

Electoral Circuses, No Bread For a Class-Struggle Workers Party!

While workers suffer the impact of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, with unemployment and foreclosures threatening the livelihoods and lives of millions, including those with no “safety net” whatsoever, the 2010 midterm elections are a circus, and a sick one at that. The capitalists’ ideologues and editorialists tell you to take your pick: the Wall Street Democrats or the billionaires’ club of the Republicans, with their racist and socially retrograde Tea Party wing. Parading as rebels against “big government,” the Tea Party movement, composed mainly of enraged elements of the petty bourgeoisie, is funded by big bourgeois interests for electoral purposes. It’s the usual shell game, the bosses’ con, with the labor misleaders and black bourgeois politicians mobilizing working people and minorities to “fight the right”—i.e., vote Democrat.

Democrats, Republicans: Partner Parties of War and Racism

In this game, the racist capitalist rulers always win, as the working people once again are lined up, *against* their own class interests, behind the supposedly more benign face of this system of exploitation, oppression and war. A recent memo from AFL-CIO political director Karen Ackerman obtained by the *New York Times* documents a massive campaign to get out the union vote. The memo complains that corporations and right-wing groups “are

spending record amounts of undisclosed money to lie to voters about which candidates will fight for the middle class” and raises a call to fight for “economic patriots who will stand with working people.” Here in capsule form is the class collaborationism that defines the outlook of the labor misleaders. For them, wage workers are a part of a great “middle class” of Americans who share common national interests with the capitalist exploiters.

This myth is ingrained in the dominant bourgeois ideology, which obscures the *class line* dividing the tiny class of capitalists—the owners of industry and the banks, whose driving interest is profit—from the working class—i.e., those who sell their labor power to the capitalists. As the bosses’ labor lieutenants, the union bureaucracy has increasingly sacrificed the class-struggle weapons that built the unions in the first place—strikes, plant occupations, mass labor protest. As a result, the union movement is at a historic low point, at a time when the capitalists are trying to make the working people pay for the economic crisis.

All over the capitalist world, the working class is facing austerity measures and union-busting. In response, Europe has seen an outbreak of defensive labor

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Washington Escalates Attacks in Pakistan

Bloody U.S. Imperialism Out of Afghanistan Now!

Barack Obama came to office pledging to step up the murderous U.S./NATO war in Afghanistan, including by intervening militarily in Pakistan to chase down Taliban leaders. As president, he has fulfilled that campaign promise and then some. While almost tripling the number of troops in Afghanistan to nearly 100,000, Obama has sharply stepped up attacks by pilotless drone aircraft in neighboring Pakistan, killing villagers by the score. The CIA carried out a record 26 such sorties last month. In a further escalation, U.S./NATO helicopters operating out of Afghanistan recently carried out several cross-border raids into Pakistan, including a September 30 attack in which they shot up a couple of border posts, killing three Pakistani soldiers.

As is inevitable in all imperialist occupations, the war in Afghanistan has entailed an endless series of atrocities directed against civilians, who have perished by the thousands. In the latest of the seemingly endless litany of sadistic outrages perpetrated by imperialist forces, a dozen U.S. Army soldiers stationed in Kandahar province have been charged in



Afghan villagers mourn victims of U.S./NATO attack in Nangarhar Province, September 19.

the random murder of Afghan civilians for sport. The soldiers cut up the bodies of their victims in order to save fingers and skulls as trophies of war.

The invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 under George W. Bush was initially embraced by bourgeois liberals as a “just” response to the September 11 terror attacks. The occupations of Afghanistan and, later, Iraq were largely intended by the U.S. imperialists as an assertion of

Washington’s willingness and ability to project military power and ride roughshod over anyone the imperialists perceive as standing in their way.

Today, with no end in sight to the Afghan quagmire and with their economies reeling from the world capitalist crisis, Washington’s NATO allies who have nearly 50,000 troops in Afghanistan, are increasingly withdrawing their contingents or preparing to do so: the Neth-

erlands pulled out this summer, Canada is scheduled to do so next year and Poland’s newly elected president promised to follow suit by 2012. While maintaining some 50,000 troops in Iraq, Obama seeks to define an “exit strategy” from Afghanistan that can be implemented before the 2012 elections and will not be perceived as a humiliating debacle.

That strategy includes a massive expansion of secret CIA operations. Journalist Bob Woodward reports in his new book *Obama’s Wars* that the CIA created and controls a 3,000-man paramilitary army of Afghans known as Counterterrorism Pursuit Teams, which carry out covert operations in Pakistan against suspected Al Qaeda and Taliban militants. As Woodward explains, Obama has kept in place or expanded 14 intelligence orders, known as findings, issued under Bush to provide a legal basis for the CIA’s worldwide covert operations. Obama has enormously expanded the global deployment of special operations forces, which now operate in 75 countries, including Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia.

The importance the administration places on these operations helps explain its uproar over the leaking of 76,000 classified U.S. military field reports posted in August on the Web site WikiLeaks. The logs show that CIA-led forces

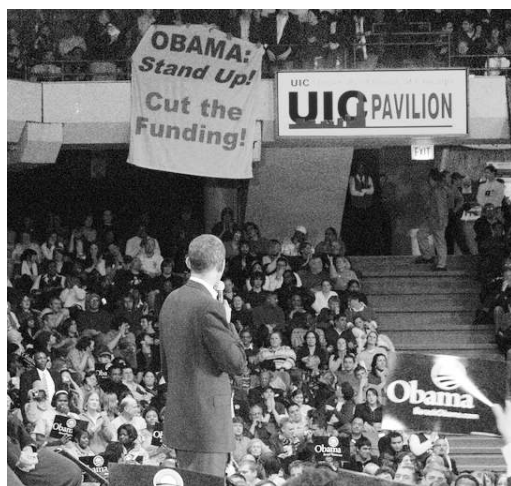
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On One Knee or Two Before Obama?

Two years ago, the International Socialist Organization (ISO) celebrated the election of Barack Obama as the new Commander-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism as a “transformative” event in American politics. Pondering “how Obama and the Democrats will use their power,” an editorial in *Socialist Worker* (7 November 2008) breathlessly asked if Obama would “fashion an economic program that puts the interests of working people at its center,” “use government ownership of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and shares in big banks in order to halt mortgage foreclosures,” and institute “an economic stimulus program that creates secure, long-term jobs.” While cautioning that Obama’s “powerful message of hope” had not been “matched by a commitment to radical policies,” the ISO nonetheless promised that with sufficient pressure “we can make the Obama years an era of struggle and political progress” (*Socialist Worker*, 19 November 2008).

