

# Democrats Pledge Billions More for Iraq Slaughter, page 2



THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST NEWSPAPER OF PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

# CHALLENGE



28 March 2007 Volume 40, No. 2  
Suggested Donation U.S. \$.50

# FIGHT RACISM

## BOSSES' TOOL TO DIVIDE WORKERS

Racism has been, and continues to be the main contradiction in the working class. It divides and weakens the international working class, greases the imperialist war machine and allows the bosses to stay in power. It is the main fiber that holds the capitalist system of wage slavery together. What else can be expected from a system built on the labor of African slaves and the genocide of indigenous Native Americans?

Capitalism created racist terror. As the black historian Lerone Bennet, Jr. wrote in "The Road Not Taken," black and indigenous slaves and white indentured servants "had to be divided by rivers of blood." Segregation and racism did not come easy or naturally. It was never "human nature." Instead, many slaves and wage slaves of all colors lived together, struggled together, raised families together and rebelled together against every attempt to divide them.

From Nat Turner and countless slave rebellions, to John Brown and Harriet Tubman's planned raid on the U.S. armory at Harpers Ferry to form an army of freed slaves (which helped spark the Civil War), to the ghetto rebellions that rocked the U.S. a century later, most massive and violent struggles of the U.S. working class have been in the struggle for equality, to smash racism. That struggle will never end until capitalism and wage slavery are destroyed with communist revolution!

Racist terror, segregation and lies against black workers are meant to punish militancy and divide the working class. The bosses try to get native born-workers to blame immigrants for lower pay and worsening conditions. They want us to see Arab immigrants as "terrorists" to dehumanize them and win us to fight for ExxonMobil's oil. While the police use black and Latin gangs to violently divide us, they use Illinois Senator Barack Obama and LA Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa to lead us to the Democratic Party and wider wars.

Hitler's Germany, South Africa's apartheid system and Israel's brutal racist oppression of the Palestinians all took their lead from U.S. racism. And in every measurable sense, racism is on the rise, the cutting edge of fascism as U.S. rulers prepare for a future of endless wars and genocide. The lower family income of black and Latin workers compared to white family income adds up to an extra \$250 billion in super-profits for the bosses. From life expectancy to infant mortality, from a widening wage gap to blacks suffering twice the unemployment of whites, from increased poverty to increased drop-out rates, black and Latino workers and youth are being hit first and hardest.

Every day over 30 million people go to bed hungry in the U.S., including 46% of all black children, 40% of Latino children and 16% of white children. To enforce these attacks, the bosses rely on racist police terror and mass incarceration. While blacks and Latinos comprise only 25% of the U.S. population, there are more than twice as many in prisons compared to white inmates.

It was Clinton, the liberal "first black president" who ended welfare, put 100,000 more racist killer cops on the streets, doubled the border patrol leading to hundreds of deaths of immigrants trying to cross the border, deported more people than any president in U.S. history, and doubled the prison population to over two million, the highest in the world! About 70% of the prison population is black and Latino. The brutal racist incarceration of black youth (the "War on Drugs") preceded and laid the basis for, Bush's "War on Terror," mass round-ups of Muslim and Arab immigrants, secret prisons and torture.

### RACISM HURTS ALL WORKERS

With the union leaders' help, the auto, steel, airlines and aerospace giants have sub-contracted tens of thousands of jobs to low-paid mainly black and Latino citizen and immigrant workers. While Boeing eliminated 50,000 jobs in Washington, subcontractors in southern California boomed, paying mainly immigrant labor less than half of Boeing wages. With the addition of over 15,000 auto-related factories — many Asian and European-owned — auto production has shifted to lower-paid workers across the South, leaving cities like Detroit, Flint, and Toledo in ruins. While black, Latino and immigrant workers are shouldering the main burden of U.S. imperialism in decline, all workers' jobs, wages, pensions and healthcare are being devastated. This shows how the bosses use racism to divide and weaken the whole working class.

U.S. imperialism has killed over 650,000 Iraqis in the last four years, well over 1.2 million since 1992. More than 850 million people live on less than one dollar a day — the World Bank's international poverty line — and half the world lives on less than \$2-a-day! Over 250,000 children die every week of hunger and malnutrition. The vast majority are black, Latin and Asian.

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# Anti-Racists Expose Obama Rally

**CHICAGO, IL March 3** — Today, PLP members unfurled a banner calling presidential hopeful Barack Obama, "The next Iran WAR President!" at a rally hosted by the AFL-CIO and its pro-war president John Sweeney. We shouted at Obama to come clean about his plans for widening imperialist oil war in the Middle-East. As security roughly escorted us from the Hyatt hotel, Obama said, "Someone tell that sister that I'm against the war," even though the day before he had addressed a group of Israeli businessmen and talked about dealing with the "Iranian threat." One anti-war activist left with us.

Calling the event a rally for "workers rights," hundreds of nurses and laundry staff from the Resurrection Catholic Hospital system were brought by AFSCME, which is trying to organize them. Sweeney, Obama and Illinois Senator Dick Durbin were all in attendance, to support the organizing drive and new proposed federal legislation to support union organizing.

These are the same pack of union leaders and politicians who did nothing to oppose the racist budget cuts in the County health system that are being carried out by fellow racist Democrats Todd Stroger and the Daley machine. The County will close half of its 26 clinics that serve hundreds of thousands of uninsured workers and children, more than 80 percent black and Latin. The cuts were made to fill a \$100-million cut in federal funding due to the \$2-TRILLION war in Iraq. These cuts will kill thousands of mostly black and Latin patients.

Still, workers were ecstatic when Obama walked into the room. Minutes after he began speaking, an integrated group, including health care workers and students involved in the County struggle, unfurled the banner and began walking toward the center aisle. We want Obama to know that he can't speak in Chicago without being exposed as a war mon-

gering agent of the racist ruling class. We distributed PLP leaflets titled, "Where Was Obama When the Clinics Closed," and sold CHALLENGE.

Taking on Obama, especially on his home turf, is not easy or popular right now. This is similar to when Harold Washington was elected the first black mayor of Chicago about 25 years ago, and no one on the "left" opposed him but PLP. But we are not in a popularity contest. We are out to challenge the misleaders and fight for the political leadership of the working class. In order to do this we will have to take this battle into the unions and churches, and the Obama and Hillary campaigns directly.

A woman who heard about the action later in the day told one of our comrades that she is active in Obama's campaign, and that the next time she has people over to her house, she will invite her along to discuss her ideas. That is the kind of ties and struggle it will take to turn the tide and expose the rulers' latest shooting star. There should be no place Obama can speak unchallenged! Join the PLP and march with us on May Day. ☛

### Obama Wants Wider War

In a public debate with Australian Prime Minister John Howard, Obama called for Australia to increase its troop levels in Iraq. As a member of the liberal wing of the U.S. ruling class, Barack wants to guarantee a permanent U.S. presence in the Middle-East. He knows that traditional allies like Britain and Australia will be beneficiaries if the Middle-East is subjugated. He wants them to ante up.

Barack has said that he is against Iran acquiring nuclear weapons. Obama hopes to recycle the "WMD" slogan to justify a future imperialist war to salvage what U.S. influence is left in the oil-rich region. As tens of thousands of workers die here and in Iraq, he offers us only more of the same racist cutbacks, fascism and war! ☛



# Dems Pledge More Billions for Iraq Slaughter

Phony "anti-war" Democrats in Congress want to give the Bush administration \$20 billion more than the \$100 billion it seeks in emergency funding for U.S. imperialism's increasingly deadly efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Disguised as demanding a 2008 Iraq withdrawal timetable, while "supporting our troops," liberals are, in fact, trying to make the U.S. war machine more lethal and more effective in stabilizing the Mid-East, and securing its oil.

The liberal NY Times (3/10) blessed the move: "House Democrats now want to add funds to speed the production and delivery of badly-needed protective armor, provide better medical care for wounded troops and veterans, and shore up the Army's eroding combat readiness....We hope they succeed." AP reports (3/8): "Democrats also intend to add \$1.2 billion to Bush's request for military operations in Afghanistan." As they hand the bloodthirsty generals all the cash they want, and more, the liberal lawmakers reveal their unswerving loyalty to U.S. imperialism.

