



*the magazine of the
Democratic Socialists
of America*



inside—

Crisis in American Labor

Michael Moore Gets Halfway There

Witnesses to Health Care Town Meetings

—and more!

Should Labor Defend Undocumented Workers?

By David Bacon

One winter morning in 1996, Border Patrol agents charged into a street-corner clinic where 40 day laborers had lined up to be tested for AIDS. One worker, Omar Sierra, had just taken his seat, and a nurse had inserted a needle for drawing the blood. As agents of the migra ran across the street and sidewalk, Sierra jumped up, pulled the needle out of his vein and ran.

Sierra escaped and made it home. Shaken by his experience and determined never to forget his friends who were deported, he wrote a song:

I'm going to sing you a story, friends
that will make you cry,
how one day in front of K-Mart
the migra came down on us,
sent by the sheriff
of this very same place . . .

We don't understand why,
we don't know the reason,
why there is so much
discrimination against us.
In the end we'll wind up
all the same in the grave.

With this verse I leave you,
I'm tired of singing,
hoping the migra
won't come after us again,
because in the end, we all have to work.



This was long ago, but since then it's gotten worse. In Los Angeles, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents ("the migra") arrived a year ago at Micro Solutions, a circuit board assembly plant in the San Fernando Valley. After the workers were herded into the cafeteria, the immigration agents first told workers who were citizens to go to one side of the room. Then they told the workers who had green cards to go over. Finally, as one worker said, "It just left us." The remaining workers were put into vans, and taken off to the migra jail.

Some women were released to care for their kids, but had to wear ankle bracelets and couldn't work. How were they supposed to pay rent? Where would they get money to buy food?

On May 12, ICE agents went to the Agriprocessors meatpacking plant. They sent 388 Guatemalan young people to prison for five months. The workers were deported immediately afterwards. One of them was a young worker who'd been beaten

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Testing Democracy in Pittsburgh: YDS GOES TO THE G-20

By Erik Rosenberg

My trip to the G-20 protests was a reflection of the G-20 itself: way out of whack.

The sojourn to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, began early, especially by leftist standards. I rose at 5:30 a.m. on September 24 from a mattress I would soon long for. Three William Paterson (a state college in New Jersey) Young Democratic Socialists (YDS, DSA's youth section) activists and I made our way to their campus where we rendezvoused with five other activists from their chapter; then we were off. Well, not quite: we realized that there was some miscommunication about the YDS banner, so we had to turn around to get it after half an hour of driving. My comrades and I agreed that this would be the only mishap of the trip, but in retrospect it was more like breaking the toilet handle on Apollo 13 before the oxygen tanks exploded.

So we were off again! Our first stop was in Allentown, Pennsylvania, where we picked up a new YDSer, George Cedeno. Then we were back on the road driving through a beautiful winding mountain highway. The highway might have been a little too beautiful and winding, because there was no "I" on the signs marking it, but what can you do? As part of the paperless and thus mapless generation we were at the mercy of the Global Positioning System.

In addition to the circuitous route, our progress was also hindered by the condition of one of our vehicles. This little baby was no Formula 1. At 55 mph it started to shake, and if you dared to break 85, the car would indicate its disapproval by letting go of the road and swerving back and forth, as if shaking its head NO! Good thing there was not a cop to be seen. (Un)fortunately for us, all the boys and girls in blue within 1000 miles were playing with their billy clubs and tear gas launchers in Pittsburgh – but more of that later. Needless to say, our seven-hour trip lasted upwards of ten.

When we finally reached the City of Bridges, there was little rest for the weary. We had been stretching our legs in the parking lot for no more than 30 seconds when an attractive "good cop" rolled up and asked us if we needed any help. Being naïve youngsters, we informed our new matron that we wanted to go downtown and asked which buses would take us there. The officer politely responded she wasn't sure, and about one sun salutation later we looked up to notice we were surrounded by six police cruisers and a paddy wagon.

At first, the group was calm. We weren't doing anything wrong; therefore, the cops couldn't do anything to us. Then we remembered what country we were in, and we were gripped by a small panic. After some accelerated democracy, plans to go downtown were scrapped and we agreed to go to the "People's Tribunal," a mock trial of the G-20 located across town. Eager to make sure we arrived at our destination safely, our new police friends escorted/followed us for over 20 minutes. Boy, did I feel safe!

The People's Tribunal convened at Calvary United Methodist Church, where YDSers enjoyed a free hot vegan meal and relaxed out of sight of Big Brother. We were joined by comrades from Jobs With Justice, YDS Coordinating Committee member-at-large Sean Monahan of Philadelphia DSA, and new member Maria Spadaro, who is in the process of organizing a group at the University of Pittsburgh. Many other young activists attended the tribunal, and we began to distribute the 800 or so pieces of YDS literature that we had brought to convert the disaffected masses.

The mock court was charged with determining if the G-20 was responsible for violating the human rights of the people. We heard the testimony of over half a dozen witnesses, including representatives from Domestic Workers United, United Students Against Sweatshops, and the American Friends Service Committee. One speaker astutely asked, "What is our measure of development?" The speaker from the AFSC noted that capitalism and war are both dehumanizing forces and that the G-20 has worked hard to militarize and capitalize the world. The speakers mentioned the ills of the earth, ranging from child soldiers in Africa to abused workers on the Upper East Side of Manhattan in the "Wild West" world of domestic workers.

Unsurprisingly, the judges, made up of experts from organizations like Hemisphere Social Alliance and Africa Action, found the G-20 guilty of violating all 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The People's Tribunal was definitely more consciousness-raising than throwing a brick through a Starbucks window, and the speakers were articulate and informative. Nevertheless, the event could have been improved if the speakers had cited specific actions taken by G-20 that led to human rights violations.

After the court adjourned, the William Paterson delegation and I drove to Maria Spadaro's apartment for some drinks, but we didn't stay long, as we were exhausted by the day's adventures. We got back in our vehicles and made a short drive to the housing that we had arranged.

As we arrived, our hostess came out to greet us. She looked a bit strange, but that isn't unusual for the left (though it turned out she was a libertarian). Right before we walked in the door, she exclaimed that she had four cats and a dog. Being the cat lover I am, I thought, "Yay! Kitties!" But my yay soon turned into a gag. To say that the house reeked of cat piss would be like saying George W. Bush was not a great president – a gross understatement. A more accurate description would be that the house was characterized by a cat piss atmosphere. You might even say that it had a cat piss weather system, since the floor and

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Obama and the Electric Car

By Steve Max

Remember how the Bush administration worked to undermine California's zero emissions laws that promoted electric car development? What a contrast (and a relief) when, last March, President Obama announced a \$2.4 billion plan to get more electric vehicles on the road. More than half the money will go to U.S. companies for research on batteries and the rest for other car components, training and evaluation.

Welcome as the Obama program is, the September unveiling of France's electric vehicle campaign raises some serious questions about the size and direction of the U.S. effort. France is launching a \$2.2 billion program to build one million street and home car battery charging stations around the country by 2015. In addition, France is contributing \$186 million toward the cost of a new battery factory that Renault is starting near Paris. Clearly, there are two different approaches here. Obama apparently supports the contention of the US energy and automotive industries that far more research is needed. The French, on the other hand, believe that the technology is ready to go and they are jumpstarting the market. The difference in the job creation potential of the two programs is glaring, with most of the American money going for high tech equipment for a handful of scientists, while the French are hiring people to connect a million plug-in stations with miles and miles of wire.

Earlier in September, the French announced that \$10 billion will be going to extend railroad freight lines in an effort to get trucks off the highways. This will not only reduce greenhouse gases, but will also make the highways safer for the smaller, lighter electric cars.

