

25 YEARS

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

A JOURNAL OF POLITICS & CULTURE

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THE GLOBALIZATION GAME



**Who's Winning? Who's Losing?
And Who Made the Rules?**





STREET VENDOR IN FRONT OF ZENITH PLANT (MAQUILLADORA) IN MATAMOROS, MEXICO.

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE has been published since 1973 by the Institute for Southern Studies. With its combination of investigative reporting, historical perspective, oral histories, photography, and literature, the magazine has earned a national reputation. In the past few years, the magazine has received two Project Censored Awards, the Sidney Hillman Award for courageous reporting on racial injustice, two Alternative Press Awards for best regional publication, a National Magazine Award, and the John Hancock Insurance Company award for economic reporting.

THE INSTITUTE FOR SOUTHERN STUDIES is a nonprofit center working for progressive change in the region. Since its founding in 1970, the Institute has sponsored research, education, and organizing programs to (1) empower grassroots organizations and communities with strong local leadership and well-informed strategies, (2) provide the information, ideas, and historical understanding of Southern social struggles necessary for long-term fundamental change, and (3) nourish communication, cooperation, and understanding among diverse cultural groups.

THE INSTITUTE is supported by foundations and individual members. Annual membership is \$24 and includes a full year of *Southern Exposure* (four issues), the email newsletter GRITS, and discounts on Institute resources and publications. Address all membership correspondence to the Institute, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27702, (919) 419-8311 or fax (919) 419-8315 to place credit card orders (MasterCard or Visa). Or email: circulation@i4south.org

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SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

SUMMER/FALL 1998

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CORRECTION: David Shaw's story in the Spring 1998 issue, "Holding Pattern at D.C. National," originally appeared in the *Carolina Quarterly* (vol. 49, no. 3).

From the Editor

“As the South blends into the national picture, its problems are less unique, more national in character. Yet there is a continuing uniqueness to the region — both in its history of struggle, and its possibilities for developing alternatives to the rest of America’s crisis-prone growth.”

So read the opening lines to *Southern Exposure’s* first editorial, published in the inaugural issue of the magazine 25 years ago. There’s not much to change in these words, which speak to the realities of Southern society today as well as they did in 1973 — except in one crucial respect. We now live in the age of “globalization,” and as this special issue of *Southern Exposure* shows, the South has emerged as a nerve center of the world economy. Or to echo our words a quarter century ago: Today, as the South blends into the global picture, its problems are more global in character.

As elites go for broke striving to make the region an international player — trumpeting the South world-wide as a cheap location with a “friendly business climate” — the sunbelt has begun to look more and more like the world’s most desperate countries. The similarity to lesser developed nations is unmistakable, as the First Union National Bank readily admits in its latest *Regional Economic Review*: “To many international investors, the Southeast possesses many of the same advantages found in the world’s newly industrializing countries, without the risk.”

One group that has been making this precise argument for almost 15 years is the Southern-based Black Workers for Justice (BWFJ; see story on page 55). In this edition of *Southern Exposure*, we were fortunate to draw on this experience by collaborating with members of BWFJ and a sister organization, the newly-established Brisbane Institute/Southern Center for Labor Education and Organizing, based at Morehouse College in Atlanta.

Working with BWFJ and the Brisbane Institute, we were also reminded of the “continuing uniqueness” of change in the South. Both organizations have emphasized the need to draw on the history of struggle of the African-American people, whose labor has been so crucial to the South’s global rise, yet who have seen so little of the prosperity created. Through local organizing and global solidarity, they have shown that challenging injustice in the South can point the way to a more just world. We thank both organizations for their insight and inspiration in this important collaboration.

And once again, we would like to thank you, our readers, during this 25th year of *Southern Exposure*, for your loyalty and dedication. As we celebrate this important milestone in the coming months, we invite you to join us. In this unique and changing region, our collaboration with you continues to be the source of our hope and vision for what a more just South — and world — could be.

— Chris Kromm

Today, as the South blends into the global picture, its problems are more global in character.

HAS SOUTHERN EXPOSURE CHANGED YOUR LIFE? Or at least left a small impression? On this 25th Anniversary, we’d like to hear about ways *Southern Exposure* has made an impact on you or your community. Maybe a story changed your mind, or helped you fight city hall. If you have a memory or short story to share — personal or political — drop us a note at: *Southern Exposure*, P.O. Box 531, Durham, NC 27701. Or email: southern_exposure@i4south.org (We’ll only publish with your permission).

LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Dear Friends,

As the seasons change from summer to fall, we'd like to tell you about some changes here at the Institute for Southern Studies, the publisher of *Southern Exposure*.

Over the last two and a half-years, Pronita Gupta has served as Executive Director of the Institute for Southern Studies. Recently she was offered a challenging new position with Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), and although it was difficult for her to leave the Institute, the new opportunity eventually succeeded in luring her away.



*Outgoing Director
Pronita Gupta*

The Institute Board of Directors and staff would like to send a heartfelt thanks to Pronita for renewing the Institute as a solid, responsible, and accountable resource for activists and organizers working for a better South. Her dedication to teamwork, a healthy and principled workplace, and to building the organization will long outlive her tenure. Above all,

her presence made the Institute a fun and inspiring place to work (her sense of humor while enduring countless staff pranks certainly helped). We wish her the best of luck in her new life and work in L.A.

Thankfully, our sadness at Pronita's leaving is tempered by our excitement about our incoming director, Reverend Aqueelah As-Salaam. Through her work as Director of the Richmond, Va., Peace Education Center and her well-known work in the community, Aqueelah has shown her passion for fairness, equality, and change. We believe that she will help the Institute fulfill its potential, while encouraging the healthy atmosphere that has made the Institute a family. A native Southerner, Aqueelah promises to be a wonderful asset to the Institute and for the South's movements for social change. Welcome Aqueelah!



*New Director
Rev. Aqueelah
As-Salaam*

Lastly, we would like to extend our gratitude to all *Southern Exposure* readers for their openness to new ideas, belief in building a better South, and for joining us as we create new paths to justice. We know that we are not alone in our quest to find and tell the truth. Thanks for reading!

*Alease Alston
Chair of the Board, Institute for Southern Studies*



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DON'T FORGET FLORIDA

As a native southerner and new resident of Miami, I am just discovering Florida as a "Southern state." Northern Florida (Tallahassee, Lake City, etc.) is more like my home in South Georgia than almost any other place I've been.

And yes, contrary to popular belief, south Florida is truly a part of "the South." Not only is this evidenced by its traditional conservatism and resistance to

progressive social change, but also in the food, pace, and things I love about the South.

What concerns me is that in just a few weeks' time, Miami has experienced caustic acid attacks on five abortion clinics; rough-housing and wrongful arrests of women workers believed to be "illegal" by INS officials; and a giant hospital merger that likely will outlaw abortions at most major medical facilities in the city.

In addition, one-third of the welfare recipients in Florida are in Miami/Dade County, where Lockheed Martin enjoys its largest contract in the country to administer welfare "reform." With little resistance, the conservative Christian Coalition has set up a new base in Orlando to operate a full-scale attack on gays and lesbians and, of course, abortion.

Because of the growing numbers of new immigrants since the 1950s, conservative cultures have collided in this part of the South to form a regressive social agenda such that I have never seen. (Our saving grace is that, for the most part, most of these groups don't like one another either!)

Also, because many of our Caribbean newcomers left oppressive governments, people are nervous about having a strong or active state. Therefore, privatization has flourished in Miami. Private sponsorships of schools is growing by leaps and bounds and there are few groups organizing to stop the practice.

We are facing some frightening (and perhaps dangerous) times here in South Florida. I wonder: can we get Florida on the map — someone's map — and start including it in discussions about poverty and people of color issues in the South? Politically and economically, South Florida follows the trends of the southern region and, for both good and bad, is still a part of the South — or I most probably wouldn't be here!

— Sheila O'Farrell

Sheila O'Farrell is active in ROOTS, an organization formed to do consciousness-raising and leadership development with the different ethnic groups and people of color that make up Miami and South Florida.

The true story about the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission

DIXIE'S DIRTY SECRET

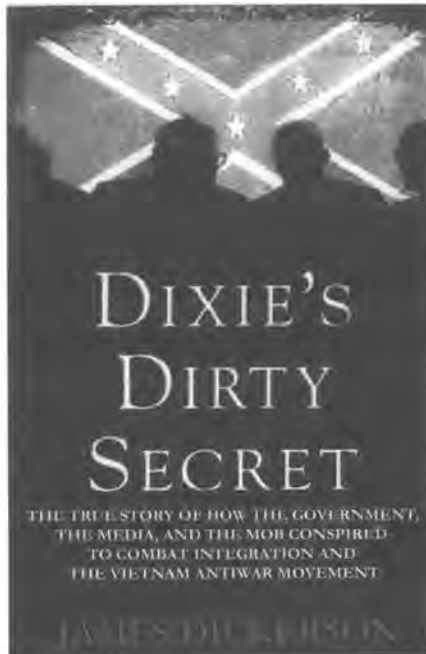
The True Story of How the Government, the Media, and the Mob Conspired to Combat Integration and the Vietnam Antiwar Movement

JAMES DICKERSON

Only recently unveiled, the secret files of the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission have already received great coverage in the national media, including NBC Nightly News, *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, and *Time Magazine*.

There is another story beneath the current headlines — the story about the commission itself—why it was formed, by whom, what it did, and under whose authority. That story is *Dixie's Dirty Secret*.

After the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling in 1954 mandated the desegregation of schools nationwide, the legislature in the state of Mississippi created the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, the basic mission of which was to prevent integration in that state. This engaging book is an investigative history of the Commission, other government agencies (including the FBI), and organized crime, all of whom conspired to break the law in dealing with civil rights and antiwar activists during the 1950s and 1960s. The author uncovers new information about the efforts of FBI agents to combat integration and exposes the longest running conspiracy in American history.



232 pages
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During a writing career spanning nearly thirty years, James Dickerson has worked for five Southern dailies and has published more than 1,400 articles in a variety of media. He is the author of six books, including *Goin' Back to Memphis*, an investigative look at how politics and organized crime has influenced Memphis music for the past century.

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AP Photo



WORKERS TURN SHUT-DOWN PLANT INTO COOPERATIVE

DAWSON, Ga. — The workers bring their own soap, paper towels, and toilet paper. They take turns cleaning the bathrooms. They use brooms and mops from home for the plant floor, mow the grass and pick up litter on their own time, and stop by to check on the plant after hours.

Last winter, they bundled up and came to work in a building with the heat left off. This summer, they'll wait until the heat becomes unbearable before using air conditioning. Vacations? None. Holidays? They're workdays. Fringe benefits? Forget it.

At the Dawson Workers-Owned Cooperative textile plant, there are no complaints. Employees work together in an adventure in efficiency and sacrifice while apparel plants continue to disappear across the South.

There have been many changes. For one, they go to the bathroom a lot less often. But the changes go deeper — in work performance, dedication, and spirit.

"We're going to do whatever necessary to make this work," says Dianne Williams, a 29-year employee at the plant. "We make our own decisions. It's no longer, 'The company say do this, do that.'"

Last Oct. 3, the plant's New York owner closed it down, leaving some 200 workers with bleak prospects and this southwest Georgia town of 5,000 bracing for a heavy economic hit with the loss of its third-largest employer.

After a week of feverish brainstorming, late-night phone calls and hours-long meetings with community leaders and rural development experts, Marcus Lemacks — the long-time plant manager who's now chief executive officer — and Dawson Mayor Robert Albritten emerged with an audacious plan: the plant would become a cooperative, in which each worker would be an owner, and all would have a say

— and a stake — in running the plant.

Lemacks and Albritten persuaded the Southwest Georgia Rural Development Board to provide an emergency \$150,000 loan, and they rounded up the workers, who hadn't gone far.

The nearest available jobs were in Albany, 20 miles away, or Columbus, 60 miles north. Many workers didn't even own a car and knew nothing but the steadily declining apparel sector.

"At my age, my options were limited," says 56-year-old Laura Jane Horne, who was unwilling to leave town for work because she cares for her Alzheimer's-afflicted mother.

Devastated by the closing, she was inspired by the cooperative plan. "We said, 'Why not fight for it?'" she recounts.

The workers formed an eight-member board and agreed to pay \$7.16 weekly dues — and to make whatever sacrifices were needed.

With a special 25 percent discount from Georgia Power Corp. and eschewing heat, they cut their winter electric bill from \$12,000 a month to \$2,000. They save \$200 a month on lawn work. They save \$40 a month on toilet paper. And on and on.

"Needles cost 43 cents. Now, when they drop one, they pick it up," says Lemacks, who uses the back of paper sent to him over fax machines for memos which are posted or passed around.

Lemacks, 59, a Clemson, S.C., native who's been in textiles his entire career, courted new customers, promising higher quality, quicker turnarounds and comparable pricing with the overseas competition. If the customer needs a rush order, he promises, the cooperative will work through the weekend to get it done.

For competitive reasons, he won't identify customers. But he said the cooperative will do \$5 million in business this year, an increase over recent years, and will grow to 300 employees by year's end.

"Of course, you never want to discourage an entrepreneurial spirit," says Roy Bowen, head of the Georgia Textile Manufacturers Association. But he says his industry's apparel sector, which has lost more than half of the 75,100 jobs it had in Georgia alone since 1984, is under "extreme price pressure" from cheap labor abroad.

Mayor Albritten is confident. "They can now control their own destiny," he says. "They want to show the world."

— Dan Sewell

NO CLASS: DESPITE SCANDAL, LOUISIANA DIPLOMA MILL STILL OPEN

Louisiana — Columbia State University seems like the perfect school for those interested in a college degree but without the time or resources to devote to a four-year full-time education. The school — which lists an address in Louisiana and accreditation from the Council on Post-Secondary Accreditation and the International Accreditation Association — offers bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, and doctorates in just 27 days for a scant \$3,000 dollars.

There's just one problem: the campus does not exist. Nor does its founder, the fictitious Dr. Austen Henry Layard, or the organizations it claims lend it credence.

In short, the school is a fake, a "diploma mill" which exchanges worthless degrees for cash.



Illustration by Seth Korch

Columbia State has used faked photographs and a false brochure to convince potential students of its credibility.

The fatherly portrait of the school's supposed founder is cut from a magazine, and the building on the cover the university's bro-

chure is in fact a nineteenth century mansion located in Tarrytown, New York. "Administrative Office #231," where hopeful students are asked to mail inquiries, is actually a three-inch square mailbox. From there, mail is forwarded to Columbia State's founder, Ronald Pellar.

Pellar is no stranger to scams. Under the alias "Ronald Dante," Pellar had already set up a system of fake workshops that allegedly promised to teach participants how to apply "permanent makeup," and also concocted a school of travel agent training. Under this same alias, Pellar married and was left by actress Lana Turner.

Pellar also served time in federal prison after hiring a

hit man to rub out a business rival in Phoenix, Arizona. Recently, the Federal Trade Commission filed charges of criminal contempt against Pellar after he failed to produce adequate information about his cosmetics school. Following conviction by a federal court in Los Angeles in April of this year, Pellar jumped bail and is now considered a fugitive.

There have, however, been no charges filed against Pellar for Columbia State, which was exposed in early 1997 by an ABC News expose. In their investigation, ABC managed to purchase a Ph.D. for a canary named Dr. Riggio, and a dog, appropriately named Scam.

Pellar also invented research on the value of what he calls a "non-traditional

degree," and published a book called *Accredited College Degrees by Correspondence*, which proudly claims that Columbia State is among the best schools in the United States. In addition, Pellar lists many invented administrators and faculty members in the school catalogue, even claiming the famous Dr. Jonas Salk as an alumnus.

Despite Pellar's conviction and the debunking of Columbia State, the organization continues to advertise in many major magazines, including *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Forbes*, *Business Week*, and *Discover*, as well as on the Internet. Until Pellar is caught, Columbia State University will no doubt continue to defraud people and animals of all sorts.

— Seth Kotch

DUKE SETS PACE AGAINST SWEATSHOPS

DURHAM, N.C. — Duke University has adopted a new policy on licensing companies that manufacture products bearing the Duke name or logo.

The policy was approved after months of negotiation between the university and the campus organization, Students Against Sweatshops. It is intended to make companies accountable for the conditions under which their products are manufactured.

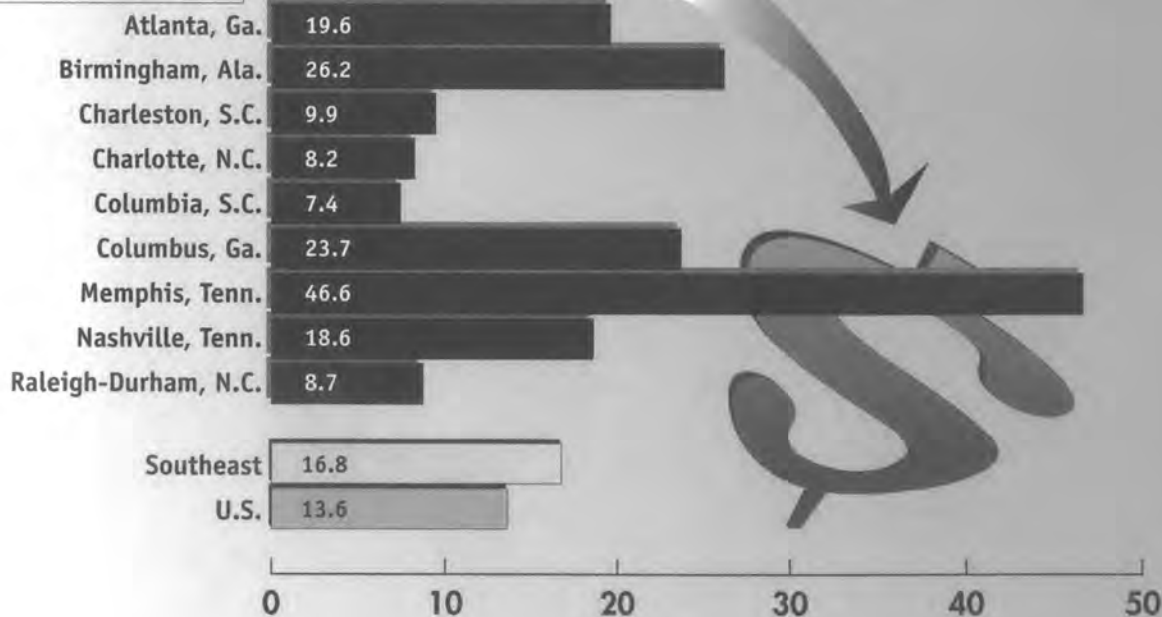
Students Against Sweatshops hopes the code will become a model for others who want to stop the global proliferation of abusive labor.

The code was patterned

The Bankruptcy Belt

The Southeast has more than its fair share of people who go bust. A breakdown of personal bankruptcy rates across the region:

Bankruptcy rate (per 1000 households)*



* Year ended third quarter 1997

** "Southeast" here is Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee

Source: Wall Street Journal, April 22, 1998

Photo by Peter A. Coclanis and Russel Van Wyk



"SALE ON HIGHWAY 17."

on existing international standards, such as those adopted by the International Labor Organization. It covers issues such as worker treatment and maximum working hours.

The code requires licensees to disclose to the university a complete listing of sites which have any role in the manufacturing process. The university has the right to send independent monitors to inspect working conditions and labor practices at these locations at least once a year. The inspection report will be given to a committee of administrators and students for review.

If not corrected, violations of the code can lead to termination of a licensee's contract.

The code is based on the idea that the purchasing leverage of a university is

greater than that of individual consumers. This is especially true of Duke, where the success of the men's basketball team has created a great demand for its athletic gear. Smaller universities might join together to gain similar leverage.

For more information, contact Students Against Sweatshops at jms18@acpub.duke.edu or Global Exchange at kimberly@globalexchange.org or 415/255-7296.

— Labor Notes

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GRANOLA POLITICS IN DIXIE: "NATURAL FOODS" GIANT REFUSES TO SUPPORT STRAWBERRY FARMWORKERS

DURHAM, N.C. — The strawberry seems harmless enough, but in the Salinas Berry Farms in the foothills of the San Joaquin Mountains of California, workers call it *la fruta del diablo* — "the fruit of the devil." This term stems not from the berry's red color, but from what workers charge are discriminatory and life-threatening practices of the strawberry industry.

Workers in the 650 million-dollar agribusiness often pick under dangerous conditions for as many as 12 hours a day, earning about \$8,500 a year. While making ten cents per pint, workers are exposed to 148 active pesticide agents, and are subject to chronic back problems due to near-endless bending over to pick the fruit.

These conditions have prompted approximately 20,000 Californian strawberry workers to enlist the aid of the United Farm Workers (UFW) to fight for better working conditions, creating a national campaign that harkens back to the civil rights era.

The Strawberry Workers Campaign has circulated a pledge of support to food distributors, asking them to endorse the strawberry workers' cause. Approximately 6,500 grocery stores — including mega-chains Safeway and Kroger — have signed the pledge.

Surprisingly, the Texas-based Whole Foods Inc., the company which owns the organic, health-conscious Wellspring Grocery and other natural foods stores, has refused to sign the pact.



ACTIVISTS LIKE ROZ WOLBARSH HAVE USED "INFORMATIONAL PICKETS" TO ALERT SHOPPERS TO WELLSPRING'S NEGLECT OF FARMWORKERS.

This seemingly uncharacteristic refusal has intensified Southern activists' support of the strawberry workers, and has prompted a wave of protest in the South against Whole Foods, which maintains a regional center in Falls Church, Virginia, and owns numerous southern grocery chains.

Among these chains is Wellspring Grocery, a North Carolina-based group of stores that has helped open new markets for organic produce. Paul Ortiz, an activist who also participated in the famous grape boycotts of the 1970's, was surprised at Wellspring's move.

"Wellspring can't just claim they're progressive," he says. "They have to earn those points. Supporting the strawberry workers' campaign would be a wonderful way for Wellspring to uphold

its principles."

In one of southern protesters' stronger moves, approximately 40 activists picketed outside Whole Foods quarterly meeting in Falls

Church last May, demanding that the company justify its decision to withhold support.

Whole Foods, headed by CEO John Mackey — who Ortiz describes as "incredibly disingenuous" — accuses UFW of a lack of commitment to organic farming. In turn, UFW accuses Whole Foods of union-bashing and general dishonesty.

Indeed, Mackey published a twenty-page manifesto on the evils of unions, stating, "The union is like having herpes. It doesn't kill you, but it's unpleasant and inconvenient, and it stops a lot of people from becoming your lover."

However, Whole Foods has officially claimed that it "will fully support a union if that is what the workers decide," but does not want to "lend [their] influence" to the workers' efforts. Activists have responded by distributing thousands of leaflets to Whole Foods customers, primarily at Wellspring grocery stores in North Carolina.

Activists say that national solidarity is important, especially with the industry's history of strong-arming union organizers

THE WAY THE COOKIE CRUMBLES

GAINSEVILLE, Fla. — University of Florida President John Lombardi shocked many guests and the press at a Christmas party last December when he described the new university system chancellor Adam Herbert as an "Oreo."

Lombardi profusely apologized for making the comment and reportedly did not intend for it to be racist. One member of the Florida State Board of Regents, Julian Bennett, attempted to retract Lombardi's comment by saying Herbert's appointment was a "magnificent duality" because "his black skin is on the outside and his qualifications are on the inside — his professionalism, his training."



— Kim Diehl

COCA COLA HIGH

DADE COUNTY, Fla. — There's nothing like the real thing. Or so it seems for Dade County school administrators who are lining up to cash in on lucrative beverage contracts with Coca Cola, Pepsi, and Dr. Pepper — a growing trend among public school districts across the South and the country.

The Dade Partners program allows principals to seek out "partnerships" with corporations and local businesses. The Dade County Bureau of Community Service estimates about 3,000 such partnerships in Dade, and they are not alone.

Palmetto, Coral Reef, and South Dade Senior Highs have exclusive partnerships with Coke. Central Texas schools have scored a \$4 million deal with Dr. Pepper.

Both successful and cash-strapped schools across the country are opting for such contracts. And no wonder. Such a contract produced a \$19,000 benefit package including a \$12,000 office for Principal Timothy Dawson at Killian Senior High in Dade County.

In return, Coca Cola has unrestricted adver-

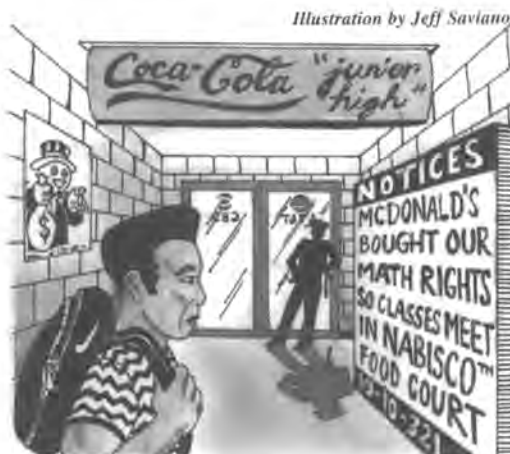


Illustration by Jeff Saviano

tising access to the school's teen market, including a \$7,000 sign over the front entrance.

On April 28 the school board ordered the sign's removal. The Principal also flirted with a similar BellSouth logo, should plans to erect a cellular phone antennae at the school go through. The school board has yet to vote on the structure.

—Alyce Gowdy-Wright

and undermining union efforts. In 1989, 1994, and 1995, strawberry workers elected the UFW in union elections, but corporations swiftly responded by firing workers and plowing up fields rather than acknowledging the votes.

Such history makes the UFW's current campaign a huge step for strawberry workers. Historically, farm workers have been excluded from many protections afforded unionized industries, including bargaining rights, primarily because of a scarcity of labor inspectors and a complicated network of subcontractors, which allow big growers to disavow direct responsibility for the safety and health of their workers.

The multi-million dollar Driscoll Strawberry Corporation — which employs almost 25% of California's strawberry workers — has emerged as a principal target in workers' campaign for basic rights: a living wage, clean drinking water, bath-

rooms in the fields, health insurance, and job security. Concerns over sexual harassment drew over 30,000 to a march through Driscoll's home base in Watsonville, Ca. — the largest march in UFW history.

Driscoll currently faces numerous criminal charges, including intimidation and harassment of union supporters and the illegal firing of union organizers.

In an effort to force Driscoll to concede to a neutrality agreement for workers, southern organizers have begun to focus on Harris-Teeter supermarkets, a dominant southern chain and large purchaser of Driscoll strawberries. A neutrality agreement, like that granted recently by Coastal Berry Company, would allow workers to unionize safely and protect their rights without fear of retribution.

The activists' efforts are starting to pay off. Among other victories, they've persuaded smaller groceries,

such as the Weaver Street Market cooperative in Carrboro, N.C., to establish extensive point-of-purchase education programs in their produce sections.

