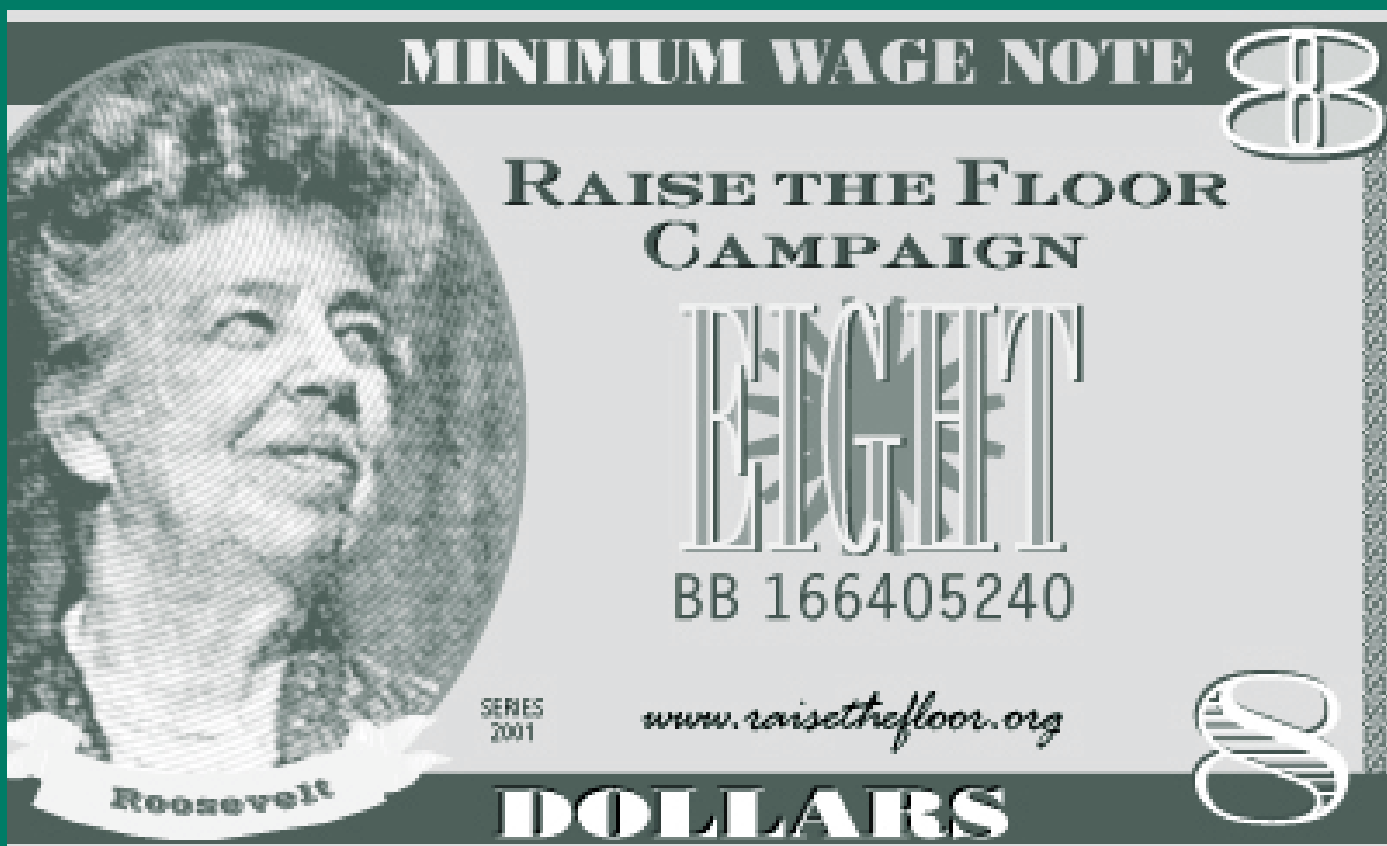


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Raise the Floor Says \$5.15 Is Not Enough

Also Inside:

Susan Crowell on The PATRIOT Act

Hunter Gray on the Native American Struggle Today

Bill Dixon on "Fast Track"

and

The AFL-CIO's Karen Nussbaum reflects on *Nickel and Dime*d

DC/MD/NOVA DSA: DC Domestic Partnership Law to Take Effect

By Bill Mosley

Hundreds of District of Columbia activists recently joined Mayor Anthony Williams, Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton and members of the DC Council to celebrate the removal of Congressional restrictions on the District's domestic partnership program after a decade-long struggle.

Even though the Council passed a 1992 act permitting any unmarried partners—gay or straight—to register with the city (DSA National Vice Chair and DC Councilmember Hilda Mason was one of the original backers), right-wing members of Congress blocked implementation of the program by placing a rider on the District's budget.

The District, like Puerto Rico and other territories, is subject to budgetary and legislative oversight by Congress, despite the fact that the District pays more federal income taxes per capita than any U.S. state but Connecticut. Congress must approve the annual DC appropriations bill, and it uses this power to impose restrictions on the District against the will of its people and elected government. For example, Congress continues to prohibit even local funding of needle exchange programs to prevent AIDS, as well as implementation of a voter initiative to allow the use of marijuana for medical purposes. Gay-bashers on Capitol Hill opposed the partnership program despite the fact that it would cost neither federal nor DC taxpayers a cent; it would merely allow city employees to purchase, at their own expense, health insurance for their partners, and receive official recognition of committed partnerships for things like hospital visitation.

Gay-rights organizations, such as ACT-UP DC and the Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance, and the movement for DC democracy joined together to fight the ban, with DC/MD/NOVA

DSA and its members playing a significant role in the victory. DSA member Judy Nedrow chaired a local commission that developed strategy for the domestic partnership struggle, and Nedrow's partner Chris Riddiough, former DSA Political Director, also played an important role on the commission. Riddiough is also former chair of the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club, a local gay-lesbian Democratic organization instrumental in convincing the District government to take up the issue.

The Stand Up for Democracy in DC Coalition, of which the DSA local is a member, conducted an annual campaign against this and other budget riders, holding rallies and walking the halls of Congress. Several of Stand Up's members were arrested engaging in civil disobedience during congressional votes.


The local campaign finally gained the support of openly gay Rep. Jim

Kolbe (R-Ariz.), who last year was instrumental in having the ban removed.

"This is a real step forward both in the domestic partnership fight and for DC sovereignty," Riddiough said.

