

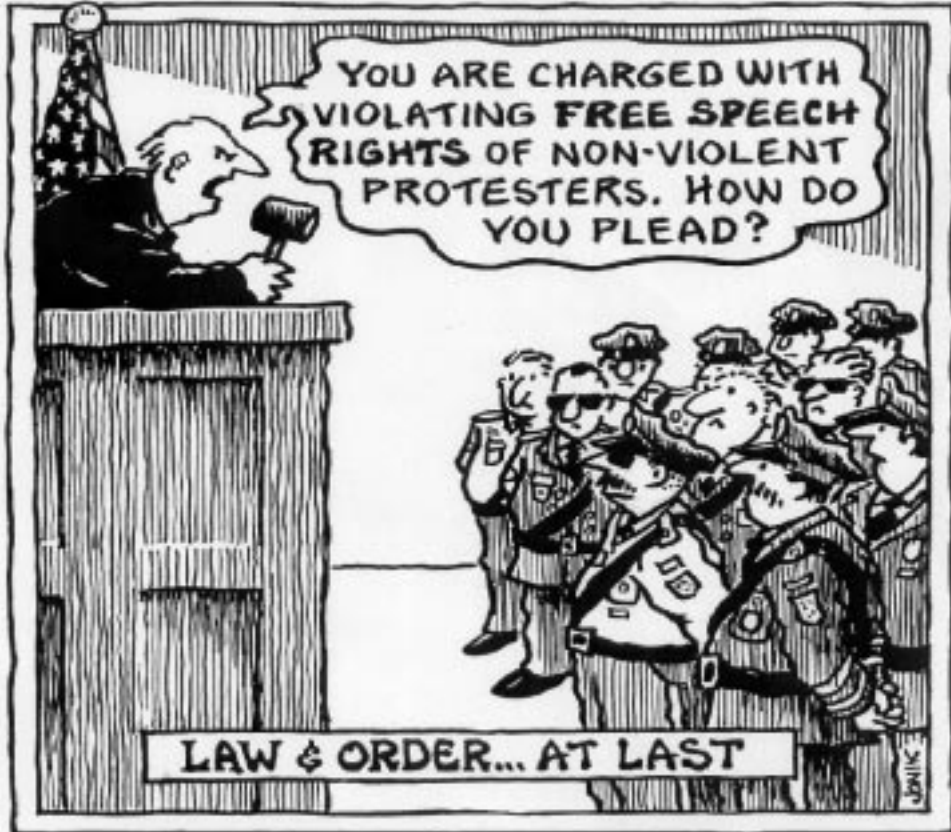


The Prism

Community alternative news and views

April-August 2000

Volume Eleven Issue Three



In Organic Agriculture, Cubans are Leading the Way

by Robert E. Sullivan

Earth Times News Service

HAVANA—The Cuban revolutionary threat is back. In an innocuous-looking, unmarked building in the Miramar suburb of Havana technicians from Fidel Castro's communist government are training cadres from all over Latin America.

The ideology of the new movement is being exported, along with equipment, to nearby Venezuela, Columbia and Jamaica, other Latin American countries, and this time, as far as Europe. Americans, so far, have been protected by the embargo from the product of the Cuban revolution: clean food.

The food is clean — largely free of chemical fertilizers and poisonous pesticides and herbicides — because since the fall of the Soviet Union, Cuba can't afford them.

And, necessity in this case being the mother of nature, Cuba may be producing the most chemical free, organic, clean produce in the world. According to the way they tell it, Cubans are getting so good at this organic business that agronomists from all over Latin America come to study it at the Institute for Crop Protection (INISAV) a low profile center housed in a former private home in the quiet residential section of Miramar. Trained at INISAV, and sent out again to the world to agitate, have been

agronomists from Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Spain, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala and Jamaica. At least a half dozen other countries have signed up, but the discrete directors at INISAV won't reveal their nationalities because, they say, the trainees think their home countries will suffer retaliation from the United States.

The institute has developed a line of completely biological herbicides and pesticides marketed throughout the island under the brand name Biasav.

This year Cuba, next the world. Exports of Biasav have begun — not to America of course, but to most of the above countries and others. And in Cuba almost 100,000 small-to-medium sized urban gardens have sprung up to provide an ever increasing percentage of the country's vegetable needs. One hundred per cent of the produce if these gardens is 100 per cent organic — simply because of a central dictate: no pesticides are allowed inside any city limits. Period. And this comes from the Castro government, which is committed to clean food.

What happened?

Ask any ten Cuban agronomists — they have 140 Ph.D.s in the Agriculture Ministry alone, plus 10,000 graduate agronomic engineers — why has Cuba gone organic and

Cont. on p.11

Radical Triangle Newspaper reaches 10th year

Grassroots paper takes a break to reassess

by Jeff Saviano

With this issue, *The Prism* reaches its 10th year. This achievement is nothing short of remarkable.

Against all odds, tens of individuals (working in groups which changed over time) produced a monthly newspaper for 10 years.

No one was paid a dime for their efforts. The paper supported itself with ads from small businesses and with donations.

Night after night, and weekend after weekend, volunteers met and cranked out a paper. There were many things people may have wanted to do in a month than invest five, ten, twenty, thirty hours in producing a monthly radical newspaper. But we did it anyway.

We—and I think I speak for all the myriad volunteers over the years—did it because it needed to be done. We remembered that the world was full of people both suffering needlessly and fighting like hell to change it.

We never sold out, we never forgot our mission, and we never quit trying to do a better job.

However, there came a point at which the people who happened to be the core volunteers, at least two of whom were here from the start ten years ago, faced a coincidence of major life changes that made volunteering at our former levels of effort impossible.

While some people showed an interest in helping out, the truth is that this publication takes an awful lot of work, and if it is produced in any fashion similar to how it has been produced, it requires a core group of people able to carry on the work each month for a year or so.

For now, without a dramatic and unexpected appearance of very serious and committed volunteers, the print version of this publication will be on hold. (We will be placing new things on our website, but this is because the website costs nothing and placing certain materials on the web takes very little time at all; most of us would prefer a print version, but this doesn't seem immediately possible.)

What will and should happen now is not for me alone to say, of course. Some believe that the paper should now rest, having reached this mark. Others believe a group of volunteers will show up who will continue as we have, and the paper will jump back to life.

Personally I see this as a decision to be made by the community which produced, supported, and read this paper. Let the discussion begin, then.

Perhaps our tenth year will be one of rebirth. *The Prism* continued a worthy tradition of truly independent, grassroots media in North Carolina. If this kind of resource is still needed, this community can do it.

The Prism's "Declaration of Intent" given 10 years ago

Here's what appeared in the first, unnamed issue published in April, 1990, expressing the consensus of those who pressed forward to launch this radical paper.

Many have expressed a need for an alternative newspaper accessible to the community and response to the need for social change. The Triangle's progressive community has no forum for information, communication and analysis. This has limited the ability of activists and organizations to meet their potential and has left citizens uninformed about important matters.

The existing news media is inadequate. Important local, national and international events are poorly reported. The economic and political forces that shape the news are not challenged. Our economy is characterized by gross inequities in wealth and access to resources, while concentrating power in the hands of a small elite. Since these elites also control the major media, news and ideas that might challenge their power are not presented to the public.

A publication is needed that is free to report on the forces behind the news. It must examine the failures and biases of the mainstream media. It must offer sound ways to change life for the better, helping readers to share ideas, experience, hope, support and power. It can provide an inspiration to action and a catalyst for change.

A group has formed to begin to address this need. Our vision is of an attractive, readable newspaper, a paper that will speak clearly and directly to a diverse community, crossing lines of race, gender, class and sexual orientation.

The success of the paper will depend on the involvement of the community it serves. All those sharing a progressive viewpoint are invited to participate in any and all aspects of the paper. We will continually reach out to the large network of activists, concerned citizens and social change groups, providing a forum to report their work events and concerns.

The newspaper will be guided by the principles of economic justice, ecological responsibility, non-violence, democracy in all aspects of life, support for reproductive rights and respect for the respect for the rights, dignity and diversity of all people.

The paper will be independent, run by volunteers, not for profit and available free to the public.

Dedication of this Issue: Valeria Jean Daniels-Paddock



May 30, 1949-
July 21, 2000

Valeria Jean Daniels-Paddock was assistant principal and counselor at Grey Culbreth Middle School in Chapel Hill. During her 27-year career in Chapel Hill, she helped originate the elementary school guidance program. She earned the Human Rights award and Middle/Junior High Counselor of the Year award of the NC School Counselor Association, and Assistant Principal of the year from both Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools (1998) and the NC Association of Educators (2000). She initiated the Character Education program at Culbreth which is now being adopted by the other schools in CHCCS.

Her concern was always the children first, and the people around her. She counseled them all. She would meet with the most irate parent or the angriest student, and they would invariably leave with a smile, even a laugh.

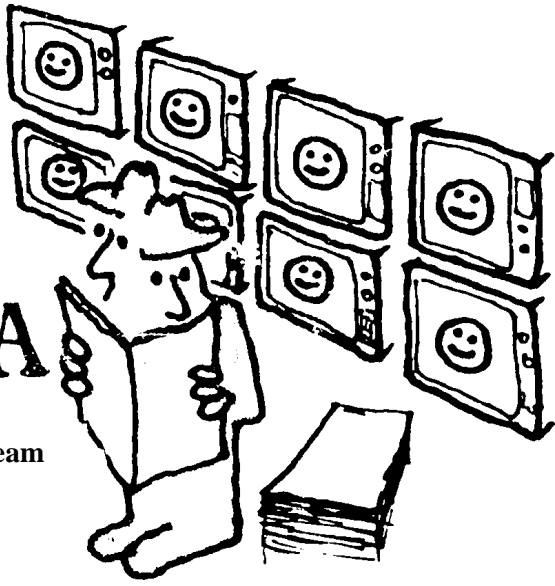
Two memorials were announced at her funeral, one by the Culbreth principal and one by the church pastor. She will be missed. The staff, and husband Dick Paddock, a long-time civil rights activist and *Prism* volunteer, dedicate this issue to her memory.

Inside this issue:

- Eye on the Media p. 2
- Deregulation Blues p. 2
- A16 Photo essay p. 3
- 10 Year Retrospective:
Leading Storiespages 3-10
- Winona LaDuke p. 11
- Zapatista Women Rise . p. 12



EYE ON THE MEDIA



Colombia Coverage in Mainstream Media Only Half the Story

by Matt Robinson

Now that \$1.3 billion in military and law enforcement assistance to Colombia has been approved by Congress, and military advisory programs have been set up, the *News & Observer* has treated its readership to a discussion of the merits and aims of this huge aid package. In the July 30 "Q" section, the question "Colombia: Another Quagmire?" is posed. While more than one side of the issue was presented, the tenor of the article makes US involvement sound more like a moral crusade against the latest villain of the day -- international narcotics production and trafficking -- than the dubious adventure that risks intensifying an already horrific civil war, a far more likely outcome.

Quoting White House sources and Fort Bragg Special forces soldiers, we are told that the US is "doing the right thing" in the planned intervention programs, already an established (if under-reported) part of American foreign policy.

In fact, the US has already suffered casualties, most notably Army pilot Jennifer Odom, whose surveillance plane was shot down by combatants on July 23. With more American "advisers" being sent into the area, more such casualties are, sadly, quite foreseeable, as are civilian massacres that have characterized just about every US "assistance" effort in the past half century, and which are already far too common an occurrence in Colombia.

