

## FRUSTRATION

## Even Superior Graphite can give you black lung

By Al DiFranco

**T**HERE ARE NO GANGS WRITING graffiti on the walls of Bedford Park, a quiet residential neighborhood on Chicago's southwest side, but graphite blowing in the wind is much tougher to erase.

The elderly residents of the modest brick row houses and bungalows that border Bedford Park's factories live in a fine mist of graphite—the stuff that lead pencils and powdered lubricants for locks are made of—that settles on the block when the wind blows from the southwest.

Cats and dogs walking across soot-covered lawns leave ink-black pawprints on the sidewalks, prints that have to be scrubbed before they begin to fade in the rain.

Conscientious housekeepers dust black powder from furniture several times a day. And by now they know they'll have to bleach their pillowcases if they fail to shampoo the stuff out of their hair each night before going to bed.

There have been meetings, petitions and protests since August 1975, but so far the best solution seems to be a strong cleaning fluid.

Upwind, at Superior Graphite Company and Bearcat Tire Company, no one is willing to admit whose black powder is to blame.

According to Bedford Park environmental coordinator Lincoln Scott, it's not carbon black—the product of Bearcat Tire—but graphite from Superior. Scott claims fugitive dust from graphite dumping on a windy day is the cause.

Two weeks ago, Scott told Superior to

"clean up their bad habits" and start loading trucks inside the plant, out of the wind. That may eliminate part of the source, but the neighbors are skeptical.

One resident, who refused to be identified for fear of reprisal by business clients in the industrial suburb, thought Scott's optimism about solving the problem was "bullshit."

"You've got the federal, state, county, Chicago and Bedford Park EPA's on this thing, but what the hell are they producing and what the hell are we paying for?" he said.

Bearcat's manager, Frank Moore, is non-committal on the guilt or innocence of his company.

"No one really knows what is causing the pollution," said Moore. "It was I who suggested that Scott get the damned stuff analyzed," although he hastened to add that "Mr. Scott says he has proved that Bearcat has nothing to do with it."

Superior Graphite manager Stanley Gratt said his company has taken samples of the pollutants to independent laboratories for analysis, but "we can't get involved with publicity—meetings, talking to people."

David Rosenbaum, chief investigator for the environmental control division of the Illinois attorney general's office, said the polluters "always say they are going to stop polluting. But usually they stop for just six or seven months."

"You've got to get them in the pocket to really make them do it," Rosenbaum added. Initial fines of up to \$10,000 and \$1,000 a day thereafter are possible, he said.

But when will there be solid evidence for a conviction? "Your guess is as good as mine," Rosenbaum told IN THESE



A Superior Graphite worker sweeping up loose graphite.

TIMES. "The attorney general's office is not in the business of putting other people out of business" with heavy fines.

And what is being done to protect workers from graphite and carbon black dust inside the plants?

"Nothing" at Bearcat, according to manager Moore, who said Occupational Safety and Health Administration officials consider graphite no more than a "nuisance dust." Moore said he's been criticized for making filter masks "optional."

EPA officials and others involved in the case echo Moore's confidence that graphite dust is mostly a nuisance, but Mrs. Lillian Goon, 30-year resident of Bedford Park, claims her husband sometimes "sneezes for an hour" on mornings of heavy dust.

Only Rosenbaum is willing to say flatly that "any particulate that enters your lungs is harmful. It plugs up your lungs."

According to the 1974 edition of *Industrial Toxicology*, pneumoconiosis—coalminers' "black lung disease"—has been reported from exposure to graphite dust in mining, milling and grinding operations.

## Women's prison may close

After 16 months of operation, the Bureau of Prisons says "in all likelihood" it will close the long-term maximum security unit at the federal Correctional Institution for women in Alderson, W. Va., within the next year.

The announcement follows stiff opposition to the maximum security unit from at least ten prison reform groups including the National Prison Project of the American Civil Liberties Union.

The ACLU hails the dismantling of the maximum security unit as a "major victory," but says it intends to "make it clear that people are watching Alderson more closely than ever." The group also plans to meet with inmates and staff at Alderson later this month, while the U.S. Civil Rights Commission continues its investigation of guard brutality and

other abuses at the prison.

