

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

The Workers' Advocate

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Capitalist profiteering and capitalist competition are at the root of layoffs in the Northwest timber industry

Save all the old-growth!

Make the government and industry fairly compensate unemployed timber workers!

The following article and sidebars were submitted by comrade Frank of Seattle:

Clinton has released his Northwest forest plan. Although it's purposely vague on many important issues it's clear about a couple of things: (1) Northwest forests, including the last remaining old-growth will continue to be destroyed, (2) laid off timber workers will get little compensation.

The reduction of the allowable cut to 1.2 billion board feet annually on the federal lands covered by the plan sounds drastic, but it's not. These lands were being severely overcut in the 1980s. The proof of the pudding is that Clinton has had to combine continued cutting of some old-growth with stepped up cutting of forests east of the Cascades and an easing of restrictions on logging of State and corporate lands in order to come up with the 1.2 billion board feet. Clinton's proposal to spend \$1.2 billion over 5 years for assistance to hard-hit timber areas likewise sounds like a lot, but it's not. Much of this money is slated to go into typical pork barrel trickle down schemes for the business establishment. Timber workers will receive very little of it. Not only that, they can expect their share to be reduced even farther by the time Clinton signs the eventual legislation.

7000 workers have lost jobs in the Washington State timber industry in the past couple years. The American Forestry Association predicts that between 20,000 and 34,000 more workers will be canned in Washington, Oregon and northern California by the year 2000. Thus the woodworkers and their families are up against hard times. And more workers being on the unemployment rolls in the Northwest acts to drag down the conditions of the rest of the workers in the region. Thus the layoffs are a blow to every worker. Moreover, the destruction of forests and wildlife by the timber corporations, the ruining of the environment in which we live, are also blows to every

worker as well as the broader masses of people. And all of the vicious "lose—lose" choices being presented by the establishment (jobs or ecosystem protection, timber industry jobs or salmon industry jobs, hard times for Northwest workers or hard times for Japanese workers, etc.) are reflections of the viciousness of the capitalist system which the establishment represents. More, establishing some

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'Ending welfare as we know it'

Wisconsin's solution to unemployment: starve the poor

As the economy deteriorates, the politicians have a solution: scapegoat the immigrants, the minorities, the welfare recipients. Find a group to demonize, and make its life miserable.

One of the chief victims are welfare recipients. As factories close, wages are slashed, and unemployment climbs, people are finding that the social "safety net" is being cut. Worse, those who take benefits are being attacked as morally unfit, responsible for the nation's decline, parasites, etc. Democrats and Republicans are uniting to scapegoat the welfare recipient. Clinton campaigned for president on the theme of "ending welfare as we know it," and getting people off welfare within two years. Republican Governor Thompson of Wisconsin has put forward his own proposal for limiting welfare to two years. A pilot program to test it awaits approval by the federal government, which oversees AFDC programs.

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Kicking the poor in Wisconsin

Governor Thompson wishes to dismantle Aid for Families with Dependent Children. His plan is based on the assumption that AFDC recipients are lazy, irresponsible people who refuse to take available jobs. So his program requires that every "able-bodied" AFDC recipient must go to work, school, or job training within 30 days of signing up for AFDC benefits. Within a year, they would all have to work. Within two years, all benefits would end except for child care and health benefits. In another year, the former welfare recipient would sink or swim completely on their own.

Thompson says he's not a monster. Why, the program would provide child care, transportation, health benefits, and help recipients search for a job. And if the state doesn't have the money for these benefits, or just doesn't bother to provide them, well, so what? The welfare recipient will just have to make do. The real point of these workfare programs is not to spend more money on welfare recipients, no, no, no, no, but to spend less.

Moreover, Thompson claims, no children would suffer. If their parents don't take part in the program, their welfare benefits would be cut, but the state would still provide for the children through vouchers for food, clothing, medical care and other necessities. The parents would starve, but the children allegedly would thrive, in the cheery imagination of these government bureaucrats. Who says Thompson doesn't have any "family values"?

And the jobs? Who knows where the jobs are? It's the job of the AFDC recipient to find jobs that no economist or statistician can find in the economy.

Florida, Maryland, etc.

A similar proposal to cut off benefits after two years is pending in Florida as well. Other states are cutting welfare benefits, either directly or indirectly. Michigan, for example, eliminated general assistance completely. And besides simply reducing benefits, another method is to cut benefits if welfare recipients don't live up to an increasing number of requirements. For example, if your child plays hooky from school, Wisconsin will cut welfare payments. (But soon, if the parent walks the child to school, Wisconsin will cut benefits anyway, because then the parent will be shirking from the required load of workfare.) And Maryland cuts benefits if children aren't immunized: that's a cheaper form of health program than actually immunizing the children.

Thompson believes Clinton will approve his program

because, after all, he is just implementing Clinton's campaign slogan. Just as Clinton played to prejudice against welfare recipients to make it to the presidency, Governor Thompson is hoping to whip the poor all the way to a GOP vice-presidential nomination in 1996.

Clinton's task force

Meanwhile Clinton is having a hard time figuring out how to "end welfare as we know it." He set up a working group to draft a plan to transform welfare. But by the end of June, they were reporting that it would cost too much money. (*New York Times*, June 21) The welfare recipient was supposed to be provided with child care, health care, and job training, but that costs money. And the last thing Clinton wants to do is spend money on the poor.

David T. Ellwood, an Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services, is one of the co-chairs of Clinton's working group on welfare. He was also the one who floated the idea of putting time limits on welfare in his 1988 book *Poor Support*. He connected it with more services for welfare recipients and even the creation of some government jobs for them. He thought this would cost \$30 billion a year. But Clinton won't hear of such sums. During his campaign, he talked of \$4 billion a year on training programs and \$2 billion on tax credits for low-wage workers.

Now Clinton aides are thinking about a gradual process, or looking for alternatives. One possibility is the old idea of having welfare recipients do work in exchange for their benefits. They wouldn't get any more money for their benefits, but they would have to do anything they were told

to do. And the Republicans are already rubbing their hands in anticipation. Forty or so House Republicans have already put forward a bill requiring welfare recipients, after two years, to work 35 hours a week for their benefits. This might not cut welfare rolls, but it sure would be profitable for capitalists. It could be used to replace paid workers, put pressure on wages, and throw additional people off work, thus creating a bigger pool of welfare recipients forced to work for hunger-level benefits.

Blame the victim

The whole rationale behind these programs is to scapegoat the victim. Conservative theorists like Lawrence Mead, author of *The New Politics of Poverty*, argue vehemently for this. He says that "the old issues were economic and structural" but "the new ones are social and personal." That is, it's a question of personal and social values. You would have a job, if only you really wanted one. It's the culture of dependency, rather than the lack of jobs at good wages, that's responsible for poverty, family breakup, drug addiction, etc.

But the new "starve the poor for their own good" policies won't end family breakup, drug addiction, etc. They are only an excuse for kicking the poor even harder. It will make every social problem in poor communities worse. But it will help the rich, who will have an excuse to cut spending on social programs. And the employers hope it will provide a more desperate workforce, willing to work at lower and lower wages, because there will be no social net to tide them over periods of difficulty. □

\$2.6 billion in local cuts on top of state cuts: California taxes the poor, and cuts their social services

The politicians in Sacramento have just passed the '93-'94 state budget. After years of cutbacks aimed at the workers and the poor, you'd think there was nothing left to cut. But this budget takes several billion dollars more from the poor in order to preserve rich tax breaks and privileges for the rich.

Cutting from three different direction

This bipartisan budget goes far to wipe up social services. Once again, aid has been cut for the elderly, the blind and disabled. Medical (California's Medicaid health

program for the poor) has been cut. Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) has been cut again, this time by 2.7%. And the renters' tax credit has been wiped out for at least two years.

That's bad enough. But there's a new twist. Republican Governor Wilson and the Democratic politicians are shifting \$2.6 billion in local property taxes away from the city and county and into the state coffers. This leaves local governments high and dry. It will mean fee increases and major cuts in health care, welfare, and social services on the local level, on top of those that the budget makes on the state level. Already local governments are threatening

thousands of layoffs of county and city workers across the state.

But there's more. Don't think Wilson and the California legislator are unsympathetic to the plight of the cities and counties. Why no. They will help the local governments balance their budget. They are moving to "relax" or wipe out a lot of "state mandates"—laws that require the counties to provide a certain level of necessary services such as general assistance (welfare), health care, mental health services for the poor, and drug and alcohol programs. County politicians have been demanding this move so they could make drastic cuts in services. Without these laws, the poor are left at their mercy. And given the severity of the budget crisis facing the cities and counties, there's no question but that whole programs will be wiped out.

Alameda County kicks the poor hard

Alameda County, for example, has slashed general assistance. After the passage of the state budget, the Alameda County Supervisors cut the monthly benefit from \$327 to \$308, and they will cut it again to \$299 if Governor Wilson succeeds in cutting AFDC.

Moreover, the supervisors put a 3-month limit on receiving general assistance for all "able-bodied" recipients—those that are "able to work." The problem is, being "able to work" doesn't mean you can find a job. The jobs just are not there.

But so what? The supervisors are planning to push 6,000 people off general assistance whether they have a job or not. This will mean increasing hunger and homelessness as thousands are left hungry and homeless on the streets. But there's more important fish to fry: they have to slash welfare costs in order to have enough money to build the jails for the now-hungry masses.

A higher state sales tax to fund more police

Indeed, the shift of \$2.6 billion away from the local government has led to local and state politicians shouting hysterically about big cuts in what they call "public safety"—police, sheriffs, district attorneys, courts, and firemen. They worry that criminals will no longer be prosecuted, and crime will run rampant.

In first place, their own acts are increasing the burden of crime in the poor and working class communities. The growing unemployment, continuing cutbacks, and racist discrimination are fueling the problem of social crime. The major business of the police is not to protect the people, but to hold them down, clamp down on acts of desperation, and especially prevent any rebellion against the horrible social conditions.

In the second place, after cutting down on social programs in order to keep the taxes low on the rich, they are going to increase the taxes on the poor to pay for the police. They are putting a ballot measure in November

which would increase the state tax, with the money earmarked for funding the system of law and order. This tax would come down hardest on workers and the poor.

Moreover, the same local government—Alameda County supervisors, for example—that are screaming for the state government to release them from the necessity to provide health care and welfare, have somehow found additional millions of dollars to help bail out the police.

Strangling public education

All these cutbacks, the whole \$2.6 billion shift, is being done in the name of saving public education. The politicians say the money is being shifted to the schools to maintain the same level of funding per student as last year.

This is really quite an amazing claim from the same hatchetmen who have voted year after year to cut funding for public education, leaving many California school districts on the verge of bankruptcy. And indeed, they're not really saving the schools this year either. Just like last year, part of the '94-'94 funding for the K-12 schools is being given as a *loan* that was to be repaid. The school districts already owe the state \$609 million from last year, and now they are to be swamped in debt. Moreover, the legislature is not providing them money to make up for inflation, nor to pay needed raises for teachers, let alone to restore the massive cuts of previous years.

In addition, the University of California, California State University, and the community colleges have again seen their budgets cut, and student fees have been hiked once more.

The rich have caused the crisis

What is behind the California budget crisis?

First of all, the California economy is in one of its periodic slumps. And the rich are making use of this to cut wages and restructure working conditions.

Secondly, the politicians have been handing the wealthy a series of tax cuts for years: Proposition 13 and the 1987 income tax cut for example. The rich get richer, while the poor pay for it.

And finally, it's the capitalist system that results in a wealthy state, with increasing productivity, being a land of plight and poverty. It's the capitalist system that produces the contrast between rich and poor.

It's the system defended by the rich and the capitalists that's causing this problem. And it's this system that directs the money toward tax breaks for the rich, rather than social services for the people.

Already protests have broken out against these cutbacks. In the Bay Area, workers, people on welfare, AIDS activists, the homeless, and students have demonstrated. We need a mass movement to fight these cutbacks. And it should be directed at the system that causes them, the rich who benefit from them, and the politicians who write them into law. □

Letter from San Francisco postal workers

An injury to one is an injury to all, Fight management attacks on Latino workers!

From the June 30 issue of the Bay Area Workers' Voice:

Workers' Voice has just received this letter from some postal workers. The harassment for speedup and concessions throughout the Postal Service has reached alarming levels. Management is trying to shift the government budget crisis onto the workers for the benefit of the rich. This is one of many examples of the brutal conditions faced by postal workers. Workers' Voice calls on all postal workers: black, Latino, white, Asian, and all others fed up with the attacks on wages and working conditions to stand with the Latino workers and spread the struggle against harassment and speedup.

At the SFBMC [San Francisco Bulk Mail Center] in recent months, there has been a sharp increase in the number of management attacks on the Latino workers. The incidents, focused now in the secondary unit, have included harassment, disparate treatment, physical intimidation, the lodging of trumped-up charges and the denial of equal opportunities.

Several employees who have not taken these attacks lying down have now become the target of vicious campaigns. These lucky workers have been treated to regular menacing visits to their work assignments by MDO G. Allen Hicks. They have been forcibly summoned to "meetings" with supervisors and hand-picked "witnesses" where they are browbeaten and made the butt of slanderous accusation. They have been summarily removed from their safety captain positions and repeatedly singled out for "crimes" as heinous as talking while working.

As if this were not enough, management has organized certain politically backward elements to try to intimidate these clerks into silence, bumping them in aisles, picking fights, acting in a threatening manner and holding out the possibility of a major, violent escalation. When these events have been reported according to management's own guidelines, cowardly supervisors like Harry McCoy have turned truth on its head and blamed the victims themselves, threatening them with removal for "not getting along."

One might think that the terrible pressure felt by these postal workers would be eased somewhat by the knowledge that they can at least fight back through the union. No such luck. The sad truth is that certain corrupt union stewards are neck deep in the attacks themselves and are often used as management witnesses. When a Latina woman in Benicia was assaulted on the job (smashed in the head with a mail bundle), APWU Local Vice-President Rufus Johnson "negotiated" a settlement with no discipline

for the attacker, telling the victim she was lucky she had kept her job. When a Latino shop steward at the BMC dared to merely stand at an APWU meeting and report that he had been receiving many complaints from Hispanics regarding favoritism, discrimination, harassment and union inaction, he was shouted down, denounced, bumped, hounded all the way to the parking lot and promptly removed from his shop stewardship.

It has now become plain to many employees that the bulk of these attacks funnel through a contemptible group of managers led by the likes of Hicks, SOM Joann Dickens and SOM Ralph Patterson, working together with corrupt union hacks, EEO officers and other bureaucrats. These coordinated attacks with their undisguised discrimination are a grave threat to all employees. It is a perfect example of the kind of corruption repeatedly condemned in the recent Employee Opinion Survey. Being created is the same kind of stress and anger that has led to numerous acts of violence at other postal facilities.

So what is behind these attacks on Latinos?

Dividing the postal workers

It's been 23 years since the successful postal strike of 1970 was waged and won for us a decent pay and benefit package. Up through the late 70's, various skirmishes (including the '79 wildcat at the SFBMC) and the continued threat of a national postal strike in part prevented the USPS from winning the kind of wholesale concessions that were common in other sectors. But since 1980, the strength of the postal workers to resist the management offensive has steadily declined, resulting in a major erosion of wages and working conditions.

