

CHALLENGE



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My Boss Got Fired — But the System Still Stinks!



Rally of hospital workers in winter of 2012.

BROOKLYN, February 12 —

"I am happy: they fired my boss!" That's what you hear all over Downstate Hospital in Central Brooklyn. A bunch of bosses were fired as part of N.Y. Governor Cuomo's design to downsize, privatize, and/or close our hospital. But don't forget: A handful of administrators have been fired, but hundreds of workers have been laid off in the past year and a half, with more to come.

That's why workers have been fighting back, with numerous demonstrations but much more needs to be done. What's holding workers back is that many of them believe our hospital won't be closed and that the system can work for them.

The workers' anger was apparent in the celebrations of the firing of their bosses, some who have offered women positions for sexual acts, stolen money, and given lush contracts to private companies with no results. Some of the petty bosses have been bull-rushed out the door, but some have been able to use favoritism to save their skins; one that the workers would have liked to see fired got a top academic job based on a resumé packed with lies. One department held a victory party, only to find the next day their boss was being kept.

PLP is having many discussions with workers. We've been warning that there is no honor among thieves, and that the new administration, the private company Pitts, hired by Cuomo, is even more anti-worker than the old

one. The company is known as a hospital closer, with a track record from Washington D.C. to St. Vincent's in Manhattan.

We are working to build momentum to call the bosses out on their lies, and to point out how this system works, and that no politician will help unless large numbers of workers stand physically in their way.

That is what happened at Interfaith Hospital a few weeks ago. When the CEO said that ambulances would no longer be allowed to bring emergency patients to Interfaith, dozens of workers marched to his office to protest. The order was rescinded and the CEO left through the back door under guard. The money was found, and the hospital is still open — for now.

When Cuomo blames the Federal budget for lack of health care money, we point out that his administration has slashed support to Downstate by 25 percent, and funds Medicaid in Brooklyn hospitals at half the rate it pays in Manhattan. But they've given hundreds of millions to their favored buddies in the form of assuming their debts.

This favoritism was exposed recently when the new mayor, Di Blasio appointed Stanley Brezenoff to a top spot in his administration. Di Blasio's 70% of the vote came in part because he took a stand against New York State's threatened closing of Long Island College Hospital (LICH). He even orchestrated his own publicity ar-

DeBlasio's Labor Pick: Bad Medicine for Workers

BROOKLYN, February 6 — Mayor DeBlasio pro-labor? Who's kidding whom?

When DeBlasio was running for mayor, he was on the picket line pledging to save Long Island College Hospital (LICH) from extinction. But now DeBlasio has appointed Stanley Brezenoff as special advisor on 152 municipal labor contracts unresolved by former mayor and multi-billionaire Michael Bloomberg.

Who is Stanley Brezenoff? He's the former CEO of Continuum Health Industries, a network of hospitals, from Beth Israel to St. Luke's/Roosevelt to New York Eye and Ear to — you guessed it — LICH. In 2010, Brezenoff persuaded Gov. David Paterson to force SUNY-Downstate Medical Center to absorb LICH, along with its \$300 million debt accumulated under Brezenoff's mismanagement. Not only did a \$140 million bequest to LICH from a Brooklyn couple vanish into Brezenoff's Continuum's bank account but his Continuum outfit stayed on to do \$50 million a year in medical billing.

LICH workers charged that Brezenoff wanted to close LICH and sell the land for condo development.

So this is the CEO that DeBlasio has appointed to "advise" on labor contracts for hundreds of thousands of city workers, while LICH goes down the tubes and tens of thousands of Brooklyn working-class families are forced to go to other hospitals miles away.

Sounds like "progressive" DeBlasio has prescribed some pretty poisonous medicine for New York City workers. But what could one expect under capitalism which runs elections designed to pick which politician will enforce the bosses' profit system? ☹

rest. But it was Brezenoff, with his health management company Continuum, who bankrupted LICH and whose company continues to receive millions in bailout money from the State of New York (see box).

We will continue to point out that under communism, the working class would run the hospitals to provide health care to our brothers and sisters, not to pile up profits. We will continue to expose how their system destroys our jobs and health care, and that the money for health care is being funneled into the U.S. imperialist war machine, killing workers across the globe to protect the bosses' profit system. ☹

JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL FIGHT FOR COMMUNIST REVOLUTION

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OUR FIGHT

★Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.

★Only the dictatorship of the working class — communism — can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today's world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.

★Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world's workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.

★While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.

★Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society's benefits and burdens.

★Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of "race." Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit black, Latino, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.

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

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

★Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion's false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.

★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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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP's criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a "following" around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual's writing of an article.

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Editorial

Bosses Will Start the Next War... Communists Will Finish It

The specter of economic doomsday makes war between China and the United States... unthinkable.... Or does it? In fact, Chinese and U.S. military planners are thinking in exquisite detail... about how to win such a conflict. — David Gompert, former Acting Director of National Intelligence under Barack Obama, Los Angeles Times, 8/26/13.

Imperialist war is inevitable under capitalism. Only war can resolve the imperialist powers' competition for resources and exploitable labor, the lifeblood of their brutal profit system. History shows that the capitalists will sacrifice millions of workers to defend those profits.

But history also shows that the greatest danger to capitalism — the international working class — can transform world war into communist revolution. It happened in the Soviet Union after World War I. It happened in China after World War II. And it can happen again if a mass communist movement is organized under the revolutionary Progressive Labor Party. With communist leadership, we can turn a quantitative capitalist crisis into qualitative change — into a society run by workers to meet workers' needs.

In his description of the tensions between the United States and China, David Gompert, a ruling-class insider, challenges the myth that financial ties between capitalist nations ensure everlasting peace. He recognizes what Vladimir Lenin, the great Soviet leader and thinker, concluded a century ago: Imperialist competition is inescapably violent. But while capitalist policy analysts are in general accord over the looming conflict with China, they have deep divisions when it comes to strategies and tactics.

Bosses' Strategic Split

At the moment, the bosses are split between two diametrically opposed concepts: "AirSea Battle" and "Offshore Control." This strategic dispute involves inter-service rivalry and likely explains the recent test-cheating scandals in the Air Force and Navy. These scandals that disgrace Air Force and Navy brass probably aim at cutting the influence of these services back to size amid tortuous strategizing for war on China. It also exposes the spending constraints imposed by the Great Recession on even the biggest, most globally engaged U.S. capitalists.

AirSea Battle envisions a quick, cheap U.S. first strike — conducted largely by the Air Force — at command and control sites deep in China's mainland. Offshore Control stands for a longer-term U.S. naval blockade that would choke off the overseas commerce that China's rulers depend upon.

The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, created in 2000, has a Congressional mandate to "monitor the national security implications of the economic relationship." Last month it heard conflicting testimony from a number of conflicted testifiers — notably Roger Cliff, an East Asian security expert newly appointed to the Atlantic

Look Who's in Libya: Obama's Armies

The Obama administration has claimed it is drawing down its presence in South Asia and the Middle East, as well as refusing to play a military role in Libya. But consider these reports from two French newspapers. *Le Canard enchaîné* (2/5/14) revealed that:

"The Pentagon has proposed to Libyan leaders to help them recruit an 8,000-man army, including 3,000 officers and non-commissioned officers, and to furnish them with the necessary arms. Some 350 American instructors will be assigned to this noble task, and some training sessions will take place in Bulgaria. But, as a large part of Libya escapes all control and the jihadist groups are proliferating there, the decision was taken in Washington, not to limit it to this friendly cooperation, and to intervene on the ground.

