

A Vision from the Heartland:

Socialism for the 21st Century



By Dan La Botz,

Socialist Party Candidate

From Ohio For the U.S. Senate

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My name is Dan La Botz and I was born in Chicago, Illinois on August 9, 1945. My mother was of Irish ancestry and my father was the son of Dutch immigrants. At the time I was born, my parents were both working in the Co-op Grocery Store in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Chicago, she as a grocery clerk and he as a produce man. We lived on the South Side of Chicago in neighborhoods that reflected the city's long history of immigration, white families whose ancestors came from all over Europe and African Americans whose grandparents or parents had come up from the South.

My parents divorced when I was eleven years old, and my mother, with two children, myself and my sister Janet, moved to California to be near her mother who was living in the San Diego area. After a couple of years my mother remarried and a year later had another child, my half-brother Kenneth.

My mother continued to work as grocery clerk, a loyal member of the Retail Clerks Union whose union contract provided her with wages, health insurance and later a pension. She and my step-father Kenneth Hornke, alternately a house painter and a commercial fisherman, bought a house in Imperial Beach, a small working class town a couple of miles north of the U.S.-Mexico border and a few blocks from the Pacific Ocean. There I attended San Ysidro Junior High School and then Mar Vista High School, schools where many of the students were the sons and daughters of Navy enlisted personnel, mostly white southerners. Many others, however, were children of immigrants: Mexican Americans, Japanese and Filipinos. I ran the high hurdles on the track team and worked on the school newspaper.

Higher Education and Political Activism

When I graduated from High School, I went to Southwestern College in Chula Vista and two years later moved on to San Diego State College where I graduated in 1968. During this period I married and my wife and I had a son, Jakob La Botz. While in college I volunteered with the United Farm Workers union (UFW) and helped support farm worker strikes for higher wages and better conditions on the tomato ranches in southern San Diego County. The UFW was really part of an enormous Latino movement for civil rights and I learned a lot from it. Growing up on the border, studying and working with Latinos gave me a lifelong love of the Spanish language and Latin American culture.

I registered as a conscientious objector to war when I graduated from High School in 1963, though because I had a student deferment and later a child, I

was never drafted. I became active in the anti-Vietnam War movement and joined in student protests and street demonstrations throughout that period. I learned that during such periods of crisis consciousness changes quickly, activists can help shape a movement as they both learn from it and help to lead it, and that people fighting for justice have enormous power.

Socialist Activist in the Labor Movement

In 1969 I became a member of a small socialist organization, a democratic socialist group opposed to both capitalism and Soviet-style Communism. The anti-war movement had been largely centered on college campuses, but we young socialists believed that we should take our socialist ideas off the campus and into society and particularly into the workplace and into the unions. So in 1970 I moved back to Chicago to look for a job. I worked as a librarian, a social worker, a steelworker and eventually became a truck driver.

I spent most of the 1970s as a truck driver in Chicago where I became involved in organizing a reform movement in the Teamsters union, then dominated by corrupt union officials linked to the Mafia. I learned an enormous amount from dockworkers, truck drivers, and food processing workers in the Teamsters union. I was a founding member of Teamsters for a Democratic Union and later wrote a book about the movement *Rank and File Rebellion: Teamsters for a Democratic Union*.

In 1980, after a series of injuries on the job, I left truck driving. I got a job as a reporter at the Chicago Daily Defender, an African American newspaper. When I joined with other reporters at the paper in organizing a local union with the Newspaper Guild, I was fired. By then my wife and I had divorced and as a single father raising my son Jake, I had to find another job quickly. I found one as a community organizer on the Northside of Chicago. There I worked with Latino immigrants to organize the Comité Latino, an organization of Spanish-speaking immigrants that dealt with housing issues, jobs, and immigrant rights. I also worked with the South Austin Community Council, an African American community group on the West Side of Chicago and helped them put out a community newspaper.

In 1984, the House Staff Association, the union of interns and residents at Cook County Hospital, hired me as organizer. When President Ronald Reagan cut back on Medicaid reimbursements, private hospitals then dumped patients on the public hospitals, overwhelming them. The doctors couldn't do their jobs because of inadequate support staff. We waged a successful campaign that pressured the Cook County Board into hiring many more transporters, blood drawers and other ancillary workers.

The union's president Sherry Baron and I fell in love, and married in 1986. Sherry and I spent a short time in Mexico City that year where she did a

rotation in environmental health while I worked as a reporter for The Mexico City News writing on labor issues. When I returned to the United States I turned my research and journalism experience in Mexico into a book The Crisis of Mexican Labor.

Raising a Family

In 1986 we returned to the United States and moved to Los Angeles where Sherry had a job at the UCLA School of Public Health. I worked for Jobs with Peace, a labor-community coalition working to make a transition in California from military to civilian production. We started a family in Los Angeles with the birth of our first son, Traven.

Sherry took a position in public health with the U.S. government and we moved to Cincinnati in 1988. Soon after, I enrolled in the History Department of the University of Cincinnati where I earned an M.A. and a Ph.D. Meanwhile amidst work and study we had a second son, Reed. I was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to conduct research in Mexico and at the same time Sherry was assigned by her agency to work in Mexico. We spent 1995-1997 living and working in Mexico City where our children learned to speak Spanish and to appreciate other countries and cultures.

On returning to Cincinnati I became a history teacher, teaching U.S. and Latin American History first as an instructor at Northern Kentucky University, then as a visiting professor at the University of Cincinnati, and for six years as a visiting professor at Miami University in nearby Oxford, Ohio. I also received grants from the Fund for Investigative Journalism to visit Indonesia and write a book about workers and unions in that country. Many of my Latin American Studies and U.S. History courses dealt in large measure with U.S. foreign policy. So I also took advantage of the opportunity to travel and learn more about countries from Brazil to Russia.

Throughout this period, spanning the late 1990's until the present I have participated in many struggles for civil rights and worker rights: working with African Americans to stop police abuse in Cincinnati, working with Latino immigrants in fighting for their rights, and supporting workers in organizing drives and strikes. Sherry and I were proud to have our children grow up amidst such struggle for justice. I also worked with Labor Notes, the labor education center in Detroit. I wrote its bestselling book, the union activist's manual *The Troublemaker's Handbook: How to Fight Back Where you Work and Win!* I also began to work with the United Electrical Workers Union (UE) and the Mexican union the Authentic Labor Front (FAT) to produce *Mexican Labor News and Analysis* an electronic monthly newsletter in English on Mexican unions.

When my non-tenure job at Miami University ended, I found a new job, and a whole new experience teaching Spanish to children from first through eighth grade. I spend my day teaching small children songs and games in Spanish and teaching conversation and grammar to the older students. I enjoy my work and learn something from my colleagues and the kids every day.

Answering the Call For Political Change

The great recession beginning in 2008 added urgency to my commitment to become even more active in the fight for alternatives to the ongoing corporate domination and reckless squandering of our nation's human assets and to the destruction of the livelihood of millions of working people at the hands of a privileged economic elite. Through struggles over the years I have come to know that none of the problems facing this country can be dealt with unless we end the domination of banks, insurance companies and multinational corporations over both major parties and over our political system.

The root of the problem is the capitalist economic system where small numbers of people control enormous wealth, where a group of a dozen men meeting in a board room can close a factory and destroy a town, or jeopardize the economic wellbeing of an entire state. The corporations do not hesitate to drive us into debt, to poison our atmosphere and our water, to lay us off for months or years or to close our plants. We need to change our economic system.

With both the Republicans and the Democrats failing to provide answers to the economic, environmental, health and foreign policy issues, the American people were becoming increasingly alienated from politics and government. Many turned to the Tea Party movement, a movement giving expression to their alienation and, in some cases base prejudices, but providing no answers. Neither the Democrats and Republicans nor the Tea Party movement are prepared to tackle the real problem which is corporate domination of the political system.

It is for these reasons and drawing on my background of lifelong involvement in struggles for social and economic justice, that I made the decision to be the Socialist Party candidate for the U. S. Senate from Ohio.



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Preface The Great American Tradition

I argue in the book you are about to read that to solve the problems of our economy and the environment, and to end America's wars abroad, that we must begin to create a socialist society. A socialist society is one where the American working people collectively own and democratically plan and manage the major industries and enterprises. I call for the abolition of the corporations and of capitalism in order to create a society of plenty for all. I believe that such a society can only be created by building a powerful movement for democracy and for working class power.

Today, America is dominated by the banks, insurance companies and multinational corporations. These organizations have two parties to represent them: the Republicans and the Democrats. While there are differences between the two, on all of the major issues facing the country, they stand in fundamental agreement. Working people today have no political party to fight for them. I see my campaign today as the Socialist Party candidate for the U.S. Senate in Ohio as a small contribution to the construction of such a working people's party.

A genuine working people's party, however, will only be created on the basis of a powerful workers' movement and strong social movements for civil rights, for gay and lesbian rights, and to save the environment. In constructing such a movement today, I think that we should see ourselves as part of a great tradition of American resistance, rebellion and revolution. We should draw on this great humanist tradition as our inspiration as we fight for the future.

Today's Great Debate

A great debate about the American tradition is taking place today. The Tea Party, the Libertarians and the Republican Party revere the Founding Fathers (and they never mention any Founding Mothers such as the radical Mary Otis Warren). They argue that the Constitution represents the bedrock of our

nation and that we should go back to its principles. We need to ask, then: What did the Founding Fathers stand for and what was the purpose of the Constitution?

As a college professor of U.S. History, I found that many of my students had profound misconceptions about American history and were shocked by what they learned from studying the historical record. Perhaps you will be surprised too to learn that the real history of the United States is quite different than the popular mythology.

The Founding Fathers and the Constitution

Who were the Founding Fathers? They were a group of wealthy Northern merchant capitalists and Southern slave owners and their lawyers. When England moved in the mid-1700s to take greater control over the colonies and to tax them more, the merchants, wealthy farmers, and planters rebelled. They did so because they wanted to be able to exploit North America's resources and to be able to exploit their workers and slaves without having to share a cut of the take with English capitalists.

They Founding Fathers—those merchants and plantation owners—rebelled solely for the freedom to make money without being taxed by the British. While they couched their Revolution against the British as a struggle for freedom, they had no interest in freedom for anybody but themselves. They were absolutely opposed to freedom for Indians, slaves, women or working people. The favored a republic controlled by themselves and were horrified at the idea of democracy, that is, putting any power in the hand of the people.

Because they hated and feared democracy, they wrote a constitution that created a strong President, a Senate which was originally indirectly elected by the state legislatures (which were all controlled by rich men), and a Supreme Court whose justices served for life. To make sure there were no mistakes, they created the Electoral College as another barrier to popular democracy.

The wealthy elite in the states created laws which required citizens to own a significant amount of property in order to be able to vote, excluding artisans and workers. Indians, slaves, and women of course had no political rights.

Such was the world of the famous Founding Fathers and such was their Constitution, a document designed to keep the rich in power and the poor powerless. This is not an American tradition to be proud of.

The American Radical Tradition

There is, however, an American tradition we can take pride in. It is the tradition of the American radicals who from the beginning fought against the dictatorship of capital and for a democracy of working people. The tradition has roots even before the American Revolution among the Indians who fought against invading European capitalists who took their land, among the slaves who rebelled against their masters, among the farmers and workers who resisted the wealthy who squeezed them for labor and taxes.

After the American Revolution, at about the time of the adoption of the Constitution, a group of radicals refused to ratify the Constitution unless it included a Bill of Rights. Those ten Amendments to the Constitution—protecting freedom of religion, freedom of speech and press, and the freedom to assemble, and the right to bear arms—constitute the most important part of that document.

After the establishment of the United States and the adoption of the Constitution, the struggle for rights continued. During the 1830s, laborers and artisans fought to abolish the property requirements for voting. During the same period, women demanded the right to collect wages, own property, enter into contracts and run their own financial affairs. By 1848 they were demanding full legal and political equality with men, including the right to vote.

The Anti-Slavery Movement

By the 1840s and the 1850s the abolitionists had become a force, demanding the abolition of slavery. Men and women, African American and white, some born free and some born in slavery came together to create a powerful social force. They broke the law and risked their lives to steal slaves from slave owners in the South and smuggled them to the North and to Canada. John Brown and his followers armed themselves to attack Harper's Ferry and

spark a slave rebellion, and, while that failed, they did help to spark the Civil War that ended slavery.

Following the Civil War, during the period of Reconstruction, slaves were recognized as citizens, enjoying the same rights as others, and—if they were men—the right to vote. Throughout the South Black people fought not only for political power but for measures like free public education which benefited poor whites as well.

Reconstruction was betrayed by Northern capitalists who joined with the defeated Southern planters to create a new exploitative system based on share-cropping and debt peonage. To enforce that new labor system, the Ku Klux Klan crushed black political organizations, and African Americans were segregated, disfranchised, and threatened with violence—and if they resisted lynched. Some African Americans resisted by moving North to escape their debts and the violence.

The Populist and Industrial Union Movement

Throughout the nineteenth century farmers and workers fought against capital both economically and politically. Farmers organized the Populist Movement to fight the grain elevator owners, the railroads and the banks. Workers between the 1870s and the 1910s carried out strikes and boycotts through which they organized the Knights of Labor, the American Railway Union, the American Federation of Labor, and the Industrial Workers of the World. Workers struck mines, steel mills, railroads, textile plants, industrial farms, docks and ships—and mostly they lost, but they kept fighting.

Finally in the 1930s workers won the right to industrial unions, creating the United Auto, Steel, Rubber, and Electrical Workers and the many others unions of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). In some local areas they created independent labor parties, but mostly the workers movement was captured by the Democratic Party which turned it to other purposes. The workers who during the Great Depression had organized the CIO then went off to "fight fascism," creating the modern American empire.

The Socialist Movement

The great farmer and worker upheavals of the period from the 1870s to the 1930s found political expression in labor parties, the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, and other left-wing movements. While each of these movements had its failings, they represented the attempt of the workers' movement to fight for political power.

The greatest of those movements, the Socialist Party of the early 1900s became an important political force in several states, with Socialists elected mayors of several cities in Wisconsin and Ohio, for example. Eugene Debs, the party's candidate for president in 1908, 1912, and 1920 won in his last election almost one million votes, about 5 percent of the electorate. The Communist Party of the 1930s and 40s became a significant force, but politically less significant as it became a supporter of the Democratic Party.

The Civil Rights Movements

After the war, African Americans rose in the 1950s and 1960s in the great Civil Rights Movement to end the Jim Crow system of segregation, disfranchisement, and racial violence in the South. And black workers in the North joined the movement to fight against the racial segregation and injustice that also existed there. At the same time, Mexican Americans in California and Puerto Ricans in New York created their own civil rights movement to overcome the prejudice and discrimination that they had faced for decades. The Civil Rights movement legitimated struggle, protest, boycotts and strikes to win social justice for all Americans.

The Anti-War and Human Rights Movements

Students, senior citizens, and millions of ordinary Americans joined the movement against the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s, and, together with the Vietnamese people's struggle for their national independence, helped to end that disgraceful U.S. war of aggression. I am proud to have been one of those anti-war protestors.

Women rose next, in the third great women's movement, like the Seneca Fall women of 1848 and the women suffragists who won the vote in the 1910s,

women of the 1960s and 1970s fought for full equality in society. They won new legislation protecting women's rights on the job and in society and they won the essential right to control their own reproduction, the right to choose abortion. Next in the 1980s and 1990s came the gay and lesbian movement, the LBGT movement fighting for the rights of gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgender people.

The Modern Leftwing Political Movement

Throughout the period from the 1930s to the 1980s, various socialist parties ran candidates for political office in states throughout the country. Since the 1980s, independent politics had taken other forms.

Barry Commoner, the environmentalist, ran for president on the Citizens Party ticket in 1980, a campaign that I supported. Tony Mazzocchi, a leader of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW), founded the U.S. Labor Party in 1996 with the goal of creating a political vehicle for working class people. I was at that founding convention. Ralph Nader, the consumer advocate, ran as the Green Party candidate in 1996 and 2000 and as an independent in 2004 and 2008. In 2000, while supporting Nader, I worked on the campaign of Medea Benjamin, Green Party candidate for the U.S. Senate.

Beginning as a middle class reformer, Nader evolved into a socialist in all but party label. Cynthia McKinney, the former Democratic Party Congresswoman from Georgia became the Green Party candidate for president in 2008. While all of these independent parties and candidacies failed, they contributed to keeping alive the important principle of independent political action. If working people do not build their own party, all of their organizing efforts will be harvested by the Democratic Party and turned back against them.

The Great American Tradition

All that I have described above constitutes what I would call the great American tradition of resistance, rebellion and revolution, the great legacy of our past. The American heroes are not George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and John Adams. The real freedom fighters

are Sam Adams and Daniel Shays, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison, Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Big Bill Haywood, A. Phillip Randolph and Hubert Harrison, Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, Rachel Carson and Barry Commoner, Reies López Tijerina and Corky González, and many more. They and the many working people, now forgotten by history, those who stood up and sat down, demonstrated and marched, struck and struck again for freedom and created our great revolutionary American tradition.

The Struggle for Democracy and Social Justice Today

The tradition of the farmers and workers of the past lives on today; it is alive in those who take up the struggle for democracy and social justice. Yet our struggles must find expression in a working class political party fighting for the interests of all who suffer exploitation and oppression in our society. We want, however, not only representative democracy, but participatory democracy, the direct involvement of all working people in running our political and economic system. The essence of this great tradition is the struggle for ever expanding personal and collective freedom, for democracy, and for social justice.

Today our struggle is to carry democracy from the political into the economic realm, giving the American people control over our economy by abolishing the corporations and turning them into publicly owned and democratically managed enterprises. At the forefront of the struggle for democracy today is the construction of a party of working people rooted in our neighborhoods and workplaces, a party which can serve as the vehicle that unifies all the various segments of our diverse working class and so gives us the potential to finally make our tradition of struggle for democracy and justice the dominant power in America.

Where will such a party come from? While the Socialist Party, the Green Party, and independent candidates can play an important catalytic role, as do the many small parties and organizations of the far left, social change will come from a mass working class upheaval from below as it has in the past of American history and as it will again in the future. The American working

people in all their great variety—from factory workers to teachers, from waiters to computer programmers, from nurses to truck drivers, and all the rest—have both the responsibility, as the majority, and the power, as the country's principal economic force, to fight back and to begin to create a new society.

Our job today is to prepare the conditions so that when the American people rebel against the corporations and the professional politicians, they will find socialist activists in the movements prepared to help by sharing their experience and their organizational resources. Our goal will be the creation of a democratic socialist society, where natural resources and the great industries will be collectively owned and democratically planned and managed. The goal may be a ways off, but the struggle for it begins now. Today our job is to tell the truth, to organize, and to fight for justice and power for working people.

Author's Note

This book was conceived in January and written between July and October 2010, some of it written and edited while traveling through Ohio speaking with voters about the issues discussed here.

The book is divided into three sections. Part I Overcoming the Crisis describes the current national crisis that faces all of us, its causes and the measures we must take to overcome it. Part II The Most Oppressed and Exploited describes four sectors of our population—looking in particular at Ohio—who represent some of the most oppressed and exploited groups in our country today: African Americans, Latinos, Women, and Youth. Part III The Socialist Alternative discusses why we should build social movements and independent political parties and briefly discusses how a socialist society might work.



Part I

Part I of this book looks at the economic and environmental crises and the impact of foreign wars, militarism and imperialism on American society. We look in particular at the nature of the economic crisis, its causes and its impact on American working people's lives in the workplace and in their communities. We look in this part at how the crisis affects issues such as housing, education, health care and our social wellbeing in general.

Chapter 1 America in Crisis

American today finds itself in the worst state of affairs in many decades, indeed in one of the worst situations in its history. The economy, the environment, and the wars—tied together in complicated ways—stand at the center of a national crisis of many dimensions, raising complex challenges for all of us. Yet neither the Republicans nor the Democrats appear to have a solution.

Our political system has repeatedly become paralyzed when trying to confront these important issues and our people demoralized by the failure of the parties and of government. We know that we need new ideas, and yet all we hear from groups like the Tea Party is the call to "Take America Back!" Back to where? Times have changed--and *there is no going back*, not to the 1980s, not to the 1940s or 1920s, and certainly not to the nineteenth or eighteenth centuries.

We can't take America back; on the contrary, we have to find a way forward. We are lost in the woods, deep in the woods, but there is a way out. We can only begin to find the way forward, however, when we understand just where we are. I write this book to help to explain where we are, to point out where we might go, and to offer a map and a compass to help to get us there. We can go forward, but only if we understand the tasks, get organized, and are prepared to fight for our future. Let's look briefly at the problems we face.

The Economic Crisis: From American Dream to American Nightmare

We are in the worst economic recession in eighty years, a Third Great American Depression like those of 1873 and 1929. Our economy today manufactures unemployment, poverty, and foreclosures. Today in the United States we have an unemployment rate which has for two years hovered around 10 percent, with real unemployment including discouraged workers

¹ Paul Krugman, "The Third Depression," New York Times, June 27, 2010 at: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/28/opinion/28krugman.html

and the underemployed at about 17 percent, and with rates almost twice that high for African Americans, Latinos, and youth.²

Many families, having lost jobs and incomes, now watch their standard of living decline and their hopes for a better life for their children disappear before their eyes. Foreclosures continue to mount in the summer of 2010, while housing values have fallen.³ The cost of college education continues to rise, with the country's best colleges charging as much as \$50,000 per year, while costs at state and junior colleges are rising as well.⁴

The three elements that once made up "the American dream," a good job at a good wage, a home of one's own, and educational opportunities for one's children, have been wiped out not just by this current depression, but by economic and political policies pursued by the U.S. government over the past 70 years. Many, of course, never shared that dream, but they held out the hope. Now the hope is gone.

The nation's economic policies are driven by the banks and insurance companies, the manufacturing and service corporations which dominate our economy. Government serves them not us. And their interests are not ours. They seek profits while we seek a decent life. Their drive for profits above all thwarts our desire for decent jobs at living wages, homes and health care for our families, and education for our children.

We have in our country the natural resources, the industrial capacity, and the human talent capable of creating a society of economic security and even abundance, but dominated by corporations and trapped in the capitalist economy we will never be able to reach our goal of a society of peace and plenty for all.

*The Environmental Crisis: The Planet at Risk

The economic situation is not our only crisis. Today the United States and the world also face an environmental crisis that threatens the future of our planet and indeed of human civilization. The corporate pursuit of profit has

http://www.houserepos.net/blog/foreclosures/foreclosures-persisting-recession-continues-housing-market/

² I am writing this chapter in July 2010.

³ House Repos, June 20, 2010, at:

^{4 &}quot;Fifty Thousand Dollars, The Boston Globe, March 28, 2010, at:

http://www.boston.com/news/education/higher/articles/2010/03/28/fifty thousand dollars/

been powered for three centuries by the burning of carbon fuels producing gases which have changed the planet's climate and warmed the global temperature.

The changes in temperature have created new more powerful weather systems and will produce rising waters over coming years, water levels that literally threaten to inundate many of the world's great cities. At the same time, the changing temperatures and weather—combined with other factors—threaten the ecosystems on which our future food supply depends. More immediately and dramatically, events such as the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill of 2010 in the Gulf of Mexico, this summer's fires around Moscow, the flooding in Pakistan, and the wheat failures in Central Europe indicate the ways in which our economic system threatens our environment.

Yet the Republicans and the Democrats have not taken these challenges seriously, and the U.S. government has not been able to implement policies to protect our environment, nor has it been capable of joining with other nations to create an international environmental policy. The U.S. and other countries failed at the United Nations Copenhagen Climate Summit to adopt a strong environmental position, and most nations were unwilling to sign the final agreement and commit to targets and dates.

Our county and the world are headed toward environmental catastrophe and seem unable to change direction, much less to stop the process. The political parties and our own government refuse to challenge the corporations in order to protect our environment.

The environmental challenges that menace our country and the world today result directly from modern corporations and the capitalist economy. The corporate pursuit of power at any price leads to a neglect of the environment, the ecosystems, and the human communities that make up our world. If our economic problems jeopardize the American dream, our environmental problems threaten the world's dream of health and human happiness. We can act to change our course and avoid the planetary catastrophe that looms, but we will have to become a powerful political force to do so.

The Crisis of our Foreign Policy: Permanent War

The third enormous crisis which we face is a foreign policy based on war, conquest and occupation. Our country is now involved in three wars abroad, in Iraq, Afghanistan, and in Pakistan. The United States has been involved in

these wars for a decade now and they have cost this country over 5,000 lives and have cost Iraq and Afghanistan somewhere between 100,000 and one million lives, most of them innocent civilians.⁵ The financial cost has been over one trillion dollars—some say three trillion—and it continues to grow.⁶

What has become clear over the past decade is that the United States now sees itself committed to a policy of permanent wars in the Middle East, Central Asia, and other regions of the world in order to control natural resources such as oil and minerals, as well as the pipelines, trade routes, and strategic geopolitical high grounds.

War has become, for our own nation and for other nations, an economic and environmental disaster. The tremendous cost of these wars deprives our nation of the financial resources to address our economic and environmental problems, while at the same time warping our national morality and ethos.

A nation which puts foreign wars and the building of an economic empire at the top of its agenda will not be able to build a fair, just and democratic society at home. A nation which pursues a policy of permanent war cannot at the same time seek to bring about the peace which will be required to reshape our economic and our environmental policy in the globalized world of today.

The common foreign and military policies of the two major parties and the U.S. government are driven by U.S. economic interests and quite often the interests of certain industrial sectors and even specific corporations. The oil companies generally determine much of our foreign policy. The wars in the Middle East and Central Asia today are driven by the U.S. oil corporations and their desire to dominate the world's oil resources. The same corporate avarice turns the United States into an aggressor in Latin America, in Asia, and Africa.

⁵ http://www.icasualties.org/Iraq/index.aspx "Casualties of the Iraq War," Wikipedia at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casualties of the Iraq War,

[&]quot;Afghanistan civilian casualties: what are the real figures?" The Guardian, at:

http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2009/nov/19/afghanistan-civilian-casualties-statistics-data

⁶ National Priorities Project, "Cost of War" at, http://costofwar.com/; Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes, "The three trillion dollar war, The cost of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts have grown to staggering proportions," *Time of London*, at:

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article341984 0.ece

Most Americans recognize that we must change the policy of permanent war, yet neither the Republicans nor the Democrats have a plan to end the foreign policy of empire building. Quite the contrary: both parties pursue a common foreign policy and military policy aimed at domination of resources, markets and cheap labor.

Historically, whether in Vietnam or Central America, whether in Iraq or Afghanistan, Democrats and Republicans have, by and large, voted to continue the same policies, at least until that policy proved to be disastrous. Then it is the American people not the legislators who have forced the government to stop the wars. We can change U.S. policies from war to peace, but only if we build a powerful social and political movement.

The Way out of the Woods

We find ourselves facing a complicated crisis of economic depression, environmental catastrophe and permanent wars around the world. All three of these enormous problems result from the corporate domination of our economy. The corporations' drive for profit has brought on both the economic and environmental crises, and the corporations' desire to control the world's resources, markets, and labor drives our foreign policy.

If we are to change our nation's history, we must have a vision of the society we want. Today the corporations' drive for profits stands at the center of our country's economic, social, cultural and political life. Those policies have robbed many of their jobs, of a living wage, of affordable health care, of their homes, and of the standard of living and very way of life.

Corporate policies have destroyed our families and our communities and threaten the well being of the nation's working people, the elderly, children, and the poor. It is time that we abolished the corporation as we once abolished the plantation.

What would be the alternative? The alternative is to put the needs of ordinary working people and those less able to fend for themselves at the center of all of our policies. We could create a country that offered jobs at living wages, that provided health care and education free for all, that insured that everyone had a home, and that all of us had the rich and fulfilling lives that all human beings deserve.

We cannot realize such a vision, however, as long as the economic power remains in the hands of the corporations. We, the American people, have to take over the great corporations and subordinate them to our national interest. The center of a vision for a new America has to be the transformation of privately owned corporations into socially owned institutions that produce according to a democratically elaborated plan.

Capitalism is a chaotic system ridden with constant booms and busts, producing great economic and social inequalities, and constantly driving our country into foreign wars for resources, markets and cheap labor. We must replace this system with one where the people plan for a green economy and for a fair and just society without racism and sexism.

We can create a world without wars and economic empires, a world with peace for all. To do so, we must abolish the corporations, as we once abolished the slave plantations, and replace them with publicly-owned and controlled enterprises that satisfy our social needs. The goal should be economic security and personal opportunities for fulfillment for all of our people, not wealth and power for a small minority of our population.

The goal of a democratic socialist America is realizable. If we are to break free of the corporations we will have to build mighty social movements and the political force to break their will and their haughty power. To achieve the goal of a country with prosperity and peace, we must create our own social movements and our own independent political power.

All of the great changes in our society must and will come from struggle from below by working people and by those with a vision of a more just society.

The Working Class at Center Stage

If we are to change society, however, the American working class will have to be in the forefront. At the center of the social movements and political power we must construct stand the American working people, native-born and immigrant, African American and white, men and women, gay and straight, who taken together make up the vast majority of our society. By working people, we mean all of those who work for wages, whether factory workers or computer programmers, construction workers or nurses, teachers or hotel workers, as well as those who are self-employed, unemployed, or dependent on Social Security or some other form of assistance.

Working people produce our wealth and pay our taxes. Working people also have the economic power to make the system go or to stop it from running. Labor unions and workers centers will be central to such a movement, but, no doubt, new forms of working class organization will be needed and will be created as we move forward.

Working people, however, cannot rely on the Republican or Democratic parties to represent their interests and must build their own political force. All of the organizing by labor and the social movements, if it does not have its own political expression, will in the end be either diverted from its course, see its goals distorted, or be captured and then killed by the Democratic Party. When activists organize and set people into motion, but have no independent political party, their organizing activities are inevitably captured by the corporate parties.

So we have to take three steps to begin to change our country. The first step is to recognize that corporate power must give way to the power of the American people. The second step is to understand that capitalism must give way to democratic socialism, our collective and democratic control of the economy. The third step is to organize the movements and the political power to bring this about. Working people make the country run, and working people—not bankers, CEOs or professional politicians—and working people should run the country.

We have the natural resources and the industrial capacity as well as the human resources to create a better world for the American people and for the people of the world. We are at a turning point in history where we must begin to set in motion the process of building the power to make that world a reality.

I foresee an America where—the corporations having vanished from the scene to be replace by social enterprises—all have jobs at living wages, all have access to free health and education, all have good homes. I foresee us living in a nation at peace with the world. I foresee America waging peace by helping others win the economic security and social justice we have achieved by creating a democratic socialist society.

I hope that through this book I can convince you that we can build independent social movements and an independent political force with the

inspiring vision of a fair society, the strategic plan of action, the long-term commitment, and the willingness to engage in a struggle for justice.

Chapter 2 Why the Crisis?

We in the United States today are at a turning point in American history. We stand at a point not so different from other great crises in American history: the years before the American Revolution and the Civil War, or the period before the social upheavals of the 1890s to 1920 known as the Populist and Progressive era, or the time of the Great Depression of the 1930s and the reforms that followed. A country passes through such periods when economic and social problems are so serious that they become momentous political watersheds, a point in time where things divide between the way the world used to be and the way it will be in the future. We are at such a time now.

The economic crisis facing our country with its high and persistent unemployment rates threatens to destroy American society as we know it. It is a threat both to our economy and to our democracy. At the root of the problem is the so-called "free market" system of capitalism, a system in which the corporations are free to close plants, send jobs abroad, lay-off workers, cut wages and take away or charge us more for health benefits. We must change from this irrational system to a collectively owned and democratically controlled economy if we are to provide our people with a decent life.

We cannot permit our country's economy to continue to deteriorate. We must take action. But, before turning in this book to analyze the problems our country faces and the steps we must take to solve those problems, I think that it's important to understand the economic and social background of the crisis. We need to know how we got where we are today before we can propose to do something to fix it.

A Short Economic History of the United States

To understand the current period, we have to begin at the end of World War II. The United States and its allies Great Britain, Free France, and the Soviet Union had defeated Germany, Italy, and Japan in World War II. As a result of its leading role in World War II, the United States not only defeated Germany and Japan, but also became the heir to much of the empires of Great Britain and France. The United States displaced England and France

to become the biggest player in the Middle East, took over from France and Japan their spheres of influence in Southeast Asia, replaced England as the banker and trader in South America, and became an arbiter of the affairs of France and England in Africa.

The nations of Europe and Japan had been virtually blown off the map during the war. European and Japanese cities had been obliterated and large numbers of the population, millions of men women and children, had been annihilated in the war. Europe and Japan struggled to rebuild, but it would take an entire generation before their national reconstructions were complete. With most of the capitalist world reduced to rubble and ashes, American power reigned supreme. The new United States, as the dominant capitalist nation on earth, had five percent of the world's population but controlled 50 percent of the world's wealth.

During the period from 1950 to about 1965, U.S. corporations had a heyday, able to make a profit at home and abroad. The American labor unions organized in the AFL-CIO, which had grown so rapidly in the 1930s and 40s, found themselves in a period where many employers were willing to tolerate labor unions and to share a percentage of their profits with the workforce. Unions pressured government to create or expand social programs to help working people, such as workers compensation, unemployment benefits, and welfare programs for the poor.

The American working people by and large, through their unions, won higher wages, better benefits, and enjoyed a higher standard of living. Not all shared in this prosperity—many African Americans, Latinos and women lagged behind in their earnings and wealth—but for most the 1940s through the 1960s was a great period of prosperity.

The Cold War and the Arms Race

At the same time, the Soviet Union, despite the enormous destruction and the loss of 20 million people, emerged as the world's other great superpower. The dictator Stalin led the Soviet Communists to take over Eastern Europe, assimilating Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and the other states of the region to its one-party system.

In China, Korea and Vietnam, Communists backed by the Soviet Union led national revolutions against foreign domination, and so in the Far East bureaucratic Communism also became the dominant social system. So, by 1950 the United States, the leader of the capitalist world found itself locked in a half-century struggle for dominance with the Soviet Union leader of the Communist world.

The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union lasted from roughly 1950 to 1990 when the Soviet Communist system collapsed. The United States claimed to be the leader of the "Free World" and the Communists of the "Communist World." Thus two words associated with idealism—freedom and communism—became the slogans of war.

We democratic socialist argued during the Cold War period that "The Free World is not free and the Communist world is not Communist." During much of that period the Soviet Union dominated the peoples of Eastern Europe, while in the United States African Americans could not vote in the South, and the U.S. allied itself with anti-Communist dictators in Latin America, the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

U.S. corporations controlled the American government, while Communist Party bureaucrats controlled the Communist countries in a struggle to control the resources, markets and labor of the world. American corporations such as General Motors, General Electric and General Dynamics controlled the U.S. government through their domination of the Republican and Democratic parties. The Communists ran a one-party dictatorship that suppressed democratic rights, crushed the national aspirations of oppressed peoples, and kept power in the hands of a small Communist ruling class.

Those two groups—American corporations and politicians on the one hand and Communist bureaucrats on the other—led their governments in the largest arms race in history. The largest countries spent 10 percent of their GDP on armaments, a tremendous waste of resources that might have lifted the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America out of poverty.

From time to time the Cold War flared into hot wars, as in Korea in the 1950s in which between 1.5 and 2 million died. At the same time, both the American corporate, capitalist empire and the Communist empire found themselves reaching their limits. The United States was defeated by the Vietnamese in the 1970s and the Soviet Union by the Afghanis in the 1990s. Enormous wealth was wasted on both sides in the pursuit of world domination. At times, as during the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 the world held its breath in fear of nuclear annihilation.

The United States eventually won the Cold War, but with ironic results. The victory can be attributed to Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who developed the clever plan of working through Pakistan's intelligence agency to support Muslim fundamentalist groups to defeat the Soviets in Afghanistan. Ironically those U.S. backed groups would evolve into the Taliban and Al Qaeda and come back to haunt the United States. Ronald Reagan then augmented the arms race, causing a crisis in the Communist bloc as it attempted to keep up while the Soviets were mired in Afghanistan.

In 1989, their economic system stretched beyond its limit by war and competition with the capitalists, the Communist dictatorships in Eastern Europe began to collapse. The former Communist bureaucrats used their power to acquire property and quickly transformed themselves into corporate businessmen, and Russia fell under the rule of a Mafia of former KGB agents. The United States proclaimed a victory for capitalism and democracy and politicians and media pundits predicted a great "peace dividend" now that the Cold War was over. It didn't happen that way.

