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SLP MEMBERS SPEAK OUT!

The following is a sampling of letters from and to members who have responded with contributions and words of encouragement to the decisions to suspend *The People* and close the headquarters. If you wrote and did not receive a personal reply from the National Office, it is only because the National Secretary must concentrate his time and attention on the immediate task of packing, shipping and doing everything necessary to preserve the Party's records and to conserve funds. All letters are read, however, and all contributions are deeply appreciated.

March 21, 2008

Dear Comrade Bills,

I am very upset about the demise of *The People*. I feel that we must keep it going in paper form. I guess I am old school, but I don't regard a document or article as real unless it is in paper form.

I have always believed that I could do more to help with *The People*: writing more or editing or any administrative tasks related to the paper. Please let me know.

Maybe I did not realize until now just what *The People* means to me: the only real voice of hope and sanity and truth that I have ever found in this twisted capitalist society.

What can I do?

Sincerely,
MICHAEL JAMES
Member-at-Large, N.J.

[Comrade James enclosed a \$1,000 contribution.—N.O.]

April 1, 2008

Dear Comrade James:

Thank you very much for your letter of March 21 and, of course, for the special gift you enclosed. "Thank you" is a woefully inadequate expression of my appreciation for the \$1,000, but please know that it is as sincere and heartfelt as can be.

You will understand when I say that I share your distress and disappointment over the demise of *The People*. Donna, Ken and I have struggled to keep it in print since the first major crisis that befell us back in 1994. We could never have gotten this far without the writing and other types of support received from you and a handful of others who have stuck with us over that entire span of 14 difficult years. We all did our best, and despite the unhappy predicament we find ourselves in today, all of us can take some consolation from the fact that we stuck fast and worked hard on behalf of what still is a great cause and still the best hope for all humanity.

At present, I do not see how it will be possible to resume publication of *The People*. For that matter, I am having difficulty focusing in on a clear picture of how it might be possible to hold the SLP together and work towards a "new beginning" of some kind. That may be because I have to devote myself completely to the immediate problem of salvaging the archives and making decisions about the rest of the Party's property.

Well, those are my problems and I simply have to contend with them and exercise my own best judgment on how to proceed. Once I am passed the immediate problems, I will turn my attention to the future and try to involve the entire membership in reaching a conclusion of where we might go from here.

Again, I thank you for your donation with all the sincerity I can muster out of a heavy heart.

Fraternally yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

March 22, 2008

Dear Comrades:

... I read the [March] *SLP Newsletter* with great sadness. I sent a check for \$200 to help recoup under separate cover. A late aunt left me a little money,

THE PEOPLE'S RESUMPTION FUND

To All Friends and Supporters of the SLP

August 18, 2008

Dear Comrades:

Do you miss the printed edition of *The People*? I sure do. It has been an integral part of my life since 1960: first as an avid young reader; then as a staff writer; then as the individual most responsible for its contents and publication.

If you miss *The People* in print as much as I do—and we are not alone—let us work together to get it started again.

I am ready and willing—and I believe myself competent and capable—to do my part: but I cannot do that without your help.

How much help?

I have given that much thought, and I believe it can be done on an annual budget of \$50,000 or less, i.e., under half of the \$119,000 it took to operate the headquarters last year.

How is that possible?

(Continued on page 2)

so I thought I'd make a larger financial contribution.

Hopefully, it won't be long before we get things back on track.

In closing, I thank you both for your seemingly tireless efforts at keeping the vessel afloat.

ROBERT F. JENSEN
Member-at-Large, Wis.

April 7, 2008

Dear Comrade Jensen:

I know that Comrade Donna Bills has written to thank you for the \$200.00 contribution you sent to help us grapple with the financial predicament the SLP currently finds itself in. Nevertheless, I wish to add my own words of appreciation to what I consider an exceedingly generous response to what I had to write in the *SLP Newsletter*. Your contribution is worth more to Donna and me than some that are larger in the dollars they represent. It is worth more in the sense that it represents a bigger personal sacrifice on your part than larger amounts from others whose financial circumstances are much better than your own. "Thank you very much" hardly seems like an adequate response to such generosity, but that is about all the English language allows. Please know that it is heartfelt, however, and that we are most appreciative.