Amid the carnage of mass joblessness, poverty and destitution, rising racist reaction and a full-bore assault on public sector unions, the escalation of the murderous



Chicagoist

Reformists' hopes spring eternal: ISO-led protesters unfurl banner at Obama campaign rally in 2007 at University of Illinois at Chicago (left); sign at Los Angeles demonstration this March (right).



Robert S. Lowden

occupation of Afghanistan—all hallmarks of the “Obama years” so far—it is hard to sell such political snake oil today. But ISO leader Lee Sustar was undeterred. In the face of a nationwide union-busting offensive against teachers unions by the Obama administration, Sustar opened an

article in the 19 August *Socialist Worker* with the incredible statement: “Your president wants you to save teachers’ jobs”!! As evidence of the Democratic Party president’s “unequivocal” defense of teachers’ jobs, Sustar pointed to Obama’s cynical, get-out-the-vote promotion of a \$10 billion education jobs bill passed in August.

This drew a mild, if remarkably public, rebuke from Sustar’s fellow ISO leader, Paul D’Amato (author of *Socialist Worker* columns that occasionally endeavor to provide some Marxist veneer to the ISO’s abject reformism). In a 25 August letter to *Socialist Worker* titled “Don’t Let Obama Off the Hook,” D’Amato chastises Sustar for shining “a too-positive light on the Obama administration.” A letter in the same issue from one Andy Libson was rather more harsh in taking Sustar to task, while professing his understanding that “Sustar and *Socialist Worker* are trying to use the words and deeds of our president to spur a quiescent working class into action.”

Libson’s telltale reference to Obama as “our president” gives the measure of the ISO’s rare public “debate.” At issue is not the fundamental Marxist principle of *working-class independence* from all the parties and agencies of the capitalist class enemy. Rather, it is simply a question of how far to go in selling out to parties of the bourgeoisie.

In any case, Sustar, having been slapped on the wrist, has obviously been rehabilitated and is once again plying his pen for the cause of making the Democrats “fight.” In a 4 October *Socialist Worker* article titled “The Change We Didn’t Get,” Sustar contrasts Obama’s record with that of liberal icon Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who “managed to turn a far worse eco-

omic crisis into a political opportunity, locking in Democratic dominance of Congress for most of the next six decades.”

And what a six decades it was. To take just the first two, under the rule of FDR and the subsequent Democratic Party regime we had: World War II, from which the U.S. emerged as the world’s predominant imperialist power; the internment of Japanese Americans; the A-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; the launch of anti-Soviet Cold War I and the domestic anti-Communist witchhunt, which purged the unions of Communist Party (CP) and other militants who led the class battles of the 1930s; the slave-labor Taft-Hartley Act. These are but a few examples of the assaults on the working class and oppressed under “Democratic dominance of Congress.”

But for Sustar, the nub of the problem is that “Roosevelt faced something Obama didn’t: an insurgent working class.” The 1930s was a period of tumultuous class struggle—from pitched battles with scabs and cops to sit-down strikes—when many militants were open to the need for a workers party. But in the ISO’s eyes, the purpose of insurgent working-class struggle is not the eradication of capitalist exploitation and oppression but the consolidation of the rule of the class enemy in its Democratic Party face.

Nothing new here, and hardly just the view of Sustar—this was the line of the Stalinist CP as well as the social democrats of that day. For its part, the ISO was born locked in an anti-Communist embrace of imperialist “democracy” against Stalinist “totalitarianism,” promoting the cause of any and every imperialist-inspired counterrevolutionary force whose aim was the destruction of the Soviet Union—a program the ISO continues to champion against the remaining states where capitalism has been overthrown, such as China.

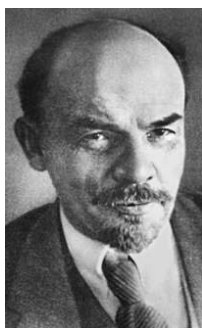
The only reason Sustar got in some temporary trouble is that his declaration that Obama was defending teachers’ jobs couldn’t have been sold to extraterrestrials. It had to be cleaned up for the ISO to soldier on in trying to convince young radicals, workers and others not to give up on the idea that under sufficient pressure “from below” the Democrats can be made to serve the interests of the working class and oppressed. Exposing the reformist opponents of proletarian socialist revolution is part of the struggle to break the chains that have shackled the working class and oppressed to the Democratic Party and to forge a multiracial revolutionary working-class party. ■



TROTSKY

The Fraud of Bourgeois Democracy

Writing at the close of World War I, Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin exposed bourgeois democracy as a cover for brutal exploitation and oppression, a facade to conceal the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Lenin’s 1918 work—a continuation of his 1917 classic The State and Revolution—polemicized against apologists for “democratic” bourgeois rule, centrally Karl Kautsky, a leading German Social Democrat who bitterly opposed the 1917 October Revolution and soviet rule (i.e., workers democracy).



LENIN

If we are not to mock at common sense and history, it is obvious that we cannot speak of “pure democracy” as long as different *classes* exist; we can only speak of *class* democracy. (Let us say in parenthesis that “pure democracy” is not only an *ignorant* phrase, revealing a lack of understanding both of the class struggle and of the nature of the state, but also a thrice-empty phrase, since in communist society democracy will *wither away* in the process of changing and becoming a habit, but will never be “pure” democracy.)

“Pure democracy” is the mendacious phrase of a liberal who wants to fool the workers. History knows of bourgeois democracy which takes the place of feudalism, and of proletarian democracy which takes the place of bourgeois democracy....

Take the bourgeois parliament. Can it be that the learned Kautsky has never heard that the *more highly* democracy is developed, the *more* the bourgeois parliaments are subjected by the stock exchange and the bankers? This does not mean that we must not make use of bourgeois parliament.... But it does mean that only a liberal can forget the *historical limitations and conventional nature* of the bourgeois parliamentary system as Kautsky does. Even in the most democratic bourgeois state the oppressed people at every step encounter the crying contradiction between the *formal* equality proclaimed by the “democracy” of the capitalists and the thousands of *real* limitations and subterfuges which turn the proletarians into *wage-slaves*. It is precisely this contradiction that is opening the eyes of the people to the rottenness, mendacity and hypocrisy of capitalism. It is this contradiction that the agitators and propagandists of socialism are constantly exposing to the people, *in order to prepare* them for revolution!