"Delta Special Forces from the U.S. army, and members of the Special Activities Division of the CIA, penetrated in October into southern Libya, not far from the borders with Chad, Niger and Algeria, as *Le Figaro* reported on February 1. Their mission is to hunt down the [jihadists] together with Libyan soldiers.... In the north, in international waters, the U.S. Navy's *San Antonio*, a landing craft transport ship, is available in case of need."

Still another example of U.S. rulers' march to wider wars.

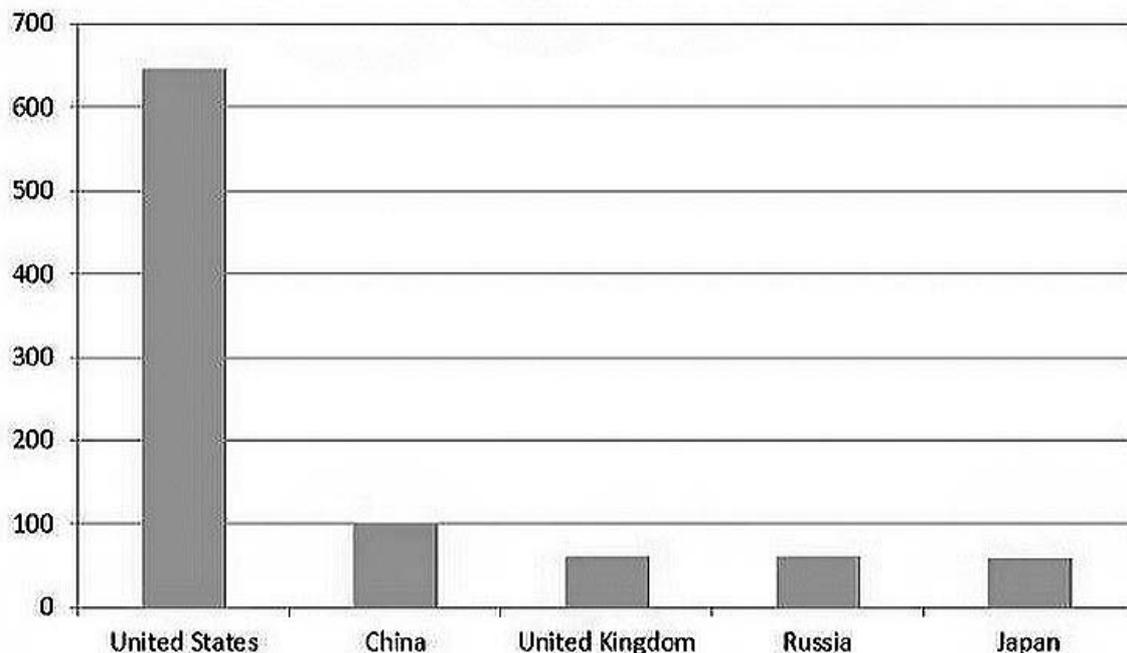
Council, an imperialist think tank with a long range outlook. (Before Chuck Hagel gave up the Council's chairmanship last year to become Obama's Secretary of Defense, he proposed forging a U.S.-led coalition — including India, Brazil, Indonesia, and Turkey — for the next world war.)

To counter a Chinese buildup for the seizure of Taiwan, Cliff proposed a limited, near-term U.S. strike on China's command center. This attack would need to be executed before 2020, he noted, when China will have "significant numbers of medium-range ballistic missiles and land-attack cruise missiles capable of reaching any of the U.S. facilities in Japan, which are the closest to Taiwan."

Cliff told the Council that an AirSea Battle could be effective in defense of Taiwan and "would probably entail large-scale force commitments and high, but not unlimited, levels of escalation." But he also acknowledged that Chinese bosses, thus provoked, might unleash an army in the hundreds of millions, along with their formidable nuclear arsenal: "Conflict over issues that threatened China's national survival could potentially entail the commitment of all of China's mili-

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Top Five Defense Budgets
(budget authority in billions of current U.S. dollars)



U.S. vs. Global Spending
(budget authority in billions of current U.S. dollars)

Fight DC Metro's Racist Policies

WASHINGTON, DC, February 6 — Today, Metro workers led a protest against the transit system's plan to raise fares and against its policy of refusing to hire formerly incarcerated workers. Protesters included public health workers, government workers, public housing residents, and students. They ignored attempts by transit police to move the pickets away from the entrance to the evening's scheduled public hearings, chanting boldly against the racist policies of Metro.

The protesters then joined the hearings, and several spoke out, condemning Metro's board for always going after working people at the fare box rather than getting money from the big developers. They make big money from the increased value in real estate that's located near Metro stations — and it's virtually tax-free!

Other protesting speakers condemned the policy of excluding ex-prisoners from the opportunity to even apply for jobs at Metro. Some returning ex-prisoners who had been previously hired and have had reliable work records for many years are now being fired because of their previous incarceration.

Protesting speakers noted that these new personnel policies deepen the racist oppression of black workers, since they suffer from racist arrest policies. This has been

documented in great detail by the Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs in a report that is available at <http://tinyurl.com/l6lwwam>. Once arrested and "in the system", these workers are excluded from job opportunities. With 7,000 people returning from incarceration every year in Washington, D.C., it is vital that they have opportunities to work at decent jobs.

Along with PLP members, the Metropolitan Washington Public Health Association (MWPCHA) and DC Jobs with Justice organized people to petition and testify in favor of hiring workers with criminal records. MWPCHA fights for jobs and housing to improve people's health and prevent HIV.

The growing movement to change this racist hiring policy encouraged the transit union local to present testimony at the hearing. In fact, the union's current president, who has vigorously resisted taking up the issue, was shamed into calling for a change in the background check policy, although she carefully avoided calling it what it is: A racist attack on workers throughout the region.

Several rank-and-file workers and students who had never spoken before stepped forward to testify, demonstrating the growing strength of this movement against

Metro's policies. As the effort to reverse these policies develops, these emerging leaders will strengthen the anti-racist movement.

Local politicians, sensing a groundswell of concern over the issue, have begun to claim that they support changing Metro's employment policy. But their role in the struggle will be to mislead. Only mass action from the grassroots will keep the pressure on Metro.

Thinking more broadly, the bosses' use of more intensely racist policies to intimidate and coerce African American workers reflects the ongoing crisis of capitalism. This greedy profit system has led to budget crises and layoffs everywhere. The bosses are desperate to reduce wages and benefits and speed up workers everywhere to shore up their failing system. The struggle at Metro is simply another aspect of the fightback against the unjust capitalist system. Until we are able to overthrow it, we will continue to face these attacks. All the more reason to build a revolutionary communist movement against the bosses!✊

Expose KKKop Killing of Kyam Livingston

BROOKLYN, January 21 — Over 50 workers and youth from all over New York City gathered at Flatbush Reformed Church in the middle of a snowstorm in remembrance of Kyam Livingston, a 37-year-old mom who died while in police custody this past July. It was the six-month anniversary of her death. Kyam's sister and mother demanded justice and accountability not only on the part of the NYPD but also from local elected officials who have yet to respond to the family's concerns thus far.

