

Dealing With NYC Budget Crunch

N.Y. Budget Action Network, a recently formed coalition initiated by the National Committee for Independent Political Action, has developed a 10-point budget proposal to address New York City's devastating financial crisis which will severely curtail services to the people. With the demand that services in health, education and housing be **increased**, not cut, the Network's carefully researched proposals indicate how the city and state can garner millions of dollars of needed funds through such means as:

raising property tax by \$300 million and using \$100 million to lower assessments in low-income neighborhoods;

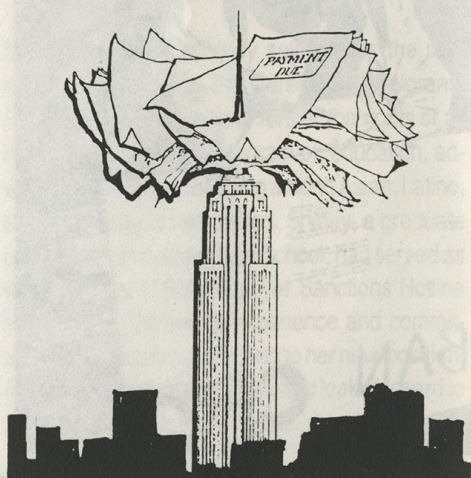
increasing the capital gains tax rate;

eliminating tax deductions for interest on corporate debts caused by mergers; and

eliminating investment and employment credit loopholes in the state franchise tax.

AAUPA is among the many organizations endorsing the Network's equitable budget program for New Yorkers.

These proposals will be pressed through lobbying elected officials, participation in budget hearings, a projected press conference on the steps of City Hall immediately following the Dinkins administration budget announcement, and a town hall meeting on the budget issue.



Who Are We?

We are a group of Asian American activists and community workers who came together in 1987 to address a variety of issues affecting Asian communities in the New York area. We are concerned with the economic and political inequities of this society and the wide range of problems that have resulted - from reckless interventions in Third World countries to a steady erosion in civil rights and economic opportunities for people of color here.

Our work is grounded in the Asian American communities. In addition, we are always seeking ways to work together with poor and working classes, and other people of color. We have:

Shared a leadership role in the Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence.

Raised money for the family of Vuthikrai Thienvanich, a Thai-Chinese man killed by NYC transit police on 12/12/87.

Organized "Jazz for Jackson", a fundraiser for the 1988 presidential campaign.

Participated in 1988 and 1990 efforts to demand a city budget that would better serve the disenfranchised.

Worked in a coalition of people of color opposed to the 1989 NYC charter revision giveaway.

Been active in the Community-Labor Immigrant Rights Coalition and its campaign to repeal the repressive employer sanctions provision of IRCA 1986.

Supported the 1988 strike by the Chun Cha Fu restaurant workers.

Helped to organize support for the CPC construction workers, and held a forum in 6/89 on exploitative job training programs.

If you would like to be on our mailing list, please contact us at:

AAUPA
Knickerbocker Station
P.O. Box 1102
New York, N.Y. 10002



Asian American Union for Political Action

NEWS

Feminist Takes An Anti-Asian Job

Last month, anti-abortion activists were startled when the U.S. territory of Guam passed, virtually unopposed, the most restrictive abortion legislation in this country. In a front-page *New York Times* article on March 16, 1990, Janet Benshoof, director of the Reproductive Rights Project for the American Civil Liberties Union was quoted as saying "It's Pearl Harbor for women." The *Times* then featured the quote in the caption under an accompanying map.

Many Asian Americans were distressed at the gratuitous allusion to Pearl Harbor, especially by a pro-choice activist. AAUPA, along with Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence, Japanese American Social Services, Inc., Organization of Asian Women, and Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund sent a letter to the editor, with copies to Ms. Benshoof and the ACLU, protesting the racism reflected in her comment.

"Anti-Asian racism continues to blame all Asian Americans for Japan's actions against the United States in World War II... and to characterize Japanese Americans and all Asian Americans as a 'sneaky people'... This resulted in the incarceration of 120,000 Japanese Americans... Unfortunately, Ms. Benshoof's insensitive characterization only fuels the already felt alienation many Asian American and other women of color feel when dealing with many of those in the women's movement."

We have since received an apologetic letter from Ms. Benshoof. Unfortunately, this is only one example of the Japan-bashing and anti-Asian sentiments that abound not only in popular culture, but also among progressive people.



CPC Vs. Workers

The Chinese American Planning Council (CPC), is reeling as top managers are "laid off" and emergency restructuring is planned. CPC, the largest social service provider for New York's Chinese, has over 600 employees and receives over \$20 million in public contracts.

However, community activists charge that CPC's latest woes result from years of mismanagement, poor labor-management relations based on cheap labor practices, and burgeoning real estate involvement. The labor and immigrant rights group, Chinese Staff and Workers Association, has been providing technical assistance to several groups of CPC employees.

In May 89, the Second Circuit court decision held in favor of a group of immigrant construction trainees who were fired for organizing their own union. The court affirmed that they were protected under the National Labor Relations Act.

CPC is also being investigated for violating federal prevailing wage laws, when it paid the construction

workers as little as \$5 an hour, instead of union rates. CPC could be liable for over one million dollars in back pay.

AAUPA members have been on the picket lines in support of the workers. Last year, we organized a forum on how this type of job training program was actually just a source of cheap labor, exploiting people of color.

In 2 pending cases, a group of CPC kitchen workers has petitioned to join the Hong Ning Workers Union. CPC's lawyer argued before the NLRB that most of the over 55-year-old employees funded through a government contract should not be in a union. Another group of Asian and Latino maintenance workers at CPC also requested to form a unit for mutual protection.