## OBEYING IMPERIALIST MASTERS, DEMOCRAT ATTACKS GI MOM

Wisconsin Democratic congressman David Obey showed his true colors in a particularly disgusting incident. When Tina Richards, an Iraq war protester and mother of a Marine, demanding that Congress bring the troops home, asked Obey why he would vote for a war spending bill, Obey lost it. Labeling war opponents "idiots," he shouted in his constituent's face, "If that [the war bill] isn't good enough for you, you're smoking something illegal. You've got your facts screwed up." (Washington Post, 2/10)

The House Democrats' proposal (Obama and Clinton back similar Senate measures) gives a green light to at least one more year of carnage in Iraq and opens wide loopholes for future U.S. troop presence there. The liberals call for "withdrawal" in 2008, except for "targeted counterterrorism operations, embassy protection and efforts to train Iraqis." Counter-terrorism includes stifling

sabotage against the Iraqi oil industry. The U.S.'s puppet government has offered Exxon Mobil and Chevron open access to Iraq's crude, but increasing violence keeps the firms out. "Since 2003, there have been more than 380 attacks on Iraq's oil assets: pipelines blown up, terminals set on fire and key personnel killed. Although some of the oil majors have privately identified areas in the country where they would like to explore, especially in the south, none have so far taken the plunge." (London Telegraph, 3/11) U.S. rulers' need to control Iraq's oil infrastructure is one of the more compelling "facts" Obey alluded to.

## DEMOCRATS' 'ANTI-WAR' MOVE AIDS DEADLY 'SURGE'

Boosting the war effort now, while effectively delaying any de-escalation for a year or more, helps U.S. imperialists make the best of the remainder of the Bush presidency. The liberal imperialists, with the NY Times and the Rockefeller-led Council on Foreign Relations in the forefront, had called for a massive invasion of Iraq. But Bush, to please his donor and voter base, has refused to raise the taxes required, or to mobilize the nation. Lately, however, the liberal imperialists have asserted greater, but not full, control over Bush's war policy.

Rumsfeld is out and Chaney chastened. And the "surge," brainchild of imperialist James Baker, is growing by the day. Imperialist strategists decry it as "too little, too late," but it represents the best they could manage under Bush. Liberals in Congress are enabling the surge

and thus stand as guilty as the Bush gang — amid a host of other war crimes — of the recent murder of a non-combatant and his two young daughters in Sadr City.

The Democrats' actions mesh with the recommendations of the liberal imperialist Brookings Institution: "Rather than force a showdown with Mr. Bush this winter and spring, Congress should give his surge strategy a chance .... There are good reasons to give the war effort... another six to nine months....[T]he new surge strategy being implemented by Gen. David Petraeus, while still insufficiently resourced, is much more consonant with classic counter-insurgency doctrine than anything the coalition has tried to date." (Brookings' Michael O'Hanlon, Wall Street Journal, 3/1)

The surge buys the liberals time until the 2008 elections, when they hope to replace Bush with one of their own. They need a president with the will and skill to militarize the U.S., for an imminent clash with Iran and a superpower conflict down the road. They need someone who can sell the draft, or as Democrats label it, "national service." [See box.]

Nobody should fall for Obama's or Clinton's or any other politician's empty promises to bring the troops home. Rep. Obey's open hostility is more honest. Backing liberal candidates advances the imperialists' war agenda. The only viable alternative lies beyond the voting booth, in relying on our own working class and recruiting masses into a revolutionary communist party, PLP.☸

## LIKE IT OR NOT, RULERS WILL RESTORE DRAFT

Many people believe the U.S. ruling class will never bring back the draft to expand the armed forces. They say the technically superior U.S. military is already lethal enough to defeat any foe, and that public aversion to war acquired during the Vietnam genocide makes mass militarization impossible. They say the draft would be "too costly" and would provide only ill-trained, unreliable manpower. Many generals and politicians have made these very points.

The rulers indeed would prefer not to have a draft. But events are often beyond their control. Michael O'Hanlon of the liberal Brookings Institution and Kurt Campbell, a former deputy assistant defense secretary, envision highly probable scenarios that would force the rulers to get over the Vietnam Syndrome pronto:

"It was only a decade ago when the nation was purported to have...an extreme over-sensitivity to casualties that prevented the country from considering decisive military actions that its national security required.... This consideration does not categorically preclude the

possibility of mandatory national service.... That could be necessary if another major war [Iran perhaps, ed.] breaks out during the Iraq operation, or if the Iraq operation drags on for so long that military morale breaks." (Hard Power, Basic Books, 2006)

The Iraq quagmire proves that being able to kill people and occupying inhabited territories are different tasks. The U.S. military can do the former quite well. The latter requires many more boots than the Pentagon can currently put on the ground. As for money, in a crunch, U.S. rulers will dig as deeply as they have to. Between 1940 and 1944, they increased military spending from 1% to 40% of gross domestic product. And U.S. rulers had less at stake in World War II. Their economic empire at the time lay mainly in North and South America, away from the fighting. Today, the Mid-East and its oil form its core.

Imperialists O'Hanlon and Campbell also address the loyalty issue: under a draft, "the most demanding military professions should be reserved for the professionals." They mean volunteers.

("Obama's Ruling-Class Apprenticeship" will appear next issue.)

## WHAT WE FIGHT FOR:

☆ **Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to smash capitalism — wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world. Capitalism returned to the Soviet Union and China because socialism failed to wipe out many aspects of the profit system, like wages and division of labor.**

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

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

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

☆ **Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women workers.**

☆ **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!**

CHALLENGE/DESAFIO (ISSN 0009-1049) published bi-weekly by Challenge Periodicals. 1 issue \$.50. One Year: \$15. Six months: \$10. Send address changes to CHALLENGE Periodicals, GPO 808 Brooklyn, NY 11202. March 28, 2007 Volume 40, No. 2

## FIGHT RACISM: BOSSES' TOOL

*continued from front page*

Attacks on African and Arab immigrants sweep across Europe while over one-third of the African population is malnourished, AIDS is rampant and life expectancy is under 41 years. In Latin America there are 98 million homeless people.

From the Serb-Muslim "ethnic cleansings" in Bosnia-Herzegovina, to the Tutsi-Hutu genocide in Rwanda, to the current U.S.-sponsored Sunni-Shia bloodbath in Iraq, to the slaughter of four million Congolese in a war for diamonds, coltan and gold, to mass murder in Darfur, racist genocide has become a growing trend, the cost of doing business in a world still suffering the loss of a once powerful world communist movement. Can the U.S. be far behind?

From the chilling sight of 100,000 black workers being left behind to die when Katrina struck New Orleans, to the closing of half the health clinics in Chicago with a patient population over 80% black and Latino, to AIDS being the #1 killer of black women between 20 and 40, the answer starts to become clearer.

Black and Latino nationalism helps the racist bosses by dividing the working class and simultaneously weakens the fight against racism, the rulers' main divisive tool. We are one international working class with the same enemy and the same fight. Only the working class, which creates all value, can unite to destroy capitalism and run society without wars, racism, bosses, or wages.

U.S. bosses are drowning in a quagmire in Iraq and are facing increasing challenges from rival imperialists world-

wide. But they still have a lot of life left in them. The one contradiction they can't escape is that they must rely on those they oppress the most to save their racist empire. That's why the morale of their army is lousy, and why soldiers will eventually be won to rebel against the brass and fight for communist revolution. Black and Latino workers and youth can bring their vast experience in fighting racist terror to lead the revolutionary movement and PLP.

When the Party leads fights against racism while exposing nationalism and patriotism, and puts forward communist ideas, then the fight against racism becomes not just another reform but leads to building PLP and is a major step on the road to revolution. We need to bring the fight against racism into all mass organizations, expose the bosses' ideas and win angry workers and youth away from the leadership's racism, nationalism and patriotic loyalty to the bosses' system. We need to make communist politics primary. The fight against racism is the key to building the mass PLP that unites the working class for a communist revolution.☸

### CORRECTIONS:

In our last issue, dated March 14, the first sentence in the front-page article on cuts in Chicago's healthcare system refers to a "Town Hall Meeting" at which workers drove misleaders off the stage. Actually this occurred at a special union meeting, which is indicated in the fifth paragraph.

On page 2, in the continuation of the editorial on Barack Obama ("Scratch a Liberal..."), the last two lines were omitted. The last sentence should have read: "The real alternative, thus, lies outside the electoral system in building a Party — PLP — that serves the working class and has a revolutionary communist outlook." (Next: Obama's early years: a ruling-class apprenticeship.)☸

# PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

P.O. 808 Brooklyn NY 11202

www.plp.com

email:cd188@juno.com

Phone: 718-630-9440

fight back



# Students See Racist Capitalism at Work in New Orleans

**NEW ORLEANS, LA., Feb. 28** — Over winter break, a multi-racial group of twenty high school students helped New Orleans workers fight the bosses' attacks, originally thinking their purpose was to "help the people down there because there is a lot to be done." Many had not understood the use of the words racism and fascism or the residents' anger at the government. That quickly changed in New Orleans.

