while gay rights activists should take part in the overall struggle to build an independent movement of the working people against the capitalist establishment. As well, the leaflet discussed the AIDS crisis, showing how a serious health problem became a world disaster due to the "let the poor die" attitude of the capitalist authorities and to the anti-gay, class and race bias that goes hand-in-hand with the division of society into rich and poor.

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Strikes and workplace news

Management abuse is behind Dearborn tragedy

Postal workers demand a real change

On May 6, postal worker Larry Jasion walked into the motor vehicle shop at the Dearborn post office and opened fire. He wounded his supervisor, along with a co-worker who was placed in a job that he had applied for, and killed an acting supervisor. Jasion's last act was to turn his gun on himself.

Only 18 months ago, a similar shooting took place at the Royal Oak post office. What caused these tragedies?

Various so-called "experts" are offering the explanation that the gunman just had bad psychological problems. But this is whitewash.

The real cause is that the postal management continues to persecute workers and drive them harder and harder. A year and a half ago Tom Mellvane was pushed to complete desperation at Royal Oak. Now it's Larry Jasion who was shoved over the edge.

After Royal Oak, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) promised to improve conditions. But since then the overtime, overwork and management harassment have only gotten worse. Rank-and-file postal workers are pointing out that the incident at Dearborn shows there must be a real change.

Only mass struggle can bring change

But management is not about to voluntarily reform itself. If real change is to come, it is up to postal workers to bring it about. The issue is how — what path is the most effective.

Postal workers identify with the rage felt by victims of management persecu-

tion. But isolated acts of vengeance are not the answer. They can bring attention to some wrongdoing. But by their very nature they are suicidal to the individual involved and may tragically claim the innocent. No matter how dramatic the action, it still involves a lone worker lashing out in rage.

But just because such desperate actions are not advisable, this does not mean we have to be meek before management or that militancy is bad. Just the opposite. Instead of stifling anti-management feelings, they must be channeled into militant organized actions. Instead of desperate individual acts, we need to unite together and use our collective strength against management.

It's up to the rank and file

Unfortunately, the union leaders are not calling for such actions. This means that it is up to the rank and file to get organized on their own to fight the rotten conditions.

Workers should join with the *Detroit Workers' Voice* to distribute protest leaflets and buttons throughout the postal facilities. Contingents from the different stations should go to the "town meetings" called by the USPS and denounce management harassment and slavedriving. These and other forms of protest must be used to build up the unity among the workers and prepare them for collective mass actions that fight for a real change.

Stop management abuse! Fire tyrant bosses like Bruce Plumb!

End forced overtime! End understaff-

ing!

Hire more career employees! And convert temporary workers to career status!

Postal bosses pushed Jasion over the edge

Larry Jasion may have exhibited some strange behavior. But the media attempts to portray him as some crazed monster are a farce. Jasion had worked 24 years for the post office with no history of violence and no criminal record. That's hardly the history of a madman.

Whatever personal problems Jasion may have had cannot absolve management. His bosses in Dearborn were well aware that Jasion was very upset at the mistreatment he received at their hands. But rather than back off, management pushed him over the edge.

About five years ago, Jasion was unjustly demoted from his job as a storekeeper in the motor vehicle area. He got the job back — but only because he was lucky enough to have a grievance arbitrator rule in his favor.

Since then, co-workers say Jasion suffered constant abuse at the hands of his supervisor Bruce Plumb. Indeed Plumb was a notorious dictator hated by many employees. Jasion filed grievance after grievance to get some justice but nothing was ever done about Plumb's abusive behavior.

Meanwhile, management imposed a

(From the May 17 "Detroit Workers' Voice," paper of the MLP-Detroit branch.) ■

crushing workload on the Dearborn workers. Many had been forced to work 60 hours a week for the last eight months. This took a particularly hard toll on Jasion. He experienced much pain in his legs and he began bandaging them to make it through the workday.

Jasion asked for some relief from the brutal overtime. But management refused. On April 23, he was forced to file a grievance on this matter which was never resolved before his death. He had also sought relief from his physical ailments by applying for an administrative clerk office job. He was denied the job, and it has been reported that management's decision was based mainly on their dislike of him.

Jasion may have had some backward ideas. And certainly shooting your supervisors and co-workers is not the way to deal with your problems. But that's how desperate Jasion had become — and it is the postal management that is to blame for pushing him to that desperation.

(From the May 17 "Detroit Workers' Voice," paper of the MLP-Detroit branch.) ■

IN BRIEF

Round two of the coal miners' struggle!

2,000 coal miners went on strike May 10 at 10 underground mines in Illinois and Indiana. This begins the second round in the fight against the use of nonunion miners by the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA), the main coal industry bargaining group. At the end of May the strike was widened to involve 6,200 miners against seven coal producers. And it was expected to spread further at the beginning of June.

This is a crucial fight for the miners. The giant coal monopolies have been increasingly shifting production to nonunion mines. Five years ago, the BCOA guaranteed laid-off United Mine Workers (UMW) members three out of five jobs at new mines. But many BCOA members circumvented that agreement by setting up nonunion mines under separate subsidiaries. If the miners don't stop this trend, experts predict that 20,000 of the UMW's 60,000 members could lose their jobs in the next five years.

Despite the importance of this fight, UMW president Richard Trumka is holding back the miners with his "selective strike strategy." Early this year, the UMW selectively struck Peabody Coal, the largest coal monopoly and head of the BCOA. But that strike was called off after Peabody revealed some of its financial records and corporate structure. Now the union is striking other companies. But each time, it keeps most of the miners on the job. That is like fighting

a giant with both hands tied behind your back. ■

California drywallers continue to fight

Four months ago the strike of some 4,000 California drywallers forced the Pacific Rim Drywall Association to sign a contract giving them higher pay, benefits, and safer conditions. But it turns out that leaders of Justice for Drywallers, and the Carpenters Union they affiliated with, also gave up a number of concessions.

Probably most important was a 50-50 provision — those called back to work would include 50% scabs and 50% strikers. And the companies are not even living up to this provision. Over 90% of those called back to work have been scabs. Meanwhile some strikers are being fired. Drywallers are complaining that the Carpenters Union is collaborating with the companies. Justice for Drywallers has given the Carpenters Union an ultimatum: enforce the contract, change your policies, or we leave for another union.

Meanwhile in San Diego, the striking drywallers have lost their strike benefits and many are facing evictions from their homes. But they have defiantly voted to intensify their picketing. ■

Justice for Janitors strike for health care

1,000 janitors who work in the office buildings in Beverly Hills, the Wilshire Corridor and Westwood walked off the job April 29. They are demanding health

benefits be included in their contract for the first time.

In St. Louis 2,400 janitors have voted to strike unless five cleaning contractors give up their demand to cancel hospitalization and pension benefits.

Meanwhile, contract struggles between 1,200 janitors in Denver and the Mountain States Employers Council have continued after the February 28 expiration date. These janitors clean over 90% of the office buildings in the Denver downtown area. The Council's latest offer includes a wage freeze for current workers, a lower wage rate for new hires, and the elimination of key job security and workload protections. Contractors also want to cut the number of workers while increasing the workload by 65%. They also want the authority, when they take over a new building, to fire 10% of the workers without cause or review. ■

Greyhound strike officially ends in setback

A tentative six-year contract has been signed by Greyhound and the leaders of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU). But don't believe the leaders' shouts of "victory."

9,000 Greyhound workers went on strike three years ago to defend their jobs, living standards and union rights. But with this agreement many strikers will never recover their jobs. Not a single scab will be replaced. There are about 1,500 drivers who, on the orders of ATU leaders, crossed picket lines and returned to work several months ago. Greyhound has agreed to rehire another 550 by July 1. And another 2,000 may get early

retirement.

And those with jobs face a hellhole to work in. The agreement includes a provision allowing subcontracting and the use of part-time and seasonal employees. The grievance machinery is to be gutted and the company has a free hand on work rules and discipline. Pay cuts are also implicit: drivers are to be paid only for their time behind the wheel. As a result, drivers who earned \$30,000 annually in the 1980's will see their pay cut by 40%. As well, workers and retirees face monthly payments of \$300 or more to maintain decent health care coverage.

Despite these setbacks, ATU claims victory because Greyhound agreed to pay \$22 million in back pay — a paltry \$3,600 per striker. In return, the ATU dropped its lawsuit demanding the \$300 million in back pay that Greyhound actually owes its workers. ■

Mushroom workers strike

On April 24, over 500 people marched through Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. They came out to support 2,500 mushroom workers who have been on strike since April 1. Their target was the Kaolin mushroom farm, producer of nearly a quarter of the country's mushrooms.

The strikers report that Kaolin management has recently cut wages down to \$4.50 an hour for hourly packing workers, required bigger baskets for the piecework without changing the rate, and denied medical benefits. The workers suffer many on-the-job injuries not covered by any workers' compensation benefits. And the bosses are increasing the pressure for them to work harder and faster. ■

Capitalist recovery: Overwork and unemployment

We have now gone through more than two years of what the moneybags call a "recovery" from the 1990-91 recession. But still there are no jobs. Even Robert Reich, Clinton's Labor Secretary, admits that "In this sluggish recovery, we remain more than 3.7 million jobs behind the pace of job creation in past recoveries. We have not yet regained even 60% of the jobs lost during the recession."

Of course part of the joblessness is because this is hardly a recovery at all. The growth in output is less than half that of previous recoveries and is closer to stagnation than to expansion. There is simply not much more work now than in the depths of the recession.

At the same time, the large unemployment is also being caused by the capitalists' productivity drive. As the *New York Times* explained January 9, "Despite nearly two years of expansion in the national output, sluggish though it has been, American employers have added no more workers than absolutely necessary. The strategy has been to use existing workers for extra hours and to work them harder and to make greater use of temporary employees."