Members of the Justice for Kyam Committee and PLP gave details about the case and explained that Kyam's death was not caused by some unusual treatment in Brooklyn's Central Booking holding cells. Her death was caused by systemic racist abuse which is part of the capitalist legal system.

A speaker corrected some of the false information spread by the "shack" (the press room at One Police Plaza) about Kyam's case, making it clear to all present that Kyam died due to NYPD racist medical neglect in Brooklyn Central Bookings, and not en route to any hospital or other medical facility as police maintain.

Several members of the Brooklyn community came forward to tell their stories of mass incarceration, NYPD misconduct, and inhumane treatment at Central Bookings. One man told the community that he witnessed medical attention being denied to a teenager who had been shot, and was left to lay bleeding in the holding cell. Another woman discussed being thrown in the back of an unmarked van by plainclothes officers who did not identify themselves as police, and then having her life verbally threatened by her arresting officer while she was being led to her cell in Brooklyn Central Bookings.

Community fighters asked many pertinent questions about where the movement to end police violence should go from here, how to streamline organizing tactics across communities, and what everyday people could do to help Kyam's family in its struggle for justice. The Justice for Kyam organizing committee had a list of many ways people could be engaged in this cause.

First, coming out to events and demonstrations on the 21st of each month would show the establishment that this is a broad-based movement with many supporters and strengthen the family's resolve to keep fighting.

Second, signing the petition either in written form or online at www.causes.com/justice-for-kyam would be helpful in showing key elected officials that there is significant community support for this cause, and they can not walk away from the issue unnoticed.

Third, having your civic group, union, church or other organization to sponsor a forum to educate the public on Kyam's case and the many issues it raises would be a good way to help build the movement.

And finally, but more importantly, writing down your own experience of conditions and other you've witnessed in Central Booking (if you have such a story to tell) and sending it via email to Justice4Kyam@gmail.com would prove that the conditions Kyam Livingston died under are not due to a fluke. They're part of a pattern of injustice against many hardworking New Yorkers.

Sending in your story would also make it possible for the organizers to put together a report to be sent to those government agencies and officials who are empowered to investigate and improve conditions in NYPD holding cells and bookings centers.

The family will be rallying outside of Brooklyn Central Bookings, 120 Schermerhorn Street between Smith Street and Boerum Place, at 6 p.m. on Friday, February 21, 2014. And, popular demand, a second Speakout is being organized for March 21. So if you missed the first one, you are encouraged to come to a second installment of what proved to be an informative, emotionally charged and impactful community event.

Lastly, join the fight against capitalism, the internal cause of racist killings, with Progressive Labor Party.✊

Killer Martelly Serves U.S. Masters

WASHINGTON, DC, February 5 — The president of Haiti, Michel Martelly, was in Washington, DC, this week to meet with his U.S. imperialist masters. He met President Obama in the White House and groveled before him, thanking him for assistance after the earthquake. What assistance? U.S. "aid" to Haiti has been minimal. Thousands still live in tents, five years after the earthquake. The cholera epidemic continues to take hundreds of lives. No significant progress has been made in fighting cholera through sanitation systems and vaccinations.

In fact, beginning with the U.S. naval occupation of Port-au-Prince after the earthquake, the U.S. has put its main emphasis on strengthening the UN's occupation army (the MINUSTAH), hated by the masses in Haiti, and with Bill Clinton's foundation's help, building the Caracol sweatshop zone in the north of the country. What is Martelly thanking Obama for? In fact, Obama offered nothing more for Haiti at the meeting, only lecturing Martelly on the need to fight crime and improve the electoral process. Such is the way imperialist masters address their comprador tools in poor neo-colonial countries.

The U.S. State Department arranged for Martelly to visit Howard University. No academic program or unit invited him. Top university administrators introduced him at the School of Business auditorium, just as they had done last spring when the criminal Senator Rand Paul appeared on campus to peddle his racist lies about civil rights being a Republican Party priority. Most of the people who attended Martelly's speech on his universal public-school agenda were older, conservative Haitians, university administrators and a small number of students and faculty.

We wanted to reach them with the truth: Martelly is attacking students in Haiti. At the Faculte d'Ethnologie, Martelly personally led his pink-shirted thugs to the campus, where they beat up students and trashed their classrooms. More recently, Martelly's police blew off the hand of one student with a stun grenade and shot students with rubber bullets.

Students in Haiti have protested Martelly's vicious attacks on them and on the working class. Their organization, GREPS, recently sent a letter to U.S. students, calling for solidarity against the criminal Martelly. PLP members circulated this letter (along with buttons from the group "End Cholera in Haiti Organization") to over 100 people who attended Martelly's speech and as well as in classes. The leaflet had the headline, "President Martelly, Enemy of Haitian Students!"

Several people commented that it was terrible for Howard University to host this criminal. A group of students from a course in International Development, who were required to attend the speech, were particularly interested in the outrageous attacks by Martelly on students at the Faculte d'Ethnologie. Even a dean commented that Martelly's conduct towards the students was outrageous.

During the brief question-and-answer period after Martelly's talk, one student confronted Martelly, saying, "The people of Haiti elected you as president, but who do you really serve, the people of Haiti or the United Nations' occupation?"

He said that he only served the Haitian people, but that the UN was a very big help. Two lies in one sentence! He serves the U.S. and UN masters, and they help only the bosses, not the masses!

The struggle of workers and students in Haiti is the struggle of every worker and student in the world. Long live the global struggle against racism and imperialism!✊

PL'ers Step Up Class Struggle at Profs' Convention

CHICAGO, January 15 — A series of struggles centering around the “Boycott/Divest/Sanction” (BDS) campaign against the Israeli government’s apartheid toward Israeli Arabs and oppression in the West Bank and Gaza became a hot point at January’s annual convention of the Modern Language Association (MLA) in Chicago.

The MLA, the largest organization of academics and students of the humanities draws thousands to its convention to discuss topics in literature and language. PL members take part in the convention to push for a Marxist understanding of class, the need for revolutionary pedagogy (the theory, methods and practices of teaching) and a materialist approach to literary history. Some sessions were led by PLers and they participated in others. Topics included “Literature and Life after Capitalism,” and “Teaching about the One Percent, the Rich, the Upper Class and the Ruling Class.”

The MLA convention — which is sometimes called a “meat-market” — also attracts many graduate students interviewing for the few available teaching jobs. It is

not surprising that almost all of them went back home empty-handed and discouraged, despite being highly qualified and willing to accept full-time work anywhere. More than 75 percent of college teachers in the U.S. are now part-time workers. In 2012, the Chronicle of Higher Education reported the number of PhDs receiving food stamps more than tripled between 2007 and 2010 to 33,655, while those with a master’s degree living on food stamps nearly tripled to 293,029.

PL members in the MLA Radical Caucus have for many years brought anti-capitalist analysis to a range of issues raised in the Delegate Assembly (DA), from the super-exploitation of adjunct labor to racist cutbacks to imperialist war. This year the Radical Caucus successfully got the DA to pass a resolution against a bogus attack on San Francisco Community College’s accreditation (and by extension, other working-class colleges). Still, the hot-button issue this year was the impact of the Israeli apartheid system on universities in Israel/Palestine.

