

The truth is that “labor flexibility” already exists, and only lacks some official title. As Secretary General of the Commerce Workers Armando Cavallieri charged, “Companies, primarily the foreign ones . . . are driving people into situations of semi-slavery.”

On March 13, during a meeting at the Labor Ministry with representatives of the Argentine Chamber of Supermarkets, and with Ovidio Bole, president of the Federation of the Chamber of Supermarkets, Cavallieri charged that supermarket workers worked shifts as much as 19 and even up to 25 straight hours. Regarding those extra hours, he said that each “supermarket pays what it wants, and in the case of Carrefour [one of the major Argentine supermarkets] it pays nothing extra—those who complain are fired. There is no compensation for those who work Sundays. In one Unimarc store, their work schedules are one week of mornings, one of afternoons, and one of evenings. The hours are totally arbitrary.”

Police-state tax law changes

One more ingredient in this Nazi economic model is tax persecution, with classic police-state methods. Former IMF official Carlos Silvani, who heads up Argentina’s tax collection agency DGI, revealed that the newly “reformed” Criminal Tax Law, which began to be implemented at the beginning of this year, has already yielded “124 criminal charges and 150 fugitives” for tax crimes against the state. “Five-thousand [tax and trade] infractions have been detected; 900 shutdowns have already been enforced, while the rest are either being processed or the owners have received warnings.” Silvani complained of the slowness of the judiciary in processing the DGI charges. Thus, in the first three months of this year, the government collected \$11.5 billion, 8.9% more than in the same period of 1996. According to Silvani, “This is more or less in the range of what was expected, and means a consolidation of the goals pledged to the IMF.”

Determined that no republican institutions, including the judiciary, should get in the way of the DGI’s zeal to collect taxes, a bloc of ruling party congressmen presented a bill to the Chamber of Deputies on March 26, that would prevent judges from “obstructing” the DGI’s efforts to shut down businesses that were not keeping up their tax payments.

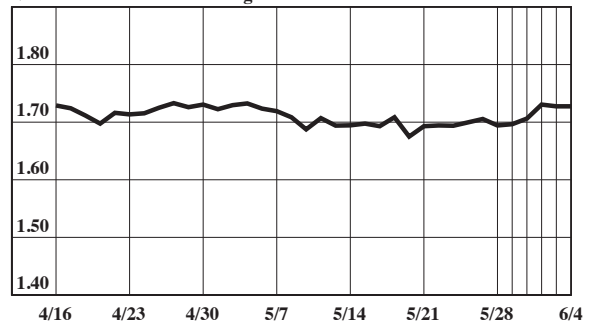
On top of all this, there are the privatizations of 28 Argentine airports, among these the International Airport at Ezeiza and the Buenos Aires Aeroparque; the Argentine postal service, Encotesa; the National Mortgage Bank (BHN); and Argentina’s three nuclear plants.

Immersed in the virtual reality of the markets, President Menem sent his people the following message from Germany, where he traveled on a state visit at the end of May: “I urge you to read the statements of the great world leaders regarding Argentina. . . . So, what more do you want? What more? Things are good, they are better than ever. Argentina has never been in a situation like the one it is in today.” As someone once said, the Emperor has no clothes.

Currency Rates

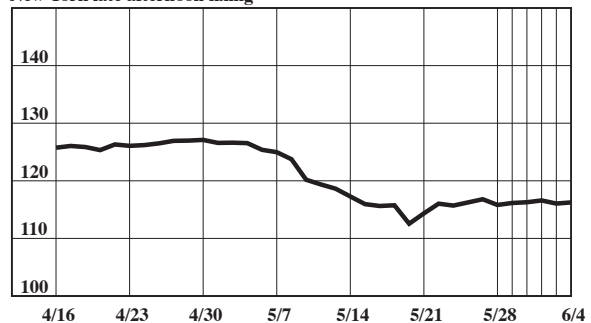
The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



