

the ***Socialist***

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Editorial

Casualties Mount as the Capitalist Crisis Deepens

For most mainstream economists recessions are statistical phenomena. A recession can be “a period of reduced economic activity” or, more precisely, two consecutive quarters of negative growth in the gross domestic product. However, numbers only allow for a partial understanding of social realities. Human beings living inside such statistics experience recessions in an intensely personal and emotional manner. Capitalism has managed to convince people that it is safe and even healthy, to build self-identities from market-based relations. This is particularly true of home ownership – the bedrock foundation of the American dream. When such dreams are shattered by mortgage banks on the prowl for profits there are very real human costs. Extinguished self-identities often produce violent outcomes.

Addie Polk provided the first warning about the human costs of the financial crisis. Now 90, Polk had lived in her Akron, Ohio home since 1970. In 2004 Polk took out a \$45,000 mortgage on the house with Countrywide Home Loans and opened an additional \$11,000 line of credit with a local bank. Countrywide was the largest mortgage lender in the US and reported more than \$900 million in bad loans before being purchased by Bank of America. After missing a string of mortgage payments, Polk began a game of cat-and-mouse with Deputies who made 30 attempts to serve her with eviction notices. Faced with the possibility of losing her home to the bank, Addie Polk attempted to end her life with a



shotgun blast to the head. Quick responding neighbors rushed her to a nearby hospital where she recovered from the wound. The outcry from Akron citizens and the attention of national media outlets prompted Countrywide to forgive Polk's debt. “Miss Polk will probably end up on her feet,” Akron City Council President Marco Sommerville commented, “But I am not sure if anyone else will.”

53 year old Carlene Balderrama's story has a far less satisfying ending. She and her husband John purchased their Taunton, Massachusetts home in 2004. Carlene Balderrama

was in charge of household finances but fell behind when the adjustable rate mortgage on the home ballooned as interest rates began to rise. After a string of missed payments, the mortgage company PHH Inc., foreclosed on the house. Balderrama hid this information from her husband. On the day the house was to be auctioned she faxed a one-sentence letter to PHH's headquarters – “By the time you foreclose on my house I'll be dead.” She delivered on this promise with a shotgun blast to her head. In her suicide note, she encouraged her husband to use the money from her life insurance policy to pay off the debt on their house.

Each year Pasadena, California resident Wanda Dunn dropped off a bag of toys at a local nursing home. This pattern changed in October of this year, as she packed all of her prized possessions into plastic bags and dropped them on the front porch of her neighbor's house with a note detailing how the goods should be distributed. One bag contained her yearly toy donation. The next

Statement of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY strives to establish a radical democracy that places people's lives under their own control - a non-racist, classless, feminist socialist society... where working people own and control the means of production and distribution through democratically-controlled public agencies; where full employment is realized for everyone who wants to work; where workers have the right to form unions freely, and to strike and engage in other forms of job actions; and where the production of society is used for the benefit of all humanity, not for the private profit of a few. We believe socialism and democracy are one and indivisible. The working class is in a key and central position to fight back against the ruling capitalist class and its power. The working class is the major force worldwide that can lead the way to a socialist future - to a real radical democracy from below. The Socialist Party fights for progressive changes compatible with a socialist future. We support militant working class struggles and electoral action, independent of the capitalist controlled two-party system, to present socialist alternatives. We strive for democratic revolutions - radical and fundamental changes in the structure and quality of economic, political, and personal relations - to abolish the power now exercised by the few who control great wealth and the government. The Socialist Party is a democratic, multi-tendency organization, with structure and practices visible and accessible to all members.

Zelig Stern

Healthcare is Our Right!

On a rainy November 13th evening in NYC a large group of people gathered in Times Square, and then marched to the headquarters of GHI, a non-profit health insurance company which faces privatization. The marchers were demonstrating in support of the passage of HR 676, a bill for national single-payer healthcare, and against the proposed privatization of GHI/HIP. The demonstration was organized by many groups including Private Health Insurance Must Go, Healthcare-Now, rank and file union members, Socialist Action, The Socialist Party USA, and others. The following is a speech given by Zelig Stern, Secretary of the Socialist Party NYC local.

We live in a moment where policy-makers believe the free market to be the answer to all problems. While protectionism may have been an evil of yesterday, all responsible trade barriers have been broken and replaced by so called "free trade", a policy devastating to workers and the environment both in the developed and less developed world. Domestically, public programs that Americans depend on have fallen victim to the seemingly unstoppable march of privatization. While the current economic crises may have started to wake people up to the dangers of these principles, their disastrous effects have been apparent since the beginning.

Healthcare is an area where the effects of free market capitalism have been particu-

larly catastrophic. Fifty million people in this country are currently uninsured while another fifty million are underinsured and these numbers are only growing. This trend must be stopped!

Two of the most recent targets of privatization are the not for profit insurance companies GHI/HIP. We cannot allow the march of privatization to go one step forward. GHI/HIP covers over 90% of city workers and their families. Privatization means increased premiums, increased co-pays, and increased denials. While New York State and New York City are promising huge cuts to social programs, New Yorkers cannot afford to have their health care hurled into the free market system.

It is not enough to stop the forward progress of this free market global takeover. We must present alternative systems. Once again the urgency to do this is nowhere more pressing than in health care. Healthcare is a right, not a privilege! That is why we cannot leave healthcare up to the whims of the free market and the health insurance companies. We need a guarantee that people will have healthcare and that the cost of their health will not be a burden on their lively hood. We must have socialized healthcare. This means worker and consumer control of the pharmaceuticals, health insurance companies, hospitals, and doctors. The first step in

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day Dunn administered a self-inflicted wound to her head. Dunn's bungalow, which had been in the family for three generations, was being foreclosed on by a bank and she too faced eviction. Wanda Dunn was so unwilling to allow her residence to be taken that she lit the structure on fire just before pulling the trigger on the shotgun. A few days later neighbor Steve Brooks made a visit to Vista Cove Nursing Home to deliver Dunn's final toy donation.