The BDS campaign, modeled on the movement against apartheid in South Africa in the 1970s-1980s, calls on institutions to get rid of their investments in companies doing business in Israel. Accompanying this economic strategy is a call for universities and professional academic organizations to boycott any institutional ties with Israeli universities. The latter largely serves to strengthen and legitimize the policies of the government, and build the false notion that Israel is an oasis of democracy in a desert of Arab authoritarianism. The boycott expressly does not, however, target individual Israeli academics, many of whom are critical of the Israeli state and, in fact, support the boycott.

In the weeks before the MLA convention, the Asian-American Studies Association, the Native American Studies Association, and the American Studies Association passed resolutions in support of BDS. The negative reaction, especially to the ASA action, was instantaneous.

About 150 university presidents have condemned the ASA; it has been attacked by the Wall Street Journal; state legislators have threatened to cut funds to universities with American Studies departments; individual members of the ASA have been deluged

with hate mail, much of it sexist, racist, and homophobic. Backed up against the wall, some members of the ASA turned to the MLA Radical Caucus with a request for support. The caucus drew up a resolution defending academic organizations from this neo-McCarthyite attack.

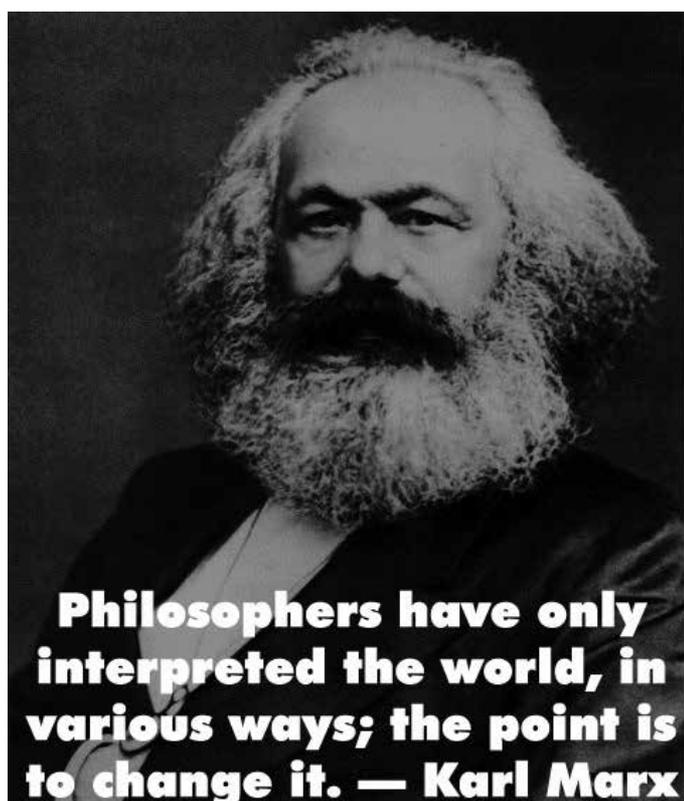
As it happened, this resolution never got to the DA floor because of a right-wing obstructionist attack on another, even milder resolution calling on the State Department to stop blocking U.S. scholars from the West Bank. This “Right to Entry” resolution passed, by a small margin, but the right-wingers had successfully managed to take up so much time that the pro-ASA resolution did not even come to the floor before the meeting was adjourned.

PL forces active in the MLA Radical Caucus — some of whom are now also receiving hate mail — have a lot to learn from these events as we move ahead in the struggle around academic freedom, BDS, and U.S. foreign policy. We have formed the beginnings of strong ties with left forces in the ASA; we have raised the importance of stressing anti-imperialism and anti-racism within the BDS movement, which promises to spread to other professional academic organizations in coming months.

At the same time, we need to bring a critical Marxist analysis to bear upon the limitations of the movement as it presently exists. Too often the defense of groups like the ASA invokes abstract liberal arguments about academic freedom and free speech that ignore — or at least sideline — the brutal repression of Palestinians that motivates BDS in the first place. Too often the Israeli-Palestinian situation is described in nationalistic terms, overlooking both the class dynamics within Israel-Palestine and the geopolitical imperatives of U.S. capital in the Middle East.

The anti-apartheid thrust of BDS, moreover, ignores a principal lesson to be learned from the abolition of legal apartheid in South Africa — namely, that unless capitalism is eradicated, the inequalities of racist super-exploitation will remain.

You need to be in it to win it, however. PL members should immerse themselves in the BDS movement, which currently is emerging as one of the key sites of anti-racist, internationalist struggle.✊



Philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it. — Karl Marx

U.S. Imperialists Plotting War with China

continued from page 2

tary forces and unlimited levels of escalation.”

Contradictions and Constraints

The contradictions in Cliff’s testimony reflect his personal career path but also the state of indecision within the dominant, finance capital faction of the U.S. ruling class. Before joining the Atlantic Council, Cliff worked for the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA), a war-on-the-cheap think tank. (The Center is bankrolled by Pete DuPont IV, the former Congressman and Delaware governor who has championed the fight for income tax cuts.) But the Atlantic Council, backed by ExxonMobil, Rockefeller Financial and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, sits squarely in the finance capital camp. These forces normally bang the drum for an expensive, long-term war with China. Cliff’s remarks suggest that the finance capital wing, currently strapped for cash, may be entertaining a cheaper and quicker way to defend Taiwan as well.

But five days before Cliff’s startling speech, David Gompert — a trusted Obama advisor — spoke to the same China war planning board. He warned against sole reliance on AirSea Battle, which “implies a U.S. threat of early strikes on Chinese territory” and “would be perceived as — indeed, would be — escalatory.” As an alternative, Gompert urged an Offshore Control blockade option and “multilateral maritime-security cooperation in the Western Pacific.”

None of these capitalist experts are acknowledging the elephant in the room. Neither AirSea Battle nor Offshore Control take into account the potential for the costly and lethal repercussions of a clash between two

imperialist empires: massive territorial invasion and/or multiple nuclear holocausts. Both strategies ignore the real prospect of a land war in China, a country that could mobilize over one hundred million fighting men and women. (The U.S. mustered a tenth of its population in World War II.) And neither strategy outlines a role for the Army, the U.S. military’s largest branch.

In reality, these doctrines commit the Air Force and Navy far beyond their capabilities in all-out warfare. In the current issue of Air Force Magazine, the CSBA’s Benjamin Lambeth boasted:

Airpower has eclipsed land power as the primary means of destroying enemy forces. Since the Cold War’s end, the classic roles of airpower and land power have changed places in major combat against modern mechanized opponents. In this role reversal, ground forces have come to do most of the shaping and fixing of enemy forces, while airpower now does most of the actual killing.

But killing from 40,000 feet or dominating the seas is not the same as occupying or controlling a country, let alone conquering one. The futile U.S. adventures in Iraq and Afghanistan, nations with a tiny fraction of China’s military resources, make that much clear.

War and Revolution

Most of all, the capitalists continue to overlook the most important repercussion of a broader inter-imperialist conflict: the rise of an international, revolutionary working class. As the rulers resort to more naked fascism — racism, sexism, mass unemployment and wage cuts — workers will inevitably fight back. Once armed with the bosses’ weapons and with communist ideas, they will turn the guns around — as they did in Russia

in 1917 and in China in 1949.