The first day, residents of the CJ Peete (aka Magnolia) housing projects moving back into the houses asked for the student volunteers to help clean them out. These apartments, constructed during the 1940s, were not affected by the flood and were ready to live in right after the hurricane. The Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO), however, locked them up and wouldn't let the residents move back, even with "legal" leases. This is part of a plan to get rid of the public housing and replace it

**' Deeply moved by what they saw of the racism intrinsic in the history of this tragedy, the students were politicized by their experience.'**

with mixed income housing, driving black workers away. According to Bill Quigley, law professor at New Orleans' Loyola University, "CJ Peete will go from 723 units to 410; of the 410 units, 154 will be public-housing eligible, with 133 mixed-income and 123 market-rate." In other words, the workers depending on these houses are being kicked out to make do with trailers if they can find nothing else.

As the students spoke to the residents, many of them began to learn about the daily lives of workers. These interactions motivated them to work harder to help, building a sense of working-class solidarity and willingness to serve the working class. But we sometimes allow the anger to fade or become cynical if we work on reformist

**Information From: Quigley, Bill. New Orleans: HUD Policies Limiting Housing for Poor, <http://www.truthout.org/cgi-bin/artman/exec/view.cgi/67/24786>. December 29, 2006.**

## Racism Behind Raids on Immigrants, Health Cuts

**CHICAGO, IL March 10** — Several thousand mostly immigrant workers and youth demonstrated today demanding an end to the racist Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) immigration raids that have occurred at factories around the country and for "comprehensive immigration reform." Unlike last year's "mega-marches," there were no American flags. And with the national and local elections over, there were no politicians.

This rally was led mostly by nationalists and revisionists (fake "leftists"), trying to carve out a niche for themselves. The speakers lacked enthusiasm and the demonstrators were mostly standing around talking to each other. Some felt the low turnout, despite being endorsed by more than fifty organizations, was due to fear caused by these mass immigration raids. But mainly it reflects that the immigration movement is firmly in the hands of the Democratic Party and the Catholic Church. Bigger demonstrations are expected on May 1.

An integrated and energetic group of young people distributed a PLP leaflet, sold CHALLENGE and had many good discussions with the protesters. A small group of health care workers attended, fresh from the fight against racist County cutbacks and clinic closings. We had a good discussion about why and how to involve our union in the immigration movement, and how this ties in with the racist healthcare cuts. We made a plan to write a leaflet and distribute it in different areas where our members work. While these were positive developments, we have a long way to go.

About fifteen of us went out for lunch af-

ter the rally. One of the young women that came with us asked what she needs to do to join the Party. She feels that she doesn't know enough, but it was the second time she asked. We told her she can learn more by coming to more events and meetings, so she can feel more comfortable talking to her friends about the Party. She had just brought a friend to our International Women's Day celebration a few days earlier.

The group of health workers, and the young people, reflect PLP's strategy of base -building; building deep personal/political ties with many people, involving them in political study and action, and winning them over the long run to become revolutionary communist leaders. With all our limitations, it is what keeps us moving forward. The 50 sponsors of today's rally have a different strategy, one of "united fronts" and "coalitions" where "leaders" meet on "executive committees" and make declarations and call rallies. But they have not been able to organize workers. We will keep working closely with the workers and young people, especially for May Day, to consolidate them into PLP. ☺

While they cleaned houses, HANO police noticed more residents moving back in, so they acted to protect the bosses, telling students that they could be charged with trespassing and vandalism because the residents did not have "the right papers." The students left, some saying "I would have gotten arrested, we should have fought back." This proved the essence of state power: those willing to fight for the working class will be punished, jailed, tortured, or even killed. As the week went on, students began to make connections, saying that, "They can spend billions of dollars on a war for oil, but they can't give the people down here money to move back into their homes."

Deeply moved by what they saw of the racism intrinsic in the history of this tragedy, the students were politicized by their experience. Black students who were less surprised by evidence of racism felt a new obligation to organize more where they live. But this anger is not enough if directed at particular politicians rather than the system that produces racist inequalities. We must work closely with these students to develop a more revolutionary perspective. It is very easy to get caught up with reformist issues (getting people back into their homes is not something to be taken lightly), but if we make this primary, we lead the working class into the wrong direction.

We have distributed CHALLENGE to some of the students and teachers on the trip, one student and two teachers are attending a study group and many more will be asked to organize for May Day. This trip, along with communist leadership, creates the potential for a strong base in our school. ☺



### Strike Against Katrina Profiteers



**PASCAGOULA, MISSISSIPPI, March 14** — The rulers' profit-driven reaction to Katrina's devastation has sparked a strike over wages and benefits by nearly 7,000 black and white workers here, shutting down Ingalls Shipyard (the state's largest employer), owned by Northrop-Grumman. The workers walked out on March 8 after a company wage "offer" would be wiped out merely by a \$50 monthly increase in health premiums. This from a Navy contractor making huge profits from the \$2 billion a week the ruling class spends on its oil war in Iraq.

"They left their houses to get this company up and running," declared fork-lift driver Willie Hammond, father of three, "and this is how they show their appreciation." (NY Times, 3/13)

After workers lost homes, cars and a way of life, they now see a doubling of rents and house prices, a gallon of milk now costs \$4.19 (up from \$2.59) and payday loans are needed to just buy gas to get to work.

Current projects on a giant Navy destroyer and several transport ships are at a standstill. The bosses' divisive weapon of racism was invisible as this united multi-racial group of strikers were determined to "hold out indefinitely." Their picket-line spirits are high; blues music echoes in the background while they set up barbeque grills to feed themselves.

They have received considerable support from town-people after a solidarity march through the city. As electrician John Reed told the NY Times, "We're living...paycheck to paycheck, and we're tired of it. If we can survive Katrina, we can survive this."

All workers should raise support for these strikers. ☺

## Campus Rally Links War, Racist Lab, Budget Cuts

### SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

— "One, two, three, four! We won't fight your oil war!" was the chant opening an anti-war rally on our campus. Some students wore orange suits and covered their heads with black hoods, depicting Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib prisoners. This caught passer-bys' attention, mirroring how U.S. imperialism has treated so-called "terrorists" and continues to build fascism and racism by portraying Middle-Eastern people as "terrorists" to justify torturing and terrorizing them.

We distributed over 50 CHALLENGES, while speakers shed light on the role of racism and the need to spread anti-racist struggles on our campuses. Speeches linked the war to growing fascism in the U.S.: Democratic Party presidential candidate Barack Obama recently announced support for construction of the anti-immigrant wall on the Mexico-U.S. border. Like L.A. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Obama also supports more cops in the neighborhoods to terrorize youth and workers.

Students made it clear that the Iraq war, possibly followed by war with Iran, comprises a U.S. ruling-class plan not only to ensure oil for Exxon-Mobil, but also to keep other imperialist powers like Russia and China away from this vital source of profit. Afterwards, many more students came outside for a fire drill, enabling us to continue distributing CHALLENGE and to put forward our politics.

One CHALLENGE seller talked with a soldier who was part of the group around Abu Ghraib when that scandal erupted. He agreed that the war profited the rich, but said that regardless of what the mission was, he only cared for his "brothers" fighting alongside him, showing soldiers' loyalty with each other. But this solidarity must be transformed and deepened into a class-conscious, internationalist solidar-



ity rather than a nationalist one. Although he wouldn't take CHALLENGE, he stayed to listen to all the speeches. Hopefully, the conversation and the event itself exposed some of the lies soldiers like him are told.

Experiences like these show the greater need to reach out to soldiers, both inside the military and by distributing literature from the outside. We must also support rebellions in the military, as PLP did during the Vietnam War.

By themselves, counter-recruitment activities won't end the war. Eventually the rulers will need a draft, which Democrats like Charles Rangel have been pushing, as well as the current backdoor economic draft that has maintained troop numbers for this war. Ultimately, to stop this war and all wars for profit, soldiers and workers will need to rebel against the brass and the rulers to destroy the capitalist system that creates these wars.

Active students on this campus plan more action. They've been campaigning against the racist criminology building and in support of teachers fighting benefit cuts. The budget cuts, the war and the racist criminology lab (site of joint research with the LAPD) all have the same source: racist capitalism. We will mobilize students against these attacks and that root cause. ☺



workers unite!

# Aerospace Workers Need Multi-Racial Internationalism

**SEATTLE, WA., March 8** — “Boeing says Airbus is the enemy, but the Airbus workers are in the same pickle we are,” concluded a Machinist at the last Boeing union meeting (see article below). “We’ve heard tonight about [IAM International president] Buffenbarger’s national industrial policy, but to answer the horrors of subcontracting we need international solidarity!” This call for the world’s workers to unite stood in stark contrast to the phony interim IAM District 751 presidential election, where the candidates argue this month over experience (in collaborating with the bosses) and vague calls for change.

While a business agent and the current vice-president duke it out over nothing but their careers, 10,000 of our aerospace brothers and sisters at Airbus will lose their jobs. The candidates have studiously avoided mentioning the European strikes.

