

CHALLENGE



THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

Fascist Anti-Immigrant Raids Attack All Workers

*In Germany they first came for the Communists,
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist.*

*Then they came for the Jews,
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew.*

*Then they came for the trade unionists,
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist.*

*Then they came for the Catholics,
and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant.*

*Then they came for me —
and by that time no one was left to speak up.*

POSTVILLE, IOWA, May 29 — The above statement by anti-Nazi Pastor Martin Niemöller is clearly related to the U.S.-Homeland Security Agency's immigration police (ICE) attack on undocumented immigrants. The Des Moines Register reported (5/12): "Months in planning, Monday's raid involved 16 local, state and federal agencies, led by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)." The largest single workplace raid in U.S. history saw 389 workers — mostly from Guatemala and Mexico — arrested in minutes at the Agriprocessors kosher meatpacking plant. They were herded onto buses and interned at the National Cattle Congress Fairgrounds, some 80 miles away in Waterloo. There they were kept in a makeshift camp, behind a chain-link fence, watched by armed immigration officers for three days until processed and sent to jails state-wide.

Nearly 300 have pleaded guilty to reduced charges of document fraud and will serve short prison sentences before being deported, while others await immediate deportation or have been placed on temporary release for compassionate reasons.

The appearance of dozens of buses, helicopters and heavily-armed ICE, state and local cops resembled a scene from a Nazi-era film. And the aim is the same: to terrorize workers.

Rosa, a 40-year-old mother of two, was working on the kill floor that morning when she heard the cries of "la migra" — a warning about ICE cops — ringing through the plant and saw her friends drop their tools and run. She slipped into a freezer and hid among the dead chickens, sitting alone in the cold for several minutes, thinking that everything was over. She would be caught, sent back to Mexico with nothing. The better life she had planned for her children was not to be.

The plant, which produces kosher and non-kosher products, was already a hell for workers, paid less than Iowa's \$7.25-an-hour minimum. The ICE investigation revealed abuses like a supervisor covering a worker's eyes with duct tape and beating him with a meat hook.

But that wasn't the main aim of the raid. The company has not been charged with anything, even though accused for years with many health violations. Not much has changed since Upton Sinclair wrote his novel "The Jungle," exposing horrendous conditions in the meatpacking industry in Chicago and across the Midwest.

The aim of the raid, and many others occurring nationwide, is not really to arrest those "guilty" of "identity theft." Its real aim is to terrorize undocumented workers, and all workers, into working for less and less, thereby reaping increasing super-profits for a capitalist system desperate to pay for its wars and economic crisis.

The lie spread by the bosses' media — and by many of their lapdogs among the union "leaders" — that immigrants are "stealing jobs" from citizen workers is exposed by the fact that, according to a report in the NY Times (5/31), Iowa bosses can't get enough workers. The state has the second lowest unemployment rate in the country, 50% less than the national rate. Iowa employers are desperately seeking employees. Why? "Companies want to be in Iowa because wages are lower than elsewhere in the nation or region," says the Times. While the bosses in general approve the idea of terrorizing workers into accepting lower wages, there's a section that doesn't want the fascist attackers to go "too far," to scare off workers from filling these low-wage jobs and limiting their profits.

This fascist attack occurs alongside the growing imprisonment of undocumented workers (see page 2 on the growing U.S. prison population). El Nuevo Herald (Miami Herald Spanish edition), reports (5/28) that the jail in Del Verde, Texas, is filled with arrested undocumented immigrants, even though this hasn't stopped the flow of these immigrants. This and other jails throughout the Southwest are big money-makers for private prison companies that run many of them. The border is also militarized as U.S. and Mexican rulers put their Plan Mexico into operation, under the guise of "fighting the drug cartels," thereby militarizing the entire region.

The essence of Pastor Niemöller's 60-year-old declaration is that all workers and their allies must oppose these growing fascist attacks. We in PLP are organizing exactly that, and across all borders. Join us! ☪

Liberal Bosses Use McClellan to Bushwhack McCain

The liberal, imperialist wing of U.S. capitalists had two main motives in publishing former Bush press secretary Scott McClellan's book, "What Happened: Inside the Bush White House and Washington's Culture of Deception." Firstly, in "revealing" that the administration based its Iraq invasion on lies — no weapons of mass destruction (WMD's), no links between Saddam Hussein and bin Laden/9-11 and no Iraqi greeting the U.S. as "liberators" — the former Bush press secretary damages Bush clone McCain's election prospects. The NY Times (6/1/08) calls it "McCain's McClellan nightmare." The British liberal Independent (5/30) gleefully wonders, "Has McClellan handed victory to Obama?"

Secondly, by further discrediting the Bushites for hyping Hussein's non-existent WMD's, it helps prevent them from launching a unilateral attack on Iran before they leave office (although that still might be possible). The U.S. rulers' liberal faction knows that tackling Iran will require far greater military force than the missiles and bombs the Bush

gang once seemed tempted to use. Recalling the 750,000-strong multi-national force they were able to muster for their 1991 Iraq invasion, the liberals are forcing Bush & Co. to work through the United Nations.

The NY Times editorialized (6/1), "Having long taken a back seat to the Bush administration in publicly challenging Iran's nuclear program, [UN] inspectors last week moved into the driver's seat, demanding that Tehran come clean on any progress it has made toward building a bomb....The Americans have handed over the wheel on the confrontation with Iran. After challenging Iran's atomic efforts with everything from diplomatic crusades to shows of military force, the Americans backed off late last year, based on a new intelligence finding that Tehran had suspended work in late 2003 on the design of nuclear arms. Now, in the waning days of President Bush's second term, it would be difficult — politically, diplomatically and militarily — for them to try to press for a new confrontation."

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Prison Slave Labor: Fascism U.S.-Style

Slavery is being practiced by the system under the color of law. Slavery 400 years ago, slavery today, it's the same thing, but with a new name. They're making millions and millions of dollars enslaving blacks, poor whites, and others — people who don't even know they're being railroaded.

— Political Prisoner Ruchel Magee.

This “land of opportunity” now boasts a prison population of nearly 2.4 million, higher than any other nation, ¾ of a million more than China, which has four times the population of the U.S. California alone has over 160,000 inmates — more than France, Germany, Great Britain, Japan and the Netherlands COMBINED. These five countries have a total population eleven times that of California. They are no less racist than the U.S. but have a different policy in treating non-violent offenders.

According to a U.S. Justice Department Report, as of this year, 7 million people are in prison, on probation or on parole. That means 1 in every 32 Americans is in the system. (<http://www.usdoj.gov/>) Seventy percent of all prisoners in the U.S. are black or Latino.

This massive imprisonment of millions is part of U.S. rulers’ efforts to control the working class and especially the potential rebellion of the most oppressed, the black and Latino workers. It occurs in the context of the virtual elimination of welfare under Clinton — when the big leap in the prison population took place — and the slashing of wages and jobs of all workers. Facing sharp economic crises and heightening inter-imperialist rivalry over energy supplies, U.S. rulers must exercise tight control over U.S. workers and try to win them to support — or at least not fight against — the rulers’ increased

exploitation, even more intense racism and preparations for wider wars. As brother Ruchel Magee says (above), slavery today — of which this mass imprisonment in U.S.-style concentration camps (and the threat of it to millions more) is a part — has a new name. That name is fascism.

History of U.S. Prison Labor

Prison labor has its roots in slavery. After the 1861-1865 Civil War, a system of “hiring out prisoners” was introduced in order to continue slave labor. Freed slaves were charged with not carrying out their sharecropping commitments (cultivating someone else’s land in exchange for part of the harvest) or petty thievery — which were almost never proven — and were then “hired out” for cotton picking, mining and building railroads. From 1870 until 1910, 88% of “hired-out” convicts in Georgia were black. In Alabama, 93% of “hired-out” miners were black. In Mississippi, a huge prison farm similar to the old slave plantations replaced the system of hiring out convicts. The notorious Parchman plantation existed until 1972.