The Emergence of Competition

In 1941 at the beginning of World War II, Henry Luce, the publisher of *Time Magazine* coined the term "American Century" which came to define the role of the United States as the world's dominant economic, political and military power. The American Century might be said to have begun in 1945 with the U.S. victory in World War II and its rise to global economic dominance, even though challenged politically and militarily by Soviet Communism.

Yet, already by the late 1960s the American Century was beginning to unravel as increased competition, economic crises and political problems emerged at home. What has led to the gradual deterioration in the U.S. position in the world?

First, following World War II, the U.S. had worked through the Marshall Plan to rebuild capitalism in Western Europe and especially Germany as a bulwark against the spread of Soviet Russian Communism, and at the same time to rebuild Japan as a seawall against Chinese Communism. So for an entire generation, from 1945 to 1965 Germany and Japan rebuilt, and then began to enter into competition with the United States in the world market.

German and Japanese capitalists, their old industrial plants having been destroyed during the war, rebuilt as economists say on "green fields." The constructed the most modern industrial plants in the world. With a highly literate and educated workforce and modern industrial plants, U.S. corporations found themselves losing market share to its competitors, leading to an economic crisis that began in the late 1960s.

Suddenly U.S. corporations and the government found that faced with competition and falling profits they could not continue to run the country as they had before. The situation first became quite clear in the 1960s when Democratic President Lyndon B. Johnson's plans to carry out a War on Poverty and to build a Great Society through social programs were undermined by his pursuit of the Vietnam War with its enormous costs. The American Century, based on global economic, political and military dominance started to come undone.

The American Response to Competition

With Japanese and German competition growing, U.S. corporations began to close older industrial plants throughout the Northeast and Midwest, opening an era often referred to as deindustrialization. Plants were moved to the American South, to the so-called "Right to Work" states where unions were weak and wages low. When that was not good enough, U.S. corporations became more multinational, moving plants to "export platforms" in the Caribbean, Mexico, and Asia. Many American workers who had had union jobs in industry lost them, and especially hard hit were African Americans.

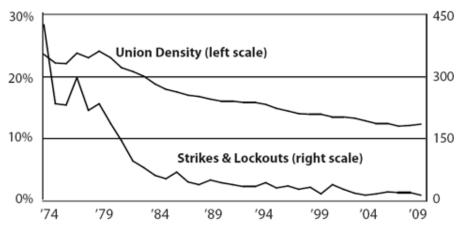
Globalization's Impact

The entire system of financing, corporate organization, production and distribution changed from a nationally-based to a globally-based system. Cars, for example, had parts manufactured in various countries, assembled in another, and then sold in yet others. No car was built in any one country, everything was made everywhere. The idea of an "American built" car became an anachronism, and a slogan like "Buy American," while it gave expression to the sense of betrayal at seeing work sent abroad, proved outdated and ineffective as a strategy. Workers around the world increasingly worked for the same corporations, as those corporations promoted a race to the bottom in terms of wages, benefits and conditions. Yet workers were not organized into alliances across national borders so that they could fight back.

The global economy fostered both deindustrialization and the elimination of unions. The closing of many industrial plants in the U.S. led to a change in the composition of the workforce. Fewer workers worked in industry, and many more worked in services. Fewer workers were unionized and where they were unionized, as service workers they did not always have the same economic power industrial workers had had, and their contracts were often not as good. In many cases bosses simply wanted to rid themselves of unions, to create what they called the "union free environment." And many did. They close old plants. Built new ones in the non-union South or sent them overseas. Or they broke the union.

Since the 1980s corporations had largely rid themselves of labor unions and labor union contracts. The percentage of the organized workforce has fallen from 35 percent in 1950 to about 7 percent today. Employers have done this by closing plants, by moving plants, breaking labor unions, and by fighting labor union organization. When contracts terminate, employers make demands for wage concessions, worker contributions to health care, and changes in conditions in the workplace. Unions, dramatically weakened, hesitate to strike and without the use of the strike's economic power, they continue to be driven backward. Consequently work life has gotten worse for most of us, and for some it has become drudgery at best and sheer hell at worst.

Organized Labor
Unionized share of wage & salary workers; work stoppages ≥1,000 workers



Source: Dollars and Sense Magazine

http://www.dollarsandsense.org/archives/2009/1109ein.html

The American economy still has industrial jobs, but now in more modern plants using continuous process, computers, numerical control, and other forms of automation that speed up production. Employers created "quality circles" and "teams" to weaken unions and to take advantage of workers' knowledge and to speed up the workforce even more. Corporations switched from the wasteful methods of the older industrial era and turned to "lean production," using just-in-time warehousing and distribution to create a system which critics have called "management by stress."

Physical exhaustion of the workforce is now accompanied by mental fatigue and emotional strain. Work means not the joy of creation but the psychological debilitation caused by constant stress. By the end of the twentieth century, our future seemed to be not a twenty-first century of human freedom, but rather the nineteenth century of what the poet William Blake called "satanic mills" of 12- to 16-hour days.

Throughout this entire period, though, productivity rose astronomically, while wages stagnated, and the balance between the power of capital and labor shifted dramatically.



Source: Institute for Research on Labor and Employment http://www.irle.berkeley.edu/events/spring08/feller/

Capital—the corporate CEOs—became the all-powerful gods of American society. Working people lost income, assets and status and became the subject of ridicule and humiliation in the corporate media.

The Persistence of the Crisis

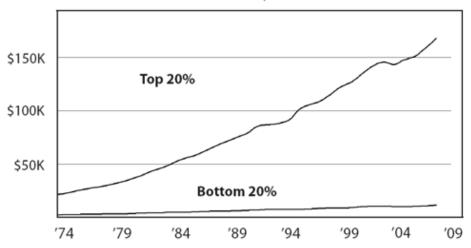
Still, the system of boom and bust continued. Beginning in the 1970s, the crisis of American capitalism expressed in recurring recessions—1969-1970, 1973-75, 1980-82, 1990-91, 2001, and 2007-2010. These crises made it clear that the economic system of the United States was no longer capable of delivering an expanding prosperity and progressive social reforms it once had. The current crisis, the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930s suggests continued stagnation at best and even deeper crises in the future. If we do not force the government to take decisive action and soon, we will face continued high levels of unemployment for decades to come.

The private sector economic crises, of course, spilled over into the public sector. Starting in the late 1970s we began to see a real fiscal crisis of capitalism. The Federal, state, county and city budgets, as well as school districts, suffer during periods of economic recessions because corporations and workers don't pay taxes. The corporations and the wealthy, to compensate for falling profits, began in the 1980s to demand that working people pay a greater share of the taxes. So over the last 30 years, the share of taxes paid by businesses and the rich has fallen, while taxes for working people and the poor have risen.

Yet, while the American economy underwent profound changes, the sacrifice to make those changes was not shared. Not at all. Income inequality has grown: put simply, the rich have grown even richer and working class incomes have stagnated while the middle class has made only the smallest economic advances.

Income Inequality

Mean household income: top 20% and bottom 20%



Source: Dollars and Sense Magazine

http://www.dollarsandsense.org/archives/2009/1109ein.html

The Crises are Caused by Capitalism

What is most important about this is to understand that the crises we face spring from the system of capitalism. Corporate executives are selfish and greedy, as their multi-million dollar salaries, stock options and pension funds testify, but greed as a psychological or moral quality is not the reason for our difficulties. The corporate political system we have is corrupt, as our experience with the oil companies, for example, reveals. But corruption is not the principal reason we have the economic and political problems we suffer. There are financial wheeler-dealers, swindlers, and crooks galore, but such conniving and scheming is not the cause of our economic problems. Capitalism, the system by which one social class of property owners enriches itself on the basis of the labor of others, is the foundation and the cause of our economic and social problems.

American capitalism, which in its period of spectacular growth and expansion from 1870 to 1970 provided the basis for continuing improvements in employment, education, health care, and social well being generally, had by the end of the 20th century become an obstacle to further improvements. Today, capitalism with its crises, its environmental catastrophes, its wars, and its racist and rightwing movements threatens us with a new barbarism. The time has come to abolish the corporation as we once abolished the

plantation, and for the same reason. The corporation, which was once been the driving force of the economy, has now become an obstacle not only to economic growth but also to democracy.

The time has come to change from corporate capitalism to a system which puts human needs rather than profits at the center. This would be a revolutionary change, a total transformation of our economy, our society, and our political system: a change from corporate dictatorship to democracy, from the drive for profit to meeting human needs. The time has come for this democratic socialist alternative, an economy owned and run by the American people for the benefit of all.

Chapter 3 Putting America Back to Work

Every time someone loses a job, the impact can be enormous. Take, for example, the case of the Ontario-Mansfield GM plant:

When General Motors the biggest employer in town, laid off 400 workers in December, it was like a boulder falling into a very small pond.

April and Rick Allison lost their jobs stamping out doors and other car parts. They plan to leave to find work.

Their departure means their landlord, Angelo Sorrenti, is worried about his business, so he's holding off buying a new pickup.

That hurts Graham's Auto Mall, which has laid off sales manager Steve Brown.

Now Brown can't make his regular contribution to the United Way.

The United Way has reduced donations to charities such as Friendly House's after-school and summer program for low-income children.

Friendly House is increasing its summer day camp fees. Single mom Pamela Hall worries if that keeps up, her 9-year-old daughter Courtney will have to stay home.

The struggles facing the people of Ontario and its neighboring communities show how the 400 layoffs ripple far beyond the gates of the GM plant, where 860 people still work....

And Ontario is just one of 12 cities facing the bleak prospect that its GM plant will shut down in the next two years.⁷

The plant closed forever in February 2010. A plant closed, a community devastated.

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⁷ Marisol Bello, "GM Plant Closing Tears at Ohio Community," USA Today, no date, at: http://abcnews.go.com/Business/story?id=8132892&page=1

The Free Market Means Failure

The United States has been in a depression now for more than two years, with no end in sight. We have the highest levels of unemployment since the Great Depression of the 1930s, with an official jobless rate hovering around 10 percent, an unofficial rate including the underemployed and discouraged workers of almost double that, and much higher levels of joblessness for the African American and Latino communities. Unemployment has meant falling incomes and a falling standard of living for many Americans, and some have lost their homes and some have lost virtually everything. Many young people can't even get a first job at any wage in this market.

The U.S. economy, as a corporate dominated, "free market" system, simply cannot profitably compete with other countries which have similar technologies, but better educated and trained workforces, and often lower wages and benefits. And we should not try to compete: that approach leads to the race to the bottom. We must turn from corporate domination and free markets to a collectively owned and democratically planned economy where we create a balance between industry, service, and agriculture, an economy that can provide jobs for all. Meanwhile, we must act as quickly as possible to create not just more jobs, but a full employment economy where every American has a right to a secure job at a living wage.

The Impact of the Economic Crisis

The effects of an economic crisis are profound both for the community and for an individual. An economic crisis leads investors to pull their capital out of corporations, and leads management to close plants and offices. Without taxes from business and workers, city and county, state and federal governments find themselves without funds to keep positions on the books or to pay workers' wages and benefits. So, first the private sector and then the public sector begin to fall apart. Capital was the lynch pin that held the private enterprise or the public agency together; without capital everything begins to come undone. Because the capital was corporate property, a corporation board of ten to twenty people could decide to close a plant and destroy a community.

The shutting down of the factory or office and the layoff of the workers leads in turn to the weakening of all of the institutions of the community: schools and religious institutions, social clubs and labor unions, professional groups and small business associations—the whole fabric of what was our

neighborhood or town is torn apart. Government agencies—unemployment, social welfare, children and family services—find their budgets and staff cut just when they are most needed. Private charitable agencies are overwhelmed trying to make up the gap. When things fall apart in this way, an inordinate part of the weight of trying to maintain family and community often falls on women.

The Psychological and Social Impact

Unemployment leads to psychological and social problems, as people lose their jobs they also often lose their sense of identity. They think: I have always been a teacher, or a factory worker, a computer programmer or a nurse, a truck driver or a hotel worker. If I lose my job, what am I? Many people feel that when they lose their jobs they have failed themselves and their families. Some become depressed and despondent. We know that in times of economic crisis and unemployment we have increases in alcoholism, drug addiction, domestic violence, abandonment, and crime.

When there is an economic crisis, everything in our lives that had appeared to be stable and secure begins to break up, and, like a ship wrecked at sea, we find our society cracking up, and pieces of our lives, our families and friends, our neighborhoods go floating by. We find ourselves lost at sea, without a lifeline, and the sharks circling around us.

We cannot permit such a situation to continue, watching our economy and society disintegrate, and our friends and family suffer. Our goal for economic health is not the Dow Jones Average on the Stock Exchange; it is the employment, health, and well being of our working people. We must create a full employment economy where everyone who is able to work can work at a fulfilling job at a living wage.

Saving the Banks

The economic situation was and is intolerable and unconscionable, and yet neither the Republican nor the Democratic parties have acted to stop the jobs crisis. They have proven incapable of addressing the terrible unemployment the crisis has brought. We can look at their record.

When the economic crisis threatened catastrophe in 2008, in his last days in office President George W. Bush took action to save the banks. The Bush Congress passed the Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP) which allowed

the government to purchase up to \$700 billion in assets and equity, that is, in the banks' bad investments. Eventually about \$89 billion was actually spent.

With the election of Barack Obama to the presidency, the program continued. Obama capped at half a million dollars per year the pay of the executives of banks which had received government assistance. That is, executives had a cap at \$500,000—more than ten times the \$45,000 wage of an average American worker. Many of the banks quickly paid off their obligations to the government to escape the pay cap on their executives.

The Obama administration also passed a Financial Reform (or Frank-Dodd) Act which reorganizes the federal oversight and regulation of the banks. Whether or not this act will help to prevent and reduce the impact of financial crises remains open to debate, since the banks prevented some elements of the original proposal from passing and quickly began looking for ways to avoid regulation while they continued many of the same dangerous practices.

And Small Business and Homeowners?

The Bush and Obama financial plans were fundamentally intended to save the banks, their boards, and their executives, not to save American workers, homeowners, or small businesses. Under the Bush and Obama plans, executives continued to make enormous salaries and bonuses, and banks continued the same sorts of practices that had caused the crisis to begin with. The foreclosures which had signaled the beginning of the financial crisis, continued, as more and more Americans lost their homes. Businesses found that credit continued to be tight, with small businesses in particular finding it hard to get loans. So the saving of the banks did not result in a growth in businesses or jobs.

Home foreclosures, for example, continued throughout the United States and here in Ohio. In Ohio there have about 100,000 home foreclosures each year of the crisis. Large counties like Franklin and Cuyahoga saw a range of between 5,000 to 10,000 foreclosures each year from 2007 to 2010. Such home foreclosures fell disproportionately on African American and Latino

families, according to several studies.⁸ Despite the Bush and Obama bank bailouts, there were so many home foreclosures in Ohio that the state placed a moratorium on foreclosures for a period.⁹ Bush and Obama saved the banks—but they did not save us.

What Might Have Been Done with the Banks?

A better response to the financial crisis would have been for the United States government to have nationalized the banks, transforming them into the U.S. Credit Union. We don't need a banking system where investors profit from our poverty and speculators gamble on our misfortune. We need a national Credit Union to finance small businesses and homeowners.

As I explained in an article I wrote a few years ago:

...if the banks were owned by the government, and the government were controlled by the people, we could democratically plan an economy to meet the needs of all. Nationalization of the banks would form part of a plan of socialization of the economy -- banks and corporations, mines and factories, airlines and railroads -- brought under the control of a combination of citizens, workers, and consumers. We would put our children, the elderly and the infirm first, and organize the economy to provide jobs, housing, health care, education, and retirement benefits for all.

We don't need greater oversight and regulation of the financial institutions. We need to take them away from the bankers, make them ours, and use them for the good of the entire society.

^{8 &}quot;Ohio housing advocate uses report to call on state senate to act on foreclosure prevention bills" at:

http://ww.examiner.com/x-23537-Columbus-Government-Examiner~y2010m6d21-Ohiohousing-advocate-uses-report-to-call-on-state-senate-to-act-on-foreclosure-prevention-bills. Find full study: Debbie Gruenstein Bocian, Wei Li, and Keith S. Ernst, "Foreclosures by Race and Ethnicity: The Demographics of a Crisis" (CRL Research Report, June 18, 2010) at: http://www.responsiblelending.org/mortgage-lending/research-analysis/foreclosures-by-race-and-ethnicity.pdf

⁹ "Ohio Places Moratorium on Foreclosures," *Foreclosure Listings*, at: http://www.foreclosurelistings.com/content/foreclosures/ohio-places-moratorium-pending-foreclosures.htm.

There is an interactive map of foreclosures in Ohio, showing the number of foreclosures per county at: http://abcnews.go.com/Business/story?id=8132892&page=1

...nationalization becomes most meaningful as part of the program of the left when we make it clear that we mean the socialization of industry under democratic control, combined with workers' control of production itself. The goal in the end is the most democratic control of the government and the economy.¹⁰

We shouldn't "save the banks." We should to transform them into an American Credit Union which serves the American people.

Saving Industry

There were similar problems with the Bush and Obama approaches to saving industry. With the economic crisis still worsening, President Barack Obama took office in January of 2009, and soon signed a \$787 billion stimulus package into law. The Obama stimulus plan provided billions in funds for infrastructure, energy and health, but as many critics, such as Nobel Prize winning economist Paul Krugman, have pointed out, the stimulus was way too small to be effective. Obama at various times claimed to have created a million jobs—but despite the stimulus, the economy stagnated and unemployment continued to hover at 10 percent.

The auto industry presents a case study of the Bush and Obama policies. With General Motors and Chrysler standing at the brink of bankruptcy in 2009, President George W. Bush used \$17.4 billion in TARP funds to help rescue the auto companies. When President Obama took office, he guided General Motors into bankruptcy and the Treasury Department bought enough General Motors stock to become the principal owner of the corporation. The U.S. government also made loans to other auto companies, forcing them to restructure.

The Obama restructuring to which the corporations agreed was based on a plan under which General Motors would eliminate 47,000 jobs, close five plants and eliminate 12 car models. Similarly, Chrysler agreed to eliminate 3,000 jobs, cut one shift from production and get rid of three car models. The car corporations and auto parts companies continued to demand concessionary contracts from workers, increasing workers' contributions to health insurance and forcing down workers wages. The car companies also took advantage of the situation to increase the pace of work in the plants. Workers worked harder for less.

¹⁰ Dan La Botz, "The Financial Crisis: Will the U.S. Nationalize the Banks?" MRZine, September 28, 2008, at: http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2008/labotz280908.html

The United Autoworkers Union (UAW), once a fighting, progressive union, had since the 1980s entered into a partnership with the corporations, and it went along with this attack on workers' jobs, wages, benefits and conditions.

So, in the end, the auto companies—that is the investors and the CEOS—were saved. But not the workers. And the reduction in auto jobs contributed to the unemployment problem, while the auto industry, once a leader in wages and benefits, now became a leader in the race to the bottom.

What Might Have Been Done?

We can save jobs, industrial and service jobs. The U.S. government, for example, instead of just buying GM stock, could have taken over the auto plants. It could have turned them over to the unions and workers to run—the white collar workers, skilled trades, and production workers know how to make them hum. The plants might have been transformed by those workers to produce wind turbines, solar panels, hydrothermal equipment, or light rail for a green economy.

We could have saved the plants, the jobs and the communities. The government could have adopted a long range goal, the creation of a national economic plan and a system of government-financed and cooperative companies, in effect, creating a new kind of national economy. None of that happened because the government represents the corporations, not the country's working people.

The Closing of DHL in Wilmington

Let's take the case of the DHL, for example, the express package company, and its hub in Wilmington, Ohio that shut down at the end of 2008, terminating 8,000 employees. While the government did provide unemployment benefits and other programs for the workers, the jobs were not saved, and many of those workers were devastated, as was their community. With the loss of millions of dollars in business taxes, the city's economy was devastated.

What might have been done to save the jobs of those 8,000 workers?

Logistics, the efficient distribution of goods, represents an important part of a modern economy, and DHL was a kind of logistics company. In the town of Wilmington, the facilities still existed, the workers at all levels had the knowledge to make the system work, and while recession had led to a decline in shipping, still there was work to be done. The U.S. government could have moved in to provide the capital to keep the facility working, perhaps integrating it into the U.S. Postal Service. Or it might have become a worker-run cooperative, with assistance from organizations that assist cooperative enterprises.

With government financing, worker know-how and consumer input, the former-DHL plant could have continued to provide jobs to those 8,000 workers. A good government would encourage workers to unionize so they had a voice on the job and would pay workers a living wage, and provide health care and pensions. Overtime, with the U.S. government's backing, the former-DHL facility—now part of a broader government enterprise—could have competed with UPS and anti-union FEDEX. (Of course, this raises the larger problem of where these enterprises fit in the American economy as a whole, an issue that can only be solved through a national economic plan. We take this up further on.)

The "Natural Trajectory of a Mature Economy"?

Today throughout northeastern Ohio many industrial plants sit idle while others have reduced production to a trickle. American industry, which has declined dramatically since the 1980s, has in places now virtually vanished. Many economists, corporate leaders, and politicians accept the deindustrialization of America as a given. They argue that as economies mature, most industrial production should necessarily moves overseas, and a post-industrial economy emerges that is based on knowledge industries and services. So, they say, the future of America lies with "creative and knowledge industries."

Such creative and knowledge industries, however, when looked at more closely quickly divide into two sorts of jobs: professional jobs on the one hand and skilled factory and service work on the other. Computer companies and firms involved in this work contract out the manufacturing to the non-union South of the United States, to Asia or to Latin America. And they often hire undocumented immigrants to do the low-end service work. So that leaves only the professional jobs.

But professional jobs too can be outsourced too. Today modern telecommunications enables corporations using satellites, telephones, and computers to employ not only textile and auto workers in Asia or Latin America, but also the technician who reads your hospital x-ray or the support person who handles your computer question. Few jobs remain safe from competition caused by globalization. We cannot allow corporations, their political parties, and the government to make all the decisions without making a fight for our industrial jobs.

On the whole, the corporate vision of the future of American society should be rejected, because it is primarily a justification of corporate profit strategies rather than an analysis of the real needs of our country and our people. This apparent development of the capitalist economy from heavy industry to knowledge industry is in no way "natural." This is simply corporate America seeking to take advantage of the absence of state regulation, union free environments, and low wages in other countries.

So we are right back where we started from, with the need to plan our economy, create jobs, and defend workers' rights to those jobs.

Reindustrialize America

We want the United States to have a healthy and balanced economy where industrial production exists alongside transportation, services, and agriculture. We have a large national market that can support well paid industrial jobs. We don't have to accept an economy based on outsourcing and deindustrialization as if there were no alternative. We can, once we take over the corporations and bring them under our control, plan our economy and provide jobs for all and some of those jobs in industry.

At present, however, we live in a capitalist society where industrial jobs pay more because workers add to the value of the materials they transform, and companies therefore have the ability to pay higher wages. And, because industrial jobs tend to bring together a large numbers of workers in one place around an industrial process, they have more power. So industrial workers can usually unionize more easily, and raise workers wages and benefits. Unionized industrial workers can in turn help other workers organize. And unionization in turn can provide the basis for greater political power. For all of these reasons, we should not let U.S. government policies and corporate greed continue to dismantle what remains of our industrial manufacturing base.

We can pass laws to regulate the corporations so that all of their financial operations and business decisions must be made public well in advance. We

can enact laws that will make it more difficult for corporations to move their plants either to non-union states or out of the country. We can tax corporations at a higher rate on the profits they make overseas, reducing the motivation to off-shore production. Ultimately, though, we must take over the corporations and bring them under the control of the American people.

When in the future the American people have taken over the corporations and brought them under our democratic control, we will still want a strong industrial sector so that we have a healthy and balanced economy. A nation such as ours, with a large population and internal market, can support an industrial sector and can make use of its products. A socialist society would raise pay and reduce hours, and create more opportunities within all workplaces for education, alternative positions and advancement. Important industrial jobs will continue to play a vital role in our economically balanced future for many years to come.

The U.S. government—controlled by the Democratic and Republican parties—has failed to represent the interests of working Americans. Instead the government has functioned consistently under presidents Bush and Obama and under both the Republicans and the Democrats as an agent of the corporations.

We Need a Government that Works for Us

At its highest levels, the U.S. government is simply a committee of the banks and corporations, making decisions to protect their property and their profits. The government works for *them*—the corporations—nor for *us*, the working people. The government makes it possible for the corporations to close union plants and send them to the non-union "right to work" states. If the corporations want to send a plant or an entire industry abroad, the government waves them on. If a corporation decides to close a plant putting thousands out of work and wrecking the lives of tens of thousands, it may do so, and the government will not interfere. Meanwhile, government policies make it hard to organize unions and difficult to get a first contract.

We need to change all of this. We need a government that works for us, not for them.

Chapter 4 Working People Deserve a Better Deal

Working people in all their great variety from factory and transportation workers to nurses and teachers, from miners and oil workers to professors and scientists form the backbone of this country. Workers should be able to live a decent life without exhausting themselves and destroying their family life.

Yet increasingly few people are able to achieve those things so often referred to as the "American dream" or a "middleclass lifestyle." The American working woman or man has an increasingly tenuous hold even on economic survival much less security or success.

What has changed in the last 40 years that has been so devastating to American working people?

- First, employers have increase productivity in two ways: by introducing computerization and other automation, and by speed-up and multi-tasking. That is, the bosses have forced people to work faster and to do more tasks than they did before. And have paid them no more for the increased labor—in fact, they have paid us less.
- Second, corporate globalization has resulted in a new world organization of production: steel mills closed in the United States while countries all over the world that had not previously produced steel opened their own mills. Auto and electrical companies close plants here and opened plants in other countries from Mexico to China.
- Third, employers have exploited immigrant workers who were unfamiliar with the language, law and customs of the country, or who were undocumented and therefore easy prey to employer extortion. Government policies have denied enough visas to immigrants, thus forcing them to enter the United States without documents in order to work.

• Finally, the government has in all things supported corporations at the expense of workers. We see this in government aid, grants, and loans to corporations, in corporate tax abatement and tax loopholes, and in other policies that in every way back up the wealthy and neglect or abuse working people.

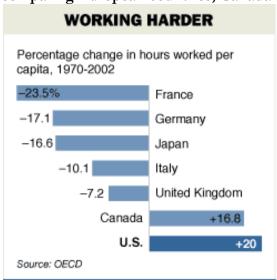
The overriding issue is that corporations—through their domination of the political process and the two major parties—have created and benefited from policies which have lowered the standard of living of American workers. At the same time they have taken advantage of the new world order to invest abroad, often cooperating with authoritarian and corrupt governments.

Let's look at the situation of working people in Ohio and in the United States in greater detail.

The U.S. Worker: Working Longer for Less

The American worker works longer hours than workers in other advanced industrial countries, and yet we do not enjoy a higher standard of living. Our work week has increased by 20 percent in the last forty years, while that of other countries has fallen.

Percentage change in hours worked per capita, 1970-2002, comparing European countries, Canada and the U.S.



Source: OECD – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

While we are working longer hours, our wages have stagnated and incomes have fallen. While nominally we make more money now than in the past, the loss in value of our money means that our real purchasing power has fallen—so we make about the same as we did 60 years ago.

Most of us believe that workers in the United States should work fewer hours, receive higher pay—a real living wage—and have healthier and safer working conditions. Yet because of corporate domination of our economy we do not.

Vacations and Holidays

We also have less leave and vacation time than workers in other countries. Other countries have national laws that require employers to provide vacation and leave time, while the U.S. has no such national law (though some states do mandate vacation and leave time). Some European countries give all workers a one month vacation.

Unemployment

For many in our economy today, the problem is not the conditions of employment, but the fact of unemployment. In Ohio, unemployment in 2009 reached 10 percent. But underemployment, that is, people working part-time jobs who need full-time jobs, reached 17 percent. The two taken together—unemployment and under-employment—meant that 27 percent of Ohioans did not have a job that allowed them to make a living. This is a truly a shocking figure, nearly one-third of working people in the state.

In the African American community, unemployment and underemployment rates are even higher. In 2009 African American unemployment reached 17 percent while Latino unemployment hit 14 percent.

When we add together unemployment and underemployment in the African American and Latino communities we find that in among both of those groups, the figure reaches about 30 percent. Again, an outrageous fact, a third of the working men and women in those communities cannot find the jobs the need and want to support their families.

Foreclosures

With so many Ohioans losing their jobs and incomes, it is not surprising that many also lost their homes. Bankers and realtor, anxious to make a profit, had made home loans available to many who were just barely able to make the payments, hoping that the economy would improve. So, when the downturn came at the end of 2007, people began to default on their loans, and lose their home.

The Growth of Poverty

The loss of jobs, stagnant wages, and the general decline in the standard of living of working people has meant an almost constant increase in poverty in Ohio over the last decade. In 2007 before the current economic crisis hit us with full force, already between 10 and almost 19 percent of Ohioans lived in poverty. The poverty levels in Ohio's major cities are even more shocking, ranging around 25 percent living at or below the poverty level. In Cleveland, Dayton and Youngstown the figure is almost a third of our people in poverty.

Wealth Gap between Rich and Poor

Yet, while poverty has increased, the wealthy have grown richer.

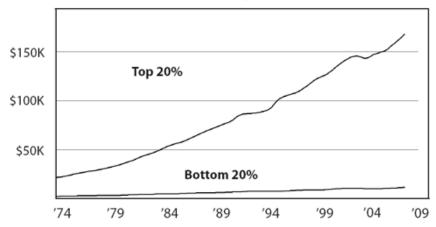
The result of stagnant wages, despite the long hours that we work, is an increasing large gap between the very wealthy and working class people. Over the last 40 years the government and employers have carried out a massive redistribution of wealth, moving wealth from working people to the rich. This has been done not only through increasing productivity and profits while reducing wage and benefit costs, but also by lowering taxes on the rich and increasing taxes on working people.

In Ohio, as in many other states, working people pay more taxes than the wealthy pay. The lowest economic bracket pays 12 percent in taxes, while the highest pays just over 6 percent. This is a result of unjust tax laws written by corporate lobbyists and passed by the Republicans and Democrats both in the Ohio Legislatures and in the U.S. Congress.

The rich are getting richer and the poor poorer. We can see the results of the process of the transfer of wealth from working people to the wealthy in this chart from 2008:

Income Inequality

Mean household income: top 20% and bottom 20%

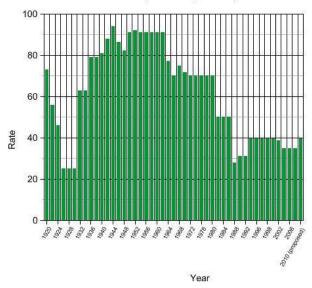


Source: Dollars and Sense Magazine

Reforming our Unfair Tax Structure

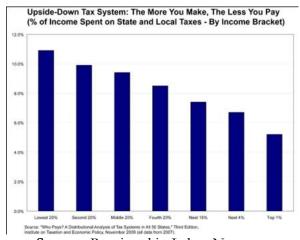
Many of the reforms proposed in this book can be financed by taxing the wealthy. During the period from 1945 to 1965, wealthy Americans paid over 80 percent in taxes, but today they pay less than 40 percent. If we were simply to return to taxing the wealthy at the rate we did 50 years ago, we could pay for the health, education, housing, transportation and other programs our nation needs today.





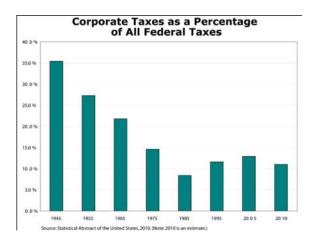
Source: http://www.balloon-juice.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/graph.jpg

Today we have a topsy-turvy tax system where those who make least pay most of the taxes, while those who make the most pay the least in taxes. The Republicans and Democrats both have shifted taxes on to working class homeowners, on to workers' wages, and on to consumer purchases. These are regressive taxes that punish working people and reward the wealthy.



Source: Reprinted in Labor Notes at http://labornotes.org/2010/07/yawning-deficits-put-public-sector-workers-crosshairs

Corporations have proven to be especially wily at escaping federal taxes. Some corporations pay no taxes at all while at the same time often receiving funding or assistance of some sort from the federal government.



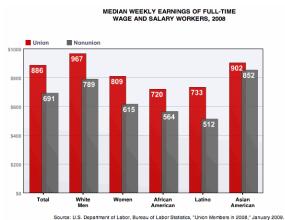
The Republicans and Democrats, representing the corporations, have no interest in reforming the tax structure. We need to build an independent working class political party that will begin to shift the tax burden back on to the rich where it belongs.

Wealth in our society should not be skewed in favor of some and against others. If we want a society that is fairer, more just, then we need to increase the power of labor unions, because dynamic unions accelerate the redistribution of wealth and lead to greater fairness.

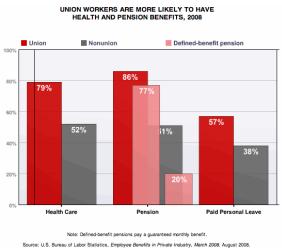
Getting a Fair Shake

How can we insure that working people get a fair shake? Historically, labor unions have done more to improve workers conditions than anything else. Labor unions raise raises, increase benefits, and improve conditions. Labor unions fought for public schools, for Social Security, and for health care. At their best, labor unions have also taken up the fight for civil rights, for the environment, and for peace.

We know that where workers have labor unions they have more job security, earn more, have better benefits, and healthier and safer conditions than non-unionized workers.



Source: Prepared by AFL-CIO.



Source: Prepared by AFL-CIO

The situation is similar for benefits. Unionized workers have more and better benefits than non-union workers in terms of health care, pensions and paid personal leave.

The Need for Pro-Worker Policies

We need policies that will give workers a decent life. The elements of such a program are these:

 We need to insure that all workers after one year of employment receive a four-week vacation every year. Some countries in Europe have had this for decades.

- Workers should have adequate paternity/maternity leave at full-pay.
- The government and employers should provide childcare for all workers with children.
- All workers deserve retirement with dignity. Social security *is not adequate* and not everyone has a private, company or union pension plan. We need a Social Security system with pensions that make private plans unnecessary.
- When workers become unemployed, they should still be guaranteed an income. A guaranteed annual income, an idea put forward by the Democrats in the 1940s and again in the 1960s and won by the United Auto Workers for its members should be a national goal.
- Workers' rights and workers' power stand at the center of our project for making America a just society.

Winning Rights for Workers

Such a program can be achieved only when workers have power, above all the power of labor unions. During the 1930s, American workers created industrial unions, engaged in militant strikes by the millions, and won contracts and higher wages. Later the U.S. government and state government gradually took away workers rights, making it more difficult to organize, to strike, and to negotiate a contract. We need to get those rights back.

Some of this can be won through legislation, but much of it will have to be won through union organization and negotiation. For decades the Democrats—Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama—promised to pass labor law reform. This item, however, always falls off the president's desk, and sometimes it falls in the waste basket. The corporate interests in the Democratic Party and the conservative Blue Dog Democrats make it impossible to pass labor law reform. Obama's promise to pass the Employee Fair Choice Act (EFCA) was quickly forgotten once he was elected.

We can change the situation for workers in Ohio and throughout the United States when they have won back their rights, rights taken from them over decades. To do so, we will need to build an independent political party of working people with a platform that calls for changes such as these:

- All workers should have the right to form or join a union of their own choosing free from intimidation by the employer or the government.
- We must end restrictions on workers' rights to strike, to engage in sympathy strikes, to boycott and to refuse to handle struck goods. (Repeal Taft-Hartley and similar state laws.)
- Workers whether in private or public employment should have the right to participate in political activity without restrictions provided that they are not coerced. (Repeal the Hatch Act and similar state laws.)
- All workers whether in private or public employment should have the right to engage in concerted activities, including the right to strike, the right to bargain collectively and the right to enter into collective bargaining agreements. (Repeal all state and federal laws that inhibit workers' rights.)
- Wherever workers have indicated by a simple majority that they want a union, they should have it without further ado. (Pass the Employee Free Choice Act.)
- Rewrite labor law and contracts to eliminate "the management rights clauses" as now established, because they are an obstacle to workers' voices and votes on their life in the workplace.