In a companion piece to the main article, our esteemed senior Senator Jesse Helms, in an inspired piece of '50s era commie-bashing, points out that the Colombian civil war is being waged by Communist narco-terrorists, and that we must do whatever it takes to resolve the conflict. It is obvious that the Senator's definition of "whatever" is limited to military aid and assistance, and not to negotiated peace. Meanwhile, best evidence shows massive army and paramilitary involvement in profiting from the drug trade, and in a recent interview paramilitary leader Carlos Castana claimed that the US has been trying to provide covert support and direction to his and other right-wing groups, universally agreed to have murdered by far the most civilians.

On the other hand, closer to the governmental party line, the main article states that

Local Activists Arrested

In the IMF/World Bank demonstrations of April 16 and, more recently, the protests of the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia, local activists were treated to organized police harassment and brutality.

In a Prison Industrial Complex march on April 15, over 500 marchers were arrested by DC police. Non-violent protesters were corralled into a narrow block and held captive for two hours before being carted off in school buses to be charged with minor offenses. Several Chapel Hill/Durham activists were among those arrested in this police action, which was a pre-emptive strike against the protests scheduled for the next day.

In Philadelphia, activists from around the state were arrested and subjected to police brutality -- safely out of the sight of cameras or independent observers -- and some are, at this writing, still in jail on ridiculously high bonds.

the weaponry and technical assistance will be helpful in bringing about a "negotiated peace" for the beleaguered nation.

The section omitted the fact that a peace process has already been established in the country, and that rebel and governmental leaders took an extended tour of Europe together in February in order to learn about civil peace from various other nations, was completely ignored in the *N&O* article. Colombian President Andres Pastrana, himself under investigation by the Colombian parliament for having been elected with massive funding from drug lords, has ceded territory to the rebels in the name of peace (and, true, because the rebels are powerful enough to hold and defend large tracts of land), and in the long view, a negotiated peace seems possible without foreign intervention.

But the "Q" section presented evidence only in support of US intervention assistance, such as the amounts of drugs produced in the region and ending up on a "table in Hilton Head". Nowhere is the question posed of "what do we do if this first 'Plan Colombia' package fails?", surely a question of concern to those familiar with that other conflict of repute from three decades ago, in which the US held little more than a commitment to do "whatever it takes" to ensure victory of non-communist forces.

As this "quagmire" develops, the *News & Observer* needs to take a close look at the situation, and ask questions that lead to a critical and public discussion of the merits of US involvement in the ongoing war.

The lives of 58,000 US military personnel may not be at risk in South America, but the lives of millions of Colombians will most surely be affected by an aid package that equals 5% of the total Colombian budget. Facts, not official or military rhetoric, is called for.

Why Beg for Dereg?

Commentary by Dan Gerlach, Budget & Tax Center Director

In an increasingly stressful world, I think we should all be entitled to a few certainties. One of those certainties should be that when I turn on the light switch, the light goes on. Another should be that I know about how much my electric bill will be each month.

But there is a national trend to deregulate the electric industry. Deregulation means that individuals and businesses could select the company to provide their electricity, while at the moment electric companies have monopolies over specific geographic areas. Under deregulation, electric companies would compete for your business, hopefully resulting in lower prices and better service.

Ha, I say. Let's look at California -- one of the states that deregulated first. Residential consumers in San Diego are paying two to three times as much in their electric bills. While service during the California heat wave has been erratic, brownouts have been common. Several hundred people, all opposed to the new deregulation and its effects, testified before the utility commission recently.

In other areas of the country, it has become obvious that some power companies are manipulating prices as well. A Wall Street Journal article reported that the energy infrastructure is not ready for competition. Some companies are denied access to the power grid. Others are taking electricity at peak times and replacing it later, jeopardizing supply. Yet others are bidding up prices from small plants, knowing that high

summer demand will result in its use. The perfectly competitive world that the free-market pointy-heads envision does not exist in the energy realm.

Let's not forget that we've already had telephone deregulation. I'm not quite sure that my long-distance bills have decreased any. After all, how could they? Companies spend millions on TV commercials and mail advertisements to recruit you. They have to think of ingenious disclaimers -- "Yes, 2 cents a minute, anytime (after two a.m. and before three a.m. on the second Thursday of the week)." They've generated a mini boomlet in the economy by calling my house to convince me to switch over with wonderful promises: "Mr. Gerlach, we'll give you free minutes, a set of Ginsu knives, and...what the hey... a brand new car!"

Please. Leave me alone. Let me pay my bill in peace.

North Carolina policymakers were right to adopt a go-slow approach to deregulation. The California experience shows that there is a whole lot of risk and not a whole lot of gain to deregulation at this time.

There are some principles that North Carolina should adopt from these lessons. First, any move toward deregulation must contain protections, both in terms of quality and price, for residential consumers. Second, power companies should be able to explain their plans for furnishing power at times of peak demand, such as hot summer days. Third, any taxation of electricity should be based on usage, not price. Deregulation promises deeper price reductions for large power users, such as industrial plants. These large users shouldn't have all the benefit of lower taxes as well. Fourth, make it a requirement that electric providers don't call me. I'll call them.

Dan Gerlach is the director of the N.C. Budget and Tax Center, based in Raleigh. He can be reached at (919) 856-2158 or by email at dan@ncjustice.org. This article appeared on the web site of the NC Justice and Community Development Center, <http://www.ncjustice.org>.

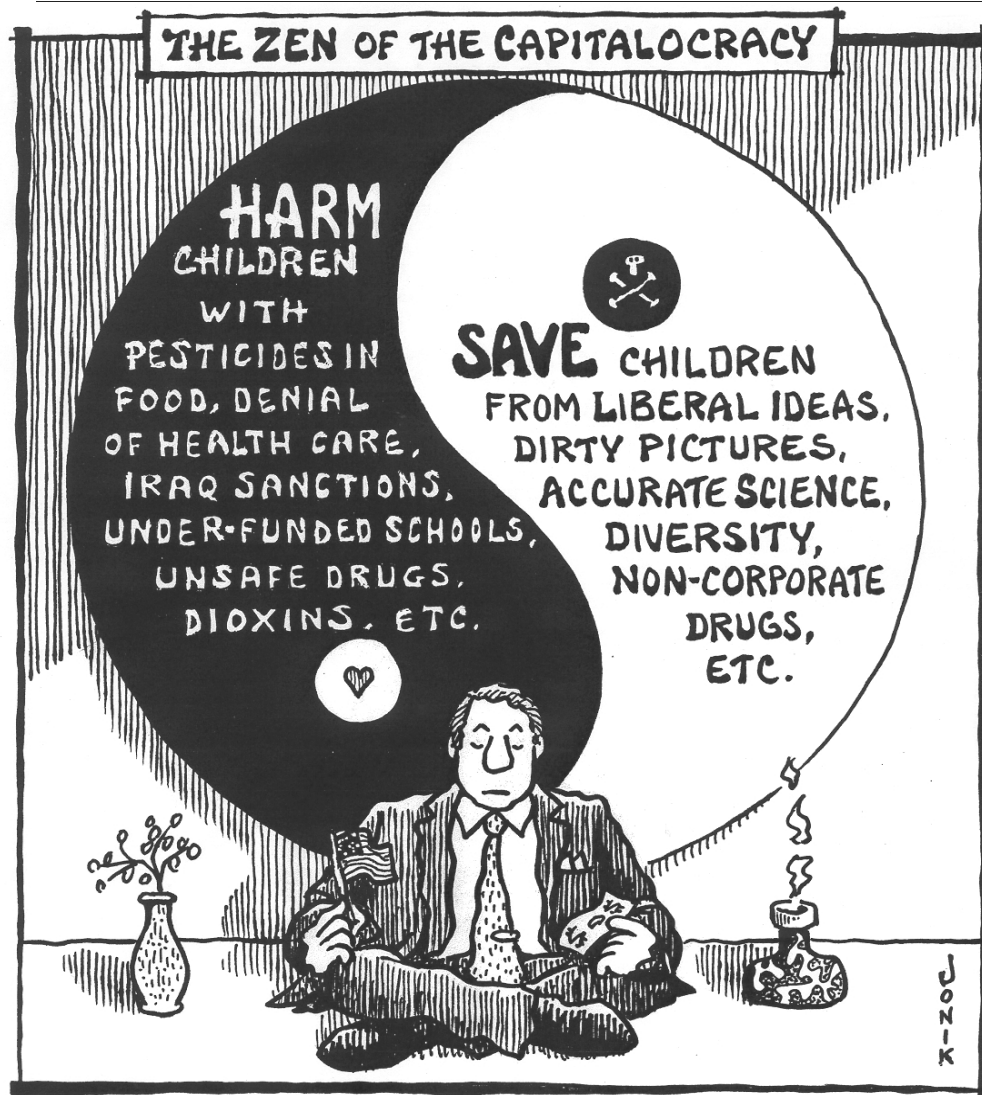
CORRECTION

In your excellent article on Dianna Ortiz (July, 1996), you wrote that she is from Kentucky, whereas she is actually from New Mexico.

Thank you for writing articles about human rights.

Sincerely,
Bruce Magnuson

(<http://www.prop1.org/protest/guatemala/guat96do.htm>)



The Prism is an independent, nonprofit newspaper providing a forum for grassroots approaches to social change. In printing news not covered by traditional media, we emphasize local issues and local perspectives on global issues. We are guided by principles of economic justice, ecological responsibility, nonviolence, democracy, support for reproductive rights, and respect for the rights, dignity and diversity of all people.

The all-volunteer staff for this month's issue of *The Prism*:

Editors: Matt Robinson, Jeff Saviano.
Production Staff: Matt, Jeff, Dick Padlock

Treasurer: Matt
Distribution Staff: Matt (co-ordinator), David K., Dick P., Jerry Markatos, Alan Archibald, Sharon LaPalme, Pedalers Express, Jordy McClung.

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IMF Protesters in DC...

Photo essay by Matt Robinson

On the weekend of April 14-16, 2000, a massive protest took place in the nation's capital. The streets of Washington D.C. were inundated by tens of thousands of activists, demonstrators, union members, independent media people, anarchists, and general malcontents, who had gathered to protest -- and if possible shut down -- the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Voicing their opposition to IMF/WB policies that exacerbate poverty and erode democracy throughout the world, but especially in the global South, the protesters took to the streets.

Over the course of the weekend, people participated in conferences and forums exploring issues of poverty, development, and globalization, and examined the World Bank/IMF role in the destruction of environmental, social, and labor standards worldwide. Demonstrators took part in marches and rallies protesting the Prison Industrial Complex, the U.S./NATO devastation of Yugoslavia, the use of sweatshop labor by multinational corporations, and Mexican repression of



Above: Green Party Presidential Candidate Ralph Nader addresses the International Forum on Globalization on April 14. Above right: The weather was beautiful for the A16 march to the Ellipse. Brightly painted puppets led the way. Below right: Graffiti marks the sentiment of radical activists. Rain dampened the spontaneous, unpermitted marchers on April 17, below left, but the police were few, motorists friendly, and thousands of non-violent protesters briefly had the run of the city streets.



...Met With Stiff Resistance

indigenous rights in Chiapas.

During the massive, non-violent protests against the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, demonstrators and innocent bystanders alike were treated to force and intimidation by D.C. Police and U.S. Marshalls. Despite anti-democratic tactics, mass arrests, and extra-legal harassment of organizers, protesters, and supporters, the demonstrations were a great success.

