Well over 10 million people participated in the global day of action against the war on February 15, over a million in the United States alone. The size of some of the protests — 2 million in Rome, 1 million in London, 250,000 in Melbourne — almost matched their geographic breadth. From Islamabad to McMurdo Station in Antarctica, from Buenos Aires to Singapore, seemingly disparate communities took to the streets together to prevent a war.

It remains to be seen if they have succeeded. Bush is still trying to wrangle a Security Council decision in favor of war. His new U.N. resolution is chilling, consisting of only one operative line: “The Security Council decides that Iraq has failed to take the final opportunity afforded to it by resolution 1441.” British Prime Minister Tony Blair, meanwhile, has been placed over a political barrel. A Minister of Parliament in Blair’s own party told the UK Guardian, “The government no longer speaks for its constituency. If Blair takes us into the war we will launch a movement in the Labour party to indict him.”

Local communities in the U.S. are using their democratic institutions to register dissent. Los Angeles recently became the 107th city or county in the U.S. to pass an antiwar resolution, along with the state legislatures of Maine and Hawaii. The New York City Council this week unfortunately tabled an anti-war resolution until March.

Activists around the world, thankfully, are not counting on votes to stop the war, but have built on the success of Feb. 15 with a day of direct action on February 21. In Italy, 200 activists blockaded a train they believed was carrying U.S. military equipment. In Montreal, a group called Block The Empire shut down the U.S. consulate for several hours.

Within the United States, students walked out of class in Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles; activists locked down a military recruitment center in San Francisco; and two students were arrested while carrying out a “people’s inspection” of Leo Burnett, the army’s advertising firm.

Even more than Feb. 15, these multinational and nearly simultaneous acts of protest occurred with no apparent coordination.

In Baghdad, “human shields” continue to arrive and now number more than 150. Coming from Japan, Turkey, Italy, the U.S., Canada and elsewhere, they will be deploying themselves at critical civilian locations, like water purification plants and electricity generators.

In the United States, momentum is building for a national moratorium to stop the war on March 5. According to Not In Our Name, which has issued the call, this means “No School, No Work, No Business as Usual.” March 5 is also the Christian holy day Ash Wednesday. Pope John Paul II has called on Catholics to fast on that day in the name of peace.
What is the IMC?

With autonomous chapters in many cities throughout the world, the three-year-old Independent Media Center has become an international network of volunteer media activists. The IMC seeks to create a new media ethic by providing progressive, in-depth and accurate representation, relying entirely on volunteer efforts. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process. Clarity. We welcome your participation in the hands of the people, away from the drive of profit.

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The Independent is funded by subscriptions, donations, grants, and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions. All contributions by NYC IMC volunteers unless otherwise noted.

What can I do to get involved? The IMC has an open door. You can write for the Independent, film events and rallies, self-publish articles to the web, take photos or just help run the office. As an organization relying entirely on volunteer support, we encourage all forms of participation.

Production staff:


Be the media: nyc.indymedia.org

Dream became a reality on Feb. 15 as people around the world marched in opposition to the war in Iraq. Photo: INDY MED

BY ANNE VENESKY

Protesters in New York City joined people in 602 cities around the world on February 15 to protest the proposed U.S. war on Iraq. While most of the world could legally march in opposition to the war, New York’s half-a-million demonstrators were only permitted a stationary rally — a rally most of them were never allowed to attend.

The Permit Denial

What could have been an oddly timed series of events, or, as many anti-war advocates continue to claim, a concerted effort by local and federal authorities to squelch New Yorkers’ rights, began just a week before the protest.

On February 8, Federal District Court Judge Barbara Jones denied protestor organizers United for Peace and Justice (UPJ) a permit to march past the United Nations building. Despite the fact that the worldwide network had organized hundreds of well-planned marches in the past, she concluded, “The court finds that the heightened security concerns posed by an unorganized large-scale march threatens the City’s interest in maintaining the public order.”

To many, the city’s “heightened security concerns” stemmed from the Department of Homeland Security’s upgrading of the terror threat to “Code Orange” the prior day. But, according to a Newsday report, New York Police Department (NYPD) Deputy Commissioner Michael O’Looney confirmed the “Police Department since the fall of 2002 has been denying all permits for protest marches in Manhattan.”

Adding to the confusion was a Village Voice report that the NYPD’s chief negotiator, Mike Esposito, proposed an alternate march route in joint consultation with the permit denial. “Without explanation,” the Voice notes, “the city took Esposito’s plan off the table and rigidly insist ed that no march would be allowed. [Mayor Bloomberg’s Chief of Communications Bill] Cunningham said City Hall knew nothing about the Esposito proposal.”

As for the Bush White House, it took an active role in the court case involving UPJ’s appeal of the march permit denial. Donna Lieberman of the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU), which handled UPJ’s case, confirmed, “The Bush Administration…filed an affidavit noting the [city’s] obligation to protect the U.N.”

Though Lieberman says the administration “took no position in the case,” it stretches cred ibility to claim the affidavit wasn’t intended to sway the court.

Rumors and (More) Impediments

Thursday, Feb. 13, just two days before the event, more odd occurrences threatened to deter protesters. The New York City Independent Media Center received a phone call from someone claiming to be Leslie Cagan, a UPJ co-chair, stating that the rally had been called off and that buses would not be allowed into Manhattan. The call and others like it turned out to be a hoax. The rumor was finally dispelled by Cagan, but not before a Philadelphia radio station broadcast the false information.

On the day of the protest, UPJ’s phone lines went down in the morning. The lines came back up after Pacifica Radio affiliate WBAI announced the problem on the air. The phones went down again shortly thereafter and remained down for a Sunday afternoon.

“The technician called the manner in which the phones went down ‘odd’ and said he had never seen another breakdown like it,” said L.A. Kaufman of UPJ. “People were brutal ly beaten and could not call us. It greatly hampered our ability to do support and…. for people to fully express themselves.”

Staff of nationally syndicated radio show Democracy Now noted that two NYPD officers yanked out WBAI’s phone lines after Pacifica began its coverage at 11 a.m. Resourceful technicians were able to get the lines back by noon.

Meanwhile, demonstrators trying to use the subway system ran into additional difficulty. Many subway lines, including the east-west L line didn’t run the afternoon of the protest and the Metro North stopped running early, allegedly due to a police investigation. The
Times Square station, the busiest in the system, was completely closed, says UFPJ, reportedly for the same reason.

The Battle of the Barricades

Though those who reached the First Avenue rally point enjoyed a relatively peaceful and empowering day of protest, most demonstrators away from the cameras had a very different experience.

The NYPD deployed a street force of 8,000 for its “crowd control” strategy. Protesters west of First Avenue were divided and corralled into pens, creating a buffer zone between them and the rally area, starting at First Avenue and 51st Street.

Demonstrators were prevented from going west to east on many side streets, in violation of the deal the NYPD had reached with UFPJ to keep side streets and sidewalks open. UFPJ said the police also violated the agreement by closing off access to First and Second Avenue from the north.

As the day wore on, would-be rallygoers became increasingly frustrated. Their attempts to make it to First Avenue were thwarted by miles of metal barricades. Those who reached Second, Third and Lexington Avenues found themselves penned in with nowhere to go as the formerly festive atmosphere became tense.

Some demonstrators broke through the barricades, but not without getting mauled, assaulted, and in some cases, arrested. One journalist was arrested for taking photos on Third Avenue. UFPJ claims that at least two clearly identified medics and one legal observer were also arrested in the area as well as in Times Square.

As the crowd grew agitated, police used the opportunity to videotape the protesters. The city eventually employed a caravan of empty buses to break up crowds on Third Avenue, nearly hitting some as they fled to the sidewalks, according to eyewitness reports.

Detention, Distortion and Denial

When it was all over, UFPJ and the NYCLU confirmed 311 arrests for the afternoon. For some arrestees, however, the ordeal wasn’t over for some time.

At a Feb. 18 UFPJ press conference, Debbie Htek of the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) said many arrestees were held on buses outside of the Javits Center for up to eight hours without access to food, bathrooms or medical attention. Injured demonstrators smeared blood onto the buses’ windows to show they were being denied medical treatment.

Other arrestees were chained together for up to 90 minutes without gloves or other protection against the extreme cold. Arrestees were not allowed access to their lawyers for up to 12 hours, and were interrogated by police about their political affiliations.

Simone Levitt of the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys said most arrestees were not arraigned for as much as 48 hours, twice the required limit.

The NYCLU’s Lieberman found the NYPD’s claim that inadequate staffing at the precinct caused the delays spurious. Citing the number of police and barricades in the streets, she explained, “The police clearly had a sense of the numbers that would be at the demonstration.”

In response, the police released a statement disputing the evidence from protesters and organizers.

“There were 294 arrests, mostly for disorderly conduct. Due to that volume there were some delays in processing people, but every one was held on heated vehicles, fed, and allowed to use the restroom. Force was used by police as a last resort.”

City Council Hearing

New York City Council member Bill Perkins, who attended the UFPJ press conference, believes the NYPD violated demonstrators’ legal rights. Perkins said the alleged police misconduct was “politically motivated and a direct response to the federal government cracking down on dissenting voices.”

On Feb. 26, the City Council Committee on Grievance and Operations, chaired by Perkins, began hearings on the protest and denial of the march permit. Neither the NYPD or City Hall sent representatives to the hearing. The police said the Council had not given a customary two weeks’ notice to appear.

