

CHALLENGE

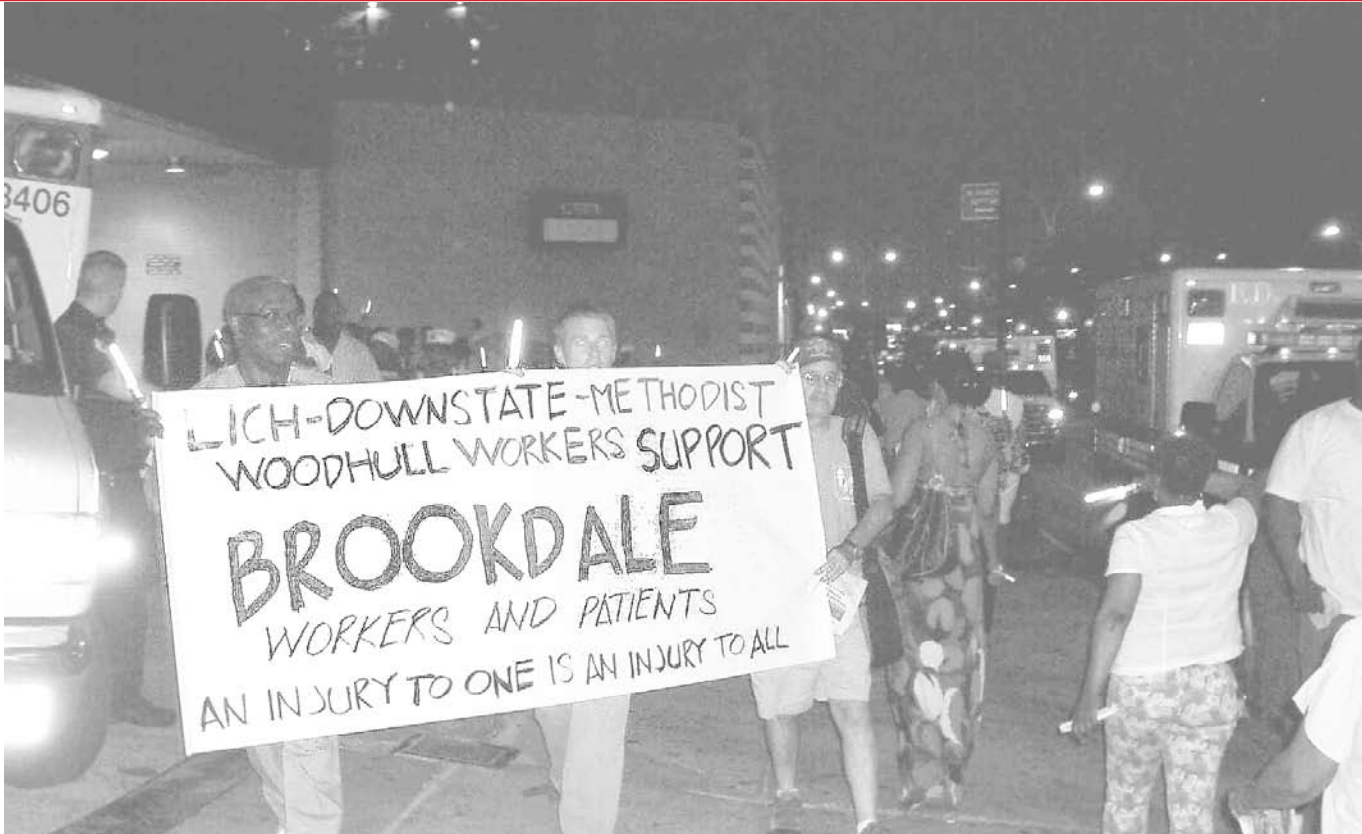


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Women Hospital Workers

Lead Fight vs. Boss-Union Hack Gang-up

BROOKLYN, NY July 18 — “Strike! Strike! Strike! Strike!” That’s how a rally of two hundred Brookdale Hospital workers ended after a night of picketing, marching and chanting in front of their hospital. Almost every worker carried a copy of CHALLENGE with the story of their struggle on the front page. Militant workers from Downstate, Methodist, Woodhull, Long Island College and other hospitals and unions came out in solidarity, greeting their Brookdale sisters and brothers with warm hugs, handshakes, and plenty of conversation.

One worker said, “The entire hospital would walk out and strike if the union said so, but they keep telling us to wait...” These racist cutbacks are taking place in every city, designed to make workers and patients pay for the trillion-dollar imperialist wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Libya, and for the bailouts of the bosses and bankers.

Just before the rally, a vice-president from Local 1199 of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) played emcee to a collection of city and state politicians in a town hall meeting. Their aim was to numb the workers into staging a silent “candlelight vigil,” unsurprising, considering that SEIU’s idea of “struggle” is a bus trip to beg Governor Cuomo and other politicians at the state capitol.

These politicians are part of the same city and state government that orchestrated the closures of eight city hospitals in the past five years. They said the same “fighting” words before shutting down St. Vincent’s and North General hospitals. Parts of Brookdale, a 3,500-worker hospital, have already shut down, robbing the mostly black, Latino, Caribbean and women workers and patients of their jobs and health care.

Speaking to a crowd of workers at the town hall,

most with CHALLENGEs in their hands, New York City councilman Charles Barron pandered to their anger, but offered no leadership for the class struggle they need. Barron’s divisive black nationalist politics reinforce racist divisions between black and white workers. Workers don’t need division — they need class unity! Barron’s and 1199’s attempts to control the workers failed when the 1199 VP tried to prevent a white worker from another hospital to speak in solidarity with the Brookdale workers, prompting angry shouts from the crowd and chants of “Let him speak!” The VP backed down.

Brookdale is being bled to death by racist Medicaid and Medicare cuts on the one hand and a pack of thieving bosses from MediSys, the hospital’s parent company, on the other. MediSys Chief Financial Officer Doss steals \$3 million-a-year in salary, and top MediSys executives (including CEO Flanz and Human Resources Director Sclair) also draw salaries from 22 dummy corporations that bill Brookdale for their “services.” Doss runs a collections agency that bills Brookdale for collecting unpaid medical debts! He draws another salary from Brookdale as a “consultant”!

At the same time, “Brookdale has no toilet paper,” one worker said. “We have to borrow it from other hospitals. Nurses are telling families to bring their own [adult] diapers. We’re borrowing medicine from Jamaica Hospital [a smaller hospital also owned by MediSys] and I’m always on the phone trying to borrow extra envelopes and paper to get my job done.”

Another woman related the racist and sexist abuse, where 80% of the workers are women. “The managers sexually harass the women...making open sexual advances. They suspend anyone who complains. They don’t fear anybody. They think they’re invincible. Re-

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Draft on the Way: Obama's War Budget Makes Workers Pay

The U.S. ruling class's "debate" over raising the debt limit above \$14 trillion and cutting the budget is all a cover to hide the goal of forcing the working class to foot the bill for U.S. imperialism's global wars that are slaughtering workers internationally.

Wars for control of Mid-East oil and gas and for strategic footholds against China and Russia cost U.S. imperialists a fortune — \$3.7 trillion so far in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. But, as battlefields widen to Libya, Yemen, Somalia and beyond, the current depression leaves U.S. rulers with inadequate ready cash. So Obama and the major capitalists he serves are pushing a budget plan that shoves even more war burden onto the backs of workers.