## (Racist and Nationalist) Birds of a Feather

Unfortunately, the leadership of these Airbus strikes mirrors the lies of our own union misleaders during the “We Can Do It!” campaign held a few years ago. Airbus’s Power8 downsizing is a carbon copy of the Boeing Dreamliner subcontracting plan. When Boeing initiated its plan, our leadership mobilized union members to screw mostly Latino farmworkers out of unemployment insurance, gut workers’ compensation and give the company huge tax breaks to keep the Dreamliner assembly in Everett, WA. We ended up losing jobs anyway as the company sold whole fabrication and subassembly plants. The Airbus

strikes may be more militant, but these pro-capitalist misleaders — on both sides of the Atlantic — are “united” in dividing workers along national and racial lines.

The Dreamliner manufacturing plan is racist. Indeed, the whole reorganization of U.S. industry is racist. Subcontractors pay slave wages to hundreds of thousands of mostly Latino workers churning out Boeing parts in Southern California and Texas. Mercedes-Benz’s Alabama assembly plant is staffed by a largely white workforce. Down the street, 3,000 mostly black workers toil in a lower-paid, sped-up subcontracted shop. No doubt European Union bosses will — if they haven’t already — export this kind of highly profitable racist division of labor back to the European continent.

## Bosses’ or Workers’ Values

At this same union meeting, the District legislative officer quoted Buffenbarger’s warning that countries that don’t share “our values” would control the nation’s destiny if we didn’t beef up our industrial [read: war manufacturing] capacity.

The implications are clear. As inter-imperialist rivalry sharpens, the EU’s formidable war industry may not be an ally of the U.S. ruling class. Russia and China have each made huge production deals with EADS (a British-French-German-Spanish conglomerate). Buffenbarger places loyalty to the needs of U.S. imperialism over our need for international working-class solidarity against all bosses.

The union leadership wants us to “race to the bottom” against Airbus workers to help finance the bosses’



Airbus strikers

war plans. Our answer is to rely on the super-exploited black and Latin workers in the subcontracting plants to embrace communist class-consciousness and lead the whole working class. Multi-racial internationalism is what PLP can bring to the class struggle.

We saw a taste of this when reporting on the union meeting back in the shop. Workers requested reprints of old CHALLENGE articles to learn how the bosses violently built nationalist and religious divisions between Jews and Palestinians. They wanted historical examples of how communists united workers in the Middle East. Next step: study-action meetings on this question to build rank-and-file leadership and morale.☺

# Airbus Walkout Faces Labor Fakers’, Pols’ Sellout



**TOULOUSE, FRANCE, March 8** — In their first mobilization since 1993, tens of thousands of France’s Airbus workers struck on March 6 protesting the company’s downsizing plan for 10,000 layoffs. At the Toulouse, Saint Nazaire and Méaulte plants, up to 90% of the workers downed tools. Nearly 15,000 marched in Toulouse, 3,000 in Saint Nazaire and 2,000 in Méaulte. The Power8 downsizing would sell the latter two plants and lay off 1,600 in Britain and 400 in Spain. Airbus employs 57,000 workers

at 16 European sites.

Immediately after the plan was announced, Germany’s Airbus workers in Varel, Nordenham and Laupheim also walked out for a short time, as did nearly 14,000 workers at four French sites. Eurocopter workers in Marignane and La Courneuve also struck in sympathy with the Airbus workers. Both Eurocopter and Airbus are EADS (EU conglomerate) subsidiaries.

The co-president of the Airbus workers’ council, Jean-François Knepper of the FO trade union, declared that “if we are not heard today, we will have to strike harder. The struggle is only just beginning.” But his radical-sounding rhetoric was accompanied by nationalist complaints that there are too many layoffs in France (4,300) and not enough in Germany (3,700).

The leaders of the five big union confederations, and three pseudo-leftist presidential candidates also marched, but all these fake leftist leaders accept the bosses’ line — “there is no alternative” to capitalism. They’re falling over each other suggesting ways for the capitalists to “solve” their crisis, mainly by pouring capital into Airbus.

On March 5, the five union confederations’ leaders said they were “reassured” by their meeting with right-wing presidential candidate Nicolas Sarkozy and centrist candidate François Bayrou. “Both...were concrete and...

wage increase stipulated in the 2007 contract signed Feb. 28 with five unions. The strike is backed by two other unions, and one that initially signed the contract.

The Peugeot workers are inspired by the successful strike of workers at Magnetto, a Peugeot division that was spun off and is now a subcontractor. The Magnetto workers won a pay hike and bonuses amounting to 100 euros a month, an extra five days vacation and permanent jobs for the temporary workers.

On March 1, 50,000 marched in Cádiz, Spain, opposing the closing of the Delphi plant in Puerto Real, where 2,800 workers were dumped, 1,600 at Delphi plus 1,200 at plants supplying Delphi. Airbus, Eastman Chemical and other area workers also affected by job losses joined the march. Delphi workers in Barcelona stopped work for an hour in solidarity with the march. The workers are doubly angry, knowing that Delphi had broken a promise to remain open till 2010 after receiving a 62-million euro subsidy from Cádiz’s local government.

All across Europe, autoworkers are becoming more militant. But a revolutionary communist leadership is needed to internationalize their struggles and build a powerful red-led workers’ movement to get off the reformist treadmills since the bosses take away any short-term gains at the first opportunity. ☺

gave us their firm support,” said CGT leader Xavier Pétrachi. “Although they think that restructuring is necessary to meet this crisis, both agreed that this...plan is not the right one....That’s...what we believe, too.”

This supposedly “left-wing” union leader supports axing workers’ jobs so long as the axed jobs are “the right ones.”

His rival in the FO trade union, Julien Talavant, gushed with gratitude because the politicians agreed to meet him. “We gave them our main demands, they listened to us, they noted them down, and they confirmed many of them.... They won’t be able to let us down now.” Talavant must believe in the tooth fairy and Santa Claus, too!

“Socialist” party presidential candidate Ségolène Royal proposes “authorizing the [French] regions entering [Airbus’s] capital ... and that the government commit itself to providing grants for research and development.” Since the regions have no money to invest and the government is up to its neck in debt, Royal’s proposal is an empty one.

“Communist” party candidate Marie-George-Buffet proposes “a low-interest European Bank loan to recapitalize Airbus and get it through this rough patch, so as to preserve the technological know-how.” She’s appealing to the capitalists’ self-interest, telling them that tomorrow they’ll need the skilled workers they’re axing today. She “forgot” that the iron law of capitalism is dictated by the bottom line.

Trotskyist candidate Olivier Besancenot wants a “European consortium” to nationalize both EADS and its subsidiary, Airbus. As if a capitalist government could change the workings of the capitalist market or would hesitate to lay off workers any more than a private sector boss!

The European aircraft unions are calling for united demonstrations throughout Europe on March 16 to pressure the European Commission.

These fake leftists and their labor faker friends can’t solve this crisis because there isn’t a solution under capitalism! The only real solution to job cuts and all bosses’ attacks is, in the long run, a communist revolution, when workers can run the economy in our class interest.

Meanwhile, one capitalist is laughing all the way to the bank. Arnaud Lagardère, holding 15% of the voting shares in EADS, sold half of his shares last April, before Airbus’s problems became public. The sale fetched two billion euros — not bad, considering his late father paid only 120 million euros for his total investment in EADS in 1999. (Arnaud inherited his father’s stake in March, 2003.)

Lagardère refuses to risk reinvesting in EADS or Airbus, but he’s enchanted that all the politicians are making cheap promises about pouring in taxpayers’ money to bail out the company. [Source: “Le Canard enchaîné,” 3/7/07]☺

(Next Issue: The European Military-Industrial Complex.)

## Strikers Must Fight Peugeot Racism

**AULNAY-SOUS-BOIS, FRANCE, March 6**—The strike launched on Feb. 28 by 460 Peugeot autoworkers continued in this Paris suburb today. One assembly line has been shut down and the other is running at a snail’s pace. The workers are holding strike rallies twice a day. On March 2, 150 Aulnay strikers went to Survilliers to support striking drivers at Gefco, Peugeot’s haulage company.

The Aulnay strikers are demanding a 300-euro-a-month pay hike, permanent jobs for the plant’s 700 temporary workers (Peugeot usually denies permanent jobs to these mostly immigrant workers), and the right to retire at 55. Six hundred workers are over 55; their retirement could create jobs for younger workers, particularly Northern and Sub-Saharan Africans from the nearby housing projects, scene of the November 2005 anti-racist rebellions. In 1982 and since, immigrant workers have led nationally-historic struggles at the Aulnay plant.

The workers’ average take-home pay is 1,100 euros a month. The plant employs 5,000 workers, 3,200 in production. Peugeot, which netted 176 million euros in profits last year, is sticking to the 25-euro-a-month

fight for communism!