More than a million jobs lost to record overtime

In April the average overtime hours for a factory worker reached 4.3 hours a week, the highest recorded since these statistics started to be kept in 1948.

Overtime pay has reached \$900 million each week — enough to employ 1.3 million new workers at the average manufacturing wage of more than \$11 an hour plus benefits.

Temporary and part-time jobs

At the same time, especially in the service sector, there is increased use of temporary workers who receive less pay and frequently no benefits.

Indeed, in 1992 half of the new jobs created were for temporary workers.

Capitalists profit

As a result of these measures and automation, productivity in all sectors jumped 4.1% in the fourth quarter of 1992, the highest increase since the early 1970's. This has meant large-scale unemployment and overwork for the working class. But for the capitalists it has meant higher profits.

Karl Marx, the founder of scientific socialism, long ago explained this phenomenon. "The overwork of the employed part of the working class swells the ranks of the reserve, whilst conversely the greater pressure that the latter by its competition exerts on the former, forces these to submit to overwork and to subjugation under the dictates of capital. The condemnation of one part of the working class to enforced idleness by the overwork of the other part, and the converse, becomes a means of enriching



The unemployed apply for jobs at Allegheny Ludlum Steel in Pittsburgh.

the individual capitalists, and accelerates at the same time the production of the industrial reserve army on a scale corresponding with the advance of social accumulation." (*Capital*, Chapter XXV "The general law of capitalist accumulation," Section 3. — "Progressive production of a relative surplus-population or industrial reserve army," page 636)

Socialism and the fight for jobs

As long as capitalism exists, then increases in productivity — whether from overwork or automation — result in greater joblessness for the workers. But

socialism would do away with the profit system, and improvements in productivity would be used to enhance workers' lives instead of destroying them. For example, improved productivity could be used to shorten the working day so that workers could take on other endeavors such as involvement in running the society.

Today, the capitalists are on a killing "efficiency" drive. The employed workers must defend themselves and, at the same time, support the unemployed by resisting the overtime, standing up to the overwork, and demanding full-time permanent jobs. ■

Unemployment growing in the cities

Federal officials are claiming that unemployment has been declining since the end of the recession and is at only 7%. Of course, anyone who works 10 minutes is counted as employed.

But recently new reports indicate that, at least in the largest cities, unemployment is actually growing and is much worse than the official count.

On March 11, the U.S. Conference of

Mayors released a report that showed that unemployment is growing in the country's 30 largest cities. The Conference estimated that unemployment averaged about 15.6% for all those cities. In some cities unemployment was much worse. In Detroit it stood near 33%. In El Paso it was over 25%. In New York and Los Angeles some 19% of the workers were without jobs. ■

Base closings and the fight for jobs

California is in an economic ditch. Official unemployment in the state is 9.8%. Cuts in military spending are taking their toll, with big layoffs in aerospace and hi-tech industries. Now the Pentagon is planning to close down four major bases in the Bay Area, eliminating 30,414 military and civilian jobs.

What should working and progressive people do in the face of these closings?

First of all, beware of the smooth-talking politicians. Congressman Ron Dellums (one of the most liberal Democratic Congresspeople) is protesting the base closings. His office claims that the bases have military value, and there are "legitimate strategic arguments" for keeping them open. (*Oakland Tribune*, March 13) No one should be surprised by this pro-military base position from the chairman of the House Armed Service Committee. After all, chairman Dellums is a big player now in "strategic" decision making. He can't rock the Pentagon boat too hard. We saw that during Bush's desert war, when Dellums failed to vote against the war resolution.

What "strategic" function do these bases serve, anyhow? The Soviet Union is kaput. So why do they need all those subs and aircraft carriers? They are needed to run a great protection racket overseas. U.S. ships and planes are used to guarantee stability and a proper investment climate for the corporations from Central America to the Mideast.

We saw this in action in Bush's oil war against Iraq. The only "legitimate strategic arguments" for these bases are pro-war and pro-corporate imperialism.

What about jobs? What about the 6,500 civilian workers at the Mare Island shipyard? They need to fight back. Not to demand spending tens of billions of dollars on more subs for nuclear war. But for jobs or livelihood.

The workers on the bases are facing the same fate as those who were laid off at Lockheed and other war industries. They need jobs, job training, or a decent income until work can be found. Beware the trap of "strategic arguments!" We need working class arguments. We need much greater cuts in the nearly \$300 billion military budget. And we need a major shift towards spending in the civilian economy for education, housing, health care, and decent jobs for the millions of dislocated and jobless workers.

This will not be an easy struggle. Clinton's proposed \$20 billion jobs bill was a drop in the ocean of unemployment and need. Yet even that was shot down in Congress.

Getting on our knees before the Pentagon and waving the flag is no solution. To wait on Clinton and Congress is to believe in miracles. The way out lies with the unity of the working people against the double-headed capitalist monster of unemployment and poverty

at home, and exploitation and war overseas.

(From the May 2 "Bay Area Workers

Voice," paper of the MLP-S.F. Bay Area Branch.) ■

IN BRIEF

1,000 rally against Engler job cuts

About 1,000 workers marched April 27 from Cobo Hall to Hart Plaza in downtown Detroit demanding jobs. Most of the protesters were state workers. They denounced Michigan Governor Engler's budget slashing. He has eliminated thousands of state jobs, shut down clinics, and is privatizing other facilities.

Originally the march was supposed to travel through the heart of downtown to the State Plaza during the busy lunch hour. But the leadership of the march was turned over to the national heads of the United Auto Workers union who were holding their auto bargaining convention at that time. On the claim they would bring out 3,000 convention delegates to the rally, they switched it to 8:00 in the morning and replaced the march plans with a rally only a block from the convention site. This disrupted the march but failed to bring out many union officials from the convention. The UAW leaders have been unable to stop the mammoth job loss in the auto industry, and now they are undermining the fight for jobs among the state workers. ■

United Airlines workers protest job cuts

Thousands of United Airlines workers picketed airports across the country May 8. Food service workers, cleaners, baggage handlers, mechanics and others protested plans to sell off 17 flight kitchens wiping out more than 7,000 union jobs. Some 1,500 workers rallied at the United Airlines terminal in San Francisco. Hundreds picketed the United flight kitchen in Los Angeles. And smaller numbers picketed airports in Seattle, New York, Boston, and Washington, D.C.

In February, members of the International Association of Machinists and

flight attendants rejected the company's demand that they reopen their contracts and give up mammoth concessions. Now, United Airlines is taking its revenge.

Kitchen workers make only \$7-10 an hour, already the lowest wages at United. But the airline plans to subcontract the work to companies paying \$5 an hour. It has also fired all Sky Caps and replaced them with workers making half their pay. And it has imposed cuts in hours and wages among nonunion reservations and ticket agents. ■

Unemployed picket in Providence, Rhode Island

Carrying signs reading "Jobs yes! Politics no!" unemployed workers picketed the federal building in Providence, Rhode Island on April 26.

Several of the workers had been without work for over two years. They came out to denounce Senator John Chafee, a Rhode Island Democrat, for taking part in the Republican filibuster that blocked President Clinton's economic stimulus bill.

Of course Chafee should be denounced. But workers shouldn't think that Clinton is much better. Clinton's own bill was worth only about 200,000 new jobs and he has been quick to compromise even those few jobs away in the name of "reducing the budget deficit."

The protesters denounced the talk of cutting the federal deficit by slashing social programs. As well, they declared, "We don't need more part-time jobs that offer no benefits or insurance." They called for legislation to pressure companies to hire full-time workers. ■

Watch out for 'managed competition'

Clinton waffles on health care

Day after day, there is another leak from Clinton's task force on health care. And likely as not, it is a trial balloon about giving in to one moneyed interest or another on health care. Clinton hopes to get his plan adopted by buying out the capitalist interests. But the result is to make the plan harsher and harsher for the workers and poor.

Will big business be allowed to opt out of health plan?

In Clinton's proposed "managed competition," businesses and individuals were not supposed to purchase health insurance directly but through regional super-agencies. The agencies will supposedly negotiate better deals from the health insurance companies, and the process will be "managed" to ensure a uniform health

guarantee for all. But now Clinton's task force is thinking about letting businesses with 1,000 or more employees negotiate their own deals with the insurers, if they so wish.

It is expected that companies with younger or healthier work forces would be most likely to opt out of the super-agencies. This would leave the super-agencies with a higher proportion of older or sicker workers than if everyone were in one pool. The idea is for the companies to saddle the general system, financed by everyone else, with higher costs, while getting better deals for themselves. This does not mean that the workers in these companies would get better health plans than otherwise, but simply that the companies would get a better deal in paying for their plans. ■

A two-tier health plan?

Clinton has time and again promised health coverage for everyone. Eventually. The Clinton administration has suggested it may take as many as eight years. For the 37 million people presently uninsured, health care will always be a matter of *Don't stop thinking about tomorrow*. Now, however, Clinton domestic policy advisor, Ira Magaziner, has suggested a way to cover the uninsured quickly: give them a cheap, second-rate package.

Speaking to the Families USA organization on May 11, Magaziner explained that the Clinton plan may have two basic health care packages. One, Plan B, would cover the millions of poor people presently covered by Medicaid plus the 37

million people without any health insurance. Meanwhile the more extensive Plan A would specify the minimum benefits that could be offered to anyone else. Magaziner confesses that the poor will get an inferior package.