—V.I. Lenin, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (1918)

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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

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

chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net

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

slsycla@sbcglobal.net

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

nysl@tiac.net

Public Office: 1st and 3rd Sat. of every month, 1-4 p.m., and by appointment, 299 Broadway, Suite 318

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

slbayarea@sbcglobal.net

Public Office: Sat. 1-5 p.m., 1634 Telegraph, 3rd Floor

TROTSKYIST LEAGUE OF CANADA/LIGUE TROTSKYSTE DU CANADA

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

spartacan@on.aibn.com

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

trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

Asylum Now for All Refugees!

Stop Persecution of Tamils!

The following article is reprinted from Workers Hammer No. 212 (Autumn 2010), newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League.

WORKERS HAMMER

Despite an attempted cover-up by the brutal Sri Lanka regime, evidence is emerging about the mass slaughter that was inflicted on the Tamil people in the North East of the island last year. During the final stages of the Sri Lankan army's military offensive, it is estimated that tens of thousands of Tamil civilians were slaughtered. At the end of the bloody 26-year war by the Sri Lankan armed forces against the Tamil people, the remnants of the Tamil mini-state were destroyed, the nationalist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which has been fighting for an independent Tamil state for the last three decades, suffered a military defeat and its leader, Vellupillai Prabhakaran, was executed. Some 300,000 Tamils who were trapped in a small area of the North East were interned in horrific prison camps and interrogation centres.

The Sinhala-chauvinist regime of Mahinda Rajapaksa, who was re-elected president in January in a grotesque display of anti-Tamil triumphalism, has continually sought to extract vengeance on the beleaguered survivors of this blood-bath. Over the past year many desperate refugees have lost their lives on the high seas as they attempt to flee to safety abroad. When nearly 500 Tamil refugees managed to make it to Canada, the Sri Lanka regime obscenely tried to vilify them as "terrorists."

The Canadian government whipped up a racist furore, sending a naval warship on August 12 armed with guided missiles to intercept the barely seaworthy cargo ship carrying the refugees, which had left Thailand in May and had already been turned away from Australia. Canadian police as well as the military boarded the vessel and took the migrants into custody; the majority of the refugees languish in jail while the state demonises them as potential "terrorists." The Canadian government also vowed to work with Australia and other countries to stop the Tamils from even setting sail. Australia already sends its navy to intercept refugees on the high seas, turning them back or redirecting them to Indonesia, which incarcerates them in Australian-funded detention centres. Those captured in "Australian waters" are imprisoned behind razor wire on remote Christmas Island. Five refugees died and scores were injured last year when their boat exploded after it was seized by the Australian navy. More recently, the Labor Party government there suspended the processing of all new asylum claims by Tamil as well as Afghan refugees and signalled its intent to ramp up deportations.

The plight of the refugees was captured in a 16 August letter issued by the Canadian Tamil Congress which stated:

"We have undergone severe hardships with very little or no access to basic necessities such as food, water, sleeping space, medicine and sanitary facilities. We have traveled for almost four months with much suffering and pain. We have come here, to this wonderful country Canada, to protect ourselves and our family members from the murders, disappearances and violence that still exist in our native country."

Protesting the government's racist treatment and detention of the Tamils in British Columbia, our Canadian comrades wrote: "We demand that all those now detained in B.C. be released immediately and that all Tamil refugees be given full

asylum! The fight to end the racist deportations and for full citizenship rights for everyone who has made it here is part of the struggle to sweep away the brutal rule of capitalism through socialist revolution" (*Spartacist Canada* No. 166, Fall 2010). The working class internationally must defend the Tamil people! **From Britain to Canada to Australia we demand: Asylum for Tamil refugees, fleeing the murderous onslaught by the Sri Lankan government and army!**



Some 300,000 Tamils were interned at Menik Farm (above) and other detention centers during and after Sri Lankan army offensive against Tamil separatists last year. Below: This August, Canadian police and military boarded ship carrying nearly 500 Tamil refugees, taking them into custody as potential "terrorists."

AFF

Department of National Defence



U.S. imperialism gave clear backing to the Rajapaksa government's offensive against the Tamils. On 6 January 2009 the American ambassador in Colombo issued a statement welcoming the fall of the Tigers' administrative capital, Kilinochchi, to the Lankan army and affirming that the U.S. "does not advocate that the Government of Sri Lanka negotiate with the LTTE" (*Asian Tribune*, 9 January 2009). Soon after, a high-level delegation from the U.S. Pacific Fleet Command arrived for "discussions" with the heads of the Lankan security forces (Indo-Asian News Service, 21 January 2009). Only *after* the army drove the LTTE from its final urban bases in early February did the U.S. and Britain call for a "temporary no-fire" agreement (*International Herald Tribune*, 4 February 2009).

Over the past year tens of thousands of Tamils in London, Toronto and other cities around the world have taken to the streets in protest at the desperate plight of the Tamil people on the island. The Spartacist League/Britain and other sections of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) have joined protests against the massacre, distributing

literature in solidarity with the besieged Tamils and putting forward our proletarian-revolutionary perspective for national and social liberation. We have long upheld the right of self-determination for the Tamil people—i.e., their right to form an independent state in the largely Tamil North and East. We stand for the military defence of the LTTE against the army assault and demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Lankan army from the area.

the British Tamils Forum reports that thousands gathered carrying placards and hoisting flags "appealing to the UK establishment and the UN to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity in Sri Lanka." There should be absolutely no illusions that the UN, or the governments in Ottawa, London, Washington or other imperialist centres will defend the interests of the Tamil people. The often heated diplomatic rifts between the Colombo government on the one hand and the UN or the British government merely reflect tactical differences. The imperialist powers, including the UN, would prefer the blood-soaked Sri Lanka regime to adopt a hypocritical concern about "human rights" now that the war has ended. But the vindictive Rajapaksa regime is not about to pay lip service to "human rights" for Tamils. Indeed other repressive regimes such as in Israel, Myanmar and Thailand are beating a path to Colombo to learn how to apply the "Sri Lanka option"—i.e., mass slaughter—against the oppressed peoples on their own terrain.

When in February 2009 David Miliband, as foreign secretary under the then Labour government, addressed a meeting of the Global Tamil Forum in London (alongside the present Tory foreign secretary, William Hague) furious Sinhala-chauvinist protests in Colombo attacked the British High Commission and burned an effigy of Miliband. Needless to say Miliband used his speech to the Global Tamil Forum to denounce the LTTE, describing it as "a terrorist organisation which committed countless atrocities." This is rich, coming from a spokesman for a government that has responsibility for the brutal occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq that have led to countless thousands of deaths.