The Progressive Labor Party cannot prevent World War III. We can’t control how or when the bosses start their next conflict. But if we build a mass revolutionary movement, we can determine how that war ends and what comes out of it. We can finish the bosses and their profit system and create a communist world in their place. Join us!✊



South Africa: After Mandela, Emerging Anti-Capitalist Fight

A lot of illusions in the ANC/SACP (African National Congress/ South African Communist Party) have been buried with Mandela, so that we can begin to look at the Mandela period differently. For example, there have always been struggles and movements in South Africa not controlled by them. Long before Mandela got out of prison, there was a strong mass movement in the 1980s that was independent of the ANC/SACP, most of whose leaders were exiled or jailed.

Class struggle carried on despite their absence and was led by a loosely-affiliated "radical democratic" movement called the United Democratic Front (UDF). It comprised new unions of militant black workers like the Dunlop Rubber workers in Durban; community-based organizers among the black youth called "the comrades"; draft resisters among young white men; a vigorous culture of protest and resistance in poster art, drama ("The Dunlop Play"); and militant poetry for worker audiences in the thousands ("Black Mamba Rising").

The UDF did not develop communist politics or a revolutionary party, though it might have been fertile ground for both. But in 1990 the ANC/SACP leadership returned and began to negotiate an end to legal apartheid.

These Pretoria negotiations were "demobilizing" to UDF activists (in their phrase), and many remained wary of the Mandela forces as a result. The legacy of the UDF lived on after the 1994 ANC election victory: in the independently-organized squatter movements in the shacktowns described in the vivid book by Ashwin Desai, *We Are the Poores*; in the opposition to the ANC/SACP/COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) neoliberal economic policy called GEAR; and in the campaign against the HIV/AIDS epidemic led by former ANC'ers like Zackie Achmat, who refused to take HIV drugs himself as long as they were not available to the poor.

Such forces continued to resist the "normalization" of capitalism under a ruling class which had narrowly opened up to include a few black entrepreneurs, while installing a new black political class in the government. Even some unions in COSATU, the AFL-CIO-like trade union federation which was the third part of "the Alliance," continued to strike against the impoverishment of workers under GEAR. COSATU to an extent became, with left intellectuals, a home for dissents from the ANC.

Now there are new UDF-like upsurges of class struggle and new glimmerings of anti-capitalist organizing in South Africa. The COSATU-affiliated minework-

ers' union was challenged by a new more militant union group which led the platinum miners' bloody strike against the multinational giant LONRHO and its ANC supporters. The latest turn to the left is the announcement at the convention of the metalworkers' union (the largest union in the whole of Africa) that they were breaking definitively with the ANC, and that, because the SACP had abandoned the working class, the union would work for a new party to fight for socialism.

While still expressing sorrow and respect at Mandela's death, the metalworkers were in fact repudiating his line and his organizations. There are many others, from students and intellectuals to wildcat strikers and the housing movement, who may be expected to sign on to a call for a return to anti-capitalist struggle in South Africa. No doubt at the outset this will keep many aspects of the old communist line (such as socialism as a transition to communism).

But a new field has been opened up with Mandela's death. It's up to PLP and revolutionary communists everywhere to jump into solidarity with the new struggles in South Africa. Like workers in motion in Haiti and Bangladesh, they are openings to a new communist internationale rising from the ashes of the old. ☪

MEXICO: Building PLP Is on the Front Burner

In the last few months, my PL club coordinated an intensive distribution of flyers in our area. We distributed approximately 300 to 400 CHALLENGE flyers daily. The flyers dealt with education reform, energy reform and the attacks against teachers here in Mexico. The main idea was to inform parents and elementary, middle, high school and college students that the purpose of the new reforms wasn't to help and improve workers' conditions but to benefit a few capitalists. The smear campaigns and many attacks against the teachers show how the capitalists try to keep people from fighting against the system, and reforms or laws that only benefit them.

We had daily distribution of flyers, and people at the majority of schools took them and shared with us comments or situations about what they were then going through. Only in two of the schools did we meet youth and people in general who were unwilling to take flyers; some threw them away, and crumpled them up. That experience momentarily made me sad and discouraged. I wondered "how useful is this?"

But when other people stopped, came back to talk about their issues and agreed with the flyer's arguments, and discussed how we're all affected by the daily bombardment of the newspapers and news, I understood that what the Party is doing is useful. I realized I have a lot to study to learn PLP's ideas, so that when someone takes an attitude like that, I could approach them and try to encourage them to read it, and if they disagree to talk about it or share it with their group.

Currently, we're meeting every Saturday to study with a new comrade who's doing her medical internship, and has participated in some of our flyer distributions and went to a communist school on racism. We're getting ready to start another school where we can invite people who live close by, friends and folks who know the Party; we'll discuss Road to Revolution III.

We're planning to continue the flyer distributions once a month. We're also organizing a CHALLENGE distribution network for the people we've been talking to, or have been meeting with, or friends we want to invite to get to know the Party.

Personally, I want to organize my schedule better to make time to study the documents I haven't read yet or those I don't understand. I want to begin talking to friends, family and acquaintances about the Party, and to invite them to meet comrades and practice with them to lose my fear about talking to people.

I'm committed to becoming more responsible and dedicated to achieving a better understanding of the Party's ideas and to recruiting many people to fight for the working class, for communism and to destroy capitalism.

A Red Youth

I am a medical student at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). I met the Progressive Labor Party in May through a friend who invited me to discuss PLP ideas. The first document I read in the club was Road to Revolution IV (RRIV). I liked the ideas of that small pamphlet. When I heard that the Party fought for communism, although I didn't entirely understand it, I knew that was something good. Fight for class equality? That seemed like a good idea. A red army of workers and students, armed struggle to take power from capitalists? That is excellent!

This is the first time I am writing to CHALLENGE. We've read several documents, but I liked RR IV the best, and Jailbreak has been hard to understand, you know, because of Dialectical Materialism [the philosophy of science and nature used to advance our communist theory and practice]. I thought the struggle against sexism was very important. I learned many interesting things, including that it's a form of racism that allows the bosses to increase their profits, that as a woman it's harder to get a job, that I could get fired for getting pregnant, that we get lower salaries and fewer rights and that part of "women's work," such as domestic work, is unpaid and increases the bosses' profits.

These study groups have taught me many things. Some I haven't understood, but I'm convinced that the capitalist system doesn't work for anybody. I'm also convinced that I have to study much more. From the beginning I was willing to change my capitalist ideology for a communist ideology, and I'm very happy with that!

I've been part of a communist school where we discussed racism. Most significant was the participation of many people who described their experiences with racism, how we are all affected, how it's present all the time, everywhere. This time I didn't talk because I didn't feel ready, but I heard the disappointment expressed by my comrades — which is what I call them now. I believed that because they worked the fields

or were workers, they wouldn't understand the complexity of this topic. I was wrong. They are people who are very conscious of *our* conditions under this system.

I've also been involved in flyer distribution at several schools and universities with my PL club. In some there was a lot of participation and acceptance of people; in others that wasn't the case. I must admit that at my medical school people have refused to take the flyers. My classmates have big expectations of personal success. They've bought the capitalist idea that personal success is synonymous with a better life. But I'll persevere. I know that our Party has members in the medical field; they should write more often in CHALLENGE to show that even in the U.S. doctors struggle and suffer under capitalism.

Our next project is a communist school on Road to Revolution III. I got assigned to cover the Paris Commune. Wish me luck.