Jackson Chin, the attorney representing these two groups states, "CPC acts as a feudal lord. It would rather waste thousands of dollars on legal delays, than to permit these aggrieved workers their basic rights".

CPC workers and community supporters picket CPC's annual New Year dinner fundraiser. Picket signs accuse CPC of cheating immigrant workers in unpaid jobs.



The Peace Dividend

With the momentous, ongoing transformation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, activists in this country are calling on our government to end its Cold War stance, not only in the international arena, but also in its economic policies which are geared to feed an insatiable military budget. The body count in this country has been high - with spiraling homelessness, chronic unemployment, deteriorating education and health care, a drug epidemic, ... the list goes on.

Now is the time to call for the "Peace Dividend", a reallocation of resources from military spending to human needs.

On Wednesday, May 2nd, New York joined 34 other cities in a National Town Meeting on "The U.S. after the Cold War: Claiming the Peace Dividend." AAUPA has joined with diverse labor, civil rights and economic justice groups across the city in endorsing this campaign.

Clearly, the Bush administration has been reluctant to let go of its war machine (what urgent national security threat called for the invasion of the nation of Panama?). Although there has been some call in Congress for symbolic cuts in the military budget, there is no guarantee that even these small amounts will benefit working class and poor communities. It will take an organized, sustained effort to attain a significant shift in our government's priorities.

Immigrant Rights Advocate

Shirley Lung was recently selected as the new executive director of the Center for Immigrants Rights (CIR). CIR seeks to further the rights of all immigrants, through a program of education, advocacy and coalition building among Asian, Latino, and Caribbean communities. Shirley, a graduate of New York University Law School, had served as the director of CIR's Employer Sanctions Hotline since 1988. She brings experience and commitment to community organizing to her new position. AAUPA congratulates Shirley and looks forward to collaborative work in the future.

The Right To Work

AAUPA, along with civil rights and community groups, is urging immediate letters and phone calls to Congress. Most Congresspeople have been slow to act to repeal an immigration law that heavily impacts Asians and Latinos. Civic groups are asking that the public pressure legislators.

"Asians and minorities should not be treated as 'second-class' in the job market", said an activist. "Most people are not even aware when they are being discriminated against".

A recent 1990 GAO Report submitted to Congress concluded that "a widespread pattern of discrimination" in hiring authorized workers was generated by the employer sanctions provisions of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. This law requires that employers demand work authorization documents from everyone before hiring. However, some employers simply avoid hiring certain groups, while others use such power and information to exploit vulnerable workers. Numerous other studies and reports from fair employment, human rights, and immigrant rights agencies have documented abuses including increased levels of discrimination in hiring based on race, foreign appearance and origin.

Other stories of sexual harassment, retaliation, unfair labor practices, and unpaid or withheld wages faced by both documented and undocumented workers are emerging, showing that the law is a serious threat to many new immigrant workers.



Can You Count?

The U.S. Census is undercounting many communities. We need to be counted for more services, community aid, and political representation. If you know someone in need of counseling to fill out the forms, Chinese speakers are available between 9 AM to 3 AM at the toll-free number.



免費電話 1-800-365-2101



Do The Right Thing?

The boycott of two Korean stores on Church Avenue in Brooklyn is now in its fourth month. As in the past, this neighborhood protest around the allegations of assault against a black (in this case, Haitian) customer by a particular Korean grocer rapidly escalated to a call for all Korean businesses to leave the community. Korean merchants have become a lightning rod for African Americans' frustration and anger at their systematic economic marginalization.

AAUPA members have viewed these developments with alarm. We believe that unity with the African American and Latino communities is essential to our struggle for civil rights and economic justice. To build these alliances, we have focused on coalition work with African American and Latino activists on issues such as racist violence, police brutality, the Jesse Jackson campaign, and discrimination in the construction trades. We now see how fragile this unity has been.

To begin to grapple with these issues, on March 11th AAUPA held an informal discussion, to which we invited some Korean American activists. The

meeting provided us with valuable insights and some possible approaches to this complex problem. We came to better understand the boycotts' profound effect on the Korean American community, which sees a major means of survival being threatened. It also became clearer how this conflict, and the underlying economic issues, are critical stumbling blocks to building unity with the African American community.

We agreed that, as progressive Asian Americans, we should be educating our communities and challenging their racism towards other people of color. On the other hand, we need to confront anti-Asian sloganeering and scapegoating, no matter what the source. Given the economic roots of the problem, we should seek ways of addressing the issue of economic empowerment together with the African American community. On a neighborhood level, this might consist of pressuring banks on their lack of small business or home improvement loans in communities of color, protesting development that doesn't provide affordable housing, demanding better streets, lights and public transportation.

Asian American activists and other progressive people must continue to search for solutions to this explosive problem.

Seeking A New Voice

The formation of an independent political party in New York State has been initiated by African Americans United for Political Power (AAUPP), to "provide a new independent line and voice for progressives." Although the new party would offer a slate of candidates including that of governor, it was stressed at its first meeting on April 2nd, that it would be based on non-compromising positions and platform rather than around individuals. Fifty thousand votes for the gubernatorial candidate would qualify the party for permanent ballot status in New York State "as a political voice for racial and economic justice, adequate health care, jobs, housing, opposition to the nuke-port, etc.," according to the flyer announcing a founding political conference to be held on Saturday, May 12th, 9 AM to 9 PM at the New School Auditorium, 66 West 12th Street, NYC.

Asians desiring to hear more about this new formation are invited to a discussion by Jitu Weusi of the new party on Wednesday, May 9th, 6:30 PM at Local 1199, 310 W. 43rd Street 10th floor. All interested are invited to attend.

