

U.S. Out of Iraq!

Imperialist Massacre in Najaf

AUGUST 30—As we go to press, an uneasy truce appears to have been established under the auspices of Shi'ite ayatollah al-Sistani between the U.S. occupation forces and the Shi'ite leader Moktada al-Sadr and his Mahdi Army. But Najaf is a shattered city, with up to a thousand dead, and U.S. bombing continues in Sunni Falluja, as the massively armored, brutal, torturing occupation army continues to rape Iraq.

During the past month's military assault by U.S. troops against Najaf, it

was the duty of proletarian forces internationally to offer military defense to the forces of the Mahdi Army against the imperialists' onslaught. This would include acts of solidarity, such as halting U.S. arms shipments through work stoppage actions internationally. There is growing sentiment in the U.S. against the occupation, but American workers have to go beyond that and actively champion the military defense of those fighting the occupation. This will require a struggle against the craven and

pro-imperialist trade-union misleaders who tie the workers to their class enemy.

Despite the insurmountable divide in politics and worldview between ourselves, secular Marxists, and the Islamic fundamentalists around the reactionary Shi'ite leader al-Sadr, in the battle for Najaf the side of the working class was clearly with the Madhi Army. As we wrote in our last article on Iraq, "As revolutionary Marxists, we have a side in the current situation, against the U.S., its allies and Iraqi lackeys.... Insofar as

the forces on the ground in Iraq aim their blows against the imperialist occupiers (including the over 20,000 private mercenaries operating in the country), we call for their military defense against U.S. imperialism. Every blow struck against the imperialist occupiers is a blow struck against the enemy of workers and the oppressed all over the world" ("U.S. Out of Iraq Now!" WV No. 830, 6 August).

Meanwhile, even as the Pentagon *continued on page 14*

Venezuela

U.S. Imperialism's Referendum Ploy Fails

Populist Capitalist Ruler Chávez Prevails

Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez scored a 58 to 42 percent victory over his opponents in the August 15 recall referendum. The recall referendum was the third attempt by the CIA and Venezuela's right-wing bourgeois parties to oust Chávez. In April 2002, they briefly succeeded with a military coup and demonstrated their commitment to "democracy" by dissolving the legislature. This was followed in the winter of 2002-2003 by lockouts and strikes organized by the bosses aimed at crippling the economy. The National Endowment for Democracy, a money-laundering conduit for the CIA, funneled millions of dollars to fund anti-Chávez marches, sabotage land reform projects, disrupt services, and line the pockets of the military officers, police and politicians the CIA favors over the populist Chávez.

Despite the red-scare tactics of the kooks and neocons in the Bush administration, more rational spokesmen for imperialism's interests washed their hands of the three-time losers in Venezuela's opposition and accepted Chávez as a man who could be trusted to protect their investments. Chávez has been able to beat back repeated efforts by the Bush administration and its local agents to topple him by maintaining a strong base of support among the Venezuelan population and



AP photos

Above: Capitalist strongman Hugo Chávez waves to crowds after casting ballot in August 15 referendum. Right: August 12 rally by Washington-backed opposition calls for "Yes" in referendum that sought to oust Chávez.

sections of the armed forces. As opposed to the Venezuelan ruling class, which is overwhelmingly white, racist and hostile to the poor non-white population, Chávez proudly promotes his indigenous and African ancestry. And given the long history of U.S. imperialist incursions into Latin America, propping up murderous right-wing regimes, typically military juntas, Chávez's anti-imperialist posture resonates with much of the population.

Moreover, to a certain degree Chávez has translated his nationalist-populist rhetoric into actual reforms beneficial to

the poor in a country where some 80 percent of the population lives in abject poverty. This ability, however, is largely dependent on the fact that the Venezuelan economy has enjoyed historically high oil prices in the world market over the past couple of years. The oil revenue windfall has allowed the government, for example, to triple the budget for education (according to official figures), increasing school attendance by 25 percent by 2002. Free medical clinics have been established, staffed by more than 17,000 Cuban doctors and dentists, in exchange for cheap



Venezuelan oil exported to Cuba. Faced with the latest effort to oust him via the referendum, Chávez introduced further social reforms, such as free food distribution to the poor as well as nationalizing and distributing unused agricultural land. He also commendably naturalized some 1.2 million desperately poor immigrants, many of them refugees from Colombia, which deepened his political base in the run-up to the referendum.

However, these programs, in themselves quite progressive, are *not* based *continued on page 12*



Jerry Dale Lowe Released from Federal Prison

After close to eleven years in federal prison in Ashland, Kentucky, United Mine Workers (UMWA) militant Jerry Dale Lowe is almost home. He was released in early August to a halfway house in Charleston, West Virginia and can spend two days per week at home with his wife, Lea; he hopes to be a free man in October. He told *Workers Vanguard*: “I just thank everybody for their support and everything they’ve done for us.”

This is indeed a bittersweet homecoming for a fourth-generation union miner who was framed up on federal charges of “interfering with interstate commerce”

stemming from the shooting death of a scab contractor in a bitterly fought seven-month strike in 1993 in Logan County, West Virginia. This strike was part of a disastrous UMWA International ten-month campaign of “selective strikes” which dumped the union’s arsenal of class-struggle tactics.

On 22 July 1993, Lowe, the safety committee chairman of Local 5958, was on picket duty at Arch Mineral’s Ruffner Mine, facing armed thugs from Elite Security, who regularly took shots at the union picket shack and tear-gassed it repeatedly. As a convoy of scabs and



WV Photo

Jerry Dale Lowe with his wife, Lea, before being sent to prison.

goons left the mine, a scab contractor was killed by a bullet to the back of the head—from the direction of the goons of *Elite Security at the mine*.

When West Virginia state officials could find no basis to charge Lowe and seven other union brothers with *anything*, Democratic president Clinton’s Justice Department stepped in with manufactured charges of “conspiracy to interfere with interstate commerce,” even though the scab truck had never been driven out of the state. The seven other men accepted a plea bargain, but Lowe refused to cut a deal with prosecutors who were trying to frame him for the shooting. The prosecutors claimed that the fatal bullet might have come from a pistol that Lowe had owned at one time. *But the court refused to allow evidence that Lowe had sold the gun prior to the shooting!*

Although his local union brothers supported him, the UMWA International tops led by Richard Trumka did not mobilize union power to back Lowe in the courtroom or on the streets. The December 1993 sellout settlement of the strike explicitly excluded amnesty for anyone facing federal charges. Through one rejected appeal after another, Jerry Dale Lowe faced the wrath of the capitalist

state without the support of his union because the UMWA tops and the rest of AFL-CIO officialdom have a policy of pressuring capitalist politicians instead of fighting for their members. As a miner, Lowe should be getting help from his union to find a job right now. But there is no evidence of this happening.

Jerry Dale Lowe’s “crime” was to defend his union, and in a very real way, as the union safety man, he defended the lives and limbs and lungs of his co-workers. It’s no surprise that he was a target in the bitter class battle of 1993. The erosion of working conditions, the loss of union jobs, the rising rate of industrial accidents can all be traced to unanswered attacks on unions and union militants like Lowe.

As a class-war prisoner, Lowe had been the recipient of a modest monthly stipend from the Partisan Defense Committee. And workers in many industries followed his case in *Workers Vanguard* and the Partisan Defense Committee’s *Class-Struggle Defense Notes* and yearned to see him free. Though he should never have spent a day in jail, we are happy that he will be a free man soon.

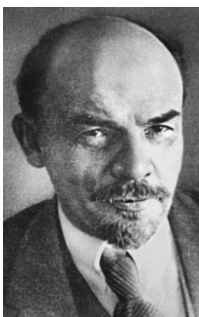
You can write to Jerry Dale Lowe at:
102 Athens Ave.
Charleston, WV 25306-6334



TROTSKY

Black Liberation and the Struggle for Workers Revolution

In a 1933 document entitled “Communism and the Negro” (published by Verso in 2003 under the title Race and Revolution), Max Shachtman, then a Trotskyist leader, powerfully argued that the oppression of black people was a fundamental component of American capitalism and that the working class as a whole could not take power without actively championing the rights of the black masses. Today, we of the Trotskyist Spartacist League raise the call for black



LENIN

liberation through socialist revolution as a central element of our program.

Under the heel of oppression and exploitation which crushes the Negro masses lie also tens of millions of American workers and poor farmers, and additional tens of millions in the colonies and spheres of influence of Wall Street imperialism. For the masses in Latin America, the struggle for liberation from Yankee oppression is bound up by a thousand invisible threads with the movement of the American working class to overthrow the power of its imperialist exploiter. But that movement, in turn, is inseparably connected with the position and interests of the black millions....

It is impossible for the American workers to make any real progress towards freedom without gaining the support of the vast reservoir of strength and militancy constituted by the twelve million black people. This support cannot be gained until the white workers become the most uncompromising champions of the Negro. It depends entirely upon the white proletariat whether the colored masses of America will form a bulwark of reaction or a battering ram of revolution and progress. For if the workers stand out as the unflinching defenders of the Negroes, the latter will put no serious obstacles in the path of cementing an invincible alliance against the ruling class. But if they regard the Negro as their inferiors, if they merely tolerate his assistance, if they try to deal with his burning problems by cowardly half-measures or formal and evasive palliatives, the Negro will rightly turn his back upon the working class as undeserving of his support.

The class struggle in the United States has reached the stage where this unity of the Negro race with the white proletariat and poor farmers is not only possible and necessary, but inevitable. It is our view that the whole past history of the Negro in the United States has brought him inexorably to the position where his daily interests as well as his future in society is tied up with this unity. The conditions of his development in the capitalist order makes it impossible for the Negro to advance any longer by a single step if he relies upon his own resource and efforts. Nor can he progress any farther by allying himself with any section of the ruling class, be it the big capitalists or the small, in the North or the South, or even the capitalistic elements in his own race. His destiny is now connected with only one stratum of society: the working class.

—Max Shachtman, “Communism and the Negro” (1933)

Jaan Laaman Thrown in Solitary for Solidarity with DNC and RNC Protests

Class-war prisoner Jaan Laaman has spent almost two decades behind bars. Like Ray Luc Levasseur, who was recently paroled, Laaman was part of the Ohio 7, leftist activists who were convicted for their role in a radical group that took credit for bank “expropriations” and bombings in the late 1970s and ’80s against symbols of U.S. imperialism such as military and corporate offices. From the standpoint of the working class, the actions of the Ohio 7 against U.S. imperialism and racist injustice are not a crime, and these courageous activists should not have served a day in prison. The Partisan Defense Committee sent the following protest letter on 14 August to the superintendent of MCI Cedar Junction in South Walpole, Massachusetts where Jaan Laaman is imprisoned.

We have learned that class-struggle prisoner Jaan Karl Laaman has been thrown into solitary confinement. It is clear this punishment is a political reprisal for his statement of support to demonstrators opposed to both the Democratic and Republican National Conventions. The Partisan Defense Committee demands the immediate release of Mr. Laaman from solitary confinement.

Just days before protesters marching from Boston to New York rallied outside the Walpole MCI facility, Jaan Laaman was thrown in the “hole.” He had written a statement of solidarity with the marchers in which he reiterated his opposition to the bipartisan war against the peoples of Iraq as well as equally bipartisan war on democratic rights domestically. For exercising his First Amendment right to free speech, Mr. Laaman is subjected to draconian punishment where he was held

incommunicado for over a week and is still locked down in solitary confinement.

It is more than obvious that Mr. Laaman is subject to these onerous conditions because of his political convictions. He remains an outspoken anti-imperialist



Anarchist Black Cross

Jaan Laaman with his son Rick at Leavenworth prison, 1999.

political prisoner who has solidarized with the grievances of black and Latino prisoners. For this he is repeatedly denied transfer from the more repressive section of the prison and has not even been allowed to see his close supporter and fiancée for over a year.

In the eyes of class-conscious workers throughout the world, Jaan Laaman has committed no crime. We demand an end to the persecution of this courageous prisoner as we fight to win the workers movement to struggle for freedom of all class-war prisoners. Again we demand the immediate release from solitary confinement of Jaan Laaman!■

WORKERS VANGUARD

Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League of the U.S.

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On Seniors and the Disabled

7 July 2004

Editor
Workers Vanguard

Could you address the situation of seniors and the disabled? There are many persons like myself living on SSI, and the general opinion is that we must vote for the Democrats since they “protect” our benefits from the Republicans, who would like to abolish the whole thing. How true is this scenario? What are the facts? And what is the revolutionary view for those dependent on capitalist largesse? They give us only an inadequate pittance on which to live, but I don’t hear any “socialists” saying we should get any more—after all, we are not “workers”! What does your party say?

Yours,
Clayton C.C. O’Claerach

WV replies: It is one of the outrages of life in the capitalist United States that impoverished seniors and disabled people—many of whom barely survive on what O’Claerach aptly calls an “inadequate pittance”—live in constant fear of losing even those few, begrudgingly distributed dollars. Last Friday, Fed chairman Alan Greenspan warned of “abrupt and painful” consequences if Social Security and Medicare benefits are not slashed. United Airlines is one of the most recent corporations to announce that it will seek to redress its bankruptcy on the backs of its workers and eliminate its pension plan—the largest pension default ever by a U.S. company. Two years ago, the spectacular meltdown of Enron resulted in 19,000 former employees seeing their jobs and future well-being evaporate.

Such attacks occur not simply because the capitalists are heartless brutes (which they are) but because of the logic of the capitalist system. Pension payments and most health care costs are, from the capitalists’ point of view, unproductive overhead expenses that lower overall profitability. Not only in the U.S. but in Europe and Japan as well, the capitalists are taking the ax to such benefits as part of the drive to increase their competitiveness on the international market.

It may appear that seniors carry a lot of weight since they represent a sizable voting bloc. But both the Democratic and Republican parties represent the capitalist

class and can only serve their interests at the expense of working people and the oppressed. Their differences amount to style and occasional tactics, not fundamental program. George Bush and his cronies give the impression that they find it invigorating and enjoyable to throw poor mothers and their children onto the street—ending the day by clinking champagne glasses with billionaire supporters to whom they promise tax cuts. The Democrats occasionally sigh about how hard it is for them to throw poor mothers and their children onto the street...then do so.

For the coming presidential election, the Republicans and Democrats have been competing for seniors’ votes by tussling over the Medicare “reform” bill passed late last year, which will clearly eliminate much of the meager health coverage that now allows poor seniors to obtain some prescription drugs. John Kerry is exploiting his opposition to this Medicare “reform” by courting seniors through a new organization, “Seniors for Kerry-Edwards,” which highlights the supposedly solid opposition of the Democrats to this increasingly unpopular bill. Yet in fact, Medicare “reform” passed with significant bipartisan support, particularly in the Senate.

The real power to turn back the capitalists’ attacks lies not in the voting booth but in the strength of the working class, whose social power is based on its position in society at the point of production. Gains for the oppressed have always been

won when the labor movement flexes its muscle and fights; this is precisely how Social Security was won in the 1930s. And the working class has a powerful interest in combatting the desperate conditions of poor elderly and disabled people; after all, every worker faces the prospect of old age, and any worker can become disabled. In 1995, the French government’s assault on retirement and health care programs triggered an enormous upsurge in class struggle by public sector workers that for three weeks brought the country to a crawl. As in a number of strikes in the U.S., a central issue in the recent five-month strike by the UFCW against the supermarket bosses in Southern California was defense of medical coverage.