The police officer charged with investigating Wanda Dunn's death offered a profound observation, "this was everyone's fault and no one's fault." Capitalism is indeed a system of relations where no single person can be said to be entirely responsible for

things like home foreclosures. The violence of capitalism is often anonymous and located inside relations in which profit-making is favored over any human right to housing. Socialists, on the other hand, would always prioritize the rights of human beings over those of mortgage banks by seeking a society organized around socialist values of compassion, solidarity and humanity. The oft repeated socialist slogan to "nationalize the banks" is therefore more than an economic demand – it is attempt to allow human beings to enjoy what should be their human right to things such as housing and to stem the tide of the casualties of economic recession.



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Lay-Out

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Notes on a Presidential Campaign

Our total vote count as of November 21, 2008, is 7,610. However, the Socialist Party USA did qualify for write-in status in 22 states, potentially increasing our vote totals. We hope to achieve 8,000 to 9,000 when the final results are in.

Overall, the results for third parties were very sobering, since our totals were significantly down from the elections of 2000 and 2004. The Obama vote was, in some sense, an aberration, due in part to the fact that electing a person of color moved liberals and independents back into the Democratic Party category, no matter what their expectations were of the outcome of an Obama presidency. The other influencing factor was the strong anti-Bush/anti-Republican vote. This was fueled, in part, by fear on the part of Democrats, Independents and progressive voters, which led to a retreat back into voting for the "lesser of two evils," because it was "still better than what we had." For many voters, Obama seemed like a "safe" vote, no matter how they looked at it. I am still confident that there were many Americans who did not like either candidate, but took the easy way out.

Despite the conditions referenced above, I feel the Moore/Alexander '08 ticket did well. We enhanced the Socialist Party's status, credibility, and acceptance with many Americans. Our appearances on television programs were crucial to circulating our ideas: The Colbert Report, Fox News' Neil Cavuto Report three separate times, a 30 minutes C-Span interview, and two CNN reports on our candidacy were more than we expected from the national media.

The United States government bailout of Wall Street financial institutions, and McCain's accusations of Obama being a "Socialist" also enhanced our opportunities to explain or defend our positions as Socialists. Our interviews on internet radio, on about 30 radio programs, many of which were broadcast nation-wide, was another contributing factor in making an enhanced impact on the national scene. We also had substantial articles in major newspapers like the St. Petersburg Times, the Tampa Tribune, the Chicago Tribune, the Milwaukee Journal, the Los Angeles Times, and many local and regional newspapers, magazines and newsletters.



Internet blogs, like the Ballot Access News, the Third Party Report and the Independent Political News, along with Daily Kos and Wikipedia and Politics1.com all reported on our ticket and the Socialist Party.

We gained ballot access in eight states, below our goal of 15 or 20 and we benefited from legal assistance from a law professor at Capital University in Columbus, Ohio, who helped us qualify in Ohio, and come close to qualifying on the ballots in the states of Louisiana and Mississippi. He did a great

job for us.

We were able to raise tens of thousands of dollars thanks to generous donations from SP members and non-members who were excited by the campaign. So many people were very generous and made significant sacrifices considering their personal circumstances. Some people are still making contributions, after the election, to help us cover a campaign deficit of approximately \$9,000 to \$10,000.

We were thrilled by the support of members in many states who worked diligently to get us on the ballot through petitioning, or to qualify us as write-in candidates. Volunteers assisted us in 31 states to qualify while another group of people worked long and hard but were not able to gain us a ballot status in their states despite their efforts.

In other states, where we did not even attempt to qualify, due to the difficult requirements, we still had volunteers who passed out our literature or called the press and local groups to promote our cause despite the lack of our presence. We gained volunteers via the internet, through our website and the party's website, and the campaign committee's ongoing publicity efforts. The potential for something bigger was there.

All-in-all, it was a valiant effort by the Socialist Party, as we did the best that we could, and we feel we made progress, and achieved enough successes to increase the party's national membership and national recognition in the coming months and years. We also built upon the work of our noble predecessors, and have moved upward in teaching the populace and workers in this country of our party's rich heritage and interest in their welfare.

David McReynolds

Another Look at Obama's Victory

Minutes after Barak Hussein Obama finished his speech in Chicago, accepting his election as President, in front of a multi-racial crowd of tens upon tens of thousands of people, and as tears ran down the face of Jesse Jackson, something quite remarkable happened all over the United States.

A friend, who had been at my apartment watching the results, phoned from her home deeper in the Lower East Side to report crowds of youth were in the street blocking traffic. Other friends confirmed demonstrations in the East Village, Times Square, Harlem, Union Square - across the city and across the nation. Spontaneous, unplanned, an expression of pent-up relief after eight years of Bush/Cheney. Several hundred folks gathered outside the White House. There were outbursts of joy across the world.

Socialists need to see in Obama's election some very positive things, including, more than anything else, the election of an African American to the office of President. But also including the active work of tens of thousands of young Americans drawn to the political process. We know, of course, that Obama is not a socialist, and that he is not a radical. That should not keep us from rejoicing in the defeat of John McCain. I've never been able to subscribe to the notion that if the worst side wins the working class will be one step closer to victory. I think, on the contrary, we will find it easier to work in a political climate where there is hope that change is possible.

Yes, we need to press Obama on a dozen fronts. I could list many, but I'll list just a few.

- * Massive investment in our infrastructure as a way of creating jobs and increasing spending from below. We need to repair our bridges, rebuild our rail system, modernize our urban energy and water systems, invest in new green technology.
- * Swift withdrawal of our forces from Iraq and a basic shift in the Afghanistan policy, which should be changed from one of intervention to one of negotiation and the withdrawal of US forces.
- * Recognition of Hamas in Palestine, as well as the Palestinian Authority, an end of military aid to both the Israel and the Arab states, resumption of diplomatic relations with Iran, and pressure on both Iran and Israel toward a nuclear free Middle East.
- * Recognition of the government of Cuba, and end the restrictions on trade and travel.
- * The closing Guantanamo and also all other centers of torture, such as that at Bagram, in Afghanistan.
- * The closing all US military bases outside our borders.



- * An examination of current drug laws, with the view to legalizing marijuana and seeking to deal with heroin addiction through treatment as a medical, not a criminal, problem.
- * The establishment of a commission to examine why the US has the largest prison population in the world, how we can shift from a "prison nation" to one free of capital punishment and with a sharply lower prison population.
- * Immediate steps toward a single-payer health plan to cover everyone living in this country, and the immediate public ownership of the pharmaceutical industry.