The Colombo government also went foam-flecked in June when UN secretary general Ban Ki Moon appointed a three-member advisory panel, which was intended to deflect external pressure from human rights groups and figures in the U.S. Congress. But this toothless UN body drew mobs of government-backed protesters onto the streets of Colombo, where the UN office was besieged and a cabinet minister, Wimal Weerawansa, went on a hunger strike. In response, the UN made it abundantly clear that the panel's aims are to award the Sri Lanka regime a "human rights" stamp of approval. A UN statement of 9 July said the panel's objectives include the "fostering of reconciliation" as well as "reflecting the commitment by Sri Lanka to the promotion and protection of human rights." The UN panel will also assist the "Lessons learnt and reconciliation commission" set up by the Rajapaksa regime to investigate why the 2002 ceasefire ended—i.e., to take the heat off the army and put the LTTE into the frame.

The UN is preparing a whitewash of the Sri Lankan military's heinous crimes and of the "democratic" imperialist powers who backed the Sri Lankan state in carrying out its brutal war against the Tamil people. The UN panel was set up over a year *after* the war had ended and amid widespread anger when information about Sri Lankan atrocities against the Tamils began to leak out into the public domain. Moreover, the UN itself was under criticism. A report in the (London) *Times* said that Ban Ki Moon's chief of staff, Vijar Nambiar, was told in late May 2009 that "at least 20,000 Tamil civilians were killed in the Sri Lankan government's final offensive" (30 May 2009).

In addition to aiding in the murderous anti-Tamil offensive, the "democratic" imperialist powers—the U.S., Britain,

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Tamils...

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Canada—have declared the LTTE a “terrorist” organisation, as has the European Union, effectively giving the Lankan regime a green light for its attacks. As we wrote in protest against the Tony Blair Labour government’s Terrorism Act 2000 which outlawed the LTTE, among other organisations:

“This Labour government has committed heinous crimes at home and abroad—from the bombing of Serbia and Iraq to drumming up anti-immigrant racism. The British state itself is an international force for terrorism—it carried out colonial massacres in Ireland, Asia and Africa—yet it brands political organisations from the Indian subcontinent and Ireland as ‘terrorists.’ This illustrates what British ‘justice’ and democracy is all about—the capitalist state is the repressive apparatus which defends the private property and rule of the bourgeoisie against the working class and oppressed.”

—Workers Hammer No. 176, Spring 2001

The roots of the decades-long Tamil insurgency lie in systematic discrimination against the Tamil people by successive Sri Lankan governments following independence from British colonial rule in 1948. The deep communal division in Sri Lanka today is itself a legacy of divide-and-rule by the British imperialists who incorporated many Tamils into the colonial administration. But following independence the Sinhalese displaced the Tamils in government service and in access to higher education. The agitation for a chauvinist “Sinhala only” language policy, led by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) in the mid-1950s, codified anti-Tamil communalism as official policy and unleashed a wave of anti-Tamil pogroms.

The national chauvinism of the Sinhalese ruling class led to growing communal polarisation that culminated in massive bloodshed in 1983 with government-inspired pogroms against the Tamils, many thousands of whom were murdered. Tamil homes and businesses in the capital, Colombo, were burnt to the ground, often with the occupants inside. Following the 1983 pogroms, orchestrated under president J.R. Jayewardene of the United National Party, we wrote:

“The massive atrocity taking place in Sri Lanka marks a watershed in that island’s history. The bloodletting and the mass population transfers have set the economy back at least a decade and are forcing the separation of the peoples. J.R. has ripped the country apart, massacring many thousands and forcing the survivors into a virtual ‘bantustan’ in the barren North.”

—“Massacre in Sri Lanka,” Spartacist (English-language edition) No. 35, Autumn 1983

Lessons of Bitter Defeat

The dire situation of the Lankan Tamil people today is testimony to the reactionary logic of nationalism. It also confirms that under capitalism, where two peoples are interpenetrated within the same territory, the national rights of one people can only be expressed at the expense of the other people. Prior to 1983 there was considerable economical and geographic interpenetration of the Tamil and Sinhalese peoples. But the bloodletting and mass population transfers of 1983 forced a separation of the island’s peoples. Tamils were increasingly compacted in the North



Workers Hammer

August 21: London protest against murderous oppression of Sri Lankan Tamils.

and the East, which had been largely Tamil but had also historically been a region of mixed populations, including a substantial Muslim component. Only the overthrow of capitalism through workers revolution can lay the basis for the equitable resolution of the conflicting national claims of the peoples of Sri Lanka.

Drawing the lessons from a bitter defeat is difficult, but necessary. For Tamil (and Sinhalese) pro-working-class activists who are reeling from this massive defeat, the chief political lesson is that the programme of nationalism has proven bankrupt for the oppressed Tamils. We base ourselves on the Trotskyist programme of permanent revolution, a programme for the semicolonial countries which means the industrial and agricultural proletariat must lead all the oppressed in the struggle against semi-feudal backwardness that is the heritage of centuries of colonial subjugation, a struggle which can attain victory only through the overthrow of capitalist rule and the establishment of proletarian power.

The core of this programme is proletarian *internationalism*: a perspective for socialist revolution not only in Lanka but throughout the Indian subcontinent. Developments in Sri Lanka do not take place in isolation but are subject to developments in the international situation. The venal ruling class is beholden to the imperialist powers and the Sri Lankan economy is dependent on foreign investment and on the European Union as a market for the island’s textiles. The working class—including textile workers who are mainly women, and the strategically placed “Indian Tamil” tea plantation workers in the central highlands, descendants of a deeply exploited population brought in from India as indentured labourers by the British—are class brothers and sisters of the more powerful working class in India and elsewhere. We fight for Marxist workers parties throughout South Asia that can unite the working people and oppressed in the struggle for workers revolutions which provide the only road to liberation from the poverty, oppression and national chauvinism that are endemic to capitalist rule, particularly in the neocolonies.

The authentic programme of Trotskyism is today upheld by the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist). The once-Trotskyist Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) abandoned the interests of the proletariat and the defence

of the Tamil people when it entered the Sinhala-chauvinist government of the SLFP in 1964. This was prefigured by the LSSP’s support to the “Sinhala only” campaign against the Tamil minority. Again in the 1980s, government terror against the Tamils drew the line sharply between revolutionists and fake Trotskyists, who capitulated to Sinhala chauvinism.