Obama's proposal for 2012-2020 slashes \$655 billion from the Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security benefits workers have earned. (White House Budget, published in 2010) This includes lowering Social Security benefits and gradually raising full

retirement benefits from age 65 to past 66 and eventually to age 69. Consequently, millions more workers will die on the job before they can retire.

Meanwhile, the needs of struggling U.S. imperialism belie his promise to curb the military budget by 7%. In fact, the imperialists themselves demand a whopping 67% boost. (See CFR's Sebastian Mallaby quote below.) The only significant "cost-cutting" move likely at the Pentagon, one now pushed by the highest brass, is restoring the draft. Most draftees, unlike career enlistees, get rock-bottom pay and no pension.

Lying Obama Promises Tea Partiers Pentagon Cuts; Bigger Bosses say 'Forget about 'em'

Obama's phony Pentagon pruning aims solely at appeasing obstructionist, anti-tax Tea Party elements in Congress. The latter front for smaller domestically-minded U.S. capitalists who don't directly benefit from the bigger bosses' expensive and expanding war agenda. But the main U.S. imperialists, whose profits depend on war, and who bankrolled Obama into office and fill his cabinet, reveal the intentional hollowness of his rhetoric.

Max Boot is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), U.S. imperialism's leading think-tank, representing the Rockefeller-dominated wing of U.S. rulers, such as Exxon Mobil and JP Morgan Chase. They seek to undermine Obama's cheap talk and rally Republican imperialists, the socially-liberal and fiscally-conservatives like Senators John McCain and Maine's two Senators, part of the old Nelson Rockefeller wing of the G.O.P.

Boot wrote in the conservative Weekly Standard (7/18/11), "Obama's proposed cuts...would seriously impair the military's ability to meet its global commitments." Boot then lets loose a flood of rhetorical questions that pretty much lay out his bosses' money-burning order of battle for the near term:

"Should we completely pull out of Afghanistan? Even with the overly hasty withdrawal of surge forces ordered by Obama, we still will have 70,000 troops there at the end of next year, costing at least \$70 billion. Pulling out troops even faster risks giving jihadists their biggest victory since 9/11.

"Perhaps we [U.S. rulers] should stop fighting pirates off the coast of Africa? Stop fighting in Libya so that arch-terrorist Muammar Qaddafi can claim a victory over the West? Stop targeting al Qaeda in Pakistan and Yemen and elsewhere? Stop deterring China, North Korea, or Iran? Stop patrolling the Persian Gulf through which much of the world's oil flows? Stop fighting cyberattacks emanating from China and Russia?"

Obama's Ruling-Class Handlers Want Massive 67% Boost, not Mini 7% Cut, in War Funding

Of course, all this call to expansion of U.S. rulers' wars means mass murder of untold numbers of workers in these countries. Boot obviously seeks a "No" answer to the military cut question. His colleague, CFR fellow Sebastian Mallaby, goes much further, urging drastically increasing war funding and reducing workers' living standards. In a piece entitled, "American Power Requires Economic Sacrifice" (CFR website, 7/7/11) he says:

"...[I]f the U.S. has the will to allocate a rising share of GDP [Gross Domestic Product] to the Pentagon, it can sustain its global dominance for a long time to come. After all, defense claimed more than a 10th of U.S. GDP during the 1950s, compared with just below 6 per cent today. But military budgets on the scale of the 1950s entail social and economic sacrifices."

Why Articles Are Not Signed

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.

Fascism Means War, and Workers Pay, Then and Now

"We can do without butter, but...not without arms." (Hitler's propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, 1936)

"American power requires economic sacrifice....Trends in military spending do reveal something about a country's capacity for coercion. (U.S. Council on Foreign Relations, 2011)

Mallaby refers unmistakably to reducing health care's 17% share of U.S. GDP. Furthermore, his demand to revert to 1950 military budget allocations of one-tenth (10%) from the current 6% means a two-thirds increase, or 67%.

Anti-Worker Draft Coming Back as 'Money-Saver'

From the Korean War in the 1950s to the Vietnam War in the 1960s and '70s, U.S. rulers maintained the draft. Today, massive unemployment and under-employment of over 30 million workers forces job-seeking youth to enlist, which may help make recruitment adequate for U.S. bosses now. But that won't be the case if rebellion reaches Saudi Arabia, Big Oil's biggest energy source, and sets the whole Middle East aflame or if armed conflict breaks out with Iran's or China's bosses. Then the U.S. "all-volunteer" forces won't be able to cut it, economically or politically.

With pay raises, benefits and pensions, the volunteer force costs the bosses too much. And only a shrinking segment of the population, increasingly poor white workers, seems won to enlisting. So here comes conscription again, in the guise of "economizing." The Air Force Times (7/14/11) reported that, "The Pentagon is considering massive changes to the force — including a draft — amid fears that new and far deeper budget cuts are looming just over the horizon.... It quoted General James Cartwright, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: "You may just shift the balance of the services from active to Guard or reserve or to — the dirty word — a draft. Those are all different characters and they have different costs that you can manage."

A new draft would force millions of U.S. youth into a war machine that would kill them and millions of our sister and brother workers worldwide. (World War II saw 14 million in the U.S. armed forces, with half the current U.S. population.) But, at the same time, in laying bare to millions the horrors of capitalist war, it would also expand the opportunities for communist revolutionary anti-imperialist organizing in the military.

Historically, the two great communist-led revolutions in the last century, in Russia and China, arose out of the imperialist World Wars I and II.

With our lives, labor, declining wages, and ever-diminishing living conditions, workers have paid for capitalists' wars for centuries. Aside from the incalculable money loss, their harm to our class amounts to billions of human beings impoverished and murdered. We must turn the tables on the profit-driven killers by building for communist revolution to destroy them.

Our Progressive Labor Party works towards this goal, as is evident from PLP's immersion in, and helping to lead, class struggles: for a community library (page 7); among transit workers in San Francisco and Washington, D.C. (page 6); for client-worker unity against budget cuts in New Jersey (page 7); among hospital workers in NYC (page 1) and in Chicago (page 6). PLP joins and leads these battles to be able to raise revolutionary communist ideas and recruit these workers to build a mass Party. ☪

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. Everyone will 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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NYC Summer Project Youth Learn, Spread and Are Inspired by Communist Ideas

NEW YORK CITY, July 16 — “Fight Back!” could be heard ringing through the streets as Progressive Labor Party marched in Harlem to arouse the working class. We had a flyer that denounced Obama as a racist puppet of the U.S. ruling class. Our militancy, multiracial unity, and revolutionary politics won many workers to pump their fists, clap their hands, and chant along with us. This final march of the Summer Project illustrated our success and power to win workers to PL’s communist ideas.

The NYC Project began with an orientation that included over 50 young people — teachers, workers, soldiers, students, parents; women and men; black, Latino, Asian, and white — the backbone of our Party and its friends. We discussed why PLP was having the Project.