Capitalist Rehab....Exploitation

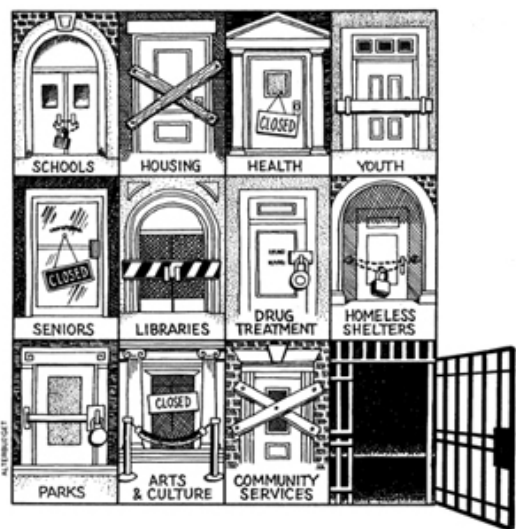
Prison labor is a pot of gold for the bosses: no strikes, unions, health benefits, unemployment insurance or workers’ compensation. This is one of the main reasons for such high incarceration rates in the U.S. At least 37 states have legalized the contracting out of prison labor by private corporations that mount their operations inside state prisons.

These companies contain the cream of U.S. corporate society: IBM, Boeing, Motorola, Microsoft, AT&T Wireless, Texas Instrument, Dell, Compaq, Honeywell, Hewlett-Packard, Nortel, Lucent Technologies, 3Com, Intel, Northern Telecom, Nordstrom’s, Revlon, Macy’s, Pierre Cardin, Target Stores and many more. All of these businesses reap extraordinary profits from the economic boom generated by prison labor. Just between 1980 and 1994, such profits rose from \$392 million to \$1.31 billion.

Inmates in state penitentiaries generally receive the minimum wage for their work, but in Colorado, they’re paid about \$2 per hour, well below the minimum. And in privately-run prisons, they receive as little as 17¢/hr for a maximum of six hours a day, or about \$20 per month. The highest-paying private prison is the Correctional Corporation of America (CCA) in Tennessee — prisoners receive 50¢/hr for what they call “highly skilled positions.” At those rates, it’s no surprise that inmates find federal prison pay “very generous” — possibly \$1.25/hr, eight hours a day, and sometimes overtime.

Private Prisons

The prison privatization boom began in the



1980s, under Reagan and Bush, Sr., but reached its height in the 1990s under Clinton, when Wall Street stocks were selling like hotcakes. Clinton’s cuts in the federal workforce led to the Justice Department contracting with private prison corporations for the incarceration of undocumented workers and high-security inmates.

Private prisons are the biggest business in the prison-industrial complex. About 18 corporations guard 10,000 prisoners in 27 states. The two largest are CCA and Wackenhut, which together control 75%. Private prisons receive a guaranteed payment for each prisoner, independent of the cost to maintain each one.

In these prisons, inmates may get their sentences reduced for “good behavior,” but for any infraction, 30 days are added, increasing profits for CCA. According to a study of New Mexico prisons, CCA inmates lost “good behavior time” at a rate eight times higher than those in state prisons.

The rulers find themselves in another risky situation: these same workers they oppress so viciously are among the ones the rulers need to arm to serve U.S. imperialism. They can be won to become part of the future red working-class army. One reason the rulers need someone like Obama is exactly to win black workers and youth (now reluctant to join the military) to fight in the many imperialist wars needed to stop U.S. rivals in the Middle East and elsewhere. A key role of our Party is to build internationalist and revolutionary consciousness among black, Latino and all workers so that imperialist war can be turned into class war for communism and an end to racism. ☸

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR:

★**Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to smash capitalism — wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim “communism is dead,” capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world.**

★**Capitalism returned to the Soviet Union and China because socialism failed to wipe out many aspects of the profit system, like wages and division of labor.**

★**Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism — the dictatorship of the proletariat. This fight requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.**

★**Communism means working collectively to build a society where sharing is based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. Everyone will share in society’s benefits and burdens.**

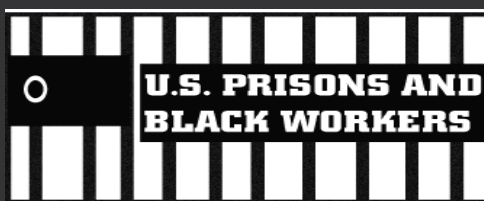
★**Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.**

★**Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women — sexism — and traditional gender roles created by class society.**

★**Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One International working class, one world, one Party.**

★**Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!**

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In the U.S, black people comprise 13% of the population, but constitute half of the country’s prisoners. A tenth of all black men between 20 and 35 are in jail or prison; black workers are incarcerated at over eight times the white rate.

The effect on black communities is catastrophic: one in three male African-Americans in their 30s now has a prison record, as do nearly two-thirds of all black male high school dropouts. These numbers and rates are incomparably greater than anything achieved at the height of the Jim Crow era.

The number of young black men without jobs has climbed relentlessly, with only a slight pause during the economic bubble of the late 1990s. In 2000, 65% of black male high school dropouts in their 20’s were jobless — that is, unable to find work, not seeking it or incarcer-

ated. By 2004, the share had grown to 72%, compared with 34% of white dropouts. Even when high school graduates were included, half of black men in their 20’s were jobless in 2004, up from 46% in 2000. Incarceration rates climbed in the 1990s and reached historic highs in the past few years. In 1995, 16% of black men in their 20’s who did not attend college were in jail or prison; by 2004, 21% were incarcerated. By their mid-30’s, 6 in 10 black men who had dropped out of school had spent time in prison.

Most of the states with a majority of black prisoners are in the South where cheap prison labor helps keep wages down for the growing auto, steel and other basic industries in that are becoming key for the U.S. war machine. However, Maryland, not generally viewed as a “southern state,” has the largest percentage of black prisoners — 77%. Wisconsin, with a tiny black population of 6%, has a black prison population of 48%. And Mississippi, the state with the largest black population, 36%, has a black prison population of 75%. ☸

PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

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Baltimore Youth Fighting for Job Funds

BALTIMORE, MD, June 2 — On May 30th, students, teachers and education advocates gathered at the Inner Harbor amphitheater to protest Mayor Sheila Dixon's refusal to appropriate \$3 million toward knowledge-based jobs for 750-1,000 young people through the Peer 2 Peer (P2P) network. P2P Youth Enterprises, a coalition of approximately 20 local youth groups, organized the demonstration. They then marched to the Legg Mason plaza and announced a hunger strike, commencing that evening. The protestors chanted and gave speeches on education, followed by an open mic session featuring socially conscious hip hop and spoken word poetry.

P2P has been engaging in activities from workshops to overnight camp-outs in front of City Hall to demand these funds. "It's outrageous that the City is not giving \$3 million to young people to do positive work," said a public school teacher. "When the City schools were predominantly white, about 20% to 40% of the city budget went to education. Now that the City's student population is 90% African-American, the portion of the City budget devoted to education is just 11%, a severe, racist cutback that hurts all students, no matter what their racial background."

The Baltimore City Council voted 11 to 3 against the P2P funding. Many speculate that pressure from Mayor Dixon forced that negative vote.

Two weeks ago, when the coalition began a four-day, overnight campout in front of City Hall, Dixon appeared and told the young people they ought to just get jobs at Target. But P2P seeks funding for programs like tutoring and mentorships, so young people can be paid to teach other youth important skills, like algebra, debate and video production.

"Target is not a comparison to Peer 2 Peer," said one P2P organizer, nor is P2P an after-school or summer program, as misrepresented by the bosses' media. It's a year-long program designed to create jobs and prepare youth for careers in a knowledge-based economy.

The \$3 million figure would come from the annu-

al interest earned on the City's \$88 million rainy-day surplus emergency fund, not from the fund itself, as inaccurately portrayed by the capitalist media. "The state of youth in Baltimore City is definitely an emergency," declared a P2P youth leader.

One excuse offered to refuse funding is "a sluggish economy," yet City funds are going into the build-up of tourist areas like the Harbor.

As the event concluded, committed hunger strikers were transported to a church where nightly shelter is being provided.