For several days the World Bank and the IMF were put squarely in the public spotlight, and delegates to the IMF/WB meetings -- the focus of the demonstrations -- were forced to discuss issues of global poverty and inequality. The meetings were not shut down, as organizers had hoped, but for three days many thousands of people from across the country and around the world joined together to make their voices heard.



Clockwise, far left: Officer outside World Bank Headquarters watches his back. Independent media shut out of press conference at Convergence Center raid. Phalanx of motorcycle officers at WB building. National Guard troops called out on A16. Outside courthouse, supporters of the incarcerated await news of those inside.

The Prism Retrospective: 10 Years of Under-Reported News

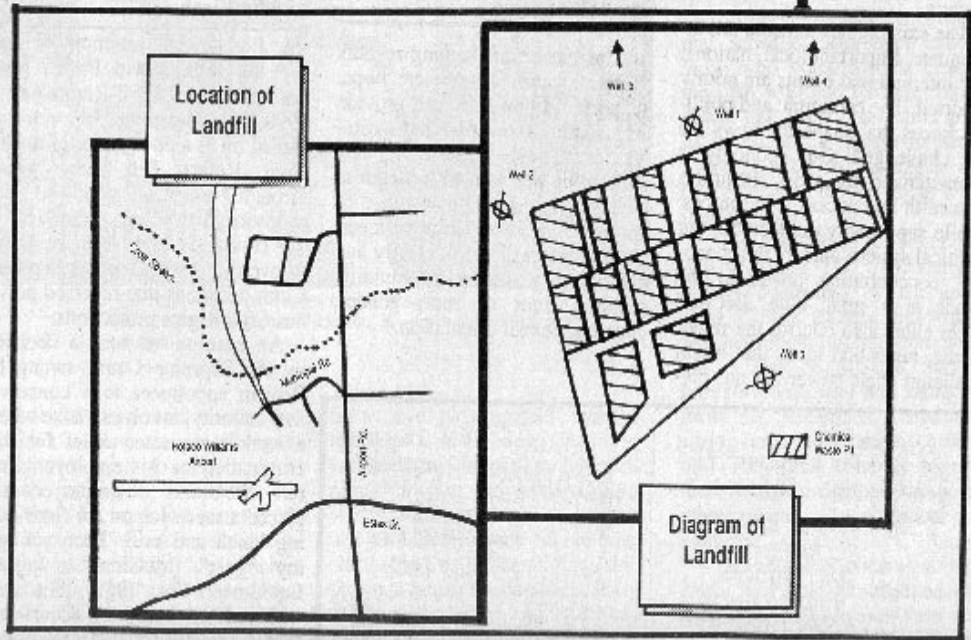
The Prism is proud to present a 10-year retrospective of news and views that have graced the pages of this grassroots publication. Many of the stories profiled here from the past decade remain current and have lost none of their relevance. There are stories of hardship and stories of triumph, and stories that, like the university-affiliated toxic dumps in Chapel Hill and Raleigh, demonstrate how the Triangle area has lots of common problems in search of solutions.

Please note that we have not reprinted the entire articles here, nor have we chosen only the most controversial stories. We hope you will find a good representation of the coverage that *The Prism* has provided to the area since 1990. *The Prism* hopes eventually to make all of its archive editions available on the Internet, but for now we hope you enjoy this brief overview of *The Prism's* decade.

1990, May

Greens call for action

UNC sits on toxic dump



Possible chemical substances buried in the landfill include poisons...pesticides, mercury, and heavy metals.

By Timothy M. Hunter

"Ignorance is bliss," but not when it comes to hazardous waste. With this in mind, the Orange County Greens initiated an investigation of a chemical landfill located in Chapel Hill and owned by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The Greens released the results of this study during Earth Week, in an effort to inform the community of the existence and possible dangers of the landfill.

The chemical landfill, located along Airport Road one quarter of a mile north of Estes Road, operated from 1973 to November of 1979 primarily as a burial ground for chemical waste from the chemistry department at UNC-CH. The landfill closed in 1979 largely due to the development of commercial services that treat hazardous waste. Since that time, UNC-CH has realized that it is more practical to ship off waste to a contracted commercial service than to landfill the waste.

The Airport Road site was a state approved and planned waste chemical burial/disposal area. In other words, the university had the state's permission to legally dispose of its hazardous and non-hazardous waste chemicals on university property. These decisions were based on attitudes of the time and the then up-to-date information on hazardous waste. In the 1970's a sanitary landfill was considered a "safe" method of waste disposal as there were no commercial waste treatment services available. Since the 1970's, however, increased knowledge in the field of hazardous waste has led to the

realization that past actions may be reason for concern for the present and the future.

Just what was buried in the unlined landfill and how much? The exact answer to this question is not known, because there was no permit system that enabled authorities to track and record hazardous waste that was treated or disposed. It was not until the early 1980's that hazardous waste regulations and an extensive permit-tracking system were implemented to ensure the safety of the transport, treatment and disposal of hazardous waste. Possible chemical substances buried in the landfill include poisons, halogenated and non-halogenated solvents, organics, inorganics, pesticides, mercury, and heavy metals.

The uncertain chemical composition of the landfill could create several complications. First, reactive chemicals may have been buried next to each other creating a possible formation of reactive products or even explosions. The probability of chemicals reacting with each other increases tremendously if the site is disturbed by events such as on-site construction or site excavation. Second, the chemicals were buried in their original containers, often glass bottles, and not safely drummed in 55-gallon steel barrels. These original bottles may have broken when the site was covered and regraded, thus increasing the chance for chemicals mixing below the surface.

The initial disposal procedure involved the digging of a trench 8 to 12 feet deep, then placing the chemicals in the trenches and burying them with 4 to 6 feet of soil

1990, April

Raleigh News & Observer editor gives Central American solidarity activists reason to launch an alternative paper

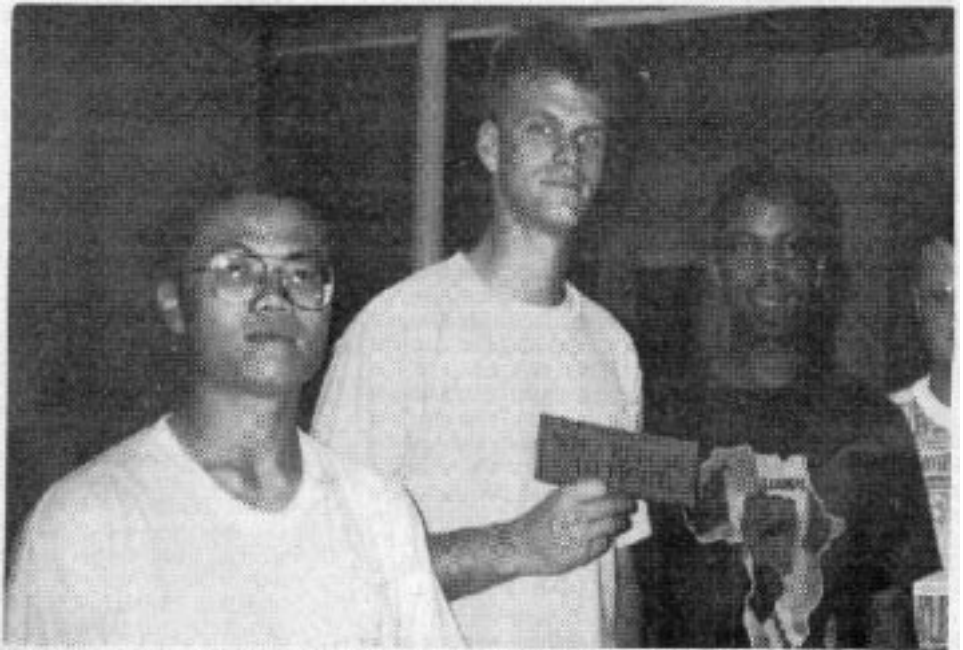
There are many in our community who are politically involved in the struggles of our Central American neighbors. They are acting out of a strong moral conviction that human rights abuses have been committed and the fingerprints of the U.S. government are frequently evident. The mass media seldom cover the seamier sides to U.S. involvement in Central America and the implications are usually off-limits for extended discussion.

David Kirsh, a staff member of this paper and author of "Central America without

Crying Uncle," recently submitted a piece on U.S. complicity with the Salvadoran death squads to the News & Observer. Opinion page editor Steve Ford refused to run it because, "there are too many facts." When asked if the piece could be re-submitted without so many facts and more in the mold of an opinion piece, Ford responded, "I doubt that would do it. How would you substantiate what you are saying?"

1991, October

Two marines refuse war's immorality



Conscientious objectors Sam Lwin (recently released from the brig), Erik Larsen and Tahan Jones.

While the Marine Corps has notified a lawyer representing several of the conscientious objectors in the brig that their applications will no longer be processed, Amnesty International has declared many of these men "prisoners of conscience."

by Kevin Carter

Erik Larsen and Tahan Jones are two Marines who don't have to worry about being sent back to Saudi Arabia if Iraq does not comply with cease-fire agreements. They're being held at Camp Lejeune awaiting courts-martial on charges of desertion and missing a movement.

The two Marines applied for conscientious objector status—Larsen on August 28, 1990, Jones on Oct. 26, 1990—and like 19 other Marines now held in the brig at Camp Lejeune, found the rules of the game had been changed. Under normal conditions Marines filing applications for conscientious objector status are given noncombat duty while their applications are reviewed. Staff Sgt. Gethicker, a public relations officer at Lejeune, says that this process usually takes "about 90 days."

Jones has waited eight months to find out if the military will declare him a CO. The Marines now held in the brig found that between the months they applied for CO status and their courts-martial the Marine Corps had let the applications pass from desk to desk in a disheartening game of political hot potato until their trials were over with.

Since early June, six Marine COs have been released from the brig, leaving 19 men still serving time. The longest sentence so far is that of Enrique Gonzalez who is serving a two and a half year sentence. While the Marine Corps has notified a lawyer representing several of the conscientious objectors in the brig that their applications will no longer be processed, Amnesty International has declared many of these men "prisoners of conscience."

Michael Marsh, a representative of the War Resister's League, says conditions in the brig are just like those in any prison. "They don't have any freedom or privacy whatever." Marsh worries about their physical and mental well-being. Normally prisoners in the brig are allowed to go outside for an hour or so of exercise each day. But Marsh says, "For a good portion of the summer they weren't allowed outside at all." Guidelines in the brig state that prisoners will not be allowed out when the temperature rises above 90 degrees or when it rains. The weather in Jacksonville this summer? Hot. And when it wasn't too hot it rained.

The GAO (Government Accounting Office), an agency with powers similar to those of a congressional committee and empowered to report to congress, has initiated an investigation into whether the procedures and regulations for people applying for conscientious objector status during the Gulf War were violated by the military. Representatives Ron Dellums (CA) and John Conyers (MI) plan to introduce legislation that will change the process of applying for conscientious objection.

1991, March

Interview: Dr. Rudolf Zarzar on American Arabs; page 3

The Prism

Vol. 2 No. 2 March 1991

Serving the counties of Durham, Orange, and Chatham

FREE

In memory of Bob Sheldon

"Bob had that spirit of bringing light to his community"

There are some people whose allegiance is to the human race and to the survival of the earth. They oppose the pursuit of empire, whatever its guise. They are called internationalists. Bob Sheldon, founder of the Internationalist Bookstore, was one of them.

He was mortally wounded on the night of February 21. On the way to the hospital that night, I happened to hear a tape of a talk commemorating another internationalist, Ben Linder, the American volunteer who was murdered by the US-backed contras for the crime of bringing electricity to light a tiny village in Nicaragua.

