A Youth and Student Bill of Rights for the 1990s

The storm clouds of the Reagan era are passing. But like a destructive hurricane, they have left in their wake twisted social wreckage. Much of the damage is serious and will take years to repair.

The wreckage includes 35 million Americans in poverty, 5 million homeless, 20 million unemployed, a budget deficit of $200 billion per year, growing malnutrition, infant mortality, illiteracy, disease, and a national debt of $2 trillion dollars.

The Reagan Administration was the most anti-labor, anti-people, anti-youth and racist administration in our history. It fueled the largest peacetime military buildup and supported policies of nuclear superiority, nuclear first-strike and intervention. Reaganism meant a bonanza of record profits for big business on top of a $600 billion tax gift. Meanwhile, working people took it on the chin. Real wages plummeted, unions were busted and factories closed. The Reagan Administration made every effort to destroy civil rights and create an atmosphere promoting racial hatred and violence.

The Reagan Adminstration was the most corrupt and degenerate in history. Over 100 officials were forced to leave office for misdeeds. While he talked tough about drug use, Reagan's administration used drugs as an instrument of its foreign policy, creating a drug epidemic in our country from the importation of tons of cocaine in exchange for arms for contras.

The Reagan Administration was the most anti-democratic because of its attempts to set up a shadow government in the White House basement. It was the most ultra-right, anti-communist administration, maintaining close ties to fascist-tinged groups.

Reaganism created a crisis in education by cutting funding to the bone, including deep slashes in student financial aid. Jobs and job training programs for young people were cut and eliminated, as was funding for social services, recreation and drug programs.

The Reagan hurricane created crises for our cities, financial system, basic industries, housing, healthcare, mass transportation and the environment.

Youth and the 1990's

But these were also years in which the American people fought tooth and nail to defeat these policies. Because of this Reagan was forced to meet Gorbachev and sign the INF treaty. He was defeated on contra aid and the Bork nomination. Because of these defeats hurricane Reagan is history.

Will life be different under the Bush administration? Despite his claims to a "kinder and gentler" America, it is clear that Bush intends to continue the policies of Reaganism.

But times have changed making the world a different place. Today the cold war is ending. As a result of the Soviet unilateral peace initiatives, Soviet nuclear and chemical weapons stockpiles are being destroyed, their military budget reduced, their troops are being brought home. Still not a peep from the Bush administration. Only plans for new weapons.

The majority of Americans, young and old, are for peace and disarmament, democracy, against racism, apartheid and intervention. The American people are in a new fighting mood. The Bush administration will be compelled by life to move in a different direction.

Victory depends on the unity of all who oppose the Bush policies. Young people's problems are not separate from those of the working class, and other sections of the American people who are being hit hard by big oil's man in the White House, George Bush. At the same time we believe young people need a common agenda to unite around.

A Recovery Act from Reaganism

To move in the opposite direction from the Bush agenda requires a massive program to rebuild a drug-free America from top to bottom: new housing, bridges, water systems, mass transportation, day care centers, schools, recreation and sports facilities. This would create millions of jobs, and mean training thousands of technicians, architects, engineers, conservationists and scientists.

Emergency legislation is needed to fund research to find a cure for AIDS. Massive funding is also needed to restore and expand drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs.

Rebuilding America means massive cuts in the military budget and higher taxes on big business and the rich. Cutting the military budget is only possible through passage of the INF treaty, a nuclear testing moratorium, a 50% reduction in strategic nuclear weapons and an end to Star Wars.