It is true that the strategy of the USPS has not been a direct, all-out assault on the senior, higher-paid employees as a group. Instead, they have elected to split the workforce into many tiers, beginning their attacks on the lower strata. In this way they hoped to keep the senior employees quiet. Thus today, in addition to the three major crafts, we have as high as 20% of the workforce as casuals, who have no rights or benefits. We have transitionals, PTF's, second-tier regulars and third-tier regulars. Millions and millions of dollars have been grabbed from those at the bottom, those least able to fight. With us divided in this way, a series of low and no raise contracts have been shoved down our throats, *cutting* the pay of *all* tiers after inflation.

Dividing us unit by unit

Besides pay-cuts, a big focus of the management

offensive has been the job-eliminating productivity drive based in part on an unprecedented investment in automation. This has brought radical methods (including 100% casual staffing) to establish minimum personnel levels in newly organized or automated units. It has meant the steady reduction in staffing of existing units. This old-fashioned speed-up had to be accomplished facility by facility, unit by unit.

To do so, a new generation of 80's managers were brought up, cut-throats trained in "assertiveness" and given the room to find ways to further the productivity drive (and their own careers) by any means necessary.

The highly successful method they developed was to build pro-management cliques in every unit where possible. These groups were built up around a collection of the usual suspects: 204-Bs, 204-B wannabes, some QWL stars, corrupt union hacks and a few compromised employees, such as those on a "last-chance" deal. In every unit they were used as informers, to launch divisive campaigns against other employees, to raise production quotas and to expand job assignment.

Favoritism for team players

One key to the successful building of the pro-management cliques was the use of favoritism. Easier job assignments, leave, training, light-duty, overtime, promotion or promises thereof, or even the right to sit in the break area for hours—all these petty hand-outs were parceled to the cliques and offered as enticements to others to join with or accommodate to management's program.

Additionally available to the select was a sort of immunity: join the team and you too can have the kind of protection obviously enjoyed by the assortment of sexual harassers, batterers, Pepsi thieves and other petty criminals that make up a good share of the management group at the BMC.

Harassment and intimidation for whistle blowers

Meanwhile, anyone who spoke out against the corruption and favoritism became the subject of attack. They were hounded and harassed, given the hardest jobs and set up for bogus disciplinary actions at every turn. This was done to teach a lesson to the broad section of postal workers who also hated what they saw: don't fight back or your life will be a living hell.

Where these direct attempts failed to silence employees, management has a long history of organizing and abetting physical violence and threats. Supervisors let it be known who is a "problem", and some of the most politically backward and often racist elements are unleashed as "muscle". Reports of these incidents are systematically ignored. In one of Allen Hicks' first such situations at the BMC, involving a mailhandler who had threatened another employee with a knife for being "lazy", Hicks clearly set the tone for future violence. Having reviewed the evidence

he replied, "I believe there was a knife...but I sympathize with you for having to work with such a bad worker". He dismissed the case with a slap on the wrist.

In order for them to be able to allow their goons to operate with impunity, management has had to take a "hands off" attitude towards nearly all violence that arises. Once again, they show disdain for our safety, but great talent and energy for empty policy statements and worthless programs.

Dividing us by race and nationality

Of course, there has been opposition to the productivity drive with its favoritism and repression that management could not easily suppress. Here at the BMC, some up-and-coming African-American supervisors, looking for an edge, learned well from a long history of white managers' use of racism to divide the workers. When faced with resistance to their attempts to implement the productivity drive, they spread the lie that any non-black worker who opposed their actions was a racist, a "skinhead," or "out to get blacks."

Meanwhile, black workers were heavily lobbied by these supervisors and their defenders on the work room floor, who tried to paint black management as the rightful beneficiaries of the victories of the Civil Rights Movement of the 60's, deserving the full support of all black people. According to these apologists, the doubts and qualms black workers were feeling about the actions of these supervisors were really just "the white man talking." The very freedom of black workers to criticize black managers was targeted, the ability to oppose the postal management offensive assailed. Black workers who didn't immediately fall into line became the victims of the most blatant harassment and ugly smear campaigns, heavy pressure to become a "team player."

Many African-American workers have seen that the actions of the black management clique speak louder than words. They've seen Hicks further a career firing black men. They've seen the same little circle of blacks advance and benefit on the backs of the big majority of black workers whose working conditions steadily deteriorate.

However, the use of these nationalist tactics brought some immediate successes. This only encouraged their use. What followed was the development of a nationalist machinery and the emergence of outright racism. Certain supervisors began to rely almost exclusively on nationalism to build their cliques, meting out favors more and more on racial lines. During one period, Outbound North was actually segregated, with one end for African-Americans and one end for others. Vicious racist books were circulated among certain circles of blacks, and racist epithets became commonplace.

This decline into racism happened because, although these black managers may have gotten their jobs riding the gains of the Civil Rights Movement, the nationalism they promote has none of the progressive content we remember from the 60's. It neither opposes racism nor strives for

unity and justice. These opportunists have made a simple decision, to put themselves first. To get ahead, they have signed on to the capitalist program, and they can have only one mission, capitalist profit. Their main concern for black workers is that they can be delivered, tamed and docile, to the postal lords in Washington.

This nationalist corruption is not limited to one group. One can speak of a certain Balkanization at the BMC, where each ethnic group is encouraged to bind together for its share of the corruption pie. For example, last year, a Filipino 204-B was illegally promoted to dock clerk over two senior-qualified Chinese-Americans. The next day, the Filipino Postal Workers Association plastered the bulletin boards with flyers shamelessly congratulating this thoroughly corrupt outcome. By throwing the FFWA this bone, management was encouraging the building of this sort of organization, which is merely a support group for Filipino managers and dedicated to suppressing any real opposition among Filipino workers to discrimination and corruption. "Don't make noise," they say. "Go with the flow and they may throw us another bone."

Reorganization: a shrinking pool of favors

The recent postal reorganization of management has had some serious consequences for the USPS policy of divide and conquer. Prior to this minor streamlining of the bureaucracy, dozens of employees were trained as 204-Bs and many more recruited. Many dreams of advancement sown during those heady days have since been dashed by the present reality.

For a time, this sent managers and their cliques into something of a panic. Without the carrot of promotion to dangle before our eyes, the other, more petty favors that remain became that much more important, with each group squabbling over control of this or that favor. To satisfy the cliques built increasingly around nationality, having already unleashed racism in their service, there was more pressure than ever to discriminate along racial lines. All of these elements are giving rise to the increased attacks on Latinos at the BMC today.

Latinos are opposing favoritism and discrimination

The other big reason is that some Latinos have said enough is enough and have stood up to defend their most basic rights.

This should come as no surprise, for Latinos have had to fight every inch of the way at the USPS. California will soon be one-third Hispanic. Yet, as late as 1983, there was literally only a handful of Latinos at the BMC. Entrance exams blatantly discriminated against qualified Latin-Americans, while the USPS bureaucracy developed 101 illegal methods to exclude Hispanics from the Post Office. Only a protracted mass struggle capped by a victory in federal court in the mid-1980's got Latinos in the door, and it's been one battle after another ever since.

Now a group of Latino workers are standing up to management abuse. In all likelihood, the USPS management will try to cool down the Latino workers' just grievances by recruiting Latino bosses like they have done for other nationalities. But to develop this fight will require passing on promises of one's own piece of the corruption pie. Instead, reach out to all BMC workers to come to the aid of those singled out for attack.

No to divide and conquer

The coordinated attacks are today being felt most acutely by Latinos. But this same machinery has been used to repress us all. It has and will be used to pacify anyone who stands up for his or her rights. The fight the Latinos have begun is a fight for all postal workers and we must support them by building up the fight against management attacks. We must take the stress and anger we feel and direct it squarely where it belongs—not at each other, but at management.

The divisions among us have seriously hurt our ability to fight against management abuses. Hostilities, suspicion and resentment hamper communication. Every three years this culminates in a contract totally dictated to us from above. The capitalist economic crisis and the soaring budget deficit surely mean we will be targeted with yet bigger wage cuts and speed-up in the coming years. Now is the time to begin to strike back against divide and rule.

No more attacks on Latino workers! □

Correspondence:

Population bomb: still a dud

The following comments, dated June 22, were sent in by comrade Steve of Los Angeles. They refer to his polemic with Earth First!, reprinted in the Dec. 20, 1992 issue of the Supplement, and the letter of comrade Fred of Seattle, which appeared in our issue of May 20. Comrade Joseph of Detroit also took part in this discussion, in our issue of July 1.

Having gone over comrade Fred's reply to my articles on the "Population Bomb" it seems more than likely that the central focus of my discussion has eluded him. It was on account of the widespread, class-biased propaganda and commonly held belief that the "ultimate threat to mankind" really is "too many babies" that I decided to open this neo-Malthusian can of worms in the first place. As I see things, it is obvious that the whole notion of a "Population Bomb" has become a highly charged political issue and it was on this front that I decided to take it on. But by no means should my approach to this subject be interpreted as indicating, as Fred thought it might, a lack of concern or disregard for the effects of population level and growth on the environment. On the contrary, it is an inescapable fact staring us right in the face that the existence of more than **five billion** people exacts a tremendous toll upon the earth and its resources.

Okay, fine, and now that this fact has been acknowledged, exactly how do we as Marxist-Leninists intend to address this issue? Are we, at this point, ready to advocate any kind of forced population control measures? Crucially, given the nature of present-day modern societies, which are predominantly, if not exclusively, capitalist patriarchies, population control has invariably meant that it is poor women who have had to be "controlled." It is poor women who have been made to suffer when pharmaceutical companies dump their more harmful brands of contraceptive pills on Third World countries after they have already been disallowed for sale in wealthier Western nations. It is poor women who suffer when they have IUD's inserted under less than sterile condition and are refused treatment for the resulting infection. In this country many poor Native American, Black and Puerto Rican women have, without their informed consent, been surgically sterilized. Insertion of Norplant (an implantable hormonal contraceptive) has already been made a requirement in some cases of mothers who receive AFDC payments. Do I hear any support for such measures? I certainly hope not. Otherwise, perhaps it's time that we seriously reconsider what we actually mean by "Freedom of Choice."

Well, someone might respond, desperate conditions demand desperate measures. Implying, I suppose, that the earth's carrying capacity is in imminent jeopardy of being exceeded. To which I would say for starters, and this is not merely my view or an opinion grasped from out of the

blue, that even under present conditions of agriculture-for-profit (not to mention that nearly everything else is for profit as well), the world-wide production of cereal grain alone is sufficient to provide every man, woman and child on this planet a daily diet of 3,600 calories. Of course this does not even take into consideration the vast acreage of farmland that this government deliberately keeps fallow by paying agri-capitalists not to grow certain crops in order to support prices.

But to be fair-minded about this issue, I have to admit that undoubtedly there exist those organizations and individuals who are sincerely searching for remedies to halt environmental destruction who, nevertheless, still cling to this notion of "overpopulation." Almost without fail, though, the arguments put forward by these well-meaning people are void of politics. Absent is any mention, much less any analysis of, the class or conflicting forces that, in the real world, are locked in irreconcilable struggles, including the fight to save the environment. Nowhere in their calls for population reduction are you likely to find any reference to the fact that modern societies are based on exploitation and the destruction of nature in the interest, overwhelmingly, of a definite class. Such a trifling oversight.

More to the point, however, in the way that it's typically put forward in this society, talk of "overpopulation" amounts to little more than a smokescreen designed to turn people's attention away from the powerful financial interests which direct and control both the political and economic life of this country. In the hands of the ruling class, data on population levels and birth rates serve to cover up the tracks of the real criminals while they continue to ply their environmentally destructive trades, creating the veritable hell on earth that exists for much of the life *remaining* on this planet.

It is also increasingly apparent that the, "Population Bomb," or some variant of this, is being deployed more and more to "Bomb" certain sections of the "Population." Take for example the almost constant drumbeat these days of the politicians and other demagogues who continue to wage their disgustingly racist campaigns to scapegoat and whip up hatred for immigrants and poor people, usually people of color, as if they were really to blame for all the ills of this sick capitalist society. I'm sure we have all become acquainted with some form of the old saw which goes something like: "Somethin's just gotta be done about *those kinda people*. They just keep breed'n like a buncha rabbits and they're ruinin' our economy." One of the stanzas from a "poem" that was actually distributed in the California Legislature on May 18, 1993 by Pete Knight (R-Palmdale) speaks of a Mexican immigrant in the following way:

"Sent for family, they just trash,
But they all draw more welfare cash.
Everything is mucho good—
Soon we own the neighborhood.
We have a hobby, it's called breeding,
Welfare pay for baby feeding.
Kids need dentist, wife need pills,
We get free—We got not bills."
(Cited in *La Gente De Aztlan*, May/June 1993)

Or if you prefer the more "respectable" variety, here's Congressman Tony Beilenson, who, in his *Special Report on the Environment* of July 1990, states that, "starvation, poverty and virtually every environmental problem we face today" can be blamed on population growth. From the executive director of Zero Population Growth, Susan Weber (*ZPG Reporter*, April 1990,) we are told in all seriousness that the "invisible force driving global environmental deterioration (is) people, too many of them." Of course, in Susan's mind that "invisible force" has nothing whatsoever to do with the capitalist mode of production. And do you suppose, just for a moment, that when she speaks of too many people she could possibly mean "too many Kennedys" or "too many Rockefellers" or "too many DuPonts"? I hardly think so. Even the liberal feminist organization, NOW, can play this game as seen in their "pro-choice" TV campaign. These ads appealed, not for the building of support for a woman's Freedom of Choice, but instead to the vulgar notion of all the money that could be saved that would otherwise have to be spent on all those welfare kids. Yuk!

But it gets worse. From the lips of the bourgeois feminist heroine Margaret Sanger comes her famous

eugenic dictum, "More children from the fit, less from the unfit, that's the chief issue of birth control." In 1922 she cautioned in her book, *The Pivot of Civilization*, that "the illiterate, degenerate masses might destroy our way of life." Next we are presented with the human-hearted pronouncements of Ben Wattenberg, whose recent book, *The Birth Dearth*, laments the declining births in the "great power nations" and the dark (no pun intended) implication for Caucasian world supremacy, Western Civilization and the American lifestyle. By the way, Jeane Kirkpatrick, the Wicked Witch of Washington, was quoted as saying, "I really like this book." This kind of anti-people garbage could just as easily have been taken right from page one of a Nazi or KKK training manual.

This list of examples should make it quite clear that although "Population Bomb" rhetoric comes in many guises, its ultimate purpose is the same. Specifically, it is meant to be used as a club to bludgeon the downtrodden and drive yet another wedge between groups of working people to keep them from uniting against their common oppressors, the capitalist class. Let me add that of course there is a time and place for fleshing out the framework of a future socialist society in order to make it something other than just "barren rhetoric." From my perspective, however, this issue of "overpopulation" has already become an effective ideological weapon, not only for the bourgeoisie, but for the more openly white supremacist organizations as well, and in light of this, it must be challenged and exposed now for the racist rot that it is.

Comrade Steve
LA Supporter, Marxist-Leninist Party □

The 'three forces and five component parts' of the legalization of gays in the military

The following article is from a speech delivered by comrade Bob, a friend of the MLP, at this year's May Day meeting in Seattle; under the above title, it has been slightly edited by the author for publication. Another talk and discussion at this meeting dealt with the timber industry in the Northwest; a detailed article on this question appears elsewhere in this issue of the Supplement.