At the time of the 1983 pogroms, our international tendency was virtually alone on the left in initiating and joining protests internationally in defence of the Tamils. Noting that the blood-bath had “catastrophically altered for the foresee-



Getty

Colombo: Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapaksa in “Victory Parade” marking first anniversary of crushing of Tamil resistance, June 18.

able future the prospects for common class struggle between the Sinhalese working class and the oppressed Tamil minority,” we raised the call for the *right of Tamil Eelam*—a separate Tamil state in the North—and for a federated socialist republic of Eelam and Lanka as part of a socialist federation of South Asia.

Prior to 1983 our organisation had upheld the right to Tamil self-determination while counselling against separation, arguing in favour of united working-class struggle for Tamil freedom and socialist revolution in Lanka (formerly Ceylon) and its extension through the Indian subcontinent. But as we wrote, “in the wake of the mass killing of Tamils, the bitterness and hostility between the peoples of Ceylon has evidently become insurmountable at least in the short run.” While calling for the right of Tamil Eelam, we also noted: “The bloody communal struggle argues that even with proletarian revolution in Ceylon and South Asia generally, a *federated* socialist republic in Ceylon will be necessary to achieve the unity of Tamils and Sinhalese on a basis of justice and equality” (Spartacist [English-language edition] No. 35, Autumn 1983).

At the same time we noted that the prospects for an independent Tamil capitalist state in the underdeveloped North were poor. Nor would the formation of such a state ensure the national survival

of the Tamils, who were interpenetrated with the Sinhalese majority throughout much of the island. On the other hand, the establishment of a federated socialist republic of Eelam and Lanka would be a beacon to the oppressed and subjugated masses throughout the subcontinent, including among the 65 million Tamils across the Palk Strait in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

In the years of civil war that followed the 1983 pogroms, at least 70,000 civilians have been killed and hundreds of thousands of Tamils driven into exile or squalid refugee camps. The LTTE managed to compact a Tamil mini-state in parts of the North and East and eventually signed a ceasefire agreement with the Colombo government in 2002. But the Sinhalese-chauvinist army’s provocations never stopped. After the 2005 election of hard-line SLFP president Mahinda Rajapaksa, who ruled out even autonomy for Tamil regions, the government abrogated the ceasefire and then withdrew from it entirely in early 2008.

Today, contrary to imperialist hype about reconciliation and a return to “stability” on the island, the Rajapaksa family oligarchy makes little effort to maintain even the trappings of “democracy,” having even locked up Sarath Fonseka, who was head of the military during the war on the Tamils and who challenged Mahinda Rajapaksa for the presidency in the last election. Stable bourgeois democratic rule is not on the historic agenda in Sri Lanka, nor is a democratic resolution of the oppression of the Tamil minority. Washington’s central strategic goal on the island is a stable regime that can provide access to the strategic deep-water harbour of Trincomalee in the Eastern Province.

Successive Sri Lankan governments have engaged in brutal “ethnic cleansing” and a bloody process of “Sinhalaisation” has forced hundreds of thousands of Tamils to leave the area while those who remain live under a state of siege. Large tracts of land are still prohibited areas and in all likelihood Tamils will not be allowed to return to certain locations. Foreigners and journalists are still restricted from travelling to the North, where permanent military cantonments are being built on former Tamil areas. Many Tamil refugees remain in camps in the North and thousands of alleged LTTE cadres are held in camps to which relatives, aid organisations or the Red Cross have no access.

The struggle to forge a new, revolutionary party in Lanka must begin with the understanding that the eradication of national oppression and true social progress for the peoples of Lanka and the region will come when the barbaric rule of capital and the divisions inherited from imperialist domination are overturned through socialist revolution. Lasting national and class justice for the Tamil working people will be secured through rule by the workers and peasants in a socialist federation of South Asia, and the extension of proletarian revolutions into the imperialist centres. ■

WORKERS HAMMER
No. 172 AUGUST 2010 40p
Newspaper of the Spartacist League

Stop persecution of Tamils!
1. Despite an alleged ceasefire, the Sri Lankan government has continued its brutal repression of the Tamil people. The British imperialist system of 'humanitarian aid' is a cover for the continued oppression of the Tamil people. The British imperialist system of 'humanitarian aid' is a cover for the continued oppression of the Tamil people. The British imperialist system of 'humanitarian aid' is a cover for the continued oppression of the Tamil people.

All Indian and Pakistani troops out now!
Down with India's bloody repression in Kashmir!

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Vote Yes on California Prop 19

OAKLAND—An initiative on the November 2 ballot in California would make the state the first in the country to legalize the sale of marijuana as well as eliminate criminal penalties for possession or use of an ounce or less by those over 21. It would make cannabis available for scientific, medical, industrial and research purposes and permit the cultivation of small amounts for personal consumption. Proposition 19, “The Regulate, Control and Tax Cannabis Act of 2010,” is written narrowly to leave much of pot use illegal and concerns itself with regulating and taxing its sale. Nevertheless, a vote for Prop. 19 is an elementary expression of support for a simple democratic right: that the government keep its claws off of people’s private lives.

Equally important, a vote for this initiative is a vote against the “war on drugs,” which is in the main a war against black people. While blacks and whites use marijuana at close to the same rate, the arrest rate for blacks is *three times* greater nationally and ranges up to *four times* greater in California counties.

The “war on drugs” has served to greatly intensify capitalist state repression, whose daily workings include street executions by marauding cops, such as the brutal killings of Oscar Grant in Oakland last year and Manuel Jamines in Los Angeles this September. In Latin America, U.S. imperialism—under both Democratic and Republican administrations—has used the “war on drugs” as a pretext for expanding its military presence and propping up pro-U.S. regimes (see “Mexico: Down With ‘Drug Wars’ Militarization!” WV No. 953, 26 February).

Contrary to government claims, the criminalization of marijuana has never had

Down With the Racist “War on Drugs”!



Johansson/NY Times

Lancaster, California: Inmates jammed into gymnasium of massively overcrowded prison.

was officially launched, centered on a racist crack cocaine witchhunt. Incarceration rates skyrocketed, especially for young black men, for whom the capitalist rulers have had increasingly little use since the devastation of unionized industrial jobs beginning in the 1970s.

Starting in the early 1990s, marijuana arrests began to shoot up as crack cocaine arrests leveled off. By 2009, annual mar-

ernment did not stop persecuting a number of patients with harrowing illnesses for whom pot provided some relief.