Magaziner claims that one day in the future, if funds are found, the benefits will gradually be raised. But if the Clinton administration is unwilling to finance equal treatment for the poor now, what will happen when Clinton and Congress runs into further budget troubles and deeper deficits? Won't it be more likely that they make more cutbacks by continuing to single out the poorest and most powerless people for attack? ■

Clinton starts to back down on abortion coverage

Clinton used to talk about covering abortion services in his health care program. This would help those women who presently can't finance an abortion.

But the administration is already whispering that it won't put up too much of a fight in Congress. The Congressional "pro-lifers" are threatening to oppose the whole health care plan if it covers abortion, and the Catholic church is spearheading a campaign on the subject. In response, a Clinton administration official recently confided: "We recognize the volatility and divisiveness of this issue, and nobody is willing to sacrifice health care reform for an ugly and drawn-out battle over abortion rights." (*Deroh*

News, May 25)

So Clinton won't appeal to the people about the importance of abortion rights. He may say a few words to keep up appearances. But he'll just water things down as far as possible, and then let Congress do its worst.

So once again the politicians may end up with a consensus on abortion: keep it away from poor women, make it expensive for working women, and let rich women do as they please. This is because, for Clinton, developing a health care plan is mainly a question of balancing various interests of the rich and powerful, not seeing that the needs of the masses are met. ■

Incorporating workers' compensation

The Clinton health task force is considering merging the medical benefits section of the workers' compensation system into its general "managed competition" plan.

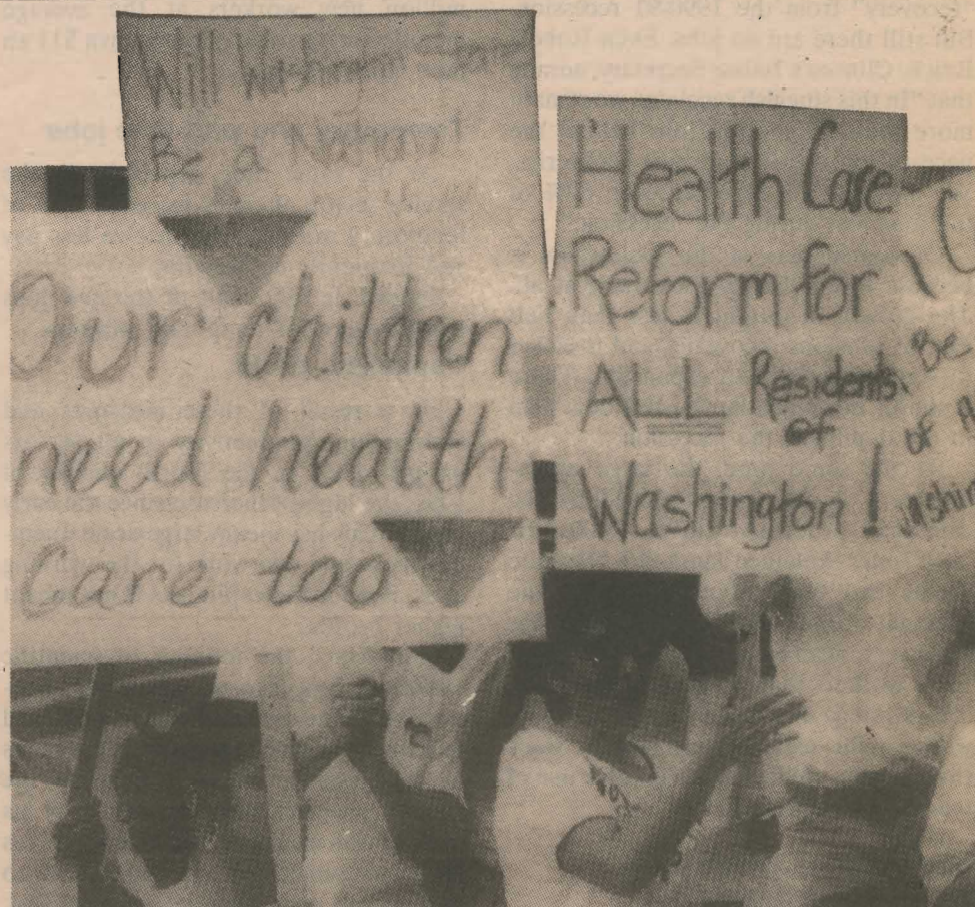
If this proposed merger were simply a matter of simplifying the present hodgepodge and eliminating the multiple bureaucracies, it would be of benefit. If it were a matter of freeing workers from the fear of denial of benefits and from the torture of the endless paperwork and bureaucratic delays improving the work-related nature of their injury, it would be better yet. But the main goal is to reduce spending on health care, and the result may be replacing workers' comp with less medical care than under the present system.

Under the present workers' comp laws,

coverage — if you are able to go through the obstacles and qualify — is often more extensive than most insurance plans. It covers employees from their first day of employment; there are no co-payments and deductibles; and there is free choice of physicians. Most importantly, there is no limit on the amount of treatment.

And what of Clinton's plan? Since universal coverage will only be gradually phased in over a number of years, perhaps some workers will fall through the cracks and have no coverage at all for work-related injuries. And how much care will there be? The administration aims to drive workers into bargain-basement HMOs, and to discourage health care through high deductibles and co-

And, of course, there is no talk at all



Farm workers picket in Seattle, May 17 when Washington's governor signed a new health care law. The law excludes farm workers from coverage.

of extending the health plan by dramatically strengthening the occupational health and safety inspections and curbing the unsafe conditions at the work place.

Instead the motive seems to be to induce the corporations to support Clinton's proposals in order to save the

high cost of workers' compensation. The companies have been putting pressure on state governments for years to cut workers' compensation, and the workers must fight to see that these benefits are maintained, whether in themselves or in an improved national health plan. ■

Capping Medicare, Social Security, food stamps, and Medicaid

Clinton's federal budget has just passed the House of Representatives and gone on to the Senate. There's a big clamor in Congress. Under the banner of reducing the deficit, conservative Democrats have united with the Republicans in Congress to push for capping the budgets of entitlement programs like the Medicare health benefits for the elderly, Medicaid health benefits for the impoverished, food stamps and Social Security.

Clinton was already considering various caps and restrictions on social programs, and he has proposed a two-year freeze on Medicare payments to hospitals. Now he is making deals to further slash social spending. It doesn't matter that the ranks of the needy have been expanding. It doesn't matter that with caps, the more people who need help, the thinner the benefits will be spread.

The latest deal in the House of Representatives avoids direct caps on entitlement programs. But Congress would have the option of cutting other areas of the budget if the social spending exceeded the targets in the Clinton budget. And more deals are expected in the Senate. Two conservative Democrats, Senator Boren of Oklahoma and Senator Breaux of Louisiana, have threatened to block Clinton's budget in the Senate Finance

Committee. But a Clinton ally on the committee stated there would be a deal offering "real reductions" in mandatory social programs in return for passing the energy tax. This was confirmed by committee chairman Moynihan (D-NY), who said that the social programs would be cut if "you change the formulas" used to determine the level of benefits. (*New York Times*, May 26) In other words, the benefits would be cut directly, not through a cap on total expenditures. Underneath the yapping about energy, which fills the daily papers, the common goal seems to be stomping on the poor.

The whole budget squabble is a disgrace. Both sides posture as defenders of the working people, while cutting social programs. They even want to cap Social Security and Medicare, although the payroll taxes for these programs still fully finance them. But the politicians are taking the extra revenue from these taxes, collected in the name of social programs, to use for deficit reduction, military spending, or other purposes. Then, if the Social Security spending exceeds the cap, they will tax the people again, or cut social spending, so the workers would have to pay twice over for Social Security. ■

Deregulating the doctors' medical labs

Clinton campaigns by offering the wealthy one plum after another. The doctors being wealthy, they are going to be offered still more. On May 18 Ira Magaziner just promised officials of the American Medical Association, voice of fossilized establishment medicine, to seek repeal of parts of a 1988 law that

set standards for medical laboratories in doctors' offices. This would eliminate proficiency testing and registration fees for 75,000 small labs or so. (*New York Times*, May 28) It would make it easier for doctors to profit from the medical tests and procedures they order. ■

How would socialism deal with health care?

Medicine for profit is self-destructing in this country. Billions in profits and extravagant salaries are flowing in to the health company executives and the doctors. But tens of millions of workers and poor people have no health coverage or inadequate coverage, and tens of millions more worry about losing their coverage.

Clinton's managed competition is an attempt to fix the system, while preserving the insurance companies. It believes that the same profit motive that got medicine in trouble will now fix medicine, if there is a dose of government management. For example, is there a need for preventive care? Clinton's advisers believe that it will be solved if the insurance companies and health maintenance organizations think that it makes more profits for them. But so difficult is it to reconcile public health and the profit motive that Clinton still hasn't figured out even how to have his plan insure everyone.

National health plans that really cover everyone exist in various forms in Canada, Scandinavia, England, etc., but they infringe on medicine for profit. They all eliminate the market for private insurance for basic care, thus eliminating one aspect of medicine for profit. In Canada, that's the only feature of marketplace medicine that is eliminated. In some European countries, the hospital and clinic system is nationalized and doctors may be salaried employees of the state. In those systems, a bit more of the marketplace is wiped out of health care.

The limits of national health care

Can the present crisis of health care be solved by national health plans, such as the Canadian plan, or the more extensive plans such as that in Sweden?

The better national plans are universal, and are a big advance on what we have in the U.S. today or on what Clinton is proposing. They ease conditions for the majority of the population. They proclaim basic health care as a right of the people, which everyone has come to expect. They remove the decision for basic care from the realm of the marketplace.

It's still connected to profit

But these plans are still not a full system of health care based on the people's needs; they are still not socialist plans. Despite what the Republicans proclaim with alarm, and what many reformists believe, government programs are not socialism.