And the campaign has changed conditions in the fields. Many strawberry growers have already provided marginal pay raises, medical plans, and have made commitments to improve working conditions.

Ortiz hopes the campaign is not seen as a fad, and that people will continue applying the pressure.

"UFW's strategy is putting a constant spotlight on the strawberry industry," he says. "This is not just an episodal thing."

As workers and supporters continue to rally for fair treatment, la fruta del diablo is establishing itself as the linchpin of what the organization is calling the biggest movement for change since the 1960s.

—Seth Kotch

HEALING TOXIC WOUNDS: MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY TAKES MATTERS INTO ITS OWN HANDS AT SUPERFUND DUMP

SELMA, Va. — On the crest of the Kim-Stan landfill, a red-winged blackbird perches atop a cattail, while methane bubbles emerge like the first simmerings of a boiling pot of water. On a rising dirt wall at the back of the landfill, fresh green grass sprouts.

Eight years ago, the Kim-Stan landfill closed its gates and uncorked its problems. But local residents hope this new growth will heal the scar of the landfill — and because of the dedication of a few people, hope endures.

For years, members of the Kim-Stan Advisory Committee have pleaded with state and federal officials for help with the environmental mess left in their community. Finally, in May, they got some welcome news. The Environmental Protection Agency determined that Kim-Stan qualifies as a Superfund site, a designation that would provide millions of federal dollars to clean up the former landfill.

While the committee members are excited — Superfund status had been denied twice to the site — they don't want the federal process to slow down the projects they started on their own when the government wouldn't act.

"We are concerned that people will feel this is a lead pipe cinch, and that everybody can relax a little," says committee chairman Ed Walters. "But we are continuing to press on."

The Kim-Stan Corporation, which owns the landfill, became an encroaching neighbor for this small mountain community in the late 1980s. The

Photo by Cindy Pinkston



JUDY TAYLOR AND FIVE-YEAR-OLD NATHAN HALL PROTEST OUTSIDE THE KIM-STAN LANDFILL AS TRUCKS DUMP THEIR LOADS.

24-acre dump was closed in May 1990 after local residents forced the state to take action against Kim-Stan. The owners had allowed trash from other states to be dumped at the landfill. Leachate from the site leaked into nearby ponds and into the Jackson River.

In its effort to shut down the dump, Selma and Alleghany County citizens assembled at the site night and day, forming a picket line and recording each truck's license plate information.

"It turned into a war: us against them. We were protecting what was ours," says Alicia Gordon, a member of the first citizens group.

The owners went bankrupt, relinquishing financial responsibility for the dump filled with 725,000 tons of trash. The group built a small shanty as headquarters, just down the road from the Civil War-era Oakland Presbyterian Church. It was from there that they started to take matters into their own hands.

The committee's first ac-

complishment was the to cover the budding 90-foot "high walls" on the side of Rich Patch Mountain with mulch last March. By securing the mountainside, the committee hopes to avoid future erosion and protect the bordering George Washington National Forest.

The committee is now busy completing the second stage of their do-it-yourself damage control: creating a

diversion ditch to carry rainwater around the landfill and decreasing the amount of contaminated leachate, which still amounts to an estimated 36,000 gallons daily.

The last two phases of the project include another blanket of soil to cap the landfill and a plan to use wetland plantlife to absorb contaminated water.

People haven't forgotten the battle between Kim-Stan and citizens struggling to win back their environment, and the Kim-Stan Advisory Committee has inherited a lot of responsibility.

While many people thought closing the landfill was enough, Gordon understands that is was only the beginning.

"A lot of people thought that the war was won," she says. "But, in actuality, it was the first battle. The biggest battle now is to have the right thing done. To take care of things we can't replace."

— Elizabeth Richey

THE FRUIT OF ORGANIZING

IMMOKALEE, Fla.— In the stifling heat of the Florida Everglades, farm workers pluck red tomatoes and haul 32-pound buckets for the crew leader's inspection. If accepted, these buckets fetch between 35 and 40 cents — almost 40% less than the rate for non-unionized pickers in California, and 32% less than what Florida pickers were paid 20 years ago.

While common wisdom holds that immigrants are hard to organize — especially with a language barrier between workers who speak Spanish, Haitian Creole, English, and indigenous Central American dialects — somehow, it has happened.

Focusing on the need for fair wages, the farmworkers have formed the *Coalicion de Trabajadores de Immokalee* (Coalition of Immokalee Workers). With over 800 members, they have built a determined campaign. Two thousand workers have signed petitions calling for higher wages, and six workers fasted for 30 days to call attention to the issue.

"Once immigrants are educated about their rights and understand their situation," says Lucas Benitez, a *Coalicion* member, "they organize as quickly as any other group of workers."

Although the *Coalicion* has attracted a variety of supporters — ranging from members of the Florida Professional Firefighters Association to former U.S. President Jimmy Carter — the pickers face a major barrier since their right to organize is not protected under U.S. law. Consequently, they have no right to demand that growers come to the table and no leverage with which to compel disclosure of growers' earnings.

As a result, Benitez says, the workers face an uphill battle. "I think that the majority of growers in the area really do not care if six workers die. They must think, 'We still have more waiting in line to work.'"

For more information on how to get involved, contact the *Coalicion* at P.O. Box 603, Immokalee, FL 33934.

— Keith Ernst

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Toxic Gumbo

Boosters lured chemical companies to southeast Louisiana for “economic development.” What they got was a public health nightmare and charges of environmental racism. Welcome to what residents call “Cancer Alley.”

By Ron Nixon

EXXON REFINERY IN BATON
ROUGE, LOUISIANA
all photos by Patrick Mahon

At night, a string of lights illuminate the sky of the rural 100-mile stretch of land between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, Louisiana. In daylight, this brightness fades, giving way to clouds of smoke that rise from a veritable landscape of giant mechanical structures. These structures belong to 138 companies that comprise a virtual “who’s who” of the petrochemical industry: Texaco, Borden, Occidental Chemical, Kaiser Aluminum, Chevron, IMC-Agrico, Dow, Dupont, and many others.

State and local officials call this progress. The petrochemical industry, they say, contributes billions of dollars and countless jobs to the state and local economies.

Residents who live in the surrounding area have dubbed the industrial colony “Cancer Alley.” For them, the industry has brought few jobs, destroyed the natural environment, and brought a host of illnesses that they attribute to emissions from the plants. Residents in the area, who are primarily minorities, also call the industry’s invasion environmental racism — the targeting of communities of color

for undesirable facilities.

A number of studies suggest that such claims may be not unfounded. Nationally, a 1987 study by the United Church of Christ’s Commission on Racial Justice called *Race and Waste* found that blacks were four times more likely to live in areas with toxic and hazardous waste sites than were whites. A 1992 investigation by the *National Law Journal* found that even when the government does enforce environmental regulations and fine companies, fines are much higher in white communities than in black ones. Even in

Louisiana, reports by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and an unreleased report by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region Six have raised concerns about the location of chemical plants and the possible impact on the health of nearby residents.

These reports and increased activity by environmental justice groups across the country prompted President Clinton in 1993 to sign an executive order directing federal agencies to investigate the petrochemical industry's disproportionate impact on people of color. The Clinton Administration also set up an Office of Environmental Justice at the EPA, and the state of Louisiana passed its own legislation on environmental racism.

None of these efforts have helped people in Cancer Alley. Here in the chemical corridor, where the chemical industry is king, such legislation means little. But in one small town residents hope to break this trend.

Convent, a small, tired town of a few hundred people, is divided by the Mississippi River and lies in the heart of Cancer Alley. A number of modest homes, small churches, and a few stores contrast run-down mobile homes and other dilapidated structures where people continue to reside.

Like the rest of Cancer Alley, Convent has its share of industry. IMC-Agrico, a Japanese owned company, has set up a base here, and its plant looms over River Road, the narrow two-lane highway that runs in and out of town. The road is in-



According to the EPA's latest toxic release inventory, over 23 million pounds of toxins were released into the air. The majority of these releases were in two zip codes, both primarily inhabited by black residents.

fectured by a nauseating stench, which emanates from the plant at all times. A giant grain elevator thrusts itself heavenward, and sends dust clouds earthward, which some people say destroy the paint on their homes and cars. Ships and barges, transporting products and raw materials for these industries, creep up and down the river.

According to the EPA's latest yearly toxic release inventory, over 23 million pounds of toxins were released into the air. The majority of these releases were in two zip codes, both primarily inhabited by black residents. It's here that Shintech, a Japanese company, hopes to build the nation's largest Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) production plant. If built, the plant would add 600,000 pounds of air pollution. The plant hopes to start building soon on 2,400 acres of land, three old sugar cane plantations where blacks once toiled as slaves.

The symbolism is not lost on Jerome Ringo, a former petrochemical worker who is helping to organize local citizens here to stop the construction of the plant. "The descendants of the people who work the sugarcane plantations still live here," Ringo says. "Much like their ancestors, these people have nowhere else to go. The people can't leave and the industries won't leave."

Clifford Roberts, 71, was born and raised in Convent. Except for a stint in the Marine Corps and a couple jobs elsewhere, he has spent his

whole life here. He had hoped to retire to the house he bought more than 30 years ago. But the encroachment of the petrochemical and other industries has him fighting for his peace of mind.

Along with a group of both black and white residents who call themselves the St. James Citizens for Jobs and the Environment, Roberts and his wife Gloria, a retired school teacher, have been working to organize locals to stop the siting of Shintech. The group has gathered more than 1,000 signatures on petitions, and at the initial public hearing for Shintech's local permits, they got more than 300 people to show up in protest. Not an easy task in an area where a significant part of the population is impoverished and nearly 47 percent are without a high school education.

Organizing is made more difficult by the fact that many people are desperate for jobs. After the initial public hearing, Roberts says the numbers of people willing to attend meetings has dropped. "Most people are afraid to come forward," he says. "Many are looking for jobs or they might have a relative who works for the parish and they're scared that person will be fired if they say something."

Pat Melancon, president of the St. James Citizens for Jobs and the Environment, claims that people are simply overwhelmed. "Whatever we do, Shintech and its people match everything we do," she says. "If we take out an ad in the local papers, they take out a full page ad. People tend to get discouraged when faced with these kinds of odds."

Melancon points to the initial public hearing for Shintech's local permits as an example. At that hearing, she says, state



ANTI-SHINTECH PROTESTORS AT A MARCH FROM THE STATE CAPITOL TO THE GOVERNOR'S MANSION IN BATON ROUGE.

and local officials, who support industrial growth, stacked the deck. Most of the people who were called to testify early in the meeting were representatives of Shintech flown in for the occasion, local officials who support the company, and representatives from the state chemical industry, who, according to Melancon, "simply overwhelmed people with technical jargon."

The first citizens who opposed the plant didn't get to speak until 11:00 p.m., she says. "Most people had gone home by then. They couldn't afford to stay."

Like most people here, what worries Roberts and Melancon most is the health impact of Shintech siting in Convent. The company's property abuts black neighbors on both sides. Three schools — where the majority of students are black — and a public housing facility are close to the plant's property. While state and local officials have denied chemical exposure to be cause of illness, nearly everyone in these communities can name someone who has died of cancer, which

they blame on toxic chemicals. They fear that the plant will add to the health problems that people in Convent already have.

"A lot of people have cancer and illness like influenza," says Roberts, who recently lost a brother to colon cancer. "We know it's the chemicals that's causing these illnesses no matter what they say."

What is of particular concern is the production of PVC at the proposed Shintech facility. PVC is commonly used in a number of products, including pipes, wire and cable coating, credit cards, and packaging materials. Industries who make PVC like to boast that it is a product necessary for everyday life. But the production of PVC is a process far from safe for everyday life.

The main ingredient in PVC is vinyl chloride, a colorless vapor with a mild, sweet odor. According to data from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease

Registry, vinyl chloride can cause cancer and a host of other medical problems. Not an enticing prospect for the numerous people here who say they suffer from a number of cancers.

Newer research indicates that PVC might also cause illnesses other than cancer. Many scientists now suspect that vinyl chloride causes reproductive problems such as low sperm count, which can lead to infertility.

"They're just adding stuff on top of other chemicals," says Elmenda West, an elderly black woman who lives just down the road from where the Shintech plant would be located. "Shintech needs to go home. We don't need any more chemical plants here; we've got enough."

David Wise, a project manager for Shintech, is quick to point out that the company was asked to come to Convent. The company, he says, has established a good relationship with local citizens. He blames much of the opposition on environmental groups and people who live miles from where the plant would be built.



With 1,000 signatures opposing Shintech's inception, Wise's claims are subject to debate, but there is little doubt that the company has support where it counts — from local and state elected officials, a high-powered public relations firm, and a medical report downplaying the environmental causes of cancer.

The parish president of St. James, Dale Hymal, has been solidly behind the plans to build the plant in St. James, some say to the point of lobbying for the company while ignoring the concerns of residents. On April 9, 1996, before Shintech had even submitted a formal application for permits, Hymal wrote the company offering the commitment and support of his office in securing a new plant site.

The parish director of operations, Jody Chenier, faxed a list of the local coastal zoning committee and planning committee members to Shintech. The purpose of this fax was unknown, but the membership of the committees was broken down by race and occupation. Background comments on each member were included. For one black member on the coastal zone committee Chenier wrote, "Very quiet, noncontroversial."

A few weeks later, about 400 people received an unsigned letter directing them to write the Department of Economic Development in support of Shintech. The letter blamed the opposition on a "negative few" and "radical national environmental" groups. The writer suggested

that residents "copy this letter and share it with friends." The letter was eventually traced back to Hymal's office because of a metered mail stamp. The 400 people who received the letter were people on a job waiting list.

"The history of this letter is very disturbing," says Mary Lee Orr of the Louisiana Environmental Action Network, a statewide group that, on behalf of the St. James Citizens, has filed an ethics complaint with the State Ethics Commission against the Parish president's office. "It is hard to believe that taxpayers' money can be used to support a particular position in the permit process. How can a Parish president's office use taxpayers' money to directly tell citizens to write letters of support for Shintech to the assistant secretary of DEA, while local, state, and federal permitting processes were ongoing?" she says.

Shintech recently contributed \$5,000 to the reelection campaign of Mike Foster, governor of Louisiana. A Baton Rouge public relations firm hired by Shintech, Harris, Deville and Associates, contributed another \$5,000. The firm also contributed more than \$2,000 in in-kind contributions.

Harris, Deville and Associates have widely distributed a study by a researchers at Louisiana State University which dismisses the idea of the risk of cancer as a result of Shintech emissions. According to the authors of the study, the cancers

that do occur in the area are attributed to smoking and diet.

But three epidemiologists who reviewed the studies question the findings. First, they say the author of the report combined small parishes like St. James with large cities like Baton Rouge and New Orleans, which had the effect of masking any excess cancers that might be occurring in places like Convent. "These analyses have little sensitivity to the research questions about cancer excess which might be associated with environmental contamination in communities along the Mississippi," writes Dr. Ted Schettler, a physician in Boston and author of *Generations at Risk: How Environmental Toxins may be Affecting Reproductive Health in Massachusetts*.

"While the focus might have been on communities along the river, in these analyses the 'river parishes' are combined with Baton Rouge, which must dominate it statistically," he continues.

Schettler suggests that to find excess cancers, it might be more useful to focus on smaller areas, like census tracts. Another problem, says Steve Wing, an epidemiologist at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is that the study focuses only on cancer. Exposure to PVC, Wing says, has been shown to cause other types of diseases as well.

Jobs. That is how state and local officials explain their support for the Shintech facility. The plant is supposed to provide 165 permanent jobs to local residents. Plus, according to a company spokesman, it will provide millions of dollars in revenue to the local economy.

But Shintech is receiving more than it will give, says Dan Mills, research director of the Louisiana Citizens for Tax Justice. Mills points out that like most industries in Louisiana, Shintech got the standard industrial package: a ten year property tax exemption which saves the company \$94.5 million. The state has also designated the area where the plant plans to build as an enterprise zone. Enterprise zones are created in economically depressed areas to help alleviate poverty.

The rebate adds up to \$35 million, and

Shintech also gets a corporate income tax credit of \$2,500 for each new job created. For the 165 jobs they will create, the company should receive \$412,500. The savings to the plant will total \$129.9 million. Over the same period, St. James Parish as a whole gets \$18 million dollars. The black communities nearest the plant get more pollution.

Despite promises from Shintech and the local government — good jobs which pay as much as \$40,000 a year — it's doubtful that residents in an area, many of whom do not have high school diplomas, will be hired at the plant.

As Pat Melancon points out, the industry that is already present has not brought much economic development despite the industrial packages. "In my life I've seen five petrochemical companies come into Convent," she says. "I have seen businesses close down and the area become more depressed as these industries have come in. We haven't seen any economic development. We've seen the opposite."

A study by Paul Templet, former head of the Department of Environmental Quality, confirms Melancon's concern. The study found that for all the incentives given to industry, these industries often provide more pollution than jobs.

But such bargains aren't usually for Southern states like Louisiana. "In the South, 'Everything is for sale,'" says Bob Hall, author of the *Green Index*, a ranking of the nation's environmental health. For Hall and other critics of the South's industrial policies, 'everything' includes cheap land, cheap resources, and even cheap lives, especially those of minorities.

A recent ad in the *Wall Street Journal* seems to bolster this argument. The ad shows a man in a suit bent over backwards. "What has Louisiana done for business lately?" the ad asks, while touting the state passage of tort reform legislation and current governor Mike Foster's background as a businessman.

Willie Fontenot, who runs Citizens Access Unit at the State Attorney General Office, says that many members of the state and local government see it as their



job to help industry. "Most elected officials don't see a conflict between community concerns and business," says Fontenot.

Over 100 years ago, emancipated slaves came to the coast of the Mississippi River to escape slavery. Here they built homes, schools, and houses of worship. Here they hoped to secure economic and social independence from their former masters. Today they are fighting to secure emancipation of another kind.

The experiences of black communities in Convent are not unique. The town is one of many areas in the Gulf Region fighting the expansion of plants like Shintech, which have spread like cancer along the Mississippi River. In the past few years, there have been more than 14 expansions of PVC plants, most in low income and minority communities in the South.

The health and economic impact is untold. Many of these companies have polluted the air and fouled the water while promising economic benefits that never materialize. For the industry, it's about market shares. They use their enormous economic and political clout to buy scientists, politicians, and public relations firms which craft crisis communication plans to counter the activities of communities and groups struggling for the most

basic of rights: clean air and clean water.

For the communities, it's about survival. In the end, communities in Convent could go the way of their neighbors down the Mississippi River. Towns like Sunrise, Revelltown, and Morrisonville no longer exist. Contaminated and bought out by Dow, Georgia Gulf, and Polacid Oil, as well as other companies, these communities, once safe havens for ex-slaves, are now toxic ghost towns.

Years ago, Louisiana struck a Faustian deal with the chemical industry. Today, black residents are paying the price with their health, their communities, and their very history.

A former resident of Morrisville summed up the experience: "They moved outwards slowly... They weren't always this close. But before you realize it, they were building right outside your door."

"Suddenly, every blade of grass is important to me. My husband planted hose pine trees in the year. You have to live another lifetime to get all this back."

SE

Ron Nixon is a reporter for The Roanoke Times and a frequent contributor to Southern Exposure.

The Texas Death Machine

The execution of Karla Faye Tucker brought the world's attention to a state ready to kill

By Ken Silverstein

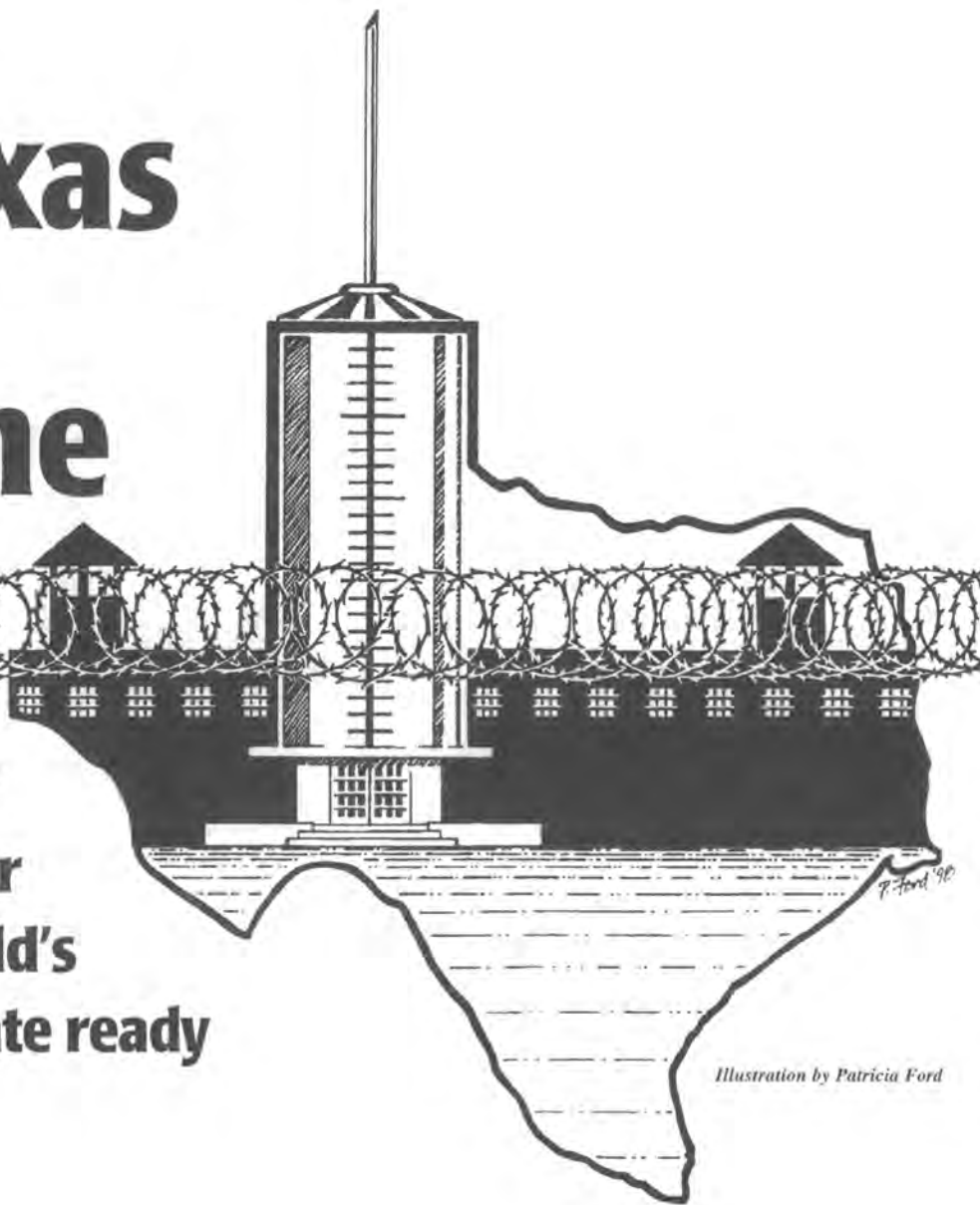


Illustration by Patricia Ford

Being charged with a capital crime is surely bad news anywhere, but there's no place worse than Texas.

After the state Board of Pardons and Paroles turned down Karla Faye Tucker's petition for clemency last February, she became the 146th person executed by Texas since the Supreme Court voted to reinstate the death penalty in 1976. Texas is also a trendsetter when it comes to killing the mentally retarded and children.

Texas, though, merely reflects what is true nationwide. The chance that a person charged with a capital crime will live or die depends enormously on race, social class — and perhaps most importantly, where the crime was committed. In calling for a moratorium on the death penalty last year, the American Bar Association said, "Today, administration of the death penalty, far from being fair and

consistent, is instead a haphazard maze of unfair practices with no internal consistency."

But Texas is still in a league of its own and the situation there is growing worse. Of the 146 people executed in the state since the death penalty was reinstated, 37 were killed in 1997 alone.

Racism plays a huge role in determining who dies. In one glaring example,

Texas law enforcement authorities picked Clarence Lee Brandley, who is black, from among many suspects in a circumstantial case of rape and murder of a white woman. As authorities told Brandley — convicted but released in 1989 after being exonerated — “You’re the nigger, so you’re elected.”

Dallas has sent dozens of people to death row, but never for killing an African-American. Harris County (Houston) alone is home to 40 percent of all African-Americans in Texas on death row. Blacks make up only 20 percent of the county’s population but about two-thirds of its death row inmates.

Texas also boasts a number of mad dog district attorneys. In Dallas, the DA’s office prepared a manual for new prosecutors, used in the early 1990s, which said: “You are not looking for a fair juror, but rather a strong, biased, and sometimes

hypocritical individual who believes that defendants are different from them in kind, rather than degree. . . You are not looking for any member of a minority group which may subject him to suppression — they almost always empathize with the accused . . . Minority races almost always empathize with the defendant.”

The city of Houston has executed more people since the re-imposition of the death penalty than any other state — except, of course, Texas. The *Texas Observer* recently dubbed Huntsville prison near

Houston, where Karla Faye Tucker was executed, “the most active human abattoir in North America.”

The man most responsible for this dubious distinction is Johnny Holmes, who has headed the local DA’s office since 1979. Holmes hangs a sign in his office’s death penalty unit that reads, “The Silver Needle Society,” which contains a list of all the people killed by lethal injection in the county. Holmes’s office also reportedly throws champagne parties on the night of scheduled executions.

Texas DAs are exceeded in their zeal

Houston’s District Attorney hangs a sign in his office’s death penalty unit that reads, “The Silver Needle Society,” which contains a list of all the people killed by lethal injection.

Photo courtesy of The Texas Observer





In three death penalty cases in Houston, defense attorneys fell asleep during trial – as one critic says, “this gives new meaning to the term ‘dream team.’”

for the death penalty only by Texas judges. The most famous case is that of Harris County District Judge William Harmon. During the 1991 trial of Carl Wayne Buntion, Harmon told the defendant that he was “doing God’s work” to see that he was executed. According to a law review article by Brent Newton, “Harmon taped a photograph of the ‘hanging saloon’ of the infamous Texas hanging judge Roy Bean on the front of his judicial bench, in full view of prospective jurors. Harmon superimposed his own name over the name Judge Roy Bean that appeared on the saloon, undoubtedly conveying the obvious.”

Harmon also laughed at one of Buntion’s character witnesses and at-

tacked an appeals court as “liberal bastards” and “idiots” after it ruled that he must allow the jury to consider mitigating evidence.

In a 1994 case, the defense requested that a number of death row inmates be brought to the courthouse. “Could we arrange to blow up the bus on the way down here?” Harmon asked.

