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# RESIST

Newsletter #192

A call to resist illegitimate authority

January 1987

## No Haven For Homeless in a Heartless Economy

MICHAEL FABRICANT  
and MICHAEL KELLY

*The following article is an edited version of a longer article that appeared in a recent issue of Radical America, Vol, 20, Nos. 2&3. For a copy of this issue, write or call Radical America, 1 Summer St., Somerville, MA 02143, 617-628-6585.*

**U**p to 3 million people now live without a home in the United States, mostly in our cities. In cities like New York, it is difficult to comprehend the scope of the homeless problem, with its more than 60,000 homeless riding the subways or seeking refuge in the train and bus stations at night.

In 1981, a Chicago newspaper reported that 50 homeless people had been buried in the city's Potter's Field in January, after silently freezing to death. A year later, the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless estimated 25,000 homeless wandered the city. Charles Ford, the Director of Emergency Services said: "We have the feeling that the numbers are increasing . . . We are finding more and more people who live on the street involuntarily — young people, who in ordinary times would be able to find jobs, and more women and children." By December 1982 every shelter in Chicago was filled to capacity and turning away 30-50 people per night.

Other cities of America's "heartland" have shared this experience. Detroit, with its massive unemployment, had over 27,000 homeless people in November 1984 — a 300 percent increase from 1982. The U.S. Conference of Mayors reported that up to 1,000 people were living in cars, trailers, tents, or campgrounds in Tulsa while another 200-300 people lived under city bridges. In 1981-1982, 1,000 people in Milwaukee lost their homes.

In recent years, the prospering and temperate "Sunbelt" cities have been inundated with unemployed workers from the Northeast. Yet in Dallas, Phoenix and Los Angeles, for example, they have found an extremely tight job market, high rents, and a much lower level of entitlement than in their old homes.

The Union Rescue Mission of Los Angeles, the world's largest private mission, recently (for the first time in over 90 years) turned people away because all the 350 beds and 350 chairs were filled. Elsewhere, during the winter of 1983, Seattle turned away 4,000 families (roughly 16,000 people) who applied for shelter. And in Flagstaff, Arizona, many homeless families have been camping out in the National Forest which borders the city.

### The New Victims

The homeless population has changed dramatically in appearance as well

as quantity. Between 1945 and 1970 urban hobos, mostly older, alcoholic men, were the major skid row inhabitants. Since then, small but growing numbers of women have appeared. By the mid-1970's many younger black and Hispanic men, unemployed and lacking job skills, began using urban shelters and flophouses. Many had drug or alcohol problems. In New York City up to one third of them were veterans, mostly of the Vietnam War.

At the same time, discharged mental patients became more prominent on the streets following deinstitutionalization. Those supporting this policy claimed that recent advances in psychopharmacology and treatment had now made community living feasible for institutionalized mental patients. New "wonder drugs," especially phenothiazines, were to supplant incarceration. Community-based treatment models became the new road towards "recovery" and social integration.

Deinstitutionalization, as it was employed, resulted more from fiscal than from therapeutic concerns. To begin with, the state mental hospital census doubled between 1950 and 1970. Housing and treating this influx required an incredible amount of money. Existing facilities were outdated and dilapidated. The unionization of state workers had further increased costs. According to one estimate, deinstitutionalization may

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have saved the state governments as much as \$5.4 billion in expenditures between 1965 and 1974.

Meanwhile, the price paid in human misery has been monumental. Vital services, community supports and follow-up treatments were not adequately developed. Many of the 400,000 people discharged from mental hospitals between 1950 and 1980 were forced to fend for themselves. Temporarily, some maintained a marginal existence in low-income housing, but by the mid-1970's this too disappeared. Other than the street, the only alternative left were adult homes or shelters. In these newly emerging "deviant ghettos," one is likely to find neither compassion nor therapeutic treatments, but usually at best, some form of repressive tolerance on the outer fringes of society.

The fiscal crisis, with its accompanying economic hardship, creates the need for increased mental health services among those most sorely afflicted. Yet, strict admission criteria have eliminated even this alternative for many.