A national health care system is still connected to profit. Maybe not the immediate treatment, but the supporting industries, which are still run on a profit basis. In Canada, for instance, the medical supply industries and drug industries are run for profit, and the national health plan provides the customers for them. So drug prices, for example, are low in Canada only by comparison to those in the United States.

The national plans, being directed by the government, are run by the ruling class as a whole. We shall see that they are prevented from infringing too strongly on the unhealthy practices of the capitalists, from pollution to work place conditions. And the doctors, as well as the government administrators, remain a privileged elite, who run medicine as their private preserve.

What is socialism?

Socialism isn't just a government program. The rule of the marketplace isn't eliminated by a bit of government regulation; it is just kinked in and channeled a bit. Socialism, by way of contrast, means eliminating the entire system of production for profit. It means that the affairs of society — from regula-

ing production to political issues — aren't just run by a government of the rich elite, but that a party of the working class takes over the government. And even more than that, it doesn't just mean technocrats or party officials administering a system, even socialist technocrats, but the working population as a whole directing production and dealing with state issues.

Socialism doesn't just mean a change in government policies, but a new way of life for the entire population and a new system of running the economy. It is a transformation which will eventually result in eliminating all ruling parties, governments, and class antagonisms.

This type of socialism, workers' socialism or true communism, is what is needed to develop consistent mass involvement in health care and protecting the environment, not as an exception, but as a rule.

Let's take a look at some of the prob-

lems of modern health care and see what a national system can do at the present time, and what a full system of health care for the people could do.

Universality

Take the problem of providing health coverage for all. This is one thing that the better systems of national health care can accomplish. And it is important. It means that workers are freed from the fear of ruinous medical expense if illness strikes their families and freed from the fear of being caught with medical expenses while between jobs or moving to another city.

Present-day marketplace medicine in the U.S. can't provide this universality. And Clinton's "managed competition" only promises it for the future, in his next term, or even in the next century. But universal coverage is a crucial feature of any useful medical plan.

It can be noted, however, that even

with respect to the better national health plans, there is constant pressure on the universal nature of coverage from the capitalist governments. Now that there has been years and years of economic difficulties even in the richest countries, social benefits are being cut back. In countries with national health care, the system is so popular that it is political suicide to openly attack it. Yet the governments chop away at it around the edge, removing this or that health procedure from the plan, or adding this or that co-pay or user fee. Productivity of the work force increases, more and more wealth is produced, yet capitalism can't even provide universal coverage on a stable basis. The workers of Canada and Western Europe will have to be vigilant or they are in danger of losing the prized accomplishment of universal health care.

Socialist health care would be univer-

Continued on next page
See SOCIALISM

Health care in crisis

No crisis for some

Every cloud has a silver lining, if you're a corporate head. There's no health care crisis when it comes to the profits of the corporations and the salaries of the CEOs. In fact, the highest paid CEO in the country last year was the head of Hospital Corporation of America, Thomas F. Frist Jr., who made a cool \$127 million. That's one-eighth of A BILLION DOLLARS for a single person. Compared to him, even a millionaire like Chrysler's Lee Iacocca looks like a welfare case!

In fact, four of the top 20 highest paid executives were in the health industry. They raked in a collective \$225 million, enough to provide decent insurance, at going rates, to 56,000 workers and their dependents.

With such gigantic sums involved, is there any wonder that there is such resistance to health reform in this country? These people want to be convinced that they will get at least as much money under any new system as at present. And if they do, the new system will be as expensive and oppressive as the old. ■

Marchers denounce cutbacks at Chicago clinics

5,000 people marched on Chicago's City Hall on May 14. They were angry about budget cutbacks at city clinics, and they shouted for health care and against Mayor Daley.

Meanwhile Sheila Lyne, the city health commissioner, cynically defended the budget cuts for city clinics saying: "...in spite of that, we're seeing more patient encounters. So they've (the demonstrators) got to see both sides." (*Chicago Sun-Times*, May 15) Oh, great: less staff, less supplies, and yet you're seeing more patients. Just imagine what type of care they're getting! No wonder people waved placards with slogans like "Kick the Lyne habit, it's bad for our health!" and blocked the doors of City Hall. ■

Protesters decry closing of Gary, Indiana hospital

More than 250 hospital workers and health care activists rallied in May against plans to close St. Mary's Hospital in Gary, Indiana by July 1. The closing would eliminate about 500 jobs of mostly minority women. And it would eliminate one of the only hospitals for the poor in the area.

The hospital is owned by Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, a Catholic order of nuns. The order owns several other lucrative hospitals in the area, but the Gary hospital has a patient load that is 70% minority. ■

Genetics and health care

In the last few months researchers have reported finding the gene for Huntington's disease and making advances in genetic studies with respect to some colon cancers and other cancers. If they are correct, it will aid in identifying people at risk for these dread diseases, in diagnosis, and perhaps in treatment.

But with the present system of private health insurance, it will also result in cutting off health care for people with such genes. Insurance companies are already starting to use genetic tests to screen applicants. People deemed vulnerable to diseases may be denied insurance, or have to pay outrageous premiums, or have their coverage exclude precisely those conditions which they may suffer from. A federal task force on genetic information and insurance reported in May on such abuses and other discrimination facing people due to genetic testing.

Thus the present health care system turns scientific advance into a disaster. Only a system of universal coverage can end such outrages, at least with respect to medical treatment.

However, other discrimination against those singled out by genetic testing will still be possible. Already, says Thomas Murray, chairman of the federal task force on genetics, discrimination is re-

ported by adoption agencies against prospective parents, in schools and colleges, and even from landlords and professional associations. Moreover, beyond what the task force looked into, there are also attempts to blame social problems like violence, or even normal behavioral variation among children, on bad genes. This reflects the anti-people attitude of capitalist society, which blames its own shortcomings on the supposed lack of genetic perfection of its victims. ■

Work place epidemics

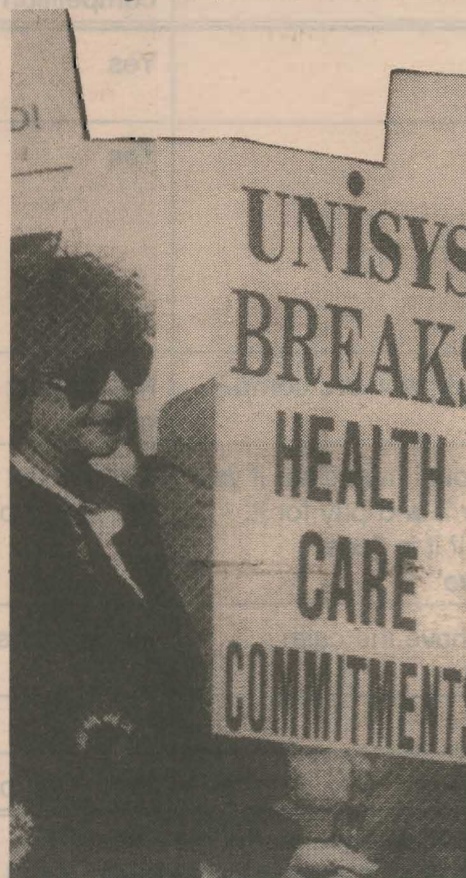
One of the biggest health problems is heartless exploitation at the work place. It is part of the untold story of the health crisis. Thousands die and millions are injured each year at American work places. Yet when the politicians talk of controlling health costs, they mean limiting the amount of workers' compensation money spent on the care and support of sick workers, not limiting the slaughter at the work place.

The work place toll is so huge that one becomes numb to the recitation of large numbers of injuries. But in this issue of *The Workers' Advocate* we deal with some individual tragedies that bring home that danger of a profit-driven economy to the workers' health. In Thailand, a factory fire killed a record 240 workers; and is it an accident or is it murder, when the factory doors are locked during working hours? And at the post office in Dearborn, Michigan, harassment and overwork drove Larry Jasion over the edge, so that he struck out in desperation, shooting his supervisors and a co-worker, and then turned the gun on himself.

In fact, the UN's International Labor Office (ILO) reports that work place stress has become a worldwide epidemic. In a report in March, they singled out American postal workers as among those at risk, along with waitresses in Sweden, teachers in Japan, and assembly line workers just about anywhere.

The ILO estimates that job stress costs \$200 billion alone in the United States, part of this being in added costs for the treatment of ulcers, high blood pressure, and heart attacks.

But job stress is part and parcel of the killing productivity drive of the last two decades. And international competition is in large part a competition over how much you can stress out the workers of an individual country before they collapse or take to the streets in protest. No matter how large the health costs, the profits to be made are even larger. And if the health costs are too large, the capitalists will respond by cutting the medical coverage and social programs for the people. ■



Unisys retirees protest company plans to erode their medical coverage.

SOCIALISM
Continued from page 7

sal as a matter of course.

Preventive care

Next is the issue of preventive care. Today the public health authorities try to prevent epidemics, but generally leave it to the people to get whatever preventive care they can afford. Many pregnant women don't get prenatal care; many people see a doctor only in an emergency room; and even the rate of vaccination is going down.

National health care plans generally do much better at this than marketplace medicine. Even Clinton's "managed competition" aims at doing the cheaper preventive care, but on the rationale of saving money. It may provide things like vaccination, annual checkups and some prenatal care. But the emphasis on the bottom line will get in the way of preventive care. A preventive system costs money now, while the bad consequences of lack of care can always be put off to the future: that's how the insurance companies will reason.

Only a preventive system based on concern for health, not for the bottom line, can be reasonably complete. Moreover, preventive care should really deal with environmental and work place issues, which are major sources for injury and disease. But such concerns work against the monied interests. This is another reason why only socialist care can provide full preventive treatment.