PLP student



LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.

PL School: Microcosm of a Communist World

Communism — well, of course I agree with many of the ideas, but the main question is: will it work? Will communism really fix capitalism? I feel like it will replace capitalism with another “ism,” but I’m not sure if it will fix all the problems. What I am willing to do is fight the problems that I see, for example racism and sexism. So if I’m fighting with communists, that’s fine.

Student Fighter

★★★★

Overall, I think the retreat was good, and I liked the topics we talked about during the workshops because I learned about things I never knew before. I also liked how we related the topics to what’s happening in everyone’s lives and how we saw that the things that are happening in our schools and community are the same. One question I have is: what will happen to the bosses after you guys plan on making everyone equal and the working class is in charge? What will you do if the bosses do not agree with your ideas?

Investigator

★★★★

These communist schools are always a great time. As I’ve spent more and more time in the Party, this group of people has become my family, a community I can rely on. Every time I go to a communist school, I am reminded of the potential we all have and the greatness of the communist future we are all fighting for. This school helped me become more of a leader, and I am dedicated to carrying on this fight to the younger generation. We will continue the fight for change, justice, equality and a communist future.

Rededicated

★★★★

A little taste of real communism is what I experienced this weekend. Spending a weekend living together with others from different backgrounds and walks of life is not a usual part of everyday life. In the world we live in today, getting people who are different from each other to form a community is a hard thing to do. However, this weekend proved this notion to be untrue.

This weekend was about building community and building unity. This weekend was about learning and growing, not as one, but as all. The idea of communism has been tarnished for most of our lives, but this communist school is the rag that will be used to wipe down the dirt that has accumulated on the idea of communism for so many years.

I truly enjoyed my time this weekend, and it is an experience that will stay with me, but will not end with me. What I experienced this weekend will be what others will experience, if I can help it!

Student of Communism

★★★★

Another year, another great communist school! This year marks my first communist school since I officially joined PLP. Though I still have doubts about certain things, this weekend gave me more confidence that I made the right choice. Leading the workshops about dialectical materialism furthered my understanding of PL. Talking with senior comrades helped fill in the blanks about the lines on nationalism and privilege. And each group taking turns with various tasks (i.e. cooking, cleaning) was again a nice look into a communist future. It also made me think about how such tasks are unevenly directed towards women, with little to no male participation — the division of labor. This whole weekend CHALLENGED me and was a perfect departure from all the reformist crap I see in the outside world usually. Can’t wait for next year! Long live PL!

A Revolutionary

★★★★

Appearance and essence, actual vs. potential. Our perception about what we see, your thoughts and ideas can be different from the reality. What you are now and what you become, all these things have a huge impact on your own impressions about anything you encounter. My experience, throughout this retreat was very informative and further explained how racism exists in our daily lives and movements we can enforce in abolishing racism. Changing people’s misconceptions and illusions about our system is a step PLP is taking in working to demolish the capitalist ideas and support the struggle of uniting workers worldwide.

Each and every communist school is a joy to come

to. At the beginning, they feel like a burden, a duty, a time to think about other things one can do on a three-day weekend. Instead, dialectically, through the unity of our opposites, working together and talking together, the negation of negation, they turn into the positive renewal of our lives and commitment to communism.

It happened again: more renewal, more joy, more people joining and becoming nails in the bosses’ coffins that we gravediggers will dig. Onward to the armed struggle- Onward!

Red Teacher

★★★★

I always thought racism started with the family, but a light shined into my dark world and showed me that racism started within our society. The ruling class created all these laws so they can gain control and earn more profit. By creating all these laws they caused so much division in our society, which is still happening today. Being here taught me the importance of ending capitalism and fighting for change in today’s society.

Bajan Girl

★★★★

I enjoyed this trip. I found out a lot about the working class. I know the history of slavery and racism. This will not end in a capitalist society. Nothing lasts forever, and capitalism will not. Slavery was deliberate, not an accident. It feels good to be around people, young and old, who want change. Coming out to the weeds wasn’t my idea of how I wanted to spend my weekend but I truly enjoyed it. I met new people, saw old faces. I know we are going in the right direction.

Red Fun

★★★★

The past weekend I’ve learned to be more outspoken. I’ll use this technique to share more about PLP and communism with at least one friend. Using CHALLENGE will be helpful. One topic that was helpful to me was appearance and essence. You have to investigate, because the first impression doesn’t always count. I also notice a pattern in slavery now and from hundreds of years ago. Communist is the way to equality and capitalism is trash. I also learned that you must always have a plan C, because your actual isn’t easy to achieve. You have to keep pushing yourself, and surround yourself with people that will encourage you.

Inspired

★★★★

The PLP camping trip this year was just as great as the previous one, but somewhat better. Everyone was mingling with each other, and new folks were enjoying 2.5 days of communist life. Appearance and essence, I believe, was the key topic we as communists elaborated on. It was very essential to explore this topic because we as communists have to pinpoint and study the appearance of capitalism and then apply dialectical materialism to figure the essence of it. But it’s no surprise what we tend to retrieve is that capitalists are full of crap.

Soy comunista toda la vida, y comunista he de morir. [I am a communist for all my life, and a communist till death.]

Red Life

★★★★

This school gave me more confidence in my ability to build the Party. I’ve been involved in the reform movement for some time, and I haven’t been putting communist politics out front. Hanging out with comrades and spending our time collectively discussing politics and everyone making meals together has furthered my understanding of communist ideas, in addition to being a small example of the world we want to live in after capitalism is permanently overthrown.

I was also impressed with the political sophistication of many young people and that there were workers from all racial backgrounds. Communism doesn’t belong to any one group, it belongs to the working class. That’s why I’m glad PLP prioritizes anti-racism in our practice, and we have shown that workers can and will discard the bosses’ lies and work together with other workers of different backgrounds to fight back against the exploitation of the entire working class.

Proud to be Red

★★★★



I went to this retreat with some of my schoolmates and teachers. We learned about how racism started and why it started. We talked about ways we can fight racism in our school. We also talked about leadership and how we can be leaders. As the weekend progressed, we cleaned and cooked together. Also, we made s’mores and cookies. We played games. I met new people, and there were some old faces too. I really like communist schools, so I can’t wait till next year. When May Day comes, we are going to sing Bella Ciao and we are going to have our painted banner.

High school Student

★★★★

The communist school has become our winter tradition. It serves as an energy booster and see our PLP club grow in strength and number every year. We discussed the dialectical categories — contingency-necessity, appearance-essence, potential-actual, and used them to investigate the history and function of racism. More importantly, we built unity and new relationships. Two people joined the Party!

One strength included bringing back the high school students from last year. The teachers did a good job building and challenging our future communist leaders. We also made a lot of fight-back plans for our high schools. I look forward to putting them into action. In hindsight, one weakness was that we neglected to talk about sexism in our whole-group discussions. The school as mostly all young black women and we need to talk about how sexism is a sharp tool of capitalism and that we *are* fighting sexism by building female communist leaders. PLP does a good job in fighting sexism. Let’s acknowledge it and fight harder!

Comrade

★★★★

This is a good experience to participate in my second communist school. It was cool to meet and work with a group of people that had different races and backgrounds from me because it made me realize that there’s people from outside my community that are suffering the same issues.