NAACP president Alice Huffman explained why the California NAACP endorsed Prop. 19 by correctly denouncing “the so called ‘war on drugs’” as “a war that disproportionately affects young men and women and the latest tool for imposing Jim Crow justice on poor African-Americans” (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 16 September). For this, she has come under fire, with more than 20 black preachers and others demanding her resignation. Nate Holden, a longtime black Democratic Los Angeles politician, has come out against Prop. 19. The capitalist Democratic Party, and black elected officials in particular, have been instrumental in the anti-drug crusade. Huffman herself has endorsed Democratic state attorney general Jerry Brown for governor. Brown boasts of enforcing the racist drug laws and opposes Prop. 19. In their role of tying labor to the capitalist class enemy, the bureaucratic misleaders of almost all of California’s public workers unions have also backed Brown, who promises to cut public workers pensions.

The “war on drugs” has at times been supported by large sections of working people and the oppressed who wrongly believe that cops and prisons are a means for combatting the social pathology of drug addiction and the drug trade. In fact, decriminalization, by taking the superprofits out of the drug trade, would also reduce the crime associated with it. For those who wish, any associated psychological or medical problem that may arise from drug use should be treated as a medical

issue, not a criminal one. At the same time, we understand that drug addiction in the ghetto is a reflection of the hellish conditions imposed on masses of black people in this racist capitalist society. As we wrote in “Anti-Immigrant, Anti-Woman, Anti-Sex: U.S./UN Crusade Against ‘Sex Trafficking’” (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 58, Spring 2004):

“Recreational drug use is nobody else’s business, but widespread drug addiction and alcoholism sap the revolutionary energy of the working class and other sections of the oppressed. The social oppression that breeds alcoholism and drug addiction among the poor should be fought through the moral authority of the proletarian socialist movement, and not through state coercion.”

Whipping up hysteria about drugs in the workplace, the California Chamber of Commerce opposes Prop. 19 because the measure approves only the “existing right of an employer to address consumption that actually impairs job performance”—i.e., the current norm for subjecting workers to drug tests. We oppose all workplace drug testing, which the bosses use as a pretext to frame up or target militants and cow the entire workforce.

The racism and union-busting of the “war on drugs” come together in the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) program, under which port workers are branded as a “threat to national security” for offenses ranging from drug possession with intent to distribute to fraud and being an “illegal immigrant.” Under TWIC, many port workers have lost their jobs, disproportionately blacks and Latinos, and including members of the largely immigrant port truckers. As the Northern California District Council of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union declared in a statement endorsing Prop. 19: “Peoples’ lives are ruined for a lifetime because of criminal records incurred from using a drug that is used recreationally by people from all walks of life. Those criminal records fall disproportionately on the backs of workers, poor people, and people of color.” Down with TWIC!

We support Prop. 19 as a step toward removing all laws against drug use, but we do not take a position on the particular schemes advanced by Prop. 19 to regulate the commercial production and taxation of marijuana. Moreover, we oppose the draconian measures it would mete out when it comes to youth—the other group specially targeted by drug laws—and those who provide them marijuana. These include up to seven years in prison for offering or providing pot to youth under 14, up to five years for ages 14-18 and six months for ages 18-21. Despite its weaknesses, however, if passed and actually implemented—no sure thing given federal and police hostility—Prop. 19 would eliminate a key legal pretext for state harassment and violence. **Down with the racist and anti-labor “war on drugs”! For decriminalization of drugs! Vote yes on Prop. 19!** ■



Jet

Al Sharpton marking “crack house” in 1986, providing fodder for capitalist rulers’ racist “war on drugs.”

anything to do with protecting anyone’s welfare. Anti-drug laws are designed to maintain social control and regimentation of the population, providing a legal pretext to repress black people, immigrants, youth and others.

Laws against marijuana were first adopted beginning in 1914 as a racist measure against Mexican immigrants in the Southwest. A federal ban in 1937 opened the era of campaigns against “reefer madness,” especially targeting both blacks and Latinos. The first federal “drug czar,” Harry Anslinger, captured that ban’s spirit with such racist diatribes as “reefer makes darkies think they’re as good as white men.”

Today’s plethora of drug laws are an outgrowth of the web of legal repression under the “war on crime,” kicked off with Democrat Lyndon Johnson’s 1968 “Safe Streets Act” and Republican Richard Nixon’s 1970 “Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act.” These and subsequent measures were implemented to target black militants and the ghetto poor following the upheavals against segregation, poverty and racist cop terror in the mid-to-late 1960s. Under Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, the bipartisan “war on drugs”

marijuana prosecutions had reached more than 858,000. More than half of all drug arrests are for marijuana, and 46 percent of all drug arrests—nearly 760,000 a year—are for possession. U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder has made clear the government’s opposition to Prop. 19, vowing that the Obama administration would “vigorously enforce” federal drug laws.

The government has no business criminalizing the personal use of *any* drug, for any purpose, regardless of its particular risks or effects. As communists, we demand an end to *all* laws against “crimes without victims,” such as gambling, prostitution, drug use, pornography and all consensual sex. Likewise, we oppose “sin taxes” on activities and products the bourgeoisie deems “immoral” or unhealthy, like alcohol and tobacco.

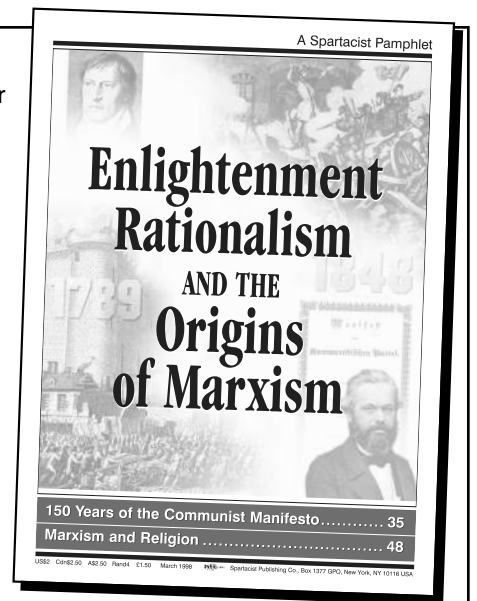
In fact, marijuana is among the safest of non-food substances consumed by humans. Yet under the Controlled Substances Act, the Feds put it on the list of the supposedly most dangerous drugs, Schedule I, along with heroin, and ahead of Schedule II drugs like cocaine and morphine. Despite the passage of Prop. 215 in 1996, which made medical use of marijuana legal in California, the federal gov-

This pamphlet reprints presentations given by SL Central Committee member Joseph Seymour on the origins of Marxism in the French Enlightenment and in left Hegelianism. Also included are “150 Years of the Communist Manifesto” and “Marxism and Religion.”