Another reason Texas kills so many people is the abysmal quality of many of the court-appointed attorneys. Attorneys in Texas have been drunk during trial (one even had to file an appellate brief from the drunk tank), had affairs with the wives of defendants, and have been known to not raise a single objection during an entire trial. In all these cases, ap-

peals courts have ruled that the defendants were provided with competent defense.

In three death penalty cases in Houston, defense attorneys fell asleep during trial. (“This gives new meaning to the term ‘dream team,’” says Stephen Bright of the Southern Center for Human Rights.) The trial judge refused to dismiss the case of George McFarland, convicted of a robbery-killing, by saying that the state had fulfilled its obligation of providing McFarland with counsel and “the Constitution doesn’t say the lawyer has to be awake.” An appeals court in Texas upheld the death sentence on McFarland and the Supreme Court refused to review the case.

Attorney Joe Frank Cannon has represented ten men sentenced to death. “Represent” here is a generous description. In the case of Calvin Burdine, the court clerk testified that Cannon “was asleep on several occasions on several days over the course of the proceedings.” Cannon’s entire file on the case consisted of three

"A Brazen Racial Animus" Crime and Capital Punishment in the South

To be sure, Texas faces stiff competition in laying claim to the title of Death State. In **Georgia**, all 46 state district attorneys — who alone are charged with deciding whether to seek the death penalty — are white, while 40 percent of those sentenced to death since 1976 are black. No white person has ever been executed for the murder of a black person in Georgia, nor has the death penalty ever been sought in such a case. Of the 12 blacks executed in Georgia since 1983, six were sentenced in cases where prosecutors had succeeded in removing all potential black jurors.

Nor does the warden of Georgia's state prison system, a mortician, inspire great confidence. After being appointed, he declared that many prisoners in the state are not fit to kill. He later led a raid on one penitentiary in which, according to 18 employees, prisoners who were handcuffed or otherwise restrained were beaten.

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that people sentenced to death are not entitled to representation in post-conviction hearings. Georgia was the first state to take advantage of this decision when in 1996, it ordered Exzanavious Gibson, a man with an IQ of 80, to defend himself.

Eddie Lee Ross, a black man, was defended by a court-appointed attorney who served as the Imperial Wizard of the KKK for 50 years. Ross's lawyer fell asleep during the trial, failed to make any objections, filed no pre-trial motions, and missed numerous court dates. Ross got the death penalty. James Messner, who was brain-damaged, was electrocuted on July 28, 1988, after his own attorney suggested in closing that the death penalty might, in fact, be the appropriate sentence.

In the case of William Hance, a black man, the jury was deadlocked at 11-1 for death, with the lone hold-out being a woman named Ms. Daniels, the only black person on the panel. Death sentences must be unanimous in Georgia, so the other jurors began pressuring Daniels. One said, "We need to get it over with because tomorrow's Mother's Day." Daniels refused to budge, but the foreman sent the judge a note saying the jury had voted for death. Despite an affidavit from Daniels, Hance went to the electric chair in 1994.

Virginia executes more people than any other state but Texas — 42 since the death penalty was reinstated. The situation in the town of Danville, the last capital of the Confederacy, is instructive in regard to how the death penalty is imposed. According to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, since the town was incorporated in 1890, every person executed in the town has been African-American.

Danville's chief prosecutor, William Fuller III, has sent seven men, all black, to Death Row. That's one fewer than the number of men condemned to Death Row in Richmond, a city with a population almost four times higher.



Fuller has charged eighteen people in Danville with capital murder, 16 blacks and two whites. He sought the death penalty for eight of the African-Americans and none of the whites. "Danville's criminal justice system is an unconstitutional embarrassment," lawyers for Ronald Watkins, one of the condemned, wrote in a pending appeal to a federal court. "The brazen racial animus that fuels the death penalty machine in Danville should be acknowledged and neutralized."

In **Alabama**, the maximum fee allowed to a court-appointed attorney is \$2,000. "I once defended a capital case [in Alabama] and was paid so little that I could have gone to McDonald's and flipped hamburgers and made more than I made defending someone whose life was at stake," says Stephen Bright.

In **South Carolina**, the state attorney general campaigned on a platform that called for replacing the electric chair with an electric sofa in order to speed the pace of executions.

— Jeffrey St. Claire

pages of notes. (The prosecutor in that case urged the jury to choose death over life in prison because Burdine was homosexual. "We all know what goes on inside of prisons, so sending him there would be like sending him to a party," he said.)

During the past eight years, only the United States, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, and Yemen have executed children (those who were under 18 at the time of the crime). Texas is the leader in the practice of killing children. Johnny Frank Garrett was executed in 1992 for the rape-murder of a Catholic nun, committed when he was 17. As a child, Garrett was beaten by a series of stepfathers and was once seated on a hot stove because he would not stop crying. He was sodomized by a number of adults and forced to perform pornographic acts (including having sex with a dog) on film.

Garrett suffered from paranoid schizophrenia and while on Death Row regularly conversed with a dead aunt. Karla Faye Tucker got two abstentions from the Texas Boards of Pardons and Parole; Garrett, executed in 1992, was shut out 17-0.

Joseph John Cannon sits on death row in Texas for a crime he committed as a teenager. He suffered serious head injuries after being hit by a truck when he was four and subsequently spent years in an orphanage. Between the ages of seven and seventeen, Cannon was sexually abused regularly by his stepfather and grandfather. At the age of fifteen he tried to kill himself by drinking insecticide. None of this information was presented to the jury in Cannon's case.

How to account for the singularity of Texas? We talked to Richard A. Ellis, an attorney based in San Francisco who handles death penalty appeals in states including California and Texas. He underlines the coincidence in Texas of two



KARLA FAYE TUCKER BECAME THE 146TH PERSON EXECUTED IN TEXAS SINCE 1976.

lethal traditions, namely Southern racism and hang 'em high frontier justice.

Though Ellis stressed that there are dedicated lawyers of high quality in Texas, such as those working in the Texas Resource Center (which, like other such appeals projects across the country, lost its federal funding in 1995), he agrees that the general level of legal representation in Texas is awful. "I've seen incredibly slipshod work there. A man on Death Row just sent me his state habeas appeal, which he saw as a ticket to lethal injection and he was right. It is 50 large-type pages of illiterate nonsense, and this from an attorney who lectures on habeas!"

Ellis says the state habeas appeal these days is often a convicted person's only chance at reprieve, in which fact-driven issues (such as ineffective counsel) impinging on a person's constitutional right to fair trial can be raised. "In California, an appeals attorney can regard \$35,000 as a reasonable (state-provided) opening

budget, with the whole budget going to \$150,000 and up. I just had a Texas case where I needed an expert witness, who could cost around \$15,000. The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals gave me a total budget for the entire appeal of \$5,000."

Of course, appeals face desperately long odds in all states. But in California, which actually has more people on Death Row than Texas — 477 to 428 — there are far more lawyers and investigators working to keep their clients alive. As a result, California has only executed four people since the death penalty was reinstated.

Texas is the only state where a judge or state attorney general can set an execution date long before the appeals process has been exhausted. Ellis noted one case where a condemned man saw his federal appeal go through district court, circuit court, and the U.S. Supreme Court in

less than a month, with the last two appeals occurring on the day of his execution. The Supreme Court finally granted a stay 45 minutes after the scheduled hour of his death (authorities were good enough to delay the injection while they waited for a ruling to come down).

California is as eager as Texas to kill people. But there's a large and active legal opposition, plus the all-important presence of money. As Ellis points out, "In California, I can have a co-counsel. In Texas, I'm the whole team. Texas is an unbelievable death machine." **S E**

Ken Silverstein and Jeffrey St. Claire write for the investigative newsletter CounterPunch. For this report, the authors are grateful to Stephen Bright of the Southern Center for Human Rights in Atlanta and two death penalty lawyers in Texas, David Dow and Brent Newton, who provided the authors with much of the information in this article. A version of this story appeared in CounterPunch: PO Box 18675, Washington, DC 20036.

The Globalization Game



When the U.S. Federal Reserve Board — “the Fed” —

decides to raise or lower interest rates, people and markets from Hong Kong to Paris to London respond immediately: exchange rates fly up or down; the price of gold fluctuates; investors curse or celebrate their sudden change of fortune.

This is globalization — when actions affect the lives of millions of people across international and intercontinental borders. And today, the intensity and breadth of globalization is truly spectacular:

- When taking a trip in a Ford Escort, chances are the traveler is driving an automobile containing parts from over 15 countries.
- In the U.S. South, over one out of every eight manufacturing workers are employed by a foreign-owned company.
- Over half the largest economies in the world today are not countries — they are multinational corporations, each doing business in hundreds of countries world-wide.

Globalization has always been with us. Ever since the first European explorers set sail in search of wealth some 500 years ago, people and empires have been dreaming of expanding their reach beyond borders.

In today's age of lighting-quick technology, globalization has taken on new meaning. We watch as the world's corporations relentlessly scour the globe for cheaper places to set up shop and market

their goods to “compete in the global economy.” But as the barons of industry set up new operations here, shut down plants there, and restructure everywhere, the citizens and communities of the world are left to wonder: what's in it for us in the globalization game?

The South's business and government elites are aiming to be big-time players in the game. In the face of widespread poverty, boosters have banked the South's future on becoming a “world-class” region, spending billions of dollars in tax breaks and other incentives to lure corporate goliaths from around the world, which they claim will bring jobs and economic power.

But will playing the game truly bring prosperity to the South? As writers at the Brisbane Institute show in “No Escape from History” on page 26, the U.S. South has always been a central player in the global economy. What has remained the same is the region's failure to enjoy the fruits of prosperity it creates — what some would call a neo-colonial status in the world economy.

The people of the South must also ask: can we afford to play this game? As we learn in “The Art of the Deal,” spending millions of dollars to entice foreign capital — like Alabama's quest for Mercedes in 1993 — doesn't always pay off, and raises serious questions about how citizen's tax dollars are spent.

And lastly, does the South want to play the game? As William Adler reminds us in “The Journey of Universal Manufacturing,” the darker side to companies on the move are the people and neighborhoods left behind. And being obsessed with reaching world-class status has a

price, as Charles Rutheiser argues in “Atlanta: The City of Global Dreams Ain't Like it Seems.”

Globalization is a game that average people were never meant to win. Kate Bronfenbrenner documents in “We'll Close!” how corporations are using their new-found mobility to break the will of workers organizing for change. In her analysis of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), Pronita Gupta shows how international accords are crafted behind closed doors, for fear that the underlying motive — shoring up economic power for the few — would be exposed.

Does it have to be this way? When we talked with some of the South's leading activists facing globalization, it became clear that, while global change has swept the world by storm, it is far from a natural disaster. Being the work of human hands, globalization can be reshaped by the citizens and communities who will feel the brunt of its impact.

In this issue we feature several “strategy sidebars.” These pieces draw on the lessons learned by activists across the South: citizens making their voice heard about corporate deals in Alabama; workers fighting plant closings in Tennessee; the Black Workers for Justice, organizing workers locally and globally.

Ordinary, hard-working Southerners didn't make the rules, and were never invited to be equal players in the globalization game. But the work of thousands of southerners makes clear that, with persistence and smart organizing, a vision of a different, more just future can prevail. We have only the world to win.

—The Editors



Going for Broke

Southern boosters are on a crusade for "world-class status." But what are the costs of trying to be a global player?

By Chris Kromm

The drive down into South Carolina on Interstate 85 may be four-lane highway,

but on a crisp October afternoon, the ride is rich with the sights of the South. The landscape is painted with time-worn Southern symbols, from kudzu-choked magnolia trees to rolling piedmont hills, to the Gaffney Peach — the famous fruit-shaped water tower which, as one native notes, "kind of looks like a redneck's rear end," mooning the Carolina sky.

About half an hour past the Peach, the familiar scenery fades in the bustling town of Spartanburg, and new sights and sounds signal that one has clearly entered another South altogether. It's Oktoberfest in Spartanburg, and judging from the clanking beer mugs and costume-decked dancers, the locals intend to celebrate the German holiday with abandon.

Spartanburg hasn't always celebrated Oktoberfest. The festival was brought here over a generation ago, the brainchild of legendary businessman Richard E. Tukey. Soon after taking over the Spartanburg Chamber of Commerce in 1959, Tukey began criss-crossing Europe, shaking hands and cutting deals to entice the barons of global industry to set up shop in his home town. Launching a German-style holiday to make foreign investors feel at home was the least he could do, a touch of southern hospitality.

Tukey's dream came true, and today, over 230 international firms line this swatch of Interstate 85 — now dubbed "the Autobahn" due to the high number

of German transplants. Corporate jewels from Michelin to BMW have located in the area, making the South Carolina upstate, in the words of one prominent Harvard Business professor, "a lesson in what is required to achieve world-class status."

But this past October, while the music played in Spartanburg, evidence was mounting that South Carolina's international aspirations were coming at a high price. That month, the conservative Strom Thurmond Institute issued a report condemning the generous tax breaks the state has been using to lure

business — which they estimated would cost the financially-strapped state upward of \$420 million by the year 2010.

"The report caused quite an uproar," says Brett Bursey, publisher of the left-leaning newspaper *The Point* in Columbia, S.C., who also opposes the business recruitment giveaways. "The politicians were upset that even conservatives were saying they'd had enough corporate welfare."

South Carolina's controversy over the costs of gaining global status isn't unique — similar battles are brewing across the South. While Southern states spend precious resources to chase migrating global corporations, critics are starting to ask hard questions: can the South afford to be a "global player?" And who wins — and loses — when states play the globalization game?

The Rise to World Class

"It was South Carolina in the 1950s and 60s that began to recruit foreign business in an organized way," says James Cobb, professor of History at the University of Georgia and author of *The Selling of the South*. But other states followed the

GLOBAL STATES

Seven of the top 10 states for drawing foreign corporations are in the South.



Source: First Union Regional Economic Review, June 1998.

Tukey formula, and soon North Carolina, Tennessee, and other Southern states were also looking for business overseas.

The South, once thought of as an economic backwater, was quickly emerging as a vital linchpin in the global economy. Today, the South has become a favorite home for global businesses seeking low costs and access to American prosperity.

"The Southeast is far and away the leader in attracting investment from overseas," says the June 1998 *Regional Economic Review*, published by First Union National Bank. The bank's economists also report that the South accounts for "close to half of all new facilities built in the U.S. by foreign-owned firms during the 1990s."

In a region where smokestack industries still thrive, many of the transplant businesses are in manufacturing. According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, the South has six of the top ten states nation-wide in percentage of manufacturing jobs controlled by international affiliates. Overall, almost 13% of manufacturing employees in the region — over one out of eight workers — work for foreign-owned companies.

The global hotspot is Interstate-85, stretching from Richmond down to Atlanta and boasting hundreds of new companies, including U.S. headquarters for dozens of foreign firms. Richmond recently lured Motorola and other high-tech leaders to the I-85 corridor. South Carolina drew \$6.2 billion in foreign investment last year; Georgia reached \$11.7 billion.

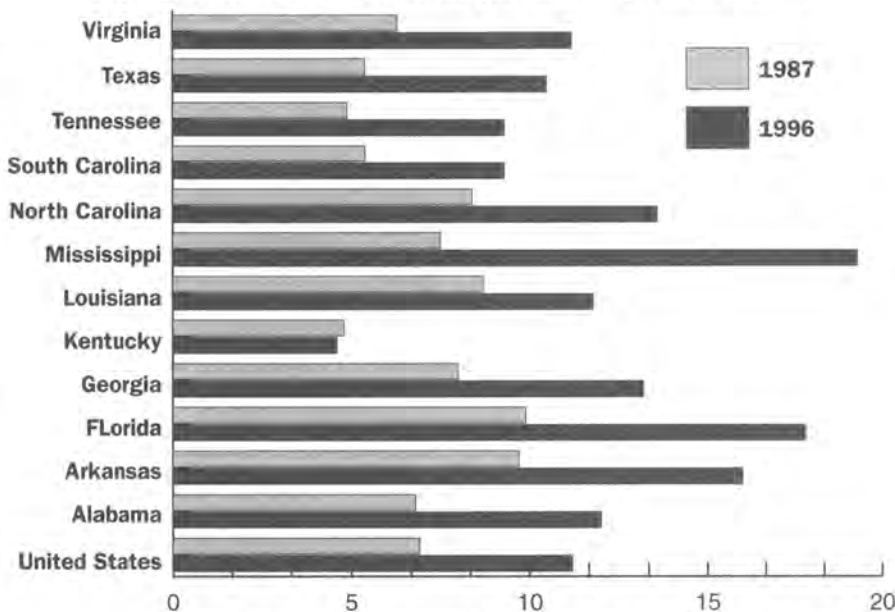
The international influx is felt in the region's cultural fabric, too, as states scramble to project a cosmopolitan image for global newcomers. Alabama now advertises Japanese and German schools for expatriate families, while Atlanta has hired models to play Rhett, Scarlett and other *Gone With the Wind* characters to impress potential investors. In South Carolina, after the German weekly *Der Spiegel* wrote about the controversy over the state's flag — which features the confederate stars 'n' bars — industry recruiters waged a campaign against the Old South flag, saying it was bad for business to look like the "Cracker Capital of America."

Working for OVERSEAS OWNERS

In the South, one out of every eight manufacturing employees work for a foreign-owned company



Percent of state's manufacturing jobs in foreign-owned plants.



Source: "Survey of Current Business," U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, June 1998

Great Global Giveaways

So why are corporations from around the world flooding into the U.S. South? Cheap land and cheap labor, cornerstones of Southern policy for decades, continue to attract European and Japanese firms. But one of the biggest reasons the corporations come is because politicians pay them to.

Over the last two decades, Southern states have spent billions of dollars using generous incentive packages — ranging from hefty tax breaks to discounted services to cold cash — to lure the cream of the global corporate crop.

The resulting "bidding war between the states," with politicians fighting to give away money for jobs, is now legendary. Tennessee began a South-wide

spending spree on foreign auto makers in 1980, when it anteed up \$44 million in incentives to land a Nissan plant employing 4,000 people — at a cost of \$11,000 per job.

The price tag spiraled upward. In 1988, Kentucky put down \$150 million to land Toyota, at \$50,000 a job. BMW squeezed \$150 million from South Carolina, at \$100,000 per job in 1992.

In 1993, Mercedes became the biggest-ticket auto deal when it played 26 sites before accepting over \$200 million from Alabama — a cost of over \$167,000 per job [see "The Art of the Deal," p. 30]. And this just included subsidies and tax breaks: throw in site preparation, roads, training, and other perks, and each of the deals topped \$300 million.

SHADY CAR DEALS

Southern states have spent billions of dollars in tax breaks and other incentives to lure international businesses, especially in the automobile industry — often while public services have suffered. Some of the biggest-ticket deals:



YEAR	STATE	CORPORATION	TOTAL INCENTIVES	JOBS CREATED	COST PER JOB
1980	Tennessee	Nissan	\$44 million	4000	\$11,000
1988	Kentucky	Toyota	\$150 million	3000	\$50,000
1990	Tennessee	GM/Saturn	\$70 million	3000	\$23,000
1992	S. Carolina	BMW	\$150 million	1500	\$100,000
1993	Alabama	Mercedes	\$250 million	1500	\$167,000

... AND THE TRADE-OFF

NATIONAL RANK SPENDING FOR SCHOOLS

Kentucky	37th
S. Carolina	39th
Alabama	46th
Tennessee	47th

Source: USA Today, 1993; Institute for Southern Studies, 1998; National Center for Education Statistics, 1995.

These budget-busting deals — which are often made with little or no public input — raise serious questions about political priorities and how tax dollars are spent.

"You'll get state leaders who are against paying a dime for social spending," says Cobb. "But they're willing to give a company that just turned a \$40 billion profit hundreds of millions of dollars in incentives."

For many, the Mercedes giveaway was the last straw. Policy experts held countless forums on how the new "arms race for jobs" was bankrupting states; newspaper editors weighed in against corporate bribery; the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis called on Congress to step in; and a lower court in North Carolina even ruled that the giveaways were an unconstitutional use of public funds for private purposes (it was later struck down).

Everyone seemed to agree with Mark Waterhouse, chairman of the American Economic Development Council, when he told the *Wall Street Journal* that "We in the economic development profession

have created a monster that is devouring us."

The outcry and resulting giveaway lull was short-lived. "There's been a change in public opinion, but not with the legislators," says Kimball Forrester, director of the state-wide citizen's group Alabama Arise. After the Mercedes controversy, Alabama was back to the bidding game, including an \$80 million package for Boeing in 1997.

Governors in states like North Carolina have begun asking for bigger unrestricted recruitment funds to sweeten any deal, while other states have opted to devise more innovative — and less conspicuous — financing schemes. According to James Cobb, states have often pledged to swear off incentives when publicity got bad — only to enter the bidding war again.

"It's a cyclical thing," he says. "Everybody quits drinking after a bad night. Same with incentives: everybody complains about these bad deals, but when it comes down to it, they think they're not going to get industry if they don't. So they get back in the game."

What kind of jobs?

State officials say they keep playing the global bidding game for one reason: jobs. "My job is to get jobs," says Wayne Sterling, Virginia's veteran industrial recruiter. "We're salespeople."

And to Southerners in depressed areas, what recruiters are selling looks pretty good. International firms tend to hire skilled labor, and according to the European-American Chamber of Commerce, European affiliates nationally pay wages 19% higher than their domestic counterparts, boosting wages all over.

What the South's global recruiters rarely mention is that wages at foreign firms — although high by U.S. standards — are often a fraction of what these companies pay at home. The BMW plant in South Carolina pays less than a third of what German workers earn — a figure that doesn't include the health coverage, child care, and other benefits already covered by the German government.

Southern state leaders and incoming companies have also reached a tacit agreement to keep these jobs union-free. Despite the recruitment frenzy, Southern states have historically rejected pro-union shops. As a company executive remarked in the late 1970s, "There are literally scores of companies that have been turned away from Southern towns because of their wage rates or their union policies."

As for global corporations they often cite the lack of labor activity as a prime reason to relocate in the region. As the *Wall Street Journal* reported in May of 1993, "German managers have found the laid-back Southern workers more malleable than some of the aggressive, unionized people up North."

Such words make workers in Europe and other countries uneasy, as they see their country's corporations migrate to the low-paying and union-resistant South — a direct threat to their jobs at home. Two Canadians recently presented a paper at a conference on globalization, which argued "The results of these [anti-union] policies have been devastating for most Canadians. Several hundred thousand jobs and many hundreds of manufacturing companies have

been lost to low-wage American states."

"[In Germany] it's not yet like U.S. workers view Mexico, as a threat to their jobs," says Leah Samuel, a reporter for *Labor Notes*. "The shifting of operations from Europe to the U.S. South is somewhat new, so most aren't very aware. But some are."

Labor advocates on both sides of the border also fear that foreign firms aim to make the low-wage, lean Southern workplace a model for all of their operations — driving down the power and protections of workers world-wide.

"The bosses of German companies want labor relations like the U.S. has," says Doris Hall, a community activist from eastern North Carolina who met with German labor and citizen organizations during an educational tour in 1996. "We could tell German workers from first-hand experience that this means the companies control the relationship."

"Going out faster than they come in"

While landing deals with big-ticket companies may give states a quick economic shot in the arm, the rush has often been short-lived. As Southern states are beginning to discover, a policy based on chasing industries on the run suffers a fatal flaw: namely, companies that move in can just as easily move out.

The South has a long history of attracting transient business. In an effort to jump-start industrial development, the region's recruiters have often chased highly mobile companies with little loyalty to their new location. Nothing has stopped the companies from moving to a state or country which offered a better deal. As one Alabama official complained in 1982, "industrial jobs are going out the back door faster than we can get them in the front door."

Relying on footloose factories made the South especially vulnerable to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which gave many companies the green light to shift production to Mexico. According to the Economic Policy Institute, the South lost a net total of 127,000 jobs to NAFTA from 1993 to 1996 — almost a third of the country's net jobs losses. Even more striking, the South

NAFTA EFFECTS

The Economic Policy Institute estimates the U.S. saw a net loss of almost 345,000 jobs nation-wide to NAFTA between 1993 and 1996. The South was especially hard-hit.



Seven states have lost jobs to NAFTA disproportionate to their share of the workforce:

Alabama	North Carolina
Arkansas	Tennessee
Indiana	Texas
Michigan	

Source: Economic Policy Institute, September 1997. Pie chart based on EPI data.

accounted for five of the seven states nationwide which lost jobs disproportionate to their share of the country's workforce.

According to Bob Becker, an organizer with the Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network, the new multinationals moving into the South aren't much different.

"Once you have a global economy, these companies aren't going to stay in the South," Becker says. "Phillips-Magnovox moved here from Holland in the 1950s. Now they're in Mexico. BASF, who built a plant in eastern Tennessee is now divided into three companies, with most of their operations in the Caribbean."

Mike Howells, editor of the *Bayou Worker*, sees the same trend in Louisiana. "If you have a company moving here from Western Europe," he says, "They come, stay a while, then move on to Latin America. That seems to be the pattern."

"It's very transitional — unless they're extracting natural resources," Howells adds. "Then they stay."

State policies today only encourage multinationals to stay on the run. For one, lavish incentives make moving cheap. "The state has already financed their buildings and given them free land, so they haven't made a big investment," says James Cobb. "On top of that, the plant technology is very mobile. They could move anytime."

The desperate deals offered to corporations also rarely include "clawback" provisions which would penalize a company, or ask them to return subsidies, if they left or failed to meet job targets.

Often, the only option states have is to keep giving companies money to convince them to stay — driving states deeper into the costly bidding game. Called "corporate retention" by development experts, to communities it can seem like job blackmail. In 1995, the state of Virginia felt obliged to give IBM \$165 million to build a semiconductor plant with Toshiba in Manassas — a town that had lost ten percent of its jobs when IBM abandoned it a few years before.

Regaining Control

When confronted with the costs and perils of the globalization game, Southern states argue that it's a matter of survival; if they don't play, some other state will. "No state can stop using incentives in a world of fierce domestic and international competition," writes Chris Farrell of *Business Week*. "To do so unilaterally would be politically and economically suicidal."

But it's equally clear that continuing to play the game only cripples the ability of

Southern states to regain control over their economic future. Only through cooperation across state and national borders can people affected by globalization gain power over its process. For as workers and community groups challenging the global bidding wars have argued, far from harnessing the winds of global change, the South has only left itself more vulnerable to the whims of corporate interests across the world.

"[Foreign companies] are still mostly

interested in cutting costs," Cobb says. "They're not coming here to pay twice the local wages or to pay their share of taxes. They find an area they want to invest in — like the South — and see which state is going to give them the best deal."

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Chris Kromm is editor of Southern Exposure. The author wishes to thank Keith Ernst, Jen Schradie, Leah Samuel and the Brisbane Institute for their assistance.

No Escape from History:

**By Hasan Crockett,
Dennis Orton &
Ashaki Binta**

The South has always been central to global change. That history shapes globalization today.