These are not socialist steps - just reasonable parts of a program for a renewal of our nation. And they are hardly a full list! But what I think very important about this election is something I've not heard others comment on - the return of a sense of a "civil society" in which citizens felt they had a right to speak to, and be heard by their government.

In the most terrible moment of the Civil Rights struggle, when lives were being lost, it was still possible for Martin Luther King Jr. to sit down with John F. Kennedy and then with Lyndon Baines Johnson - not "instead of" demonstrating, but "in addition to" organizing mass demonstrations and civil disobedience.

I remember, during the Vietnam War, organizing a small group of intellectuals to meet with Adlai Stevenson, then the UN Ambassador, to ask him to resign his post in protest to the Vietnam War. Rather than dismissing the idea as outrageous, Stevenson met with our group for over an hour. When Carter was President and Andrew Young his ambassador to the UN, more than twenty of us met with Young at the UN Mission to the UN urging the US to do more for disarmament, while at the same moment thousands of people were rallying

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Eric Chester

A Socialist Perspective on the Financial Crisis

The financial crisis marks a new era in the evolution of the capitalist system. Capitalism has ceased to be a progressive force in economic development. Its underlying dynamic of individual greed, joined with a blatant disregard for the long-term welfare of the community, inevitably brings with it economic, social and environmental disaster. These destructive forces far outweigh the limited and skewed impetus capitalism gives to innovation and invention. As radicals, we need to articulate a distinctly socialist alternative to the current crisis.

The current collapse of the financial sector is indicative of the total failure of the capitalist economic system. During the recent housing boom, speculators offered deceptively low interest rate loans on mortgages. As a result, millions bought houses they could not afford. Much of the funding for these loans came from some of the largest and most powerful financial institutions in the world. For a brief moment, lending institutions and banks made huge profits, but then, as usual, the bubble burst, leaving the housing market and the financial sector in complete disarray.

As the housing market slides toward a freefall decline, the entire economy is being dragged downward. Banks, tottering on the brink of insolvency, are reluctant to extend loans. This tightening of credit extends beyond the housing market, curtailing investment throughout the private sector. In a globally integrated economy, a sharp downturn in the U.S. economy ripples rapidly throughout the world. Already, commodity prices, especially oil, have dived downward, making it even more difficult for those in the developing countries to survive.

The Limits of Reform

Although widespread market deregulation exacerbated the depth of the current crisis, the underlying problems run far deeper. Capitalism cannot be reformed or regulated. It is inherently unstable and destructive. In terms of the current crisis, the following points should be kept in mind when listening to progressive pundits calling for a stricter regulation of the marketplace. First, once the economy has begun to collapse, liberal nostrums generally prove to be of little value. By the time corporations and consumers have lost confidence in the economy, lower interest rates and deficit financing have little impact on investment decisions. During the 1930s, President Roosevelt followed Keynesian policies of pump-priming. Although unemployment rates declined, they remained at very high levels until 1939, when the approach of U.S. participation in World War II brought with it a vast program of military spending and revived the economy. These days, the federal government is already operating at a substantial deficit, due to the military occupa-



NYC Anti-Bailout Protest - photo by Alex Nathanson

tion of Iraq and Afghanistan. The huge costs of the bailout will further restrict the ability of the government to fund job-creating programs.

Second, the current enthusiasm for deregulation follows closely from the global integration of the capitalist system. Corporations moved their factories overseas expressly to escape government regulations, as well as to exploit a workforce that could be coerced into accepting lower wages.

Furthermore, financial markets have become globally integrated, so that banks and other financial institutions can quickly shift funds to unregulated markets located anywhere around the world. Globalization undermines the ability of national governments to maintain even minimal control over large corporations, and it is therefore not surprising that the federal government failed to monitor the mortgage market as it headed toward the abyss.

Finally, business cycles have been occurring for hundreds of years. Indeed, capitalism is a system marked by booms and busts, since it is premised on the actions of individual businesses that manipulate markets to maximize their own profit. Unfortunately, the actions of an individual business, particularly in an economy dominated by large and powerful corporations, can easily unravel the entire economy. In the case of the current crisis, when an innovative mortgage broker decided to capitalize on the rapid increase in the price of housing by granting loans to individuals who obviously could not afford them, the problem appeared to be limited in scope. Should the borrower default, the mortgage holder could foreclose, and then sell the house for a substantial profit. The scheme seemed to be a surefire way of cashing in, so good that

National Action Commission

Our Love is Worth Fighting For

The recent passage of anti-gay referendums in relation to equal marriage rights, adoption, and related areas points out the ongoing power of the anti-gay religious right. This is a time for all of us; gay, straight, white, people of color, young, old, religious, non-religious, men, women to take a stand in support of equal rights for all peoples, in this case; LGBT (Lesbian/Gay/Bi/Trans) people. As socialists we call for economic democracy, grassroots politics, and emancipatory liberation. As feminists we oppose patriarchal systems that attempt to enforce artificially one type of gender expression or sexual identity. As anti-racists we oppose white supremacy and its divide and conquer tactics that attempts to split up the unity of the working class. We call for the repeal of all anti-LGBT laws and statutes and call for the rights of minorities to not be up to recall by a sometimes misled majority. We will work with groups working to overturn these anti-gay decisions and call for unity of all the oppressed in our shared vision of a just society; which we believe will be fulfilled by moving towards a socialist society. A society where people will be in cooperation with each other through their direct participation and able to benefit from the fruit of their labor to the benefit of themselves and all in society.



A Socialist Perspective...

other brokers and bankers rushed to participate.

The bubble kept expanding, but only as long as housing prices continued to rise, and interest rates remained low. This was an edifice that was bound to collapse like a house of cards, sending the entire economy into a downward spiral. Once again, capitalist markets failed to take into account the interrelatedness of a modern, industrialized society. Only a planned economy can overcome this inherent and fatal flaw.

Bailing Out Billionaires

With many of the largest banks and financial institutions on the brink of bankruptcy, the Bush administration proposed a gigantic bailout that will cost taxpayers hundreds of billion of dollars. The Democratic Congressional leadership rushed to support the Administration's proposal, and, with the addition of a hundred billion dollars in tax breaks to the wealthy and affluent, the bill quickly gained Congressional approval.