What led to the defeat of those extremely popular strikes was the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy, which kept the strikes isolated and then sold them out. The class collaboration of the workers’ leaders in this country is encapsulated by their support for—and integration into—the Democratic Party. This is the reason the ruling class has largely been able to get away with its vicious war against everybody from unionists to welfare mothers, black people, immigrants, seniors and the disabled. The craven misleaders of the labor movement and assorted reformists push the idea that the working class and oppressed must support the Democrats in order to prevent the Republicans from doing even more horrible things. Such illusions have only



Protesters demonstrate against Medicare “reform.”

Corbis

served to politically disarm the working class, preventing it from making any but the most feeble protest as *both* capitalist parties have made war on it.

Illusions in the Democrats as a “lesser evil” make them if anything *better* (for the bourgeoisie) than the Republicans at driving down the living standards of the working class and oppressed. One of the main “achievements” of the last Democratic administration was the fulfillment of Clinton’s vow to “end welfare as we know it” in 1996, resulting in thousands of poor people being forced into miserably paying “workfare” jobs and eliminating disability payments for large numbers of children as well as immigrants. Clinton also took aim at Social Security, effectively slashing \$17.5 billion in his first year in office by increasing taxes on benefits, later cutting billions from Medicare (see “Feds Loot Social Security,” WV No. 669, 30 May 1997).

We fight for free, quality medical care, housing and a decent standard of living for everybody, including those whose age, illness or physical disability forces them to be dependent on the state (or on younger members of their family). We therefore favor any monetary increase or improvement in benefits that can be wrested from the state. Ultimately, there can and will be no real social security, or end to poverty and unemployment, homelessness and racist oppression except through establishing—through socialist revolution—a planned, collectivized economy governed in the interests of working people. That requires a revolutionary workers party, forged in political struggle against the reformist leaders of the working class.

Just as the vicious mistreatment of the sick, elderly and defenseless graphically demonstrates the depravity of this capitalist system, so would the inclusion of such individuals in a socialist society demonstrate the fundamental decency, as well as rationality, of the world envisioned by Karl Marx. Marx described this future society as one that would be based on the principle “from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.” In other words, he recognized that due to physical differences in human beings, not every individual will be able to work at the same level for the whole of society, but will participate as he or she is able and reap the benefits the socialist society is able in turn to provide. This is the world we want to build, by putting the working class in power around the globe. ■

Solidarity with Palestinian Hunger-Strikers!

The following August 30 letter was sent by the Partisan Defense Committee to the Israeli government.

The Partisan Defense Committee protests the inhumane treatment accorded Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails and insists that the Palestinian hunger-strikers’ urgent demands be granted immediately. Since August 15, over 3,000 Palestinian prisoners, many of whose lives are reportedly in danger, have refused any nourishment other than water. The hunger-strikers are demanding increased access to telephones, a cessation of humiliating strip searches and an end to the severe restrictions on family visits. The hunger-strikers’ demands are so minimal and basic that they demonstrate the desperate quality of their incarceration.

Israeli officials have reacted to the hunger strike with typical racist vin-

dictiveness. Prison staff are reportedly withholding necessary medical care from striking prisoners. Officials have imposed additional sanctions, banning all family visits as well as the sale of cigarettes and candy. Public Security Minister Tzahi Hanegbi vowed not to cede to the hunger-strikers’ demands, declaring that they could “starve to death, as far as I am concerned.”

Conditions in Israeli prisons and detention centers are notoriously cruel and inhuman. Palestinian prisoners are routinely subjected to solitary confinement for extended periods of time, denial of due process, arbitrary and indiscriminate beatings and—openly acknowledged—torture. The Palestinian hunger-strikers’ demands represent a cry of protest against this system of brutal repression, which richly deserves to be brought to an end. **Grant the hunger-strikers’ demands! Free all victims of Zionist state terror!**

American “Boob-oisie”

Austin, Texas
10 June 2004

Dear Editors:

I write to express concern about language used in the article “The Nipple That Shook the Moral Foundation of a Nation,” WV, no. 820, 20 Feb. 2004. The language that concerns me is the following: “...overfed, drunken nuclear families....”

The intention of the article was to criticize bourgeois morality. There is nothing educational about the statement above. It is a gross, elitist insult, nothing more. How can the *Workers Vanguard* hope to win over working-class readers if it flings at them the epithet “overfed” and “drunken.”

The paper states that signed articles do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint of the *Workers Vanguard*. This particular article was unsigned suggesting that the statement *does* express the editorial viewpoint. I certainly hope that this is not the case.

Sincerely,
Robert L. Smale

WV replies: Apologies to svelte and sober workers everywhere. The complete

sentence referred to states: “What H.L. Mencken called the ‘American boob-oisie’ is in full frenzy following the Super Bowl, all because the kids, sitting around family TV sets in the bosom of their overfed, drunken nuclear families, finally got to see something interesting on network TV.” We weren’t referring to workers at all; rather, what the writer had in mind was the “boob-oisie’s” own kids, referencing the stifling hypocrisy of petty-bourgeois families, like the Dursleys in the Harry Potter stories, who self-righteously stuff themselves silly while condemning anything outside their narrow, puritanical world, especially if it’s sexy, like the flash of Janet Jackson’s nipple. Most people in this country do not live in “nuclear families”—that is, the unit of husband/wife and their own kids—and the lower on the economic scale you go, the less likely it is such bourgeois formations exist. Given the huge drop in real wages over the past decades and massive cuts in social services, most everybody we know has to scramble in various messy, non-suburban, non-nuclear ways to get by. ■

Over 1,000 Arrested—Drop All the Charges!

NYC: 500,000 Protest RNC

AUGUST 31—Half a million people marched in New York City in a protest organized by United for Peace and Justice against the “Bush agenda” and the Iraq war and occupation on August 29. This huge march spoke to the anger of millions who are fed up with the lies and cruelty of the Bush administration. Military families, who are usually conservative, marched with photos of their sons and daughters killed in Iraq. A wide spectrum of contingents representing organized labor, AIDS activists, the homeless, fighters for civil rights, women’s rights and socialists mobilized for the protest.

The August 29 protest against the Republican National Convention (RNC) was conceived and carried out as a mobilization for the Democratic Party. The Spartacist League energetically intervened with a counterposed revolutionary alternative. The growing discontent with the vicious gang in the White House should not be squandered by supporting their partners in crime, the Democrats. Our banner reading, “U.S. Out of Iraq! Israel Out of the Occupied Territories! Break with the Democratic Party of War and Racism—For a Workers Party That Fights for Socialist Revolution!” was a magnet that attracted those justly fed up with the shell game of voting every four years for one or another capitalist party to oppress the working people here and worldwide. Our comrades also raised a banner in Central Park, joining others who defied the city’s outrageous ban on rallying there. Spartacist comrades sold over 1,300 newspapers and more than 20 subscriptions.

The police-state tactics against protesters and infringements of everyone’s democratic rights to free speech and assembly are a good indication of how much the government fears the working people and the left. While the right-wing media launched a campaign of hysteria, portraying those who engaged in civil disobedience as “extremists” and, effectively, as “terrorists,” the liberals went out of their way to condemn militant protesters.

The government’s new “red scare” equates dissent with “terrorism,” and treats protesters like the “enemy within.” FBI counterterrorism agents took aim at youth organizers, sniffing around for “possible violence” in advance of protests outside the two capitalist party conventions this summer. Three youth in Missouri are now targets of a domestic terrorism investigation and were subpoenaed to testify before a federal grand jury. To say this “chills” free speech is to liken an iceberg to a popsicle; the Feds are preemptively stopping people from participating in protests before any demonstration, much less any crime, has occurred. Indymedia reports that the Secret Service attempted to snare activists by asking Indymedia’s Web server to provide user connection logs.

As we go to press, over 1,000 demon-

strators have been arrested in protests against the RNC. Many were held for more than a day without recourse to a phone call or a lawyer and penned in a sludge and oil-slicked warehouse on a pier in the Hudson River. Protesters who rappelled down the Plaza Hotel with a banner with the words “Bush” and “Truth” inside arrows pointing in opposite directions face felony charges because a cop chasing them cut himself on a cracked skylight. Nine other protesters arrested

they want to, including trying to ghettoize the rallies on the desolate West Side Highway. Both ANSWER/NCA and UFPI have filed lawsuits seeking to overturn the ban. We say: *Down with the ban on Central Park! Protesters have a right to rally wherever they want!*

A taste of what anti-RNC protesters will be facing was at hand during the protests outside the Democratic National Convention in Boston last month, where the city set up a “free speech zone”—a



WV Photo

Spartacists join others in defying ban on protests in Central Park, August 29.

August 29 face seven years in prison on trumped-up felony assault charges. *Release the RNC protesters! Drop the charges!*

We reprint below an August 21 statement issued by the Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee protesting the ban on demonstrations in Central Park.

* * *

The Republicans are preparing to descend upon New York City to re-nominate George W. Bush as their presidential candidate. The Republican Party—along with the Democratic Party, the other party of war and racism—is responsible for the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq as well as the intensifying war on working people and the oppressed at home. And, so, many people want to protest. In response, New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg’s administration has launched an all-out attack on the fundamental rights of free speech and assembly of those seeking to protest the Republican National Convention (RNC). The city has denied access to the Great Lawn in Central Park to the International ANSWER coalition and the National Council of Arab Americans (NCA), which are planning a demonstration on August 28, and to United for Peace and Justice (UFPI), which is planning a demonstration on August 29. The utterly absurd pretext for the denials is that the grass may get trampled! The city administration has been doing everything to prevent people from protesting where

razor-wire steel cage outside the Fleet Center and under an elevated freeway—which protesters rightly largely ignored. New York City plans to far outdo Boston in state repression. Under the guise of the “war on terror” and in preparation for the RNC, the Bloomberg administration has kept the city in an ongoing state of “code orange,” as cops armed with automatic rifles ominously patrol the subways. The NYPD has openly admitted to infiltrating planning meetings for the anti-RNC protests, and the FBI has been going around interviewing people, particularly targeting anarchists and spreading the vile and dangerous lie that they are “violent.” Now, in an unprecedented move, the city administration has announced its intention to open the sealed records of people whose charges stemming from protest arrests were previously dismissed. The “security” hysteria surrounding the RNC is also aimed at those Democratic Party opponents of the Bush administration who would mobilize in the streets. Through its intimidation tactics, the powers that be are trying to frighten people from protesting against the oddly demented and war-crazed Bush administration. This must be met with a defiant and mass protest against all aspects of the bi-partisan war on working people at home and abroad.

The hysteria surrounding the right to march against the RNC comes in the context of the vicious occupation of Iraq, U.S. imperialism’s “war on terror” and the intensification of government repression following the September 11 attacks. The ANSWER/NCA demonstration is specifically called against the racist and anti-immigrant government attacks on the rights of Arabs and Muslims. As Mara Verheyden-Hilliard, the attorney for ANSWER and NCA, put it at a court hearing on August 20, the city’s claims that the protesters should be content with demonstrating outside Central Park and Manhattan altogether is akin to telling black people that they should not complain about being at the back of the bus and instead be content with being on the bus at all. What became clear at the court hearing is that the city administration is trying to pit ANSWER/NCA against

UFPI, arguing that if forced to grant ANSWER/NCA a permit in Central Park, the city would use this to deny UFPI its permit under the pretext that the rallies are only a day apart. The ANSWER/NCA attorney rightly denounced this despicable maneuver.

From opposition to gay marriage to opposition to giving drivers licenses to undocumented immigrants, the government has been on a campaign to eviscerate everybody’s rights. During an August 17 press conference where Bloomberg cynically welcomed “peaceful protesters” (i.e., those willing to allow themselves to be locked into police pens) with offers of discounts at Applebee’s (!), activists from CODEPINK: Women For Peace were arrested as they attempted to unfurl a banner criticizing Bloomberg for denying demonstrators access to Central Park. Drop the charges now! This is not the first time that the Bloomberg administration has tried to turn the streets of New York into a police state; recall in February 2003 when the administration tried to prevent UFPI from protesting against the then-impending war on Iraq.

Bloomberg stated that free speech is a “privilege” that can be taken away and has vowed to arrest individuals who try to exercise *their rights* and assemble in groups of 20 or more in Central Park. Bloomberg’s actions demonstrate what we Marxists recognize as the class nature of the capitalist state, which exists to defend the interests of the ruling capitalist class against working people and the oppressed. Witness the brutal terror regularly meted out by racist NYPD cops against black people in the ghettos. The “anti-terror” frenzy promoted by Democrats and Republicans alike is in reality aimed at the labor movement and the oppressed. When New York transit workers voted to go on strike in late 2002, the media screamed that they were launching a “jihad” and the strikebreaking Taylor Law was invoked. In a 2003 letter signed by Republican House majority leader Tom DeLay, firefighters who had lost over 300 of their comrades trying to save people in the World Trade Center were declared to be a “clear and present danger to the security of the United States” because they are unionized!

We call on all defenders of free speech, the right to assembly, due process and equal protection under the law to oppose the vicious assaults on the rights of anti-RNC protesters and to demand that ANSWER and UFPI be allowed to rally in Central Park. We of the Spartacist League and the Partisan Defense Committee are stalwart defenders of democratic and labor rights, including the right of a Marxist workers party to organize. The democratic rights under attack today were won through centuries of struggle and revolution—the parliamentary partisans in the English Civil War, the U.S. Revolutionary War, the Great French Revolution, the American Civil War, the pitched labor battles of the 1930s and the mass movement against Jim Crow segregation. What the government wants to get away with is the ability to label any and all political opponents as “violent” or “terrorists”—categories that will provide the state with a license to suspend democratic rights, criminalize political activity and engage in legalized murder. Whatever rights we have under this oppressive capitalist order were won through tumultuous class and social struggle. Our rights must be defended through the struggles of black people, immigrants and defenders of civil liberties welded to the power of the multiracial labor movement. ■



Maisel/Daily News

**August 30:
NYPD brutalizes
anti-RNC
protesters.**

For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution! *How I Became a Revolutionary*

We reprint below an application letter to the Spartacus Youth Group, youth auxiliary of the Spartacist League/Britain, as originally published in *Workers Hammer* No. 188 (Autumn 2004).

WORKERS HAMMER

I first became interested in politics when I was eleven years old. A small anti-abortion group was protesting outside our local hospital because it was the one place within a 60-mile radius where a single doctor performed abortions. Every day they stood opposite the hospital with placards showing pictures of aborted fetuses. I began asking questions and at eleven years old I came to the conclusion that it is a fundamental right for women to have safe access to abortion. I spent the following ten years involved in a myriad of left-wing campaigns, including, but not limited to, working on referendums to ban discrimination against gays in employment; protesting the use of child labour by Wal-Mart manufacturers; advancing the economic rights of single mothers; fighting for the rights of tenants; protesting the economic sanctions against Iraq and protesting the bombing of Iraq in 1998. I threw myself into these campaigns with the passion of someone who wanted to see a better and more just world. Though I was involved in many different campaigns, they all had one significant similarity: they all were based on the belief that one could pressure the government into acting on the side of the poor and oppressed.

Though I had many strong beliefs, I never thought beyond the bounds of capitalism. I grew up in a rural, backward area and people did not talk about socialism. I was only eight when the Berlin Wall fell and East and West Germany were united under capitalism, and was ten during counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. I always thought that the best way to advance social justice was to persuade people to vote for social advancements and put constant pressure on the government to advance the rights of the poor and oppressed. I had not yet been exposed to politics with any other method.