Globalization is no longer a new term.

Its use has become as common as any word. But the socio-economic and political dynamics it refers to are monumental indeed. There is no region or country in the world untouched by the current trends in global economic and political policy, and the U.S. South is no exception.

Workers and their communities are suffering the ill-effects of global corporate power, including low wages, poverty, instability, privatization, shifting capital, lean production, massive deregula-

A SHORT HISTORY OF GLOBALIZATION IN THE SOUTH



1492 • COLUMBUS

The Italian explorer employed by Spain lands on "Hispanolia," beginning the European "globalization" of the Americas.

1550-1660 • SPAIN'S CENTURY OF GOLD

Millions of tons of silver and gold are extracted and shipped from the Americas.



1619 • THE SLAVE TRADE

The global slave system comes to the South when a ship carrying 20 Africans arrive in Jamestown, Virginia.

1860 • KING COTTON

The Southern-based cotton economy dominates U.S. political system; accounts for half of all exports in 1850.

EUROPEAN EXPANSION
1500-1600

THE SLAVE TRADE
1600-1850

tion, unemployment, and massive corporate subsidies. The sovereignty of whole nation-states is under direct attack in this new global world order. This is the reality of globalization for people everywhere.

In this process of globalization, one does not have to look far to see how the South, along with the Southwest and Native American Territories, have come to resemble a Third World within the borders of the United States. As First Union National Bank writes in its latest *Regional Economic Review*, "In the increasingly global economy, the South's international connections are becoming more important. The Southeast is far and away the leader in attracting investment from overseas, accounting for close to half of all new facilities built in the U.S. by foreign-owned firms during the 1990s. To many international investors, the Southeast possesses many of the same advantages found in the worlds newly industrializing countries without the risk."

"The South's economy ranks as the fourth largest in the world," the report goes on to note, "and has grown an average of 6% a year since 1991. Wage rates,

while rising, remain well below the U.S. average and productivity growth is stronger."

This South's rise to prominence in the international context is the result of a long history of struggle between the forces of change and those of reaction: slavery and slave rebellion; Jim Crow and freedom movements; industrialization and the repression of worker organizing. Thus, while the intensity of globalization in the last decades of the 20th century is spectacular, it is by no means new — and has not changed the neo-colonial status of the South's people.

"Free Trade" and global empires

Religious crusades, the trade of commodities, and the journeys of refugees are all examples of events that have crossed geographical borders throughout history. The spread of Christianity in Europe from 476-1056, for example, was an early form of global empire-building, as was Spain and Portugal's Treaty of Tordesillas, signed in 1494 and creating a north-south Line of Demarcation to divide "discovered" lands around the world between the two powerful coun-

tries.

It was in the 1600s that global trade began to rise. As European rulers came to see that trade was as important as gold, they system known as mercantilism took hold.

Mercantilism rested on three key beliefs, which have shaped globalization to this day. First was the primacy of trade: the idea that a nation's economic strength depended on exporting more goods than it imported. Second, leaders of the new system declared that more profit is made selling manufactured goods than raw materials. Lastly, the new powers argued that the state should play an active role in supporting economic activity through regulating commerce, and supporting industries such as shipbuilding needed for the new trade-based system.

The new system relied on the subjugation of millions of people. It required conquered colonies to supply raw materials to the mother country, as well as serve as markets for finished goods.

The system also needed slaves. Across the Americas, plantations were spreading to grow sugar, cotton, and tobacco,



1936 • BUSINESS RECRUITMENT BRIBERY

Mississippi passes "Balance Agriculture with Industry Act", launching the modern age of business recruitment incentives.

1944 • BRETON WOODS AGREEMENTS

World powers meet in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire and create World Bank and International Monetary Fund to stabilize the post-war world.

1948 • FREE TRADE

Leading nations sign the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), designed to expand the "free market" across the globe. GATT becomes the World Trade Organization in 1995.

1980 • CORPORATE CAR GIVEAWAYS

Tennessee launches the South-wide bidding war for international auto makers, giving Nissan incentives totaling \$11,000 for each job created.

1994 • NAFTA PAINS

North American Free Trade Agreement goes into affect, sparking revolt in Mexico. South claims heaviest job losses in the U.S.

MONOPOLY CAPITALISM AND "THE NEW SOUTH" 1860-1945

MULTINATIONAL CAPITALISM AND "RESTRUCTURING" 1945-PRESENT

and they needed cheap labor to be productive. The global African slave trade began, coming to the South in 1619 with the first shipment of 20 Africans to Jamestown, Virginia.

Slavery and the plantation system may have been, in the words of Karl Marx, "primitive accumulation," but the profits were enormous. As early as the 1680s, The Royal African Company transported an average of five thousand slaves a year. As DuBois describes, the web of "triangular trade" developed by Great Britain was a clear sign that a new global economy had arrived:

The Negroes were purchased with British manufactures and transported to the plantations. There they produced sugar, cotton, indigo, tobacco, and other products. The processing of these created new industries in England; while the needs of the Negroes and their owners provided a wider market for British industry, New England agriculture, and the Newfoundland fisheries.

King Cotton's Global Reign

The global slavery system took root in the South with the rise of King Cotton. "Where cotton was king," writes George Novack in *America's Revolutionary Heritage*, "the whole economy fell under its sovereign sway. The price of land and the price of slaves were regulated by the price of cotton. A prime field hand was generally calculated to be worth the price of ten thousand pounds of cotton. If cotton was bringing twelve cents a pound, an able-bodied black was worth twelve hundred dollars on the slave market."

By 1850 the cotton kingdom covered about 400,000 square miles stretching

from South Carolina to San Antonio, Texas. Cotton constituted over half the total exports for the U.S. in 1850, and commerce, manufacturing, and banking in the North depended on the cotton/slave system.

As with all global systems before and since, the state actively protected and supported King Cotton. From 1820 to 1860, the cotton nobility controlled the president, the cabinet, both houses of Congress, the Supreme Court, the foreign service, and they dictated the major policies made in Washington.

Cotton was also a driving global force. It powered the industrial revolution: Cheap labor in the English textile mills and slavery on American plantations combined to enrich England, fueling their ability to reach further into India and Africa.

The harsh conditions of the slave system on which cotton depended have been well-documented. But little is said of slave resistance, which was crucial to

slavery's destruction. There were over 250 slave revolts from colonial times to the Civil War.

This resistance was also an early example of cross-border solidarity: as DuBois notes, uprisings elsewhere, such as the revolution in Haiti, "threatened the whole slave system of the West Indies and even of continental America."

Finally, in the 1860s, the cotton slavocracy collapsed under the weight of a single crop economy. But what soon became clear is that the South — the supplier of raw material in the global cotton system — gained little from the profits reaped during cotton's reign.

"Though the cotton, rice and sugar of the South sold for \$119,400,000 in 1850, the total bank deposits of the region amounted to only some \$20,000,000," writes Novack. "Ten years later, when the value of the crops had increased to more than \$200,000,000, less than \$30,000,000 was deposited in the banks of the cotton and sugar belt."

Photo by Earl Dotter



AN ITT AUTOMOTIVE PLANT IN MATAMORAS, MEXICO. AS MANY GERMAN AND OTHER FOREIGN AUTO MANUFACTURING COMPANIES MOVE TO THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES, U.S. COMPANIES ARE SHIFTING PRODUCTION TO MEXICO.

The source of wealth, but not the benefactor — this exploitative relationship, seen in many Third World countries, was to become a familiar pattern for the South as the slave economy gave way to 20th century globalization.

"Restructuring" and the New South

While the South languished under Jim Crow, a new world order was taking shape after World War II. The World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the General Agreements on Tariff and Trade (see "A Globalization Glossary," page 57) all were being established to shore up the strength of the major economic powers.

Fearing the end of the war-time industrial boom, the Southern corporate leaders and politicians began looking worldwide to bring business to the region. With a formula of cheap labor, cheaper land and generous incentives, the region soon became a haven for foreign investment, which fueled the rise of the "New South" as a global player.

By the early 1970s, a period of global "restructuring" was underway. The U.S. economy began to experience a falling rate of profit, largely due to the rising strength of Europe and Japan.

At the same time, the world's currencies became deregulated, beginning in earnest the corporate search for cheaper sources of labor and resources. The U.S., Europe, and Japan began to increase their loans of "foreign aid" to developing, "Third World" countries of the global South, through the World Bank and IMF. The conditions attached to those loans came from the "Washington Consensus," a model of development based on the belief that deregulated, market economies were the only hope for poor countries.

The impact was felt everywhere. Under the guise of doing whatever it took to win in the global marketplace, corporate America began demanding and getting concession after concession from American workers. Plants were played against each other; others shut down altogether and set up shop in non-union areas with more exploitable resources.

Runaway shops became increasingly common as business moved to the "sunbelt" — the Southeastern and South-

Progressive analysis and discussion of the global economy is now more important than ever.

western U.S.— and then on to Mexico and other nations. The impact was severe, especially for the African-American community: the resulting lack of stable blue-collar jobs is cited by some experts as a leading cause of the urban underclass.

The Global South Today

Globalization today is marked by new forms of corporate control over the economy, from new work systems and "labor/management cooperation" to privatization of public goods and services. These trends have not escaped their Southern context.

In the late 1980s, the U.S. South emerged as the top region in the country for privatization. The main form privatization has taken in the region has been in the form of contracting out. Nine southern states showed significant efforts to privatize public transportation. Water systems and social services are also targets of this policy.

The decline in federal aid to support public services coupled with the massive tax breaks and subsidies given to attract private industries to various states, have been key to underpinning the trends in the South toward privatization.

Moreover, the lack of unionization in the region weakens the ability of impoverished Southern workers and the U.S. national trade union movement as a whole to effectively combat the forces of globalization.

The South has always featured a conservative political climate, designed to limit union power in the region. Right-to-work laws have been especially crippling, forcing unions to represent non-members. In twelve Southern states, including the District of Columbia, there are roughly only 2.3 million dues-paying members, yet these same unions must represent over 2.7 million workers in their bargaining units. This is not only a drain on minimal resources, but also directly undermines the collective strength of local unions, giving undue advantage to the employer.

Political powerlessness for the African-American population in the South is also a feature of the Southern political climate, reinforced by international trends and policies of globalization. Majority Black congressional Districts from North Carolina to Louisiana have been targeted for elimination in an increasingly conservative political climate.

Finally, the role of gender issues in the globalized economy are also reflected in the conditions of Southern working people. Black women bare the brunt of economic exploitation, suffering the lowest per capita income of any sector of the U.S. landscape. Forty-five percent of Southern black families are headed by single women, whose median income was only \$12,000 in 1993.

As one astute analyst framed it in the excellent anthology *Creating A New World Economy*: "Global militarization, the environmental crisis, global inequality, U.S. economic decline, and corporate control over the economy illustrate the profound ways in which global and domestic problems interact and the ways in which the solutions to global problems depend on solutions to domestic ones and vice versa."

"In short, to solve the problems we face, we must think locally and globally at the same time if we are to act at all. This means that progressive analysis and discussion of the global economy is now more important than ever." §

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The Art of the Deal

After Alabama gave over \$250 million in breaks to lure Mercedes, what have activists learned about challenging corporate welfare?

By Pronita Gupta

In today's economic environment, corporate loyalty seems all but extinct. Using their ability to relocate as leverage, corporations have taken to playing states off each other to get subsidies and benefits in exchange for jobs. The result has been the famous "war between the states," where states compete for corporations by offering bigger and better incentive packages.

One of the best-known examples of this controversy is the case of Mercedes-Benz's move to Alabama. In 1993, Mercedes announced its intentions to build an automotive assembly plant in North America to produce a new sport utility vehicle. What followed was an all-out bidding war between 62 locations in over 20 states — many in the South — to land the German giant.

Interestingly enough, Alabama was not on Mercedes' top list. However, the Alabama Development Office (ADO) — the state business recruitment agency — and then-Governor Jim Folsom put together one

of the most lucrative incentive packages in history. They won, and Mercedes agreed to build its first North American plant in Vance, Alabama.

The Deal of the Century

The \$250 million-plus package included \$118 million in up-front subsidies and \$55 million in potential tax breaks. These subsidies included sewer, water, and utility improvements; the purchase and development of the site; and annual funding for employee training.

In return, Mercedes promised to create 1,500 jobs directly and 14,285 jobs indirectly. Most of the indirect jobs were to come from nearby suppliers, but the deal did not require Mercedes to purchase supplies and services in-state.

The deal also required an overhaul of Alabama's tax laws to allow the ADO to offer two types of incentives. The first was a corporate tax credit, which allows expanding companies to credit their taxes towards construction debt.



"Citizens deserve to be involved"

MERCEDES-BENZ VISITOR'S CENTER IN VANCE, ALABAMA.

Lessons from Alabama Arise's campaign against the deal

One of the leading organizations to challenge the Mercedes deal was Alabama Arise — a state-wide alliance at the time of some 85 religious, labor and community groups (it claims 115 member organizations today). The organization is known both in small towns and the state legislature for combining grassroots organizing with lobbying to ensure that low-income people have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.

"With the issue of taxes, we found a 'handle' for talking to people," says Kimball Forrester, state director of Alabama Arise for seven years. "This is how we approached the Mercedes deal. In Alabama, a family making as little as \$4,500 a year can be taxed for income. So why does Mercedes get such a sweet deal?"

Alabama Arise argued from that beginning that a fair economic

development plan would include three things: the creation of well-paying jobs; a state where corporations were full tax-paying citizens; and the strengthening of the state's education system and other essential services.

"They kept saying, 'we need to compete in the global economy,'" Forrester says. "The attitude among state leaders seemed to be, we'll give away money for *any* kind of job."

But even with Arise's strong track record in changing policy, the momentum could not be overcome. The deal flew through the legislature with little public scrutiny, and no citizen involvement.

In 1995, the group decided to get a second opinion on the rosy predictions the state's economists offered about the deal. Contracting with the Midwest Center for Labor Research, they found

The ADO also established a “job development fee,” allowing a company to use the money their employees would pay in state personal income tax to repay their construction debts. Known as the “Mercedes Law,” this controversial provision had the potential to cause the state to lose millions of dollars in revenue. And since this new legislation could not be targeted to any one company, the break had to be offered to every business. By 1995, 86 other companies had received this benefit.

The Opposition Grows

As people learned more about the Mercedes deal, opposition grew. Republican gubernatorial candidate Fob James, who spoke out against the incentives, narrowly defeated Folsom in the elections. Other critics included small businesses, who feared that they would shoulder the tax burden created by these incentives geared towards larger manufacturers.

Organized labor also joined the chorus of opposition, concerned that other industries would consider layoffs to stay competitive. The Alabama Education Association

(AEA), became a vocal critic, arguing the cut in corporate tax revenue would rob funds from the state’s constitutionally-mandated education trust.

Analysis From the Bottom Up

Alabama Arise asked the Midwest Center for Labor Research (MCLR) to undertake an analysis of the incentive package offered to Mercedes, focusing on the hidden costs of the Mercedes deal. Key findings of their study included:

- Mercedes was the ultimate winner, by receiving a net tax break of \$173 million, but only having to pay \$65.8 million in state and local taxes. Additionally, if the company’s returns were not enough to pay the state loan of \$42 million, the state would have to pay for it. Lastly, the plant faced no “clawback” provisions to penalize the company if it chose to leave the state;
- The people of Alabama would be the ultimate losers. The state had already lost \$3 billion from various companies invoking the “Mercedes Law” — such losses would no doubt continue. Also, few good jobs would be gained and the average wage

level in the state would not significantly increase;

- The Mercedes plant would create 1,500 direct jobs, but only 4,700 indirect jobs, since the plant could not (and would not) purchase in-state at the level ADO assumed in its cost-benefit analysis.

Financial Fallout

By February 1995, it was clear that the state would not be able to meet the obligation to issue the \$42.6 million bond to Mercedes. The Governor tried to use funds set aside for education to pay the bond, but was stopped when the Educators Association threatened a lawsuit.

The Governor finally had to borrow from the State’s pension fund at an exorbitant rate to meet the bond obligation. It was also revealed in 1998 that Alabama may spend more to train workers for Mercedes and recent transplant Boeing than on elementary and secondary students. The state will spend \$23 million picking up the tab to train workers and has agreed to spend \$5 million a year for 20 years to operate the Mercedes training center.

the deal would be more expensive, and have less of a positive ripple effect, than boosters claimed (see above).

When Governor James announced in March of 1995 that he would consider revisions to the Mercedes Law, Alabama Arise and its allies put together several key recommendations:

- Subsidies should encourage “high road” economic development that benefits workers and communities.
- Subsidies should be targeted to economically-distressed communities and disadvantaged populations.
- Full disclosure of proposed subsidies should be required before approval and include a public comment process.
- “Clawback” provisions: subsidies should be an enforceable contract between the state and the company, with penalties if the company fails to live up to its promises.
- Community-based development, including minority-owned businesses and cooperatives, should receive assistance from the state.

“We were able to get rid of some the most egregious parts of the deal,” Forrester says. But the final results were the same: The governor’s minor reforms swiftly passed, reflecting the agenda of the quick-acting industry lobby. Key citizen provisions were dismissed or diluted: for example, the request for public disclosure of subsidies was amended at the last minute to require that deals only be shown to the legislature.

Alabama Arise lost the Mercedes battle. But they emerged wiser in the ongoing campaign for public accountability and en-

suring just development for all citizens.

What would Alabama Arise tell another citizen’s group facing a similar case of corporate welfare?

“It is worth building relationships across sectors — among the religious community, the environmental community, labor,” he says. “We need all of them if we’re going to win.”

Groups must also remember that building the power of citizens to shape decision-making is the most important goal. One weakness of Alabama Arise’s campaign, Forrester admits, was not keeping their grassroots base fully informed — limiting their capacity to apply public pressure.

“One key lesson we learned is that you have to stay membership-driven,” Forrester says. “As your ‘inside circle’ at the state level learns the issues, they have to stay in dialogue with the grassroots. Make sure you aren’t captured by a bunch of policy wonks.”

“Citizens deserve to be involved, and they can understand the discussion,” he adds. “If they ever saw the level of discussion in the legislature, they’d realize that their analysis is every bit as sophisticated.”

Much of the information for these two stories is drawn from Hany Khalil and Theresa Gerdella’s “Reforming Alabama’s ‘Mercedes Law’” which appears in the book Public Subsidies, Public Accountability by Sandra Hinson of the Grassroots Policy Project (see Resources section for contact information). Thanks also to Chris Kromm for assistance with writing and interviewing.

Are you a multinational corporation, looking to cut costs and boost profits? Want to move your operations to a location with a "friendly business climate?" Then it's time to play Multinational Monopoly — the game of global business giveaways, where you always win!

Here are some of the exciting recruitment incentives Southern governments have to offer for locating in their state.



COLLECT MONEY WHEREVER YOU CAN!

COLLECT REVENUE BOND

Your move south will be financed by a tax-exempt Industrial Revenue Bond (IRB). You won't have to jump through a lot of hoops to get one: only 13 states nationwide place restrictions on IRB's, and many don't investigate your company's needs or job-creating potential before writing the check. In 1996, South Carolina's Mecklenburg County offered Germany's Star Linear Systems \$8.5 million to expand into the area, even though the company was creating few jobs.

YOU WIN!!!

COMMUNITY CHEST

Take as much from the community as you want.

MULTINATIONAL

THE SOUTHERN GAME OF GLOBAL

Research: Kim Diehl, Chris Kromm and Amy Clower, Institute for Southern Studies, 1998
Design: Mia Kirsh

Disclaimer: Hasbro, Inc. holds trademarks for a real estate trading game named Monopoly®, for the design of that game's distinctive game board, its four corner squares, and for each of its distinctive elements. The use of those or similar marks on this page in no way indicates that Hasbro, Inc. endorses, sponsors, or otherwise shows support for this article, the ideas contained in it, or for Southern Exposure, the Institute for Southern Studies, or anything else you could dream up.

DIP INTO BRIBERY FUND

Still not convinced? There's always cash in the general state "recruitment fund" to sweeten the deal. Most state governors keep \$10-20 million tucked away for just such an occasion.

TAKE MONEY FROM WORKERS' PAYCHECKS

As if operating in a low-wage, right-to-work state wasn't enough, in South Carolina you can also collect a Development Credit — right out of your workers' paychecks. Take anywhere from 2-5% of your employees' wages, and enjoy making "necessary property and infrastructure improvements."

RECEIVE CHEAP POWER

Don't worry about high utility rates — those are for average citizens! When Trico Steel — a joint venture between LTV, British Steel, and Sumitomo Metal Industries — moved to Decatur, Alabama in 1994, the local electric utility arranged a deal to charge the conglomerate only one cent per kilowatt hour for power — while residential customers in the area were paying up to five and six cents. Total savings: \$28.7 million a year. When Southern states say they'll "hook you up," they mean it.

GET FREE LAND

Need a patch of land to set up shop? In many states, the government will give you a free site worth millions, without asking for a dime in return — as when Georgia handed over 500 acres to South Korean-based Hankook Synthetics in 1997. And if there isn't room, they'll make room. In 1992, South Carolina's development agency "quietly went around and bought dozens of private homes to put together the site for BMW," says one resident. "What they were doing didn't even get in the newspaper."

MONOPOLY



CORPORATE GIVEAWAYS

CHANCE

Don't worry, you're not taking much of one.

RECEIVE TAX CUT

Corporate taxes aren't very high in the region — around 5-6% in most states — and property taxes are low, too. But many states will give you a break, since you're helping to create jobs. Or even if you don't create jobs: in Louisiana in 1994, Exxon got \$14 million dollars worth of tax abatements designed to reward new employers — but because of its use of out-of-state labor, it projected creation of only one new, permanent job. According to the Louisiana Coalition for Tax Justice, nearly 75% of the state's property-tax exemptions go for projects that create no new permanent jobs.

EMPOWERMENT ZONE

Congratulations! You've landed on an "Empowerment Zone," which in many states grants you a 100% exemption from state and local property, inventory, new equipment or raw material taxes. The taxes might be phased back in within a few years, but you don't have to stay that long — you're a corporation on the move!

RECEIVE JOB CREDIT

Believe it! The government will pay you to create jobs you needed to fill anyway! You can take a tax write-off for about \$3,000 per job in most states — all the way up to \$12,500 in a state like North Carolina.

GET FREE TRAINING

A secret treasure chest for expanding companies which rarely gets calculated into the final incentive package price-tag. While funds for job-training are being cut across the region, most southern states will offer to recruit and train a target company's entire workforce free of charge. At least free to you: your workers are usually trained through the taxpayer-funded community college or state university system.

FOREIGN TRADE ZONE

The state built this to link you to the global economy — so use it! These taxpayer-funded hotspots of commerce may look like they're on Southern soil — but legally they're considered to be outside the U.S. for customs purposes. Each Southern state has at least one zone — most have several — where you can import materials and products from overseas at bargain rates. All goods exported from the zone avoid duty altogether.



The Journey of the Universal Manufacturing Co.

by William M. Adler

MENDENHALL, MISSISSIPPI,

DECEMBER 14, 1963: Most everyone is here. And not just from Mendenhall and Magee, the two rivalrous siblings anchoring the northern and southern ends of Simpson County, but from the outlying villages: Pinola and Sanatorium and D'Lo and Braxton and Harrisville and Merit. And they've come despite the terrible weather: it didn't merely sleet in the middle of the night; it poured what seemed like fully formed sheets of ice.

They have come to this strange, sprawling mecca of corrugated metal and brick plunked down on U.S. Highway 49, smack between Mendenhall and Magee in the piney woods of south central Mississippi, to celebrate the grand opening of their county's first industrial employer, Universal Manufacturing Company, a maker of ballasts for fluorescent lights. (The ballast regulates the flow of current in the lamp.)

Following the invocation, the festivities commenced with the playing of the National Anthem by the combined high school bands of Mendenhall and Magee – itself no small feat of diplomacy – and ended with box lunches and guided tours of the shiny plant. In between there was all manner of speechifying and bow-taking by local politicians, the plant managers, and state economic-development officials.

Also appearing was Governor-elect Paul B. Johnson, an ardent segregationist who was swept into office the previous





IN 1950 UNIVERSAL MANUFACTURING COMPANY BEGAN IN PATERSON, NEW JERSEY.

month on a wave of support from his notorious predecessor, Ross Barnett. It was Barnett himself who had led the negotiations with Universal's founder and president, Archie Sergy. And it was Barnett and Sergy who would jointly cut the ceremonial ribbon.

Sergy had flown in from headquarters in Paterson, New Jersey, where his flagship plant, opened in 1950, was still in operation. But he'd recently had union problems there – the incumbent Teamsters had beat back the IUE, the International Union of Electrical Workers, in a bloody battle for control. Sergy, a 48-year-old Paterson native, wanted an ancillary plant in the union-free, low-wage, low-tax South.

In Mississippi, courtesy of the state's hospitable Balance Agriculture With Industry (BAWI) program and the county's million-dollar bond issue, Sergy found what he was looking for. He predicted a "long and prosperous relationship between Universal and Simpson County."

MATAMOROS, TAMAULIPAS, MEXICO, JUNE 10, 1988: It is a blindingly blue, hot and humid morning, and Hector J. Romeu, Jr. is one frantic man, as harried as Chaplin's Little Tramp. Matamoros is a rapidly growing border city across the Rio Grande from Brownsville, Texas. Romeu, like the border region itself, straddles both countries; he was born in Mexico and schooled in the U.S.

Romeu handles sales and public relations for the Finsa Group, a principal developer of industrial parks along the Mexican border. Its original park, less

than a ten-minute drive from the International Bridge across the Rio Grande, occupies five hundred acres on what used to be farmland on the west side of Matamoros. Romeu has been chasing his tail for weeks, tending to the innumerable details of staging today's gala: It's the Grand Opening of the first MagneTek Universal Manufacturing plant here.

Archie Sergy no longer owns the company. He sold it shortly after cutting the ribbon in Mendenhall and it has since changed hands three more times, most recently to MagneTek, Inc., a public company based in Los Angeles. MagneTek

Hector Romeu's two years of gut-grinding work – from recruiting MagneTek to shepherding it through site selection and groundbreaking the previous March, to the manufacture of the first ballasts — all of that pays off today.

Facing the Plant-Closing Threat

An interview with Bob Becker of the Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network

In the 1980s, Tennessee's top brass began billing their state as an economic miracle. Unlike the declining smokestack states of the Midwest, Tennessee was becoming a haven for heavy industry, with corporate crown jewels such as Nissan, GM/Saturn and Firestone setting up shop in the state.

But citizens started to see an underside to the miracle: plant closings. It seemed that just as fast as some companies were moving in, others were moving out. This was supposed to happen in Michigan or Ohio, but not Tennessee — a state which prided itself on having a "healthy business climate," keeping unions out and wages down.