If we are to win such rights in order to change our situation, we will have to rebuild the labor movement. We turn now to how we might go about that task.

Chapter 5 Rebuilding the Power of the Labor Movement

Today many workers in Ohio and throughout the United States earn low wages, receive few benefits, work in miserable conditions, and have no voice in their workplace. While you may think that such a description would refer to sweatshop workers in small companies, it can also refer to workers employed by prosperous corporations and government agencies. Even people who work in what we think of as good workplaces such as hospitals and schools can sometimes have miserable conditions.

During the last 40 years, U.S. corporations have succeeded in eliminating labor unions from most workplaces, lowering wages, making workers pay more for their health care, and succeeded in increasing the hours we work and the speed at which we work. Many employers treat workers without respect and without consideration, some of them treat workers contemptuously and even abusively. Much of this is due to the decline of union power.

In the 1950s, 35 percent of all private sectors workers in the United States were in unions, while today there are less than 10 percent. The decline in union strength, wages, and benefits is no accident. It is the result of a concerted campaign by employers to reduce their costs in order to preserve their profits.

The American employers' attack on workers began in earnest in the late 1970s and it has continued unabated since that time. The media portrays unions as both outdated and unnecessary, or as a factor that might cause companies to close down or relocate. Corporations bring in expensive law firms to help them fight the unions, and security companies to intimidate workers. When there are strikes, the corporations with the help of local government and security guards bring in replacement workers.

When the employers' offensive began in the late 1970s, union officials who had grown comfortable with the bosses and with ritualized bargaining were caught unprepared. Most union leaders hesitated to lead a fight back, and as the saying goes, he who hesitates is lost. During the 1980s some unions were broken, while others were forced to accept concessions contracts. Unions

found themselves leading a retreat, and by the 1990s they had become less attractive to many workers.

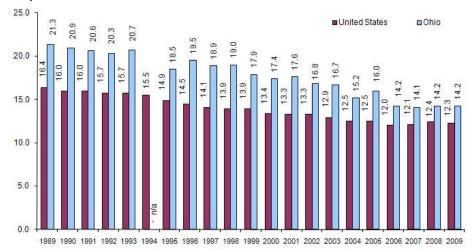
Union leaders were also often slow to adapt to the changing character of the American workforce as it became more African American, Latino, Asian, and female. The union tended to be as some union activists said, too "male, pale and stale." By the 2000s, except in a few heavy industries and among public employees, unions had virtually disappeared from the scene.

We can turn this situation around, but to do so we must understand where we are and what we have to do to change it

The Declining Strength of Unions

The biggest factor in Ohio workers' setbacks has been the declining size and strength of our unions, as show in this graph:

Members of unions as a percent of employed in the United States and Ohio, 1989-2009



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Union Membership in Ohio, 2009," March 9, 2010

Since Ohio was once a strong union state, we have not fared as badly as some. Still we have seen employers break unions, tear up contracts, and drive down our standard of living. Workers in Ohio, like those in other states, have experienced stagnating wages for decades and now wages have actually begun to fall in some industries.

Yet, at the same time, productivity and profits have risen. Employers have introduced computers and other forms of automation, yet while our productivity as workers has risen, our pay has fallen.

Though we as working people have invented, designed, engineered, built, and operated the modern industrial or service workplace, the investors have carried off the profits leaving us holding the bag.

Since the Depression began in 2007, we have seen our wages actually fall for the first time in decades.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008.

The State of Our Union Movement

If we are to rebuild the power of the labor movement, then we have to begin with the union movement we have today. The Ohio AFL-CIO today has about 1,600 local unions, from 48 different international unions, and altogether 650,000 members. These are firefighters and factory workers, electricians and educators, plumbers and postal workers, miners and municipal employees throughout the state. In addition the Ohio Education Association (OEA) represents 130,000 teachers, faculty members and support professionals who work in Ohio's schools, colleges and universities.

Some unions, like the teachers (AFT and NEA) and the Teamsters can be found in virtually every city and town and in rural areas throughout the state and can have an enormous impact on public opinion and are capable of taking action. We do have some strong centers of union activism, especially in the Jobs with Justice chapters in Cleveland, Toledo, Columbus and Dayton. Jobs with Justice organizes local level support among workers from different unions, bringing together rank-and-file workers from many different industries, jobs and experiences. A new sense of the labor movement develops when teachers walk picketlines with Teamsters or nurses and construction workers come together to support the same cause.

Recently there have had active organizing campaigns in Ohio. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and its Justice for Janitors campaign has been successful in organizing janitors in several cities in the state. The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) has organized strong contract campaigns for retail clerks and worked with new immigrant workers to organize packing plants in some cities. And other unions have also been fighting to improve workers lives.

Unfortunately though, many local union leaders and rank-and-file workers have become convinced that they cannot fight back and win against the employers. Sometimes this is because of the employers' vicious attacks on workers, and at other times it is because of the top-down and often undemocratic approach of union leaders Some union members seem to have given up the fight. How then can we begin to rebuild the union movement?

A Strategy for the Unions

The problem with the American labor movement is that is has been dominated by a philosophy of business unionism, that is, unions see themselves as businesses, cooperate with businesses and support political parties which represent businesses. Many union leaders want to form partnerships with the employers, rather than fighting for their members. The labor movement has in large measure ceased to fight for working people. We must make it do so again.

My own view is that the rebuilding of the unions will depend on these principles:

- Grassroots Organization in the Workplace.
- Willingness to Engage in Confrontation with the Bosses.
- Democracy and Equality in the Union
- Coalitions with other Unions and Communities
- Independent Political Action
- Internationalism in the Union Movement.

Grassroots Organization in the Workplace

The starting point for rebuilding unions is in the workplace. Unions have their origins both historically and logically as organizations of workers who come together where they work to demand that they be treated more fairly to make the employer do so. Very often the first unions were illegal and clandestine organizations, for employers fired union members and governments jailed them. The first unions often had little formal organizations and no paid staff.

The union grew out of workers' conversation with each other about conditions, and then out of a plan to change them. When the workers took action to protect themselves and to demand something better, whether higher wages or better conditions or dignity on the job, the union was born. The union grew out of workers' collective action to improve their lives, action against the employer and sometimes against the government.

Only later, once they were legalized, did unions acquire union halls and paid staff. Over the course of decades, government created rules to regulate union behavior and employers worked to turn some union leaders into junior partners. Union officials' salaries and expense accounts grew, union conventions became junkets and the fight for workers' power and rights was forgotten. So today we have to begin to rebuild rank-and-file power again from the shop floor, from the office, from the school or the hospital. Sometimes this takes the form of new organization, sometimes it takes the form of a fight to democratize the union and put power back in the hands of the rank and file.

Unions will have to be rebuilt from the workplace, the local union, and the community, from the bottom up. There is no alternative.

Confronting the Boss

We cannot rebuild the labor movement unless we are willing to confront the boss. This is not easy. The boss has the power to punish us in a thousand ways: to stop our promotion, to change our shirt or hours, ultimately to fire us. Yet if we do not stand up to the boss, both the immediate boss and the ultimate corporate or government boss, we cannot make any forward progress.

We know that we are in the midst of a Depression where the boss will have no problem replacing us. There are millions of unemployed, looking for jobs. Strikes have proven very difficult to carry out in the face of employer resistance, government repression and replacement workers. Few people have the courage to the risk losing their jobs, their cars, their houses, perhaps their marriages and families. Yet, if no one stands up, we will not be able to move forward. Employers will continue to push down wages, push up health contributions, and speed up the workplace.

Standing up to the boss begins with a change in one's own attitude. It can begin with having the courage to accept a leaflet from someone, handing a leaflet to another, wearing a union button, or carrying a sign on an informational picketline. We can only find the strength to stand up to the boss when we feel that we have the support of our co-workers. Solidarity—mutual support—is the foundation of the labor movement. The historic slogan of the union movement expresses that idea: "An Injury to one is an injury to all."

Workers will only be able to confront and stop management abuses such as wage-cuts, increases in health care costs, forced over-time, workplace discrimination and undignified treatment when they are prepared to use their economic power and political power. Strikes are unions' ultimate economic weapon, and it may not be possible or wise to use them as the first act. We need to begin with small actions and to escalate the fight for unions, contracts, higher wages, and better benefits and conditions by using a variety of tactics to confront the bosses.

Sometimes organized resistance in the workplace may work. At other times we will have to use civil disobedience to confront the corporations. Civil disobedience was the strategy of the Civil Rights Movement which won African American people their rights in the South. We in the labor movement should take up that strategy again and find others of our own.

The rebuilding of the labor movement will take a working class upheaval from below in the forms of strikes, boycotts, civil disobedience, and mass confrontations with power to rebuild the power of unions.

Democracy and Equality in the Union

Unions will be strong and successful when they can draw upon the ideas and energy of their members. Regrettably, many unions are run by a handful of leaders who make all of the decisions, failing to tap the reserves of knowledge, experience, and creativity of their own members. In the worst cases, some union leaders collaborate with the employers and collude with them against the members, even taking payoffs for "labor peace" or concessions. When that happens, workers need to organize within their unions to democratize them and take them back.

Workers need democracy in the workplace, in the union, and in society. Free and fair elections in unions form one part of workers' rights, but workers also need the power to control their unions on an on-going and day-to-day basis. Workers also need leaders accountable to them as well as elected and recallable workplace representatives who fight for them day-in-and-day-out.

When unions become undemocratic, or in the worst cases authoritarian and corrupt, they generally cease to fight for all of their members. When the members run the union, they can make the union a real vehicle for their fight against the employers.

And Equality

Many unions were for decades led by white men, even when the members included minorities or even majorities of African American or Latino men and women of all races. Gay and lesbian union activists often felt afraid of being outed and ridiculed or harassed. Since unions are based on the principle of solidarity, they can only be effective when all have equal rights as members, equal opportunity to become leaders, and equal treatment when represented by the union.

We have made some important strides in this area, but some unions still have a ways to go to overcome internal inequalities. When the union itself isn't fair, it's hard to get the boss to be fair.

Coalitions with other Unions and Communities.

Many unions remained for decades, first in the good times and then in the bad, isolated bastions within the labor movement and within their communities. When unions were doing well back in the 1950s to 1970s, they often felt that they could go it alone. When they began to face hard times in the 1980s to 2000s, they too often had no idea how to reach out and form coalitions with other unions and with the community.

Unions cannot when they are in trouble go to a community that they have previously ignored, perhaps for decades. We need to build on-going relationships among our unions and between unions and communities. Today unions are strongest when they have built ties to the African American, Latino, and immigrant communities, when they work with the environmentalists and the gay and lesbian (LGBT) movement.

We see in some states, such as California, movements coalescing around issues such as fighting state budget cuts to health, education, and social services. When unions and broad community coalitions come together to take on such issues, they become something like a political party, since they must come up with an alternative political program, and they represent an enormous part of the population. While this represents an enormous step forward in building political alternatives, the possibilities are usually largely lost because the coalition believes the only alternative is the Democratic Party.

Independent Political Action

Virtually the entire U.S. labor movement, with a few notable exceptions, supports the Democratic Party and its candidates in every election. The Republican Party, with its pro-business and anti-worker platform is out of the question for most unions, while the Democrats put themselves forward as the party of working people. Yet the Democrats, despite the loyal support of the unions, fail to fight for labor's agenda.

Labor law reform has been at the top of the union leaders' wish list for decades, yet Presidents Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama all failed to use the Democratic Party's power to reform our labor laws to make it easier to organize. Obama had promised to fight for the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), but after only a few months in office, that item had fallen off his desk and onto the floor if not into the waste paper basket.

The Democratic Party has since the 1970s moved so far to the right that it now stands to the right of former President Richard Nixon of the Republican Party. Nixon, it should be remembered, passed the Occupational Safety and Health Act and the Environmental Protection Act and other pro-union legislation. This is *not* a recommendation that we should work in the Republican Party, which we certainly should not. It simply points out how things have changed.

Both Major Parties Have Moved Right

The Democratic Party today, like the Republican Party, supports a corporate agenda that opens markets, deregulates, privatizes, cuts health education and social welfare budgets, and generally weakens the position of unions and undermines the standard of living of workers. Ohio's Democratic Party Senator Sherrod Brown, to his credit, has fought in Congress for a jobs program for workers. Lee Fisher, Ohio's Lt. Governor and my Democratic Party opponent for the U.S. Senate, also takes prounion positions on many issues.

That Brown and Fisher take such pro-union positions reflects the power of the Ohio organized labor movement, particularly in the Cleveland area. Yet those pro-union positions cannot win because of both the corporations that pay for the Democratic Party campaigns and because of the 50 conservative Blue Dog Democrats in the House who make progress on labor issues and other progressive issue impossible. Several of those Blue Dogs come from counties in southeastern Ohio, and as long as they are elected to Congress as Democrats, more progressive Democrats will be unable to change the direction of their party. That's why we need unions to begin to participate in politics independent of both corporate parties.

What might independent political action mean? Labor unions, instead of making the phone calls, walking the precincts and getting out the vote for the Democrats, might run their own members as independent candidates for city councils, state legislature and Congress. Independent labor candidates, Greens, and Socialists could make common cause in fighting for a progressive agenda.

The Greens and Socialists play an important role in raising progressive political ideas, building alternatives to the left of the Democrats, and in being activist politicos committed to taking the social movements into politics. In my own view, neither the Greens nor the Socialists are likely to form the

basis for a future progressive working peoples' party to the left of the Democrats, rather new forces will arise from future struggles that will create new political opportunities. In the meantime, we need to support all of those who seek to build a movement to the left of the Democrats.

Internationalism in the Union Movement

Finally, if we are to rebuild the power of the labor movement, we will have to adopt an internationalist stance, seeking to work with both the immigrants in our own country and with workers in other countries. The principal problem of the American working class is the American corporate class—not immigrants and not workers in some other country. The best potential allies of the native-born American working class are not their bosses, but rather the immigrants to our country and foreign workers in other countries. Attacks on Latino immigrants or on China tend to turn our heads away from the real problem: the corporations which have systematically destroyed many American workers' jobs and lives.

Some argue that the panacea of the American economy is "Buy American!" But this slogan simply has no meaning when most products are produced through industrial processes that span continents and seas. The typical automobile contains 25 percent parts from overseas, and another 25 percent produced in foreign-owned companies in the United States. We live in a global economy where multinational corporations play one country against another as easily as they do one city against another. Corporations use their power to demand tax abatements, to limit environmental controls, and to try to get "union free" enterprise zones.

If the union movement is going to take on the corporations, then we have to join with immigrants in this country and with workers and unions in other countries to get the power to resist their economic pressure and shape our own international policy and economic agenda.

We will only solve this country's problems when working people can rebuild a strong labor movement that can fight to improve workers' economic situation, but also change our country's national priority from profit to human need.

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¹¹ Joseph White, What Is an American Car? These Days Its Hard to Tell, and That Could Snag the Push to Save Detroit Auto Makers," *Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 26, 2009, at: "http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123265601944607285.html

Chapter 6 Solving the Housing Crisis

Housing in America—once thought of as part of the "American Dream"—has become for many an American nightmare. Millions of Americans have faced eviction as they either couldn't pay their mortgages or found that their landlords hadn't paid the mortgage. Homeowners and renters both have found themselves on the curb. Those Americans who so far have escaped eviction pay too great a percentage of their income for housing, while others cannot afford housing at all and find themselves homeless. At the same time, bankers seem to have shut down the builders, who in turn have let go of their subcontractors and construction workers. We have a housing crisis.

The Housing Bubble Bursts

The housing crisis which began in 2007 and detonated the broader economic crisis was the result of banks engaging in poor lending policies in order to make a quick profit. Too many buyers, trying to find a better home for their families, but making too little money to fulfill their dreams, were paying too great a percentage of their income on housing, whether as mortgage or rent.

When homebuyers proved unable to pay, the loans went bad and the banks began to lose money and other financial institutions which had bundled and bought their loans began to fail. That housing market crisis soon spread to other areas of the economy, leading to a downturn in industrial production, and then to recession throughout the society.

The housing problem, which began because we failed to provide good housing at reasonable prices for the American people, became a crisis. Once the recession had begun, more people couldn't meet their mortgages, and a syndrome of economic decline took hold. The reduction in employment and loss of jobs, the wage cuts and the rising costs of benefits now exacerbated the housing crisis.

More and more people fell behind in their home payments. Others couldn't make the rent. Some found themselves homeless. While much of the media attention has been on the tremendous number of home foreclosures over the last few years, the country also has a longer term and broader crisis in housing.

The economic crisis, originating as it did in the housing sector, led to a collapse not only of the banks holding the mortgages, but also of parts of the real estate business, and of the home building contractors and subcontractors, and to unemployment among tens of thousands of construction workers. Throughout the country, the failures of the free market system and of government policies have caused hardship for construction workers and their families.

Obama and the Democrats Response to the Housing Crisis

President Barack Obama first responded to the crisis of the banks and only secondarily to the crisis of homeowners and renters affected by the current economic crisis. To the credit of the Obama administration there were serious efforts to saving the housing market from collapse, thus to protect homeowners. Most recently in August of 2010 the Treasury Department designated \$2 billion to help homeowners, with \$148 million of that coming here to Ohio. This is on top of another \$172 million announced earlier, all of this to help 35,000 unemployed homeowners to avoid foreclosure. Ohio Governor Ted Strickland and his administration also took some actions to help protect homeowners in the legal arena.

Yet, these policies represent too little too late. Ohio had 89,000 foreclosures in 2009, up 3.8 percent over 2008. Moreover, policies to save homeowners—while they are essential—do not address the long term and chronic problems of our nation's approach to planning, development, and housing construction. The housing market of the last couple of decades has looked like a roller coaster, creating insecure economic conditions which have wreaked havoc with builders, contractors and sub-contractors, workers, homebuyers and renters.

¹² Jack Torry, "Ohio is awarded \$148 million to fight foreclosureMortgage troubles expanding among state unemployed," Columbus Dispatch, August 12, 2010, at: http://www.dispatchpolitics.com/live/content/local_news/stories/2010/08/12/copy/ohio-is-awarded-148-million-to-fight-foreclosure.html?adsec=politics&sid=101

¹³ Luke Mullins, "How Ohio Is Tackling the Foreclosure Crisis," April 2008, U.S. News and World Report, Money, April 21, 2008, at: http://money.usnews.com/money/personal-finance/real-estate/articles/2008/04/21/how-ohio-is-tackling-the-foreclosure-crisis.html

As a New York Times article stated in September 2010:

Over the last 18 months, the administration has rolled out just about every program it could think of to prop up the ailing housing market, using tax credits, mortgage modification programs, low interest rates, government-backed loans and other assistance intended to keep values up and delinquent borrowers out of foreclosure. The goal was to stabilize the market until a resurgent economy created new households that demanded places to live.¹⁴

The government failed to achieve its goal. Now some economists are talking about just letting the housing market collapse with a loss of 30 percent in housing values! The free market system is clearing failing American homeowners and those who want to buy homes.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Housing costs rose during the bubble of the 1990s and early 2000s, putting new homes out of the reach of many. Then housing prices fell, reducing the value of or even wiping out the largest asset of most American families.

At the same time many renters were paying higher rents than in the past. Over all Americans paid a larger percentage of their incomes for housing than they had in past or than they should be in the present. Yet many Americans still live in houses or apartments which are in poor condition or too small for their families.

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David Streitfeld, Housing Woes Bring New Cry: Let Market Fall," New York Times, September 5, 2010 http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/06/business/economy/06housing.html? r=1&ref=us

While we have an aging population, we have done little to build the kinds of housing that senior citizens will need in the next couple of decades. At the same time, many young people and young families cannot afford housing and move back home to live with mom and dad. The housing crisis then isn't simply about the current wave of foreclosures, but about our country's inability to plan development and create enough appropriate and affordable housing for our people.

An Irrational System - No Planning for Development and Housing

American planning, development and housing have become highly irrational. We have created enormous areas of suburban sprawl, often without consideration for the transportation costs in terms of time and money, the impact of automobile commuters on the environment, the damage to wetlands and other ecosystems, or without thinking about the issue of the availability of water, especially in the West. At the same time in many cities, we have destroyed a great deal of public housing, often as part of a plan to remove poor people, especially poor people of color, in order to make way for gentrification of the neighborhood by better off white people or ethnically diverse cosmopolites.

The capitalist market and the corporations, together with mistaken government policies, have brought us to our current crisis. The largest home builders in the United States are national corporations operating in several states which in good years can build as many as 100,000 homes a year, and in recent years build tens of thousands. They build homes for profit, without thought for the broader implications of their practices on our society.

Our planners and developers, builders and real estate agents, often colluding with local school boards, have consciously worked to foster racial and class segregation, accentuating the already enormous differences in incomes and assets between whites and many Asians, on the one hand, and African Americans and Latinos, on the other. Virtually every urban area has its exclusive suburbs for wealthy people, usually white, its upper middle class suburbs, working class suburbs, and often African American suburbs for black middle class and working class people, and dilapidated older suburbs for the poor. Meanwhile inner city neighborhoods have fallen into decay, as homes have deteriorated and businesses have pulled out.

With our capitalist economy, the banks and corporations have created an irrational system which rewards wealthy investors and speculators, but at the

same time puts housing out of the reach of many in our population. While some have bought big box homes in the suburbs or exurbs that they can hardly afford, others find the homes they own losing value, some have crowded their families into small dilapidated apartments, while others have no homes at all.

At its worst, the housing problem finds expression in homelessness. According to the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio, "Last year, approximately 150,000 Ohioans were homeless. More than 40 percent of Ohio renters cannot afford the fair-market rent of a two-bedroom unit; and foreclosures totaled nearly 90,000 in 2009. It was the 14th consecutive year of record breaking foreclosure numbers."

While many of the homeless are people with mental problems or addiction issues, increasingly large numbers of the homeless are families. Around the country government agencies and school districts report growing numbers of homeless school age children. The country's homeless shelters find their resources strained, and many of the homeless continue to sleep in their cars or on the streets.

African Americans and Latinos Particularly Hard Hit

Thousands upon thousands of Ohioans and millions of Americans have been affected by the foreclosure crisis. While all have been affected, African Americans and Latinos have suffered a disproportionately high number of foreclosures.

An estimated 2.5 million foreclosures were completed from 2007 – 2009, and an estimated 5.7 additional ones are imminent.

An estimated 17% of Latino homeowners and 11% of African-American homeowners have already lost their homes to foreclosure or are now at imminent risk.

The great majority of homes lost were owner occupied, as are those at imminent risk of being lost.¹⁶

¹⁵ Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio, home page, at: http://www.cohhio.org/

¹⁶ Debbie Gruenstein Bocian, Wei Li, and Keith S. Ernst, "Foreclosures by Race and Ethnicity," CRL Research Report, June 18, 2010, at:

http://www.responsiblelending.org/mortgage-lending/research-analysis/foreclosures-by-race-executive-summary.pdf

Government Housing Policy

While we tend to think of buying and owning a home as a private matter, like everything else in our society, these are questions of public policy, and government has been involved at every level functioning to protect bankers and other investors. Throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, government programs have not only influenced but have actually shaped the successes and failures of housing in our country. Many believe that government housing policies principally benefit low-income people, but this is not true. As the National Institute for Housing wrote a few years ago:

Most Americans think that federal housing assistance is a poor people's program. In fact, less than one-fourth of all low-income Americans (those who have Section 8 rental vouchers or who live in government-assisted developments) receive federal housing subsidies. In contrast, almost two-thirds of wealthy Americans – many living in mansions – get housing aid from Washington.¹⁷

The largest and most important housing policies of the United States were created during the Great Depression of the 1930s and in the post-World War II period.

During the period of the Great Depression, in 1938, the U.S. government created the Federal National Mortgage Association (FNMA), also known as Fannie Mae, to allow lenders to create more home loans. This was done by transforming mortgages into mortgage-backed securities, a loan backed by mortgages. While originally a government-owned corporation to help homeowners, in 1968 it became a private corporation.

Government Insurance of Mortgage Loans

While conservatives like to talk about the wonders of the "free market," there has been no free market in housing for over 70 years. Rather private parties—banks, realtors, and builders—have taken advantage of public policies intended to help the general population in order to enrich themselves, while at the same time creating a class-based and segregated housing market.

¹⁷ Peter Dreier, "Will President Bush Reform the Mansion Subsidy?" National Housing Institute, at: http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/144/mansionsubsidy.html

Shortly before the end of the war, in 1944, the U.S. Congress passed the law that created the VA Home Loans. The Veterans Administration would insure loans which made it possible for the banks to make these loans at lower interest, as low as 2 percent, with no down payment. Since the law was passed more than 18 million Americans have benefited from VA Home Loans, most of them working class men and women.

In 1968, Congress created the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (FHLMC), known as Freddie Mac, to facilitate the secondary mortgage market. Freddie Mac bought mortgages from Savings and Loan companies, with the government functioning as the guarantor of their values. Mortgages of Veterans and of government employees were insured by yet another agency, the Government National Mortgage Association known as Ginnie Mae.

Without these government programs to back up bank loans we would have many fewer homeowners than we do today. Yet these policies have not always worked fairly. While the government backed the bank loans, banks and realtors discriminated. When in the late 1940s William Levitt, often called the "father of suburbia," built the first modern suburban subdivisions in Levittown, New York, he refused to permit African Americans to buy houses, even though they enjoyed VA or FHA financing. Levitt established a precedent followed by other homebuilders. African Americans were unwelcome in the suburbs.

Virtually all of the other suburban builders of the era of the 1940s to the 1960s continued the policy of excluding African Americans. So in the building of the modern suburbs, in which two-thirds of Americans live today, a great opportunity for racial integration was missed, and a policy of racial segregation was instituted. While the Civil Rights Act and other federal and state laws were intended to overcome such discriminatory policies, suburban segregation has continued to this day.

Red-Lining and Block-Busting

At the same time, banks and realtors took their pencils and drew red lines around certain neighborhoods in the cities, refusing to provide mortgage loans to those areas. When African Americans, most of them crowded into urban ghettos, sought in the 1950s and 1960s to move into new neighborhoods, realtors would manipulate blacks and whites for their own profit. A realtor would move in one black family, spread rumors that the

neighborhood was about to "go black" and that their property values would fall.

White residents would panic, and realtors would sweep in, buy up their homes cheap, and turn around and sell them at a profit to new black residents. Neighborhood property values would fall, not because the African Americans had moved in, but because the better-off whites moved their homes and business out to the suburbs. The city tax base declined, and city services fell off, a problem compounded by white city fathers neglecting black neighborhoods.

Bankers and realtors, using block busting, panic peddling, and red lining created our contemporary cities with their ghettos and slums. All of this was possible because of the government policies which guaranteed virtually all of the mortgages. Thus government policies—supposedly in place to benefit the many—actually benefited the few.

The Homeowner Tax Deduction

Perhaps the biggest government policy, however, is the homeowner tax deduction which permits home owners and owners of rental property to deduct their mortgage payments from their taxable income. The National Association of Homebuilders, the National Association of Realtors and the Mortgage Bankers Association all push to maintain the homeowner tax deduction as it because it benefits them. While there is no doubt that the policy helps some working class and low-income folks buy homes, because it is available to the wealthy it also functions as a government subsidy for the rich and their mansions.

The homeowner tax deduction today may have a total value of as much as \$100 million. While this policy has benefited many working class people, it has also benefited the well-to-do and the well off who have sufficient income to pay their taxes. They do not need such a deduction, and the deduction should certainly be eliminated for those with higher incomes.

Public Housing

What can be done about the crisis of development and housing? We might begin to answer that question by first asking: What has been done in the past? And what went wrong?

During the Great Depression, with many around the country engaging in protest demonstrations and strikes, the Congress created the Federal Housing Authority and then the United States Housing Authority to help the many who had been left homeless. The first public housing projects were modern buildings with the most modern facilities, two- and three-storey garden apartments set in green spaces, with stores and playgrounds for the children. By the end of the 1930s, the government built housing like this for hundreds of thousands of people both white and black who came to live in these comfortable communities in urban areas. In addition, many state and city governments also built apartment complexes and some labor unions created housing for their members.

Public housing was not only an economic measure and a social program, but it also had political implications. Such public housing developments, populated by thousands of working class people, often with shared histories and common concerns, became powerful social and political institutions. The people who lived in such housing often supported labor unions and voted for progressive candidates within the Democratic Party. Public housing projects became bastions of political power for working people, even if the Democrats didn't always do all they might have or should have.

From Urban Renewal to Urban Removal

Things began to change with President Truman's Housing Act of 1949 calling for "slum clearance" and with the Housing Act of 1954 which called for "urban renewal." While these housing acts purported to build housing for low-income people, they were often used to raze entire neighborhoods made up of older homes and to destroy tight-knit communities, particularly the communities of poor people and African Americans. When in 1956 Congress also passed the law that created the Interstate Highway system, state and local governments similarly used the new highway system to eradicate poor and black neighborhoods and to segregate cities.

Many African Americans said that it wasn't about "urban renewal," but rather about "urban removal." African American communities were wiped out and their inhabitants poured into new high-rise public housing, as public housing became ghettoized, that is, in many areas primarily occupied by blacks.

The second generation of public housing projects was not built to a human scale, but was often a complex of many enormous, multi-story, steel and

concrete buildings, with little open space and few green areas. They looked like huge filing cabinets, warehouses for the storage of the poor. While they may originally have been habitable and comfortable enough, there was inadequate government support, administration and management of the projects was poor, and they became increasingly difficult to live in as the elevator systems often failed, the lighting went out, and through lack of repair the buildings became dilapidated. Grounds were neglected as was garbage service for the poor. In many cities the buildings became filthy and covered with graffiti, and without adequate policing crime grew.

From Public Housing to Section 8

Government neglect worked to destroy public housing. By the 1970s the second generation of public housing projects had become notorious for poverty and crime. Public housing became stigmatized, many viewing it as a kind of dumping ground not simply for working class and low-income people, but also for the criminal element. At the same time, many cities began to experiment in gentrification as a way to rebuild the cities, so public housing land and sometimes the buildings too became an object of interest for banks, developers and realtors. A program of what might have been called humanitarian intervention began; the projects would be blown up or sold off in order to rid the city of these centers of poverty and crime.

Conservatives now suddenly saw an opportunity to both eliminate the housing projects and to make money. The U.S. Congress passed and President Richard Nixon signed into law Section 8 or the Housing Choice Voucher Program. When the Public Housing projects began to fall, tenants were given vouchers to pay their rent, thus taxpayer money was redistributed not to working class people, but rather to property owners. Federal money no longer went to build public housing, but rather to subsidize landlords. The gentrifiers carefully monitored these developments, steering low-income renters, African Americans, and Latinos into what they saw as the appropriate neighborhoods. The U.S. government created a kind of "socialism for the landlords" giving tax-payer money to private parties to make a profit, while they also segregated and re-segregated the cities.

Most Recent Developments in Public Housing

Since the opening of this century, U.S., state and local governments have cooperated to remove what remained of low-rise public housing in many parts of the United States. Public housing in cities around the country has

been eliminated for one reason or another, often driven by a desire to control inner-city real estate, to remove African American or Latino communities, or to deal with low-income neighborhoods by removing the poor. In some places a catastrophe such as hurricane Katrina has been used as the excuse to bulldoze public housing, while in others such as Cincinnati the housing has been condemned because it had been allowed to become dilapidated.

More recent government housing policies such as HOPE VI, call for demolishing dilapidated public housing and replacing it largely with Section 8 housing or other public housing. More units are destroyed than are built, however, and the residents of public housing projects around the country complain that their voices have been ignored. Some resident are moved from one public housing project to another, others end up in Section 8 housing, some into more expensive privately owned housing, and some no doubt onto the streets.¹⁸

Around the country banks, developers and realtors have fought to take control of downtown neighborhoods, gentrifying through rehabilitation or the construction of townhouses usually out of reach of the poor. At the same time, suburbs have spread far out into the country to rural areas or in places like California into the high desert, in the process known as suburban sprawl. The sprawl not only threatens woods and wetlands, but also increases the use of cars and the burning of gasoline, increasing transportation costs and magnifying the damage from carbon fuels.

We have no plan for development, and no plan for housing, and government programs seem only to keep our chaotic and destructive market system functioning through complex and ineffective government programs. It's time for a plan.

Planning for Housing for America

The lack of rational planning in our housing sector has caused problems for everyone in our country, from bankers to builders and from homeowners to hardhats. Many homeowners lost their homes because they couldn't make the nut and when landlords couldn't make their mortgages renters were evicted. Millions of American families have suffered distress and some have experienced disaster because of our anarchic economic system.

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¹⁸ Winton Pitcoff, "New Hope for Public Housing?" National Housing Institute (NHI), at: http://www.nhi.org/online/issues/104/pitcoff.html

We don't have to live this way. There is an alternative. That alternative is a national government housing plan aimed at creating the houses and apartments necessary for our people. The U.S. Credit Union, discussed elsewhere in this book, would finance all construction public or private. Consequently the bankers who have nearly ruined our economy would no longer have a role in housing. A new U.S. National Housing Agency would create a U.S. Home Building Company which would buy up some of the existing building companies and contract others, which would in turn hire the sub-contractors and employ the construction workers who today do not have jobs.

This company working with regional planning authorities and doing the appropriate environmental impact studies would build homes and low-rise apartments throughout the country. The existence of a national housing plan would create stability in the housing industry would allow us both to provide the appropriate housing for all, and also to insure sustained employment to builders, contractors and construction workers. Government built homes, with lifetime leases, would be self-insured by the U.S. government. Thus the parasitic insurance companies would be driven out of this sector.

Rethinking Planning, Development and Housing

We have over the last 75 years or so developed the notion that home ownership, in particular a huge home in the sprawling suburbs, represents not only a desirable model, but the only model of housing our population. Yet this model all too often means environmental damage, stress on natural resources such as water, and creates enormous transportation costs. We need to rethink the kind of country we want to have and whether or not it would be better to create not more suburbs, but rather more small cities and better planned large cities which could accommodate our population more comfortably and more rationally.

Today, with our planning and developing, building and marketing of homes completely in the hands of private parties who use government resources to subsidize themselves, rather than to rationally meet the needs of our people, we cannot even begin to have such a discussion amongst ourselves. We need to move to a society where banks and corporations will be replaced by economic and social institutions democratically controlled by the American people to plan for a rational future.

We want a society where the government finances housing; the American people plan development and housing; and where environmental concerns are preeminent. We want the government to hire the regulated subcontractors who employ only union labor. We want a society where everyone has a house or apartment which is a safe and secure home for themselves and their families. And none of this is too much to hope for. In fact, it should be the right of every American to have a comfortable, secure, and affordable home or apartment.

Chapter 7 Quality Public Education Free for All

The American educational system is failing us. The funding of education is unequal and unfair. The system as a set of institutions, principally our public schools and universities, are classist and often racist. We lose many students before they finish high school, and we make it too expensive and too difficult for most of those who want go to college. We demand too much of teachers and don't pay them well enough.

Today, President Barack Obama's Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan with his \$4.35 billion "Race to the Top" program is encouraging many of the worst trends in our existing education system. The country's two national teachers federation, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA), as well as the major civil rights organizations such as the NAACP and the Urban Leader, have criticized Duncan for failing to address the needs of all students and especially low income and African American students.¹⁹

We have in the last two decades produced a series of non-reforms—magnet schools, charter schools, No Child Left Behind, and now Race to the Top—which have only made the situation worse. Meanwhile the cost of college has become astronomical, meaning that many families and new college graduates will be saddled with huge debts for years to come.

If we are to deal with these issues we will have to tax the wealthy and the corporations to pay for education, distribute resources fairly to rural, urban and suburban schools, and give teachers the ability to teach, in large measure by reducing their class sizes. We will have to bring back to our schools physical education, foreign languages, music, and the arts, since they are central to a real education.

Most of all, however, we will have to create a new ethos, a new national morality, that comes through the fusion of a movement for liberation from corporate, capitalist domination of our society and a vision of a new egalitarian and democratic society. When teachers, parents, and students

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¹⁹ Civil rights leaders, Sec. Arne Duncan talk education reform, *USA Today*, July 28, 2010, at: http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2010-07-26-civil-rights-reform N.htm

come together in a movement in the classrooms, in the streets, and in politics, part of a larger movement to sweep the power of banks and corporations from control of our lives, education will be transformed. This has happened in our country in the past, in the 1860s, in the early 1910s, 1930s, and again in the 1960s. We can make it happen once more, but it won't be easy.

