

THE INSUBORDINATE

A Working Class Publication

November.2007 Issue 1

Welcome to America: Immigration in the Baltimore-Washington Corridor

John Parson

There are many "facts" currently being circulated about illegal immigrants, particularly from the conservative groups like Help Save Virginia and Help Save Maryland. Supposedly, per their "experts," illegal immigrants drain our economy, mooch off of our system, burden our schools and communities, raise our crime rates, lower our housing values, and generally rape and defile our good old home grown American culture. They would have you believe that illegal immigration is the key issue in our country, and that "illegals" are a plague to our society that must be removed.

They point to solutions like 287(g), a law that allows Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a federal agency that replaced the INS, to train state and local police to act as immigration officials, arresting and detaining illegal immigrants. They also suggest the banning of all social services to those who cannot prove legal residency. They suggest any person suspected of being an illegal immigrant to have a full background check performed by local police, and have them detained if illegal status is verified. Ultimately, they want every single border closed, and every undocumented worker deported.

These ramblings have gained a lot of strength as of late, particularly in the counties of Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William of Northern Virginia. Loudoun and Prince William have already passed measures banning social services to anyone who is of illegal status, and Prince William County has enacted 287(g), and required police to perform background checks on anybody of "reasonable suspicion" of being undocumented. It even allowed residents to sue the county for any public department they thought provided services to illegal immigrants. Prince William's resolution has received much controversy from not only the Hispanic immigrant community, but from the Virginia working class in general, with as much as 10,000 people turning out at a time to contest the resolution, causing many stipulations to be removed, most notably that residents could no longer sue, and that



Thousands of immigrants and workers gathered together in protest of anti-immigrant solutions passed earlier this year in Prince William County, Virginia

background checks would be limited to crimes, (although even routine traffic stops in Prince William still take 3-4 hours as records are checked).

The town of Herndon in Fairfax County has long been a heated site of immigration debate, with armed Minutemen showing up on the streets to confront day laborers just trying to earn a day's pay. Shortly thereafter, the town passed a resolution banning street side solicitation, including looking for jobs, and set up a day laborers center, which was again the site of confrontational protests. In the last few months, the center was closed down and the ruling overturned, and the fight has again returned to the streets of Herndon.

But do all these anti-illegal immigrant groups and all this anti-illegal immigrant hype hold up to any scrutiny? Do undocumented workers really do immense damage to society? Contrary to what Help Save Virginia and Help Save Maryland would like you to think, illegal immigrants do, in fact, pay taxes. Everything they purchase pays a sales tax. The Social Security Administration has a "Suspense file," an account of income and property taxes that cannot be matched to a name or Social Security number (in other words, taxes paid by the undocumented) growing rapidly. These taxes have been estimated at anywhere from \$90-140 billion a year. Immigrants make up a larger percentage of the workforce than they represent in the overall population, 12.4% as compared to 11.5%, and while paying at least \$90 billion in taxes, only receive \$5 billion a year in benefits.

Do they really burden our school system? Help Save Loudoun (a subsidiary group of Help Save Virginia, based in Loudoun County) would have you believe that each illegal immigrant costs our school

systems approximately \$13,000 per year. But in reality, even their solution of deporting all illegal immigrants would not lessen that cost. Regardless of individual students, school systems still require bus transportation systems, buildings, heating, cooling, ventilation, and electrical systems for those buildings, that compose the majority of the school system budgets. These costs are independent of the number of students, and must be paid regardless of how many students are present. Even teacher costs must be attributed over masses of students. It's not difficult to see that the majority of that cost would still exist whether or not an illegal immigrant is present, and the burden they place on the school system is arbitrary at best.

These groups will suggest that immigrants drive down property values, raise crime rates, and ruin our communities. However, these ideas are nothing more than the same arguments presented against the poor and working class communities in any city in America, especially areas where whites are in the minority. It's a sign of class division and poverty, not immigration status. Rather than being a legitimate argument against immigration, it is nothing more than rehashing the same old case for gentrification.

