

CHALLENGE



THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

Obama to Workers: SACRIFICE TO SAVE RACIST CAPITALISM

Upon the election of Barack Obama, the bosses' mass media has flooded us with the idea that his victory will somehow alleviate 400 years of racism in the U.S. But ever since the anti-racist rebellions of the 1960s and early '70s, the bosses have learned how to use black politicians like Obama to push the same myth of "the end of racism." Yet, since then mass racist unemployment, police terror, imperialist wars, wage-cuts and plant closings have continued, and they won't stop with Obama.

Yes, there was "dancing in the streets" when Harold Washington was elected the first black mayor of Chicago. The cheering had barely died down when his first official act was laying off 3,000 city workers, 80% of them black. Within 48 hours of the Obama election, NYC Mayor Bloomberg (he of the \$20 billion fortune) announced plans to lay off 5,000 city workers (a large number black and Latino), close scores of poor children's dental clinics, raise the 8.375% sales tax another 3% (highest in history), cancel the scheduled \$400 rebate to working-class homeowners while raising their property taxes 7%, hike personal income taxes 15% and put a six cents tax on every plastic bag used in every store!

These objective conditions of capitalism — "solving" the bosses' economic crisis on the backs of the working class — cannot be wished away and will result in intensified attacks.

OBAMA'S CAPITALISM WILL WIPE OUT JOBS, HOMES, PENSIONS

Obama will not prevent those tens of thousands of GM and Chrysler workers, victims of a probable merger, from losing their jobs.

Millions of homeowners will still suffer foreclosures.

The stock market plunge will still wipe out billions of dollars in workers' 401(k) pensions.

Obama will not alleviate the super-exploitation of millions of subcontractor workers all across the South and California.

His promise to accelerate Clinton's placing of 100,000 cops on the streets will continue the racist and strike-breaking role that the police play for the bosses.

Obama — as all presidents before him, Democrat and Republican — will still carry out the Carter Doctrine: to use military force wherever in the world U.S. rulers' control of oil is threatened (U.S. "vital interests").

IMPERIALIST WAR STILL ON THE AGENDA

Obama will still maintain the hundreds of U.S. military bases worldwide, ready to start up new wars (assuming he can get the troops to fight them) which will continue to kill millions of people as has already occurred under Clinton and Bush in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Obama has advocated 20,000 more troops for Afghanistan (and an invasion of Pakistan?) to guarantee an oil pipeline from Kazakhstan through Afghanistan and Pakistan.

While no doubt the rulers will orchestrate an Obama trip to Africa before "cheering crowds," it will not stop the profit-driven war for vital minerals in the Congo which has already killed 5,000,000 people.(see page 5)

And whenever some troops may be withdrawn from Iraq, Obama still has championed holding them "at the

ready" in bases around the Mid-East and South Asia, to "guard against terrorists" — meaning anyone threatening the U.S. bosses' oil empire. The NY Times (11/3) revealed that Obama and McCain advisors, along with ruling-class "think-tankers," have been jointly discussing the military option for Iran.

All this will be part of Obama's "program" because his job — and the job of any U.S. president — is to defend the capitalist system that creates these problems, which is precisely why the ruling class put him in position to take the White House. This was no accident. (See box, page 5 on Obama's "Dream Team".)

Already, in his acceptance speech, Obama was pushing "sacrifice" and "service" — which will soon become "national service," a back door to a military draft. This first black president is being touted as the "culmination of the civil rights movement" of the 1960s (even Bush referred to that the morning after the election!), conveniently omitting the nation-wide black rebellions and then the racism that followed over the last 40 years, in unemployment, health, housing, education and police brutality.

COMMUNIST ANALYSIS CRUCIAL

In the face of the ruling-class media onslaught, Progressive Labor Party has Marxism and its analysis of capitalist exploitation: how workers' labor power that produces all value is turned into bosses' profits; how the contradictions that are built into capitalism lead inevitably to periodic recessions, depressions, mass unemployment and imperialist wars between rivals competing for super-profits, resources and control of energy. Marxism is still as valid as ever.

Interestingly enough, in this presidential campaign, when Obama was nonsensically attacked as a "socialist" or "communist" it was linked to the idea of "sharing" and "equalizing wealth." While they were rebuffing this "accusation," no doubt millions think "sharing" is a pretty good idea, one cornerstone of communist ideas.

The rulers are already flooding us with the "democracy" garbage, about the U.S. as "the beacon to the world." It's PLP's job to answer this, as we have all along, in exposing the real U.S. role in the world — all the mass murder in the wars the rulers have launched: Vietnam, Panama, Grenada, Iraq and Afghanistan. And all the fascist dictatorships U.S. rulers have generated or sustained: the Shah's Iran, Guatemala, Chile, the Congo — under Johnson and Nixon, Carter and Clinton as well as Reagan and the Bushes. We cannot allow people to forget the nature of this "beacon."

In the long run, and many times in the short run, PLP's analysis of the contradictions of capitalism/imperialism is the only thing that makes sense to the working class. We should never underestimate this. Over the past 47 years, it is what has enabled us to make it through many tough times and come out stronger.

PATIENCE, URGENCY, ACTION ON THE ROAD AHEAD

All this will not be easy, as workers and others get sucked into the rulers' billion-dollar propaganda machine. Facing off against "the-first-black-president" business may very

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ELECTION HEIGHTENS RULERS' ASSAULT ON WORKERS

President-elect Barack Obama has emerged as a propaganda machine for the U.S. ruling class, calling on the working class to "sacrifice" for the survival of capitalism while doling out nearly a trillion dollars to the banks, insurance companies and failing corporations. Thus, U.S. rulers scored a significant, but temporary, win over class consciousness on November 4th.

Barack Obama moved 63 million workers, students and professionals, including record numbers of black and young voters, towards capitalist "solutions" for the economic crises and imperialist wars that capitalism itself creates. Booms and busts are part and parcel of an inherently unstable profit system. Self-interested financiers constantly tout worthless "good-as-gold" instruments, like subprime mortgage bundles, credit default swaps and other "securities," to cheat one another and the public. Houses of cards inevitably collapse. And ceaseless worldwide competition among national ruling classes for markets, labor, and resources, especially oil, sparks ever-intensifying military conflict, that ultimately goes global.

As Obama's choice of advisors shows (see "Dream Team", page 5), he intends, as every U.S. president since Washington has, to make workers pay for rulers' problems. With his supposed all-class mandate, Obama hopes to enact anti-worker policies more freely than Bush, an obvious enemy of labor.

PROMOTING UNITY WITH THE ENEMY

Stealing a line from Nazi Germany, Obama promotes the notion, fatal to our class, that we're all in this mess together. Nazis at Hitler's 1930s' rallies shouted "one people, one nation, one leader." At his election night media event in Chicago, banker-backed Obama spouted a similar ruling-class credo:

"We rise or fall as one nation, as one people." So we must "sacrifice" to save the bosses' nation. A multi-racial, largely working-class crowd cheered repeatedly, enthusiastically and illogically, "Yes we can."