Whatever the motive for last month's murder, Bob had that spirit of bringing light to his community. *The Prism* staff will fondly remember the guidance and support Bob gave us from the beginning.

Those who want to volunteer their help in keeping the Internationalist Bookstore open, please contact:

Internationalist Bookstore Committee
P.O. Box 951
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
Checks should be made payable to: "IBC"



COURTESY MARILYN CHEZZI

1992, January

Hamlet: Never again!

Since the September 3 Hamlet fire, every week has brought new revelations of official disregard for human life at every level. The plant was never inspected, but a tiny ice cream facility next door was—several times! An FDA inspector was in the plant every day inspecting chicken but overlooking safety hazards. He actually approved locking exit doors "to keep flies out." And while there had only been three reported cases of theft at the plant, a businessman member of the state OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) advisory panel claimed that workers there "brought the fire on themselves!" Governor Martin says workers need to "speak up," but it's been revealed that federal OSHA does not respond to anonymous complaints. Local media call for regulation. But more important, workers need representation.

The following is a large portion of last month's guest editorial that was left out due to a layout error. We reprint it with our apologies to the author, Justice Speaks, the newspaper of the Black Workers for Justice.

The Hamlet tragedy has revealed more to the world than merely the callousness, greed, and inhumanity of one profit hungry corporate family. It reveals more than the lack of adequate regulations or their enforcement at the local, state, and federal level.

Such a needless industrial tragedy could only happen to a Southern working class shackled by the crisis that is their day to day experience.

At Imperial workers were paid poverty level wages. Low wages are characteristic of the South.

Imperial workers were permitted one bathroom break per day. The lack of dignity and respect on the job is a common characteristic of the South.

Imperial workers paid tremendously high (for poverty wages) insurance costs each month. Many Southern companies force Southern workers to pay for their own coverage for inadequate insurance, if coverage is offered at all.

Former Imperial workers complain that a common occurrence at the plant was to fire an

injured worker after they received workmen's compensation for an injury on the job. Southern states have the worst injury compensation programs in the country, with North Carolina leading the list, where punishment by firing is the most common "remedy" for on-the-job accidents.

Imperial's maintenance workers were forced to "leave the burners on" while they attempted to repair faulty hydraulic lines "to save down time." Forced production, regardless of the cost to the workforce, is the rule of the day in Southern plants. In the poultry industry, injuries like carpal tunnel syndrome may have reached epidemic proportions.

Imperial Foods located itself in a poor Southern African-American community. More than a third of all industries in the South will "find their way" to a Black Belt area—especially those industries which are labor intensive.

The town of Hamlet is 44 percent African-American while Richmond County is 35 percent Black. Yet, political organization and Black representation are non-existent with the exception of the Town of Dobbin Heights. The lack of Black political power in the South is a major factor in the lack of political and regulatory protections for African-American people throughout the South.

Imperial Foods workers had no union! The South has the lowest percentage of organized workers in the country. Even where unions do exist in the South, they are weakened by the lack of a supportive climate.

Twenty-five Southern workers are dead. We mourn with their families and loved ones. We share their frustration, anger, despair, and pain. To paraphrase one worker, "They cared more about their chickens and profits than they did about the people who worked there." Imperial Foods' locked doors and blocked exits tell it all. However, it was never more true that we must do more than feel the pain and suffering of all that we have lost. The Hamlet tragedy must never happen again!

Contributions can still be sent to: Imperial Food Products Victim Relief Fund, P.O. Box 151, Hamlet, NC 28345. The Relief Fund is being administered by the town of Dobbin Heights.

1993, March

NAFTA: What Does it Mean to NC?

by Mia Kirsh

Nearly 200 community leaders, activists, businesspeople and citizens gathered for a conference in Durham at the end of January to learn more about the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The conference, entitled "Free Trade Agreements: Impacts on the Carolinas and the Americas," was well organized by a number of local environmental, Latin American, church and university groups.

The majority of the fifteen mostly progressive panelists and speakers sought to amend NAFTA rather than to oppose it. Most progressive groups around the country have opposed NAFTA outright as has most of the population. A recent Wall Street Journal/NBC news poll showed those with an opinion on NAFTA opposed it by nearly 2 to 1. But the conference panelists argued that amending the agreement is potentially more useful.

NAFTA, like its companion global agreement, the General Agreement on Trades and Tariffs (GATT), is not a "done deal."

There is still time to oppose it or to amend it before Congress votes on it this fall. That is why getting informed about it is so important, and the mainstream media have failed to do the job. This conference was an excellent source of information about NAFTA and its broader implications for our community. But *The Prism* was the only local paper that bothered to cover it.

NAFTA: What it is and who's behind it

In his keynote speech, Dr. Jorge Castaneda, a professor from the National Autonomous University of Mexico, and a visiting professor at Berkeley and Princeton, said that NAFTA was originally a corporate idea evolved in Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. Although NAFTA was "signed" in August 1992 by George Bush, Canada's Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, and Mexico's President Carlos Salinas, it is not yet set in

stone. Bush insisted on the lie that this is the only possible free-trade agreement. But there are other ways to do it, according to Castaneda.

The Bush agreement is a typical conservative free-trade plan, with no social or environmental awareness and no industrial policy for the future. Castaneda envisioned an alternative agreement similar to the European Community (EC). This 30-year European plan is more socially and environmentally aware, allows labor mobility, and makes possible the transfer of resources from richer to poorer regions, enabling their greater economic participation.



Garry Morrison

1993, May

Lesbians and Gay Men More Visible, More Victimized in North Carolina

by Jeremy Raw

In the wake of a hugely successful march on Washington DC in support of equal rights for gay men, lesbians and bi-sexuals, the North Carolina Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCCGLE) released its annual report on May 4 in Raleigh. The report, entitled "Homophobia and Human Rights in North Carolina," chronicled bigoted violence and discrimination against lesbians, gay men and people with AIDS. Human rights abuses ranged from hate crimes to discrimination by government agencies, including harassment, entrapment and false arrest by law enforcement officers.

NCCGLE documented a total of 578 anti-gay incidents in North Carolina in 1992. Of these, 104 qualified as hate crimes under federal guidelines, a marked increase from the 61 hate crimes documented in 1991. NCCGLE compiled its statistics from data collected in 1992 by a statewide network of lesbian and gay service agencies.

Anne Burlein, coordinator of NCCGLE, commented, "1992 marked many breakthroughs as lesbians and gay men played

increasingly visible public roles in both national and state elections, as well as in local churches and schools. Right-wing activists responded with a backlash of violence and harassment intended to intimidate people back into silence."

Burlein also stated that "The National Lesbian and Gay Task Force estimates that 80% of anti-gay incidents go unreported. When lesbians and gay men report crimes, they risk losing family, friends, employment, housing and health insurance" because of their sexual orientation. "Institutionalized homophobia means that police and government agencies often seem part of the problem rather than a resource," she added.

Nevertheless, Burlein noted that the tide is changing and that North Carolina courts are becoming more responsive to lesbians and gay men.

Significant discrimination continues to afflict lesbians and gay men. The NCCGLE report pointed out the vulnerability of lesbians and gay men to "witch hunts" that target and root out employees simply because they are rumored to be homosexual. Such discrimination is not yet illegal because lesbians and gay men are not yet included in federal or state civil rights laws.

The activities of the police create another significant problem. Accounts from Charlotte indicate that police "sting" operations have harassed, enticed and falsely arrested gay men, in violation of the U.S. Constitution's guarantee of equal protection under the law. According to civil rights attorney Anita Hodgkiss "Few heterosexuals would tolerate" enforcement of the crime against nature law comparable "to that being pursued against gay men."

The law criminalizes oral and anal sex, whether heterosexual or homosexual. Under this law, approximately 90% of the state's population are felons. The law is applied in a discriminatory way against lesbians and gay men, and remains one of the strongest pillars supporting a climate in which anti-gay bigotry seems acceptable.

NCCGLE also documented discrimination due to fear of AIDS, much of it by institutions such as the NC Department of Social Services, which refused to remove HIV-positive children from abusive homes because the children "were going to die anyway." Children have become the victims of homophobia in other ways as well. One of the cruellest effects of the crime against nature law is its use to deny lesbian mothers and gay fathers access to their children in custody disputes following di-

voice. An alarming rise also occurred in homophobic abuse among youth and on campuses, making youth and schools the area of sharpest increase in documented anti-gay incidents in 1992.

The Coalition called in its report for repeal of the crime against nature law; for the state to re-enter the National Organization of Victim's Assistance, for attention by high school and college campuses to the needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual youth; for law enforcement to stop selectively enforcing the crime against nature law and to abandon entrapment techniques; for civil rights protection for lesbians, gay men and bisexuals; for maintenance of anonymous AIDS testing and state-supported AIDS prevention programs; for an end to the US military's ban on homosexuals; and for training members of the bar in gay/lesbian issues in family and criminal law.

Said Burlein, "We hope this report will contribute to the growing movement among concerned citizens to create a new climate in North Carolina that resists all hate violence and discrimination."

1993, July-August

UNC Housekeepers Movement Building Steam

by Matt Stiegler

Sometimes it takes a disaster to reinvigorate a movement. Other times, you need a victory to rekindle a sense of momentum. The UNC Housekeepers Movement recently got both.

Hard on the heels of news of an important court victory for the housekeepers' class action grievance against the university came the outrageous firing of housekeepers leader Eric Browning.

Good news and bad, it all adds up to a stronger, more unified, more visible Housekeepers Movement.

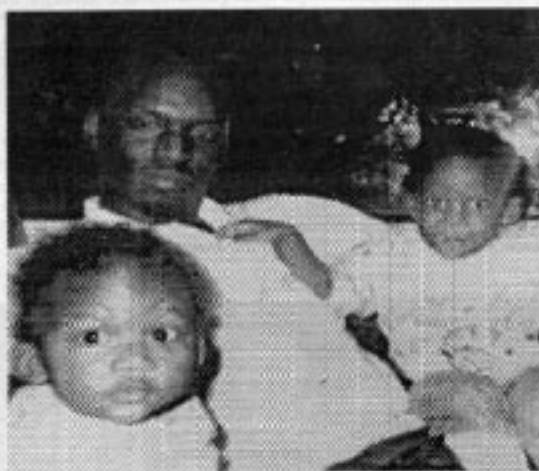
September Hearing Set

The good news is that the housekeepers' class action grievance will get a full hearing. That hearing, before an Administrative Law Judge in Chapel Hill, will be the final two weeks in September. Ninety-one housekeepers are currently signed on to the grievance.

In a motions hearing in April, Judge Brenda Becton brushed aside university administration attempts to cripple the grievance. A motion to dismiss the grievance, a motion to force the disclosure of all grievants' tax returns, and a motion to dismiss evidence of the university's history of maintaining unequal treatment for "black jobs" — all were rejected.

The judge also expressed willingness to hear housekeepers' ideas for redress, including back pay, front pay, and meaningful training opportunities.

Legal expenses for the grievance are expected to run over \$5000.



Housekeeper Eric Browning with two of his five children.

Conversation ... or Retaliation?

The May firing of housekeepers leader Eric Browning was a shock to the entire movement. Browning, an outspoken member of the Housekeepers Association Steering Committee, was given as the reason for his firing an emotional conversation he had with his job counselor. Movement leaders think the firing stems from retaliation, not a conversation.

Browning, a father of five, worked for four years as a UNC housekeeper. In that time, he filed 13 applications for better paying jobs.