In the retrograde climate of post-Soviet reaction, the struggle to reassert the validity of the program and purpose of revolutionary Marxism is crucial for our fight for new October Revolutions.

\$2 (48 pages)

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Education...

(continued from page 12)

Education Act in 1958.

A certain level of education is also necessary for industrial labor. During World War II, when there was a labor shortage and the bourgeoisie needed workers for war industries, California shipyard owners recruited untrained and often semi-literate Southerners, black as well as white, who learned to read and write, and often became skilled apprentices in little more than three months. During the war, the G.E.D. program was initiated to prepare returning servicemen who lacked a high school diploma to take jobs. It was expanded in 1963 for the general population.

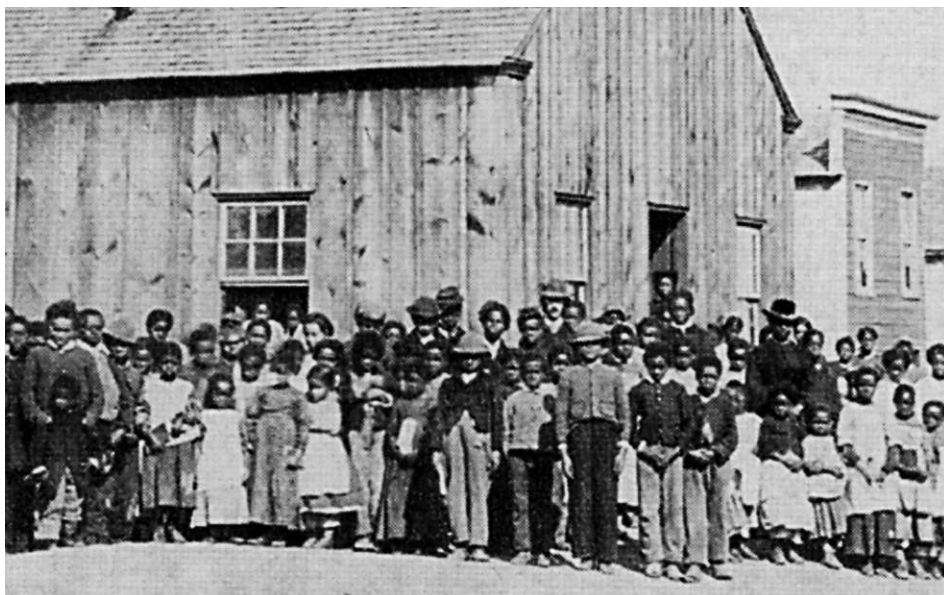
While black workers have been a key component of the workforce in industry, they have also typically been the “last hired and first fired.” And after the bosses took the wrecking ball to steel mills and auto plants in the North and Midwest, the government saw little need for the overhead expense of educating those whose labor power was no longer needed. As a result, the children of black workers in particular have been treated more and more as an expendable population. The financial titans’ interest in “education reform” has nothing to do with the welfare of the poor, black and working-class kids penned up in decrepit, underfunded schools. For these kids, it’s all about pushing union-free schools where longer days and a longer academic year can be required to cultivate obedient wage slaves (if needed) and foot soldiers for the American empire.

In capitalist America, which was founded on black slavery, the black population forms a specially oppressed caste stigmatized because of skin color. Separate never has been and never can be equal. Whether it is run by Barack Obama or anyone else, the capitalist system is racist to its core—from segregated housing and schools to unemployment, cop terror and mass incarceration in the name of the

“war on drugs.” While closing schools and hospitals, the capitalist rulers have seen fit to pay for the “overhead expense” of prison construction, on a massive scale. Poor black youth are offered the “choice” of facing death on the streets, including at the hands of the racist cops, enrolling in U.S. imperialism’s wars and occupations, expecting time in jail, or, for some, a minimum-wage job.

Minority students in segregated schools across America confront conditions more suitable for a police state than for a place of study: metal detectors, video cameras, strict hall and truancy monitoring by security guards, drug testing, locker searches. “Zero tolerance” policies have led to tens of thousands of arrests for such “crimes” as pushing, tardiness and using spitballs. Cities hire school security out of local police forces, which carry out murderous racist terror on the streets. The nearly 5,000 “School Safety Agents” and 200 armed police on duty in New York City public schools constitute the tenth-largest police force in the country. This is an “education” system that essentially treats minority youth as future criminals. The schools serve to reinforce the isolation of black youth in a society where 28 percent of black men are destined to spend time behind bars.

In his 2005 book *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America*, Jonathan Kozol, an award-winning author and former Boston public school teacher, cites a study by Harvard professor Gary Orfield that powerfully documents the growing segregation of public education. Five decades after the 1954 Supreme Court *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling that overturned formal legal segregation of public schools, Northern schools are more segregated than those in the Deep South. More than two million black and Latino students attend what Kozol calls “apartheid schools,” in which 99 to 100 percent of students are non-white. During the 1990s, the proportion of black students who attended



Robert Langmuir Collection

Alexandria, Virginia, 1864: School founded during Civil War by fugitive slave and abolitionist Harriet Jacobs.

majority white schools decreased to a level lower than in any year since 1968. The Supreme Court’s 2007 decision throwing out school desegregation plans in Seattle and Louisville gave official sanction to those seeking to overturn some 1,000 remaining integration plans across the country.

Bilingual education has also been under steady attack. In California in 1998, racist Proposition 227 required replacing bilingual programs with sink-or-swim “English immersion” classes. As we wrote in “Down With ‘English Only’ Racism!” (WV No. 688, 10 April 1998): “Those with the ability to become bilingual on their own due to privileged circumstances—e.g., those with access to private tutoring, or who come from educated households—are deemed to be an asset to the country. The rest, often from impoverished, rural families where no one is literate in any language, are to be used as superexploited, terrorized and preferably illiterate unskilled labor.”

Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

It has taken tumultuous, even revolutionary struggle to extend the right to education to black people in America. It took a bloody Civil War to uproot the slave system, under which teaching slaves to read was a crime. Most of the first Southern free public schools were established following the Civil War during Radical Reconstruction, the turbulent decade of Southern interracial bourgeois democracy carried out by the freedmen and their white allies and protected by Union Army troops, many of whom were formerly enslaved. A literacy rate that was around 5 percent for black people in the 1860s rose to 40 percent in 1890. As symbols of measures toward black equality, schools were often targets of Ku Klux Klan terror.