Thanks, too, for the kind and supportive words you offered to Donna and me. It is just as difficult for me to find the words to express my appreciation for those as for your donation.

Wishing you well, I am
Fraternally yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

March 24, 2008

Dear Comrade Bills:

Enclosed is \$85.00: \$12.00 for dues, \$73.00 for Sustainer Fund (a meager amount considering the SLP financial situation)....

Fraternally,
DONALD J. DONAKER
Member-at-Large, Minn.

April 7, 2008

Dear Comrade Donaker:

I know that Donna acknowledged receipt of your letter of March 24 soon after it was delivered on April 1, and I know that she has thanked you for your contribution to Party funds, sent your dues stamps and the subscriber's list you asked for. Nonetheless, I wanted to add my own thanks for the \$73.00 that you sent to help with the current situation.

You described your contribution as "a meager amount considering the SLP financial situation," but I feel disagreeable enough tonight to say it just ain't so. The meager contribution is the contribution that falls short of the individual's capacity to come to the party's assistance in this hour of its need. I do not believe that is the case with your contri-

bution, and for that reason I consider it a generous one. True, many more dollars are needed to get the SLP back on its feet again, and they will have to come from members and other friends and supporters of the SLP who are in a better position financially to salvage the situation. Nonetheless, more spirit and good will come with every dime you sent than there is in all the dollars that others may have to spare but have not sent.

Well, I have been told that I can be a very disagreeable fellow at times, but in this case I hope you will not think too badly of me for the weakness.

With best wishes, I am
Fraternally yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

March 24, 2008

Greetings:

Enclosed two checks: one for \$5.00 for 2003 NEC proceedings, the other check for \$50.00 (donation).

My federal refund should arrive within three weeks. When it does, I intend to make a \$100.00 donation.

The Best.
MICHAEL PRESTON
Member-at-Large, N.Y.

April 7, 2008

Dear Comrade Preston:

Thank you very much for your letter of March 24, with which you enclosed two checks. The first, for \$5.00, was for a copy of the 2003 NEC Session Proceedings. I believe that has been sent. Perhaps you have already received it. Please let me know if you did not and a replacement will be mailed.

The second check you enclosed was for \$50.00 and identified as a donation. Thank you for that. We are struggling, but I am hopeful and confident that the membership and other Party supporters will rise to the occasion and see the SLP through what certainly is one of the darkest junctures it has ever faced. If we all do our best to rally our spirits and pull together, the SLP will surmount this obstacle just as it has surmounted many others in times past.

With best wishes, I am
Fraternally yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

March 26, 2008

Chris Dobreff
[of Section Cleveland]
Dear Comrade Dobreff:

Thank you for your \$200 contribution to the SLP Sentinel Fund. It is a welcomed boost to the Party's financial situation and attests to your unwavering support of the SLP. Both are sincerely appreciated.

The situation the Party faces is a tough one, but if the members and other supporters can get behind it as you have,
(Continued on page 2)

PROGRESS REPORT

Some Details on What Closing the SLP's National Offices Entailed—Newspapers, Archives and Storage

Before I start with what must necessarily be a brief report on the progress made toward shutting down the National Headquarters in an orderly way, I wish to thank all those members who have written to express their feelings about the decisions to suspend publication of *The People* and to remove everything from the headquarters. It is reassuring and helps convert a sad task into one that is at least bittersweet.