The Current Crisis in Education

American education today is in a deep crisis, the result of a prolonged attack by corporate and political forces who do not want to see a well educated people in this country, certainly not a well educated working class. Public education has been starved of funds, rival voucher systems and charter schools have been used to undermine and weaken the public education system, and supposed national standards and unfunded mandates have crushed it under the weight of bureaucracy. The result has been disastrous for our children and for our country.

A recent study, "Left Behind in America: The Nation's Dropout Crisis" (2009) conducted by Northeastern University of Boston, found that:

- Nearly one in five U.S. men between the ages of 16 and 24 (18.9 percent) were dropouts in 2007.
- Nearly three of 10 Latinos, including recent immigrants, were dropouts (27.5 percent).
- More than one in five blacks dropped out of school (21 percent). The dropout rate for whites was 12.2 percent.²⁰

My own state of Ohio lost over 180,000 students in 2009, a dropout rate of 13.3%, and other states are doing even worse.

http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/05/05/dropout.rate.study/index.html

http://www.clms.neu.edu/publication/documents/CLMS 2009 Dropout Report.pdf

²⁰ "High school dropout crisis' continues in U.S., study says," CNN, at:

The Northeastern study can be found at:

STATE	DROPOUTS AGED 16-24	DROPOUT RATE
California	710,383	14.4%
Florida	423,529	20.1%
Georgia	270,114	22.1%
Illinois	218,949	13.2%
Michigan	162,512	12.8%
New Jersey	111,236	10.8%
New York	368,854	14.6%
North Carolina	202,280	17.6%
Ohio	188,335	13.3%
Pennsylvania	196,360	12.5%
Texas	582,109	18.5%
Virginia	139.783	13.9%

Source:

http://www.clms.neu.edu/publication/documents/CLMS 2009 Dropout Report.pdf

While once the U.S. led the world in secondary education, today it has fallen far down the list of the societies which best educate their children. A 2009 report the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development placed the United States 18th among the 36 nations examined. While the top nation in education, South Korea saw 93 percent of its high school students graduate on time, the U.S. in that year had only a 75 percent graduation on time rate it was reported.²¹

At the same time, schools in the United States today are more segregated today than they have been in more than four decades, according to a study by the University of California at Los Angeles. According to the 2010 report, non-white students are locked into "dropout factory" high schools, where large numbers do not graduate, and few students are well equipped for either college or a future in the US economy. Summarizing the report:

Schools in low-income communities remain highly unequal in terms of funding, qualified teachers, and curriculum. The report indicates that schools with high levels of poverty have weaker staffs, fewer high-achieving peers, health and nutrition problems, residential instability, single-parent households, high exposure to crime and gangs, and many other conditions that strongly affect student performance levels. Low-income campuses are more likely to be ignored by college and job market recruiters. The impact of funding cuts in welfare and social programs since the 1990s was partially

²¹ http://www.upi.com/Top News/2008/11/19/US-slipping-in-education-rankings/UPI-90221227104776/

masked by the economic boom that suddenly ended in the fall of 2008. As a consequence, conditions are likely to get even worse in the immediate future.²²

While the dropout rate of mostly working class and poor children represents the greatest failing of our school system, things are by no means easy for the middle class. During the 1960s and 70s, public education in several states was nearly free, and many were able to access educational opportunities that their parents could not. But things are not better for our children today, they are worse, much worse. For many, college is out of reach without loans, and many graduates are saddled with tens of thousands of dollars in debt. Other simply give up after a year or two, unable to continue to work and study.

The prices of college have become astronomical, as shown in this chart:

Type of Institution

Projected 4-Year Tuition and Fees

	Today (Enrolling 2010)	In 18 Years (Enrolling 2028)
Private College	\$121,800	\$347,700
Public/University (in-state resident)	\$32,600	\$92,900
2 Years Community College & 2 Years Private College	\$ 70 , 000	\$199,800

(Based on average tuition and fees for 2009-2010 as reported by The College Board® and assumed to increase 6% annually.)²³

Americans recognize that the inequalities in education mean that many because they could not finish high school, or go to college, or go on to pursue an advanced degree will be trapped in low wages jobs. U.S. Census Bureau studies show that education correlates highly with income.

http://www.projectcensored.org/top-stories/articles/2-us-schools-are-more-segregated-today-than-in-the-1950s-source/ The full report can found at:

http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-

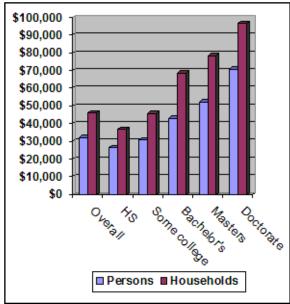
 $[\]underline{diversity/resegregation\text{-}in\text{-}american\text{-}schools?} \\ 20 more \% 20 segregated$

²³ http://www.savingforcollege.com/tutorial101/the real cost of higher education.php The College Board Report can be found at:

http://www.trends-

collegeboard.com/college pricing/pdf/2009 Trends College Pricing.pdf

Relation of Education to Income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Studies.²⁴

We are denying many of our children and young adults education and by doing so we deny them the opportunity to have fulfilling jobs and to earn a decent living.

What's the problem with our schools? Politicians and the news media frequently blame public school systems and the teachers unions. The teachers unions complain that we have the wrong budget priorities, shortchanging education. Parents and students complain that the schools and teachers fail to reach and teach their communities and their students. High school seniors and college students and their parents worry that when they graduate young adults won't be able to find jobs. Many see a future staggering forward under the burden of college loans.

Some state governments and school districts have tried innovations. First there were magnet schools as an alternative to the failing local schools. Magnet schools seemed to institutionalize the class divisions in the public schools, while weakening the neighborhood schools, often taking some of the best teachers out of low-income, working class, or minority

²⁴ Chart from "Income inequality in the United States," Wikipedia, at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Income inequality in the United States

neighborhoods. Then came educational vouchers and charter schools, using public funding for private schools.

Many of the charter schools seemed to offer quick fixes and wonderful promises, but in general failed to perform any better than public schools and sometimes worse. Competition for funds between genuine public schools and charter schools increased, to the detriment of the public schools and of students. At the same time, states and school districts put pressure on the unions and their contracts, purportedly to weed out bad teachers, but often to eliminate the strongest critics of administration failures.

Then almost a decade ago, in January 2002 Congress enacted No Child Left Behind. President George W. Bush and Senator Ted Kennedy worked together to pass this far-reaching, bi-partisan legislation intended to reform the entire American education system by improved testing, higher standards and greater accountability on the part of teachers, administrators and school systems. But No Child Left Behind, which led to teaching-to-the-test, pleased almost no one. Meanwhile America's educational system has continued to decline.

Why have all of these efforts apparently failed? What is the problem with education in America? The problem is the lack of a national *ethos*, that is, a fundamental and pervasive set of moral values regarding education and its role in our society. Without a new educational ethos, part of a new set of moral values for our country, a sense of our country, we will be unable to make education work. We can only understand what such a national ethos might look like by going back to look at our past.

The Great Age of American Education

American education was at one time far more successful, not to say that it was without problems. During the great era of mass immigration to the United States, between 1880 and 1930, American public schools absorbed millions of immigrants from around the world, provided them with elementary education and in many cases a high school education as well. Teachers were highly respected by parents and students—if often underpaid—and the school was a community and civic center and a source of enormous pride.

The American ethos of the era held public education and educators in high esteem. Why was that? We were then, between 1880 and 1930, largely a

nation of peasant immigrants who, uprooted and dispossessed of their land by the expansion of capitalism in Europe, Asia and Latin America had come to seek work and freedom in the United States. Whether these peasants had come from Germany or Ireland, from Poland or Italy, from China or Mexico, or from Appalachia or the American South, they understood that finding an industrial job for themselves and finding a school for their children was the key to their families' futures.

The great social upheavals and reform movements of the turn of the last century led to new ideas about education. The Populists, mostly farmers; the Knights of Labor, a union of workers of all sorts; and the middle class Progressive political reform movement of the 1910s, while they didn't always agree, demanded improvements in public education. Working people—family farmers and industrial workers—forced the schools to make reforms.

John Dewey, the great educational thinker and reformer of the era, argued that education should be useful to the real lives of the immigrants who populated American cities and schools. Schools, he asserted, should teach not through rote learning but through experience, and that it should further American democracy. As Dewey wrote,

...the society of which the child is to be a member is, in the United States, a democratic and progressive society. The child must be educated for leadership as well as for obedience. He must have power of self-direction and power of directing others, power of administration, ability to assume positions of responsibility. This necessity of educating for leadership is as great on the industrial as on the political side.²⁵

At the time, Dewey's ideas—an indirect expression of the social movements of the times—while not radical, represented a significant shift in education, an attempt to make education meaningful to the nation's masses of immigrants.

Whether these immigrants were Jews, Protestants or Catholics, or freethinkers (as secular humanists were called in those days), they saw in the public school the opportunity not only for personal advancement, but for the lifting up of their people. The community took pride not only in the

²⁵ John Dewey, *The Moral Purpose of the School* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1909), Chapter II, at: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/25172/25172-h/25172-h.htm

individual achievement but also in the collective accomplishment that education represented. Not only mothers and fathers, but whole families scrimped, saved and sacrificed to put one and then another of them, and sadly not usually all of them, through high school. Few from working class families in those days ever made it to college, but when one did, it represented a community achievement. One of our boys or our girls—Jewish, Polish, Irish or African American—had become a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher or a nurse.

The Post-War Period

The generation that had been born in the 1920s, grew up in the Great Depression, and then fought in World War II, pressed forward into higher education. The generation that struggled through sit-down strikes and street battles to build the industrial unions of the CIO became a force in Roosevelt's and then in Truman's Democratic Party. They fought for and won an expansion of public education. The power of labor unions in the electorate, usually operating through the Democratic Party, forced more educational reforms.

After World War II, veterans won the G.I. Bill which paid for their higher education. Suddenly the universities and colleges, which had been largely the preserve of the descendents of white, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon founders of the country, were filled with the children of the immigrants: Irish and Italian, Polish and German, Jews and African Americans. Education became more accessible, more democratic.

At the same time, during the 1930s and 1940s, the labor union movement, which had succeeded in organizing industrial workers, spread to the schools. Teachers organized unions and began to fight for contracts, succeeding in a few big cities like Chicago and New York. The teachers' union movement would finally mature in the 1960s and 1970s as the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), mostly in the cities, and the National Education Association (NEA), mostly in the suburbs, won union contracts with job security, higher wages, pensions, and an end to discrimination against single women. By the end of that period the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the AFT, and other unions were also attempting to organize college and university professors.

Of course, during the period from the 1930s to the 1960s African Americans fought to end segregation in the South and to overcome discrimination in the

North. Brown v. Board of Education was as much a response to the black struggle for equality as it was a spur to further fights for freedom. African American marches, demonstrations, sit-ins and widespread conflict with local and state authorities finally forced open the doors to education. With the Brown decision—and a constant struggle to see the law carried out—black women and men of the South entered public school and college classrooms from which they had been excluded for generations. That in turn led to more black teachers in the classroom.

Latinos—Mexicans in California and Puerto Ricans in New York—also carried out a similar civil rights movement, overcoming prejudice against their nationality, skin color and language. Latino high school students' "blowouts," student strikes in Los Angles, for example, forced administrators to recognize and respect the Mexican American community, its teachers and its students.

American public education may be said to have reached its apogee sometime around the mid-1960s. American prosperity, the result of the U.S. victory in World War II and U.S. dominance over the world capitalist economy, made great reforms possible, but only with struggle. As a result of those struggles, by the 1960s all Americans now felt they were entitled to public education from kindergarten to high school and even through college. African Americans and Latinos also found a place in the system. Teachers unions not only brought secure jobs, better pay, benefits and pensions to educators, but they also fought for a larger education budget that benefited not only themselves, but also communities and students. By the 1960s several states—New York, California and Texas, for example—had what was virtually free public education from kindergarten through Ph.D.

The system was by no means perfect, and social class, race and gender excluded many—but by and large tremendous gains had been made for most. The peasants who had come to America for education at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, fought to create a more democratic and egalitarian world, and lived to see their sons and daughters complete high school and many of their grandchildren graduate from college. Struggle—by immigrants, by labor unions, by African Americans and Latinos—had succeeded in bringing many Americans educational opportunities on a scale hardly to be imagined a generation or two before.

So What Went Wrong?

So what went wrong when it seemed that so many things were going right? The post-war period, with its great economic advances, also led to a great divide in American society. When William Levitt and other developers created the first suburbs—largely paid-for by the G.I. Bill and the Veterans Housing Administration—they excluded African Americans. Many whites moved to the suburbs, taking their small business, their higher incomes, and their taxes with them.

The Civil Rights movement, followed by Black Power and the black urban uprisings and riots of the 1960s led to mass "white flight" to the suburbs. White suburbs often had modern new schools with wonderful facilities and all the latest contraptions, while old, inner-city schools became dilapidated brick museums filled with cast iron and wooden desks with holes for the ink wells used by students two generations before.

The power of the civil rights movements forced government and corporations to hire African Americans and Latinos for jobs from which they had long been excluded. That in turn led those blacks and Latinos who found jobs in the corporations to follow whites to the suburbs, though for African Americans those were often black suburbs. Others, however, white, black and brown, were left behind in the inner cities which in many places became racial and economic ghettoes. The black community became divided.

The division of the American education system into more prosperous white suburbs and less prosperous, racially mixed and racially divided older cities became an obstacle to bringing equal education to all. Suburban school districts were flush with funds while city school districts had little in their coffers. In my home state of Ohio, the state's Supreme Court ruled in 1997 and reiterated in several subsequent rulings that educational funding was unequal and unjust. Race and class divisions destroyed the old ethos that through education we might all rise together, and instead some rose while others sunk. Increasingly the well-off rose and those of the working class and poor sunk.

If race and class division constituted one set of obstacles to higher education, they were not the only ones. During the 1960s and the 1970s, President Lyndon B. Johnson's plans to build a Great Society through social programs, including improvements in education, were undermined by the enormous cost of the Vietnam War. Military spending and warfare—Vietnam, the Gulf

War, the Iraq War and the war in Afghanistan—would again and again in the late 20th and early 21st century undermine attempts to improve education. America's attempt to control the world's resources, especially oil, and to dominate world markets not only through economic measures, but also through foreign policy and warfare, meant enormous military budgets that constantly eroded the possibility of providing education for all.

The Crisis and Education

By the 1970s, as we have discussed elsewhere in this book, a crisis of American capitalism had emerged, as expressed in recurring recessions—1969-1970, 1973-75, 1980-82, 1990-91, 2001, and 2007-2010. The crises meant that the economic system of the United States was no longer capable of delivering the economic and social reforms it once had. American capitalism, which in its period of spectacular growth and expansion from 1870 to 1970 had provided the basis for continuing improvements in employment, education, health care, and social well being generally, had by the end of the 20th century become an obstacle to further improvements.

When Germany and Japan rebuilt after World War II, however, creating plants more modern and efficient than those in the U.S., and by 1970 their products had become competitive in world markets. U.S. capitalists suddenly found that they were longer as dominant an economic power as they had once been. Then around the opening of the 21st century, China had become an international economic power as well. Competition from Europe, Japan and China, with Brazil and India also entering world economic competition, exacerbated the economic problems of American capitalism.

The recurrent economic crises became a way of life, and they were accompanied by repeated fiscal crises. When businesses failed and workers lost jobs, taxes also fell, and school budgets were cut. Banks, corporations, and the wealthy worked to reduce the "social wage," as it is called, government programs for health, education, and social well being. Under President Ronald Reagan and again under George W. Bush, the government shifted the tax burden on to the shoulders of the "middle class," that is, onto the backs of working people.

So, by the beginning of the 21st century American working people began to find that they not only didn't earn more than their parents—as had been the case with every generation for a hundred years—but they paid a higher

proportion of the country's taxes, while at the same time they lost access to affordable higher educational.

Corporations and governments moved to cut not only workers actual wages, but also what we call the "social wage." The social wage refers to all the social benefits that workers receive collectively: public health services, public education, public transportation, public housing, public parks. Sometimes taken together people referred to these as "the welfare state," though it never provided real social wellbeing to all. Ronald Reagan may have initiated the process, but soon both Republican and Democratic party politicians were at it, cutting everything, including our schools.

While some other countries were improving education, American high schools cut foreign languages, music, and the arts. College and university education became more expensive, and the class character of higher education became more exaggerated, with the private universities for the very rich, state universities for the upper middle class, and state colleges and community colleges for working class kids. And none of it is cheap. Parents and their children take out loans, and parents and their college age children all work to put them through school.

The class character of education is striking. When I taught History and Latin American Studies at Miami University, an upper tier state school for mostly white suburban students from the suburbs of Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati, most students didn't have to work more than a few hours on campus. But while teaching at the University of Cincinnati, I found that nearly all of my students worked at least 30 hours and many 40 hours a week at an off-campus job. Needless to say, Miami students had more time to study (and to party) than the U.C. students. Many other students study at community colleges, often having to take remedial courses because of the poor high school educations they received, while they work at full-time jobs.

Clearly, we need a new educational system. We need a new ethos, a new set of fundamental moral values that forms the basis for that educational system. How do we get there?

Twice Down the Wrong Road: NCLB and Charters

The U.S. government has during the last 20 years or so headed down the wrong road twice. The first was the adoption of the standardized testing model of education—mandates without funding—and the other was the

charter school approach. Today virtually everyone involved in education recognized that these approaches failed—though the Obama administration continues to pursue them.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) created unfunded educational mandates that, on the one hand, led to teaching to the test and, on the other hand, forced schools to close music, foreign language, physical education and other programs in order to fulfill those mandates. State education departments dumbed down their standards to make their success rate look better. NCLB led to scandals as some administrators falsified test scores and a handful of teachers even helped their students cheat in order to make the grade. All in all, NCLB led to minimal improvements in some areas but to little real new achievement in most. At the same time though it destroyed the idea that a school should be a place to nurture the love of learning not only in academic subjects but also in art, music, song, dance and sports.

Charter Schools: A Failure

Charter Schools—that is, private schools supported by our tax money—made great promises at the beginning. But reports have shown that charter schools are no more successful that public schools—in fact, they do a worse job than public schools. The Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University study revealed that "17 percent of charter schools reported academic gains that were significantly better than traditional public schools, while 37 percent of charter schools showed gains that were worse than their traditional public school counterparts, with 46 percent of charter schools demonstrating no significant difference."²⁶

Not only do charter schools fail academically, but they also fail socially. A report by the Civil Rights Project at UCLA found that "charter schools continue to stratify students by race, class, and possibly language, and are more racially isolated than traditional public schools in virtually every state and large metropolitan area in the country." Since many African Americans live in big cities in the East and Midwest, more black students are being attracted to these poor Charter schools.²⁷ Charter schools in Ohio have done

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²⁶ http://credo.stanford.edu/reports/National Release.pdf All full reports at: http://credo.stanford.edu/

²⁷ http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/news/press-releases/new-report-explains-that-charter-schools-political-success-is-a-civil-rights-failure/choice-without-equity-press-2010.pdf Full report at: http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/news/press-releases/new-report-explains-that-charter-schools-political-success-is-a-civil-rights-failure

particularly poorly. Many Ohio charter schools have been forced to close because of poor performance, and others have been scandal ridden, with school officials misappropriating funds.²⁸

We keep getting models such NCLB and charter schools because the corporations and the two major political parties have no interest in real education, not only for employment, but also for civic life and for social wellbeing. Corporations seek to educate various strata of the population to fill the slots as middle managers, computer programmers, clerical workers, factory, and service workers—with little concern about either what's best for society or what's best for the individual. Only an approach rising from the grassroots, from working people, school teachers, parents and children will be able to set education on the right course.

Arne Duncan: Corporate Education

President Obama's Secretary of Education Arne Duncan had already shown his educational model in Chicago, as reported by one education magazine:

Duncan has rejected many of Chicago's local school councils and has converted roughly 20 Chicago public schools a year over to private operations. He loves the stultifying test taking used to judge national standards, and stands firmly with the notion that teachers at poorly testing schools should be canned. He has also turned a blind eye to addressing a study from his alma mater Harvard University [stating] that Chicago's public schools are "only a few percentage points from an experience of total apartheid for black students."²⁹

When Duncan became Secretary of Education, his \$4.35 billion Race to the Top program encouraged schools to create more charter schools, to fire teachers, and failed to do anything about the class and race inequities in the system. Many educators criticized the results of the Race to the Top contest

²⁸ http://charterschoolscandals.blogspot.com/search/label/*Ohio; Jennifer Smith Richards, "31 charter schools risk closure in 2011," Colulmbus Dispatch, June 28, 2010, at http://www.dispatch.com/live/content/local_news/stories/2010/06/28/31-charter-schools-risk-closure-in-2011.html

²⁹ Dave Zirin, "Dunking on Arne Duncan," *Rethinking Schools, at*: http://www.rethinkingschools.org/restrict.asp?path=archive/23 03/dunk233.shtml See also other articles on Duncan in the *Rethinking Schools*.

or its arbitrary standards and mistaken judgments on schools, teaching, and students' learning.³⁰

Fighting for a Better Model

Teachers, parents, and students have not simply accepted the deterioration of public education—the budget cuts and layoffs, the reduction in programs and increased class sizes, the attack on teachers' conditions, benefits and wages. The United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) has provided a model for fighting for better education, by building a fighting alliance of teachers, parents, and the broader community. In 2009, in response to the recession and California's fiscal crisis the Los Angeles United School Board, Los Angeles teachers carried out a one-day strike and teachers supported by parents and students carried out a hunger strike. The movement won national attention and led the LAUSD to reconsider and to recast its budget.

Similarly the Union of Professional and Technical Employees (UPTE-CWA) of the University of California system struck against cuts in the educational system, as students demonstrated. Thousands of workers and students participated in large scale demonstrations at campuses throughout the state. The model of cooperation between teachers, communities, parents and students has to be strengthened and spread across the United States.

While California has seen the biggest upsurge in militancy, across the country teachers, parents and students are fighting to defend and to preserve public education. While all of these efforts are important, we will have to build a far larger movement for social change, one that demands that free, quality, public education at all levels be available to all of our people. How do we get there?

Immediate Reforms to Bring Excellent Education for All

We once had an educational ethos based on the notion—however incompletely realized—that through education we would forge a nation and rise together. We can only deal with the crisis in education if we can create a new ethos which projects a new vision of a democratic and egalitarian American society and education's role in achieving it. We cannot envision a new society unless we deal with the issues of racism, militarism, and

³⁰ "Harvard study gives Race to Top winners bad grades on academic standards," http://voices.washingtonpost.com/answer-sheet/education-secretary-duncan/race-to-top-winners-get-bad-gr.html

capitalism and its economic crises, the fundamental forces which destroyed our previous attempts to build a just and inclusive educational system. Even before we make the fundamental changes necessary to create a democratic and egalitarian educational system for all, we could begin to make some reforms that would immediately improve education.

- Tax corporations and the rich to pay for free public education from pre-school to Ph.D. During the 1960s such free public education existed in California and New York. The people and the legislators of those states said: Our universities are educating and training the corporations' professionals, technicians, and skilled workers, so the corporations should pay for them. The corporations and the very wealthy, those who are best able to pay, should be taxed for this important public good of a well educated citizenry.
- Adequate funding, however, must be distributed fairly. The inequities in funding among the nation's suburban and urban school districts and between states must be overcome so that all Americans receive an equal education. A white child in a Midwestern suburban, an African American inner-city child on the East Coast, and a rural child in the South, and a Latino child in the Southwest should all receive the same educational opportunities to allow them to go as far as possible in life.
- With this new tax money from corporations and the rich, we can provide a quality educational environment. In the private schools where wealthy parents send their children well-paid teachers have small classes and students receive constant personal attention. With adequate funding we can adapt the model of good teaches, small classes and personal attention to educate all of our children. Teachers, parents and students recognize that smaller class size represents the most important factor in a quality education. Teachers' unions have long made smaller class size the centerpiece of their educational reform proposals, and they are right. Educators recognize that small class size, especially in the lower grades and especially for children from low-income, minority and immigrant families, is one of the most important factors in their education. To provide smaller class size, we will have to build more schools, rebuild others, and train more teachers.

• Create a more democratic and participatory school system where parents, teachers and older students work together to shape education to meet the community's needs. Too often today state boards of education and district school boards provide funds to a top-heavy educational bureaucracy that through a corporate command structure dictates educational policies to teachers, parents and students. The educational bureaucracy needs to be cut and the command and control approach to education ended. We need an education system where there is a dynamic exchange of ideas by educators, parents and older students, so that all feel their voices are heard.

Beyond these four basic steps—tax the corporations, distribute funds fairly, train more teachers, and create a more democratic educational model—represent only a small part of the reforms necessary, of course. Improving education does not mean teaching-to-the-test, and No Child Left Behind should be repealed. We need to teach foreign languages to our children. We need music classes—and therefore we need instruments—in every school. Children need physical education at all levels every day. We need a lunch hour for children, an hour not 20 minutes, and we need healthy food. The school day should more or less parallel the 8 to 5 work day so that parents don't have to worry about their children who leave at 3 when they don't get home until 6. We need to make the curriculum of the school meaningful for students, but it will only be meaningful if they can leave school to find fulfilling jobs at living wages, homes they can afford to buy or apartments they can afford to rent, and universal health care.

The New Ethos for Education for a New Society

While providing more money and providing it more fairly could go a long way to resolving many of the problems of our educational system, it represents no panacea. Only the emergence of a new ethos in our society will make it possible to create an educational system for a new more democratic and egalitarian society. I already mentioned the way that the immigrants from overseas or from the South of the United States in the early twentieth century created such an ethos as they struggle to get industrial jobs, create industrial unions, and fight for legislation that opened the doors of the universities to their children, so let me give another example.

During the Civil War, African American slaves walked off the plantations and into the Union Army camps, volunteering to work or fight to defeat the

Confederacy and to win freedom for all black people. Those black soldiers and their mothers, wives and daughters in the Union Army camps often clutched at the sleeves of the union soldiers, saying, "Please, sir, teach me to read."

After the war, education was the insistent demand of the former slaves. Union Army officers, free African Americans from northern states or Free People of Color from the South, and progressive white women from the North went South to create schools for those newly freed black slaves. After reuniting their families, and creating their own churches, the former black slaves of the South wanted education above all.

Education was linked to the dream of freedom and to the ideal of personal fulfillment and collective improvement. The teacher was held in high esteem, education was a nearly sacred thing, and study was not a duty but a privilege and an honor. The dream of freedom and equality, as we know, would be stifled by the rise of Jim Crow, disenfranchisement and segregation, and the struggle would have to be renewed in the 1950s and 1960s before the grandchildren and great grandchildren of those former slaves won the right to education.

The struggle for a new society, a society of freedom and equality for the former slave, produced a new educational ethos in the 1860s and 1870s, just the peasants coming from Europe, China and Mexico would later in the struggled for equality and dignity in the era of industrial capitalism also produce a new educational ethos in the 1910s and the 1930s. What these two stories have in common is the idea that when the struggle for liberation reaches a certain point—the Civil War in the nineteenth century, the great union struggles in the 1930s, and the African American Civil Rights movement in the 1950s to1960s—then education is transformed. We need once again to produce that dynamic interaction between liberation and education, between education and liberation.

Education and Liberation

Paolo Freire, the great Brazilian educator and author of *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* has argued that education is not simply a process of pouring knowledge into people, but rather a dynamic process of self-fulfillment and collective liberation. Healthy education suggests that teachers are also students, and students become teachers as well in a common struggle to create a new society and a new world. When teachers and students work

together to find the answer to common social problems, together with their communities in a democratic and egalitarian way, then education becomes part of a process of liberation. Discussions and debates about the struggle and about the future, says Freire, form an essential part of a revolutionary process, liberating individuals while at the same time creating solidarity.

What this means for us today is that we will in building a social movement to end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, in fighting for single-payer health care, in working to end the use of coal and petroleum, and in fighting for jobs for all at living wages also necessarily create a liberation movement that will transform education. Many activists of the 1960s and 1970s like myself can tell you that we never studied so hard or learned so much or valued education as highly as when we were involved in working for civil rights, stopping the Vietnam War, and then fighting for women's liberation. Even when we carried out student strikes that shut down the universities, we created our own schools and classes and stayed up all night studying U.S. foreign policy and conducting teach-ins.

All of these different examples, from the African American experience in the Civil War, to the industrial workers' experience in the 1930s, to the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, to the anti-war movement of the 1960s and 1970s suggest that the struggle for liberation creates new bonds of solidarity which form the social basis for an educational revival. The Los Angeles teachers' and parents' alliance demonstrates the same thing.

Activists in the LGBTQ movement or the environmental movement will tell you the same thing about their experiences in their social movements. Social movements create a desire to know and understand in order to arm oneself to confront the corporate and political forces which oppose social progress. Certainly in terms of the humanities and the social sciences, there is nothing like social struggle to produce education. When one fights for justice against the powers-that-be, every day is a civics lesson, every day one is summoned to understand one's history, everyday one is forced to be creative in the use of language, images and movement.

We can create a new educational system in our country—teachers and their labor unions, parents and communities, students young and old—but only if we build the movement for liberation that will provide a decent society for all.

Chapter 8 Creating a Strong System of Social Wellbeing

Today all of the programs that help to maintain and enhance the wellbeing of the American people are under attack. Republicans and Democrats both aim to dismantle the social safety net, beginning with Social Security. If American working people don't wake up and fight back, we will find ourselves standing by watching the destruction of Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and the rest of our system.

Why is our social safety net under attack? American banks, corporations and the very wealthy, facing increased international competition and seeing profits fall, want to reduce their corporate and individual taxes as a way of continuing to accumulate wealth for investment. To reduce their tax burden, the corporations are going after the aged, the sick, and the poor. Of course, they've never liked the idea that we should tax their wealth to protect the nation's health—but now with competition growing and profits shrinking, they want to take back everything they can.

To justify the dismantlement of our system of social wellbeing, they argue that the systems are in crisis, underfunded, and that the benefits must be reduced. None of this is true, but FOX News, CNN, and much of the rest of the corporate media have hyped the hysteria. To resist this attack on the wellbeing of all Americans, we need to better understand what's at stake and organize a movement to defend our social safety net.

Corporations Attack the Social Wage

Here is another way to think of what's happening. Economists sometimes talk about corporations paying us two wages: our "personal wage or salary" and our "social wage." That is, the employer gives you your pay check at the end of the month, but he also pays money into your company health and plans and into government health and pension plans. The employer also pays taxes that support unemployment benefits, support to families with children, and Social Security.

The bosses today are going after both our personal and our social wages. They are demanding wage cuts, and asking for increases in our contributions to the health and pension plans, while at the same time they are demanding

tax cuts. The result is that our earnings and our standard of living are being whittled down on both ends, both the individual and the social. We need to organize to resist this attack on us, our children, and our aging parents. We need to resist for ourselves and for future generations.

Social Security: Always Inadequate

Our present Social Security system was established in the 1930s as a response to the Great Depression and to the working class upheaval of that era with its mass strikes, factory occupations and street battles between workers and police. Fearful that workers would turn to more radical action or even to revolution, the U.S. government created the modern social welfare system with Social Security at its heart. The Social Security system provided workers with very modest retirement benefits based on their lifetime earnings.

Some groups of white collar workers have since the early twentieth century had company retirement plans which after the 1930s were supplemented by Social Security. During the 1940s, because the Social Security system paid so little, labor unions began to negotiate additional retirement benefits for union members. For about a third of the American working class, their total retirement benefits would be made up of the combined Social Security payments and union pension plans, while about two-thirds had only Social Security. We have had then for decades a retirement system which was highly unequal, with some enjoying private retirement plans while and many others received a Social Security payment that was quite modest and often not enough to keep them out of poverty.

The Importance of Social Security for the Elderly

Social Security is absolutely essential for most elderly Americans. For two thirds of elderly Americans, Social Security represents a majority of their income, while for 20 percent it represents their entire income. The Social Security benefits are not very generous. Today most beneficiaries receive 33 percent of their previous earning, and by 2030 this will be reduced to 29 percent. Though they receive Social Security benefits, retired workers who had low lifetime earnings and disabled workers and their families still often live in poverty. Cutting benefits to deal with the shortfalls in Social Security financing would thrust millions more into poverty. Cutting social security benefits is unconscionable and unacceptable.

According a recent report by the Trustees of Social Security, even if the U.S. economy grew at the extremely low rate of only 1.6% a year, the revenues of Social Security based on the current level of payroll taxes would cover currently planned benefits for another 38 years and would be enough to finance about 70% of all benefits through 2078. While there is a projected shortfall in the distant future, it is not an immediate threat to the system. "The net present value of the shortfall in revenues over the next 75 years is \$3.7 trillion, only about one-third of the net present value of the Bush tax cuts of 2001 and 2003 and about 0.7% of gross domestic product projected for the same period. A payroll tax increase of about 2% would eliminate the shortfall. Or one could reduce the Bush tax cuts of 2001 and 2003 back by less than 50%, and transferring the added revenues to Social Security."³¹

Obama and Social Security Reform

Now President Obama has appointed Republican Alan K. Simpson, former Senator from Wyoming, to head his Deficit Commission and take the lead on Social Security reform. Simpson is a conservative who aims at dismantling Social Security. He has referred to seniors on Social Security as "lesser people" and called the Social Security system a "milk cow with 310 million tits." More important than his casually nasty and abusive remarks, is Simpson's long history as a man out to cut the Social Security budget.³²

How could President Obama have appointed such a man to head up Social Security reform? Obama has warned that Republicans want to privatize Social Security, when the real threat is that the Democrats joined by the Republicans will cut its budget. The reasons have to do with the shared desire of the Republican and Democratic parties to reduce employer contributions and workers' benefits. To justify reforms that will restructure the system and reduce the scope of Social Security, the argument must be made that the system is in crisis, though, in truth, no immediate crisis exists. While a financing shortfall is foreseeable in the distant future, it can be easily remedied by taxing the wealthy.

³¹ Laura D'Andrea Tyson, "Social Security Crisis? What Crisis? Modest benefit cuts and revenue increases would solve the shortfall," *Business Week*, January 17, 2005, at, http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/05-03/b3916024-mz007.htm

³² Brian Beutler, "Tit's A Big Deal: Alan Simpson's Long History Of Advocating Social Security Cuts," TM, August 26, 2010, at:

http://tpmdc.talkingpointsmemo.com/2010/08/tits-a-big-deal-alan-simpsons-long-history-of-advocating-social-security-cuts.php

Reforming Social Security

What kind of reforms can be expected from the Republicans and Democrats? President George W. Bush has proposed the privatization of the Social Security system, but that proved so unpopular that the Republican Party is not likely to try such a direct attack again--though for some that will remain the long term goal. The Democrats can be expected to propose changes that reduce both the beneficiaries and their benefits.

The most likely reforms are these:

- Increasing worker contributions to Social Security.
- Raising the retirement age at which one is eligible for Social Security benefits.
- Reducing Social Security benefits for future beneficiaries.
- Turning Social Security into a targeted needs-based system, rather than a universal system.
- Along with the creation of such a targeted, needs-based system, the encouragement of parallel or alternative private retirement insurance.

The goal of all of these reforms is to foist economic responsibility for the system on to working people, and to relieve the wealthy of responsibility. All of these reforms would represent a reduction in government benefits or what we have called the social wage flowing to workers and at the same time they would represent an increase in the share of the national wealth enjoyed by employers. None of these reforms are acceptable, and in fact, we should move in the opposite direction, raising taxes on the wealthy and raising benefits for all retirees.

A Program to Save Social Security

While Social Security is not in imminent danger of collapse, we do need a plan to address projected shortfalls in the more distant future. What might be done?

• First, the burden for Social Security should be shifted on to the employers. The employers should pay not 50 percent, as they now do, but 100 percent of the costs of Social Security.

- Second, corporate contributions should be increased to a percentage which guarantees that there will be no shortfall within the next 100 years.
- Third, there should be no further raise of the retirement age above what is now considered the full, normal retirement age of 65. Most people begin working at around 20 years of age. Forty-five years of work is enough, whether for those working in hard labor jobs or those at mind-numbering jobs sitting in front computers. People must be able to retire while they can still enjoy the fruits of their labor through fulfilling recreation, education, and travel.
- Fourth, benefits should be increased proportionally, with the greatest increases going to those who had lowest lifetime earning and therefore have lowest benefits, in order to both raise and equalize payments for all workers.