Yet this victory is only one step in a longstanding struggle for full political rights for the District. The Stand Up coalition and its allies will continue the fight to win for the District the same rights that all other taxpaying Americans have—full legislative and budget autonomy, as well as voting representation in Congress—so that the annual budget battle with Congress becomes a thing of the past.

Bill Mosley is a member of the Democratic Left editorial committee and DC/MD/NOVA's representative to the Stand Up for Democracy in DC Coalition. For information on the DC democracy struggle, write to bill-mosley@starpower.net.



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DSA NATIONAL OFFICE
180 Varick Street FL 12
New York, NY 10014
212.727.8610
<http://www.dsausa.org/dsa>

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DSA NEWS

► Llewellyn Appointed National Director

The National Political Committee has appointed Frank Llewellyn National Director for a term that will extend at least through January 31, 2003. During the next year the Personnel Committee will review the functioning and organization of DSA's staff and conduct an evaluation of Llewellyn's performance as Acting Director and Director. Llewellyn has served as Acting Director since May 15th of last year.

Frank Llewellyn was a founding member of one of DSA's predecessor organization, DSOC, and worked on its staff for nine years until 1981. He has served in the national leadership of DSA since its formation in several capacities and was a member of the National Political Committee for five years until he resigned to become Acting Director.

"I am thrilled to be able to play such a significant role again after all of these years," he said when the appointment was made during the January meeting of DSA's NPC.

► DSA Wins Funding Exchange Grant

The Funding Exchange has made a \$7800 grant to DSA to support our efforts to affect the TANF (Welfare Reform) Reauthorization Legislation that will be considered by Congress later this year. The Funding Exchange is a national membership organization of publicly supported, community-based foundations dedicated to building a base of support for progressive social change through fundraising for local, national and international grantmaking programs. It supports progressive community-based organizations that address the root causes of social problems.

The Welfare Reform Legislation, passed five years ago, represented a major assault on the poor. The bill (and the expanding economy) succeeded in dramatically reducing caseloads over its first few years. However, the recession has reversed that trend. Many of the people receiving benefits are running up against the time limits established in the original legislation.

There is hope that some of the worst features of TANF will be modified, including provisions affecting immigrants and those in education or training programs. Changes in the time limit provisions, which put so many people at risk, will be much harder to obtain.

Activists around the country are organizing a series of teach-ins and actions at welfare centers. DSA will be organizing an event in Washington later this year.

"We are extremely pleased to receive this support from one of the most respected progressive foundations in the country. As members are all too aware, the bulk of our support is provided by dues and contributions from members; we hope this can be a first step in broadening our funding base," said National Director Frank Llewellyn in announcing the grant to the National Political Committee.

DSA's efforts on TANF Reauthorization is part of its program, adopted at the November National Convention, to address underlying issues that support the low-wage economy.

► DSA Endorses April 20 March on Washington

At a meeting on February 21, the Steering Committee of DSA's NPC voted to endorse the March on Washington called by the National Youth and Student Peace Coalition to protest the "War on Terrorism" and its consequences both at home and abroad (*see back cover for details*).

For a DSA perspective on the Enron crisis, go to:
www.dsausa.org/dsa.html
and click on "A Word from Our National Director"

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\$5.15 an Hour Doesn't Add Up

By Holly Sklar

They work five days a week, often more. They work full time in the richest nation on earth, yet they can't make ends meet.

They can't make ends meet because their wages are too low.

They are health care aides who can't afford health insurance.

They work in the food industry, but depend on food banks to help feed their children.

They are childcare teachers who don't make enough to save for their own children's education...

They care for the elderly, but they have no pensions.

© Excerpt from *Raise the Floor: Wages and Policies That Work*, by Holly Sklar, Laryssa Mykyta and Susan Wefald

A job should keep you out of poverty, not keep you in it. Most Americans believe that. Yet the minimum wage has become a poverty wage instead of an anti-poverty wage. Workers paid minimum wage earn just \$10,712 a year working full time. That's more than a third less than their counterparts earned a third of a century ago, adjusting for inflation. A couple with two children would have to work more than three full-time minimum wage jobs to make ends meet. It just doesn't add up.

The federal minimum wage, first enacted in 1938, was meant to put a firm floor under workers and their families, strengthen the depressed economy by increasing consumer purchasing power, create new jobs to meet rising demand and stop a "race to the bottom" of employers moving to cheaper labor states. President Bush's proposal to let states "opt out" of the federal minimum wage—whenever it's finally raised—would destroy it, taking us back to the pre-New Deal era.

The minimum wage helps offset the lack of bargaining power among the nation's lowest income workers. When the minimum wage floor falls, it drags down average real wages as well.

The real value of the minimum wage peaked in 1968 at \$8.14 per hour (in 2001 dollars). Today, a fourth of the workforce makes under \$8 an hour. They'd all be minimum wage workers in 1968.

Since 1968, worker productivity went up, but wages went down.

Productivity grew more than 75 percent between 1968 and 2001, but hourly wages for average workers were more than one percent lower, adjusting for inflation. Real wages for minimum wage workers were down 37 percent.

If wages had kept pace with rising productivity since 1968, the average hourly wage would have been \$25.39 in 2001, rather than \$14.33. The minimum wage would be \$14.25—not \$5.15. That adds up to an annual difference of nearly \$19,000 for a full-time worker.

Profits also went up, but wages went down. Real domestic corporate profits rose 60 percent between 1968 and 2000, according to the latest adjusted profit figures. The retail trade industry employs more than half the nation's hourly employees paid at or below minimum wage. Retail profits jumped even higher than profits generally—skyrocketing 151 percent.

In 1980, the average CEO at a major corporation made as much as 97 minimum wage workers. In 2000, they made as much as 1,223 minimum wage workers.

The federal minimum wage can and should be increased to \$8 per hour and indexed to inflation. That's barely about the amount a single full-time worker requires to meet basic needs such as food, housing and health care. No one should have wages so low they have to choose between eating or heating, health care or childcare. \$8 just about matches the 1968 minimum wage peak, adjusting for inflation.

Certainly, employers can pay a minimum wage equivalent to what their counterparts paid more than three decades ago, when 2001 was just a movie.

Successful businesses—large and small—have shown that good wages are good business. Higher wages reduce turnover, improve productivity and increase purchasing power. In-N-Out Burger, for example, ranks first among fast food chains in food quality, value and customer service. There are more than 150 In-N-Out Burgers in California, Nevada and Arizona. The starting wage of a part-time worker there is \$8 an hour.