The high rates of inflation and unemployment during the recession of 1980-1982 produced yet another wave of homeless people. Massive layoffs and plant closings in 1983 produced situations in cities like Detroit, where in 1982 close to 20,000 workers per month lost their unemployment benefits. In 1983 Illinois had a 13.9 percent unemployment rate or 759,000 unemployed citizens, and also had the nation's highest rate of home foreclosures (1.6 percent). Shelters in Chicago, Detroit and elsewhere cited "the loss of a job" as a primary reason for homelessness.

The inability of younger blacks or Hispanics to enter the labor market has also contributed to the homelessness explosion. Their unemployment rate (over 50 percent) is the highest in the nation. Unable to find jobs or affordable housing, many young black and Hispanic men are crowded out of their family's apartment. In 1980, virtually no people under the age of twenty-one stayed in New York City municipal shelters. By 1985, they comprised 7 percent of the total shelter population. Recent estimates showed approximately 22,000 homeless youth in New York City, the largest subgroup of homeless.

Finally, homeless families are the newest and, perhaps, most frightening

wave of homelessness. Headed mostly by women, living on AFDC, they represent the fastest growing group of homeless.

### The Government Strikes Back

To this grievous problem, the government response has sometimes been nightmarish. In Fort Lauderdale, a city councilman urged the spraying of trash with poison to cut off the "vermin's" food supply. In Phoenix and in President Reagan's home city of Santa Barbara, anti-homeless ordinances prohibit sitting, sleeping or lying down in public areas such as parks, and consider trash-bin refuse as public property. Hence, foraging for food is a criminal act. At the Federal level, a Department of Housing and Urban Development Survey concluded that there were but 200,000-300,000 homeless nationwide. Despite its numerous methodological flaws which considerably underestimate the problem, this survey has nonetheless been used to minimize government action. For example, HUD's recommendation against new, temporary shelters has seriously inhibited efforts for more significant change.

Obviously, the need for safe, decent shelter greatly outstrips the number of slots available. Recent estimates show only 330 shelter beds in Detroit, for a homeless population of 27,000. Chicago has approximately 1,000 beds for 20,000-25,000. In Connecticut, the second richest state, the less than 950 shelter beds far under serve its 10,000 homeless men, women and children. One Shelter in Hartford turned away more than 3,500 applicants in a recent 12-month period.

Shelters also fail to meet the differing needs of homeless people. Alcoholics, the unemployed, the elderly and former mental patients are all lumped into one space. Sanitary conditions are often poor. Bathroom and shower facilities are woefully inadequate given the crowded conditions. Some municipal shelters like the one in Washington, D.C. featured myriad abuses, including random beatings of homeless people by vicious security guards. Given these conditions, many homeless people have apparently "preferred the rats and the cold" to contending with the degradation of the public shelters.

In New York City, municipal shelters have repeatedly failed to meet

basic health and safety standards. Overcrowding, unsanitary conditions and the menacing atmosphere of shelters discourage many of the most vulnerable homeless from seeking assistance. In effect, many elderly and mentally ill people hazard the street rather than risk a night at a shelter. Scores of homeless people in New York City reported violence in the public shelters. Two researchers noted that "for most men we talked to, mention of the shelter conjured up . . . an ever present threat of violence. It is the violence which is the strongest deterrent to men who once there, vow never to return . . ."

The present growth in homelessness began during the 1970's which were also marked by the most acute economic crisis since the 1930's. Investment decisions, private savings and weekly paychecks suffered from double digit inflation. The nation also lost 30 million jobs during this period. By 1976 plant shutdowns had wiped out 39 percent of the jobs that existed in 1969 or an average of about 3.2 million jobs destroyed each year. While approximately 110 jobs were created for every 100 jobs that were destroyed, this ratio still represents a sharp reduction in job creation compared to the 1950's and 1960's. A striking increase in the unemployment rate also occurred, soaring from 5 percent in 1970 to approximately 10 percent in 1981.

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## IT'S TIME TO RESIST



### ILLEGITIMATE AUTHORITY

*Funding social change since 1967*

The Resist Newsletter is published ten times a year by Resist, Inc., One Summer Street, Somerville, MA 02144. (617) 623-5110.

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*Gay Community News*

Printing: Red Sun Press

# Art, Politics and International Solidarity

FERNANDO TORRES

Translated by Cathy Mahoney

Unfamiliar melodies rise from the small, red-carpeted stage where more than a dozen musicians perform with stunning precision.