We should in the United States create a Social Security pension system for the elderly that is sufficient in itself to provide for retirement in dignity and comfort without other private or union retirement plans. The long term goal must be the development of a national economic plan, based on the socialization of the private corporations, which provides for a happy and fulfilling later life for all of our citizens.

Health Care Problems Not Solved

While Social Security does not face an immediate crisis, our health care system does because it is unsustainable. The Obama Health Care Reform certainly has its positive side. It did extend health care coverage to 32 of the 48 million uninsured in the United States and it did provide greater protections to insurance consumers, for example by eliminating the issue of preexisting conditions. Yet it left many other equally important problems unresolved. The key issue of rising health care costs that threatens to destroy our entire health care system was not addressed.

Under the recent Obama reform, health care costs will continue to rise, and consumers will be forced by circumstances to purchase insurance with inferior coverage. Meanwhile employers are using the Obama reform to reduce their health care costs and to foist those costs on to the public and their employees.

Under the Obama Health Care Reform, both employers and insurance companies have motivations to shift costs onto workers. Beginning in 2014, employers will be tempted to push workers out of their health plans and into the state insurance pools. Insurance companies will continue to raise premiums, deductibles, and copayments. Many workers faced with choices of insurance plans offered in the pools will choose the cheapest plan so they can pay their mortgages or send their kids to college. They will end up with inferior and inadequate health insurance. And the whole system will be faced with collapse by the rising costs.

The programs created in the 1960s, Medicare for the elderly and Medicaid for those with low incomes are essential programs which must be saved. But we cannot save them if we do not keep health care costs under control, and we cannot do that while for-profit companies stand at the center of our system. We must create a single-payer health care system—something like Medicare for all—which eliminates the insurance companies from the system. But we also need to socialize the for-profit health and hospital companies and the pro-profit pharmaceutical industry.

Ultimately, we need a U.S. Health Care System which eliminates eliminate all private for-profit elements from the system: insurance companies, hospitals, and the pharmaceutical companies. Our health is too important to be in the hands of corporations and their greedy CEOs. Health professionals and labor unions, workers and consumers can democratically elaborate a system which would serve all at no cost. We can tax the rich to pay for this system.

We Need Paid Sick Leave

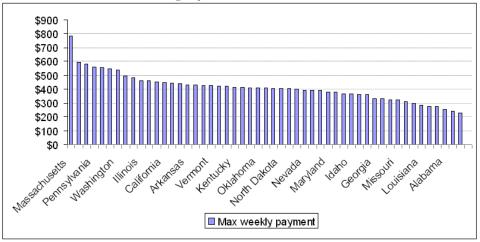
One serious problem with our health care system is the lack of paid sick leave for workers. When parents don't have paid sick leave, they go to work sick and they send their sick kids to school because they can't stay home to take care of them. This is a serious public health issue. All workers should have at least one week of paid leave so they can take care of themselves, their aging parents, and their children.

Our Unfair Unemployment System

Like the rest of our economic and social system, the unemployment system is filled with inequalities and injustices. Workers in some states receive much lower benefits than those living in other states. The differences reflect American history: those states with low unemployment benefits are almost all

found in the old South with its history of slavery and debt peonage, and with its more recent history of weak unions. Where employers have more political power, benefits are lowers.

Differences in State Unemployment Benefits



Source: "Unemployment Benefits Comparison by State" http://fileunemployment.org/unemployment-benefits-comparison-by-state

Unemployment Benefits by State

States that pay highest unemployment insurance compensation

- 1. Massachusetts (\$628-942, 72 weeks)
- 2. Rhode Island (\$528-660, 79 weeks)
- 3. Pennsylvania (\$558-566, 72 weeks)
- 4. Connecticut (\$519-594, 72 weeks)
- 5. New Jersey (584, 79 weeks)

States that pay lowest unemployment insurance compensation

- 1. Mississippi (\$230, 59 weeks)
- 2. Arizona (\$240, 72 weeks)
- 3. Alabama (\$255, 59 weeks)
- 4. Tennessee (\$275, 59 weeks)
- 5. Florida (\$275, 79 weeks)³³

^{33 &}quot;Unemployment Benefits Comparison by State," at: http://fileunemployment.org/unemployment-benefits-comparison-by-state

Such differences in unemployment insurance are patently unfair. We need a national standard of much higher unemployment benefits for all workers and with some regional differences to reflect local cost of living.

State Aid to Families and Children also Unfair

In the midst of the Great Depression of the 1930s and the upheaval that it brought, the United States created the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program to assist those who had no jobs or income. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and other employer organizations constantly pushed to get rid of this program and other programs which helped working people. In the 1980s conservatives began to claim that AFDC and other welfare programs attracted immigrants to the United States. In the mid-1990s, Democratic Party President Bill Clinton joined with conservatives to push through Congress the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act.

Clinton's Welfare Reform required recipients to begin working after two years of benefits, placed a lifetime limit of five years on Federal benefit funds, and strengthened enforcement of child support. While the Clinton reform reduced the number of people receiving welfare payments, partly because of a temporary economic expansion, only some of those people found jobs. Others had to turn to support from their families, friends or from private charity. The Clinton Reform, while it provided some support for welfare recipients while they sought jobs, did not have a jobs creation program for the poor. And jobs, after all, are the heart of the matter.

While the center of an immediate economic program has to be the creation of jobs, we must also provide an income to those families and children who need to pay the rent, clothe themselves and put food on the table. We must offer just bare survival, but a decent standard of living for those who for one reason or another cannot find jobs. We do not want a system based on welfare; we want a system based on providing good jobs at living wages for all Americans. However, when private industry fails to create jobs and people are in need government must step in to preserve a decent and comfortable stand of living for the unemployed until jobs are created.

Childcare for Families

One of the biggest issues for working class parents is the question of childcare. While some other countries have laws requiring employers to

provide it, few government agencies or private employers in the United States provide child care. Without safe, nurturing, and affordable childcare, many women and men are forced to rely on family members or friends for childcare. Sometimes that may be fine, but often the situation is not ideal. The problem is especially difficult and often seems insoluble for those who work second or third shift or irregular hours.

Parents, whose commuting and work are often more than enough to handle, don't also need the stress and anxiety associated with the lack of child care. We need to pass legislation that requires all medium- and large-sized employers to provide childcare for their workers, and which creates other government run childcare centers for workers employed by small businesses. Such child care centers can be paid for by taxing the wealthy, those who own the corporations and benefit from the labor of those workers.

We can't save what we have and create what we need without strong labor unions and without an independent party of working people. To get the social safety net, the system of social wellbeing that we need, we will have to fight for it.

Chapter 9 Saving the Environment, Saving the Planet

The world's leading scientists in environmental studies agree that our industrial civilization, based on the use of carbon fuels, has over the last three hundred years changed the world's climate. We face a looming environmental catastrophe. If we do not change our economic and industrial model we are in danger of destroying the environment of the entire planet.

As the United Nations *Geo4* report says:

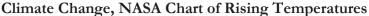
Imagine a world in which environmental change threatens people's health, physical security, material needs and social cohesion. This is a world beset by increasingly intense and frequent storms, and by rising sea levels. Some people experience extensive flooding, while others endure intense droughts. Species extinction occurs at rates never before witnessed. Safe water is increasingly limited, hindering economic activity. Land degradation endangers the lives of millions of people. This is the world today.³⁴

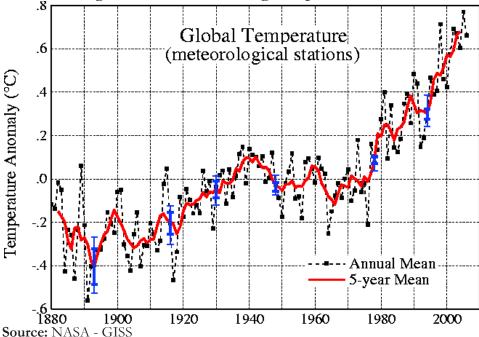
What are we going to do to prevent our planet from becoming uninhabitable, to prevent our economic and industrial system from destroying the planet, the plants and animals, and human race?

If the human race is to survive, we have to change the practices which are destroying the world's ecosystems and endangering the planet. Among the most dangerous of those practices is the use of carbon fuels which produce the carbon dioxide that is one of the leading contributors to global warming.

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³⁴ United Nations, Global Environmental Outlook: Geo4, at: http://www.unep.org/geo/geo4/report/GEO-4 Report Full en.pdf





We Must Change our Practices

As the use of carbon fuels has increased over the past century and a half, so has the world's temperature. If we do not dramatically reduce the use of carbon fuels, then we will be unable to sustain the world's ecosystems—and the planetary environment will become uninhabitable for many organisms, including us. If we do not change our practices, we will be destroying the planet's health and our health.

While individuals and communities can through their behavior have an important impact on improving the environment, still most of the responsibility for our environmental problems lies with the great corporations which use carbon fuels and engage in other practices that pollute our air, water and land. Governments, because they are dominated by the corporations, have failed to take action to end environmentally damaging policies.

Individuals and communities can have an impact, but it is far more important to change the institutions and systems which are affecting our environment. At the center of the environmental problems faced by our civilization stand

the corporations, capitalism and the profit motive. When corporations have to choose between making a profit and protecting the environment, they will always choose profit.

Many corporations have enormous investments, for example, in coal and oil; their first concern is to protect their investments and potential profit, not our environment or health. The drive to make a profit and to accumulate capital drives the entire system, and it drives it to contaminate and pollute. The solution to the environmental problem then lies through bringing the corporations under our control and ending the capitalist system.

How do we Solve the Problems

The U.S. government—under both Republicans and Democrats—has, in order to protect corporations and their profits, refused to sign the most important international agreement dealing with the environment. Since it was negotiated in 1997, the United States has refused to sign Kyoto Protocol, the international environmental treaty signed by 187 other nations.

Similarly, the United States helped to sabotage the Copenhagen Climate Conference of 2009. The United States pushed the "Copenhagen Accord" and reached a deal in closed doors meetings with the leaders China, India, Brazil and South Africa. The U.S.-backed agreement did not commit the signers to interim 2020 carbon emissions-reduction targets, nor to legally binding reductions. The Accord only suggested the general goal of limiting the global warming increase to 2 degrees Celsius—well above the 1 degree C to 1.5 degree C target most governments sought.

The U.S. position reflects the interests of U.S. corporations with heavy investments in coal and oil. While the coal and oil companies call the shots in Congress and the White House, we cannot solve the environmental problems. We should demand that the United States and other governments participate in such international conferences in good faith and act with other nations to reduce the use of carbon fuels more dramatically.

A Program of Immediate Reforms

While international agreements are important, we have to act now to change our own country's behavior. We need to strengthen environmental laws and agencies and we need to more strictly regulate corporations. What are immediate and short terms steps that can be taken here?

- We should accelerate fuel economy standards of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007. Though our larger goal should be to reduce the use of the internal combustion engine and the number of individual automobiles.
- We should stop the development of unconventional fuels such as liquid coal, tar sands and oil shale, since they will dramatically increase global warming pollution. Expensive, environmentally dangerous, we do not want these energy sources to be developed.
- We must eliminate the inefficient and outdate coal-fired power plants in our country, but we must accompany that with a program to protect the full-incomes of power plant workers and coal miners while we make a transition to renewable energy. There is no clean coal and we need to begin to end coal mining. In particular we must stop mountain-top removal style mining as quickly as possible, while protecting workers' incomes and helping them make a transition
- We must act to begin to dramatically reduce the use of petroleum.
 We must highly restrict off shore drilling in the Atlantic, Pacific and Gulf coasts. At the same time, we must develop a plan for an economic transition for communities dependent on the oil industry and for workers and their families.
- We have to reject the use of nuclear power as an alternative because
 of the extremely high cost of construction, which the corporations
 attempt to foist off on the taxpayers, and because of the danger of
 nuclear power plants from Love Canal to Chernobyl. We must not
 subsidize nuclear plants or the nuclear industry.
- We need a national transportation plan to make the most economical and best environmental choices about the use of barges, railroads, trucking and air to move freight and passengers in our country. Such a plan should enhance both the economy and the environment.
- We need to strength the Clean Air Act and the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) to protect the health of communities and workers. We must also strengthen the Clean Water Act which was weakened by Supreme Court decisions in 2001 and 2005. Today,

according to the League of Conservation Voters, the drinking water of 110 million Americans is at risk, and 59% of streams and 20% of wetlands are at risk of losing protection. We need to overcome those Supreme Court decisions and restore the act to its original power.

- We need to pass legislation to protect the ocean and the marine life.
 Large-scale fishing enterprise and fish processing companies have
 depleted many species of fish. We need to protect the seas and the
 fish, while also acting to protect those who make their living from
 fishing or processing fish.
- Similarly, we need to strengthen the Endangered Species Act and protect it from being weakened either legislatively or administratively.
- We need to modify the 1872 Mining Law that governs mining on public lands so that taxpayers get a fair return and so that land managers can balance mining against other uses of public lands.
- Oil and gas revenues in the amount of \$900 million intended for the Land and Water Conservation Fund established in 1965 should actually go to that fund and not to the general fund of the federal treasury.
- We need to adequately fund the National Park Service which currently has an operating deficit of more than \$800 million, a land acquisition shortfall of \$2 billion and a multi-billion dollar maintenance backlog, according to the League of Conservation Voters.
- Where companies have caused environmental damage, they should be made financially responsible in full for the cleanup of toxic waste and for compensation to workers, residents and for the impact on our society.
- We need to establish the principle of environmental justice. We must stop both private corporations and governments from placing landfills, toxic waste disposal site, and incinerators in minority and working class communities. We should phase out landfills and

incinerators through changes in packaging, recycling, and waste management.

 We should legislate programs for recycling of glass, metals, plastic, paper, and chemicals and the use of safe recycled materials for public works projects such as roadways, parks, and playgrounds.

All of these are important short-term measures that we can take, but in the long term we need to change our economic and industrial model.

The Need for a New Economic System

More important, however, is changing the economic and industrial system of the United States, since we are one of the world's largest nation's and one of the largest economies. Scientists have been aware of the dangers of climate change for decades, but unfortunately our government has largely failed to implement changes that will prevent disaster in the near future. The barrier to preventing climate change is not a lack of science or understanding, but rather the misguided priorities of the capitalist economic model.

Corporations will continue to pursue environmentally unsafe practices if they are cheaper than proven alternatives. Oil, coal, and gas companies use their vast amounts of wealth to stifle and suppress alternative energy sources. They have gone as far as to launch an enormous counter information campaign on climate change. Unfortunately it has succeeded in fostering climate change skepticism among many Americans despite the existence of a world-wide scientific consensus. We must begin to bring the energy corporations under control; we must begin to socialize them.

Socializing our Natural Resources

We need to bring all of our natural resources under public ownership and under democratic control, both to conserve those resources, but also to preserve our wilderness, and restore the environment. Most important we need to bring the oil and coal companies under public ownership and democratic control of our society. These carbon fuels are both too valuable and too dangerous to be in the hands of corporations which are concerned only with profit, and not with the environment or human health.

If we are to accomplish these goals, we need to strengthen our environmental movements and we need to wean those movements from

their dependency on the Democratic Party. The Republican and Democratic parties both represent the corporations first, while environmental and public health concerns come much further down the list. The environmental movement must be independent and if it is to have the power to change our country's political agenda, while at the same time it must become deeply involved with the workers' movement. An environmental-labor alliance is essential to future progress in this area.

Chapter 10 Ending War, Militarism, and Imperialism

People voted for Barack Obama for president in 2008 largely because they wanted to bring an end to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Under the Obama administration, however, the wars have only expanded, ruining the lives of both the soldiers who fight them and the countries which suffer them. As I am writing, President Obama is moving more troops into Afghanistan, there are about 100,000 there now, and he plans to leave an occupying force of 50,000 in Iraq indefinitely. Meanwhile the drone bombing of Pakistan continues, frequently taking the lives of civilians. These are policies which are bad for America and bad for the world and we must end them.

These wars are illegal by the standards of international law, they are unconstitutional since Congress has never declared war, and they are above all immoral, unnecessarily taking the lives of thousands of U.S. soldiers and of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and Afghanis. U.S. soldiers have had tens of thousands of casualties, while suicides in the military are rising, and returning soldiers often return unable to participate in civilian life. What a tragedy. What a waste.

Why War?

Why war? American corporations dominate U.S. policies, whether we talk about domestic, environmental, or foreign policy. Facing rising competition around the globe, from Europe and Japan since the 1970s and from countries like China, India and Brazil since the 1990s, American corporations have pressed the U.S. government to control scarce resources such as minerals and oil, to control world markets, and to exploit labor.

Capitalism has from the beginning been about piracy and war just as much as it has been about markets and trade. Since the 1500s capitalist countries have engaged in wars to take colonies and to defend their colonial empires. At first, such wars involved England, France, Spain, Portugal and Holland. Only in the 19th century did the United States get involved on a grand scale.

Since World War II, the United States has adopted the role of global policeman, with a worldwide military command structure. The U.S. has

between 700 and 1,000 bases in nations around the world which serve to prevent rival states, nationalist movements, or social rebellion from disturbing the long term interests of the corporations.

Maintaining a global military command structure and engaging in wars around the world to protect corporate interests is an expensive business. American citizens pay for this vast military machine and its wars through our taxes. The U.S. will spend 4.7 percent of our GDP, or \$1 trillion on military spending this year, representing 19 percent of the total budget, and 28 percent of tax revenues. In reality, argue some analysts, the military spending is over 50 percent of the total budget, if one includes the debt and interest from past wars which is still being paid and veterans' benefits.



The U.S. Military Has between 700 and 1,000 Bases around the World

Source: Monthly Review Magazine and U.S. Department of Defense sources.

We've Got to Stop This

We've got to stop this. We must withdraw all troops from Iraq and Afghanistan at once. We must stop the drones bombing Pakistan. As a Senator, I would vote against any military budget while foreign wars and occupations continue. We must withdraw all U.S. troops from the Middle East, for those occupations only breed anti-Americanism and terrorism. We should be using that military budget to create jobs at home, and for health care and education.

We can only stop the wars, however, when we understand that they result from the relationship between corporations, the military, professional politicians and the government. Those four forces have kept the United States at war for over a century defending U.S. corporate interests

A Brief History of U.S. Foreign Policy

Teaching U.S. history for ten years as a college professor, I found that many students knew little about the history of our country's foreign policy. The idea that the United States fought its foreign wars in self-defense and for freedom and democracy simply doesn't stand up to scrutiny. When confronted with the historical record, students were often shocked to learn the real role of the American government in the world. I suppose some of you too may be surprised by the story, which I tell here as I often told it to my students. (Rather than burdening the text with notes, I put a brief bibliography at the end of the chapter for those who wish to see my sources or to learn more.)

While most Americans think of our country as a peaceful power, in fact, the United States has a long history of aggression. The United States is an imperial power, that is, a country which by economic, political, and military means has created an empire to provide land and resources, labor and markets for its capitalist economy. Imperialism also often becomes cultural, as the dominant nation imposes its language, religion and customs on other nations.

Historically, American imperialism has been driven as much by agriculture as by industry. Wheat farmers and pork producers, steel makers and car manufacturers have had an interest in expanding their foreign markets, at times through the acquisition of colonies and at other times through expanding U.S. influence abroad. The American empire has always been complex, made up not only of actual colonies which became possessions of the United States, but also of other regions which while nominally "independent" were economically dominated by and, in fact, completely controlled politically by the United States.

Imperialism and militarism go hand in hand. Imperialism-the acquisition of colonies, the suppression of the native population, the subjugation of those people, and the defense of the colonies from other empires requires a powerful military. To acquire and defend an empire, one needs armies and fleets, an air force and space craft. Historically the U.S. Navy and later the

U.S. Air Force were the principal leaders in directing those forces, assisted by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The acquisition of the empire, however, took more than a century and a half, and only gradually acquired its modern character.

The U.S.-Mexico Conflicts

The American empire can be said to have been born in the middle of the nineteenth century. The United States, at that time, was dominated by slave owners who served as presidents, sat on the Supreme Court, and served as Senators and Congressmen. Consequently, the U.S. government worked to secure more land for the expansion of the plantation slavery system. The more commercial northeastern states also had their eyes on the port of San Francisco which would give them access to Asia. So they too became interested in the expansion of the United states "from sea to shining sea." This was, said the imperialists of that era, America's "manifest destiny."

The principal obstacle to U.S. ambitions at the time was Mexico, and President Polk, a slave owner, was proud to have provoked war Mexico as an excuse to seize its territory. Between 1835 and 1854—through the War of Texas Secession, the U.S.-Mexico War, and Gadsden Purchase—the United States took about half of Mexico's territory. Those wars brought into the United States the territory that would become the future states of Texas, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Colorado, and part of Wyoming.

The United States also forced more than 100,000 Mexican citizens and hundreds of thousands of indigenous people—Indians—to become U.S. nationals through conquest. Only a minority of those people became U.S. citizens at once, while for others winning citizenship and rights would take decades. The first Latinos in the United States were not immigrants—they were a conquered people. They did not cross the border—rather the border crossed them.

The U.S. Imperial Strategy 1850 to 1914

American corporate and governmental leaders recognized that the expansion of the U.S. Empire would have to be approached strategically. European powers—Great Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia—already controlled all of Europe, much of Western Asia, and had by the 1880s taken control of virtually all of Africa (except the U.S. colony of Liberia and independent Abyssinia). This meant that the United

States would have to expand its empire to the West and South, toward Asia and Latin America.

So the United States began its march across the Pacific toward Asia. Already in the 1850s Commodore Perry had sailed a fleet into Tokyo Bay, firing off his cannons and demanding that Japan open its markets to the West. A decade later, William H. Seward, President Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of State, acquired Alaska in order to get the Russian Empire out of North America. Alaska also expanded the U.S. presence in the Pacific. The Aleutian Islands, reaching out into the Pacific Ocean, were a finger pointed at Japan.

The United States, though it now had the Pacific Coast of most of North America, including Alaska, still had to compete with European powers in the vast Pacific. The principal objective there was the acquisition of Hawaii, a strategically important group of islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. The United States Navy, James Dole (Hawaiian Pineapple Company) and Christian missionaries succeeded in undermining the Hawaiian nation and overthrew Queen Lili 'uokalani in January 1893. Hawaii became another U.S. colony, a key stepping stone on the march to East Asia. Meanwhile, the drive for empire also continued in the South, in the Caribbean and Latin America.

The Spanish American War

The Civil War—the victory of the capitalist North over the plantation slavery of the South—represented the most important development in the history of capitalism in the United States. The expansion of capitalism also led at once to more imperial wars as the United States worked to acquire land and natural resources, strategic ports and islands, cheap labor and markets. Capitalist also sought new outlets for investment and one of the places they invested was in the Spanish colony of Cuba.

This drive for empire—pushed by politicians like Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt and media moguls like William Randolph Hearst—led to the Spanish-American War of 1898. They urged intervention to support the Cuban independence movement against Spain, but their motives were principally economic. U.S. investors in mines and plantations in Cuba feared that Spain could not protect their investments and pushed the U.S. to intervene.

So, the United States, a vigorous young capitalist power attacked the aged and decrepit Spanish Empire. The U.S. defeated Spain in what was called the

"Splendid Little War" of just 100 days, destroying the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay. As the spoils of war, the U.S. thus acquired Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. Puerto Rico and the Philippines became U.S. colonies pure and simple. Cuba, while nominally independent, was reduced to colonial status by the Platt Amendment, which gave the U.S. the right to intervene in Cuba.

Americans in the age of Jim Crow racism were reluctant to grant citizenship to the newly acquired people of Spanish, African and Asian descent. Puerto Ricans, forced to become U.S. nationals, only became citizens with the passage of the Jones Act in 1917, just in time for World War I. Filipinos status and remained unclear for decades.

"The American Lake"

With its fleets now sailing the Atlantic, the Caribbean and the Pacific, the United States Navy took great interest in the creation of a canal that would permit its flees to move between those seas. So in 1901 and 1902, after Colombia refused to sell Panama to the Americans, the United States provoked a phony revolution. President Roosevelt then simply took Panama. Panama became nominally independent, while the United States took control of the canal zone—and in reality controlled the state of Panama as well.

With the United States in control of Puerto Rico and Cuba and the Panama Canal, the Caribbean was reduced to what was called "the American Lake." The United State took on the role of policeman of the region, intervening to protect American investors generally by sending in the Marines. While most occupations lasted only months or a few years, U.S. forces occupied Nicaragua from 1912 to 1933, and Haiti, from 1915 to 1934.

Describing this period in U.S. History, General Smedley Butler said in a 1933 speech:

War is just a racket. . . . I wouldn't go to war again as I have done to protect some lousy investment of the bankers. . . . It may seem odd for me, a military man to adopt such a comparison. Truthfulness compels me to. I spent thirty- three years and four months in active military service. . . . I spent most of my time being a high class muscle- man for Big Business, for Wall Street and for the Bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism.

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I helped make Mexico, especially Tampico, safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank

boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefits of Wall Street.

The record of racketeering is long. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. In China I helped to see to it that Standard Oil went its way unmolested.

The World Wars and the Struggle for Dominance

Between 1814 and 1914 the European great powers—England, France, Russia and Austria-Hungary—and maintained peace through a balance of power. Then suddenly things changed.

What upset that balance and led to world war was the appearance of three aggressive new contenders for world dominance: Germany in Europe; Japan in Asia; and the United States in the Americas. Each of these countries—Germany, Japan and the United States—hoped to break the power of England and France and take over their possessions so that they could take advantage of the land, resources, labor and markets in the colonies. In Europe, Germany fought to defeat France and Germany to win their colonies in Africa; while the United States and Japan struggled for dominance in the Pacific.

Presidents Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921), a Democrat, was the principal architect of American foreign policy, diplomacy and war in the twentieth century. His over-arching goal was to break up the British and French empires and lay claim to their colonial wealth. Free trade was the principal argument and ideology that the American government would use to justify the break up the European empires so that the United States could gain access to the former colonies. Wilson's famous Fourteen Points revolved principally around this idea of free trade which became a pillar of American imperial ideology.

At the end of World War I Wilson's attempt to create a League of Nations as a sort of arbiter among empires failed when the U.S. Senate rejected participation. The victorious powers—England, France, and the United States—held Germany responsible for the war and forced that country to pay reparations. Those reparations flowed to London and Paris, and from there to the New York banks which had financed the war. In the end, World War I had resolved nothing in Europe.

Most historians today view World War I (1914-1918) and World War II (1939-1945) as one long war with a brief breathing space of a generation to grow a new crop of soldiers and to rearm. The world wars had their roots in conflicts between the great powers, struggles over control of colonies and the world market. With nothing having been resolved by the first Great War, the European powers rearmed and a new generation rose up to fight the next war over the same issue: who would control the planet?

The picture of this period is complicated by the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the rise of the Soviet Union. The Russian Revolution began as an attempt by workers and peasants to overthrow the Czar in February of 1917 and then in October of that same year to overthrow the capitalist government that replaced him. The Russian workers and peasants created a short-lived workers' government and an incipient socialist system, but that experiment soon failed. Out of the failed socialist revolution rose a new class of bureaucratic rulers headed by Joseph Stalin, the Communist dictator, who through his Five Year Plans and a forced march to industrialization would turn Russia into a great power once again.

The World Wars and the American Empire

President Wilson called World War I a "war for democracy" and President Franklin D. Roosevelt said the United States fought World War II for "freedom." Yet, in both World War I and World War II, the United States allied itself with the British and the French governments which controlled empires made up of millions of colonial slaves who had no rights whatsoever. And in the Second World War, the United States allied with the Soviet Union then ruled by the dictator Joseph Stalin. Neither democracy nor freedom had much place among America's allies, nor in its own colonies such as the Philippines.

While World War II has sometimes been referred to as "the good war," there was little that was good about it. Atrocities were committed by all of the powers on all sides in violation of international law. Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and military Japan carried out enormous slaughters, but so did the United States and its ally the Soviet Union. The Japanese government slaughtered the Chinese. The Germans killed millions of other Europeans, among them six million Jews. England and the United States firebombed the men, women and children in German cities. Soviet troops engaged in a campaign of rape of German women as they marched to Berlin. The United

States firebombed Japanese cities killing hundreds of thousands of civilians and then dropped atomic bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Sixteen million people died in World War I, and some 60 million were killed in World War II, and tens of millions more suffered the ravages of war.

The Post-War Settlement

The United States government succeeded during the course of the war not only in defeating Germany and Japan, but equally important, the U.S. succeeded in pushing aside Great Britain and France in some of the most important regions of the world. At the end of the war, the United States moved into take over control of the Middle East from England and France. In South America, the United States displaced England as the dominant banking and trading power. In South East Asia, France and Holland ceded to the United States and its new partner, Japan.

At the end of World War II—with most of the industrial nations reduced to rubble—the United States was the only capitalist nation still functioning. With only 5 percent of the world's population, the U.S. controlled 50 percent of the world's wealth. The United States had succeeded through the two world wars in becoming the dominant capitalist power, a power potentially capable of controlling the entire world. That dream, however, would not be realized for another fifty years, because a new power had appeared which stood in the way: the Soviet Union.

The Cold War

The Soviet Union, despite losing 20 million people, emerged from World War II a great power. An enormous nation state, neither capitalist nor socialist, it succeeded in becoming a rival to the United States, a rival which at one point dominated almost half the world. At the end of World War II, Stalin's tanks rolled over Eastern Europe, forcing that region to become part of the Communist world. At the same time Stalin supported, though he could not control, Communist revolutions in China, Korea and Vietnam.

At the end of World War II, the United States led the so-called "Free World" and the Soviet Union led the so-called "Communist World." In truth, the Free World was not free and the Communist world was not communist. In the United States itself, African Americans in the South had not rights and could not vote. America led a Free world which included fascist Spain and Portugal, feudal monarchs in the Middle East, and ruthless dictators in Latin

America. The Soviets led a Communist world of dictators—Stalin, Mao, Ho Chi Minh, and Kim Il Sung--where many had a low standard of living and none had rights—except the rulers.

The Cold War period—with occasional hot wars, most importantly the Korean War of the 1950s—led to one of the greatest arms races in history. While the U.S. was the only nuclear power at the end of World War II, the Soviet Union soon developed the bomb as well, and both nations developed aircraft and missiles capable of delivering the bomb. Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union created vast stockpiles of nuclear weapons, enough to blow up the world many times over. In addition to the nuclear weapons, the U.S. and the Soviet Union and their allies also created huge amounts of conventional arms, as well as secret caches of chemical and biological weapons.

The Fall of the Soviet Union

The United States and the Soviet Union both found their ambitions of world domination thwarted. The United States met its match in the Vietnamese peoples' desire for national independence and self-determination, while the Soviet Union succumbed to the intransigence of the people of Afghanistan. While the Soviet Union helped to arm the Vietnamese in their fight against the U.S., so too the United States helped to arm Afghanistan's warriors against the U.S.S.R. The United States' strategy included support for Islamic fundamentalists in order to drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan. That strategy would "blow back" at America on September 11, 2001.

The Soviet Union, mired in Afghanistan, dealing with the rising costs of the arms race, faced its own internal contradictions of a so-called Communist society which could not keep up with the capitalist West. In 1991 the Soviet Union collapsed. Within the next couple of years all of the Communist regimes in Europe were swept away by popular opposition. Finally, fifty years after the end of World War II, the United States became the world's dominant military power—though at the same time, its economic power began to erode.

International Economic Competition

While the United States had dominated the world's capitalist economy between 1945 and 1965, things began to change as Germany and Japan rebuilt. The United States had encouraged the rebuilding of capitalism in both nations in order to prevent the expansion of Soviet Communism. But

by the late 1960s and early 1970s, products from those nations were beginning to compete in the U.S. market.

By the 1980s, a handful of powerful nations once again competed to dominate the world economy: the U.S., Germany, and Japan. In 1978, China adopted reforms which while continuing the Communist one-party dictatorship also encouraged the development of capitalism. Japan meanwhile suffered from a long, drawn-out economic crisis, and by 2010 China had become the second largest economy in the world. For American corporations these developments represented serious challenges.

American corporations dealt with the increasing competition in three ways.

- First, they closed old factories and built new factories in the non-union U.S. South, in Mexico, or overseas.
- Second, they developed both new technologies—continuous process, numerical control, and computerization—and introduced new forms of work organization such as quality circles or the team concept.
- Third, American corporations recruited workers from Latin America, Asia and Africa to immigrate to the United States—with or without documents—in order create a workforce without rights or knowledge of U.S. labor laws that could be easily exploited.

The Increasing Importance of Oil and other Resources

With the U.S. now facing competition from the European Union, China and Japan, and even newer competitors such as India, Brazil, and Russia, the control of markets and natural resources became more important to U.S. corporations than ever. In particular, control of petroleum became key as it seemed that the hand on the oil spigot could control economic developments. So the United States became involved in the wars in Iraq, principally over oil, and has threatened the government of Venezuela, another oil rich nation.

Because of the importance of oil, the United States attempts to control all developments in the Middle East and Central Asia. At present there are really several fronts: the War in Iraq, the War in Afghanistan, the bombing of Pakistan, and the U.S. support for Israel in its ongoing struggle to suppress the Palestinian people. At the same time, the U.S. and Israel appear to be

preparing for an attack on Iran, which would lead to an even larger, more destructive and politically more dangerous war. The Middle East—because of its oil, its strategic location as the hub of Europe, Asia and Africa, and the ongoing conflicts—represents the powder keg of world politics, waiting for a spark to ignite it.

MMinerals in Afghanistan

Oil is not the only important resources. In June the New York Times reported that Afghanistan was rich in valuable minerals:

The United States has discovered nearly \$1 trillion in untapped mineral deposits in Afghanistan, far beyond any previously known reserves and enough to fundamentally alter the Afghan economy and perhaps the Afghan war itself, according to senior American government officials.

The previously unknown deposits—including huge veins of iron, copper, cobalt, gold and critical industrial metals like lithium— are so big and include so many minerals that are essential to modern industry that Afghanistan could eventually be transformed into one of the most important mining centers in the world, the United States officials believe.35

Afghanistan's vast mineral wealth was only revealed to the public in June of 2010, but no doubt the U.S. military and American corporations have been aware of this for some time. The Afghan War, while supposedly being fought to stop the Taliban and Al Qaida from creating a base there, has other and more important motivations: the control of mineral resources, the domination of a strategically important nation, and as a U.S. base to resist the expansion of Russia and China into the region.

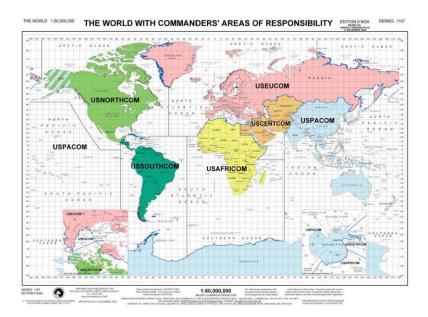
America's Global Military Presence

The U.S. government, seeing itself as world policeman, works to protect American corporate interests abroad through a worldwide command structure. The U.S. command structure directs the American war policy abroad. The United States today is not involved in foreign wars either to defend the United States or to fight for freedom. Rather it fights for

³⁵ James, Risen, "U.S. Identifies Vast Mineral Riches in Afghanistan," The New York Times, June 13, 2010, at: http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/14/world/asia/14minerals.html

corporate interests in natural resources such as the oil in Iraq and the minerals in Afghanistan. The U.S. military responds to the corporations' desire to control the world market and to exploit cheap labor stand. Those issues—land, resources, markets, and labor—stand at the center of U.S. foreign policy today as they have from the beginning.

U.S. Military Global Command Structure: Six Regional Commands



An Alternative to Militarism, Imperialism, and War

The alternative to militarism, imperialism and war is a democratic foreign policy, that is, a foreign policy which serves the interests of the American people—and of people around the world—be working toward peace. Our current foreign policy—in particular the "War on Terrorism"—not only fails to protect the American people, but it actually breeds anti-Americanism and creates terrorists. We have got to change our direction entire.