# Capitalism's Poverty Killed Mali Immigrants in Bronx Fire

**BRONX, NY, March 12** — The city's ruling class and its media are using the horrific fire that took the lives of ten members of two immigrant families on March 8 to: (1) make their whole sorry lot look like the ultimate example of compassion — including School Chancellor Klein, Governor Spitzer, Senator Hillary Clinton, Mayor Bloomberg (who changed his tune after being forced to return from Florida after actually blaming the victims for having space heaters) and, of all people, Yankee boss George Steinbrenner; and, (2) burying the news about the probable grand jury cover-up of the cops who murdered Sean Bell.

Soon after one of my West African students at a Family Literacy program called to tell me that another student's best friend from Mali had died in the Bronx fire, (nine children died altogether), we visited our classmates and with them the stricken families. Our program is collecting donations for the families.

The working class has shown again its solidarity and generosity, accompanied by an outpouring of grief and love for the families. Neighbors have erected shrines, established donation centers and collected food. Teachers and children at the local public school which three of the dead children attended are mourning their loss.

The tragedy was no accident. It grew out of the poverty and desperation that imprisons millions of our working-class brothers and sisters, living lives so fragile that they become a tragedy waiting to happen. Capitalism, by its nature a system of exploitation, repression, racism, brutality and profit wars, creates the underpinnings for

such calamities.

In the High Bridge neighborhood where the house burned, 41% of the population lives below poverty line; 35% are under 17. Meanwhile, here in NYC the rich have multiple dwellings worth billions. Condos sell for millions. Landlords divide family-sized apartments into small units and charge \$2,000 rent each. Working-class families can't find affordable, safe housing. Workers' homes like this one that burned here are often dilapidated fire hazards needing thousands of dollars in repairs.

The banks and the City hold hands: the banks enrich themselves financing dangerously shabby houses for low-income, unsuspecting buyers in search of the "American dream of home ownership"; the City co-operates, having no regulations and zero responsibility for such structures. The cost of heating fuel has skyrocketed, leading low-income dwellers to use dangerous space heaters and ovens for warmth.

Oil giants like Exxon-Mobil made a record \$39 billion net profit last year while the U.S. government spends trillions on imperialist military operations. Workers labor long hours on two and three jobs to support their families. Large numbers of undocumented immigrants are caught in this trap, fighting poverty while sending generous parts of their meager earnings to their families ravaged by imperialism back home.

Racist profiling and persecution run rampant. Their effects pervade our communities and jobs and have surfaced in our classroom. But the potential for unity among



The bosses always proclaim that humans are selfish. During this tragedy, workers from all over NYC donated food and supplies to the families.

working-class immigrant students from Mali, Gambia and other West African countries, from Mexico and the Dominican Republic have surfaced as well. We talk, we learn and we struggle, and many stand up to injustice and fight for our needs.

Only under communism, where workers hold power, will the system serve our class's fundamental interests. Such a society, free of racism and capitalist borders, built on production for need, will eliminate the extreme vulnerability in which so many of our working-class brothers and sisters, especially children, currently live. Those of us now building the international communist movement and the Progressive Labor Party must re-dedicate our lives to this struggle. ☺

## Fascist Storm Troopers Round Up Immigrant Women Factory Workers

**NEW BEDFORD, MA., March 6** — Early this morning over 300 Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents, backed up by local cops and two Coast Guard helicopters, descended on the small Michael Bianco Inc. (MBI) factory. The raid's target was 500 or more workers — mostly undocumented Latina women — sewing armored military vests.

This notorious sweatshop started as a small leather goods producer, but multiplied in size after 9/11 when it got military contracts to make backpacks and bulletproof vests. MBI makes its profits by paying workers \$7 an hour, without

contracts. Significantly, the court gave the owner permission to travel to Puerto Rico, perhaps to hire more workers for his sweatshop.

While the media and the governor "deplored" the abandonment of the detainees' children, they will not address the impossible dilemma undocumented workers pose for U.S. bosses. On the one hand, these 12 million workers represent an invaluable source of cheap labor and higher profits for the bosses, and the military sees them as a partial solution to its manpower problems. On the other hand, the Homeland Security bosses pose these workers as a serious

**'ICE raid tactics came right out of a Gestapo handbook: exits guarded, and eight hours of interrogation about each worker's immigration status.'**

benefits or overtime pay, and by enforcing a system of massive fines for tiny infractions like lateness or talking on the floor. They get away with this by threatening arrest and deportation.

ICE raid tactics came right out of a Gestapo handbook: exits guarded, and eight hours of interrogation about each worker's immigration status. (Some workers were questioned as many as three times.) By the end of this ordeal, 361 workers were detained with 45 released because of pregnancy and other medical issues, subject to later questioning. The remaining detainees were then handcuffed and bussed to a military base. After a night in unheated facilities, most were flown to remote cities in the South, the rest being sent to Massachusetts jails. No arrangements were made for the detainees' children, leaving as many as 200 missing a parent, and stranding many at day care or with babysitters.

The factory owner and two managers were arrested and immediately charged with conspiring to import and hire "illegal aliens" without government authorization and then released. MBI will apparently keep at least some of its military

"security problem" that might interfere with the bosses' plans for a "secure" U.S. Congress is still working on legislation that will somehow harmonize these two sets of interests, but the end result is already clear: entering the U.S. without documents will no longer be a civil offense, handled administratively. It will be a criminal offense involving jail time and/or heavy fines. Hiring an undocumented worker will be a crime with heavy penalties. Non-citizens will be permitted to work only under strict controls. But the key force in imposing this new element of fascism will be the terror raids on immigrants (documented and undocumented) carried out by the ICE storm troopers.

The New Bedford round-up is not the first such raid, and it won't be the last, because capitalism depends on this kind of repression to maintain control of workers and maximize profits, especially in the current crisis. It won't be restricted to immigrant workers but will be used against all workers who fight back. We must join the battle against fascism to turn it into the revolutionary struggle that will build a communist future. ☺

## Mexico: Abolition of Wage System Only Answer to Slave Labor

**MEXICO CITY, March 8** —

On this International Women's Day, thousands of workers and their allies, organized by the Electrical Workers' Union, marched in the Zócolo (city center) demanding a pay raise in the face of rising inflation; to repudiate the Calderon government's economic policies; and to protest Bush's visit. The justified workers' anger against the rulers' attacks finds no real solution in the union leaders and other organizations. They only push "Obradorism" (support for Andreas Manuel Lopez Obrador — the opposition presidential candidate). The workers don't need "reformed" capitalism; we need to fight for communism.

This year the hourly minimum wage was raised for millions of workers from 3.60 pesos (US 35¢) to 5.50 pesos (US 54¢). The "better-paid" industrial workers earn an average of US \$2 an hour. Meanwhile, multi-billionaire Carlos Slim rakes in \$2.2 million per hour, 24 hours a day! His fortune exceeds US \$49 billion, making him the world's third richest man. Slim, Televisa, TV Azteca, the banks and the financial groups who own the mines all exploit and repress the workers, reap billions from exploiting workers, millions of whom go hungry.

Even worse, prices of tortillas, eggs, meat, milk and other basic products have all risen, while the current minimum wage doesn't cover basic nutritional needs — only enough to buy 8 of the 100 products needed to survive. At least five times the daily minimum wage (238 pesos) is needed to provide a family's basic nutrition, without even considering housing, health, education, clothing, shoes, etc. A family would need a 435.7% wage hike to cover the basic necessities of food, shelter and clothing.

The worldwide war over markets forces the bosses to drive workers into this misery. This super-exploitation is generating massive immigration. The International Organization on Migration reported that during ex-President Fox's 6-year term more than 4.3 million young workers, 40% of them women, emigrated to the U.S., joining more than 10 million already there.



Anti-Bush protestors battle cops.

In Michoacán alone, 40,000 children are forced to work under extreme conditions up to 13 hours a day in the fields. The same or worse occurs in more rural areas like Guerrero, Oaxaca and Chiapas.

Those with jobs live under threat of joblessness or underemployment. Capitalism uses the reserve army of unemployed to force poverty wages and long hours on those who hold jobs. The National Institute of Statistics and Geography reports that 10,480,299 people are self-employed and 26,453,462 are wage-earners. This excludes labor performed in jails or reformatories, where people are forced to work to "repay society" while the profits from their slave labor fill the pockets of a few bosses.

The massive, brave struggles in Pasta de Conchos, Atenco and Oaxaca demonstrate that the working class is looking for an alternative to this capitalist inequality. It's up to revolutionary communists to show that supporting Obrador's brand of capitalism is no alternative. The solution is a society without capitalists, where the workers produce to meet their own needs, not to increase the megamillions of Slim or any other exploiter. This struggle is international, against a capitalist system that only offers wars, fascist terror, drug cartels and racism. CHALLENGE must increasingly become the beacon that guides these struggles towards building a mass PLP in the fight for communist revolution. ☺

# < Letters >

**'Ultimately, workers can never have free speech while there's a bosses' dictatorship. Bourgeois democracy can never fix the situation.'**

—Red Student

## Letter from Spain: The ETA, Nationalism and Communism

After nine months of a "peace process," last December's ETA [Basque nationalist group] bombing of Madrid's Barajas airport surprised many. One should not underestimate its symbolism and psychological impact.