With the NYPD and administration officials absent, the council’s main questions regarding the march permit went unanswered.

As did those of Committee member Margarita Lopez-Torres, who witnessed arrested protesters held in heated vans and buses for hours outside of One Police Plaza. “The police should be here to tell us why,” she said.

A further hearing will reportedly be scheduled in the near future, with police and administration officials in attendance.

According to Perkins staffer Cas Stolzman, “If the Council is displeased with how the administration is interpreting the law… changes to the city code are possible; there’s also the possibility of internal changes based on what is heard.”

world hit the streets to stop the war

world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among Humankind and between it and the Earth.”

Since the first WSF, two more have convened in Porto Alegre, and regional and thematic Social Forums have been held in Argentina, Italy, Ethiopia, India, Brazil, Palestine and New York City. In these forums, the networks of the global justice movement were developed and strengthened.

Momentum was building. In the summer of 2001, a plan emerged to move beyond a specific action in a single city to a week of protest in November at stock exchanges around the world. September 11 scuttled those plans and threw the global justice movement off balance. Activists had to contend with the shock of thousands of dead, the “war on terror” abroad and a war on civil liberties at home. It quickly became evident, however, that the war was not about fighting terrorism, but extending the American empire.

When the European Social Forum met in Florence in November 2002, confronting empire was at the top of the agenda. It was here that the call was issued for a day of international protests on Feb. 15 against any war on Iraq, whether under U.N. auspices or by the U.S. alone.

While many other large-scale, anti-war demonstrations have taken place around the world in the last year, the diversity, breadth and speed with which people organized themselves for Feb. 15 was greatly facilitated by the networks of the global justice movement. In only three months of organizing, the anti-war movement burst onto the world stage as more than 10 million people mobilized in visible opposition to the U.S. war drive.

In the wake of the global upsurge, even the flagship paper of the establishment, The New York Times, noted “…there may still be two superpowers on the planet: the United States and international public opinion.”

As more people join the protests against war, it’s important to acknowledge the roots of the movement. The Feb. 15 protests were sparked by people who are not only against this impending war, but also against imperialism and corporate-led globalization. The focus of the anti-war movement is currently on Iraq. However, to have a lasting impact, anti-war activists must learn from the global justice movement by working to confront and dismantle the business of war.

I SWEAR lawyers for the protest organizers testify at a post rally City Council hearing probing the police department’s aggressive “crowd control” strategies. PHOTO: ANDREW ASKEW
FROM THE FRONTLINES OF

First person accounts from the IMC newswire

For those who never made it to First Avenue, calls for peace took on an additional significance. After New York police corralled massive crowds into steel barricades in areas west of the main rally point. The following reports were compiled from the NYC Indymedia newswire.

I marched with Racial Justice 9-11/People of Color Contingency Against the War… It was the most diverse (race, gender and age) crowd I’ve ever seen in a peace march in NYC. They were the most self-disciplined people I’ve seen in my life. We marched for blocks and blocks on a bitterly cold day, suffering the police harassment, the humiliation of being penned in, the lack of public bathrooms, the lack of contact between the organizers and the marchers, but we didn’t give up and go home.

SILVIA

The demonstration today in NYC was both inspirational and a source of deep frustration… The people raised their voices, walked in the street, but remained non-violent. I can say this without qualification: we were non-violent. Enthusiastic chanting is not violence. It is free speech… I watched a 250+ lb. officer in riot gear ramming with all of his strength into a 110-pound woman in front of me. His name tag read “Meyers.” He seemed to enjoy what he was doing, but the woman was shrieking in terror as she realized that there was no one to save or protect her…

JOE BUCK

For what it’s worth a small group of about two dozen of us were shoved onto the sidewalk at 45th Street… the police kept shoving us (they were riot cops with batons held horizontally across their chests) after we had stepped back on the sidewalk — a legal place to stand. We shoved back. They were two deep but we were at least four deep and we made them back up. Acting in unison — you can beat them.

ANONYMOUS

I am proud of our little group. We were strangers but acted as one at that moment.

SEAN

After attending the main rally on 1st, I walked to the outskirts of Times Square to join the marchers. Then, for some unknown reason, the police assaulted a man holding a huge puppet of Bush — that really cool green one that everyone liked (even CNN mentioned this puppet): they ripped the puppet off of him, threw him onto the pavement (slamming his head onto the ground), arrested him, and proceeded to tear this beautiful and complex puppet to pieces like swaggering grade-school bullies.

The crowds I joined were peaceful and well-controlled. Even though we were shouting and running through the streets at times, we moved together, looked out for each other, and could become quiet and still at a moment’s notice. The police were unorganized, confused, violent, and unruly.

AL

I too saw the situation with buses on Third Avenue… One in particular that I saw came careening down Third Avenue at a very high rate of speed as the crowd in the streets was thinning out and looked like it was intentionally trying to hit people. One person I saw was able to jump out of the way at the last second before being hit. The bus also tried to ram into two people trying to cross the street. It was complete insanity.

LILY

I too saw the situation with buses on Third Avenue… After more pushing by cops on foot, lots of people were scared and crying out in pain and opposition. Then they started using the horses’ bodies as weapons… three or four cops charged the crowd with their animals. We were terrified. There was nowhere for us to go to get away from the cops. The people on both sides of me were stepped on and as the horse directly in front of me reared I was kicked in the chest.

In my 12 years of horse ownership, I have never seen a worse example of horsemanship or animal abuse.

LILY
As I set out to march in New York City on Saturday, February 15 I felt I had been through all this before. The first march I was compelled to go to preceded the first Gulf War. I was in college, an idealistic sophomore, and this would rather go to jail than serve in the war. I remember my best friend and I declaring we would rather go to jail than serve in the war. During the march, which had 200 people at most, I walked along, chanting shily amid Vietnam-era peaceniks and aspiring hippies from my own generation. Now, more than 12 years later, my idealism has faded somewhat. Yet the fact injustice still motivates me to take to the streets is a good sign.

I was 10 blocks from the bandstand, and as far as I could see behind me, there were protesters. People were smiling and laughing. When it finally ended, we all left with a feeling of peace and accomplishment.

When I got home and turned on the news, I was troubled. Not only was the city claiming the protest was big enough, refused to let them pass. The police commissioner complained the city spent $5 million in police overtime to control the protest — which was clearly inflammatory at a time when big cities were all facing budget crises.

This attempt to steer public opinion and to hide the essential truths of the rally was to me the greatest insult. The assumption has been that the government knows what is best for us. Now, one day after the protest, the freezing cold has given way to a blizzard.

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As the streets are being snowed over, I can’t help thinking that the voice of the people is receiving a similar snow job.
To contemplate war is to think about the most horrible of human experiences. On this February day, we are at war, and every American on some level must be contemplating the horrors of war.

Yet, this chamber is, for the most part, silent — ominously, dreadfully silent. There is no debate, no discussion, no attempt to lay out for the nation the pros and cons of this particular war. There is nothing… And this is unacceptable. And we can’t be the chamber we contemplate. This is no simple attempt to defang a villain. No. This coming battle, if it materializes, represents a turning point in U.S. foreign policy and possibly a turning point in the recent history of the world.

This nation is about to embark upon the first test of a really key doctrine applied in an extraordinary way at an unfortunate time. The doctrine of preemption — the idea that the United States or any other nation can legitimately attack a nation that is not imminently threatening but may be threatening in the future — is a radical new twist on the idea of self-defense.

It appears to be in contravention of international law and the U.N. Charter. And it is being tested at a time of world-wide terrorism, making many countries around the globe wonder if they will soon be on our — or some other nation’s — hit list…

This administration has turned the patient art of diplomacy into threats, labeling, and name-calling of the sort that reflects quite poorly on the intelligence and sensitivity of our leaders, and which will have consequences for years to come… One can only wonder at the anger and shock of any President after the savage attacks of September 11…

But to turn one’s frustration and anger into the kind of extremely destabilizing and dangerous foreign policy debacle that the world is currently witnessing is inexplicable from any administration charged with the awesome power and responsibility of guiding the destiny of the greatest superpower on the planet.

Frankly many of the pronouncements made by this Administration are outrageous. There is no other word.

Yet this chamber is hauntingly silent. On what is possibly the eve of horrific infliction of death and destruction on the population of the nation of Iraq — a population, I might add, of which over 50% is under age 15 — this chamber is silent.

On what is possibly only days before we send thousands of our own citizens to face unimagined horrors of chemical and biological warfare — this chamber is silent. On the eve of what could possibly be a vicious terrorist attack in retaliation for our attack on Iraq, it is business as usual in the United States Senate.

To engage in war is always to pick a wild card. And war must always be a last resort, not a first choice. I truly must question the judgment of any president who can say that a massive unplanned military attack on a nation which is over 50% children is “in the highest moral traditions of our country.”

This war is not necessary at this time. Pressure appears to be having a good result in Iraq. Our mistakes, I might add, put ourselves in a corner so quickly. Our challenge is to now find a graceful way out of a box of our own making. Perhaps there is still a way if we allow more time.

