

A City in Need of Shelter

by Richard Freeman

In Philadelphia, one-sixth of all households pay 50% or more of their income for housing. The number of vacant apartments in the city has doubled over the past three decades; the rate of evictions from homes is running at 600-1,000 per month; and, at least 33,000 affordable housing units need to be built for the poor. Philadelphia echoes the nation's economic crisis: Its loss of 230,000 decent-paying manufacturing jobs over the past 35 years has created a large number of poor, who cannot afford housing.

The 2000 Decennial Census reported that Philadelphia has 589,280 households. Some 261,251 of them, 35%, earned annual incomes of less than \$20,000, which should classify all of them as poor. And even above that level, another 129,109 Philadelphia households pay 30% or more of their income on housing. Moreover, 90,376 households (earning \$20,000 or less) pay a staggering 50% or of their income for shelter.

More than half of all the housing units in Philadelphia were built before 1934. It has 70,009 units that are vacant, double the level of 1975. Philadelphia needs massive housing construction. In a March, 2003 study, entitled, *Closing the Gap: Housing (un)Affordability in Philadelphia*, authors Amy Hiller and Dennis Culhane reported, "There are at least 30,000 fewer affordable housing units in Philadelphia than needed for rental households with incomes below \$20,000." The authors conclude that the City of Philadelphia needs to build 33,000 more units just for the poorest of the poor. But the great age of the city's housing stock defines a building project of perhaps 50,000-100,000 units.

In the U.S., an estimated 6 million households live on the edge of homelessness, because of the unaffordability of housing. Many poor families can afford to pay for housing only because of the assistance of Section 8 vouchers provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which pays for a portion of these families housing cost. However, the Bush-Cheney White House proposes new rules to cut \$1.6 billion from the Section 8 program in the Fiscal Year 2004-05 budget, which means that 250,000 households nationwide are threatened with being thrown into homelessness after Oct. 1, of which several thousand are in Philadelphia. Federal funding to Philadelphia has already been slashed by 8%.

High-priced, high-rise apartments may be built at the site of the dismantled Philadelphia Navy Yard. But at the Richard Allen Homes in North Philadelphia, 1,324 units for the poor, were torn down, and 408 duplex homes were built in their place. Of the new duplex units, 178 have been set aside for the poor. Where are the rest of the former residents to live?

The IMF Is Killing Mexico With Thirst

by Alberto Vizcarra Osuna

In the Summer of 1982, Mexican President José López Portillo launched the construction of the Fuerte-Mayo Canal in the border area between the northwestern states of Sonora and Sinaloa, for the purpose of reactivating the Water Plan of the Northwest (PLHINO). But ever since then, all succeeding governments have submitted to the fiscal austerity and budget-balancing policies dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The result has been turning Mexico away from public investment in basic infrastructure and, simultaneously, the suspension of strategic public works for national economic development.

Apart from the Ibero-American Labor Committees, and several growers' organizations like the Permanent Forum of Rural Producers, which have maintained a systematic support of the PLINHO, inspired by the economic concepts of Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., the great majority of government, agricultural, and business institutions in Mexico, along with the political parties, have succumbed to the illusion that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and globalization would guarantee the region's future and the country's economic growth.

Nonetheless, the prolonged drought that has ravaged the states of Sonora, Chihuahua, and the northern part of Sinaloa for more than a decade, leaving hundreds of thousands of hectares parched and fallow, has finally driven many people back to reality, and the PLINHO is once again receiving publicity as a much-needed project, without which there can be no future to the region's—and the country's—plans for food self-sufficiency.

What Really Is the PLHINO?

During the six-year term of President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, his government's technocrats rebaptized it the Hydraulic System of the Northwest. The new name was not merely a semantic change. By abandoning the term "Plan" for that of "System," the disease of Salinism killed the original concept of the PLHINO, which was to link the hydroelectric dams, thereby assuring the transfer of surplus water from Nayarit, and southern Sinaloa to the northern lands of that same state and to all of southern Sonora as well. Today, as then, the arguments of these idiots is reducible to the alleged "financial inviability" of the original project. This is the same chorus of fools who faithfully repeat the "analysis" of the World Bank that there will be an inevitable war over water