A group of largely undocumented workers spoke in Spanish about unemployment; a PL soldier outlined the role of imperialism. Racist health care was analyzed as well as PLP’s organizing among transit and hospital workers (see CHALLENGE 7/20). PL brought young people together from all over the U.S. — Chicago, LA, Baltimore, and beyond — to both recognize that we’re fighting the same enemy and that the working class is facing similar conditions everywhere.

Racist Cop’s Threats Fail

Tuesday started off bright and early as we surrounded an unemployment center in Trenton, NJ (see page 7). We rallied outside and handed out flyers. A racist cop almost drove his car into a group of disabled people in his rush to try to intimidate us. He waddled out of his car wearing a bulletproof vest, hoping to scare us, but did not succeed. He would be the first of the bosses’ attempts to shut down our rally.

The unemployment center’s security force confiscated CHALLENGE from all the workers who walked into the building. The state will always break its own laws whenever it chooses to prevent workers from hearing communist politics. New Jersey’s fascist governor Christie is spearheading attacks on the working class’s education, health care and aid checks, the latter amounting to only \$140 a month! How are workers and their families expected to live on such a pittance? Our rally

could have been a spark in a tinderbox; the bosses fear the potential of the working class to rise up and smash them.

‘Give me a CHALLENGE....They took mine...’

A black woman health care worker came angrily out of the building towards us saying, “Give me a CHALLENGE; they took my copy and I want one.” She was mad about their confiscating her paper.

On Wednesday, we headed to the Bronx. Comrades there did an excellent job organizing our site, ensuring that food and drinks arrived. Young people from LA performed a great skit: some comrades acted the role of bosses; another group were communists; and a much larger group acted as the working class. A debate ensued which helped raise the awareness of all to understand and contrast the bosses’ arguments with the ideas of communism. An enriching discussion followed on what it means to build a base in the working class.

Force Shutdown of Recruiting Center

After the study group, we all moved in a disciplined manner to a military recruitment center in the Bronx where we distributed 400 CHALLENGES on the surrounding corners and picketed the center. The recruiter became so upset when we showed up that he shut down the center. Speeches in Spanish and English condemned U.S. imperialism.

After the rally, the HBO film “No Contract, No Cookies” and another “independent” film on the Stella d’Oro strike were screened, with about 10 former Stella d’Oro workers present. A sharp discussion followed, illustrating how the strike was both a school for communism and an inspiration to us in the class struggle.

Thursday was Harlem Day. After individual groups sold the paper in the morning, we picketed the military recruitment center there. We distributed a flyer denouncing Columbia University’s racist expansion, exposing Obama’s racism and attacking U.S. imperialism. The racist KKKops showed up and began following us, “escorting” us over a 10-block march. They told us to turn off our bullhorn.

As one young person put it, “I was scared of the police, so I chanted louder to not have to think about them.” When we arrived at the Columbia employment agency, we condemned them for not providing jobs and for stealing homes from black workers.

Afterwards, we attended a forum on anti-communism based on Grover Furr’s book “Khrushchev Lied,” which exposed deceitful questions on the New York High School History exam. We also heard about the attack on PL teachers at Brooklyn’s Clara Barton H.S. The forum helped us sharpen our arguments against those who spread the bosses’ lies about the history of the world communist movement. They spend billions of dollars to portray Stalin as a “mass murderer” because they fear his communist ideas.☺

Summer Project Impressions

(The following are three expressions of volunteers’ experiences.)

“I really enjoyed the diversity of the Summer Project and how hospitable the host-comrade was. It inspired me in ways that no other experience could. The rallies we held had an outcome that I did not know was possible from an organization that is frowned upon as much as the PLP. The anti-communism forum was one of the most helpful in teaching us on how to defend communism. It showed how far the bosses and pigs go to make sure their despicable way of living prospers.”

★ ★ ★ ★

“The NY Summer Project was different in atmosphere and surroundings, but in some ways similar to the LA Project making you realize the struggle is the same everywhere, like the issues with the government. The NY project was a fun experience.”

★ ★ ★ ★

“My experience during the Summer Project was inspiring, and I learned more about what is going on in the world. My comrades taught me how to be strong and fight for what is right. We are the workers and we will not let the bosses rule us.”

(Write to CHALLENGE with your Summer Project experience.)

Brookdale

continued from front page

cently, fifteen of us women went to one of their offices and put a stop to it. We haven’t heard from him again!” The women leading the struggle have shown incredible bravery and strength, continuing the fight against the bosses even while 1199 tries its best to cool the workers down.

We heard similar stories of fight-backs and job actions from every department, including a three-day sit-in at the hospital last month, after MediSys stopped paying into the 1199 SEIU National Benefits Fund. This “forced” the union to cancel the workers’ health insurance and replace it with a much worse plan with sky-high, unaffordable co-pays. Aside from stripping the workers of their health care, no one knows what steps, if any, the union has taken against the bosses to recoup their losses.

Either way, the union is worth over a billion dollars. It could have paid for the workers’ health insurance while fighting to get its money from MediSys. Instead, it meekly accepted the hospital bosses’ benefit cut. Had George Gresham and the union leadership really wanted to support the struggle, they had every “legal” reason to strike back in January, when MediSys first violated the labor contract. As one worker said, “The bosses

treat us like garbage and the union leaders always give us reasons why we can’t fight, but we know we gotta fight!”

Beyond MediSys, we are confronting the whole racist profit system and a U.S. ruling class that is struggling to keep its world empire amid stiffening competition. Today they fight Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, but down the road looms China. With the help of the union misleaders, they are taking back everything that U.S. workers have gained in the past 80 years in order to meet their growing competition.

PLP is fighting for a base among the workers in order to challenge the bosses and union misleaders. The Brookdale workers are fighting on behalf of every worker affected by racist hospital closures. Every worker worldwide can support the Brookdale Hospital workers by raising their fight on the job and in their union, sending messages of support to CHALLENGE. Workers in the New York City area can sign up to sell CHALLENGEs at Brookdale.

While the bosses ultimately control whether or not Brookdale closes, through building



CHALLENGE networks within Brookdale, we are injecting our ideas of fighting back with multi-racial working-class unity. Should Brookdale close, in whole or in part, these workers will bring these ideas with them into the looming struggles ahead, wherever they go. Our long-term success will be measured in how many workers understand that only when millions of workers join PLP and the fight for communism, can the international working class destroy capitalism and seize power.

The politicians and union misleaders had their say at the town hall meeting, but the mostly-female Brookdale workers will have their say when they strike against the bosses. We ask every one of these fighters to join us.☺

Comrade Milt Rosen, 1926-2011



In the fall of 1961, Milt Rosen convened a small collective that would soon leave the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) to form the Progressive Labor Movement. Four years later, Comrade Milt became the founding chair of the Progressive Labor Party. He served our organization and the working class in that capacity until 1995.

On July 13, Milt died of Parkinson's Disease at the age of 85. He is survived by family, friends, and thousands of comrades — and by a revolutionary communist party deeply rooted in the international working class.

Since PL's birth half a century ago, many left organizations have withered and died. Others have decayed into the living death of electoral politics or a fake Marxism which allies with "progressive" sections of the ruling class. PL is the exception because it never stopped evolving. Milt grasped the essence of dialectical materialism, the philosophy of communism: that the objective world is ever-changing, and that the Party must continue to learn from its own experience and those of the courageous but flawed workers' movements that preceded it. He was staunchly principled, but never rigid.