First, it's a clear message from the ETA that the "peace dialogue" does not mean surrender of Basque political aims it's been pursuing since long before the end of Franco's fascist dictatorship.

Second, in the last few decades Madrid has profited from investments coming from the European Union fund for regional development. The airport's brand-new terminal is a good example of the economic privileging of Madrid while Spain's other regions suffer economic constraints. The bombing is a symbolic response to these economic inequalities.

The Spanish media, political parties and government were unanimous: the peace process was broken and the ETA was responsible. This is politically motivated to feed public anger towards the ETA and the Basque nationalist movement, to show the power of bourgeois democracy against the "assassins." Spain's prime minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero said optimism about peace prospects was a mistake. But this is all maneuvering in the political circus transpiring between the Spanish government and the ETA. Nobody knows what's really happening inside those negotiations; the bombing could only be understood in the context of that process.

In any case, these explanations of the airport bombing exclude a communist analysis of the situation in the Basque Country and in Spain. As Lenin once said, communists oppose any form of oppression, and therefore have always supported nationalist struggles, insofar as they are carried on by a specially oppressed regional or ethnic section of the working class against the dominant national capitalists. But the cultural, regional and linguistic differences which are part of human diversity, and should not be oppressed, should also not be used to divide the working class.

That's the problem of many nationalist workers' movements today, including the left Basque national movement. Originally the ETA had a somewhat clear communist perspective, and focused its struggle against Spanish and French capitalism as part of a more general workers' struggle. The ETA thought its fight could awaken the Spanish and French working class on the road to communist revolution.

In recent years, however, a less leftist tendency emerged in the ETA. A more nationalist language replaced a communist one. Spain as a whole, not Spanish and international capitalism, became the enemy. That is important ideologically. As clear statements against Spanish, French, and Basque capitalism lost ground, nationalist claims became central, and the joint struggle of the working class (Spanish, French and Basque) became marginal.

Today the Basque Country is one of Europe's richest regions. Unemployment is virtually non-existent. Therefore, many people in Spain see Basque nationalism as a kind of economic egoism, and Spain's rulers use these feelings to stress the unfairness of nationalist claims.

The left Basque nationalist movement, unlike many nationalisms, has always supported migrants and victims of sexual abuse and racist attacks. But such solidarity is meaningless without communist struggle. Revisionism and petty-bourgeois ideology have won the minds of many Basque leftists. That's why their struggle

has degenerated into a competitive struggle between different groups of capitalists for the prize of the rich Basque Country.

The "peace process," therefore, is not an issue for the communist movement. The real problem is not whether one is for or against the ETA, or for or against the linguistic and cultural rights of the Basque people, but rather that in the Basque Country the working class has lost its battle against capitalism. It was defeated on the battlefield of ideology. Nationalist ideology is always keen to accept leftist tendencies, petty-bourgeois ideology, and egoistic claims. That's its great danger. Only a communist vision can clear the battlefield. Capitalism is the source of all inequalities and communism is its worst enemy. All kinds of oppression can only find their answers inside the communist movement.

*Love and Struggle, a Reader*

**CHALLENGE COMMENT:** Thanks for your letter. We would add that individual acts of terrorism in any form don't help the cause of workers' liberation. History has already proven that. And workers ultimately pay with their lives. The recent ETA bombing killed two immigrant Ecuadorean workers, just like the Jihadists' March 11, 2005 terrorist bombing of train commuters killed hundreds, mostly workers, including immigrants. Indeed, nowhere have nationalist movements led to the liberation of the workers they claim to represent. They have merely exchanged one form of capitalism for another. Only a united working class led by revolutionary communists can end the national and racial oppression which were born with capitalism.

## It's the Bosses Who Dictate Censorship

A recent article about censorship appeared in the Hollywood Reporter as a response to "Grey's Anatomy" actor Isaiah Washington's homophobic remark in the Golden Globes press-room. Shortly afterwards Washington apologized and entered rehab. The article said that censorship is no cure for the way people think; that words are simply words. The mainstream press has avoided using these words, and the writer feels this is a retreat and cop-out.

The debate over the media enforcing "political correctness" comes up on my job; one co-worker even labeled it fascist. My co-worker said black rappers use the "N-word" all the time, so why shouldn't white people be allowed to say it? The argument goes: words aren't the problem, only the "bad thoughts" behind them are. Meanwhile, the other side argues that censorship is necessary so people aren't exposed to offensive language that could insult a minority, ethnic, or religious group.

However, this debate lacks any class analysis or bearing on how workers are treated every day. At my job, for example, everyone is talked down to and yelled at to work faster so the company can reap maximum profits. While no one openly directs racist slurs at me, I'm certainly treated in an inferior manner. Women, black and Latino workers are paid less. Still many of us push the racist and sexist music that justifies super-exploitation to

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the rest of the working class.

Banning slurs from the media doesn't mean that the capitalists aren't sexist or racist in exploiting workers. The rappers and comedians who don't use slurs, often still advocate black nationalism or reformism. They're even more dangerous because they disguise pro-capitalist programs and music. Political media is heavily censored to keep working people ignorant and their senses dulled in favor of pro-capitalist ideas.

Censorship as handled under capitalism is a reformist issue that sweeps class consciousness and revolutionary politics under the rug. Saying offensive words to get a rise and reaction, then shrugging them off as just "expressions," is useless without a revolutionary solution for the audience that listens.

Ultimately, workers can never have free speech while there's a bosses' dictatorship. Bourgeois democracy can never fix the situation. The working class shouldn't fight for the freedom of the entertainment industry to keep us in the dark about revolutionary politics. Our voices can only be free under communism.

*Red Student*

**CHALLENGE COMMENT:** Justifying use of offensive words also ignores the historic roles that slurs play in dehumanizing and spreading racism/sexism

## PL'ers Leaflet London Anti-War March

On Saturday, February 24th a large demonstration against the War in Iraq, and the Trident nuclear weapon system was held in London. Anti-war activists assembled for the march beneath Hyde Park's Speakers Corner. This area in London has historically been a place for free speech and political argument since the 1830's. The spot was originally Tyburn, the place of execution where for centuries the public watched while people were hung. Later, during the days of the Chartists who fought for the vote for the working class, it became a place for mass demonstrations and speeches.

When we heard about this demonstration, we printed 200 copies of a leaflet about the victory of students and teachers who got NYC's teachers' union to pass a resolution against military recruiters in the high schools. We spent a lot of time talking about this struggle. Many people told us that the army comes to the schools to recruit in the UK as well, and they were excited to hear what New Yorkers had done.

Here are some of the comments: "We're trying to do the same as you over here. Get the recruiters out of the schools." "We also oppose racism." "We

do have some victories every now and again. One day we'll have the big victory, when the workers take over." "It's a start, it's a start." "It's great that you're here." People also eagerly questioned us about events in the U.S. We had been a bit unsure of ourselves at first, but each positive comment encouraged us.

It was an exciting afternoon -- amongst people opposed to the war. The police said there were 3,000 demonstrators. The march organizers said there were 60,000. Someone heard there were 100,000 who attended the march. The next day all of the Sunday newspapers were strangely silent.

*Two New Yorkers*

## Mailer's Book Clueless on Fascism

I just read Norman Mailer's latest novel, "The Castle in the Forest," and if I didn't already know about fascism, I wouldn't have learned a thing about it from this book. Perhaps Mailer (who I think is Jewish) will make the case that the devil was behind the Nazis and Hitler. That seems to be his point.

The only time there is even a hint of what fascism was all about is when Mailer mentions briefly that Hitler was able to "con" wealthy tycoons into supporting him.

*Red Coal*

**CHALLENGE COMMENT:** Actually it was the "tycoons" that used the Nazis to invade, and exploit, all of Europe and North Africa, and eventually attack the communist-led Soviet Union.

## Back to New Orleans

When I was invited to visit New Orleans during winter break, I had mixed feelings and was full of expectations. I expected to see more people, more built homes, and at least 70% of the garbage cleaned up. To my disappointment, things have remained the same. In fact, there are fewer people living there and helping out. I felt sad because of the destruction, but I was also angry and speechless because I couldn't comprehend the government's slow response in rebuilding the city. A year and six months and the same shit! I was even angrier to see how the government-built levees in the Lower Ninth Ward compared to those in the French Quarter. It amazed and angered me that the French Quarter levees look like docks while in the Lower Ninth Ward they looked like the wall in a handball court. This proved to me the inequality between

*continued on next page*

## &lt; letters continued &gt;

the rich and the working class. It showed me that the government's main concern is not the people, but the war.