My proposal is this:

• The United States government and its military should cease acting as the corporations' enforcer. Our people's interests, taking into consideration the interests of the world's people, must be paramount--not the corporations' interests.

- We must withdraw all U.S. troops from Iraq and Afghanistan at once and cease the bombing in Pakistan.
- The United State must stop its virtually uncritical and unconditional political, financial, and military support for Israel. Israel must return to its 1967 borders and recognize the rights of the Palestinian people.
- The United States should dismantle its worldwide command structure and cease to be the global policeman, a policy which breeds anti-Americanism and terrorist violence.
- The United States should also accelerate the dismantlement of the nuclear stockpiles and join other nations in outlawing alls nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons—with no exceptions.
- We need to work for a world redistribution of economic power and wealth to raise the standard of living for those hundreds of millions who today survive on one or two dollars a day. This is not about "foreign aid," but about changing world investment, trade and labor policies.

War not only takes the lives of Americans and of others around the world, it also drains our economy, distorts our priorities, and it corrupts our morality. War thrives on and encourages national chauvinism, racism, and religious bigotry. It promotes a false sense of national superiority, while actually undermining our economy and our ethos. We don't need to organize for war abroad; we need to organize for a struggle at home against the corporations and the politicians who would take us to war.

We need to act today to begin to transform the United States from the hated war-maker which it is today to the respected and admired peace-maker which it can become.

References and Further Reading

The following books provide basis for the interpretation of American history that I have presented in this brief essay. They are highly recommended for further reading.

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Part II

In Part II we look at the ways in which the economic crisis has affected four communities, focusing on conditions in Ohio which are representative of much of the Midwest and of the nation. All of these issues we have talked about in Part I—the economy, the environment, the wars—have a particularly devastating impact on these groups—African Americans, Latinos, women and youth—because of their particular histories and because of their situations in our economy and society today.

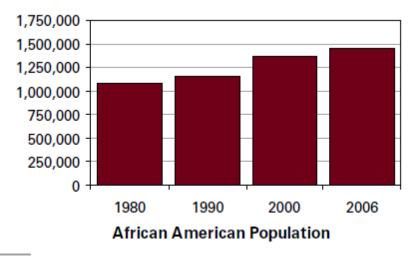
While we need a broad socialist movement, these groups which have been among the most exploited and oppressed have their own particular needs and demands and in taking up those issues they will also create their own movements. Historically, these groups have played a leading role in changing our society, and, we have no doubt that they will do so again in the future. We will need to work to insure that the movements of African Americans, Latinos, women and youth find their place, and a place in the leadership, of the broader working class and socialist movement.

Chapter 11 The Crisis and African Americans

African Americans have lived in Ohio since the state was founded in 1803, though many had been brought into Ohio from Virginia and Kentucky as slaves. But because slavery was not permitted in the Northwest Territories, of which Ohio was part, white slave owners turned their former slaves into indentured servants. Those servants—slaves in all but name—faced long years of servitude.

Later in the nineteenth century, for African Americans escaping slavery in the South, Ohio became for many the first stop on the Underground Railroad as they made their way north to Canada and freedom. After the North's victory of the Civil War, followed by the defeat of Reconstruction, some African Americans came to Ohio seeking to escape from sharecropping and debt peonage, Jim Crow, disfranchisement, and lynching.

Ohio's African American Population



Source: Ohio Department of Development at www.development.ohio.gov/research/files/p0008.pdf

During the Great Migrations of World War I and World War II, tens of thousands of African Americans migrated north to seek work in the factories of industrial cities like Cleveland, Toledo and Youngstown. Yet, until the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 1960s, in cities like

Cincinnati, African Americans continued to face segregation in employment, housing, education, public accommodations, and the criminal justice system. No wonder then that in some Ohio cities, frustration and anger at racism and poverty flared into riots in the late 1960s. Many African Americans argued that the upheavals were not riots but ghetto rebellions against injustice.

Today about 12 percent of Ohioans are African Americans, almost two million people. Yet most African Americans still face problems of discrimination and poverty that seem like something out of the distant past. The Cleveland Plain Dealer wrote about one local African American woman who is one of the working poor:

Terrio Norris knows their struggle. A home health aide, she works two jobs to support her college-bound son and pay the bills on their rent-to-own home in Cleveland's Union-Miles neighborhood. She expects to earn about \$20,000 this year.

"It's been really hard the last couple of years," Norris said. "I'm a single parent, but Dad's involved. Through the grace of God, we're making it."36

Many others are also, just barely making it. In the summer of 2010 The Cleveland Plain Dealer surveyed the state of African Americans in Ohio. They reported:

About one-quarter of the region's black residents live in poverty, a rate nearly unchanged from 1970.

Overall, the American black family stands more than 30 years behind the American white family in a key indicator of quality of life. The average black family income in 2006, roughly \$52,000, is about what white America lived on in 1971, after considering inflation.

...the percentage of black families living on less than \$17,600 a year rose from 24 percent to 27 percent of the community even as, nationally, poverty among blacks decreased slightly.

¹ John Kroll, "Black in Northeast Ohio: How African-Americans are faring," The Plain Dealer, July 20, 2008, at:

http://blog.cleveland.com/metro/2008/07/black in northeast ohio how af.html#indicat ors

Many in the local black working class -- families living on between \$17,000 and \$41,000 a year -- tumbled into the poverty ranks as factory jobs disappeared.

More alarming may be what's happened to Greater Cleveland's black middle class -- a family of three earning between \$41,000 and \$83,000 in 2006. That income group ballooned nationally but eroded here. Experts see several causes, including the collapse of the black nuclear family and the de-industrialization of Northeast Ohio.³⁷

Why Such Poverty?

The decline of the economic situation of the African American community, and the current state of black Ohio results directly from the changes in the world and national economy over the last few decades. Since the 1930s African Americans in the United States found their most secure and most remunerative employment in the Federal government and in heavy industry. Even after corporations began to open up white collar positions for African American workers, still it was usually union jobs in industry and government that paid best, had the best benefits, and offered the greatest job security.

The beginning of the world economic reorganization in the mid-1970s, the closing of steel mills and auto plants hurt workers white and black, but it was most devastating for African American workers. At the same time, the U.S. government began to reduce the number of Federal workers through attrition, reductions in force, and contracting out. Those two factors combined—industrial plant closing and the loss of government jobs—overwhelmed African American communities.

While some black families fortunately found work in other areas of the country or other sectors, many fell into underemployment and unemployment. Because Ohio was such an industrial state and has suffered such a loss of industrial jobs, African Americans in our state are actually doing worse than black workers in other states in terms of employment. African American unemployment is always higher than that of white Americans, including here in Ohio.

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³⁷ John Kroll, "Black in Northeast Ohio: How African-Americans are faring," *The Plain Dealer*, July 20, 2008, at:

http://blog.cleveland.com/metro/2008/07/black in northeast ohio how af.html#indicat ors

Unemployment Causes Poverty

The lack of secure, good paying jobs, the jobs that used to exist in industry and in government, led to the increasing poverty in the African American community. A recent report on Ohio's African American community published by the Kirwan Institute of Ohio University asserts:

Data indicates worsening socioeconomic conditions in income and economic health for the Black community in Ohio. These figures suggest that the economic crisis is reversing gains in income and reductions in poverty made in the 1990s by Ohio's black residents. Compared to national figures, Ohio's Black community is experiencing rates of poverty and unemployment which are growing faster than rates experienced by Blacks nationwide. This trend suggests that Ohio's poor economic climate has directly impacted Black residents. Black poverty rates in Ohio declined from 32.3% in 1990 to 26.5% in 2000, but since 2000, rates have steadily risen. Poverty rates in 2007 for Black Ohioans are at 30.9% (compared to a national Black poverty rate of 24.7%)³⁸

What is most distressing about this bleak report is the sense of ground which had been gained being lost again, advances made turned into retreats. According to the same report, "Unemployment rates for Ohio's Black community have increased from 7.6 percent in 2000 to 11.6 percent in 2007, reversing the sharp increase in employment for Black Ohioans which occurred in the 1990s."

The economic crisis is beating the African American people back, driving them back into a past of poverty from which we all thought they had finally escaped. Today almost 30 percent of African Americans in the United States live in poverty, 25 percent in Ohio.

The Home Foreclosure Crisis

When people lose their jobs, they are, of course, also likely to lose their homes. While many Americans have been affected by foreclosures, African Americans have been harder hit than white Americans. A recent study found:

³⁸ Kirwan Institute, The State of Black Ohio (2010), Section III, p. 35. (Available on line as pdf.)

An estimated 2.5 million foreclosures were completed from 2007 – 2009, and an estimated 5.7 additional ones are imminent.

An estimated 17% of Latino homeowners and 11% of African-American homeowners have already lost their home to foreclosure or are now at imminent risk.

The great majority of homes lost were owner occupied, as are those at imminent risk of being lost.³⁹

African Americans are seeing their gains in homeownership being wiped out by the crisis.

The Crisis in African American Education

With the loss of industrial jobs, it is more important than ever for African American young people to get a good education. Yet, the State of Ohio is failing black youth:

Diplomas Count 2010, put out by the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center in Bethesda, Md., found that only 47.5 percent of Ohio's black public school seniors graduated on time in 2007, the most recent data available for state comparisons.

That makes Ohio eighth worst in graduating black high school students.

The national average graduation rate for African American students is 53.7 percent, the study says.⁴⁰

The public schools do not have the resources to do the job, and the charter schools do no better and often do worse.

 $\frac{http://www.responsiblelending.org/mortgage-lending/research-analysis/foreclosures-by-race-executive-summary.pdf}{}$

³⁹ Debbie Gruenstein Bocian, Wei Li, and Keith S. Ernst, "Foreclosures by Race and Ethnicity," CRL Research Report, June 18, 2010, at:

⁴⁰ Denise Smith Amos, "Ohio lags in minority grad rates," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, July 24, 2010, at: http://news.cincinnati.com/article/20100724/NEWS0102/7250302/Ohio-lags-in-minority-grad-rates

And the Crisis in Health Care

Health is a large and complex issue, too big to tackle here, so let us look here at just one aspect of health in the African American community, that of children. The Kirwan Institute of Ohio State University in a recent study found that:

In Ohio, the infant mortality rate for African Americans is more than double that of whites—16.9% as compared to 6.7%. In addition, only 7.8% of non-Hispanic White babies are classified as low-birth weight, compared to 13.6% of Black infants. Both factors are related to the prenatal care a woman receives while pregnant. In Ohio in 2005, only 72% of African American women received prenatal care in the first trimester, the lowest percentage across all racial and ethnic groups. In terms of dental care for Black children, poor health outcomes tend to be the norm. More than 150 million Americans do not carry dental insurance and this has a significant impact on dental care obtained by people of color. Poor children were five times more likely to have unfilled cavities and 80% of tooth decay is disproportionately found in only 25% of children. This is a travesty, as dental decay is the most common and easily preventable disease in children.

There is no good reason that African American children should be sicker than other children. The health problems that black children suffer result from the corporate and government policies which have destroyed jobs, taken homes, and created a system of institutional racism.

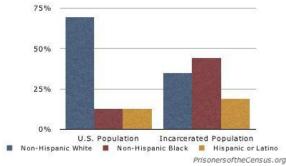
Criminal Justice System Discriminates

African Americans also face discrimination in the criminal justice system. My African American friends call it the "injustice system." At every step in the criminal justice system people of color face discrimination, from the racial profiling that often led to the first encounter, to the lack of experienced legal counsel in the trials, to the longer sentences handed down at the trials. African Americans will usually serve longer time for the same offense as whites and are more likely to face the death penalty. This is true both across the United States and here in Ohio as shown in the two following graphs:

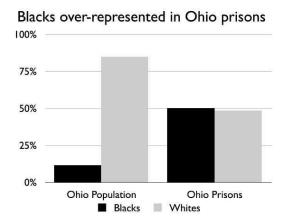
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⁴¹ Kirwan Institute, *The State of Black Ohio* (2010), Section IX, p. 120. [Available on line as pdf.]

Racial disparity between U.S. and incarcerated populations



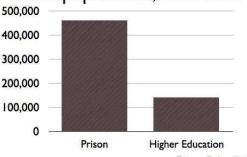
Source: U.S. Census and Bureau of Justice Statistics. (Peter Wagner, 2004)



Source: Prison Policy Initiative http://www.prisonpolicy.org/graphs/blackohio.html

While we should be educating young African American people, instead our society is increasingly imprisoning them, as shown in this graph:

Increases in the African-American male populations, 1980-2000

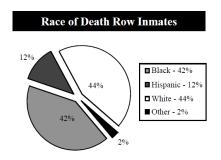


Prison Policy Initiative

Source: The Prison Index page 34. (Peter Wagner, 2003)

Of course, once a young African American man or woman has been jailed, his or her chance of finding and keeping a job decreases dramatically. The first criminal conviction, often a juvenile conviction, frequently leads to a life of crime, prison, or unemployment and dependence on the state. What a shameful destruction by our society of potentially productive young lives.

The same sort of disparity exists in terms of inmates facing the death penalty. While African Americans make up only about 12 percent of the U.S. population, in 2009 they made up 42 percent of those on death row.



DEATH ROW INMATES BY STATE: October 1, 2009					
California	694	S. Carolina	63	Connecticut	10
Florida	395	Mississippi	59	Kansas	10
Texas	339	U.S. Gov't	58	Utah	10
Pennsylvania	223	Missouri	52	Washington	9
Alabama	201	Arkansas	42	U.S. Military	8
Ohio	170	Kentucky	36	Maryland	5
N. Carolina	169	Oregon	33	S. Dakota	3
Arizona	132	Delaware	19	Colorado	3
Georgia	108	Idaho	18	Montana	2
Tennessee	90	Indiana	16	New Mexico	2
Oklahoma	85	Virginia	16	Wyoming	1
Louisiana	84	Illinois	15	N. Hampshire	1
Nevada	78	Nebraska	11	TOTAL	3263

Race of Death Row Inmates and Death Row Inmates by State Source: NAACP LDF "Death Row, U.S.A." (October 1, 2009)
When added, the total number of death row inmates by state is slightly higher because some prisoners are sentenced to death in more than one state.

Obama Has not Helped African Americans with Jobs

President Barack Obama, perhaps because he believes that African American voters will support him no matter what, has not done much to help create

jobs in black community. *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* interviewed an African American builder about the issue:

Norman Edwards, executive director of the local Black Contractors Group, said job loss for African-Americans and other minorities has been higher than figures for the general population. Many of these businesses are smaller and haven't been able to tap stimulus funding, so they haven't weathered the recession well.

Edwards favors additional stimulus funding for the groups overlooked the first time.

"The stimulus was a joke," he said. "It did not pass down to us. This time it needs to go to the disenfranchised businesses." 42

Edwards is right. The Obama stimulus failed to create jobs for the black community. African Americans cannot rely on Obama, but need to build their own movement to fight for their own program for full employment.

A Way Forward for African America Ohio

While the African American people of Ohio and of the United States will have to write their own program for this century, we can already see in broad outline some of the important points that will no doubt come forward:

- African Americans, like other Americans, need jobs now. More than jobs, Ohio and the United States need a full-employment economy, one that provides jobs for everyone who needs work.
- African Americans need a public education system that has the economic resources—the financing, buildings, teachers, and equipment—to serve them. We need to end a system where half of all black children never graduate from high school. Black children like other children should in their majority be going on to college.
- African Americans—as do all Americans—need a national system of health insurance and a national public health system which meets all

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⁴² Olivera Perkins, "Ohio has lost almost 10,000 construction jobs in the past year," *The Plain Dealer*, July 27, 2010.

of their health needs at no cost. Many industrial nations have such a national health care system, and we should too.

 African American homeowners need financial support from the government to stop the foreclosures which are taking away their homes.

Above and beyond those most immediate needs of the black community in Ohio and the country, there are other issues as well. We learned during the Civil Rights movement that programs of affirmative action are necessary to insure that African Americans have the same opportunities and achieve the same economic and social benefits as whites. We must fight once again for affirmative action to insure African Americans access to employment and promotion, and to college education and higher education.

We have also learned over the last few decades how the institution of slavery—that is, the enslavement of millions of African Americans—built the fortunes of many of America's corporations and of our very wealthy. Many who today live in comfort do so as a result of the wealth accumulated over 250 years through the labor of slaves. The corporations which accumulated their early wealth in that way should have to pay reparations to those who earned that wealth, that is, to the descendants of the human beings that they enslaved.

Achieving racial justice remains one of the most difficult challenges of our society today, and it will not be accomplished without some controversy and difficulty, but much of that can be minimized or avoided if we collectively take control of the corporate wealth of our society and begin to use it for the common good.

The conditions facing the African American population today in the areas of employment, poverty, health, education and criminal justice *do not have to be this way*. We can run our society differently so that African American people enjoy the same rights and benefits as others in our society, but to do so we will have to join together and to act.

Building an Independent Social and Political Movement

African Americans in Ohio and throughout the United States will, as they have in the past, overcome. During the era of slavery, black leaders such as Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth provided

leadership to the movement. In the period from the 1910s to the 1940s it was leaders such as W.E.B. Du Bois and A. Phillip Randolph who led the fight for justice and equality, and during the period of the great Civil Rights movement Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ella Baker were central, while Malcolm X inspired many with the call for Black self-determination and empowerment. We can be sure that a new social movement will push forward fresh leaders for the coming era.

The way forward, as in the past, lies in the construction of a powerful independent African American movement, which, supported by white, Latino, and other allies, builds the power to win justice and equality. The African American people of the United States built such movements in the 1910s, in the 1930s and 40s, and again in the 1960s and 70s—and they will do so again. When African Americans have acted, they have not only improved their own situation, but have also improved life for all other Americans.

The movements of the past were often led by members of the small middleclass and professional elite of what was then a largely segregated African-American population. As a result of the Civil Rights movement, a section of black Americans succeeded in becoming successful and ensconcing themselves in the corporate world or in politics. Most African Americans, however, are working people for whom becoming somewhat more integrated into capitalist America has not brought prosperity or even security. To be successful in tackling the intertwined problems of capitalism and racism today, leadership of the African American community will have to come from the black working class and its allies.

We can see the basic outline of an agenda for a new African American movement in the issues facing black people today. African Americans need jobs, access to affordable housing, health care, education, and fair treatment from the criminal justice system. Such an agenda can only be won by building a powerful working class movement for change in which African Americans will play a leading role.

The fundamental strategies of a rebuilding of a black movement will have to be developed by African American activists and leaders themselves. We know from the past though that such a movement will have to challenge the white-dominated corporate power structure and the conservatism of some African American elite groups. Whether that struggle with the white power structure and those African Americans who accommodate it will take the form of non-violent civil disobedience, strikes and boycotts, or other new and inventive tactics we cannot now foresee. New, creative leaders from the African American community will no doubt develop new tools to work for freedom, equality and justice.

When in the past African Americans built powerful movements, they faced repression from both private parties and the government, often violent repression. At the same time, politicians—usually from the Democratic Party—attempted to capture the Civil Rights and Black Power movements and neutralize them as an independent force. The Democrats, while taking up some of the slogans and demands of the movements, generally watered them down, to prevent the sort of structural change that might have really ended institutional racism.

The African American movements of the 1950s and early 1960s had all their greatest successes when they and their white allies were acting independently of the political powers-that-be, including white-owned business and the government. During that period when both the Republicans and Democrats failed to support the black community, it was African American men, women and children who often risking their safety and even their lives forced the country to grant civil rights. So the African American movement and its allies, while building a new black power movement, will have to fight to defend its political independence as well.

Those of us who are white, Latino, Asian, Native American, or new immigrants will have everything to gain and nothing to lose from being the allies of a new black freedom movement. We all will benefit by making our system fairer and more just.

Chapter 12 The Crisis: Latinos and Latino Immigrants

While you may not realize it, Ohio's Latino population has a century long history in this state. (We use the words Latino or Hispanic interchangeably to mean anyone who comes from a Spanish speaking country.) Mexican Americans from the Rio Grande Valley of Texas first began to immigrate to Northwest Ohio about 100 years ago to work harvesting sugar beets. Some stayed to work in Toledo's sugar beet processing plant, then found jobs in local steel mills and then in the auto and auto parts factories. Latinos established the first Hispanic community in Ohio in Toledo.

Puerto Ricans began to come to work in the steel mills in Lorain and Cleveland, Ohio in the 1940s. During the post-World War II period, more immigrants came from Mexico and some from South America. Some of them settled in Columbus. Most recently, since the 1980s, there has been an influx of Central Americans to cities like Cincinnati and in small towns like New Philadelphia.

Today nearly every Latin American nationality and ethnicity can be found in cities in Ohio, though still in relatively small numbers. Only 2.6 percent of all Ohioans were Latinos in 2008, compared to 15.4 percent for the entire country. Though in Cleveland, almost 10 percent of the population is Hispanic. While the numbers of Hispanics in Ohio today are still relatively small, we can expect the Latino population to grow both through reproduction and through immigration.

Latinos make important contributions to our economy and society, yet today the Hispanic community is suffering, and in many cases more than most of us. Latinos face unemployment, low wages, inadequate housing, they have deficits in education and suffer from serious health problems. The State of Ohio has failed to meet the needs of the Hispanic community. A new direction is needed.

The Latino Immigrant Population

Most of Ohio's Latino population is made up of people who have lived here for generations, people who have established themselves and have careers.

Ohio also has many recent Latino immigrants and among them the largest group is Mexicans.

Why do so many Latinos migrate to the United States? There are two principal reasons, one economic and one social-political. Most immigrants, Latinos or others, come to the United States because they cannot find good jobs paying living wages in their own countries. Unable to support their families, they migrate in search of work. Since the United States has the largest and strongest economy in the Western Hemisphere, immigrants have naturally come here to look for work.

A much smaller number come here because of political or criminal violence in their countries, but once they decide to move, they too need jobs.

While many immigrants come through legal immigration channels and have the proper documents, other are undocumented immigrants. As any immigration lawyer will tell you, entering the United States without documents—an "uninspected entry" as it is called—is *not* a crime, so it is incorrect to call such immigrants "illegals." It is also inappropriate to call such immigrants "illegals" because such a term also tends to dehumanize a person who is simply a worker, much like ourselves, unemployed and looking for a job.

Why Don't They Have Documents?

Why do so many fail to get documents so that they can enter the country properly? The principal reason that so many come without documents is that for many years now the United States has failed to make available enough visas for the workers needed by our economy. While employers generally count on about 500,000 Latino immigrants to harvest the fruits and vegetables that we eat, and tens of thousands of others to work in construction, in hotels and restaurants, and in food processing plants, the government provides only about 70,000 visas.

Consequently, seeing no alternative if they are to feed their families, immigrants turn to smugglers called "coyotes." Immigrants will pay a smuggler a couple of thousand dollars to smuggle them into the country so that they can work in the fields, making about \$10,000 a year. Many coyotes and employers exploit workers, cheating them out of pay and overcharging them for housing, food and equipment.

While some Latino immigrants are business people or professionals with higher levels of education, most Hispanic immigrants are likely to work in agriculture and construction, hotels and restaurants, food processing and meat packing. Employers are more likely to exploit undocumented immigrants who fear deportation, and the abuses are many.

When the government periodically cracks down on immigrants, either by checking Social Security numbers or raiding workplaces, employers complain that they are being deprived of a stable workforce. Obviously such a system does not serve the immigrants, the employers or the American people. The government policies on immigration are a failure. We need immigration reform.

But They DO Pay Taxes—And Often they Don't Get Services

Myths about immigration abound, some claiming that immigrants don't pay taxes and that they use more than their fair share of public services. Yet, virtually all immigrants have their taxes withheld by their employers just as the rest of us do, banks and landlords fold property taxes into mortgages or rent, and immigrants pay sales taxes all state residents do. In fact, immigrants have paid hundreds of millions into Social Security under false identification cards, money they can never claim. Many immigrants, because they are not citizens or do not have visas, are not eligible for publically funded services, while some do not use services for which they are eligible out of fear.

We need to reform our immigration system so that those immigrants who have come to work here can receive the proper documents and continue to live and work in the United States without fear. We need to regularize the status of those immigrants so they can come out of the shadows. We also need to increase the number of visas available to make it possible for other Latino immigrants—and immigrants from other regions—to come into our country with the proper documentation. Finally, we need to change our foreign policy so that the United States does not through its foreign policy create the conditions in other countries that force people to migrate here.

The Role of U.S. Foreign Policy in Latino Immigration

U.S. foreign policy has for a hundred years supported U.S. corporations which sought access to Latin American resources, markets and cheap labor. Many Americans remain unaware that U.S. corporations pressured the U.S. government to carry out CIA coups to overthrow democratically elected

governments in countries like Guatemala and Chile. The U.S. coup in Guatemala in 1954, on behalf of the United Fruit Company, and the coup in Chile in 1973, on behalf of AT&T, both brought to power military dictatorships. Both of those coups led to Latino immigration to the U.S.

Poorly conceived trade agreements have also led to immigration. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has been bad for American workers, but it has been just as bad for Mexican workers. When U.S. corporations dumped cheap corn into Mexico, they wiped out Mexican farmers who then migrated to the U.S. in search of work. The Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) has had a similar impact on nations in that region. We cannot deal with the immigration issue unless we stop such destructive U.S. foreign policies.

Solving the Immigration Issues

The Latino immigration issue will not be solved by building walls, militarizing the border, or carrying out raids on workplaces and in communities. The answer to the immigration policy lies in changing our foreign policy and in carrying out a program that provides documents to immigrants living and working in the United States together with adequate visas for continued immigration.

If, for example, the United States—driven by a desire to control oil—orchestrates a coup in Venezuela or organizes an invasion of Venezuela with Colombia or on its own, we can expect to see tens of thousands of Venezuela immigrants. Some will come as refugees or asylees, other will have work and residency visas, and some will be uninspected immigrants. We can avoid creating new wave of desperate immigrants by respecting the Venezuela government's sovereignty and staying out of their affairs.

If the United States continues to negotiate so-called "free trade agreements" with other nations, agreements that give U.S. banks and corporations free rein to ride roughshod over the economies of other countries, then we will continue to see economic problems in those nations. Their citizens, their lives ruined by the latest NAFTA-type agreement, will be forced to look abroad for work, and many will come here.

Who can blame them from following the money? If capital can migrate, then labor too should be able to migrate. But the peoples of Latin America should

not be forced to migration because of economic, political or military policies manufactured in the United States.

The Issues Facing the Latino Community

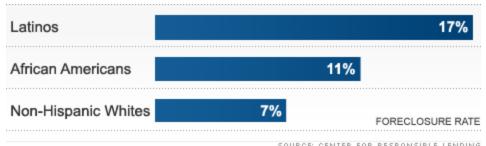
Most Latinos in Ohio, however, are not immigrants, but people who have been in this state for generations. The Latinos in the Toledo area are mostly descendants of Mexican Americans from the Rio Grande Valley; in Cleveland and Lorain the Puerto Rican people are, of course, U.S. citizens; and most of the other Hispanics from South American and the Caribbean came with documents, and, of course, all of the children born here are citizens.

What then are the issues facing 'most of our Latino population? Just as for the rest of us, the principal issue is unemployment. Hispanics have been losing jobs at an even higher rate than the rest of the population.

Latinos have lost more jobs that whites and some other groups in our society because the sectors in which they work—construction, manufacturing, for example—have been hard hit by the depression. Very often Latinos who are recent immigrants have been the last hired and consequently, having no seniority, are the first fired.

The Latino Foreclosure Crisis

Given the high levels of unemployment in the Latino community, it is hardly surprising that many families have found it difficult to hold on to their homes. The Latino foreclosure rate of 17 percent is more than double of that white Americans and half again as high of that of African Americans, as shown in this chart.



SOURCE CENTER FOR RESPONSIBLE

Source: Center for Responsible Lending - 2010

Like other Americans, when Hispanics lose their homes, and if they cannot afford an apartment, they may be forced to move in with relatives or friends or find themselves homeless.

Depression Hard on Hispanic Community

The current economic crisis has forced many in the Hispanic community to turn to others in their community for support. Some 28 percent of Latinos questioned for a national survey by the Pew Hispanic Center in 2009 reported that they had helped a friend or family member with a loan, while 17 percent had accepted a loan from friends or family.

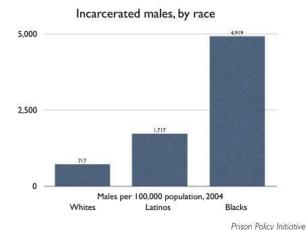
Latinos and the Crisis in Education

The U.S. and Ohio education systems are failing the Latino community. Hispanic students have the highest dropout rate in the schools nationally. Among students who have dropped out, Latinos are less likely than African Americans or whites to get a GED credential.

Having been failed by both the public school system and the adult education system, many Latinos enter the job market without adequate education. Consequently many Hispanics work in industrial or service jobs, laboring long hours at hard labor for too little pay.

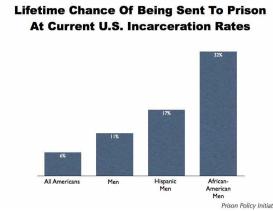
Latinos and the Criminal Justice System

Latinos, like African Americans, face the problem of racial profiling, meaning they are more likely to be stopped and arrested. Once arrested and in court, they are more likely to face unfair trials and if found guilty to receive longer sentences. Consequently, U.S. and Ohio prisons hold a disproportionately high number of Latino prisoners.



Source: Statistics as of June 30, 2004 from Prison and Jail Inmates 2004, Tables 1, 14 and 15 and U.S. Census. (Peter Wagner, June 2005)

All of these conditions mean that Latinos have a far greater chance of incarceration at some point in their lives.



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prevalence of Imprisonment in the U.S. Population, 1974-2001. (Peter Wagner, 2003)

Racism and Discrimination against Latinos

Latinos faces discrimination and racism for various reasons: because they are foreign born, because of their color, and because of their language, religion and customs. Racist or discriminatory treatment comes from the government, from employers, and sometimes from other Americans. Some government officials and some county sheriffs and police departments

engage in racial profiling and harassment of Latinos. Employers sometimes discriminate against Latinos in hiring, promotion, pay and benefits.

If the Latinos are immigrants, some predatory employers may actually cheat them out of their pay by paying below the minimum wage, not paying overtime, or in construction simply refusing to pay them at the end of the week or month. Such abuses are common and well documented by private organizations and the government.

During a time of economic crisis, such as the period we are now living through, some groups would like to scapegoat immigrants, holding them responsible for the problems caused by government policies and greedy corporations. The Tea Party, the Republican Party and the rightwing news media such as FOX have worked to fan the flames of racism against Latino immigrants and against other immigrant groups in our society. At the same time, many Democratic Party politicians have caved in to the pressure of rightwing groups and given up on the defense of the rights of Latino immigrants and other foreign born people.

In Arizona, conservative and racist groups passed Arizona SB1070, an antiimmigrant bill that would have violated the privacy rights of all citizens and would have led to racial profiling. While a Federal judge blocked some of the bill's most egregious elements, still it remains important to repeal the Arizona law and to prevent such a law from spreading to other states. Immigrants should not be scapegoated for the failing of the U.S. economy.

The Democratic Party's Failure to Address Economy

President Barack Obama and the Democratic Party majority in Congress have so far failed to address the economic crisis facing the Latino community. A study by the National Council for La Raza, a Hispanic advocacy group, found that the Obama administration's stimulus program had failed Latinos:

Specifically, the package shortchanges many of the nation's 44.3 million Latinos by excluding provisions for the most vulnerable segments of the population. Unfortunately, the positive publicity generated by the speedy passage of the stimulus package threatens to forestall further congressional action to improve the economy.⁴³

⁴³ Catherine Singley, After Stimulus: Sustainable, Economic Security for Latinos, National Council for La Raza, 2008, at:

The Hispanic community, like other communities in Ohio and in the nation, needs jobs. More than jobs, we need a full-employment economy, one where everyone who wants or needs work can find a job that pays a living wage with decent benefits and conditions. The other needs of the Latino community are clear: putting a stop to the foreclosure crisis and health care and a good education for all.

Creating a New Latino Movement

During the 1960s the Latino communities of the United States developed leaders and movements to fight for their interests. César Chávez led the United Farm Workers in California fighting for both workers' rights in the field and political rights in society. Reies López Tijerina headed up La Alianza in New Mexico fighting for land taken from the Hispanic community and Corky González led the Crusade for Justice in Denver California. Militant young Latinos joined the Brown Berets in California and the Young Lords in Puerto Rican communities.

During that same period here in Ohio, inspired by Chávez in California, Baldemar Velásquez founded the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), a union made up then of mostly Mexican American migrant farm workers in the tomato and pickle fields of Ohio. During the 1970s FLOC developed into a strong union and after years of struggle was able to win contracts from Campbell's and Mount Olive and in the 2000s organized thousands of immigrant H2A Visa workers in North Carolina. Today, FLOC is working to organize Reynolds tobacco workers. FLOC's years long fight for Latino workers' rights and workers' power stands as important example of commitment and dedication in the Latino community.

Today the Latino community is once again creating new organizations—Latino workers centers have sprung up throughout the country in the last 15 years and a new immigrant rights movement is growing. Many young Latinos have become involved in the fight for the Dream Act, a bill which would give young undocumented immigrants six-years of legal residency while they attended college or served in the military, and would give them permanent residency if in that period they completed two years of college or received an honorable discharge from military service.

The Democrats have cynically attached the Dream Act to the military budget. While the Dream Act deserves support, it is impossible to support the U.S. military budget which funds the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, and maintains the U.S. military machine around the world. We will have to continue to fight for the Dream Act, but as a separate bill.

Emerging Political Demands of the Latino Community

Latinos will, as they have in the past, create their own movements with their own demands. Still we can see the basic outlines of a program for the Latino community emerging from the contemporary movements:

- Repeal of Arizona SB 1070 and repeal or prevention of other such laws in other states.
- Regularization—legal residency—for all immigrants now living and working in the United States and of their families.
- Passage of the Dream Act—independent of the military budget.
- Latinos, like other Americans, need jobs now. More than jobs, Ohio and the United States need a full-employment economy, one that provides jobs for everyone who needs work.
- Latinos need a public education system that has the economic resources—the financing, buildings, teachers, and equipment—to serve them. We need programs that support Latino and other immigrants, both children and adults, as they learn English.
- Latinos—as do all Americans—need a national system of health insurance and a national public health system which meets all of their health needs at no cost. Many industrial nations have such a national health care system, and we should too.
- Latino homeowners need financial support from the government to stop the foreclosures which are taking away their homes.

Latinos descended from the many nations and ethnic groups of Latin America will have to lead their own movement, but that movement will need allies from other Americans. Such a movement will continue to develop the tactics of earlier movements—informational picket lines, strikes, boycotts, and hunger strikes, and new tactics as well.

The Latino Movement and Independent Political Action

In the 1960 many Latinos came to understand that the Republican and Democratic parties would not be willing or able to organize the independent progressive political movement needed to bring about social change. In the Southwest, Mexican Americans in Texas organized La Raza Unida Party (The United People Party) and actually won school board and city council elections in the Rio Grande Valley area.

In that era, Puerto Ricans, many of whom were also disgusted with the Republicans and Democrats, created both the Puerto Rican Independence Party and the Puerto Rican Socialist Party. Those parties were active both on the island of Puerto Rico and in cities like New York and Chicago with large Puerto Rican communities. If Latinos are to see their goals fulfilled, they will have to reclaim that independent political tradition, either by creating an independent Latino party or by joining with others on the left and in the labor movement to create a working peoples' party.

Chapter 13 The Crisis and Women

The economic crisis has been hard on all Ohioans and all Americans, but women often have it hardest. The employers' attack on unions and workers and government policies that cut the budget at the expense of women are responsible for the situation. The corporations, the government, and professional politicians through neglect and through their anti-working class policies, have made the lives of most women harder and have made many women poor,

The general attack on workers over the last forty years which resulted in weakened unions, longer hours with lower wages, and rising health care costs—also affect women. Single women with children, however, who really work two jobs—one at the plant or office and the other at home—find it increasingly difficult to be both breadwinner and mother. At the same time, cuts in government services have hurt women, and foundations and charity agencies cannot begin to pick up the slack.

Government policies in our country fail to provide for the basic needs of women. We have the only industrialized society that does not have a national public health care system, while some other countries have virtually free medical care. While other countries require government agencies and private employers to provide day care centers, ours does not. Women's reproductive health services in most other countries are far superior to those in the U.S.