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Senator Byrd: Reckless Administration May Reap Disastrous Consequences

BY U.S. SENATOR ROBERT BYRD

February 15, 2003 — St. Mary’s Church, Presque Isle, Maine Peace Rally Speech

When people think about bombing Iraq, they see in the heads of Saddam Hussein in a military uniform, or maybe soldiers with big black mustaches carrying guns, or the mosaic of George Bush Sr. on the lobby floor of the Al-Rashid Hotel with the word “criminal.” But guess what? More than half of Iraq’s 24 million people are children under the age of 15. That’s 12 million kids. Kids like me. Well, I’m almost 13, so some are a little older, and some a lot younger, some boys instead of girls, some with brown hair, not red. But kids who are pretty much like me just the same. So take a look at me — a good long look. Because I am what you should see in your head when you think about bombing Iraq. I am what you are going to destroy.

If I am lucky, I will be killed instantly, like the three hundred children murdered by your “smart” bombs in a Baghdad bomb shelter on February 21. That fire was caused by a fire so intense that it flash-burned outlines of those children and their mothers on the walls; you can still peel strips of blackened skin — souvenirs of your victory — from the stones.

But maybe I won’t be lucky and I’ll die slowly, like 14-year-old Ali Faisal, who right now is on the “death ward” of the Baghdad children’s hospital. He has malignant lymphoma — cancer — caused by the depleted uranium in your Gulf War missiles. Or maybe I will die painfully and needlessly like 18-month-old Mustafa, whose vital organs are being devoured by sandfly parasites. I know it’s hard to believe, but Mustafa could be totally cured with just $52 worth of medicine, but there is none of this medicine because of your sanctions.

Or maybe I won’t die at all but will live for years with the psychological damage that you can’t see from the outside, like Sabast Mohamed, who even now can’t forget the terror he lived through with his little sisters when you bombed Iraq in 1991. Salman’s father made the whole family sleep in the same room so that they would all survive together, or die together. He still has nightmares about the air raid sirens.

Or maybe I will be orphaned like Ali, who was three when you killed his father in the Gulf War. Ali scraped at the dirt covering his father’s grave on February 15, the day war started. And his father made the whole family sleep up as late as he wanted. But today, with no education, he tries to live by selling newspapers on the street. Imagine that these are your children — or nieces or nephews or neighbors. Imagine your son screaming from the agony of a severely burned limb, but you can’t do anything to ease the pain or comfort him….

This is not an adventure movie or a fantasy or a video game. This is reality for children in Iraq. Recently, an international group of researchers went to Iraq to find out how children there are being affected by the possibility of war. Half the children they talked to said they saw no point in living anymore. Even really young kids knew about war and worried about it. One 5-year-old, Assen, described it as “guns and bombs and the air will be cold and hot and we will burn very much…”

Back in elementary school I was taught to solve problems with other kids not by hitting or name-calling, but by talking and using “I” messages. The idea of an “I” message was to make the other person understand how bad his or her actions made you feel, so that the person would sympathize with you and stop it. Now I am going to give you an “I” message. Only it’s going to be a “We” message. “We” as in all the children in Iraq who are waiting helplessly for something bad to happen. “We” as in the children of the world who don’t make any of the decisions but have to suffer all the consequences. “We” as in those whose voices are too small and too far away to be heard. We feel scared when we don’t know if we’ll live another day. We feel angry when people want to kill us or injure us or steal our future.

We feel sad because all we want is a mom and a dad who we know will be there the next day. And, finally, we feel confused… because we don’t know what we did wrong.
Howard Zinn, author of “A People’s History of the United States,” and professor emeritus of Political Science at Boston University, spoke to a packed New School University auditorium last month on the Bush Administration’s push for war on Iraq.

Zinn, a long-time critic of United States domestic and foreign policy, asked the nearly 500 attendees to “step back from the immediate” and look at history.

“Without history, you don’t have a reason to question or to suspect a ‘pattern of deception and lies.’ But, one thing we find in history is that ‘Governments lie. And understanding that governments lie is a good starting point for any citizen.’

Drawing parallels between the Mexican American War and the current crisis with Iraq, Zinn recalled then-President Polk’s dubious petition against Mexico. “The cup of forbearance had been exhausted,” Polk wrote shortly before the U.S. attack, in an address to Congress on the eve of the Mexican-American War, 1846. “The cup of forbearance had been exhausted, even before the recent information from the frontier... After reiterated minaces, Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory, and shed American blood upon American soil. She has proclaimed that hostilities are commenced, and that the two nations are now at war.

As war exists, and, notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it, exists by the act of Mexico herself, we are called upon by every consideration of duty and patriotism to vindicate with decision and honor, the rights, and the interests of our country...”

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By Chris Fleisher

The Starbucks occupying the first floor of the Charles Schwab pagoda on the corner of Canal and Lafayette Streets is crowded with approximately three non-Asians to every Asian. Though many of these customers are undoubtedly tourists, they might represent the changing face of Chinatown residents.

As the Chinatown economy continues to struggle, gentrification has emerged as a concern among local leaders. Steven Yip, director of operations at the Chinese American Planning Council, is one of the concerned citizens.

“The threat of gentrification is a real thing,” said Yip. “With the efforts to rebuild Chinatown, you’re going to have a lot of conflicting priorities — and the outcome may not be in the best interests of the working poor.”

The Asian American Federation of New York recently reported that for the last quarter of 2002, more than 90 percent of businesses surveyed anticipated an “inability to recover to the level of business prior to September 11.”

Motivated in part by tax breaks and prime real estate at bargain prices, many affluent investors are jumping into Chinatown. Edmund Li, managing director of Helmsley-Spear Properties, for example, is currently building loft spaces on the periphery of Chinatown that will rent for as much as $8,000 per month.

Li says the minimum qualification to rent a space would be an annual income of 40 times one month’s rent.

“That’s usually most landlords’ requirement,” he says.

The loft space, located at the corner of Essex and Canal Streets, is a sleek building with white stucco exterior and tall tinted windows. It sits between two grungy walk-ups, one of them built in 1907.

Since the summer of 2001, a total of 65 garment shops have closed, leaving warehouses available for developments similar to Li’s. Though Li suggests that the influx of higher income residents would ultimately stimulate Chinatown’s economy, some community leaders wonder: At what cost?

The slow exodus of Chinatown families to New Jersey, upstate New York, Connecticut, and other neighboring areas has been one of the most significant impacts of the terrorist attacks.

Unfortunately, these sectors of late have been experiencing slow-to-zero growth. According to Shao Chi Sim, director of research with the AAFE, many workers have been abandoning Chinatown for work in the casinos in Atlantic City and Connecticut.

“What Chinatown in New York faces is the same danger that a lot of Chinatowns face around the country,” said Robert Webber, spokesperson for Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE), a group that advocates equal rights and access for Asian Americans.

“With gentrification, with souring rent… only a small core of Chinatown remains and the rest basically is perhaps becoming more of a tourist place than a community.”

Though tourism is a major economic stimulus for Chinatown, Webber said a common misconception is that it is the main sector of the local economy. “It doesn’t drive the jobs,” he says. “The largest sectors are actually the industrial sector… and the professional service sector.”

With the slow exodus of Chinatown families and residents looking for jobs and housing outside the neighborhood, Webber said, “Second, it needs to link up with other neighborhoods throughout New York City, especially lower Manhattan.”

Webber maintained. “People live here, work here, shop here, and come here for religious and cultural reasons. CHINATOWN AFTER 9/11

Brokers cash in as Chinatown economy falters and residents leave

With gentrification, with soaring rent… only a small core of Chinatown remains and the rest basically is perhaps becoming more of a tourist place than a community.”

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Speeding along
calls Bush worst ever

Rumsfeld armed
Korea

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld talked tough on North Korea’s nuclear weapons program. But he took a different stand three years ago. In 2000, the corporation on whose board he had scored a $200 million contract with North Korea. Under a deal brokered by the Clinton administration, Swiss engineering giant ABB supplied equipment for two nuclear power stations. Two years earlier, Rumsfeld had attacked the deal, claiming the nuclear plants could be used to make “dirty bombs.” Did Rumsfeld know about the contract? Wolfram Eberhardt, a spokesman for ABB, said Rumsfeld “was at nearly all the board meetings” during his 10 years with the company.

Big Brother watching
immigrants

Big Brother has eyes that open a little wider this month when the State Department opens its database of more than 50 million foreign visa applicants to local police agencies and the FBI. The database includes applicants’ photos, addresses, dates of birth and names of relatives. The New York Times reports that within a year the State Department database will be integrated with an FBI database and six others for local police departments, and will be instantly available to 100,000 police officials and intelligence agencies.

Legendary journalist
calls Bush worst ever

After speaking at the Society of Professional Journalists awards banquet in January, legendary White House correspondent Helen Thomas, who has covered the last nine presidents, was asked by reporter John Bogert to autograph his program. As she did, he joked, “You sound worried.”

“This is the worst president ever,” she replied. Bush “is the worst president in all of American history.”

This followed a speech where Thomas said Bush is riding a wave of fear — of looking unpatriotic, of asking questions, of fear in general. She added that we have chosen to promote democracy with bombs instead of largesse, while Congress “defaults.” Democrats cower and a president controls all three branches of government in the name of corporatism and the religious right.

Speeding along
missile defense

Last week the Bush administration proposed to exempt the Pentagon’s controversial missile defense system from legacy limited operational testing. The request, buried in President Bush’s 2004 budget seeks to rewrite an existing law that requires weapons testing for all new technologies. If passed, the administration intends to have a limited ground-based system operational by October of 2004.