Business can certainly afford a hike in the minimum wage. In *Raise the Floor*, we calculated the direct cost of raising the current minimum wage to \$8, the indirect "ripple effect" of increasing the wages of workers paid at or slightly more than \$8, and the additional costs to the employer of employee benefits and taxes. We found, for example, that the cost of an increase to \$8 represents less than one percent of receipts minus payroll and benefits.

Opponents of minimum wage increases typically claim that small businesses will be unable to compete and they will have to lay off workers and maybe close their doors. When have you heard a chain store executive worry that their new store would drive the local mom and pop store out of business? In reality, small businesses can absorb and benefit from a minimum wage increase just as big busi-



These fake eight dollar bills (the amount of the suggested minimum wage) are one tool the Raise the Floor Campaign uses to get its message out

nesses can. Our research shows that small businesses would not be disproportionately affected by a minimum wage increase.

Minimum wage critics will use any excuse to oppose wage increases. They said that raising the minimum wage would end the economic boom. Now they're saying the minimum wage can't go up because the boom is over. A convenient Catch 22. After the last minimum wage increases in 1996-97, the economy boomed with extraordinarily high growth, low inflation, low unemployment and declining poverty rates—until the Federal Reserve purposefully slowed economic growth by raising interest rates, a mistaken course it belatedly reversed.

In reality, the minimum wage was raised during the last recession in 1990-91 with positive effects. We need to insist that better wages aren't a problem in bad economic times. They are part of the solution. We hear a lot of talk about the importance of consumer spending to economic recovery. Well, consumers can't spend what they don't have. If consumer purchasing power is

at the heart of economic recovery, wages are at the heart of consumer purchasing power. Wage hikes aren't put under the mattress. They get recycled back into the economy.

A January poll of likely voters by Lake Snell & Perry for the Ms. Foundation for Women found that Americans overwhelmingly see raising the minimum wage as key to stimulating the economy. A resounding 77 percent favor increasing the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$8 an hour. The \$8 figure has even more support than increasing the minimum wage to \$6.65.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, every demographic group agrees the minimum wage must be raised. And, an overwhelming 79 percent favor regularly raising the minimum wage to keep up with inflation.

Our focus in *Raise the Floor* is on setting a national floor through national policies such as the federal minimum wage and Earned Income Tax Credit. We emphasize the word *floor*. Today, many states and localities have higher minimum wages, prevail-

ing wages and living wage ordinances, and higher eligibility thresholds for social services. States should be encouraged to reach *higher* than the federal standard, but *not* allowed to engage in a "race to the bottom" by opting out of the federal minimum wage.

The \$8 minimum wage is a long overdue companion to the 8-hour day. It will help reduce poverty for millions of workers and their families. Better wages mean more people will be able to meet their needs without government assistance. But government must do more to assure that everyone can meet their basic needs, whatever their wage.

Millions of Americans are struggling to make ends meet even though they are above the official poverty line. In computing national minimum needs budgets for *Raise the Floor*, we found that families need more than double the official poverty level—sometime much more—to meet basic needs.

In a Ms. Foundation poll, 86 percent said the federal government "has a responsibility to try to do away with poverty." There is strong agreement across all demographic groups. Americans know the federal poverty line is set unrealistically low. In the poll, 49 percent said a family of four needs an income of at least \$45,000 a year to make ends meet; 26 percent said at least \$35,000 and 10 percent said at least \$25,000. By contrast, the U.S. Census Bureau sets the poverty line for a family of four at only about \$18,000.

To assure that all working families can meet their basic needs we should supplement a higher minimum wage with improved childcare, health care and Earned Income Tax Credit (EIC) policies. The EIC should be a supplement to an \$8 minimum wage, not a substitute for it. The EIC should not be a giant taxpayer subsidy to cheap labor businesses that don't want to pay a minimum wage their employees can live on.

When President Roosevelt sent the Fair Labor Standards bill to

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Bush and Ashcroft Unleashed

By Suzanne Crowell

Air Force One had scarcely set down at Andrews Air Force Base before the pressure began. When the President did not return to Washington on September 11th until late in the day, those in the media who speculated on whether the reported phone threat to Air Force One was genuine, or indeed, had ever been made at all, became the recipients of their own threatening phone calls from White House staff. The calls stated that now was not the time to critique the President's performance. When the recipients publicly demurred, they were taken to task in public. The tone of the ensuing months was set early on.

What has transpired since then under the leadership of President Bush and Attorney General John Ashcroft includes sweeping revisions to search and seizure law, dismantling of safeguards against police-state tactics, clampdowns on publicly available information, unilateral reversals of longstanding government policy, and wholesale disregard of the lessons learned from the civil liberties abuses of the McCarthy, civil rights, and Vietnam eras.

The linchpin in the Administration's power grab is the USA PATRIOT Act, which includes a far-reaching "wish list" of the criminal justice, intelligence and counter-intelligence communities. Some of the administration's proposals did not survive the legislative mill, but most did. And in a sleight of hand worthy of the congressional oligarchs of old, the bill voted out of the House Judiciary Committee that represented a compromise, albeit imperfect, with civil liberties groups was summarily trashed and replaced by a bill largely of the Administration's devising.

The government has been able to conduct warrant-less surveillance and

searches of persons suspected of being agents of a foreign government, party, or faction under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) since 1978. Any information gleaned in such warrant-less surveillance could already be used in a criminal trial. FISA surveillance is never revealed to its subject unless a criminal charge is brought. But the USA PATRIOT Act goes beyond FISA and alters funda-

If you are active in the struggle for justice, you had better pick your friends, causes, and activities carefully. . .

mental principles of law in several ways. First, it permits "sneak and peek" searches with a warrant that allow the government to enter your home or office while you are asleep or away, to download your computer, and to remove, alter, or copy papers and other items without the notice required heretofore. The government is not required to tell you at the time or for an indefinite period afterward that it conducted such a search or to list what was found, taken, or copied. This power is not restricted to the investigation of terrorism but can be used in any federal criminal investigation.

Second, the act expands the reach of the CIA to domestic activities. The limitation of the CIA to intelligence-gathering on foreign soil has been a sacrosanct principle since the agency's founding, but the new law allows CIA officers to prepare domestic grand jury subpoenas and interrogation in tandem with the FBI and federal prosecutors, and to use the results thereof.