In countless other examples, a simple look at reality debunks the anti-illegal hype. So-called "pro-enforcement" standpoints simply do not hold up to scrutiny. When the financial and social "arguments" against illegal immigration are clearly fabricated rhetoric, what could the real agenda be? The answer can be found quite simply within the statements of those behind it. Sue Fleming, a member of Help Save Manassas (a Prince William branch of Help

Continued on page 3



Lethal Labor: Meet the Tunnel Rats

Sophie Morgan

"We're not going to be pushed around anymore." John Thayer is no longer holding back. But who can blame him? After 22 years as the supervisor of the Capitol Power Plant Tunnel Crew, a subsidiary of The Architect of the Capitol, he has helped keep those in cushy seats in the District of Columbia comfortable in both hot and cold weather. Thayer is a part of a group of 10 men who patrol five miles of underground utility tunnels that supply heating and cooling to many of the complexes on Capitol Hill, including all of Congress and 20 other federal office buildings. However, do not let the idea of working under Capitol Hill derail your thoughts from the cold, hard truth that the Tunnel Crew, aptly nicknamed the "Tunnel Rats," work in unforgiving conditions; temperatures often exceed 160-degrees, immense chunks of concrete plummet from the ceiling, and the perilous passages are engulfed in welding fumes, pulverized asbestos, and concrete dust. The shafts are so out of control, the Capitol Police refuse to venture into them out of concern for the safety of their dogs. The fire department will not attempt an emergency rescue as there is a lack of communication system and, due to the extremely cramped conditions, access is extremely limited. But that is merely the tip of the iceberg.

More than one year ago, the Tunnel Rats were presented with a bit of truly horrifying information: The Architect of the Capitol had been purposely misleading them for years about the dangerous levels of asbestos exposure in the passages. While the company knew, they never bothered to inform their workers that the concentration of airborne asbestos were extremely toxic - 30 to 40 times the legal limit. After Thayer and his crew came about this terrifying news, they demanded to look at their yearly physical records only to find out exactly how appalling the situation was. At age 33, Thayer's lungs had been so severely damaged, it looked as if they belonged in the body of a 118 year old.

However, no one ever told any of the Rats this information; on the contrary, each worker was given an annual physical and an annual pass, clearing them for another year of lethal labor. Even more despicable is the fact that every one of the crew members brought home those toxic levels of asbestos in their clothing, posing severe risks for their family and children. In response, the Rats decided to seek some answers for themselves. After traveling to Detroit at their own expense to be examined by Dr. Michael Harbut, a nationally-renowned expert at the Karmanos Cancer Institute, the news was even worse: All ten of the workers are sick as a direct result of the daily exposure to asbestos. Seven of the ten have asbestosis, a chronic lung disease associated with asbestos exposure. Each are at a dangerously high risk for developing lung cancer or worse, mesothelioma, a highly uncommon form of lung cancer that is related solely to exposure. From simply going to work and doing their jobs, the workers have caught something that will indefinitely shorten each of their lives.

Instead of receiving praise for their diligent work and tolerating the unbearable circumstances they are forced to labor in, the Tunnel Rats have faced retaliation for blowing the whistle on the Architect of the Capitol and have taken their case to the federal courts as well as Congress. It is a tragedy that hard working people have the need to seek court assistance for compensation for injuries and to defend their rights to speak out for a safe workplace. The crew has faced harassment and threats for alerting Congress and the court system to the life-threatening levels of asbestos and other hazards they have faced while working in the tunnels.

The Architect of the Capitol continue to misrepresent working conditions in the tunnels. They have hired private contractors to sweep the issue under the rug by using such disgusting tactics as trying to rid asbestos through the use of a power washer in some of the passages as well

as other methods that are in blatant violation of OSHA regulations. These contractors show absolute disregard for public health by allowing asbestos to be released into the air through grates in sidewalks and streets along Capitol Hill. As recently as a few months ago, crew members' personal monitoring devices showed levels of airborne asbestos that were more than six times the allowable exposure in the tunnels. One can only imagine what is in the lungs of the average citizen of the District of Columbia.

After more than a year of delegation, an out-of-court settlement has been reached by the Tunnel Rats and The Architect of the Capitol, the terms of which are confidential. However, the agreement covers only the workers' whistle blowing claims. It does not address the serious physical injuries the crew has suffered from dozens of years of exposure to asbestos and other toxins. No matter the dollar amount, there will be no resolution that will repair the unimaginable damage done to these workers lives and bodies, not to mention the potential damage done to their families and quite possibly the vast majority of the citizens of the District of Columbia.

The human lung when afflicted with Mesothelioma



Boycott the City Center Sheraton

Flint Sparc

In 2005, the Omni Hotel in Baltimore was bought up by Bill Yung the III's expanding Columbia-Sussex empire of sixty-seven hotels and fourteen casinos. Rebranding it the City Center Sheraton, Yung had the hotel refurbished but there was one detail about the hotel he couldn't change. What Yung did not bargain for and now refuses to bargain with are the unionized hotel workers of UNITEHERE Local 7 and the International Union of Operating Engineers (IOUE). When Columbia-Sussex bought the hotel, they recognized the union's Collective Bargaining Agreement, but the company has since tried to reject the workers demands.