When GIs say ‘No!’

BY LEE GOUGH

“I cannot sign any petitions, pledges or post my name because I am not allowed to disagree with my Commander-In-Chief. I did not realize when I joined the military that I gave up my basic right to freedom of speech and freedom of assembly,” wrote an anonymous Marine this month during an Internet anti-war forum.

The Marine continued: “I have been amazed at just how many military members have suddenly become a democrat [sic] recently. And we are very scared that this will be like Vietnam all over again. We are afraid that we will come home and be called baby killers. We want… the people to know that we did not ask for this job…”

The statement was signed, “the silenced few, the proud… the Marines.”

It suggested resistance to aggressive adventurism in Iraq may be growing within the U.S. military. The Marine’s words illustrated the dilemma that individuals who voluntarily serve in the military lose the right to publicly dissent from policies they oppose. They are even forced to participate in them.

Marines are currently banned from applying for discharges from military service (unless the applicant is gay or lesbian). To date, the Marines are the only branch of the military actually barred from applying for discharge. Soldiers can be court-martialed for publicly opposing any military action. Consequently, many troops (and regular citizens concerned about the selective service or a possible draft) are desperately looking for more information on their rights.

Teresa Panepinto, coordinator of the GI Rights hotline, says, “Since 9/11 our workload has quadrupled.” Specifically, in 2001 there were over 17,000 calls to the hotline, which is a component of the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors, based in Oakland and Philadelphia. In 2002 there were 21,218 calls. The number of hotline branches has doubled since 9/11.

Although there are no statistics for 2003, Panepinto notes “the number of people wanting selective service (draft) information has gone through the roof” and “the number of GIs seeking conscientious objector (CO) status has also vastly increased.”

Moreover, “those who signed up for the military through the delayed enlistment/entry program, and have changed their mind and want out of the military, have made up another large portion of calls… not only has the number of calls gone up, but the nature has changed as well. We’re seeing way more GIs interested in CO discharges, and we’re getting contacted by way more reservists than pre-9/11.”

“Most callers are between the ages of 18 to 30, who have just joined or have been in under two years. That said, we are receiving many calls from older people who have been in the military a long time.”

According to Panepinto, “Almost everyone who calls the hotline wants out.” though the “reasons range from CO to those who have gone AWOL/UA to those with medical and/or psychological problems. Although there is nothing in military regulations that allows for COs to be treated poorly… that doesn’t stop it from happening. COs are often ostracized by their peers. Many commanding officers tell COs that they will flat out refuse to read their application for discharge.”

During the first Gulf War, peace groups estimated that 2,500 military men and women sought CO status. A subsequent General Accounting Office investigation placed the number closer to 500. But Youth and Militarism Magazine, a publication of the American Friends Service Committee, observed that this number failed to include those who were jailed for refusing orders.

Also growing in number are veterans and military families who oppose what they see as an unjustified military attack on Iraq. Military Families Speak Out is one such group. It has made alliances with newer resistance organizations, such as September 11th Families for Peaceful Tomorrows, and veterans’ groups, such as Gulf War Veterans against War on Iraq, Veterans for Common Sense, and Citizen Soldier, which challenges domestic militarism.

Two billion dollars a year are spent on recruiting youths into the armed forces. But as one 19-year-old Army infantryman’s mother, Carol Korreck, wrote to the White House, enclosing a picture of her son, “Dear President Bush, This is my son Tim. You have been referring to him as ‘military force.’ I want you to be continually mindful of the fact that your ‘military force’ has a mother and two sisters who want you to value his life as much as we do.” Carol Korreck has yet to receive a reply.

for more information

GI Rights hotline: www.gi rights.org (800)-294-9544
Veterans for Common Sense: www.vcs.org
Vets for Peace: www.veteransforpeacefultomorrows.org
(202)-443-8476.
Citizen Soldier: www.veterans-against-the-iraq-war.org (212)-679-2250.

NATIONAL BRIEFS

Korea

Rumsfeld armed
Korea

Congressional briefing on North Korea’s nuclear weapons program revealed that six ground-based system operational by 2004 will be integrated with an FBI database and six others for local police departments, and will be instantly available to 100,000 police officials and intelligence agencies.

Big Brother watching
immigrants

New York Times reports that within a year the State Department database will be integrated with an FBI database and six others for local police departments, and will be instantly available to 100,000 police officials and intelligence agencies.
PALESTINE: UNDER

Palestinians, frustrated by their indefinite curfew, break out spontaneously. Bullet holes are visible on the gate.

“A We will make a cry in each home and a funeral in each street” — Verse by a Palestinian poet.

A Nablus government office.

House in Gaza of Hamas member Salla Shehade, killed by an Israeli air strike this last summer. The attack killed an additional 15 people, including nine children.
A U.S.-financed assessment of the overall malnutrition level among Palestinian children, released this month by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), found that one in five Palestinian children under the age of five now suffers from chronic or acute malnutrition. This astonishing statistic is on par with impoverished nations such as Chad and Nigeria, and actually surpasses rates of child malnutrition in Somalia and Bangladesh. Such figures, the report noted, are “considered an emergency by most humanitarians and public health officials.” The report points to Israeli-imposed closures and sieges of major civilian centers as the direct and primary cause.

We typically think of famines as being caused by natural disasters (droughts, overgrazing) or by crises that result in the displacement of large populations from their lands (wars, ethnic strife). The situation in the occupied Palestinian Territories, however, is a startling aberration since it is clearly a man-made disaster intended to specifically target whole civilian populations. Most importantly, it can easily and immediately be reversed.

Today, Israeli military sieges are literally imprisoning families within their homes for days at a time. People cannot leave their homes to work, buy food, go to the doctor, or send their children to school. Military checkpoints and roadblocks are restricting commerce and the transport of food supplies. Workers cannot travel between Palestinian towns, and farmers and manufacturers are unable to deliver their goods to shops and markets. People have exhausted the money they can draw on from relatives and connections on the outside.

The USAID report also revealed that about one quarter of West Bank Palestinians have had to sell personal possessions to put food on the table. The World Bank recently determined that as many as 62 percent of Palestinian families are now living on less than two dollars a day. As a result of these obstacles, increasing numbers of families are skipping meals or reducing their food intake because eventually they run out of money and assets to sell.

But how can the slow starvation of a whole population be stopped when that very starvation is being altogether denied by the Israeli government and ignored by the U.S. Administration? Major General Amos Gilad, Israel’s coordinator of government affairs in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, was hardly ruffled by the USAID findings. In fact, he asserted that “hunger is when people have swollen bellies and fall over dead. There is no hunger yet.”

The starvation of captive Palestinians is nothing less than the muffled ethnic cleansing of a whole people. As always, these matters should be of serious concern to U.S. citizens given that our diplomatic, military and financial support have long allowed Israel to pursue with impunity such policies which contradict our own cherished political values and commitment to human rights. It is time for us to speak up.
Huerta: Shifts in courts threatens hard-fought workers rights

By Dolores C. Huerta

As a co-founder of the United Farm Workers with Cesar Chavez, I know what progress looks like. Injustice and the fight against it take many forms—from boycotts and marches to contract negotiations and legislation. Over the years, we had to fight against brutal opponents, but the courts were often there to back us up. Where we moved forward, America’s courts helped to establish important legal protections for all farm workers, all women, all Americans. Today, we face a potentially dangerous shift in the courts to protect the worker’s rights, women’s rights and civil rights that our collective actions secured.

It is especially bitter for me that one of the most visible agents of the strategy to erase our legal victories is being called a great role model for Latinos. It is true that for Latinos to realize America’s promise of equality and justice for all, we need to be represented in every sector of business and every branch of government. But it is also true that judges who would wipe out our hard-fought legal victories—no matter where they were born or what color their skin—are not role models for our children. And they are not the kind of judges we want on the federal courts.

Miguel Estrada is a successful lawyer, and he has powerful friends who are trying to get him a lifetime job as a federal judge. Many of them talk about him being a future Supreme Court justice. Shouldn’t we be proud of him?

I for one am not too proud of a man who is unconcerned about the discrimination that many Latinos live everyday. I am not especially proud of a man whose political friends—the ones fighting to protect all the earth has been shaped, impacted, placed on the map and developed by whites. This slanted perspective has a poignantly deep and complicated impact on all people of African descent. It means you have no face in history. Try to imagine it: no presence on the landscape of our country. I have been shaped by such a consciousness, knowing more about European history, myth, art and culture. It is for people like myself that black history month becomes a necessity. Though the focus is on African Americans, I benefit from having a sense of my cultural inheritance and in my opinion they are winning the battle to protect the rights and safety of workers and women and anyone with little power and only the hope of the courts to protect their legal rights.

Just as we resist the injustice of racial profiling and the assumption that we are lesser individuals because of where we were born or the color of our skin, so too must we resist the urge to endorse a man on the basis of his ethnic background.

By Michelle Gilkes

Americans have recognized black history every year since 1926, first with a week and then a full month. Though African Americans have been part of this country since early colonial times, only in the 20th century have their contributions been acknowledged in mainstream American culture.

I say “their” because though I am black I am not African American; the legacy of African American history is something I adopted when my family came to this country. My family moved to the States from England, where I was born, and to England from Trinidad and Tobago where, to my family, our history began.