Two-tier care

And what about two-tier care: quality care for the rich and something else for everyone else. Under marketplace medicine today we even have three-tier medicine: lavish attention to the rich; moderate attention to workers with health plans; and emergency rooms at best for the poor.

National health plans level out the treatment. However, under capitalism, the rich always leave themselves a loophole. The Canadian plan covers basic care, but presently leaves other important aspects of health, including dental care, to the marketplace. The German health plan is something of a model for the Clinton administration; they start with the German plan and subtract anything reasonable from it. But the German plan

allows two-tier medicine: the wealthier 9% of Germans are outside the basic plan and in private plans instead. And even in countries with national plans that embrace everyone, the privileged are given red-carpet treatment.

The Clinton plan promises care for all, but it won't cover everyone for years at best. The health care task force is even considering an openly two-tier system, with the poor getting shafted as usual. The better national plans, by contrast, provide the closest to equal care for all that is possible under capitalist conditions.

In socialism, two-tier medicine will be unheard of. The very division of the country into rich and poor is abolished under socialism. The extra privileges for the wealthy thus vanish too. Socialism also reintegrates mental and manual labor, thus eliminating another source of prejudice and privilege. When socialism reaches the point of classless society, then the very nature of society will make two-tier medicine an absurdity.

The features of universal care, preventive medicine, and a single standard for all are the best features of national plans, where they shine. Even here we have seen that, while preferable to marketplace medicine, the national plans have their problems. Now let's look at some other health care issues, where both marketplace medicine and national health care fall on their face in front of the necessities of today.

Elitism

The doctors are a privileged elite in this country. The average doctor in private practice makes almost \$200,000 a year, after all expenses including malpractice insurance. Even a national system, when it is imposed after doctors have become used to such a status, can usually do little. The Canadian doctors, for example, are paid moderate salaries only in comparison to American doctors, and they are not reconciled to their pay status.

This elitism affects the cost of health care. There is no way that it won't bear heavily on the people so long as health fees are expected to support the medical elite, both doctors and health industry management, in the lifestyle of kings. But moreover, it also affects the nature of health care, whether most doctors will have sympathy for working people, and whether they will have respect for the

experience of nurses and other medical personnel.

At present, there are experiments in this country in the use of nurse practitioners to do many medical tasks. But under the present system, this is an exception, and moreover it is connected with the idea of professionalizing some of the nurses rather than bridging the gap between doctors and all medical workers.

Under socialism, mental and manual labor will be reintegrated. The snobbishness and high-living of the doctors will come to an end. This will facilitate involving the whole population in medical matters, integrate the medical personnel more closely with each other and their patients, and help invigorate the

whole field of medicine.

At the work place

One source of misery and illness for workers is the work place. The ordinary disregard of the capitalists for their employee's health is growing in the productivity drive that has dominated most of the last two decades.

For one thing, speedup has resulted in repetitive stress injury becoming a national epidemic. You can take any job, no matter how pleasant in itself, and make it a nightmare by doubling or tripling its speed. And if that isn't enough, combine the job with additional

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See SOCIALISM

Revisionism is not socialism
Health care in Russia, Eastern Europe, Cuba, etc.

The national health care plans in Canada and Western Europe are not socialist, but simply superior government programs to what exists here in the U.S. The national plans in the former Soviet Union and the former regimes of Eastern Europe, and those presently in China, Cuba, Viet Nam and Korea were not socialist either. Neither the countries nor the health plans.

The former East Germany provides an interesting example. It had one of the best systems of medicine in Eastern Europe, a system that compared well with that in much wealthier West Germany. But look how it treated environmental issues. It patched up the symptoms of those who walked into the clinics, while the government let the country get dirtier and dirtier. Health care and environment were two separate things. Health care and the work place were two separate things. And the patients are kept as passive as in Western medical systems.

The country itself was divided into a passive work force, better-paid professionals, and a privileged ruling class. Its health system reflected this. There was special care for the elite. And the patients were a passive mass acted upon by the doctors.

Cuba too has a particularly excellent medical system for a country of its level of development. And it has maintained

this system even during the recent years of economic privation. Yet the Cuban system too is simply a good national system in a class-divided country.

Despite the important revolutionary changes that occurred at one time in Russia, Cuba, and many of these countries, they did not achieve socialism. Moreover, they degenerated into state-capitalist countries. They talked Marxism and socialism, but actually had a bureaucratic rule of a new ruling class. They were not Marxist, but revisionist countries, whose words didn't match their deeds.

Their economic systems differ from Western marketplace capitalism due to the great role of the government and the institutionalized role of the ruling party. But the government and the economy was not run by the workers. They were still capitalist societies, but state capitalist societies. They generally had comprehensive national health systems. And these systems differed somewhat from the national systems in the wealthiest Western countries. For example, the doctors had lower pay, and there was a scarcity of resources. But these programs also had a good deal of resemblance to the more radical health plans in Western Europe. Like them, they were simply government programs in class-divided societies.

Comparison of different health care systems

	Present	Clinton's managed competition	A really good national system	Socialist medicine
Treatment is for profit?	Yes	Yes	The supporting health industries are still for profit	No
Elitist? (Huge gap between doctors and other medical personnel; experts dictate; patients are passive factor.)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Action on work place concerns?	No (Only workers comp.)	No (At best workers comp.)	Only on some things.	Yes
Preventive care?	Traditional medicine: if you ask for it and pay for it. HMO: if it is "cost effective"	If it is "cost effective" for the health provider	Yes, on many things.	Yes, even on work place and environmental issues
Covers all care, including dental, eyesight, etc.?	If you have the cash	Many things not covered	Fewer things not covered	Full coverage
Two-tier?	Yes	Yes	Not so much.	No
Universal?	No	Promises, promises	Yes	Yes

National health care will be a tremendous advance on the present system, but it still will not be socialist care. Clinton's "managed competition" won't cut away at any of the institutions of medicine for profit, and does not compare to the better national systems in Canada and Western Europe. All

national health care systems under capitalism are subject to the budget-cutting of the last decade when there has been an economic restructuring at the expense of the working people.

Defend women's rights!

Florida clinic defenders foil Operation Rescue

On April 10, several hundred pro-choice activists came out to defend several Florida clinics from the notorious anti-abortion group, Operation Rescue. This put a major dent in OR's plans to celebrate Easter weekend by terrorizing women and clinic personnel.

On April 9, OR had blockaded a clinic in Fort Pierce. There was an injunction against the blockade and police were on hand, but pro-choice activists weren't there. So, as usual, the cops took their sweet time, and OR was able to block the clinic for over an hour.

But the next day, with the abortion rights forces amassed, it was a different story. The big showdown was at the Aware Woman Center in Melbourne. Melbourne has been the site of an OR training school for teaching how to shut down clinics. 100 OR fanatics, led by national leader Keith Tucci, showed up

at the clinic. This time, however, some 250 pro-choice activists formed a solid wall in front of the clinic. Faced with the determined clinic defenders, Tucci didn't even try to blockade the clinic. Instead he led about half his forces from across the street from the clinic to the clinic defense line where they all went limp. The police slowly took them away.

After turning back OR in Melbourne, many of the activists traveled an hour and a half to Port St. Lucie. It was expected OR would strike a clinic there. But the pro-choice presence was enough to keep the dozen or so anti-abortion people who showed up far away from the clinic.

Meanwhile, in Fort Lauderdale, over 100 pro-choice activists defended a clinic against a small group of pro-lifers. There was also a clinic defense in Orlando. ■

3,000 march against 'pro-life' murder



Three thousand pro-choice demonstrators marched on May 8 in Pensacola, Florida. They were outraged at the bloody efforts of the "pro-life" terrorists to intimidate abortion providers and forcibly deprive women of their rights. A Pensacola abortion clinic was the site of the heinous murder of Dr. David Gunn by an anti-abortion demonstrator in March, who shot him three times.

Anti-abortion violence is no accident.

"Right-to-life" leaders like Randall Terry, founder of Operation Rescue, say the murder of Dr. Gunn was "one isolated, abnormal act." But in fact, Mr. Terry told a rally of his followers in Washington, D.C. last year that "we must do everything we can to torment these people [doctors — WA]." (*Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, April 19-26, p. 6) And this murder is the logical outcome of routine "pro-life" activities like stalking clinic personnel, harassing patients, and blockading clinics. This has included numerous cases of firebombing clinics or spraying them with gasoline or noxious chemicals.

Indeed, only a couple of weeks after Dr. Gunn's murder, a leader of the anti-abortion South Carolina Missionaries to the Unborn, Ann Rider, was arrested by the police after stalking

Lorraine Maguire, the director of the Charleston Women's Medical Clinic, for over a year. This included issuing a leaflet on how much cash the clinic had on hand to encourage robberies of the clinic. As well, according to the arrest warrant, Rider made "strong references to the murder of Dr. Gunn" in threatening Maguire's life. Moreover, she "informed Maguire that she knows the layout of furniture in the Maguire home" and "has referred to Ms. Maguire's daughter and encouraged others to 'rip her arms off' so that Ms. Maguire would know how aborted fetuses feel."

Is Ann Rider simply a lone weirdo? No, her activities are defended by the likes of Keith Tucci, executive director of Operation Rescue, who called Rider the victim of a "witch hunt."

Anti-abortion violence is not the result of a lone madman or woman, but of a mad movement.

Stand up to the holy bullies!

