

Capitalists impoverish workers

The "City of Brotherly Love" is the image farthest from the mind of anyone thinking of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania today. What comes to mind instead are a militarized, race-baiting police force dropping a bomb on a predominantly black working class neighborhood; body bags containing the remains of 11 men, women, and children; and the homes of 61 families burned to a crisp. These images are indicative of the profound economic and political changes gripping this city and region, the country, and the world.

For nearly a century the most powerful capitalists of the United States of North America (USNA) ruled the major Northern urban areas through political machines built on corruption, ethnic patronage, and mass economic and social bribery. Extensive bribery and patronage were possible because USNA imperialism was undergoing unprecedented worldwide expansion.

Today economic realignments are forcing political realignments. The shifts in the global economy — from mechanics to electronics, from expansion to contraction — are destroying the foundations of big city machines. The direct and open dictatorship of the capitalist class is now emerging.

In the period of expansion following World War II, the capitalists were able to provide the mass of workers, including the unemployed workers, with a steadily improving standard of living. Today the capitalists' ability to bribe the workers is becoming more and more limited to a narrow, highly skilled and professionalized stratum of the population. Many of the community, trade union, and elected misleaders are drawn from this stratum. The open dictatorship of the capitalists requires the class collaboration of this narrow social base.

Philadelphia is a naked example of this process. In the 1950s the Democrats defeated the Republican Party machine and set about building one of their own. Since then politics and patronage in Philadelphia have been controlled by the Democratic Party machine. This machine was built and run by the late Congressman Green and later taken over by Frank Rizzo, after the former police chief became mayor in 1971. Now the remnants of the old Green machine are being put on the defensive by the emergence of the Greater Philadelphia First Corporation (GPFC) as the most effective political force in the city and region. The local Democratic and Republican Parties pale in comparison.

The economic life of the most dispossessed and disenfranchised members of the working class continues to deteriorate. This is giving rise to increasing restlessness over such issues as homelessness, housing, health care, and drugs. This restlessness, coupled with the need to meet global competition, has

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forced the capitalist class to adopt new strategies and organizational forms and to establish more effective means of political rule.

Speaking about the formation of the GPFC and its satellites, a 1982 statement from the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Philadelphia explained,

Some will view this [the formation of the GPFC and its satellites] as a "power grab" by the business community. Are you trying to dominate the other interest groups in Philadelphia?

This is a reorganization of the business community . . . We are restructuring ourselves so that our resources can be put to work in partnership with others for the welfare of the whole. We can not diffuse ourselves so much as to represent all of Philadelphia's interests. Of course we are interested in having a more powerful leadership position. We are pouring enormous resources into the community and wish to see those resources used forcefully.

The GPFC has since developed more tact. Their public statements now elaborate more on the question of "partnership" than on the forceful use of their resources.

The 1983 election of the city's first black mayor, Wilson Goode, opened the door to the political emergence and consolidation of the GPFC. Goode received a Masters Degree from the prestigious Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania. He is a former member of the Greater Philadelphia Partnership (GPP) formed in 1975. The GPP (now the Urban Affairs Partnership, a major arm of the GPFC) was the precursor and producer of the basic strategy of the GPFC. At the very beginning of Goode's first mayoral campaign, he clarified his aims.

I intend to make Philadelphia's government the best-run company in this town . . . and we will work in close partnership with business, labor, political, neighborhood and institutional leaders to bring about our common goal — economic revitalization.

MAKING PHILADELPHIA FIRST

The accelerating electronics revolution in production and circulation has wrought vast and fundamental changes and crises. Capitalism has become an integrated world system. The contracting world economy and market forces every capitalist city to compete on a regional, national, and international basis to attract capital investments. The GPFC's economic plan to "Make Greater Philadelphia First" reflects these changes and demands. Accordingly their 1986-1991 regional plan states:

Greater Philadelphia's economy is in transition from one heavily based upon traditional manufacturing to a

more diversified one based on newly emerging technology and economic opportunities. The region possesses certain strong competitive advantages upon which it can capitalize . . . Greater Philadelphia is the first metropolitan area of the United States to be underlaid by a completed fiber optics network physically designed to support information-intensive businesses. Linked to the communication system of the nation's Northeast corridor it is already in actuality the nation's first metropolitan "teleport," a distinction it should retain for several years.