Sparked by Milt early on, PL exposed both counter-revolutionary revisionism and "revolutionary" nationalism as death traps of worker-boss unity. It indicted the state capitalists of the Soviet Union as far back as 1966, and then broke with the ones ruling the People's Republic of China. Those failed revolutions led PL to advance beyond Marx's two-stage theory that socialism was a first step toward communism; history had shown that socialism inevitably led back to the exploitation of capitalism. And unlike any other group on the landscape, the Party emphasized the importance of the fight against racism as a basic communist principle, not a mere tactic. It understood that all struggles are essentially anti-racist struggles. Most important, it saw that capitalism cannot survive without racism dividing groups of workers, and that racism injures and exploits the entire working class.

PL stayed vital and relevant because Milt and other comrades refused to shrink from struggle or to compromise our communist politics to make expedient alliances. The Party stood apart from others parading as "left" groups; Milt called that separation "glorious." He knew that our unity, first and last, must be with the working class.

Over decades of action and analysis, the Party was built by Milt and by people he directly influenced and developed. They steered PL to its early growth amid the opportunities of mass movements and the threats of government attacks. Then they kept us on course through the "dark night" of rising fascism. As Milt noted in "Jailbreak," his down-to-earth booklet on dialectics, "We must be able to combine urgency with patience."

The Progressive Labor Party is now growing on five continents. It continues to sharpen its practice and its political line to overthrow capitalism and

build a communist future. That struggle endures today. It is PL's living history, and Milt's legacy to all of us.

Milt Meets Stalin

Milt's first brush with the enormous power of communist ideas came as a 17-year-old soldier (he had lied about his age) in Italy in World War II. Each morning he would see a name in fresh red paint on the buildings' walls: "STALIN." The anti-fascist partisans, knowing they risked execution if caught, had come out at night with their paint cans to raise morale.

After the war in Italy ended, Milt, now a sergeant, was in charge of a motor pool. His unit was ordered to break strikes led by communist resistance fighters, the soldiers' former allies. Milt led "search-and-avoid" missions, as they later became known in the Vietnam War. His troops would board the trucks and set off, but they never found a strike. Instead they'd get "lost" on the winding mountain roads.

In and Out of the CPUSA

After returning home to Brooklyn from the Army, Milt joined the Jewish War Veterans, the first of many mass movements he would enter. Influenced by his future wife, Harriet, he then joined the Communist Party of the United States.

In the 1950s, Milt went to Buffalo, New York, to organize fellow workers at a steel mill. He soon became a local union leader. Citing the mill's status as a "war plant," management said they had to fire Milt because he was a communist — otherwise, they said, they'd lose their government contracts. They gave each worker a letter stating they were sure Milt would "want" to be fired rather than cost everyone else their jobs. As the workers came off shift, they walked past a fire in a steel barrel and dropped their letters into the flames. As a result of their unity and struggle, Milt got "unfired."

Milt rose to become the CP's leader in Erie County, centered in Buffalo, a platform he used to advance the politics that ultimately created PL. In 1957, when the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) brought its witch hunt to Buffalo to destroy communist influence among industrial workers, Milt and Mort Scheer (later the vice-chairperson of PLP) led the charge against it. They turned HUAC's hearings into a political battleground. Rather than hiding behind the Fifth Amendment, which the CP used to avoid "self-incrimination," comrades in Milt's collective proudly espoused their communist beliefs and attacked the committee's fascist inquisitions. Meanwhile, Milt and Mort organized mass demonstrations outside the hearings and marshalled mass support. HUAC fled town, discredited. Milt was both teaching and learning a valuable

lesson: that communists must fight back against fascism, no matter what the risks.

The industrial work in Buffalo became both PL's foundation stone and Milt's point of departure from the old Communist Party. By the late 1950s, in retreat from McCarthyism, the CPUSA had abandoned any effort to organize the working class for revolution. It hid its most advanced ideas from workers and plunged into the sewer of electoral politics, running its own candidates and supporting "lesser-evil" liberals for office. Socialism, the CPUSA leaders declared, could be achieved by reforming capitalism. On the international stage, they joined with fellow revisionists in the Soviet Union in calling for "peaceful coexistence" with the U.S. and its capitalist bloc — an impossible strategy, given the fight-to-the-death reality of imperialism.

By contrast, Milt (by then the CP's industrial organizer for New York State) defied the old party's directives and openly called for communism and the need for mass, violent revolution to achieve it. He and his comrades saw that the future of communism lay in negating the old movement — in preserving its progressive elements while discarding what had become outworn or harmful. In January 1962, they published the first issue of a monthly magazine called "Progressive Labor." In July of that year, in a meeting at the Hotel Diplomat in New York City, they formally broke with the CPUSA and established a new Marxist-Leninist organization called the Progressive Labor Movement, or PLM.

Others split with the CPUSA around the same time, over essentially the same ideological disagreements. One new group, Hammer and Steel, had 500 members; PLM began with 12. Yet our movement grew while the others all dwindled away. Why were we different? PLM's strategy, as originally put forward by Milt, was to turn away from the organization that had given it birth. Milt could see dialectically that the old CP had reached the end of its historical process.

While Hammer and Steel tried to pull the CPUSA to the left, a hopeless and sectarian pursuit, PLM reached out to non-communist workers and students and led them in militant class struggles. The wisdom of that strategy soon became obvious.

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Founding Chairperson of PLP, Great 20th Century Revolutionary

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The Hazard, Kentucky Miners

In one of its first mass activities, PLM stood behind 500 wildcatting, armed coal miners in Hazard, Kentucky, who were locked in an all-out war with the coal barons to win decent conditions and wages. Milt convinced one PLM member, a railroad worker and local union president, to take two weeks off to mobilize solidarity for this fight. Out of this was born the Trade Union Committee to Support the Hazard Miners. A relief campaign raised critical funds and sent truckloads of food and clothing to the strikers. When the miners' rank-and-file leader came to New York City, PLM organized a mass meeting of a thousand people to hear him.

Milt saw the need to highlight the role of industrial workers as a crucial force for revolution. PLM made the Hazard strike a national cause. For the ruling class, it was an equation for big trouble: wildcatting strikers + armed violence against the bosses + communist ideas. Reformist forces moved into the Committee to seize its leadership and destroy it, but not before countless workers and students came to see the world with new consciousness.

As Mao said, "To be attacked by the enemy is a good thing." Milt was not discouraged. He realized that we couldn't control the content or ultimate direction of reform movements. Our power came from expressing our revolutionary ideas within these groups and winning workers to communism.

The Struggle Against Revisionism

In October 1963, before PLM's National Coordinating Committee, Milt delivered a comprehensive report on the fight against fake Marxism, or revisionism. After months of discussion, the report was published in March 1964 as "Road to Revolution." A devastating ideological assault upon the old communist movement, it begins:

"Two paths are open to the workers of any given country. One is the path of resolute class struggle; the other is the path of accommodation, collaboration. The first leads to state power for the workers, which will end exploitation. The other means rule by a small ruling class which continues oppression, wide-scale poverty, cultural and moral decay and war."