Third, the government can now forego the bothersome requirement of limiting its searches to those shown to

have links to a terrorist group or act. Instead of acquiring the individual bank records of someone under suspicion, they can requisition the bank's entire database. Ditto for phone company, credit card, hospital, university, hotel or motel, public library, or company records. All they need show is that the information is needed for a foreign intelligence investigation.

In the meantime, Attorney General Ashcroft has proceeded to erode the nation's civil liberties on a number of other fronts. He based the indefinite detention of hundreds of persons of Arab descent on the assertion that terrorist plots are like a "mosaic," the full extent and import of which cannot be determined until all the pieces are assembled.

Federal courts around the country apparently bought that argument and authorized wholesale roundups of alleged "material witnesses," who were then held secretly without benefit of counsel for months. None of those imprisoned in the roundup have been found to have terrorist links. So far, the only person charged with a crime connected to September 11th was already in custody prior to the attack. Ashcroft openly defended the massive preventive detention on the grounds of forestalling future attacks, upending the FBI's stated policy of conducting investigations only of those whom they had reason to believe had actually violated or planned to violate the law, rather than conducting speculative arrests.

In a startling tandem move, Ashcroft also decided that the government would eavesdrop on attorney-client conversations without court permission where it has a "reasonable suspicion" that an exchange of information would occur about a future terrorist act. Previously, it took a judge

to approve such eavesdropping, and the government had to show that criminal activity was occurring or was about to occur. Ashcroft's edict brought a rebuke from the American Bar Association.

Also upsetting to the ABA was the Administration's notion that foreign nationals alleged to be terrorists should be tried before military tribunals without the due process protections required of the nation's courts generally, even courts martial. Solicitor General Theodore Olson warned the ABA against advocating "inflexible" conditions that could tie the Presidents' hands in the war on terrorism, according to the Associated Press. The ABA voted anyway to recommend that the tribunals at least proceed with due process rights for the defense.

Perhaps there's only one step left, a step hinted at by respected *Washington Post* writer Walter Pincus, who reported that the FBI is frustrated by the refusal of some detainees to talk and is considering "using drugs or pressure tactics such as those employed occasionally by Israeli interrogators.... Another idea is extraditing the suspects to allied countries where security forces sometimes employ threats to family members or resort to torture."

The Administration itself has vowed to zip its own lip. After September 11, government information available for years on the web disappeared, incidentally sparing a lot of polluters and other corporate wrongdoers damaging public exposure. On November 1, President Bush sealed all presidential records since 1980 (the first year the records were covered by a new disclosure law), presumably to protect members and staff of his administration who also served Ronald Reagan—for example, Vice President Dick Cheney. Even worse, on October 12, Ashcroft ordered all federal agencies to withhold information requested under the Freedom of Information Act whose disclosure "might implicate commercial and personal privacy interests." Such interests

have been the subject of numerous press exposes of public and private misbehavior based on FOIA documents over the last several years.

All of this and more is justified as essential to the fight against terrorism. Terrorists have certainly struck some deadly and horrific blows at US embassies, military installations, and now the World Trade Center. But the Justice Department has attempted to make the picture look even worse. After examining the Department's annual reports, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* asserted that "the Department of Justice has overstated its record of arresting and convicting terrorists for years, inflating the numbers it gives Congress with garden variety crimes that have no connection to terrorism." A typical example cited was when a drunken airline passenger was alleged to be a "domestic terrorist" at sentencing by the San Francisco US Attorney's office. That office led in such characterizations from 1998-2001, when it was headed by then-US Attorney Robert S. Mueller, now head of the FBI.

Will the new measures affect you? If you are active in the struggle for justice, you had better pick your friends, causes, and activities carefully, according to an analysis by OMB Watch (see

www.ombwatch.org). Just as FISA was used in the 1980s to spy on the perfectly legal activities of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), there are myriad ways to come afoul of the new anti-terrorist regime in Washington, from being in a demonstration in which someone unknown to you trashes a window or resists police, to participating in a sitdown strike, to unwittingly aiding a person or organization associated with someone suspect, etc. The history of suppression of dissent in this country, particularly during times of perceived threat, is replete with examples of government misconduct, and even when such conduct is eventually called to account by the courts, the damage is often done—the protest is stymied, the activists have already been immobilized, or the organization is destroyed. The one lesson we have learned is that new powers will be used in ways even their proponents never dreamed of, and those given untrammelled authority to wield them will eventually abuse them.

Suzanne Crowell is a DSA member in Washington, DC, and a member of the steering committee of the Fund for the Fourth Amendment.



The Native American Struggle: One Century Into Another

By Hunter Gray



I come out of a racially and culturally mixed background. My father was an essentially full-blooded Indian and my mother was an Anglo from an old Western American “frontier” family. Our identity has always been on the Native side. I grew up in Northern Arizona and Northwestern New Mexico, where our family was extensively involved in Southwestern social justice campaigns and has always had a very close involvement with the regional Indian nations.

Every Native nation, whatever the particular nature of its geographical proximity to the mainline and essentially dominant society, is directly and consistently and adversely affected by capitalism. Increasing numbers of Indian people, while always maintaining their fundamental place and bond within their respective tribes, are being drawn out and onto the rough and rocky trail of the working class. The really meaningful self-determination of Native people, genuine respect for Native cultures, effective protection of Native land and water and other resources, and maximum well-being of the Native people, will certainly be very strongly enhanced in a democratic socialist context.

Almost 80 million Native people have died in the

Western Hemisphere as a result of the European incursion. In addition, Euro-American governments, especially that of the United States, have made every effort—quite unsuccessfully—to assimilate Indians in the socio-cultural sense. The US census of 2000 indicates that 2.4 million people identified themselves as Native Americans, up 25 percent since 1990. This is a clear and unequivocal statement of basic Indian identity—although almost all of these would be of some mixed ancestry, a very common situation throughout Indian country in this day and age. (In addition, slightly over four million other people indicated some Indian ancestry—but this category is not accepted by many Native people as indicative of basic Native identity.)

There are almost 600 tribal societies in the United States that are rightly perceived by their members, though not by most Anglos, as sovereign nations. About two-thirds of our people are from “Federally-recognized” tribes, covered by treaties and/or other special Federal ties, and hold about 55 million acres of reservation land. Also, 40 million acres have been set aside for Alaskan Natives under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971. If physically resident on their

Indian lands, Federal Indians are eligible for Indian trust services, such as they are: health, education, welfare, socio-economic development, and criminal justice. The other one-third, mostly in the east, are not Federal Indians, receive no special services, and, in most cases, have no reservation land. In a few instances, they may receive minimal Indian services from the state in which they reside. "Urban Indians"—more than half of all US Native Americans—receive virtually no Federal Indian services, even if they are from Federally-recognized tribes.