The young people view the hunger strike as necessary to attain their goal, with no plans to end it until the mayor and the City Council grant their demands.

Progressive Labor Party applauds the selfless commitment of the hunger strikers and all their many supporters. But we recognize its limitations. In general, hunger strikes seek to embarrass the rulers, but the rulers really have no shame. After all, capitalism starves millions of workers worldwide.

P2P activists stepped up the level of struggle by bringing many supporters to the Mayor's Night-In, which she had promoted as an opportunity for youth and adults to talk about solving problems in various neighborhoods. The vast majority of participants were P2P supporters, who spoke out very forcefully, essentially taking leadership of the event away from the politicians. At one point the mayor physically grabbed the microphone to defend herself and to accuse adult P2P supporters of misleading P2P youth. However, she received meager applause, compared to the overwhelming repeated applause for P2P speakers, a vigorous standing ovation for the hunger strikers, and powerful applause supporting the \$3 million for P2P youth jobs.

In a broader sense, political awareness is growing, learning how politicians and the government, though claiming to represent all people, are really puppets for the ruling class of big business owners. Some of the young activists recently attended PLP's May Day march in New York City.



It's becoming clearer that the government is not neutral but really a dictatorship of the capitalist class. The government is theirs, not ours.

Even if a reform victory is achieved — winning \$3 million — the rulers, having state power, can always take it away later, as they're doing in cutting wages for millions of workers. This is especially true, given the bosses' need to direct resources toward carrying out imperialist oil wars in Iraq and elsewhere.

Capitalism cannot be reformed, nor can it solve the problems it creates for the working class. We need a future in which the working class shares the fruit of all the value our labor produces. Only communist revolution can achieve this.✱

Chile's Students Hit Privatized Education, Seize Schools

SANTIAGO, CHILE, May 28 — For the third successive week, high school and college students have militantly protested a new law which could privatize public education. Students demonstrated on May Day and then again on May 16 (Day of the Fighting Youth) when students took over several colleges and high schools immediately after "socialist" President Michelle Bachelet gave a national speech on education. In one school students hung a banner reading, "If education is a merchandise, students must be rebels."

Today, the "carabineros" (riot cops) brutally repressed a planned student march, attacking several thousand gathered in Santiago preparing to march to the Ministry of Education. The cops said they "had no march permit." Some 337 students were arrested battling the vicious police attack. Over 600 were arrested nationwide during this day of protest. The cops beat students viciously as they were being loaded into police vans.

The government's proposed General Education Law offers some crumbs like computers and a few scholarships, but each municipality would control education, opening the door to privatization. Students say they want free public education like their parents received, not a few computers or scholarships.

Chilean youth, like youth worldwide today, had a reputation of being non-political, but the reality of a local and international capitalist system bent on making workers and youth pay for its crises and wars, is impelling young people to realize they must fight for their interests.

Education under capitalism, whether free or privatized, is based on promoting bourgeois ideology and building the next generation of exploited workers the bosses need. The best education these youth can acquire is in the class struggle against capitalism and its stooges. ✱

Teachers Oppose Bosses' 'Reform' to End Pensions, Cut Vital Services

MEXICO CITY, May 29 — Thousands of teachers from many parts of Mexico, including Guerrero, Michoacán, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Tlaxcala and Mexico City, participated in a massive march here to protest the reform of the law of the Institute of the Social Security in Service of the State Workers (ISSSTE), which plans to reduce pension benefits and increase retirement age. Members and friends of PLP distributed thousands of leaflets exposing capitalism and calling on teachers to fight for communism.

In their fascist offensive, the bosses and their imperialist backers have dealt a new blow to workers by reforming this law, thereby giving workers' savings to the banks and financial institutions. These "reforms" mean the end of pensions for the retired, removal of the right to housing credits, slashing child-care services and a severe cut in medical services.

In the short term, this will affect the workers of the Federal Commission of Electricity (CFE), of PEMEX (the state-owned oil company) and of public companies. Even though the more pro-U.S. imperialist bosses support the "reform" all the other Mexican bosses represented by different capitalist political parties, including the opposition López Obrador and the PRD are behind it. (This situation is facing workers worldwide — see page 5 on France's workers facing a similar attack.)

Currently more than 20 million Mexicans eke out their existence on wages equal to barely twice the minimum and many even less than that. These hungry masses lack a revolutionary organization. PL'ers must continue exposing the bosses and their neoliberal and state capitalist policies and keep organizing the workers to build a communist system where exploitation, poverty and unemployment will not exist. We must have confidence in



Oaxaca Teacher's Strike in October 2006

the great potential of the working class to make a revolution and run society.

During the march there were many insults and anger directed against President Felipe Calderon and Elba Esther Gordillo, "leader" of the teachers' union, but the problem isn't only these puppets and the Social Security Reform. The whole capitalist system is rotten and must be destroyed.

Some teachers said that the positive reforms to Social Security were won with over a century of struggle and now the bosses are taking them away with one stroke. This is the essence of capitalist "reforms": they give workers only crumbs and can take them back at any moment. We need to fight, not for reforms but for a communist world, where workers in Mexico and globally will control society for the benefit of the international working class. Long Live Communism!✱

'Market Reality' Fascism Hits Axle Strikers

Jobs, Wages Cut in Half

DETROIT, June 1 — The recent sellout contract signed between American Axle and the UAW is a perfect example of how capitalism works and where its priorities lie: destroying the lives of thousands of workers and turning U.S. industry into a low-wage haven. The immigration raids spreading throughout the Midwest and Southwest are no accident. They're aimed at terrorizing ALL industrial workers, immigrants, undocumented or citizens, into accepting even lower wages. A worker who falls for any kind of racism is betraying his/her own class interests.

Axle workers are the latest victims of this fascist attack. The Axle bosses say the new contract "addresses market reality." (NY Times, 5/29/08, and all following quotes) After their 87-day strike, this is how that "reality" hits the workers:

- Within a year, 2,000 of 3,650 union jobs will be eliminated.
- "Wages and benefits would be cut at least in half."
- "Most new work will be going outside the United States."

And this is how "reality" meets the company's bottom line:

- "It expected to save about \$300 million a year under its new contract."
- "American Axle...lined up \$1.4 billion in new...business for the next five years and...85 percent of it would be sourced abroad." ("Operations in Mex-

ico and overseas helped the company earn \$37 million in 2007.")

- Wages in Axle's new plant in Guanajato, Mexico will be barely \$1.50 AN HOUR.

What about the union? The bosses say the UAW "jointly addressed" this market reality "in this new set of agreements." Yes, it "addressed" more than half the workers onto the street and cut the wages and benefits of the remainder more than half. To say the company has the union leadership in its hip pocket is putting it mildly.

This swindle follows the pattern set by the Big Three automakers and the union. GM just announced that one-fourth of its workers, 19,000 (adding to the 34,410 who left in 2006), are taking the company-offered buyout. Of these 19,000, JP-Morgan auto analyst Himanushu Patel "predicted GM won't replace 15,000...and will hire 4,000 [at half the pay] for total annual savings of \$2.1 billion." (Associated Press, 5/31)

Forty years ago, UAW President Walter Reuther was acclaimed for signing a contract with a "guaranteed annual wage." Hundreds of thousands of laid-off U.S. autoworkers can now testify that the only "guarantee" under capitalism is job- and wage-cuts for workers and maximum profits for the bosses. And the racism of the bosses and UAW hacks has hit black autoworkers even harder, devastating cities like Detroit and Flint. Since 1999, Michigan has lost 143,000 auto jobs — 45 percent of the total lost nationwide.



No matter what gains workers make through bitter struggle, when capitalism's market asserts itself — through global competition, the drive for maximum profits, economic crisis and the needs of imperialist wars — the workers wind up at the bottom of the heap. After all, the bosses control the government and this state power is used to enforce the laws of the capitalist market. That's why PLP says this system can't be reformed. "Market reality" won't permit it.