I enjoyed the workshops that my group and I focused on, such as the category of potential and actual, on ending racism and fixing the working class. Before I got to the communist school, I always thought that there’s nothing to worry about. But then I started to understand the plan on how the capitalist system is being racist and having many workers work long hours with little pay. I figured out it was all wrong and see how PLP is focused on problems that go on today such as stop-and-frisk.

I appreciate that I took in a lot of information on the system today, so when I get back home I can tell a lot of young kids like me how the system is functioning. It’s all wrong, but it can be changed by starting a revolution. The system focuses on having winners and losers but if everybody becomes equal then it will have everybody satisfied with less problems.

Youth

★★★★

My weekend in the communist school was one

Continued on page 7

LETTERS

continued from page 6

amazing experience. As soon as I walked in the doors, the warmth was so welcoming; everyone came to me and introduced themselves. Everyone had their sense of humor, which made it really enjoyable. Attending the first workshop, the core of our group was unbelievably united. Getting to know other people's beliefs on their political views is interesting. I was enlightened by the way we explained communism. Before I came I thought communism was the bad guy, but now I've realized I had been learning a lie and it's time to revolt and revolutionize our nation. Viewing the world as a communist, I could see people treated equally. That is our goal in this activist group. I loved my weekend here, learning about the flaws. Everyone was amazing and inspirational. Thank you.

Batman Fighting for Justice

★★★★

To be honest I don't even know where to start. We've gone from fun times to serious times. My brain feels so rejuvenated from all of our intense discussions regarding racism. We also discussed politics that changed my views. All of the gruesome details were exposed about racism and who's really who they say they are. Before I came to the school, I was absolutely clueless about politics, dialectical materialism, etc.

Finally, I can see the light. The light is still dim for now, but I can still see it. I'm so thankful for everyone that helped me open my eyes and see what side the government is actually on. I definitely want to join PLP. Thank you, communist school!

A.B. <3

★★★★

Another successful communist school completed! My absolute favorite part of the trip is that we were able to bring six students from our school. Hearing them thinking about, disagreeing and questioning the Party's politics gives me great confidence in a communist future.

Red, Gorgeous Teacher

★★★★★

Opposition to Racist Israeli Rulers Is Not Anti-Semitic

The following is a relatively complete excerpt from a contribution to a listserve of academic Marxists. One contributor claims that to criticize Israel is anti-Semitic. This is one of a number of contributed answers to that person, and is also addressed to all other subscribers to the listserve. We think readers of CHALLENGE will be interested in this particular response as an example of Marxist reasoning. — Ed.

These are just some thoughts on this discussion that should ring true to Marxists, though I propose it to further the discussion and invite still more commentary.

In order for us to evaluate the questions of anti-Semitism, Israel, and Zionism it seems to me that we have to be sure to maintain a class point of view. Israel, like all nation states (i.e., the entire world today), is a class-divided society. It is not a homogenized classless entity, about which one can make valid, or even meaningful, statements. As such, Zionism can and should be separated from Jewishness, both conceptually and in fact.

Thus one can be anti-Zionist without being anti-Semitic. Zionism is the ideology and practice, and indeed essence, of the Israeli ruling class. That a significant portion of the Israeli working class accepts a Zionist point of view is an example of the fact that the dominant ideology, dominant but not universal, in any society is that of the ruling class — except in those rare times of revolutionary ferment. The ruling classes, after all, control all the institutions that develop and purvey that ideology, from the media to the schools and universities to the state.

I believe it is not enough to oppose the concept of the state in general [as the contributor in question has done — Ed.] but implicitly support it in particular in the case of Israel. The state is the primary expression of class rule, particularly under capitalism. To attribute Zionism to the entire Israeli population, including both the capitalist and working classes, is to blame the victim (the Israeli working class), who are among the most exploited in the world — by their own Jewish rulers — as are the Palestinians.

The Israeli working class, in the current absence of a major communist party there [though PLP is planting roots among Jewish and Palestinian workers there and is growing — Ed.], buys into the ideology of the ruling class to a certain extent, but it is against their interests

to do so. [The interests of the Jewish and Palestinian working classes] provide the basis for a growing communist party there to win workers away from Zionism and toward a communist outlook and motivation to overthrow Israeli capitalism. This can only happen with unity between Jewish and Palestinian workers, as has [been brought about] in the past under communist leadership.

To label all Israelis as Zionist and label all anti-Zionism as anti-Semitic is a form of blaming the victim, similar to the blaming of all Americans [i.e., the working class — Ed.] for U.S. imperialism and its many racist and genocidal wars — regardless of the temporary and misled support of such wars on the part of a significant portion of the U.S. working class.

In short, I do not believe that opposing oppression by the Israeli ruling class is anti-Semitic. Rather to support Zionism is anti-Semitic.

International Red

Solidarity Boosts Locked-Out Altoona Workers

CHALLENGE (1/29) contained an article on some 150 locked-out electrical workers in Altoona, Pa. These workers had voted down the latest contract and the bosses responded by locking them out in mid-November. To this very day the workers continue to walk the picket line and their fighting spirit remains.

Then on February 1, over 400 workers from various unions throughout this small city gathered for a solidarity rally with the locked-out workers. The mood was militant. One of the electrical workers said he would remember that day for the rest of his life.

This solidarity is exactly what's needed, and hopefully it will grow into something much bigger in the coming weeks.

Meanwhile, unionized nurses at the Altoona Hospital are preparing to strike this month. It seems that the class struggle is alive and well in this Republican Party-dominated town. In the past, Altoona has also been a hotspot for Nazi skinheads and the Klan.

With the right kind of leadership all of these workers can be won to communist politics. Winning them to read CHALLENGE would be a good start.

Red Coal



RED EYE ON THE NEWS ...

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

Vast political corruption enduring

NYT, 1/26 — Political malfeasance grabs headlines, and few public failings are as colorful as a House legislator who stores \$90,000 in marked bills in his basement freezer (William Jefferson, Democrat of Louisiana, convicted of bribery, racketeering and money laundering in 2009) or one who boasts to an FBI undercover agent, "I've got larceny in my heart" (John Jenrette, Jr., Democrat of South Carolina, convicted of accepting bribes in the Abscam sting [and] was later found guilty of shoplifting shoes and a necktie at a Marshalls department store).

Nevertheless, political analysts say...political corruption throughout the 19th and 20th centuries...was much more common....

What has skyrocketed...is the public perception that politicians are corrupt....

There's a large majority of voters who believe it's just endemic....

A 2012 study by researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago calculated that 31 of the approximately 100 Chicago aldermen who had served since 1971 — and four of the seven governors — had been convicted of corruption.

Living on tips = living in poverty

NYT, 2/1 — To the Editor:

Most New Yorkers don't realize that tipped restaurant workers in the state earn a subminimum wage of just \$5 [an hour]....The restaurant industry fiercely opposes raising their base pay....Last year, the industry successfully lobbied Gov. Andrew Cuomo to exclude these wages from New York's minimum wage increase.

While a server in a high-end Manhattan restaurant

may earn enough in tips to live comfortably, the reality for most tipped workers, including bussers and bartenders' assistants, is very different. Living off tips...the workers face a family poverty rate that is three times the rate of the general work force....The majority of these workers are women and minorities.

Last year Governor Cuomo made a promise to use his executive authority to convene a wage board that would be empowered to give the state's tipped workers a raise....The governor [has yet to] act on that promise.