The three most important developments to report at this point are the following:

FIRST: Duke University recently accepted my offer to make a gift of a complete set of the *Daily People* (1900–1914) and a partial set of *The People* (April 1894–present) for their Special Collections Library. [See Autumn issue]

I was led to approach Duke by a book, Nicholson Baker's *Double Fold*, and his concern that bound volumes of many historic newspapers were being discarded by libraries or bought up and "cannibalized" to sell as novelty items. Baker started the American Newspaper Repository a number of years ago, but was forced to give it up because the collection grew too large and expensive for him to maintain. He turned the entire collection over to Duke, which is committed to preserving them and making them available to researchers.

I approached the curator of Duke's Special Collections, Andrew Armacost, about making a gift of *The People* to the university, and after a brief exchange of emails, he not only agreed to accept the two sets I offered, but to pay for the shipment of 62 cartons.

Incidentally, many of the cartons in which those volumes have been stored for years had to be reopened to check on the bindings and condition of the newspapers, and then repackaged to ensure they would survive the journey from California to North Carolina.

I am pleased to report that Mr. Armacost has informed me that all of the cartons arrived safely with their contents in good order. I also have reason to believe that the *Daily People* set now safely added to Duke's Special Collections Library is the only complete set of bound volumes still in existence.

SECOND: I have also been in touch with Mr. Helmut Knies of the Wisconsin State Historical Society, which has been the repository for most SLP files and records since 1907. Mr. Knies also has agreed to accept the shipping charge for all the files and records we have for the collection. The volume of material is considerable. It spans a 20-year period (1987–present) and could take as many as 60 cartons. All of that material has been accumulating over the years as the letters, reports and other documents involved moved from the active to the inactive files. Because many of the transfer files and cartons in which those records have been kept have also been moved several times and stacked on top of each other, most, if not all, must be repacked in sturdier cartons to ensure that they reach Wisconsin in good condition. That task could take a week or more, once I am able to turn my attention to it.

THIRD: I have rented a storage locker, but have yet to decide what will go into it. However, I wish to thank Emily Bills and Comrade Robert Burns for the generous contributions they made for that specific purpose. With their help, it should be possible to keep the locker for at least a year, if that proves necessary.

There is much more I could report, but that must suffice for now, except to add that Comrade Donna Bills takes what time she can from job hunting to come into the office to process the mail, attend to the bookkeeping and banking, and to publish this issue.

ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

THE VIEW FROM ENGLAND

March 10, 2008

Dear Donna,

Thank you for the email. . . .

I would only be stating the obvious by saying how sad I was to hear your news. It is tempting to speculate on why the SLP has reached this point, but to be useful a detailed and serious analysis of the objective / historical / social / organizational / programmatic circumstances and reasons is required, not a quick and possibly glib response.

And it is not only the SLP: While the SLP is unique in its program of Socialist Industrial Unionism combined with political action, there are a few (very few) other organizations in the world, which—while not embracing the essential principle of revolutionary industrial unionism—have a nonreformist stance, a nonopportunist outlook, a reasonably sound grasp of the materialist conception of history, a good understanding of the law of value, and recognize that the emancipation of the working class must be their own conscious revolutionary act, that socialism cannot be brought to “the masses” by an elitist vanguard. In these regards they overlap (to a great extent at least, although they may also have other differences) the position of the SLP. But they, too, are tiny, isolated, and generally diminishing in numbers and influence.

In the highly industrialized bourgeois-democratic (“advanced”) countries at least, the ruling class have got a very firm grip on the consciousness of the working class. By “education,” the press, radio, TV, cinema, religion, mysticism and pseudo-science, slick politicians, opportunist parties, nationalism, xenophobia, racism, pop-culture, and commercialized sport, they pretty well control—or at least divert into nonsystem-threatening channels—the thoughts and actions of millions of people. They have almost perfected the process into an art form. This is what we are faced with.

I do not make the above comments as a complete explanation of the demise of socialist organizations: as stated a detailed analysis is required. But it is the unfavorable climate that we have to operate in and must therefore be part of the reason.