Essentially, the bailout bill injects hundreds of billions of dollars of government money into banks and financial institutions that are on the verge of bankruptcy. Thus, the rich and powerful are being rescued from the huge losses they would have absorbed if the market were allowed to run its course.

This staggering giveaway will bring higher taxes and further cuts in essential social services. As president, Obama will use his charismatic appeal to sell these cuts, and the accompanying decline in living standards, to those who can least afford it.

A Socialist Alternative

Of course, as socialists we reject the bailout plan. Apologists

for capitalism always insist that profits are a reward for risk-taking, and yet when powerful financial institutions take foolhardy risks, and lose, the public winds up bailing them out.

We need to make these points but we need to go much further. In the past, socialists have advanced transitional demands that point the way to a new society, demands such as a six-hour workday. Now that capitalism has entered into a period of terminal decline, we need to present demands that in and of themselves present elements of the transition to a socialist society.

In this context, a socialist program to meet the current crisis would demand that the government take over the financial sector, without compensation, and then delegate the distribution of home loans to a decentralized network of non-profit credit unions. The federal government would agree to assume responsibility for the defaulting mortgages, but only with the understanding that the government would be paid back for this subsidy by receiving the proceeds when these houses are sold, over and above the equity accumulated by the current residents. In the short-run, the costs of this debacle would be borne by those who benefited from the scam through a steeply graduated income tax.

Such a program to counter the immediate crisis is not enough. Housing is too important to be left in the hands of avaricious speculators and developers. The federal

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Billy Wharton

Meltdown in Paradise: Wall Street and Hawaii

An old Hawaiian proverb states “O ka makapo wale no ka mea hapapa i ka pouli” (only the blind gropes in the darkness). As the Wall Street meltdown spreads into the Hawaiian economy, the island’s business class and Republican Governor are doing their fair share of groping. The state’s extreme reliance on the tourist industry makes it one of the most vulnerable regions to what is quickly becoming a global recession. Couple this with the free-market ideology of Governor Linda Lingle and Hawaiian residents are faced with the very real prospects of a painfully deep recession.



Tourist sector statistics anticipated the general slowing of the American economy. When the hotel occupancy rate topped out at 83% in 2004, it seemed that success in the tourist sector would once again guide the general economy. The unemployment rate was driven to a 30-year low of 2.2% in December of 2006. The first blow to the tourist sector was delivered in early 2008 as Aoha and ATA Airlines collapsed thereby reducing the number of available flights into the islands. Calls for the Hawaiian state or Federal government to intervene and nationalize the airways were rejected by free-market Governor Linda Lingle. Consequently by mid-2008, the Bank of Hawaii reported that passenger volume from North America had declined on a year-to-year basis by more than 12%. By September, as the shock from Wall Street began to filter into the global economy, Hawaiian tourism was in a freefall. Room occupancy plunged to 65%, domestic arrivals declined by 22% and the economy lost \$141 million in visitor spending. Business began immediate firings, 1,100 layoffs in the tourist sector alone, which drove the unemployment rate to more than double its 2006 level at 4.5%.

The emerging crisis could not be isolated in the tourist industry. As in other parts of the country, the housing bubble also burst producing a crisis in foreclosures. 594 homes were foreclosed on in September, a 77% increase from August. The spillover into the rental market forced the median average rent to nearly \$1,200 a month. Residents have been driven to desperate measures to secure affordable housing. In the Honolulu neighborhood of Kalihi, slumlords created an improvised housing structure made of poles and plywood down the side of mountain. Fifty families paid \$500 to \$700 a month to live in this cramped, unsanitary and

structurally unsound structure. Resident Bernadette Yockman described her unit, “It was unsanitary. It was terrible. But we needed a roof over our heads.” The unstable mass of materials eventually collapsed sliding off the mountain into a nearby streambed with ten people still inside. Kalihi is an early signal of the coming barbarity of a society in recession.

In the face of these steep economic declines and their related social effects, Hawaii’s

first Republican governor in 40 years, Linda Lingle, has proposed a “focus on innovation.” Lingle, who was a contender for John McCain’s Vice-Presidential nomination, understands the cutting of state spending as being particularly innovative and, in a September 21, 2008 speech, pledged that “we will continue to lower business fees and not increase taxes.” She also called for “frank discussions” with island’s trade unions and a continuance of the “state’s conservative budget structure.” Instead of mapping out a plan for relief she continues to tout Forbes Magazine’s upgrading of the state’s bond rating. Business leaders on the island have applauded Lingle’s conviction that the private-sector can inherently “stabilize and self-correct,” and that government intervention is futile.

Multinationals have read these political signals clearly and seem to be treating the financial meltdown as opportunity to move on weakened local businesses and real estate. The drugstore chain Walgreens recently announced the purchase of four local pharmacies on the island of Maui and seeks to expand further. Disney has continued plans to construct a large-scale mixed-use resort which will feature more than 800 units. The 21-acre oceanfront resort in Oahu represents an expansion for Disney, since this vacation housing is not supported by a nearby theme-park and brings the company into direct competition with hotel chains such as Marriott and Hilton. One final effect of multinational corporations came indirectly in the food industry. The Flamingo Restaurant had, since the 1950s, made itself a staple throughout the islands by serving up a menu of American-style “comfort food.” In October of this year, one of the last Flamingo locations, only one other remains in operation, announced its closure, buckling under rising food costs, increasing lease payments and competition from low-priced fast-food businesses. A customer marked the loss “It is like a part of your family

National Action Committee

Socialist Party Condemns Post-Elections Racist Attacks

The Socialist Party USA condemns the racially motivated attacks which have followed the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States. People of color have been targeted throughout the country by small groups of racist whites. Acts have ranged from a cross burning, simulated lynchings and even violent attacks in some instances. Mainstream news sources report that hundreds of incidents have occurred.

The election of Barack Obama was undoubtedly an important historical event. Millions of Americans rejected the race and red baiting tactics of the McCain-Palin campaign and cast their vote without regard to race-status. The election therefore drew from the long-term progressive cultural impact of the civil rights movement. Viewed entirely from this perspective, the election of Obama represents a potentially progressive moment in American race relations.

Sadly, the Obama presidency will offer little of the “change” and “hope” it promised throughout the campaign. Early indications are that his administration will be directed by a free-market capitalist agenda and his policies will seek to enhance the profitability of corporations at the expense of working-class America. People can expect little in the way of fundamental change in healthcare, militarism or wealth redistribution. Winning these much needed changes will be the duty of broad social movements.

