

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

Revive the Humboldt education system!

Mass protests by German students should go beyond justified concern at budget cuts, and get at the root of the problem.

Stop learning! Begin to think!" "We are not that stupid!" First appearing in strikes of German university students in Frankfurt and Berlin in mid-November, these slogans have meanwhile been taken up at about 65 universities in Germany. About half a million university students are mobilized so far, in a strike which had its first peak with a mass rally of 40,000 in Bonn, on Nov. 27. The slogan that tells students to "stop learning" and "begin to think" sounds paradoxical, but it isn't. Like all other Germans, the students should reflect on the reasons that have led to the collapse of government and industry funds for education, for the natural sciences, and especially, for new technologies and engineering. The German universities, with their limited capacities, can enroll only 950,000 out of 1.8 million students applying for entrance. The universities need at least 7 billion deutschmarks (\$4 billion) more per year, to begin to meet the need.

But the most striking paradox in German education, is that, 27 years after the "Brandt Reforms"—the "post-industrial" transformation of science and general education that began under Chancellor Willy Brandt, in 1969—the social sciences programs are overcrowded with students, while the physical and technical sciences are "depopulated." Since 1990, for example, the number of newly enrolled students in classical machine-building and engineering disciplines, as well as nuclear engineering, has dropped by 40%.

Social and political courses at the universities often have several hun-

dred students crowded into one room, trying to follow the words of one lecturing professor; by contrast, seminars in machine-building often have one professor trying to lecture only a handful of students, who, fortunately, have not been discouraged by the general environmentalist "political correctness," which goes against science and technology. This discrepancy, and the transformation of values that stands behind it, has not been properly addressed in the students' protest actions, so far, and that is why the intervention of the BüSo (Civil Rights Movement Solidarity—the German "LaRouche movement"), which does address this problem of the paradigm change of the last 25-30 years, is so important. The BüSo is trying to raise the level of students' actions from mere protests against the state budget cuts for the universities, to an understanding of the nature of an economic system that has produced these budget-cutting policies.

At the demonstration of 40,000 students in Bonn on Nov. 27, a leaflet dealing with these issues, authored by BüSo Chairwoman Helga Zepp LaRouche, was distributed. Under the headline, "World Financial System Faces Meltdown!," the leaflet states that the students' protest was long-overdue and justified, but that it can only be successful if it addresses the problem in the right way.

"The entire international financial and monetary system is bankrupt," the leaflet states, pointing to the danger represented by the \$100 trillion financial derivatives market. Since the stock market crashes of Oct. 27, the

collapse has entered a new phase, while representatives of leading institutions are desperately trying to pretend that everything will be all right.

"Are you ready, to really do something for education and your future?" the leaflet asks the students, telling them to no longer expect a remedy to come from the political elite, which is "so much committed to the axioms of austerity policies, and the sacred cows of the free-market economy, which have led to this misery, that they cling to them, hysterically, no matter how obvious the disaster may be."

The leaflet elaborates, that the economic system needs a complete reorganization from the top to the bottom, a "new, just system, a Bretton Woods II," which would carry out a global reconstruction program, including Africa and Latin America. That, and nothing less, should become the focus of youth protests, the BüSo stated.

"Only if we return to productive full employment, to the application of scientific and technological progress in the production process, and to worldwide economic growth, will we have the means to be able to finance the education, health, and social security systems," the leaflet concludes.

What Germany needs, to be able to secure a meaningful future for its youth, is to revive the technological-scientific impulse, which was created in the early 19th century by the education reforms of Wilhelm Humboldt: the best education in science and Classical culture. As many citizens as possible must learn to think, and a genuine interest in science must be implanted in the nation, Humboldt always insisted. This principle, which is incompatible with the views of the budget-cutters, was what made Germany a leading industrial nation in the second half of the 19th century.