My politics began a significant change when I was studying for a Masters degree in "human rights" at the University of Essex. I quickly became involved in the University Peace Campaign, which was organising protests against the upcoming war against Iraq. I threw myself into this campaign with all of my passion and spent Saturdays leafleting in the town centre to build local demonstrations. We collected donations and support petitions for the striking firefighters, and attempted to mobilise campus protests against top-up fees [additional university tuition charges]. This was the first time I heard people discussing socialism on any remotely serious basis and started for the first time to understand that the nature of capitalism is to maximise profit for the

few by exploiting the labour of the many. I began making the links between capitalism and war, poverty, racism, and women's oppression; however, I did *not* honestly believe it to be possible to either overthrow capitalism or to rebuild an egalitarian society. This is perhaps why I, as did many others, seemed to believe the Stop the War Coalition and the leaders of sundry left-wing political organisations when they put forward the idea that we could stop the war if we all united

faded shortly after I arrived in London. In every direction I could see liberal placards with slogans such as "US—no, UN—yes" and "No war without a second resolution." I was further disappointed and disillusioned when I reached Hyde Park and began listening to the speakers on the stage. I had previously thought that it was a good thing that the Stop the War Coalition was trying to unite everyone who was simply against the war because I was under the impression that once

drop in numbers when, by the middle of the demo, I decided that I would never again attend a demo called by Stop the War because they peddled the illusion that we could sufficiently pressure the government into not going to war by merely marching through the streets. I do not think I was alone when I thought that two million people on the streets of London would prevent the British government from going to war; they went to war despite this and it left me and probably at least a million others feeling completely and utterly disempowered.

I, too, would have stayed home and not bothered to march again had I not encountered the Spartacist League and the Spartacus Youth Group. I had been reading *Workers Vanguard* for a few months and after the March demonstration against the war, I decided to contact the organisation as its revolutionary politics were beginning to become appealing when I realised the utter bankruptcy of reformism. I began meeting with comrades and thinking more seriously about the Soviet Union. I found it initially difficult, as I was too young during the existence of the Soviet Union to understand the significance of its collapse at the time.

At this time my human rights law teacher went to Afghanistan to do a report on the state of women's rights. She returned with nightmarish tales of her research, which was all conducted while she was forced to remain hidden under a full *burka*. She found that it was routine in legal cases for the family of the perpetrator of a crime to hand over their young daughters as property to the victim of the crime as retribution. Girls were routinely stopped on the street and given virginity tests, which lead to a prison term if not passed. The situation for women in Afghanistan at the moment is that of horrific slavery—there is little difference between life under the woman-hating Taliban and under imperialist occupation. The photos from *Workers Vanguard* of women in Afghanistan in the early 1980s during Soviet intervention were significant for me—there were photos of women in modern clothing with rifles slung over their shoulders before going to fight side-by-side with the Soviet army against the *mujahedin*. There were later photos of women in jeans and T-shirts sitting around a table with men at a university studying. Upon discovering that apart from the Spartacist League, all other organisations on the left took the side of the CIA-backed, women-hating, reactionary *mujahedin*, I was disgusted.

The Social Gains of the Bolshevik Revolution

The progressive role that the Soviet Union played in Afghanistan and the fact that most other left organisations sided with reactionary women-hating Islamic fundamentalists first won me over to the distinct politics of the Spartacist League. I began reading more about the Soviet Union and other organisations' line on the topic. Many organisations claim the Soviet Union was not progressive and had some variant form of capitalism. I began doing research for my degree on the state of women in Russia before the 1917 revolution, after the revolution, and after counterrevolution. The findings were shocking and quickly persuaded me that the Soviet Union was progressive for women. The effects of counterrevolution were so devastating for women that it is

continued on page 7



Above: Afghan women reject veil in 1980, as Soviet Red Army intervention opened road to social emancipation. After Soviet withdrawal, women were forced back into oppressive *burka*.



together and marched together with a single demand.

I spent the two weeks before the 15 February demonstration in London called by Stop the War handing out leaflets at my university and in the town centre in an attempt to build the demonstration. Every day I skipped my classes to spend several hours outside in the bitter February cold selling tickets for seats on our coaches to London. I felt an amazing sense of self-gratification when we filled nine coaches bound for London. I thought that if we got two million people on the streets that would be enough to pressure the British government to listen to the people and not to go to war. All sense of gratification

together, more radical politics would be advanced. I was sorely mistaken. The politicians who took the stage advocated the use of the UN, praised the "peace-loving" French bourgeoisie, and resorted to cheap anti-Americanisms, while little was said to denounce the role of British imperialism. I had arrived at the demo feeling optimistic and empowered, and left feeling disillusioned in the dominant left-wing political tendency in Britain and disappointed at the liberal politics put forward at the demo.

Breaking with Liberalism

At this time I was becoming more radical and unequivocally opposed to capitalism, despite not seeing any clear means to dispose of capitalism and rebuild a socialist society. I marched again at the Stop the War Coalition's London demo during March and felt even more disempowered. The war had officially begun against Iraq and the numbers of demonstrators dropped significantly. It went from two million on the streets in February before the start of the war to significantly fewer in March after the bombing had begun. I quickly understood *why* there was such a significant

Reader Says, "Take It Easy on Chomsky"

20 July 2004

Yo Bros—

Take it easy on *Noam Chomsky* [see "Noam Chomsky: The Liberal's 'Anarchist'," *WV* No. 829, 9 July]. Chomsky is *brilliant* at times. We *all* evade dialectical materialism in one

way or another. Chomsky is the lesser of fascist evil and he is open to change, I think. Go after *Sen. Rick Santorum of PA* instead, for example.

Patrick O'Connell

Young Spartacus replies:

Dream on.

Report on Toronto Iraq Demo

"The Whole Damn System's Got to Go!"

The following article is reprinted from Spartacist Canada No. 142 (Fall 2004), newspaper of the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste, Canadian section of the International Communist League.

The June 30 Toronto demonstration against the occupation of Iraq split in two, as long-simmering political animosity between the direct action milieu centered on the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) and the "respectable" left exemplified by the International Socialists

SPARTACIST

CANADA

(I.S.) [affiliated with the British Socialist Workers Party] came to a head. About 400 went with the June 30th Organizing Committee (June 30th OC), which mobilized anti-capitalist youth to "March south to confront war profiteers!", i.e., Canadian corporations. A smaller group of 300 went with the I.S.-dominated Toronto Coalition to Stop the War (TCSW) on one of its standard peace crawls. The Trotskyist League and Spartacus Youth Club organized a contingent for the anti-capitalist march, in sharp contrast to various self-proclaimed Marxist groups who marched with the I.S. and its liberal/social-democratic allies.

The June 30th OC's mobilizing leaflet stated: "We have been standing outside the U.S. Consulate month after month, and believe we need to focus closer to home on Canadian involvement in U.S. policy, and those companies in our midst that are benefiting from the illegal and increasingly horrifying situation in Iraq. Here in Canada, we have a responsibility to do whatever we can to challenge our government and the businesses they support." In contrast, one of the speakers at the mainstream rally began by thanking the cops for "protecting us" and, in continuing, proclaimed that "we" want peace in Iraq, "like in Canada."

The June 30th OC called for protesters to join them at 6 p.m. on a snake march south through downtown to protest Canadian corporations profiting from the war and occupation. TCSW's response was to try to beat them to the punch by marching north early. They tried to seed the demo for this maneuver with a chant sheet/march map that said demonstrators should keep to the "official" march route, and sent an ineffectual "agitator" to try to draw people out of the June 30th OC crowd on the basis of "unity" and "solidarity." Some of their officials yelled at OCAP organizers that they were "not allowed" to lead protesters south. This did confuse a few youth, who were vacillating after hearing TCSW's denunciations of the June 30th OC for "splitting" the demo. We argued with a few of these youth not to fall for it—that the march south was against Canadian capital, and that it was the TCSW that was splitting the demo in an attempt to marginalize left-wing youth. One activist got up on top of a speaker to exhort demonstrators to come with the June 30th OC, apparently after he was denied the coalition's mike. In the upshot, the direct action milieu led a bigger chunk of the crowd away from the consulate.

The June 30th OC had led two actions earlier in the day, including a 2 p.m. picket of 40-50 people against a corporation setting up private hospitals in Iraq. We joined this picket. At 4 p.m. some 250 youth assembled to block a downtown intersection but were prevented by a heavy cop mobilization. They then



Spartacist Canada

June 30: Trotskyist League banner at Toronto Iraq demonstration.

marched to the main rally site, arriving with a splash, chanting "One, two, three, four, we don't want your f---ing war; Five, six, seven, eight, stop the killing, stop the hate!" It was somewhat integrated and contained a lot of young people from the suburbs, many of them high school students.

Our contingent of 18 people went with a banner and bullhorn on the snake march, with two comrades going north with TCSW to sell and report. Our banner read "U.S. out of Iraq! Canada out of Afghanistan! For class struggle against Canadian capitalism! Israel out of the Occupied Territories!" Mostly the march dodged along, turning here and there to get around a crew of bicycle cops who sought to hem it in and at times block it. The cops had clearly planned their response carefully and had massive reserves waiting largely out of sight while deploying smaller forces to deal with the march directly. They were filming everybody and deployed mounted cops to block the central portion of Bay Street [the financial district] when the march got close to it.

Chants raised by the organizers included "Bay Street's covered in Baghdad's blood," "From Iraq to Palestine, occupation is a crime" (we joined these chants), "No peace in Baghdad, no peace in Toronto," "No justice, no peace," and the "One, two, three..." chant mentioned above. Several of our chants got picked up here and there, in particular "Imperialist occupation, we say no—The whole damn system's got to go!" Comrades noted that some in the milieu around us were determined not to chant anything we raised, while others seemed to be saying to themselves, "My god, I'm chanting along with the Sparts! Have I lost all control?" Our chant, "Quebec bashing, we say no—The whole damn system's got to go!" notably drew ire from some in our vicinity, who tried to prevent it and complained that "we came to a demonstration about Iraq." But any serious fight against the Canadian rulers' attacks on the oppressed abroad has to be connected to their attacks on the oppressed at home. Elements in the direct action milieu are not exempt from the blindness to the oppression of Quebec by the Canadian state that is so rife on the left. That under-

lines why we need to put the question front and center.

The march stopped for a while outside the HQ of a "security" contractor in the mercenary business and then went one block north, where Bush was burnt in effigy in the middle of an intersection. Left groups on this march were pretty atomized—there were some individuals from the New Socialist Group (NSG) [which originated as a split from the I.S.] as well as one from Socialist Alternative and the Stalinist "Young Left."

Comrades on the northbound march thought it was pretty limp. The official chants were exclusively against the U.S. and not picked up very much. We noted the presence of individuals from the Worker-Communist Party of Iraq, a few NSGers and, notably, the entire contingent from the Bolshevik Tendency (BT). The NSGers, when queried as to why they were on this march and not the southern one, replied that "there are many different lines in the NSG, so we are going on different marches." They have already lost a chunk of members in the direction of anarchism (the Autonomy

and Solidarity group), and many NSGers are activists in the OCAP/No One Is Illegal milieu and have political views quite divergent from those of the NSG's warmed-over social-democratic founders. The BT raised the chant "U.S., UK, get out of Iraq today," but otherwise was content to chant along with some of the official slogans.

Our comrades were a highly visible component of the wing of the June 30 protest that sought to oppose the capitalist rulers at home (however its organizers understood this). We ran into people the day after who were talking about the split in the demo; one noted that the march south was chanting communist slogans like "Workers of the world unite" (that was us). The Indymedia discussion site had a slew of postings, largely denouncing the I.S. for their bureaucratic maneuvering and rightist "coalition building." One read, "Why does the I.S. insist on dominating any field it enters and trying to sabotage any alternative actions?" One can expect elements in the anarchoid milieu to put it down to the I.S.'s "Leninism." In fact, the I.S.'s behavior is the antithesis of Leninism. Their actions on June 30 aimed at policing the movement on behalf of the NDP [social-democratic New Democratic Party] politicians, union bureaucrats and the like who speak from their platforms, i.e., at defending the existing, pro-capitalist leadership of the working class. None of the components of the direct action milieu have the perspective to construct an alternative leadership of the working class in political competition with the open reformists, as we do. Their opposition to the I.S.'s reformism thus remains partial and largely at the level of tactical militancy. This explains, for example, OCAP's frequent refusal to polemicize against the NDP.

The march organized by the June 30th Organizing Committee represented an important, if partial, break to the left within the antiwar/anti-occupation movement. Trotskyist League and Spartacus Youth Club comrades attended follow-up organizing meetings, putting forward our political perspective centered on working-class struggle against Canadian capitalism, and pledging to actively build for and join in future actions. ■

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S. Local Directory and Public Offices

Web site: www.icl-fi.org • E-mail address: vanguard@tiac.net

National Office: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116 (212) 732-7860

Boston

Box 390840, Central Sta.
Cambridge, MA 02139
(617) 666-9453

Chicago

Box 6441, Main PO
Chicago, IL 60680
(312) 563-0441

Public Office:

Sat. 2-5 p.m.
222 S. Morgan
(Buzzer 23)

Los Angeles

Box 29574, Los Feliz Sta.
Los Angeles, CA 90029
(213) 380-8239

Public Office: Sat. 2-5 p.m.
3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215

New York

Box 3381, Church St. Sta.
New York, NY 10008
(212) 267-1025

Public Office:

Sat. 1-4 p.m.
299 Broadway, Suite 318

Oakland

Box 29497
Oakland, CA 94604
(510) 839-0851

Public Office:

Sat. 1-5 p.m.
1634 Telegraph
3rd Floor

San Francisco

Box 77494
San Francisco
CA 94107

TROTSKYIST LEAGUE OF CANADA/LIGUE TROTSKYSTE DU CANADA

Toronto

Box 7198, Station A
Toronto, ON M5W 1X8
(416) 593-4138

Vancouver

Box 2717, Main P.O.
Vancouver, BC V6B 3X2
(604) 687-0353

Women's Liberation...

(continued from page 5)

clear that there was a qualitative change in the economic system. In the Soviet Union nearly 95 per cent of women who were able to work were either in employment or full-time education. The entire female sex was more educated and skilled than anywhere else in the world. After the restoration of capitalism in the former Soviet Union, the status of women dropped quickly and dramatically. Most women went from being in skilled employment to jobless and the luckier women resorted to begging in the streets. Women have been pushed into such desperate economic situations that some are being trafficked into sexual slavery. Though prostitution in impoverished areas is common, the phenomenon of highly educated and skilled women resorting to prostitution on a large scale is unique to the former Soviet Union. Many women who were doctors, teachers, or engineers during the existence of the Soviet Union are only able to survive as prostitutes.

It is extremely difficult as a young person at this time, when the imperialist powers and their allies are able to run rampage over defenceless parts of the world, to be able to imagine the overthrow of capitalism in the imperialist centres. I was fortunate enough to attend a recent dayschool put on by the Spartacist League which featured first-hand accounts by ex-miners from the 1984-85 miners strike. The lessons were inspiring, as I learned that though the current political climate and consciousness seems



Workers Hammer

Spartacist contingent at London antiwar protest, February 2003.

bleak, it has not always been this way and it will *not* always continue to be this way. Despite their ultimate defeat, the miners left us with important lessons, such as that the best tool for social advancement is class struggle. While two million people marching through the streets of London on a police-approved demo means little to the bourgeoisie, the class struggle of key industrial workers is what inspires fear in the ruling class. It is the working class that holds the power—and when it can be mobilised to fight in its own interests, *significant* social advances can be made very quickly. The working class is the key to

overthrowing capitalism because it is the only class with the interest and the actual social power to bring down the government and possess the skill to start it back up again under workers control.