The president is no doubt reacting to the problem that while about 55,000 electric cars are already rolling in the USA, foreign companies hold the battery patents due to the previous disinterest of U.S. firms. It will be most unfortunate, however, if wide-scale electric vehicle promotion were held up here until American companies discovered something new enough to earn their own patents. Obama's goal for the U.S. is one million electric vehicles on the road by 2015. For France it is a far more ambitious two million by 2020. (The U.S. has roughly five times the population of France.)

Meanwhile, the city of Paris is moving forward with a program of its own that we could well use here in New York. Under the leadership of its Socialist mayor, Paris is planning to have a fleet of 4,000 small electric cars in the city itself and 2,000 more in nearby suburbs that will be available at 700 self-service rental and charging stations. One simply checks availability on-line, picks up a car at a nearby station and drops it at the station closest to the final destination. The cost hasn't been finalized yet but there will be a monthly subscription of roughly \$25 and a charge somewhere between six and nine dollars for 30 minutes of driving. (Due to the current unfavorable exchange rate, these costs seem higher to us in dollars than they will to the French in euros.) The plan is expected to go into operation later next year. Paris already has a similar short-term rental program with 20,000 bicycles, although maintenance and theft appear to be ongoing problems. (As an aside, it is worth noting that the French view of government as creating solutions is also what gets their single-payer health care system the top rating by the UN World Health Organization.)

Of course, to reduce global warming gasses, any electric vehicle program has to be backed up by a non-carbon-based (coal or gas) electric generating system to charge the batteries. U.S. electricity is 31% non-carbon; in France it is 92% but with an over-reliance on nuclear power.

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The Ongoing Crisis of the American Labor Movement

By Paul Garver

It is a shopworn cliché that the American labor movement is in permanent crisis. Another cliché reminds us that a crisis represents a combination of danger and opportunity. But clichés can capture essential truths.

It is the worst of times. A deep recession is draining workers' incomes and earning power and further decimating the ranks of industrial unions. Private sector union organization is approaching a historic low point. Public sector unions are scrambling to defend jobs, salaries, and benefits as cities and states grapple with sharp declines in tax revenue. Internecine struggles are distracting some unions from fully concentrating on their organizing and political agendas.

In other respects, the times are more promising. Organized labor made a major contribution to the election of a Democratic president committed to labor law and health care reform and of a Congress less unsympathetic to the interests of workers than any since the 1970s. Public rejection of the excesses of unrestrained capitalist greed has weakened entrenched resistance to reform and resulted in increased public support for the goals espoused by labor unions.

Organizationally, labor structures present a mixed picture, one that would have been hard to predict in 2005, when the Change to Win (CTW) unions bolted from the AFL-CIO. In general, state and local AFL-CIO federations were able to retain the membership of local CTW affiliates, and many were revitalized by more diverse and younger leaders. The grassroots upsurge that put a single-payer health system on the long-term agenda of the AFL-CIO was led by local and state federations. The AFL-CIO's commitment to improve its racial and age diversity was reflected both in the composition of the delegations to its recent convention and in the range of social issues addressed there.

One of the most welcome shifts in AFL-CIO policy over the last decade has been the wholehearted advocacy of the rights of all workers, including undocumented immigrants, so-called "guest" workers, and others among the most vulnerable and exploited groups of workers. Growing ethnic diversity in the ranks of labor, if not necessarily reflected on the Executive Council or top leadership, and the increasing prominence of labor council leaders, like Maria Elena Durazo of Los Angeles, who champion immigrants' rights safeguard against a return to "nativism." Convention delegates strongly supported the struggles of immigrant and indentured workers, including the uprising of the Indian pipefitters at Signal International shipyards in Louisiana and Mississippi. When 23 of these workers who had found their way to Fargo, North Dakota, were arrested in an unconscionable raid by ICE officials, it was the head of the North Dakota AFL-CIO who organized a solidarity response.

In summing up the results achieved by the AFL-CIO over the last four years, outgoing President John Sweeney just asserted,

We forged beyond our traditional boundaries and created historic partnerships with worker centers, independent unions, and the National Education Association. We pulled our allies together in vibrant coalitions and made our federation the action center of the progressive movement. Now we're making sure our doors stay open by bringing more women, more young people, and more minorities into our leadership.

These were no small accomplishments, given the trauma of the defection of the CTW unions and the resulting budget and program cuts. Despite its shrunken budget, the AFL-CIO sponsored

the most effective initiative in political organization and mobilization, Working America, making a major contribution to elect Democratic candidates in marginal districts.

Finally, in his only reference to the implications of the massive defection of the Change to Win unions, Sweeney added,

At the center of these is unity – the solidarity that flows through the marrow of our movement. Your solidarity is what pulled us through when our federation split apart – you cared more about our common purpose than your own self-interest – and proved that "we are many; we are one."

There are few major policy differences between the AFL-CIO unions and those from CTW on social and political issues. CTW unions, often led by SEIU, continue to make substantial contributions to progressive politicians and support social movements and causes. However, the high expectations that many expressed with the founding of CTW have dissipated. Despite its strong advocacy of new organizing, materially assisted by the expenditure of funds previously dedicated to AFL-CIO affiliation fees, CTW affiliates have not in fact organized workers more effectively or creatively than AFL-CIO affiliates have.

The mantra of the CTW defection was that "organizing is power." But the CTW never expressed the social urgency and commitment to worker solidarity that could have galvanized a broad social movement. When its heterogeneous affiliates did not achieve improved organizing results through CTW-coordinated efforts, the alliance fell apart into an alliance of convenience, cemented together at least in part by budgetary gains through relief from AFL-CIO dues.

Talking Union (www.talkingunion.wordpress.com) is a blog of the DSA Labor Commission. Conceived at the 2007 DSA Convention, it began publishing at the beginning of 2008. Its co-editors are Stuart Elliott, Duane Campbell, and Paul Garver; other members of the Labor Commission frequently propose additional articles and contributors. To date, TU has published some 500 articles, all of which remain accessible on the blog. Frequent subjects include the inter-union disputes cited in this article, labor history, international labor developments, the EFCA, and announcements of upcoming forums, demonstrations and other events affecting labor. Regular contributors are diverse: some, but not all, are DSA members. TU also asks permission to cross-post important articles that have appeared on other progressive labor blog sites.

CTW also claimed that it would be more effective in organizing at the global level, by targeting international chains in the service industries. With considerable hoopla and a fair amount of checkbook diplomacy, SEIU and Unite Here galvanized international union alliances within global service companies like Compass and Sodexo. These alliances were to use a top-down model based on secret agreements with these companies that encouraged union organization at selected sites in return for very modest contractual agreements. The model, of course, was the controversial arrangement between these companies and SEIU/Unite Here that opened up limited organizing space. No large surge of new membership at home or abroad resulted. CTW international policy has become much less ambitious: its major recent “achievement” was the signing of a limited protocol agreement with the All-China Federation of Trade Unions that is not likely to produce many concrete results.

While CTW continues to exist on paper, two of its major affiliates have split: Unite Here has rejoined the AFL-CIO, and the Carpenters stopped paying dues last year. CTW proved ineffective in resolving disputes among its own affiliates. UFCW president Joe Hansen made a sustained but unsuccessful effort to mediate the increasingly hostile divorce between Unite Here president Bruce Raynor and John Wilhelm, president of Unite Here’s Hospitality Division. After Raynor led his minority faction into SEIU, Hansen joined other union presidents, including several others from CTW affiliates, in assuring Unite Here of support against jurisdictional raids from SEIU (This dispute has been covered extensively in some 20 articles on DSA’s Talking Union blog).