Ireland not innocent in sex abuse

NYT, 2/1 — For years, the government of Ireland has denied liability for child sexual abuse by teachers in state-financed schools managed by the Roman Catholic Church. The European Court of Human Rights punctured this denial...with a finding that the Irish government, in financing and regulating the education of youngsters, had "an inherent obligation" to protect...a victim....

Surprise! Rich company cheats workers

NYT, 2/1 — Carlos Rodriguez Herrera said he often worked 65 hours a week as a deliveryman for a Domino's pizza shop on East 89th Street in Manhattan but was paid for just 45 hours. A co-worker, Anatole Yameogo, remembers working from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. one Saturday, but his pay stub said he worked just five hours that day.

"One manager told me that you will work more than 50 hours a week but we'll pay you for 40," Mr. Yameogo said. "That helps the managers increase their bonus."

Citing these and other complaints, the two bicycle deliverymen sued the Domino's franchise that employed them, accusing it of minimum wage and overtime violations. Eventually, dozens of delivery workers joined the lawsuit....the Domino's franchise...has agreed to pay \$1.28 million to 61 workers....

Atheism slowly gaining acceptance

GW, 1/24 — Last week a 23-year-old Afghan man

became the first person [in Britain] to be granted asylum on the basis of his atheism — which, his lawyers argued, would have made life impossible in his country of birth, where religion permeates every aspect of life....[and] which makes perfect sense. If you accept the place of religious belief on the human rights agenda, then you have to allow atheism equal weight....

It is telling that this man is the first atheist to be offered asylum in the UK, when he can't be the first ever to face persecution....That is part of our problem: us atheists, we don't organize....

Schools are required to take a proportion of children from "other faiths"; atheism doesn't count....Filling in the form where you describe your "other faith" — "I'm raising my child to believe you people are mad. Will that do?"

'Jail for drugs' is a failed policy

NYT, 2/3 — To the Editor: Bill Keller writes about an "emerging consensus" on reducing the prison population. But the reforms he highlights are surface-level solutions that do not address the underlying problem: misguided laws that make criminals out of people because of the substance they choose to consume....[using] arrest, prosecution and incarceration.

Drug laws have fueled the incarceration boom. More than 1.5 million people are arrested every year in the U.S. for a drug law violation. A slight course correction is an inadequate response.

Many countries...have carried out decriminalization with impressive results, including reducing the harms of drug misuse and improving public safety and health.

....The true "emerging consensus" [is that] the war on drugs has failed...[along with] the theory that the U.S. could jail its way to a solution for drug use...

Strikes Sharpen New Class Struggle in South Africa



80,000 platinum miners on strike, crippling production and resisting the cops' rubber bullets and stun grenades.

There is life in the class struggle in South Africa. Leading the wave is a strategically important strike that is galvanizing workers and disrupting the global platinum market and the South African economy. On January 23, the world's big three platinum producers, Anglo American, Impala, and Lonmin, were struck by seventy thousand miners in the Association of Mineworkers & Construction Union (AMCU). This new and militant union is up against the African National Congress government, whose police fired rubber bullets into three thousand strikers trying to stop scabs at Anglo American.

The strike was expanded on Feb. 3 by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), the largest union in Africa, which joined in with their own wage demands. While the AMCU miners have diverged from the traditional ANC miners' union (the National Union of Mineworkers), NUMSA has gone further, breaking completely with the ANC and thus opening a new era of class struggle.

Class Struggle Survives the ANC Sellout

We can now see the anti-apartheid period in South Africa as a great wave of antiracist struggle forced into a deadend by its ANC leadership. These leaders reformed the apartheid state but left racist

capitalism intact. Imperialists worldwide first fought the anti-apartheid alliance, which also included the South African Communist Party and the Congress of South African Trade Unions, and labeled participants as communists and terrorists. But when it became obvious that apartheid was a losing strategy for maintaining capitalism in a majority-black society, the rulers changed their tune.

Once the alliance agreed to keep capitalism intact, local bosses and imperialists everywhere praised Mandela to the skies. Despite this misleadership, the class struggle went on independently of the alliance from the 1980s to the present day. Twenty years after the first ANC election, workers suffer the same level of poverty, 10 percent higher unemployment, and a level of inequality among the highest in the world. So they continue to rebel.

With the ANC alliance discredited, what politics will lead the new struggles — reform or revolution? The same clash of ideas can be seen throughout the world, among armed fighters in Syria (some of whom are genuinely fighting for a better world), garment workers in Bangladesh and Cambodia, antifascists in Greece and Pakistan, and students in Chile and Haiti. We need a new communist internationale, the Progressive Labor

Party, to lead our class worldwide. Slowly but surely, workers will get there. Militant strikes, breaking with pro-capitalist leaders, can become schools of worldwide revolution.

Two years ago, these same South African platinum miners ushered in the new era with a bang with their ferocious strike against Lonmin's mines at Marikana. Taking many casualties, they battled not only the company but the National Union of Mineworkers (the key union in the ruling alliance) and the killer cops of the ANC state, whose massacre of 34 strikers reminded everyone of the apartheid years. (The dictatorship of the capitalist class was intact under a new governing party.)

Now the AMCU strikers seek "a living wage" instead of "an apartheid wage" — a doubling of the entry-level monthly pay to 12,500 South African Rand (US \$1,129). The raise would threaten the current economy of platinum production. With NUMSA now in the strike, will more workers start thinking about using their power to abolish capitalism and the wage-and-profit system altogether?

Killer Cops Prop Up the Rand

The strike exposes many contradictions in that system. On one side are

the local ANC bosses who would like to placate workers and strengthen their political position by showing some improvements in miners' conditions, along with stronger regulation of foreign direct investment. On the other is international Big Platinum, which wants to keep miners as low-paid as possible and expects the ANC to keep them in check.

The government is pretending to strengthen health and safety provisions in the mines. But the ANC also needs its killer police, their main strikebreaking weapon, to prop up their credit rating and the value of their currency (the rand). In 2012, labor disputes lowered the economy's growth rate to 2 percent and knocked 25 percent off the value of the rand.

Imperialist investors are worried about the weak performance of South African platinum mines, which contain 80 percent of the world's reserves but account for only 53 percent of market share. There is high demand today for platinum, a component of catalytic converters and fuel cells, as carmakers turn away from petroleum. But the striking workers stand in the way of capitalist dreams of higher profits. They must save their own lives and capital be damned! The battle lines are drawn.

The Fight for Communism

But again, with what politics? Forces on the left seem to be reorganizing as the ANC weakens. Amid expanding strikes and a tide of community protests (about thirty a day), NUMSA's breakaway from the ANC alliance could give a push to organizing directly against capitalism. The NUMSA is exploring a movement for socialism. While these forces seem honestly opposed to capitalism, PLP would point out that history has shown that fighting for socialism leads directly back to capitalism. Even though we hail the tremendous advances that occurred in the Soviet Union and China, in the final analysis, socialism is state capitalism. The working class must abandon socialism as a stage and fight directly for communism.

PLP believes such discussions are exactly what workers everywhere need, and we look forward to working with the comrades in South Africa who are taking up this task. We will learn from one another to create a new communist internationale, the only alternative to the grind of racist capitalism, constant economic crisis, and endless imperialist wars over strategic resources like oil and platinum.☺

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