In 18 months I went from being a reformist who could not see an alternative to capitalism, to becoming a revolutionary committed to the overthrow of capitalism. Though it is difficult, I try not to be too disheartened by the general right-wing shift of even the so-called “socialist” organisations. The SWP [Cliffite Socialist Workers Party] has created its new electoral front—RESPECT, which attempts to corral those who were angry

about the war against Iraq into electoral politics. There is no mention of capitalism and no mention of class struggle. This organisation, which purports to be the best left-wing alternative at the moment, has [antiwar Member of Parliament (MP) expelled from the Labour Party] George Galloway as their supreme leader, who is staunchly opposed to abortion. It is no exaggeration to say that I had stronger political principles when I was eleven years old growing up in a rural backward area than the RESPECT Coalition. Though the SWP and other left organisations give lip service to fighting for socialism, they consistently are unwilling to uphold the basic socialist principle of advancing the status of women. The SWP supported the *mujahedin* in Afghanistan who routinely attacked women who showed their faces from behind the veil and cut off the hands of those who dared to teach women to read and write. They cheered counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, which led to the enslavement and desperate impoverishment of millions of women and an increase in prostitution. They currently put forward as their prime candidate in an electoral front an MP who is so staunchly opposed to abortion that he is praised by extremist anti-abortion organisations. It is the fact that we are in such a reactionary time that has made me realise the immense importance that I join those who are genuinely committed to fighting *against* this reaction, *for* the overthrow of capitalism, and *forward* to communism. I firmly state that I unequivocally agree with the programme and pledge to abide by the discipline.

Comradely,
Ariel R.

“Life After Capitalism” Conference Anti-Communist Exclusion Flops

In the “Life After Capitalism” conference sessions at the City University of New York, August 20-22, speakers regularly argued for “Anybody but Bush,” which means attendees angered by the war in Iraq should hold their noses and vote for Democrat John “I’d be a better butcher” Kerry. Meanwhile, conference organizers, especially “anti-capitalist” Left Turn, acted on their threatened political exclusion of the communist Spartacus Youth Club, undoubtedly offended by our call to break with the capitalist Democratic Party. (A split out of the International Socialist Organization that quickly liquidated into the “anti-globalization” milieu, Left Turn combines the worst elements of the two.) The SYC was the first “banned” group to set up a table at the conference; we talked politics and distributed literature including leaflets protesting the censorship. Several youth solidarized with us against this exclusion, as did some left groups including the centrist Internationalist Group (IG) and the “third campist” League for the Revolutionary Party.

Shortly after they spotted our tables, the conference organizers ordered us and the IG to take them down and then called in campus cops—baldly crossing the class line—when we refused to do so. Notably, the *News and Letters* group began chanting “Let them stay! Freedom of speech!” which we and others picked up. At this point the organizers backed down, presumably worried about how it would look if they carried out their threat to have us arrested by the very same NYPD preparing to terrorize protesters against the Republican National Convention. We reprint below the leaflet issued on August 17 protesting our threatened exclusion and the August 16 letter we

sent to the president of Hunter College defending the conference against violence-baiting in the bourgeois media.

* * *

Protest Anti-Communist Ban at Life After Capitalism Conference!

We call on defenders of free speech to protest the stated policy of the “anti-authoritarian” Life After Capitalism conference that: “Life After Capitalism will try to remain a space free of sectarian left groupings (you know who you are). Tables will NOT be offered to these groups and those who try to sell papers or other forms of literature without the consensus of the organizing body will be asked to leave.” This censorship provoked a wave of protest on Indymedia in response including one writer who aptly noted: “In anti-authoritarian lingo, ‘sectarian’ = open communist,” and another writer who queried: “...how is banning people from attendance at your conference NOT sectarian? Just curious” (nyc.indymedia.org, posted August 9). We note that their un-democratic attack on free speech is not so different from Republican Mayor Bloomberg’s attempts to prevent a rally against the Republican National Convention on August 29. We also call on defenders of free speech to oppose the *New York Post*’s false violence-baiting of the Life After Capitalism conference (see SYC statement in support of Life After Capitalism’s right to free speech).

In our effort to intersect radical-minded youth looking for a revolutionary program to stop capitalism and end imperialist war, the Spartacus Youth Club sent an e-mail to the organizers of the Life After Capitalism conference requesting a literature table. We received the follow-

ing response: “...this is a conference for mostly anarchist and anti-authoritarian organizers and not a space that would be receptive to members of the SYC. Thanks for your understanding and respect.”

While we don’t respect Life After Capitalism’s anti-communist and very “authoritarian” exclusion, we do understand it. It flows logically from their promotion of pro-Democratic politics—Naomi “Vote Kerry” Klein among others will open the conference—that they feel compelled to ban a revolutionary communist youth organization from distributing our literature. We are well known for opposing both Republicans and Democrats, and for our actions in defense of class war prisoners, such as Mumia Abu-Jamal and recently paroled Sherman Austin, as well as actions to stop the Klan and other fascist provocations. All this is part of our struggle to build a workers party to fight

for socialist revolution and to put an end to racist American imperialism. This is what they don’t want you to hear.

We have noticed that Life After Capitalism offers a workshop called “The Joy of Protest.” In that spirit, we look forward to protesting this anti-communist exclusion together with other leftists, all throughout the conference. We invite the participants to check out the banned communist literature.

* * *

SYC Letter to Hunter Defending Conference

Today’s *New York Post* carried an article titled “Finest Prep for Anarchy” which falsely violence-baits the participants of the “Life After Capitalism” conference which will hold its opening event at Hunter College on Friday. This article is of a piece with the Bloomberg administration’s efforts at stifling political protest against the Republican National Convention and coincides with national FBI efforts, reported in today’s *New York Times*, to intimidate protesters.

As part of defense of the right to free speech, the Spartacus Youth Club urges you not to take any steps against the conference. ■

Spartacus Youth Club Events

BAY AREA

Meet the Marxists on Campus

Wednesday, Sept. 8, 4:30 p.m.
City Café (under the student union)
City College of San Francisco

Video Showing

Thursday, Sept. 9, 7 p.m.
“From Death Row,
This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal”
100 Wheeler Hall, UC Berkeley
For more information: (510) 839-0851
or e-mail: sycbayarea@sbcglobal.net

TORONTO

Class Series

Wednesday, Sept. 29 6:30 p.m.
U.S. Troops Out of Iraq!
Canadian Troops Out of Afghanistan!
For Socialist Revolution to
End Imperialist War!

York University Student Centre
room to be announced
Information and readings: (416) 593-4138
or e-mail: spartacan@on.aibn.com

Visit the
ICL Web Site:
www.icl-fi.org

For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

We print below Part Two of a forum, slightly edited for publication, given by Comrade Don Alexander of the SL/US Central Committee in New York City, 3 April 2004. Part One appeared in WV No. 830 (6 August).

PART TWO

I need to point out that the ruling class today is forced to admit that increasingly U.S. society is being resegregated. In a special education supplement (*New York Times*, 18 January) on the 50th anniversary of the *Brown* decision, a writer admits that “Millions of black students are celebrating Brown’s anniversary in schools almost as segregated as when it was decided. It is now true, as the court held, that ‘separate but equal facilities are inherently unequal.’ But 70 percent of black students attend schools in which racial minorities are a majority, and fully a third are in schools 90 to 100 percent minority.” Professor Gary Orfield, co-director of the Civil Rights Project at Harvard, has done quite an extensive investigation of the growing resegregation in the U.S. He argues that, practically speaking, the U.S. today hasn’t qualitatively progressed beyond the era of formalized segregation embodied in the infamous 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision that sanctioned state-supported segregation in public accommodations.

When you look at what’s going on as the schools become more segregated today, the fastest-growing, and now the largest minority affected are Latinos. We, as fighters for a revolutionary vanguard party, point to the common interests of all sections of the oppressed. Our task is to combat not only anti-black racism within the immigrant milieu, but the anti-immigrant chauvinism of many black workers and black people. This is critical from the standpoint of fighting for socialist revolution in this country. What we see is that the ruling class has thrown increasing layers of the population on the scrap heap.

In the annals of judicial history, what they call “*Brown I*” was the Supreme Court decision in 1954 that struck down *Plessy v. Ferguson*. And in “*Brown II*,” the second decision a year later, the Supreme Court ordered desegregation with “all deliberate speed,” i.e., slowly. In other words, they gave the green light to Southern segregationist foes of integration to obstruct the implementation of



Washington Post

Spartacist League initiated 5,000-strong labor/black mobilization that stopped KKK march in Washington, D.C., November 1982.

that decision. Consequently, by early 1964, a full decade later, only 1.2 percent of black children in the eleven Southern states attended schools with whites. So the law is one thing, and the reality on the ground is another.

could really do an interesting study on when was the first time, if ever, *Othello* was performed in that part of the country.

When the first *Brown* decision was handed down, it was trumpeted by U.S. imperialism as an expression of Ameri-

How the Liberals and Reformists Derailed the Struggle for Integration

These legal decisions are never made in a vacuum, but they are a product of social struggle. Thus, far from being friends of black people, many judges opposed *Brown*. For example, leading segregationist Mississippi Circuit Court judge Tom Brady, in line with the white-supremacist Citizens Councils, asserted that this was “Black Monday” and that the Supreme Court was leaning toward Communism. The segregationists in Little Rock were circulating questionnaires essentially asking whether black boys would be permitted to solicit the white girls at school soirées? Would they be allowed, white girls and black boys in drama classes, to get together? Someone

can democracy in its finest hour. In 1954 Secretary of State Dean Acheson underlined their interest in *Brown*:

“Other peoples cannot understand how [school segregation] can exist in a country which professes to be a staunch supporter of freedom, justice, and democracy. The sincerity of the United States in this respect will be judged by its deeds as well as by its words.”

—*International Politics and Civil Rights Policies in the United States, 1941-1960* (2000)

And of course, they were increasingly embarrassed because the Soviet Union reminded them quite frequently and regularly of the vicious, legalized segregation, while the U.S. rulers railed against “Soviet Communist totalitarianism.”

The State Department didn’t waste any time in trumpeting the progress in race relations: within an hour of the Supreme Court’s decision, the Voice of America broadcast the news all over the world in 35 different languages. And Carl Rowan, a black journalist who was the face of the State Department abroad, traveled far and wide to convince the Third World that America was finally making progress.

Of course it was bull because, in the aftermath of the *Brown* decision, white racist defiance quickly developed. Autherine Lucy, a black woman who wanted to get into graduate school, was attacked by mobs at the University of Alabama when she tried to attend school there in 1956. That angered a lot of European and African governments.

A year earlier, in 1955, Emmett Till fared worse. Emmett Till was a 14-year-

old black youth from Chicago visiting relatives in Mississippi. He was lynched for the alleged “crime” of whistling at a white woman. His horribly mutilated body was shown. His mother insisted upon an open casket funeral, and all over the world people saw the barbarity of lynch law. Thousands of black people all over this country marched after that, and many say that the beginnings of the civil rights movement began with the demonstrations around Emmett Till. A couple of weeks ago the *New York Times* (22 March), in an editorial titled “The Ghost of Emmett Till,” said that there is a reinvestigation of his murder being planned by the Justice Department because they have new information on Till’s murder. If somebody is nailed, he’ll probably be 95 years old, on a respirator with one lung, one kidney and one hour to live. And if it’s not that, the system is still one of murderous legal lynchings and racist frame-ups that keeps on keeping on. Just look at the cases of Mumia Abu-Jamal and the many other class-war prisoners in this country, like Jerry Dale Lowe.

Every step forward for workers, black people, women and all the oppressed has been won by militant struggle against the racist capitalist system. Reliance on the bourgeois courts politically *disarms* the workers and oppressed. The unions in this country were built by defying the bourgeoisie’s laws against trade unions, laws that called unions “criminal conspiracies,” which the capitalists could revive again.

Black youth hurled themselves against the infernal machine of the racist, segregationist, law-and-order establishment, playing a very important role in shattering the McCarthyite Cold War consensus and atmosphere in the South. The law had to adjust to the new facts on the ground. In other words, it was no thanks to good-hearted and benevolent judges that the walls of Jim Crow segregation came tumbling down.

Robert Weisbrot, the author of *Freedom Bound: A History of America’s Civil Rights Movement*, noted that before the *Brown* decision:

“Sporadic local protests also sent a message of growing Negro assertiveness, but few, black or white, received it. In November 1953 forty-eight black soldiers in Columbia, South Carolina, were arrested and fined more than \$1,500 because one sat next to a white girl on the bus. That same year a Negro boycott of buses in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, lasted a week before officials permitted blacks and whites to occupy some seats on first-come, first-served basis.”

Now, after several decades of bipartisan racist reaction and attacks on the standard of living of the working masses, sections of the ruling class openly embrace the “ghosts of the Confederacy” and their heirs. For example, Attorney General John Ashcroft has expressed his admiration for the Confederacy. Trent Lott, the Republican Senator, got a slap on the wrist for *openly* stating his support for the segregationist Strom Thurmond. Thurmond was the rabid segregationist who led Southern racist resistance to the integration of the armed forces under President Harry S. Truman and bolted from the Democratic Party to form the Dixiecrat Party in 1948. And none other than the current head of the Supreme Court, William Rehnquist, as a



National Archives

Integrated army unit during U.S. imperialism’s dirty, anti-Communist war in Korea, 1950. Many black soldiers came back from Korea intent on fighting to overturn Jim Crow segregation in U.S.

clerk to Supreme Court Justice Robert Jackson, wrote a memo in support of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision. This is the ruling class that is in power.

The Failures of the Civil Rights Movement in the North

When the civil rights movement went North, it ran into a brick wall. It went up against the bedrock of the economic oppression of the black population. It was not de jure (in law) segregation but de facto segregation that they had to contend with. The collapse of that movement flowed from Martin Luther King's and the SCLC's bankrupt, liberal pacifist program of reliance on the racist federal government and the Democratic Party. That is what crippled that struggle.

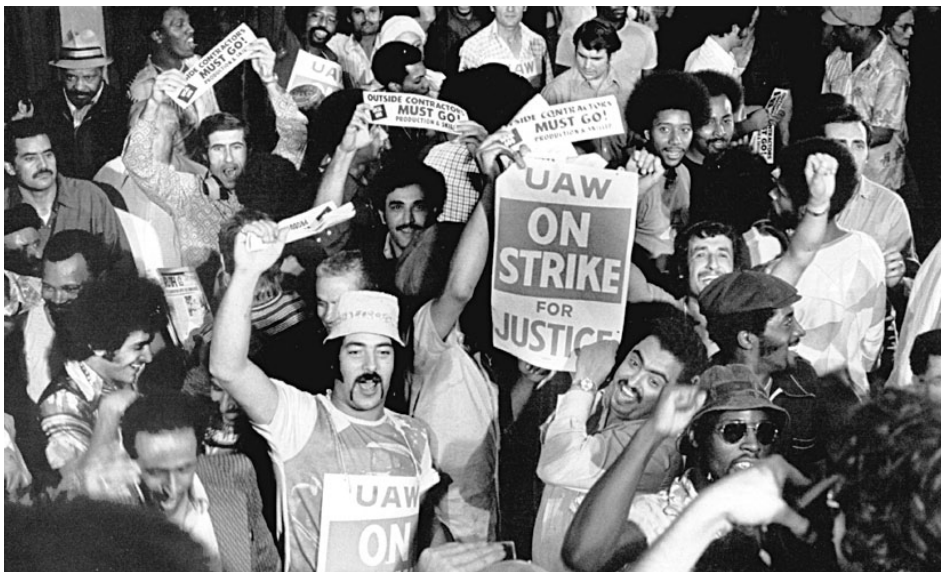
As a result of the inability of the liberal-led civil rights leadership to address the capitalist roots of black oppression, many black activists embraced a separatist road and rejected integrated class struggle, which is not only in the interest of blacks but is in the interest of the entire working class. The result was that the best of an entire generation of young black militants, particularly embodied in the contradictory radical-nationalist Black Panthers, was cut down through murderous FBI Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTEL-PRO) repression, facilitated by murderous internal factionalism.