The union organized with workers at the hotel in the 1970s, and there has been a union contract at the property for over thirty years. Local 7 boasts 200 members at the City Center Sheraton including every hourly worker in hotel (with the exception of the front desk, bellhops and some administrative aides). The union sees the Sheraton as it's beachhead for organizing

the entire hotel industry in Baltimore. This is quite significant for the local economy, as hospitality is now the second largest industry in the city. Increased union density in industry often means that the union is able to not only command better wages and benefits for their membership, but also for workers throughout an industry. While workers at the Sheraton still earn more than non-union workers in other local hotels, the wages for hospitality workers in Baltimore are still much lower than cities where UNITEHERE has density like in New York City, Chicago and Las Vegas.

UNITEHERE proposed raises of fifty cents every year for 2006 to 2008; Columbia Sussex refused the offer and instead only paid the workers a raise of thirty-five cents in April of 2007. Yung also tried to trash the union's health plan and increase the cost to workers to make it unfeasible, but the union was able to fight off that attempt through the National Labor Relations Board suit, ironically forcing the company to pay a larger share of the health care costs, while workers continue to pay the same amount. Columbia Sussex's attempts to unilaterally implement changes in conditions have so far

earned it complaints and violations from the National Labor Relations Board, which have forced the company to rescind it's changes. In addition, the company has tried to weasel out of making any contribution to employees pension. In an attempt to discourage the union, Columbia Sussex stopped dues checkoff; but UNITEHERE continues the fight even if with no dues coming from their worker members at the hotel.

Yung has tried to rob the banquet servers of more of their gratuity. The company charges 21% gratuity on every banquet bill, of which the servers only received 75%. In Columbia-Sussex drive to maximize profit, they've tried to reduce the server's cut to 60%. UNITEHERE has successfully fought at locations to win 100% of gratuity for the workers. This is one of the driving reasons behind the banquet servers supporting a boycott of their own hotel, and thus their potential gratuity. They are willing to make sacrifices in the struggle now, for bigger payouts in the future.

It's not just the wages, it's the working conditions as well. The over

Continue next page

Continued from previous page

700 rooms at 101 W. Fayette Street are now being cleaned by fewer housekeepers since a round of layoffs. Security personnel have also been laid off, and employee servers have complained increasingly of a lack of hours and bad scheduling. The company is engaging in a deliberate campaign of transitioning employees who expect benefits to contracting temporary workers, on a daily and permanent basis. The company has also sought further changes to scheduling and attacks seniority.

The housekeepers, whose starting pay is \$9.50 an hour, have not only had to face a speed up caused by short staffing but also managerial incompetence. One example is that clean linens that were once placed on every one of the hotels twenty seven floors are now only available on every other floor. Even then, it often runs out, which forces the housekeeper to cart down to the basement, and wait for sheets as soon as they come out of the laundry. While Yung saw to the refurbishment of the rooms that increased the weight of the beds housekeeping works with, they have not upgraded the laundry which suffers from aging equipment. A lack of working dryers now has sheets airing out over days at a time. Many of the duvet covers have not been cleaned in some time.

With the company's unwillingness to negotiate with the union and attacks upon working conditions, the workers of Sheraton Baltimore City Center Hotel have voted for a boycott of their own hotel, beginning on November 15th, 2007. A majority of workers

signed boycott support forms, showing their commitment to the struggle. In addition, the boycott has been endorsed by over 30 organizations including the DC and Maryland State AFL-CIO, the Baltimore Council of the AFL-CIO, The Baltimore NAACP, The Baltimore AARP, Black Pride, Progressive Maryland, Casa de Maryland, The Baltimore Building and Construction Trades Council, National Black Justice Coalition, and Equality Maryland. The union strategy is to pressure large clients of the hotel to take their business elsewhere to bring the company back to the negotiating table with the union. The boycott is being launched with a major demonstration and picket line outside the hotel.

UNITEHERE sees the struggle in Baltimore as part of a much larger campaign throughout the hospitality industry. With revenues that exceed \$1 billion, Columbia Sussex is one of the largest private hotel companies in the world providing more than 27,000 rooms throughout the U.S., Canada and the Caribbean operating under such brands as Marriott, Hilton, Westin, Sheraton, Renaissance and Doubletree. While the company largely refuses to cooperate with unions, through it's rapid acquisitions it now has three hotels with UNITEHERE contracts, and the

Baltimore contract is the first to expire. The company bought the Tropicana Resorts and Casinos in Las Vegas and Atlantic City last year, and contract negotiations are underway with UNITEHERE affiliate Culinary Workers Local 226 and Local 54. So far, Columbia Sussex has made a similar unacceptable "offer" the Las Vegas Tropicana workers to no longer fund the union health, welfare and pension funds. Likewise the Tropicana workers in Atlantic City have also issued a report of sub-standard conditions. Yung has claimed that he will never sign a contract in Las Vegas. Greed is Yung's motivation, he has claimed that if other hotels can have a 25% profit, he'll squeeze 35%; to do that he has to squeeze the workers and break their union.