On my second day, I needed to gain strength from somewhere, and that's one of the things that made me happy about New Orleans. The people who live and work there are amazing. It's empowering to see that after devastation people come together and help out. On this trip I met wonderful and interesting people like our group tour guide, John. I was really touched by what he taught us about the history of New Orleans, especially St. Bernard's Parish. I felt sad when he told us how the tragedy affected him mentally and how he wanted to commit suicide because of the devastation. At that moment, I wished I had all the power in the world to help him and others who felt that way. After this, I was eager to start working, because I was desperate to clean up and let my frustrations out. When I began gutting a green house in the Lower Ninth Ward, all the emotions I had experienced from two days of seeing destruction came out. I felt good bringing things down.

I'm really looking forward to going back to New Orleans in the summer. I realized through this experience that it is our duty to understand that the system has no good intentions for the working class and to educate others about this reality. New Orleans is proof of the capitalist agenda. It is a struggle to help people learn that this was not some act of God, but that officials knew what was coming and still disregarded what was needed to reinforce the levees. If one sits down and starts contemplating what is going on now, one can see that the capitalist system is only about the rich.

We really need to help more in NO. I figured if the government won't do anything, it is our duty as caring people and workers to help the people of New Orleans. I advise everyone to experience what I experienced.

Bronx student

# Paul Sporn 1921 - 2007

Paul Sporn, one of the founding members of the Progressive Labor Movement — forerunner of the Progressive Labor Party — died on February 27 in New York at 85.

Comrade Paul hated capitalism, which he saw as a system that bred poverty and racism. These views led him to join the Communist Party (CP) in the 1940's. During World War II he joined the Air Force to fight fascism, serving in North Africa and Europe.

When the war ended, he was one of a group of CP members who moved to Buffalo as part of that party's industrial concentration policy. There he worked in an auto plant for five years and later became an instructor at the University of Buffalo. This circle of party members in Buffalo became the core of a group that felt the CP had degenerated into an organization that had accommodated itself to capitalism. It was committed to reforming capitalism and gaining Socialism by a constitutional amendment abolishing private property, rather than seeing the necessity for the working class to have to violently overthrow the ruling capitalist class. In 1961, members of this group left the CP and formed the PLM the following year.

In 1964, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), as part of a nation-wide witch-hunt to root out communists, especially in the working class, descended on Buffalo (then a major industrial city). They subpoenaed workers and teachers, many of them, by then, members of the PLM. We organized a counter-offensive against these budding fascist anti-communists, massing nearly 1,000 pickets in front of the building where the hearings were being held. Comrade Paul was one of the first to be called.

Heretofore, the CP had told members subpoenaed by such committees "not to get the inquisitors mad," to "be nice" and, if necessary, "take the 5th" — refuse to answer questions on 5th Amendment grounds that it could "incriminate" them. But PL had a different line.

Our idea was to take the offensive and challenge the red-baiters. When Paul took the stand, the first question



asked him was, "Where were you born." Rather than refuse to answer, he drove the Congressmen crazy for the next three hours, as they tried to get him to answer that one question. They finally gave up and didn't ask anything else.

The following day, the Buffalo Evening News (the city's main newspaper) ran a front-page banner headline: "Univ. of Buffalo Instructor Defies HUAC." This set the tone for the entire hearings, which ended in a flop for the Committee. They hadn't run into such opposition in all their previous hearings.

Soon afterwards Paul was fired under a NY State law banning teachers who were members of organizations the government labeled "subversive." He moved to Detroit where he taught at Wayne State University and helped lead the PLP group there for a number of years as well as helped organize the International Committee Against Racism (In-CAR). In later years, Paul was no longer active in PLP but still held to the view of the necessity for working-class revolution. In 1995, he published a book entitled, "Against Itself: The Federal Theater and Writers' Project in the Midwest."

PLP sends its condolences to his family and will remember Paul for his contributions as one of the earliest founding members of our Party.✪



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

## Yes, US in Iraq for oil

If you suspected that oil lay at the bottom of it all, you guessed correctly.

In February 2001, White House officials consulted with outsiders on possible replacements for Saddam and means to exploit his oil fields. In a memo titled "Plan for post-Saddam Iraq," troop requirements, war crimes tribunals and "apportioning Iraq's oil wealth" are discussed.

A month later, the Pentagon circulated a document titled *Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oilfield Contracts*, listing 30 countries with interests in Iraq's oil fields . . .

Since there was no legal reason for a preemptive invasion of Iraq, Wolfowitz's said, "For bureaucratic reasons, we settled on one issue, weapons of mass destruction." (Pythian Press, 2/20)

## US funds create the terrorists

In the 1980s, the Central Intelligence Agency shipped about \$3 billion worth of weapons to Afghan commanders fighting the Soviet occupation, a struggle that left perhaps one million Afghans dead and perhaps three million in exile in Pakistan.

A disproportionately large share of the CIA's weapons went to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar...a Pashtun commander who was the murderous leader of the Islamic Party. Mr. Hekmatyar stockpiled many of the weapons. After a brief stint as prime minister in Kabul...He became a strong ally of the Taliban....

His forces have been killing American and NATO troops in eastern Afghanistan... (NYT, 3/11)

## China legalizes robbery by rich

China was set to take another giant stride away from Maoism this week with the passage of a controversial bill to protect private property....

Critics of the new bill say it will legitimise what they see as a mass theft from the people. "The property law basically takes all the illegally gotten income and legalises it . . ."

...In a survey by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences half of the respondents believed that the rich had acquired their wealth through illegal means. (GW, 3/15)

## Bosses' laws enslave 'guests'

The report is titled "Close to Slavery: Guestworker Programs in the United States."...

Workers recruited from Mexico, South America, Asian and elsewhere to work in American hotels and in... labor-intensive industries...are routinely cheated out of their wages, which are low to begin with . . . And they are virtual hostages of the American companies that employ them.

The law does not allow these "guests" to change jobs while they're here. If a particular employer is unscrupulous, as is very often the case, the worker has little or no recourse....

A favorite (and extremely cruel) tactic of employers is the seizure of guest workers' identity documents, such as passports and Social Security cards. That leaves the workers incredibly vulnerable....

Without their papers the workers live in abject fear of encountering the authorities, who will treat them as "illegals." They are completely at the mercy of the employers....

"This is not a situation where there are just a few bad-apple employers," (NYT,12/3/06)

## Young workers can't find jobs

The strongest job market New York City has had in decades has not helped the city's youngest workers find jobs, leaving them at risk of becoming permanently unemployable...

The report...cited sharp decreases in employment among residents ages 16 to 24 from 2000 to 2006, a period in which employment rose for most other groups....

...The share of people actively looking for work and



unable to find it — among those aged 16 to 19 was 28.4 percent....

Young men who get locked up for drugs offenses "are basically unemployable" after they leave prison . . .

Even for those dropouts who stay out of legal trouble, there is an economic isolation... "You have no real connection to the world of work." (NYT, 2/27)

## Misuse troops then rob them

...The administration uses carefully cooked numbers to pretend that it has been generous to veterans, but the historical data contained in its own budget for fiscal 2008 tell the true story. The quagmire in Iraq has vastly increased the demands on the Veterans Administration, yet since 2001 federal outlays for veterans' medical care have actually lagged behind overall national health spending.

To save money, the administration has been charging veterans for many formerly free services...

More important, the administration has broken long-standing promises of lifetime health care...Two months before the invasion of Iraq the V.H.A., which previously offered care to all veterans, introduced severe new restrictions on who is entitled to enroll in its health care system. As the agency's Web site helpfully explains, veterans whose income exceeds as little as \$27,790 a year, and who lack "special eligibilities such as a compensable service connected condition or recent combat service," will be turned away. . . .

...The parallels between what happened at Walter Reed and what happened to New Orleans — not to mention parallels with the mother of all scandals, the failed reconstruction of Iraq — tell us that the roots of the scandal run far deeper than the actions of a few bad men. (NYT, 3/5)

# PLP HISTORY

## 1969 PL-Led Strike Paralyzed Harvard

(Students for A Democratic Society, Part IV)

The ideological struggle within SDS over nationalism peaked during the San Francisco State strike. It sharpened further over the negotiations U.S. imperialism was conducting with North Vietnamese government representatives.

From the start PL had opposed U.S. imperialism's "right" to negotiate anything in Vietnam, upholding this position once the negotiations began in 1968. It was a difficult, unpopular principle to defend, because the mass heroism of the Vietnamese struggle had justly captured the admiration of hundreds of millions of anti-imperialist workers and students, and because SDS's right-wing leadership pandered to nationalism. But despite threats and intimidation, PLP continued to maintain that negotiating with U.S. bosses would inevitably lead to betraying everything Vietnamese workers and peasants were fighting and dying to win — most notably, a life free from imperialist oppression. Events were to prove the Party correct.