PLM and the Anti-War Movement

As of early 1964, active opposition to the growing U.S. war in Vietnam was limited to a few pacifist groups. PLM chose to break through the existing limits and organize a militant, anti-imperialist movement to demand immediate U.S. withdrawal. In March of that year, Comrade Milt sat on a panel at Yale University with representatives of supposedly left organizations, most of them Trotskyite. The panelists were arguing heatedly about "democracy" in Cuba when Milt changed the subject in his characteristic style: "You guys are full of shit. We should be talking about building a movement against the war in Vietnam. Our organization, the Progressive Labor Movement, is doing just that."

While Milt acknowledged the critical importance of theory, he always taught that practice was primary. That conference was a case in point. Before an audience of more than 500 students and faculty, he focused on the Vietnamese revolution and the efforts of U.S. imperialism to crush it — and what we could do to help the Vietnamese working class fight back.

Milt electrified the crowd. When he proposed a nationwide mobilization to protest U.S. aggression in Vietnam, the conference overwhelmingly voted its approval.

On May 2, 1964, under PLM's leadership, the first major demonstrations against the Vietnam War were staged in cities around the country. In New York, one thousand people attended a rally at 110th St. and Central Park West, where they heard PLM speeches about the necessity of communist revolution. Breaking a police ban on demonstrations in midtown Manhattan, the marchers wound through Times Square to the United Nations for a second rally.

To sustain its fight against the Vietnam War along with students and other non-communists, PLM founded the May 2nd Movement and built chapters on a number of college campuses. As the war expanded, liberals and fake leftists grabbed the leadership of the broadening anti-war movement. Even so, our anti-imperialist politics and militant leadership led to a period of rapid growth for PLM on campuses nationwide. More young people were drawn to our organization when we broke the U.S. government's travel ban on Cuba and brought 134 students there over the summers of 1963 and 1964.

CHALLENGE-DESAFIO

In June 1964, PLM began publishing CHALLENGE-DESAFIO. At a time when bilingual publications were unheard of, and despite our organization's small size and limited funds, Milt fought for a paper in both English and Spanish. We had no choice, he said; we had to make communism available to the many New York workers from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and elsewhere who spoke mainly Spanish.

As our movement expanded into Chicago and Southern California, which had large numbers of workers from Mexico and Central and South America, an English/Spanish newspaper became even more important to organize workers for communism on a multiracial, internationalist basis. Years later, DESAFIO would also pave the way for our work in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Fighting Racism

From its very beginning, Milt led the struggle within PL to see racism as the ruling class's primary tool to divide workers. He helped us understand how the capitalists' racist ideology poisons every facet of workers' lives, from unemployment to police terror to the eugenic pseudo-science pushed on college campuses. Given this analysis, it became clear that the key to communist revolution was to build a mass, multiracial, anti-racist movement. PL could not lead the working class without masses of black and Latino workers and youth as members and leaders.

"POLICE WAR ON HARLEM" was the front-page headline of the first issue of CHALLENGE, over a photo of a man who had been beaten by a cop's billy club. The article described the growing anger that would lead to the Harlem Rebellion one month later, when the police shot 15-year-old James Powell in the back, killing him.

New York's mayor placed Harlem under virtual martial law, and more than eighty "left" and civil rights groups agreed not to demonstrate. Milt had a different idea. He proposed that PLM print thousands of posters: "Wanted for Murder, Gilligan the Cop." They became the anti-racist flags of Harlem residents in their struggle against police brutality.

When PLM members stepped out of their Harlem clubhouse to start a march, they were immediately arrested. One leader was charged with "sedition" for "attempting to overthrow the State of New York," and faced up to 20 years in prison. Others were rounded up in predawn raids and jailed for contempt of court after refusing to testify. Even the printers who produced the Gilligan posters were jailed! Nothing scares the capitalists more than multiracial unity under communist leadership, and they were quick to suspend their so-called "freedoms" to squash us. But the bosses' legal terror backfired. As a result of its activity in Harlem, PLM gained respect among black workers throughout the country.

Throughout this inspiring period, Milt helped to give our members the confidence to "dare to struggle, dare to win." He understood that the main threat to a communist movement was not ruling-class terror, but our own timidity.

From Movement to Party

In April 1965, two hundred comrades met in New York and took a bold step forward: the founding convention of the Progressive Labor Party (PLP). The transformation from a movement to a party signified greater unity over our politics, greater trust and confidence in our members and the working class, and greater commitment to organizing for communist revolution.

WANTED FOR MURDER



The PL poster that rocked New York

Milt was chosen as the first chairperson of PL because he was unafraid of struggle. He'd led the internal fight that transformed the Buffalo CP into a red force, in sharp contrast to the CP's national leadership and its accommodation to capitalism. PLM was born out of that internal struggle, as was Milt's analysis in "Road to Revolution." Milt himself had been steeled in class struggle, from his experiences in World War II to his vanguard communist work in Buffalo's steel industry.

Work in Mass Organizations

Following the massive Washington anti-war rally in the spring of 1965, Milt saw that Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) had grown into the center of radical student politics. He proposed that the May 2nd Movement be dissolved and that our student members move into SDS, which had potential for far greater growth. Some PLM members felt comfortable in M2M, and fought against this change. Some even left our organization when their view did not prevail.

This internal struggle was an early battle over the need to work in mass organizations, which are invariably led by the ruling class. Despite their limits, these groups connect communists to large numbers of workers and students. They allow us to bring our revolutionary ideas to people even as we fight alongside them for reforms. From the beginning of our movement, Milt was a firm advocate for working in unions, community groups, churches, and academic organizations.

From 1966 to 1968, PL would do its largest-scale political organizing among students. We recruited hundreds of members by building the Worker Student Alliance, which became the majority caucus within SDS. Many of those students joined the Party, and Milt led the push to send large numbers into the factories, where our work continues today. We also organized students to waive their deferments, enter the draft, and join the military to build our movement there. With three U.S. imperialist wars now raging, that work is more important than ever. As Milt liked to say, "You've got to be in it to win it."

continued on page 8

Racism In S.F. Transit, Driven By Capitalism; Muni Workers Fight Back

SAN FRANCISCO, July 16 — Once again, the San Francisco mass transit (Muni) drivers are leading Bay area workers in class war. For a second time they rejected a give-back contract with a resounding two-to-one vote, 994 to 488. These NO votes show the potential for Muni drivers to stick together and act in their class interest, a terrifying possibility for corporate San Francisco.

Drivers' vote defied the combined forces of the city's labor leaders, the Democratic political elite, and San Francisco's downtown big business interests. Labor leaders publicly denounced the drivers. Meanwhile, local billionaires campaigned against city worker pensions (*Fortune Magazine*, 6/13).

Corporate money passed a City Charter amendment, Proposition G, which specifically attacked the drivers' salary formula as the way to "fix Muni." Muni management boasted that it would save \$41 million from union concessions. Corporate-controlled media promoted vicious, anti-working-class lies, many of them coded against black and immigrant drivers. All of these forces joined the standard fascist chorus: "We need shared sacrifice."

Pushing the fraudulent ideology of all-class unity, the leadership of Transit Workers Union (TWU) Local 250A had recommended the contract package as a "win-win." Here is what the workers are slated to "win": a pay freeze, big cuts in full-time jobs and transit service, reintroduction of part-time work, and the weakening of worker rights to allow speedy firing.