Despite several centuries of physical genocide, forced removal and relocation, and attempted socio-cultural genocide designed to secure remaining Indian land and resources; despite racism and cultural ethnocentrism; despite the pressure of the urban/industrial juggernaut, so many of whose values run counter to those of the Indians; and despite mixed blood and biculturalism, Indian tribal nations, Indian cultures, and Indian people are very much around. The commitment to a cohesive family and clan—to one's tribe (essentially one big family)—remain strong, as do the basic values inherent in tribal cultures: strong religiousness; a pervasive identification with the whole Creation; a belief that there is no coincidence or happenstance in the Universe; an essentially communalistic view of land use; democracy; egalitarianism; classlessness. And very much undergirding and pervading the ethos of all tribal cultures is the ancient and enduring principle of tribal—mutual—responsibility: the tribe has an obligation to the individual and the individual has an obligation to the tribe. If these two conflict, the tribal perspective prevails, but there are always clearly defined areas of individual and family autonomy into which the tribe cannot intrude.

Euro-American theft of Native land and disruption of the traditional tribal economies, coupled with consistent governmental failure to live up to solemn treaty obligations (part of the "Supreme Law of the Land") created a perpetual economic depression for Indian people long before the Industrial Revolution. As a people, Native Americans have been consistently burdened with the highest unemployment and the worst economic deprivation, the poorest health conditions and the lowest life expectancy. The great social upheavals of the 1960s, which had numerous Indian manifestations—Wounded Knee in 1973 and many other examples—saw some promising legislation and hopeful policy trends. But the election of Ronald Reagan was a great step backwards. Although there has since been spotty progress on a few fronts, the promising momentum of more than a generation ago has not returned.

Although most Native Americans were not granted citizenship until 1924, the right to actually register and vote remained generally very much inhibited—via terror and fear, literacy tests and related devices, and even some state laws explicitly preventing Native voting in state and local elec-

tions—until the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. This opened the door to widespread Native voter registration and political action. However, there is still much Indian wariness of voting in the "white man's elections." Aside from a few geographical areas—parts of Alaska, Arizona, New Mexico, and South Dakota—the Indian vote in state and Federal elections is often relatively small. It is also generally hard for any Indian candidate to draw much Anglo support. The Democratic Party has more Native support than the Republican, but most Indians are not especially enthusiastic about either.

Native Life Today

Whether Federally-recognized or not, reservation or urban, the Native American situation is characterized by severe economic marginality and frequently outright desperation. Unemployment on the reservations, always high,

is now between 50 and 90 percent. Urban Indian unemployment stands between 50 and 60 percent, with many additional people working only part time at odd jobs and day labor. The average life expectancy for an Indian person is six to ten years below that of other Americans, with the Native

health situation marked by the highest diabetes, tuberculosis, alcoholism, and suicide rates in the US. The death rate for Native people via alcoholism is seven times the national average. Alcohol frequently figures into the extremely high Indian suicide rate, which is almost 75 percent above that of all other races and two to three times higher than the national average for Native males between fifteen and thirty-four years of age.

To some extent, the extremely deplorable Native situation is part of the overall commission/omission campaign against Americans of "the fewest alternatives." But in the case of the tribes on some western reservations, the special motivation is obviously to force these tribes, whose land includes very substantial "energy resources," into collaboration with the thoroughly exploitative oil and mining corporations. This tactic has old roots. A half-century ago, the primarily Eastern-owned oil and mining corporations, utilizing their considerable influence with the ever-obliging US Department of Interior (which contains the Bureau of Indian Affairs), began to systematically maneuver their way onto Indian lands. As the 1950s progressed, the corporations—whose royalties to the Indians have been modest at best—entrenched themselves in Indian country with uranium as a major target. They mushroomed like the clouds produced by their explosive offspring at Desert Rock, Nevada, a prime nuclear site. The fallout from Desert Rock, eventually leaving

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The Native American situation is characterized by severe economic marginality and frequently outright desperation.

The Native American Struggle (cont.)

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a trail of death in Northern Arizona and the southern portions of Nevada and Utah, has affected Anglo, Indian, and Chicano alike, and has struck down rancher, farmer, soldier, herdsman, hunter, and worker. This particular situation and the great anger emanating from it have never really been publicized.

Much less known nationally has been the predominately Native situation on and immediately adjacent to the reservations. Many, many hundreds of Indian uranium workers—mostly Navajo, as well as some Laguna tribesman in north central New Mexico—have now died because of both the inherently and insidiously destructive nature of uranium and the corporations' lack of meaningful safety procedures. Given the remoteness of much of the Navajo country especially—it is bigger than the state of West Virginia with relatively few roads—it is likely that the death count is considerably higher than any formal records indicate. Most of these deaths have been from lung and stomach cancer. Some authorities predict that virtually all of those involved in uranium mining, milling and refining will eventually die from those or closely related causes. The very air over much reservation land has been poisoned by uranium and other energy industries. The random dumping of uranium wastes has produced dangerously high radioactivity levels in Indian water supplies—killing people, livestock, and wildlife. The life span of uranium's "ghost dance spirit" ensures that this multi-faceted ghoulish legacy will last for several thousand years. In related catastrophes, coal mining carves the earth and erodes most lungs; hard-rock metal mining gnaws all lungs and vitals and its smelters and refineries destroy any vegetation. Meanwhile, despite the profound contradictions and spasms within the capitalist economic system, the expansion efforts of mining and other resource corporations continue. Increasing Native opposition to this deadly incursion has mounted steadily, with some people feeling that resource development should be very carefully done under the communalistic auspices of the tribes themselves and others being against any mining whatsoever.

In the waning days of the 20th Century, a new front opened. The Federal government began pressing many tribes to serve as dumping grounds for deadly nuclear waste. This is being resisted by Native people and their allies with rapidly mounting and sharply increasing vigor and militancy.

As for the casinos, outsiders often see the relatively recent development of over three hundred of these establishments in Indian country as a much more positive and beneficent economic phenomenon than it is. The cold reality is that, while the casinos have helped the economic picture of the tribes involved to a minor extent, they have also engendered no small amount of corruption, skim-offs from outsiders, and much venomous intra-tribal factionalism. In addition, since Federal labor laws do not cover tribes, it has been very difficult for almost all tribal casino employees to unionize—and pay and conditions are

often extremely poor. Furthermore, however slowly, the states themselves are beginning their own legalization of non-Indian casino gambling.