Every year influential and magnificent black leaders, scholars and artists are commemorated so that the memory of their efforts and achievements are inserted into mainstream American culture. It gives her the self-esteem to pursue her goals. I called a friend from the Dominican Republic to ask her what she thought of the commemoration. Her first response was to say that “they” should stop complaining about what has happened to them. I am concerned about the white man’s abuses and lift themselves out of misery. It is not as easy as that,” I remarked.

“I know, Michelle,” she said. “But I think that if you are in the gutter it’s because you want to be there. There are opportunities and programs that can help. My family came here with nothing and we are educated and take advantage of what is available. These people are not the ones fighting to abolish affirmative action and the Hispanic community.”

He would also be dismayed that any civil rights organization would stay silent or back such a candidate.

To my friends who think this is all about politicians fighting among themselves, I ask you to think what would have happened over the last 40 years if the federal courts were fighting against workers’ rights and women’s rights and civil rights. And then think about how quickly that could become the world we are living in.

As MALDEF wrote in a detailed analysis, Estrada’s record suggests that “he would not recognize the due process rights of Latinos,” that he “would not fairly review Latino allegations of racial profiling by law enforcement,” that he “would most likely always find that government affirmative action programs fail to meet” federal standards, and that he “could very well compromise the rights of Latino voters under the Voting Rights Act.”

Miguel Estrada is only one of the people nominated by President Bush who could destroy much of what we have built if they become judges. The far right is fighting for them just as it is fighting for Estrada. We must fight back against Estrada and against all of them. If the only way to stop this is a filibuster in the Senate, I say, Que viva la filibuster!

Dolores C. Huerta is the co-founder of the United Farm Workers of America

Gilkes: Black history month builds historical consciousness

GET YOUR WAR ON
Tortilla Maker Tries to Flatten Union

BY TONY PECINOVSKY

A three-year struggle for union representation at the Chicago-based Azteca Tortillas, one of the nation’s largest and most successful tortilla producers, sixty-three employees won a National Labor Relations Board election. On April 12, 2002 they became members of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) Local 1159.

About a month later UE started contract negotiations with Azteca. When the mostly Latino workers expressed concerns about verbal abuse, rashes, burns and workplace injuries, Azteca showed its true colors. Azteca’s contract offer gutted seniority rights in new job openings, paid grievance procedures, eliminated clean-up time at the workplace, and was only offering a 5-cent an hour raise.

Most of the Azteca workers made around $9.50 an hour and could not afford to pay for medical care — while only offering a 5-cent an hour raise. Adding insult to injury, Azteca refused to bargain in good faith and would not negotiate.

In protest of the company’s proposal, an informational picket was set up outside of the plant. Then on September 30, members of Local 1159 were forced to strike. Azteca, which claims to be a pillar of the immigrant community, told all the workers they were fired for participating in the picket.

In response to this illegal activity, UE filed unfair labor practice charges against Azteca, which has an estimated yearly revenue of $30-$33 million, violated two Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations in the fall of 2002 and was cited for 12 violations of federal health & safety laws, 10 of which were repeat violations, in 2000.

The National Labor Relations Board has issued a complaint against the company and has filed unfair labor practice charges. The charges include interrogation of employees, acts of illegal surveillance and threats of hiring permanent replacements.

National support for the Azteca workers has helped the UE members remain united and strong. Moral is high and not one striker has crossed the 24-hour-a-day, 7-days-a-week picket line, despite the bitter Chicago winter.

According to UE’s Rick Peduzzi, “The overall morale of strikers remains very high.” Adding, that “Community support has also been exceptional.”

To many, the Azteca campaign and UE’s leadership exemplifies a new trend in organized labor. While the trade union movement has been more willing to work with community, religious and student organizations, until recently it hasn’t focused many resources on organizing immigrants and Spanish-speaking people of color.

Many sections of organized labor have realized that focusing on immigrants’ issues in the workplace is necessary to create and strengthen labor and community unity.

Taking a pro-active approach to building relationships with other organizations like Jobs with Justice, United Students Against Sweatshops, religious congregations, political leaders and community organizations has, in many recent struggles, paid off.

By working in coalitions and partnering up with small businesses in the community, UE has been able to exert much more pressure on Azteca, and is hitting Azteca CEO and President, Art Velasquez, where it hurts — his pocketbook.

Recently, members of Local 1159 declared two major victories. On Feb. 17, after months of requests by UE, Azteca CEO Art Velasquez agreed to accept federal mediation in the contract negotiations.

Though federal mediation provides no guarantee, the Azteca workers are hopeful that this development indicates that real progress can be made at the bargaining table.

And in February, Hyde Park Food Co-op in Chicago announced that they would support the boycott against Azteca. “The Hyde Park Food Co-op sent a very strong message to Art Velasquez that union busting will not be tolerated,” said Josefina Botella, an Azteca worker.

On Feb. 4, Congressman Luis V. Gutierrez and Congresswomen Jan Schakowsky called on Azteca to negotiate fair union contract “as soon as possible.”

While Azteca tortillas, shells and chips continue to be sold in grocery stores throughout Chicago and the country, including major grocery chains like Jewel and Dominicks, UE is certain the boycott is having an effect. They are also confident the Azteca workers, with community, student, religious and political support, will get a real contract.

For more info visit www.rankfile-ue.org

Tortilla Maker Tries to Flatten Union

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Belgium will Investigate Ariel Sharon

On Feb. 13, the Belgian Supreme Court ruled to allow investigation into the 1982 massacres of Palestinian civilians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon. Belgian law, using the principle of universal jurisdiction, allows for the prosecution of crimes against humanity even if they were committed outside of Belgium. The court decision could clear the way for the prosecution of Ariel Sharon, who was the defense minister at the time of the attacks, although he currently enjoys immunity as Prime Minister. An Israeli inquiry in 1983 said that Sharon bore “personally responsibility” for the attacks, in which more than 1,000 civilians were killed. A case against his codentendant, former Israeli army commander Yaron, could go forward immediately, Israeli officials reacted angrily to the decision and suggested it could hamper relations between the two countries.

Venezuela’s Chavez Wins?

President Hugo Chavez is emerging as the victor in the month-long opposition strike. The coalition of oil management and unions, the middle class, and mainstream press have thrown in the towel and agreed to a previously scheduled referendum on Chavez’s presidency in the summer. Striking oil managers are in danger of being permanently replaced, as Chavez uses unconciliatory rhetoric towards their ability to return to work. Chavez agreed on a referendum to be held in the summer before which the strike, which was aimed at oust Chavez. Though Chavez survived the strike and is stronger there is a possibility that he could lose the referendum on the same day which the opposition has shifted its mobilizations. Perhaps the greatest challenge to Chavez is a revitalized oil industry that can fund his reform program. Oil production is still below pre-strike levels.

U.S. Iraqi Evidence Not Enough to Charge him

Yet again one of the Bush administration’s smoking guns has proven to be flimsy. First there was the highly praised British intelligence report on Iraq — found to be lifted, spelling mistakes and all, from a decade-old graduate student paper. Now, Newsweek reports that when Iraq’s most prominent defector, the Saddam spy Kamel, was debriefed by U.N. officials he was “hushed up” by U.N. inspectors. Kamel, who served as U.N. officials he asserted that Iraq had completely destroyed its weapons of mass destruction. The White House has repeatedly cited Kamel’s defection as evidence that Iraq hasn’t disarmed and that inspections are ineffective. The debriefing was said to have been “hushed up” by U.N. inspectors and the CIA.

Kamel was Hussein’s son-in-law and former head of Iraq’s weapon programs. He fled Iraq in 1995 with boxes of secret papers documenting Iraq’s pre-gulf war military buildup. In the interview with disarmament officials, Kamel states bluntly that “all weapons — biological, chemical, missile, nuclear, were destroyed.”

The Iraqi defector, killed by Saddam in 1996, has been referenced four times in armament officials, Kamel states bluntly that “all weapons — biological, chemical, missile, nuclear, were destroyed.”

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REBELS REJECT ECOTOURIST RANCH

BY BENNETT BAUMER

Rancho Esmeralda lies nestled in a valley with rows of macadamia trees and picturesque cabins back-dropped by beautiful mountains. Its exotic ambiance boasts of bareback horses running freely through yellow dirt paths. A beacon of leisure and tranquility in troubled times, Rancho Esmeralda is the fruit of the life savings of Idaho natives Glenn Wersch and Ellen Jones. Their Kokopelli Ranch in Chiapas, as Zapatista sympathizers say, soldiers use the Rancho Esmeralda lands, which lie adjacent to the autonomous community, for transportation purposes.

Within the past month members from autonomous indigenous communities have warned the U.N. against encroachment on their lands. They held a group of rioting North Americans for $300 in "taxes." The tour guide who led the tour into the ranch said, "They were fairly aggressive in hustling us off the river," Canadian tourist Andrew Walter said.

Furthermore, Wersch contends he was beaten up during a confrontation with locals from the nearby indigenous settlement of Nuevo Jerusalén (New Jerusalem). Wersch and Jones also have charged that the Zapatista sympathizers are gearing up to occupy their lands.

Indigenous leaders have rejected the U.N.'s "irrelevant" claims. They have said that their community's only concerns are raids from the military outpost across the highway and the fact that the ranchers still sell the land "for dinero." The military barracks were built after the Zapatista rebellion started a couple of years ago. The Zapatistas say the American-owned Rancho Esmeralda is used by Mexico's military and they want the Gringos to go home.