First I'd like to present some of the broad questions which form the backdrop of this discussion. It will probably be less than useful for us to attempt to explore these questions directly today, because we are likely to drift off into generalities and speculation. Perhaps, if we have time, we can tie some of the more specific issues raised in discussion explicitly to their place in the broader picture.

Nonetheless, for context, some of the broad questions we need to understand:

What are some of the sources of anti-gay culture historically? Presently?

What about the role it has played, and plays presently in the maintenance of the division of labor?

Is anti-gay bigotry related to anti-women bigotry, and the gender division of labor? If so, how?

What are the implications for class society of tearing down anti-gay cultural attitudes? For socialists?

Three forces

There appear to be three major social forces operating on the development of this issue presently. Arrayed from

right to left, these are:

First, a grouping of some significant portion of the military top brass, possibly the majority of politicians, and the fundamentalist christian structure and right political movement. This grouping sees advantage in the maintenance of the bigoted culture in the military. What are these advantages?

Second, a moderate camp, including Clinton, which is more populous than it may appear at first glance. For example, many military officers who publicly have been opposed to legalization have made statements in private indicating that they do not really have a problem with it. The most well known of these is General Schwarzkopf (see *Conduct Unbecoming* by Randy Shilts). This grouping also includes a large section of the masses. This camp seems to see advantage in bringing military culture more in line with that of overall society. At some level they may see a need to ease the growing contradiction between a society moving steadily forward and a military firmly nailed to the last century. What are the implications of this shift for the military? What about for overall society? And why the shadowy support for this position?

Third, a grouping among the masses to the left of the 'Clinton' camp, which supports more comprehensive democratic aims than Clinton's limited position does, both for gays, specifically, and for oppressed groups, generally. This group encompasses the broad array of left groups and activists, including ourselves, as the left wing, and just generally democratically-minded people. To one degree or another, this grouping sees a need for pushing democratic aims beyond simply bringing the military more in line with "enlightened" society. For our purposes, this grouping contains two major perspectives: that of working class interests, and that of the militant gay liberation movement. How do the aims dictated by an independent revolutionary working class perspective differ from those of the militant gay liberationists?

Five hypotheses

Finally, I'd like to present five hypotheses about why this development is occurring now. These need not be seen as exclusive of one another, nor is any one of them necessarily complete by itself.

First, two which are internal to the military:

1) Rape and sexual harassment against military women are strengthened by the ban on gays. Women who reject unwanted sexual advances often face accusations of lesbianism and ugly investigations. Gay men and suspected gays are also subject to rapes, gang rapes, and brutal beatings. From the perspective of the military, this is probably destructive to morale and efficiency. It probably inhibits recruitment, also.

2) A highly organized gay subculture has developed in the military in the last 25 years. This may appear very dangerous to the bourgeoisie, as it develops habits among gay military personnel of flaunting military codes. Reagan/Bush's tactics of greater repression have, of course, only heightened the problem. Clinton's move may represent a new tack.

And then, three hypotheses pertaining to broader society:

3) The inevitable economic restructuring this country is undergoing is likely to cause increasing hardships for the majority, especially workers and the poor. By posing as a great humanitarian on the question of gays in the military, Clinton may be buying some tolerance for himself as this squeeze develops.

4) Clinton's election may signal a change in bourgeois tactics toward the masses, from those of the Reagan/Bush years. If so, the highly organized right-wing movement built up during those years may be seen as a liability. Quick, though somewhat limited, defeats on their two major focuses, abortion rights and gay liberation, could demoralize them enough to allow the ruling class to take this new tack relatively unimpeded.

5) Since Stonewall, in 1969, gay civil rights activists have followed a tried and true civil rights recipe: sit-ins, die-ins, marches and speak-outs, letter-writing and electoral campaigns, as well as a few riots. Clinton's move, then, may be an attempt to pre-empt the so-far mostly civil movement from becoming radicalized and "uncivil".

□

Behind the high cost of mass transit in Boston

The following articles are from the July 11 issue of Boston Worker, voice of the Boston branch of the MLP:

Who is breaking the MBTA budget?

In the middle of June MBTA General Manager John Haley released a report to the *Globe* announcing plans to privatize 25 per cent of the MBTA [Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority] bus lines. Haley claimed that this move was necessary to contain rising labor costs which are supposedly breaking the MBTA budget and draining the state taxpayers. In this way he tried to set the rest of the working people against the MBTA workers and to justify privatization. Similar charges have been levied by Haley's bosses Kerasotis and [Republican Governor] Weld. Numerous Democratic Party politicians have made the same charges. But the cold hard facts are that these charges are totally false. It is not MBTA workers' wages that keep inflating the MBTA budget, but rather it is the MBTA's dealings with the private sector: banks, construction companies, and equipment vendors.

The part of the budget going to wages and benefits has declined sharply despite a 50% increase in service.

The *Boston Worker* investigated Haley's charges by reviewing the MBTA annual budget reports since 1972. What we found was that wages, salaries and benefits of all employees including supervisors and executives had steadily declined from 68% of the net cost of service in 1972 to 58% in 1978 to 48% in 1992. Haley himself projects that in the current fiscal year wage and benefit costs will decline to 45% of the net cost of service despite an expected contract settlement that will have to include back pay for the 2½ years that MBTA workers have gone without a raise.

Unfortunately MBTA budgets do not separate the wages and benefits of the workers from those of the supervisors and executives. Since over this period the MBTA has increased the number of executives by 500% (from 81 to over 400), the decline in the part of the budget going to the wages and benefits of the non-supervisory workers has been even sharper.

Where the money really goes.

The real budget buster is debt service. Since 1972 debt service, that is, principal and interest payments to banks and bondholders, have increased from \$22.7 million or 14.9% of the budget, to an expected \$255 million or 31% of the budget this fiscal year. *This year the MBTA will pay out more in interest to the banks and bondholders than the wages of all the bus drivers, train and streetcar operators,*

collectors, track workers, and train repairmen put together! Since 1989 the total debt service bill has increased \$116 million while the total wage and benefit bill (including management) has increased \$53 million.

Most of the debt service is interest. And MBTA bonds are a very lucrative investment. But why all the debt? The MBTA has run up over \$2 billion in debt in the past decade to fund capital construction and the purchase of new equipment. And everything the MBTA buys from the private sector it pays top dollar for.

It paid millions to HR Grace company for a worthless toxic waste dump through which it built the Alewife Red Line extension.

The MBTA is planning to pay \$30 million to build a parking lot on top of RESCO's waste dump next to the Lynn Marsh.

The MBTA spent \$800,000 per car to have the Red Line cars rebuilt. It spent \$1.1 million per car for the new Green Line street cars. Compare this to the \$1 million price tag quoted in railroad magazines for a brand new 4500 horsepower locomotive with 9 computers, air conditioned cabs and bathrooms and an air compressor big enough to power the brake system of a 100-car train.

Clearly equipment vendors and contractors and real estate speculators are making a killing off the MBTA. It is very similar to the military procurement system and its \$600 screwdrivers. But Haley says not one word about this waste. In fact, he is continuing his capital improvement borrowing at a rate of \$3800 million per year, which will guarantee that soon debt service will be over half the MBTA budget.

No one can deny that MBTA service needs to be expanded. But when everything is purchased at 50 to 100 percent over its regular market value, when the idle bondholding class rakes in hundreds of millions a year in tax-free guaranteed interest off this effort, then the public is being fleeced.

Haley, Weld and the capitalist politicians have proved themselves to be pathological liars who will say anything to attack the working people and to find a new way to help wealthy friends rob the public till. □

Are MBTA workers overpaid?

Or is privatization another scheme to break up and beat down the working people?

In justifying privatization Haley repeats the well-worn propaganda that MBTA workers are overpaid. He says that the MBTA has the highest labor costs per hour of bus operation in the country. Of course he does not back this up with hard facts. Nor does he mention that the Boston metropolitan area has one of the highest costs of living and the highest medical insurance costs in the country. It also

has one of the most congested traffic systems in the country, which leads to considerably higher maintenance costs.

But let's get down to actual figures. Haley claims that the average bus driver makes \$35,000 per year. This, he claims, is too much for a bus driver. But the fact is that \$35,000 per year is still not enough to support a family of four in the Boston area at what the federal government itself considers a moderate standard of living. When Haley complains that this is too much, he is only expressing the arrogance of the capitalists and their flunkies that the people who do the actual work in this society do not deserve a decent living. He is reflecting the attitude of the rich not only toward MBTA workers but all workers. But on top of this, Haley has his figures wrong.

The figure of \$35,000 per year is not the average wage of a MBTA bus driver. It is approximately the average wage of a full-time MBTA bus driver putting in a 9½-hour day. But the majority of the MBTA bus drivers are not full time. They are 'part-time' drivers who make from \$18,000 to \$27,000 per year, pay over 60 per cent of the cost of their health benefits, and put in a 12- or 13-hour day for 5 to 6 hours pay. Over the past 10 years the remaining full-time bus drivers have suffered a slight loss in real wages to inflation, but the wage cutting due to the massive expansion of the part-time system has been much worse. But this is not enough for Haley and Weld. Privatization will be a means of taking advantage of the high unemployment of the 90's and reducing wages even more.

The issue of privatization of the T is not a matter of concern just for MBTA workers. It is part of the struggle of the whole working class to defend its livelihood. For the past 15 years American capitalism has been restructuring one branch of the economy after another to increase profits at the workers' expense. Millions of manufacturing, transportation and communication jobs have been permanently eliminated. The average manufacturing worker has lost 15% in real wages while he or she is producing nearly 40% more. Millions have been forced out of higher-paying industrial or construction jobs into lower-paying non-union retail trade or service jobs. Twenty-five per cent of the work force has been turned into part-time temporary or contingent workers with little or no benefits. On the MBTA over half the operators have been turned into part-time workers. Now the latest craze of the large corporations is to contract out as much of their work as possible to low-wage sweat shops, and to replace permanent workers with temps or contract workers.

Privatization is the public sector reflection of this trend. Hundreds of state highway jobs have been eliminated as the work is turned over to private contractors or the workers replaced with prison laborers (Kerasotis' ultimate exploitation technique). This past week 735 cafeteria and cleaning workers were replaced by non-union private contractors at the state schools for the mentally retarded. In every case, privatization means lower wages and the elimination of health and pension benefits. When is this

going to end? A wealthy minority are pigging out by devastating ever-growing sections of the working class. It is time to fight back. Support the MBTA workers fight against privatization. Build an independent movement of the working people to fight back against the wealthy minority of capitalists who are devastating our livelihood and our children's future for their ever-growing profits. □

The real story of the MBTA's private contractors

The T has already contracted out most of its cleaning work. And all the private contractors doing work formerly done by T workers are non-union. They pay their workers ½ to 1/3 the wages of MBTA workers; they provide no benefits for most of their workers; and they charge the T only five or six per cent less than it would cost to have MBTA workers do the job. Making the biggest profits through the superexploitation of their workers is what the private contractors are efficient at.

An example of the wages of these workers is the wages of the station cleaners in the subways. Until six months ago they were paid \$7.50 per hour, with a 35-hour week and no benefits. But then their employer unilaterally cut their wages to between \$5 and \$6 an hour, depending on the worker. Such are the advantages of keeping the workers from having a union. Most of the station cleaners are immigrant workers who have a difficult time finding a job in normal times, much less the present recession. So their employer took advantage of their situation to just cut their wages.

But the worst situation is the situation of the car cleaners on the Green Line. A large number of these workers are now convicts on prison work release programs. They are paid \$5.75 per hour. They work from eight at night to three in the morning, which is after the trains stop running. So they must sleep in the street cars until 5:30 a.m. when the trains start running again. But the real kicker is that their employer is also the owner of the privatized half-way house where they must live. A good part of their wage then goes back to their employer in terms of room rent. And if their employer is not happy with their work, if they protest or try to join a union, back to the penitentiary they go. This is an outrage. We do not mind prisoners being given useful work to do to help reintegrate them into society. But they must be given the same wages and rights as other workers, not used as chain-gang peons.

The workers who work for the MBTA's private cleaning contractors, especially the work-release convicts, are in a weak position to defend themselves. MBTA workers should show solidarity with them and tell the public about these outrages. Unless we defend those who are being worst exploited, we will all be forced down to that level by competition. □

How to fight back

MBTA workers face a very serious challenge from Weld's privatization attempts. They are in serious danger of being divided into competing public and private sections and suffering even more drastic reduction of their wages and benefits. Haley is proposing to contract out the operation and routes of the Quincy and Lynn bus barns as his first step in privatization. His privatization proposals will be discussed at the MBTA Board of Directors meeting on July 21 at 10 Park Plaza. It is time to fight back.

Weld and Haley cannot be allowed a free hand to slander and attack the workers. They must be confronted at every turn. MBTA workers should take leaflets to the riders of the system, who are mostly working people like themselves. MBTA workers need to organize rallies and demonstrations to arouse their own ranks and build public support for their cause. When Haley proposes to privatize the bus routes at the MBTA Board of Directors meeting, why shouldn't MBTA workers be there en masse to oppose him, to publicize their cause and break up his orchestrated, monopolized media event. Only by going directly to the working people themselves, only by showing that they are a united force that is going to fight, can MBTA workers win the respect and support of the working class public for

the inevitable battles that are coming.

The old policy of the AFL-CIO and Carmen's Union leaders of eschewing mass action in favor of quiet lobbying of the legislature and campaigning for various Democratic Party 'friends of labor' has proved totally bankrupt over the last 12 years. The Democratic Party has repeatedly joined in and led the attack on the MBTA workers and state workers. From the management rights bill to the part-time system to increased health insurance co-payments the Democrats have stabbed the MBTA workers in the back. Even their 'anti-privatization' Pacheco bill does not stop privatization. It merely says the state must save money by privatizing. It cuts some of the profit out for the [politically-]connected contractors, but it doesn't stop privatization. The Democrats like the Republicans are a capitalist party beholden in the final analysis to the overall interests of wealth. Politicians and PR firms will not save the MBTA workers. Like any other section of workers they must rely on their own strength and the support of workers like themselves. Things are not going to turn around until the working class in this country starts to build its own, independent, mass, fighting movement. MBTA workers are faced with the challenge of contributing to building such a movement. □

On the fight for abortion rights in Illinois **'Parental notification': down but not out**

From the July 7 issue of Chicago Workers' Voice, paper of the MLP-Chicago:

On Friday, May 28, the Illinois House failed to pass the Parental Notice of Abortion bill. The House bill sponsor, Terry Parke, (R., Hoffman Estates) would not send it to committee, faced with further revisions.

Everyone had expected it to pass. Only a week earlier, the Illinois Senate passed its version. The irony of the House defeat was that the bill's own sponsors and supporters defeated it by all their efforts to pass it.

When first introduced in March, it not only required a doctor to inform a parent or guardian 48 hours ahead of time that their daughter wanted an abortion. It also made it a felony not to. It contained stiff fines against the doctor and up to a year in jail. This was the first thing that rankled some legislators, who thought they might be going too far. They didn't want to hurt its chances of passage so demanded changes. A compromise reduced the penalties to \$1000 for the first offense and \$5000 for subsequent ones.

