Economist debates "zero growth" concept

By Jonathan Weker

"I don't think we can keep going the way we're going," warned Marshall Goldman, an economics professor at Wellesley College. "We are using up the planet's resources, and there are definitely things we're doing we're creating our own problems, and those things cannot be eradicated."

Goldman's comments came
during a debate with Paul Gallagher of the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC) held at MIT Wednesday. The debate, entitled "The greatest threat to your survival or ideology of Fascism," was one in a series of NCLC debates.

In arguing against the concept of zero growth for the world's economy, productivity, and population, Gallagher opposed the Marxist Labor Theory of Value, which he interpreted as suggesting that human producers and reproduce everything necessary to their existence, including the natural environment. "The natural environment...was produced by men," he contended. "They produce their own environment as they produce with it."

Gallagher claimed in his presentation that human beings reproduce themselves at a higher level in an environment which requires improvement of the modes of production. He cited as an example the "agricultural revolution" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, pointing out that a zero growth crisis at the time was resolved by an improvement in agricultural methods.

Debating the affirmative values of zero growth, Goldman revealed that he personally did not see any solution to the world's problems, but only the problems.

Goldman pointed out that the world's population would double in the next thirty-five years, and noted that most of the planet's people were concentrated in urban areas, placing additional strain on the already overloaded resources and facilities in these localities. Furthermore, he claimed, the world is getting materially richer, though the wealth is not evenly distributed. "Our pets have ten to fifteen times the impact on the environment as a person in India," Goldman commented.

Gallagher argued that the world has not advanced materially, and that in fact the actual purchasing power of the average individual has declined in recent years, which he claimed indicated that the globe was slipping into a state of depression.

According to Gallagher, the monetary crises which have confronted the Western world over the past few years have been followed by periods of austerity. He remarked that following the most recent crisis last week a number of European nations introduced so-called "Austerity Programs," a name which he felt was an admission on the part of these countries that their standards of living had been reduced.

"This last point was challenged by Goldman, who stated in his rebuttal that the monetary crisis had not let to austerity, but rather to a boom, and that he could not discern any "tightening of the belt" in either Europe or Japan. According to Goldman, people now are as well off as they have ever been, a fact which he feels is perhaps the best indicator of the state of the world's economy.

However, he noted that economic growth will lead to problems if it keeps going at the same rate. Goldman rejected the abo-

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