The only lasting victory that can be won from the Axle workers' three-month battle is for the workers who bought and read CHALLENGE and came to PLP's May Day events to join the Party in building a movement that aims to eliminate this system and its profit-driven markets so workers can hold state power and use it on behalf of the working class. Our goal is to establish a communist society in which workers come first and there is no "second" — profits, bosses and their labor lieutenants will be buried six feet under. ☸

Urges El Salvador Guerrilla Vets to Join PLP

El Salvador — At the end of the 1970's there were nine people in my family including seven brothers and sisters. The government army came into my settlement, killing children, youth, old people, and women; in my family four brothers were killed because they were suspected of helping the guerrillas.

In 1979, when I was 24 years old, I was pursued by the National Guard because of my revolutionary ideas. I joined a military detachment of the ERP (Revolutionary Peoples' Army). We had massive confrontations with the government's army at the same time that they bombed us. When we were invaded by the enemy in a combat zone, we sometimes spent up to eight days without food. After battle, we went to an area that was under the control of the guerrillas where we got our political and military training.

In 1989 we carried out a military campaign where I fought in the city of San Miguel, in the eastern part of the country. I spent nine days in a trench, seeing many of my comrades fall from the enemy's weapons, and seeing the suffering of the civilian population from the bombings. But we also attacked and showed our political resolve and military strength, as we forced the army to flee and struck mortal blows. Hundreds of soldiers and police fell, brought down by the revolutionary shrapnel

of the armed people. Here we were true to our slogan of struggle: victory or death.

At one moment when we were ambushed by the enemy army, a soldier in the bosses' army (who today is my friend) warned us about this ambush, from which I escaped unharmed. This helped me understand that soldiers in the government's army were winnable since most aren't won ideologically to the bosses' side.

Since the end of the armed struggle, as a disabled veteran of the war, I'm a member of ALGES — Association of the Disabled from the War in El Salvador. The ideas of a revolution to change society had me frustrated for a time, as I feel that I had been fooled by the high leaders of the guerrillas. After the war, many of them became brazen servants of the capitalists, while my conviction and that of my fellow disabled and dead fighters was to fight and win for the working class.

I then met a club of PLP and when I heard the strength of their political ideology, it didn't seem foreign to me. Here I see true revolutionary ideology, which is the fight for communism. I hope that this story helps many fellow veterans of the war to join the Progressive Labor Party since the commitment to fight for the working class must continue. ☸

unilaterally driven agenda." It concludes, "In coming years, U.S. political leaders will almost certainly have to adapt their styles and aspirations to global leadership to the international rules of the game that the United Nations embodies" — although, again, that depends on what U.S. rulers think they can get away with on their own.

U.S. global leadership — that is, imperialist domination, with junior partner allies — is also the goal of another of McClellan's newfound backers, billionaire currency swindler, election fixer, Rockefeller ally and liberal "philanthropist" George Soros. Osnos got his big start as an officer in Soros's Human Rights Watch and has published six Soros books through PublicAffairs. After buying votes in various pro-U.S., anti-Russian electoral "revolutions" in Eastern Europe, Soros now calls for U.S.-led multi-national military action against Chinese influence in Darfur.

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'War on AIDS' Needs War on Capitalism

WASHINGTON, D.C., April 15 — Over 120 public health workers and students met at the annual meeting of the MWPHA (Metropolitan Washington Public Health Association) with the goal of launching a more intense HIV/AIDS advocacy. Speakers and workshop participants attacked the "social determinants of disease" — lack of housing, jobs, and youth development programs, and widespread substance abuse. Most attendees wanted to break out of their small boxes and form a strong unified movement to demand more resources from the federal and local government.

Scrambling for small grants for NGOs and trying to help resolve complicated individual problems of AIDS sufferers is not enough! Most participants felt that the war on AIDS should be joined with a war on capitalist institutions. Reflecting higher levels of awareness, a speaker attacked the "war on drugs" as a war on people. Others noted that the phony "war on terror" drained resources from public health programs. Attendees agreed to testify at city council budget hearings and did so the next week.

This MWPHA conference moved from the traditional public health education to pushing for aggressive political pressure on the system to beat the factors that sharpen the devastation of AIDS. A virus may cause HIV/AIDS, but capitalism and its racist impoverishment of millions transform it into an epidemic by increasing peoples' vulnerability.

Stable affordable housing is at the forefront of this battle; without it, consistent treatment is almost impossible. But pressure on the system, however bold and militant, is not enough. Capitalism must be overthrown to get at the root of the problem. Too many activists in the HIV/AIDS movement are still far from embracing this goal. But, step by step, some progress is being made.

PLP members' active in this struggle have led regular public outreach in Ward 8, the lowest income area in D.C. These actions began only with condom distribution and education, and have progressed to community speak-outs and rallies. The stage is set for more intense struggle — confronting politicians and city agencies in their offices around demands for housing and drug treatment. PLP must win more people to its politics to turn struggles like this into schools for communism.

The building of a revolutionary party amid public health struggles is hard work but is the only way forward. We have launched study-action groups that explain how communism can destroy capitalism and its epidemics, but political theory among our friends remains weak. This opens the door to the Obama/Democratic Party deception, taking grants from the archenemies of public health like Pfizer and other drug companies, and a belief that building NGOs will show the way forward.

At this vital time, during growing racism and fascism in the U.S., a financial crisis and endless imperialist wars abroad, we must intensify our struggle to win our friends to step forward and join the communist PLP for the long-term struggle to destroy the racist root cause of AIDS/HIV.☸

MCCLELLAN

Continued from front page

Aiding Liberal Imperialists Seeking Larger Forces for Wider Wars

Turncoat McClellan helped sell Bush's on-the-cheap warmaking, Rumsfeld's hi-tech "shock and awe" invasion which failed to win a war but managed to kill one million Iraqis. But McClellan now serves the more powerful multilateral camp of U.S. bosses. His bestseller resulted from a year of close collaboration with Peter Osnos, publisher of PublicAffairs press and a senior fellow at the Century Fund, a liberal, ruling-class think-tank. A recent Century Fund study, "America's Slide From Leadership to Isolation," blames the current Iraq fiasco on "too few U.S. boots on the ground" and "U.S. abandonment of collective security for a

French Rulers Put Squeeze on Workers' Fight-Back

PARIS, June 1 — Due to sharpening imperialist competition, French President Sarkozy is now ignoring most of France's union "leaders" leaving them virtually paralyzed. While these misleaders plead with the government to negotiate, and organize symbolic 24-hour protest strikes, Sarkozy steamrolls right past them with plans to dismantle both the welfare state and the unions.

To pursue its imperialist agenda, the French government needs a docile workforce and ready cash. For example, while visiting Iraqi officials today, foreign minister Kouchner offered them French military instructors to train the Iraqi army. In return, the Iraqi prime minister offered to buy state-of-the-art military technology from France, one of the world's leading exporters of arms and aircraft.

Iraqi foreign minister Hoshiyar Zebari said "there is an urgent need for French companies to be more present here in Iraq." Sarkozy wants European Union imperialism to penetrate Iraq in the next six months. Therefore, the government is playing hardball with the unions here.

On May 22, thousands struck and over 450,000 demonstrated in 153 cities protesting government "reforms" to force workers to work longer for smaller retirement pensions. But Sarkozy intends to push his reform through, consulting the unions only on precise points and without trying to get approval from even the most sellout unions (Le Figaro, 5/23).

The main teachers' unions called for another 24-hour strike on May 24 against government plans to axe 11,200 jobs next school year, but while 15,000 demonstrated in Nantes, the action was only partly

successful elsewhere. The following day Education Minister Darcos announced the cuts would be maintained and "protest marches won't change a thing."

That hard-line position was enough to bust up the union coalition. On May 27, three teachers unions said they were "suspending" the protest movement.

The government then busted up union unity around another 24-hour strike against retirement "reform" planned for June 17. When the smaller unions split with the bigger ones (CGT and CFDL) over the latter's backdoor agreement with the bosses' organization MEDEF, the government then double-crossed the whole business with a measure undermining the 35-hour work-week.