Another hitch came up when Gov. Edgar, a longtime supporter of parental notification, pointed out that the bill, in its existing form, would probably be overturned by the courts. It did not contain a provision for "judicial bypass". Such provisions provide an alternative to telling parents. They also allow the courts to restrict abortion. A young woman who didn't want her parents informed would have to go before a judge and argue for not telling them. This is supposedly a means of protecting the right to privacy of the young woman. Gov. Edgar said he would not sign legislation without this provision. They changed it — over the protest of Parke and the Senate sponsor, Thomas McCracken (R., Downers Grove).

Finally, two days before the House was to vote on the bill, the Illinois State Medical Association got into the act.

Concerned over penalties against doctors, they blitzed the legislators with a major lobbying effort. One that left jaws hanging as the doctors' group demonstrated the true meaning of "clout". Their arguments for "doctor/patient confidentiality" and "self-policing" barely disguised the fact that the private medical establishment has no objection to restricting the abortion rights of young women. The IMA, which has consistently refused to support abortion rights, merely wanted a way found that did not cast doctors in the role of the heavies.

By Friday, when the bill came to the floor of the House, firm supporters were shaky and shaky support evaporated. Another compromise was in order. However, the changes necessary to its passage would have completely undermined Parke and McCracken's intent. The bill would have become a toothless advisory referendum. Rather than see this happen, Parke withdrew the bill, effectively killing it for this session of the General Assembly.

Is it really dead?

Commenting on the bill's defeat, Parke said he'd be back in 1994 with another. Rep. Vicki Moseley (R., Springfield) believes the concept of parental notification has broad public support. "I feel that parental notification, if nothing else, is one area where the majority of Americans are on the side of the parents."

Pro-choice activists should take heed. The noose continues to tighten around abortion rights. The rope handlers show no sign of slackening their grip. More warningly, the maneuvers around the Parental Notification bill amount to a dry run. The General Assembly now has a ready, workable formula for a law that they can get off the ground. They will try. Get ready, starting now, to defeat any renewed attempts to resurrect this medieval legislation. □

Abortion in the Soviet Union

The Bolshevik revolution and the emancipation of women, part 4:

The following article gives the views of a study group in Chicago of comrades and friends of the Marxist-Leninist Party. The first three parts appeared in our issues of May 20 and December 20 last year, and July 1 this year.

One of the fiercest struggles taking place today in the U.S. is the fight to retain the hard-won right to legal abortion. In view of this, it is instructive to examine the issue of abortion in the Soviet Union under the Bolsheviks — and after. After the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks immediately decriminalized abortion: all penalties for abortion were abolished. On November 18, 1920, the Bolsheviks legalized abortion and set up a system to ensure safe and free abortions. Today, it is rather astonishing to realize that with a stroke of the pen, the Bolsheviks granted women the right to legal abortion. They were the first government in modern history to do so. This testifies to the fact that the Bolsheviks gave protection of the health and welfare of women one of the highest priorities on their agenda. They also realized that, at this time, the right to abortion was a democratic right essential to the liberation and equality of women. The full story, however, is complex. Legal abortion was abolished in 1936. This was not only a betrayal of the Bolshevik goal to liberate women, but illustrates as well the general revision of Marxism-Leninism.

The necessity for abortion

Under the Czarist regime, abortion was considered murder. However arbitrarily the laws were enforced, persons performing abortions could receive severe punishment: cancellation of medical license, long periods of imprisonment, and even death if the woman died. If abortion was self-induced, the woman herself could be punished. Abortion could be legally performed only if a woman's life was threatened. It was therefore driven underground for poor rural and working class women who resorted to quacks, herbalists, midwives or other "wise women". As always, the daughters and wives of the rich could procure the service through private doctors.

After the Revolution, there were many public forums, newspaper debates and women's meetings over abortion and the "new morality". Zhenotdel [the women's commissions of the Bolshevik Party, the history of which are studied in Part 2 of this series in the Dec. 20, 1992 issue of the *Supplement*] workers confirmed that women were demanding legalized abortion and giving undeniable economic justification for it (Field, p. 75). Still, at this time

legalizing abortion did not seem a viable option, due to the shortage of doctors, facilities, and the resistance of much of the medical profession. However, merely removing criminal penalties had resulted in an increase in abortions, and the death and injury rate from self-induced abortions and unqualified practitioners had become even more appalling. Contraception was almost unknown among the working classes.

The conditions of the Civil War finally impelled the law of 1920. The war caused massive social disruptions which resulted in widows, abandoned women, orphaned children, and pregnancies that were an intolerable burden. The abortion rate escalated even more, and official sources estimated that, during this period, 50% of the women who underwent illegal abortions became infected, and that 4% of them died (Schlesinger, p. 44). Moreover, freedom from the burden of over-large families was considered necessary to liberate women into the workforce and the war effort, as well as to free them from ecclesiastical and patriarchal cruelty. For example, in the rural and Muslim areas, underage girls were often forced, sometimes by rape, into maternity (Schlesinger, p. 18). Above all, economic conditions, and most particularly the housing shortage, were crucial factors.

It is important to understand that the decision to legalize abortion was not based on the criterion of a "woman's right to control her own reproductive processes," as it is expressed today in the pro-choice movement. Almost no one liked the idea of abortion or viewed it as a long-term solution. Instead, abortion was considered a temporary right, as the Decree states, "for so long as the moral survivals of the past and difficult economic conditions of the present compel some women to resort to this operation" (Abortion Decree, cited in Schlesinger, p. 44). Underlying this qualified view toward abortion were the assumptions that children were the Soviet Union's "socialist future", and that bearing children was woman's natural function and social contribution. Even Kollantai, that most radical of social theorists, criticized the feminist idea of woman's absolute right to control her body as bourgeois

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selfishness, a failure on the part of women to provide the collective with future workers (Farnsworth, p. 362). Both she and Krupskaya, for example, condoned abortion as necessary, but advocated research into contraception. It seems that the option of childlessness as an acceptable lifestyle was not considered. It must be added that not all party members condoned legalized abortion; for example, Sofia Smidovitch, a later Zhenotdel director, vigorously expressed the view of some who feared that legal abortion would lead to promiscuity and the disintegration of the family (pp. 362-3).

There were other factors which contributed to the dilemma. Abortion was, at this time, still considered a dangerous operation, and the medical profession was on the whole conservative. Pregnancy was considered less damaging to women's health, and early efforts had been directed into improving maternal and infant care. There also seems to have been a fear of the "social engineering" ideology of the European birth control advocates, the "Neomalthusians", who advocated limiting the birthrate of the working classes and ethnic minorities. Lenin, of course, had made a clear distinction between the "hypocrisy of the ruling class" and the "protection of elementary democratic rights" in his 1913 article, *The Working Class and Neomalthusianism*. He had stated: "[We demand] the unconditional annulment of all laws against abortions or against the distribution of medical literature on contraceptive measures" (p. 30). Concerns about replacing population decimated by war, famine and epidemic, and the desire to populate the vast barren Eastern regions, also cannot be overestimated. This latter factor has been constant throughout Soviet history.

So, at the beginning of the Bolshevik regime, legalizing abortion was regarded as a necessary evil. It was an intermediate step until contraception could be improved (see the Coda on Contraception), and until domestic, social and educational services could be put in place to free women to be both mothers and productive workers. Given the grim realities of the current situation, it was considered necessary that women have access to abortions in clinics under medical supervision, and that scarce resources be diverted into establishing such a health-care system.

The abortion decree - November 18, 1920

The Decree on the Legalization of Abortions may be considered as part of the First Family Code. (An article on Soviet Family Law is forthcoming.) The Commissariats of Health and Justice decreed:

1. To permit such operations to be performed freely and without any charge in Soviet hospitals, where conditions are assured of minimizing the harm of the operation.
2. Absolutely to forbid anyone but a doctor to carry out this operation.
3. Any nurse or midwife found guilty of making such an operation will be deprived of

the right to practice, and tried by a People's Court. (Illegal abortionists could be tried for manslaughter if the woman died.)

4. A doctor carrying out an abortion in his private practice with mercenary aims will be called to account by a People's Court.

In addition, it provided that:

a. Abortions be surgical operations, not induced by drugs.

b. After abortions, women stay in a medical facility three to five days.

c. Working women be granted up to three weeks of recovery with full pay.

d. Abortions not be performed after 2 1/2 months (some accounts say 3).

e. An abortion not be performed for the first pregnancy unless the woman's health is endangered.

f. Under these conditions, no doctor has the right to refuse an abortion, but is at liberty to discourage it in any fit manner (Field, pp. 79-81, and Schlesinger, p. 44).

These conditions applied to married and single women alike. The prohibition against first pregnancy abortions was justified on the grounds that the concept of illegitimacy had been erased. Exceptions were made for juveniles and victims of rape and incest. It was thought that pregnancy was actually beneficial to a woman's health and psychological well-being, so it was urged that abortion be discouraged if a woman had fewer than three children, if her health was good, and if her living situation was adequate. Women were not supposed to apply to the clinics more than twice each year. Even though doctors could not refuse abortions, Field states that from 50% to 80% of the women who applied for first abortions were discouraged (p. 90). But evidently, due to the great variability in medical personnel and facilities, virtually any woman who demanded an abortion obtained one. For example, if a first-time pregnant woman insisted on abortion, she could be considered psychologically "unfit" for motherhood. Because the clinics usually had long waiting lists, women could go to private doctors if a license was obtained. No facts are available on abortions performed after the first trimester, but there are indications that this also was possible under certain conditions. Since it was recognized that facilities and education were inadequate in many regions, women who self-induced abortions were not prosecuted. In fact, Schlesinger states that it was common for women to self-induce abortions in order to get admitted to the clinics and avoid the red tape and long waits (p. 175). Also, because clinics were scarce in the countryside, and because rural and Muslim women were suspicious of doctors in general, they often preferred their own "wise women"; and it seems the law turned a blind eye.

The Aboritaria

Aboritaria (state facilities) were established in major cities and towns. Foreign medical personnel and scientists commonly toured these facilities, which were regarded as state-of-the-art. Among these were three American sociologists — Fannina Halle, Alice Field, and Ella Winter — who visited the Moscow Aboritaria in 1930-32. They were all very impressed. Following are their observations.

There was a great deal of propaganda explaining safe, legal abortion in public museums, schools, factories and the Points of Consultation, which were gynecological clinics throughout the towns and countryside. The visitors were quite astonished at the medically explicit language, the graphic portrayals, and the freedom of discussion in mixed-sex groups. On the other hand, there were also many signs which cautioned: "To allow abortion is not the same as to encourage it," and "Prevention, not abortion" (Halle, p. 139).

The procedure to obtain an abortion was very thorough, to say the least. One suspects that the bureaucratic red tape was specifically designed to discourage abortion. Women had to obtain a license from the Abortus-Troyka, consisting of a doctor and various community members or public officials. Where such resources were available, a visiting nurse was sent to obtain a complete medical history. Doctors and social workers emphasized the risks of abortion and the health benefits of pregnancy, and women were often persuaded to view films of abortions or real procedures. Field states that out of every 100 pregnant women coming to the Moscow health clinics, 18-20 asked for abortions, but that during the laborious intake process, up to 60%-75% of the applicants changed their minds (p. 90). Unless the woman was very nervous, abortions were done without anesthetic and took only three to five minutes. After an abortion, women were referred to contraceptive clinics. Whatever method was used, it is described as similar to "pulling teeth". (No explicit description of either abortion methods or contraceptive devices could be published in the United States at this time, and Field mentions that she had to expunge many relevant details in order to be published, p. 97.) The visitors were impressed not only by the hygiene and efficiency of the facilities but by the solicitude of the (mainly female) staff and the relaxed atmosphere among the patients. They state, however, that the number of Aboritaria was nowhere adequate (13 in Moscow and environs), especially in the countryside, and that they were always very overcrowded with long waiting lists. The fact that Clinics for Incomplete Abortions (mangled or self-induced abortions) were also eventually established in 1931 testifies to these facts.

The three sociologists interviewed Moscow women and came up with this profile. Many women had had four, five, six abortions and some had even had 15-20. The average number was seven. The typical woman seeking abortion was between 25-40, married, with two or more children. Economic hardships comprised almost 60% of the reasons given, with medical reasons next. Abortions due to

"egoistic" reasons were rare. Of the younger unmarried women who applied, the largest social group was students, who could not complete their studies with a child, and who cited lack of adequate housing as another major factor.

The effects of abortion

By 1932, there were no cases of criminal abortion prosecuted in the Soviet Union (Halle, p. 143). The abortion policy had evidently achieved its intent. But it had been a struggle. As early as 1924, the medical profession had become alarmed about the abortion rate, and had gotten a regulation passed that restricted abortion to medical emergencies. Due to a prompt upsurge in illegal abortions, this was hastily reversed (Mace, p. 245). Then a fee was introduced, based on family size, but this did not seem to deter the rate and was often waived (p. 245). And party members and their wives had been urged from the first not to resort to abortion in order to set a public example (p. 245).

Statistics on abortion, like most Soviet statistics, are questionable. It was popular to compare legalized abortion in the Soviet Union to illegal abortion in western European countries, especially Germany (where, however, since abortion was illegal, reliable figures are doubtful). Soviet officials boasted that "we are the country in which abortion is least practiced" (Halle, p. 144), and in 1929, stated that the Soviet rate was 8.2% per 1,000 women, or half the rate of Germany (Schlesinger, p. 173). Field states that by 1927 only 14% of abortions were performed outside of state facilities, as compared to 41% in 1923. She states the mortality rate was only .079% in state hospitals (p. 78); and Winter confirms the low mortality rate: in 1931, for example, only one fatality in 26,000 abortions, 10 times lower than in Germany and the U.S. (p. 147).

In 1927, a major conference of gynecologists was held in the Ukraine to assess the results of the abortion law; Schlesinger states this was actually a "demonstration against legalized abortion" (p. 174). The vast majority of the participants took an extremely negative view. They stressed the "manifold harm done to women by artificial abortion": citing subsequent psychological problems, birth difficulties, sterility, deformed organs, hormonal trauma, and still-born embryos. On the other hand, they agreed that Soviet abortion policy had saved countless lives, and that procedures were the most enlightened and safe in the world. Still, they feared that this fact was encouraging a "light-hearted" approach toward abortion, and a "paralysis of the will to parenthood"; in short, abortion was damaging the sanctity of marriage and the family.

Only one doctor came close to the position that abortion is a woman's inherent right, but his views are striking: "The woman's request is sufficient because no one is more capable than she herself of judging her social indication; no one of us men would accept a decision by some commission Do not prevent women from deciding for themselves a fundamental issue of their lives. Woman has

a right to a sexual life as freely realized as is that of man" (p. 186). He added a voice of reason to the proceedings, pointing out the deleterious effects of multiple pregnancies and the lack of economic resources to support children.

The Resolution of the Conference confirmed:

- 1) a remarkable increase in abortions;
- 2) a considerable decrease in secret abortions and diseases and deaths ensuing thereof;
- 3) that abortion had not resulted in a reduction of the Ukrainian population;
- 4) that the public must be warned against the harmful consequences of abortion;
- 5) that it should not be carried out except by authorized medical personnel;
- 6) that the most effective method to counteract abortions is distribution of harmless contraceptives; and
- 7) that scientific investigation and testing of contraceptives is the most urgent social task before gynecologists (p.187).