To capitalize on the region's competitive advantages the plan established specific goals and objectives. A major goal was to "increase cooperation between business and labor." An effective vehicle being used to accomplish this is the Philadelphia Area Labor Management Committee (PALM). Formed and supported by leaders of both the Chamber of Commerce and the Philadelphia Council of the AFL-CIO, the committee has been held out as exemplary nationally. One of PALM's most celebrated efforts is the Built-Rite program, a partnership between the construction industry and the highly bribed Building and Construction Trades Council.

(gas and oil), and Fidelcor Inc. (banking) are just a few of these interests. In 1987 they reported sales totalling over \$41 billion.

One in every five Philadelphians lives below the poverty line. The rate for whites is one in every nine; for Asians, one in four; for blacks, one in three; and for Puerto Ricans, nearly one in two. At least 115,000 people live on less than \$5,000 a year. There are over 15,000 homeless in the city while some 22,000 homes stand vacant and deteriorating.

North Philadelphia is the most impoverished section of the city. It has large concentrations of unemployed black youths whose jobless rates range from 55 to 75 percent. Half of the city's abandoned housing is located there.

All the economic, social, and political contradictions of the city are most concentrated in North Philadelphia. It is predominantly black and has the largest community of Puerto Rican people in the greater Philadelphia area. Two of the city's three enterprise zones are located there. Within their boundaries, over 500 businesses employ nearly 30,000 low- and minimum-wage workers.

Public-private partnership has resulted in an over-half-a-billion dollar "stick-up" by the convention center construction project and

% UNEMPLOYED Philadelphia by Zip



1985
DOWNTOWN INDEX
▲ HUNTING PARK WEST
● AMERICAN ST.
■ WEST PARKSIDE
□ 1.7 to 8 %
■ 9 to 12
■ 12 to 24.5

Sourced North Philadelphia

In paying tribute to the Built-Rite program Harris Wofford, Pennsylvania Secretary of Labor and Industry, stated,

To survive and prosper in an economic environment that has become global, deregulated, intensely competitive, and dominated by radical technological change, our businesses must be well-managed, efficiently operated, quick to respond to changes in the market, technologically up-to-date, and manned by skilled people committed to the success of their organization. To achieve this labor-management cooperation is essential.

The Built-Rite program supposedly proves that a partnership between the exploiter and the exploited benefits all. However this so-called proof is shattered by reality. Tremendous wealth on one side and extreme poverty on the other make up the reality of Philadelphia. While city officials, labor lieutenants, and corporations profess partnership, they continue to tighten the belts of workers. Capitalism can only mean hardship for the majority of workers. The exploited and exploiters have diametrically opposed interests.

The GPFC represents the most powerful corporate capitalist interests in the Philadelphia region. Cigna Corporation (insurance), Smith-Kline-Beckman (pharmaceuticals), Bell Atlantic (telecommunications), Sun Oil

Cigna Corporation combined. The mass of North Philadelphians have yet to receive even a dime from the Mayor's much-touted North Philadelphia Plan.

To "Make Greater Philadelphia First" requires the creation of a more favorable — i.e., competitive — business climate. This means making Philadelphia's workforce last in wages and living standards. Minimizing labor costs is the key to maximizing profits.

This economic assault is already underway. In response, the exploited are stirring and beginning to fight back. A favorable business climate requires a docile and controlled workforce, including a properly trained pool of unemployed labor. To accomplish this, every striving of the exploited toward political and organizational independence from their exploiters must be nipped in the bud. This is the essential aspect of the strategy behind the promotion of partnership.

THE TYRANNY OF CHARITY

Characteristic of this new period of capitalism's general crisis are the growing debt and deficits of the federal government. Federal funding to the cities and states is diminishing. Community Development Block Grants and other funding are puny compared to the massive outlays of the Great Society of the 1960s. Consequently, private big business interests have been forced to



Greater Philadelphia Development Affiliates

to "make Philadelphia first"

leverage part of their cash flow to maintain control and urban development.