Meanwhile, spurred by the murder of Dr. Gunn, Congress is considering legislation that would provide for federal injunctions against clinic blockades and other harassment of patients and clinic personnel. This would remove the privileged position granted anti-abortion violence by the Supreme Court in January this year when it exempted the anti-

abortion fanatics from the provisions of the Ku Klux Klan Act. And apparently some legislators are trying to write the law carefully, so it only bans violence aimed at preventing women from exercising their rights, not ordinary protests, nor labor conflicts. Thus, federal action against a nationwide conspiracy of violent harassment to deny women's rights would only be just.

Nevertheless, another law, however just or carefully written, will not save the day. It would make some difference. But there are already plenty of other laws on the books that are being violated by anti-abortion violence. Yet the courts and the cops are reluctant to take action against the holy bullies.

If the anti-abortion goons are to be stopped, the task at hand is to mobilize pro-choice women and men to defend abortion rights. This is the only solid guarantee of women's rights. Wide sup-

port should be developed by organizing in the work places, communities and schools. Youth and working class women and men must be inspired with the importance of their own action to defend women's rights. Mass defense of clinics, the confrontation of the "pro-life" movement, and varied pro-choice demonstrations are the best way to defend the clinics and keep them open. Such action also encourages the courts to lift a finger or two against anti-abortion violence; but most importantly, it demonstrates the mass sentiment, creates a favorable atmosphere for the exercise of women's rights, and isolates the "pro-life" goons as religious fanatics.

Don't rely on the authorities, whether hostile conservatives or foot-dragging liberals. Don't wait for another law. Don't expect someone else to make things better. It's up to the pro-choice movement to act. ■

Minneapolis NARAL tells clinic defenders to stay home

Operation Rescue took its merry band of bigots to a clinic in the Minneapolis suburb of Robbinsdale on April 24. Over 100 pro-choice demonstrators showed up to oppose them. Also on hand was a small army of police sent to enforce an injunction banning physical interference with patients and staff but also restricting all demonstrators, for or against women's rights.

About 80 OR showed up, gathering in a parking lot adjacent to the clinic. Twenty of them went over to the clinic to picket. After parading before the news crews for a couple of hours, the anti-abortion forces left.

But the story does not end here. It seems the establishment pro-choice leaders not only did not want OR around, but they didn't want rank-and-file pro-choice activists around either. Local officials of Planned Parenthood, NARAL, the Abortion Resources Council and the clinic directors told those inquiring about defending the clinic not to show up. They said it would interfere with the cops enforcing the injunction.

How disgusting! The leaders of those pro-choice groups led by bourgeois and establishment women don't want any unsightly pro-choice activists around to mess things up. What does it matter to them that the police have a long track record of treating OR with kid gloves? What does it matter that time and again militant clinic defenders have routed the anti-abortion goons and kept the clinics open? Yes, the cops are bothered by clinic defenders. It brings pressure on them to actually do something about the

holy hit squads.

Moreover, not only were the activists told to stay home, but once they got to the clinic, the injunction was used against them. For example, the police told pro-choice demonstrators they would arrest "anyone shouting." But this doesn't upset the leaders of Planned Parenthood and NARAL: why, they probably wanted such wording in the injunction. After all, they themselves demand the same thing at clinics across the country. They would rather jeopardize the clinics than see such terrible things: Shouting slogans. Demonstrating. How horrible! No doubt, dear reader, you are shuddering at the thought of it!

It seems it's more important to the leaders of NARAL, Planned Parenthood, etc. to discourage the initiative of youth and progressive women and men, than to defend the clinics. Oh yes, they want your money and your vote, but they don't want you to come out and build your own movement. That would interfere with their plans to court favor with the moneyed interests and the bourgeois powerbrokers, whose good opinion they seek so fervently.

But fortunately the rank-and-file activists defied the wishes of the pro-establishment leaders. Victory goes to those who build a movement and develop mass support, not to those with the best lawyers. Even if the police take some action on behalf of an injunction, there's still need for pro-choice activists to come out on their own and show that they, not OR, are the real popular movement. ■

IN BRIEF

Missionaries to the preborn "welcomed" to Detroit

A handful of bigots gathered at a church in the Detroit suburb of Livonia on May 28 to establish a chapter of the anti-abortion group, Missionaries to the Preborn. But about 50 pro-choice activists were on hand to "welcome" them.

The pro-choice forces set up a picket line at the entrance to the church parking lot. The anti-abortion leaders called in the cops, and with their protection three of them came out of the church toward the pro-choice line. They were loudly denounced, and they retreated. ■

Operation Rescue chased in Napa, California

When Operation Rescue (OR) called

a meeting in Napa, California on April 7, some 80 abortion rights protesters showed up to confront them. When the small group of anti-abortion crusaders arrived, they were met head on by angry activists. Luckily for the OR zealots, lots of police were on hand and they walked off the pro-choice people.

The anti-abortion cabal then formed a prayer circle. Having evidently gotten divine guidance, they made a beeline for their car and a sheriff's van. They made their escape, surrounded by pro-choice activists and with the slogan "Pray, you'll need it, you're cause has been defeated!" ringing in their ears. ■

FACTORY FIRE Continued from back page

their profits; they cared not one bit for the safety of the workers. There were no fire alarms, sprinklers, or other safety equipment. There were even no fire exits. And the top floor did not have windows.

Under such conditions, a disaster was only a matter of time. Workers reported that there had already been four fires there, the most recent just a few months ago.

Wait, there is more to be told of the cruelty of the toy factory's owners. Factory management had also locked one of the two exits of the plant, making the place a virtual prison for its employees. Workers were body searched each day as they left work. While they could enter through both doors, one of the two doors was locked after the last worker came in.

This policy was carried out under the excuse of preventing stealing by workers. To the capitalist profiteers, the possibility of a few toys being stolen was of higher concern than the safety of hundreds of workers.

This was mass murder

The deaths of the 240 Thai workers can only be described as mass murder.

It simply did not need to happen. To pass it off with the sterile description of "industrial accident" would be a cruel joke.

THAILAND Continued from back page

ness. While capital flooded into Thailand a few years ago, it has recently slowed down somewhat. Manufacturers are today seeking even lower wages which are to be found in places like China, Indonesia, and Viet Nam. Companies in Thailand have thus been under pressure to cut costs. A Kader official is reported to have acknowledged this in the case of its toy factory near Bangkok.

The other end of the chain of exploitation

However it would be wrong to place the full responsibility for the May 10 mass murder just on Asian capitalists. The Asian employers are but one link in the chain of global capitalism.

The Kader plant in Thailand produced stuffed animals and dolls. It was one of hundreds of plants that have emerged across Asia producing toys for markets around the world, especially the rich countries of North America, Europe and Japan. Much of the production in these plants is done under contract to big Western toy manufacturers like Mattel, Tyco, and Hasbro. They in turn sell to toy retailers — from Toys 'R Us to K-Mart.

These retailers and manufacturers are constantly looking to get their products made at the cheapest cost, so they can reap fatter profits. The end result of this search for the cheapest production that begins in New York or London is the brutality imposed on laboring women in Asia.

Workers in each country have to try to improve their conditions as best as they can. But the global chain of present-day international capitalism links the conditions of the workers in different countries. The threat of moving production to places with even lower labor costs hangs constantly as a sword of Damocles on the workers' struggles. This means that international solidarity must be a living part of the agenda for workers' movements everywhere. Just as capitalists are global, so too must the working class build its links between countries. Only workers' struggle, developed across national frontiers, can develop really effective weapons against today's rapacious monster of global capitalism.

Whatever the cause of the fire — that is still being investigated — this many workers did not die simply because a fire broke out. They died because the Thai workers labored in a system where profit is supreme. And in Thailand, a country with a weak and heavily repressed workers' movement, the owners could get away with spending nothing on the workers' safety and operating plants which resemble prisons.

Will there be change?

The Thai government talked tough after the tragic fire, declaring that safety-law violators will be punished. But this is empty talk. For a short time, some of the worst offenders may be singled out; a few may pay token fines; and then, business will return to "normalcy."

The *Wall Street Journal* noted in a May 13 report that the conditions which led to the May 10 fire were not at all unique to the toy factory. It reported that "an hour-long tour of several office and

SOCIALISM Continued from page 8

responsibilities. Then add computer monitoring of the smallest details of job performance, and the stress itself will cripple.

No national health system run by a capitalist government will stop this speedup, and Clinton's "managed competition" wouldn't think of trying. So long as the economy is run for profit, a plague of injury and misery will be upon us. Only under socialism does the health of the workers figure in as a priority matter in deciding the methods of production. The integration of health care with the work place will be one of the most important features of socialist care.

Pollution

The environment is of tremendous importance to health. Many problems are related to pollution. Since the medical establishment doesn't want to tread on the toes of industry, it has pooch-pooched this. This has helped the companies impose dirty environmental conditions, especially on the minorities and the poor. The rich think that they can go live in clean neighborhoods while only the poor will get poisoned.

As a result, not only is pollution rampant, but this country doesn't even have a picture of pollution as a whole and its health effects. And when a particular pollutant becomes a problem, the government drags its feet. For example, for decades it has been known that millions of children (and adults too) have suffered from lead poisoning, which makes their lives miserable. But the government didn't want to offend the oil industry, so it was years and years until leaded fuel was gradually banned. It didn't ban leaded paint for residential use until 1977. And even now, in many cities across the country, the water supplies are tainted; the government saves its conscience by putting out brochures advising people to let tap water run for a minute or so before using it for drinking or cooking.

It is only under socialism that environmental factors become important in the very planning of industrial production. Indeed, preserving and improving the environment will be one of the main motives of science and industry. Medicine will be fused with work place and industrial concerns, thus allowing it to reach a new level of effectiveness.