Poor and working class whites will therefore be challenged not to fall back into patterns of racial animus which debilitated the labor movement throughout the 20th century. As scholar W.E.B. DuBois noted, white workers have

A Meltdown in Paradise...

because you grew up with these local places, these eateries, yeah?”

Hawaii is not as exceptional as it may seem. Other areas in the country equally reliant on Wall Street have been devastated and there is more pain to come. Yet, the early peak of the Hawaiian economy and the sharpness of its subsequent decline offer grim lessons for other regions just entering the worst of the recession. People can expect little assistance to automatically be provided local and state governments - power indeed concedes nothing without a demand. Politicians such as Linda Lingle will remain committed to “market-based solutions” even while residents construct third-world slum housing. Large corporations view this power vacuum as an opportunity. A financial crisis will help Corporate America to accelerate their monopolization of every aspect of life. The question at hand is how much longer working people will be willing to blindly grope in the dark. Perhaps another Hawaiian proverb might provide guidance out of this disaster, “if the wish to come arises, walk firmly.”



often proved willing to forgo the struggle for material gains in favor of receiving the psychological wages of whiteness.

As the US heads toward a major economic recession, a racist discourse which targets people of color and immigrants is sure to emerge among a section of whites. Elite politicians will seek to mobilize these sentiments as a means to push forward a right-wing political agenda. However, class unity can be built through a critical recognition of the role of racism inside of capitalist society. Speaking out forcefully against racism and building democratic multi-racial coalitions will greatly assist in the construction of the mass social movements needed to move beyond the meager reforms offered by the Obama regime.

White supremacy is a primary enemy of working class solidarity. The recent racist attacks are purposeful attempts to divide working people against each other. The socialist left has learned the hard lessons of the 20th century and will oppose any racist attacks be they cultural or physical. A cultural approach which features exchange and engagement, instead of just tolerance, offers the brightest possibilities for unity among all working people. Public campaigns and policy proposals to dismantle the prison industrial complex, address issues of environmental racism and to challenge racial patterns of employment could demonstrate the effectiveness of anti-racist class politics.

We recognize that every human being regardless of their country of origin or skin pigmentation needs healthcare, a clean environment and a peaceful life. Socialists remain committed to challenging the fear, racism and oppression that typify capitalist society by building movements which demonstrate that solidarity, equality and compassion offer brighter possibilities for humanity. Thus, the Socialist Party USA says no to racist attacks! No to white supremacy! And, yes to working class solidarity in the service of human liberation!

Approved by SP-USA NAC 11/20/08

Aron Guy

Change from Below: Dutch Socialists Build a Grassroots Movement



Three days before the presidential election, Dutch Socialist Party member of the European Parliament Kartika Liotard met with the New York City chapter of the Socialist Party USA at the A.J. Muste Institute in lower Manhattan to share her experience of building a widespread grassroots movement.

“People were looking for something different,” said Liotard, who has spent 21 years helping to

create a party that is strong on the streets and a winner at the ballot box.

In a small country of 16.5 million people without a substantial left-wing tradition, the Dutch Socialist Party (SP) has more than 60,000 members and is the third-largest and fastest-growing of the Netherlands’ ten parliamentary parties. Founded in 1972, the SP holds 25 of 150 seats in the Netherlands lower house of parliament, which allocates seats based on the proportion of the popular vote. This is the equivalent of holding about 72 seats in the 435-member U.S. House of Representatives, although the U.S. system of winner-take-all voting would make this much more difficult to achieve. Liotard is one of 2 members of her party elected to represent the Netherlands in the 785-member European Parliament.

Liotard explained that the Dutch SP achieved success by creating an egalitarian socialist movement, built on the experience and practice of its members. Guided by three core concepts of human dignity, equality and solidarity, the party rejected the notion of a top-down socialist movement and insisted on full representation of members’ interests and needs. “We knew we had to create a new kind of modern socialism,” Liotard said.

The SP is dedicated to the principles of a generous social welfare state and public ownership of key sectors of the economy. In the short-term, its members are working to alleviate the more egregious harms of the capitalist state. At the beginning, two or three SP members would travel to a neighborhood and listen to community concerns. Was there too much garbage on the street? Not enough lights on at night? No facilities for the elderly? Once the needs were identified, the SP would help to organize local people to solve those problems. The SP also cooperated with trade unions, helping during strikes and working to reform labor law.

This strategy eventually led to the election of socialist members at the local and regional level, and by 1996, the SP had its first national representatives in the parliament. The SP began

to be identified as the party of the working class, in part by people who felt the older and larger Labor Party no longer represented them. As the SP became more successful, the party made an important decision. SP members in all levels of office would draw an average salary, with any excess money returned to the party. This would give the party more financial resources to address issues of concern to their members.

For example, Liotard said the Dutch SP is leading the way in outlawing the use of asbestos and helping the victims of asbestos-related illnesses — a campaign supported in part by the salaries of SP-elected politicians.

Other sources of funding come from the sliding-scale dues paid to the party by its members. In addition, people donate their time, which means a little money can go a relatively long way.

With success, the SP increased its focus on maintaining a close, transparent relationship with people at the grassroots level. As the largest opposition party in parliament, the SP had a chance to join in the ruling coalition with Christian Democrats and the Labor Party after the 2006 elections, but ultimately decided that the level of compromise was too high.

The “secret,” then, of a dynamic socialist movement turns out to be not so secret after all: intense, local, highly adaptive community organizing done by hard-working people who did not let their small numbers or their failures deter them at first and who so far have not let their growth or electoral success take them away from their base.

Liotard ended her discussion with a grand prediction. “I’ll come back next year and we will be in a huge hall,” she said.