On June 13, an "independent" arbitrator used Proposition G to shove the rejected contract down the drivers' throats. The arbitrator had the full backing from the union leadership, which worked to sabotage any real strike preparations.

The media attacks fueled intense anger and resistance among the TWU membership. Many members devoted their time and energy to turn

out the NO vote, hoping that the credible threat of a strike would make management back down. Activists forced the leadership to call a strike authorization vote and passed a resolution against binding arbitration.

As many rank-and-file leaders now recognize, a NO vote is not enough. With workers now saddled with the contract, new debates are raging: Can we really do job actions or strike independent of the union? Will the courts save us from Prop G? How can we mobilize to overcome our fears and divisions? How do we unite with passengers and other Bay Area transit workers to make this a class war against corporate San Francisco?

Despite the threat of firing and other reprisals, activists see the need for militancy and tighter organization within the membership. When the union is siding with the bosses, workers cannot afford to wait for an official go-ahead to sanction their next move.

Muni workers need to unite in mass strikes and demonstrations with working-class passengers. Local 250A's path of legal action — playing the bosses' game by the bosses' rules — is a dead end. Communist leadership is needed to fight for workers' power and to get off the reform politics treadmill, where bosses will always be free to take back the crumbs won in yesterday's struggles.

'Shared Sacrifice' Is Coded Racial Scapegoating

Presently, Muni drivers are 80% black, Latino, and Asian, many of them immigrants. Since the 1980's, growing numbers are single parents, most of them women.

Racism and sexism have always lain at the heart of Muni contract negotiations and city elections. As one driver with relatives in the South told CHALLENGE, "Racism is worse here than I ever

experienced in Alabama." As the driver noted, it has made no difference that departing executive director Nate Ford (who's leaving with a \$384,000 severance package) is black. During the recent negotiations, Ford was part of the management team that spent \$100,000 on a PR firm to leak stories that attacked drivers. This created a hostile, racist, anti-worker atmosphere where passengers complained that some drivers were "rude" and "overpaid" and "don't even speak English."

The new Muni contract neatly dovetails many aspects of racism. The transit agency plans to bring in part-time drivers to eliminate up to 7.5% of full-time jobs and cut the pay of current drivers. Muni used to offer jobs where black, Latino, Asian and immigrant youth could move up the economic ladder. Now incoming workers will face full-time bills with part-time pay. This system forces them to accept these conditions with a gun to their head; their alternative is unemployment. Meanwhile, service cuts targeting mid-day and off-hour transit fall hardest on those with the lowest incomes, another example of institutionalized racism. Poorer, geographically-isolated neighborhoods are sacrificed to bolster rush hour "trunk" lines leading to downtown businesses. Profits, as always under capitalism, come first.

Muni management, like all servants of the capitalist class, works overtime to divide workers with racism. In the short term, this strategy gives the bosses the cover they need to destroy the drivers' standard of living and impose inequitable service cuts. Over the long haul, it's an essential tool for the rulers to maintain an economic system based on social control and profits for the few. Reform victories cannot change that fundamental system. We need a communist revolution to replace capitalism with a society run by and for the working class, where mass transit will take all workers where they need to go. ☺

Step-by-Step: Workers Battle Bosses' Fascist Attacks with PL's Politics

When change is gradual we sometimes can't see it. To others who've been watching all along the change is obvious. Over several years fascism in health care has slowly taken shape in Chicago and those of us in the middle of it sometimes aren't struck by the changes. The gradual dwindling of staff as more and more uninsured workers show up at the County Hospital, the scores of tiny cuts in supplies, services and support, the steady increase in video surveillance cameras, police presence, swipe cards that track workers as we go about the day's work — then we wake up one morning and think, "So this is what fascism looks like!"

As reported in CHALLENGE some of the more in-your-face Nazi-style attacks have been impossible not to notice. When the administrators decided to kick the respirator patients out of the chronic care unit which they had slated for closure, health workers fought back. We organized a loud demonstration at the front door of Stroger Cook County Hospital. When the County bosses cut the WIC program, taking milk out of the mouths of babies, we were there to call them out. When they made plans to demand cash co-pays for clinic visits from patients who couldn't afford bus fare, we organized our co-workers to protest at their Board meeting.

In all this what we didn't see was a greater openness to communist ideas. Hospital workers who have been getting out a few dozen CHALLENGEs most issues for years were surprised when PLP Chicago Summer Project participants from out of town held a picket line and sold 200 CHALLENGEs outside Stroger in just over an hour. At one point a bullhorn speaker explained how the inevitable oil wars caused by the capitalist system drained all the money out of the bosses' government coffers, leaving hospitals, schools, housing, transportation — everything workers need — to fall apart. This led into a chant, "The only solution is communist revolution!" Patients who had grown frustrated and angry waiting for hours to be seen in the ER joined in the picket as it passed the Emergency entrance and took up the chant like veteran comrades: "The only solution is communist revolution!"

Of course getting the paper into the hands of 200 new readers and collecting a few new contacts and phone numbers does not make a revolution. But it is a step in the right direction. More important, maybe, is that it provides a wake-up call to some of us who have been looking at this situation so long that we didn't really see one side of it. The fear is mixed with anger, lots of it, maybe even more in patients and their families than in the staff. We need to ramp up our work among patients and strengthen ties between patients and staff so we can join forces against the Chicago rulers who are hell-bent on destroying public health.

Veteran Hospital Worker

PLP Builds Class Consciousness Call for Strike to Battle D.C. Bosses, Union Hacks

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The battle against the Metro transit bosses and sell-out union leaders is heating up. PLP members at Metro used a union-called town hall meeting for workers and riders "to get input" to expose the sellouts and have radical conversations with fellow workers about the need for communist revolution.

Party members testified that a strike at Metro would help all D.C. area workers, including Metro riders, resist today's racist offensive against workers. Those statements from both Metro workers and riders got the loudest applause of the meeting, and helped build an attitude of rebellion that opens the door for building the PLP at Metro and throughout the community.

Although support for a strike to resolve our contract dispute is wide spread among riders and drivers, the union leadership is strongly opposed to any work action by members of ATU (Amalgamated Transit Union) Local 689.

Since strikes by transit workers in D.C. are illegal under the bosses' laws, the union president is afraid to lead a strike. She fears it would bankrupt the union and she would wind up in jail. Without a plan to win a strike, many workers are afraid of losing their jobs if it fails.

Many workers have illusions about what a strike can accomplish. Some believe that if we strike, the bosses will be on their knees begging us to come back to work. This is an unlikely scenario. They will try to hit us hard, and we must be prepared to hit back!

PLP's job is to help people overcome their fears of a strike as well as give a realistic estimate of what it takes to advance our interests under current conditions.

fear of striking is having a party organization which has the support of the workers and a plan to move forward. Most of the groundwork for this has been done. Now it is time to consolidate this base into the Party by helping our brothers and sisters gain a clear vision of a lifetime struggle to destroy capitalism and replace it with OUR power, workers' power.

A strike will not end the bosses' domination of us, but a strike can give us good training in how to fight. Workers are terminated all the time without just cause at Metro. There is no reason to expect Metro would not attempt to continue these policies during a strike. The difference is that we will be fighting back in a mass way to advance our goals. Through sharper struggle against the bosses, we will be able to see the need to build a new kind of society where workers collectively run things — communism — so that we can get off the treadmill of constant attacks from bosses.