Pill-popping and knife-happy

Current medicine is pretty good at certain things: any problem can be solved in isolation by taking a pill or cutting it out with a scalpel. If analyzing the problem requires listening to the patient and investigating the environment or living conditions of the patient, things get

worse. In fact, the drug industry spends billions of dollars each year to persuade doctors that the newest pill is the answer, and the medical profession is all too eager to respond to any problem with a knife.

National plans won't solve this in themselves. True, in the name of cost control, there will be pressure under "managed competition" to do less high-priced operations. But unless treatment is based first and foremost on concern for the patient, such cost-control will mainly be denying treatment. It will be a matter of chance whether it also provides better treatment.

Socialist medicine removes the profit in pill-popping and excessive operations. It thus creates the possibility of a medicine which looks more deeply into the causes of disease and the methods of treatment.

Finally, let's note that poverty itself is one of the biggest causes of health problems. A national health plan could help a bit: it would prevent impoverishment from medical bills. But it could not

eliminate the system of mass unemployment, discrimination against minorities, bad schooling and other mass misery. This requires the social transformation of the entire society.

Workers must put their stamp on the system

A national health plan is not the same as a socialist plan. It would, however, bring needed relief for the workers today. But since such a plan is administered by the capitalist governments, the workers must be vigilant to ensure that it would provide for their needs. This is especially true today, when Clinton is trying to persuade everyone that the chief virtue of "managed competition" will be saving money for the corporations and the ruling class as a whole.

Under socialism, there will no longer be a division into workers and exploited. The population as a whole will naturally take a hand in something that interests it so much as health care. But under the present system, the rank-and-file workers must organize to ensure that they will have a say. This struggle faces us today.

Racist monument denounced in New Orleans

A teach-in was held at Xavier College April 15 against the "Liberty Monument" located in downtown New Orleans. The monument was erected in honor of the White League, a racist gang that persecuted black people in Louisiana after the civil war.

Two days later a march was held against the monument. It started just as the Rodney King verdict came out. When the protesters learned that only two officers got convicted, they yelled "No justice, no peace." Activists also picketed a City Council meeting. They vowed to keep up the protests until the racist monument is removed.

1,500 come out against the KKK in Miami Beach

On April 24 about 40 white supremacists held a rally to oppose the opening of the Holocaust Memorial in Washington D.C. But they were overwhelmed by

better safety regime in the work places. Over the last decade, Thailand has undergone a large-scale industrial boom. This boom has created fabulous wealth for a few. This has come from the labor of millions of women and men who have been torn out of the countryside into sweatshops like the Buddha Monthon toy factory.

But the same conditions which have created such oceans of misery have also brought together millions of people into common conditions of life and work. These in turn can give rise to a sharing of ideas about united struggle.

These conditions offer the potential for a movement to emerge among labor that can take on the profit-hungry exploiters. A movement that fights for a living wage and for human working conditions. A movement that can eventually replace an economic order based on the greed of a few with a system arranged to fulfill the human needs of the majority.

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the 1,500 people who came out to oppose them.

The racist rally was called by Hank Pritchard, an ex-KKK member and founder/leader of the Society for the Advancement of White People. Most of the white supremacists were young skinheads, many of whom wore Nazi insignia.

LA Continued from page 3

cuts and is now running for City Council. Supporters of the Marxist-Leninist Party interrupted her speech shouting, "Why did you vote for big school cuts?" She couldn't explain herself, and was exposed among many of the protesters who began asking, "Why did she come here?" and "Who invited her here?" MLP supporters also distributed a leaflet in support of the Chicano students' struggle at UCLA and calling for more militant mass actions to fight the education cuts.

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Italy rocked by political crisis

The political order that was set up in Italy at the end of World War II is in shambles.

All the old parties have been tainted by corruption scandals. Hundreds of officials and politicians are in jail or facing investigation. A number of businessmen have been arrested. The government elected by parliament has been forced to resign. And a non-parliamentary government headed by the governor of the central bank has been established, in effect as a "government of national salvation" for Italy's capitalist class.

Meanwhile, the old parties are being repudiated by voters. The Italian bourgeoisie is scrambling to regain the loyalty of the citizenry.

Underlying the political disorder is the fact that the country is also in serious economic trouble, and established arrangements of the post-war reformist setup are being scrapped. A new offensive has been unleashed against the working people.

Will the capitalists manage to defuse the crisis, or will the working class find a way to use this present crisis of the capitalist system to enhance their own political potential?

The post-war arrangement: keep the PCI out of government

The political arrangement set up by the Italian bourgeoisie in Italy after World War II was based on containing the power of the Communist Party of Italy (PCI). At the end of the war, anti-fascist sentiment among the masses had greatly expanded the influence of the PCI, the party with the strongest record of struggle against fascism.

At that time, the PCI had already turned away from revolutionary policy towards reformism. They were ready to participate in a government to stabilize capitalism, if a number of major reforms were agreed to.

However the Italian capitalist class, with the support of U.S. imperialism, was determined to keep the PCI out of power. And this policy would become the sine qua non of bourgeois politics in the country for decades to come. Never mind that the PCI became tamer and tamer over the years and did not represent any serious threat to capitalism. Still, the old policy stayed in place.

For decades, the PCI was the number two party in election results after the Christian Democrats, while the Socialists ran third. The SP was even tamer than the PCI, but had the Socialists ever

accepted an invitation to join a coalition with the Communists, a CP-SP reformist coalition would have outnumbered the Christian Democrats and taken control of government. The bourgeoisie feverishly worked to prevent this.

So, through backroom deals, the Socialists were wooed to the side of the Christian Democrats against the PCI. The alliance between Christian Democrats and other conservative parties with the Socialists has had its ups and downs, with a new government being required on the average of once a year. But they all agreed on keeping the PCI out of power.

This unprincipled alliance against the PCI became the foundation for a vast patronage system in which jobs, government contracts, bank loans and tax breaks were spread around to keep supporters happy. Eventually some privileges of this system were extended even to the PCI, though they were kept out of the national government.

The PCI, long having given up a principled policy, kept trying to make itself acceptable. Fairly early on the PCI accepted NATO. But this was not enough for the Italian (and Western) bourgeoisie. Kept out of national office, the PCI nonetheless won local administrative power through city elections. And on the national level it acted as a very loyal opposition, adopting a position of abstention (that is, not voting NO), when its NO votes would have paralyzed a Christian Democrat administration. During the 1970's the PCI came out with its call for "historic compromise," begging to be included in a Christian Democrat administration and declaring their willingness to accept any minor post in the cabinet. But they were still spurned.

Times have changed

The Cold War came to an end. And the PCI declined and split. The basis for the old anti-PCI alliance has dissolved.

All of the old parties have suffered declining strength in the last few years. The Democratic Party of the Left (the renamed PCI) is floundering, though it still receives about one-fourth of the vote and leads current opinion polls. The Christian Democrat vote has declined. And the voters are sick and disgusted with the Socialists, who used their ruling position in the last few years to simply enrich themselves. In general, voters are sick of all the old parties, which kept Italy in a constant state of gridlock and political feuding.

Given the crisis of what passes as

working class or socialist parties, the political vacuum is being filled by other forces, like the Greens and the Northern League. Both organizations appear fresh and untainted with the old corruption. They refuse to participate in the old parties' coalitions, and they lack the organizational structure of the old parties. Politically, the Greens focus on environmental issues and appeal to disaffected followers of the Socialists, while the Northern League is based on a racist, "me-first" appeal to northerners.

Economic malaise

Meanwhile, Italy's economic growth has slowed down to zero. During last year's European currency crisis, Italy was forced to devalue the lira.

In part this has led to increased rivalry among the politicians. Where they used to politely share bribes, the early 1990's brought in an orgy of cutthroat competition for money.

But more importantly, it has spurred the bourgeoisie towards action for rearranging the whole political order. With continuing economic stagnation the Italian bourgeoisie became anxious to rid itself of the old "partyocracy," with its bloated bureaucracy and government-run industries. It wants to replace them with a streamlined state and privatized enterprises. It also wants to get rid of or cut back traditional reform measures like the indexation of wages to inflation, health and pension benefits, etc. The old setup has meant a huge government debt. And this in turn means that there are obstacles to Italy joining the unified currency that has been planned for the European Community in coming years.

Indictments of politicians and businessmen

Beginning a year and a half ago, magistrates and prosecuting attorneys began handing down indictments against politicians and businessmen involved in bribery. These cases were actually initiated by businessmen themselves. Sick of paying bribes, a number of businessmen began coming forward in Milan to testify against corrupt politicians.

These investigations led to the fall of the administration headed by the Socialist Party leader Giuliano Amato in April. He was forced to resign after members of his cabinet began to be investigated on corruption charges.

Scores of members of parliament are being investigated, though none have yet been formally charged or jailed. Parliament, dominated by corrupt politicians, is making sure they maintain their immunity from prosecution.

But hundreds of major bourgeois figures are now rotting in jail awaiting trial. Two hundred top businessmen have been arrested in Milan alone. Those arrested include the former financial director of Fiat, Italy's largest industrial concern, and the chairman of ENI, Italy's national energy consortium. Also sitting in jail is Franco Nobili, the head of IRI, a publicly-owned conglomerate that is Italy's largest enterprise, employing over 400,000 people. Nobili was a close associate of ruling Christian Democrat politicians and helped them use IRI as a financial base.

Private businessmen are charged with handing over stacks of money to the politicians as bribes, to secure government contracts. The ruling parties used these bribes as a sort of extra tax to finance their parties. It is estimated that each year the systematic kickbacks on public-works contracts cost the Italian government an extra \$4 billion. (*The Economist*, March 20) All told, the bribes and kickbacks may have totaled \$100 billion since 1980, helping to smother growth in the Italian economy. (*Washington Post*)

A government of national salvation?