Our Demands

From a Native American perspective, these basic issues stand very much to the fore:

- Federal adherence to treaty and related obligations. Treaties between the United States and the Indian nations are (however occasionally mangled by the Federal government) part of "the Supreme Law of the Land"—completely in the context of Article 6, Section 2 of the US Constitution. Although Congress ended treaty-making with the tribal nations in 1871, the hundreds of treaties then in existence continue with full legal validity.
- Federal protection of Native land, water, and other natural resources—and substantial Federal funding to build back the badly shrunken reservation land base.
- Federal recognition of the non-Federal tribes. This was supposed to have been effected by the 1921 Snyder Act, which guaranteed Federal Indian services to all Native Americans in the US—but the Act's coverage and Indian services were restricted immediately to only those Federally-recognized Indian people resident on reservations.
- Removal of the Bureau of Indian Affairs from the corporate-dominated Department of Interior and its elevation to cabinet status. The BIA is presently under very heavy fire from the tribes and their advocates for massive mismanagement of Native trust funds and the mishandling of other trust responsibilities.
- Substantial Federal funds for Indian-controlled and Indian-directed programs on reservations, in non-reservation rural settings, and in urban areas. The 1975 Indian Self-Determination Act involving Federal reservations is a promising first step.
- Substantial Federal funding for tribally-owned and tribally-controlled development of natural resources and other economic programs.
- Correction and reinterpretation of the 1988 Indian Gaming Act to allow tribes to operate their casinos without non-tribal—e.g., state—interference. As it stands, the Act and a subsequent 1996 Supreme Court decision (*Seminole*) force tribes to reach agreements with states, thus undercutting *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832), the key case blocking state jurisdiction over Indian tribes.
- Establishment of full tribal civil and criminal jurisdiction on Indian lands. Most of this is now held by the Federal government.
- Cessation of Federal and state attacks on Native activists

and immediate freedom for persons such as Leonard Peltier.

- Elimination of racism and cultural ethnocentrism wherever they may exist. These are critical issues for Native people in any setting, but are frequently—and often brutally—of particular importance in police, employment, housing, and education situations involving urban Indians.

None of these measures will come into existence easily. The enemies of the Native American people are many: the corporations; much of the national government, regardless of administration; state governments almost totally; and a plethora of Anglo “backlash” organizations. These latter are racist groups that seek to end the Federal obligation to the Indian tribes and to prevent anything which would be, from an Indian standpoint, relatively successful land-claims settlements, as well as ending the protection of treaty-based Native hunting and fishing rights. And, in the final analysis, the basic goals of all of the enemies of the Indian people are—as ever—control of Native land, Native water, and Native natural resources.

Indians and Socialism

Both the Industrial Workers of the World in the 1910s and 1920s (its martyred Cherokee executive board member and organizer, Frank H. Little, lynched at Butte in 1917, should always be well remembered) and its radical relative, the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers in the Rocky Mountains following World War II, did have very substantial grassroots Indian involvement. Significantly, each of these visionary organizations was characterized by minimally rigid ideology, a vigorously democratic ethos, and an extremely strong and tangible commitment to full rights for all minorities.

But, frankly, there really hasn't been much effort on the part of American radical organizations to do more than pay lip service to Indian rights. Too often, when they've tried to do more, they've failed to understand, or even try to understand, the uniqueness of the Native aboriginal/legal situation as well as the primary commitment to tribe and tribal culture and overall Indian identity. Some non-Indian radicals impress Native people as being too similar to the wrong kind of Christian missionaries: ethnocentric and dogmatic, self-righteous, and sweetly conniving. Indians need dependable and supportive non-Indian allies.

In fairness, Indian people are sometimes too reluctant to listen to worthwhile ideas if they come from non-Indians and are frequently too wary of entering into association with them. Many fear that alien ideas and associa-

tions could somehow threaten their aboriginal identity. Growing numbers of Native people, however, are becoming aware that that essential of tribalism, “an injury to one is an injury to all,” has to be extended to the dispossessed of all humanity and that loss of socio-cultural identity will not occur in the framework of healthy political association and coalition. The multi-ethnic, anti-nuclear, direct-action groups, involving many Indians (especially in the West), represent a significant step, as does the consistently on-going intertribal and multiracial international effort to free Leonard Peltier. The Nader/LaDuke presidential campaign stimulated significant Indian interest and support since it conveyed clear empathy with the Native situation and because Winona LaDuke is, of course, a Minnesota Ojibway.

Non-Indian radicals ought to be aware by now that it takes much more than mechanical arrangements and presumably altruistic politicians to build and maintain bona fide humanistic socioeconomic democracy, especially in a predominantly urban/industrial context. They can learn much from the First People about faithful commitment to economic communalism, democracy and classlessness; to a practical recognition of the spiritual foundations and interdependence of every component of the Creation; and to a very fundamental ethos which, despite all of the surrounding temptations and vicissitudes, continues to produce Native people whose primary commitment is to serve their communities rather than simply serving themselves.

Hunter Gray (Hunterbear), who presently lives and works in Idaho, has been active in Native rights, radical unionism, and civil rights activism since the mid-1950s. He is the author, under the name John R. Salter, Jr., of Jackson, Mississippi: An American Chronicle of Struggle and Schism, and of numerous articles on social justice.

BERNARD BACKER

Long time activist Bernard Backer died after a long illness in early February. Backer, who was active in the old Socialist Party, was a founding member of the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, one of DSA's two predecessor organizations. Backer served in the national leadership of DSOC and DSA during the 1970's and 1980's, and worked to build locals in Nassau County, NY and Princeton, NJ. Backer was also extremely active in the Workmen's Circle serving in several leadership positions including the presidency.

The family has asked that donations be made to DSA or to the New Jersey Geriatric Center of the Workmen's Circle in Elizabeth, New Jersey (225 W. Jersey Street) in lieu of flowers. Tax-deductible donations may be made to DSA Fund, 180 Varick Street, 12th fl., New York, NY 10014.