The GFFC, with its developed strategy and highly sophisticated organization, orchestrates the main issues and method of exploitation and oppression of labor. The role of corporate foundations and trusts is critical. The Ford, Pew, Felt, William Penn, and Philadelphia Foundations spin their webs as the benefactors of the workers' intelligentsia.

The Pew family owns the controlling stock of the locally based Sun Oil Company, whose Chief Executive Officer sits on the Executive Board of the GFFC. The Pew family Foundation, the Pew Charitable Trust, recently released a report entitled "A Matter of Vision." It clarified the GFFC's strategy in relation to newly emerging community struggles.

Many of Philadelphia's neighborhood-based organizations started as advocacy groups with a strong adversarial relationship with the city and local administration. Some groups still use those tactics. But while the adversarial organization plays a role in community development, the more successful groups have moved from that confrontational stance to a more

communities, are these same policies now being welcomed? Because drugs have been allowed to infiltrate every working class community in Philadelphia, be they black, Hispanic, or white.

In the 90-day period earlier this year, drug-related violence killed 22 youths and babies. Finally, when the life of five-year-old Marcus Viles was cut short in a crossfire, many communities broke out in militant rallies and protests. Fearing a potentially explosive "Rev. Jimmie" the media, the politicians, and the mayor moved in immediately to divert this mass anger. They took the years of pent-up anger against economic neglect, killings, drugs, and police complicity and misdirected it against the jobless youth and the "alcohol and drug" drug dealers. They put the police forward as the staunchest fighters against drugs.

At the same time, but lost in the shuffle of events, yet another batch of drug squad policemen was indicted for complicity in the skyrocketing multi-million dollar drug business. Before the Marcus Viles killing the media made no mention of the hundreds upon hundreds of complaints to the police about the setting up of drug hotspots and drug trafficking, complaints that fall on deaf ears.

The capitalists are using the drug question

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tional politics. Nothing and no one can escape it. The ruling class strategy relies on it.

An example of this is the last and hotly contested mayoral election. Mayor Goode, the incumbent "MOVE" bomber, narrowly defeated the vote which united political cop, Frank Rizzo. With Rizzo turned Republican, the local Republican Party reinforced its major coalition during this election. Phil Bell punning proclaimed a new realignment in city politics, the Republican Party now the party of the white ethnics and the Democratic Party that of the blacks.

Behind this scene, however, the real political makers and shakers of the GFFC placed their financial eggs equally in both the black and white baskets. Victory in either case meant "heads they win, tails you lose."

A major legacy of the color question is the de facto segregation of most of the city's neighborhoods. Of course, this includes the persistent unequal economic and social status of especially the black and Hispanic neighborhoods. Lack of funding recently forced Philadelphia's school superintendent, who is black, to close six day-care programs. Five of those chosen were operating in schools in the predominantly white northeast section of the city. Although this was really an attack on the entire working class, the media pictured it as an ethnic question.

Several months ago a state senator succeeded in passing, for the first time, his perennial bill calling for the secession of Northeast Philadelphia. Although it did not pass the whole state legislature, it reinforced the senator's and others' credentials as "white ethnic" politicians. Their argument for secession is that the Northeast, a predominantly white area, pays too much property tax and receives too little and low-quality public services from a black administration that favors the black neighborhoods.

THE NEED FOR A PARTY

Everywhere there are signs that the workers of Philadelphia are awakening. The homeless are pulling the boards off of abandoned houses. The Puerto Rican community recently erupted in protests and marches against the continued police terrorizing of their lives. City and state workers are locked in battle against layoffs and two-tier wage contracts. All these stirrings are like lit fuses. They are attached to a social bomb that is about to explode.

In response to the deepening economic crisis and the increasing stirrings of the masses, the ruling class is moving to defund its interests. It is streamlining its forms of organization, honing its strategy, and developing its agitation and propaganda, all in preparation for the inevitable upsurge of the working class.