But the facts were unmistakable: dozens of plants were closing doors, laying off thousands of workers, and moving across the border in search of more profitable pastures.

It was in this climate that a group of workers and community leaders got together and formed the **Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network**, or TIRN.

"We got out a map, and started putting dots wherever we knew there was a closing," says Bob Becker, who for six years has been bringing together workers to face the threat of plant closings as an organizer for TIRN. "There were dots all over the place. We knew we had to do something."

How did TIRN come together?

We formed TIRN in the late 1980s, because a lot of things were coming together at once. One was that the textile workers unions were seeing plants closing throughout the region. There was also a study — "Mountains to Maquilladoras" — that showed how a lot of the plants that had moved from the North to the South, were now moving down further south to Mexico. The great battle was supposed to be between the "rust belt" and the "sunbelt." But in reality, both regions were losing their jobs to other countries.

was formed in 1986 by a Los Angeles art collector and leveraged-buyout specialist, Andrew G. Galef. Galef's investment advisor was Michael Milken, whose firm underwrote the deal with "junk bonds." (Milken later pleaded guilty to six counts of securities fraud and spent two years in prison.)

Hector Romeu's two years of gut-grinding work — from recruiting MagneTek to shepherding it through site selection and groundbreaking the previous March, to the manufacture of the first ballasts — all of that pays off today. He has been rewarded with a splendid morning, and the MagneTek honchos, in from headquarters in Los Angeles, are delighted with their gleaming plant and the enthusiastic welcome Romeu has orchestrated.

There are city and state officials and union leaders on hand to meet and greet the American executives, as well as a reporter and photographer from *El Bravo*, the Matamoros daily with long and deep ties to Romeu's employer, the powerful Arguelles family. And Romeu even has thought to outfit the visiting execs in natty going-native panama hats emblazoned with MagneTek's royal blue capital-M "power" logo.

The plant manager, an affable Arkansan named Chuck Peeples, leads the officials on a tour of the plant, the first of a projected five interconnected facilities to open on site. (A sixth would open in 1994 on a lot across the industrial park.) The equipment they stroll by is operated by a young, almost entirely female workforce. These women, primarily in their teens and twenties, have come north in search of work and a better future than the bleakness promised in the jobless farming towns of the interior.

After the ribbon is sheared and the plant inspected, the entourage of revelers shuttle over to American soil for a cocktail party at Rancho Viejo, a country club and condominium development a few miles north of Brownsville. There in the Casa Grande room MagneTek executives rub elbows with officials from Finsa, with politicians and chamber of commerce officials from both sides, and with fellow American manufacturers along the border, members of the Brownsville-

Matamoros Maquiladora Association.

Drinks flow from the open bar, tuxedo-clad waiters serve fresh shrimp, taquitos, cheeses and fresh fruit. Hector Romeu, his work completed, moves serenely among the guests, nodding, touching an elbow here, slapping a back there, introducing MagneTek officials to their counterparts at General Motors and to others of his 15 American corporate clients in the industrial park.

The story of these ribbon cuttings, a quarter-century, 800 miles, and an international border apart, is that of North American labor and capital during the latter half of the twentieth century and the dawn of the next. Indeed, the story of Universal Manufacturing — its employees, its owners, its communities — is a clear prism through which to view a much larger tale: that of the global economy. But the story of Universal doesn't begin in Mendenhall, and it will not end in Matamoros. It begins, appropriately enough, in the cradle of American industry: Paterson, New Jersey.

Paterson was founded on the sixteenth anniversary of America's Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1792, not as a municipality but as a business: the home of the country's first industrial corporation, the Society for Useful Manufactures. The Society's guiding light was Alexander Hamilton, the nation's first Treasury Secretary, who envisioned Paterson as a great National Manufactory.

The plan failed, but Paterson has always been a magnet for dreamers and schemers, an entrepreneur's city. In 1950, when Archie Sergy opened his plant, Paterson was brimming with factories small and large — from textiles (it was once hailed as "Silk City") to machine shops to electrical components. The city's postwar boom attracted many migrants, including a young woman from rural, central Virginia named Mollie Brown — "Dimples" to the folks back home in Cartersville.

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA, NOVEMBER

1950: Rolling into Broad Street Station on the daily northbound run, the conductor of the Silver Meteor does not bother to stop the train. Richmond is not a prin-

Photo by Ellen Denuto



MOLLIE JAMES, WHO MIGRATED FROM VIRGINIA TO WORK AT THE UNIVERSAL PLANT IN PATERSON IN 1950.

cial destination for the Meteor, the queen of the Seaboard Air Line Railroad's Florida to New York whistle-stoppers, and so the depot merits the train's slowing only enough for passengers to disembark and for new passengers to hop on.

At a few minutes before two on a cold, pitch-black morning, a father and his nineteen-year-old daughter wait anxiously on the platform of the ornate World War I-era station. Mollie Brown is headed to Penn Station in Newark, New Jersey, to meet her fiance, Sam James, who would take her home, to Paterson, to her new life. She was dressed in her finest: a new navy blue suit. She carried nearly everything she owned in a half-dozen sky blue suitcases her father had given Mollie for the trip.

The other great northbound coaches — are full of people like Mollie: black southerners crossing the Mason-Dixon Line, heading for the promised land.

Mollie is traveling alone, but the "colored" train cars of the Silver Meteor, and indeed those of the other great northbound coaches — the Champion, the Florida Sunbeam, the Silver Comet — are full of Mollie Browns: black southerners crossing the Mason-Dixon Line, heading for the promised land. Those from Mississippi and Alabama and Arkansas commonly headed for Chicago or Detroit; Texans and Louisianans went west; Georgians, Carolinians, and Virginians usually stayed on the Eastern Seaboard, migrating to Washington, Philadelphia, New York. Or to smaller industrial cities such as Camden, New Jersey, and Newark and Paterson.

"There were so many places to work," Mollie recalls of her early days in Paterson. "You'd just catch the bus and go from factory to factory and see who was hiring." Among her stops was a low-slung cement building in Bunker Hill, a newly industrializing neighborhood near the Fair Lawn bridge in northeast Paterson. The sign out front said UNIVERSAL MANUFACTURING COMPANY. Mollie knew no one there, nor had she heard of the company or understood exactly what it manufactured. "Something about a part for fluorescent lights," she told her husband that night.

MENDENHALL, MAY 1961: It is graduation day at New Hymn School, the black school in rural Simpson County, and Dorothy Black is sitting in the auditorium, mulling what to do with her life.

What has been TIRN's strategy in how to deal with these plant closings?

A big part of our strategy has been figuring out what to do, from a grassroots perspective. In 1990 and '91, we tried something new: we held "Dislocated Worker Thinktanks." We'd get together 20-25 people who had been through a plant closing and lost their jobs, and ask: "What do you know now, that you wish you had known then?"

During these sessions, things just kept coming out: "I wish I had known the warning signs." Or "I wish I knew what happens to health benefits after you lose your job."

Out of this, we created a Plant Closings Manual. And a lot of this manual has to deal with a basic question: "How do you keep your life together?" For example, the workers said that one of the things you need to have in place after a plant closing are numbers for drug and



WORKERS HOLD COPIES OF THE FINISHED PLANT CLOSINGS MANUAL.

spousal abuse hotlines, numbers for suicide hotlines. Because when people go through this, they are seriously upset.

What are some ways community and worker groups can face the challenge of plant closings?

There are basically three ways. One is to fight to keep the plant open. We've tried this, and had a few successes, using worker-buyouts and by pressuring the employer. But it's a lot of hard work.

The other is to accept it, and focus on dealing with the impact of the closing. People are asking, "I'm losing my job, what next?" Helping them figure that out is an important step. But this shouldn't be your focus if your goal is to keep the plant open, so it's important to decide what you want.

And the last strategy is to be more proactive about changing policy, and focus on economic development — about what kind of jobs we want in our region.

What unique challenges do you think organizers working on this issue face in the South?

Tennessee has a wonderful packet they give out to industries that want to locate here. The first thing it says is, "Our state has lower than

average wages." For 30 years, our state, and North Carolina, Georgia and other southern states, have all done the same thing: their idea of economic development is to attract business from Cincinnati or Detroit by being cheap.

Well, then Mexico comes along. Once you have a global economy, these companies aren't going to stay in the South. And they aren't going to stay long in Mexico, either. International companies do the same thing.

Your group was recently part of the successful effort to defeat "fast-track" legislation to expand NAFTA. What made your efforts successful?

Our success came from the groundwork we had laid down a long time ago. In the early 1990s, workers would be talking over coffee about how all their jobs were going to Mexico. So we took workers on trips to Mexico, so they could see first-hand where their jobs went. They could see the 17-year-old girl doing their job for pennies an hour. And then they understood, it wasn't the Mexican worker who took their job, but the company.

So when NAFTA was passed in 1994, people were upset already. NAFTA became short-hand for all the trade agreements and policies that were causing dislocation and trouble. Every time a plant closed, Congressman Bart Gordon would get a phone call: "Why on earth did you support NAFTA?" So when fast-track came up last year, he couldn't vote for it.

SOME KEY PLANT-CLOSING STRATEGIES

- 1) Build a Worker's Organization:** This is the most important step.
- 2) You Can Save the Plant:** Strategies include setting up a committee, studying the warning signs, insisting on a feasibility study.
- 3) Know Your Rights and Negotiate:** Learn plant-closing laws, and negotiate for benefits you deserve.
- 4) Find Resources for "Starting Over":** Use your community's re-employment, retraining, job-search resources and financial assistance.
- 5) It's Not Easy:** Learn where to get support for personal and family needs.
- 6) Speak Out:** Things will change only when workers and communities organize together.

These and other strategies are discussed in detail in *Taking Charge*, a plant closings manual published by TIRN. For more information, write to: TIRN, 1515 E. Magnolia Ave., Suite 403, Knoxville, TN 37917.

— Chris Kromm

Photo by Ruby Carter



DOROTHY CARTER STARTED WORKING AT UNIVERSAL'S MISSISSIPPI PLANT IN 1965.

She'd grown up on sixty acres in the country; her parents farmed cotton and corn and some cucumbers. The family also raised hogs and dairy cows. "Even if it was nothing but a biscuit every day, we never went hungry," Dorothy says.

Her parents had been denied a formal education; neither had made it past eighth grade. But they saw to it — "demanded" — that Dorothy and her five sisters — she was the third oldest — finish high school. And even though Dorothy's parents needed her in the fields, keeping her and her sisters out of school every September and October to pick cotton, Dorothy always managed to attend school when the books (handed down from the rural white school) were distributed, and always kept up with her studies.

On this day her hard work is recognized: she is honored as class salutatorian. There would be no immediate pay-off for her academic prowess. In the fall of the year she married a classmate,

Like Mollie, she had "no idea" what a ballast was. She did know she would earn \$1.10 an hour, which was considerably better than the two dollars a day she took home as a maid.

Louis Carter, who had entered the Army. Louis was stationed in Kansas, where they would live until the following summer. They returned home for a month, could find no work, and decided to follow the path of most of their classmates: they moved up North. They headed to Indianapolis, where job opportunities were little better. In the spring of 1963, they again came

home, moving in with Louis's parents. Louis found occasional work cutting pulpwood; Dorothy went to work as a maid in Jackson, some thirty-five miles from home. She earned three dollars a day, one of which went to her carpool driver.

The earlier report that nearly everyone in Simpson County attended the plant's grand opening was lifted from coverage in the county's two weekly newspapers. What the papers meant was that nearly every white person attended. No blacks were there, nor were any, with the exception of a single janitor, employed at Universal. That would not change until after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 — and then not immediately.

Louis Carter was among the first blacks to seek a job after President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the law. He and a friend went to the plant gate, where a guard matter-of-factly informed them the company would not be taking their applications: "We don't hire niggers

It was difficult work, coil-winding, repetitive and tiring and mind-numbing, but it was a job she was thrilled to have. And although Balbina didn't know it, it wasn't just any job – it was a job once held by both Mollie James and Dorothy Carter.

here." (It should be noted, however, that once the plant integrated, the manager, an emigre from Paterson, took a courageous and principled stand against white resistance.)

By mid-1965, word had filtered down of a change in Universal's hiring policy. As Dorothy's father reported to her, "The government is making them hire black folks so you need to go up there." She was hired the day she applied. Like Mollie James, she had "no idea" what a ballast was. She did know she would earn \$1.10 an hour, which was considerably better than the two dollars a day she took home as a maid.

CIUDAD DEL MAIZ, SAN LUIS POTOSI, MEXICO, APRIL 1991. Her funds were dwindling fast. She'd had the equivalent of about 90 dollars to begin with, and now that she'd paid a man 20 to taxi her the hour from her mountain village – a place of clean and clear air, almost surrealistically bright light, and desperate poverty – to the bus station in town, and now that she'd bought a couple of tamales from a sidewalk vendor and a one-way ticket on the nightly bus to Matamoros for 30 dollars, Balbina Duque Granados was down to less than 40 dollars.

Although the bus would not depart until 9:15 this evening, Balbina's driver

Photo by William Adler



BALBINA DUQUE GRANADOS STILL WORKS FOR MAGNATEK, UNIVERSAL'S CORPORATE SUCCESSOR.

had needed to make the trip early in the morning, so she spent the day keeping vigil over her three bags in the bus station, a green-and-white cement building spared from full-onset drab by the presence of numerous framed color photographs of luxury coaches.

Balbina was leaving for the border, 400 miles northward, to work as a caretaker for an elderly couple with ties to her village. She was torn about going, especially about having to leave her 18-month-old son behind with her mother. "If there were work here," Balbina said in Spanish during a visit home not long ago, "everyone would stay."

But there was no work. As a grocer in town explained: "You really don't have a choice. One girl will come home in new clothes and three or four girls will be impressed enough to follow her – to Matamoros or wherever." They followed one another into the maquiladoras, the largely American-owned plants that have sprouted along the border since the

free-trade zone there was established in 1965, the year Dorothy Carter started working at Universal.

Three decades later, it was at Universal's corporate successor, MagneTek, that Balbina wound up after the caretaking job didn't pan out, and after a failed marriage and a series of odd jobs, including a housekeeping stint at a motel that rented rooms by the hour. The factory job was Balbina's "answered prayer." It was difficult work, coil-winding, repetitive and tiring and mind-numbing, but it was a job she was thrilled to have. And although Balbina didn't know it, it wasn't just any job – it was a job once held by both Mollie James and Dorothy Carter.

PATERSON, JUNE 30, 1989: It is three o'clock on a warm afternoon, and the second of the two washup bells has rung for the final time. Mollie James has been here, on the assembly line at Universal Manufacturing, since 1955. She was the first female union steward, the first woman to run a stamping machine, the first to laminate steel. And now, after thirty-four years on the line – nearly two-thirds of her life – she's the last to go.

Her wide shoulders are hunched over the sink as she rinses her hands with industrial soap alongside the others. She is a big-boned woman of fifty-nine, with a handsome, animated face framed by oversized glasses.

Rumors of the plant closing circulated freely for well over a year. There already had been several rounds of layoffs. And even though the company had promised employees as recently as six months ago that the plant would not close altogether, few believed it.

It was around then, in fact, that movers had begun pulling up much of the plant's massive machinery, much of which was bolted to the cement floor when the plant opened in 1950. By this early summer afternoon four decades later, vast stretches of the floor were uninhabited, marred by huge potholes where once had been signs of American industrial might.

"The movers came at night, sometimes just taking one piece at a time," Mollie recalls.

"We'd come in in the mornings and there'd be another hole in the floor."

"The movers came at night, sometimes just taking one piece at a time," Mollie recalls. "We'd come in in the mornings and there'd be another hole in the floor."

There were no valediction speeches from company or union officials, no farewell luncheon, no pomp of any sort. A week earlier, the workers themselves held a dinner at Lunello's, an Italian eatery on Union Boulevard. They'd kicked in fifteen dollars apiece and celebrated their long years together at Universal. Many of these people were more than co-workers; they were friends on whom Mollie has come to depend as she would a member of the extended family. They ate together at work, attended weddings, baptisms, parties, funerals together.

On this afternoon, though Mollie knows many of her co-workers better than she knows some of her relatives — knows their mannerisms, ways of speech, strengths, flaws — on this afternoon their voices blend, their faces blur. The decades together on the line have done that: bound together the most varied of people. Black and white Americans. Dominicans. Russians. Italians. Indians. Puerto Ricans. Peruvians. They came to work for Universal — and stayed — because of the good wages and benefits their union had negotiated, and because the job seemed a secure one — a job they could raise a family on, buy a house, a car, borrow money against, count on for the future.

MATAMOROS, JUNE 10, 1988: It was the future to which Anthony J. Pucillo, the company's executive vice president of ballasts and transformers, directed his remarks during the Grand Opening ceremonies. Pucillo applauded the way labor and management worked together to open the plant — the first ballasts came off the line here two months earlier, in April. "In order to be able to successfully compete in world markets and create jobs," Pucillo said, "one has to rely on this kind of team. Here in Matamoros, people have a vision for the future; if we can make quality products at competitive prices, the company grows. If MagneTek grows, we all grow."

If Pucillo's vision was not original, it remained compelling: that labor would prosper alongside capital. It was the very notion that had pulled a teen-age Mollie James out of her native rural central Virginia four decades earlier, had convinced Dorothy and Louis Carter to remain in Simpson County, would shortly draw the young and frightened Balbina Duque to the teeming border from her home in the placid high-desert of central Mexico.

SEPTEMBER 1998: Despite attending a computer-training course, Mollie James has never again found work. She lives on Social Security and rental income from the three-family house she owns. She will turn 67 in October and hopes soon to return home to Virginia. Dorothy Carter, 55, spent 20 years at Universal, working her way up to a management position. She left the company in 1985 to start a bakery. The bakery has since closed, and Dorothy works as a pharmacy clerk. She and Louis, who in 1973 became the local union's first black president, are divorced. Balbina Duque, 27, still works for MagneTek. She earns \$1.45 an hour. Even with overtime, the wages do not cover basic expenses for herself and her three children. Along with her sister and her sister's two children, they share a two-room cement-block house. The house has neither indoor plumbing or heat. It is located in the neighborhood of Vista Hermosa — Beautiful View — just beyond the rear fence of the MagneTek plant.

The Mississippi plant will close this



month. The company is reportedly moving those operations not to Matamoros, but 45 miles or so west to the border city of Reynosa, where the unions are weaker and where the prevailing wage is a few pesos lower. Hector Romeu is scouting sites there.

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William M. Adler lives in Austin, Texas. He is at work on a book about Universal Manufacturing. Research support for portions of this article were provided by the Dick Goldensohn Fund and by Carol Bernstein Ferry. Spanish translation by Christina Elena Lowery.



CIRCLED: THE MATAMOROS, MEXICO INDUSTRIAL PARK WHERE MAGNETEK OPERATES



Photo by William Adler

The house has neither indoor plumbing or heat. It is located in the neighborhood of Vista Hermosa – Beautiful View – just beyond the rear fence of the MagneTek plant.



Atlanta: The City of Global Dreams Ain't Like it Seems

All photos by Charles Rutheiser



What happens to a city obsessed with its world-class status?

By Charles Rutheiser

In the late spring of 1997, nearly 100 foreign journalists descended upon Atlanta for a four-day, all-expense-paid tour sponsored by the Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau. The extravagant junket — complete with a moon-lit dinner on Stone Mountain Lake and a barbecue buffet on the grounds of *Gone With the Wind* author Margaret Mitchell's renovated home — was intended to heighten Atlanta's appeal as global tourism hotspot, and to counter the negative portrayal the city had received at the hands of the foreign press during the 1996 Summer Olympic Games.

Atlanta's boosters had thought the games were their ticket to international status and a great global image, but much of the world's media begged to differ. In report after report, journalists lambasted Olympic organizers for their disorganization and smugness, and took the city to task for its crass commercialism and lack of a discernible history, culture, and identity.

Trying to restore its image as a "world-class city," the Convention and Visitors Bureau wined and dined the journalists, and treated them to a VIP tour of prime attractions. But the junket was a typically Atlantan response to a problematic situation, as a good deal of the city's success over the last century and a half has been the result of tireless self-promotion and public relations to attract global corporate interests.

An Olympic-Sized Identity Crisis

Atlanta has always been something of a creation of its own imagination — or rather, the imagination of a cadre of visionary dreamers that stretches from 1890s New South promoter Henry Grady to 1990s Olympic organizer Billy Payne. A sort of future-oriented place where the rhetoric consistently runs more than a few laps ahead of the facts on the ground.

Two years after the Olympic Games brought the city unparalleled attention at home and abroad, Atlanta still lacks a clearly-defined identity. Within the United States, Atlanta is best known for its baseball team and its airport. In a recent survey, more than one-third of Americans were at pains to come up with anything characteristic of Atlanta at all.

For many Europeans and Asians, Atlanta conjures up images of the moon-lit and magnolia-scented Old, rather than the New South. When these visitors encounter a vast complex of modern office buildings, shopping malls, planned unit developments, and expressways that sprawl over the hills and vales of the north Georgia piedmont, they are left to wonder: "What is Atlanta?"

Atlanta's ambiguous identity is no accident, for successive generations of some of the most dogged urban boosters in the United States have regularly reinvented its form and image. Much like its

ill-fated Olympic mascot, Izzy (originally known, fittingly, as Whatizit?), Atlanta's defining feature has been its ability to morph, to reconfigure itself into an amenable locale for global capital.

The Global Corporate Hothouse

Yet while Izzy crashed and burned under the glare of world-wide ridicule, Atlanta has been a success with U.S. and foreign corporate executives, who, for much of the past decade, have regarded Atlanta as one of the most accommodating places in the world to do business. Atlanta possesses a loosely-regulated, hothouse atmosphere made to draw investment dollars.

Atlanta's defining feature has been its ability to morph, to reconfigure its itself into an amenable locale for global capital.

Over the past 30 years, billions of dollars in foreign investment — some \$8 billion in 1997 alone — have joined the still larger flow of domestic capital that has fueled the engine of a metropolitan growth machine. At the same time, many Atlanta-based corporations have expanded their overseas operations, while almost half a million immigrants and refugees have joined with legions of corporate transplants and emigres from New York, California, and the Rust Belt to bring an unprecedented diversity to Atlanta's social and cultural landscape.

Atlanta has always had global aspirations, but it wasn't until the late 1960s that the Capital of the New South started promoting the notion of it being "the world's next great international city." Following a model that had proven itself in attracting national capital and institutions to the city, the Chamber of Commerce hawked Atlanta's virtues in the European business press, while elected officials invested nearly five billion dollars of public funds into building the necessary infrastructure to lure global interests — including the Georgia World Congress Center, a new international airport — and sent scores of trade missions to

the business capitals of Europe and Asia.

As in many other southern states, cheap land, low taxes, non-unionized labor, limited regulations, as well as various and sundry investment incentives were major draws for investors in the U.S. and abroad. The Atlanta metro region went on to snare the vast majority of outside investment that has found its way to Georgia.

The global dollars started pouring in during the early 1970s. It was then that Greek, Kuwaiti, and Saudi investors helped finance two of downtown Atlanta's major developments — the Omni International (now CNN Center) and the Atlanta Center, Ltd. (now the

Hilton Hotel and Tower) — while a Dutch firm purchased one of the city's leading corporate citizens, Life (Insurance Company) of Georgia.

Between 1975 and 1984, the number of foreign companies with offices in Atlanta mushroomed from 150 to 780, with 240 of these being U.S. headquarters for these firms. Most of these companies were from Canada, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Germany, but they also included branches of the world's twenty largest banks, making Atlanta second only to Miami as a center of international finance in the Southeast. By 1984, foreign companies had invested more than \$3 billion in offices, warehouses, and manufacturing plants throughout the metro area, as well as hundreds of millions more in real estate speculation.

But global investment really took off when former U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young was elected mayor in 1981. Young spent his tenure in office vigorously recruiting international investors, traveling so often that he was jokingly referred to as the "absentee mayor."

Northeast Asia was an especially coveted target, and thanks to Young's ex-

“Finally comes despair”

In 1996, the plant that Ann Mittendorf had worked at for six years closed its doors in Loganville, Georgia, and moved to Mexico. Since then, she has joined the organizing department of the textile union UNITE! in North Georgia.

Recently, she offered the following testimony at a forum on globalization held by the Atlanta Book Club, saying, “Since NAFTA, my job along with millions of others has been eliminated. I don’t want to be a number, forgotten in the haste of the rush for the border.”

I would like to begin by introducing myself. My name is Ann Mittendorf. I am a wife and a mother of two, and I have been an active participant in the labor force for many years.

I worked at Lithonia Lighting in Conyers [Georgia] for eight years. At one time we were a big business, supplying jobs for many families. Now, the big business is moving to Mexico. The workers who are still there have suffered greatly and pay more for the few benefits they still have.

I then went to work for the Kuppenheimer Men’s Clothing chain in Loganville. I worked there as a seamstress for six years and served as the President of the local union. Our plant closed in October of 1996, and [since then] I have been working for UNITE!, the union that represented the Kuppenheimer workers. I would like to tell you about the ordeal that the workers encountered when the plant closed.

Can you comprehend how it feels to find out that your job has ended? I remember, the first thing that we felt was disbelief. We thought, “Maybe it’s not true. Some mistake was made and soon we’ll be hearing that it was only a rumor.” Then, slowly, one by one, people began to realize that the plant was really going to close.

Then comes panic. “What’s going to hap-

What happens when globalization hits? A story from North Georgia.



ANN MITTENDORF WITH GEORGIA CONGRESSWOMAN CYNTHIA MCKINNEY

pen to our insurance? Will we lose our retirement? Why doesn’t the company answer our questions?” Everyone is so edgy we’re taking it out on our families.

Then you get angry. You think of all the days you came in sick but gave your best anyway. It seems so unfair that your whole life has been turned upside down. You’ve worked so hard to achieve success and now there’s nothing left.

Finally comes despair. You realize you have to let go. “Who knows what lies ahead for us? How many will find another job? How many will lose their homes?”

I want to tell you about some of my former co-workers, Kathryn and Montine. They had worked at our plant for over 30 years. They have put all of their adult lives into their jobs — morning after morning without fail. Now, all of a sudden, they will not go to work. How many mornings will they lie awake in tears — feeling that all their years were spent in vain? How do you say goodbye to so many memories? How do you start all over again? This happened a year ago, and neither one of them has found a job yet. They’re both over 55, and even though we’re not supposed to be subjected to age discrimination, we all know these things happen every day.

Then we have Pat and Lynn. Pat’s husband has cancer, and Lynn just returned to work after having a stroke. They both had to deal with losing their medical benefits or

paying a hefty price to even continue these benefits temporarily. That’s not easy to do on an unemployment check. Pat did find a job, but she makes less money. That was her only option, in order to have some kind of health coverage for her husband. Lynn is now facing the end of her unemployment benefits with nothing to look forward to.