He has three years of college, consistently good job reviews, recognized leadership ability, and got along well with his co-workers.

He was denied on all 13 applications. Sometimes they would tell him he used too much of his sick time. Many times his applications would be lost. Once he was given the obligatory interview after the job had already been filled. Only once did he even get the notice of denial guaranteed all employees.

He had more than leadership in the Housekeepers to make him a target for the administration. Browning also had won victories in the employee grievance system when he was treated unfairly. At the time he was fired, he had two grievances in process, dealing with training and promotion. Both were stopped by the firing.

Browning may have further imperiled his job by meeting with Jesse Jackson when he was here in April. *The Prism* ran a front page photo of the two shaking hands just days before the firing.

Browning and the Housekeepers Association held a widely-covered press conference on June 24 to announce his decision to contest the firing. That will begin with a university hearing on July 21.

About the Movement

Over 90 percent of the 300 plus housekeepers at UNC are African American. Over 70 percent are women. They are in the lowest pay grade in the state system; the starting pay

of \$11,800 per year puts them well below the poverty line. Most clock in at 3:50 in the morning. They have to ask permission to use the bathroom. They get no half hour break for lunch. Their "training opportunities" are an insulting litany on "policy and procedure." Ten year veterans work in daily fear lest they be suspected of "speaking up." Their supervisors are often undertrained or arbitrary or worse. The assistant superintendent of housekeeping is known for hiding in the bushes to spy as housekeepers come in to work to single out those more than four minutes late.

This is a movement whose significance transcends our neat "issue" categories of race or gender. It lies at the intersection of our society's viciousness and neglect towards African Americans, towards women, towards the poor and less educated. It is a movement of people who insist only on being treated as persons.

It is about simple ideals, ideals like dignity and fairness and justice and respect.

Take some time now, while you are still thinking recklessly about justice. You can afford \$10; maybe you can afford more. Without immediate support from our community, our grievance will die, our newsletter will fall silent. Send a check to the UNC Housekeepers Association, Campus Y, CB # 5115, UNC-CH, Chapel Hill, NC, 27599.

The Housekeepers Association holds meetings at noon every Thursday in the Campus Y at UNC. Supporters are welcome.

Stiegler is the acting editor of the Housekeepers newsletter, *We Are All Housekeepers*.

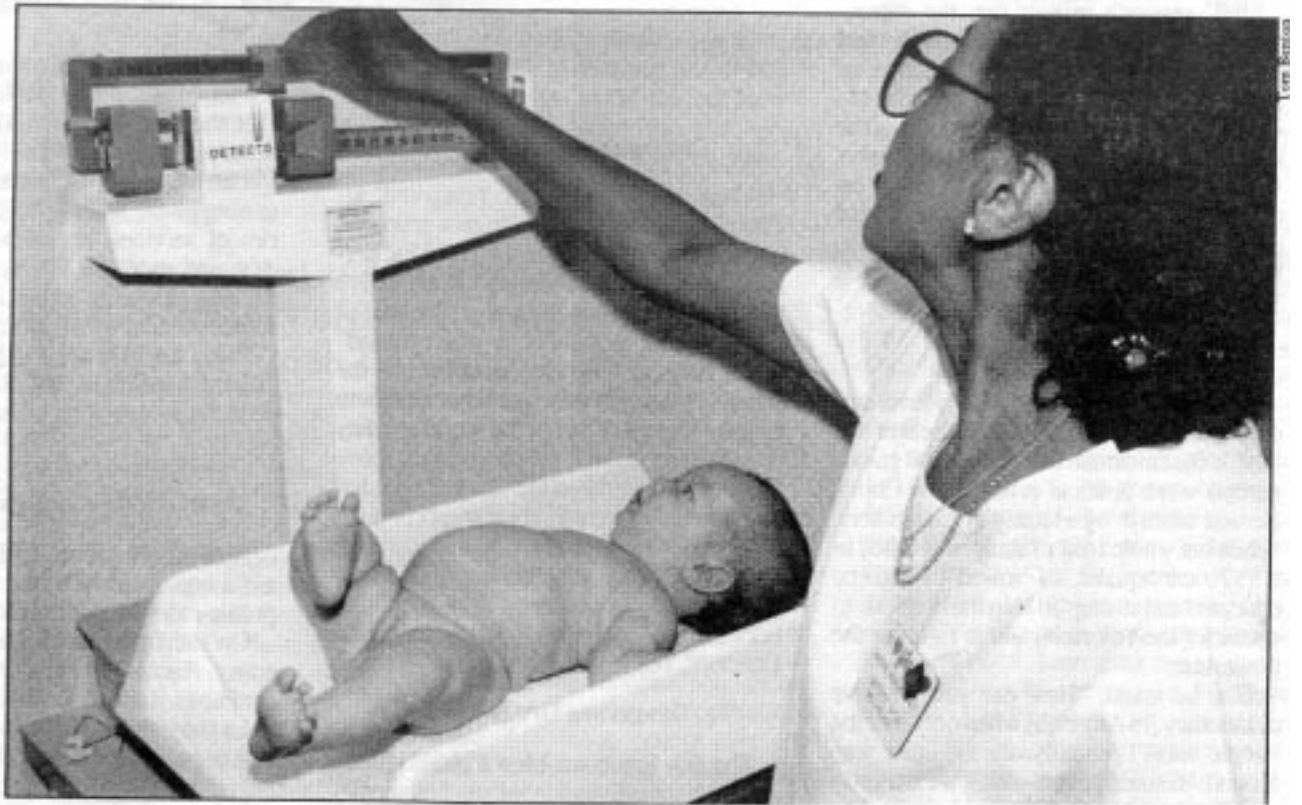
1993, November

“Single Payer” Beats Other Health Plans

Health Care in the South

- The infant mortality rate in the South is higher than the rest of the country, and in some rural areas it is higher than in Haiti — the poorest country in the world.
- Southerners paid 8.3% of their income for health care in 1980, and 11% in 1991; both are higher than the national average.
- Qualifying for medicaid in the South is difficult because the maximum yearly income for a family of three to qualify is \$4400.
- The low unionization rate in the South means if you want higher wages, you'll probably lose your health plan. Also two out of three jobs are now temporary or contract labor (with no benefits)

(source: Former Georgia Representative, Rita Valenti)



By Mia Kirsh

Is the Clinton health care reform package a step forward for Americans, especially the uninsured poor, or could it be a step backward? Many in the progressive community wrestled with this question at the recent NC Fair Share Convention held on October 30th in Raleigh. The problem: should we support Clinton's plan as a needed first step toward improving

1995, May

How I Survived AIDS-Related Pneumonia in a North Carolina Prison

Prism Exclusive!

by Eddie Hatcher

In 1988, Eddie Hatcher and another Native American, Timothy Jacobs, became internationally known for their takeover of the local newspaper in Robeson County. They took this action as a desperate attempt to draw attention to county officials' involvement in drug trafficking and discriminatory treatment of minority citizens. A federal jury acquitted Hatcher and Jacobs, but subsequently the state tried and convicted Hatcher on kidnapping charges. While Jacobs accepted a plea bargain agreement, Hatcher was sentenced to an 18-year prison term.

Hatcher remained politically active while in prison. He was stabbed in the lung a couple of years ago by another prisoner who has claimed that he was acting on the suggestion of a prison official. Several months ago, Hatcher was diagnosed with AIDS and finally was released from prison. However, state officials did not give a clear reason for his release.

Hatcher gives the following description of the prison medical treatment he received recently:



On January 12, 1995, while being housed in solitary confinement at the Iredell County prison unit in Statesville, I began to experience a dull pain in the lower part of my right chest each time I took a deep breath. For several days I attempted to overlook the pain, thinking it might be a sore muscle or something unimportant.

Approximately four days after the pain began, I informed the prison nurse of the pain and shortness of breath. The nurse told me that I had a hiatal hernia, and I was given a bottle of Maalox. After several bottles of Maalox, and another week of worsening pain and shortness of breath, I approached another nurse. I told this nurse that I felt as if I had some congestion in the lower part of my chest, and that if I could get it broken up it would go away. She advised me very quickly to take a “cold pill” which had absolutely nothing to do with chest congestion.

Each day the pain and shortness of breath would intensify. I could feel my breath becoming shorter. After about three weeks, the pain and shortness of

I arrived at the hospital emergency room in shackles and chains, almost unable to walk.

breath had become so bad I had almost stopped eating. I quickly learned that if I lay on my right side, it helped the pain ease up and it seemed I could breath easier. I began to hurt so bad that I would refrain from getting up to eat.

1994, March



Let's Eliminate the Sales Tax on Food

by Jim Jensen

Of all the many ways in which the poor and the disadvantaged are treated unfairly, North Carolina's sales tax on food is one of the worst. It is one bit of unfairness that could — and should — be changed.

It should be easy to remove the tax on food. Various measures have been proposed to eliminate, or at the very least reduce, the tax. There are currently two bills in the legislature that would change the sales tax structure as it affects food.

The best argument against a sales tax on food is obvious: A sales tax is probably the most regressive tax there is. That is, the lower a family's income, the more of its income the family must spend on things subject to the tax. Typically, according to *Citizens for Tax Justice*, low-income families spend three-quarters of their income on things subject to sales tax. Middle-income families spend less than half their income on things subject to sales tax, and the richest families spend only about one-sixth of their income on taxed goods.

Put another way, a 6 percent sales tax is the equivalent of an income tax with a 4.5 percent rate for the poor, a 3 percent rate for the middle class, and a 1 percent rate for the rich. That's about as regressive and unfair as a tax can be, and the reason for sporadic — and unsuccessful — attempts at substantial tax relief for the poor by reducing the tax, at least on an essential like food. We do, after all, have to eat. Food is hardly discretionary spending. But at present, it seems more likely that the legislature will be successful in attempts to eliminate the intangibles tax, a step that would obviously benefit the well-to-do. The fact that observers think this small tax on stocks, bonds, mutual fund (holdings and other “intangible” assets may be eliminated, while) attempts to cut the tax on food may fail or be postponed, reflects the reality of the political power structure in our state.

Organizations such as North Carolina Fair Share are working hard to change this situation. Removal of the sales tax on food is one of the top goals on Fair Share's agenda, along with promotion of the single-payer health plan. But it won't be easy to accomplish. All food had been exempted from the sales tax once before — in 1941 — but the tax was reimposed in 1961, specifically to provide more money for education. Since then the sales tax has been going up rather steadily.

1995, April

On the occasion of our fifth anniversary, it's worth asking: What is the character of the *Prism*?

We have always attempted to publish items on local issues and activities or local aspects of national and global issues. However, we depend mostly on local people to volunteer to write and it generally takes more legwork to do a local story. And what happens nationally and internationally is more and more related to what is going on locally. In essence, there is no separation between local and non-local. NAFTA is a good illustration of how local global can be.

Nevertheless, there's been a noticeable pattern of *The Prism* doing an article about something strictly local and then several days later the same basic story comes out in one of the local for-profit papers. This happened with the story about the uncertainty about Internationalist bookstore's future. It happened with the article about the specific ways that the Smart Start program benefits children. It happened with *The Prism's* scoop that Oscar-winning Empowerment Project was moving to Orange County from California.