Five women remain in the maximum lockup, with a sixth scheduled to be placed there soon. According to the ACLU, most of the women have been told they will be released to the prison's general population if they maintain what Alderson officials call "clear conduct."

Women involved in "subversive" activities, deemed "notorious," involved in highly publicized cases or simply serving long sentences have all been candidates for maximum security.

Opponents charge selection of prisoners for maximum security confinement—in the case of Alderson it's a life centered around three corridors—is arbitrary and typical of the selection process throughout the federal penal system.

## Inflation Rx

Continued from page 3.

istration, while pledging to fight inflation, often does just the opposite. Deregulation of natural gas, which Carter pushed through Congress, will dramatically increase energy costs and higher interest rates will escalate the cost of housing, if the construction industry doesn't simply collapse.

## Social contract unlikely.

Despite a nod to importance of inflation in necessities in his TV speech (except for energy), Carter's anti-inflation program is mainly aimed at preserving the dollar as international currency and, by extension, preventing the collapse of the world capitalist market. That preoccupation reflects the growing subordination of the American economy to the vicissitudes of the international economy and the deepening difficulty of the U.S. acting as kingpin of international capitalism, despite the advantages to U.S. multinationals.

Unlike some advanced capitalist countries, there is little prospect for labor, capital and the government arranging a "social contract" governing distribution of income within which unions and employers can bargain. Neither business nor labor is sufficiently centralized organizationally for that; business is politically hostile to such social democracy; and unions, lacking a clear political vehicle, feel that their institutional role as wage broker would be wiped out if political decisions usurped traditional bargaining. The AFL-CIO call for mandatory controls points in the direction of such a social contract, but the political weakness of organized labor and workers generally lessens the chance that any such deal would favor labor's interests.

For a week Carter tried to "finesse the issue of inflation politically," according to American University economics professor Howard Wachtel, but the threat of collapse of the world capitalist econ-

omy did not permit it. Mandatory controls, imposed in a recession when labor is even weaker, remain a possibility, but Carter may first experiment with "tax-based incomes policies," or TIP—rewarding or penalizing employers with tax adjustments for holding down wages.

## Everyone will be screwed.

Aside from anxiety about preserving real incomes leading to a conservative political mood, some leftist economists argue that inflation is not as serious a problem for the poor, workers or even the retired (whose social security is now protected against inflation) as it is for bankers and bondholders. "Is the cure worse than the disease?" one union economist asks about the inflation palliatives. "Yes. The only argument for fighting inflation is that we're stuck with capitalism, and with inflation, capitalism is going to collapse and everyone will be screwed anyway."

Within the confines of capitalism, leftist economists tend to favor a variety of actions: Alperovitz-style structural reforms of specific sectors, mandatory controls focusing on prices in the major inflationary sectors, some progressive form of "social contract" or incomes policy, or measures to protect real incomes without worrying about inflation unduly. The latter includes everything from militant union wage demands (that would in turn lead to new capital investment and higher productivity) to varieties of indexing wages or taxes to inflation (also favored by conservative "monetarist" economists).

All are preferable to Carter's approach, but none is likely to eradicate the current inflation, which stems from deep-seated dilemmas of the capitalist order complicated by new problems concerning the resource base in oil and other materials of contemporary industrial technology. "It's hard to find a radical position on inflation in this economy," says Wachtel, who argues for protecting incomes against inflation rather than trying to stop it. "It would require such a revolution that you might as well have another revolution, a socialist revolution."

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# IN THE WORLD



This child was wounded by shrapnel during the fighting that broke out last month in Masaya, Nicaragua.

## Talks open amidst continued fighting

By Ron Ridenour

SAN JOSE, COSTA RICA

**T**HE BROAD OPPOSITION FRONT (FAO) of Nicaragua opened negotiations with an organization of American States (OAS) mediation team last week by presenting a non-negotiable demand for the "immediate removal of President Anastasio Somoza from all political and military positions," the removal of him and his family from Nicaragua, and the expropriation and nationalization of his property (estimated at between 400 and 500 million dollars, or one quarter of the economy).