After the fall of Giuliano Amato's government in mid-April, the ruling class was stuck. There was no one among the established parties and politicians free of corruption, no one who could command public confidence. In desperation they turned to a non-politician to head up a new government.

They appointed Carlo Ciampi, head of the Bank of Italy, to be the new prime minister. Ciampi is 72 and has never been a politician. And the Bank of Italy is one of the few institutions (so far) not touched by the investigations of corruption. It's a sign of desperation that the politicians turned to someone who has never been a member of parliament to head up the new administration. At the same time, appointing the top banker has reassured the whole bourgeois class as well as European and world financial markets.

Ciampi made some strategic moves to distance his regime from previous ones. He brought in non-party "technocrat" types to run the government. And to make sure that he would not create the impression that he was simply ruling on behalf of money, he named three members of the Democratic Party of the Left to the cabinet. So finally, after decades of ostracism, this party got a share in power. Ciampi also brought in the leader of the Greens. (A few days later the DPL party politicians resigned to protest the parliament's decision not to lift the immunity from prosecution of the former Socialist leader Bettino Craxi; but they are not opposing Ciampi's government.)

In terms of policies, Ciampi pledges more of the same austerity that was being carried out by the Socialist Amato. He wants deep cuts in government spending along with rapid privatization of government enterprises. Given the widespread disgust with the old, profligate milking of public enterprises, he will likely be able to carry this off.

So it's just the old bourgeois game of blame the working class for the sins of the ruling class. It may be salvation for the capitalists, but it's another circle of hell for the laborers.

What the working class faces

For the working class, the situation presents new dangers as well as fresh opportunities.

The new government order planned by the bourgeoisie will seek to gut many of the old reformist arrangements that made life a bit easier for working people. The working class faces the need to expand its mobilization against such policies. Last fall there were huge demonstrations against Amato's policies when he began dismantling the social welfare system and doing away with the *scala mobile* (the system of regular cost-of-living increases in workers' wages). In February there were massive demonstrations against the loss of jobs inherent in Amato's privatization plans.

But the working class must forge a new movement that can give it organization and voice its own political interests and aspirations. The old union leaders and so-called workers' parties are justly discredited. The challenge before the working class today is whether it can use the present crisis to start building a new independent workers' movement.

In many of the anti-cutback rallies workers demonstrated their hatred for the sellout union bureaucrats. And various forms of rank-and-file groupings have begun to emerge. These sentiments will bear real fruit if the conscious and activist workers can create a new, revolutionary working class party that represents a real alternative to the old, corrupt politics of the bourgeoisie. ■



Italian workers confront cops in a recent mass demonstration.

Profit system sets new record

240 workers die in world's worst factory fire

March 25, 1911. A fire blazes through the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City. It kills 146 workers, mostly immigrant women. They were stuck behind doors locked by the owner.

The Triangle Shirtwaist blaze would go down in history as a symbol of the merciless greed of the profit system and of the callousness of capitalist bosses towards workers.

For decades, that atrocity would stand as the worst industrial fire in history. In recent years, though, scenes like that are becoming commonplace again:

April 5, 1988 at the Anyang Textile factory in South Korea. 28 women die in a fire.

December 27, 1990 at a clothing factory outside Dhaka, Bangladesh. A fire blazes through a five-story building and kills at least 30 workers, mostly teenage girls. They were prevented from escaping by locked doors.

September 3, 1991 at Imperial Poultry in Hamlet, North Carolina. A fire kills 25 workers, mostly black women. Fire exits were sealed shut under the excuse of preventing workers from stealing.

May 1991, in a factory in Dongguan in southern China's Guangdong province.

A fire kills 80 workers, mostly young women. Workers were locked on the top floors of the building.

Now there is a new world record: 240 deaths at the Buddha Monthon toy factory outside Bangkok, Thailand. Here too, most of the victims were young women, who slaved at the plant for less than a dollar an hour.

On Monday, May 10, a fire swept through a four-story building which housed the toy factory. About 800 workers were in the building. The fire quickly spread to two other factory buildings. All three were destroyed. As soldiers searched the rubble over the next few days, they retrieved 240 bodies, many burned beyond recognition. More than 500 other workers were injured. Many suffered broken limbs as they tried to leap to the ground from the upper floors.

A disaster that was waiting to happen

The Buddha Monthon factory buildings were constructed within the last five years. But the owners only thought of
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The scene of the fire at the toy factory outside Bangkok.

Asian women workers refuse to be victims!

From the sweatshops of Asia today, regularly come tragic stories of the cruelty being wrought by the new industrial boom. But there is another side to the story which usually does not make the news here in the U.S.

Women workers in Asia are determined to not just be victims. There is an incipient resistance movement developing among them.

Thai women workers demand maternity benefits

According to a report published by the Hong Kong-based *Asian Women Workers' Newsletter*, women workers in Thailand are currently involved in a fight for improved maternity benefits.

Currently women workers in the private sector are legally entitled only to 30 days maternity leave with pay while female government employees are entitled to 60 days paid leave plus a maximum of 30 days leave without pay for post-natal care.

Since 1991, women workers and the labor movement have been demanding that the government improve the maternity benefits for women in private industry. On International Women's Day in 1992 women workers rallied in support of 90 days paid maternity leave. And last November, more than 1,000 workers and their supporters marched in Bangkok to press for demands including the 90 days of paid maternity leave.

On March 8, International Women's Day, this year some 700 women workers demonstrated outside the Prime Minister's residence. The government leader was quoted as saying afterwards that improving maternity benefits may make employers reluctant to hire women. However, in April, government officials said that maternity leave would be increased to 90 days but only 45 days would be paid by employers. The rest would be paid from the Social Security Fund.

Women workers and trade unions have rejected the government's proposal. It is seen as inadequate because the Social Security Fund only covers enterprises with more than 20 workers, and workers recognize that amending the Social

Security law will take a long time. Workers believe the government is trying to stall the implementation of any change.

Workers decided to continue the struggle by planning a marathon protest in front of Government House between April 25 and May 1.

Sri Lanka workers locked out

Over 3,000 workers, mostly women, have been locked out since April 27 by two Atlas Glove companies in the Free Trade Zone in Katunayake, Sri Lanka.

The lockout developed out of a workers' struggle over holiday pay advances. Earlier workers were paid an advance of 900 Rupees for the New Year's holiday in the local calendars. This year the companies offered only Rs 450. Workers demanded Rs 1000 and went on strike. After two and a half days, management agreed to pay Rs 900 plus wages for the period of the strike. But later they backed away and refused to pay for the days of the strike; instead they wanted the workers to take unpaid leave for those days. The workers refused this because many had no leave left and they would lose their monthly attendance and end of year bonuses.

The companies responded with the lockout. Many workers even had their identity cards taken away so that they could not work elsewhere. Those who rallied outside the plant were assaulted by company thugs.

At a conference mediated by the government, management agreed to take back the workers but excluded 21 who were the workers' representatives in the labor-management joint council. These workers had been handpicked by the company but now were seen as trouble-makers.

The workers are demanding that all be taken back.

This struggle comes in the midst of an emergent movement among women workers in the Free Trade Zones of Sri Lanka. Last November 7, thousands of workers rallied in the first mass protest to demand their rights. Police used tear gas and clubs against them. Leaders of the demonstration were arrested and are still out on bail. ■

Thailand – one link in the chain of global exploitation

The 240 workers who died in the Bangkok toy factory fire were the victims. Who then were their victimizers?

The toy plant was run by Kader Industrial, a company jointly owned by Thai, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong owners. Some 40% is controlled by the Hong Kong-based Kader Holdings, another 40% by a company with links to Thailand's giant Charoen Pokphand Group, and the rest by Taiwanese investors.

The Hong Kong owners tried to deflect responsibility for the May 10 tragedy with the excuse that the plant in Thailand was managed by the Thai and Taiwanese owners.

These are not small change capitalists. They represent some of the major business groups that are emerging in Asia. A financial deal shortly after the Bangkok fire showed something of the weight of these business groups. Several big companies based in China just teamed up to buy a 74% stake in a property investment arm of Kader Holdings. Among the investors from China was Deng Zhifang, the son of China's leader Deng Xiaoping. Deng Zhifang will now sit on Kader Investment's board of directors. The Chinese leaders still claim to be communists, though they have long ceased to have one iota of support for workers' interests. Clearly the shame of the toy factory tragedy did not enter into their business dealings.

The other side of the Thai "miracle"

East Asia is currently going through a huge capitalist boom. Thailand is part of this boom. The country has seen hundreds of industrial plants set up here

over the last few years, by both local capitalists as well as employers from around the region and the U.S. and Japan. Economic growth has averaged over 10% for several years in a row. Even in the midst of the current recession in the West, economic growth continues to run strong in Thailand.

"Thailand prides itself on being one of the easiest places in Asia to do business in," observed the London-based *Economist*. The magazine noted, however, that this "flexibility" comes at a cost: "Brothels flourish because the police are paid off. Forests get hacked down because nobody stands up to the logging industry. And toy factories with pitifully inadequate fire precautions stay open." Indeed, due to the slash-and-burn ethic of capitalism here, most of the country's forests have been cut down, there is a massive AIDS epidemic, and Bangkok sinks a few more inches each year because the water level is dropping and little is spent to counter this.

At the same time, the toy factory disaster was not just a symptom of a Thai problem. Pitiful wages and callous disregard for worker safety is a problem across the region. For example, the Malaysian Trades Union Congress says the number of industrial accidents there nearly doubled from 1985 and 1990, up to 121,104 from 61,724.

The workers at the Thai toy factory were not only victims of the extreme exploitation rampant in Asia's current industrial revolution, but they may also have been victims of the continuing global pressure for increased competitive-

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