Take the story of one Ohio woman, Deborah Coleman:

Deborah Coleman lost her unemployment benefits in April, and now fears for millions of others if the Senate does not extend aid for the jobless.

"It's too late for me now," she said, fighting back tears at the Freestore Foodbank in the low-income Over-the-Rhine district near downtown Cincinnati. "But it will be terrible for the people who'll lose their benefits if Congress does nothing."

For nearly two years, Coleman says she has filed an average of 30 job applications a day, but remains jobless.

"People keep telling me there are jobs out there, but I haven't been able to find them."

Coleman, 58, a former manager at a telecommunications firm, said the only jobs she found were over the Ohio state line in Kentucky, but she cannot reach them because her car has been repossessed and there is no bus service to those areas.

After her \$300 a week benefits ran out, Freestore Foodbank brokered emergency 90-day support in June for rent. Once that runs out, her future is uncertain.

"I've lost everything and I don't know what will happen to me," she said.44

While Coleman's personal story points out women's tenuous hold on economic security in Ohio and throughout the country today.

The Situation of Women in Ohio

Almost two-thirds of all women in Ohio work. They are employed in everything from restaurant and hotel work to nursing, teaching and social work. Women work in smaller numbers in heavy industry and construction, but can be found there as well. Median annual income for women in Ohio in 2005 was \$31,500, perhaps enough to support a single woman, but many women are heads of households with children to house, clothe and feed.

Women, of course, don't start on a level playing field with men. Women in the United States in 2010 earn only 79 percent of what men earn, despite equal pay laws and women's increasingly high level of educational attainment. While women as a whole may earn 79 cent for every dollar a man makes, women of color generally earn a far smaller percentage of men's earning. The chart below shows that in 2006 African American women earned only 66 cents and Hispanic women only 62 cents for every dollar earned by a man.

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⁴⁴ Nick Carey, "Fears grow as millions lose jobless benefits," Reuters, July 14, 2010, at: http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE66D0LB20100714?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews

So when hard times come, earing lower wages, having less saving and fewer assets, women suffer most, Some 13.4 percent of all Ohioans live in poverty, and while for men the figure is 11.9 percent, for women it is 14.7 percent.

The economic crisis that began at the end of 2007 has thrown more women into poverty, particularly single women with children and older women. Single women with children have the highest poverty rates, 37.3 percent of white single women with children live in poverty, 48.1 percent of African Americans, 42.8 percent of Asians and 53.3 percent of Latinos. While African Americans, Asians and Latinos have the highest rates of poverty, white women with children, since they are from the largest ethnic group in the state, make by far the largest number of poor women. Given the poverty in which many of their mothers live, it is not surprising then that 19 percent of Ohio's children grow up in poverty.⁴⁵

Older women also often live in poverty or near it. Two thirds of men over 65 have pensions, but only about a third of women do. And men's pensions generally pay more than women's. Women's pensions amount to only two-fifth of men's. African American senior citizens are most likely to be poor, since they lack assets or income from sources other than Social Security. While white men over 65 have a median income of \$21,054 and African American men a median income of \$15,365, white women's median income is \$12,663 and that ob black women \$10,034. Women white and black have lower retirement incomes than white and black men, respectively. Not surprisingly then, we find high rates of poverty among elderly women white and black, but especially among African American women.

A Program for Women in Ohio and the Country

Most working women in Ohio, of course, are not among the poorest, and women not all are single mothers or single seniors. Many are married women or partnered women with children, usually parts of families where both parents work. Yet they too are having a hard time making it. The work and family demands of women put enormous stress on their lives, and yet neither their corporate employers nor the government provide much relief.

What would a program to improve the lives of working women in Ohio look like? The historic demands of both the union movement and the women's

⁴⁵ Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Center, at: http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/acrossstates/Rankings.aspx?by=a&order=a&ind=43
&dtm=322&tf=35

movement suggest that women must have control over their own bodies and lives t be able to support their families, raise their children, and lead fulfilling lives.

Women then should have full reproductive rights, that is, the right to choose whether or not to have children and the right to raise children in safety, dignity and health. The government should make contraceptive materials affordable and accessible to all. Contraception, however, doesn't always work, and women must be able to terminate a pregnancy that they did not plan for and are not prepared for either economically or emotionally. Women should have the right to choose abortion, including those women who receive medical assistance from the government. We must repeal the Hyde Amendment which has now for thirty years forbidden government for paying for abortions for women who could not pay for the procedure themselves.

If women are to be able raise children in safety, dignity, and health, then we must raise the minimum wage to a living wage. The current Federal and state minimum wages represent less than half of what a living wage would look like. When women and their families can't find work or can't work, we need to ensure a guaranteed income for all families, including married/partnered families and women-headed families.

When women have children, they need support at many levels. We need paid parenting leave for mothers and fathers during the child's first year of life, such as exists in some other countries. We must expand public schooling to include quality, full-time childcare from age two to five. While protecting women workers' and all workers' jobs security, wages, and benefits, we must also create work/family plans that permit flexibility to working parents.

What Can be Done to Improve the Situation of Women

Women in Ohio do have some organizational resources they can call upon to help them. The National Organization for Women (NOW) exists in most major Ohio cities and forms part of the national NOW organization. NOW worked with other organizations and with women all over the country to fight Wal-Mart for discrimination against women workers, sexual harassment on the jobs, and for its exploitation of workers.

When NOW got involved a few years ago, it reported that, "Nearly three-quarters of a million women work as 'sales associates' in Wal-Mart stores. On average these women earn \$6.10 per hour, or \$12,688 per year if they are permitted to work full-time. This wage puts many of their families below the poverty level — half even qualify for federal assistance under the food stamp program."

Many women belong to labor unions from the Service Employees Union (SEIU) and American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) to the American Federation of Teacher (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA), and many others. Unions have helped to raise women's wages, provide them benefits and ameliorate their conditions. SEIU's Justice for Janitors Campaign helped to raise the wages and provide health care benefits for many women workers in the last few years.

While the existence of NOW and the labor unions have been important in defending the past gains of women, neither the Now nor the unions have been able to move forward. What has been missing since the late 1970s is the existence of a militant women's movement. While the women's movement won many gains in that era for all women, but particularly for middle class white women, it has not since made much headway. NOW and the unions both became institutionalized and both lost touch with grassroots working women.

NOW leaders pursue legal cases and legislative strategies while in general and with some notable exceptions they fail to organize working class women in their area. Union officials too often pursue organizing and contract campaigns without involving women union members and workers. Both NOW and the labor unions too often came to depend upon the Democratic Party to deliver for them, rather than organizing their members to fight for what they need for a decent life.

The modern women's movement that arose in the 1960s and 1970s conceived of itself as a radical movement, a movement not only for important reforms, but also standing for a revolutionary transformation of American life. Women demanded not only full equality and equal opportunity in society, but also a different kind of society, one where all human beings would be valued and each individual would be able to fulfill herself or himself.

⁴⁶ Now, "Wal-Mart: The Facts," at: http://www.now.org/issues/wfw/wm-facts.html

The women's movement of that era achieved some remarkable successes, but too often in the decades that followed upper- and middleclass women who made advances while working class women remained marginal to the movement. Many professional women found fulfilling careers, while too many working class women remained in low-paying, dead end jobs. We women and men who have supported women's causes should be proud of the movement's remarkable successes in the recent past, but we should also work to strengthen the working women's movement.

What we need now are women and their male allies committed to organizing an ethnically and culturally diverse working women's movement that puts issues like low wages, child care, and reproductive rights at the top of its agenda. Such a movement will have to take up the standard strategies of social movements of the past such as mass demonstrations, civil disobedience and strikes, but it will also have to develop an independent political force. Women, especially working class and low income women, and women from the African American and Latino communities, will not be able to carry their struggle very far forward unless they are prepared to act independent of the Democratic Party and ultimately to build a political alternative to it.

Chapter 14 The Crisis and Ohio Youth

By Michael Cannon

Over the past few years, the media has increasingly referred to young people coming of age in the midst of the current economic crisis as a "lost generation." As young adults enter an economy of sparse employment opportunities and prohibitively expensive education, many indeed find themselves "lost."

Young people have proven to be the most vulnerable to the effects of the financial crisis and will have to live with perhaps decades of structurally high unemployment and restricted access to higher education.

Experiencing long-term unemployment so early in adult life will be a hindrance to overall career achievement and personal satisfaction for many. These first years are crucial in establishing a firm foothold in one's career path and will have a permanent impact on lifelong earnings potential.

This is undoubtedly the case nationwide, but for the youth of Ohio, the financial collapse only exacerbated an already unfolding crisis. For Ohio, the recession did not begin with the 2007 financial meltdown. Before the Wall Street collapse and the official announcement of recession, Ohio had already been suffering through a protracted decline. The state has been hemorrhaging jobs for decades as the result of a corporate driven policy of de-industrialization.

Ohio once rivaled Michigan as America's industrial heartland. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, the state's robust manufacturing industry provided tens of thousands of working Ohioans with secure, well-paying jobs. However, ten years into the 21st century, Ohio once again rivals Michigan, only now not for economic vitality, but for job losses; Ohio is

second only to Michigan, shedding 213,000 since 2000. From 2000-2007 the state lost 23.3 percent of its manufacturing jobs.⁴⁷

The state that was once a leader in manufacturing and industrial innovation is now a front-runner in a national race to the bottom spurned by a sustained corporate offensive against working people. For many Ohioans this has meant a substantial decrease in their standard of living and long term unemployment or underemployment.

The few jobs which have replaced the hundreds of thousands lost in the industrial sector are predominately low-wage service sector positions with few or no benefits. This is devastating for young people trying to get that all-important first job and to provide for themselves. Many cannot make it and find themselves forced to return to living with their parents.

The shift from industrial to service sector employment has paralleled other developments as well. Without employer and worker tax revenues, the state is faced with a fiscal crisis, and government at all levels is laying off workers. Education, health services, and a vast array of other social programs are all slated for deep cuts. These developments have devastated millions of Ohio families, having a particularly severe impact on children and young adults.

Public Education

When evaluating the situation of young people in Ohio, public education is certainly one of the most crucial areas to examine. It serves as a microcosm for the broader patterns of social stratification in the state, bringing growing income inequalities and racial disparities into sharp focus. An overview of the situation facing education in Ohio also reveals a great deal about the priorities of the state legislature, as well as the corporate entities which exert an increasing degree of financial influence over our educational system.

Recent trends and developments, both nationally and in Ohio, chart a grim trajectory for both K-12 and higher education. As these sectors continue to bear the brunt of the corporate and legislative assault on the public sector, education is undergoing a fundamental transformation as more and more

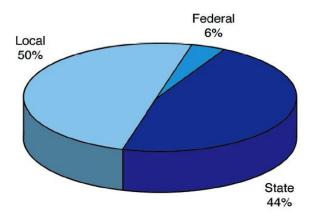
⁴⁷Charles McMillan "Ohio Job Losses Worse Since Great Depression" http://www.ourfuture.org/blog-entry/out-work-ohio

private funds come to replace shrinking state dollars. These developments, coupled with the deteriorating overall economic situation, have contributed to a generalized crisis of education statewide.

Perhaps the most notorious injustice of the state's school system is its method of allocating K-12 funds.

The state's now infamous discriminatory funding mechanism for K-12 has been the subject of much criticism over the past twenty years. The controversy centers around the fact that roughly half of all funding for public schools is derived from property taxes.

Percentage Breakdown of Ohio Public School Funding Sources



Source: William L. Phillis "The Pursuit of School Reform in Ohio" at: http://www.ohiocoalition.org/pdfs/Forum 2005 11.pdf

This is problematic primarily because, given the wide variance in property values among school districts, poorer communities in inner cities or rural areas receive less revenue with which to fund their schools, leading to enormous disparities in education. In 1991, the glaring injustice of this property tax scheme prompted over five hundred school districts to file suit against the state in *DeRolph v. State of Ohio*. The case ended up in the Ohio Supreme Court which ruled this method of allocating funds to be unconstitutional.

Even so, the Ohio legislature still stubbornly fails to fully implement the court's decision and rectify this institutional discrimination in any meaningful way. Consequently, inequality of access to quality education has continued to grow. *The National Catholic Reporter* contrasts two disparate schools quite vividly:

Vinton County High School, in a property-poor district of Ohio, relies on a coal heater, producing an acrid scent of smoke throughout the school building for much of the year. Textbooks are several generations old. At Dublin Coffman High School, also located in Ohio but situated in a school district that includes the corporate headquarters of several high tech companies, the \$27 million facility provides state-of-the-art science labs, a computer for almost every student, a well equipped, plush library and a bucolic campus setting.⁴⁸

Public education in Ohio has been under duress for years, but the situation is now quickly approaching critical juncture. Ohio, like nearly every other state in the nation, has faced an abysmal budget shortfall for the past two years. For the 2009-2010 fiscal year, federal stimulus dollars allowed the legislature to stave off severe reductions in funding, but with these funds soon set to expire, Ohio schools are quickly approaching financial disaster. As is too often the case, the legislature is seeking to close this monetary gap in part by slashing education funding, rather than raising taxes on the wealthy or reducing corporate welfare and closing loopholes.

In addition to the quality of our schools, the overall economic situation of students in Ohio has worsened as well. Between 1999 and 2004, the percentage of economically disadvantaged students increased from 13 percent to 30 percent.⁴⁹ With so many children coping with economic insecurity, it should come as no surprise that so many are failing to finish high school. Nearly ten percent of Ohio high schools have consistently high

⁴⁸ John Allen "National Catholic Reporter"

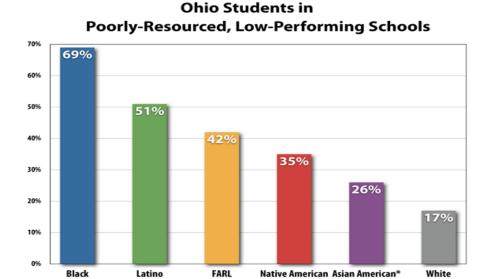
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1141/is_n26_v33/ai_19389741/

⁴⁹ www.nd.edu/~jwarlick/documents/UpdateOhioSchools.ppt

dropout rates, with Cleveland having the lowest graduation rate in the nation.⁵⁰

Poorly funded schools adversely affect all children, but the impact on minority students is exponential, particularly on African-Americans:

Source National Oppurtunity to Learn 50 State Report – Ohio http://www.blackboysreport.org/otlwebsite/states/ohio



With such staggering statistics, it is clear that Ohio's children have been the most vulnerable victims of the state's social and economic decline. The most recent economic shocks have only amplified what was already a deep crisis.

Higher Education

Access to higher education has become even more restricted. The precipitous fall in tax revenues collected by state and local governments has led to a renewed push for austerity, with public colleges and universities facing especially steep reductions in funding. State educational institutions are increasingly only nominally "public". As state allocations continue to

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⁵⁰ Jay P. Greene "High School Graduation Rates in the United States" http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cr_baeo.htm

decrease, students are forced to make up for the shortfall through increasing fees and tuition. From 2000-2003, Ohio students saw a 17 percent increase in education costs.⁵¹ Following this increase, a ban on tuition increases was instituted for two years, only to be lifted in 2009.⁵² This year some state colleges have raised tuition by as much as 3.5 percent and 2011 will see an overall cut of \$170 million in state appropriations.⁵³

The quality of public higher education, however, has not increased along with the cost. There is now essentially an inverse relationship between how much students pay into the system and the quality of education they receive. While the administrators claim tuition hikes are necessary to offset the effects of less state money, academic programs, student services, and financial aid are still under the knife.

Cuts to scholarships and financial aid money are the most damaging to students:

Kassandra Coffman stood at her high school graduation ceremony a year ago and was handed a certificate by the then-speaker of the Ohio House congratulating her for earning a state academic scholarship.

But just one year into her chemical engineering studies at the University of Toledo, the merit-based Ohio Academic Scholarship Program that provided her with \$2,200 last year is on the chopping block.

"It was my understanding that as long as I kept my [grade-point average] up and performed academically, it would be there," the 18-year-old Mansfield resident said." ⁵⁴

⁵¹ William Trombley "The Rising Price of Higher Education"

 $http://www.highereducation.org/reports/affordability_supplement/affordability_1.shtml$

⁵² Courtney Rochon "College Tuition Freeze Lifted"

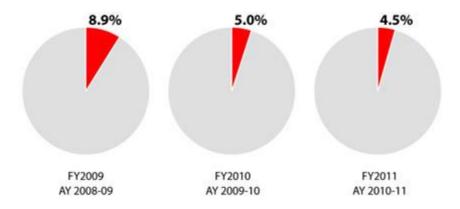
http://www.wtap.com/home/headlines/51347292.html?storySection=story

⁵³ Nicholas Johnson, Phil Oliff, and Erica Williams "An Update on State Budget Cuts" http://www.cbpp.org/cms/?fa=view&id=1214

⁵⁴ Jim Provance "Ohio Scholarship Feeling Pinch of Budget Cuts"

http://toledoblade.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090615/NEWS24/906150324

Financial Aid and Scholarships As Percentage of Ohio Higher Education Budget Fiscal/Academic Years As Noted



Sources: Ohio Office of Budget and Management (FY09); Am. Sub. H.B. 1, 128th General Assembly (FY10, 11)

Source: http://www.aicuo.edu/Graphs%20-%20Comparison%20with%20publics.html

Thousands of Ohio students are facing similar situations. For many first-generation students, realizing the dream of a college degree depends upon receiving financial aid. As funding dries up, we are seeing a return to the highly stratified educational system of the past, when a place in the university was reserved only for children of the affluent.

Even for working class and first-generation students who are able to attend college, the kind of education they receive is changing. The underlying conception of what defines an education has undergone a fundamental transformation over the last thirty years. The notion of education as intrinsically valuable has been displaced by an increasing emphasis on job training. This sentiment has informed the kind of budget cuts schools have been making. Liberal Arts programs, and other allegedly "less practical" disciplines, have faced disproportionate amounts of cuts.

The increasing use of part-time faculty has further undermined the quality of higher education. According to Ohio State University English Professor Frank Donoghue, tenured and tenure-track professors now only constitute

35 percent of faculty. ⁵⁵ Adjuncts often teach upwards of five classes at more than one college simultaneously and for comparatively meager pay.

Fighting Back

The young people of Ohio thus find an economy of few jobs and diminishing access to further education. Ohio youth should make their own voices heard, but the outlines of their needs are pretty clear:

- A full-employment economy with jobs for all young people over the age of 18.
- Free public education from K through college.
- Educational stipends for all families with children in middle school, high school, or college.

We can pay for these programs by taxing corporations and the wealthy.

The bleak situation facing young Ohioans demands a strong response. Thus far, resistance to cuts in education and other social services has been generally muted and sporadic. We have yet to see any concerted and formidable fight back against the state legislature's efforts to use the economic crisis as a cover for demolishing social services. Neither have we seen a determined push back against the corporations, who announce records lay-offs along with record quarterly profits.

The social victories won during the last great economic crisis during the 1930s and in the 1960s were achieved only through intense struggle on the part of working people, specifically young people; they were not handed down by benevolent elected officials. This applies just as much today as it did then. In order for young people in Ohio to find relief from joblessness and to gain access to quality education, housing, and the other essentials for a quality life, we must organize at our workplaces, schools, and even on the unemployment line.

⁵⁵ Frank Donghue, *The Last Professors: The Corporate University and the Fate of the Humanities*, (Fordham University Press. 2008).

Part III

In this part of the book we look at the problem of creating an independent political movement and at the goal of creating a socialist society.

Chapter 15 Why Vote Socialist?

Q&A on the Democratic Party - An Interview with Dan La Botz

Frequently asked questions about whether or not to vote for the Democrats or to support a Socialist, Green or progressive independent candidate.

Question: You are a progressive activist running as the Socialist Party candidate for the U.S. Senate. You chose not to run as a Democrat. Do you really think that the Republicans and Democrats are the same? Most progressives don't seem to think so. Most people on the left think that the parties are quite different and that it matters greatly whether or not they vote Republican or Democrat.

La Botz: I agree that the Republican and Democratic parties are not the same. They have different platforms, different histories, and different reputations. Many consider the Republicans to be more conservative, more pro-war and the Democrats to be more liberal and pro-peace. The platform positions-and reputations of these parties, however, do not tell us how they actually act or how they will behave in the future.

The Democrats seldom live up to their liberal reputation and seldom fulfill the more progressive planks of their platform. The war? Since the election of Barack Obama, he and the Democratic Congress have expanded the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the drone bombing of Pakistan. The environment? Obama announced—and then after the BP geyser—retracted expansion of offshore oil drilling in the Gulf of Mexico and along the Atlantic Coast. Labor? After making a campaign promise, the Democrats dropped the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA) which they had promised the unions.

Immigration? The Democrats put immigration reform they had promised Latinos and other immigrant groups on the back burner while increasing deportations and making it harder for immigrants to get jobs. Heal care? The Obama administration rejected the best option, single-payer out of hand, and also ditched the public option. Women's right to choose? Some prominent Democrats—especially the Blue Dogs—do not support abortion rights and

played a key role in eliminating abortion from the 2010 health care bill. Civil liberties? The Obama administration has continued to condone or excuse torture, rendition limiting domestic civil liberties, and promoting governmental secrecy and outsized power for the executive branch.⁵⁶

The Democratic Party's neoliberal national, state, and big city leaderships have betrayed rank-and-file voters looking to them for support.

Voting for Democrats does not lead to substantially more liberal or progressive national politics on most issues because the corporations dominate the Democratic Party. The Democrats are a corporate party, a capitalist party. And because of the Democrats' loyalty to the corporations they are demoralizing many supporters and potential supporters.

Question: Most of us think of the Republicans as the corporate party. What do you mean when you say the Democrats are a corporate and capitalist party?

La Botz: American corporations play almost as large a role in the Democratic Party as they do in the Republican Party. First, of course, they provide campaign funding for the party and its candidates. Most big corporations hedge their bets, contributing to both Republicans and Democrats, though some definitely lean toward the Democratic Party.) Large corporations, for example, bankrolled much of President Barack Obama's campaign. Now that the Supreme Court has decided that corporations are persons and can give unlimited sums, Republicans and Democrats both will be even more beholden to the corporations.⁵⁷

Second, corporate executives and corporate attorneys provide Democratic Party candidates and party staff, and provide the Democrats their policies. When it comes to policy, the Democratic Party works closely with the largest corporate associations to develop legislation. When Obama designed the health plan, he met with the insurance companies, the for-profit hospital companies, and the pharmaceutical industry. Liz Fowler, vice-president of WellPoint (with its affiliates Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield) wrote

⁵⁶ For details on the civil liberties issue, take a look at the ACLU's recent devastating report "Establishing a New Normal: National Security, Civil Liberties, and Human Rights Under the Obama Administration - An 18-Month Review." http://www.aclu.org/national-security/establishing-new-normal.

⁵⁷ See: http://www.opensecrets.org/overview/topcontribs.php;
http://www.opensecrets.org/pres08/contrib.php?cycle=2008&cid=n00009638.

substantial portions of the Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care Act. Not surprisingly, the reform did not eliminate insurance companies or the profit motive from health care.

Third, the Democratic Party campaigns operate, just like the Republicans, principally through advertising and the media. So the Democratic Party also becomes linked to those sorts of advertising and media corporations. The Democratic Party has close ties with the corporations—and no intention to break them.⁵⁸

Question: But don't you exaggerate? Even if the corporations dominate both parties, aren't the Democrats more progressive on certain issues such as-labor?

La Botz: At one time, the Democrat Party held more progressive positions on many of those issues. During the post-war period of American capitalist expansion, from 1939 to 1969, the United States with its vast power and wealth could make concessions to the working class. Today, facing an economic crisis, the Democrats have to manage the crisis, have to impose austerity, they have to make cutbacks. The Democrats were more liberal back in the 1970s when there was both more elasticity in the economic system and a mass movement pushing them.

After Howard Dean became head of the Democratic Party, he worked to move the party more toward the center and even toward the right. The Democratic Party platform's liberal planks have been watered down. Dean encouraged the party to bring in more conservative politicians to compete with the Republicans. Blue Dog Democrats, as they are known, are often anti-abortion, anti-LGBT, and anti-labor. The growing number of these Blue Dogs has made the party as a whole more conservative. If you vote Democrat you find yourself backing a party that is moving to the right, and taking you with it.

Even on social issues where the official positions of the Democrats have often been better than the Republicans, such as abortion and gay and lesbian

http://www.commondreams.org/headlines06/0619-05.htm;

http://www.rockymountainnews.com/news/2008/may/12/dnc-sponsorships-raise-questions-on-motivations/;

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/01/07/new-dnc-head-kaine-offers n 155845.html.

⁵⁸ See, for example, http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE63K2W820100421;

http://socialistworker.org/2009/07/16/democrats-and-big-oil;

rights, their commitment has been tepid and uninspiring, and all too often compromised on important points. Moreover, the Democrats' conservative economic policies alienate people who could be won over to more progressive social positions if there were a party that stood firmly for <u>both</u> economic and social equality.

Question: But shouldn't we try to move the Democrats to the left? Can't the Democrats be reformed? Don't you see any merit in being involved with movement people in the Democratic Party campaigns? Don't you see that as a vehicle for change?

La Botz: The most impressive example of this strategy was Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition in the 1987 Democratic Party presidential primary. Jackson traversed the country, marching on picketlines, participating in demonstrations, and standing on the U.S. Mexico Border with Rosario Ibarra, a socialist and the first woman candidate for president of Mexico, calling for rights for immigrants. Jackson won almost 30 percent of the vote in a campaign based on supporting the struggles of working people. It was a remarkable achievement.

Then, having lost his bid for the nomination, he took all of those whom he had mobilized and kept them imprisoned in the Democratic Party. *Time* magazine reported in 1987: "Instead of threatening to bolt the party, [Jackson] embraces it. At a gathering of Democrats in Atlanta, Jackson declared that while the party has both a conservative and a progressive wing, it needs two wings to fly. Democrats let out a sigh of relief. During a debate among the presidential candidates, the preacher sounded so reasonable he was almost irrelevant." The Jesse Jackson Rainbow Coalition campaign served primarily to keep the most active, militant and radical Democrats from leaving the party. After the campaign, that movement disappeared.

This is the historic role of the Democrats: in the Populist era of the 1890s, in the labor upheaval of the 1930s, in the post-war upsurge of the 1940s, in the radical period of the 1960s. The Democrats role is to round-up the insurgent and dissident elements that are making change and bring them back into the Democratic Party and to chloroform them, put them back to sleep.

Question: The Progressive Democrats of America (PDA) seem to agree with you about the corporate control of the Democratic Party, but still they want to reform it. What do you think about their strategy to reform the Democratic Party?

La Botz: Many Progressive Democrats of America members are movement activists. I admire their stated goal. As the PDA website says, "We seek to build a party and government controlled by citizens, not corporate elites—with policies that serve the broad public interest, not just private interests." (http://pdamerica.org/about/what-is-pda.php) Such a goal is laudable, but in my opinion virtually impossible.

The Democratic Party has such strong institutional ties to government, the military, professional politicians, and the corporations that the kind of reform the PDA seeks is not possible. The Democratic Party is not a block club, or a community center where people could actually organize and vote out the leadership. It is a top-down party completely enmeshed in professional politics and government.

I imagine that many PDA members will also come to the conclusion that reform of the Democrats is not possible. My hope is that, when they do, they will not become cynical about politics and the possibility of change, but will organize to lead those progressive out of the Democratic Party, to work for independent, progressive politics. And today, when progressive candidates are defeated in Democratic primaries, I hope PDA members don't play by the party rules and go on to support "centrists" and "moderates" who have demonstrated their commitment to reactionary policies at home and abroad.

Question: So you don't see any chance for reforming the Democratic Party?

La Botz: We have to look at the Democratic Part in the context of the contemporary American economy and society. Working people, labor unions, the movements for social justice used to prefer the Democrats. They knew the Republicans wouldn't negotiate, but with the Democrats negotiation was always possible. For all intents and purposes, those days are over.

We have entered a period of capitalist crisis, a structural crisis of modern American capitalism that finds it increasingly difficult to compete internationally with Germany, Japan, the rising power of China, and now the new competitors such as Brazil and India. While the U.S. economy—that is American capitalism—could in the past afford to be more expansive and liberal in its social programs, that sort of largesse is no longer possible in the current crisis.

The Republicans and the Democrats have both become parties of economic retrenchment, looking for ways to cut reduce universal social programs, such as Social Security, and to restrict their benefits. Under these conditions, the Democratic Party will continue to move to the right, despite the best efforts of genuine progressives within the party. It's time to leave and create a working peoples party.

Question: Some people fear that the Tea Party movement and the ultra-conservative candidates they have successfully nominated in the Republican Party mean that the country is moving toward fascism. Faced with rightwing Republicans and currents of fascism, they argue, we have to support the Democrats.

La Botz: There is a growing rightwing movement in the form of the Tea Party and one can find some real though still small fascist organizations at work. The question is, does the Democratic Party represent some sort of bulwark against such ultra-conservatism and fascism? Do we see the Democrats mobilizing to create a massive movement as an alternative to the rising rightwing or even fascist movement? Not at all. The entire goal is to get people to vote for the increasingly conservative Democrats. How does that stop the right wing?

Do you stop the right by supporting the corporate-dominated Democratic Party? Do you stop a growing conservative trend or emerging fascism by moving to the right with the Blue Dog Democrats? I don't think so. I think we fight the right by building powerful independent labor and social movements and offering an alternative to both corporate parties, that is, to both the Republicans and the Democrats.

Question: Alright, but from a completely pragmatic point of view, given our two party system, doesn't your campaign run the risk of taking votes away from the Democratic Party candidate and electing the Republican?

La Botz: No, I don't buy that. It's not like this is a zero-sum game. Half of the eligible voters in the United States don't vote. Most of those are working people and low-income people. The Democratic Party, which claims to be the party of working people, should be able to get its votes there. If it cannot, that's their fault. Not mine.

When the Democratic Party loses elections, it generally loses to the Republicans, not to third parties. The argument that Ralph Nader and the Green Party cost Al Gore and the Democrats the 2004 election is completely specious. The Republican Party, the Democratic Party, and the Supreme Court won the election for George W. Bush.⁵⁹

Every party and every candidate has the opportunity and the responsibility to go out and win voters.

Right now Rob Portman is predicted to beat Fisher by 55 to 35 percent, according to a Rasmussen Poll. Why is Portman running ahead? First, Portman has about \$9 million in his campaign treasury to Fisher's \$2 million. Portman's advertising is burying Fisher. Equally important, Lt. Governor Lee Fisher cannot attract votes because Ohio has lost tens of thousands of jobs while the Democrats held power in both Washington, D.C. and Columbus, Ohio. The Democratic Party has failed to deal with the economic crisis and to provide jobs. The Democrats have consequently lost their appeal to working class and low-income voters.

Question: Would you want people to vote for you if the vote were really close, if the vote for you might mean the difference in who wins the election?

La Botz: Yes, I ask people to vote for me even if a vote for me might make the difference, because otherwise the Democratic Party will continue to be able to blackmail progressive voters. Most working class, African American and Latino voters only vote for the Democratic Party candidate because they believe that he or she will be better than the Republican. And all too often they are disappointed.

The Democrats extort votes from voters with the threat that the Republicans will be worse. Meanwhile both parties, arm-in-arm, move to the right. The Republicans will always tend to be worse than the Democrats, even as the whole political landscape shifts rightwards. We can't let this serve as a permanent argument for accepting whatever the Democrats do.

People should vote for what they believe in, for what they know would be right for our country, not for a supposed "lesser of two evils." We will not be

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⁵⁹ See: http://www.cagreens.org/alameda/city/0803myth/myth.html.

able to go forward unless we are prepared to break with both corporate parties and construct a new political party on the left.

Question: Some would say: All that sounds very nice, but this is a two-party system, like it or not. You are a spoiler, so you are helping the Republicans.

La Botz: I have to say, this is the most common argument I heard from liberal Democrats. I hear this argument from the real party loyalists and it really disturbs me. Some tell me I shouldn't run as a Socialist and tell others that they shouldn't run as Greens or independent progressives. I find it deeply distressing that people who consider themselves to be "liberals" would attempt to squelch any attempt to create a more democratic system.

The Democratic Party organization, despite the party's name, always opposes other parties and candidates that appear on their left. If we really believe in a democracy, then we have to recognize that people have the right to organize political parties and to put forward their point of view. If we are really progressive, then we should welcome a broadening and a deepening of the development of left political alternatives. We should recognize that healthy debate on the left will be good for the left and for the country.

Question: It sounds like you dislike the liberal Democrats about as much as they do you.

La Botz: Dislike the Democrats? Not at all. Most of my co-workers, neighbors and friends are Democrats. I absolutely oppose the Democratic Party organization, because it is a political arm of the corporations. But I find that I agree with most grassroots Democrats about the issues, and find that we share many common values. After all, when I participate in an anti-war demonstration or a union picketline, I am usually marching alongside a bunch of Democrats. While I walk with them, I talk with them, maybe even argue with them, and try to change their minds, try to convince them of the need for independent politics.

What we have to recognize is that the functional role of the Democratic Party. That is, whatever it says about itself, the Democratic Party in fact functions to prevent the development of an American political party that can represent the real interests of working people -- from auto workers, teachers, bus drivers, steelworkers and clerical workers to nurses, freelancers, home health care workers and computer programmers.

That's why the Republican Party isn't sufficient for the corporations to run the country. The American ruling class needs two parties. The Republican Party keeps the small business people and corporate managers in line. The Democratic Party exists to keep the working class majority under control. The Democratic Party—and especially its leftwing—functions to keep the labor unions, African Americans, Latinos, women and LGBT folk from leaving to form an independent working class party not controlled by the corporations.

Question: Do you think that voting for you could really change America? Would a vote for you really move us in the direction of Socialism?

La Botz: I believe that progressive social change comes from mass movements from below, from working people. All of the great changes in American society came from such movements, whether we talk about the creation of the industrial unions in the 1930s, the African American Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, or the women's movement of the 1970s. Still today the environmental movement and the gay and lesbian rights movements have been created by millions of American working people. Social movements and activism bring change.

Yet, movements and activism must also need a vision, a political platform and a strategy. I run for office to project the vision, program and strategic ideas that can change American society. If I were elected, or even if 51 Socialist Senators were elected or if 50% plus 1 of the House were socialist, we could not bring about the change this society needs. Only the building of a mass movement can do that—but it would have to be a mass movement with a political agenda. I am attempting to project that agenda.

Socialists recognize that elections are only part of the democratic process and only part of changing society. Our goal is to build working class power in order to change society. The Democrats really want your involvement only on Election Day, and then hope you will go back to sleep. We want your involvement even more on other days, and want you wide awake and fighting for the future.

Question: Isn't your campaign then really a symbolic campaign? Aren't you just seeking a protest vote? Aren't small parties like yours doomed to remain marginal?

La Botz: Not at all. This is not a symbolic campaign; this is a quite real campaign. To carry out the campaign, we have built campaign organizations in towns and cities and on college campuses throughout Ohio. Through the campaign, I have spoken to thousands of Ohio voters at meetings and public events. We have distributed tens of thousands of pieces of literature. I have appeared on radio and television shows talking about the need for a socialist alternative and my platform has appeared in newspapers all over the state. I have shared the platform with candidates from the other parties as we debated the issues. We will come out of this campaign having won thousands of votes for socialism, but more important we will have contributed to build activist networks and a socialist movement.

Question: So, do you think that Socialists can come to power in the United States through the ballot box?

American history suggests that social movements and alternative political parties together offer the possibility for profound social change. We can think back to those small groups of men and women, black and white who met together in churches and schools back in the 1840s and who eventually formed small abolitionist groups and then the Free Soil Party. The existence of such a social movement and of an alternative political party provided the catalyst that led to the formation of the Republican Party which then led the Civil War to abolish slavery in the South.

We can also think of other small political parties which in other periods—the 1930s and the 1960s—a vision, a platform and a strategy. I think of the small labor parties that developed in the 1930s and of the Peace and Freedom Party of the late 1960s. While the social movements and the political alternatives they developed did not coincide to lead to the radical transformation of America in that period, they did force the major parties to adopt some of their progressive platform.