Then we have Sharon and Martha. Sharon has one child and gave birth to twins shortly after the plant closed. She cannot afford to work because she cannot afford childcare for three children on minimum wage. Marsha has one child. But her husband is unemployed. What kind of holidays will they have? There won’t be many presents under the tree.

America is not made up of companies and corporations with no emotions, but people like these who have real feelings — real families — and real problems.

This is not an isolated case; it affects millions of Americans who have no job — because their job has gone to a family of South Americans who are willing to work a sixteen hour day for pennies. Do they benefit from the jobs that are going over the border? No, they suffer too. Wages in Juarez, Mexico, have dropped from \$1/hour to 70 cents/hour since NAFTA passed.

And who gets the profit? Certainly not us, or people in Mexico or other countries. We are paying for it at the expense of our very hearts and souls. Only the corporations come out ahead.

We have to stop this raping of the American family. We have to educate the people around us. We have to make sure people are registered to vote. We have to find out which politicians are truly on the side of the people, and which ones are out only for personal gain. We have to make sure that we’re not just another number.

I hope when you leave here tonight, you leave with a sense of the devastation that is taking place around us daily — and the need to get organized.

— Ann Mittendorf

haustive networking, by the 1980s Georgia boasted more Japanese-owned facilities than any state but California. By the end of the decade, Japan had more facilities and employed more workers in Atlanta than any other foreign country.

A (Low) Place in the Global Economy

Today, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan account for 40 percent of foreign investment in the state of Georgia. However, within Atlanta itself, Canadian and Western European firms continue to play a significant role in the metro area economy, accounting for slightly more than two-thirds of the foreign-owned facilities and more than half the workers employed by foreign-based firms.

In particular, European investors continue to be major players in the city's hot residential and commercial property markets — many of the corporate trophy buildings constructed over the last ten years in downtown and Midtown Atlanta were at least partially financed by European capital.

Overall, the number of foreign-based firms with operations in Atlanta increased by some twenty percent between 1990 and 1997, and they currently employ more than 80,000 workers. As impressive as these figures may sound, these jobs constitute only some four percent of the total metro area employment.

And while the Chamber of Commerce makes much of the fact that Atlanta is home to the U.S. headquarters of 315 foreign-based companies, most of these are of small to medium-sized firms, rather than major corporate entities. Most of the facilities operated by foreign-owned firms specialize in sales, distribution, and warehousing.

As a result, Atlanta's role in the new global division of labor resembles its former function in the U.S. urban hierarchy: a regional node for distribution and, to a lesser extent, production, rather than a command and control center. In other words, Atlanta is not so much a place where decisions or products are made, as it is a place where decisions are carried out and goods stored and shipped.

International Success Symbols

Of course, foreign investment consti-

tutes only part of Atlanta's international presence. Foreign trade has increased dramatically in recent years, with metro Atlanta accounting for more than two-thirds of Georgia's global exports. With more foreign investment and trade have come increased numbers of foreign visitors, and it is estimated that roughly half a million foreign travelers visited Atlanta in 1997, with Britain, Germany, and Japan — the three largest sources of foreign investment — accounting for nearly half the total.

Over the last two decades, a number of Fortune 500 companies with operations of global scope — including Georgia-Pacific, United Parcel Service, and Holiday Inn Worldwide (the latter British-owned) — have relocated their corporate headquarters to Atlanta. These new arrivals join a number of other transnational "corporate citizens," ranging from the well-known Coca Cola and Turner Broadcasting System (now part of Time Warner), to dark horses like the Southern Company, which has quietly emerged as the largest privately-owned provider of electricity in both the United States and the world.

But a city's "world-class" status is not made by foreign investment and trade alone, and city leaders have made symbolic efforts to cast Atlanta in a cosmopolitan light. The first step came in the early 1970s, when city officials renamed Cain Street — which connects the World Congress Center with the expressway — "International Boulevard." In preparation for the Olympics, efforts were made to enhance the road's "international" character through extensive use of flags, globes, and other worldly symbols.

Exiting the expressway, the traveler passes under a proscenium of flags, then, crossing Peachtree Street, under twin globes set in the facades of the Hard Rock Cafe and Planet Hollywood. The intersection of Peachtree and International — temporarily re-named "International Square" during the Olympics — is marked by a large mosaic of the world rendered in black and red asphalt tile. Unfortunately, like the mysterious lines on the Plains of Nazca in Peru, this globe can only be seen from above, and most of the thousands who pass by each day

And while the Chamber of Commerce makes much of the fact that Atlanta is home to the US headquarters of 315 foreign-based companies, most of these are of small to medium-sized firms, rather than major corporate entities.

are completely oblivious to it.

Continuing westward, International bisects the central square of Centennial Olympic Park, which is bordered by a grove of flags from previous Olympic host nations, before terminating at the new Georgia International Plaza, which during the Olympics possessed yet another ceremonial thicket of world flags. The overall effect of this all-too-literal inscription of internationality into the fabric of the city, however, is neither global nor local, but, as the international community proclaimed in 1996, provincial and tacky.

The Immigrant Stream

Atlanta's real international boulevard is located some two dozen miles to the northeast of the official one, along an eleven mile stretch of Buford Highway near the cities of Doraville and Chamblee in suburban DeKalb County. Like many cities of the Deep South, Atlanta was never an immigrant destination. This began to change during the 1960s, when small numbers of immigrants began arriving from Latin America and Asia.

During the 1980s, Atlanta became a favored location for the resettlement of more than 10,000 refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos, many of whom resided in apartment complexes along Buford Highway. In the 1990s, the stream of refugees broadened into a wide and

mighty flow of thousands from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, and Eastern Europe. Refugees, though, were themselves greatly outnumbered by legal and illegal immigrants from Mexico, China, Korea, India and several dozen other countries.

In the old strip malls that flank Buford Highway and along Riverdale Road in Clayton County and other locales in the metro area, ethnic entrepreneurs have opened up hundreds of restaurants, groceries, and other specialty stores to cater to the needs of the region's increasingly multicultural population. The immigrant communities also boast the now familiar array of social, cultural, and business organizations as well as a number of small, but growing, banks that are partially capitalized from abroad.

Although an accurate count is difficult, researchers estimate the number of foreign-born Atlantans at around 435,000, or almost twelve percent of the metro population. While some of the foreign-born are expatriate employees of foreign-based firms, the vast majority are immigrants and refugees.

Atlanta's recent arrivals often find themselves on the margins. The metro region's public culture remains rendered in shades of native-born white and black. Of all counties in the area, only DeKalb — where almost 40 percent of the foreign-born live — has made efforts to officially embrace multiculturalism.

In fact, in many places the increase in immigration has stimulated a backlash, such as the city of Smyrna in suburban Cobb County, where city fathers, fearing the same kind of "un-American" landscape to be found along Buford Highway, passed an ordinance that banned signs in foreign languages.

And sheer numbers have not yet translated into political power. Many foreign-born are not yet citizens — Atlanta has the dubious honor among American cities of having the longest wait for obtaining citizenship — and there is considerable tension between and among different Asian, Hispanic, and other groups. Yet it is virtually inevitable that increased numbers, coupled with the economic success of many immigrant entrepreneurs will eventually translate into



some degree political influence.

Global Atlanta: Myth and Reality

While Atlanta's global connections are undeniable, it is another thing to know what to make of them. While city leaders envision "a world-class city on par with New York, London, Paris and Tokyo," in the words of an Olympic organizer in the summer of 1996, such fantasies have not translated into overall prosperity or economic power.

Atlanta is more comparable to other Sunbelt metropolises like Los Angeles, Miami, and San Francisco, cities that serve to link newly-industrialized regions with the global economy. Atlanta's sphere of influence is the Southeastern U.S., long considered by many to be an

internal colony of the North, but now the nation's most economically-dynamic region.

As it pursues global dreams, Atlanta may find that trying to become a player in the international economy means greater interdependence, and the prosperity it brings can be more ephemeral than eternal.

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*Charles Rutheiser is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Georgia State University in Atlanta. He is the author of *Imagineering Atlanta*, published by Verso.*



THE WORLD OF COCA COLA IN ATLANTA



Changing International Agreements, Starting in Your Own Backyard

The Multilateral Agreement on Investments

By Pronita Gupta

As you hear more about the global economy, it seems that new acronyms and new economic agreements are being created at an alarming rate. Terms such as NAFTA, GATT, WTO, IMF, and MAI (see glossary below) are thrown around as though they are common parts of speech. It's hard to keep up — much less understand how these trade and investment pacts will affect your state or community.

However, these agreements can have incredible and often devastating impacts right down to the local level, usually affecting jobs. One such agreement, the Multilateral Agreement on Investments, or MAI, is one of these little-understood but potentially destructive accords.

MAI: Jargon to English

The Multilateral Agreement on Investments is a new international economic agreement that would make it easier for corporations to move their investments — both money and production facilities — across international borders.

The MAI is currently being negotiated at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) — a global forum with 29 members representing the wealthiest nations, including the United States.

Proponents of the MAI claim that the agreement would reduce inefficiency caused by burdensome regulations, reducing obstacles to overseas investments and opening up more foreign markets. They claim these steps will help to spur the U.S.

economy and create high-paying jobs. Proponents also argue that the U.S. can protect this country's interests by exempting existing laws they want to protect.

Critics argue, however, that this agreement would end up tying the hands of governments by limiting them from regulating or restricting foreign investments, granting multinational corporations almost unlimited rights, with few or no responsibilities.

Some of the most controversial provisions within the MAI that directly affect state and local communities include (in MAI jargon):

"National Treatment:" This provision requires countries to treat foreign investors no less favorably than domestic firms. Countries would not be able to place restrictions on what foreign investors can own, meaning sectors such as natural resources or even broadcasting could be owned and operated by foreign corporations. It also means that programs designed to assist domestic firms, such as small business initiatives or set-asides for minority-owned businesses, would no longer be allowed. Lastly, national, state, and local governments could no longer require corporations to hire a certain percentage of their workforce locally.

"Most Favored Nation:" This provision requires that governments treat all foreign investors and foreign countries the same under regulatory laws. Therefore, coun-

tries could no longer use economic sanctions, such as those used successfully against South Africa under apartheid, to pressure a nation to improve their human rights record. It would also make it difficult for governments to enforce labor and environmental standards.

"Performance Requirements:" MAI would limit laws that require investors to meet certain social or environmental conditions in order to be eligible for subsidies or government grants. Important gains that could be overturned include living wage laws, job-creation requirements, and environmental laws and standards. One important program vulnerable to this provision is the Community Reinvestment Act, which has established rules to promote bank investments in low-income areas.

"Uncompensated Expropriation:" Governments would have to repay foreign investors immediately and in full if they deprive them of any portion of their property. However, the language in this section is so broad that it can be used against environmental or labor standards that cause a company to lose some profit.

"Repatriation of Profits:" This provision would ban countries from preventing investors from moving assets — money or production facilities — out of the country. In other words, corporations would be able to move in and out of countries with little regard for the local or national impact. Therefore, a state that has spent millions in subsidies to lure a corporation has no guarantees that the corporation won't pick up and leave a few years later if it finds another location willing to provide even greater subsidies or lower wages.

"Investor-to-State Dispute Resolution:" This would allow corporations to sue governments and seek monetary compensation if they feel a law violates the investor's rights. Foreign investors would have the choice of either suing a government before an international tribunal or in the country's domestic court. Once again, this provision weakens corporate accountability within any particular country.

The main question the MAI raises is one of accountability. By weakening government protections, the MAI places an enormous amount of power in the hands of multinational corporations that are accountable to no one except their stockholders. Democratically-elected officials and governments are largely given only "rubber stamping" authority.

While corporations gain all the rights and few responsibilities under the MAI, workers, communities and the environment must pay the price in this "race to the bottom," where investment gravitates to areas with the lowest wages, working conditions, and environmental standards.

High-tech Organizing Delays the Agreement

The OECD has been quietly negotiating the MAI since 1995 and had hoped to seal the agreement this past April. However, a draft of the 150 page agreement was leaked to the public in 1997, prompting outrage worldwide by grassroots groups, and inspiring a successful high-tech organizing campaign.

Citing concerns about national sover-

eignty, lack of labor and environmental protections and issues of corporate accountability, groups across the world turned to the Internet to quickly spread information and signal a call to action. Activists bombarded local and national legislators with faxes, phone calls, letters, and e-mails demanding an end to the MAI negotiations until further community input and standards were put in place. A number of cities around the world, including San Francisco, passed resolutions declaring their cities to be "MAI-Free Zones."

This victory, which came at the same time labor and environmental organizations had successfully defeated President Clinton's attempts to expand NAFTA through "fast-track" legislation, has boosted confidence among citizen organizations that grassroots activism can change global trade and investment agreements.

Where it now stands

Due to grassroots pressure, the negotiations were put off until October 1998. The effects of the Internet campaign are still being felt; some countries, such as the

U.S., are demanding waivers for some of the provisions. However, there are no promises that the wish list of waivers will ever become reality.

MAI negotiators have also discussed adding references to labor and environmental concerns in the preamble, which critics charge would only serve as window dressing with no enforcement authority.

If the MAI fails to be ratified at OECD, a similar agreement may resurface in one of the other trade and investment bodies, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). If MAI-type language was considered by the WTO or other global associations, it might prove an even greater challenge for community-based groups to monitor and push for provisions that protects workers and the environment.

How to get involved

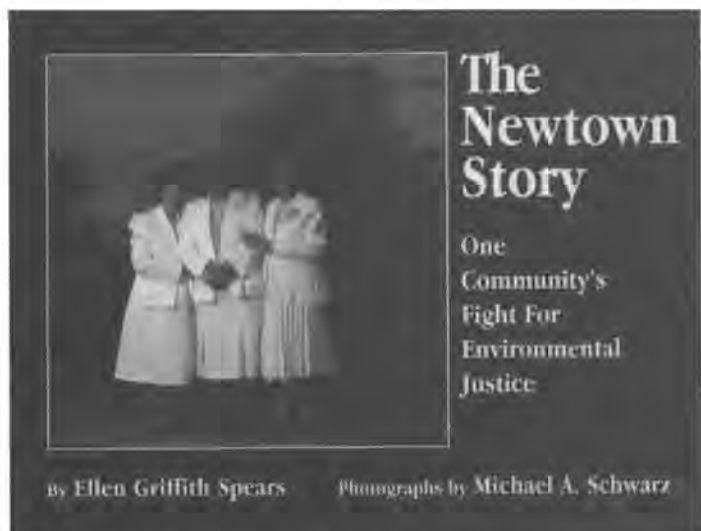
If you are interested in learning more about or joining organizing efforts for citizen input in the MAI and other trade pacts, there are many organizations you can contact, including The Preamble Collaborative, and Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch (see resources section for more information).

THE NEWTOWN STORY

One Community's Fight for Environmental Justice

Environmental racism may be one of the most deadly forms of racism. This book celebrates the history of the Newton Florist Club — established in 1950 to ensure that food, flowers and aid were available to the bereaved, and has expanded to organize for social, economic, and environmental justice in Hall County, Georgia.

To order, please send \$17.95 (includes shipping and handling) to: The Newton Florist Club, P.O. Box 908403, Gainesville, GA 30501 or call 770-718-1343. (Georgia residents should add \$1.05 state sales tax.) All proceeds from the sale of this book go to the Newton Florist Club.



“ This is no garden variety floral club. For almost fifty years the courageous women of Newtown have been quite literally fighting for their lives — and ours. This is their story, ably told by Ellen Spears and photographed by Michael Schwarz. ”

— NASHVILLE AUTHOR JOHN EGERTON



We'll Close!

Photo by Earl Dotter



SOCORRO LEOS DRAWS WATER IN MATAMOROS, MEXICO, WHERE SHE WAS MAKING 95¢ AN HOUR WORKING FOR AT&T BEFORE QUITTING FOR HEALTH REASONS. AT&T BEGAN SHIFTING JOBS FROM ITS UNIONIZED PLANT IN RADFORD, VIRGINIA, IN THE 1980s.

After NAFTA, companies have found the best anti-union strategy is to threaten to shut down the plant and move further south.

by Kate Bronfenbrenner

When workers at the Tultex textile plant in Martinsville, Virginia, started organizing for a union, company managers told them they had to watch a videotape. While sitting in mandatory “captive audience” meetings, workers saw graphic footage of boarded windows and padlocked gates at closed-down textile plants in New Jersey — plants that had also been organized

by the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union.

The implications of the video — which the company also showed on the local cable access station — were clear: This will happen here if the union comes in.

What happened in Virginia was not unique. Especially after the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), plant-closing threats and actual plant closings have become extremely pervasive and effective components of employer anti-union strategies in the United States.

From 1993 to 1995, employers threatened to close their plants in the majority — 50 percent — of union elections to be certified. In another 18 percent of the campaigns, the employer threatened to close while the first contract was being negotiated, after the election was won.

Some of these threats had teeth. Nearly 12 percent of employers followed through and shut down all or part of the plant before a contract was negotiated, and another four percent closed down the plant before a second contract was reached. This 15 percent shutdown rate is triple the rate in the late 1980s, before NAFTA went into effect.

In short, where employers can credibly threaten to shut down or move their operations in response to union activity, they do so in large numbers — a trend which has had strong implications for union organizing across the country.

Threats, open and veiled

Plant-closing threats come in a variety of guises. Veiled and verbal threats are the most common, which is not surprising given that direct, unambiguous threats to close plants in response to union organizing are clearly in violation of the law.

In more than one in ten cases, according to organizers, employers directly threatened to move to Mexico if workers voted to unionize. Threats ranged from attaching shipping labels to equipment throughout the plant with a Mexican address, to posting maps of North America with an arrow pointing from the current plant site to Mexico, to a letter directly stating the company will have to shut

In more than one in ten cases, according to organizers, employers directly threatened to move to Mexico if workers vote to unionize.

Photo by Kim Diehl/ISS



A FRUIT OF THE LOOM PLANT IN TEXAS GAVE AWAY FREE T-SHIRTS TO EMPLOYEES, SHOWING A UNION ORGANIZER BEING CHASED OUT OF TOWN. THE COMPANY CONVINCED WORKERS THAT A PRO-UNION VOTE WOULD FORCE THEM TO SHIFT OPERATIONS TO MEXICO.

down if the union wins the election.

In March 1995, ITT Automotive in Michigan parked 13 flat-bed tractor-trailers loaded with shrink-wrapped production equipment in front of the plant for the duration of a UAW organizing campaign. The company posted large hot-pink signs on the sides of the vehicles which read, "Mexico Transfer Job." The equipment came from a production line the company had closed without warning. ITT Automotive also flew employees from its Mexican facility to videotape Michigan workers on a production line which the supervisor claimed the company was "considering moving to Mexico."

In a captive-audience meeting speech during a Teamsters organizing campaign, Robert Epstein, president of AJM Packaging and Roblaw Industries in Folkston, Georgia, made a more subtle but no less direct and unambiguous

threat.

"We've been here in Folkston going on 10 years, we've enjoyed the stay in Folkston. Our company is growing ... by leaps and bounds," he said. "It looks like now that we can't count on Folkston to be part of those future plans and part of that future growth. But nothing is said and done and the fat lady hasn't sung yet and quite frankly we won't know what's gonna happen around here, I guess until May 12" — the date of the union's election vote.

In other cases, the threats were much less complicated. In the Texas Rio Grande Valley, Fruit of the Loom posted yard signs in the community that said, "Keep Jobs in the Valley. Vote No." The company also hung a banner across the plant that warned, "Wear the Union Label. Unemployed."

Companies have used different approaches to relay threats. A common ap-

Workers of the World, Network!

Labor activists around the world see organizing the South as key to change

by Leah Samuel

The South has become a location of choice for corporations seeking natural resources, low wages, few and often weak unions, tax breaks, and lax regulations. And as companies move from as far away as Europe to take advantage of the workers and residents of the southern U.S., workers are mobilizing and joining forces to fight back.

Heiner Kohnen heads the German office of the Transnational Information Exchange (TIE), an international network of labor-rights groups formed in 1977 to promote cross-border solidarity. He sees the state of the U.S. South as crucial to workers across the globe.

"The South plays a role in North America as a cheap, union-free labor resource," Kohnen says. "It is used as a competitor and hammer for concessions to other regions and workers."

He adds that the recent merger of auto giants Daimler-Benz and Chrysler could lead to "future runaway shops [from Europe to the South], specifically in the parts and supplier sector."

Well aware of the South's role in the downward spiral of wages and workers' rights, activists in the 1990s have taken the cause of organizing the South to the global stage. While unions here are seeking to organize workers in the South, other labor activists are creating linkages between southern U.S. workers and their counterparts in other countries.

In 1995, Kohnen and a group of German workers toured the South. "The interest of the

From 1993 to 1995, unions won elections 33 percent of the time in units where plant-closing threats occurred — significantly less than the overall win rate of 40 percent.

proach used by supervisors was to call two or three workers together for a meeting to give them the "straight facts" about unionization. The supervisor would explain how she was concerned about the union campaign because she "had much to lose," meaning her job, if the union was certified. Other supervisors would claim that they had "inside information" about plans to move the plant.

Other companies distributed leaflets in the plant or mailed letters to all employees' homes making veiled plant-closing threats. A final tactic used by companies was to spread plant-closing rumors. In one case involving the glass and chemical maker PPG Industries, a plant manager's son claimed that he had overheard a phone conversation in which his father discussed plans to close the plant and move it to Mexico if the union was certified.

An Effective Anti-Union Strategy

Plant-closing threats matter. From 1993 to 1995, unions won elections 33 percent of the time in units where plant-closing threats occurred — significantly less than the overall win rate of 40 percent.

The rate of union success dropped significantly — down to 25 percent — in cases where employers put direct threats into writing. Additionally, more than half of the organizers in cases where threats occurred reported that the fear of plant closings contributed to the union withdrawing the petition before the campaign went to an election.

And the threats continue after a union wins recognition. In the period studied, some absolutely refused to bargain with the union, making clear that they would shut down rather than be forced to sign a union agreement. Others focused on

how, now that the union had won the election, the company was re-evaluating operations and considering transferring work to non-union facilities or contracting out bargaining unit work. More common was the threat that the employer might go out of business if the union succeeded in bargaining the kind of agreement that they were attempting to reach.

According to union negotiators, the primary adverse effect of these post-election plant-closing threats was to seriously undermine the quality and scope of the first agreement. In the most extreme cases, the threats led to the union withdrawing from the unit or losing a decertification election, as workers began to question the ability of the union to reach an agreement without severely risking their job security.

We're closing!

Actual plant closings are the most severe form of anti-union employer activity. From 1993 to 1995, employers imposed this "death penalty" sanction in a surprisingly high number of cases. In almost 12 percent of the cases where the union won the election, and another four percent after a first contract was reached, there was a full or partial plant closing.

In most of these cases — 85 percent — the employer had directly threatened during the organizing campaign to shut the plant down if the union won the election, and then followed through. In the case of the United Steelworkers of America campaign at St. Louis Refrigerator Car Company, the company had repeatedly told workers that if they gave the company trouble it would transfer operations to a newer non-union facility in Akron, Ohio. Ten days before the election, the company agreed to voluntarily recognize the union, only to shut the facility down one week later.

Photo by Earl Dotter



VICKY GILLESPIE LOST HER UNION JOB WITH AT&T IN RADORD, VIRGINIA, AFTER THE COMPANY BEGAN SHIFTING OPERATIONS TO MEXICO. "WHAT IS AMERICA COMING TO?" SHE ASKS. "WE CAN'T KEEP SENDING AMERICAN JOBS TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES."

The 15 percent incidence of plant-closings represents an upsurge from the five percent closing rate in the 1980s and early 1990s. The tripling of the rate in the years since NAFTA was ratified suggests that the agreement has both increased the credibility and effectiveness of closing threats for employers, and emboldened increasing numbers of employers to act upon that threat. In fact, in several campaigns, the employer used media coverage of the NAFTA debate to threaten workers, stating that it was fully within the company's power to move the plant to Mexico if workers were to organize.

Toward a threat-free workplace

With today's fears of downsizing and job loss, many workers take even the most veiled employer plant-closing threats very seriously. When combined with employers' other anti-union tactics, plant-closing threats appear to be ex-

tremely effective in undermining union organizing efforts.

And the fears build on themselves. Union organizers say that one of the most effective components of employer threats are the photos, newspaper clippings, and video footage of plants which shut down in the aftermath of a union campaign.

Plant-closing threats pose new challenges for unions, which can learn from the success and failures of past organizing efforts. Union victories like the Electronic workers' (IUE) campaign to organize production workers at an auto parts plant in Texas, or the Steelworkers' 1995 campaign to organize a Unarco wire fabricating plant in Oklahoma, were able to overcome threats of moving to Mexico through the intensity and quality of their campaigns.

Success for unions has hinged on a rank-and-file intensive strategy, backed by significant staff and financial resources and based on building community solidarity. Unions who have lost elections due to plant-closing threats have tended to run much less aggressive campaigns, with an emphasis on less personal tactics such as mass mailings, leafleting, and large meetings.

As for current U.S. labor laws, the penalties for illegal plant-closing threats and other labor-law violations are extremely limited. If employers fire union activists, the worst penalty they face is reinstatement and back pay for the dismissed workers, with no possibility of punitive damages. If employers refuse to negotiate, they merely receive another order telling them to bargain in good faith. In the case of Sprint's La Conexion Familiar, where the National Labor Relations Board found that the company had committed over 50 labor law violations, the only penalty was that Sprint reimburse

workers was to understand the consequences [of plants relocating to the South] and to debate the possibilities of fightback," he says. "The tour was a huge help for the struggle in Germany."

The trip also gave German workers a chance to see first-hand new plans for corporate restructuring, including "lean production," concessions bargaining, and "worker/management partnership" approaches.

In other cases, workers are banding together across borders for joint campaigns. This past February, union activists from Holland came to the aid of workers at a DSM

Photo by BWFJ



GERMAN AUTOWORKERS MEET WITH MEMBERS OF THE BLACK WORKERS FOR JUSTICE IN NORTH CAROLINA.

Polymer plant in Wytheville, Virginia, who were seeking to organize with the Oil Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW) union. DSM is a Netherlands-based company with 19,000 workers in the United States, Canada, and Europe.

Workers say the assistance from Dutch union leaders is what tipped the scales in the union's victory in Virginia. The Dutch activists talked to workers, and pressured officials at the DSM Polymer plant and at DSM headquarters in Holland to recognize OCAW. In addition, members of the Dutch union protested at DSM's headquarters in Holland to raise awareness of the Virginia workers' fight for a union.

The Virginia workers' campaign became a cause in Holland because of the glaring differences between the way Dutch workers and American workers are treated by the same employers. In Holland, DSM workers are members of the powerful *Industriebond* union. DSM

OCAW President Robert Wages says that the Dutch unionists' involvement in the victory "signals a growing awareness of the necessity for unions to work together in the global economy."

workers there have a 36.5-hour workweek and four weeks of vacation. They are also trained and transferred to other plants when DSM reorganizes or reduces operations. This is in addition to the country's strong support of government health care and other social services.