AT U.N., IT LOOKS LIKE WAR

BY DONALD PANETH

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y., Feb. 24, 2003 — The Security Council postponed action on Iraq Monday, allowing supporters of imposing new sanctions on Iraq to pursue the matter through the Council this afternoon. The French foreign minister, Dominique de Villepin, offered a compendium of what he called "facts, not assertions," "evidence, not conjecture," regarding Iraq's weaponry and its failure to comply with U.N. arms inspectors. He declared that Iraq had "failed the test," and "placed itself in a dilemma of war or peace in Iraq."

President George W. Bush's response to the huge demonstrations for peace around the world on Feb. 15 was especially significant. "Size of protest," Bush said, "it's like deciding, well, I'm going to decide policy based upon the security, in this case, the security of the people."

Those terms — focus group, leader, security — might be examined and defined anew, if events were not moving so fast. But they are moving quickly, and in that context, a lot is being lost.

Other important issues are being ignored or sidelined, including the authenticity of the material presented to the Council Feb. 5 by Secretary of State Colin L. Powell on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and the need for a new resolution. Powell offered a compendium of what he called "facts, not assertions," "evidence, not conjecture," regarding Iraq's weaponry and its failure to comply with U.N. arms inspectors. He declared that Iraq had "failed the test," and "placed itself in danger of serious consequences."

However, Powell's presentation was questioned and criticized in a number of quarters. Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Feb. 10 that evidence of Iraq's weapons programs must be verified by inspectors on the ground. The key word was "verified."

De Villepin observed: "Powell reported alleged links between al-Qaeda and the regime in Baghdad. Given the present state of our research and intelligence, nothing allows us to establish such links."

The Security Council postponed action Feb. 19 on the issue of North Korea's suspected nuclear weapons program and on whether economic sanctions should be imposed. There were numerous other global problems scarcely mentioned in the press as it covered the imperative political dilemma of war or peace in Iraq.

War or peace — which is it to be?
DE-BUGGING THE SILICON VALLEY DIVIDE

BY RAJ JAYADEV

Two years ago, the young temps of Silicon Valley were invisible. The mainstream media obsessed over the fantasy of the 21-year-old who was three years from retirement, busy stalking out dotcom property in cyberspace, and concerned only with being late for their weekly hip-hop yoga class, the reality for most folks working in Silicon Valley was starkly different.

Most young people worked at unglamorous, dead-end temp jobs. Work outside the tech industry was mainly in “support services” — such as making smoothies for the hip-hop yoga class. So the people who were really turning the engines of Silicon Valley were nowhere in the public’s perception.

But then a small group of us started meeting after work at a Vietnamese cafe downtown San Jose, trying to out-do each other with stories about the “digital divide,” we put our stories on paper. We wrote about what we really wanted to say to the CEO, why people do drugs at work, and what it feels like to be so close to unattainable wealth.

When YO published our stories, we started handing out the magazine at Silicon Valley bus stops, light-rail stations and fast-food joints. We even chased the lunch truck all around the South Bay. People read our stories and for the first time saw their experiences reflected on paper, confirming that they weren’t alone.

But we were limited because our stories were not accessible to Spanish speakers. So we created a bilingual, bimonthly zine that gives voice to those who live and work at the epicenter of the high-tech revolution. We called our organization and our zine De-Bug because we wanted our name to come from the language of the shop floor. In the computer industry, de-bug refers to the process of searching out and exposing the cause of a malfunction.

For a year now De-Bug has been defining experience of being young and temporary. If we have learned anything from the tech meltdown, it is that we are all “temporary” in this economy.

We hold open discussions every week to generate content for the zine. We keep our content interesting and unpredictable by asking questions that we don’t know the answers to. When we did a story on drug use at work, our respondents — nicknamed “Getting High-Tech” and “Wired at Work” — did it to escape the monotony of work. They said, however, they did drugs at work because it made them more focused and interested in their tasks. Who knew?

Initially, folks attributed the surge in youth entrepreneurship to a need to express themselves. But soon the dialogue shifted to how today’s jobs do not allow people to satisfy their goals, whether it’s home ownership or greater security or status. As Kefing Aperto-Berry, a De-Bug writer, penned point by point, “I don’t want to be wanting my whole life, like my parents.”

Shana White, De-Bug’s 21-year-old Web designer, formerly tempted in the tech sector. She says, “My average pay for assembly was $8 an hour, and for administrations it was $12. But whether I was on the line or behind the desk, I always wondered what I was going to do next because the jobs never lasted.”

The most common problems with temp work are low wages, lack of health benefits and job insecurity. But Edward Nieto, one of our pioneer zine writers, claims that his real problem with his temp job is “...my Mondays roll into my Tuesdays without me knowing it.” This observation makes a lot of us ask ourselves how badly the pay sucks.

There have been many attempts to organize low-wage workers in Silicon Valley using newsletters, flyers and newspapers. Mass organizing has failed so far in Silicon Valley.

But De-Bug is getting second looks by working people. We believe this is because De-Bug is sincere, and we are not trying to spin an agenda or political line in our stories. Our zine speaks to the total lives of the people who do these people’s work. The temp-based economy, with its short-term jobs and constant turnover, has spawned a generation of workers who do not identify with their experiences.

Because media creation encourages people to think for themselves, the zine lets us go places where traditional organizing does not. Traditionally, organizers have identified the key issues and the strategies to address them, while the workers simply hold the signs and chant in picket lines. Writing and art, however, allow people to develop analysis and strategies based on their experiences.

The challenge for labor-organizing in Silicon Valley is to meet people where their heads and hearts are, even if it’s not in the workplace.

More and more jobs are becoming contingent as employers shy away from permanent employees. Our potential movement, in which media creation plays a central role, is not only about a two-dollar raise, although that certainly is a part of it.

Through outlets like De-Bug, we hope to show young people at the low-wage end of the tech sector not so much the Silicon Valley fantasy but rather the more meaningful dream it inspired — the freedom to determine your own path.

Raj Jayadev, 27, is the coordinator of Silicon Valley De-Bug, a project of Pacific News Service. He was raised in San Jose.

If you could create a job that would be it?

DEBUG: Drawings and paintings

VIVE LA FRANCE!

BY EMILY REINHARDT

For most New Yorkers, Lafayette is probably the street where they pick up a Starbucks coffee or stock up on duct tape. The realization that it is named after a Frenchman where they pick up a Starbucks coffee or stock up on duct tape. The realization that it is named after a Frenchman where they pick up a Starbucks coffee or stock up on duct tape. However, there is a French revolution in Louisiana:

French-speaking Cajuns are seeking to reassert their Haitian roots as they push for a cultural identity. They are seeking to reassert their Haitian roots as they push for a cultural identity. The most recent of these efforts has been a movement to have Louisiana recognized as a separate country.

The movement to have Louisiana recognized as a separate country has gained momentum in recent years. In 2012, the state of Louisiana filed a petition with the United Nations to have the state recognized as a separate country.

However, the petition was rejected by the United Nations. The United Nations has not recognized any country as a separate nation in recent years. However, the petition was rejected by the United Nations. The United Nations has not recognized any country as a separate nation in recent years.

Louisiana is a state in the southeastern United States. It is the 18th largest state in area and the 24th most populous state. It is bordered by the Gulf of Mexico to the east, Mississippi to the north, Alabama to the west, and the Tennessee River to the south. The capital is Baton Rouge, and the largest city is New Orleans.

Vive la France!

French-bashing has even gone to the general public’s head, with some restaurants renaming French fries “Freedom Fries.”

The fact that the United States was years late to the party for both world wars and that the French helped us considerably with that little terrorist operation parade the Revolutionary War is more food for thought than any “Freedom Fries.” But besides war, what the French have given us, as a country or culture, is immense. Some examples:

• Quiche
• Flaubert, Proust, Colette, Moliere, Zola, La Fontaine, Voltaire, Balzac, Baudelaire, Hugo, Racine, Dumas, Verne, de Maupassant, Stendhal, Sartre, Duras, Genet and Ionesco, just to name a handful of literature’s greats.
• Berets
• • Quiche
• • Berets
• • Innumerable words and phrases that we use everyday: “la carte,” “la mode,” “art deco,” “bon voyage,” “chic,” “coup d’etat,” “critique,” “debutante,” “deja vu,” “deconstruction,” “enfants terribles,” “Tautu,” “tete-a-tete.”

And this is just the short list of what we’ve been given by that “old Europe.” We owe our language, our Indian wars, and our French-bashing buddies don’t realize they’re being ganged by attacking the French. Or perhaps they are just envious terribles.
THE CLOSING OF THE FINAL FRONTIER?

BY A.K. GUPTA

The CIA has never looked sexier. Top secret technology, biodegradable “bugs,” ultra-sleek weapons, cutting-edge methods of dealing out death and deception — all are on display in The Recruit, the latest in a series of films getting projects depicting the intriguing world of the CIA.

Other recent films include The Bourne Identity, Sum of All Fears, Spy Boys, Confessions of a Dangerous Mind, a film aimed at teens called Agent Cody Banks, and in the works, The Good Shepherd, a Leonardo DiCaprio vehicle about the history of the CIA. Or maybe there’s 24, Alias, The Agency, as well as a Discovery Channel documentary on the CIA. What most of these projects share correctly in films and television, the CIA that the agency is actively trying to perpetuate.