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Dan Jakopovich

The Korean Colonial War and the American Support for Mass Murder

A crime is a crime, whether perpetrated in the name of Stalinism, fascism, capitalism or democratic socialism. However, although it is today, for instance, popular in Croatia to refer to the Bleiburg massacre (where Nazi collaborationists and some civilians were mercilessly killed) as an ostensible manifestation of the “criminal” nature of the Yugoslav social revolution itself, it is ignored that capitalism has always been steeped in blood and crimes, and that following the Second World War “democratic” capitalist countries also settled accounts with the defeated in a horrific manner.¹

Secret documents from the Korean War were recently published, revealing that in the mid 1950s the US authorised the killing of approximately 100,000 leftists, generally without any formal charges or trials whatsoever. The highest circles in the Pentagon and State Department classified this fact at the time as a military secret and concealed it from the public. In the words of the historian Jung Byung-joon, a member of the South Korean Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the American “army were at the crime scene and took pictures and wrote reports.” The head of the commission posited that the number of 100,000 leftists killed is very conservative. On the basis of some research it is believed, for example, that the majority of 300 thousand leftists and their sympathisers who were sent to concentration camps at the beginning of the war for “re-education” were killed. Prior to the beginning of the war, the American military government in South Korea banned the Korean Workers Party, and at the beginning of the war they cruelly suppressed practically all forms of leftist political activity that were discovered.

There is also evidence and indications of the direct US role in the killings. One North Korean report, for example, states that an American military advisor gave the order to kill approximately a thousand prisoners in Incheon in late July 1950. The American journalist Alan Winnington reported the allegations by a witness that American officers supervised mass executions in Daejeon. Colonel Rollins S. Emmerich later wrote in his report to military historians that he attempted to prevent the executions of 3,500 prisoners in the southern port city of Pusan but authorisation was nonetheless given from the head of the American command for the mass executions of leftists.

Furthermore, for example, when the Far East commander and fanatical anti-communist General Douglas MacArthur was informed in a highly classified report of the execution of approximately 300 people near Daegu, including the murder of women and a 12- or 13-year-old

girl who were thrown into a ravine (where hours later several were still alive and moaning), he did nothing. W. J. Sebald, the State Department liaison to MacArthur, confirmed in a cable to secretary of state Dean Acheson that MacArthur's command viewed the South Korean killings as an “internal matter” and that the American command had “refrained from taking any action” in this regard. This, however, is not entirely accurate. There were significant forms of cooperation with the executors so that, for example, the State Department told diplomats to avoid issuing comments about the reports in connection with the South Korean crimes, and the American ambassador in London, for example, characterised a report on the massacre in Dajeonu as a “fabrication,” while the American army later blamed North Korea for the massacre.

Those who are acquainted with the character of American foreign policy following the Second World War, American military interventions (of various types and intensities) and the crimes in China, Italy, Greece, the Philippines, during the Korean War (in which approximately 3 million people perished), Albania, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Iran, Costa Rica, Syria, Indonesia, British Guiana, Vietnam (approximately 4 million dead), Cambodia (approximately 600,000 peasants were bombarded prior to the arrival of the Khmer Rouge), Laos, Haiti, Guatemala, Algeria, Ecuador, the Congo, Brazil, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, East Timor, Ghana, Uruguay, Chile, *continued on p. 14*



North Korean Prisoner Executed by South Korean Troops

SARI KULBERG & BILL BALDERSTON

Hunger in a World of Plenty

Was Malthus right? Are we condemned to a level of food production unable to meet population needs, especially in a period of urban expansion? Are we condemning the world to mass starvation? The answer is NO!!! The food crisis appeared to explode overnight, reinforcing fears that there are just too many people in the world. According to the FAO, with record grain harvests in 2007, there is more than enough food in the world to feed everyone—at least 1.5 times current demand. In fact, over the last 20 years, food production has risen steadily at over 2% a year, while the rate of population growth has dropped to 1.14% a year. Population is not outstripping the food supply.

Lack of food production is rarely the reason that people are hungry. This can be seen most clearly in the United States, where despite the production of more food than the population needs, hunger remains a significant problem. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in 2006 over 35 million people lived in food-insecure households, including 13 million children. Due to a lack of food, adults living in over 12 million households could not eat balanced meals and in over 7 million families, someone had smaller portions or skipped meals. In close to 5 million families, children did not get enough to eat at some point during the year.

It is certainly true that for hundreds and even thousands of years hunger and starvation have been linked not only to natural factors, but social instability and warfare. But in the contemporary era the more immediate level is made up of factors which have reached an acute level in the last two years, when prices of the sixty agricultural commodities traded on the world market increased 37 percent last year and 14 percent in 2006.

Temporary measures only begin to address the longer-term structural level cause for this food crisis. These factors are often lumped under the general category of neo-liberalism. The result was to attempt to do away with the regulatory role of government and allow the market to dictate all.

What did this mean for food production? In the Global South it meant, the end to supports for seed, fertilizer, price controls and tariffs. It allowed large landowners and multinational corporations to take over much of the food production. This contrasts with the ongoing massive subsidies large farmers/corporations continue to receive in the US. But, one thing that both sets of societies have in common is the undermining of food reserves as a fall-back in times of crisis.

For centuries, grain reserves have been an essential component of functioning food systems. However, in the last 2 decades, the U.S. and most other governments have let

reserve systems wither. They have unwisely placed full faith in the free market to self-correct, and eliminated their last emergency response mechanism.

This structural problem is equally linked to food production, international food sales, and production for export. In earlier centuries, colonialism dictated the reorganizing of local farming economies and production for sale in the colonizing nations. Think of the impact of sugar production on the genocide of countless native peoples of the Americas and the creation of the Trans Atlantic slave trade from Africa. The impact of international food trade has also been forceful over the last several decades. The so-called "Green Revolution" (beginning in the 60's and 70's) was not simply the result of creating new 'super crops' such as the now famous 'genetically-modified foods.' Newly created technology to rapidly increase production (and reduce labor costs), is linked to the 'structural adjustment programs', forced on Third World countries by international institutions, like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and more recently, the World Trade Organization (WTO), under the 'stick' of massive debt, created by the 'carrot' of free trade. It is this situation which has allowed gigantic multinational agribusiness corporations such as Cargill, Archer Daniels Midland and Bunge to dominate global trade in grains and Monsanto to control more than 20 percent of the seed market. This has drastically reduced the breadth and diversity (including massive deforestation) of the agro-ecological systems worldwide. This provokes not only financial manipulation, but vulnerability to all sorts of disease and famine.