With the union misleaders at loggerheads, Sarkozy is attacking on yet another front — introducing a bill to make it easier to shift public workers from one ministry to another, and even to shift them out of the public sector altogether.

The government has been able to play off these union misleaders against each other because they're all competing to become the government's "preferred negotiating partner." The big losers are the workers.

Only communist leadership, dedicated not to negotiating with the government to "improve" capitalism, but to overthrowing the government and the capitalist system, offers a way forward for the working class here.☸



French Government Boxes in Undocumented Immigrants

PARIS, June 1 — A January 7 government circular which legalizes undocumented workers in dribs and drabs is keeping them at the mercy of the bosses and their government. The circular provides for the legalization of workers who can produce a job contract, proof they've been working for three months and a promise from their boss to pay the costs of legalization. But each prefecture is allowed to apply the law as it sees fit.

The result is a feudal system in which legalization depends on a worker's relationship with his boss, and the boss's relationship with the prefect. Another aim is to smash the strike movement for legalization launched by undocumented workers in April.

Mexican Bosses Battle Over Oil While Workers Starve

MEXICO CITY, June 2 — The fight amongst the capitalists of the world for control of oil has motivated the latest wars in which hundreds of thousands of workers have died for the different greedy bosses' profits. In this period, this dispute among the imperialists is leading to World War III.

For the Mexican ruling class, the big fight amongst different sections is over PEMEX, the state-owned oil monopoly. President Calderón, with the support of the U.S. imperialists, wants to privatize it all, while other local bosses (like former presidential candidate López Obrador) oppose this, preferring it to remain as a state-owned company, favoring more investments from local capitalists instead of U.S. oil companies.

Oil is the bloodline of modern capitalist industry and war machines. Control of the oil flow and profits is the reason the U.S. bosses and their military are geared to make wars from Baghdad to Kabul. It is now more profitable than ever with the continuous rise of the price of a barrel of crude. For example, PEMEX had profits of about \$100 billion in the last four years.

This oil wealth does not belong to the "Mexican people" as the politicians tell us. If it did, its megaprofits would be used to end the poverty of 70 million people in Mexico, 50% of whom live in extreme poverty. These profits benefit the politicians who administer PEMEX and the companies' bosses who have direct business with PEMEX.

The center of the dispute between the group led by Calderón, the ruling PAN party and the majority of the PRI (which ruled for 60 years before PAN) against López Obrador, the FAP (Broad Progressive Front) and some of the PRI is over which group of national or foreign bosses will control the billions of dollars of profits of PEMEX.

The competing bosses are trying to convince us to support the "privatizers" or the "nationalists." This is a fatal trap. We workers are the ones who produce all the wealth including the oil and we must take it into our own hands. Capitalism in any form (free market or with nationalized industries) is based on the exploitation of the working class. Choosing sides in this dogfight as far as workers are concerned is like siding with either the drug cartels or the bosses' government in their mini-civil war over drug profits. Workers have only one choice: to build a massive international communist movement to fight for the revolutionary dictatorship of the working class over all bosses and establish a society in which oil, and everything else, will serve the needs of the world's working class. That is what PLP fights for. Join us! ☸

PLP Exposing Fake Leftists, Union 'Leaders' in Pakistan

This May Day gives us an audacity to fight against exploitation with full devotion, honesty, enthusiasm and bravery. The working class all over the world is very eager to get rid of capitalism but, for example in Pakistan, we've got to deal with the brutal living conditions that this system breeds, with union leaders who are in cahoots with the bosses and with fake-left leadership who lead us down the dead-end of state capitalism. None of these leaders want to change the world of capitalist oppression because they are puppets dancing in the hands of bosses by getting money and other personal advantages. They are created by the capitalists to keep poor workers away from their revolutionary struggle against exploitation, poverty, illiteracy and profit. We, as PL'ers, fight against all of these anti-working-class forces and struggle to bring true communist ideas to the masses of Pakistani workers.

Capitalist bosses have recruited gangsters and called them union leaders. Almost every so-called union leader is enjoying a luxurious life style: homes in posh areas, dinners at best restaurants, costly car, etc. Many ruling class parties have their own union bosses to protect their political interests and to keep the workers quiet against their policies. Trade unions in Pakistan Railways, Steel mill, PIA, Wapda, PTCL, Pakistan Hydro Electrical Board and many others are led by the bosses' lieutenants.

While the union bosses get fat, the Pakistani working class faces miserable circumstances: high prices, low wages, poor working conditions, no job security, and many other social problems. This situation creates the conditions where workers are ready to get rid of this rotten system but they can't find a way out because of puppet leadership!

The super-exploitation of Christians, women and children illustrates the genocidal situation that has been created for workers in Pakistan. Christians are common as sanitary workers who face some of the worst working and living conditions. Women workers are subject to rape by local bosses or landlords. Resistance means that the women can be accused of having an illicit relationship and subject to the barbaric sentence of stoning. The children of the working class face particularly terrible conditions. Most families cannot afford to send them to school so many send them to madrassas (free religious education pro-

viders) to get religious education, food and shelter. In many schools, the clerics feed the children the anti-working-class ideology of political Islam and convince them to protect local bosses' interests by becoming "terrorists." Child labor is also very common. Many children work in restaurants, hotels and factories where they face low wages, sexual abuse and torture.

In response to these horrible conditions, fake-leftist parties, chanting the slogan of state capitalism (socialism), are working to maintain capitalist oppression. No party is functioning for the working class — they prefer to get sympathies of "intellectuals" from upper class and hold conferences in five-star hotels with capitalist guests. They are encouraged to keep good relations with bosses in the better interest of their families; "after all it is due to these bosses they are getting something to keep their families alive."

You cannot find people from the working class in their meetings — they don't like to meet workers with torn clothes or dirty hands. They argue for national and people's democratic revolution, socialism, international socialism, Trotskyism, nationalism, but not for communism! Nobody can hear a single word about communism from these fake leaders because they are afraid of it.

It exposes their purpose to work for capitalism by these fake -isms. But we understand their intention: to keep the working class away from any real revolutionary movement. They are here to spread the illusion that communism is dead and to protect the interests of bosses. Workers are fed up with these fake -isms that all lead back to capitalism. They need communist ideas to change their lives.

PLP's voice is very loud and clear, its line is based on truth, honesty and experiences of great revolutionaries. It has strong power to attract sincere people and it gives courage to workers for changing the world of exploitation into equality, justice and prosperity. Communism is a truth that penetrates the hearts of the working class.

It is alive and still bringing workers under one red flag of PLP to make international communist revolution. When we greet workers with the line of our Party they are happy to join us and get rid of the fake-leftist trade unionists. We believe we will win millions of workers, students, soldiers and other oppressed and exploited people to get rid of imperialist wars, terrorism and exploitation.☸

LETTERS



PLP's Politics Shine on Colombia's May Day

As previously reported in CHALLENGE, May Day was a modest success for PLP's revolutionary communist forces in Colombia. Many new friends joined our contingent during the mass May Day march in Bogotá. Marching with our red flags and red PLP T-shirts, our contingent was led by a huge banner proclaiming, "DESAFIO, revolutionary communist newspaper."

Our "fight-for-communism" chant echoed throughout the day on the lips of many other marchers. We also chanted, "Fascism and terrorism sustain capitalism; Don't vote — organize for revolution; No more sexism; Long live communism! End imperialist war with communist revolution!"

DESAFIO and a PLP communist leaflet were distributed during the march. Comments of people in our 100-strong contingent (our largest ever here) included:

"As a party, you are showing strength, interaction and an outstanding unity," said one friend. Another said, "During the march, when I heard a strong blast nearby, I thought people would run away, but your organizational strength and serenity calmed me almost completely." A close friend of PL told us, "We needed more belligerence in our chants, but I felt very good most of the time. If you had invited me earlier I would have brought my daughters. I will do that next year."

A young militant comrade, while proudly waving the red flag, told her friend, "The red flags gave us a lot of inspiration and attracted the eyes of hundreds of May Day marchers. Our fist and star mean the rebelliousness of revolutionary students, workers, peasants and soldiers on five continents united by our Party's communist program."