In the mid-1970s, a congressional committee chaired by Sen. Frank Church exposed the CIA’s sorry history of using assassination, overthrowing sovereign governments, and using assassinations and chemical and biological warfare agents against its opponents. Hollywood responded with films such as The Three Days of the Condor, Missing, Salvador and JFK, which was highly critical, if not outright damming of the CIA. Given that the official CIA response to inquiries was “no comment,” the imaginations of the American public were allowed to run rampant.

However, with the release of Top Gun in 1986, which glamorized naval aviators, the CIA realized its image could be improved using the Hollywood machine. In 1996 the CIA appointed Chase Brandon, a 25-year veteran of covert operations in Central and South America, to head its public relations effort. That is not to say space exploration lacks vision. Even when it did have sky-high dreams, it was motivated by the Cold War. Propaganda was the chief purpose of the Apollo Program. Tens of billions of dollars were spent in an effort comparable with the Manhattan Project, and for what? So some flyboys could tool around in a lunar buggy, knock about golf balls and lug back moon rocks?

As for the science conducted in the shuttle, it’s of dubious value. NASA hyped the myriad experiments it conducts in the micro-gravity environment. Critics snort, “Micro-gravity is of micro-importance.” Shuttle crews don’t see themselves as final-frontier explorers, but futuristic construction workers hauling in and heaving out satellites, or space movers ferrying materials to the international space boondoggle.

So why continue with manned space flight? Most aerospace companies make their money from building and launching satellites, which don’t require astronauts. Some tout space tourism as the solution. It’s estimated that millions of people are willing to pay $5,000 or more for a brief space flight. Even if tourism generated billions a year, it would be a cosmic particle in the galaxy of money needed to develop reliable space travel. (Just developing a new commercial jetliner, comparatively, is a multibillion-dollar gamble.)

Others such as the Mars Society want to colonize the Red Planet. Even to send humans to plant the Stars and Stripes on Mars could cost $1 trillion. And opponents are already crying, “Hands off Mars!” Another far-fetched idea is asteroid mining. Even then, no one suggests humans, when robots would work 24/7 without complaint.

There is one other source of life support for a human presence — the Pentagon. Its goal of supreme global conquest is worthy of “Ming the Merciless.” In one planned document, the Air Force envisions two squadrons of 15 space fighters each that can deliver a “payload” — bombs, direct energy weapons, space marines — anywhere in the world in under 30 minutes. (Military research was part of the doomed Columbia mission. Israeli astronaut Ilan Ramon was testing a device that would enhance the ability of satellites to peer through dust and cloud cover.)

Or maybe the dreams of tomorrow will look like the 1980s sci-fi flick Outland: space colonies as company towns, expendable, drug-addicted miners, corrupt sheriffs and quacks “one shuttle flight away from a mal-practice suit” patching the wounded. That is not to say space exploration shouldn’t continue. There are many positive roles it can play beyond economic exploitation or military conquest. Satellite imaging is irreplaceable for mapping desertification, deforestation, pollutants, the effects of global warming, etc. The Hubble Space Telescope has greatly expanded our knowledge of the universe. The Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence as well as the search for extra-solar planets may one day answer the burning question if we are alone in the universe. One of humanity’s more laudable traits is our innate curiosity about the universe in which we live.

But with a choice between Darth Vader and Social Darwinism in futuristic drag, it’s no wonder that most people have grown indifferent or even hostile to the space program. The future, it turns out, ain’t what it used to be. But maybe we can look forward to the day when space squatters and lunarchists are fighting corporate solarization.
**TECHNOTOPIA, and the Death of Nature**

BY JAMES JOHN BELL

“We are on the edge of change comparable to the rise of human life on Earth,” San Diego University professor of computer science Vernor Vinge warned in 1993. Vinge is one of a number of scientists and futurists who predict that technological progress will carry the world toward a “Singularity” — a point at which technology and nature will join up. At this juncture, the world as we have known it will become extinct in the new definitions of life — “nature” and “human” will take hold. Vinge explains, “Within 30 years, we will have the technological power to create superhuman intelligence. Shortly after, the human era will end.”

While leading proponents of technology have been aware of the Singularity concept for some time, there are concerns that, if the public understands the ramifications of the Singularity, they would be reluctant to accept new and unsettling technologies, such as genetically engineered foods, nanotechnology and robotics.

**Machine Evolution**

A number of books on the coming Singularity are in the works. The idea of machine life gone awry is a Hollywood favorite. This May, Matrix Reloaded, the sequel to the blockbuster film Matrix, will delve into the philosophy and origins of Earth’s machine-controlled future. In addition, Warner Brothers is releasing this summer the most expensive film of all time — a $180 million sequel called Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines.

Cast members prepared themselves for their roles in the Matrix, by reading Wired editor Kevin Kelly’s 1994 book Out of Control: The Rise of Neo-biological Civilization. Kelly’s first page reads, “The realm of the born — all that is nature — and the realm of the made — all that is humanly constructed — are beginning to merge.”

**Central to the workings of the Singularity are a number of “laws” — such as Moore’s Law.**

In 1965, Intel corp. co-founder Gordon E. Moore noted that the number of transistors that could fit on a single computer chip had doubled every year for six years. From this he predicted that the doubling would continue, and it has — to date, one billion calculations per second. Moore’s Law holds today: a computer can perform one million billion calculations per second — about 1/20th the power of the human brain.

**Today, millions of circuits are found on a single computer chip, and technological “progress” is accelerating at an exponential rather than a linear growth rate. In 2005, IBM plans to introduce “Blue Gene,” a computer that can perform one million billion calculations per second — about 1/20th the power of the human brain.**

According to Moore, “an computer hardware will surpass human brainpower in the first decade of this century. Software that emulates the human mind — “artificial intelligence” — may take a few more decades to evolve.

Stewart Brand, in his book The Clock of the Long Now, discusses another law — Monsanto’s Law — which states that the ability to identify and use genetic information doubles every 12 to 24 months. This exponential growth in biological knowledge is transforming agriculture, nutrition and healthcare in the emerging life-sciences industry.

**Reaching Infinity**

Since the end of the last ice age about 11,000 years ago, the human population has grown exponentially. Dan Eber, a scientist at the Boeing Artificial Intelligence Center, notes that the asymptote, or point of near-infinite increase, in human population is “located in the year 2035 AD.” An infinite number of humans is, of course, impossible. Scientists predict our numbers will hover around 9 billion by mid-century.

Eder points out that the predicted rise of “technological singularity” and other groups believe global artificial intelligence could begin to multiply exponentially once biological life has met its limits. Scientists are debating not so much if it will happen, but what discovery will set off a series of Earth-altering technologic actively organizing not just to bring the Singularity about, but to counter what they call “technohobbes” and “neoluddites.” Critics like Greenpeace, Earth First and the Rainforest Action Network.

The Progress Action Coalition (Pro-Act), formed in June 2001, fantasizes about “the dream of true artificial intelligence... adding a new richness to the human landscape never before known.” Pro-Act, AgBioWorld, Biotechnology Progress Foundation and other groups believe that desire accelerated scientific progress acknowledge that the greatest threat to technologic progress is artificial intelligence could usher in the fields of nanotechnology or the discovery of “knowledge-enabled mass destruction.”

**The Times of London compared Joy’s statement with Einstein’s 1939 letter to President Roosevelt, which warned of the dangers of the nuclear bomb.**

**Eber notes that GNR technologies is amplified by the fact that some of these new technologies have been designed to be able to “replicate” — i.e., they can build new versions of themselves. Nuclear bombs do not sprout more bombs and toxic spills do not grow more spills. If the new self-replicating GNR technologies are released into the environment, they could be nearly impossible to recall or control.**

**Globalization and Singularity**

Joy understands that the greatest dangers we face ultimately stem from the world where global corporations dominate — a future where much of the world has no voice in how the world is run. The 21st century GNR technologies, he writes, “are being developed almost exclusively by corporate enterprises. We are aggressively pursuing the promises of these new technologies within the now-unchallenged system of global capitalism and its manifold financial incentives and competitive pressures.”

**The Warning**

In April 2000, Sun Microsystems’ chief scientist and co-founder Bill Joy warned in the now-infamous cover story “Why the Future We Don’t Need U.S.” in Wired magazine, of the dangers posed by developments in genetics, nanotechnology and robotics (GNR). Unless things change, Joy predicted, “We could be the last generation of humans.”

Joy said that “knowledge alone will enable mass destruction” and termed his phenomenon “knowledge-enabled mass destruction.”

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Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen contends that if chemists earlier in the last century had decided to use bromine instead of chlorine to produce commercial coolants (a mere quirk of chemistry), the ozone hole over Antarctica would have been far larger, and would have lasted all year, and would have severely affected life on Earth. “Avoiding that was just luck,” stated Crutzen. Another of the world’s biologists believe a global “mass extinction” is underway.

A 1998 Harris poll of the 5,000 members of the American Institute of Biological Sciences found 70 percent believed that what has been termed “The Sixth Extinction” has begun. As a direct result of human activity (resource extraction, industrial agriculture, the introduction of non-native animals and population growth), up to one-fifth of all living species — mostly in the tropics — are expected to disappear within 30 years. “The speed at which species are being lost is much faster than any we’ve seen in the past... including those related to meteor collisions,” University of Tennessee biodiversity expert Daniel Simberloff told The Washington Post.