The lever for so much of this drastic transformation has occurred through de-regulation, creating a 'legal' framework for massive changes in land tenure and agricultural dimension. If land reform/redistribution was the motor force for so much of the social revolution of the 20th



A Socialist Perspective on the Financial Crisis

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government should begin building millions of units of low and medium density, high-quality low-cost housing, integrated ethnically and across income levels. These housing units should be constructed by a unionized and ethnically and gender integrated workforce, and designed to be energy efficient and located near a greatly expanded system of mass transit. They should be owned by local communities, but should be operated by resident councils.

These are immediate demands, but we need to move quickly to a socialist society, one in which housing is no longer bought or sold, but instead is provided to all as a basic right. In a socialist society, all new housing would be built and owned by local governments, but operated by councils elected by the residents. Individual houses and condominiums could be occupied by the current owners, but they could not be sold or transferred, and they would be absorbed into the public sector over a specified period of time.

Housing needs to be placed in the same category as health care and education. It needs to be completely removed from the marketplace and provided to all on the basis of total equality.

Hunger in a World of Plenty

Century (whether in China, Vietnam, Mozambique, El Salvador, et al), what is occurring now is a reverse distribution. One only has to look to Mexico to see the effects of ending the 'ejido' system (common farmlands in most of Mexico which were a great gain of the Mexican Revolution), leading to the displacement of millions of Mexicans, many of whom have ended up in the US. In this country, we see the demise of most family farms, from the 80's to the present, bought up mainly by agribusiness.

Certainly this dislocation has led to incredible urban growth, in most cases, no provisions have been made for adequate housing or jobs, leading to the creation of one BILLION global slum dwellers, many of whom formerly produced food but now barely subsist. This goes hand-in-hand with the massive loss of farmland. One dramatic example is that China has had an annual loss of 2.6 million acres since 2000.

The architects of this failed free market strategy are prescribing more of the same. But some countries have resisted. Malawi reintroduced subsidies for seed and fertilizers and the yields increased so dramatically that they now export food to Zimbabwe. Venezuela, under Chavez, has introduced a feeding program that not only provides free meals for children, the elderly and the infirm, but also involves a massive network in the food distribution. They also have created a network of stores with basic foodstuffs at major



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discounts. Cuba and other countries have turned to urban gardens and organic foods to help supply new city dwellers.

We must demand a five-year moratorium on agro-fuels, both in the US and in Europe (through the UN), while other fuel systems can be developed. Second, we must seek the reactivation of small-farm agriculture by renegotiating free trade agreements to favor local producers and taking farm production out of the WTO. One immediate measure which could be taken is the providing of \$755 million to the World Food Program to make emergency food available. Third, we must insist on rebuilding national food economies by reestablishing grain reserves, both here and abroad. Finally, we must prioritize agro-ecology by shifting the reliance from genetic-engineered agriculture (its free-trade backers and corporate producers) back to a locally based environmental agriculture. This would preserve the environment, and help provide food and employment to the world's poor. It would also be more efficient since family farms are more productive, on a pound per acre basis, than large industrial food production. In addition, it would be much less dependent on oil-based production.

Such measures are essential not only to meet this current food crisis, but to reverse the assault of the neo-liberal 'free-market' strategy which is causing so much impoverishment in the world today.

This is an edited version of an article which first appeared in the NEA Peace and Justice Caucus Newsletter. Sari Kulberg and Bill Balderson teach in public schools in Oakland, CA.

The Korean Colonial War...

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Bolivia, Angola, Zaire, Jamaica, the Seychelles, Grenada, Morocco, Surinam, Nicaragua, Panama, El Salvador, Serbia, Afghanistan, Iraq etc. (in quite a few of these countries, several times), this will not be surprising news. Ultimately, many more people perished in various US bombardments (almost as a rule, civilians), and it has been demonstrated, for example, that within the framework of the Indonesian massacres of leftists, the US provided lists of leftists to be killed to the Indonesian authorities (approximately half a million leftists perished in Indonesia during this period).²

How little has changed since then is demonstrated by the fact that tens of thousands of people are languishing in prisons in Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantanamo Bay and elsewhere, often without trial, without any legal protection whatsoever and subjected to numerous forms of torture, while the number of deaths caused by the war in Iraq (according to Opinion Research Business) has already exceeded a million.

Although the British authorities in the Korean conflict played a somewhat more moderate colonial role, European states, especially the strongest such as Britain and France, cannot be exonerated from the innumerable direct and indirect crimes that are being perpetrated today in the name of capitalistic "democracy." Among European administrations, Britain is the most shameless in maintaining its "old habits,"³ and in recent times France has revived its imperialism in countries such as Congo-Brazzaville, Haiti, the Ivory Coast

Another Look at Obama's Victory

continued from p. 5

two blocks North of the US Mission.

We felt we had a right, not only to protest, not only to commit civil disobedience, but to meet with our members of Congress, to petition the officials of our government, and to expect them to hear us out. There were certainly times when this didn't work - I remember being arrested in the office of then-New York Senator Al D'Amato when he refused to meet with our delegation. But in general, people felt they had a right to be heard.

One of the things which happened during the Bush/Cheney years was a decisive end of this tradition of civil dialogue. Cindy Sheehan could camp outside President Bush's Texas ranch in summer and winter but could not gain a meeting. On the eve of the Iraq War, which was a violation of the UN Charter, the peace demonstrations around the world were the largest ever seen. The Pope even sent a personal envoy to plead with Bush against launching the war.

But the war was launched, and with it the most secretive and criminal administration I have seen in my life, including that of Richard Nixon. It was not that we were silenced - many reading this were, like me, arrested at some point during those eight years in protests or demonstrations. There were countless demonstrations, but they grew smaller as

and Rwanda, not to mention various structural neocolonialist strategies.

A genuinely civilised, democratic society will neither perpetrate nor justify such crimes. The "ethics" of wolves (or "hawks") generally prevails today.

Notes

1) See, for example, Richard Drayton, *An Ethical Blank Cheque*, *The Guardian*, May 10, 2005, and Patricia Meehan, *Cruel Allied Occupiers*, *The New York Review of Books*, October 25, 2007 (a review of Giles MacDonogh, *After the Reich: The Brutal History of the Allied Occupation*, Basic Books, 2007).

2) See the brilliant book on this subject by William Blum, *Killing Hope: U.S. Military & CIA Interventions Since World War II*, Zed Books, London, 2003, p. 194.