The result of legalized abortion on the Soviet birthrate is an interesting question. It was repeatedly stated in *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* from 1927 to 1936 that the overall population level was not decreasing: it was either holding its own or slightly increasing. By 1936 it was said to be increasing at a healthy rate: 1.5% annually compared to Europe's .03%-.07% (Schlesinger, p. 313). On the other hand, many experts were alarmed at the decreasing birthrate in the urban centers, where women were electing to limit families to one or two children. Some party officials viewed the abortion rate in the cities as "massive and horrifying", and saw an ominous portent for future population growth (Geiger, p. 73). But since other important social influences on the birthrate must also be considered, it is difficult to assess this, e.g., the great decrease in infant mortality and childbirth deaths due to really excellent maternal and infant care, and the increasing life span of Soviet citizens.

Summary

What can be concluded about legalized abortion between 1920 and 1936? No one liked it, but it had accomplished its goal. The health and social condition of women had been greatly improved. Despite advanced medical procedures, it was still viewed as medically dangerous. Still, women resorted to the service in huge numbers, while at the same time a considerable percentage was discouraged. It was more of a problem in the cities. There were sporadic attempts to substitute contraception, but nothing really adequate was accomplished. It had not greatly harmed the birthrate, yet the birthrate was probably not growing at a pace fast enough to suit many. Perhaps, most important, it was seen as fostering immorality and as harming the family structure. And it must be noted that since the middle twenties, there had been a strong conservative effort to strengthen the "traditional" family in the Soviet Union.

Prohibition against abortion - 1936

In 1936, legal abortion was abolished. The Prohibition mandated:

1. In view of the proven harm of abortions, to forbid the performance of abortions whether in hospitals and special health institutions, or in the homes of doctors and the private homes of pregnant women. The performance of abortions shall be allowed exclusively in those cases when the continuation of pregnancy endangers life or threatens serious injury to the health of the pregnant woman and likewise when a serious disease of the parents may be inherited, and only under hospital or maternity-home conditions.

2. For the performance of abortions outside a hospital or in a hospital under conditions violating the above provisions, the doctor performing the abortion shall be criminally punishable to the extent of one to two years' imprisonment, while for the performance of abortions under unsanitary conditions or by persons who have no special medical training a criminal penalty of not less than three years' imprisonment shall be fixed.

3. For compelling a woman to undergo an abortion, a criminal penalty of two years' imprisonment shall be fixed.

4. In relation to pregnant women undergoing an abortion in violation of the said prohibition, to establish as a criminal penalty a social reprimand, and in the event of a repetition of the violation of the law on the prohibition of abortions, a fine up to 300 rubles (Decree, cited in Schlesinger, pp. 271-2).

In order to ameliorate the new law, the state mandated stricter sanctions against employer discrimination toward pregnant women, increased subsidies to new mothers and mothers of large families, increased numbers of maternity homes, nurseries and kindergartens, stricter divorce laws, and harsher penalties for non-payment of alimony. Another call for increased research into better contraceptive methods was issued.

The Prohibition Against Abortion is part of the revision of the Family Law begun in 1936 and completed in 1944. However, as distinct from the 1926 Family Law revisions, there was no parliamentary discussion about this change (Schlesinger, p. 281), although the draft bill was submitted for public debate. Schlesinger attempts to present a representative sampling of opinion from *Pravda* and *Izvestiya*. Given the probable bias of these official organs, it is understandable that most of the responses — heavily weighted by sociologists and medical personnel — registered approval of the measure. A slightly more critical attitude was expressed in *Izvestiya* which, being under Bukharin's editorship, possibly implies that he was not in favor of the bill. However, individual opinions by leading party officials

are not available; given the climate of purge trials, this is not surprising. There were certainly negative views which mainly cited inadequate economic resources and housing for rearing children. As before, student women protested the interruption of their studies. While it is impossible to ascertain the true feelings of the general population from these excerpts, what is certain is that this public forum did not, in the end, alter any of the proposed features of the new law (p. 251).

The rationale

The rationale for the Prohibition Against Abortion is set forth in the Forward to the Decree, and in the official explanation of the New Family Policy in *Pravda* (Schlesinger, pp. 251-271 and pp. 280-347). The impression is that all the stops were pulled out to convince the masses of the correctness of this decision. The arguments are numerous, contradictory and specious, and the rhetoric is inflammatory. The main tactic is to invoke the authority of Lenin (and Engels). The chief argument is as follows: Lenin opposed abortion in principle, and meant abortion to be only a temporary measure until conditions had changed. Conditions have changed. Therefore, Lenin would wish abortion to be abolished. Lenin's *The Working Class and Neomalthusianism* is cited as a chief support for this argument. In this work of 1913, it is true that Lenin had exhorted class-conscious workers to oppose the artificial restriction of the birth rate imposed on them by the bourgeoisie, and had portrayed class-conscious workers as enemies of Neomalthusianism, "suited only to unfeeling and egotistic petty-bourgeois couples, who whisper in scared voices: 'God grant we manage somehow by ourselves. So much the better if we have no children'" (p. 30). But Lenin's statements are taken totally out of context. He was analyzing conditions under capitalism, and refuting the Malthusian principle that overpopulation, not capitalism, was the source of the workers' oppression.

Now, however, the Soviet argument goes: Socialism has achieved "complete victory"; therefore, there is no longer justification for abortion. "Only under conditions of Socialism, where exploitation of man by man does not exist and where woman is an equal member of society, while the continual improvement of the material well-being of the toilers constitutes a law of social development, is it possible seriously to organize the struggle against abortions by prohibitive laws as well as by other means" (p. 270). It is asserted that there are existing (or planned) state services which make it possible for women to be both productive workers and mothers. "We alone have all the conditions under which a woman can fulfill her duties as a citizen and as a mother responsible for the birth and early upbringing of her children" (p. 254). It is even argued that the relatively low abortion rate (compared to Europe) proved that Soviet women were insistent on having children and fulfilling their natural function, and that they had already proved that they could handle both children and work. "In

the USSR, woman's productive and social work does not in the least interfere with motherhood but is beautifully coordinated with it" (p. 310). By 1944, patriotism and war fears had become clear: "Mass abortions for egoistic reasons are not to be tolerated...Tens of thousands of women ruin their health and delay the growth of a new generation for socialist society" (p. 310). And "The Fascists have invented the legend that taking part in social production and work is incompatible with motherhood" (p. 325).

The large number of abortions women were having is cited as a tragedy. New Soviet medical evidence expands on the horrors of abortion, the mutilation of women, but the evidence is not very convincing. As an example: "There are few operations so dangerous as the cleaning out of the womb during pregnancy. Under the best conditions and in the hands of the most experienced specialists, this operation still has a 'normal' percentage of fatal cases. It is true that the percentage is not very high. Our surgeons have brought the technique of performing abortions to perfection. The foreign doctors have unanimously testified that their technique is irreproachable" (p. 264).

The flip side of the argument is that the Prohibition Against Abortion is a measure to actually protect and elevate Soviet women. Abortion is seen as an insult to womanhood, motherhood, (and even to fatherhood!). The argument states that the NEP period had furthered bourgeois libertinism and irresponsibility, of which liberalized abortion was a component. The new decree will free women from being forced into abortion by husbands, relatives and, above all, employers. Abortion is associated with the degradation of women, through male egoism, Don Juanism, philistinism, "free love" and the "nationalization of women," all lingering remnants of bourgeois society, which must be eradicated. The current "new Socialist family" is what Engels really had in mind; whereas abortion is a "foul and poisonous idea from the enemies of the people to liquidate the family and disrupt marriage" (p. 252). The arch-enemy-of-the-people Trotsky is dragged in as holding Fascist views toward the incompatibility of work and child-rearing; and Kollantai's writings are attacked as being anti-family and anti-motherhood.

In short, abortion is an enemy of the "Socialist" state, and so is anyone in favor of it.

The aftermath

At the same time that the Prohibition Against Abortion was incorporated into the Revised Family Law of 1944, the revised Criminal Code strengthened the penalties against abortion. Contraception was possibly made illegal (see Coda). The New Family Law further restricted the divorce law, promised more social services to women, provided for even more generous subsidies to mothers and children, and established rewards for women with large families: the "Motherhood Medal" for 5-6 children; "Motherhood Glory" for 7-9 children; and "Heroine Mother" for 10 or more children. These honors were equally available to

unmarried women.

Soviet women continued to resort to illegal abortion, and so in 1954, criminal penalties against women were revoked; and in 1955 abortion was again legalized.

Summary

What lay behind the 1936 Prohibition Against Abortion Decree is many-sided. There was the perceived necessity to increase population in face of the impending World War II and, in fact, the USSR was eventually to lose over 20 million lives. Another important factor is obviously economic. Having given up ideas of eliminating the economic foundations of the family (as the economic unit of society) through the expansion of state services, these resources could be diverted into industrialization. In conjunction with this, it may have been reasoned that the discipline required for rapid industrialization and collectivization demanded strengthening the family as a measure of social control and obedience. In the NEP period, the de facto marriage provision of the Revised Family Law of 1926, which recognized unregistered unions, had undeniably resulted in social instability because of the lack of state services to support women and children; and the rapid onset of industrialization and collectivization had further increased disruption. Another factor which has been proposed is the desire of the party to gain loyalty from the peasantry, who had always held traditional views toward the family, during this period which was calling for new sacrifices (Geiger, p. 97). But at the core is the fact that a new reactionary class had come to power which had no desire to emancipate women and, in fact, relied on the old bourgeois family structure to prop up the new state capitalism.

The Prohibition Against Abortion plainly illustrates the revisionism of Marxist-Leninist theory which had been taking place, since one of its chief tenets is the emancipation of women. In strengthening the bourgeois family structure, the Prohibition increases the exploitation of women. It imposes the burden of being both workers and mothers/housekeepers, without adequate state services to relieve domestic drudgery. It restricts women's right to work and to rise to their highest capacity. In doing so, it reverses the concept of women from "workers" to "mothers". It almost relegates women's bodies to the service of the state as "breeders"; and once again subjects them to mutilation and death by unqualified practitioners and self-abortions. The new law particularly affected rural women in a negative way, as both the birthrate and the rate of illegal abortions rose dramatically in the countryside. Essentially, the ban against abortion strengthened the reactionary view toward women which still largely prevailed there.

The Prohibition Against Abortion also illustrates how Marxism-Leninism has been deliberately rewritten. Lenin's statements on Neomalthusianism are distorted to fit a false context. To justify confining many women to the home with large families, it redefines domestic labor as "socially

useful work". Compare this to Lenin's innumerable diatribes against domestic slavery. The new law also distorts Engel's concept of the relationship between man and woman as based on freely expressed sexual attraction and compatibility, in that it basically redefines the relationship between the sexes as parental. It presents the "new Soviet family" as that ideal form of social relationship which Engels envisioned but declined to delineate. In so doing, it nullifies the Communist ideal of state responsibility in the social as well as the educational rearing of children, which it regards as merely another feature of Kollontaiism or ultra-leftism. Not least, it ignores the early Bolshevik insistence that people's sex lives are not the business of the party.

The original decree had endorsed abortion until "such time as moral survivals from the past and the economic conditions of the present compel some women to resort to this operation." The new law insists that these conditions no longer prevail, and that is plainly false. The most blatant hypocrisy is expressed in the insistence that Socialism has been fully achieved, in order to justify the taking away of women's rights and the reestablishment of the bourgeois social structure.

A coda on contraception

The logical alternative to abortion is contraception. It is understandable that no one wanted to view abortion as a long-term solution. But why then, didn't the Soviets seriously pursue this course? It seems an obvious solution. The key word is "ambivalence" because on the one hand, contraception was viewed positively as an alternative to abortion; but on the other hand, contraception was viewed negatively as a threat to population growth, a threat to the family, and an impetus to promiscuity. It was an irresolvable contradiction.

Before 1917, contraception was practically unknown, except among the upper classes who had access to European goods. But the Bolsheviks did have plans to develop and promote contraception as an alternative to abortion. A system of free contraception clinics was established, and devices were cheap. After the attempt by the doctors to revoke the abortion decree failed, a Laboratory for Preventatives was established in 1925, and was said to be the first of its kind in the world. Even an experiment for developing a contraceptive out of the "biolaktin" in buttermilk is mentioned! (Halle, p. 139). There was talk of giving out birth control information at the marriage registries, but this was never done. It makes sense that the Bolsheviks had these plans, as no one viewed abortion as a long-term solution. And Lenin, at least, knew that the transition to socialism — when women would be relieved of their domestic burdens and children would be cared for — would take a long time. Possibly the conditions of NEP put a damper on these plans.

From 1920 to 1928, despite devoted workers in the contraceptive field, birth control essentially meant abortion.

Then during the early phase of industrialization and collectivization, when women were again badly needed in the workforce, the contraceptive campaign was renewed. Posters against abortion became somewhat hysterical, e.g., "Abortion is a great evil! It must die out! The destruction of it is the most important social problem of the immediate future" (Field, p. 77). Like abortion, contraception was under strict state control. The three American sociologists, Halle, Field and Winter, also visited the state contraception centers, and give the following account.

Women were usually referred to these clinics only after they had had a child. These facilities were scarce and overcrowded; and the procedure was ponderous (forms, exams, and visiting nurses). Field says that 50% of the women were issued a "particular mechanical device" only used in the Soviet Union which involved returning to the clinic every 10 days for checking and cleansing (p. 97). Condoms and spermicides may also have been dispensed. But there was evidently a serious problem in instructing uneducated people how to use the devices properly, under largely unsanitary living conditions. Information on contraception was also included in the traveling medical units in the countryside, but rural women were reluctant to visit the clinics.

At any rate, contraceptives were in short supply, and both those dispensed by clinics and those sold illegally on the street corners were of poor quality and the butt of jokes. Contraceptive advocates were forced to promote even these imperfect devices on the grounds that risk added a measure of excitement to sex (Field, p. 85). While contraceptive use continued to increase, e.g. 40% from 1927 to 1930, the total figures remained very low (Winter, p. 146). The contraception campaign was always put in terms of a "weapon against abortion", not as a weapon for women's rights; and terminology suggesting family planning was avoided (Field, p. 95). This half-hearted approach toward contraception seems even more glaring, since concurrently its role in family planning was being promoted all over Europe and in America.

The best source for later information about abortion and contraception in the Soviet Union is Von Frank. The continuing dependence of Soviet women on abortion rather than contraception is reflected in the data that in the year following the 1936 law, the birthrate jumped from 41% to 93% in the larger cities and even more dramatically in the countryside (p. 31). There were sporadic attempts to promote contraception, but after the 1944 law, information, sale and manufacture of contraceptives were apparently banned (p. 32). (There is some doubt about this, as data is confusing.) However, it is clear that women continued to resort to illegal abortions in large numbers, until abortion was again legalized in 1955. Von Frank proposes that this time, illegal abortion was seen not only as a threat to women's health, but a threat to the economy. She states that the absenteeism, ill health and deaths of mother and child were cited as undermining the workforce which depended on women (p. 13). Geiger adds that the

government viewed the substantial underground economy of medical personnel doing abortions on the side as a real problem (p. 167). At the same time there was a renewed attack on family planning, i.e., limitation. Controlled fertility was equated with genocide, warfare, murder and depravity (Von Frank, p. 14).

As late as 1979, Von Frank states that while the state now supported contraception, it was still not widely used, and that 40% of women who had had an abortion still used no contraception (pp. 14-15). What contraception is available today still seems to be unsatisfactory and scarce; and it is suggested to visitors to the (former) Soviet Union that, in addition to cigarettes, blue jeans and cassette tapes, contraceptives are welcome gifts and items for barter.