The same time that nature’s ancient biological creation is on the decline, artificial laboratory-created biotech life forms genetically modified tomatoes, genetically engineered salmon, cloned sheep are on the rise. Already more than 60 percent of food in U.S. grocery stores contain genetically engineered ingredients — and that percentage is rising.

Nature and technology are not just evolving: They are competing and combining with one another. Ultimately there could be only one winner.

For more information on the Singularity visit www.technologicalsingularity.info

**Paintings of Israels and Palestinians: For My Parents**

by Seth Tobocman

1-857126-85-2/5.95/180 pages/April 2000

Sketches from Israel and Palestine that offer a starting point for discussion about the area’s history and contested land.

A Disjoined Search for the Will to Live by Shaka N’Zinga

1-857126-77-8/5.19/147 pages/February 2003

A novel of struggling through pain and injustice from a politicized prisoner incarcerated since age 16.
Revolución y Contrarrevolución en Venezuela

Así se llamó uno de los paneles del semi- nario La crisis del neoliberalismo reali- lizado el 21-22 de febrero en Nueva York, patrocinado por NACLA, NYU y otras instituciones. Este fragmento del discurso de Juan Pablo Torres Delgado, cónsul de Venezuela en NY, presenta la opinión de un miembro de la Revolución Bolivariana. En próximas ediciones del periódico publicaremos la ponencia de Blanca Ekehtat, Catia, TV Caracas, al igual que puntos de vista alternativos y críticos de la revolución bolivariana.

Para entender lo que está pasando en Venezuela, es necesario que revisemos algunos antecedentes a vuelo de pájaro. En los años 89 y 90, el mundo enfrentaba una crisis ideológica con la caída del muro de Berlín y de la Unión Soviética. El pensamiento progresista estaba en reflujo... La paz estaba globa-lizada, había un mundo unipolar y una sola potencia... En América Latina, se discutía, entre otros temas, el rol de las fuerzas armadas, que no tenían una doctrina propia sino la del Pentágono. En Venezuela, una generación de militares jóvenes empezó a diseñar un modelo de país... A idear una doctrina latinoamericana. No eran marxista-lenin-istas, eran fundamentalmente nacionalistas, como insistía el pensamiento de Simón Bolívar, el líder, de Ezequiel Zamora, el guerrero, y de Simón Rodríguez, el maestro...

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Podemos ser detenidos y deportados de un delito inmigratorio o de otro tipo, también hemos perdido los derechos legales, portadores de green card, diálogo sobre este tema. Y como si eso septiembre, el gobierno de Bush cortó el países. Sin embargo, después del 11 de campaña de amnistía para los Antes de los atentados del 11 de septiembre, Estados Unidos durante 19 años. Es uno más amarse con su familia, después de residir en Quito, Ecuador, sin que le permitieran comu- nicarse con su familia, después de residir en Estados Unidos durante 19 años. Es uno más en la larga lista ... Antes de los atentados del 11 de septiem-bre del 2001, las organizaciones por los derechos de inmigrantes y refugiados, habían alcanzado consenso y apoyo en la campaña de amnistía para los indocumentados. Contaban con el apoyo de los gobiernos de México y de otros países. Sin embargo, después del 11 de septiembre, el gobierno de Bush courtó el diálogo sobre este tema. Y como si eso fuera poco, actualmente los inmigrantes legales, portadores de green card, también hemos perdido los derechos legales a la defensa; si somos acusados de un delito inmigratorio o de otro tipo, podemos ser detenidos y deportados de inmediato. No tenemos derecho a reclamar la presencia de un abogado. Es decir, que los inmigrantes, documentados o indocumentados, hemos perdido nuestros derechos básicos, como el Habeas Corpus, en nombre de la “seguridad nacional”. Artemio Guerra, director del Proyecto de Participación Cívica de Nueva York, dice los inmigrantes enfrentan una avalancha de obstáculos. Deben hacerse frente al accionar combinado de la Oficina de Inmigración y Naturalización (INS), Policía, Administración del Seguro Social y los patrones. Las ocupaciones de mayor riesgo por el control gubernamental son aquellos puestos de trabajo considerados “claves” para la seguridad nacional: aeropuertos, oficinas federales, contratistas del gobierno –desde fábricas de helicópteros hasta textiles. Si eres un inmigrante, te consideran una amenaza para la seguridad nacional. No importa tu estatus inmigratorio, y las reglamentaciones serán más estrictas aún puesto que la Oficina de Inmigración está ahora bajo control del Departamento de Seguridad Nacional.” Estas leyes inmigratorias fueron en su mayoría sancionadas en 1996, durante el gobierno de Clinton, como parte del paquete de reformas Immigration Reform Act. Y le han venido como anillo al dedo a este gobierno republicano, que las está haciendo cumplir al pie de la letra, invirtiendo en ello un tremendo presupuesto. Hasta ahora, no se han visto las ventajas de esta política inmigratoria en la llamada lucha contra el terrorismo. De los mil detenidos en la Operación Tarnac, según las autoridades federales, ninguno está acusado de actividades terroristas. Sin embargo, es claro el efecto paralizante que ha tenido esta política inmigratoria en la actividad sindical. Con este clima, es difícil para un trabajador indocumentado obtener y mantener un puesto de trabajo, es más difícil aún organizar un sindicato y por lo tanto, disminuyen las posibilidades de mejora salarial. Y cuando los trabajadores inmigrantes, se ven obligados a aceptar salarios más bajos, también bajan los salarios del resto. Hace unos meses un vocero de la Red Nacional por los Derechos de Inmigrantes y Refugiados (NNIR) se preguntaba: “Los inmigrantes tendrán que vivir en un estado policíaco? La respuesta del gobierno de Bush ha sido un SI rotundo. La fuerza laboral agrícola nacional es de unos 2.5 millones de personas. El promedio de educación del trabaja-dor agrícola es de 8 años o menos de escuela. La mayoría de los trabajadores agrícolas son jóvenes, casa-dos y nacidos en el extranjero, y más de dos terceras son de origen hispano. La fuerza laboral agrícola para la región de El Paso-Juárez se estima en 12,000 personas. La mayoría son inmigrantes legales de México y el resto son ciudadanos estadounidenses de origen mexicano. Estos trabajadores laboran principalmente en los campos agrícolas del sur de Nuevo México y en las zonas agrícolas aledañas a El Paso. Cuando menos una cuarta parte son mujeres y es común encontrar a niños menores de edad laborando en los cam- pos. El ingreso anual promedio es de unos $6,000, menos de la tercera parte del nivel de pobreza ($18,770 para una familia promedio de 5) Sólo unos cuantos contratistas de mano de obra agrícola proporcionan agua para beber o servicios sanitarios en los campos. Los contratistas de mano de obra agrícola y los agricultores condicio-nan el empleo a que los trabajadores consuman la comida y las bebidas alcohólicas que expenden en los campos. Como resultado a la reforma a la Ley de Asistencia Pública y a las leyes de inmigración, la mayoría de los trabajadores agrícolas ya no califican para recibir asistencia médica o de ayuda de alimentos. Casi la mitad de la fuerza laboral agrícola de la región carece de un lugar permanente para vivir. El promedio de vida de los trabajadores agrícolas en Estados Unidos es de 49 años. La Agencia de Protección del Ambiente (EPA) estima que cada año ocurren más de 300 mil enfermedades relacionadas a la exposición a pesticidas. Participa en la campana de UFW. Visita el website www.farmworkers.org Traducción de El Independiente, IMC-NYC

**UFW dice NO A LA GUERRA**

Cesar Chávez, fundador del Sindicato de Trabajadores Agrícolas (UFW) nos mostró un camino de paz y acción no vio-lenta. Ese legado se vuelve indispensable hoy más que nunca. El Sindicato de Trabajadores Agrícolas ha sumado a esfuerzos nacionales y globales en contra de los planes del gobierno de Bush de lanzar una “guerra preventiva” contra Irak. El presidente Bush no ha ofrecido evidencias convincentes al pueblo estadounidense de que la guerra sea necesaria, que Irak represente una amenaza inminente para este país. El uso de la fuerza militar requerría que miles de jóvenes, muchos de hispanos, afroame-ricanos y de otras minorías, vayan a la guerra. Sin embargo la guerra contra Irak significaría un daño a para la democracia a nivel interno. Los expertos de este gobierno estiman que los costos de dicha guerra rondarían los 200 mil millones de dólares, requiriendo reducciones del gasto público en áreas como nuevos empleos, salud pública, servicio social (welfare), el ambiente y otros programas gubernamentales fundamentales. Los oficiales de la Casa Blanca dicen que son necesarias reducciones para colocar el presupuesto federal “en pie de guerra”. Poco o nada del presupuesto nacional estará disponible para auxiliar a los gobiernos estatales de California, Arizona, Texas y Washington que pronto podrían eliminar los programas de salud y welfare para los residentes pobres y las minorías, incluyendo los trabajadores agrícolas. El aumento del gasto militar junto con la reducción de los presupuestos para servicios causará más desasosiego a millones de familias trabajadoras empobrecidas, entre las que se encuentran los trabajadores agrícolas que están entre los más pobres y explotados de Estados Unidos. Los últimos datos del departamento de trabajo muestran que el 90 % de los trabajadores agrícolas de California ganan menos de diez mil dólares por año, y no tienen cobertura de salud.

**Trabajadores agrícolas fronterizos**

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