1995, June

Labor Board Slaps Greensboro Kmart with Kmplaints



Photo courtesy of ACTWU

KGGO's media partners fail to probe 3rd set of Kmart violations - see page 2

by Andy Rogers

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) hit Kmart Corporation with the third set of complaints in less than two years for violations of federal labor law at Kmart's Greensboro distribution center. Among the 25 violations in the latest set of complaints against Kmart: terminating employees in retaliation for union activities, threatening employees with discharge and other retaliation for union activities, failing to supply records of occupational injuries and other information regarding work hazards and employee health and safety requested by union representatives and illegally telling employees that wage increases were withheld

"I realized that many of these workers were single mothers who provided for their families..."

or frozen in retaliation for voting for the union. Workers at the Greensboro facility voted several years ago to be represented by the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU). The workers say the Union representation is needed to fight abuse

TEED OFF: Workers get distinctly lower wages and benefits at the Greensboro Distribution Center than at other Kmart DCs.

1996, February

Swine Stench Stalks Siler City

Chatham County: Next Hog Haven?

by Steve Seilkop

Chatham County may soon be on the receiving end of spill-over from industrial pork producers just like the fecal slop that has contaminated eastern North Carolina.

Over the past summer, breaches and overflows of animal waste "lagoons" have resulted in the discharge of millions of gallons of pollutants into the rivers and streams of eastern North Carolina. Nearly all of these catastrophes have occurred at large-scale hog operations, with one spill into the New River exceeding 25 million gallons. Coupled with unusually large die-offs of millions of fish in our coastal rivers and estuaries, these disasters have brought publicity to the rapid growth of the hog-production industry in our state and its role in the escalating degradation of our water quality and fisheries.

Until the events of the summer, many

of us in the Piedmont were unaware of the growth in the state's hog production which has occurred primarily in eastern NC. Over the past five years, hog production has doubled to nearly eight million animals per year. These animals generate more than twice as much biological waste as the state's human population.

The treatment of the hog waste is however, much more rudimentary and loosely regulated. The "farms" that produce the hogs are enormous, with a single operation having as many as 20,000 hogs confined in barns from which feces and urine are periodically flushed into multi-acre open ponds ("lagoons") and then sprayed onto agricultural fields. The situation for individuals living near these large-scale hog operations is grim. In addition to suffering intolerable odors and contamination of their wells by nitrates and bacteria, neighboring residents have experienced severe degradation in the value of their property.



Does Big enjoy wild times? 17 of the 19 commissioners on Governor Alford's pork family reform panel are pork producers or are closely associated with pork producers.

1996, June

Abandoned in Durham

by Michael Steinberg

Perhaps a million people in the richest nation on the planet continue to wander for want of shelter, while empty houses proliferate within their sight but not their grasp. The Triangle may be continuing its economic expansion, but perhaps several thousand in Durham alone face homelessness every day.

This two-part series investigates homelessness in Durham. Part One (below) focuses on the plight of those having to rely on Durham's shelter system. Part Two, in the next issue, exposes those who profit by controlling empty and abandoned housing.

Part One of Two Parts

In the Shadow of the Jailhouse
On a blistering hot Saturday last May I met three people sitting in the shadow of the Community Shelter For Hope at 412 Liberty Street just east of downtown Durham. The shelter, also known as Community Shelter for the Homeless, is operated by the county, though its continuing future is in doubt, as some county commissioners want to reduce or cut off its funding.

Flyers posted ominously at the shelter's entrance had already given me a foul warning:

Attention Residents
Beginning June 1, 1996, DCSH will be charging residents a fee of \$5 per day to stay here and receive services.

Outside, one of the three people in the shelter's shadow had nothing good to say about it. Alice Suggs said she'd been thrown out of it into a hard rain early one recent morning because a steak knife, one she said she kept for protection, had been found on her.

"They told me to go to the library," she said. "It's like a prison in the shelter. If you don't do what they want they treat you like dirt."

Suggs protested the strict regimentation inside the shelter. To her this reflects a public mentality that simply because one is homeless one is less than human or some kind of criminal.

Suggs, who has lived in Durham most of her adult life, said her last job, which paid \$4.50 per hour, "fell through the cracks" and that her 3 week stay at the shelter had not enabled her to find another one.

"You can't get a job," she complained. "You gotta fix your hair and have nice clothes. You can't get to sleep in there until 1, then have to be up at 4 or 5 just to go to Labor World (a day workplace nearby at 715 North Mangum). And when you do go to sleep you still better watch your stuff."

Suggs said she ended up in the shelter after her unemployment ran out and she could no longer pay her \$50 weekly rent. Suggs' companions, George Burnett from St. Paul in Robeson county, and James Parker from Virginia, had been staying at the shelter too, and agreed with her assessment of it.

1997, March

The women and children of Iraq

by Rania Masri

"I am against war, since war means destruction, hurt and ruin. Nobody should like war especially when all the great powers of the world gang up against one country in an unequal war and try to destroy all signs of progress and make the country go back to the middle ages. People are starving to death and inflation is murder. Missiles and bombs do not think, they hit and explode—whether you are military or civilian, sick or well, old or young, men or women, you die. Where do you go to hide?"

—Iraqi woman over 50 years old

The war against the Iraqi people did not end in 1991 with George Bush's cease-fire declaration; instead, the war against the Iraqi people—against the Iraqi men, women, and children—is continuing with savage intensity to this very day. It has only changed in form from the thunder of bombs to the eerie silence of a militarily-enforced blockade.

More than 300,000 Iraqis were killed in the 43-day military war in 1991. Since then, more than one million people—mainly young children—have died as a direct result of the US-led blockade on this small country. The lack of food and medicine, along with the deteriorating sanitary conditions in Iraq, have caused far more harm and suffering than the military war itself—

despite the use of more than 142,000 tons of bombs and 350 tons of depleted uranium shells during the bombing campaigns. From a legal perspective, the maritime blockade, coupled with the air blockade, amounts to an act of war, thereby making the economic sanctions a continuation of the war that supposedly ended in March 1991.

What have been the effects of this continuing war, euphemistically referred to as sanctions, on the people of Iraq? Four million people, one-fifth of the population, are currently starving to death in Iraq (UN FAO report, 1995). The general human situation is deteriorating everyday, while

the situation for women in Iraq is even more precarious. Up to 95% of all pregnant women in Iraq suffer from anemia, and thus will give birth to weak, malnourished infants. Most of these infants will either die before reaching the age of five due to the lack of food and basic medicines or will be permanently scarred, either physically or mentally. Furthermore, many mothers, due to their own weak bodies, are unable to breast-feed their children. Due to the runaway inflation caused by the blockade, these families lack the means to feed their children. The mothers often bring their children to the hospital to die.



Photo by Stewart-Horst Günther

Hunger and disease inflicted on Iraqi civilians: terrorism.

1997, October

NRC Lets Shearon Harris Slide—Again

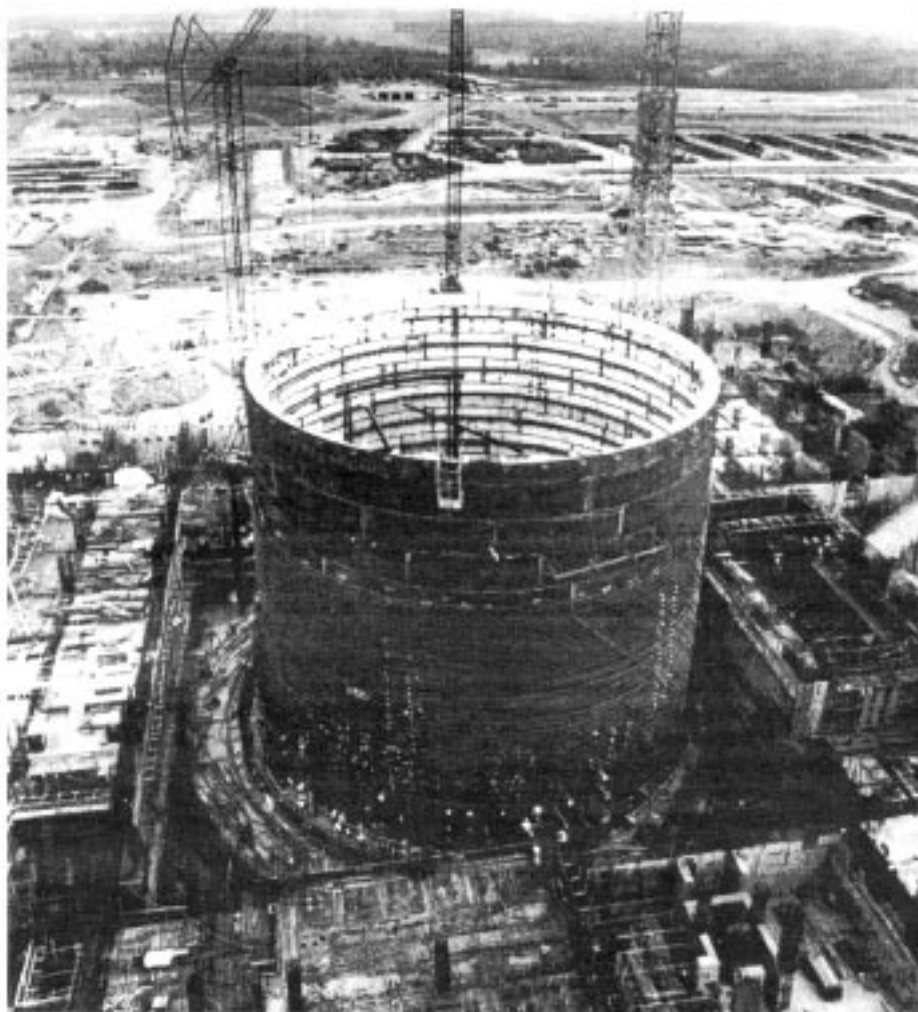
by Michael Steinberg

A US General Accounting Office report earlier this year lambasted the Nuclear Regulatory Commission for letting safety problems proliferate and fester at the nation's nuclear power plants. A recent review of the situation at the Shearon Harris nuclear power plant by this reporter confirmed the GAO analysis at that facility. And belt-tightening measures by the plant's owner and operator, Carolina Power & Light, are threatening to make safety there deteriorate even further.

The Untouchables

The GAO report, entitled "Nuclear Regulation: Preventing Problem Plants Requires More Effective NRC Action," was released on June 17. It was undertaken after public pressure mounted by communities near nuclear plants led to a request for an investigation of the NRC by Senators Joseph Biden of Delaware and Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut.

The report found that the NRC is not effectively overseeing the plants that have problems," that it "is not getting licensees to fix deficiencies in a timely manner," and that "NRC enforcement actions are too late to be effective." After the report's release Senator Biden called for a Congressional investigation of the NRC, which itself replaced the Atomic Energy Commission in the 1970s after it became all too obvious that the latter was too cozy with the industry it was supposed to regulate.



Shearon Harris reactor containment vessel #1 under construction

Let Them Drink Tritium

CP&L's 1996 Radiological Report for Shearon Harris indicated that "the only plant-detected activity detected... has been tritium activity in Harris Lake at an average concentration of 4750 picocuries per liter [pCi/l]. Tritium activity (455 pCi/l) was observed only 1 out of 12 times at Lillington, NC, located 17 miles downstream on the Cape Fear River." Tritium from Shearon Harris was also found in fish from Harris Lake.

The problem of tritium—radioactive hydrogen—from Shearon Harris was first exposed by this reporter in the April, 1996, *Prism*. In 1994 tritium levels in Harris Lake water—used as drinking water for plant employees—at one time exceeded the federal limit of 20,000 pCi/l.

But even the nearly 5000 pCi/l level found in the lake last year is hundred of times higher than naturally occurring levels of tritium. According to nuclear expert John Gofman, "Fresh water... is estimated to have had a natural level of 6-24 pCi/l" before the Nuclear Age. Which makes the level found in Lillington water 19 to 74 times higher than that.