When SEIU imposed a trusteeship over its California health care workers’ local United Healthcare Workers-West in January,

it did not suffer the same negative reaction from union leadership that its attempted hostile takeover of Unite Here triggered. UHW-W clearly possessed a strong internal structure of local leaders and shop stewards who rejected the imposition of external SEIU control. The purged leaders of UHW-W formed a new National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW) to try to regain their union, filing numerous decertification petitions against the trustee local. SEIU has been able to prevent the holding of new elections in most major hospitals by legal maneuvers, and narrowly won a major election for Fresno home health care workers by pouring in massive resources from outside. SEIU incumbency brings it enormous legal and financial advantages, but despite

limited financial resources, NUHW survives and continues to battle to regain a foothold in hospitals, where its institutional support is most deeply rooted.

However, SEIU’s prestige within labor, liberal, and left publics plunged. A clumsy threat to withdraw SEIU support from the San Francisco Labor Council in retaliation for the support Local 2 Here was giving to NUHW backfired when other unions promised to increase support for the Council (Its president was Mike Casey of Local 2). Other local labor councils in California are demanding that SEIU respect the right of former UHW members to vote their choice of union representation by withdrawing legal challenges that are delaying elections. And supporters of the Employee Free Choice Act are deeply concerned that SEIU’s conduct in California is reducing political support for employee free choice legislation.

Organized labor in America currently has the best opportunity it has had for many decades to advance health care and labor law reform as a key element of a progressive social and political movement. However, the external battles being waged are fierce, and labor does not need the additional distractions and diversion of resources presented by escalating inter-union conflicts.

Talking Union has devoted some 40 articles to analyzing the conflict between SEIU and UHW (NUHW) over the past year. Both sides were invited to contribute articles explaining their positions and did so. Talking Union editorialized in favor of a negotiated settlement, precisely to avert the protracted and debilitating trench warfare that has, in fact, resulted.

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Two Cheers for Michael Moore

A review of *Capitalism: A Love Story*

By Chris Maisano

“Capitalism is an evil, and you cannot regulate evil. It must be eliminated.” That’s the conclusion Michael Moore comes to at the end of *Capitalism: A Love Story*, the latest blast of agitprop musket fire from the *enfant terrible* of documentary

filmmaking. As a socialist, it seems as if I should be experiencing unalloyed joy over the fact that the most visible and successful documentarian of all time is making this argument to millions of moviegoers in the U.S. and around the world.

Unfortunately, I'm not. The film certainly has its share of bravura moments, but I'm afraid that the limitations of the messenger have limited the potential effectiveness of its often muddled message.

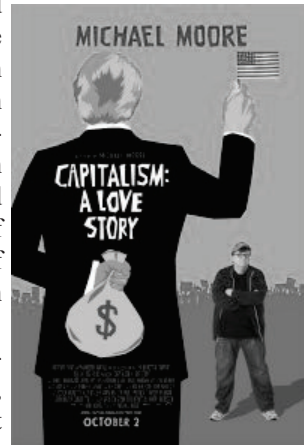
Moore's general argument can be summarized as follows. From around World War II through the 1970s, capitalism in the United States seemed to work pretty well. People like his father worked for companies like the old General Motors, where the postwar settlement between management and the union provided a good salary, benefits, and job security and lifted workers into the middle class. Notwithstanding a few imperfections such as Jim Crow and Vietnam, this was the Golden Age, captured in the nostalgic Moore family home movies that appear in the film. Then came the Fall, marked by the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, which ushered in a period of rising inequality culminating in the collapse of the financial system and the grinding recession we're currently suffering through.

In this fallen state, privatized juvenile detention centers make kickbacks to corrupt judges, airplane pilots live on food stamps, families get foreclosed on and evicted from homes they've lived in for decades, the rich buy off most of Congress through campaign contributions and receive favors from politicians and regulators in return. If only we could return to the good old days of the New Deal and FDR, Moore not so implicitly suggests, the Golden Age could be restored and justice would once again rule the land.

Aside from the fact that Moore's historical reconstruction is based on an overly rosy view of the postwar era, how does this argument square with his final conclusion that capitalism is an evil that cannot be meliorated, only overthrown? It simply doesn't. Many of the abuses that he highlights in his film could be prevented within the framework of a generally capitalist system, though doing so would of course require large-scale political struggle. FDR's proposed economic Bill of Rights, which Moore presents as a set of principles that should provide the moral and ethical foundation of our political economy, has largely been implemented in the more social democratic countries of northern Europe and is not in any way incompatible with capitalism as such. As is common with jilted lovers, Moore doesn't seem ready to completely

abandon the system that betrayed his trust and toyed with his emotions, even though he says that he really wants to. What results is an often incoherent whirl that doesn't make a fully effective case for either reform or revolution.

Now, it's entirely possible that I'm completely over-thinking this film, and should just be happy with the things Moore does well. He rather effectively argues that capitalism and democracy are not necessarily compatible and gets three Catholic priests on camera who explain how capitalism



violates moral precepts at the core of all major religious traditions. With the help of former industry insiders and bank regulators such as Bill Black, he accessibly explains how and why subprime mortgage speculation brought the financial system to the brink of collapse. Sitting down with Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) and bailout oversight chief Elizabeth Warren, he shows how Wall Street and its political allies held Congress ransom in return for billions of dollars in public money. The workers who occupied the Republic Windows and Doors factory in Chicago last winter are offered as models for workers around the country to emulate, and even Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) makes a cameo appearance to

show that socialists can be as American as Mom and apple pie. The film will expose millions of Americans to even a muddled critique of capitalism as a system for the first time, and I'm sure that many who see it will be spurred into political action. These are good things, and Moore deserves credit for making a film that takes on such a politically taboo subject.

Still, if moviegoers leave the theater ready to storm the barricades after watching this film, under what banner will they march? Since it does not offer any coherent alternative to the system it denounces, we don't know. Unfortunately, even for Michael Moore, a man who has just made a major motion picture denouncing capitalism and calling for its elimination, socialism is still the love that dares not speak its name.

Chris Maisano is active in New York City DSA. He studied at Rutgers and Drexel University and currently works as a librarian at a large public library branch in Brooklyn. He is also the editor of the Young Democratic Socialists' online blog, "The Activist" (www.theactivist.org).

Chronicling the Thirty Years War:

A Review of Steve Early, *Embedded With Organized Labor: Journalistic Reflections on the Class War at Home* (Monthly Review Press, 2009).

By Michael Hirsch

Saying there is no class struggle is like denying gravity exists. Corporate America knows the stakes in a class war. So does Steve Early, and so does DSA. Does U.S. labor?

In one sense the question is nonsensical. Unions are by nature class institutions. They work to secure member inter-

ests in a conflict-riddled if not homicidal economic environment. But what workers' interests are actually secured? How generalized are the benefits? And how goes the fight?

Even the noisy debate between the AFL-CIO and Change to Win union federations over how best to revitalize the

labor movement – at least as it surfaced publicly – was never framed in terms of class war. No fertile engagement in ideas and counterpoised initiatives over how best to build up labor’s power was ever launched, if such an engagement was even intended. The debate, such as it was, was tactical. Not good.

Meanwhile, the class war against American workers and their families has raged unabated since the days of Jimmy Carter’s unfortunate administration. Where once labor-management cooperation got lip service, and where labor was treated as a junior partner with business in what was sold as a mutually advantageous social compact, the terrain is changed.



After the oil crisis of the mid-1970s, fang-and-claw industrial relations returned. Some say they never left.