The U.S. rulers, whom Obama serves, seek to restore profits at home through racist layoffs and across-the-board pay-cuts, modeled after Big Auto's halving of younger, mainly black and Latin, workers' pay packages last year. Replacing outright foreclosure with forcible renegotiation of mortgages on terms favorable to the banks forms another part of liberal Obama's domestic assault on workers. He also seeks to lure or compel working-class youth into the expanded military that U.S. rulers need for their widening wars. Pakistan and Syria are the newest battlegrounds. Iran, Russia and China loom on the horizon.

The president-elect promises young, increasingly unemployed workers a college education if they live through a stint in the armed forces. But joblessness alone may not provide the 91,000 new troops Obama demands or the millions that war with China or Russia will require. That's why a second tier of New Deal-style liberals like Robert Reich stands behind the bankers in Obama's camp. Reich & Co. propose a large-scale program of federal jobs at rock-bottom wages to rebuild infrastructure and the military. If that doesn't work, there's always the draft.

WORKERS CAN BUILD A MOVEMENT BASED ON OUR CLASS INTERESTS

Obama's victory, amid recession and war and the anti-worker onslaught it accompanies, constitutes a real setback for our class. But history shows that red-led workers can turn just such developments into their opposite and build a mass movement against capitalism. In the depths of the 1930s depression, the old Communist Party led militant sit-down strikes, as at GM in Flint, Michigan, in 1936-37, that fought layoffs and pay-cuts. It also organized thousands to physically block foreclos-



ures and evictions. Unfortunately, that party failed to link these struggles to the need for communist revolution as the only solution.

The anti-Vietnam War movement of the 1960s, in which PLP played a leading role, mobilized millions. The Party exposed virtually every major university's and company's role in the U.S. war machine and organized strikes, sit-ins, walkouts, teach-ins and other aggressive actions against it. Learning from the old CP's errors, it recruited many to a revolutionary outlook.

We can reinvigorate our working-class, communist Party today by reviving struggles like these while correcting the mistaken class politics that robbed them of revolutionary promise. The "C" P's World War II era "United Front Against Fascism" encouraged allying with "good" anti-Hitler imperial-

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OUR FIGHT

★ **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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Obama to Workers: Sacrifice to Save Racist Capitalism

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well put us into some unpopular positions initially (see box on right). But PLP's Marxist analysis and communist ideas, combined with the understanding of objective conditions, will present us with untold opportunities to convert any "unpopular" position into a mass understanding among the working class that capitalism — white, black or whatever — is our enemy.

Patience and urgency must be the guide. Patience with our friends and within mass organizations as the objective conditions unfold, and the urgency to advance PLP's ideas at every turn.

We should organize to take action against the ruling-class onslaught, to figure out ways to answer their attacks. Fighting evictions and foreclosures; organizing rank-and-file unity of the employed and unemployed. There will be increasing millions thrown on the street. We must raise the issue in our unions and fight the misleadership tooth and nail. This can become a mass issue and unite workers all across our class, union and non-union, employed and unemployed, black, white and Latino. Working-class unity is a prerequisite for revolution. Class war is our answer to the rulers' "all-class unity."

This class struggle must be linked to the only solution to capitalism's horrors: communist revolution. The absolute precondition for that goal is building the Party needed to lead it, the PLP.

It will not be easy. But as has been said, "Revolution is no tea party." ☸

HOW 'UNPOPULAR' BECOMES 'POPULAR'

Exposing and opposing Obama and the ruling class he serves may not be "popular" at first. But in our 47-year history, PLP has never shrunk from upholding principled positions that may be "unpopular." And we not only have been proven correct eventually but emerged stronger for it.

Before even being a Party, in 1964, two years into the Progressive Labor Movement, when the Harlem Rebellion erupted, we were the only group supporting and encouraging that uprising. While now such support might be viewed as "automatic," we were opposed by all the reformist organizations, the preachers, the "Communist" Party, the press and TV and the full power of the State.

All those forces were calling for the rebels to "cool it." The rulers banned our demonstrations with injunctions (which we broke), sent us to jail, invoked a Grand Jury witch-hunt, tailed us, bugged our phones and so on. But our "unpopular" position mushroomed into huge rebellions through-

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PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

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Students Open to LA PL'ers' Exposé of Obama, Capitalism, Draft

LOS ANGELES, CA., November 4 — Today, election day, several black and Latino high school students delivered a Power Point presentation to over 300 of their peers, about half black and half Latino. They gave an historical, economic and political context to the U.S. election, particularly related to oil wars, and revealed the "hidden agenda" of the two candidates.

The presenters narrated and led discussions in four different sessions, getting better each time. Students were filled with anger and a thirst for answers when informed about Obama's plan for youth to enlist for "National Service"; about old Clinton and Bush advisors now working for Obama and McCain; and about the inter-imperialist wars that will continue with either candidate.

Discussion and debate followed the presentation, also involving several teachers. Students then understood what's behind the rising cost-of-living and how the war is causing school budget cuts, tax hikes and a collapsing economy.

One student raised eyebrows, saying, "Well if Obama is not fit, if McCain is not fit, then who is?" One presenter replied that, "No one is fit because it's a question of the system and we know for a fact

that capitalism is not a system fit for working-class people."

In another session a teacher declared, "I respectfully disagree with many of the points of the presenters. I think that Obama will bring positive change, especially after so many heads of states from other countries have expressed their support." Then another teacher commented that she understood the presentation as, "No matter who wins the election, the next President will have to mobilize the country for a bigger war. The danger is that Obama will try to convince an entire generation to commit to patriotism, to defend the U.S. government's interests and to sacrifice for the American empire." Many students hissed, saying "not me."

It was clear from the discussions that after hearing a class analysis, an explanation of the nature of capitalism and imperialism's need to wage war, youth and workers will not be easily swayed by patriotism, no matter which ruling-class spokesperson tries. As one black presenter put it, "Obama is just a shirt that they have put on because it is in style."

With this event we've not only developed our leadership but also will be able to increase our



Fight Racism By Fighting FOR Communism!

CHALLENGE networks. We realized that many young people are open to the anti-racist, revolutionary communist ideas and struggles found in our newspaper. Through political, ideological and class struggle and the fight to secure CHALLENGE networks, we can alert the working class to the rulers' plans for wider war, leading to World War III, as well as help prepare our class for the long fight for revolution, and working-class state power. ☸

LA, Brooklyn PL'ers Attack Obamamania

LOS ANGELES, CA, Nov. 4 — PLP'ers and friends went to three colleges with CHALLENGES, leaflets and the PL election pamphlets to offer students an alternative to capitalist elections — communism. The elections were on everyone's mind and most seemed open to hearing that the source of our problems is capitalism and that Obama won't solve them.