With each song by Marcel Khalife and his group, Almadayin, the audience filling the room is transported to faraway lands. The magic is only interrupted by the enthusiastic applause demanding another encore. North Americans, Lebanese and Arabs of many nationalities become one in the warm atmosphere of solidarity.

The next day, in the same place, Salvadorean songs fill the hall, announcing and denouncing with each note of the marimba, the nights with their days in Central America.

On Tuesday, a white curtain is pulled down and hundreds of thousands of Chileans marching down the boulevards of Santiago appear on the screen. The images of the workers are followed by bombs falling on the Presidential palace in the central plaza. A flag dissolves in flames, as if the last witness to a period which ended and a dictatorship which began.

Wednesday, the mayor of Berkeley describes his visit to zones controlled by the FMLN in El Salvador, showing slides and answering questions from the audience.

On Thursday, the red carpet which covers the stage is removed and fiery guitar music accompanies a troupe of whirling flamenco dancers.

Friday, the chairs are pushed back in order to dance to the rhythms of a Cuban conjunto at a benefit for a brigade traveling to Cuba.

On Saturday, friends of Nicaragua present evidence and testimonies of the achievements and difficulties facing the Sandinista revolution.

The following days bring discussions and cultural programs about Africa, Ireland, the Middle East, Guatemala, the strike by Latina workers at a Wat-



La Pena (Berkeley, CA) celebrates its 10th anniversary.

sonville cannery, the problems of refugees and the sanctuary movement, the proposition on the ballot to quarantine AIDS victims, and many other themes.

It is a cultural festival of national and international solidarity with music, poetry, dance, theater, forums, paintings, photographs, videos, debates and testimonies. It is an idea, perhaps still in the process of being formed, which began eleven years ago as the dream of a small group of activists in the Chile solidarity movement — Chilean and Latin American exiles along with North Americans — which today has become La Pena Cultural center.

Somehow always managing to survive the perpetual economic difficulties which plague the life of a non-profit cultural center, La Pena remains committed to its original principles of unity: support for the struggle against the dictatorship in Chile, support for liberation struggles in Latin America and the Third World, and support for progressive struggles here in the U.S.

As a result, La Pena is known and respected throughout the United States as a center of political culture.

La Pena Cultural Center represents the fusion of politics and culture, of the culture of Chileans in exile and their environment, of Latin American struggles and North American solidarity, a place where the cultural expressions and the struggles of “forgotten” people of many nations can be shared.

At La Pena, cultural work is more than a cup of coffee, a library or a discussion of the classics: it is a constant activity and practice.

But La Pena did not develop in isolation. Its existence is intimately linked to the culture and the struggles of Latin America during the last decades. La Pena is a reflection of these struggles which for diverse reasons have given birth to a movement called “Solidarity.”

One definition of international solidarity in the U.S. is the understanding and aid which the people of the

*Continued on next page*

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U.S. give to other peoples in struggle, in many cases resulting from an awareness of the intervention of their own government against these peoples. Solidarity is also the rejection of any form of intervention and the recognition of the right to sovereignty and self-determination.

The solidarity movement in the U.S. has passed through many stages. In all periods in its development, artistic expressions have been present. The peace movement of the sixties, for example, which resulted in important demonstrations of solidarity with the Vietnamese people, even in some cases unintentionally, was a very important current which grew and was nurtured in U.S. popular culture.

Songs and other art forms were both witnesses and active participants in that period. Rebellious youth used culture to reject militarism, the draft and the war in Vietnam. The cultural expressions of that period were many, from the form of dress to graphic art, photography, dance and music. Today these cultural expressions help us to remember and learn from this important period of our history.

Other struggles have also given birth to large social mobilizations. Chile, Iran, Nicaragua, South Africa and El Salvador have been the source of major controversies in the U.S. These international situations have fueled the growth of the solidarity movement and are also generating important cultural expressions.

Revolutions and social changes have always been accompanied by an important cultural movement. In one form or another, liberation movements have known how to mix art and revolution, art with the struggle for liberation. In Vietnam, Ho Chi Min, the most important leader in the struggle for liberation, was also a poet. In Nicaragua, music was part of the insurrection, and songs were used to teach how to dance as well as how to clean a gun or prepare for the uprising. Poetry was also important, and poetry workshops existed even in the police barracks.