Whatever the context, labor’s been hammered. The inviolate Treaty of Detroit, like the treaties the U.S. government signed with Native Americans in the 18th and 19th centuries, was repeatedly violated, even as early as the late 1950s when shop floor conditions declined, fear was the real face of workers

under scientific management, and the Steelworkers launched a three-month strike, with mixed results. From the collapse of industries once the hallmark of the American Century – textiles in the 1950s, shipping in the 1960s, steel in the 1980s – to concession bargaining, business outsourcing to the “developing countries” abetted by free-trade agreements and the collapse of the U.S. auto industry today, labor is on the defensive and its ranks have thinned. Before John Sweeney was elected AFL-CIO president in 1995, even labor’s rhetoric was stilted. As business waged a scorched earth campaign, labor mostly settled for a Christmas truce.

Today, with the union movement talking a tougher line, the percentage of unionized workers in the general population is declining in all states but California. When the AFL merged with the CIO in 1955, some one third of the American labor force was unionized. In 2009, even with more labor leaders talking left, speaking at DSA functions and proposing what in any other country would be called social democratic policies, just 12 percent of the U.S. workforce is represented by collective bargaining agreements. Worse, less than eight percent of the private sector workforce is unionized. New York State, with just 25 percent of its workforce in unions – largely in New York City and its surrounding suburbs – has the nation’s largest concentration of unionists.

The lack of a critical mass of organized workers who can humanize industry work standards hobbles not just workplace agitation and job security but political action, too. A labor reform bill President Carter was elected to pass – and

didn’t – and that bears a striking resemblance to the possibly stillborn Employee Free Choice Act of today, died absent Carter’s spending needed political capital on its passage. Hundred-million-dollar electoral campaigns by both union federations in 2008 resulted in a Congress that can’t seem to pass a healthcare reform package worthy of the name.

The rash of daily newspaper closings nationwide affects not only journalists but printers, truckers, clericals and retailers, too. To compete internationally, domestic food processors increasingly subcontract to temp hiring agencies who offer below-standard wages and no job security or benefits.

With even the once mighty construction trades retreating in the face of nonunion contractors, it’s been one long, defensive war. Now even the Ford Motor Company, with its relatively small losses, wants the same sweet stimulus taste offered to the broken General Motors. And GM wants to be stimulated again.

Meanwhile, income inequality just in this decade alone has worsened, the transfer of wealth from the working class to capital creating a financial gulf wider than anything seen since the gilded age. It’s small comfort that it took Wall Street’s bubble bursting and a full-blown recession to narrow the gap.

Embedded on labor’s side the whole time was Steve Early, who held the sometimes tenuous positions of being both a New England representative for a major AFL-CIO union and a close observer and sympathizer of progressive and rank-and-file movements. His new book, *Embedded with Organized Labor: Journalistic Reflections on the Class War at Home*, is a compendium of some of the savviest writing on working men and women written over the last 20 years. His writing evinces a feel not just for the politics of labor vs. capital, but also for the tactile realities of work and status in America. In breadth it ranks with C. Wright Mills’ *The New Men of Power*. The difference: Early is no academic.

One theme cuts through each essay: that the best way to revitalize the labor movement is to empower its members. Early would jettison the in-vogue brand of “progressive managerialism” for an “organizational transformation that puts members in charge of their own unions.” He would nix using members as film extras, or so many feet to be mobilized in the streets and state capitals, and instead give workers a stake not only in the outcome of union campaigns, but in their planning and execution, too. Do that and they will come in the millions. He’d also take a chance on union democracy, because U.S. culture already has enough condescending saviors.

Ranging from a close reading of labor’s history during the second half of the twentieth century to contract reporting, the persistence of racism and ethnic discrimination in industry, the plight of undocumented workers and the political jousting between the competing labor federations, Early even manages to cull some of the best bits from others’ work, as when he cites Nelson Lichtenstein writing that “the treaty of Detroit was less a mutually satisfactory concordat” than “a limited and unstable truce, largely confined to a well-defined set of regions and industries; a product of defeat, not victory.” It was indeed.

Early's book isn't only about traditional unions. He includes a fine essay on community-based worker centers, too, showing both the strengths of organizing new immigrants on the basis of their common plight as marginalized ethnics and the weaknesses inherent (the huge potential for employers to play off one racial and ethnic group against another).

Now a quibble. The title, *Embedded with Organized Labor*, isn't quite right, in part because each of the book's essays is a review of others' books. As it only incidentally contains dispatches from the war zone, a more fitting title would be *Embedded in the labor section of the Library of Congress*. Even in "Reuther Redux," his lengthy essay on the AFL-CIO imbroglio with its rival Change to Win, and in "Afterthoughts on Sweeney," which are among the strongest essays in the book, what Early is doing is critiquing key books on labor. Still, it's a boost to know that someone with Early's competence is bookspotting, given that more than half of the some 64 works under review – all but the two by the execrable Linda Chavez worth a read – are from academic houses with small press runs and limited distribution capacity. Just 10 are from major publishers.

Saying it's for the most part a collection of reviews is also no slam on Early for failing to write the book he didn't write; the pieces easily stand on their own. Early, almost singular among journalists (David Bacon is another, as is Jane Slaughter) writes from the standpoint of knowing the terrain first hand. He's uniquely qualified to treat others' material well, and he does. The book also should be required reading for younger DSA comrades who, in my experience, tend to treat unions as if they are Edenic institutions instead of After-The-Fall political arenas.

That brush with reality comes across sharply in his discussion of the "democracy vs. density" debate, where Early faults Change to Win (and particularly the Service Employees International Union) for staking its fortunes on union mergers and mammoth locals. Traditional trade union servicing and a regard for members' opinions, Early says, get short shrift. He sees the wholesale trusteeing of locals as payback for local leaders refusing to be team players, not as acts of vigilance to end corruption or mismanagement. And he reads the move

toward multistate mega-locals with appointed officers – marketed as putative efforts to streamline operations – as politically-motivated, and with nothing in common with internal union reform.

For Early, the real agenda of appointed leaders – those coming out of a social movement background as well as those former workers in their industries – is to build a job base for themselves while institutionalizing international union control. Democracy and member empowerment don't even compute, and easily turn into the kind of "cartel unionism" that Mexican workers chafe against. Even so, the density argument Change to Win makes – that increased membership numbers give unions power in particular industries – has some veracity to it, and something I think Early underplays. What is the point of a democratic union that can't bring employers to heel, or that is the plaything of any coterie capable of cobbling together an election plurality? For Early, the results that Change to Win touts don't guarantee influence, either, and he gives numerous examples of sweetheart contracts signed and militants burned by the new leaders. Still, there are any number of public sector unions that – top down as they may be – have served their members well, if only as clients and not as partners. Sometimes clients just want to be served. Sometimes authoritarian leaders do get the job done.

Of course, the battle between empowerment and effectiveness isn't new, nor is it a zero-sum game. In the mid-1920s, A.J. Muste observed (in an essay sorely absent from Nat Hentoff's one-volume edit of Muste's collected works) that unions necessarily perform two roles: that of a mobilizing army and that of a democratic town meeting. As Muste noted, the two don't easily fit together, but they must.

Interested in meeting Early? He will be book-touring through at least February. Go to http://www.monthlyreview.org/books/event_steveearly.php for the schedule or call Scott at the book publisher's number: 212.691.2555.

Michael Hirsch is a New York-based labor journalist and DSA member and is on the editorial boards of New Politics and Democratic Left.

Health Care Town Meetings: Two Views

Dispatches from a "Town Hall": Where is the Left?

By David Duhalde

Late on a Thursday afternoon in August, a staff-wide email went out to my union office. Rep. Niki Tsongas (D-MA) would host a town hall meeting on healthcare in Chelmsford the coming Saturday morning. Recent reporting about the congressional forums across the country sparked my interest, and I couldn't miss the opportunity to gauge the nature of these events for myself.

The event was moved to City Hall from a supermarket because of expected high attendance. As my vehicle

approached the driveway, the five cars in front of me all turned in to the parking lot. Right then, I realized that not only would I not get into the town hall, but the gathering would also be as popular as it would be polarizing.