One comrade talked to a group of students about how Obama has positioned himself to appeal to the best sentiments of people. But the reality of who he is and who he represents is quite different. We mentioned that Goldman

communist revolution. He said it was worth thinking about and everyone there took our literature.

In several other conversations, mostly young black people said they had been thinking along the same lines, or that they agreed with what we said. They were particularly worried about Obama instituting the draft in order to field the troops needed for the war in Afghanistan, and saw the call to sacrifice and service as a code word for the draft.

We saw only one group of students who were sort of cheerleaders for Obama and

BROOKLYN, N.Y., Nov. 4 — PLP maintained a constant presence in the lives of our close friends and the broader working-class community today, warning of a future of more war and more fascism amid the euphoria that surrounded the election of Barack Obama. The highlight of the day was a paper sale at a main transportation hub in central Brooklyn where we distributed 300 CHALLENGES and over 500 leaflets about the election and the economic crisis.

The energy our group brought to Crown Heights flowed from a day when all our forces, including several high school youth who have grown much closer to the Party over the last year, talked politics with our peers all day long; in classes, on break and at home.

Our membership, new and experienced, fought for the line that Barack Obama's popularity represents a greater danger for the working class than any movement the Bush/McCain crowd of open fascists could ever build. As the day wore on into the evening, several of our comrades hosted socials or were invited out to watch the election returns.

Even amid the hype, and among friends with whom we share deep agreement around anti-racist politics, we were able to win them to recognize that the "change" this election will bring will prove to be insignificant. The harder part is convincing them that things will get worse, but we are working on it!

We reminded our friends and ourselves that war in the Mid-East will widen, that workers will pay the price for this economic crisis, and that racist police attacks like the killing of Sean Bell will occur again and again as long as we live under this brutal capitalist system.

The enthusiasm for Obama, while rooted for many in an honest belief that racism took a defeat in this election, is bound to fade as war, depression and fascism intensify. It remains our task, wherever we have influence and on as many levels as possible, to offer careful analysis of the developing world situation and present our Party and the fight for communism as the only solution. ☸

The spirit of service and sacrifice which he is calling for really means that the young people who supported him will be the ones called on to fight imperialist wars.

Sachs, etc., supports Obama and that both he and McCain are supported by capitalists and carry out their interests, not those of the workers.

The spirit of service and sacrifice which Obama is calling for really means that the young people who supported him will be the ones called on to fight imperialist wars. Obama has pledged to increase the army by 92,000 troops and send 20,000 to Afghanistan.

A young man gestured to his friend and said, "That's just what we were talking about." His friend said he didn't trust either the Democrats or the Republicans and he would rather vote for a Freedom and Peace candidate. Our comrade said that elections wouldn't bring the change we needed, that it would take a

didn't want to talk to us. "You have to believe," said one older woman. We told her that we believe in the working class, that history has taught us not to believe in the Democratic Party. Despite being unconvinced, she took a copy of the election pamphlet.

One black student said, "My grandmother and I have been talking about that same thing (how Obama and McCain both support wider wars and bailing out the banks). Yes, I'd like to get together with you guys."

The overwhelming majority of young people we talked to were open to our ideas. Three people gave us their contact information to come to a study group and future activities. We distributed about 600 leaflets, 200 CHALLENGES and about 150 PLP election pamphlets. ☸

Without Red Alternative Volunteers Could Become Network for Fascism

Barack Obama's loyalty to his capitalist paymasters on the "bailout for billionaires" and his call for wider war in Afghanistan/Pakistan reveal his true colors.

But by far the most dangerous aspect of this election is Obama's bringing to the White House the biggest, best organized, fastest-acting grassroots army in the history of presidential campaigning. In a text message sent out minutes before his election-night acceptance speech, Obama told followers, "We have a lot to do to get our country back on track and I'll be in touch about what comes next."

The new president's minions include 3.1 million Internet-linked donors and volunteers. The most active of the volunteers include the million registered

on mybarackobama.com, a social network that the campaign established to communicate needs, events and assignments to volunteers. Participation and fund-raising totals were calculated and there's a numeric score for each volunteer's success.

This volunteer network will be asked to exert pressure on Congressmen who oppose Obama's legislation, among other tasks. This mass support for concentrated power in the hands of the president, if it takes hold, will make Bush's fascist executive power grab look inept and tame. We will "love our dictator."

The campaign maintained extensive and precise digital records, allowing the new president a zip-code by zip-code map of "loyal soldiers." No matter their individual intentions, they will be used to

build a base for a program of more war and more fascism.

No doubt thousands of Obama-ites think they'll push the president in a more "progressive" direction. We must be among those masses to offer them an alternative. We must go to the January 20th inauguration in D.C. with CHALLENGE. We must step up the fight against racist unemployment, police terror, foreclosures, imperialist war, cutbacks, and bring workers, soldiers and students our communist politics. This is the only way to turn the dangerous illusions many people have in Obama into opportunities to build a communist alternative. ☸

Boeing Strike Sold Out But PLP's Politics Spread



SEATTLE, WA., Nov. 1 — “That paper better say reject it,” said a Machinist to CHALLENGE sellers on his way to the final Boeing contract vote. He was happy to see our headline calling the sellout contract an attack on all workers. He expected our Party to take the side of the working class no matter what the popular sentiment at the time. Most agreed it was a sellout, but didn’t see any alternative after striking more than eight weeks. In the end the contract was accepted, ending the strike of 27,000 machinists.

This action began two months ago with a two-day rebellion against the gang-up of the company, the government and their union lackeys. The union leadership proved that they have the bosses’ interests in mind by asking everyone to go to work, despite an 87% strike-vote. Angry, militant workers responded by chasing them from the union meeting. Leading up to the rebellion and beginning of the strike, “Rolling Thunder,” a campaign of disruption where workers bang their tools against the factory machines, could be heard throughout the plant.

The pro-capitalist union leaders set us up from the beginning. The union’s contract slogan, “It’s our time, this time” fed the illusion that those of us left in the traditional union plants could force significant concessions from the bosses on our own. To

add insult to injury, the misleaders said they were blindsided by the worldwide economic meltdown that undercut their “bargaining power.” Thousands of CHALLENGE readers were not so blindsided.

Their written pitch to sell the contract bragged, “We made significant gains with respect to...the ability to help guide this Company into the future.” They continue to argue that the way out of periodic capitalist crises is to give more concessions to [union] workers. In essence, they say the unions (and their endorsed politicians) can save capitalism from the greedy politicians.

Years ago, Karl Marx proved that capitalism would always suffer periodic crises of overproduction, no matter what the wages of workers. Worldwide depression is built into a profit system that can’t pay workers the value of what they produce. The only way for the capitalists to resolve this contradiction is to destroy the productive capacity of their international rivals: in other words, war and world war.