Soviet history shows that there is either massive use of legal abortion or there is massive resort to illegal abortion. The development of contraception would have greatly aided the liberation of women. It would have freed them from the psychological and economic burden of unwanted pregnancies and from the pain and danger of abortions. It would have assisted their participation in the administration of the country, as envisioned by Lenin. But a double "social contribution" from women was demanded: as both full-time workers and as mothers producing future workers (and sometimes soldiers). The early Bolsheviks realized that this could only work if comprehensive services were provided to free women from domestic labor, and if the state took over much of the care and training of children. These goals were not realized, and abortion has continued to be a central issue in the history of Soviet women. □

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The Northwest timber industry

Continued from the front page

"balance" between wrecking peoples' lives and further wrecking the environment only means to continue to wreck both. Radical change, a real change from what has gone before, is called for in Northwest timber country. But is such change possible, or must we choose up sides over the choices which have been presented to us? And are there any ultimate solutions, solutions which can ensure both employment for the masses of people and an end to the wrecking of the natural world? This pamphlet takes up these issues.

Why the timber industry lay-offs?

For simplicity's sake we will divide our answer into two categories of causes: (1) the more immediate causes, (2) long term trends. We leave aside the question of how various factors interrelate.

There are three main immediate causes:

(1) U.S. housing starts remain well below the highs reached in the mid-80s. Housing starts in King Co. Washington, the most populous county in the Northwest, hit a 9-year low in September '92 and apartment starts a 20-year low. There haven't been big improvements since then. Meanwhile housing starts in Japan have also slowed down. (Japan is a huge market for raw logs cut in the Northwest as well as being a market for some lumber and other finished wood products.)

(2) The glut of the world paper market. This classic capitalist "bust" has gone on for four years now and is predicted to last at least another two years by the industry prognosticators.

(3) Court ordered shutdowns of U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management timber sales until these agencies produce plans for maintaining viable wildlife populations. (These agencies have flagrantly violated the Forest Management Act of 1976 ever since the law was written.)

The long-term trends are just as important in explaining the present lay-offs and one issue in particular will rise in importance as an explanation for the lay-offs which will continue for the rest of this century and into the next.

In 1990 the Government Accounting Office (GAO) published a report which predicted a 55% *increase* in timber harvesting over the next 50 years and a 13% *decrease* in employment. By far the largest increase in cutting is predicted for the South with only a slight increase predicted for the Pacific Coast. And this report didn't even take into account the question of preserving Northwest old-growth forests. The GAO cited mill modernization and increasing productivity as the reasons for shrinking employment. In the Northwest we have to add two more reasons: (1) the historical trend of the timber industry moving to the

South (and now overseas), (2) overcutting. Let's look at these reasons.

(1) Mill modernization. This has been a big factor in the decline of lumber and plywood mill employment throughout the Northwest. In Washington State employment in these mills shrank from 65,000 in the late 1970s to 39,000 in the late 1980s. Pulp and paper mills are also throwing workers out as they modernize. Several of these mills have closed their doors forever during the past few years due to the pulp and paper glut but very often the same companies closing down mills (i.e. Weyerhaeuser) are opening up brand new mills. In fact right in the middle of the crisis of overproduction of pulp and paper the mill owners have been spending record amounts for capital improvements. These investments peaked at an astounding \$16.1 billion worldwide in 1990. The new mills being built can produce 2-2½ times as much pulp with *fewer* workers. Thus while laying off workers in the midst of one world glut the capitalists have been preparing conditions for another glut and more layoffs in the future. Naturally they hope to prolong the interval until another crisis by bankrupting those competitors who can't or won't modernize. But this is no welcome news to workers in the mills which will go belly-up.

Modernization has actually been taking place in all aspects of the timber industry (logging, timber cruising, road building, etc., etc.) and is sure to continue.

(2) Increasing productivity. This is a result of applications of new technology (modernization) as well as the refined methods of capitalist slave-driving being used in all industries these days (job combination, subcontracting or gyppoing, etc.).

(3) Moving to the South. This trend has been going on for some decades now and we've already seen how the GAO predicts its continuation. The reasons are straightforward. When Northwest land was cheap and covered with virgin forests or naturally seeded second-growth it was very profitable to log. Additionally, there were large federal timber holdings. But the cutting down of these forests made tree farming necessary. And farming the flat lands of the South with the rapidly growing species native there is more profitable, even though some of the species yield lower quality lumber. (We'll briefly comment on the U.S. timber corporations setting up shop in Latin America a little later. Corporations headquartered in the Northwest are part of this trend.)

(4) Overcutting. This has been a less talked about issue. Both the timber industry and government have been trying to cover their overcutting practices with endless chatter about sustained-yield logging. But the chickens are now beginning to come home to roost. And they're going to continue to come home for a long time.

In the mid-1980s there was a building boom in the U.S. and all through the 1980s there was a boom in Japan and

east Asia. To cash in on this the Northwest timber industry went wild cutting down trees. "Sustained-yield" talk was exposed as nothing but lying propaganda as trees as young as 40-45 years started being logged. Contributing further to this was the fact that a lot of tree-growing corporations got loaded with debt and strapped for cash during the spate of leveraged buy-outs, mergers, defensive strategies against buy-outs, etc. of the 80's. They cut down their trees and tore up the earth in order to get immediate cash. (The Plum Creek Timber Company is justly notorious in this regard.) Furthermore, the indebted federal government sold off its trees to the timber industry (often in "below cost" sales) at rates far exceeding anything which could be imagined as being sustained-yield management.

In the early 80's the Forest Service doubled its timber sales and at one point was building more miles of roads than were being built in the rest of the entire country. (Besides being a handout to the timber industry and road contractors this had a "bonus" feature. Wilderness areas, areas in which logging is banned, could not be set aside by Congress if roads were cutting up the land.) By 1990 rebellions started to break out within the ranks of the Forest Service itself as mid-level officials protested what the environmental movement and some ordinary loggers had been charging for years. They said Forest Service logging was proceeding at twice the pace the land could grow trees, they protested that for 20 years 35% of the money given the agency by Congress went for logging while only 2 or 3% went for soil and water conservation, wildlife, recreation, etc. In 1992 a higher official quit and wrote a nationally published article in which he denounced the agency as being "comfortable with lying to the public" and "serving the timber industry as agents of environmental destruction rather than environmental protection". (For more on the role of the U.S. Forest Service see the sidebar on page 25.)

But the hang-over from the money-grabbing binge of the 1980s is now beginning to come on and around 1995 it's going to get much worse. According to a report from the Interagency Scientific Committee issued in 1990 private cutting in the Northwest (which makes up a little over half the cutting in Washington State) will plunge in 1995. The reason given? No loggable trees.

The timber industry is acutely aware of all the factors contributing to unemployment which we've listed. But a section of mill owners seizes on one issue, the court-ordered shutdowns, and reduce it to just northern spotted owl protection only. They're doing this because they're desperate for federal logs and want to build a mass political movement for continued devastation of the public lands. Hence they frame the issue as being a choice between owl protection or protecting people's livelihoods. But this is demagogic rot.

The struggle to preserve the last of the Northwest old-growth forests.

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In April 1990 the Executive Director of the Western Council of International Woodworkers (Mike Draper) said the following at a mill owner-backed rally in Portland, Oregon: "We aren't going to stand for a bunch of Volkswagen-driving environmentalists coming up here and driving us to the poor house....We must hold the environmental extremists accountable for their actions....etc.". (This was the infamous rally at which environmentalists were attacked on the streets of Portland.) We've just looked at what is really driving Northwest timber workers "to the poorhouse". Here we want to deal with the environmental movement in general and "environmental extremism" in particular.

In the fascistic ranting we just cited Mr. Draper crudely tried to make the environmental movement appear as some fringe group of "outside agitators" who could care less about the lives of thousands of timber workers and their families. Besides being a not so clever way to avoid speaking to valid issues being raised this kind of crude demagoguery doesn't wash well these days for another reason. The ranks of the environmental movement have filled with working people, even including woodworkers, and in every major environmental battle we find thousands of "little people" skirmishing against the power of capital. After all, it's the workers and poor who suffer the effects of pollution and environmental destruction more than anyone else. Thus the progress of this movement is of deep concern to them. (Just one example of why the workers and poor are particularly concerned with protecting the environment deals with the question of public land usage. E.g. when it comes time for recreation they don't have the private estates, don't have the yachts, don't have the fare to fly all over the world, etc. which mill owners, politicians, and highly-paid "labor leaders" have. They must in great degree

depend on the public lands.)

In April 1990 Mr. Draper also attacked "environmental extremism". What he and others who are so fond of using this term really mean by "extremism" is *any* protection of the environment that infringes on the profits of the capitalists. So when the Sierra Club (also in April of 1990) came out with a proposal that the Forest Service reduce its cutting by about 1/2 this represented just more "environmental extremism" to Draper and the timber industry millionaires and billionaires he's sold his soul to. Problem is (as we saw above) rebelling Forest Service supervisors were already saying in 1990 that the USFS was selling trees at twice the rate it could grow them. Thus the Sierra Club was actually taking a *conservative* position, sustained-yield logging (something the Forest Service supposedly was to do all along).

When it comes to preserving the last of the old-growth rain forests in the Northwest the leaders of the mainstream environmental organizations have consistently taken conservative positions. This is a result of their being chained to "realistic" politics, mainly Democratic Party politics. These "realistic" politics confine themselves to activities acceptable to the establishment (lobbying, wheeling and dealing with politicians and government bureaucrats, letter writing and petitions). They're premised on acceptance of the capitalist system, albeit a more regulated capitalism, and therefore their aims necessarily become limited to seeking compromises with the very forces destroying the environment. But with the whole world facing mounting environmental crises the old premises and old "realistic" politics of the mainstream environmental organizations are being proved more bankrupt with each passing day.

Some mainstream environmentalists fawned all over Clinton and Gore at the April forest "summit" in Portland. They later claimed this meeting was a victory for the environmental movement. Well we're now seeing what kind of victory it was. Clinton threw out the first eight options presented him and demanded a ninth option more friendly to the timber industry. Option Nine allows logging in the old-growth forests, speeding up of logging east of the Cascades, and easing of Fish and Wildlife Service restrictions on logging of state and private lands. And there is talk by congressional Democrats of speeding implementation of Clinton's plan by passing legislation exempting it from environmental laws. So that is the victory brought about by fawning on Clinton and his fellow Democrats.

(Of course these leaders of the environmental movement went to Portland knowing that Clinton's budget proposal for national resources and the environment was *down* \$1.1 billion from *Bush's*! They knew he had already abandoned his pre-election talk regarding grazing fees, mining, and below-cost timber sales. They knew Clinton had come to an agreement with Foley over exclusion of any plan for forests east of the Cascades. But they fostered illusions in Clinton anyway. And that's why we call them *mis*leaders.)

This brings us back to the question of preserving the last of the old-growth Pacific rain forests. These forests are the

last of their type in the world. (Although they extend into Canada they are in perhaps even greater danger of being wiped out there.) What's left of them is scattered over barely 2.3 million acres of mostly mountainous terrain in Washington, Oregon, and northern California. (Compare this to the 63 million acres of commercial timberlands in the Northwest. Or compare it to the holdings of just *one* company, Weyerhaeuser—6 million acres in the U.S. plus licenses on 9 million acres in western Canada.) Less than 20% are in low elevations, the most biologically diverse and productive sites. Almost all are on federal land. It seems to us that it's in the interest of both the present and future generations of working people to preserve these forests *in their entirety*. Furthermore, the even smaller and more fragile old-growth forests on the east side of the Cascades Range should likewise be preserved. (In typical pork barrel maneuvering with the timber interests—directly represented by Speaker Tom Foley—discussion of eastside forests was excluded from the forest "summit" agenda.)

We are not alone in this view. Within the active environmental movement, in scientific circles, and among the masses of people, there have been many arguments developed for it. We would like to just touch on a couple of them: (1) the old-growth forests serving recreational needs, (2) the old-growth forests serving the development of science.

Those who enjoy nature, enjoy the primeval forests, etc. are often put down as a bunch of simple-minded and privileged daydreamers unconcerned with such practical matters as feeding and housing a family and the like. But of course it is often out of simple thoughts and daydreams that great practical solutions to the problems confronting the masses of people come. More, to imply that life should simply be a struggle for bread is to imply never-ending slavery. More still, it's fine, according to those who make this put-down, for people to relax from their toil by spending money for trips to gambling casinos, private resorts, hotels, etc. But for them to recreate (and...aargh...for free!) in the lands they have paid taxes to support all their lives is another matter.

And it's not just a few people who enjoy themselves this way. Many of the wilderness areas previously set aside by Congress (as well as National Parks, state parks, etc.) are being degraded by overuse. Permits are already required for entry into certain sections of some of them and permits are being considered as a solution to overuse of entire wilderness areas in the Northwest. Preserving the rest of the ancient forests would help ease this problem.

But a ban on any more old-growth logging need not mean that scientific research in these forests could not be conducted on a somewhat higher level than is allowed in the present wilderness areas. These forests are complex ecosystems involving uncounted species of life. Some species, like the spotted owl, marbled murrelet, fisher, etc. are on the verge of extinction and many more sure to follow due to such things as changes in the acidity of the water and snow east of the Puget Sound basin because of

The U.S. Forest Service

The U.S. Forest Service is an Agency of the Department of Agriculture. It started to become the U.S. Timber Industry Service in the 1940s. An early infamous example of its playing this role occurred in Washington State. The Olympic National Forest set up the 110,000 acre "Shelton Unit" as a private preserve of the Simpson Timber Company. This insured Simpson mills in Shelton and McCleary a vast supply of logs and freed up Simpson to do whatever it wished to do with its own lands. The Forest Service action was a result of typical pork barrel legislation pushed through Congress by the Washington congressional delegation (Democratic) and signed by Truman.

The Republicans are just as guilty of pushing pork barrel handouts to the timber industry through Congress. Both parties give billions to the rich without blinking an eye. A good example is the congressional legislation which virtually turned the Tongass National Forest in Alaska over to two pulp mills by giving them 50 year contracts for all the logs they could use. It also gave the Tongass (that is the two pulp mills) an automatic \$40 million every year with which to build roads. Meanwhile the Tongass N.F. was bleeding the federal treasury for \$50 million a year through "below cost" timber sales. This continues. In 1992 the Tongass lost \$59 million. It's notable that Reagan's Undersecretary of Agriculture (the man directly responsible for the Forest Service) was a corporate lawyer for one of the very biggest timber corporations, Louisiana Pacific. And who should own one of the two mills given this billion dollar handout in Alaska? Louisiana Pacific.

(While serving up billions to the timber industry in this way the U.S. Forest Service had the audacity to begin charging ordinary people for the right to camp in its

campgrounds. This is outrageous.)

With the denunciations of Forest Service policies beginning to mount in the early 1990s Congress began to pretend that it had known nothing of what the agency was about. It held hearings. It "discovered" that the Forest Service was overcutting the lands under its jurisdiction. It "discovered" that the Forest Service lied about this, i.e. in Idaho 3/4 of barren clear-cut land was counted as mature timber, etc. (The federal courts had already found the Forest Service guilty of violating the law, of violating the Forest Management Act of 1976, so the good congress-people couldn't pretend that they didn't know about that.) And Clinton leaves the entire Forest Service bureaucracy intact!