Seventy-five people stood in front of me in line to enter when the police announced that no more would be allowed entry to the 300-person, standing-room-only event. The elderly couple behind me took this as Rep. Tsongas not wanting to hear debate. The wife said they should hand out a petition

for people saying they'd never vote for Tsongas again. Her husband reminded her, however, that they had never cast a ballot for Tsongas. While I question the couple's event planning experience, they were awfully sweet and made sure to wish me well before they departed.

Unable to attend the forum, I scanned the crowd to hear debate. There were nearly 250 people eagerly wanting to enter. Among them, I saw only a handful of labor activists. There were several dozen people I assumed were with Organizing for America (Obama's political operation). The vast majority seemed to be conservative activists, but I use the term "conservative" loosely. These people seem less interested in slow change; they appeared more as the right-wing populist and reactionary wing of American politics. Some might think it even unfair to lump them with the mainstream Republicans. But since when does the GOP care about fairness?

The atmosphere was poisonous. There was no real debate outside. Conversations consisted of ill-informed reactionaries dialoguing with the compromised Left. The right-wingers used nonsensical talking points around "Obamacare": support of euthanasia, rationing, socialism, fascism, etc. Good progressive people (although I didn't hear anyone for single-payer, much less socialized medicine) attempted to win over the other side. I saw one young filmmaker engaged with five anti-reform activists for nearly twenty minutes. He went up against arguments like "fire departments should be privatized," "what's wrong with the system now?" and "I don't have healthcare or want it." Afterwards, as I was asking him if I could get a copy of the film, another gentleman came up to us. He said the man who said he did have insurance actually got care from the Veterans' Administration! I guess he loves socialized medicine but needed to hide his affections around his conservative buddies.

The anti-reform crowd's attitude toward organized labor was both negative and funny. I saw two union brothers from the IBEW being heckled by a man. The conversation concluded with "Oh, you're union," to which one replied "Yeah, and proud of it!" The reactionary then curtly replied, "Look at what the UAW did to Detroit." He left before anyone could respond. I later saw him waving an anti-socialist sign. Clearly, this guy never knew that the autoworkers union had no share in management's power to design and produce cars that few wanted

to buy. What was humorous, too, was that the same group that argued with the filmmaker went around asking, "Where are the union people?" when I was standing right behind them. Evidently, they were totally unfamiliar with my bright purple shirt clearly reading "1199 SEIU." My height (I'm only 5'3") and only slightly husky frame must have thrown their "union thug" stereotype for a loop. It reminded me of a comment I heard on staff with YDS: "You kinda small for a union guy."

The two major problems at this event were the noxious atmosphere and the near-complete absence of the radical Left. Aside from one comrade from DSA, I saw no people advocating change who were actual socialists. Sadly, there were nearly a dozen LaRouchites. They were probably the event's biggest advocates of labeling Obama a Hitleresque leader and equating his healthcare team with National Socialist eugenicists.

Without a visible socialist presence, the arguments for decent health care reform fell upon the Obama supporters and a handful of universal coverage activists. With no socialists engaging the crowd, the Obama people were the "left." That's a problem. I remembered my bitterness at self-righteous radicals from my college days – the people who would berate social democrats and liberals as sellouts but always were conspicuously absent from battling a conservative. At this gathering, I would have certainly welcomed any revolutionary challenging those reactionaries. I'd have settled just for someone loudly calling for socialized medicine as in France, too.

I wish I'd been more vocal at this event, but I was practically alone in my beliefs. I think that it's time for us to stop blaming Democrats for progressive agenda setbacks such as the watered-down Employee Free Choice Act. Even if Obama criticizes the liberals who attacked Sen. Ben Nelson (D-NB) for having a lousy position; as a former community organizer, the president should remember he needs an organized left demanding more. That's the only way to enable some decent reform to happen, even if it's not single-payer. Until we stand up and get heard, the Palin wing of American politics will destroy another chance to make the lives of working and poor people better.

David Duhalde is a former National Organizer for the Young Democratic Socialists and is active in Boston DSA.

People Not Profits: An Example of a Successful Health Care Town Hall

By Sean Monahan

We set out for the health care town hall expecting battle. Dan Assaraf, Colin Johnson, and Don Hopkins had seen the news earlier in the day and, consequently, feared the worst. As a fledgling YDS chapter at Temple University, we might have been just a little bit anxious. The warnings of a new "Maoist China" coming forth from a sea of right-wing lunatics and rumors of death panels that will kill Grandma echoing through the media were on our minds. However, at the town hall scene, we encountered something quite different.

We arrived at Broad Street Ministry, the chosen venue in center city Philadelphia, about two hours before the event's scheduled 6 p.m. start in order to ensure front row seats. Even then, a line had already formed, although thankfully consisting mainly of progressive health care reformers. It was quite noticeable from the beginning that the reformers and left-wingers had arrived before the expected droves of rude rightists. We were given large signs by Health Care for America Now (HCAN), and we stood in line with the occasional

“Health care now!” chant sporadically being belted out from small groups in the line. Although HCAN was dominant, many other groups were present, including ACORN, Health Care for All Philadelphia, and, of course, Philly DSA. There was slight tension between single-payer advocates and those who claimed to have accepted the political reality. But it also seemed clear that a strong majority wanted a public plan, and many supported single-payer, at least in the long run.

Joined in the meantime by Sean Monahan of Philly DSA, we waited for two hours, incorrectly expecting buses of the Right to show up to antagonize the movement for meaningful health care reform. Somewhat disappointingly, the only noticeable opposition group to appear was the local Lyndon LaRouche crowd, whose views were so nonsensical that it was unclear if even they themselves knew what they were advocating. The reporters present appeared to be quite interested in the LaRouche signs portraying Obama with a Hitler mustache. Hoping to distract the media, we YDS/DSAers started up a new chant – one quite in tune with our socialist politics. The chant “people not profit” began to gain momentum among the crowd. This seemed to attract the media’s attention away from the loonies and toward us. Dan must have made an impression, switching from the consensus building “People not profits” to “What do we want? Single-payer! When do we want it? Now!” which attracted the voices of more than a few HCANers in the line. This must have impressed the news, because a photo of Dan and other chanting reformers appeared the next day in several local papers (and one in St. Louis, Missouri).

Around 6 p.m., we got into the church, found seats in the sixth row surrounded by HCANers on all sides, and a good 45 minutes later the event began. Liam O’Donnell of Broad Street Ministries, the host, opened up by talking a bit about the church itself, the honorable social services provided under the church’s roof, and the expectations of courteous and productive discussion. He called for a civil discourse and reminded everyone in attendance to “see the other as fully human.” A volunteer also announced that water would be served in the back (it was quite hot in the packed building) and that there were restrooms in the front. While pointing out these facilities, he briefly confused right and left before correcting his error. Certainly there was no more ambiguity between Left and Right for the rest of the evening.

Rep. Joe Sestak (D – PA), the featured speaker, introduced himself to cheers and said that he would stay until he had answered all questions. He claimed to have invited by e-mail about 150 opponents of his position (which was the plan as it existed on August 12th). However, a large presence of organized right-wingers was not evident, and the ones who were there tended to be isolated individuals (one explicitly an insurance employee). Audience members asked questions, and Rep. Sestak answered them in a calm courteous way, sometimes directly addressing the question, sometimes shifting the topic to one he was more comfortable with. Sestak actively sought out people who disagreed with him among the questioners, effectively attempting to make himself out to

be a man who responds to all members of the community – a strategy that made him seem like the good guy, but effectively gave the floor disproportionately to the minority right-wingers to the disservice of the majority Left.