Community activists in western Massachusetts have found elevated levels of Down's Syndrome and five kinds of cancer there, which they attribute to tritium releases into the Deerfield River by the now shutdown Yankee Rowe reactor. Exposure to levels of tritium such as those released by Shearon Harris have only been going on for decades, while, according to Gofman, the much lower naturally occurring levels had remained constant for millions of years. While conclusive evidence of the effects of nuclear-produced levels of tritium may yet be lacking, neither CP&L or the NRC seem to have any problem with putting people at risk.

1998, March

Farmworkers Challenge Mt. Olive Pickle

by Baldemar Velasquez

The Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) won a stunning victory with its unprecedented three-way agreement in 1986 with Campbell's Soup Co. and Midwestern produce growers (see *Prism* 12/94-1/95). Now FLOC is about to launch an all-out campaign to induce Mt. Olive Pickle Co. to recognize farmworkers' right to union representation and to redress their grievances.

You can expect this effort to make national news and draw solidarity from all over the world—unless, of course, Mt. Olive's CEO budges from his current intransigence.

"Organize the South," said the FLOC convention delegates last August, and everything we've learned during three decades of farmworker organizing is now being put to the test in North Carolina! Our target is the Mt. Olive Pickle Co., of Mt. Olive, NC, largest pickle producer in the South.

If it was difficult convincing farmers in Ohio that we had more in common with each other than with corporate agribusiness giants, it will be even more difficult in North Carolina.



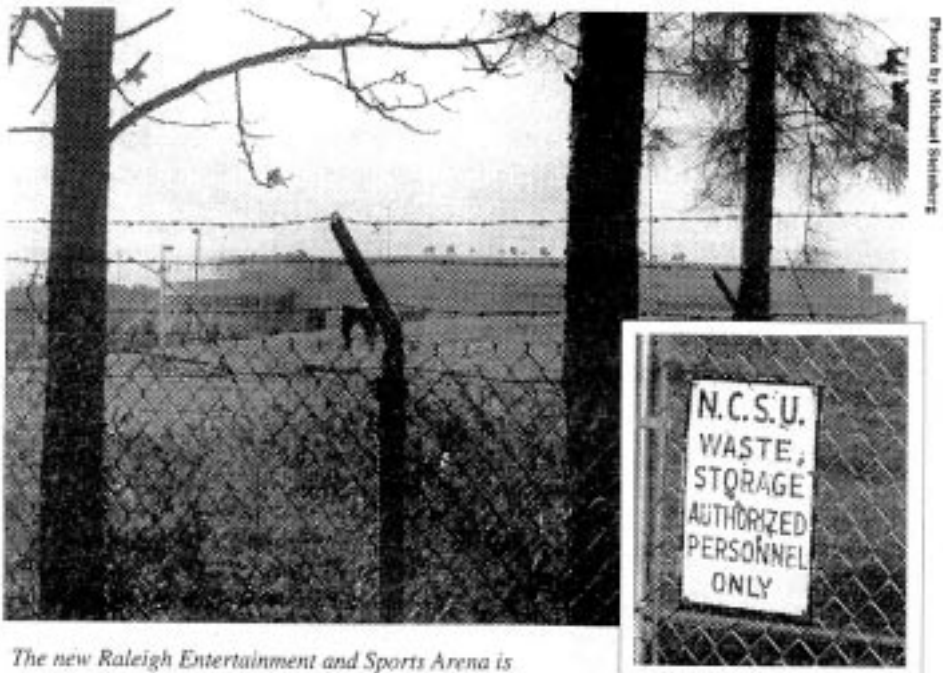
If it was hard to persuade impoverished migrant workers in Ohio that they could improve their families' lives by sticking together with the union, it will be even harder in North Carolina.

If it was tough to generate support for organizing and boycotts in Ohio, it will be even tougher in the land of Jesse Helms!

Baldemar Velasquez is president and founder of the Ohio-based Farm Labor Organizing Committee.

1999, December

Raleigh Sports Arena Fouled by Toxic Dump



The new Raleigh Entertainment and Sports Arena is right across the street from this EPA Superfund Site.

Radioactive sheep, DDT, and contaminated groundwater don't stop the Hurricanes

By Michael Steinberg

The Raleigh Entertainment and Sports Arena (ESA) opened in late October with hosannas of hoopla and hype. North Carolina State University basketball and the Carolina Hurricanes professional hockey teams now call the \$155 million complex home, and James Taylor will ring in the millennium there on New Year's Eve.

But in all the frothy media reports on the ESA's inauguration, there was no mention that it is located directly adjacent to an EPA Superfund Site containing carcinogenic hazardous and radioactive wastes that have leaked and contaminated the surrounding groundwater.

In the EPA's September 1996 Record of Decision (ROD) on the site, the agency declared that, "Actual or threatened releases of hazardous substances from this Site, if not addressed by implementing the response action selected in the ROD, may present an imminent and substantial endangerment to public health, welfare, or the environment."

Yet over three years later, while

multimillions were devoted to the ESA—including over \$100 million in public funds—the contaminated groundwater beneath and beyond the site has not been cleaned up. And when that cleanup does begin, it will likely take 30 years.

The EPA in fact identified the site for Superfund status way back in 1984, and added it to its National Priorities List for cleanup in 1986.

Hazard Hill

The 1.5 acre site is officially known as North Carolina State University Lot 86, Farm Unit #1. Today it looks like a benign grassy hill directly across the road from the east parking lot of the Entertainment and Sports Arena.

A chain link fence set back from the road has been thrown up to discourage fans from wandering closer to the site, which is set further back from the road and surrounded by another chain link fence festooned with double strands of barbed wire.

1998, April

Rogers Road re

Our Community is the "Sacrificial Lamb"

Commentary

by Larry Reid

The Rogers Road Community has been dubbed the sacrificial lamb of Orange County.

I say this having worked on countless boards and committees which at best provide an expensive education on what happens at a landfill and who doesn't want one in their backyard. I have served with public officials from Durham, Alamance, Orange, and Wake Counties. The committees were made up of mayors, commissioners, aldermen, councilmen, citizen representatives and more.

We've spent thousands of dollars having engineers and archaeologists attempt to answer the age-old question of what to do with this garbage.

When the studies were all complete and the reports were in, the bottom line read 'big dollars to be spent by government officials.' I don't know if those big dollars just frightened them or if they thought they would lose face if they fought to carry out what the studies recommended, but it seemed to drive a wedge between the governments and they decided to dissipate as a group. This left each entity or governing body to wrestle with the question of what to do with this garbage.

In short, the studies suggested that the governing bodies consider mass burning as a means of handling solid waste. This in itself seemed to be the first of the driving wedges. The second wedge was the price tag hung on this system. I think the third was the question of who would bear the cost and how.

These questions were never put to the community as a whole, in the form of a questionnaire or debate in a public forum.

Yet, it was decided by each executive governing body that this price tag, and the suggested means of handling solid waste, was far more controversial than landfilling or having to site another landfill. My summation from this was that the current landfills in each of these counties had just been dubbed the sacrificial lamb of the county.

Needless to say, in each case, current landfills were sited near low-income and minority-owned properties, thereby lowering the likelihood of great retaliation to big government desiring these areas for public use. When a matter, such as a landfill, is defined as a public necessity, local governments are allowed to use state laws which are on their side, thereby inflicting on local residents the fear that properties will be condemned in the name of other "public use."

These thoughts enter the minds of local landowners a little more roughly by way of expensive legal fees in court, when locals are forced to defend their ownership against local governments, to whom we pay taxes for the protection of our ownership rights.

I think it's time that governments face up to the fact that we all must pay. It is a utility, much like sewer, water, and electricity, we all create garbage. It is a byproduct of being human.

Now, as to who will stand up and say, "I'll be that garbage commission," no one seems to be on the way. Maybe it should be proposed to the State Legislature that a solid waste utility be created.

Until it is perceived that garbage is a necessary utility, and that everyone should pay for a portion of this utility, we will continue to have local governments "bowing out" to landfills.

Larry Reid is an independent contractor who lives with his wife Karen in the Rogers Road community.

Students win anti-sweatshop code from UNC!

Photo by Jerry Markatos



NC State records indicate that the university disposed of an average of 3660 pounds per month of these hazardous wastes during the 12 years of the dump's operation. These included monthly averages of 900 pounds of solvents, 500 pounds of pesticides, and 550 pounds of waste oils. NCSU also reported that the total volume of these wastes was 300,000 cubic feet.



L to R: Marion Traub-Werner, web techies, and behind-the-scenes strategy session.



Winona LaDuke Speaks on Why She's Running on Green Ticket

By **Winona LaDuke**

I want to talk a little bit about why I'm doing this [running for Vice President on the Green Party line], and what has brought me to it. A lot of you probably don't know much about my history or what we do in my community, but I've worked for about 20 years on environmental issues from pretty much a Native perspective. During the course of that time I've tried just about every single recourse to try to solve these issues. I've been in court, I've been to Congress, I've been to the United Nations, I've been to almost every single administrative hearing process in this country that you could go to. In the course of that work I've discovered that most of those processes don't work, or sometimes they work and we'll stall something, but the thing that comes up time after time is the issue of the electoral process, the fact that bad people have been elected, and bad people beholden to corporations make bad decisions that affect all of us.

So the question is posed to people like you and I, what are we going to do? I'm probably like a lot of other people; I've not been a big participant in electoral politics, largely because, if you think of it from a Native perspective, if they had one person one vote, 100 years ago, things would look quite a bit differently in the United States

than they look now. But they did not actually give Indian people the right to vote in this country until we were less than 1% of the population. That's indicative of how disenfranchised our community is from the American system. Obviously that's intentional, and obviously there are a lot of pieces to that, including that we have our own sovereignty.

In addition, if one considers the circumstances which we are in, I'm someone who believes that we as progressive people, or as people from these rural communities, or people from communities like mine who see the back end of bad public policy—we have to rise to the challenge and go through the process of recovering democracy so that decisions and public policy are written not for the richest people in this country, but for the poorest. So if I believe that, then I actually must put my own arm into that process, and struggle with that as each of us do. As my friend Ralph will say, it's to rise from being a private citizen to being a public citizen.

As I've traveled around there's an excellent response as I go to different places. Now first, I have to issue a disclaimer. I have a four-month old newborn, I'm definitely the only Vice-Presidential candidate who is nursing, which means that I do not travel as much as my colleague Ralph, who is not

nursing in this election year. But as I go around the country I find what I'm sure a lot of you find, that a lot of people are frustrated with the options, a lot of people don't think that there's much that they can do, a lot of people have disempowered themselves. The encouragement that I try to give in my talks as I go to these different places is that change is made by people like you and me. Change is made by common people; it is not made by someone who comes from someplace else and fixes it. There's nobody who's going to fix it but us.

The work that we do on my own White Earth Reservation in northern Minnesota, the people who are resisting plans to suck out all the water from an aquifer up in northern Wisconsin, the people who resist those things are people like you and I. The words I give are usually to encourage people towards that, and I find that it really resonates with people all around the country. They want to feel like there is something they can do.