"We were lied to by management [during the organizing drive], which does not happen in the Netherlands," Henk Walravens, an Industriebond representative, told an OCAW reporter. "The lies made it even more important that we help OCAW and the workers in Wytheville to win."

OCAW President Robert Wages said that the Dutch unionists' involvement in the victory "signals a growing awareness of the necessity for unions to work together in the global economy."

The unions and workers involved in these exchanges agree that workers in different countries can learn from each other. Organizations like TIE hope that organizing solidarity for worker struggles around the world — through a grassroots approach — will bring the understanding needed to organize.

What opened the debate for us here [in Germany], says Kohnen, "was to understand the strategic role of a region that is marginalized, union free, and racist."

Leah Samuel is a writer for Labor Notes.

Reaching such a "level playing field" for all workers will require significant reform to U.S. labor laws and to the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation, which provides an enforceable code of conduct for countries covered under NAFTA.

Photo by Earl Dotter



RESIDENTS OF A COMPANY TOWN NAMED "INDEPENDENCIA" IN MATAMOROS, MEXICO, PASS A WANDERING PIG FEEDING ON GARBAGE.

fired workers back pay and find them comparable jobs at other Sprint locations.

Things could be different. Where workers choose unions free of plant-closing threats and other forms of intimidation, the union success rate is dramatically higher. For example, in the public sector — where employers are less likely to mount anti-union campaigns — workers vote for unions in large numbers. In contrast to the private sector win rate, which has averaged less than 50 percent for more than a decade, unions in the public sector enjoy win rates averaging more than 85 percent.

Reaching such a "level playing field" for all workers will require the expansion of worker and union rights, and of employer penalties, in the organizing process. These changes should be accomplished both by significant reform to U.S. labor laws and by amendments to the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation, which provides an enforce-

able code of conduct for countries covered under NAFTA. This code must include both restrictions on the ability of companies to shift their operations to other countries to avoid unionization and guarantees to organize free of interference and intimidation.

Most important of all, the new codes must include meaningful penalties for violations of those rights. Then, and only then, will workers be able to exercise their democratic rights to have an independent voice of their own choosing represent their interests in the workplace. And then, and only then, will employers no longer be able to flagrantly violate labor laws at the expense of their workers' dignity and well-being. **S**

Kate Bronfenbrenner is Director of Labor Education Research at the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University. Versions of this story appeared in New Labor Forum and Multinational Monitor (P.O. Box 19405, Washington, DC 20036).



Acting Locally and Globally

The Black Workers for Justice

Photo by BWFJ



GERMAN WORKERS VISIT THE BWFJ WORKER'S CENTER IN ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA.

By Stan Goff

The window in the door is boarded up. The wood, black and mealy with age, breaks through the halfhearted whitewash at the corners. Inside are less-than-state-of-the-art office machines, file drawers, stacks of paper, a meeting table, and a lot of open space that amplifies footsteps on the worn hardwood floor.

On one wall is a map of the South, overlaid with commentary on race and poverty. On the opposite side is a map of the world, which sits next to a huge photograph under cracked glass of young Angolan guerrillas, men and women, in battle fatigues with weapons slung across their shoulders. It reads, "The liberation of women is a basic re-

quirement for the revolution, the guarantee of its continuity, and a pre-condition for its victory." The international connection is right on the wall.

The building is called the Worker's Center — just that. Based in Rocky Mount, it serves as the base of operations in eastern North Carolina for the Black Workers for Justice, or BWFJ.

Saladin Muhammad, the organization's National Chairperson, settles onto the wooden step outside and props his back against a 4x4 beam. He's a fireplug of a man, stocky and built close to the ground. His features are youthful, but the frosting in his hair gives away his age. He begins talking in a measured tone, like he's testing his words for trac-

tion, until his subject animates him.

"We have to understand that you can't bring people around a 'project,' but around a need. That's how we've built real infrastructure at BWFJ for 17 years," he says. While he talks, a local worker shows up with a lawn mower to cut the grass. It seems an unlikely scene for a group that is currently reaching out to workers in eleven other countries and across the United States to wage a fight with the Goliaths of the international financial establishment.

Black Workers: Organizing for Power

Founded in 1981, BWFJ was formed to "advance the rights and dignity of the working poor in the southeastern United States." Beginning with a three-person organizing committee, they built themselves into one of the most credible and effective organizations in the South.

By 1988, they were organizing at the Schlage Lock plant in Rocky Mount, N.C. When the company moved to Mexico in search of cheaper labor, BWFJ led 800 workers in the successful fight for severance pay, extended benefits, and the cleanup of Schlage's environmental waste. In 1991, after the fire at the Imperial Foods plant in Hamlet, N.C. — where 25 people were killed because the company had locked the emergency exits — BWFJ offered assistance to devastated families and led the fight to bring Imperial Foods to justice.

BWFJ combines its aggressive grassroots approach with a willingness to adopt innovative strategies. In-plant organizing, like that which BWFJ began in 1994 among auto-sector workers at the Consolidated Diesel company in Whitakers, N.C., is a good example. They began by forming Unity Committees inside the plant, where a standard certification drive was unlikely to succeed, and then partnered the committees with the United Electrical Workers union (UE) for organizational backing. BWFJ calls these "non-majority unions," which have been successful in contesting firings and opposing wage cuts.

BWFJ's focus on black workers is based on the premise that building political power among the least powerful, in

the least organized region of the country, is a prerequisite for overcoming the setbacks of working-class movements. These setbacks have become more ominous as a result of the "race to the bottom" tactics that U.S. companies have used in shifting Northern unionized jobs to the South, playing southern white workers against politically powerless black workers, and finally shifting jobs into developing countries under the cover of free trade agreements.

"Our historical circumstances as black workers tell us that black workers are central to organizing in the South, and to organizing workers generally," says Ashaki Binta, BWFJ Director of Organization. "BWFJ was founded on an understanding of the special oppression of the entire African-American people, who are 90 percent working class. Acquiescing to racism and gender oppression is an error that both the left and organized labor have been guilty of in the past," she adds. "These struggles continue today."

"The question of power and powerlessness for black people in this country," Binta continues, "is inextricable from the issue of self-determination."

Telling the world about the South

To highlight the "strategic necessity" of organizing black workers in the South, BWFJ launched a series of Organize the South Solidarity Tours in 1990 and 1992. "The tours were designed, in part, to bring the national labor movement into a discussion about the condition in the South," says Binta.

BWFJ is now taking this call to the global stage, by co-hosting three Southern International Workers' Schools, focusing on the Public Sector (1998), the Private Sector/Auto (1999), and a Workers' Conference in 2000.

"We want to bring national and international solidarity to the southern fightback, and we want the southern fightback to directly confront the anti-worker initiatives of international finance capital," says Binta. "For us, that work has begun in organizing the public sector — a focus due to privatization and cutbacks in social services."

"Public workers all over the world are

"We are not working on winning [union] elections, but on building organization and consciousness."

— Saladin Muhammad

experiencing this phenomenon directly, putting them on the cutting edge against current trends in globalization."

Public Workers against Private Gain

Last year, BWFJ initiated their most recent anti-privatization strategy by taking part in a "Grievance for Justice Campaign" among public workers in North Carolina. Building on a six-year fight by housekeepers on two university campuses over wages, workloads, and job security — and organizing by the NC Public Service Workers Union — BWFJ invited an independent union, the United Electrical Workers, to begin a new kind of organizing drive.

Faced with North Carolina's prohibition against collective bargaining by state employees, the union began to sign up and listen to workers through mostly-volunteer "Grievance Brigades." Grievances ranged from racial discrimination to work speed-ups to disrespectful behavior by bosses, and were sent by the hundreds to the University Board of Governors, the press, and state officials. Currently, six campuses are being organized and UE Local 150 has become a fully chartered union. Anti-privatization efforts though public worker organizing are also progressing in Atlanta through SEIU Local 1985, and in MASE/CWA Local 3570 in Mississippi, which, along with UE 150, are also supporting the first Worker's School this October.

Acting Globally

The First Southern International Workers School is a collaborative effort between BWFJ, the Brisbane Institute: Southern Center for Labor Organizing (SCLEO), and the Transnational Information Exchange (TIE), based in Germany. The School will be hosted by the Brisbane Institute of Morehouse College, and will featured labor representatives from Brazil, Canada, Cuba, England, France,

Haiti, Mexico, the Netherlands, Puerto Rico, Senegal, and South Africa.

Phil Denniston, a staff organizer with SEIU Local 1985 in Atlanta, sees these efforts as valuable to his work on the ground. "With no collective bargaining in Georgia and the state being right-to-work, we concentrate on building and spreading power," Denniston says. "Education is important, and efforts like [the Workers' School] are important to educating workers."

As a popular bumper sticker says, "If You're Being Attacked Globally, You'd Better ACT Globally." Workers around the world are reaching across international frontiers to lock arms. The Black Workers for Justice and the First Southern International Workers' School are on the front lines of these efforts.

"We are not working on winning elections," says Saladin Muhammad, "but on building organization and consciousness. The Workers' School is a key part of the movement to organize the South."

SE

The Black Workers for Justice, Transnationals Information Exchange, and the Brisbane Institute: Southern Center for Labor Education and Organizing announce

**The First Southern International Workers School
"Globalization and the U.S. South"**

**October 1-4 1998
Morehouse College
Atlanta, Georgia**

For more information, contact the Brisbane Institute at (404) 681-2800 ext. 2254; or the Black Workers for Justice at (404) 768-8801 or bwfj@igc.apc.org



A Globalization Glossary

By Pronita Gupta

Bretton Woods Institutions

The Bretton Woods Institutions are the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (see below). They were created by the world's leading powers to rebuild the world's economies at a meeting in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, in 1944.

General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)

GATT, which deals primarily with trade in goods, was founded in 1948 and was supposed to become a part of the United Nations. GATT is two different things: an international agreement establishing the rules for international trade; and an international organization created to support the agreement. GATT has been revised through eight multilateral negotiations, known as "trade rounds." The outcomes have been the liberalization of world trade and a reduction in tariffs. During the last trade round, known as the Uruguay Round (1986 to 1994), the GATT was amended and incorporated into the World Trade Organization.

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

The IMF was created to oversee and monitor the international monetary system (especially the exchange of national currencies). Like the World Bank, the IMF also lends money to countries, especially developing nations, to restructure their economies to be more "efficient." These austerity measures usually result in deep cuts in social service programs and weaken government protections. The IMF does not pretend to be equitable: Voting power is based on the amount of money a country contributes to the Fund. The United States is the largest contributor to the IMF.

North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

NAFTA was passed and signed into law in 1993. It eliminates barriers to the flow of goods between Mexico, Canada and the United States. It was supposed to increase the U.S. trade surplus with our neighbors, but has actually thrown regional trade into a deficit. It has served to roll back many of the gains American citizens have won over the last century, weakening environmental, health and public safety standards.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

The OECD was originally created as the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) after World War II to help rebuild European economies devastated by the war. In 1961, it was re-created as OECD and charged to do research and negotiate world investment rules, which must be adopted by a consensus of the member nations. The latest such pact is the Multilateral Agreement on Investment. The OECD is based in Paris, its negotiating meetings are closed to the public, and its documents are kept confidential.

Structural Adjustment

Structural Adjustment is what many countries must agree to in order to receive financial assistance from the World Bank and IMF. These austerity measures are ostensibly designed to make these countries more efficient and capable of sustaining growth. In practice, they primarily serve to severely restrict or reduce the role of governments in regulating the economy. These measures include: reducing government spending, especially in social services

such as education and healthcare; cutting or containing wages to reduce inflation; allowing increased imports; removing restrictions on foreign investments; privatizing state enterprises; and deregulation.

World Bank

The World Bank lends money to developing nations for infrastructure development and to spur economic growth. It is comprised of five organizations: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the International Development Association, the International Finance Corporation, the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes. The World Bank is controlled by the most developed countries with the strongest economies, and often lends funds or provides financial assistance only after a country has adopted "structural adjustments."

World Trade Organization (WTO)

The WTO became a real organization in January 1995. It continues the GATT function of dealing with rules of trade between nations. Unlike GATT, the WTO is a permanent agreement and covers trade in services, such as travel, insurance and telecommunications, and intellectual property. Its three main goals are to promote free trade, increase free market "liberalization," and settle disputes. The WTO/GATT is probably the least democratic of the multinational institutions, highly influenced by Western transnational corporations. The WTO allows countries to challenge each other's regulatory laws without democratic input, and the dispute proceedings are closed to the public.



Resources

Photo by Earl Dotter

National, Regional, and State Organizing

AFL-CIO

815 15th Street NW
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 637-5187

Alabama Arise

P.O. Box 612
Montgomery, AL 36101
(334) 832-9060

Black Workers for Justice (BWFJ)

Rocky Mount Center
216 Atlantic Avenue, P.O. Box 1863
Rocky Mount, NC 27802
(919) 977-8162

Brisbane Institute/Southern Center for Labor Education and Organizing

830 Westview Drive SW
Atlanta, GA 30314
Phone: (404) 681-2800, ext. 2254

La Mujer Obrera

c/o Centro Obrero, P.O. Box 3975
El Paso, TX 79923
(915) 533-9710

Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network (TIRN)

1515 East Magnolia Avenue #408
Knoxville, TN 37917
(615) 637-1576

Tri-National Commission for Justice in the Maquiladoras

10706 Anderson Court
Sugar Creek, MO 64054
(816) 836-3242

Research and Analysis on Globalization

CorpWatch

www.corpwatch.org

Grassroots Policy Project

2040 S. Street, NW, Suite 203
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 234-0980

Highlander Research and Education Center

1959 Highlander Way
New Market, TN 37820
(423) 933-3443

Institute for Policy Studies

1601 Connecticut Avenue NW #5
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 234-9382

Institute for Southern Studies

P.O. Box 531
Durham, NC 27702-0531
(919) 419-8311

Inter-Hemispheric Education Resource Center

Box 4506
Albuquerque, NM 87196

Multinational Monitor c/o Essential Information, Incorporated,

1530 P Street NW
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 387-8030

Project South: Institute for the Elimination of Poverty and Genocide

9 Gammon Avenue SW
Atlanta, GA 30315
(404) 622-0602

Transnationals Information Exchange (TIE)

7435 Michigan Avenue
Detroit, MI 48210
(313) 842-6262

Drive



by Karen Vann-Monaghan

Elvis died last week. Summer hangs heavy over the backyard. Kate sits on the stone steps. Lights another cigarette off the last one. Sunlight flecks off specks of dust held suspended in midair. Dumb damp August air. The next-door neighbor's nephew shoots BBs at bumblebees. Wails in outrage when stung. The ice has melted in the tea. Time to go inside. Time to get a haircut. Time to get up and get the hell out of here.

Kate has decided. It is the decision she knew she would make one day. Today. She has made her decision to go. Tomorrow. She has told no one. Can't think of a reason why not, except she can't think of a reason why either. Didn't want to have to defend her decision. Wouldn't know how anyway. Just wanted to drive it out. Drive it all the way out.

All of her actions that morning were done to the metronome syllable "now." She packed up the '64 Ford Galaxy 500, black with red interior, just as if she were returning to campus: typewriter, stereo, coffee pot, and even that God-awful turquoise macramé owl. Her friend Jane had given it to her when she transferred to Appalachian State. It had been given to Jane by her friend Cindy when she had graduated the year before. No telling how long the dusty blue owl has been circling about in Martin Hall. Kate had been tempted to bestow it on her roommate last semester. Even then Kate had known she wouldn't be back.

Would not be back. Kate barely squeaked out of high school. Caught her parents off guard when she announced her intentions to go to college. Surprised her teachers. Even her friends seemed dubious. It would surprise no one that she was quitting. Dropping out for all the wrong reasons. She liked the little liberal arts college not far from the Carolina coast, with Spanish moss sagging from the trees like old knowledge. She enjoyed the classes, liked the small town kids that made up the student body, even admired a few of her professors. But . . .

She wasn't really dropping out because of Winston. No, she had changed. If she had quit because of Winston she wouldn't have gone back after spring break. She had stuck it out. Too late she had found an answer to his riddle. His penchant for alliteration and a sophomore's introduction to Freud. He had wondered, as had Sigmund, what do women want? She had been too quick to tease, "What would women want with Winston?" He had teased back, "What would Winston want with women?" Too late. She thought of a better reply too late. "A womb of his own." Too late. Too bad.

Easier to have shared a laugh than to have gotten entangled in solving that riddle. Curse Freud anyway.

Winston. Proud to be cut from the baseball team. From reading one book on the subject he no longer believed in athletic competition. Yet he had no qualms about slashing into lesser intellects with calculated sophistry in minor debates at mediocre seminars on a middle-of-nowhere campus. No, he was not the reason she wouldn't be back. Kate didn't know of a reason. Wasn't looking for one. It was simply time for something else. Time to drive.

Kate exhales a fat line of blue smoke. Starts to light another skinny brown cigarette off the one just finished. She wonders if she will mention that she is leaving. Maybe over dinner tonight. From inside the house she hears her father coughing, calling for her brother to come change the oxygen tank. She knows he's still at work down at the bottling plant. She rubs her cigarette out on the stone step, drops the butt in an almost empty can of Mountain Dew. On her way through the den she grabs a pack of Lucky Strikes in case Dad's out. She tosses it to him on her way to the front porch to fetch more oxygen. The green tanks are heavy. She gets the dolly as close as she can, wobbles the tank onto it, then wheels it in place beside her father's chair. As quickly as she can, she switches the apparatus and sets the gauges. In the process she lets a little oxygen escape to inhale for a pure air buzz. Then she wobbles the empty tank onto the dolly and wheels it to the front porch. It rings a hollow clang. On the concrete as she rolls it from the dolly to the rust stain circle of all the previous empties. Back inside Dad watches the traffic passing. He perks up as Mom pulls in the drive right on time, tires crunching on the blue green gravel. Ambulance siren blares from the television. General Hospital. Kate goes out the backdoor. Lights another cigarette. Family legacy. Flicks ashes onto the clover.

Next morning Kate is awake before dawn. Listens to the mockingbird in the cedar tree. Hears the echo from the myna bird on Old Miss Matthew's side veranda. Who was mocking whom? Endless avian litany. It had always been, would always be like . . . ? Kate tries to iso-

late just one thing. Everything just sort of grew more dense without really changing. Shopping malls . . . interstates . . . kudzu . . .

Heading for the hills instead of back to college was a subject that never came up. Not over dinner the night before. Not that morning as she drives Mom to the factory one last time. It is the wrong way to do things. Kate knows that. But how to explain to her mother the things she doesn't understand herself. It is time to go. Kate knows that, too. But she doesn't know how she knows it. It had to be now. Or never.

A peck on the cheek. Quick good-byes for a couple of weeks, not for a lifetime. Kate watches her mother show her ID before entering the textile mill. Kate wonders again about the fence with the spiraling barbed wire top. Was it to prevent a break-in? Or a break out? From the top of the concrete stairs, Mom turns to wave goodbye before entering the windowless building. No, not windowless. There are windows. Small. High up. Above the heads of the workers. Painted over.

Kate slides in an 8-track. Patti Smith. Waits for the crosswalk to clear. It'll take a while. An army of women, uniformed in pastel polyester, helmeted with Toni perms, scurries from parking lot to factory. She looks at the expressions on their faces as they pass. So many variations. Kate tries to guess who is excited about a new grandchild, relieved for a few hours from a drinking husband, concerned about a late period, mad as fire about the new quota set for old machines, having an affair, joyful about finding the Lord, or simply tired before the day begins. Others are women she worked with after school and weekends at Tastee Freeze. A few she recognizes as former classmates from Southern High. They were the ones who had quietly left school, quietly gotten married — or not — and were quietly raising kids of their own. Lucky to have gotten on down at the mill.

There's Aunt Candy wearing tight black wranglers and a checkered flag tee over stiletto b-cups. As a preteen, Kate, having only vague suspicions about the suspension variations of bras, had hoped her breasts would grow out pointy, too. Fortunately, she outgrew that desire. But she still salted her watermelon after spotting Aunt Candy salting hers down at White Lake several summers ago. Back then Kate and her sisters would practice holding cigarettes like Aunt Candy. Flicking away ashes with cool, emphatic elegance. Aunt Candy teased her bleached hair, smoked filterless Camels, wore hot pink nail polish even on her toes, and had absolutely no qualms about arguing with Uncle Leon. Anytime, anywhere. And she was always right. Almost. The woman has no idea the impact she had on good girls from good families. The whole point was — she wouldn't have given a damn if she did know. It was intoxicating. She spots Kate. Comes over. Hops in.

"I been worried about you, Missy." She yanks out Patti Smith mid-screed. Turns on the radio, pushing all the buttons until she gives up. Turns the dial for a country station.

"Well, I'm glad someone is, but why are you worried about me, Aunt Candy?" Kate looks into the back seat where Patti landed.

"Cause I heard you were quitting college to get married. Dumb idea. And I'm not your aunt." Candy lights a Camel.

"Where on earth did you hear that?" Kate has never been good at keeping up on gossip, especially about herself. Couldn't imagine anyone's life being so boring that gossip about her would spice it up.

"Let's just say I'm acquainted with his daddy." Candy looks straight ahead but nods as if to say she understands a hell of a lot more than she'll ever admit to. "But then I heard you broke it off. Good girl. You stay in school."

"Well, if you happen to be talking about me it wasn't serious to begin

with." Aunt Candy's never been the best source for news. Must have gotten mixed up on who this tidbit was about. Mixed her up with one of her cousins. Debbie, maybe. Or Janette. Or even Dwight, for that matter.

"I almost bought me this car, you know that?" Candy flips open the glove compartment. Starts glancing through the worn moss green memobook with the one-side-blue/one-side-red pencil wedged though the spiral at the top. "Saw it on a Tuesday. Had to wait till payday. Gonna buy me this one. Come Friday afternoon the man said he sold it that morning. Wouldn't say to who. Wasn't on the lot a week. Should have know it would be your daddy to buy it. This one could be doing it over at Jet Motor Speedway."

Kate watches Candy studying her father's notations. Carefully printed block numbers, shakier after the stroke, but all there: dates, mileage records, oil changes, each and every repair. It dawns on Kate. That's how he knew. Every time. Whenever she cut school he would ask before a week had passed, "Ever been to Fayetteville, Kate?" or, "Wonder what was going on in Raleigh last Wednesday." Never a big deal about it. Must not have told mom. But he always made sure she knew he knew. End of conversation. Now Kate knew how. He read the speedometer. Kate smiles. It should have been so obvious but it

had confused the hell out of her. Had her cutting more classes driving further afield trying to figure it out. She'll have to think of a way to let him know she knows without admitting anything.

Candy stopped talking. Kate tries to remember the last thing she said.

"Thought Uncle Leon gave up racing after that last crash-up over at Trico."

"Not for Leon — who ain't your uncle. For Little Leon — who ain't your cousin neither." She flips backwards through the memobook to double-check the facts. Satisfied, she tosses it back in the glove compartment. "Yes, ma'am,

tell your daddy I want to buy me his car."

"Ain't his to sell. Share it with my sisters and we'll never agree to sell it. Hell, we never agree on anything." Kate laughs, lights another off the last one.

"Well, I got sisters too and y'all will get tired of sharing it. Better not sell it to nobody else. Kate laughs louder. "Yes, Aunt Candy, you're probably right. It's mine for two weeks, then not for a month. If I decide to sell my third I'll keep you in mind."

Candy's nod settles it better than a handshake. The deal has finally gotten off the ground. One third promised better than no third at all. She'll have this car yet. It'll run better after Ross has it for a couple of years. He'll keep it running fine for his girls. She'd buy a car from Ross anytime. Hell, if the boy can't hold any steadier than his daddy, she might just take it on the track herself. "Thank you. I'll hold it to you. But like I said, I ain't your aunt."

"What do you mean you ain't my aunt anymore? Did you really leave Uncle Leon for good this time?" Kate tries to picture one without the other.

"Haven't left him. Just divorced him. And as soon as my youngest turns 18 I'm leaving home. Florida. Heard they're short on nurses. If Leon sobers up he can come with me. Or not. Let me tell you one thing, there will come a day when you'll have to lean back, look way up, get a crick in your neck just to bitch at your sons. That's when you'll know life is passing you by." Candy rolls down the window to share an inside joke with two women jaywalking behind them. Turning back to Kate, "And I never was your aunt and Leon ain't never been your uncle neither."

"So, how come y'all're always at my family reunions?" The twang of country music is giving Kate a headache. The folksy, hokey commer-

An army of women, uniformed in pastel polyester, helmeted with Toni perms, scurries from parking lot to factory.

cial are too much. She takes a bet on a Bob Seeger bootleg. "Leon's granddaddy's old maid eloped with your mama's step-grandma's half brother. She raised his kids but none of her people are related to his. It all hinges on a marriage that never took place no way. Claim they did it in Dillon." Candy glances with upturned nose at Kate's 8-track collection.

"So what does that make us?" Kate contemplates the obtuse geometry of her kith and kin.

"Total strangers." Candy cuts Bob short mid horizontal bop. Turns the radio back on. It's going to be country or nothing. And Candy ain't one to settle for nothing.

"So, how long have you been at the mill anyway?" Kate watches the crowd of hurried women thin out.

"Since L&M started handing out pink slips. Didn't waste no time getting one to Leon. Got his in the first batch. Four hundred ninety-six let go Friday before Fourth of July. Happy Independence Day. With the tobacco factory closing down the Blue Light Diner lost all the regulars. Going after the college crowd. Now I can't begin to live on college boy tips. One of those Duke brats told me he liked older women. Gave him Mama's number. Let her preach to somebody else about Jesus for a change. Next week I go graveyard. Start taking classes over at Tech first thing Monday morning. Now that my divorce is final I qualify for financial aid. Displaced Homemakers Program." Candy shakes her head and snorts. "No more sleeping till noon, bridge party teas, shopping all day, and trying out recipes from the Sunday paper." She begins laughing.

"Honey, don't you believe it." Tammy Wynette belts out her anthem right on cue. Kate reaches to turn it off but Candy smacks her hand. Suddenly Kate feels about seven years old again. Not knowing what to say, she considers the divorce. "Guess Tammy knows a lot about Leons."

The last stragglers from the parking lot bolt through the crosswalk as the air swells with blaring horns. Traffic hasn't moved in twenty-seven minutes. Candy opens the car door, saying over her shoulder, "Tammy might know a hell of a lot about good old boys but she don't know a damn thing about me. Don't nobody know nothing 'bout me." She hollers at the guard to hold the gate. He does. She strides through without hurrying. The gates clang behind her.