When one man, a veteran probably in his 30s, yelled out at Sestak and started to storm out, all the pro-reform activists tensed up and prepared for a shouting match like those we had seen on TV. Sestak, however, apparently knew the man personally, and was able to calm him down, bring him back, and a discussion of the effect (or lack thereof) of a public plan on the veteran health care system ensued. In this case and

in many others, Sestak would direct questioners to members of his staff who had copies of the bill he was advocating, so they could personally look through it and talk to people who knew the legislation well enough to answer more detailed and complex questions. Having said that, he frequently dodged



questions relating to specific parts of the text of the bill when asked on the floor, preferring to speak vaguely. Typical of a good politician, Rep. Sestak was exceedingly careful not to back himself into any corners about specific provisions.

One woman told the story of being a general practitioner who left the practice a few years ago to fight for health care reform full-time. She said she advocated a single-payer system as the most efficient and effective mode of health insurance. Throughout the night, it seemed that every time someone used the term “single-payer” a large part of those in attendance erupted with applause and cheers. Despite the strong support in the room for such a system, Rep. Sestak said that while he understood and respected the arguments for single-payer, he instead supported the current bill, which allegedly fosters competition between the private insurance companies. He gave the impression of one who could be pushed to the left if there was sufficient popular pressure, like so many “moderate” Democrats.

In regards to the radical Right, the moment of battle never came, although there were a few more incidents of anger or belligerent questioning. One man (a senior citizen and a doctor) accused the bill of including abortion in the public option, claiming that he would not vote for any health care plan that supported abortion (Rep. Sestak disputed that claim). In another incident, one man, who claimed to be very emotion-

al, read a long statement from a piece of paper, starting with something along the lines of, "I want to say first that I was not paid by anyone to be here." He clearly had trouble reading the words on the paper and seemed to not understand his own arguments, and we found it likely that he had not written it himself, as he claimed. The final of three solutions to the health care problem suggested by this man was, "Illegals – get rid of them!" As a voter in Pennsylvania's 7th district, he also informed Rep. Sestak, "As far as I'm concerned, you're fired!" He did not ask a question.

Dan Assaraf of Temple YDS, however, managed to get one question in after waiting three hours or so, wanting to know Sestak's opinion on the Kennedy and Conrad plans. Sestak seemingly did not seem to know these plans that well (since they were Senate bills). Dan's attempts to press him on single payer failed to gain any real concessions from the congressman. Eventually, they had to move on to another person.

Even though this town hall was merely a discussion, with minimal impact in comparison with the mighty insurance

lobby, it seemed successful. It seemed to fulfill all the promises a democratic and rational discussion of public policy had to offer. There was a search for disagreement, to make sure opposing voices could be heard, and people who were generally anxious and angry about health care were allowed to have their say. No one was shut out, and the congressman made himself seem genuinely interested in our thoughts and questions about the legislation. Although Rep. Sestak skillfully dodged the tough questions and the Right held the floor for a disproportionately large amount of time, the Left at least was able to make its presence known and demonstrate that a civil debate is possible. In comparison to the numerous raucous, unproductive town hall experiences throughout the country, this one seemed fulfill the promise it offered: a rational and democratic discussion on health care.

Sean Monahan is active in Greater Philadelphia DSA and is on the Young Democratic Socialists Coordinating Committee.

Immigrant Labor Rights

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with a meat hook by a supervisor. Lacking papers, he was afraid to complain. After the raid, he went to prison with the others. The supervisor stayed working on the line.

Here also women were released to care for their children, but again with the ankle bracelet. Their husbands or brothers were in prison or deported, and they were held up to ostracism in this tiny town of 2000 people.

They say it's just "illegals" – that makes this politically acceptable.

ICE says these raids protect U.S. citizens and legal residents against employers who hire undocumented workers in order to lower wages and working conditions. But very often immigration raids are used against workers' efforts when they organize and protest those very same conditions. At the big Smithfield plant in North Carolina, where the workers spent 16 years trying to join the union, the company tried to fire 300, including the immigrant union leadership, saying it had "discovered" that their Social Security numbers were no good.

Workers stopped the lines for three days, and won their temporary reinstatement. But then the migra conducted two raids, and 21 workers went to prison for using social security numbers that belonged to someone else. The fear the raids created was compared by one organizer to "a neutron bomb." It took two years for the campaign to recover. The Agriprocessors raid came less than a year after workers there

tried to organize. At Howard Industries in Mississippi, the migra conducted the biggest raid of all in the middle of union contract negotiations.

Why is this happening?

Former Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff said, "There's an obvious solution to the problem of illegal work, which is you open the front door and you shut the back door." Chertoff means by "opening the front door" that he wants people to come to the U.S. as contract workers, recruited by employers using visas that say a worker can only come to work. This is the logic and requirement for every guest worker program, going back to the braceros. And to make people come only through this employment-based system, he'll "close the back door" by making walking through the desert across the border, or working outside of this contract labor system, a crime punished not just by deportation, but by prison.

E-Verify, the high-tech immigration database endorsed by both the Bush and Obama administrations, is only the latest idea for enforcing this kind of criminalization. Behind E-Verify, behind the raids, and behind every other kind of workplace immigration enforcement, is the basic criminalization of work. Since 1986, federal law has said that if you have no papers, it is a crime to have a job.

So you stand on the street corner, a truck stops to pick up laborers, and you get in. You work all day in the sun until



photo by David Bacon

you're so tired you can hardly go back to your room. This is a crime. You do it to send money home to your family and the people who depend on you. This is a crime too.

How many criminals like this are there? Experts on immigration statistics say there are 12 million people without papers here in the U.S.

But it's not just here. Manu Chao wrote a whole CD of songs about this: "Clandestino." He sings about people going from Morocco to Spain... Turkey to Germany... Jamaica to London. There are over 200 million people, all over the world, living outside the countries where they were born. If all the world's "illegals" got together in one place there would be enough people for ten Mexico Cities or fifteen Los Angeleses.

If working is a crime, then workers are criminals. And if workers become criminals, proponents of this system say, they'll go home. That's the basic justification for all workplace immigration enforcement.

But is anyone going home? No one is leaving because there's no job to go home to.

Since 1994, six million Mexicans have come to live in the U.S. Millions came without visas, because it wasn't possible for them to get one.

All over the world people are moving, from poor countries to rich ones. The largest Salvadoran city in the world is Los Angeles. More than half the world's sailors come from the Philippines. More migrants go from the country to the city in China than cross borders in all the rest of the world combined. So many people from Guatemala are living in the U.S. that one neighborhood in Los Angeles is now called Little San Miguel Acatan. San Miguel was the site of the worst massacre of indigenous people by the U.S.-armed Guatemalan Army in that country's civil war. Now more San Migueleños live in Los Angeles than in San Miguel.

The economic pressures causing displacement and migration are reaching into the most remote towns and villages in Mexico, where people still speak languages that were old when Columbus arrived in the Americas – Mixteco, Zapoteco, Triqui, Chatino, Purepecha, Najuatl.

Why are so many people being displaced?

NAFTA is just one element of those changes that have transformed the Mexican economy in the interests of foreign investors and wealthy Mexican partners. The treaty let huge U.S. companies, like Archer Daniels Midland, sell corn in Mexico for a price lower than what it cost small farmers in Oaxaca to grow it. Big U.S. companies get huge subsidies from Congress – \$2 billion in the last farm bill. But the World Bank and NAFTA's rules dictated that subsidies for Mexican farmers had to end. This was not the creation of a "level playing field," despite all the propaganda.

In Cananea, a small town in the Sonora mountains and site of one of the world's largest copper mines, miners have been on strike for two years. Grupo Mexico, a multinational corporation that was virtually given the mine in one of the infamous privatizations of former President Carlos Salinas, wants to cut labor costs by eliminating hundreds of jobs, busting the miners' union, and blacklisting its leaders. If

miners lose the strike and their jobs, the border is only 50 miles north.