Boeing CEO Jim McNerney made this perfectly clear in his now infamous memo during the fifth week of the strike. Citing foreign competitors and the “global financial meltdown,” he admitted U.S. imperialism could not sustain decent wages, benefits and job security. He called for an end to these “repeated work stoppages.” Within days of the contract acceptance, he vowed never to “go through this [a strike] again.” This is a clear indication that the bosses are going to intensify their attacks on the working class.

Building CHALLENGE Networks Throughout the Strike

As the bosses’ system is shocked by internal contractions and threatened by imperialist competitors, we must turn every strike, big or small, into a school for communism, by intensifying the class struggle, promoting anti-racist, international working class solidarity. A highlight of building working-

class solidarity, was when a pair of Boeing strikers traveled to Los Angeles to present a “thank you” (signed by fellow strikers) to non-union subcontractors for their support.

The trip was made possible because a Party-led group of strikers met every week during the strike. We struggled with each other at these meetings to leave behind the illusions spread by the hacks. Communist revolution was offered as the only answer to capitalism’s inevitable crises, the attacks on our economic well-being and the inevitability of racism and war.

As the strike progressed, we produced flyers, solidarity letters and blog posts. We argued in this literature for mass pickets and solidarity rallies. In addition, we visited thirty-five other strikers to discuss how our communist politics related to this strike and beyond.

The mass sales of the paper — and the network sales that have been going on for many years — laid the basis for these meetings. They also encouraged another comrade — who spent many hours distributing PLP literature to strikers — to organize for worker-student unity in his campus organization. Prior to and during the strike, over 40,000 PLP flyers and 18,000 CHALLENGEs were distributed and sold to strikers in the Seattle area, L. A. subcontractors and UAW members at Boeing’s Long Beach, CA. plant.

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

The struggle to consolidate and expand the modest revolutionary gains made during the strike is our next task. Although the strike is over, Boeing workers are incredibly angry with the sellout contract and there exists the potential for more action. We will continue to build our network of CHALLENGE readers, as well as building unity with sub-contractor workers in Seattle and L.A. Very importantly, we will push for unity between the commercial workers who went on strike and those in war production, who continued to work. By doing so, we can expand the class struggle and win more workers to the idea that revolution is the only solution! ☸

Profs Go To ‘Strike School’ on Stella D’Oro Picket Line

Communists know industrial workers’ labor is the major source of bosses’ profits and, with red ideas, the natural leaders of workers’ fight-backs and revolutions. Education workers like myself need to link up with more strategically placed industrial workers to fight part-timers’ exploitation, anti-strike laws, racist tuition hikes or imperialist war recruiters.

So I and other professors in my union went to support the striking bakers at the union-busting Stella D’Oro, to bring them PLP’s ideas, and introduce other profs to workers in struggle. The Stella D’Oro strikers taught me plenty.

Lesson 1: Unlike many of my professional colleagues, workers stick together when the chips are down. The 135 strikers are solid — in nine weeks not a single scab from their ranks, workers of many backgrounds, senior and junior, women and men. One older South Asian worker was deeply moved by the solidarity of the young, mostly Latino/a workers, who refused to scab despite being there only one year. It made him determined to stay out, not so much for himself as for the next generation of workers. Those are feelings that help make everyone here a potential revolutionary.

Lesson 2: Class consciousness is alive. Though weaker now, workers feel it when things get tough. Members of their sister Local 3 brought a big cake they had baked for the strikers. A Verizon worker who refused to cross the line returned with ten pizzas and drinks for the picketers’ lunch. (My friend also brought two pizzas. And the picketers gave us food and drink, too, as we leafleted and talked with

them.) A Local 3 electrician also refused to cross the line; the boss’s problem went unfixed. My own union’s members gave \$450.

Lesson 3: Workers are open to communist thinking. As communists we tried to heighten class consciousness. The strikers agreed with our suggestion to leaflet nearby industrial sites to win those workers to their coming rally. In two hours we had MTA bus drivers, Time-Warner Cable electricians and Montefiore hospital workers coming to the rally!

The other side of class consciousness is hatred of the cops — who harass the pickets and chase motorists for their day’s ticket quota — and, of course, hatred of scabs. Professors were impressed hearing workers giving scabs hell. I asked my friend to relate how miners he worked with had fought scabs and also won some to stop.

Lesson 4: Many New York workers have family ties to the CUNY colleges, the basis of a real worker-student-teacher alliance. At Stella D’Oro almost every worker I asked had a nephew, a daughter, a friend, among the 400,000 CUNY students. It’s important to be there alongside our students’ families in struggle. We need to fight harder for the worker-student-professional alliance — a PLP idea — in the CUNY union.

On the line we learn it’s not as hard as some claim. There are many ways to broaden friendships made with strikers. We can’t build a revolutionary movement or recruit many intellectuals to PLP without this direct alliance with industrial workers.

Lesson 5: Workers think straight, figure things

out, and know what has to be done. A strike is a great “school for revolution” (Bolshevik leader Lenin’s phrase). Many bakers have good political ideas far beyond the immediate strike issues — war, the elections and of course the bailout. And they’re open to the Left. One striker said the bosses actually did nothing in the plant; he saw that we don’t need the bosses at all, that workers can run everything.

Two leaders on the line were curious about our thoughts on the elections. They had little faith in the bosses’ two parties. One said war expenditures were part of the economic crisis (try to find that on CNN). He related a detail we hadn’t heard about, Iceland’s borrowing from Russia.

As a communist teacher, I was eager right then to start a “sidewalk seminar” to hear more of their ideas. It would have been one of my best classes, as both learner and teacher! The next step is discussing CHALLENGE.

One creep in my union said we shouldn’t do much to support this strike, since these little struggles were “a dime a dozen.” Hogwash! Every worker in struggle is a valued part of that age-old tradition that ultimately leads to communist revolution. The Stella D’Oro line is full of such lessons. If you live in New York, go to 237th and Broadway, lend your support and bring CHALLENGE. They’re there 24/7, and for all of us.

Still Learning☸

Bosses' Dogfight Over Congo Wealth Threatens New Genocide

On Nov. 7, African leaders held a summit meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, demanding an immediate cease-fire to the latest fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Hundreds of thousands have fled the Eastern Congo due to the fight between government soldiers, UN forces and General Nkunda, who's supported by Rwanda's rulers and bosses. The fighting is much more than an extension of the Hutu-Tutsi clashes that led to the massacre in Rwanda in the mid-1990s.

Francois Grignon of the International Crisis Group explains, "Nkunda is being funded by Rwandan businessmen so they can retain control of the mines in North Kivu. This is the absolute core of the conflict. What we are seeing now are beneficiaries of the illegal war economy fighting to maintain their right to exploit."