Some of this history is being revised in the anarchist milieu. You have, for instance, the Northeastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists (NEFAC). They recently had an article, "A Synthesis of Race & Class: A Look at the Black Panther Party & Its Goal of Liberation" (*Northeastern Anarchist*, Summer/Fall 2003). What the anarchists say is quite interesting because it indicates why their rejection of a Leninist vanguard party makes them incapable of understanding the fact that what really led to the demise of the Panthers was not simply FBI repression. It was not simply what the anarchists call the Panthers' "authoritarian, top-down structure" or their advocacy of a vanguard party (which was of course vanguard in name only, because there was male chauvinism within that organization). What NEFAC says is this:

"The Black Panther Party was the most important revolutionary organization in America during the late 20th century.... [The party] was able to develop a truly revolutionary political platform that presented a more just and viable alternative....

"Perhaps the party would have benefited and maximized its potential as a Revolutionary Black Nationalist organization by broadening its struggles to both remedial and immediate programs as well as more militant activities so long as they were both aimed at a common and revolutionary goal: the necessity for black people to gain control of the institutions in their own communities, eventually transforming them into cooperatives, and of one day working with other ethnic groups to change the system."

This petty-bourgeois rejection of the working class is exactly the Panthers' type of New Left sectoralism. Thoroughly anti-working-class, it is based upon the utopian, classless notion of a "black community," or "black communities," which are really impoverished



Ford River Rouge workers in 1976 national auto strike. Detroit was center of black proletarian militancy until Big Three auto bosses gutted industry while pro-capitalist UAW tops capitulated.

ghettos. What are you going to control? The Panthers were nationalists; they were radical nationalists. They wanted social revolution, but they rejected mobilizing the integrated working class to sweep away this system. This is the key reason for their political demise. It wasn't simply that the state was all-powerful. There was sympathy among white workers in the Bay Area. In the early 1970s we had supporters who worked in a General Motors auto plant in Fremont, California. This was a factory where the Panthers briefly had a caucus, which they later liquidated.

Today, the effects of the destruction of the Panthers' organization and the defeats of the movement are deeply felt. The black population is leaderless. Under the conditions of relentless racist attacks today in the name of the "war against terror" at home and abroad, it is vital to know who our friends and who our enemies are. Things didn't have to turn out this way. If you really look at the road forward, it has to be based on this program of class-struggle revolutionary integrationism, by forging a revolutionary workers party that tells the bitter truth. In that regard, we have to clear the ground of the reformist and centrist obstacles that block the road to power.

Don't be fooled by the occasional socialist rhetoric. The International Socialist Organization (ISO) is a good example of what we're talking about. Time and again, they stand with the Democrats against workers and the oppressed. On 23 October 1999, they were out there in the rally organized by Sharpton to defend the Klan's right to march. He went to court on behalf of the Klan, whereas the Spartacist League and the Partisan Defense Committee, along with the Labor Black League, mobilized a mass labor-centered mobilization that stopped the Klan.

So what does the ISO say is the way forward? In a recent article called "Racism in America Today" (*International Socialist Review*, November-December 2003), they say that, despite the persistence of institutional racism in America,

"It would be wrong, nevertheless, to conclude that things are just as bad as they were before the civil rights movement.

Many of the legislative gains from that period—from affirmative action to ending segregation—are under attack. But the impact of the movement has been longstanding, fundamentally changing the attitudes and perceptions of millions of people about African Americans."

Where do you start, right? One thing to say is that the lie of black inferiority, the recrudescence of "scientific racism" in this *Bell Curve* book, which was a best-seller at the time it was published in 1994, which preached the genetic inferiority of



Emmett Till and his mother. The lynching of this 14-year-old black youth in Mississippi in 1955 for the alleged "crime" of whistling at a white woman helped fuel civil rights movement.

black people, struck fertile soil. The point is that the civil rights movement failed to end black oppression because it was tied to the Democratic Party, and these fake socialists cover up that fact because they are busily tailing the Democrats today. There was nothing in that article about breaking with the Democratic Party. I think it is because the ISO's whole perspective is to reform this racist, capitalist system. And, of course, they supported every counterrevolutionary nationalist movement, every anti-Soviet struggle in the past, which culminated in the destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state.

So their program is very illustrative of what we are dealing with out there. We have so-called socialists in this country who practically ignore the growing resegregation of the U.S. In the case of the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP), they actually openly champion segregation—for example, opposing school busing in Boston. Their virulent hostility to integration is no accident since they are virulently Stalinophobic, anti-Soviet. Rejecting defense of the gains of the Russian Revolution led to accommodation to American imperialism at home on the strategic question for proletarian revolution in the U.S., the fight for black liberation.

The kind of "integration" that the ruling class is interested in aims to recruit the best of those minorities whose skills and training can be utilized to defend the capitalists' interests at home and abroad. This involves being able to intervene into countries with large non-white populations, sitting astride regions where there is oil, gold, diamonds and the like. So the white ruling class will drop the color bar to get a Colin Powell and a Condoleezza Rice to do their bidding in enslaving and murdering thousands of dark-skinned

peoples, and other oppressed peoples, around the world. This has nothing to do, of course, with the obliteration of the color line, but rather the obliteration of horribly impoverished people around the world. So the class enemy has a consistently counterrevolutionary strategy and program, and we have to have a consistently revolutionary strategy and program.

If you want another example, look at the support from sections of the U.S. officer corps for retaining affirmative action at the University of Michigan last year. Why? They remember their long, losing and dirty colonial war against Vietnam—which was conducted with a racially torn military. Now, they have a Hispanic commander leading troops in Iraq.

The bourgeoisie wants "integration" insofar as it furthers their struggle for unbridled exploitation. We defend affirmative action as one of the remaining minimal and very inadequate gains of the civil rights movement, which were wrested from the white ruling class in struggle. However, affirmative action does not and cannot attack the race and class biases inherent in this system. In the universities, we fight for open admissions, free tuition and a fully paid state stipend, especially to enable minority and working-class youth to attend those schools. Very recently, the Spartacus Youth Club mobilized actions at Columbia University against an anti-affirmative action "bake sale" sponsored by the Con-

servative Club, which is in cahoots with an assortment of sinister racist imperialist elements, such as the pro-slavery ideologue David Horowitz. The Conservative Club had in their cross hairs blacks, Jews, Hispanics, gays and others. We mobilized against their racist provocation at Columbia while organizations like the ISO refused to endorse the SYC-initiated action because they were basically trying to pressure the administration to defend minority students.

Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

We fight to build a vanguard party that bases its program not upon the current consciousness of the working class, but upon its objective interests, its interests as a conscious revolutionary class. This is really the hallmark of what we're fighting for, a party that is a tribune of the people. Under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolshevik Party, the workers of Russia smashed the outmoded capitalist system. This was the first and the only successful workers revolution in history. Today, U.S. imperialism is seeking to destroy the remaining bureaucratically deformed workers states in China, Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea. Despite the political misrule of the Stalinist bureaucracies in these countries, the smashing of capitalism there is a good thing for the workers internationally. We Trotskyists unconditionally defend those workers states against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution. It's a good thing that North Korea has nukes. Otherwise, the U.S. imperialist bandits would have obliterated them a long time ago. We fight for workers political revolution in those countries to oust the treacherous Stalinist bureaucracies whose anti-internationalist, anti-working-class program facilitates the

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Ernest Richie Collection

Blacks in Baton Rouge, LA, organize boycott of segregated city buses, 1953.

Black Liberation...

(continued from page 9)

imperialist drive toward capitalist restoration. To be a Marxist, a Trotskyist, a fighter for world revolution, you have to be a proletarian internationalist. Our task here is to build that revolutionary Trotskyist party and finish what the Bolsheviks started in 1917 by fighting for new October Revolutions.

The class-struggle program for black liberation is directly tied to the struggle for proletarian revolution. In this regard, every generation comes to revolutionary consciousness in their own way. My personal road was tortuous, starting as a follower of the petty-bourgeois radical-nationalist Frantz Fanon, who seemed to be offering an uncompromising assault on the citadel of racism and imperialism—looking for the “wretched of the earth” to rise up spontaneously to drive off the imperialists. Only when I joined the Spartacist League did I learn that Fanon’s “radical” nationalism was an expression of the prevalent New Leftism which propagated the myth that the working class was *not* the agent of revolutionary change, but had been “bought off” and integrated into the racist capitalist system. I’ll skip some of the other delusions that I had to discard along the way.

We’ve learned a lot from the Bolsheviks. When you look at some of the history of what the Spartacist League has fought for, such as the struggle for busing in Boston, it is really important to see how we swam against the stream. I was fortunate to spend some time with Dick Fraser, along with other comrades, in Los Angeles in the early 1980s. We tried to assist him in various ways—he was a very sick man at the time. We had one friend in common, a guy by the name of Earl Ofari [Hutchinson], who was a friend of mine, and Dick had done some writing with him too. In the early 1970s, Ofari played a role in breaking me from the dead end of “revolutionary nationalism” and in telling me over and over again that a woman’s work is never done. He wrote a useful book called *The Myth of Black Capitalism* which really assisted me in developing a class perspective.

We had a big argument in 1974-75 about the demand, which Ofari supported, that the government send federal troops to Boston to protect black schoolchildren, who had been bused to integrate schools in South Boston, a white enclave. At the same time, Ofari denounced the Maoist Revolutionary Union, the predecessors of today’s Revolutionary Communist Party, which capitulated to the racist anti-busing forces in Boston and came out with an infamous headline in their press: “People Must Unite to Smash



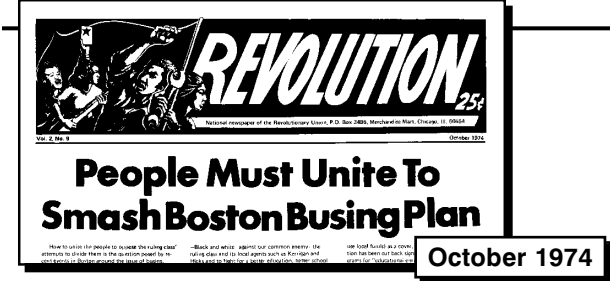
1920 Soviet Russian poster reads: “He who is illiterate is like a blind man.” Today SL/U.S. calls for free, quality integrated education for all.



March 2004: SYC initiated protest demanding “Down With Racist Provocations on Campus!” and “Defend Affirmative Action!” at Columbia University.

Boston Busing Plan” (*Revolution*, October 1974). This was a gross capitulation to the racist scum from the Nazis and the Klan to Louise Day Hicks, who was a leader of the racist outfit called ROAR (Restore Our Alienated Rights). Ofari’s main fire, however, was directed at the so-called “sectarian” Spartacist League. We were in the forefront of fighting for mass integrated labor-black defense to defend the black schoolchildren against the howling racist mobs in South Boston. We fought for low-rent, racially integrated public housing, for quality integrated education for all, and for the implementation of busing and its extension to the suburbs as a minimal—although inadequate—step toward black

Muslims. They betrayed the struggle for black equality. Finally, the fight against the resegregation of America cannot be separated from the unrelenting ruling-class offensive against labor and oppressed minorities, which has resulted in increased concentration of wealth at one end of society and increased segregation and misery at the other. The recent five-month-long, bitter, sold-out UFCW grocery workers strike in Southern California indicates that there are today thousands of workers determined to resist the capitalist attacks. They fought, and it was not impossible for them to have won. But the treacherous trade-union bureaucracy isolated that strike, refused to extend it



1974: Predecessor of today’s Revolutionary Communist Party sided with white racist backlash against busing (above), while reformists of Socialist Workers Party youth group pushed illusions in federal troops to defend black children.



equality. We weren’t successful in getting the labor movement organized along those lines. However, this was in the interests of workers and the oppressed. The trade-union misleaders in that city didn’t lift a finger so as not to alienate the Democratic Party so-called “friends of labor,” such as Teddy Kennedy and others. Initially, Kennedy made some mild support statements, and they ran his butt off the stage. We linked this fight to the struggle for socialist revolution and a workers government. In contrast, the reformist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) called for federal troops to “defend” black people and tailed behind the petty-bourgeois liberal NAACP. In pursuit of their class-collaborationist bloc with the liberals, the SWP sought to rewrite history by claiming that through mass pressure the armed forces of imperialism could be made to fight for the oppressed. They consciously distorted history to suit their reformist appetites. They tried to erase the indisputable fact that every time troops were called in, particularly in response to black rebellion, it was to suppress those who were fighting back. The capitalist state—its cops, its courts, its armed forces—is not neutral. These bodies are instruments of capitalist rule and racist repression. The Workers World Party of Sam Marcy was tailing behind this black Democrat, Bill Owen, who opposed busing and was looking for a political career. Marcy put out a pamphlet, *Busing and Self-Determination*, which should have been titled “The Right to Tailism.” In it, they stated: “Separation or Assimilation—It’s Up to the Oppressed.” So they simultaneously tailed the petty-bourgeois liberals of the NAACP and the Black

were a significant presence of workers out there on behalf of women’s rights—especially in the fight for abortion, which is under attack. The possibilities of integrated class struggle are palpable and, on a modest scale, very real. White, Latino and Asian workers were out there together on the picket lines during the recent UFCW strike. They fought, and their union wasn’t broken, even though they were bitterly sold out. How do we get that kind of leadership? By drawing the class line. By breaking with the program of class collaboration that preaches the lie of a “community of interests” between the workers and the bosses and of “lesser-evilism,” which is pushed by the reformists and labor fak-ers. That party will be built by unmasking the enemies of the workers and the oppressed, no matter what their color or nationality is. A necessary task for the working class in this country is the forging of such a revolutionary workers party, a political weapon to advance a fight for jobs for all through a shorter workweek with no loss in pay, for free medical care, for free universal education, for full citizenship rights, for immigrant rights, for militant defense of the rights of gays. The fight for free abortion on demand, the fight for freedom of all class-war prisoners is a fight for a socialist America. And this fight will be realized through expropriating the capitalist class. I want to end with this quote from a black youth in Roxbury, Boston, who was inspired by the struggle for integration in that city. It underscores one of the points that we’ve made, namely, that in the past,

on most occasions, the black population has sought every opportunity to fight for integration and equality as opposed to opting for a separatist road. It is only in periods of defeat and out of despair that some have turned toward pseudo-nationalism. Reflecting the egalitarian sentiments of a significant number of black people in the civil rights era, an eleven-year-old black youth said: “Busing’s just got to be, man. Got to be. We got it coming to us. We got to open up ourselves, spread out. Get into the city.... Go to good schools, live in good places like white folks got.... That’s why they’re busing us” (*Brown v. Board of Education* [2001]). To realize this dream of genuine equality, you must fight for a socialist revolution. You can’t get it unless you have a party that swims against the stream and that bases itself upon the lessons of the class struggle and the fight to smash capitalism on a world scale. ■

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Black History and the Class Struggle No. 2

On the Civil Rights Movement

VOTE NOV 8
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BLACK PANTHER

August 1984

Fifty Years After *Brown v. Board of Education*

Public Education:

A Promise Undelivered

We print below a presentation, slightly edited for publication, by a New York Labor Black League for Social Defense member at a Spartacist League/Spartacus Youth Club regional educational in New York City on April 3.