The problem facing Philadelphia's working class is one of building an organization of leaders united around a class strategy. This has never existed before. The highest level of unity ever reached in the past has been limited to coalition politics. Even then, we often found ourselves fighting one wing of the class enemy in coalition with the other.

Periodically community, trade union, and protest groupings come together in coalitions to deal with a heated issue or an election. But often they fall apart after the powers-that-be make their first tactical move in response. Coalition politics are by nature tactical and short-lived and consequently offer little maneuvering room. They are helpful under certain circumstances in getting masses of people out into the streets and struggling. But coalition politics have proved insufficient and unequal to a strategically united and organized capitalist corporate power structure.

The GFFC is fighting for the life of its class. It understands fully what is at stake. The GFFC and its satellites — the Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Coalition, the Urban Affairs Partnership, etc. — constitute the local officer corps of the capitalist class. The GFFC is the capitalist district committee in Philadelphia! They also have their media and press organs through which much of their mass agitation and propaganda goes out. The Philadelphia Inquirer is one of their central agitational organs. Its publisher, Sam McKel, is also the chairing of the Long Range Planning Commission of the GFFC.

The capitalist class's main strength lies in the inability of the working class to independently develop its organization and officer corps in its own self-interest.

Through helping to draw masses of people into struggle, our Party's task is to facilitate the development of a class strategy and an officer corps out of this struggle. The homeless, the parents against drugs, the

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youths who understand that minimum wage jobs in fast food industries hold no future, the families living in houses that are falling down around them — all are beginning to look toward others willing to take to the streets with them.

Our Party must be positioned in the forefront of these battles. The capitalist propaganda urging partnership and class collaboration must be combated by Party agitation and propaganda raising the class consciousness of the exploited, the laid-off, and the locked-out. The Party's task is to help supplement the scattered and sporadic actions of the masses with planned actions in sustained struggles for empowerment and emancipation. Such a party of working class leaders in Philadelphia will be built. The process has already begun.

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businesslike approach, building relationships with corporate leaders... Some of the original founders have remained with their organizations, but... those leaders evolved into seeking pragmatic solutions to the problems of their neighborhoods. As the leaders changed, so did their groups.

Many of the organizations formed out of direct struggles for housing, food, education, etc. have little or no resources to sustain continued activities. The foundations were quick to rush to the "aid" of organizations that were particularly aggressive in their demands. Militant leaders soon found themselves embroiled in legal red-tape and paper work. They were forced to adjust the forms and aims of struggle so as not to jeopardize their foundation grants.

BEHIND THE WAR ON DRUGS

Organized police terror — on a scale that would be called military occupation in other countries — is being readied for use against those organizations that can not be controlled or contained by the foundations' tyranny of charity. So-called "mini-stations" are being deployed throughout the different communities of the city. They serve as the decentralized command posts of an increasingly militarized police force.

In some areas workers are welcoming these mini-stations. Why, after years of hostility toward the notorious Philadelphia police, particularly by the black and brown

as a political tool to develop a community base of support for a newly equipped and organized police department and to position the police in working class neighborhoods where economic hardship threatens to turn into political unrest. The plan for mini-stations is part of a blueprint to update the Philadelphia police department. The task force that drew that blueprint was financed by the Greater Philadelphia First Corporation.

THE COLOR FACTOR

Although the drug plague exists to one degree or another in every community, the capitalists, especially through the media, have been presenting it as a black problem. In so doing, they are continuing to rely on their ability to manipulate the color factor to keep the most exploited and oppressed section of the working class divided along color lines. The Democrat's promotion of ethnic politics during and since their convention is another example of this strategy.

Throughout USNA history the capitalists have actively promoted discrimination along color lines to prevent workers of all nationalities from uniting in defense of their common class interests. Today in Philadelphia and throughout the country they are using the color factor and ethnic politics to help reinforce across-class partnership within each ethnic grouping.

The color question runs through all aspects of the life of Philadelphia, from the locations of enterprise zones to sports to elec-