Congo's President Joseph Kabila has used the army to support Hutu militias who fled to Eastern Congo from Rwanda. They perpetrated the genocide of Tutsis in Rwanda in the 1990s and now also control lucrative mines there. Thus, the fight is for control of the region's mineral wealth.

However, there's also an imperialist dogfight over Congo's cobalt and other key minerals for weapons and in modern technology. In the Walikale region, the Rwandan army forced local communities to mine coltan, a mineral vital to mobile phones and laptop computers. In 2000, coltan was earning Rwanda \$20 million a month.

The fight over Congo's wealth already killed over 5.2 million people during the 1997-2003 civil war following the overthrow of long-time CIA puppet dictator Mobutu. Then Angola and Zimbabwe sent forces to fight alongside the new Congolese government against the armies of Rwanda and Uganda in what became known as "Africa's world

'U.S. rulers have established Africom, a Pentagon command center for Africa, aimed mainly at China, in an attempt to re-gain control on the continent using the military.'

war."

Today, China is heavily involved in the Congo and the rest of Africa, including oil-rich Sudan, at the expense of U.S., British and French imperialist interests.

Two years ago, President Kabila announced plans to rebuild Congo's infrastructure. Denied loans or aid for this from the U.S. or British governments, Kabila turned to China. (Washington is mainly taken up with costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.)

Chinese rulers, needing Congo's minerals and other raw materials, have given the Kabila government \$8 billion for infrastructure projects. Its import-export bank has pledged money for Congolese road and rail construction. A new Chinese-

built railway is proposed to link Katanga (another mineral-rich province) to the coast. (In the 1960s, the CIA financed Col. Tshombe's Katanga secessionist movement, opposing the then Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, who the CIA eventually assassinated.) Major hydro-electric projects are in their initial stages.

Capitalism's global economic melt-down will surely sharpen all the contradictions in the Congo. The commodity price drop might have the same effect as the collapse of world prices for coffee (Rwanda's main export) which impoverished much of the population and sharpened ethnic rivalry. This led to the Rwanda genocide in the 1990s as local bosses and politicians fought to control the shrinking economic pie. Today a similar mixture is bound to lead to more "ethnic cleansing" and a wider civil war.

Local bosses are fighting for control of the region's mineral wealth to compensate for any losses in the world market. U.S. rulers have established Africom, a Pentagon command center for Africa, aimed mainly at China, in an attempt to re-gain control on the continent using the military.

For African workers and their allies, the only way out of this hellhole is to unite along class lines, breaking with all the ethnic-based warlords and bosses, and forging a revolutionary communist leadership. It's a long hard task, but is the only road for real liberation. ☸

Strikers, Indigenous People Battle Colombia's Army, Cops

BOGOTA, COLOMBIA, November 6 — More than 19,000 sugar cane cutters, subcontracted by co-ops in the Cauca Valley, have been striking since September 15 in eight sugar mills. The workers, represented by several unions, are demanding decent wages and working conditions, permanent jobs (ending subcontracting), the right to unionize and elimination of the ecological and social harm caused by the production of agrofuel (ethanol).

The bosses have rejected the workers' demands and are supported by the government, which has militarized the mills. Cops and paramilitary forces have attacked the strikers with tear gas and rubber bullets, using military tanks armed with water cannons. Several strike leaders have had their lives threatened. The bosses' government and media have labeled the strikers "subversive," a death sentence in Colombia.

Boss Carlos Ardila Lülle, who controls 80% of the sugar and ethanol business, is also connected with Coca Cola, Nestle, Postobonm Bavaria Brewery and RCN Radio-TV network. These corporations are heavily involved in using death squads to kill militant unionists and other activist workers.

A national march by 22,000 Indigenous people (see CHALLENGE, 11/12) opposed the fascist repression and land seized from Indigenous communities by landlords using death squads. These landlords raise cash crops on stolen land — African palm, sugar cane and poppy plants for cocaine. The army and cops attacked the march, killing several people and injuring dozens more, but the struggle continues.

Initially, President Uribe — the U.S.'s most loyal ally in South America — denied the attack, but then



admitted it and accused the marchers of being "infiltrated by guerrillas." He aims to bust this struggle as was done with the 43-day judicial workers' strike, who were also threatened by death squads and mass firings.

The Uribe government is so discredited that, after claiming several youths recently killed were guerrillas who died in clashes with the army and cops, finally admitted the truth: these youths were executed in cold blood so the government could claim it was "killing guerrillas." The scandal has forced several high-ranking military officers, including Colombian army chief General Montoya, to resign. This is the kind of "democratic" governments U.S. bosses are backing in Latin America.

We in PLP have been modestly participating in some of these struggles, discussing our communist politics with workers and youth. But we must do more. While such struggles are good, they're not enough. Capitalism cannot be reformed or changed, even if electing "progressive anti-Uribe politicians," as some reformists and fake leftists claim. The main lesson for workers and youth is that a revolutionary communist leadership must be forged to fight for a society without any bosses, their racism, fascist death squads and imperialist warmakers. ☸

Election Heightens Rulers' Assault on Workers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

ists, like U.S. and British rulers.

Nationalism, which boosted local, usually non-white, capitalist bosses, turned sincere anti-war 1960s' activists into a cheering section for capitalist misleaders like Nelson Mandela. Under the latter's presidency, unions were told not to strike while his maintenance of capitalist exploitation under black bosses increased unemployment and poverty.

Within the U.S., nationalism enables workers' enemy Obama and war criminals Colin Powell and Condi Rice to help preserve the profit system. Powell defended the My Lai massacre in Vietnam and directed the slaughter in the first Gulf War. (See CHALLENGE, 11/12)

Progressive Labor Party categorically rejects a united front with bosses, nationalism and all other forms of class collaboration. But correct ideology is only one prerequisite for a successful revolutionary communist party. Another is leading effective, inspiring, sharp class struggles — schools for revolutionary communist practice. The plunging economy, escalating imperialist warfare and the new Obama regime present our Party with opportunities to grow qualitatively. ☸

Barack's Capitalist Dream Team: Workers' Nightmare

The emerging "Team Obama" boasts many of U.S. capitalism's most vicious racist job-, wage- and benefit-cutters and imperialist warmakers. Economic hit-men like former Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker, Clinton's Treasury-Secy. Robert Rubin and his assistant Larry Summers, and Clinton's NY Fed chairman Timothy Geithner comprise Obama's money trust.

Their policies directly raised unemployment to levels unseen since the 1930s, dismantled Welfare and helped engineer Wall Street's "restructuring," which this year alone has cost 1.2 million workers' jobs. Government figures show 21.2 million workers out of work or unable to find full-time jobs. (NY Times, 10/8) Meanwhile, executives of failed firms haggle over the size of their multi-million-dollar "golden parachutes."