I was two weeks short of my fifteenth birthday when the Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. Like most of my friends and family, I received the news with tremendous excitement. I had been raised to revere the Supreme Court and to have an almost biblical faith in the Constitution. This decision confirmed the lessons of my youth.

Fifty years later the promise of *Brown* remains undelivered. I have spent 36 of those years as a teacher, working primarily with American black and immigrant adult students. I have learned a great deal, but the most vivid lesson of all is how public education supports the system of exploitation and racism that holds down the entire working class.

In the late 1960s and '70s, a wealth of haphazardly constituted adult literacy programs, established in the wake of the ghetto uprisings as part of the "war on poverty," proliferated in the city. The funding was unstable; teachers were underpaid, overworked and without benefits. Classroom space was often miserable, the teaching materials paltry, and the management deplorable. Despite these conditions, students flocked to classes in storefronts and social service agencies in Harlem, Bed-Stuy, Bushwick and South Jamaica: immigrants, refugees, African Americans, the working poor, school dropouts and welfare mothers. Waiting lists were full and classroom space scarce. The funding served less than half the number of students who needed to learn how to read or learn English. There was, however, a vibrant energy to the classes.

During the next decade or so the struggle to make adult literacy a right continued, and the competition for funding became increasingly fierce. Enter Democrat Bill Clinton and his program to "end welfare as we know it." Within a year, hundreds of welfare recipients, mainly women, who were the mainstay of the afternoon adult classes, were herded into workfare programs where they got minimal instruction in language and reading. Instead they were taught how to write résumés, how to dress for an interview, and (I kid you not) how to be humble on the job. Forced into these programs, many students were sent to work in dead-end jobs at less than minimum pay. Unknowingly, many of them were sent to jobs that belonged to workers who were on leave and had the right to reclaim their positions when they returned. They worked without medical benefits or workmen's compensation in dangerous situations, and worst of all, some of them were sent to scab during the Service Employees (SEIU) Local 32B-32J strike in the winter of 1995-96—all to the deafening silence of the unions. The communications workers, AFSCME DC37 and the United Federation of Teachers did get some of their workfare workers unionized, but for the most part the unions turned their backs on these workers, abandoning any form of struggle to remedy their deplorable working conditions. We in the Labor Black Leagues, a fraternal organization of the Spartacist League, call for an integrated, revolutionary pro-

gram to fight the rising tide of slave labor.

But the exploitation of welfare workers was only part of the growing bipartisan assault on social welfare and literacy programs. I worked for seven years with a program designed to provide a safe haven for students who had dropped out of the public schools. Supported by a network of counseling services provided by community-based organizations funded by the NYC Department of Employment, classes were run for young men and women, overwhelmingly black and Hispanic, between the ages of 17 to 24. Prominent among these youth were the students who were recruited through the VERA Institute of Justice to attend school as an alternative to incarceration. By the mid '90s, the funds for the community-based organizations had been eliminated, leaving the school without a systematic means of recruitment or support. As a result, many of these young people found themselves back on the streets or left to face prison sentences. When this program, along with other alternative programs, was forced out of its school building in 1999, the administration of the Board of Education and CUNY [City University of New York] showed little interest in finding them new space. To quote an administrator in the office of the Deputy Chancellor: "I haven't much interest in youth returning to school. They should have done it right the first time."

In racist capitalist America, the education of black youth is inextricably tied to the job market. In a sagging economy,

with more and more jobs being exported, minority and immigrant youth have become an increasingly expendable population. As WV pointed out in "Desperation, Segregation and the 'Ebonics' Controversy," (WV No. 660, 24 January 1997):

Kennedy High, NYC: High school students in America's ghettos today are subjected to humiliating searches, prison-like conditions.

"The capitalist rulers invest only as much as they can realize back in profit when it comes to the education of those they exploit."

Today the New York State Education Department estimates that about 30 percent of the population of New York reads below a fifth grade level. In New York City alone about two million people need reading classes, and many more need ESL

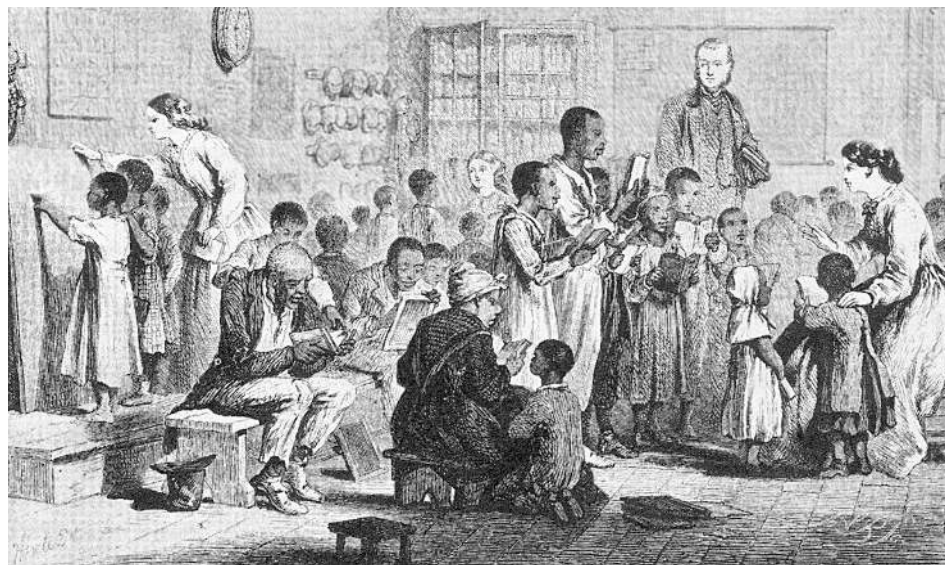
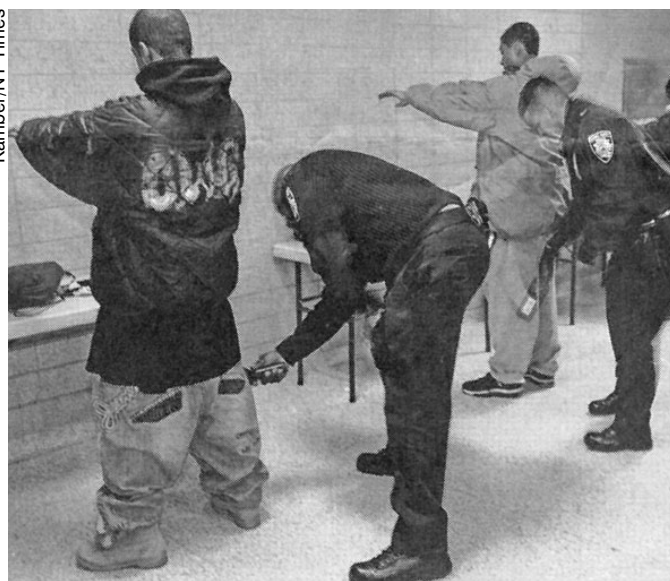
(English as a second language), but the number of students being served has dropped from approximately 50,000 15 years ago to approximately 25,000 today.

And what kind of curriculum does the state offer the students who attend these classes? During the civil rights movement, there were many legitimate demands to include material from black and immigrant history and literature that had been missing from the curriculum. What became known as "multiculturalism," however, took a strange turn. It often meant that students were taught nothing outside of their cultural experience. When I found a text of Russian short stories hidden in the back of a closet, I was told that the young welfare mothers I was teaching would understand the stories in *No Hot Water Tonight*, a popular text in the basic literacy classroom, much better because it was closer to their experience. When a young man in one of my classes complained that he was tired of reading books about life in the "hood" and would like to read something different, we could find very little variety in the book room. By this standard of instruction, the only books that I should have read in school would have been *The Diary of Anne*



Little Rock, 1957: Black student jeered by rabid white mob as she enters Central High School.

Kamber/NY Times



Southern school for freed slaves during Radical Reconstruction. It took the Civil War to establish public education for black people in America.

Library of Congress

Frank, Portnoy's Complaint or Marjorie Morningstar.

To assume that students can only understand the things that are in the narrowest scope of their experience is both patronizing and racist. There is more than one way to keep people in the ghetto or the barrio. Indeed, there are some good programs initiated by educators, such as the American Social History Project whose text on the Civil War, *Freedom's Unfinished Revolution*, I have found very useful. You can walk into high school classrooms and see pictures of Mumia Abu-Jamal or Huey Newton plastered on the wall, giving the appearance that some kind of political discussion is taking place, but none of this translates into real education as long as teachers are forced to prepare students to pass standardized tests like the Regents or the High School Equivalency Exam (GED) which only assess students' knowledge of material that is limited to approved texts, all of which are super-patriotic, and which determine who graduates. That is why a class-struggle leadership of labor to get rid of the political cops of the ruling class is essential.

Limiting the curriculum is not the only way in which students are denied full entry into the educational system. After a

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Venezuela...

(continued from page 1)

on any kind of social revolution or even basic structural reforms. They are entirely dependent on the vicissitudes of the world market prices for oil. As the research department of the Wall Street investment bank of J.P. Morgan commented, “The strength of oil prices is allowing the [Chávez] government to maintain an expansionary fiscal policy that would be unsustainable otherwise” (London *Financial Times*, 13 August).

At the same time, the Chávez regime has perpetuated the reactionary influence of the Catholic church on social questions like gay rights and abortion. When Chávez’s 1999 Constitution was initially proposed, it originally contained language against discrimination of homosexuals. But under pressure from the church, such language was removed. Meanwhile, abortion remains illegal in Venezuela.

Chávez’s defeat of the recall referendum was welcomed as a guarantor of “stability” by such mouthpieces of imperialism as the London *Financial Times* and the *New York Times*. In the lead-up to the referendum, oil giants ExxonMobil and ChevronTexaco signed agreements to invest billions in Venezuela. In turn, Chávez’s victory was enthusiastically cheered by a broad spectrum of ostensible socialists around the world. What accounts for this seemingly contradictory base of support? Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, many leftists have imbibed the “death of communism” ideology, concluding that the only hope is to fight for reforms and thus prettify forces that are only seeking to rescue capitalist rule and enhance the exploitation of the working people. In Venezuela, these leftists help mask Chávez’s leadership of the capitalist state as a “revolution” by the working people and poor.

Workers World Party organized pro-Chávez protests outside Venezuelan consulates in the U.S. where Venezuelans cast absentee ballots in the referendum. The front page of *Workers World* (August 19) screamed, “Venezuelans Mobilize to Defend Revolution.” But Hugo Chávez and his “Bolivarian revolution” (named for nineteenth-century bourgeois nationalist Simón Bolívar) rule Venezuela on behalf of local capitalism and foreign imperialist investors. As such, Hugo Chávez is a class enemy of the workers and the oppressed.

Although the International Communist League does not have a section in Venezuela at this time, our aim is to stake out a position to clear the theoretical obstacles in the path of present and future struggles. We state that the working class had no way to express its own interests in the Venezuelan recall election: a “yes” vote would be a de facto bloc with the CIA and its local lieutenants; a “no” vote would amount to political support to the capitalist Chávez regime. As there was no means to express the crucial need for the political independence of the work-



Wide World

Left: Militiaman guards formerly American oil refinery, expropriated by Cuban Revolution in 1960. Right: One of 17,000 Cuban doctors and dentists who today provide free medical care to Venezuela’s poor.



Ricardo López Hevia/Granma

ing class from the bourgeois state in this referendum, abstention was the only choice for revolutionaries.

Had there been a rightist military coup against the Chávez regime, as there was in 2002, we would have sought to mobilize the working class in military defense of Chávez while politically opposing his regime. The classic historical precedent for Marxists is Spain 1936 when a right-wing military coup, led by General Francisco Franco, attempted to overthrow the Popular Front government, a coalition of the Socialist and Communist parties with a handful of bourgeois liberals. The heroic and spontaneous mobilization of the Spanish working class beat back the coup attempt, leading to a prolonged civil war. As Trotsky declared at the

This requires an intransigent fight against nationalism in Venezuela, which obscures class divisions in the country. Only the victorious struggle for working-class rule, i.e., socialist revolution throughout the Americas, will ensure land to the landless and enable the oil workers and other proletarians to enjoy the wealth created by their labor.

Chávez: A Bonapartist Strongman

Chávez and U.S. imperialism have a symbiotic relationship. Venezuela supplies 14 percent of U.S. oil imports and is the principal source of oil for refineries in the Gulf of Mexico. Chávez has kept the oil pumps flowing to the U.S. throughout

dropped his populist rhetoric to embrace a \$30 billion IMF bailout package and has enforced austerity on the masses as part of the deal, while sending Brazilian troops to police devastated Haiti. Leftists who yesterday were gaga for “Lula” now drop his coattails to climb on the Chávez bandwagon. In so doing, they help prepare future defeats for the workers and peasants of Venezuela.

Like Peronism in Argentina or the rule and institutions established by Lázaro Cárdenas in Mexico in the 1930s, Chávez, a former colonel who led a failed military coup in 1992, is what Marxists call a bonapartist ruler. The term refers to a regime usually headed by a strongman, typically a (former) military leader (like the original Napoleon Bonaparte), which in a period of crisis or stalemate between the irreconcilably opposing class forces of labor and capital elevates itself to a position of “leader of the nation,” seemingly above competing class interests. In Argentina and Mexico, such bonapartist rule was combined with corporatism, whereby political, social and even trade-union organizations are directly tied to the state.

In fact, the current bourgeois opposition in Venezuela includes Democratic Action (AD), which began as a bourgeois-populist party and dominated Venezuelan bourgeois politics for decades. Moving to stave off labor unrest, the AD government in 1945-46 was able to extract substantial concessions from the oil companies to the benefit of oil workers. This resulted not only in the creation of a labor aristocracy among the oil proletariat, but also gave AD control of the vast majority of oil unions in the country.

Revolutionary Marxist leader Leon Trotsky analyzed why bonapartist rule frequently occurs in countries that have “skipped stages,” i.e., where there was no bourgeois revolution and socio-economic modernization before the rise of imperialism as a stage of capitalist development. Although these societies, like any other capitalist society, are divided into three classes—the bourgeoisie, the proletariat and the vacillating petty bourgeoisie—the national bourgeoisie is weak and, in fear of the proletariat, serves as dependent agents for foreign imperialism. In a transcript of a 1938 discussion with Trotsky, then in exile in Mexico, titled “Latin American Problems: A Transcript,” Trotsky said:

“We see in Mexico and the other Latin American countries that they skipped over most stages of the development. It began in Mexico directly by incorporating the trade unions in the state. In Mexico we have a double domination. That is, foreign capital and the national bourgeoisie, or, as Diego Rivera formulated it, a ‘sub-bourgeoisie’—a stratum which is controlled by foreign capital and at the same time opposed to the workers; in Mexico a semi-Bonapartist regime between foreign capital and national capital, foreign capital and the workers. “Every government can create in a case like this a position of oscillation, of inclination [tilting or leaning] one time to the national bourgeoisie or workers and another time to foreign capital. In order to have the workers in their hands, they incorporated the trade unions in the state.”