If you were a miner with a busted union and no job to support your family, where would you go? No wonder they've been on strike for two years in Cananea. They're fighting to stay home – in Mexico.

NAFTA, and the U.S. and Mexican governments, helped big companies get rich by keeping wages low, by giving them subsidies and letting them push farmers into bankruptcy. But that's why it is so hard for families to survive now. Low wages. Can't farm any more. Laid off to cut costs. Your factory privatized. Your union busted.

Salinas promised Mexicans cheap food if NAFTA was approved and corn imports flooded the country. Now the price of tortillas is three times what it was when the treaty passed. That's great for Grupo Maseca, Mexico's monopoly tortilla producer, and for WalMart, now Mexico's largest retailer. But if you can't afford to buy those tortillas, then you go where you can buy them.

The advocates of economic liberalization said an economy of maquiladoras and low wages would produce jobs on the border. But today, hundreds of thousands of workers on the border have lost their jobs because when the recession began in the U.S., people stopped buying the products made in border factories. Even while they're working, the wages of workers are so low that it takes half a day's pay to buy a gallon of milk. Most maquiladora workers live in cardboard houses on streets with no pavement or sewer system. When they lose their jobs, and the border is a few blocks away, where do you think they will go? If it was your family, if you had no food or job, what would you do?

And when people protest, the government and the companies bring in the police and the army. People are beaten, as the teachers were in Oaxaca in 2006. After the army filled Oaxaca's jails, how many more people had to leave?

When President Manuel Zelaya tried to point Honduras in a different direction, just raising the minimum wage so that families could have a better future, not as migrants but in Honduras itself, what happened? The U.S.-trained military, acting for the country's wealthy elite, kidnapped him in his pajamas, put him on an airplane and flew him out of the country. Now how many people will leave Honduras, because the door to a future at home has been closed?



photo by David Bacon

The lack of human rights is itself a factor contributing to migration, since it makes it more difficult, even impossible, to organize for change.

Migration is not an accident. The economic system in the U.S. and wealthy countries depends on migration. It depends on the labor provided by a constant flow of migrants.

About 12 million people live in the U.S. without immigration documents. Another 26-28 million were born elsewhere, and are citizens or visaholders. That's almost 40 million people. If everyone went home tomorrow, would there be fruit and vegetables on the shelves at Safeway? Who would cut up the cows and pigs in meatpacking plants? Who would clean the offices of New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, or Chicago?

Immigrants are not the only workers in our workforce, the only people willing to work, or the only people who need jobs. Our workforce includes African American and Chicano families who have contributed their labor for hundreds of years. The vast majority of white people – the descendents of European immigrants – are historically workers, too. We all work. We all need to work, to put bread on the table for our families.

But without the labor of immigrant people, the system would stop.

Those companies using that labor, however – the grape growers in Delano or the owners of office buildings in Century City, or the giant Blackstone group that owns hotels across the country – do not pay the actual cost of producing the workforce they rely on. Who pays for the needs of workers' families in the towns and countries from which they come? Who builds the schools in the tiny Oaxacan villages that send their young people into California's fields? Who builds the homes for the families of the meatpacking workers of Nebraska? Who pays for the doctor when the child of a Salvadoran janitor working in Los Angeles gets sick? The growers and the meatpackers and the building owners pay for nothing. They don't even pay taxes in the countries from which their workers come, and some don't pay taxes here, either. So who pays the cost of producing and maintaining their workforce?

The workers pay for everything. For employers, it's a very cheap system.

Here in the U.S., it's cheap, too. Workers without papers pay taxes and Social Security but are barred from the benefits. For them there's no unemployment insurance, no disability pay if they get sick, and no retirement benefits. Workers fought for these social benefits and won them in the New Deal. For people without papers, the New Deal never happened. Even legal residents with green cards can't get many Social Security benefits. If they take these benefits away from immigrants, it won't be long before they come after people born here.

Why can't everyone get a Social Security number? After all, we want people to be part of the system. All workers, the undocumented included, get old and injured. Should they live on dog food after a lifetime of work? The purpose of Social Security is to assure dignity and income to the old and injured. The system should not be misused to determine immigration status and facilitate witchhunts, firings, and deportations for

workers without it.

Wages for most immigrants are so low that people can hardly live on them. There's a big difference in wages between a day laborer and a longshoreman – \$8.25/hour in San Francisco, where a dockworker gets over \$25, plus benefits. If employers had to pay low-wage workers, including immigrants, the wages of longshoremen, the lives of working families would improve immeasurably. And it can happen. Before people on the waterfront organized the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, they were like day laborers, hired every morning in a humiliating shapeup where each person competed for a job with dozens of others. Dockworkers were considered bums. Now they own apartment houses. It's the union that did it.

But if employers had to raise the wages of immigrants to the level of longshoremen, it would cost them a lot. Just the difference between the minimum wage received by 12 million undocumented workers and the average U.S. wage might well be over \$80 billion a year. No wonder organizing efforts among immigrant workers meet such fierce opposition.

But immigrants are fighters. In 1992, undocumented drywallers stopped Southern California residential construction for a year from Santa Barbara to the Mexican border. They've gone on strike at factories, office buildings, laundries, hotels, and fields. Those unions today that are growing are often those that have made an alliance with immigrant workers and know that they will fight for better conditions. In fact, the battles fought by immigrants over the last 20 years made the unions of Los Angeles strong today and changed the politics of the city. In city after city, a similar transformation is possible or already underway.

So unions should make a commitment, too. In 1999, the AFL-CIO held an historic convention in Los Angeles, and there unions said they would fight to get rid of the law that makes work a crime. Unions said they'd fight to protect the right of all workers to organize, immigrants included. Labor should live up to that promise. Today, unions are fighting for the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), intended to make it easier and quicker for workers to organize. That would help all workers, immigrants included. But if 12 million people have no right to their jobs at all and are breaking the law simply by working, how will they use the rights that EFCA is designed to protect? Unions and workers need both labor law reform and immigration reform that decriminalize work.

Employers and the wealthy love immigrants and hate them. They want and need people's labor, but they don't want to pay. And what better way not to pay than to turn workers into criminals?

This is an old story – what they've always done with immigrants.

In the early 1900s, California's grower-dominated legislature made it a crime for Filipinos to marry women who were not Filipinas. At the same time, immigration of women from the Philippines to the mainland was very difficult. For the Filipino farm workers of the 1930s and 40s and 50s, it was virtually a crime to have a family. Many men stayed single

until their 50s or 60s, living in labor camps, moving and working wherever the growers needed their labor. But those Filipinos fought to stay. They had to fight, just for the right to have a family.

During the bracero program from 1942 to 1964, growers recruited workers from Mexico who could come only under contract and had to leave the country at the end of the harvest. They said the braceros were legal, but what kind of legality is it where people had to live behind barbed wire in camps and go only where the growers wanted? If braceros went on strike, they were deported. Part of their wages were withheld, supposedly to guarantee their return to Mexico.

Half a century later, they're still fighting to recover it.

The braceros fought to stay. Some just walked out of the labor camps, and kept living and working underground for 30 years, until they could get the amnesty in 1986.

Then, in 1964, heroes of the Chicano civil rights movement like Bert Corona, Ernesto Galarza, Cesar Chavez, and Dolores Huerta forced Congress to end the bracero program. The next year, Mexicans and Filipinos went out on strike in Coachella and Delano, and the United Farm Workers was born.