May Day itself was held under fascist conditions here. The paramilitary death squads have killed 24 trade unionists so far this year, and several others are missing. This, plus the sellout and opportunist policies of the trade union leadership, led to a smaller participation by organized workers, but there were plenty of other marchers. Many, including the social-democratic electoral opposition "Democratic Alternative Pole," concentrated on demanding President Uribe's resignation, as if fascist violence would end by eliminating one bosses' goon.

When the march ended at Plaza Bolivar, fake leftists sang the national anthem so we responded singing The Internationale. Many workers sang with us and chanted, "Long Live Communism!" As the day's events were concluding, the cops viciously assaulted anyone hanging around (including senior citizens and children) with tear gas, beating up and arresting 115 people. Youth responded by attacking some banks and local businesses.

More and more youth are realizing that the system has nothing to offer them, and are becoming increasingly militant.

May Day was a day of struggle here, a day in which our communist politics shone brightly.

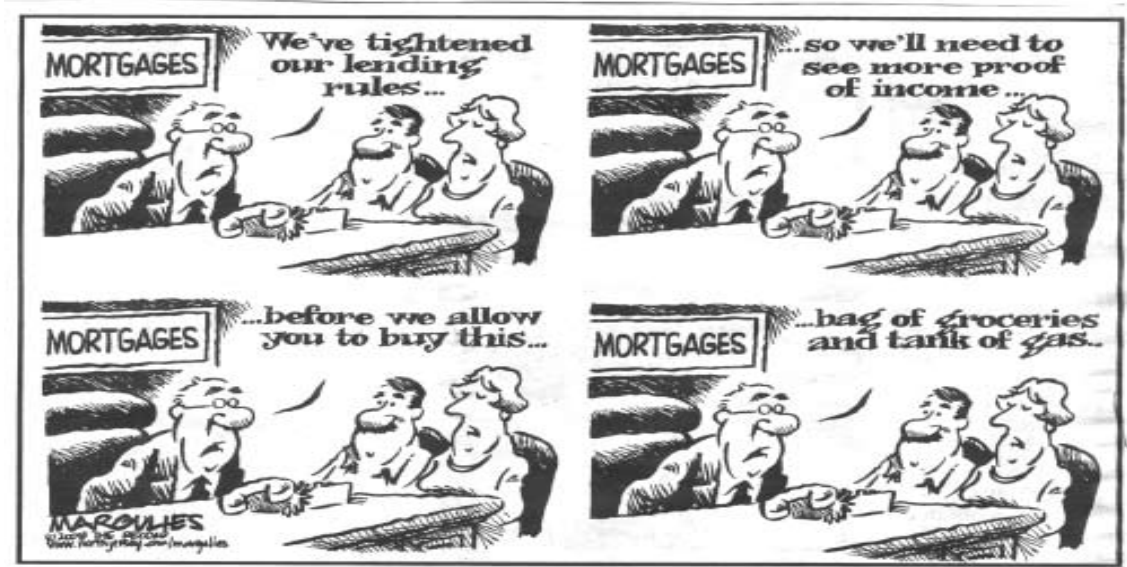
Comrades in Colombia

'Democratic' Law Robs Peru's Peasants

The ruling APRA party here in Peru is a loyal imperialist lapdog serving the local bosses as well. Its ideology and practice are fascist, using social demagoguery resembling Hitler and Mussolini. Now it's trying to impose a new law (DL 1015) to enable capitalists to take over peasant community-owned land very cheaply. This follows the Spanish colonialists' robbery of communal land two centuries ago.

But today, the robbery is "democratic." The bosses use their laws and even allow some opposition from useless organizations like the People's Advocate which is suing to oppose the law. But this is just a waste of time. It will be a lengthy trip through the Constitutional Court, which eventually will approve it.

Last year, President Alán García wrote articles in El Comercio (the bosses' main paper here) saying



he no longer thinks like his old leader, Raúl Haya de la Torre, the social-demagogue who founded APRA in the 1920s. Alán García now proclaims himself a "center-leftist" believer in the free market.

Haya de la Torre was also a loyal servant of the imperialists and local bosses while demagogically saying he represented blue collar workers and intellectuals. He did all this to present his party as a counterweight to the old international communist movement.

Haya de la Torre wrote his famous "Anti-imperialism and APRA," claiming to oppose imperialism while being anti-communist. He said APRA was an anti-imperialist front like Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang in China (meaning a nationalist front which included workers, poor and rich peasants and the national bourgeoisie).

Julio Antonio Mella, the great young Cuban communist who helped found the Communist Parties of Cuba and Mexico, and became a leading ideologue in the international communist movement in Latin America, wrote an essay entitled, "What is APRA?" exposing de la Torre's lies. While in the past, APRA hid its pro-capitalist ideology, today it's an open loyal servant of U.S. imperialism and all those who daily exploit millions of workers in Peru and worldwide.

Protests are being organized against the legal robbery of the communal land. But this is just a reaction against this capitalist offensive, unfortunately lacking communist leadership. Several of us here are trying to change that situation.

Friends in Peru

P.S. We've been receiving DESAFIO regularly.

Construction Deaths Are Murders

The city "building boom" has netted tens of billions in profits for contractors, real estate moguls and bankers providing interest-bearing loans. Yet construction workers are dying like flies: 30 workers in the last year due to building collapses, faulty cranes, lack of inspection and generally hazardous conditions erecting scores of high-rises city-wide. Still the profiteers refuse to insure safe working conditions.

These are not "accidents." They're murders.

In March, a crane collapse killed seven. In late May two more died in the crash of a crane that should have been removed from service after an earlier discovery of a faulty turntable repair. The contractor had been cited for 35 violations and paid a lousy \$104,675 in fines. On June 2 still another worker died in a fall when no licensed rigger was on site.

Many construction workers are undocumented immigrants, hired because the bosses can pay them poverty-level wages, rushing them onto jobs with little or no training. Racism causes this murder for profit.

Brooklyn Reader

NYC Youth Maintain May Day Momentum

BROOKLYN, NY, May 24 — A multi-racial crowd of nearly one hundred teachers, students and their families gathered in a local park to share food, fun and politics as we try to build on the excitement of May Day in preparation for summer activities. This weekend barbeque is a tradition in our area, and was the largest in several years.

After the food ran out due to the bigger-than-expected attendance, speeches highlighted the key role of industrial workers in the revolutionary process. We called on guests to join this year's Summer Projects in Seattle and Los Angeles. One college graduate explained his decision to work in the transportation industry. Two high school seniors, both valedictorians at their respective schools, described how the Party helped guide them along a path of struggle in school, rather than passivity.

Our multi-racial and inter-generational crowd once again made an impression, this time on several parents at the cookout. They're now considering sending their teenagers to the West Coast this

summer.

Young people who had led walkouts in their schools and marched on May Day together used their recently-honed organizing skills to bring friends and family to kick back and enjoy this day of food and sports.

PL'ers in the NY Urban Debate League are planning a city-wide forum on the Sean Bell case and on criminalization of youth in schools. This will help us stick to our plans of keeping our red ball rolling from May Day right into the summer and the next school year.

The winning of youth into our Party and its anti-racist activities demonstrates the important role young students and workers play in our movement. It also shows youth that instead of fighting and shooting each other (a rash of which has erupted in the city), we should be fighting for a society that eliminates the racist warmaking bosses who cause the social problems workers and youth suffer.✊

The U.S.-Death-Squad Empire Strikes Back

BOGOTA, COLOMBIA, June 1 — The heart-attack death of Manuel Marulanda (aka Tirofijo or Sureshot), founder and leader of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the largest and oldest Latin-American guerrilla group, follows several recent events favoring the U.S.-Colombian government's war policies in the region. Early in March, Raúl Reyes, FARC's second-in-command, was killed by an air-command raid while asleep in a camp inside Ecuador. Then Iván Ríos, another top FARC commander, was killed by his own security chief to collect a huge government reward. This was followed by the surrendering of Commander Karina, the top FARC woman leader. (Apparently, the Colombian secret police threatened her daughters' lives, a common government tactic against guerrilla leaders).