Another example of the active participation of cultural work in a movement for social change which has had a profound impact on progressive culture throughout the world was the cultural experience which took place during the Popular Unity period in Chile from 1970 - 1973.

In 1970 Salvador Allende Gossens

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won the presidential election in Chile, becoming the first socialist to be elected through the "traditional" electoral process.

The reforms initiated by Allende in benefit of the people were many, including efforts to broaden access to culture for all of the people. Prior to this period, most Chileans' cultural experiences were limited to "commercial" art, which was alienating and in most cases, dominated by foreign influence. Cultural imperialism was challenged and laws were passed requiring radio and television stations to present Chilean music.

From 1970 to 1973 a consciousness for change was born in Chile, a consciousness of creation and a search for new alternatives. This consciousness was reflected in the arts. The Chilean New Song Movement, music rooted in traditional folklore which spoke of social issues, became popular. The song "The People United Will Never Be Defeated" became a symbol of the commitment of artists to social reality. Sung by millions in Chile, it continues



to be sung throughout Latin America and the world.

The people, the principle actor in the political process at that time,

developed cultural initiatives of great significance. Murals, festivals, radio programs, penas, dances and cultural programs in the shantytowns flourished. Cultural workers created new opportunities for expression and debate, enriching both their own work and the movement as a whole, profoundly stimulating and influencing the development of authentic Chilean culture, both new and traditional.

Following the military dictatorship which took power in 1973, Chile entered a period known as the "Cultural Blackout", due to the intense repression and the forced retreat of the popular movement, during which the people began to regroup their forces. This period was broken with the appearance of the "cultural resistance" and the emergence of clandestine art forms expressing opposition to the regime and most importantly, faith in Chile's future. Today this movement walks hand in hand with the growing anti-dictatorial movement. It is a new movement, containing the tragedy of countless deaths along with the call for freedom. It is a culture of life, the natural reaction to so much death. It is full of optimism and humour, continually unmasking the absurdities of the dictatorship. It is art which arises from the ashes to be converted into powerful flames which cannot be extinguished.

The revelation of role of the CIA and the Nixon government in the military coup in Chile generated widespread rejection of U.S. intervention. By 1976-77, a national solidarity movement existed, led primarily by North Americans, with organizations in practically every U.S. city.

The forced dispersal of hundreds of thousands of Chileans into exile gave people throughout the world the opportunity to experience the incredible cultural wealth which was created during the Popular Unity government. It was a culture in exile, living from memories, which were transformed into denunciation. It was sad and full of pain. At the same time, however, this culture became an important weapon in the international isolation of the Pinochet dictatorship. Cut off from an organic connection with their people and the struggle in their homeland, there nevertheless continue to be many Chilean artists in exile whose principal source of inspiration is the desire for freedom in their country.

In the United States, many artists

have incorporated songs about Chile in their repertory. Pete Seeger has performed with Chileans on numerous occasions, and has composed songs to Victor Jara, the beloved singer murdered by the military junta.

Holly Near has written a monumental song dedicated to disappeared women in Chile. Sweet Honey in the Rock sings to Soweto and Chile.

The New Song Movement in the U.S., an active participant in the solidarity movement, sings to El Salvador, Nicaragua and South Africa, inspired by these struggles and inspiring others to join in the struggle, demonstrating that popular culture has no borders. Its songs fly in search of truth, peace and solidarity.

Cultural workers in developed countries as well as poor countries have a great task as announcers, as collective historians, as movers and harmonizers of our struggles to reach the song of our freedom.

*Fernando Torres, born in the city of Antofagasta in northern Chile, is of the generation that was politically born during the government of Salvador Allende. He was 16 years old when Allende was overthrown, and was imprisoned for a year in Tres Alamos concentration camp. Following his exile in 1977, he began participating actively in the Chile solidarity movement, particularly as a musician, songwriter and poet. He is currently studying journalism at Laney College and working as an artist in-residence at La Pena Cultural Center in Berkeley, California.*

#### The Resist Pledge System

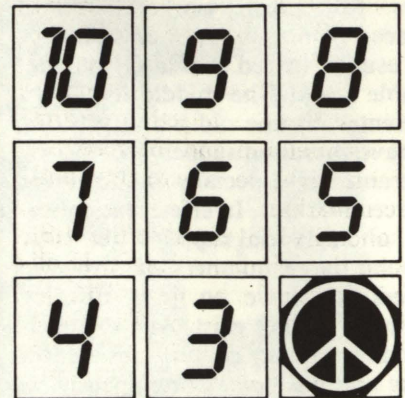
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## CANCEL THE COUNTDOWN

Why will thousands of peace & justice activists travel to Cape Canaveral, Florida, January 17?