That year, in 1965, they went back to Congress. Give us a law, they said, that doesn't make workers into braceros or criminals behind barbed wire, into slaves for the growers. Give us a law that says our families are what's important, our communities. That was how we won the family preference system. That's why, once you have a green card, you can petition for your mother and father, or your children, to join you in the U.S. We didn't have that before. The civil rights movement won that law.

That fight is not over. In fact, we have to fight harder now than ever, and not just against those who hate immigrants. We have to make sure that those who say they advocate for immigrants aren't really advocating for low wages. That the decision-makers of Washington, D.C., won't plunge families in Mexico, El Salvador, or Colombia into poverty to force a new generation of workers to leave home and go through the doors of furniture factories and laundries, office buildings and packing plants, onto construction sites, or just into the gardens and nurseries of the rich.

So what do we want?

First, we want legalization, giving 12 million people residence rights and green cards, so they can live like normal human beings. We do not want immigration used as a cheap labor supply system, with workers paying off recruiters and once here, frightened that they'll be deported if they lose their jobs.

We need to get rid of the laws that make immigrants criminals and working a crime. No more detention centers, no more ankle bracelets, no more firings and no-match letters, and no more raids. We need equality and rights. All people in our communities should have the same rights and status.

Families in Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, or the Philippines deserve a decent life, too. They have a right to



survive, a right not to migrate. To make that right a reality, they need jobs and productive farms, good schools, and health care. Our government must stop negotiating trade agreements like NAFTA and CAFTA and instead

prohibit the use of trade and economic policy that causes poverty and displacement.

Those people who do choose to come here to work deserve the same things that every other worker does. We all have the same rights and the same needs – jobs, schools, medical care, a decent place to live, and the right to walk the streets or drive our cars without fear.

Is this possible?

Major changes in immigration policy are not possible if we don't fight at the same time for these other basic needs: jobs, education, housing, health care, justice. But these are things that everyone needs, not just immigrants. And if we fight together, we can stop raids and at the same time create a more just society for everyone, immigrant and non-immigrant alike.

Is this possible?

In 1955, at the height of the Cold War, braceros and farm workers didn't think change would ever come. Growers had all the power, and farm workers none. Ten years later, we had a new immigration law protecting families, and the bracero program was over. A new union for farm workers was on strike in Delano.

We can have an immigration system that respects human rights. We can stop deportations. We can win security for working families on both sides of our borders.

Is it possible? *Si se puede!*

David Bacon is associate editor at Pacific News Service; author of books on immigration, most recently Illegal People: How Globalization Creates Migration and Criminalizes Immigrants; and a reporter and documentary photographer for 18 years whose work has appeared in such publications as TruthOut, The Nation, The American Prospect, The Progressive, and the San Francisco Chronicle.

G-20 Saga

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carpeting were wet with the feline excrement. An unfortunate few, who will remain unnamed out of courtesy to their families, were “rained” on in their sleep. Needless to say, at least six socks were abandoned on that foul planet.

Waking up the next morning was easy, and we kept good-byes to a minimum. We ate breakfast at a diner with a broken window. Bystanders automatically assumed the darn protesters were behind the vandalism. But employing the analytical tools developed by discussing socialist theory for hours in the car ride over, we determined that it was unlikely that protesters were behind the shattering, since the McDonalds and the Starbucks across the street were untouched. It was later announced that a group of frat boys were behind the destruction.

After providing the most economic stimulation that Pittsburgh has enjoyed since the invention of the Bessemer Process, we walked over to the main event, the “People’s March.”

The People’s March was organized by the Thomas Merton Center, a Pittsburgh anti-war group. At the intersection of Craft Street and Fifth Avenue, we met up with other YDS activists from Michigan State University, Philadelphia, and Wooster College of Ohio. Over 20 YDS activists marched in our visible contingent.

We were also joined by just about every other leftist group ever created. From Free Tibet to Free Palestine to Legalize Marijuana, they were there. This is unsurprising, consider-

ing that the march was co-sponsored by 70 organizations. The group of about 10,000 marched into downtown. Once the buildings were over five stories tall, the sidewalks were lined by police officers spaced five feet apart, dressed in full riot gear, with batons in hand. If you looked up, you could see cops on top of and inside buildings, and they stood in ranks five or six deep where space permitted. Some carried tear gas launchers and some carried automatic shotguns. All were really scary.

The march paused in front of a county building, and speeches were given. Some of the speeches we had heard the previous night, and all spoke of the sad state of the world.

The march continued across the Seventh Street Bridge out of downtown, where it ended with a rally and more speeches, including one by Cindy Sheehan. Realizing the length of the drive ahead of us, the William Paterson group decided to leave as soon as possible. Unfortunately, that wasn’t so soon.

We needed to get back to our cars but the buses were barely running, and when they did, they were completely full. After about an hour of waiting, we decided we might as well just walk back, but just as soon we started we bumped into a young man we had met at the People’s Tribunal Thursday night. He had flown in from California, so he had rented a car. Our new savior offered to take the drivers to the cars so

continued on back cover

We join in celebrating 37 years of Democratic Left:

DL Supporter

Peter Albrecht
Donald R. Anderson
Timothy Bankson
Trevor Barton
Dale Buskirk
Jerome Crumlish
Nancy Goldner
Renee Greene
Theodore Guggenheim
Dorothy and Josef Gutenkauf
Herbert Herman
J. David Ivers
John King
Steve Mayhugh
Evemarie Moore
Spencer Resnick
Robert Riley
David Shriver
Albert Westpy

DL Sustainer

Duane Campbell
Melvyn Dubofsky
Harold Hill
George Mandler
Frank Morrow
Maxine Phillips
Ken Tray

DL Booster

Thomas Broderick
Leo Casey
Joseph Masheck
Robert Myers
George Roberts
Timothy Sears

DL Writer

Mark Schaeffer

DL Editor

Don Shaffer

In Memory of Doris Shaffer

Remember the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire!

Anonymous

G-20 Saga

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we wouldn't have to walk all the way back. This was great news, since we were all tired from the four-hour march. The non-drivers sat down on a curb and waited. And we waited and waited some more.

During our wait, we noticed that some cop cars were marked Palm Beach County. Palm Beach, Florida? No way! We asked the cops and they confirmed that they had come all the way from the Sunshine State just to keep us out of trouble. We later met some cops from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who told us that they were making lots of money being in Pittsburgh and beseeched us to hold even more protests in the future so they could all buy second homes. Yay big government!!

After about two hours of waiting to be picked up, the drivers finally called us and said the police had closed all the bridges and had split the city in half with a barricade. So after all that waiting, we had to walk back anyway. Finally, reunited in our vehicles, we began our long trek back to Jersey. The ride back was relatively uneventful – if you don't count stumbling upon a Nazi book store and being hit by change thrown by a bunch of thugs in Allentown. It's safe to say that I've never been happier to cross the Delaware River and enter the great state of New Jersey.

Overall, the G-20 protests were a mixed bag. The protesters performed the important task of visibly criticizing the undemocratic G-20 for facilitating the sad state of the world. On the other hand, there was no central organization of the protests and the demands were unclear. The speakers, while they vividly described the world's many problems, failed to provide the smoking gun needed to garner a mainstream indictment of the G-20 for its crimes against humanity.

Nevertheless, the YDS expedition was a great success. Despite my sarcastic tone, we had a good time and strengthened the social bonds that are the mortar of our movement. Well over 20 of our members from New Jersey, Philadelphia, Ohio, and Michigan, normally separated by distance and time, were able to meet, catch up, and trade organizing wisdom. The trip was also an organizing opportunity that we hope will yield groups in Pittsburgh and Allentown. With any luck, we will soon be reunited at another large demonstration against the capitalist system and provide the cops from Milwaukee the dough they need to finally purchase that dream house on the shore of Lake Michigan.

Erik Rosenberg is DSA's National Youth Organizer.

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