I think it possible in the near future that the “center of gravity,” so to speak, could shift to countries like China, as they industrialize at a furious speed and the class struggle plays out in particularly brutal forms. Certainly the working class in China, India, and so on will have to fight back with militant organizations of their own, but to what extent (if any) genuine and viable socialist organizations with an internationalist outlook materialize in these countries remains to be seen.

Regarding literature: I will simplify my operations here by stocking fewer titles (both SLP and non-SLP) and producing a simpler (and less expensive to produce) catalogue. . . .

Fraternally
JIM PLANT,
England

[For a somewhat different view of the general situation, we refer members to the discussion on “SLP Problems and Solutions,” published as an appendix to the 2003 NEC Proceedings. Copies are still available to SLP members. Please send your request and \$5.00 to cover postage and handling to SLP, PO Box 218, Mountain View, CA 94042–0218. Be sure to specify that you are requesting the 2003 NEC Proceedings.]

WAGE-LABOR AND CAPITAL

By Karl Marx

What are wages? How are they determined? Marx answered these and other basic questions in this brief but fundamental work. An introduction by Frederick Engels is included to bring the terminology to the exactness of Marx's later and mature works. *A must read!*

Free at

www.slp.org



THE PEOPLE
The San Jose, Calif., building that served as the SLP's National Headquarters from August 2000 through August 2008.

...SPEAK OUT!

(Continued from page 1)

)things will work out.

With kind regards,

Fraternally yours,
DONNA BILLS
for the National Secretary

April 1, 2008

Dear Donna,

I was sorry to read in the newsletter
(Continued on page 2)

that you and Bob had to close up shop and business as usual for the time being. The SLP will rise again stronger than ever.

Enclosed is \$500.00. I shall try to send another \$500 next month. . . .

Fraternally yours,
LOIS REYNOLDS
Member-at-Large, Calif

April 8, 2008

Dear Comrade Reynolds:

Thank you very much for your letter of April 1, all the personal news it contained and especially for your very generous contribution of \$500.00. Your statement that “The SLP will rise again stronger than ever” has the ring of a slogan and, as I told Donna, almost prompted me to set the Sentinel Fund aside and start an SLP Phoenix Fund. The trouble with that is that I am not quite ready to concede that the SLP has gone up in flames. We are on the mat, no doubt about it, but I know that we can salvage the situation if only everyone will put their shoulder to the wheel and do their part. You certainly have done yours, and I thank you deeply. . . .

Fraternally yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

April 7, 2008

Lois Kubit

[of Section Cleveland]

Dear Comrade Kubit

Thank you very much for your letter of March 23 and the \$10.00 contribution that you enclosed. In addition, I thank you for freeing us from the necessity of offering you a refund on the unfulfilled portion of your subscription to *The People*. Frankly, I am not sure that we will have sufficient funds to offer refunds to the readership after we have managed to relocate, at least not immediately. It is to be hoped that most readers will display the same generosity as you have.

Wishing you all the best, I am
Fraternally yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

April 7, 2008

Reynold R. Elkins

[National Member-at-Large, Ohio]

Dear Comrade Elkins:

Thank you very much for your generous contribution of \$1,000.00, which I received on April 1. Your donation arrived at a very critical time and I am extremely grateful for it. The receipt you requested is attached.

As you undoubtedly know from the last issue of the *SLP Newsletter*, Donna dropped off the Party's payroll at the end of last month and is now out looking for other work. I will follow at the end of this month, or possibly sometime in May. In the meantime, I am working hard to safeguard the Party's archives and the things we will need to get things started again as soon as humanly possi-

ble after Donna and I find new jobs. I sincerely hope that you and all other Party members will stick by us until we can work things out and get a new start. If you do, I am confident that the day will not be long in coming when we can look back on the current situation as a dark but only brief moment in SLP history.

Again, I thank you deeply for your generous and timely contribution, and I wish you well.