- (a) to go to the beach
- (b) to protest and cancel the first test of the Trident II missile
- (c) to stop Star Wars development
- (d) to end nuclear warhead and flight testing as the first steps toward total abolition
- (e) all of the above

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January 17, 1987**

(Martin Luther King Weekend)

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Continued from page Two

These trends also helped depress wages for most workers. Those displaced from mill, auto or steel jobs were usually forced into lower paying, unstable work. The middle level jobs represented by the old manufacturing line have rapidly disappeared, making job transition especially difficult for displaced workers. In effect, the educational and financial supports necessary to enable large numbers of displaced workers to move to jobs offering similar pay do not exist. And the overwhelming majority of new jobs are low paying and unstable. Consequently, at best, only a small fraction of displaced workers can be absorbed at the upper end of the wage pyramid.

## Undercutting the Social Wage

The reduction of wages is not accidental but rather part of the dynamics of capitalism. This same process unfolded in earlier periods of economic crisis. As E.P. Thompson has noted:

*The first half of the 19th century must be seen as a period of chronic underemployment in which the skilled trades are like islands threatened on every side by technological innovation and by the inrush of unskilled or juvenile labor . . . We must bear in mind the insecurity of many skills in a period of rapid technical innovation and of weak trade unions . . . In a number of trades . . . noted as both organized and highly paid in 1812 there was serious deterioration in the status and living conditions over the next 30 years.*

Declining living standards were also experienced by the unemployed during this period; and in 1834, the Doctrine of Less Eligibility was applied to the unemployed, keeping relief grants below the wages of the lowest paid laborer. Therefore, the wage reductions during this period coincided with lower relief grants. Substantial reductions in relief benefits between 1820 and 1840 placed many families below subsistence income levels.

These historic circumstances have contemporary parallels. The "social wage" (of welfare-state benefits), increasingly available to chronically unemployed and dislocated workers since 1930, has been redefined by the present fiscal crisis. The accompanying reduction in marketplace wages has led to today's intensified poverty and homelessness.

Recent reports by journalists, academics, advocates and the govern-

ment underscore the dramatic reduction of entitlement benefits and services. Between 1980 and 1981 an intense drive emerged to make across-the-board cuts in all social welfare programs. Overall, cash welfare benefits declined by 17 percent. One million people were eliminated from Food Stamp coverage. Ninety percent of the working, AFDC families had their benefits reduced or eliminated. Finally, the value of general assistance payments has declined substantially. While these trends did not begin during Reagan's presidency, they have been dramatically intensified by this administration.

As cash benefits have eroded, both private and public sector housing investment decisions have also changed. The Federal government effectively withdrew from the public housing market. In 1979 over 40,000 units of conventional public housing were completed; by 1982 the number had dropped to 25,000 units. In 1979 there were 23,860 new starts for the elderly and handicapped; in 1983 only 14,112 units were funded. During fiscal year 1985 the Reagan administration arranged to fund only 12,500 new units of subsidized housing, 10,000 for the elderly and handicapped, 2,500 for Native Americans.

The central city renovations characterizing many U.S. cities have made matters worse. In New York, tax abatements gave incentives to convert low income housing to luxury apartment buildings. Between 1975 and 1981 approximately 35,000 units of low income housing were lost. New York City offers the most dramatic example of these market forces. Cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, Phoenix, Newark, San Francisco, Denver and Chicago also report substantial losses in their low-income housing stock to downtown renovation or luxury housing development. These trends partly respond to the changing economic structure which has allowed some elite professionals and entrepreneurs to benefit from a polarized job market which has hurt most workers. The increased demand for urban housing from relatively affluent people has pushed many low-income individuals and families out of the formal housing market.