In Venezuela, the Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela (CTV—



Workers World Party promotes illusion that the rule of capitalist populist Chávez represents a “revolution.”

time, to be victorious the workers had to break with the Popular Front government, a form of bourgeois rule: “It is only necessary to seriously and courageously advance the program of the socialist revolution” (“The Lesson of Spain” [July 1936]). While the Chávez regime in Venezuela is a bourgeois-populist, not a popular-front, government, a U.S.-backed military coup aimed at toppling it would necessarily pose the defense of the organizations of the working class and plebeian masses.

The immediate perspective that is urgently posed is not only to oppose U.S. imperialist incursions into Venezuela and elsewhere, but to fight to shatter the support of the workers movement to either Chávez or the opposition, and to forge a revolutionary internationalist workers party to lead the working class to power.

the Iraq war (despite his verbal opposition to the U.S. war) and pays the foreign debt to the imperialist bankers. Venezuela depends on the U.S. market for two-thirds of its oil exports which generate 75 percent of the country’s export earnings and half the government’s revenues. In turn, bogged down with an Iraq occupation going badly, certain circles among America’s imperialist rulers see a stable source of oil from Venezuela as more important than removing Chávez.

With hunger riots in Argentina still fresh in mind and a deep economic crisis throughout Latin America, Venezuela’s oil windfall and the entanglement of U.S. imperialism in Iraq allow Chávez to posture as an “anti-imperialist” strongman in America’s backyard. Along with recent popular upheavals in Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador, Chávez’s defeat of the recall referendum is another indication of a political-ideological shift in the climate away from “neoliberalism” to nationalist populism in the region. As we wrote at the time of the Argentine economic crisis which ignited mass protests and strikes in “Behind the Global Capitalist Recession” (Part Two, WV No. 768, 9 November 2001):

“However, such a shift in the political climate and balance of forces is not in itself anti-capitalist. In a sense, it would strengthen the forces of capitalism in Latin America by recementing the ties of the working class to its own national bourgeoisie, which is well practiced in demagogic denunciations of Wall Street and Washington.”

Nationalist populism and economic neoliberalism are merely alternative policies of the same capitalist rule, often pursued by one and the same individual, as dictated by the exigencies of the moment. Thus former workers’ leader Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva of Brazil abruptly

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Venezuelan Workers Confederation) is subordinated to the bourgeoisie's Fedecámaras (Chamber of Commerce) through the political domination of AD over the CTV. Following a three-day strike in 2000 by oil workers affiliated to the CTV, Chávez introduced a union-busting national referendum on whether existing unions should undergo a "re-legitimation" process. The CTV called for a boycott and only about 25 percent of the country's electorate participated. A necessary step in the evolution of any bourgeois populist regime must be to attempt to bring the unions to heel. Chávez has sought to do this by either co-opting workers organizations or crushing them through repression, or some combination of the two. When a majority of CTV candidates won in the "re-legitimation" elections, Chávez then threw his support to a new, rival union federation, the Unión Nacional de Trabajadores (UNT—National Workers Union). Many union leaders within the UNT see defense of the Chávez government as the central axis of their formation. The future of the UNT will be no different than the CTV so long as the UNT remains subordinated to the bourgeoisie through its alliance with Chávez.

To advance the struggles of the workers in Venezuela and for the labor movement to champion the rights of all the oppressed, the rural toilers, the unemployed, women and the youth, it is essential to fight for the complete and unconditional independence of all the trade unions from the capitalist state and bourgeois parties. This means a fight to turn the trade unions into organs of class struggle and not machines in the service of bourgeois-nationalist rulers and imperialism's satraps.

"Death of Communism" Leftists Tail Chávez

Close ties between Castro's Cuba and Venezuela are a thorn in the side of America's rulers. But both Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez are opposed to the fight for social revolution in Venezuela or elsewhere. In the late 1970s-early 1980s, when a civil war raged in El Salvador and the left-wing Sandinistas toppled the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua, Castro advised against following the "Cuban road"—i.e., he advised against the expropriation of the capitalist class and the overthrow of capitalist rule. Castro thus contributed to the subsequent defeat of the Salvadoran insurgency by the U.S.-backed military regime and the eventual toppling of the Sandinistas as a result of U.S. economic warfare and support to the contra terrorists.

This has only emboldened the American imperialists to tighten the noose around Cuba with the imperialist blockade. We Trotskyists fight for unconditional military defense of the Cuban deformed workers state against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution. Our perspective is to forge a Trotskyist party to lead a political revolution against Stalinist misrule in Cuba and to implant the revolutionary internationalist perspective of Bolshevism and the fight for revolution throughout the Americas.

It must be precisely because Chávez has no intention of carrying out a social revolution that the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP) called for "unconditional military defense of the Chávez regime" ("U.S. Hands Off Venezuela!" *Proletarian Revolution*, Spring 2004). Vehemently opposed to the Trotskyist program of unconditional military defense to any and every workers state, where capitalist rule was overthrown, the LRP invokes the slogan...to defend the capitalist Chávez regime without condition—i.e., giving Chávez a blank check.

The LRP has historically refused to defend the workers states on the false premise that they are "state capitalist." Well, Trotsky wrote that bonapartist regimes like Cárdenas' in Mexico "create a state capitalism which has nothing to do with socialism. It is the purest form

of state capitalism" ("Latin American Problems: A Transcript"). Now, irony of ironies, the LRP reserves the call of "unconditional military defense" for the "Cárdenas-lite" bonapartist regime of Chávez!

A more credible argument is presented by the Mexican Liga de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (LTS—Workers League for Socialism), which originated from the tendency of the late Nahuel Moreno, an Argentine pseudo-Trotskyist who was an ardent supporter of bourgeois-populist general Juan Perón, who ruled Argentina in the 1940s and '50s. In an article on



Marxist.com

Chávez glad-hands Alan Woods of pseudo-Trotskyist International Marxist Tendency in Caracas earlier this year.

the recall referendum (13 August), the LTS states: "The Chávez leadership can only bring defeat and frustration to the Venezuelan masses. Unfortunately, most of the left capitulates to him, bestowing political support more or less shamefacedly, which only serves to impede the proletarian vanguard from regrouping around independent working-class politics." These fine words serve to camouflage the operational conclusion drawn by the LTS: "Vote NO critically, a NO to the opposition and to imperialism, which in no way means a 'YES' to Chávez." Thus when the ballots were counted, all the LTS rhetoric notwithstanding, their position and their vote were to maintain Chávez in office, helping to recement the ties between Venezuela's working people and the Chávez regime. The LTS is a very good example of centrism: revolutionary in words, opportunist in deeds.

Hugo Chávez does not even pretend to be a Marxist. That ruse is for the ostensible socialists who support him. None are more fawning than the International Marxist Tendency (IMT). British IMT leader Alan Woods has been wine and dined by Chávez. Chávez quotes from Woods' book, *Reason in Revolt*, on his weekly television broadcast, *Aló Presidente*. IMT members in Venezuela threw themselves into promoting Chávez, guided by Woods' oddly messianic adulation of the strongman: "He alone has dared to confront the power of the oligarchy and defy the might of American imperialism." This is reminiscent of what pseudo-Trotskyist groups in Argentina have argued, that it was correct to have supported Perón, otherwise you would be supporting "the oligarchy."

The IMT is taken to task for "over egging the pudding" in their adulation of Chávez by the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI). A lengthy CWI polemic, "Revolutionary socialists and the Venezuelan revolution," (21 June) waxes orthodox against the IMT's capitulation to bourgeois-nationalist forces. Nonetheless, the CWI then goes on to advise Chávez on how he should have responded to the referendum, to the point of criticizing Chávez for not organizing workers militias and committees rather than agree to the referendum. The CWI writes:

"Chávez agreed to proceed with the referendum arguing that he will win it and it will strengthen the legitimacy of his regime. This was an incorrect policy in

our opinion.... Rather than accept this result it would have been far better to strengthen the community organisations and build workers' elected councils, to link these up locally, on a citywide basis, regionally and nationally and go onto the offensive. Together with rank and file committees of the soldiers these bodies should establish an armed workers' militia and take the necessary step to take the revolution forward and overthrow capitalism."

In the same article cited above, the CWI writes, "It remains to be seen if Chávez actually proceeds to undertake the arming of the working class and the general population," thus pushing the deadly illusion that Chávez and the capitalist state would ever arm the working class. Such deadly illusions have been pushed in the past by leftists with disastrous results, for example, in Chile in 1970, when the Socialist leader Salvador Allende was elected president as head of a Popular Front coalition. As a condition for taking office, Allende pledged to the Chilean bourgeoisie and its American imperialist protectors that he would appoint no military or police officers who had not been trained in the established academies and, moreover, would prohibit the formation of workers or other popular militias. We warned at the time: "Any 'critical support' to the Allende coalition is class treason, paving the way for a bloody defeat for the Chilean working people when domestic reaction, abetted by international imperialism, is ready" ("Chilean Popular Front," *Spartacist* No. 19, November-December 1970). And three years later that is exactly what happened.

Notwithstanding the CWI's criticisms of the IMT, the premise of the CWI is *not* that Chávez is a bourgeois politician and therefore the class enemy of the working class and oppressed, but that he has simply not gone far enough in his "revolution." Rejecting the struggle to build a revolutionary workers party, both the CWI and IMT (which until 1991 were one organization) are characterized by liquidation into and promotion of social-democratic and bourgeois-nationalist forces.

Hugo Chávez is a lot more frank about his aims than the craven leftists who capitulate to him. In an interview with Tariq Ali (*CounterPunch*, 16 August) Chávez explained:

"I don't believe in the dogmatic postulates of Marxist revolution. I don't accept that we are living in a period of proletarian revolutions. All that must be revised. Reality is telling us that every day. Are we aiming in Venezuela today for the abolition of private property or a classless society? I don't think so.... Try and make your revolution, go into combat, advance a little, even if it's only a millimetre, in the right direction, instead of dreaming about utopias."

The basic premise of all the left groups—from Workers World Party to the IMT and CWI—that to one degree or another support the Chávez regime or prettify it is that the anti-imperialist rhetoric and reforms are a step toward socialism, a sort of modern variant of the Menshevik/Stalinist schema of "two-stage revolution" (the first stage being a bourgeois-democratic revolution and the second stage, in the never-to-be future, being

a socialist revolution). But both Marxist principle and all historical evidence have demonstrated that the tying of the working class and its organizations to any bourgeois ruler only serves to impede independent working-class struggle, and sets up the proletariat and its allies for slaughter by the bourgeoisie. In the case of Venezuela and Chávez, this would be posed when either Chávez turns on the workers and poor (for example, if oil revenues substantially drop) or when the Chávez regime is overthrown by more rightist forces. In opposition to such left groups, Marxists seek to prepare the Venezuelan working class to effectively combat the murderous forces of bourgeois reaction, whether carried out by Chávez or his bourgeois opponents.

By historical standards, Hugo Chávez is not a particularly radical left bourgeois nationalist either in terms of his ideological posture or actual reforms. During the Cold War era, many left bourgeois nationalists, like Egypt's Nasser or Algeria's FLN, claimed to be carrying out some kind of "socialist" program or transformation. Even Mexico's Lázaro Cárdenas nationalized the oil industry and made significant land distributions to the peasantry in the 1930s. The subordination of the working class to Cárdenas resulted in more than 60 years of corporatism and the shackling of the proletariat to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), the bourgeois ruling party until 2000. And if one looks at the living conditions of working people and the oppressed in countries like Mexico today, you can plainly see the limitations of even the most radical bourgeois nationalists. In the wake of the destruction of the Soviet Union, ostensibly Marxist organizations that have always tailed left bourgeois nationalists are today reduced to promoting nationalist politicians who openly repudiate any socialist pretensions.

Authentic communists struggle to forge Leninist-Trotskyist parties throughout Latin America, and this means a determined struggle against bourgeois nationalism which serves as the "glue" binding workers to their "own" rulers. Chávez's "Bolivarian revolution" is an appeal to anti-U.S. Latin American nationalism. But as one of the founding documents of Trotsky's Fourth International, "Thesis on the World Role of American Imperialism" (1938) underlined: "Only a union of the Latin American peoples striving towards the goal of a United Socialist America and allied in struggle with the revolutionary proletariat of the United States would represent a force strong enough to contend successfully with North American imperialism."

It is only the working class that has the social power to end the rule of the foreign imperialists and their local lackeys. Key to the survival of a workers revolution in Venezuela is its international extension to the rest of Latin America, particularly into Mexico and Brazil, and into the imperialist United States itself. This is the perspective of permanent revolution for which we of the Spartacist League/U.S. and our comrades of the Grupo Espartaquista de México, sections of the International Communist League, fight. ■

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TORONTO

Iraq...

(continued from page 1)

churns out more cover-up “investigations” of the Abu Ghraib torture chamber, new horrors are coming to light. “Keep them standing,” was the order at a Marine-run jail in Iraq called “Camp Whitehorse,” where a 52-year-old detainee, Nagem Sadoon Hatab, was beaten to death because he wouldn’t or couldn’t keep standing. According to a report of the court-martial of Marines involved, in the *San Diego Union-Tribune* (28 August), Hatab had six broken ribs and a broken hyoid bone in his neck when he was found dead, naked, curled in a fetal position, in the prison’s yard. Marines violently beat Hatab and claimed he fell into some razor wire, then dragged him by the neck, stripped him and left him to die.

When U.S. rulers first launched the war against Iraq, they claimed to be fighting to bring “freedom” to the oppressed Shi’ite and Kurdish people. But as the occupation, with all its savage atrocities, marches on, so does increased resistance to it, including by Shi’ite clerical leaders. Now, the U.S. portrays the likes of al-Sadr as nothing more than terrorists and barbaric religious fanatics. But it should be noted that al-Sadr and his allies recently intervened to free a kidnapped American journalist, Micah Garen, because of his work documenting the looting of

Iraqi antiquities from 5,000-year-old archeological sites near Nasiriya, while the Taliban—Wahhabi extremists of Sunni Islam and the erstwhile allies of the U.S.—destroyed irreplaceable ancient Buddhist statues in Afghanistan in 2001, claiming they were an “affront” to Islam.

The seething hatred for the arrogant occupiers could again explode into open military conflict at any time. But our call for military defense of those who take up arms against the occupation is by no means a blanket endorsement of the so-called “Iraqi resistance”—we oppose the murderous communal violence against other religious, ethnic and national groupings, the terrorist bombings which wantonly blow up innocent civilians, the kidnappings and execution of foreign civilian workers.

The once-powerful Iraqi Communist Party—with its strong secular traditions—was smashed decades ago by the Ba’athists in league with the U.S. imperialists. And today, with the devastation of war and occupation, and after more than 12 years of murderous United Nations sanctions, the Iraqi economy is in ruins, with unemployment at 70 percent. Nonetheless, it is urgently necessary to fight to forge Marxist workers parties in Iraq and throughout the region. Capitalism can never equitably resolve the democratic rights of the peoples of Iraq and the Near East—the Palestinian and Hebrew-speaking peoples as well as the Kurds,



Reuters

U.S. military forces devastate Najaf in fighting against insurgents led by Shi’ite cleric Moktada al-Sadr.

Shi’ites, Sunnis and others. Liberation and justice can only come with the overthrow of bourgeois rule in the region and the establishment of a socialist federation of the Near East, as part of the fight for international socialist revolution.