For a strike to be successful, strengthen the union, and build greater class consciousness, the racist divisions that exist in our union must be overcome. Black, Latino, Asian, and white workers standing side by side in a fight against the bosses will be a strong signal of our ability to win against the bosses in the long run.

Part of helping workers overcome their

www.plp.org

Client-Worker Unity Vital Step Towards Revolution

EAST ORANGE, NJ, July 12 — “Can’t you see what they are doing to us? Listen to these people we need to start fighting back,” yelled an angry black worker standing in line to collect his monthly welfare check. He was one of hundreds exposed to PLP’s ideas as we organized over 30 students and workers to rally in front of the Essex County Development Center.

Racist Cutbacks and Unemployment

As the ruling class continues to spend more money on imperialist wars across the globe, the working class is facing more and more cuts. A recent study by Brown University put the cost of “post 9/11” wars at around \$4 trillion.¹ Meanwhile 300 General Assistance (GA) clients lost their Emergency Assistance benefits. Thousands had their “benefits” suspended without notice (while still eligible) pending state review. Even those that do get GA get only \$140 a month!

While the bosses talk about unemployment being at 9.5% in NJ, that number is at least doubled for the mostly black and Latino workers of Essex County. In Newark it is over 20%. This is why PLP calls it racist unemployment. While it hurts all workers, it is always worse for black, latin and immigrant workers.

Meanwhile, the Democrat controlled State Legislature voted to force thousands of public employees to pay huge increases in their pension and health care coverage contributions.

While the workers and their clients real interests are to unite against the bosses’ tremendous attacks, many are motivated by a lack of class-consciousness and see

¹ <http://news.brown.edu/pressreleases/2011/06/warcosts>

the person on the other side of the glass as the enemy rather than the bosses who profit. This is not a coincidence. The capitalists spend billions promoting racist, anti-working class ideology so that workers don’t see who their real allies are.

Workers welcome CHALLENGE and PLP

As we sold CHALLENGE to the workers waiting to get into the building, it was clear from their comments that they saw the Republicans and Democrats as no more than attack dogs for the bankers, bondholders, and billionaires who are profiting from this. Last year alone, the banks received almost \$3 billion.

PLP showed that, besides just attacking the Republicans and Democrats, we must smash capitalism, the main cause for these attacks. We exposed the racist cutbacks and called for clients and workers to unite as the first step towards building a communist revolution. Many of the workers eagerly took CHALLENGE. As the crowd got more and more energized, the cops tried to stop our rally but with no success. One woman came running out saying, “[The cops] wouldn’t let a guy in because he had one of your newspapers. They made him throw it out. But they didn’t see mine cause I put it in the pile of other papers.” After she said that the workers on the line folded up their papers and put it in their pockets so they wouldn’t get taken away.

Many workers also left their contact information and urged us to keep in touch. This has given us a chance to build a base amongst the many unemployed workers here in NJ. Through base building and class struggle our aim is to win many of these workers to be leaders in our party.

Parents Resist Demolition of Community Library

“It’s disgusting,” said a Whittier mother of the Chicago Public Schools’ (CPS) latest attempt to demolish the community center and library known as “La Casita.” Last fall, the Whittier parents kept the building open with a heroic and grueling 43-day sit-in. After following all CPS stipulations on how to keep the center open, La Casita parents were surprised when demolition workers showed up with permits. This shows that no matter how hard workers fight, the bosses will lie, cheat and steal to get what they want. Regardless, the parents quickly jumped into action to stop the CPS demolition.

The next day, with the demolition crew scheduled to arrive at 6 AM., the Whittier parents, with support from the community, mobilized 60 workers, teachers and students to begin a new sit-in. Only one demolition worker showed up at 6:30 AM, scouting the area to check on the protest. A PLP member and a La Casita mother attempted to win this worker’s support. He refused. With true working-class solidarity, the Whittier mother gave the worker her phone number, saying that while the bosses aren’t coming for your neighborhood now, they will be soon, and we can help.

At 7:45 AM, the Chicago KKKops blocked off all roads leading into La Casita. In response to this fascist attack, PLP members and allies went door-to-door in the neighborhood informing residents about the situation, trying to get them involved in the fight-back. This made many sit-in’ers feel more confident that no matter what CPS and the KKKops did, we would respond.

At the heart of this struggle are the CPS’ lies. They planned to build a library in the adjacent school by cutting in half two classrooms that are already overcrowded, with 30 or more students. Additionally, this second-floor library would be inaccessible to handicapped students since the school has no elevator. A CPS spokesperson pretended to care about the students’ well-being, saying it doesn’t make sense to have services outside the school. Yet CPS refuses to renovate the school “cafeteria” where students eat in a basement with sewage water running on the ground.

The mass media has helped to spread pro-CPS distortions, stating, “Parents protest construction of library” without giving the parents’ side of the story. However, it makes sense that the bosses’ media would further the bosses’ interests against the working class.

PLP will continue to lead, and be led by, the valiant parents of La Casita in order to save the center from demolition. Yet we must fight the cause of this and all working-class struggles: capitalism. To do this, we ask La Casita parents and friends to join PLP to fight for a communist revolution. Only with a communist victory in that battle will workers be able to breathe easy, without the bosses’ (like those in CPS) boot on our necks.☺

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

Voters don’t decide national policy

NYT, 7/16 — To the editor: With regard to China’s slow move to copy western democracy, one has to look with the impartial eyes of the outsider as to exactly what this democracy has degenerated into. The Anglo-Saxon countries in particular have eroded the democratic concept of choice to create a Henry Ford system, where you can have any colour of governing party provided it is the same — the same monetarist economic policy, the same retreat from social welfare...the same two-speed systems of education, health and pension policies. We have no choice, but we have the right to vote.

Worker anger broad, aims narrow

NYT, 7/1 — Joining a growing wave of unrest in Europe over government austerity measures, tens of thousands of British teachers and public-sector workers walked off their jobs on Thursday to protest proposed changes to their pension plans.

More than 10,000 schools were affected by the strikes, as were universities, Social Security offices, courtrooms, airport customs desks and other government operations, Union officials warned that the strike could be the first of a series of walkouts here in the next few months, reflecting growing unhappiness over layoffs, salary freezes, tax increases... and a persistently sluggish economy.

....Around Europe, workers are feeling the same way....Irish and Portuguese governments have been voted out of office....Greece has been convulsed with riots as residents reacted with fury to its harsh austerity package....Britain’s....Labour

[Party], aware that too close an association with unions has worked against it in the past, tried to walk a fine line on Thursday, sympathizing with the workers’ grievances while saying they should not have gone on strike.

U.S. blocks workers’ will in Haiti

GW, 7/8 — ...In June 2009 the Haitian parliament unanimously passed a law that would raise the minimum wage to \$5 a day. Given Haiti’s endemic poverty and brittle democratic culture, the fact that an elected parliament could pass a law that would earn such popular support was encouraging.

The U.S. thought otherwise....[They] lobbied alongside the factory owners, including contractors for some of the priciest jeans and underwear in the west, to force the 60 cents an hour rate in the poorest nation in the western hemisphere even lower.