The consequent increase in urban rents leaves poor people particularly vulnerable. Increasingly, general

assistance and AFDC payments are simply insufficient to meet the new urban rent levels throughout the country. As has been noted: ". . . the amount of public assistance a recipient was allotted for rent — whether as a separate shelter allowance or as part of a flat grant, ranged from 20 percent to 60 percent of local fair market rent."

When basic rent allowances are insufficient to meet prevailing rents, then grants have more symbolic than real value. Entitlements that increasingly fail to meet basic survival needs (such as permanent housing) most dramatically indicate the growing inadequacy of today's "social wage".

## Devastating Effects

The gap between benefits and prevailing rents has obvious consequences. Many cities report dramatic increases in eviction rates, disproportionately affecting low-income citizens. In New York City, where a half million eviction actions were initiated from a total stock of two million rental units, approximately half involved people receiving public assistance.

Many people have reacted by moving in with friends or relatives, thus increasing the density of their living space. In New York City alone over 230,000 families are doubled and trebled up. If but 3 percent of these families are made homeless during 1986 the number of homeless families will nearly double.

As usual, women and people of color have been disproportionately affected. Because they are even less likely to have "primary sector" jobs, their wages are lower in the first place. And housing discrimination based on racism and on prejudice against single women with children predates the fiscal crisis. Single mothers rightly fear that their children will be taken away to foster care if they cannot find housing, while blacks and Hispanics may be victims of racially motivated violence within shelters or on the street. In short, economic hard times and capitalist restructuring combine with social wage cuts to increase the plight of women and minorities and to further reduce their already inadequate options.

Clearly, we have entered a period of economic resocialization. In effect, the whole labor force is being resocialized to new and lower wages while benefits are cut to show the poorest that an



*Jerry Berndt photo, from The Homeless: Missing Persons, 1986*

even more reduced living standard awaits them outside the marketplace or within the welfare system. Reductions in entitlement and spending have both freed resources for alternative investments and substantially diminished the living standard of the poor. These forces have combined to create a new subclass of poor: the homeless.

But for such shifts to succeed, entitlement recipients must also be resocialized. The welfare rights philosophy of the 1960's and 1970's which argued that all citizens are entitled to adequate living standards and affordable housing, is being replaced by an attitude that recreates 19th century definitions of entitlement. Temporary shelters and soup lines for the homeless are replacing housing and an adequate food allowance as prevailing public policies. In effect, the state's legitimizing role is being reconstructed and translated into policies that reflect 19th century structural and social relationships.

#### **Rollback in Welfare Policy**

During an earlier period of economic crisis, the 1930's, the social wage, or base entitlement of workers, was redefined. In contrast to the erosion of benefits and economic rights in the

current period, the Great Depression began as expansion of social insurance programs and a gradual increase in the social wage. Advances in defining economic entitlements continued, albeit gradually (as compared, for instance, to many Western European countries), during the post-war boom.

Many economists and historians have shown that the advance in the social wage during the 1930's was not an historic aberration. These improvements occurred because various groups of workers and/or citizens organized and pressed their demands for economic benefits. Social movements across a wide spectrum pressured the state to take a primary responsibility for assuring its citizens a certain minimum living standard, transcending church and private agencies that were expected to assume this social function in the past. Between 1934 and 1936 this conflict peaked and various reforms resulted which increased social insurance benefits and coverage. In effect, the intensified class conflict of this period forced both economic and wage concessions. The states also increased their investment in programs designed to help preserve social harmony.

The subsequent fifty-year expansion of the social wage has strengthened the position of many workers. Government benefits have cushioned many groups of workers from the market's instability. Unemployment insurance, disability benefits, AFDC and other entitlements have guaranteed those temporarily and chronically out of the labor force a minimum standard of living. During the 1970's, entitlement benefits, particularly unemployment insurance, even enabled many citizens to temporarily resist taking jobs for reduced wages. Part of the strategy necessary for workers to resist long-term wage reductions is to protect and expand the social wage benefits that have evolved during this period.