Kate pulls through the crosswalk to park just on the other side. Drivers, relieved that the wait is over, speed past as she considers her choices. It's not simply a matter of taking a semester off. To not go back would mean losing her grant money, getting knocked off her father's disability checks, and having to pay back the student loan that made up the bulk of her tuition. Dropping out now might mean never getting a chance to go back. Going back was the best option. Dropping out to move to a town where she didn't know anyone, didn't have a place to stay, didn't have a job waiting was a bad idea no matter how you looked at it. If things didn't work out would she be able to live with the consequences?

In the rearview mirror she watches as two women try to convince the guard to open the gate. He pretends it isn't up to him. They flirt. They tease. They pretend it doesn't matter. After a few moments of play he lets them though. Kate thinks about 2:30 p.m. The women will flow out as if exhaled by the brown lungs of the factory itself. They will pour forth from the bottleneck door to cascade down concrete stairs. At the gate they will automatically hold out their arms to show that they are not forgetting about a remnant, or pillowcase, or spool of thread. The gesture is as automatic as the flash of IDs at the gate in the morning, or the smile they offer to their supervisor's bosses. The younger women

spring ahead, as if fleeing from fate. They are first through the gates to jump into idling pick-ups, or Chevy vans with shag carpet interiors.

Then it's the oddest thing. Makes Kate shiver every time. To watch the slow flowing river of women who have been up at the mill for years upon years. All the women have become gray-haired, whether they were gray at 6:30 a.m. or not. The lint from the fabric sticks to hairsprays, dyes, and to the Afro-sheen coifs beneath do-rags. Bending over sewing machines, working as fast as possible to make quota, has given all of the women the same wrist, neck, and shoulder aches. From hours spent doing the same job in the same rhythm, all the women move in the same way. From the mind-numbing monotony they wear the same expressions. Could only eight hours have elapsed? Eight hours of airless, droning repetition.

How many times? Too many times. This summer. Last summer. And the one before that. Once or twice a week Kate waited for her mother at the end of her shift. She would see her exit the door at the top of the stairs. Kate would start the engine, put her cigarette out, and wait. She would lean over to open the door only to have the woman — a stranger — pass right by to join her carpool, or board a bus. That might happen two or three times an afternoon, all within an eternity of twenty-seven minutes. And it was an even eerier feeling to be watching so carefully, to be absolutely sure not to be mistaken this time, only to

jump as her mother opened the door to slide in beside her. Kate knew she would never tell her mother this, would never bring it up to her brother or sisters. What if it never happened to them?

Yes. If she had to. Kate could live with the consequences. Now or never. Kate starts the car. Oh, how she loves the way the '64 Ford, black with red interior, lifts from park to claim the road. She meanders and circles and loops through her hometown to make ab-



olutely certain. American tobacco, the Bulls' ballpark, and churches of austere stone parade by. Maneuvering confidently, she approaches Five Points from every direction. Down Main St. for a last glance at the old library, cotton candy pink, plump cheeked, overfed and holding its breath. She cuts through the empty parking lot of what had been Sears before it led Thalheimer's, Belk, and J.C. Penney on the long march to the malls. Crossing the tracks for a quick trace along the edge of Little Hayti. Doubling back. One more time from the west through Five Points, this time on Chapel Hill Street. She pauses for a moment to glimpse the newspapers rolling off the press in the window of the Herald-Sun. Then on to her favorite downtown scene, which is not a scene itself, but a reflection. Of a stone church and willow tree in the smooth tinted surface of an office building. Best seen from the corner of your eye on passing. The road dips, lifts curves, and the scene is gone. Waiting at the stoplight, Kate scans the area. Suburban sprawl crawling into town in the guise of police, fire, and TV stations. Counter-clockwise on the Downtown Loop leaving home headed west. In her rearview mirror she notices the gap-toothed skyline. First time she's noticed it since the Adshusheer came down. Incredible. The Adshusheer Inn, only ten stories high but a block thick; magnificent but squat. It had stood stoically beside the slender seventeen-story Catawba Central Bank, where Superman would have lived had he been a Tar Heel. Together they had been the Mutt 'n' Jeff of her hometown skyline. Alone the bank building seemed exposed, and oddly fragile.

OK. Like the mountain man said, you can't go home again. But even if you stay in place, you can't stay in time. Now. Or never. No, not never. Now. Time to drive.

SE

New York City. Bill will begin his MFA in the Fall at UNC. "KNOT" was a gallery full of knots: drawn and painted knots on paper, famous women (Carly Simon, Frida Kahlo, and Anais Nin) wrapped up in knots in intimate paintings, and soft sculptural knots with tails that fell from the ceiling and walls.

"KNOT" was such a brilliant use of LUMP's space that Bill invited Wilson to curate a show. The exhibition, "Extrasensitivity," which included Wilson's current work, was the result. Wilson is making precious pillows, embroidered and painted with wrenching texts, that she places on New York streets for people to take comfort in, a calm in-

terruption within the city's chaos, or simply for people to take. They all disappear quickly, but not until after Laura takes a color photograph of her plump cloth clouds hovering close to a construction sites barrier, or the busy streets curb. Five slate colored teardrop pillows rest against a chain link fence. They read, "SOUL...IS BEING STOLEN...EVERY MOMENT...OF EVERY HOUR...OF EVERY DAY."

LUMP is one of the only spaces where one could see "KNOT" and "PERPETUAL LOOTING..." in the Triangle area. The Modern Museum in Durham is a basement room that Director Jim Kellough invites artists to come do what

they will. While I look forward to shows at the Modern Museum, it is a small space, just enough for one artist to do one thing. Ant Farm, a more traditionally based artist collective, is wonderful, but they have no gallery. Weatherspoon Art Gallery in Greensboro and SECCA in Winston-Salem are fantastic spaces to see international and regional contemporary art, but they show established artists.

LUMP shows what they want, and what they want is to give all kinds of artists a chance to exhibit their work. Considering Helms pervasive homophobic spirit and damning power over the arts, LUMP is a gift to us all.

—elin o'Hara slavick

From Suffragettes to SHE-DEVILS

Women's Liberation & Beyond
By Liz McQuiston
Phaidon Press Ltd., 1997

With 600 illustrations, this book is pure pleasure, both visually and politically.

It is a book to keep on the coffee-table, next to your bed, and close at hand when you make a "Keep your laws off my body!" sign for the next march on Washington. For artists, activists, designers, feminists, and educators, *From Suffragettes to She-Devils* is an enormous resource for dynamic graphics, feminist history, and effective political strategies through visual production.

As Germaine Greer writes in the foreword, "...the subversive power of women's art is now undeniable." To give you a comprehensive overview of women's art that is beautifully crafted, intricate, formally diverse, witty, conceptually direct, and unnerving, McQuiston gives a grand tour through her well curated "museums" of Emancipation (First Wave Feminism), Revolution (Second Wave Feminism), Activism and Backlash, New Technologies, and The In-



ternational Women's Movement. I want to carry the silk "heroine banners" from 1908, proudly sport a Women's Lib. pin, and enlarge much of the book at the nearest copy shop for posters.

But for a book that "is first and foremost a design source book," I am surprised by the choices of hot pink and fluorescent yellow that compete with

and overwhelm subtle images. Fortunately, most of the pages are white, so the only thing to agitate and stun you is Sue Coe's dense painting, "Woman Walks Into Bar - Is Raped by Four Men on the Pool Table While Twenty Watch;" or to make you covet and alter your clothes, Varvara Stepanova's "Designs for a costume for a working woman" from the Soviet Union in 1924; or make you wish that votes mattered as much today as women believed they did in 1912 as shown in the poster, "The Appeal of Womanhood," by Louise Jacobs, published by the Suffrage Atelier.

Not only does this book make you feel a "global sisterhood," it shows you, through historical and contemporary examples, how to make "women in struggle" visibly powerful.

—elin o'Hara slavick

Taking on the Problem of the 20th Century

The Challenge of Interracial Unionism: Alabama Coal Miners, 1878-1929

By Daniel Letwin

University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Southern workers show signs of stirring. Central Labor Councils in Atlanta and Charleston have dubbed their hometowns "Union Cities," raising the voice of labor in local politics. Stagehands at New Orleans' new convention center have been on strike since last July, and across the Mississippi, metal workers at the Avondale Shipyard are staging rallies to force the company to bargain with the union they voted in four years ago.

At the University of North Carolina, housekeepers have joined the United Electrical Workers Local 150, which is building a state-wide public-sector union. "Living wage" bills have been proposed in cities and counties across the region, and the Farm Labor Organizing Committee has set out to organize the South. The southern labor movement may be on the rise.

But success for these movements will arrive only after they have confronted what W.E.B. Du Bois called the "problem of the 20th century:" reaching across the color line. As workers take on the challenge of organizing in the South, history has many lessons to teach.

Daniel Letwin's *The Challenge of Interracial Unionism* takes its reader through four of the most vibrant moments of working-class protest in southern history. Starting with the Greenback-Labor Party's electoral movement in the 1870s and the Knights of Labor's mixture of electoral and shop floor action in the 1880s, Letwin guides us through the struggles to build the United Mine Workers of America at the turn of the century and again during World War I.

In the process, we also learn something

about Alabama, if nothing more than the remarkable legacy of working-class protest — from the Alabama Communist Party of the 1930s to the Lowndes County Freedom Organization in the 1960s — that has sprung from the Heart of Dixie.

And we learn of their continuity. The slogan, "An injury to one is the concern of all" was taken up by Civil Rights workers in the 1960s — and as Letwin tells us, the Knights of Labor marched through Birmingham under the exact same banner nearly one hundred years earlier.

This book also addresses one of the most heated debates in U.S. labor history, about the extent of racial cooperation in working-class organizing. Herbert Gutman, a pioneer labor historian, launched this debate with an essay in 1968 on Richard Davis, a black leader of the United Mine Workers in the 1890s. The essay inspired an entire generation of historians to further examine the role black workers played in the U.S. labor movement.

But the essay wasn't without critics. Historian and former activist Herbert Hill, who as the Labor Secretary of the NAACP spent years battling racism within the AFL-CIO, charged Gutman with exaggerating the UMW's determination to unite black and white workers. Critical of a Marxist tendency to assume that working-class organizations would tend toward racial cooperation, Hill claimed that it was more realistic to expect just the opposite.

In *The Challenges of Interracial Unionism*, Letwin challenges his readers to examine this question historically. The success of interracial organizing depended upon such changing factors as the strength of the economy and the national labor movement, federal intervention, and the climate of racial politics in Alabama and the South.

All of the unions Letwin describes

SOUTHERN

were ostensibly committed to interracial cooperation. The preamble of the Alabama Knights Assembly, for example, urged white members to "set aside all race prejudices against the colored laborer . . . so that the toilers of both races may be successful in their struggles with trusts, monopoly and organized capital." Black and white union leaders regularly spoke to interracial audiences, and union halls became central social spaces in black and white communities.

But cooperation had its limits, and the second constant in the history of the unions was disassociation from the cause of racial unity when it was deemed necessary. When the Knights were criticized for disrupting the social order in an 1887 parade, a labor journalist replied that black Knights did not march side by side with the white, nor did they seek to intrude themselves into improper prominence. Twenty years later, a pro-union newspaper refuted charges that the United Mine Workers had promoted The Social Equality Horror by asserting that there is not at present, never was, and can never be social equality between whites and blacks.

Letwin argues that to have called for racial equality at that time would have been suicidal for a struggling union movement — a reality recognized by black workers who supported the unions. In a sense, this affirms Herbert Hill's claim that white unionists, however committed they were to organizing black workers, would never have risked the union struggling for full equality.

In other cases, however, the unions' commitment to interracial cooperation put them on the leading edge of racial progress in the state. While the UMW endorsed the 1901 Alabama Constitution that effectively denied blacks the right to vote, in 1917 it may have been the only organization in the state that held interracial conventions where black delegates debated and voted, just as white members. Letwin describes the organization's approach as "collaboration between the races," at once accommodating and test-

UNIONS

ing the boundaries of segregation.

Several factors contributed to this collaboration. The percentage of black workers in Alabama mines increased steadily after the Civil War, reaching a majority by the turn of the century. Workers of both races recognized that they simply could not afford to organize separately from half of their coworkers.

But solidarity went deeper than pragmatism. Black and white miners shared a common lifestyle of hard work, poverty and exploitation, and they came together in union meetings and social events to share those experiences.

According to Letwin, the fact that miners were all of the same gender also contributed to their ability to organize across racial lines. As he points out, interracial

contact between men and women was the most explosive issue in the Jim Crow South. In industries such as textiles, where black men worked in the same factories as white women, interracial unionism would have crossed an unthinkable boundary. As long as they respected other racial norms, however, male miners were able to challenge less volatile rules of racial separation.

And Letwin reveals that the success of interracial unionism went beyond the unions themselves, having as much to do with vibrant social and community lives forged when miners were not at work or in their union halls.

We are left to wonder how black and white women struggled in their own workplaces — in fact, Letwin never tells us where they worked. Could women or children associate across racial boundaries as easily as men? What support did women give to the unions? Did they

form their own?

These questions may not have been central to the project that Letwin laid out for himself, but they are certainly important for understanding the dynamics of interracial working-class movements. Also, by concentrating on successful moments, Letwin also overlooks the periods that are most like today. At a time when union membership is lower than it has been in fifty years, it may be more important to examine when and why unions failed.

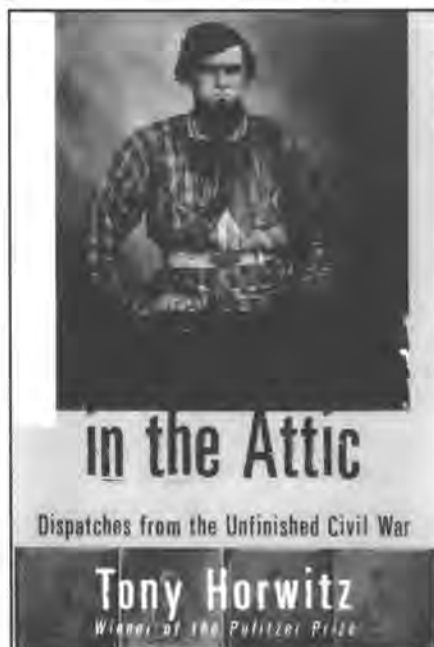
But overall, *The Challenge of Interracial Unionism* does what it set out to accomplish. It fills an important gap in a growing body of literature on the relationship between race and class in the United States, and is presented in enjoyable and accessible form. And most importantly, by illuminating the strengths and weaknesses of previous struggles, this book provides an important guide for the future.

—William P. Jones

“Separate and irreconcilable” is the recurring theme of *Confederates in the Attic*. Former war-zone reporter Tony Horwitz paints a bleak picture of an American South haunted by ghosts of the past. All across the South, the author visits small towns and finds white folks who can't accept the defeat of the former Confederacy, and black folks who have slowly and often painfully carved out a life for themselves with their own separate institutions, history, and civic and social lives.

But that's about as deep as it goes. Horwitz reports — he does not go far beyond the surface of this complex and paradoxical society that grew out of the emancipated and defeated Confederacy. Moreover, Horwitz recounts the negative and extreme aspects of modern life in the South with a very high entertainment value. The reader will find many tongue-in-cheek descriptions of Civil War reenactments, eccentric collectors of anything covered with the image of the rebel flag, and silly factoids about phenomena such as “The Cats of the Confederacy.”

The reason for the author's Southern odyssey was his own childhood fascina-



Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War.
By Tony Horwitz.
Pantheon Books, 1998.

tion with Civil War history, triggered by an encounter with hard-core Civil War reenactor Robert Lee Hodge. I started to question Hodge's sanity when I found

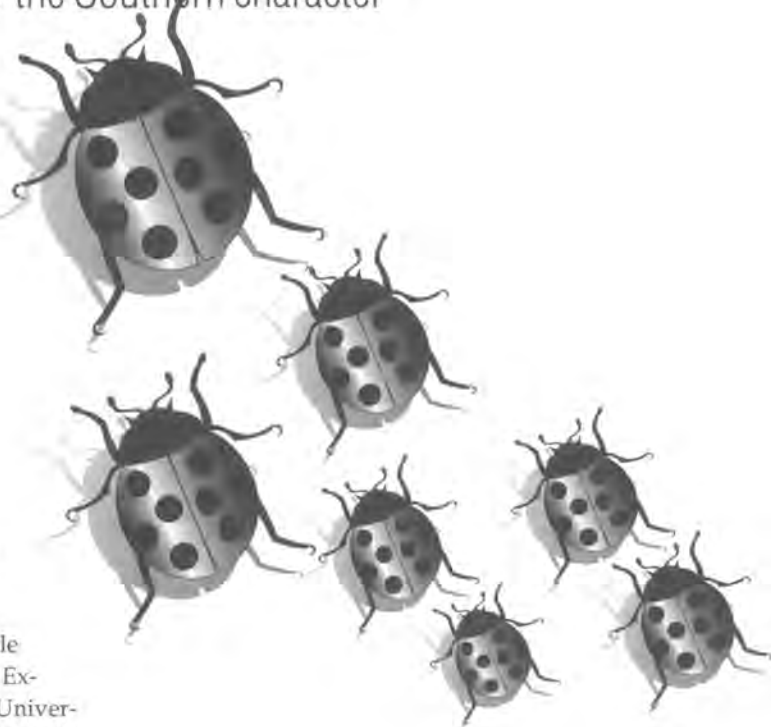
out the he was the man pictured on the cover of the book, and that the ragged man holding up a dagger wasn't some half-crazed nineteenth-century Southern rebel.

Every spare minute and dollar in Hodge's life are spent recreating his alter ego: a Confederate soldier. On an extreme quest for authenticity, Hodge will spend days in the woods of old battle grounds, unwashed, half-starved, living on scraps of sow belly, when under the spell of old soldier's diaries he will approach some type of hallucinatory time-travel. His ultimate specialty is “bloating,” a favorite with photographers, where he will imitate the swollen corpse of a Confederate casualty-of-war.

Throughout the months of his research for this book, Tony Horwitz frequently met up with Hodge and his fellow reenactors to join them in their twisted fantasy of a life deemed more exciting. That's why I was very surprised to find no mentioning of Hodge's name in the acknowledgements. It left me with a bad taste in my mouth and confirmed my suspicions about Horwitz's superficial and somewhat exploitative use of the South's historical memories.

—Florence Tonk

Ladybugs



By Mary Lee Kerr

The South never seems to see the end of invaders. The newest intruder into Southern homes and gardens is the ladybug. Long a fondly regarded character of nursery rhymes, this red spotted beetle has become an unwelcome visitor.

"In the early 1990s there was a lady beetle population explosion," says James Jarratt, Extension Entomologist at Mississippi State University in Starkville. "I've never heard complaints like that in my life. There were untold thousands of the lady beetles in peoples' homes."

The ladybug population explosion isn't simply a natural occurrence. The South has always had several of its own varieties of lady beetles, but the new invader is a foreign import. Touted as an excellent non-chemical means of controlling aphids and other crop-destroying pests, the multicolored Asian lady beetle was imported from Japan and introduced into agricultural regions of Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The bugs did their job, successfully preying on the aphids that attack pecan trees throughout the Deep South. The trouble is, unlike native species that seek bark or leaves for protection in the winter, the Asian lady beetle likes rocks. And houses seem an awful lot like big rocks.

"They are attracted to the warm side of light colored houses,"

"We have ladybugs swarming inside and out," writes MW. "I have come home and just cried because there were so many."

says Jarratt. "They get in through cracks in the walls and overwinter in wall boards. When it warms up, they become active and hundreds will work their way into living spaces." Once they're indoors, he adds, ladybugs may cling to curtains or congregate around light fixtures. While they're harmless, they can become an annoyance because of their sheer numbers. Jarratt says the creatures fall in people's food while they're cooking, secrete a staining blood if disturbed, and may create an odor, particularly if many of them die in the walls.

"They were a big hassle," says Teresa Ingram, whose Louisville, Mississippi home was invaded a few years ago. "They'd get inside and cover the ceiling so that I'd have to vacuum everyday. It was just awful."

The problem is so widespread that desperate computer users have started a chat room on the Internet dedicated to the ladybug invasion. "We have ladybugs swarming inside and out," writes MW. "I have come home and just cried because there were so many." Fellow chatters tell her they're harmless but to try Raid, vacuuming, or calling a county extension agent to curtail an infestation. AM from Virginia asks, "This is our fourth year of ladybug infestation. Am I doomed from here on out to years of vacuuming? Does anyone have any truly helpful solutions?"

A small industry has grown around trying to find solutions to ladybug infestations, mainly through the use of pesticides. Agricultural extension specialists take a milder approach, telling concerned callers that lady beetles are beneficial and should be controlled by simply caulking crevices in houses to prevent their entry or, if they do invade, simply vacuuming them and releasing them outdoors.

But, as extension specialist Frank Wood in Guntersville, Alabama found out, the mild approach may not satisfy an irate caller. "A woman called me and said she didn't care how beneficial they were," says Wood. "She had company coming for Thanksgiving dinner and she wanted those things out of her house."

At least one USDA representative now says that this attempt to control the forces of nature may have gotten out of hand. "It has become a very sensitive issue," says Louis Tedders, an entomologist with the USDA Fruit and Nut Station in Byron, Georgia who released the ladybugs there in 1984. "People are really upset and I'm sorry."

S



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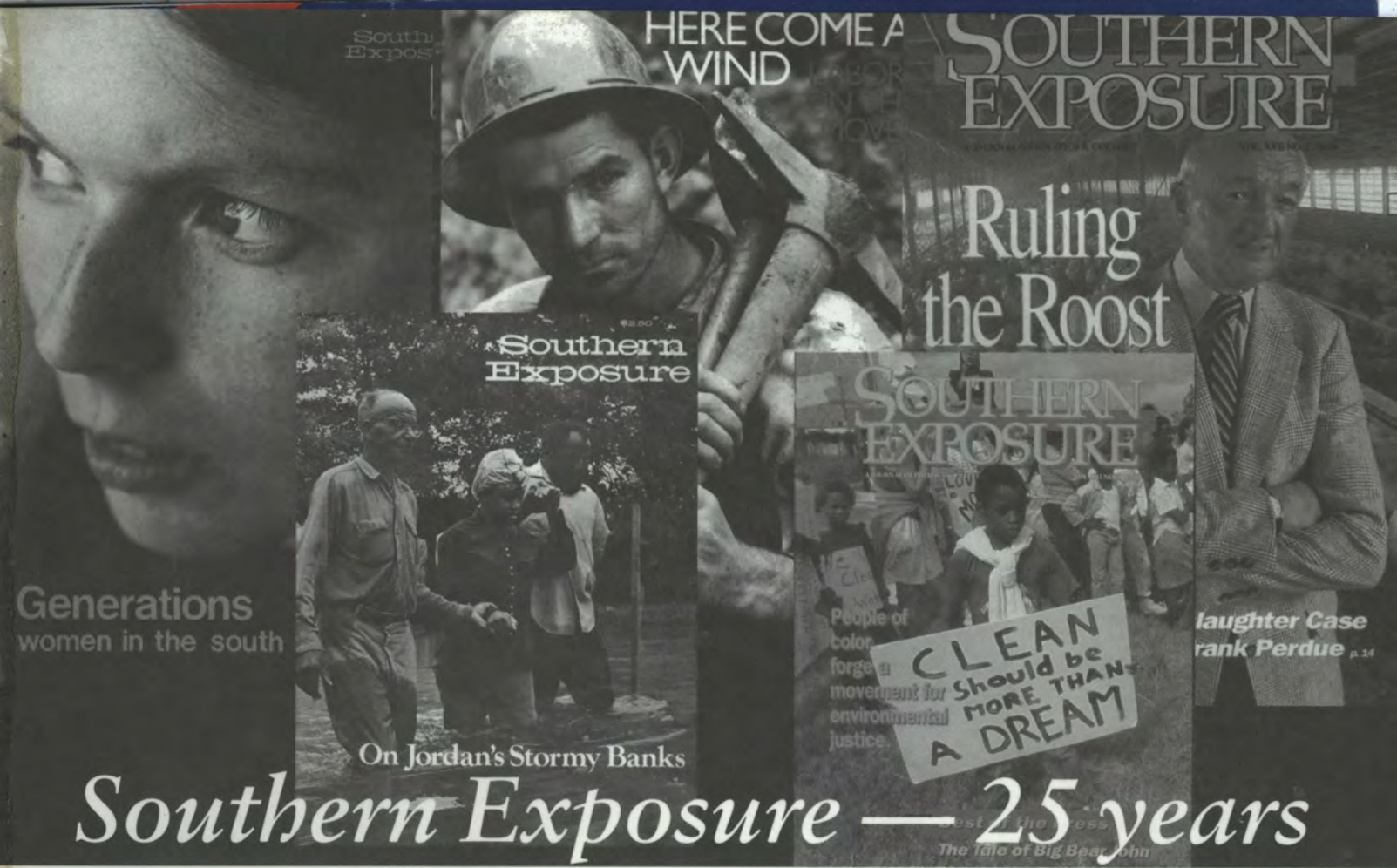
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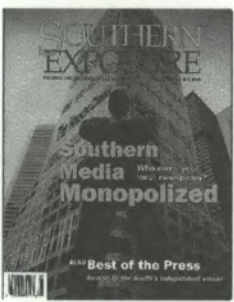
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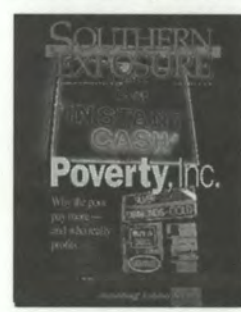
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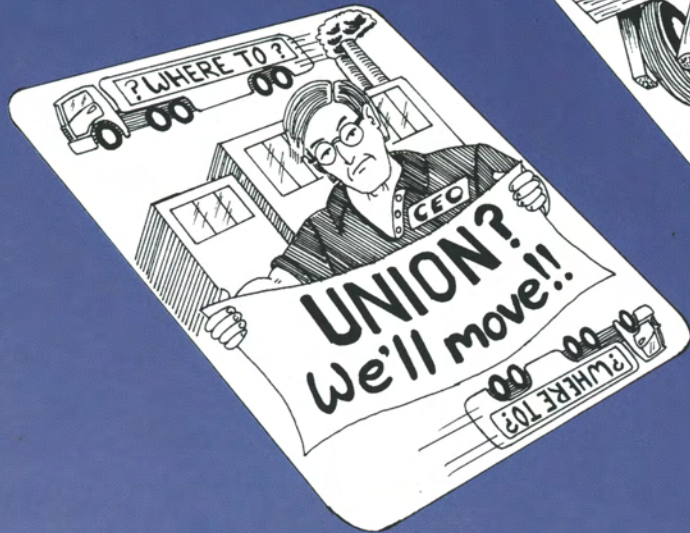


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