3) See, for example, only in connection with the current highly illustrative direct British involvement in the torture of people in Uzbekistan, a book by the renegade former British ambassador in Uzbekistan, Craig Murray, *Murder in Samarkand: A British Ambassador's Controversial Defiance of Tyranny in the War on Terror*, Mainstream Publishing, London, 2007. For a broader review of British foreign policy following the Second World War, see Mike Curtis, *Unpeople: Victims of British Policy*, Vintage Books, London, 2004.

the years passed, and the public felt there was less and less chance of civil protest having any effect. We were living, for eight years, under an administration which gained the 2000 election by fraud, and by a single vote of the Supreme Court.

There was a dangerous side effect to this "end of dialogue", and that was the rise of conspiracy theories, including the whole "9.11 Truth" movement. These theories argued that there really was nothing people could do about our politics, except study what had happened. Hopes of mass protests were doomed by the "conspiracy" which controlled things. On the eve of the election there were reports across the internet (and even an article in *Rolling Stone*) that McCain would be elected by massive voter fraud, that troops were being prepared to come into the streets if there were protests against his election. Conspiracy theories are deadly to democratic movements which hope to win by discussion, education, and elections. Conspiracy theories leave people feeling helpless.

In this sense, Obama's victory was a victory for a return to civil dialogue - to debate, demonstrations, and elections . . . with a hope that change might occur. In this sense, the election empowers all of us, whatever our views on Obama. America is open once more to the possibility of change. Change as deep as Obama seemed to promise, and change much deeper, the kind of change socialists advocate.

Mansoor Osanloo Imprisoned in Iran Because "He talks."

Mansoor Osanloo, the union activist and leader who has been imprisoned in the past two years on the charge of organizing the independent Tehran's Bus Drivers Union, is being kept in the maximum security criminals' ward of Rajayi Shahr prison where the most notorious criminals are being held. In the recent months, despite his serious heart and eye condition, Mansoor has been denied medical care among other things. Mansoor's wife, Parvaneh Osanloo, explained the current situation in an interview that was published online this week.

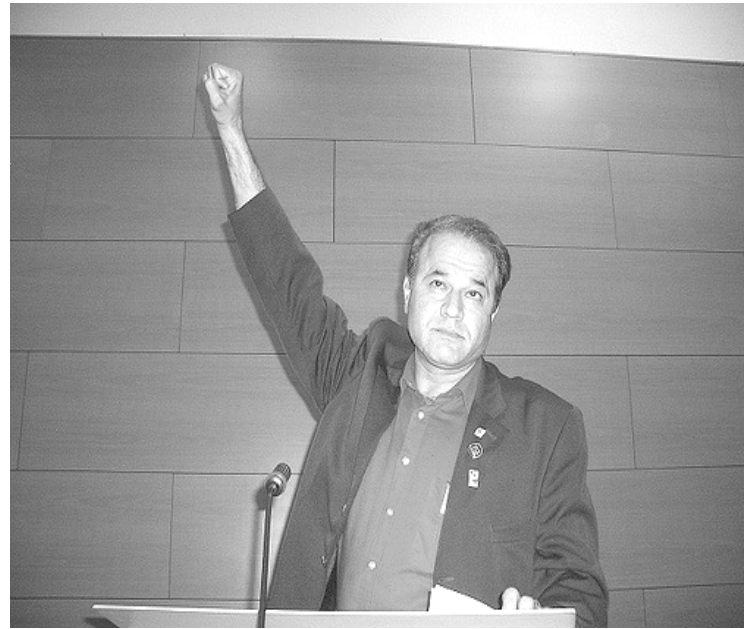
Parvaneh expresses her amazement upon hearing Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's claim in last week interviews during a UN visit that all prisoners in Iran are tried publicly and are never denied representation by defense attorneys. This was clearly not the case for Parvaneh's husband; listening to Ahmadinejad's pretensions in front of the foreign media, Parvaneh wonders why her husband has been denied basic rights such as medical care for so many months despite his failing health.

"After several months of delay, my husband was finally taken to hospital on the September 20th" Parvaneh says, hoping to receive medical treatment for both an infection in his eye resulting from a recent operation and for his dangerously high blood pressure. In the hospital and in transfer, Parvaneh explains "he was put in handcuffs and shackles." This made the situation so traumatic that the medical doctor in the hospital decided to write a letter to the prison officials requesting that they "refrain from using such instruments" because "it causes too much stress" on a patient with a heart condition.

All this happened after Mansoor was denied medical care earlier this month and was instead transferred to a maximum security prison facility and was denied any communication with outside for several days. The transfer was explained to Parvaneh as being conducted under orders from "the head of the Province of Tehran's Security Council" and "the Head of Iran's Prisons Association." Parvaneh was told by the judge that Mr. Osanloo has been transferred to the Rajayi Shahr prison because he talks.

Doctors had concluded previously, after medical examinations, that Mansoor needed to spend at least 6 weeks in rehabilitation, Parvaneh explains. However, he has been so far denied even a single day of medical leave from prison.

As far as working with the Islamic judicial system of Iran goes, Parvaneh explains that although she has been in contact with several defense attorneys, she has realized that these attorneys cannot do much for her husband as the Iranian government and judicial authorities categorically



ignore any effort concerning Mansoor.

"Mansoor has spent 18 consecutive months in prison now" Parvaneh says, and "much as we understand the economic hardships that the union members are grappling with in their everyday lives, we wish they could have done more to make Mansoor's case visible to the authorities."

Parvaneh, now the sole source of income for the Osanloo family, currently has to work several shifts a day and use the time that has been designated as the annual "paid holiday time" to follow up on the situation of her husband.

"Mansoor is in jail not because he wanted to" Parvaneh says, "but because he stood up for the rights of his comrades and co-workers; defending the rights of the working people is not a crime and therefore, my husband has done nothing illegal or against the national security. Everything that he has done is legal and legitimate."

For more info visit:
www.freeosnloo.org

Healthcare is a right
continued from p. 3

achieving this promise is the creation of a national single payer healthcare system. While this is not socialized healthcare, it puts in place systems that will still be used under socialized healthcare, and removes a part of our health from the free market. It is a step toward the final goal. No compromise with the health insurance industry can provide this promise. This is why Obama's plan must be opposed. This is why we must pass HR 676 now. Not one more death for profit!!

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