As at SF State, PLP and the Worker-Student Alliance (WSA) caucus of SDS organized militant action as well as principled debate. The action followed the logic of PLP's anti-nationalist, pro-working class line. The April 1969 Harvard strike soon provided a stunning affirmation of this marriage between theory and practice.

By 1969, liberal U.S. university presidents were falling over each other to mislead the anti-war movement. They sponsored pacifist teach-ins, day-long "moratoriums" and other diversions from militancy. Many had backed the 1968 presidential candidacy of Eugene McCarthy, a Wisconsin Democratic senator, who had entered the campaign with the explicit purpose of channeling student dissent into a pro-boss electoral dead-end.

PLP argued that capitalist universities were an inseparable part of U.S. imperialism's Vietnam butchery and that the student movement should take clear action

against this relationship rather than promote illusions about it. Harvard provided a leading example. For several years, PLP'ers within the Harvard SDS chapter had led militant struggle against Harvard's collaboration with the war. In 1967, Harvard students confronted Defense Secretary McNamara. Later that year, a militant sit-in temporarily blocked recruiters for Dow Chemical — which produced the horrific weapon napalm — demonstrating inside the chemistry building when the Harvard professor who had invented napalm was in his office there. PLP and its base within SDS consistently exposed Harvard fascists like Samuel Huntington, who had helped develop the infamous "strategic hamlet" plan to turn Vietnamese villages into concentration camps.

Throughout 1968-69, PLP and the Worker-Student Alliance Caucus had campaigned against the presence of ROTC (Reserve Officers Training Corps) on the Harvard campus. Other demands included ending Harvard's plans for expansion in a Cambridge working-class neighborhood. The pro-nationalist right-wing within SDS opposed ROTC with lip-service but always found ways to resist taking militant action against it.

After losing a close vote to seize University Hall, a key administration building in Harvard Yard, nonetheless PLP and the WSA estimated that enough students were prepared to take this bold action and that it should proceed regardless of the vote. This decision was crucial in exposing the limitation of "parliamentary democracy" as an obstacle to revolutionary anti-imperialist action.



PL and SDS protest Vietnam War

On April 9, scores of PLP-led SDS'ers seized University Hall, ejecting the administrators in the building. Crowds gathered outside to support or debate the sit-in. By nightfall, 500 protesters were occupying University Hall. The next day at 3 AM, Harvard President Pusey called in 400 state and city cops, who maced and beat the protesters, arresting more than 100.

The cops' brutality boomeranged. Thousands protested by boycotting classes. More than 10,000 attended a four-hour meeting in Harvard Stadium to discuss the demands and tactics of an action that had become a strike. The country's most prestigious university, a crucial resource for imperialism and the war effort, was essentially paralyzed for the remainder of the academic year.

PLP had compellingly demonstrated that far from watering down class struggle against imperialist genocide, an anti-nationalist line sharpens it. On the other hand, the all-class unity of nationalism inevitably leads to collaboration with the enemy and turns even the most militant struggle into its opposite.

As the annual convention of SDS approached, the '69 Harvard Strike swelled the ranks of the Worker-Student Alliance caucus and brought many new recruits into PLP.

(Next: The 1969 Convention: the right-wing minority "expels" the majority.)

## U.S. Rulers Throw Wounded GI's on Scrap Heap

The exposé of horrific conditions in Walter Reed Hospital shows how once again soldiers have been chewed up and spit out by the military. The hypocrisy of the slogan support the troops is again exposed as only a PR slogan to get people to support a war they don't believe in.

How is it that no one knew what was happening at Walter Reed? Is it really possible that all this is just being discovered now? Four years ago Mark Benjamin, writing for UPI at the time, revealed similarly fetid conditions for wounded soldiers in Fort Stewart Georgia. Not only was nothing done, but he received hundreds of death threats.

Now the Washington Post writes the same story and two generals, the Secretary of the Army and the Surgeon General of the Army are fired. The Democrats who have pushed the Walter Reed hearings cynically ignored the problems of wounded soldiers for all these years because they wanted to see how the war was going to play out. Now with the war going down the tubes, they are piling all the blame on, and further embarrassing "lame duck" Bush.

It is particularly sickening that we have been fed story after story about how great the wounded have been treated, and all the medical advances that have been made by the military. Amputees jogging and playing basketball has become standard fair on the news networks. Did none of those reporters or politicians touring the hos-

pital notice the hundreds of severely wounded soldiers living in squalor?

Using young working-class soldiers as cannon fodder and then tossing them away is nothing new. In 1932, at the height of the depression, poor veterans of WWI camped out in Washington, D.C. to demand benefits. These former soldiers, known as the Bonus Marchers, were brutally attacked by infantry, cavalry and tanks on the orders of Herbert Hoover and under the direct command of Douglass MacArthur, assisted by George Patton, and Dwight Eisenhower.

While ten times as many Iraqi's have been killed and wounded, the number of wounded U.S. soldiers is still huge. The official military count is at about 25,000, many with extremely severe injuries, but there have been over 32,000 who have been air medevacked out of Iraq. Many wounded are never even counted because they are treated in their units and then go on to civilian care facilities.

In addition the military admits that the number of mental health cases is already at least 65,000. All these numbers will only go up. The first Gulf War is still counting the wounded, with over 200,000 U.S. soldiers, nearly half the total force, suffering from some form of Gulf War syndrome. There is no doubt that for many years to come poor young people will be paying the price for this war for oil, and the ruler's politicians will be crying crocodile tears to exploit their pain. ☹

## BUSH TRIP IN LATIN AMERICA REFLECTS SHARPENING INTER-IMPERIALIST STRUGGLE

The U.S. ruling-class strategy for its continued domination of Latin America is in disarray. This is not only the result of inept and shortsighted leaders (even though the U.S. rulers have plenty of them), but as a declining world power, they just don't have many alternatives. Bush's recent tour of five Latin American countries exposes this clearly.

His goal was to shore up U.S. imperialism's image and influence in the region, while undermining that of its imperialist rivals and of Hugo Chavez who are taking advantage of the U.S.'s precarious situation in Iraq to encroach on its backyard. In trying to stem this trend, U.S. bosses have a big problem: they're bankrupt both politically and economically. On both counts, they have little or nothing with which to bribe the Latin America elites or the region's 570 million impoverished workers.

Brazil — Latin America's biggest, most populous country, with the ninth largest economy in the world — was the big prize. To split Mercosur (a four-country trade group) and counter Chavez' proposed integrationist Gaseoducto del Sur — a giant gas pipeline that will link Venezuela, Brazil and Argentina, costing some \$20 billion — Bush proposed "... a partnership with Brazil and other ethanol producers ....designed to wean countries from Venezuela's cheap oil." (LA Times editorial, 3/8) But U.S. ethanol producers are protected with a 54-cent-a-gallon tariff against the cheaper Brazilian ethanol. Therefore, the same Times' editorial continued, "The 'OPEC for ethanol' that the president is expected to create...won't actually open the U.S. market...and as a result will accomplish little."

"What Bush has offered instead," says the LA Times, "is a variety of small anti-poverty programs that are dwarfed by Chavez' initiatives in the region," referring to Bush's

promise of \$385 million to help workers buy houses; \$75 million in three years for education; sending the hospital ship Comfort to visit Latin America's ports to attend patients; and \$1.6 billion a year in aid to the region. A Brazilian newspaper mocked this, saying that's what the U.S. spends in less than five days in Iraq.

Mass anti-U.S. demonstrations also expressed the hatred that workers and others on the continent have for the U.S.-backed neo-liberal program and genocidal wars. Discredited politically and economically, eventually the U.S. rulers' only possible alternative to the challenges in the region of nationalist forces like Chavez and its Chinese, Russian and EU imperialist rivals will be to resort to war. That's why the U.S., under the guise of "fighting drug trafficking and terrorism," is expanding and upgrading its existing military bases in the region, while building new ones.

But as CHALLENGE has reported, the anti-U.S. forces in the region (backed by the other imperialists) are also arming themselves and building massive nationalist-patriotic movements to win workers to fight on their side. Chavez is spending billions more on arms than any other Latin American country. And both Brazil and Argentina have nuclear aspirations.

A NY Times Op-Ed article (3/11) poses the question: "Is the battle for Latin America already over?" We can answer this with a resounding "No!" — not without a bloodbath. Latin American workers and their allies need to reject false "revolutionaries" like Chavez, Morales, Lula, Ortega, Correa and Obrador and build the PLP and a truly revolutionary communist movement to bury all the capitalists/imperialists and their lackeys forever. ☹