The subjugated Iraqi masses face the same racist and union-busting enemy faced by working people and the oppressed in the United States. It is in the class interests of the multiracial American proletariat to fight for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq. In Iraq, the struggle against the American occupation must be combined with a struggle

against all forms of bourgeois nationalism and religious fundamentalism. As we wrote last issue, “While making clear that the main enemy is U.S. imperialism, a revolutionary party with roots and influence in Iraq today would mobilize against the reimposition of *sharia* [Islamic law], against communalist sectarian attacks, for organizing the vestiges of the workers movement and the legions of the unemployed on a class basis through strikes and workplace occupations against the thieving imperialist occupiers and parasitic clerics.” *U.S. out of Iraq now! Defeat U.S. imperialism through workers revolution!* ■

Education...

(continued from page 11)

long and bitter struggle, the fight for open admissions was won at the City University. Practically overnight, this nearly all-white university became racially mixed, producing black engineers, teachers and other professionals. But almost as soon as it became fully integrated, this university, which had been free during the Spanish-American War, the two world wars and the Great Depression, started imposing tuition fees on its students.

The tuition hikes started under Democrat Mario Cuomo’s administration. By 1995, the tuition had grown high enough to provoke several thousand students and teachers from all the campuses to converge in protest at City Hall. As the protests continued to flare up on the campuses during the weeks that followed the rally, Chancellor W. Ann Reynolds began to bring reprisals against those students who led the protests. The Professional Staff Congress (PSC), the union at CUNY, supported Chancellor Rey-

nolds in her persecution of protesters. Support for open admissions is not even on the radar screen in unions like the UFT and PSC. In its revolutionary ten-point program the LBL calls for the universities to be free and open to all.

At every turn of the road, black and immigrant students find themselves being turned back from the city’s major colleges. Instead of mobilizing labor on behalf of black rights, the unions have tied themselves to the ruling class through their allegiance to the Democratic Party. The teachers union has put the preponderance of its efforts into securing school safety. They have aided and abetted the capitalist rulers by making the schools look like correctional institutions. This means increasing the presence of police and metal detectors. Both students and teachers have a right to attend safe schools, but to students who are harried and hounded on a daily basis by police, to students who are warehoused in dead-end special classes for minor infractions and often deemed deviant, turning the schools into prisons can only increase their sense of alienation and despair.

I am no longer surprised that the promise of *Brown v. Board of Education* never materialized. It is as important to the capitalists to control and restrict the level of literacy among the black population as it is for them to control the flow of guns into the inner city. It is worth remembering that it was during the height of the abolitionist movement that the prohibitions against slaves learning to read were solidified in slave codes. The slave masters were well aware that literate men like Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner had led the major slave rebellions. This fear exists today. Why else would the capitalist rulers have framed up Geronimo ji-Jaga (Pratt), a decorated Vietnam veteran and military strategist, and Mumia Abu-Jamal, a prize-winning journalist? Pratt was released when overwhelming evidence was produced to exonerate him; equally cogent evidence has surfaced on behalf of Jamal, but he remains in prison. What a threat this super-articulate black man must be to the state.

Where does one turn for racial justice? To the Supreme Court or the Constitution? That is what the school system pro-

motes. Courses like “The Constitution Works” are typical of the staff development that is offered to teachers. But the Constitution to which they turn is also the document that was written to enshrine slavery. I might also point out that it is the same document that restricted voting rights to white males of property. It took a long and bloody civil war and 100 more years of violent struggle to extend those rights to blacks and women. In fact, all of the rights we have have been won through struggle.

Property taxes are still, however, the basis for school funding. Even the literacy programs are funded on property values. As long as property remains the basis for funding schools, education will remain separate and unequal, providing quality education for those who have property and denying it to those who do not. What I did not know when I was fifteen, but is eminently clear to me now, is that it will only be through socialist revolution, which topples the capitalist state and brings the multiracial working class to power, that we can hope to have integrated equal education for all. ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

Million Worker March...

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Transportation and Infrastructure subcommittee that “port employers are not following Coast Guard regulations vigorously.” While lately Local 10 leaders have voiced support to the port truckers’ cause, Mitre focused on attacking largely immigrant port truckers as the problem—this while the non-union port truckers are desperately trying to organize against the same shipping bosses that want to destroy the ILWU.

The ILWU tops have offered up longshoremen as the guardians of capitalist security on the waterfront. Instead of uniting all workers on the docks in a union fight, these misleaders have split the working class by openly embracing the “war on terror” targeting immigrants and the ILWU itself. This demonstrates that unless you have a trade-union leadership that makes a decisive break with the capitalist state, it will intertwine the union with the capitalist state and its repressive apparatus, even to the point of having the union carry out some of the state’s police functions. With the capitalists on an anti-immigrant witchhunt, only a fighting workers party can lead a winning struggle for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants* and to *organize the unorganized*.

An example of the kind of labor-centered class struggle that a revolutionary workers party would fight for is the Oakland 9 February 2002 united-front protest in defense of immigrant rights and against the USA-Patriot Act and the Maritime Security Act initiated by the Partisan Defense Committee and Labor Black League. Support from ILWU Local 10 was crucial in making this protest a real demonstration of labor solidarity.

This Government—Democrat or Republican—Is Not Ours

When the MWM Mission Statement denounces the “handful of the rich and powerful corporations [who] have usurped our government,” it feeds the illusions of workers that this is “our government” and not a tool of the “rich and powerful corporations.” Besides, “usurped” from whom? As most of the heavily black workforce of ILWU Local 10 knows, the “founding fathers” of this country—Washington, Jefferson, Madison, etc.—were rich white men whose wealth was accumulated from the labor of the black slaves they owned.

American *capitalist* democracy is a tool for the continued dictatorship of the employers and the exploitation of the



ILWU contingent at March 20 antiwar demonstration in San Francisco. Right: Poster at ILWU Local 10 hall pushes Kerry-Edwards ticket; local newspaper highlights Kerry’s agreement with Bush on asserting U.S. military power.

workers. The government, tied by thousands of threads to Wall Street, acts as an executive committee on behalf of the employers as a whole, whether Democrats or Republicans are in charge. Its real job is to defend the capitalists’ continued rule, their wealth and their prof-

tradition. Its leadership included the officials of key unions in the city, as well as leaders of the Socialist Party and the Communist Party, who all promoted the ALP as an “independent party.” But in reality, the purpose of the ALP was to channel socialist-minded workers into



WV Photos

Karl Marx: “Abolish the Wages System!”

In his 1865 work *Value, Price and Profit*, Karl Marx addressed the limits of even the most militant struggles that remain within the confines of the capitalist system:

“They [the working class] ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction; that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady. They ought, therefore, not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerilla

fighters incessantly springing up from the never-ceasing encroachments of capital or changes of the market. They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the *material conditions* and the *social forms* necessary for an economical reconstruction of society. Instead of the *conservative* motto, ‘A fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work!’ they ought to inscribe on their banner the *revolutionary* watchword, ‘Abolition of the wages system!’”

its by wielding armed force—the cops, the courts, the prisons—against unions, black people, immigrants and all the oppressed. It is a fantasy that the bourgeois political parties and the government can be made accountable to the poor and oppressed, as the MWM claims.

Nonetheless, a wide range of self-proclaimed socialist groups—like the reformist Workers World Party, International Socialist Organization, Freedom Socialist Party, Northern California Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism, and Socialist Organizer—have flocked to the MWM, echoing the fake refrain of “independence.” This is nothing new. In July of 1936, for example, the American Labor Party (ALP) was founded in New York City, where the workers had a long and strong socialist

voting for Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Democrats, “to put over a deliberate political swindle on workers who were seeking genuine independent labor political organization and action” (see Art Preis, *Labor’s Giant Step* [Pathfinder, 1972]).

The American labor movement is disarmed by its leadership’s acceptance of the capitalist system and its allegiance to the Democratic Party. The fight to forge a new, class-struggle leadership in the trade unions is inseparable from the

fight to forge a workers party—and in the end both will be built through the struggles of labor and the oppressed in defense of their interests against the capitalist bosses.

Writing on the eve of the Second World War, Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky advanced the Transitional Program both to defend the interests of the proletariat under capitalism and to take forward the struggle for socialist revolution, writing:

“If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish. ‘Realizability’ or ‘unrealizability’ is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what its immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery.”

For the workers and all the oppressed to achieve their fundamental needs—like education, health care, decent jobs—this country must be taken out of the hands of the Wall Street billionaires and put in the hands of the workers. While fighting to defend every gain of the workers, a workers party would use every struggle to prepare for the fight for a workers government—a different kind of government democratically run by the workers that seizes industry, transportation and the banks from the capitalists and rebuilds the country based on planning for social need, not profit. The MWM’s political program is an obstacle to building the politically independent, fighting workers party we desperately need. ■



UAW

1937 Flint sit-down strike led to rise of UAW as powerful industrial union. To defend its interests and those of the oppressed, labor must be mobilized in struggle.

Spartacus Youth Club Forums

Break with the Democrats! No Vote to Nader! We Need a Fighting Workers Party!

Saturday, Sept. 11, 2 p.m.
Immanuel Presbyterian Church
3300 Whilshire Blvd.
(1 block west of Wilshire/Vermont
Redline Station)
For more information: (213) 380-8239
or e-mail: slsycla@sbcglobal.net

LOS ANGELES

Thursday, Sept. 16, 7 p.m.
UC Berkeley
110 Wheeler Hall
(near downtown Berkeley BART)
For more information: (510) 839-0851
or e-mail: slbayarea@sbcglobal.net

BAY AREA

Saturday, September 11, 5 p.m.
Also: Eyewitness Report from RNC Protests
UIC Circle Center, White Oak Room, 750 S. Halsted St.
For more information: (312) 563-0441 or e-mail: spartacist@iname.com

CHICAGO

Labor Black League Discussion

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Now! Abolish the Racist Death Penalty! For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

Update on Mumia’s case and readers circle discussion to follow showing of:
From Death Row, This Is Mumia Abu-Jamal

Saturday, September 18, 4 p.m.
299 Broadway, Suite 318
(1-1/2 blocks north of Chambers St.)

For more information: (212) 267-1025

NEW YORK CITY

WORKERS VANGUARD

Break with the Democrats! Fight for a Class-Struggle Workers Party!

Million Worker March: Tail of Lesser-Evilism

Working people in the U.S. are frustrated and looking for a way out from the grinding exploitation, racist oppression and poverty that pervade American life. Most are rightly fearful and angry at the loathsome Bush administration, and are looking for an alternative. But no such alternative exists with Democrat John Kerry, who at nearly every turn—like the “war on terror” and the occupation of Iraq—is promoting himself as an even more effective “war president.” The only way to fight for the interests of working people and the oppressed is to build a workers party that will lead the struggle for the emancipation of labor through socialist revolution and the establishment of a workers government.

Judging from the AFL-CIO’s official “stay away” orders to unions, you might think that the “Million Worker March” (MWM), scheduled for October 17 in Washington, D.C., is a break from “lesser evil” support for the bosses’ Democratic Party in the November 2 elections. Indeed, “a great movement for social change” (to borrow words from the MWM Mission Statement) is urgently needed in this country, but the movers and shakers behind the MWM have no intention of building the workers party we really need.

Many workers think that an “Anybody but Bush” vote for Kerry is not really a vote for the capitalists’ other party of racism and war. Without an explicit renunciation of the Democrats, railing against the Bush administration only feeds these illusions. The MWM platform deliberately avoids denouncing “lesser evil” support to the Democrats—including by their own unions, whose tops are pouring money into Kerry’s campaign coffers. Workers who want a genuinely independent workers party must raise their own class-struggle banners at the MWM in October.

Some workers are indeed disgusted with the prostration of the AFL-CIO officialdom under John Sweeney, whose 1995 promise to revive the union movement has proved utterly empty, and with their blatant electioneering for the Democrats. How then does a union bureaucrat mobilize those among the black, Hispanic and working-class population who are disaffected to turn out for the Democrats this November? This is where the MWM, with its facade of “independence,” comes in.

Sweeney & Co. issued a memorandum to “All State Federations and Central Labor Councils” encouraging them “not to sponsor or devote resources to the demonstration in Washington, DC but instead to remain focused on the election.” In answer, International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 president Henry Graham and two MWM co-chairs, Local 10 officials Clarence Thomas and Trent Willis, baldly stated: “There is nothing inconsistent with our mobilizing for October 17 and attempts

to dump Bush.” The ILWU has endorsed Kerry’s campaign. One MWM supporter, F. Christopher Silvera, an official of Teamsters Local 808 in Long Island City, frankly declared in a letter posted on the MWM Web site:

“The Million Worker March is a crucial vehicle for voter mobilization. The timing of it, coming two weeks before

no way will these problems be solved by “demand[ing] that politicians and the administration listen to the people who pay their salaries, rather than the voices of big business and the rich,” as the ILWU Local 10 resolution initiating the MWM last February said. That amounts to yet another fruitless attempt to pressure capitalist politicians to do the right

struggle militancy would mean defying the bosses’ laws and injunctions, anathema to the UFCW leadership and the union bureaucracy more generally.

No decisive gain for labor was ever won in a courtroom or by an act of Congress. Everything the workers movement has won of value has been achieved by mobilizing the ranks of labor in hard-fought struggle, on the picket lines, in plant occupations. The strength of the unions lies in their numbers, their militancy, their organization and discipline and their relation to the decisive means of production in modern capitalist society. What counts is power, and for a long time labor has not flexed its muscles.

Though today’s union tops often speak at MLK Day assemblies and invoke racial equality, they reject the hard class struggle needed to organize integrated unions. This is most sharply posed in the South, where “right to work” laws are backed up by racist Klan terror. The union bureaucracy’s refusal to wage the kind of struggles needed to organize the South and the unorganized more generally has resulted in the spiraling decline in union membership and the general weakening of the labor movement that has been taking place over the last few decades.

Organize the Unorganized! Jobs for All!

In a statement last May, Clarence Thomas declared that “the central reason” for the MWM “is the systematic outsourcing of our jobs to areas of the world where workers can be exploited even more ruthlessly.” Thomas himself has on many occasions supported international labor solidarity (for example, in defense of Iraqi trade unions). But any form of support for “America First” economic nationalism puts you in bed with your own bourgeoisie.

Appeals for protectionism—seeking barriers to the import of competing goods from abroad—reinforce U.S. capitalist interests and widen chauvinist and racist divisions within the working class internationally. Unemployment and the drive to lower the cost of labor are necessary to the capitalist boom-bust economic cycle. The capitalist will always go where wages are lowest, whether it’s the open shop American South or India. Key to the defense of workers in the U.S. is *solidarity action to support organizing of workers in foreign countries*.

The union tops have also pledged allegiance to the political goals of U.S. imperialism. A graphic example is outlined in the May 2004 issue of the ILWU’s *Dispatcher*, which headlines: “ILWU Lobbies Congress for Port Security.” The ILWU flew its new “Port Security Director,” Mike Mitre, to Washington to testify on June 9 to the House

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WV Photos

Oakland, 9 February 2002: Partisan Defense Committee and Labor Black League initiated labor-centered demonstration against government’s “anti-terror” laws, in defense of immigrant rights. Below: Longshoremen were at core of united-front mobilization.



the election makes the march the cheapest, most effective get-out-the-vote initiative ever undertaken by the Teamsters and the AFL-CIO.”

We Need a Workers Government!

The MWM Mission Statement raises many of the urgent problems of working people today whose living conditions are under assault across the board—health care, education, housing, jobs, wages, the U.S. war against Iraq. But

thing for the working class. But this is a for-profit system where the government serves the ruling class and no one else.

To go forward, the working class has to mobilize its social power independent of the capitalists, their state and all their political parties. In the recent strike of grocery workers in Southern California, what was really needed for the UFCW to succeed against the supermarket bosses was the national extension of the strike, including actions like shutting down the distribution centers. This kind of class-