The homeless crisis reflects the unravelling of many of the advances of the last fifty years. Shelters and soup lines do not offer those presently homeless, or those who risk falling through the safety net to the streets, a basis for recreating their lives. At best, these services only temporarily halt the physical, emotional and intellectual deterioration of the homeless person. If the needs of the homeless, chronically unemployed or temporarily unemployed are to be met, then

*Continued on next page*



# GRANTS

**Madison Institute for Social Legislation**, 953 Jenifer St., Madison, WI 53703.

The Madison Institute for Social Legislation, MISL, has made significant gains in its effort to extend legal and social recognition to members of non-traditional families. MISL links lesbian and gay communities with other groups historically denied social and economic justice through direct action, research and education.

Census studies based on national figures show that the economic status of unmarried couple householders is significantly lower than their married counterparts, and over half of unmarried couples live below the poverty line. The MISL has begun a campaign to pass a City-wide ordinance in Madison that would extend to alternative families some of the same rights and benefits currently granted families based on marriage. While this is similar to domestic partners legislation, the Madison effort is broader in its coverage and in its definition of alternative family structures.

Since women, people of color, old people, people with disabilities and lesbians and gay men are all vulnerable to discrimination based on their family status, the MISL is directing its work towards recognition of family types important to these groups; single parent families, extended families, intergenerational families, families of two or more adults unrelated by blood, marriage or adoption who, together with their dependents, are in a mutually supportive relationship.

The ordinance would address employment, to cover health care coverage for family partners and dependents, paid sick leave and bereavement leave; housing, to provide equal rental opportunities and public housing assistance; and public accommodations, to assure recreational opportunities are equally affordable to alternative and nuclear families such as at the YMCA.

Already the MISL has persuaded the City of Madison Equal Opportunities Commission to study the "desirability and feasibility" of an ordinance, and organized the largest public meeting in the Commission's history to support the legislation. The MISL has gained the support of, among others, the Wisconsin State Employers Union, les-

bian and gay groups, tenants groups, disabled rights groups, and the Fair Housing Council of Dane County.

The MISL also conducts extensive research and education campaigns, and has available a number of publications on non-traditional households. A recent grant of \$300 went towards the cost of organizing the City-wide ordinance.

## Homeless

*Continued from page Seven*

economic entitlement must be expanded or advanced, not diminished. This expansion or redefinition must begin with the economic right of citizens to housing and a job at a livable wage. Jobs and housing must be pursued jointly and not separately: splitting the two will only further fragment individuals and groups, and thus make them more amenable to economic resocialization.

Obviously, this kind of change will not come from liberal government policymakers or legislators. To the contrary, without forceful resistance there will be an ongoing, intensified drive to reduce the social wage. As in earlier historic periods, pressure must come from laborers, the unemployed and those most fundamentally affected by the economic crisis. Only such pressure can preserve and extend the present boundaries of the social wage and link it to broader economic issues.

Ultimately, the more general economic crisis has triggered both marketplace and social wage reductions. Consequently, any strategy against poverty and the reduction of the social wage must also confront broader economic issues, such as the relationship between deindustrialization and housing shortages. Thus, struggles in deregulated industries (such as transportation) and primary manufacturing industries (like steel and autos) must be connected to social wage fight backs. The social wage struggles of the poor can also move from daily survival issues to long-term needs, such as when working class groups in New Jersey threatened by housing displacement (due to gentrification and layoffs) joined homeless groups to have much of the state surplus earmarked for housing relief (\$900 million).

Embedded in this type of strategy are educational goals designed to clarify myths about deindustrialization. For instance, many state legislators wanted to use this surplus as a corporate tax break to prevent the flight of industry from New Jersey. Yet similar tax breaks granted during the previous decade had actually coincided with an accelerated flight of capital from this area. In effect, many of the people involved in this campaign learned that the investment of state surpluses in the private economy had hurt their short and long term interests. This strengthened their resolve to channel the surplus to programs that directly benefit working class and poor people.

We cannot develop in the abstract a blueprint of the many strategies for addressing homelessness, social wage reductions or more generally, the economic crisis. Certain prerequisites have been identified: (1) developing critical linkages in campaigns between the interests of the working class (gentrification) and the poor (homelessness), (2) maximizing the opportunities for educating participants about the myths of deindustrialization, the housing crisis, etc., and (3) heightening class tensions when surplus value is not appropriated to advance the interests of working class or poor people. Clearly, specific organizations must be created to actualize these strategic possibilities. Only then can a progressive, rational agenda emerge which will seriously address homelessness, and more fundamentally, the economic crisis.

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