Fraternally yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

April 7, 2008

Rosemary and John Gale

Phoenix, Arizona

Dear Comrade and Mr. Gale:

Thank you very much for your generous response to the appeal for financial support printed in the last issue of the *SLP Newsletter*.

Donna and I are extremely grateful for all the responses the National Office has received to that appeal, but those received from members and supporters who have known difficult times are especially meaningful to us. We know that \$150.00 represents a considerable sacrifice for you—enough to make a mere “thank you” seem a woefully inadequate expression of our appreciation.

I wish I knew of some better combination of words that could demonstrate how much we value your donation, but I do not. I can only hope you understand what I am trying to say.

Fraternally yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

April 7, 2008

Dear Donna,

We hope this small sum of money [\$65] will help.

Fraternally,
WALTER & MILLICENT LEIBFRITZ
of Section Cook County, Ill.

April 11, 2008

Dear Comrade Bills:

. . . The \$100 money order is for whatever is urgently needed in memory of Comrade Albert Ronis.

Fraternally,
MARVIN RONIS
Member-at-Large, N.J.

April 19, 2008

A quick note to accompany the small cheque (\$250) enclosed. Every little bit helps! I hope things improve soon—and good luck to all.

Fraternally,
BRIAN BLANCHARD
Australia

May 1, 2008

Dear Comrade Bills:

Enclosed . . . check is for \$500 from the section members as voted at our April 13 business meeting. Thank you both for your continuing efforts.

ROBERT P. BURNS,
Organizer Section Cleveland

May 1, 2008

Donna Bills,

Enclosed is \$20 for any costs the Party needs. I'm going to try to budget this much each month. We've got to get the paper going as soon as possible. I've written to a couple of other party members to encourage them to do the same.

I know you and Robert are busy looking for jobs so you don't need to write me back.

Fraternally,
CHARLES BATEMAN
Member-at-Large, Calif.

...RESUMPTION FUND

(Continued from page 1)

For one thing, I no longer need medical insurance, and I only need enough salary to supplement what Comrade Donna Bills receives on her new job. For another, I would only need that “supplement” for about one year, when I will become eligible for full social security.

Beyond that, we would need enough to pay for a place for me to work, enough to buy supplies and to pay for vital services, enough to repair and to replace office equipment as needed, and enough to cover printing, mailing and shipping costs.

The membership alone may not be able to finance such an operation; but, then, the membership is not alone. The SLP has enough friends and supporters to subsidize any shortfall—provided the membership will do its fair share.

Motivating the Party's supporters to supplement your efforts will require some concrete evidence of the SLP's determination to publish *The People* again—and to keep it in print. That means putting one or two new issues into their hands—and that means raising enough cash to get a start.

How much cash would it take?

Well, preferably one-half of what it would cost to publish *The People* for one year, but no less than one-third of that amount, i.e., \$17,000–\$25,000. Split the difference and say \$21,000, but nothing less than \$17,000.

If you miss *The People* as much as I do, if you want to see it in print again, and if you think I am capable of doing the job, that is the amount of help you will have to provide. That is what it would take to get a start—and it is needed now, before SLP supporters start to think that *The People* is gone forever and that the SLP has gone with it.

Again, I am ready, willing and (I believe) able to do the job. The rest is entirely up to you. To paraphrase the inimitable, if indigestible, Mr. Bush: “You are the decider!”

Please do everything you can to help by sending your contribution to the SLP or *The People*, P.O. Box 218, Mountain View, CA 94042–0218, or by **clicking here** to donate online, or by using the coupon, below.

Sincerely yours,
ROBERT BILLS
National Secretary

THE PEOPLE'S RESUMPTION FUND

The People
P.O. Box 218
Mountain View, CA 94042–0218

Dear Friends:

Enclosed is my contribution of \$ _____ for *The People's* Resumption Fund. Please do everything possible to put *The People* back in print again soon.

NAME

ADDRESS APT.

CITY STATE ZIP

Or click here to contribute online: <http://www.slp.org/support.html>