The Baltimore workers of Local 7 are the tip of the spear not just for UNITEHERE's campaigns at Columbia Sussex, but all Baltimore workers and they need our support. Boycott City Center Sheraton Hotel!

Coversory continued

Save Virginia) has said that "If we turn our heads and permit illegal entry into our country without making any effort or identification, we are saying our language, our culture, our Constitution, our neighborhoods and our flag are inconsequential." When we realize that the Constitution itself makes no mention of immigration policy, that option is ruled out immediately. Left are our language, our culture, our neighborhoods, and our flag. VA resident Chris King claims he's "tired of pressing '1' for English" on the phone. So often we hear outrage because "they don't even try to learn our language!" when, in fact, an overwhelming majority (75%) of undocumented immigrants learn English within a few years, and the demand for classes to learn have far exceeded the supply.

Now it's down to our flag, our culture, and our neighborhoods. They feel that foreigners will defile their culture and ruin their homes, much like the wealthy folks from up the hill say about those in the ghetto. This paints a brand new light on the anti-illegal camp: racism and hatred of the poor and working class. Despite Prince William's claim that their resolution is not a racist one, the very fact that they call for anyone of "reasonable suspicion" to have their immigration status checked with even a speeding ticket displays bigotry for all to see. What defines "reasonable suspicion?" The fact that countless white undocumented immigrants live virtually without hassle, yet even legal Hispanic and Middle Eastern workers get harassed, demonstrates the criterion: skin color and economic status.

Why else would a group of wealthy, upper class Anglo conservatives demand policies that, in fact, would create and even greater tax burden on workers? Why else would they allow court costs and police shifts to dramatically increase? Why would they be willing to burden the public with new detention centers, all of which cost taxpayers workers a fortune? They don't like hearing somebody else's language or helping the underprivileged. It's that simple.

It's time for all of us, as workers, to recognize the plain and simple truth: "illegal" or not, we are all human beings, we all have needs, and immigrants face the same struggles as us: a boss who seeks to exploit us, and a wealthy few who seek to control us. Regardless of who we are, or where we're from, we are workers. Its time to stop griping about immigrants "taking our jobs," "destroying our language," or "destroying our culture," realize such vitriol is nothing more than a lie, and join with the immigrant community in struggle. We must recognize anti-immigrant policy, and anti-immigrant lies, do nothing but divide the working class, and if we seek any realistic gain, such divisions must be erased.

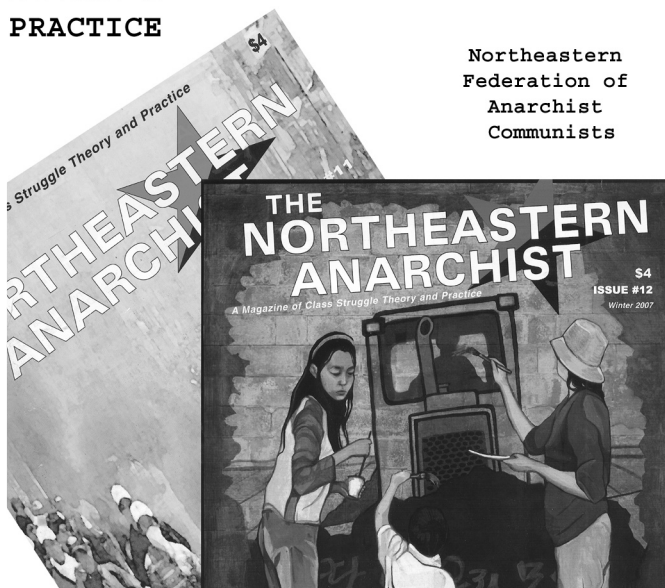
THE NORTHEASTERN ANARCHIST

CLASS STRUGGLE
THEORY &
PRACTICE

from

NEFAC

Northeastern
Federation of
Anarchist
Communists



Checks and money orders can be made out to "Northeastern Anarchist" and sent to:

The Northeastern Anarchist
PO Box 230685, Boston, MA 02123, USA
northeastern_anarchist@yahoo.com

Name: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ country _____

email _____

Total back issuesx \$2

Entire set of back issues (#1-11)x \$20

bundle orders for distribution _____

... x \$3 per copy for five or more copies

... x \$2.50 per copy for ten or more

Subscription (4 issues) \$15

Solidarity Subscriptionx \$25

support free subs for prisoners

International ordersplease add \$3

anonymous contribution\$

TOTAL: _____

NEFAC.NET

Important Announcement!!!
Help put an end to fascism!