The Not-So-Fast Track: Derailing Bush's Trade Agenda

By Bill Dixon

Here's the deal on Fast Track. The War on Terrorism changes everything, so let's put partisanship aside for the sake of the national interest. That's why the Bush Administration is seeking renewed Fast-Track authority for trade agreements. Now more than ever, opening up foreign markets by promoting free trade is vital to our long-term strategy for national security. We need to unite behind the Administration's effort to maintain US leadership on globalization, even if it means temporarily losing a few jobs to foreign competitors.

Got that? Good. Now, here's the deal on steel. The War on Terrorism changes everything, so let's put partisanship aside for the sake of the national interest. That's why the Bush Administration is imposing thirty-percent tariff protections for the US steel industry. Now more than ever, protecting key domestic industries from foreign competition is vital to our long-term strategy for national security. We need to unite behind the Administration's effort to protect American jobs in the steel industry, even if it means temporarily suspending US leadership on free trade.

Confused? Well, you're not alone. With its narrow win on Fast-Track authority last December in the House of Representatives, and with its dramatic move against steel imports this March, the Bush Administration has managed to confound, alienate, and jeopardize an extraordinary range of interests on both sides of the trade issue. Progressives should take note. Thanks to the Administration's fumbling, the cause of "free trade," and especially its Republican variant, is at least as vulnerable today as it was before 9/11, and maybe more so.

Conventional wisdom says that presidents get what they want during

wartime, particularly in the domain of foreign policy. But this assumes that the Administration knows what it wants. And that is no small assumption to make about Bush's weirdly retro-

Thanks to the Administration's fumbling, the cause of "free trade," and especially its Republican variant, is at least as vulnerable today as it was before 9/11, and maybe more so.

grade trade strategy. Superficially, Bush sounds a lot like his predecessor on trade; but deep down Bush and friends are throwbacks who prefer a more imperial, Reaganesque notion of globalization that is more unilateral in design and more directly driven by US military and business interests.

The problem, of course, is that the world has actually changed a bit in the past twenty years. Global capitalism today is no longer even remotely bounded by US hegemony. Neither do many ordinary Americans believe globalization to be unambiguously "in the national interest." So the Bush team is learning the hard way that free trade remains perilous ground, as both policy and politics, even as they brazenly take political advantage of the horrors of 9/11. The result is not one bad trade strategy but several driven by cross-purposes.

True, Republican demagoguery over 9/11 worked well enough back in December, when the House by a single vote renewed Fast-Track authority for President Bush. Fast-Track authority allows presidents to send trade legislation to Congress for an up or down vote without the possibility of amendment. The idea is to insulate trade deals

from special interests and back room horse-trading by making them impossible to change once submitted to Congress by the president. Fast Track had been routinely granted to every president since Nixon until 1997 and 1998, when House Democrats twice mobilized to deny it to President Clinton. Clinton's Fast-Track defeats marked a turning point in the trade debate. They also revealed the growing strength of a rejuvenated AFL-CIO, which had rallied magnificently against the measure and in doing so set the stage for labor's decisive participation in the Seattle WTO protests of 1999.

No doubt it was with these events in mind that the Bush Administration took office seeming to harbor only faint interest in Fast Track—or, as they tried to rename it, "trade promotion authority." So skittish was the Bush camp on trade that there was even early talk about not filling the post of US Trade Representative (USTR) and leaving the work of trade negotiation to be divided between the Commerce Department and the National Security Adviser. When Robert Zoellick eventually became USTR, he found himself crowded out of the Administration's debate over trade policy by the unilateralist camp led by Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Rice. Zoellick had to push hard to get Fast Track back on the agenda. And not quite three months after 9/11, he got his way.

The Fast-Track vote would have been lost without the 9/11 rhetoric, and was very nearly lost despite it. In the closing moments of the vote, Republicans finally secured the last minute vote-switch of Rep. Jim Demint (R-SC) by promising to scrap a Clinton trade accord on textile imports from the Caribbean. The

DeMint deal effectively raises the cost of exporting textiles to the US from poor countries, and will likely transfer much of that increase into the pockets of a handful of textile producers in a few southern states. Let's recall that the entire rationale behind Fast Track is that it keeps trade agreements from becoming captive to parochial back room deals that ultimately undermine US credibility with trading partners. Yet to keep the Fast-Track vote from derailing, the

Administration sunk to striking exactly that sort of bargain, all at exorbitant cost to developing nations in the Caribbean.

After the House vote, Bush urged the Senate to take swift action to vote likewise, which it did not do. The Senate is historically more pro-trade than the House, and will in all likelihood pass Fast Track eventually. But following Tom Daschle's lead, the Democrats have kept Fast Track on hold as a bargaining chip, demanding (for starters) increased funding for job-training and support for firms threatened by cheap imports (aka Trade Adjustment Assistance). Daschle and company have so far failed to link Fast Track to increased foreign aid and international labor rights. Still, the Democrats' demand for job-training funding draws an important contrast between two rival versions of free trade, particularly since the Bush budget this fall proposed—incredibly—cuts in federal job-training programs, this despite high unemployment amid a long and



A "Fast Track" Attack on America's Values

The heading of a Public Citizen ad opposing the granting of Fast Track authority, which appeared in the New York Times and the Washington Post

severe economic recession.

The Administration did get it right when it came to the steel crisis, sort of. In the face of a surge of cheap imports, rising health costs for retirees, falling steel prices abroad, and a recession at home, the US steel industry has been staggering since 1998. One third of US steel firms have gone bankrupt in that time, leaving tens of thousands of workers out of jobs. The tariffs will slow the industry's bleeding, but broader structural problems continue to threaten it with extinction. The Administration has promised no action on the skyrocketing health care costs for retirees, and neither has it made any commitment to aid the restructuring of the industry either at home or internationally. The steel crisis is yet one more vivid example of why laissez-faire globalization cannot and will not work. The same goes double for the quaintly unilateralist version favored by Bush. Without greater government planning and intervention within and between the advanced economies, US steel will

remain in crisis, and the US economy as a whole will run the risk of a dangerous trade war with Europe and Japan.

What this means is that certain post-9/11 reports of the death of the fair-trade movement have been greatly exaggerated. Far from having been trampled by war-fever and patriotic frenzy, the US left remains well positioned to keep globalization off the Fast Track. Given the fundamental confusion and shortsightedness of the Bush trade agenda, it is no wonder why the free-traders are worried.

Bill Dixon is formerly of Chicago DSA and has recently returned to Albany, NY, where he finds the level of class consciousness to be somewhat less advanced. He studies political theory at the University of Albany."