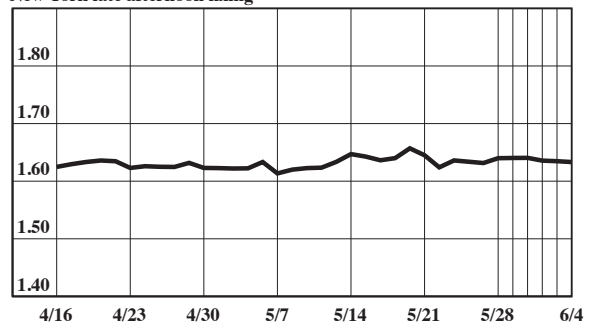
The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



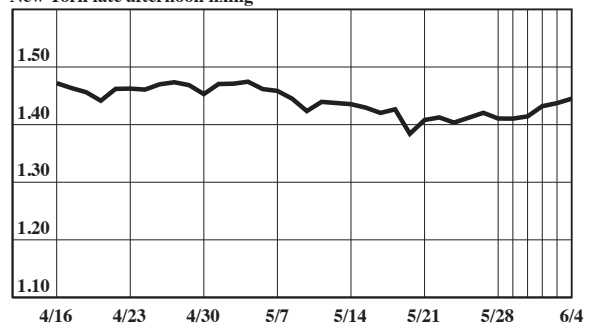
The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing



Proposed air pollution standards will do nothing to save lives

by Colin Lowry

Under the banner of creating cleaner air, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency proposed tighter standards for ground-level ozone and particulate matter in November 1996. Although these standards would force industries to install billions of dollars of emission-control equipment, there is increasing evidence that the standards are not based on real science. The EPA claims that the new standards are justified, because they will save lives; the reality is that the tighter standards not only will *not* save any lives, but instead will put many more lives in jeopardy, by shutting down industrial production, stifling economic growth, and forcing more people into poverty. It is ironic that the EPA is claiming that there are more cases of respiratory disease, with air pollution as the culprit, although the nation's air quality has been improving steadily over the last 20 years, according to the EPA's own reports.

The proposed new standards would tighten the ozone standard from 0.12 parts per million (ppm) average over 1 hour, to 0.08 ppm average over 8 hours. Also, new standards for previously unregulated particulates of 2.5 microns (2.5 millionths of a meter) in size, known as PM 2.5, will be introduced. The present standards, resulting from the Clean Air Act of 1990, have already burdened the United States with increasing costs of pollution controls, and there are still at least 70 areas of the country that do not meet the present standards, and some that never could.

The evidence for the new standards is based on flawed statistical correlation studies, and has almost no clinical or laboratory studies supporting it. The Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC), which is responsible for reviewing the data to support the new standards, was split internally on the issue. Many said that there was not enough research to make the EPA's case, and that the available research showed that the present standards were adequate. Under pressure from the EPA (which appoints the members of CASAC), the dissenting members eventually supported the new standards.

Congressional hot issue

The new standards have been a controversial issue in Congress, with hearings taking place in the Committee on Science in the House, and the Committee on Environment and Public

Works in the Senate. Early in May, 115 Congressmen sent a letter to President Clinton, asking him not to implement the new standards. On the Senate side, six Democratic senators, including Robert Byrd (W.V.) and John Glenn (Ohio), did the same.

On the side of the EPA, the environmentalists, led by the Sierra Club and the Natural Resources Defense Council, have lined up to support the implementation of the new air standards.

Estimates of the cost of implementing the ozone and particulate standards range from \$6.5 billion a year according to the EPA, to over \$60 billion a year, according to Alica Munnell of the White House Council of Economic Advisers. Also, the number of metropolitan areas in non-compliance would increase to at least 140, including many that are presently in compliance with the 1990 standards.

Interview: Dr. William B. Innes

'No good scientific basis for EPA's standards'

Dr. Innes received his Ph.D. in physical chemistry at the State University of Iowa in 1940. He has 20 years experience working on catalysts for exhaust treatment, and developing pollution-measuring devices while with American Cyanamid Research Laboratories. Innes moved to Upland, California, in 1964, and formed a research and development company to work on the smog problem. He has worked as a consultant on the effects of lead in gasoline, incineration efficiency, acid rain, stratospheric ozone, as well as reviews of various pollution control agency proposals, including the current EPA proposal. Innes is the author of many articles on various aspects of pollution.

EIR: On what basis does the Environmental Protection