February 22nd-24th
Crown Plaza Dulles Airport Hotel
Herndon, VA

The weekend of February 22nd-24th, the openly white supremacist newspaper "American Renaissance" will be holding their annual conference at the Crown Plaza Dulles Airport Hotel, in Herndon, VA. Present will be everything from suit-and-tie neo-Nazis, to the bonehead thugs of Stormfront. It is critical that fascism be stopped in its tracks, and this is no exception.

Resistance and Solidarity, a DC-based collective opposing racism, fascism and the cruelties perpetrated by the capitalist system, is calling on Mid-Atlantic anti-fascists to join us, Saturday February 23 at 9am for a day full of actions (in many forms) to protest the racist hate spouted by the AmRen National Conference. In the spirit of the anti-fascists that came before us, let's shut these racists down by any means necessary.

CONSIDER THIS ON ELECTION DAY:

Have you ever...

- * Felt cheated, as if promised that things would get better, only they never did?
- * Felt unsure as to whether it will be different this time?
- * Felt unable to pick which warmongering parasite to choose from?

We have the solution... VOTE NOBODY!

Vote Nobody, Because Nobody Cares....

* About Health Care:

The US is the only major industrialized nation in the world that lacks a universal health care system. Last year the US Census Bureau indicated that around 47 million Americans (about 15.8% of the total population) had no health insurance coverage at some point during 2006. The majority of those uninsured are working class, whilst there are further disparities documented in minority populations. The World Health Organization in 2000 surveyed 191 nations, it ranked the United States health care system as 37th by overall performance, 72nd by health and 1st by cost. Nobody is willing to end the death sentence that a lack of adequate health care holds over millions of our lives, or the cash cow this is for the insurance companies.

* About our Children:

Year on year child poverty rates in the USA rank amongst the highest in the developed world, in 2006, poverty rate for minors in the United States was 21.9% - the highest child poverty rate in the developed world. Nobody is willing to put an end to this situation.

* About Education:

A narrow and weakened educational system, under the 'No Child Left Behind Act' is teaching our children one thing, to jump through hoops, preparing them to be obedient but unskilled workers, whilst also allowing faith based groups and military recruiters greater access to schools. Nobody cares that a poor education system will leave a poor future for our children.

* About Human Life:

As our troops are shipped off to fight and die in yet more countries around the world, it is clear that nobody values the lives of our service men and women. Furthermore, as the wars rage around the world killing more and more working class men and women, it is clear that that nobody seriously opposed the war, nor is doing anything to bring the death and destruction to an end.

* About the environment:

As the ice caps are melting, as species are becoming extinct at an alarming rate, and as pollution continues to destroy the ozone layer and the air quality, or more generally as climate chaos continues to run amok, nobody is willing to take the steps needed to avert ecological disasters.

* About our jobs:

With the unemployment rate as of October 2007, standing at 4.7 percent, around 7.2 million people, according to government figures,

and the increasing manufacturing flight to cheap foreign economic processing zones, coupled with the repression of the right to organize in the work-place. Nobody cares about the right to gainful and dignified employment.

* About transportation:

With a crumbling infrastructure which is killing us on our way to work, with crippling gas prices eating away at our wages, with ever greater clogged roads, and with inadequate coverage of public transportation, it is clear nobody cares about our transportation needs.

Together, with NOBODY leading us we can take back our communities!

NOBODY will keep all promises!

NOBODY will give you freedom!

Nobody in power means power for everybody!

The current system, regardless of who is in charge, is based on a minority forcing their decisions on the majority, a system in which a few hold the power and the wealth.

There is an alternative, we believe in a system where power is shared equally, a system based on recallable delegations, rather than careerist politicians, based on shared ownership, rather than private profit, a system of human need rather than economic greed, and mutual aid rather than free trade. This system is known as: Anarchy.

Sam Bellamy

NOBODY 



"The Insubordinate" is a publication of the Dancing Cat Anarchist Collective.

The DCAC are working class revolutionaries who identify with the communist tradition within anarchism, seeking abolition of both capitalism and the state.

The DCAC are a Washington D.C. based supporting collective of the Northeastern Federation of Anarchist Communists (NEFAC).

<http://www.dancingcatcollective.net>