Researcher seeks personal accounts of creative, innovative projects conducted by locals and/or international unions (1998 to the present) for inclusion in new book, *MORE Robust Unionism*.

Please contact DSA member Art Shostak at shostaka@drexel.edu, or, 610-668-2727. He seeks interviewees in the next three months in Boston, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, New Orleans, New York, and San Francisco, but he can conduct his short interview over the internet or phone as well.

Reflections on Nickel and Dimed: Earning Respect for Women Workers

By Karen Nussbaum

Years ago I met a woman struggling to make ends meet on her low-wage, humiliating, dead-end job. “Who do you turn to when you have problems on the job?” I asked. “My mother,” she answered. No union, community agency, women’s organization or political leader came to mind. I was surprised until I came to learn that in a world where collective power is rare, workers have a painfully constricted view of the options for change.

I thought of this woman when I read *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*. Barbara Ehrenreich’s insightful best-seller takes us on a sojourn through low-wage women’s work in America. She describes with jangling clarity details of the work life of the working poor, a distressingly large sector of the workforce. Earning only enough to pay bills week to week, these millions of workers fall off the ledge when anything unexpected comes up: a toothache, a flat tire, a kid with a problem in school, a bad landlord. Comfortable middle class readers end the book asking, “How do they do it?” Ehrenreich admits she doesn’t really know. She “cheated”—she was in good health and had insurance; she had a car; she had enough money for a security deposit on an apartment. Some of her co-workers worked through sprained ankles, lived in vans and went without meals.

The recession on the heels of September 11th only magnifies the problems. Hundreds of thousands of women in jobs like those Ehrenreich held—hotel maids, food service workers and retail clerks—are out of work with little or no help from the federal government in extending and expanding unemployment insurance.

In my experience, the strains Ehrenreich describes are not reserved for women in the high-turnover jobs



Low-wage women workers are the sector of the workforce most eagerly looking to unions as a solution.

she took. Much of “women’s work” requires feats of social engineering. I met a secretary with fourteen years experience, the single mother of three, who didn’t have enough money in her monthly budget to buy a pack of gum. A mother of two with a new full-time job could afford to get either health insurance or pay for child care—she chose health insurance, and had her seven year-old take care of her five year-old before and after school. A hospital worker with no health insurance had a heart attack. Within months she was back working three part-time jobs to pay off \$60,000 in hospital bills. A middle-aged flight

attendant shared an apartment with three other women. “I’ll never be able to retire,” she said.

Workers believe they deserve better. According to a 2001 AFL-CIO survey, “Workers’ Rights in America,” a cross section of workers believes they are entitled to basic rights: 87% believe there should be a “living wage”; 85% support job security unless the employer has a good reason for termination; 82% believe employers should provide education and training. And virtually all workers believe it is essential or very important to protect the following rights: 97% for equal treatment regardless of race or ethnicity; 95% for equal pay for women; 96% not to be sexually harassed; 92% for equal treatment regardless of age.

Workers see the gaps between what they should expect and what they can expect: only 14% say rights are already protected enough; 63% don’t trust much in employers to treat employees fairly; and 57%—up 10 points since 1996—say management has too much power compared with workers.

How to bridge the gap between the power of management and the dismal working conditions of workers? As it turns out, low-wage women workers are the sector of the workforce most eagerly looking to unions as a solution.

More women than men have joined the labor movement every year of the last twenty years; union election campaigns where a majority of the workforce is women are more likely to win; women are more likely to say they would join a union tomorrow if they had a chance, especially young women; and women are more likely to side with workers over management in a dispute.

We need only look at the big

organizing wins of the last few years to confirm the statistics. Consider health care workers, including the 74,000 home health aides in Los Angeles who joined SEIU for the biggest organizing victory since the sit-down strikes of the 1930s, hotel and restaurant workers, and light manufacturing—all predominantly women's jobs.

pledged to invest more resources in organizing, to use union power and influence to make organizing more possible, and to take steps to change the environment for organizing.

Progressives can help change the environment by lending support when workers organize. Winning a union is a community affair, and members of a

Progressives can help change the environment by lending support when workers organize. Winning a union is a community affair.

But organizing faces enormous resistance. Kate Bronfenbrenner of Cornell points out flagrant abuses of workers' rights by management in a study published in 2000. Among other forms of intimidation, employers illegally fire union supporters in 31% of organizing campaigns; and half of employers threaten to shut down the company if employees organize. Fierce employer opposition and wholly inadequate labor laws keep the gains of unions modest.

Unions must do a better job, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney acknowledged last December at the AFL-CIO Convention: "The American labor movement is failing to help new members organize at anywhere near the level we need to—and this failure must be addressed...or the future of this federation is at stake." The Convention

community can hold employers accountable by participating in Voice@Work campaigns (see www.afl-cio.org/voiceatwork/index.htm).

The need for unions for low-wage women won't be going away anytime soon. "What surprised and offended me most about the low-wage workplace," Ehrenreich writes, "...was the extent to which one is required to surrender one's basic civil rights and—what boils down to the same thing—self-respect." Any organizer will tell you that the desire for respect is at the heart of every organizing campaign. And it will take more than Mom's help to get it.

Karen Nussbaum is the director of the AFL-CIO Working Women's Department.

\$5.15 Doesn't Add Up

continued from page 5

Congress in 1937—with its provisions for a minimum wage, overtime pay and restrictions on child labor—he said that America should be able to give working men and women "a fair day's pay for a fair day's work."

When workers are not paid a fair day's pay they are not just underpaid—they are subsidizing employers and stockholders. It's time for that subsidy to end.

Holly Sklar is the coauthor of Raise the Floor: Wages and Policies That Work For All Of Us and Streets of Hope: The Fall and Rise of an Urban Neighborhood, and author of Chaos or Community? Seeking Solutions Not Scapegoats for Bad Economics.



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National Youth and Student Peace Coalition

CALL TO ACTION

It's time for all those who believe in and still cherish democracy, freedom and equality to demand accountability from government officials and

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- An end to the degrading and secret imprisonment of immigrants.
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HOSTING GROUPS: National Youth and Student Peace Coalition, National Coalition for Peace and Justice, 9-11 Emergency National Network, NYC Labor Against War.

Young Democratic Socialists, DSA's youth section, is a member of the National Youth and Student Peace Coalition. DSA endorses this event and encourages members to participate in and support it.

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Democratic Socialists of America
180 Varick Street, 12th Floor
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Fax 212-727-8616
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