The FARC has suffered major setbacks, losing many areas it once controlled, reducing its ranks to some 9,000 fighters.

All of this has induced the Uribe government, the Colombian generals and the White House to seek a military solution to eliminate the FARC altogether.

However, the FARC might be down but it's not out. Recent reports show its urban base increasing. Yet the government now has the upper hand. Uribe and U.S. rulers are using this to intensify attacks against its two main enemies in the region: Venezuela's Chavez and Ecuador's Correa (both oil-producing OPEC members).

These two are partly to blame for this. After the Colombian military's air-command raid that killed Raúl Reyes and others inside Ecuador (with open U.S. intelligence help), Uribe and the U.S. were on the defensive since this raid was to sabotage Chávez's plan, supported by France, to exchange Ingrid Betancourt (a French citizen and former Presidential candidate in FARC custody) and others for FARC members held in government prisons. This exchange was making Chávez and FARC look good. But amid worldwide condemnation of the Colombian government for the raid, Chávez and Correa shook hands with Uribe at a Latin-American presi-

dential meeting in the Dominican Republic. Uribe later responded to this favor by increasing attacks on FARC and linking it to Chávez and Correa.

The Uribe government was also discredited internally because of its connection to "parapolitics" (death squad-drug dealer groups). Sixty-four politicians (51 of them congressmen or 20% of Parliament) have been linked to parapolitics; 32 are already in jail. Most are linked to Uribe.

Semana, a newsweekly magazine, commented (5/4), "In the '80s, Pablo Escobar and his gang reached Congress, but only 5% of all parliament members were linked to him. In the '90s, when the Cali cartel decided to subtly bribe politicians under what was known as Process 8000, only 26 congressmen ended up in jail (10%). Today, the alliance between the mafia and paramilitaries has...seen 51 congressmen under investigation (19%)."

In mid-May, 14 jailed leaders of the AUC (death squads) were suddenly sent to the U.S. for drug trials. This had a dual purpose: firstly, to clean the image of President Uribe and force the Democrats in the U.S. Congress to pass a free-trade deal with Colombia. Secondly, the death-squad leaders will only be tried for drug-dealing, not for the thousands they've killed (mostly innocents) in the last few years. Thus, the links of Uribe and U.S. companies (Chiquita Brands, Del Monte, Coca-Cola, Drummond Mining) to these killings won't be exposed.

Most of the thousands murdered in Colombia in past decades are victims of the Army and its allies in the paramilitaries (trained and financed by Plan Colombia, signed by Clinton with Colombia in the 1990s). Although the FARC is labeled "Marxist," it's far from that. Its main goal has been to negotiate a deal with some section of Colombia's ruling class (and possibly with some imperialist rivals of the U.S.) to preserve capitalist exploitation. Colombia's working class and its allies don't need more capitalism. They need to fight for a communist society without any bosses. That was the idea advanced by the small but growing PLP group here on May Day. ☺

McClellan...

continued from page 4

Another liberal McClellan enabler is life-long war criminal Richard Holbrooke, vice-chairman of Perseus investors, the firm that owns PublicAffairs. Holbrooke was an aide to ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge in the U.S. genocide in Vietnam in the 1960s and advised Bill Clinton's bombing of Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s. A nominal supporter of Hillary Clinton, Holbrooke recently jumped on the Obama bandwagon by conceding his nomination at a May 26 debate in Toronto.

McClellan didn't jump ship alone. His older brother Mark, also a former GOP stalwart, joined the liberals last year. As Bush's head of Medicare/Medicaid until 2006, he made those agencies blank-check factories for giant drug companies. Today, Mark McClellan heads a program at the liberal Brookings Institution that studies ways of federalizing health care and subordinating Big Pharma's profits to the rulers' larger war agenda. McClellans' opportunistic fence-jumping reflects a major, ongoing effort by the imperialists to win as broad a base as possible to their cause. The coming elections are, of course, their main focus.

Book Benefitting Obama

Scott McClellan's Iraq "exposé" chiefly aids Barack Obama. Hypocritically feeding on widespread anti-war sentiment, Obama proposes an Iraq exit strategy. But his platform demands 92,000 new soldiers towards "making the finest military in the world...best-prepared to meet 21st-century threats." (Obama 2008 website) Voting for Obama as an anti-war candidate would thus be a grave political error. Voting for anyone, in fact, can't help at all.

The solution to the capitalists' endless wars and their ceaseless attempts to trick us into supporting them lies outside their fruitless electoral process. It lies in building a communist party dedicated to the long-term struggle of overthrowing the deadly profit system. ☺



Below are excerpts from mainstream newspapers that may be of use for our readers.
Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly, LAT=Los Angeles Times



Insider praises China's Red era

To the Editor:

I am writing to counter the one-sided and distorted picture of the Chinese revolution, particularly the Cultural Revolution... in your May 4 issue. I grew up and worked on a collective farm during the Cultural Revolution. I have been doing research in China for the last 20 years.

Today more and more Chinese working-class people look back at the Cultural Revolution years with fond memories. Despite some shortcomings of the Cultural Revolution, China was a socialist society that was overcoming inequality with full employment, free medical care and free education for its citizens. It was a country that had largely eradicated deeply rooted problems of homelessness, prostitution, bandits and drug abuse.

Since China abandoned socialism, it has been faced with the spread of drug abuse and prostitution, worsening environmental degradation, official corruption and other crimes. It is time that we recognize the positive lessons of Chinese revolution, particularly the Cultural Revolution.

Dongping Han, Swannanoa, N.C.

The writer teaches history and political science at Warren Wilson College (NYT, 5/25)

Socialism's fall = quake deaths

Earthquakes don't destroy strong, well-built

buildings; they destroy weak ones. In China, public anger is mounting. A third of the confirmed dead were children trapped in the 6,900 classrooms...

This is not just corner-cutting in the quest for fast growth. It is the consequence of systematic non-enforcement of regulations in return for bribes, and everyone in China knows it.

...Officials have unchecked power and no compunction, given the loss of the belief they are building a communist utopia, in helping themselves to cash on an even grander scale. (GW, 5/23)

Black capitalism no improvement

The scale and suddenness of attacks on thousands of African foreigners has surprised authorities. It should not have. Xenophobic attacks on Zimbabweans, Malawians, Mozambicans and Somalis have raised awkward questions about the depth of reconciliation in the "rainbow" nation. When six white police officers were caught on film setting dogs on three black men, little attention was paid to the defenceless victims, three Mozambicans. That was nearly eight years ago, and research by the South African Migration Project has shown high levels of intolerance to South Africa's 5 million immigrants since then. The influx of 3 million refugees from Zimbabwe appears to have brought xenophobia that was latent to the surface.

The speed with which the fire has spread through the squatter camps shows how dry the tinder was.

...The real problem: Africa's richest and fastest-growing nation is also its most unequal. The violence has shown, once again, how little the fading presidency of Thabo Mbeki has delivered to the unemployed, unskilled and dispossessed. (GW, 5/30)

Boss poisons you? Not a crime!

Mr. Elias wanted his workers to clean out a 25,000-gallon tank that contained cyanide waste... When the workers complained of sore throats and difficulty breathing, Mr. Elias told them to finish the job or find work somewhere else.

Mr. Dominguez, a 20-year-old high school graduate, wanted to keep his job... Two hours later, covered in sludge and barely breathing, he was removed from the tank, a victim of cyanide poisoning at the hands of a ruthless employer...

He now has the rigid body movement and stammering speech found in patients with Parkinson's disease.

My colleagues and I were shocked to learn that an employer who breaks the nation's worker-safety laws can be charged with a crime only if a worker dies. Even then, the crime is a lowly Class B misdemeanor, with a maximum sentence of six months in prison. (About 6,000 workers are killed on the job each year, many in cases where the deaths could have been prevented if their employers followed the law.) Less than two per year have been prosecuted. (NYT, 5/27)

Is There An Obesity Pandemic?