Although many of the crimes of the Forest Service have been publicly exposed in recent years many others undoubtedly remain hidden. This is because of the bureaucrats' policy of taking vengeance on those in its ranks who don't toe the line. A good example of this occurred in the Tongass National Forest.

The Tongass is America's largest National Forest. It's larger than several eastern states. A scientific team was given the job of studying the effects of logging on the wildlife there. In 1992 the team came out with a report saying logging was wreaking havoc on wildlife and making recommendations which would have been detrimental to the timber corporations. So the Forest Service just covered up the report and gave bad performance reviews to the scientists. But the head scientist quit and went public with his information. There have also been numerous cases of Forest Service employees being demoted and sent to other regions because they actually tried to act as "stewards of the public trust"—the creed their employer supposedly upholds.

air pollution. (The latter even if the remaining forests are more or less preserved in their entirety!) This too speaks in favor of complete preservation because in nature there are thresholds. If several species become extinct it's possible that a whole lot more forms of life which are interdependent with the extinct species may suddenly disappear. Since these ancient ecosystems are potential treasure houses for scientific discovery (the recent discovery of taxol in the western yew gives a hint of the pharmaceutical potentials), with everything from the bacteria in the soil, to the fungi, to the plants and animals having potential, it's important that species not be lost. The smaller and more divided the forests, the higher the likelihood of this occurring.

Finally, preservation of the old-growth is of importance to tree farming. Generations of monocultural plantations are certain to give rise to many problems—insect and viral infections, extinction of necessary root molds, general degradation of the soil, the need to

introduce genes from other gene pools, and others. In the old-growth forests nature has devised complex strategies to deal with many of these problems. But if this ecosystem is gone, or comprised only of a few sick forests, then the opportunities for study and experimentation are also gone.

Should the working class support a log export ban?

Mill owners without their own timberlands have been closing down mills or running on part-time schedules throughout the Northwest. They can't buy logs at present prices and still reap adequate profits. Japanese and other Asian log buyers have been outbidding them for logs cut on private lands and the public lands have been under injunction. Speculation has also driven up log prices. Thus they have opened a two-pronged attack: (1) do anything possible to get back into the public forests, (2) howl for a ban on export of logs to Asia.

For those timber corporations owning their own trees it's been another story. They've been raking in the loot through export sales and grabbing a bigger share of the domestic market as competitors go broke. They too hate the environmental movement and reap benefits from the public forest gravy train (after all, they've overcut their own lands) but they're dead set against a ban on log exports.

The section of mill owners most affected by the log crunch have been joined by a host of politicians, labor misleaders, and leaders of mainstream environmental organizations in crying for the outlawing of log exports to Asia. But in our view neither the working people nor the broader environmental movement should join in this chorus. The wail may be a popular one but all of the voices are off-key. (Such a ban already exists for logs cut on federal lands and Washington State has had a similar ban for logs cut on state lands. There is no ban on exporting logs cut on private land in Washington and Oregon and no ban on log exports from Oregon State lands.)

The argument being made for a log export ban is that if the Japanese and other Asian importers can't get Northwest raw logs then they will buy finished lumber from the Northwest, mills will reopen, jobs will return, etc. But this scenario is problematic. Asian importers could begin buying logs in Siberia, Chile, New Zealand, etc. Japan is presently hotly contending with the United States for the forests of Chile and already getting sawed lumber from Siberia. And Korea's Hyundai Corporation has logging operations in Siberia. (For more on Siberian timber see the sidebar.) Moreover, if Asian importers were forced to turn to America for more finished lumber (they already get nearly 30% of their finished wood products from the United States) they might buy most of it from the South and Northeast. Even though the quality of lumber from those regions might be somewhat lower this is at least partially offset by lower prices. They can also buy finished lumber in Canada. In fact the Canadian mill owners have been much more willing to cut lumber to the sizes required by the Japanese market than their counterparts in the U.S.

Secondly, the above argument is not followed through to its logical conclusions. What if a log export ban did force Asia to import Northwest lumber rather than logs? Would we not be back at square one in terms of a rapidly dwindling log supply brought about by overcutting? And would there not be renewed pressure from the mill owners to cut the rest of the old-growth forests in order to "care about peoples' livelihoods, not owls' " etc.? It seems the leaders of many of the environmental organizations have "forgotten" this little problem as they engage in the game of making fleeting opportunist alliances and sacrificing the long term interests of the movement.

Thirdly, from the perspective of the working class, the argument is based on self-defeating nationalism. What about the Asian lumber industry? In Japan, for example, there are almost 17,800 mills employing tens of thousands of workers. The section of Northwest mill owners howling for a ban on log exports whines about Japanese govern-

On Siberian timber

Siberia has half of the world's conifers and one quarter of its standing trees. More than half of the stands are virgin. These vast forests have half the Amazon's capability for holding and adsorbing carbon dioxide (carbon dioxide from industrial fuel burning being the prime culprit behind the greenhouse effect). The capitalists of the world see them as a potential source of great profits, and Weyerhaeuser, Louisiana Pacific, and Georgia Pacific have all been nosing around in them. The Yeltsin government is hungry for cash and willing to make deals but there are major hang-ups with problems like transportation. There is also much nationalist and bureaucratic in-fighting going on between the Russian and Siberian establishments which is holding up the letting of contracts. And Siberian wood products cannot presently be imported into the United States because of gypsy moth and other infestations.

If the American (and other) capitalists overcome the problems presently holding them back and ravage the Siberian forests, like they've done those in the U.S., an ecological disaster affecting the entire planet is in the making. Carbon dioxide over the northern hemisphere will increase tremendously, and, because the Siberian forests regenerate very slowly due to the cold climate, it will stay there a very long time.

Obviously Siberia—the people, the land, the many rare species—would also suffer a disaster. Russian capitalism has already caused enough damage to the environment. For example, Lake Baikal, which contains one fifth of the world's fresh water, is presently being polluted by both pulp and paper mill wastes and silt from logging operations. Siberia doesn't need such damage multiplied.

We left out one other problem. Resistance by the Siberian peoples to the devastation of their land may derail the big plans of Russian and Western capital. An environmental movement is presently active there and we wish it every success.

ment protection of these mills. Of course this is complete hypocrisy on their part. Not only have many of them lived off the public forests for decades but the U.S. government has slapped tariffs on Canadian lumber and already bans the export of logs cut on federal forests. In 1992 alone the Forest Service was used to subsidize the timber industry to the tune of \$453 million through "below cost" timber sales. Over the past decade such sales have amounted to \$5.6 billion! Doesn't all this add up to protectionism?

No, the Northwest mill owners without timberlands, just like their Japanese counterparts, have only one aim—more and more profits. And to ensure more wealth for themselves they always want more protection. But for the

American mill workers to join with their own exploiters in a nationalist crusade against log exports is to willy-nilly fall into the trap of saying to hell with the Japanese and other Asian mill workers. This is essentially no different than saying to hell with the southern mill workers, the Oregon mill workers, the workers in the mill down the road, the workers in the next department, etc. Such talk is sweet music to the ear of every employer. But every thinking worker knows that his or her fate is linked to *working class solidarity and struggle*. The most fundamental lesson of the employer's concessions-grabbing offensive of the past dozen years has been that unity with one's own employer—giving concessions to the company in order to “save jobs”, giving up the hard fight to build class-wide solidarity and struggle in favor of what appears to be an offer of some immediate security—is to dive into the swamp of competing with fellow workers in a struggle for less and less and disastrous defeats for all. And with the increasingly global economy the old concept of *internationalist* working class solidarity is needed as never before.

Then where should the woodworkers direct their fire?

We examined the factors behind the declining employment in the Northwest timber industry in the first section. Here we would just note the obvious fact that even if the rest of the old-growth were completely thrown open to logging and the allowable cut on the federal lands restored to the levels of the 1980s, which is not going to happen, employment would still decline, and decline very sharply in one or two decades as the last loggable trees were felled. Blaming the environmental movement for a problem which the capitalists' drive for profit has been building up for generations is worse than just nonsense. It leaves the woodworkers at a loss as to where to seek relief, where to direct demands. And it seems to us that the woodworkers should militantly direct demands in two directions.

First of all the employers. These suckers have raked in untold wealth through the overcutting, automation, etc. which are direct causes of the declining employment. Besides fighting against concessions, job combinations, etc. the woodworkers should demand from the employers that they give big severance pay packages, including money for training for other types of jobs.

Secondly, the government. First the government allowed overcutting of its forests and this worked to build up employment to a level which could not be sustained. Now by changing its policy it's causing layoffs. Thus the government should pay too. And it has the money. Sure all the politicians yell about the budget deficit but at the same time they're proposing to give another \$276.9 *billion* to the war industry and another \$212.1 *billion* to the bankers in interest payments (see Clinton's proposed budget). Let them give some of this money to laid off timber workers in the form of long-term no-interest loans, real money for schooling, money for medical care, and a special fund

administered by an elected committee of rank and file workers to go to pay the bills of any worker who has a financial emergency due to being unemployed. The “benefits” presently given dislocated workers are a sick joke and relief on this scale is needed.

Obviously the woodworkers aren't going to get anything without a fight. And they've proven in recent years that they can fight. One of their problems, however, has been that they have often directed their protests in wrong directions, i.e. against the environmental movement. This has much to do with the influence of Mike Draper and other sold out union officials. We dealt with Draper's raving against the environmental movement above and noted how this put him in bed with the mill owners—particularly those without their own timberlands. Draper's still in bed with them. In recent months he's taken to writing letters to newspapers in which he opposes any ending of “below cost” timber sales by the government. Underlying all of Draper's demagoguery is the idea that when push comes to shove the workers and their employers really do have a common interest. This idea is sure poison to militant trade unionism. The trade unions in the United States were originally built up very much against this thinking. But as more and more of the leaders went over to it the trade union movement was weakened in power.

Finally, there are undoubtedly a lot of wise people who will charge that what we are saying may have some merits in theory but it's just not realistic. The woodworkers are just too weak to accomplish anything by themselves and the best they or any other section of the working people can do is stick behind their present union leaders and hope they can strike some deal with the supposed friends of labor in the administration and Congress. We can only offer the following in response to such “realism”.

Having been active participants in the struggles of several sections of the American working class for 15 years and more (for example, of shipyard workers, Boeing workers, Paccar workers, nurses and grocery workers in the Northwest) we know something of the difficulties workers face in mounting *any* struggle in defense of their basic interests these days. The working class has been devastated by the employer's concessions offensive which began in 1979. Wages and benefits have fallen, conditions worsened, and everywhere the bosses are speeding up the workforce while at the same time automating plants and mills, closing down obsolete factories and throwing workers out the door. The working class has become increasingly disorganized. While the union leaders have become more “modern”, more mainstream and respectable, etc. trade union membership has continued to fall dramatically, strikes are rare, and championing the working class as a social force to be reckoned with is likely to bring down hoots of laughter upon one's head. The old “realistic” policy of uniting behind the union leaders no matter what they say and hoping that the politicians (usually Democratic Party politicians) will somehow save the day has led to defeat after defeat. But we didn't create this situation. The best

we can do is offer an alternative orientation and work to the best of our capabilities to make it a reality. That is all that any force seriously interested in the fate of the working people can do. We don't expect miracles nor do we expect that the majority of woodworkers will suddenly adopt the orientation for struggle we put forward above. But to use this as an excuse for saying nothing is in reality an excuse for capitulating to the "realism" which has led to the present bad situation, an excuse for capitulating to the status quo.

What of some of the other solutions to layoffs in the Northwest timber industry?

There have been a number of solutions to the problem of layoffs being offered other than resumption of wholesale logging of old-growth and a log export ban. Some of these solutions, if seriously put into effect, would indeed ease the problem of unemployment to some extent and at the same time be less damaging to the environment. Others are just ruses through which the timber industry hopes to get more federal logs. Sometimes these proposals are put forward in order to string the woodworkers along on the vain hope that employment will return to former levels, sometimes they are put forward by "green" "experts" in bids to get money for things like more studies, and at other times they are put forward as honest solutions to a problem of wide concern. Thus each has to be carefully examined. Here we will comment on some of the more obvious features of a few of these proposals.

Salvage logging. Under the Bush administration so-called salvage sales (sales of blown down trees, insect or fire damaged trees, etc.) by the federal government were stepped up. This became a big ruse for circumventing the court orders and getting into the old-growth. The Forest Service adopted a policy of "sweetening" its salvage sales by adding in healthy trees. The mill owners without trees want this policy to continue and have been behind the demonstrations on the Olympic Peninsula for its continuance. They whine a lot about "wasted" logs and create big myths about how down or insect infested trees are fire hazards or can spread infestation throughout the forests. But this is scientific nonsense.

Firstly, down trees don't go to waste if they're not hauled out. They decay, become nurse logs for seedlings, and regenerate the soil. Secondly, there is no scientific evidence that insects in dying trees in an old-growth forest spread to healthy trees. Thirdly, an old-growth forest is full of snags, down trees, old logs, and a thick blanket of litter. A few more blow-downs does not appreciably add to the fire hazard. What often does add to it is a logging operation.

Selective logging. Clearcutting is the most environmentally damaging method of logging there is. On sloping land it can cause severe erosion and silting up of streams. And even on flat land it's very damaging. The Forest Service and big timber companies have added to this problem in

the past 30 years by adopting a policy of cutting down everything standing and burning the slash. This makes it easier to seed or plant a new crop of trees but it kills the natural life right down into the soil, weakens the soil itself, fills the air with smoke, and often slash burns escape into live timber (which is then "salvage" logged). Selective logging (removal of scattered trees) is less damaging to the environment and also is more labor intensive, that is, more loggers and yarders are required to get out the same volume of timber.

Thus if selective logging were generally required there would be more jobs in the woods and less damage to the environment. But this relatively small increase in jobs would not stem the larger decline in mill jobs. We should also note that some of the forces championing selective logging are not interested in having it adopted as a general policy in the Northwest. Rather, they propose it as a method to use for continued cutting of old-growth.

The so-called new forestry. This more intensive kind of forestry includes growing multi-layered forests of several species, paying attention to providing habitat for a variety of animal species, selective pruning and thinning, selective logging, etc. It's actually a kind of forestry which has been practiced in a number of countries for generations and which has been taught in American forestry colleges for a long time. Obviously it's more friendly to the environment and it requires more labor than monoculture tree farms. Therein lies the rub of course. The reason it has never been widely practiced in the United States is that it's more profitable to use less labor to get the same volume of product. In the Northwest that has meant clearcutting the original forests, replanting with Douglas fir (all of the same age), and clearcutting again. Neither the creation of jobs nor the environmental consequences (other than those which radically affect profit making) are part of this formula.

The application of the so-called new forestry in the Northwest would be a step forward. Everything we said regarding selective logging above also applies to it. And here again we have to note that there are some forces which are promoting it only as a cover for cutting more of the ancient forests. According to them it doesn't matter if the rest of the old growth is destroyed because they will "manage" habitats, maintain biodiversity, etc. with their "new" forestry.