John Podesta heads Obama's transition team. The lobbying firm he founded fronts for BP, Boeing, General Dynamics, Lockheed, Northrop, Raytheon, and other cogs in the Pentagon war machine. Rahm Emmanuel, Obama's new chief of staff, served in the neo-Nazi Israeli Defense Force during the genocide of the first Gulf War.

The Rockefeller wing of the ruling class, expecting potential opposition to capitalism's putting the screws on the working class, has been planning Obama's rise for some time. As CHALLENGE has reported, Rockefeller money sent Obama to Harvard and then to a professorship at the U. of Chicago and then to the "electric" speech at the 2004 Democratic Convention which gave him the national spotlight. It was then that he started pushing the rulers' "all-class unity" ("We're not blue states or red states; we're the United States"), now his watchword. In Obama the rulers have the perfect guy to champion this.

According to the NY Times (10/5), Obama's forces began organizing this campaign the day after he was elected to the Senate from Illinois two years ago. They figured out how to raise hundreds of millions of dollars, outspending McCain four to one. ☸

LETTERS



Haiti: Kids Buried Alive by Capitalist Greed

On November 9, an angry crowd went to the site of the collapsed La Promesse school building in the town of Petionville, Haiti, where 92 children and adults were buried alive. They were demanding that the rescue operation be stepped up. The three-floor building had crumbled two days earlier. Fortin Augustin, the evangelical pastor who built and ran the school, was arrested, accused of shady construction.

The thousands in the crowd were angry over rumors that some rescue workers, including a group from Fairfax, Virginia and another from the islands of Martinique and Guadalupe, were working slowly in order to make more money. The crowd shouted: "We don't need money to work in the rescue operations!"

This tragedy was somewhat different from the many in which hurricanes, floods and mudslides have killed thousands in Latin America's poorest country. It occurred in a relatively well-off part of Port-Au-Prince.

It's estimated that two million people of the nine million living in this Caribbean nation reside in rotten houses. Hills across the country are full of huts, churches and schools that could crumble just like this school.

President Preval and the UN forces occupying Haiti are making big noises about how bad this tragedy was. But not much will change since the government doesn't enforce its own construction codes. And the UN military occupation force is too busy shooting at civilians in its so-called war against drug gangs.

This is another capitalist/imperialist-caused murder of innocent children and workers. A system that, in order to make a few bucks, cannot even guarantee the lives of school children must be smashed.

Toussaint Rouge

Boeing Strike Brings Solidarity and Communist Class Consciousness

Two solidarity dinners were held here in Los Angeles, gathering a multi-racial crowd of 85 workers, students, teachers, parents, children, men and women. Subcontractor workers introduced striking workers from Boeing, who spoke to the group about their recent strike in Seattle. Over \$700 was raised at the dinners to help sustain our Party's effort to build communist class-consciousness among strikers and subcontractor workers.

Many of the attendees expressed how inspired they were to hear about workers at one of the primary manufacturers of defense products in the U.S. striking, and not only for better wages and benefits. They were also fighting for future generations of workers and to build anti-racist international unity with subcontractor workers.

The Boeing strikers told of lunches, visits, CHALLENGES, and communist leaflets that helped build class struggle and revolutionary consciousness among many of the 24,000 strikers in the Seattle area. Strikers presented subcontractor workers with a letter thanking them for their support and calling for unity against the aerospace bosses. Over 30 Boeing strikers signed the letter.

"The speech was good because I learned a lot about what the workers are doing while on strike and what they are striking for. Also it became very clear to me how the union leaders really try to screw the workers instead of help them get what they need," said a Party friend who attended.

After the strikers' presentation, the group discussed how people can understand communist ideas, whether they make \$30/hr at Boeing, \$12/hr at a subcontracted aerospace plant or 7 cents per piece in a garment factory. Consistent and clear explanation of the current situation facing workers shows that only communist revolution can solve our problems.

Like a good number of strikers, many students and workers had questions about how we assure that communism will succeed this time around. "Why only one Party?" "What about human nature?" "How can we get high school students more interested in CHALLENGE?" Revolutionary history, a dialectical materialist explanation of society's development, and requests to write more for the paper were discussed.

Recently this strike was also discussed with workers in Mexico City and teachers in Oaxaca who sent congratulations and support to the strikers. The political work we did during this strike can affect workers, students and soldiers everywhere.

This strike has given us a glimpse at the opportunity we have as PLP to build and grow internationally during this period of economic crisis and strikes. Students and teachers pledged to step up the visits to Boeing and the subcontractors with CHALLENGE. We will continue raising communist ideas on the job, in the classroom and outside those walls to build a movement capable of destroying capitalism with a revolution for communism led by the PLP.

A Comrade

High Schoolers Backed Boeing Strikers

Dear Boeing Strikers,

We are a group of students in Los Angeles who read about your strike in CHALLENGE. The following are statements from some of us:

* A strike can make a difference. As the daughter of a working-class family, I know the struggles and hardship the working class goes through on a day to day basis. I know that the strike will be successful due to the fact that workers are the ones who make this world. All the wealth that the bosses have comes from the working class; we create their profits. If the workers go on strike, the bosses

ELECTIONS
UNDER THE SHADOW OF
IMPERIALIST WARS
PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY ON THE 2008 U.S. ELECTIONS

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aren't making any money.

* It is important that this article talked about unity. Our class, the working class, is strongest when all of us — union and non-union alike — are lined up together against our common enemies.

* I learned about the important role of workers who make airplanes; especially war planes. It's good that we have the power to stop making airplanes. If we want to stop the war, you guys are really important.

* Unity among workers — citizens and non citizens, students, and every single person who belongs to the working class — is important. We are all struggling to get what we need, but if we don't unite, there's no point. We want to end the bosses' rule because in one way or another, workers are being exploited. Here in California we have a lot of immigrant workers who get paid less than many others.

* It's an inspiration to me as a working class comrade to see all of you out there on the front line everyday in unity, side by side, fighting back. I just want to say on behalf of the youth of LA, you have all of our support. Tough times are ahead. I just hope you all can keep your chins up and fists in the air. We all can win this fight and will, sooner or later. Many of the bosses will try to put you down and divide the workers, but if you all keep the unity, you are a strong force. Keep up the struggle.

High School Students

HOW 'UNPOPULAR' BECOMES 'POPULAR'

continued from page 2

out the country over the next four years. The masses ratified our position.

EXPOSED THE TRUTH ABOUT VIETNAM WAR

Not only were we the first to demonstrate against the Vietnam War, but we took the lead against the liberal, "Negotiate, stop-the-bombing" crowd, labeling it an imperialist war with nothing to "negotiate." We dared criticize the Ho Chi Minh leadership for not fighting for communist workers' power but rather for "national liberation" and alliance with the sellout Soviet Union.