This is Part 1 of a five-part series. Part 2 will discuss whether these statistics about the "obesity epidemic" are believable — a specific example of how we decide what's true and what's not. Part 3 talks about the health consequences of overweight and obesity. Part 4: the causes of the obesity problem. Part 5: what can be done about the obesity problem — and how this relates to politics.

You can hardly pick up a magazine or newspaper these days and not read something about being fat and losing weight. Headlines trumpet that we're in the midst of an obesity "epidemic" — not only in the rich countries but even in poorer countries around the world. But is this epidemic real?

Then there's the debate about the health effects of being "overweight" — not really fat (that is, "obese"), but just a few pounds above what's considered normal. Some scientists argue that being even a little overweight increases the risk of dying early or getting heart disease, diabetes, or cancer. Other researchers claim that being a little heavy isn't bad for you and, in fact, may even be good for you if you're middle-aged or older.

Finally, there's tremendous controversy about the causes of obesity as well as the best way to lose weight and keep the pounds off. Do you have to eat less or just change what you eat? What about low fat and low carbs. Soda and fruit juice? Where does exercise fit in?

All of which brings up a basic question for all of us: when it comes to important — and maybe even controversial — questions, how do we know what's really true? That's a question that matters not only for health, but for everything we do in our personal lives, our work, and our political activities.

Let's look at some facts — in this case, statistics collected by the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics (You can get information on this issue from the website www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity).

How Do You Define 'Fat'?

"Overweight" and "obese" are both terms for ranges of weight that are greater than what is generally considered healthy for a given height. For adults, overweight and obesity ranges are determined by using weight and height to calculate a number called the "body mass index" (BMI). BMI is used because, for most people, it goes along with their amount of body fat. BMI is calculated by dividing a person's weight in kilograms by height in meters squared:

$$\text{BMI} = \text{weight (kg)} / \text{height (m)}^2$$

To figure out BMI using pounds and inches, multiply weight in pounds by 700, divide the result

by height in inches, and then divide that result by height in inches a second time. You can find a BMI calculator at www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi.

BMI is used to classify people as "overweight" or "obese" as follows:

* An adult with a BMI between 25 and 29.9 is considered overweight.

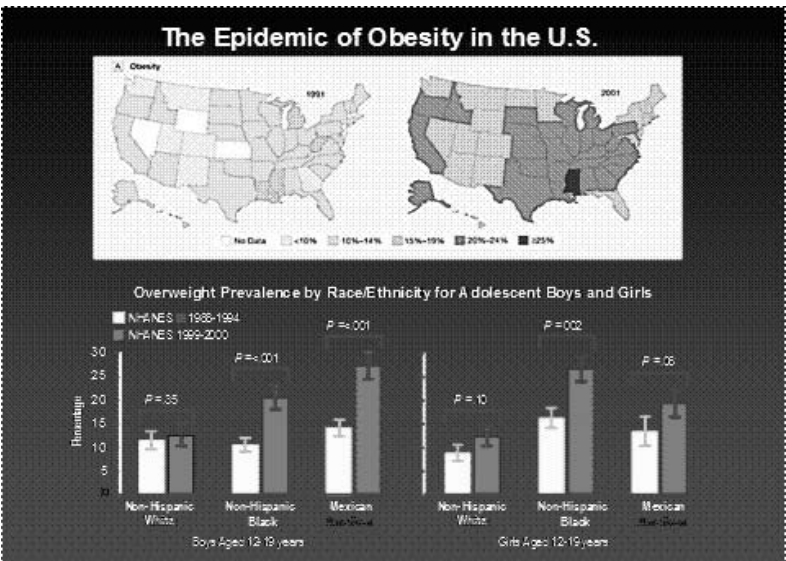
* An adult with a BMI of 30 or higher is considered obese.

How Fat Are People in the United States?

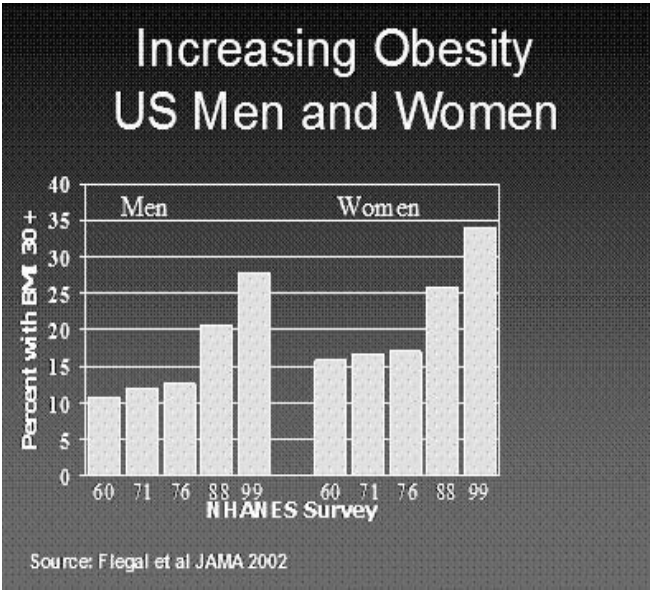
What do the statistics based on BMI show? In the U.S., the amount of overweight and obesity in the population has increased sharply since the 1970's for both adults and children. Two national surveys (NHANES — the National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys) show that among adults aged 20-74 years, the amount of obesity increased from 15.0% (in the 1976-1980 survey) to 33% (in the 2003-2004 survey). These two surveys also show increases in overweight among children and teens. For children aged 2-5 years, the amount of overweight increased 5% to 14%; for those aged 6-11 years, from 6.5% to 19%; and for those aged 12-19 years, from 5% to 17%. See included graphs for another view of the trends in overweight and obesity in the U.S.

How Fat Are People Around the World?

This is indeed a world-wide problem, reflecting capitalist development trends in many countries (more high-calorie food available and more sedentary lifestyles as people move from agricultural work to office and factory jobs). (Data here from World Cancer Research Fund: Diet, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Cancer, 2007.) Most recent estimates suggest that in 2002 there were 1 billion overweight or obese people worldwide. In China, where capitalism has returned with a vengeance, the amount of underweight adults has decreased and the numbers of people who are either overweight or obese has risen substantially. In 2002 there were 184 million overweight and 31 million obese people in China, out of a population of 1.3 billion.



The World Health Organization has found that over a 10-year period in the 1980s and '90s, the average BMI increased in most populations. Historically, starvation, underweight, and infection were the main nutrition-related public health problems in middle- and low-income countries. This is no longer the case. Surveys have shown that overweight exceeds underweight in most model- and low-income countries, including those in North Africa and the Middle East, Central Asia, China, and Latin America. The rise of overweight and obesity since the mid-1970s has been two to four times faster in lower-income than higher-income countries. In some poorer countries, scientists now speak of a "dual burden": obesity alongside starvation.



NY Civil War Draft Riots Were Racist Attacks on Black People

Although the review of "A People's History of the Civil War," it erred in suggesting that the draft riots in New York City (and women's role in them) constituted an "inspiring story." In fact, the New York draft riots were vicious racist attacks on black people, comparable to the 1919 race riots in which white mobs murderously attacked black communities in many cities after World War I.

In June 1863, the pro-slavery Democratic Party in New York whipped up racist sentiment among Irish and German immigrant workers, declaring that the Civil War was a "n_____ war" and that the Emancipation Proclamation issued in January of that year would lead to a flood of freed blacks moving to New York, driving down wages of white workers and depriving them of jobs altogether.

During the five days of the draft riot in New York City, white mobs lynched eleven (11) black men and burned the Colored Orphan Asylum on Fifth Avenue between 43rd and 44th Streets to the ground, terrifying the newly-homeless 233 black children who had been living there. Thousands of black people fled the city, never to return. For more on this, see Leslie M. Harris, In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863. A relevant

excerpt can be read at <http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/317749.htm>.

We must never forget the severity of U.S. racism, both historically and today. It's central to every aspect of U.S. capitalist history, and remains today

the most significant tool that helps the capitalists stay in power.

Anti-racist Red

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