We all will agree that electoral politics is an important part of an overall piece of how you change things, but it's not the only thing that you do. You engage in your political work in every arena you can, whether it's rebuilding your community, whether it's litigating, whether it's seeking some kind of administrative redress. You need to continue all those pieces of work, but you move towards elec-

toral activity. People would like to feel, in my experience, that there's somebody they can vote for who meant something to them. I hear that a lot of places. This one farmer came up to me last year and he says, I must tell you that I'm a violent and secret supporter of you. I think that there are a lot of people out there who are like that, who are just common people who would like to believe in something, who know that people died for the right to vote in this country and they'd like to cast their vote for something that they believed in.

So I would say that there's an increasing interest in this, and I will try to do my part to keep encouraging this process, to encourage people to engage in it.

Winona LaDuke is the director of the White Earth Land Recovery Project on the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota and works with the Honor the Earth foundation. She is the author of two books, Last Standing Woman, and All Our Relations.

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Cont. from p. 1

you'll get the same answer ten times: it is safer for the campesinos or workers in the field; safer for the workers who consume, and safer for the workers' families. It is, after all a socialist country. "Agriculture of the humble, by the humble and for the humble" said one government functionary.

But all ten will admit, not even pressed, that the real incentive was the loss of the Soviet support.

When the Soviets were supplying chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, and tractor driven equipment to apply them, "we used to spray the crops every six days," said INISAV engineer Esperanza Rijo-Camacho "whether they needed it or not."

"Luckily, and I choose my words carefully, luckily, the roof caved in 1989," said Mavis Alvarez of the Cuban Small Farmers' Association (ANAP) which has decided to go as organic as possible because the system is sustainable. "It made us pay attention to that which was already there - more rational methods."

"We like to call it 'ecological agriculture'," Alvarez said. "It is a much wider concept which involves harmony with the land, and the environment. If we don't save our natural resources, we are without a basis for development."

"The campesino in the land is much more able to cooperate with the environment" than large scale farms, she said. "He has traditionally been conservative because of the impact on his land."

And in Cuba the small farmer is no small potatoes. "We have about 250,000 members and with their families that averages out to about a million people working the land," she said, "And we are not a non-governmental organization. We are part of the revolution and support it."

"It is not a matter of convincing anyone like American organic farmers sometimes try to do," she said, "the state is committed to ecological farming."

Yes it is, said Juan Jose Leon Vega, the director of external relations for the Agricul-

ture Ministry. "I don't believe many people know how big organic farming in Cuba really is," he said. "The day the market opens Cuba will be the most important source for America for organic products. Americans want clean food. We grow the cleanest food on the continent. No other country on the continent has the capacity, the possibilities, and the initiative. Also, we are close."

The Crop Protection Institute has some 222 local Centers for the Reproduction of Entomophages and Entomopathogens (CREES) which produce extremely inexpensive biological agents made up of bugs who

eat pesky bugs, virus that combat bad viruses, larvae that kill other pests, and all manner of natural weapons to combat what campesinos universally call "the plague," be it animal, virus or fungus.

In some cases the sprays are made up of sliced up bodies of the pest themselves, mixed with water sprayed in the often successful theory that no species wants to hang around with the smell of its own dead. In all cases the stuff is made down the road - and, if all goes well, at a time when it is needed locally. When farmer Cirrillo Rodriquez, 65, has a problem, seven technically trained members of the local government committee are available to talk to him.

They know the signs indicating which "plague" is hitting his rice, corn, root crops, pigs, chickens and vegetables, and what biological products can be applied to help. He gets the sprays from the local CREE.

Castro's government has banned the use of any chemical fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides within the borders of any Cuban municipality - to protect the workers, their families and the water they drink.

This is not an inconsiderable factor. According to minister Leon-Vega there are exactly 2,600 large scale organic gardens in cities throughout the island, 3,600 smaller, intensive gardens, and 93,948 little parcels

run by families for their own use, and every single mother's son of them is an organic farmer. "We sell them their seeds, and their fertilizer and their pest controls, and it is all organic."

The result, by and large is clean food for Cubans. Marty Bourque of Food First, an Oakland California think tank specializing in food policy worldwide, said "because of the drastic reduction of pesticides and fertilizers overall in Cuba, it has to be much cleaner than any other country, in general terms. And in particular terms too. In fruit and vegetables, for example, and these are very important

areas because the stuff comes in fresh off the fields. "In the large-scale production of such things as sugar, rice, and potatoes, they use very little insecticide, and only where

they absolutely have to, and then only on the areas that absolutely need it, unlike some places in the United States where they, whether they admit it or not, use pesticides by the calendar, whether they need it or not.

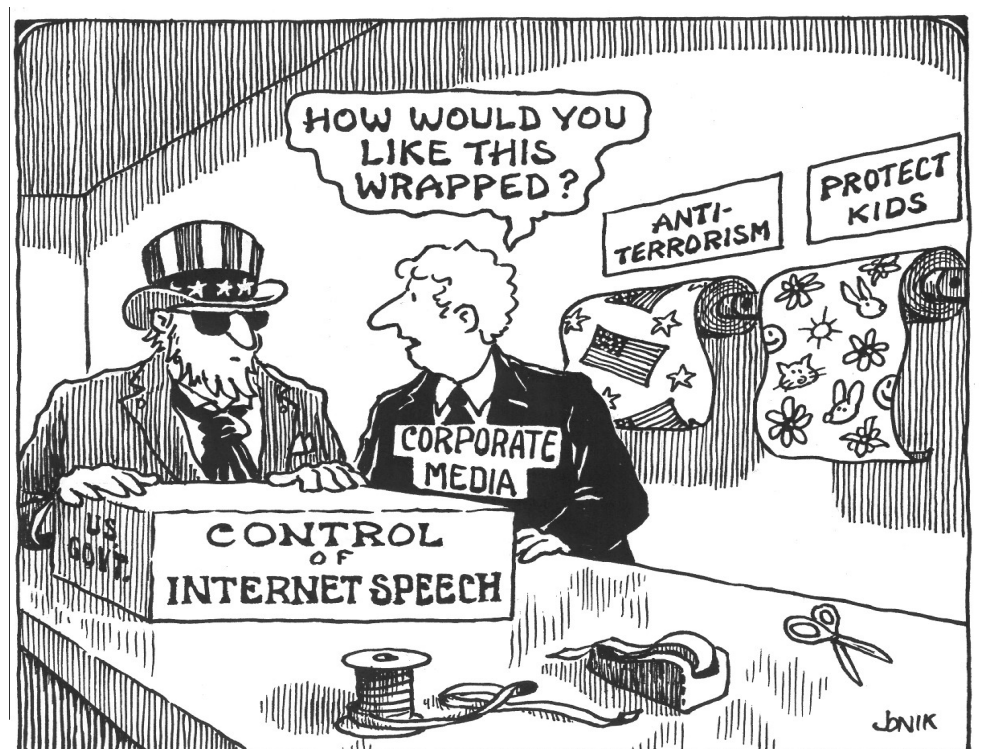
"The food is not labeled organic, or certi-

fied organic, it just is organic. And it is not a two-tier market with organic food only for those who can afford it. It is organic food for everyone." "What are the chances of it reaching American shores? Very remote. One entry to the American market might have been through setting up a joint venture with some European countries to produce the biological pest control solutions.

"We had a lot of interested parties," said Dr. Emilio Fernandez of the Crop Protection Institute, "but they were afraid if they did business with us, their own exports (to the United States) would be cut off." So today it is Cuba. The world tomorrow, and the United States maybe a little after that.

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"I don't believe many people know how big organic farming in Cuba really is" -Juan Jose Leon Vega, Agriculture Ministry director of external relations



Zapatista Women Occupy Radio Station to Demand Respect for Women, End to Military Occupation

by Wendy Courtemanche

Amid an intensification of the military presence surrounding their communities, 8000 Zapatista women and their supporters gathered in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas on March 8 to celebrate International Women's Day. They traveled from the remote corners of the state, some braving a 12-hour journey through a region dominated by soldiers and military checkpoints, in order to make their voices heard.

Two hundred marchers peacefully occupied the government radio station in order to send out their message, calling for respect for women and an end to the military occupation of their communities, during a one-hour broadcast. An indigenous woman from the jungle explained to her radio listeners, "Many of us do not know how to read or write, and for this reason we have come so you all can listen to us. We want you all to know that we will not get accustomed to the militarization." The march culminated in the Plaza of the Cathedral, where the women included in their demands the liberation of the jailed UNAM students in Mexico City—students who have marched together with the Zapatistas in their common struggle for democracy.

In 1994 the Mayan people of Chiapas, Mexico said "Enough!" to 500 years of exploitation, poverty, and repression. The Mexican government's response to the Zapatista demand for justice and dignity has been to send tens of thousands of soldiers (one-third of the entire Mexican army) to the region, one of the poorest in Mexico. These soldiers, aided by police and paramilitaries, have created a climate of violence and intimidation, and are increasingly responsible for the destruction of forests and the contamination of lakes and rivers throughout the countryside. U.S. military assistance to Mexico, including training of soldiers in the infamous School of the Americas and sales of weapons and equipment, has risen dramatically during this same time period.

This "low intensity warfare" has a tremendous negative effect on the daily lives of indigenous women in Chiapas. Due to the Army's presence, which has brought drugs, prostitution, and threats of rape and harassment into their communities, women (and men) are often afraid to leave their villages. They are unable to gather firewood, tend



Mayan women have found their own ways of organizing to oppose '500 years of exploitation, poverty, and repression.'

their crops, bathe or wash clothes in the river, or leave to sell their weavings or to seek medical attention. Thousands, displaced by the violence, are living in inadequate, temporary shelters and suffer from high rates of physical and stress-related disorders. This region has the highest rate of infant mortality in Mexico, with 67% of the population suffering from malnutrition.

In the face of this harsh and repressive situation, women are taking a stand and speaking out. Traditionally one of the most marginalized sectors of society, indigenous women found in the Zapatista uprising "a spark, a waking call" which led them to see that they deserved respect as persons. They began to celebrate March 8 after the Zapatista uprising, and they have re-named it International Revolutionary Women's Day. Part of their inspiration has come from the Zapatista Revolutionary Law of Women, which promotes the right to participate in community decisions, to obtain education and health care, and to choose how many children they want to have. It also gives them the right to choose their marriage partner and to be free from physical abuse.

These are radical concepts for women who traditionally have been sold into mar-

riage before the age of 15, "like property" one of them says, and denied an education or a voice in their own futures. Now indigenous women are openly organizing themselves. They are major participants in protests against the military occupation, often as the front line in face-to-face confrontations with soldiers. They are forming cooperatives for their weavings and actively seeking ways to improve their economic situation. They now believe that they have the right to speak and be heard, and to participate in the construction of a just society for themselves and their children.

The Zapatista movement has become a stimulus for social change and democracy, both within Mexico and in other parts of the world. Their struggle, and especially the strength and determination of these Mayan women, has inspired many others to join together and say "Basta! Enough!" International support is extremely important for them in making their voices heard and their cause known. You can help by asking your legislators to support the current U.S. congressional initiatives promoting peace and human rights in Chiapas.

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Indigenous women in the Zapatista communities have been looking to break through traditional barriers to gender equality.

both within Mexico and in other parts of the world. Their struggle, and especially the strength and determination of these Mayan women, has inspired many others to join together and say "Basta! Enough!" International support is extremely important for them in making their voices heard and their cause known. One way you can help is by supporting the work of Cloudforest Initiatives. This non-profit, non-governmental organization supports efforts for peace, justice and sustainable development, including a bilingual womens education project, in the autonomous Maya communities of Chiapas.

For more information, contact the Cloud Forest Initiative website at <www.cloudforest-mexico.org> or call 651-592-4143 to request one of their newsletters.

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