They pressured the former Haitian president, Rene Preval, to undermine the popular democratic will in the interests of greater profits for garment manufacturers until he created [a] two-tier minimum wage with workers in the textile industry getting just \$3 a day.

Two years later, during presidential elections, the U.S. was back, interfering even as it preached democracy and good governance....

Why vote if real power resides beyond democratic control?...Increasingly it is global economics that shapes the narrative.

Life extra tough if no medical Plan

NYT, 7/7 — When poor people are given medical insurance, they not only find regular doctors and see doctors more often but they also feel better, are less depressed and are better able to maintain financial stability, according to a new, large-scale study that provides the first rigorously controlled



assessment....

While the findings may seem obvious, health economists....and other researchers said the study was historic and would be cited for years to come, shaping healthcare debates....

The study found that those with insurance... were 40 percent less likely to borrow money or fail to pay other bills because they had to pay medical bills.... “Being uninsured is incredibly stressful from a financial perspective, a psychological perspective, and a physical perspective.”....

Capitalist world keeps slavery alive

NYT, 7/2 — Anyone who thinks slavery ended with the 13th Amendment is not paying attention. According to the latest State Department statistics, as many as 100,000 people in the U.S. are in bondage and perhaps 27 million people worldwide. The numbers are staggering.

These victims of human trafficking are vulnerable men, women or children coerced into servitude for sex or labor. They might be transported from Russia to Europe, from the Philippines to Dubai, or held in their hometown.

Comrade Milt Rosen: Great Revolutionary

continued from page 5

Turning the Tables on HUAC

In the summer of 1966, the House Un-American Activities Committee launched an investigation of "subversive activities" in the movement against the Vietnam War. They subpoenaed the movement's leaders, including five student members of PL. Comrade Milt and other Party leaders and members seized the opportunity to mobilize 800 people to pack the Washington, D.C. hearing room, disrupt the proceedings, and demonstrate outside Congress. Some were arrested, and at least one student joined PL while in jail.

Once again, our comrades openly advocated communism when questioned by the Committee. We "took the offensive and exposed the racist HUAC members for the Nazis that they are," as Milt wrote. We turned the hearings into an attack on capitalism and on the liberal Johnson Administration, accusing it of mass murder in Vietnam and racist policies at home. Those hearings were a major step toward the abolition of HUAC.

"Build a Base in the Working Class"

At our 1968 Party convention, Milt gave a speech that was subsequently published as one of the Party's most durably important statements. "Build a Base in the Working Class" advanced the necessity to develop close ties with industrial workers, on and off the job, and to immerse ourselves in their lives. In this way, a party could be built from tens to hundreds to thousands — eventually to a mass party of millions, capable of seizing state power from the rotten capitalist class. Milt's vision was the polar opposite of the bosses' vicious caricature of communists as isolated terrorists.

Milt's analysis linked selfishness and individualism to revisionism, anti-communism, and lack of confidence in the masses. It advocated "serving the people" through a long-range outlook and a lifelong commitment to fighting for communism. It stressed the need for collectivity and for criticism and, especially, self-criticism.

"I believe that all the weaknesses displayed by party members are also exhibited by myself," Milt said. "Even after 22 years of trying to help build a revolutionary movement, I believe that one of my main motives still is self-serving. That is, I do my work more to satisfy something within me than to serve the people. Nonetheless, I would say that the biggest reason that I have been able to do the little I still do...is that I really believe the working people will, eventually, defeat imperialism."

With PL members worldwide doing communist work within mass organizations, it would be useful to study this speech in our Party clubs and study groups, and to spread its ideas to workers and students with whom we are involved in class struggles.

Road to Revolution IV

In 1982, after a year of discussion within PL and its base, Milt led the struggle to adopt "Road to Revolution IV" as the political line of the Party. RRIV analyzed the return to capitalism in the Soviet Union and China. It concluded that fighting for socialism as a preliminary stage before communism — a core principle of the international communist movement since Karl Marx — was fatally incorrect. This theory had led inexorably to a reversal of all the gains from the heroic struggles of millions of workers. RRIV, by contrast, called for winning the working class to fight directly for a communist society. This was a qualitative leap for PL and for the international working class.

Great Revolutionary Leadership

Milt Rosen, through his leadership of the Progressive Labor Party, made ground breaking contributions to an international movement that began with the Communist Manifesto of 1848. Marx and Engels showed how capitalism exploits the working class — and how the capitalists will be destroyed by the workers they have brutalized. Lenin organized the communist party that led to the first



Harlem rebels marching with PL poster and CHALLENGE.

seizure of power by the working class in the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Stalin consolidated workers' power in the Soviet Union, and led the proletariat to smash the Nazis in World War II. In 1949, Mao advanced the concept of a people's war with a mass base to overthrow the U.S.-backed fascist regime in the Chinese revolution.

As another link in this historical chain, Milt was the first to expose the weaknesses of socialism as a halfway house back to capitalism. Where Lenin, Stalin and Mao had viewed nationalism as a stepping stone toward communism, Milt was the architect of a new concept: one international working class with one international communist party, leading workers directly to communism. Milt clarified the contradiction between reform and revolution, and how communists must function as revolutionaries within the reform movement. And it was Milt who led the fight against the "cult of the individual," showing how it prevented workers from becoming communist leaders and thinkers.

'No Chairperson for Life'

Milt believed that the only way our Party could grow was to constantly train new leaders, especially black, Latino, and women comrades. Milt believed that fighting both racism and sexism was an integral part of the class struggle, and he ensured that much of the Party leadership would be in the hands of women. One of the Party's early militant struggles grew out of its organization of mothers on welfare, who united with welfare workers to demand services for their children. As the Party immersed itself in class struggles in the garment districts of New York and Los Angeles, in the grape fields of the San Joaquin Valley, and in the Stella D'oro cookie factory in the Bronx, we learned that unity between men and women workers was essential to building our movement.

In all previous communist parties, the chairmen (and virtually all were men) stayed on as party leaders until they died, were too sick to continue, or were thrown out. Milt suggested to our Central

Committee that this was a dangerous practice. Staying on as chair forever implies indispensability, and no individual communist can be indispensable. Therefore, in 1995, Milt stepped aside as Party chairman. He remained active in other ways, in meetings and fund-raising. Communists don't believe in retirement, he said. We contribute as long as we can.

A Communist Forever

After stepping down as Party chair and before becoming too ill to function, Milt continued to make vital contributions to PL and the international movement. Among his most significant lessons was the need to understand the character of our historical period. Shortly after the events of 9/11, he spoke of how he'd underestimated the impact of the old communist movement's demise, and how far it has set back the class struggle. This failing, he pointed out, could lead to one of two devastating errors: false optimism or despair over the formidable difficulties in building a mass communist party. Milt's self-criticism reminded us that the old movement's defeat may have left us in a "dark night," but the working class has lived and fought through dark nights before.

While the end of the old movement was the worst setback we've ever suffered, it isn't the end of history. It's not the end of class struggle. Our Party exists all over the world, and small though it may be, it is growing. With words and by example, Milt taught the vital importance of a long-term outlook. More clearly than most, he knew there were no shortcuts to revolution. He embraced it as the commitment of a lifetime.

More than anything, he taught us never to give up. ☺

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