Manufactured lumber. This term applies to wood products which are substitutes for sawed lumber. Such products often can be manufactured from fibers of species which haven't generally been commercially logged and don't require the big saw-logs found in the old-growth if they do require the usual commercial species. Some of these products seem to be quite good but since they still tend to be a little higher priced than lumber they're not widely used. One such product, Paralam, has gained considerable attention since Clinton's Portland forest "summit". But the Paralam example shows that it would be an error to think many unemployed timber workers will find jobs in manufactured

lumber plants. That's because Paralam is manufactured in ultra-modern high-tech factories requiring few workers. And this is generally the case with other types of manufactured lumber.

We should also note that some of the manufactured lumber corporations are cynically using the Northwest timber layoffs as a golden opportunity to lobby for government subsidies.

Tourist industry and fishing industry jobs. Preserving the ancient forests and sharply reducing the allowable cut on federal lands would serve to attract a few more tourists to the Northwest as well as assist the fishing industry. (Logging operations continue to silt salmon spawning beds even though this is supposed to be illegal.) But a somewhat bigger tourist industry won't create that many jobs. (Needless to say there is also the issue of fighting to increase wages in many of the jobs connected to this industry.) And there are already plenty of commercial fishermen.

For radical change and socialism.

We have shown how capitalist profiteering and capitalist competition are responsible for the layoffs in the Northwest timber industry as well as being responsible for wreaking havoc on the environment. Yet liberally compensating laid off workers and training them for new jobs, preserving the rest of the old-growth timber, adopting new forestry and logging methods which are less destructive to the environment, increased usage of manufactured lumber in building (or less wood products at all in building), etc. are all *possible*, in theory, under the capitalist system.

Conditions can arise which force capitalism to change policies. For example, further depletion of forests would inevitably lead to use of less wood in building construction and a changing of forestry practices. Capitalism can make the latter kind of adjustments and in much of Europe it was long ago forced to. Capitalism can also follow more or less enlightened policies. For example in Japan, as a fire prevention measure, there are legal restrictions on the use of wood in multi-unit housing construction. Concrete and steel must be used. But in the United States, where many people burn to death each year in wood frame apartment buildings, the American Plywood Association has just launched a campaign to beat down a trend toward using more steel in apartment and condominium construction. In short, capitalism has the capacity to change and does change—slowly, grudgingly, and with very high human and environmental costs. The environmental costs are inseparable from human costs and both are becoming increasingly difficult to bear. This is the basis for both the existence of the environmental movement of the people as well as the eventual rejuvenation of the working class movement.

Although it's possible, in theory, for capitalism to make the kind of changes just listed American capitalism is not yet ready to make them. All Clinton's new forest policy for the Northwest will amount to is slower destruction of the forests, a slower rate of lay-offs, and the most meager

relief for unemployed timber workers. In other words both the people and the environment will continue to suffer.

And here we must for the last time give the position of our log-short mill owners. They counterpose environmental destruction to the well-being of the working people. Cut the rest of the old-growth, they say, so people can have jobs. But no, they should really say: "Cut the rest of the old-growth so we can make a bundle. When the last trees are cut we'll close up our mills and invest elsewhere. The workers' livelihoods mean nothing to us. After all, we've been demanding concessions-riddled contracts for years. We've laid workers off with every downturn in the construction market, with every piece of modern equipment we've introduced. Profit is our be-all and end-all. That is why we did our very best to contribute to the overcutting of the forests and thereby hurry the present crisis into being. Thus our real policy is that both the people and the environment suffer. We're in complete agreement with Clinton on this and many of us lobbied for an early sitting of his forest summit precisely because we wanted a rapid ending of the court orders. We called these injunctions against continued violations of the law 'gridlock' and Clinton fell in love with our phrase. Our only difference with Clinton is over the pace of destruction."

Our conclusion from all of this is that the working class and masses of people should fight to force capitalism to change in the direction of what is theoretically possible. At the same time, for a fight to really be powerful the combatants need to be inspired by their own independent perspective. If they have in mind their own ultimate solution

What do we mean by socialism?

When we write of socialism or socialist society in this pamphlet we are writing of what Karl Marx called the first (or lower) phase of communism. In our view such a system has never yet been achieved by humanity. In some countries the working class has risen in revolution and taken initial steps for a transition to socialism but in every case it has been overcome by a combination of its own ideological and organizational weaknesses and the economic and political might of the old world of capitalism. In the Soviet Union this led to a bureaucratic state capitalist regime being consolidated under Stalin. This regime called itself socialist and communist but a serious critique of it based upon the elementary principles enunciated by Marx and Lenin shows this to have been false advertising. In other countries, especially in Europe, governments have been elected which call themselves socialist. But these are governments led by conniving politicians who hope that by slightly reforming capitalism, increasing its state sector and calling that socialism, etc., they can head off a real socialist revolution of the working class.

Social change and population growth

There are many who hold that no matter what the social system is, humanity will eventually destroy the natural world to such an extent that human life becomes impossible. The question of the human population explosion in most of the world is often the foundation upon which this conclusion rests. But *homo sapiens sapiens* is one species of life which can consciously control its own birth rate and, therefore, it's not predetermined that the population explosion will continue until the earth can no longer hold all the people.

For one thing, it's well known that high birth rates are most common in economically backward and impoverished societies, societies where the women are terribly oppressed, societies where many children are needed to help feed the family and take care of the parents in old age. With industrialization comes lower birth rates and in some advanced countries populations are stable. So the world is in a race of sorts on this question. On the one hand industrialization and modernization are spreading everywhere, on the other hand the populations keep exploding in the impoverished countries. (World imperialism, led by the United States, fuels the latter by increasing the poverty in the less developed countries through its demands for interest payments and through many other means.)

There are also cultural questions like religion. For example the Catholic Church opposes any use of birth control products. But even the hold of this church on its members is shaken with industrialization and its by-products—employment of women, more education, etc. Thus in America, for example, a large number of Catholics use birth control products.

And there is the oppression of women. All the old rubbish—like a woman's "place" is to be the house-

servant of a man, bear children for him, etc.—though more pronounced in semi-feudal societies, continues to weigh down women in industrial society.

Rather than looking at the present population explosion and giving up on the future of humanity on earth the communist movement fights on several fronts which will unquestionably affect population growth as the struggles develop.

(1) We support the efforts of the masses of people in the economically backward countries to throw off the chains of imperialism and develop their economies in an all-sided manner, e.g. to really industrialize. (If they can mount a socialist revolution, so much the better.)

(2) While we uphold *the right* of people to religious beliefs and practices (as well as fighting against persecution of religion) we oppose all religion on scientific grounds. In particular we oppose those religious teachers who say a woman's role is to be in the kitchen, barefoot and pregnant, etc.

(3) We fight for the full emancipation of women. Real equality in every sphere of society. Complete freedom to personally choose whether to have children or when to have children.

(4) We fight to bring into being a revolutionary socialist society which eliminates poverty and want by achieving a level of industrialization not yet seen—an industrialization which is consciously and democratically planned by a highly educated people. We are convinced that such a society would not choose to overpopulate the earth.

(5) We also might add that while we oppose all coerced birth control, i.e. the coercive methods used in China, or U.S. imperialism's notorious policies of mass sterilizations in Puerto Rico in the 1960's and 70's, we support the efforts of those who make birth control information and devices available to the masses of people, conduct education on birth control, etc., the world over.

to a problem then their blows are surer, they don't become tired so quickly, they are less vulnerable to camouflaged attacks and less likely to be fooled by false choices presented to them by the enemy.

This raises the question, is there any way to maintain jobs and a modern way of life for the people and not ruin the environment? Are there any ultimate solutions? If one accepts the present economic and political realities as being unchangeable, there isn't. Everyone knows that it isn't just American capitalism which destroys the environment, including the forests. The backward agriculture practiced in many parts of the world is very destructive. Also notoriously destructive was the state capitalist system practiced in the former Soviet Union. In fact one can't go anywhere on earth and not find an environmental problem. And even the most enlightened or sophisticated governments do no more

than slow the rush toward an ecological disaster of global proportions.

But the present economic and political realities are certainly changeable and concerned people on all continents are struggling to find a way to break the status quo and solve what is very much becoming a number one riddle of life for all species on the planet (how to develop a modern life of quality for humanity and not so wreck nature that human life goes the way of the other species whose extinction has been brought about by human activity. No individual or organization, least of all ours, has a magic formula to apply to this problem. There can't be one. We believe, however, that working class socialist theory provides the logical road toward its solution. (See sidebar.)

Take the issue of unemployment in the timber industry. In the capitalist system of production, increases in the

productivity of labor (due both to more refined methods of slave-driving and modernization of the production processes) result in unemployment. The motivation for increasing labor productivity is to expand the profits of competing capitalists. While the potential for producing the commodities demanded by society increases tremendously only part of the society benefits. The rest is left in the lurch. The unemployed don't have the money to buy commodities as before and the drive for profits among competing capitalists force them to use the existence of the unemployed as a battering ram with which to drive down the wages and conditions of the rest of the working class. Thus the potential mass benefits of increased productivity can never be fully realized because of capitalism's tendency to shrink its own market. (Giving an average wage to the unemployed, raising the minimum wage etc. might seem like obvious solutions to this problem but they're not. It's against the basic nature of the capitalists to reach into their own pockets for money with which to pay for such things. And if employed working people are further taxed to pay for the relief of their unemployed brethren the overall market is not increased.)

But according to the socialist theory, increases in the productivity of labor under socialism are fully realized. They benefit all of society rather than just an upper crust. The motivation of the working class organized as the ruling class for developing and applying new technology to production is that this lightens toil and shortens the working day as more is produced in less time. Further, if a group of workers are automated out of jobs they are not sent to an unemployment line. It's in a socialist society's interest that everyone be employed in some work that increases the general wealth that all share. Thus it's also in its interest that everyone have a very broad general education as well technical training in the most up-to-date productive techniques so that they can immediately transfer to new work.

Education and training take resources of course but that doesn't mean that socialism means more taxes. The very opposite is the case. Clinton's present budget includes things like \$45 billion more for the S. and L. bankers, \$212 billion in interest payments, etc. A socialist society is not burdened with shoveling money to filthy rich financiers in this way. Nor is it burdened with shoveling money to highly-paid bureaucrats, consultants, lawyers, and the profit columns of government contractors. In fact if a society is really socialist it means cheap government, small government, simple government, and a government that has less and less reason for even existing. Education per se is also cheapened. For example, under capitalism the capitalists take a cut for every textbook they print, for every school they build, etc. The price of every pencil includes money for capitalist profit. Socialism eliminates this parasitism.

Or take the issue of the Northwest forests. We've seen how the profit motive has led to their devastation. But wouldn't a socialist society likewise devastate the forests simply because people need housing, paper, and so on, even if the profit system were eliminated?

We can't give a definitive answer on how a particular socialist society would treat the forests since genuine socialism has to be the work of the masses of people and it is they, not us, who would ultimately decide all the questions of land and resource usage, ecosystem preservation, type of housing, forestry practices, etc. This is also connected to the consciousness of the mass movement—and of its leading party(s)—which rises to overthrow the old system. The stronger its environmental and scientific components the less is the chance for policies to be adopted which are harmful to the environment. But even though we can't be definitive we can confidently state that the socialist system provides the only real opportunity for humankind to confront all of the environmental issues, including forest devastation, *en masse* and with any chance of achieving lasting victories. We're also confident that a socialist society would act to preserve such things as the remains of the Northwest old growth forests without hesitation and as a matter of course.

Why this confidence? A socialist society has to make economic decisions in the planning of its economy. Such decisions are not based on what yields the highest rate of profit, rather, they are based upon what benefits society in an all-round (not narrowly "economic") way and upon what the people want. Socialism has the potentials within it (the increasing productivity of labor going to benefit all of society; universal employment of all who are mentally and physically able to work; elimination of human labor being wasted in the insurance industry, advertising industry, corporate law offices, government and corporate bureaucracies and the like; elimination of parasitic profits; and a highly educated population) for making narrowly "economic" sacrifices in order to serve the general quality of life of the people and still maintain a higher standard of living for the masses than exists anywhere under capitalism—and for making such decisions through a process of informed popular debate. Here we will briefly discuss what a socialist society could do in this regard on some issues pertaining to forest devastation.

Pulp and paper—The number of trees cut annually in North America just for paper is unfathomable. (Not satisfied with devastating North American forests, U.S. corporations have also moved into Central and South America to do more of the same.) But thousands of tons of paper annually goes for purposes which a socialist society would eliminate, i.e. the paper used by the industries, bureaucracies, etc. listed above as being a waste of human labor.

And, besides making recycling a real priority (40% of the refuse in America's landfills is paper and wood), a socialist society would be able to seriously look at the alternatives to wood chips being used as the source of paper fiber. For example, it's widely known that paper can be made using kenaf or hemp fibers. Hemp grows rapidly and on most any kind of land. In much of the United States several crops a year can be harvested. But growing hemp is presently illegal (which doesn't prevent this from

being a billion dollar industry anyway) and the pulp and paper industry makes immense profits doing what it's already tooled up to do: turn wood chips into paper.

Housing—More lumber is used in housing construction in the United States than for any other purpose. We saw above how the American Plywood Association has recently launched a campaign to insure that alternative materials are not used in multi-family buildings. It doesn't matter if other materials may be better, or if hundreds of people die a year in burning wooden buildings, wood products are lucrative for a section of the capitalists and they will go down fighting to ensure their profits continue. But a socialist society wouldn't have to deal with this. It could objectively weigh various building materials against each other in terms of their cost to society in labor time, weigh the health and safety considerations, and, since all building products ultimately come from the earth, weigh which raw materials could be extracted or harvested with the least damage to the environment. Moreover, since socialist planning, if it's really socialist planning, is organized planning by the masses of people, esthetics would also be a factor considered.

(Under capitalism there's worship of the market. It's exalted as the magic key which opens the door of every mystery, the verifier of what products are best, the indicator of what the people want, and so on and so forth. But the masses of people are poor. They have to buy what's cheapest. What the best products are, or what they would really like, aren't part of their considerations. What's more, they have to buy what's available. Present-day capitalism is dominated by monopoly corporations which use their clout

to shape what's on the market and therefore available.)

There is also an issue of what kind of housing is built. Multi-family buildings require relatively less wood or other building materials than single family houses. They require relatively less labor to construct. They can be made spacious, soundproof, and include public recreation rooms, cafeterias, laundries, etc., right within the building. And, if multi-unit housing were built on a large scale there would actually be more room for gardens, woods, parks and other recreation facilities on the surrounding land because more land would be freed up. We don't know if the people in a socialist society would opt for this type of housing but it seems to have a lot of advantages.

A really new forestry—Take away profit driven timber companies, substitute an economy planned by a society which has unleashed great productive powers through a socialist revolution, a society which struggles to ensure a high level of education and culture for every member because this is to the advantage of all, a society where the masses of people really have time to think about the world and participate in changing it, and the potential for ending the devastation of the earth and its forests seems almost limitless. Trees could be planted everywhere in order to hold the soil and rebuild it, in order to restore watersheds and help control floods, in order to absorb and hold carbon dioxide and thus begin to reverse the greenhouse effect, and more. Monoculture tree farms and clearcutting could become a thing of the past as a really scientific forestry was implemented. And the rejuvenated forests would be havens for both wildlife and people for all of the land would belong to the people. □

Notice of change of address for the MLP-Seattle

**The former p.o. box of the Seattle branch
of the Marxist-Leninist Party
has been discontinued.**

The new one is

**MLP-Seattle
P.O.Box 28951
Seattle, WA 98118**