Today we are in a period when the combination of a complex economic, social and political crisis, an emerging mass movement, and parties offering political alternatives will be able to bring about the changes we seek. When this crisis deepens, history suggests that we will pass through a period of massive upheaval from below. When that happens, today's left-of-center political parties—the Greens, the Socialists, and others—can help to provide that catalytic element which can lead millions of Democrats to leave their party and form a new party that really represents and is accountable to working people and has a progressive platform. For clearly it will be rank-

and-file Democrats and abstentionist and apathetic voters who will form the basis for America's working class socialist party in the 21st century.

Chapter 16 A Socialist America

We have described in the earlier chapters of this book the conditions in Ohio and in the United States today. Our nation faces three enormous crises—the economy, the environment, and imperial wars—which threaten the wellbeing of the majority of our citizens. We have levels of unemployment we have not seen in 80 years, 10 percent official and about 17 percent real unemployment. We have environment catastrophes—above all climate change or global warning—which threaten to destroy our civilization. The United States is engaged in illegal and immoral wars which take enormous numbers of human lives—Americans, Iraqis, Afghanis, and Pakistanis—and which also absorb a large part of our national wealth. In short: American capitalism has become a system which produces unemployment and poverty, environmental catastrophe and war, not the good life we once hoped for.

Driving these crises are banks and corporations that put profit above all, above our health and wellbeing and above our people's real national interest. Every corporate decision revolves around the question of how to increase profits and accumulate more wealth, and the hell with everything else. The multinational corporations control our political parties, providing the financing, the personnel, and the party platforms. We are a nation run by and for corporate CEOs, board members and bond and stockholders.

The corporations through their control of the two major political parties determine our economic policy that leads to depression; they determine our environmental policy which leads to ecological catastrophe, and they determine our foreign policy, which leads to imperial wars. At critical moments the corporations and the government tend to become almost one, a kind of state capitalism, and then for a while release their grip on each other and relax back into the normal state of competitive chaos. Yet, at all times, government serves the corporations—it does not serve the American people. It works for them, not for us. We need an alternative, and the alternative is socialism.

Not Stalinism or Social Democracy

One of the first questions that usually comes up is, "But hasn't this been tried before, and didn't it fail in the Stalinist Communist version in the Soviet Union and in the Social Democratic version in Western Europe?" There is a good deal of truth is this observation. In Russia in 1917 workers succeeded in carrying out a revolution to overthrow the Czar's dictatorship and within a few months the capitalist pro-war government that succeeded it. But Russia's backwardness, the devastation of World War I and a civil war accompanied by foreign invasions made the situation impossible. By the mid-1920s the socialist experiment had failed because of the backwardness and poverty of Russia and the hostility of the capitalist world around it. The workers' government collapsed and out of its ruins arose Stalinism or bureaucratic Communism, a state, economy, and society which was neither capitalist nor socialist.

Social Democrats first came to power in Europe following World War I, but they saw their goals as preventing a genuine socialist revolution and as saving and ameliorating capitalism, rather than ending it. The Fascists and Nazis swept them aside as they created the most ruthless capitalism the world has known. After World War II, the Social Democrats came to power again in several countries, now managing capitalism through both periods of expansion and contraction, epochs of reform and retrenchment. Social Democrats, much like the Democratic Party in the United States, found themselves in the last few decades carrying out neoliberal economic programs more ardently advocated by the Conservatives (or in the U.S. by the Republicans). Social Democracy today often represents little more than neoliberal capitalism rather than a movement for democratic socialism.

Despite the failures of Communism and Social Democracy, socialism remains not only a possibility, but the only rational alternative to capitalism. As democratic socialists, we reject both Communism and Social Democracy. We opposed both capitalism and Communism (with a capital C). We stand for a society based upon cooperation and democratic planning. We advocate instead the democratic control of government and the economy by the whole population with the direct involvement of working people in decision making in all aspect of society.

A Society of Abundance

We believe that such a socialist society is possible because we have the technological and industrial capability to create an environmentally sustainable economy that could produce the abundance that would allow us to fulfill all human needs. If we organized our economy rationally, we could make enormously more efficient use of our resources, our capital and our labor. We could then reduce the work week from today's 40 or more hours a week to 30 or even 20 hours a week at the same or better pay than they earn now, putting more people to work while allowing all working people to have more leisure. Leisure means time for rest and recreation, time for education and travel, time for the family and friends.

Not Corporate Profit but Human Needs

What then is this socialist alternative? What would distinguish a socialist government and society from a capitalist one? Let us imagine a society in which not corporate profit but rather human need came first. We might take a worker, say, a young single mother with two children, perhaps a grocery clerk like my own mother or maybe a hotel maid. We might begin by thinking about what she and her children would need for the secure and comfortable existence which is the prerequisite for having a happy life.

What would she need?

- First, she would want to know that she would have a full-time job with real security, that she could not be laid off without any notice, or fired without cause, in any other way lose her job without being provided equal or better alternative employment.
- Second, she would want a living wage—not the minimum wage, but a
 real living wage, one that would allow her to pay all of her bills and
 still have money for food and clothing, as well as for education and
 recreation.

- Third, she would want a decent place to live, an apartment or home for herself and her children at a rent or with a mortgage that she could afford.
- Fourth, she would want transportation from home to work, as well as to the local college or university, and to entertainment and recreation for herself and her children.
- Fifth, she would want health care—regular medical checkups, dental care, eye examinations, pharmacy, and if necessary hospitalization.
- Finally, she would want good schools for her children from kindergarten to college, as far as they can go—because she has great plans for her kids—and she would want to be able to go to school herself to get that degree she put off when she was younger.

When we think about such a person, this young woman worker, the head of a household with two children, we can see that if her needs were met, we would also meet the needs of the majority of people in our society. Some people today may be able to fulfill one or more of those basic needs more easily than she, at least at the moment, but most of us share several of those basic needs. If we take care of that young working woman's needs, we will have taken care of most of us.

So we start with that idea, that we will create a system which provides support for those who need it most, and therefore also provides enough support for everyone. If we create a health care system which takes care of her, we will have taken care of everyone's health care needs. We can see that in her case—given her job and her family—she will need to have housing at a very low rent or mortgage and cheap transportation, and that she will need free health care and education if her children are to go to school and on to college. How will we be able to provide these things for that woman and others like her?

The Model: Not Competition but Cooperation

As socialists, then, we start not with the drive for profit, but with the human needs which our government and our society should meet. We think about our society then not as being like the world of business and markets with their competition, but more like the world of our families and neighborhoods where we cooperate and collaborate to take care of each other.

Healthy families—and we recognize that there are many different sorts of families, straight and gay, headed by two adults or by one, and more complex versions with other relatives and friends—but whatever sort they are, healthy families work for the good of all, not for the aggrandizement of one, they do not exploit and they do not oppress.

In healthy neighborhoods we know that we can call on our neighbors to watch our kids in an emergency, or to check on our elderly parents, to water our plants or feed the cat when we're gone for a day. We see in our own sick society, many examples of human community and cooperation, from the community garden to the local fire station that show us that people at their best are caring and loving. Socialists then start with that idea that we as a society will—though obviously on a much larger scale—collaborate the way a healthy family or a good neighborhood collaborates to meet our common needs.

A Revolutionary Change

We imagine a future in which a powerful working class movement, a movement made up of the great majority of people in our society, has succeeded—no doubt through enormous protests, strikes and struggles—in overturning capitalism and the capitalist state. The great corporations that once owned all of our basic industries, services and agriculture have been taken over by the people of the United States. The old government, which previously served the corporations, has also been supplanted by a new government controlled by the country's working class majority.

The new government has the responsibility to organize the country's economy and to put what were once privately owned corporations to work, not for profit but for the common good. How might that happen?

Not Economic Chaos but a National Economic Plan

Today the decisions of rival investors and corporations drive the American economy, as wealthy people or big institutional investors throw millions upon millions of dollars into one financial, industrial or service sector or into one corporation or another. The goal is always profit and the accumulation of greater wealth, not improving the lives of human beings. This selfish and chaotic approach to the economy leads to periods of boom that are quickly followed by the bust.

There are bubbles and then they burst. Billions pours into Silicon Valley or into real estate and then the market collapses, and suddenly the economy fails, banks and businesses fold, and millions lose their jobs. Capitalism, even when dominated by oligopolies and regulated by government, remains a competitive and chaotic system which cannot provide economic security for society.

Tapping the Creativity of the People

The alternative to such an irrational system is the democratic elaboration of an economic plan which would determine what our country would produce to meet the needs of our people. The development of a national economic plan for a country of the size and complexity of the United States represent an enormous challenge, but one that can be met by tapping the knowledge and creativity of the American people.

Under socialism the government—not this corporate-controlled government, but a democratically elected government by and for working people—would create the national plan. The government at the highest level could, on the basis of past experience, establish some broad budgetary guidelines and general objectives, but such a plan would have to be elaborated and articulated by involving the workers, consumers, and other stakeholders in different sectors of the economy. Since the nineteenth century such democratic planning has been possible, but today in the electronic age of instant communication and computers it would be much simpler.

Democratically Planning an Economy

We would, no doubt, want to dramatically reduce the military budget, and perhaps spend some of that money on environmentally sustainable mass transit. The people could through their representatives make such big and very general decisions. The government would employ expert budget analysts and statisticians to create specific budgetary guidelines and objectives, always with the understanding that they work for us.

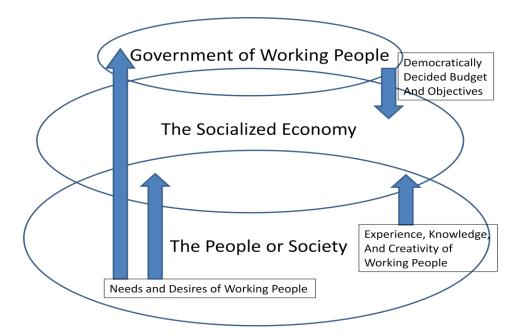
The plant managers—who would themselves by working people—would strive to implement those broad guidelines. To do so, they would call upon the assistance of the plants' workforce and consumers, but might also call on environmentalists to provide advice on how to best run the plant. Since our society would be concerned about justice and equality at every level, civil rights organizations might be asked to comment on employment, promotion wages, and respect in the plant.

The Role of Small Business

Today most small businesses exist within a framework established by the demands of the powerful banks and corporations and by the vicissitudes and vagaries of the market. In a socialist society small businesses would continue to exist, and they would have to be subordinated to the national economic plan, but they would no longer have to worry about the banks and corporations or about the uncertainties of the economy.

Small business could, on the one hand be supported by the government which would also ensure that they pay their taxes, pay living wages, and that they remain small and serve the common good. Certainly small business could not be permitted to grow into corporations which would once again threaten the common welfare as they do today. Yet they would know that the national economic plan had a place for them and that even if some problems should arise, they like other citizens would have a right to health care, education, and a decent life.

How Would a Socialist Society Work?



The graph above is meant to convey in very broad outlines the general conception of a socialist society. Let us clarify a few points here.

- First, the government would be democratically elected by the entire population.
- Second, the entire population through their national or state representatives and through direct participation at the local level would have an opportunity to shape the national plan.
- Third, the socialized economy would still be made up of many different specialized enterprises—everything from mines and forests to fisheries and farms, from hotels and restaurants to computer programming centers and hospitals. The particular issues in each of these sectors would be brought to the table by those who work in them and are impacted by them.
- Fourth, while the national plan would through the national plan set the budgets and goal, working people would be involved in the long term and short term planning and operation of their workplaces. The idea is that socialism would combine representative democracy and

participatory democracy so that all people could be involved in planning and carrying the tasks necessary to create a society that works for the benefit of all.

A Democratic Society

Democratic socialists, such as myself, foresee a society which is a democracy in every sense of the word. Representative institutions, some sort of national congress or parliament, would be necessary because of the size of our country. We believe that various political parties with different platforms would probably compete for leadership of the congress.

We also believe it is important for different groups with particular histories of oppression and exploitation to be able to organize around their own issues. African Americans, Latinos, women, gays and lesbians might want to form social and political organizations to bring their issues to the table in a socialist democracy.

A national representative government would be supplemented and enhanced by democracy at all levels of society, by what has been called participatory democracy. Workers, consumers, and communities could also participate in making decisions at the local and regional level.

Workers Power

"Where do we see such a society in the world today?" you may ask. We don't at present see such a democratic socialist society anywhere, but we do see examples of workers self-organization of the economy. The Mondragón cooperative, a complex of worker-owned and worker-run businesses in the Basque region of Spain, provides one example. We also see such worker self-organization in societies experiencing radical change and social upheaval, such as in Argentina during the economic crisis a few years ago. When bosses there closed factories, workers took them over and rank them. There have been similar experiences in Venezuela where today working class movement struggle for socialism.

The greatest examples of movements for workers power seen in modern history took place during the Russian Revolution of 1917 to the 1920s and

the Civil War in Spain in the 1930s. During both of those experiences, workers created mass movements, formed democratic councils to run the workplace. In Russia the left political parties and the workers' councils created a workers government that held power for a few years, until overturned by Stalin's counter-revolution. We can learn much from such experiences. Still, the American working people will have to construct socialism out of their own history, culture and struggles.

Today as the American people confront the economic and environmental crises and the nation's terrible foreign wars, it often seems hard enough just to win some small reform, much less to change the society. Yet, the truth is, that the problems we face and the reforms for which we fight seem now to be possible only by creating a socialist society. American capitalism, faced with foreign competition and fearing falling profits, has no desire to permit reforms. The Republicans and the Democrats are called upon to impose austerity. The necessary alternative is an independent working people's party fighting for democratic socialism. We have the responsibility to create that alternative.

Appendix I Platform of Dan La Botz – Socialist Party Candidate for U.S. Senate from Ohio, 2010

The Economy and Jobs

The United States government must create a full-employment economy.

The U.S. government or state governments should take over many of the idle plants where ready workforces already exist and turn them to green production.

The U.S. and state government should themselves invest in transformative green infrastructure, a new national transportation system, and a new energy system.

We need government jobs programs to employ the unemployed in socially valuable work such as rebuilding our infrastructure and our aging cities, environmental conservation, and programs such as health and education.

Full employment can be created by shortening the work week, 32 hours work for 40 hours pay with no loss in wages.

The Financial Crisis

Not a penny more for the banks and the bankers! Take over the banks.

The U.S. government should nationalize the banks creating something like a U.S. Credit Union with offices throughout the country providing loans to small businesses, homeowners, and cooperatives.

Low interest loans should be advanced to working people for home improvements, for the purchase of large appliances, and for vacations.

Educational loans would not be necessary because we would tax corporations to pay for free education.

The U.S. Credit Union should deny credit to speculators and gamblers in the markets.

Education

Our country must provide quality education free to all from pre-school through Ph.D., from technical schools to life-long learning. Some U.S. states did this in the 1960s and we could do it again by taxing the corporations.

We can provide quality education for all by taxing the corporations and the very wealthy.

The rich in our country can send their children to private elementary and secondary schools where the class size is 10 to 15 students, such small class size and personal attention should be the goal of public education.

Good schools provide courses in music, art, foreign languages, and physical education, and we must return to that model of a complete and well-rounded public education system.

Teaching is exhausting work and we need to shorten teachers' hours and increase their pay. One should not have to work for 30 years to reach a decent standard of living.

The Public School system can provide alternative models, but vouchers and charter schools drain off the resources of public education without providing either better education or education for all.

Our higher education system has become extremely class-based, with working class students are often limited to the community colleges and the middle class to state universities, while the very wealthy have access to private universities. We must create a system where all have access to quality education at all levels.

Housing

We must build affordable housing in affordable communities. Red-lining, real estate racial steering, inadequate transportation, and other policies of social segregation have divided our country by race and class while at the same time

making housing unaffordable for many. We need quality, affordable housing for all.

A U.S. Credit Union's local offices could provide credit for mortgages at reasonable costs to individuals and families.

We need to construct attractive, comfortable, well-maintained publicly funded or publicly provided housing throughout our cities and suburbs.

Such publicly funded housing, if well done, can include high-rise and low-rise buildings, houses and apartments, and special facilities for assisted living.

The construction of such socially supported housing in significant numbers would lower rents for those in private housing.

Transportation

We must reconstruct our national, state and local transportation systems to serve our goals of full employment and access to jobs, affordable communities, and the building of a green economy. The major transportation systems should be publicly owned, democratically planned and involve workers and consumers in their management to make them more efficient.

We must create a comprehensive national transportation policy to analyze transportation use and restructure transportation to serve the needs of our people. The various kinds of levels have to be coordinated.

We must establish a safe, comfortable, affordable airline service throughout the country without a class seating system and without unreasonable surcharges.

We need a national rapid rail system to move both people goods and people across the country.

We must have cheap, efficient local public transportation systems that serve communities and make it possible for workers to access jobs.

Workers and Unions

Working people in all their great variety from factory and transportation workers to nurses and teachers, from miners and oil workers to professors and scientists form the backbone of this country. Workers should be able to live a decent life without exhausting themselves and destroying their family life.

Wealth in our society should not be skewed in favor of some and against others. We need to increase the power of labor unions because dynamic unions accelerate the redistribution of wealth and lead to greater fairness.

Workers in the United States should in general work fewer hours, receive higher pay, a real living wage, and have healthier and safer working conditions.

We need to insure that all workers after one year of employment receive a four-week vacation every year. Some countries in Europe have had this for decades.

Workers should have adequate paternity/maternity leave at full-pay.

The government and employers should provide child care for all workers with children.

Private pension plans should be eliminated and all workers ensured real social security, that is a government pension which makes possible retirement with dignity, together with free medical care, recreation facilities, and lifelong learning programs.

When workers become unemployed, they should still be guaranteed an income. A guaranteed annual income, an idea put forward by the Democrats in the 1940s and again in the 1960s and won by the United Auto Workers for its members should be a national goal.

Workers and Union Rights

Workers' rights and workers' power stand at the center of our project for making America a just society.

All workers should have the right to form or join a union of their own choosing free from intimidation by the employer or the government.

We must end restrictions on workers' rights to strike, to engage in sympathy strikes, to boycott and to refuse to handle struck goods. (Repeal Taft-Hartley and similar state laws.)

Workers whether in private or public employment should have the right to participate in political activity without restrictions provided that they are not coerced. (Repeal the Hatch Act and similar state laws.)

All workers whether in private or public employment should have the right to engage in concerted activities, including the right to strike, the right to bargain collectively and the right to enter into collective bargaining agreements. (Repeal all state and federal laws that inhibit workers' rights.)

Wherever workers have indicated by a simple majority that they want a union, they should have it without further ado. (Pass the Employee Free Choice Act.)

Rewrite labor law and contracts to eliminate "the management rights clauses" as now established, because they are an obstacle to workers' voices and votes on their life in the workplace.

Civil Rights

African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, Asians, Africans, Arabs and Muslims continue to face racism and discrimination in America. The U.S. government must be made to protect the civil rights of all regardless of national origin, race or ethnicity, religion, language, culture, gender or sexual preference.

Governments at all levels must end racial profiling and police brutality.

We must stop the common practice throughout the country of police shootings of black men.

We must protect gays and lesbians, bi-sexuals and transsexuals from harassment and abuse by anyone.

We must stop the tendency toward anti-Arab and anti-Muslim statements by public officials and the media.

Communities struggling in their own interests must come to see the need of collaboration with others who are fighting for their rights. We must work to bring together these various social movements of peoples who struggle against discrimination in particular areas, into a broad movement of civil rights for all.

Criminal Justice

We have to end the racist and classist prison industrial complex and do away with the death penalty. We need a system of restorative justice.

The criminal justice system is unjust in its treatment of working class and poor people in general and particularly of African Americans and Latinos.

The "war on drugs" has been from the beginning a racist war on black and Latino communities, and it should be ended. Drug trafficking has been tolerated and even promoted by many among the economic elite, ruining communities and then using the criminal justice system against the poor. Drugs should be de-criminalized and medicalized, and drug addicts dealt with as people with a health problem.

The death penalty, a horrible, grotesque and barbaric institution, should be abolished, not only because it has been too often invoked against the innocent, but above all because it is an inhumane and unreasonable punishment. The American Bar Association and the American Law Institute both call for ending the death penalty.

The criminal justice system should be reconceived on the basis of rehabilitating and restoring those convicted of crimes to society as productive citizens, finding them living wage jobs in the employment economy.

Women and the Right to Choose

Women must have control over their own bodies and lives and be able to support their families, raise their children, and lead fulfilling lives.

Women should have full reproductive rights, that is, the right to choose whether or not to have children and the right to raise children in safety, dignity and health.

Women should have the right to choose abortion, including those who receive medical assistance from the government. (We must repeal the Hyde Amendment.)

The government should make contraceptive materials affordable and accessible to all.

If women are to be able raise children in safety, dignity, and health, then we must raise the minimum wage to a living wage.

We need to ensure a guaranteed income for all families, including married/partnered families and women-headed families.

We need paid parenting leave for mothers/fathers during the child's first year of life, such as exists in some other countries.

We must expand public schooling to include quality, full-time childcare from age two to five.

While protecting women workers' and all workers' jobs security, wages, and benefits, we must also create work/family plans that permit flexibility to working parents.

Gay and Lesbian Rights

Equal rights for all means just that. Gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, and transgender (LGBT) people should have the same protections and opportunities as all others in society and in the workplace.

LGBT people should be free from discrimination in housing, employment, education, and every other aspect of our society.

Gay and lesbian couples should enjoy the same marriage rights as straight people.

Immigrant Rights

Most immigrants migrate because of the need for work, and whether or not they have papers, they are not criminals. Millions of immigrants in the United States contribute to our economy and become part of our communities. They must be given full civil and political rights. At the same time, we must change the world's economic disparities that force so many to migrate because of poverty.

Legalize all immigrants who are now living and working in the United States.

End immigrant roundups at the workplace and raids on immigrant homes.

Stop the policy of breaking up immigrant families.

Create immediately enough visas so that immigrants who come to work can enter the country legally.

End guest worker programs that create a second class status for workers.

Immigrants should enjoy full labor, civil, and political rights.

No denial of health, education or social programs to immigrants.

Pass the Dream Act so that immigrant children can go to college.

The Environment

The environmental crisis that threatens our planet can only be stopped by dramatically reducing the use of petroleum and coal. Nor is nuclear power the answer.

The U.S. government must take control of our energy resources such as oil and coal and build a new green economy.

We must take our idle plants and productive capacity and turn them to production for the new full employment green economy.

We must turn from carbon fuels to geothermal, wind turbines, and solar panels.

We should devote resources to conservation measures and finding ways for Americas to live a decent life without squandering energy.

The Wars and Militarism

To pursue a policy of peace in the world, the United States must dismantle the military industrial complex at home and end the wars for resources, markets, and geopolitical advantage abroad.

The United States should end the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan and withdraw immediately from those countries. The U.S. wars in the region do not serve the interest of the American people and they breed anti-Americanism and terrorism.

The U.S. military budget, today \$750 billion dollars should be radically reduced and devoted to social needs at home and abroad.

We must ensure that workers in the military industrial complex find new jobs in a full employment economy. We must carry out a transition that restructures our economy to provide military workers good jobs with equivalent income.

The Middle East: Israel and Palestine

President Obama and previous administrations have stated that Israel's occupation of the Palestinian Territories captured in 1967 must end. But U.S. government policy has subsidized the Occupation and protected Israel from international political anger over its violent and repressive actions. A reversal of U.S. behavior is necessary as the first step towards Middle East peace.

The United States must end its policy of unconditional political, financial and military support for Israel.

A "two-state solution" requires Israel's return to its 1967 borders. Palestine must have an independent state based on contiguous territory with complete sovereignty.

The Israeli-Egyptian blockade of Gaza must end immediately. The United States must drop its position that Hamas is a "terrorist organization" and respect the Palestinian people's freedom to choose their own leaders.

Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem violate international law. The U.S. government should immediately ban the imports of all goods produced in these settlements.

U.S. policy should conform to the principles of human rights and international law, regardless of political pressure by AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) and the Christian religious right.

Rebuilding the Power of the Labor Movement

We must rebuild the workers' movement from below, from bottom to top, so that it can confront and beat the bosses and transform government.

The American labor movement will only be rebuilt through the initiative and the activity of rank-and-file workers. We must recreate the fighting spirit and bonds of solidarity that can make working people the leading force in building a more democratic and egalitarian American society. And make unions a political power once more.

Workers need democracy in the workplace, in the union, and in society. Free and fair elections in unions form one part of those rights, but workers also need the power to control their unions on an on-going and day-to-day basis. Workers need leaders accountable to them. Workers need elected and recallable workplace representatives who fight for them day-in-and-day-out.

Workers will only be able to confront and stop management abuses such as wage-cuts, increases in health care costs, forced over-time, workplace discrimination and undignified treatment when they are prepared to use their economic power and political power.

The rebuilding of the labor movement will take a working class upheaval from below in the forms of strikes, boycotts, civil disobedience, and mass confrontations with power to rebuild the power of unions.

Working people cannot make significant advances as long as they have no political party of their own and remain trapped in the Democratic and Republican parties.

Rebuilding the Social Movements

We will not be able to achieve a more just society unless we build the social movements, above all the labor and civil rights movements. Power yields nothing unless confronted with a demand for justice. Only through a powerful social movement engaged in strikes, protest demonstrations, marches, civil disobedience and the confrontations that force power to succumb to justice will be able to make the United States a more democratic, egalitarian, and just society.

Communities struggling in their own interests must come to see the need of collaboration with others who are fighting for their rights. We must work to bring together these various social movements of peoples who struggle against discrimination in particular areas, into a broad movement of civil rights for all.

Independent Politics

We need an independent, progressive party with an anti-corporate agenda that can be the expression of the social movements and the needs and desires of the American people.

Such an independent party would be made up of labor organizations, women's groups, gay rights organizations, environmental and human rights activists, African American and Latino and other ethnic movements.

Such a party would have an anti-corporate agenda aimed at the transformation of American society into one where all have free health care and education, jobs at living wages, and a genuine environmental program.

We see the forerunners of such a future national party of tens of millions in the Labor Party, the Green Party, the Socialist Party and other progressive parties now raising such a progressive program.

Corporations

The corporations that today dominate our economic, social, cultural and political life have out-lived their usefulness. Just as 150 years ago the slave plantation became an obstacle to our country's development, so today the corporation is the great obstacle that blocks the way to our common prosperity, and like the plantation, it must be abolished. No group of ten or twenty men sitting in a board room should be able to shut down a plant and destroy a community or bankrupt an industry and cripple a state. We as a society must expropriate the corporations and turn them into socially owned, democratically managed enterprises.

Government owned industries and socially owned cooperatives, with goals set democratically by society, production democratically managed by workers, with the input of consumers, and the advice of experts represent the future alternative to corporate domination and capitalism.

Capitalism

The capitalist economy of the United States, dominated by the big banks and multinational corporations, fosters growing disparities between rich and poor, encourages social inequalities such as racism, exploits workers and neglects and abuses the poor. We must create an alternative: a democratic socialist economy where we as people decide our economic priorities and work together provide jobs, health care, education, and a decent life for all.

Socialism

Socialism means the social ownership and control of the nation's large corporations and major industries, a democratically planned economy where the people set the priorities, and where workers and consumers cooperate to realize those goals. Democratic socialism has nothing in common with Soviet-style Communism nor with those Social Democratic parties that merely manage capitalism without transforming it.

Socialism means eliminating the corporation as the dominant institution of our society around which everything is organized and replacing it with collectively owned and democratically managed economic life. Socialism means the nationalization of the "commanding heights of the economy," not the takeover of small businesses.

Socialism means the democratic and collective elaboration and implementation of a plan to meet the needs of society. A planned economy will allow us to eliminate the boom-bust cycle that brings us an economic crisis every few years wrecking the lives of tens of millions.

Socialism will allow us to transform the entrepreneurial impulse and competition so that they serve the common good rather than the individual acquisition of wealth and power.

Socialism does not mean taking away people's personal property or their ability to make decisions about their life. Rather it means eliminating obstacles and expanding opportunities.

Socialism means society taking control of the economy and providing housing, education and health care for all so that people-no longer worried about their economic survival-have more freedom in their personal and social lives.

Appendix II Socialist Party: 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 in which people cooperate at work, at home, and in the community.

Socialism is not mere government ownership, a welfare state, or a repressive bureaucracy. Socialism is a new social and economic order in which workers and consumers control production and community residents control their neighborhoods, homes, and schools.

The production of society is used for the benefit of all humanity, not for the private profit of a few. Socialism produces a constantly renewed future by not plundering the resources of the earth.

Under capitalist and authoritarian "Communist" states, people have little control over fundamental areas of their lives. The capitalist system forces workers to sell their abilities and skills to the few who own the workplaces, profit from these workers' labor, and use the government to maintain their privileged position. Under authoritarian "Communist" states, decisions are made by Communist Party officials, the bureaucracy and the military. The inevitable product of each system is a class society with gross inequality of privileges, a draining of the productive wealth and goods of the society into military purposes, environmental pollution, and war in which workers are compelled to fight other workers.

People across the world need to cast off the systems which oppress them, and build a new world fit for all humanity. Democratic revolutions are needed to dissolve the power now exercised by the few who control great wealth and the government. By revolution we mean a radical and fundamental change in the structure and quality of economic, political, and personal relations. The building of socialism requires widespread

understanding and participation, and will not be achieved by an elite working "on behalf of" the people. 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.

Radical democracy is the cornerstone not only of our socialism, but also of our strategy. Here are the main features of each:

Socialist Society

Freedom & Equality - Democratic socialism is a political and economic system with freedom and equality for all, so that people may develop to their fullest potential in harmony with others. The Socialist Party is committed to full freedom of speech, assembly, press, and religion, and to a multi-party system. We are dedicated to the abolition of male supremacy and class society, and to the elimination of all forms of oppression, including those based on race, national origin, age, sexual preferences, and disabling conditions.

Production For Use, Not For Profit - In a socialist system the people own and control the means of production and distribution through democratically controlled public agencies, cooperatives, or other collective groups. The primary goal of economic activity is to provide the necessities of life, including food, shelter, health care, education, child care, cultural opportunities, and social services.

These social services include care for the chronically ill, persons with mental disabilities, the infirm and the aging. Planning takes place at the community, regional, and national levels, and is determined democratically with the input of workers, consumers, and the public to be served.

Full Employment - Under welfare capitalism, a reserve pool of people is kept undereducated, under-skilled and unemployed, largely along racial and gender lines, to exert pressure on those who are employed and on organized labor. The employed pay for this knife that capitalism holds to their throats

by being taxed to fund welfare programs to maintain the unemployed and their children. In this way the working class is divided against itself; those with jobs and those without are separated by resentment and fear. In socialism, full employment is realized for everyone who wants to work.

Worker & Community Control - Democracy in daily life is the core of our socialism. Public ownership becomes a fraud if decisions are made by distant bureaucrats or authoritarian managers. In socialist society power resides in cooperative enterprises. Community-based worker-managed and cooperatives help provide the flexibility and innovation required in a dynamic socialist economy. Workers have the right to form unions freely, and to strike and engage in other forms of job actions. Worker and community control make it possible to combine life at work, home and in the community into a meaningful whole for adults and children. Girls and boys are encouraged to grow up able to choose freely the shape of their lives and work without gender and racial stereotyping. Children are provided with the care, goods and services, and support that they need, and are protected from abuse.

Ecological Harmony - A socialist society carefully plans its way of life and technology to be a harmonious part of our natural environment. This planning takes place on regional, national, and international levels and covers the production of energy, the use of scarce resources, land-use planning, the prevention of pollution and the preservation of wildlife. The cleanup of the contaminated environment and the creation of a nuclear-free world are among the first tasks of a socialist society.

Socialist Strategy

Socialist Feminism and Women's Liberation - Socialist feminism confronts the common root of sexism, racism and classism: the determination of a life of oppression or privilege based on accidents of birth or circumstances. Socialist feminism is an inclusive way of creating social change. We value synthesis and cooperation rather than conflict and competition.

We work against the exploitation and oppression of women who live with lower wages, inferior working conditions and subordination in the home, in society and in politics. Socialists struggle for the full freedom of women and men to control their own bodies and reproductive systems and to determine their own sexual orientation. We stand for the right of women to choose to have a safe and legal abortion, at no cost, regardless of age, race, or circumstance. Women's independent organizations and caucuses are essential to full liberation, both before and after the transformation to socialism. Women will define their own liberation.

Liberation of Oppressed People - Bigotry and discrimination help the ruling class divide, exploit, and abuse workers here and in the Third World. The Socialist Party works to eliminate prejudice and discrimination in all its forms. We recognize the right of self-defense in the face of attacks; we also support non-violent direct action in combating oppression. We fully support strong and expanded affirmative action programs to help combat the entrenched inertia of a racist and sexist system which profits from discrimination and social division.

People of color, lesbians and gays, and other oppressed groups need independent organization to fight oppression. Racism will not be eliminated merely by eliminating capitalism.

International Solidarity & Peace - People around the world have more in common with each other than with their rulers. We condemn war, preparation for war, and the militaristic culture because they play havoc with people's lives and divert resources from constructive social projects. Militarism also concentrates even greater power in the hands of the few, the powerful and the violent. We align with no nation, but only with working people throughout the world.

Internal Democracy - Socialism and democracy are one and indivisible. The Socialist Party is democratic, with its structure and practices visible and accessible to all members. We reject dogma and promote internal debate. The Socialist Party is a "multi-tendency" organization. We orient ourselves

around our principles and develop a common program, but our members have various underlying philosophies and views of the world. Solidarity within the party comes from the ability of those with divergent views on some issues to engage in a collective struggle towards social revolution. We strive to develop feminist practice within the party.

Cultural Freedom - Art is an integral part of daily life. It should not be treated as just a commodity. Socialists work to create opportunities for participation in art and cultural activities. We work for the restoration and preservation of the history and culture of working people, women, and oppressed minorities.

The Personal as Political - Living under domination and struggling against it exact a personal toll. Socialists regard the distortion of personal life and interpersonal relations under capitalism as a political matter. Socialism must ultimately improve life; this cannot be accomplished by demanding that personal lives be sacrificed for the movement. We cherish the right of personal privacy and the enrichment of culture through diversity.

Electoral Action - Socialists participate in the electoral process to present socialist alternatives. The Socialist Party does not divorce electoral politics from other strategies for basic change. While a minority, we fight for progressive changes compatible with a socialist future. When a majority we will rapidly introduce those changes, which constitute socialism, with priority to the elimination of the power of big business through public ownership and workers' control.

By participating in local government, socialists can support movements of working people and make improvements that illustrate the potential of public ownership. We advocate electoral action independent of the capitalist-controlled two-party system.

Democratic Revolution From Below - No oppressed group has ever been liberated except by its own organized efforts to overthrow its oppressors. A society based on radical democracy, with power exercised through people's organizations, requires a socialist transformation from below. People's organizations cannot be created by legislation, nor can they spring into being only on the eve of a revolution.

They can grow only in the course of popular struggles, especially those of women, labor, and minority groups. The Socialist Party works to build these organizations democratically.

The process of struggle profoundly shapes the ends achieved. Our tactics in the struggle for radical democratic change reflect our ultimate goal of a society founded on principles of egalitarian, non-exploitative and non-violent relations among all people and between all peoples.

To be free we must create new patterns for our lives and live in new ways in the midst of a society that does not understand and is often hostile to new, better modes of life. Our aim is the creation of a new social order, a society in which the commanding value is the infinite preciousness of every woman, man and child.

If you agree with these principles, then we would encourage you to join the Socialist Party.

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So many people have helped that I fear I may have overlooked someone, but know that all of you have my appreciation and my thanks. While many made suggestions about this book, in the end I am the one responsible for the ideas expressed here.



I was born in Chicago, grew up south of San Diego on the U.S. Mexico border, and have lived in Ohio for the last twenty years. As a young man, I was an anti-war activist and then a community and labor organizer. Later in life I became a writer and educator, spending ten years teaching college.

I have continued to be active in the causes of workers and in the civil rights movements of African Americans and Latino immigrants. My wife Sherry Baron and I live in Cincinnati where I teach Spanish at a local elementary school. We have two sons, Traven and Reed, both of whom are in college, one

in New York and one in Illinois. My older son Jake is a musician and actor who lives in New Orleans.

In 2010, concerned about the country's economic crisis, health care, the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the environmental crisis, I decided to run for the Senate as the Socialist Party candidate.