We were lambasted — "who are you to criticize the leadership of workers and peasants fighting in the jungles of Vietnam." But we stuck to our guns while organizing in the military for class war against the brass and solidarity with those

Vietnamese workers and peasants. Our "unpopular" position exposed that mis-leadership which has now welcomed Ford and Nike into Vietnam to exploit workers on \$2 a day.

PLP was one of very few to take the "unpopular" position of indicting the Soviet and Chinese Party leaderships for selling out the revolutions. Again, we were proven correct as these two fake "communist" parties sank into the swamp of full-blown capitalism. We exposed this in 1966 in the Soviet case (23 years before its so-called "demise") and in the early 1970s in China's case, long before they were welcomed into the capitalist camp.

None of these positions came easily, although they may appear so now. But the Party emerged stronger, advancing communist ideology against the socialist return to capitalism, against the maintenance of the capitalist wage system, against the bosses' nationalism, against the cult of the individual. PLP produced the ideas of one Party/one class, of fighting directly for communism. That is the only solution for the working class. ☸

APHA Marchers:

'Down With Borders, Up With Health!'

SAN DIEGO, Oct. 30 — In the midst of a capitalist financial meltdown and days before the presidential elections, some 13,000 people attended the American Public Health Association (APHA) annual conference. In line with its theme of "Public Health Without Borders." The conference was held in this city near the U.S./Mexico border with Tijuana, the most populated border crossing in the world.

And yet, aside from slogans and location, there was little mention of the racist attacks on immigrant workers on this side of the border or the wage-slave conditions of workers in the Maquiladoras on the other. At least that was the case until a contingent of PLP health workers started raising the political issues more sharply.

It was clear when an anti-racist resolution advanced by activists was quickly rejected by the APHA leadership that they had no plans of even acknowledging the racist attacks on immigrant workers. Not unlike the decline of the anti-war movement or immigrant rights movement, or struggle around the Jena 6, what prior struggles that existed in APHA were virtually replaced with the movement to get Barack Obama into the White House. However, our Party contingent, consisting of veteran and younger comrades, was able to organize a couple of events that culminated in a march and demonstration from the convention center to the Federal Building.

Just in the past year, racist attacks on immigrant workers have intensified with increased raids and deportations by the ICE (the Immigration Gestapo). There are now over 300,000 immigrant workers held in detention centers throughout the

U.S. which is already more than double the number of Japanese interned in concentration camps during WWII. Immigrant workers are dying in these detention centers as health care is being delayed and/or denied. Our resolution highlighted these racist public health attacks on our immigrant brothers and sisters and called on APHA to make a public statement opposing this racist injustice.

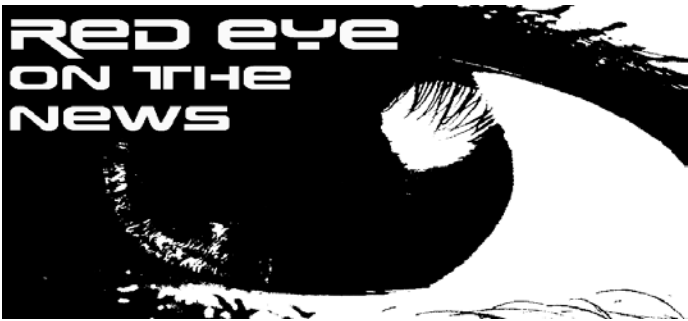
One APHA caucus had originally planned a bus tour of the Maquiladoras in Tijuana but was forced to change plans due to the increasing gang violence. Instead they held a small forum at a community college in the area. At that gathering we passed out copies of our resolution and called on the group to organize a protest at the border wall. The leadership of the group dismissed our suggestion but others supported it. With the leadership of a young comrade and a young doctor we met there, we were able to use the next few days to organize in our various workshops to build for our "radicals breakfast" as well as the march on the Federal Building.

At the opening plenary, California comrades helped us distribute a PLP flier stating that, "as public health people, we are right in the middle of a crossfire. In our clinics and hospitals we can see how capitalism's inequality spreads sickness and death. Today's keynote speaker, Michael Marmot, has written a great deal about the 'social determinants of health.' The 'Unnatural Causes' PBS series makes the point clearly that inequality is making us sick. Yet none of the critics of this savage inequality will name the real cause. Much is said about the web of causation, but nobody will name the spider. The spider is capitalism. It cannot be tamed. It must be destroyed!" CHALLENGE was sold

outside the plenary and distributed to our friends hand to hand. Another flier exposed Obama's connections with Wall Street bankers and warmongers like Colin Powell.

At our "radical breakfast" one young black woman we met the day before exemplified the younger public health activists we need to attract in larger numbers. Her impassioned account of fighting for the health needs of her Mexican immigrant clients in a small southern city was inspiring to hear. Other friends, including colleagues and CHALLENGE readers met at earlier conferences, joined in the discussion about how to build a more activist group in APHA.

At our demo, we organized over 20 people, multiracial, young and old, that marched and chanted "Public Health Means, We Got to Fight Back" and "Down with Borders, Up with Health!" We met two young hotel union organizers that joined and brought their bullhorns to amplify our message. Overall, it was a small and yet spirited group, which wants to continue these actions in the upcoming conferences. We also met many others before and after the march, exchanged contact information and forged new relationships that we hope to develop over the year. More importantly, it also energized our veteran comrades and we'll be planning more events to strengthen our work in our locations, like the fight against 500 new layoffs in the Cook County Health System. This work needs to intensify as the deepening economic crisis and expanding wars intensify the attacks on public health and safety-net hospitals where many of us work. ☸



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



FDR's capitalism needed war

NYT, 11/10

FDR did not, in fact, manage to engineer a full economic recovery during his first two terms. And the reason was the fact that his economic policies were too cautious. FDR was eager to return to conservative budget principles. That eagerness almost destroyed his legacy. After winning a smashing election victory in 1936, the Roosevelt administration cut spending and raised taxes, precipitating an economic relapse that drove the unemployment rate back into double digits. What saved the economy, and the New Deal, was the enormous public works project known as World War II. This history offers important lessons for the incoming administration.

U.S. finances right-wing terror

NYT, 10/30

The wave of killings has increasingly opened the United States to criticism because it is required to make sure Colombian military units have not violated human rights before giving them aid. Almost half of the reports of civilian killings in 2007 involved units that received American aid.

Peru workers in violent demos

NYT, 10/30

Thousands of people demonstrated in five provinces on Wednesday, threatening politicians in one, setting a police station on fire in another and demanding a larger share of the taxes generated by local mines in several others. Three police officers were taken hostage in Moquegua.