The opposition also proposed a 16-point program for a democratic government that includes civil liberties for all; agrarian reform; improved working conditions, especially for miners; adequate health and welfare; universal schooling (50 percent of Nicaraguans are illiterate); the reconstitution of the national guard; and free elections in 1981.

Until 1981, FAO proposed rule by "The Three"—Sergio Ramirez, a lawyer representing *Los Doses* (The Twelve), a year-old group of professionals, businessmen and priests; Rafael Blaz, a lawyer and president of UNDEL, a coalition including the Conservative Party and the Nicaraguan Socialist party (PSN); and Alfonso Robelo, an engineer who represents business interests and is said to have powerful friends in the U.S. The OAS mediation team, led by Bowdler

from the U.S., Alfredo Opias from Guatemala and Ramon Emilio Jimenez from the Dominican Republic, had their own proposal for an interim government, if Somoza decides to step down. It would include an official of Somoza's national guard, run by his son Jose, who had been next in line for the presidency.

This arrangement, Casimiro Stelo, one of The Twelve, said in San Jose, would only result in "renewed armed struggle."

As negotiations started in Managua, *Los Doses*, in a first anniversary statement, said that there could be no solution to the crisis "if the Somoza system is not dismantled and Frente Sandinista Liberacion Nacional (FSLN) and the FAO are not allowed to participate in each stage of the nation of the future."

The Twelve warned the U.S. against intervening on behalf of Somoza.

"The half century support of the dictatorship must end. It can no longer prevent the peoples' liberation. The only thing the U.S. can do to show its respect for Nicaragua is to stop all support of the dictatorship and ally with the poor and those who have suffered under Somoza."

Neither Sotelo nor Ernesto Cardenal, a Nicaraguan priest who joined the FSLN last year, believes the U.S. can any longer support Somoza, who is "thoroughly isolated and universally repudiated."

Cardenal told *IN THESE TIMES* that the FSLN is growing steadily and will "fight until victory."

Somoza's 7,500 troops outnumber the guerrilla army and are augmented by

Continued on page 10.

## Some Sandinistas condemn the talks

*IN THESE TIMES* correspondent Michele Labrut, taperecorder in hand, was blindfolded and taken to meet with Sandinista Liberation organization guerrilla Bayardo Arce "somewhere in Nicaragua."

Arce is on the national board of the Prolonged Popular War (PPW) faction, the most radical of the three Sandinista groups. Labrut reports, however, that the Marxist PPW guerrillas have been plagued for nearly two years by bickering over ideology and tactics.

A second faction—the Proletarians—are trying to organize students and labor unionists.

It was the third faction—the Terceristas—alone who attacked the National Palace Aug. 22 in Managua. The group has allied itself with democratic-minded bourgeoisie and, according to Labrut, is dedicating itself to almost immediate insurrection.

She described Arce as "a young man who talks slowly with a low voice and a firm glance that has been forged by many years of political militancy." She said he apologized for the tight security, leaving his Alstom sub-machine gun on a chair during the interview.

As a member of the national board of the Sandinistas, how do you analyze the situation?

Because of the repression, the work of many organizations among the masses has been delayed. Masses move through leaders who, because of the repression, are obliged to act clandestinely.

We are making guerrilla war, trying to

strengthen our forces in the fundamental parts of our army. We believe that if we don't abandon our struggle the prospects are good, because there are sufficient objective bases for the prolongation of the crisis. On the economic side, for example, Somoza is without a cent. He can't keep the people content, the bourgeoisie is hurting. There's no money and much resentment.

The people's hatred of the dictatorship has been increased, and internationally the regime is weak. The *gringos* have to think it over again about giving Somoza their support. We're trying to show that even if the *gringos* turn back to him, we will continue to have popular support, openly or not.

How long do you think the people will support this sort of situation?

We guide the masses. Conditions do not exist to launch a rapid offensive. It is not only with will that you make the revolution. What is necessary is political work to make it understood that people have to hold out and at the same time wage guerrilla war to show that we are not retreating from the military scene.

What is the Sandinistas position regarding the negotiations conducted by the large opposition front?

The Group of Twelve only speaks for the Terceristas—the third faction. They don't count with the Proletarians and they count even less with us. The Sandinistas do not agree, do not accept—

Continued on page 10.