Rulers solution: screw workers

NYT, 10/28

If G.M or Chrysler were to go under, tens of thousands of people would be thrown out of work. But if General Motors and Chrysler were to merge, with some sort of government assistance, the story might end pretty much the same. To make a combined General Motors-Chrysler work—let alone flourish—the company would need to win big concessions from the U.A.W., cut salaries and benefits, and lay off a lot of people, fast.

Non-Marxist economics is bull

NYT, 11/2

Questions For James K. Galbraith

Q: There are at least 15,000 professional economists in this country, and you're saying only two or three of them foresaw the mortgage crisis?

A: Ten or 12 would be closer than two or three.

Q: What does that say about the field of economics, which claims to be a science?

A: It's an enormous blot on the reputation of the profession. There are thousands of economists. Most of them teach. And most of them teach a theoretical framework that has been shown to be fundamentally useless.

Imperialism needs Obama

NYT, 11/5

A new politics of the common good can't be only about government and markets. "It must also be about a new patriotism — about what it means to be a citizen" This is the deepest chord Obama's campaign evoked. The biggest applause line in his stump speech was the one that said every American will have a chance to go to college provided he or she performs a period of national service.

Gaza: One Vast Israeli Concentration Camp

Visiting Israel/Palestine gives a glimpse of the reality of fascism, racism and nationalism in full force. Recently I was one of a delegation of 120 health professionals from around the world invited to a long-planned World Health Organization conference on mental health in Gaza. The conference was organized by the renowned Gaza Community Mental Health Project. Just days before the meeting, Israel announced that no foreigners would be allowed in as they would be “supporting the Hamas agenda.”

We went anyway to protest at the gate, along with Israeli activists and the international press. A hundred strong, we marched and chanted in front of the high wall with gun turrets and under the spy blimps that surround Gaza, a virtual concentration camp. We then had the conference by video from Ramallah, but there were many technical hitches, and the Gazans remained as isolated as ever. However, many progressive contacts were made, some interested in our communist analysis and in getting our literature.

Before and after the conference our group of anti-occupation doctors traveled around the West Bank (WB) and witnessed the devastation wrought by poverty and occupation. Since Palestinians’ travel within the WB is hindered by military check points everywhere, and there are very few health facilities, they receive spotty medical care.

Preventive care, diagnostic tests, medical records, and even blood work is hard to come by. Patients with chronic diseases like diabetes or cancer get only haphazard and inconsistent services. Life expectancy is in the early 60s, while a few miles

away the Israelis have the most modern facilities.

In severe emergencies, like a heart attack, local hospitals are not equipped to handle the situation and transport to Israel or East Jerusalem is hampered by lack of permits. A doctor I worked with in Tulkarem for a morning told me he sees about five patients a year die from lack of emergency care.

In Nablus we met a 17-year-old boy who was paralyzed from the waist down from a bullet. Israeli soldiers surround this city, which has a history of resistance, and make frequent nighttime incursions. This boy had been walking with friends when he was wounded by their gunfire at age 15. He now lies in a room up two flights of steep steps and has two deep bedsores, from which he will probably die in time. Leaving Nablus, we drove on the narrow winding roads that Palestinians have to use, because they’re banned from the Israeli highways. We came upon a severe car accident in which a woman died and four others were badly hurt – a very common occurrence.

We visited a village where Israeli volunteer doctors go once a month and bring their own medicines. The examining table was a mattress laid across four school desks. All we could do was a quick blood pressure, breast exam, prick the finger of diabetics and give a month’s worth of pills. The villagers were so grateful they prepared us a huge feast. No matter how poor the people, we were feted wherever we went.

Despite the primitive and shocking conditions in most of Palestine, Israelis are largely unaware and/or unsympathetic. There is extremely potent racism against Arabs, who many Israelis see as sub-



The Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to pit worker against worker.

human, and a conviction that Jews are the victims in their own apartheid state. Most Israelis are taught a very distorted view of history. Many have failed to understand that anti-Semitism was used historically to divide workers and shift blame from the ruling classes of Western and Eastern Europe, just as racism against all groups is used and is still used today. Racist Israeli workers and students fail to understand that not only are they building up hatred against themselves around the world, but that they are poisoning their own society with the pathology that militarism and racism breed and cutting themselves off from allies to fight for a better society.

(Next: short history of situation in Palestine/Israel.)

‘Wall-E’: Its ‘Anti-Consumerism’ Opens Door to Fascist ‘Solution’

I took my 13-year-old daughter to see the new Walt Disney film, Wall-E. We were both disappointed. The film seeks to condemn pollution, blind consumerism, passivity and obesity, but the message is muddled.

On pollution, human beings have been forced to leave the earth because it’s too polluted. They take refuge on a spaceship while robots clean up the planet. Which, after all sorts of incidents, is what finally happens. No explanation of the source of pollution — capitalism — is given. Ultimately, the slogan is simply to sow seeds. Does this mean a return to nature, the theme of Thoreau’s Walden? As if it was possible to return to a pre-industrial Golden Age.

Meanwhile, humans have become the happy slaves of a totalitarian consumer society, where no one works (except the ship’s captain). They do nothing but blindly consume, obeying the exhortations of commercials projected on the screens that they watch continually. They remain sitting all day long in motorized armchairs, no longer able to walk or even stand. They do nothing but clap their hands to give orders to an army of robots that do all the work. This is a denunciation of the consumer society, and of the obesity crisis in the U.S.

But once again, there’s nothing about where this consumer society comes from, a society in which sterile consumption replaces the creativity of production. And this is where the film’s message becomes really muddled. First, because the heroes of the film are the robots Wall-E and Eve, and not human beings. They are the ones who lead the rebellion against this situation, and who act. And these robots were conceived with spin-off products in view, in particular video games the filmmakers hope kids will passively consume. Moreover, entire sequences in the film are drawn from video games, which the theater audience consumes passively.

The film projects an ambiguous image of feminism. Debatable: Eve is a violent robot equipped with an energy cannon, and — as the bosses want U.S. soldiers to do — she shoots first and asks questions later. She makes her partner, Wall-E, tremble.

But also positive, when Mary, another robot, initiates the action to save the children during a crisis aboard the spaceship.

The treatment of race relations is also ambiguous: there are white couples and black couples who help one another but there aren’t any inter-racial couples.

The favorite film that Wall-E watches continually — and which represents the lost Golden Age — is one from the 1950s. A Golden Age for pollution — and anti-communism...

All this makes for a neutral film that offends nobody. But because the film doesn’t denounce the capitalist system which engenders pollution, blind consumption, passivity and obesity, it opens the door to the “solution” that capitalism also offers: fascism, which can very well accept a spirit of sacrifice [renunciation of personal consumption in favor of government (military) consumption], the glorification of physical fitness [developed for (military) service for the fascist order], and the abandoning of passivity in favor of (military) action directed by heroes (führers) — who are to be followed as sheep follow a shepherd — as the masses of human beings in the film follow Wall-E and Eve.☺



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