With the Compromise of 1877 and the withdrawal of the last federal troops from

the South, black people were left at the mercy of former slaveowners, now backed by Northern capital, and their murderous nightriders. Funding for black education was slashed and Jim Crow segregation eventually became the law in the South, leaving its imprint in the North as well. Nonetheless, black teachers continued to struggle against enormous hardship to operate schools for black children. In the segregated Northern ghettos that emerged following the Great Migration of black Americans to industrial centers in the early 20th century, separate and unequal schools for blacks became facts of life linked to segregation in housing.

The civil rights movement of the 1950s and ’60s took up the fight against segregated and inferior schools, contributing to the end of de jure segregation in the South. But under the leadership of liberals like Martin Luther King, who looked to the capitalist Democratic Party, the courts and the government, that movement could not end the de facto segregation of black people, North and South, which is rooted in the capitalist system.

Starting in reaction to the Supreme Court’s *Brown* decision, massive “white flight” to private and suburban schools reinforced segregation. A crucial turning point came in the mid 1970s, when school busing was ordered in Boston—a minimal attempt to integrate its public schools. The busing plan touched off a virulent racist reaction as mobs stoned school buses carrying black kids. The court-ordered plan was limited to neighborhoods like South Boston, one of the poorest white areas in the U.S. outside of Appalachia, and the black Roxbury ghetto. Liberal Massachusetts Congressmen, for their part, made sure that nobody was bused out to the relatively privileged suburban schools, further fueling the racist frenzy. The Spartacist League called to defend the busing plan and extend it to the suburbs. We agitated for the integrated labor movement—



Novosti

4 October 1957: Soviet Union launches Sputnik satellite into outer space. Fear of Soviet lead in military technology sparked last major investment in science education in the U.S.

The New York Times.
“All the News That’s Fit to Print”
VOL. CVIII, No. 34,614
NEW YORK, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5, 1957
LATE CITY EDITION
FIVE CENTS
SOVIET FIRES EARTH SATELLITE INTO SPACE; IT IS CIRCLING THE GLOBE AT 18,000 M. P. H.; SPHERE TRACKED IN 4 CROSSINGS OVER U.S.

Where’s the Kryptonite?

The premise of the newly released—and much hyped—documentary *Waiting for “Superman”* is the director’s “discovery” that the real cause of the ghastly performance of American public schools is...the teachers! Directed by Davis Guggenheim, who also directed Al Gore’s *An Inconvenient Truth* and the biographical film about Barack Obama made for the 2008 Democratic National Convention, this lavishly produced anti-union propaganda piece has been hailed by the bourgeois press and politicians internationally, including Barack Obama, who endorsed it as “heartbreaking” and “powerful.”

This screed argues that if teachers had no protection against firing, U.S. schools would perform as well as those in Finland, which are rated first internationally in math and science. Guggenheim neglects to mention that Finnish teachers are unionized and have tenure, in addition to state-funded training programs, high salaries

and short school days—all fine by us.

The film promotes the non-union charter school operator Harlem Children’s Zone as a model. At Harlem Children’s Zone schools, students’ standardized test scores are above New York City’s average in math. One way these schools raised math test scores was by dismissing an entire grade of students for not performing well enough! Although Guggenheim insists that school performance has nothing to do with funding, money has everything to do with Harlem Children’s Zone, where spending dwarfs that at NYC public schools. Two-thirds of the charter’s \$84 million operating budget comes from private donations.

One of the film’s heroes is Michelle Rhee, who as Washington, D.C., schools chancellor all but gutted union rights and protections, backed in this effort by Mayor Adrian Fenty. Rhee is portrayed as the champion of black school kids and their parents for her

offensive against “incompetent” (read: unionized) teachers. In fact, it was mainly black teachers and black neighborhood schools that got the ax under Rhee, whose restructuring effort touched off a sharp racial polarization in the city. Rhee resigned on October 13 after Fenty lost a Democratic primary election, one of a number of officials across the country who have been booted out in reaction to their attacks on public schools and unions.

As president of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), Randi Weingarten is the film’s main villain, despite the enormous concessions she helped to extract from the union, including by personally intervening to negotiate the contract in D.C. that caved in to Rhee’s demands. Weingarten’s response to the anti-union frenzy in the press has been to stress how much effort the AFT has put into “trying to reform”—including by giving up seniority protections, expediting firings and embracing charter schools. This craven prostration only further endangers teachers and schools. What is needed is a class-struggle fight to defend union protections and for quality, integrated public education for everyone.

Anarchists Unite with Big Brother Against Reds

The following letter by the New York Spartacus Youth Club was submitted to the Climax newspaper at Western Massachusetts' Hampshire College on October 11.

On September 7, Hampshire College's self-appointed speech police struck a blow for censorship. When the Spartacus Youth Club brought our revolutionary Marxist newspaper *Workers Vanguard* to campus, a group of "politically correct" self-described anarchists waged a two-day campaign to kick us off. These junior McCarthys showed their "anti-authoritarian" credentials by crying to the campus administration, which was only too happy to revoke our permit for a literature table. Our purported "crime" was being communists who engage in political debate. These anarchists smeared us as "racist," "transphobic" and "anti-gay" for trying to argue with one of them about capitalism, because the student in question was a transgender "person of color." This argument is as transparently false as it is paternalistic.

Only genuinely anti-gay and racist forces, who seek to silence all opposition, benefit from such idiotic and cowardly censorship. Does this clot seek to suppress the speech of religious groups, the Green Party or Democrats canvassing for votes—who we think have

Hampshire College

every right to express their views—or only the reds? Those groups seek to uphold the system of capitalist exploitation. We want to do away with it. The revolutionary movement has a proud tradition—which we uphold—of scathing arguments and polemics. It is through such clashes of opinion that one actually learns something.

Against the liberal idea of these lifestyle anarchists that one's personal sexual identity can alter the oppressive conditions of capitalist society, we understand that liberation is a material act that requires changing the conditions that people live in. Like women's oppression, the oppression of homosexuals is rooted in the institution of the family, which is fundamental to capitalist society. To do away with all forms of oppression engendered by capitalism, we put forward a Marxist program for socialist revolution. The racist U.S. ruling class pushes every kind of chauvinism and bigotry to

divide working people and the oppressed. We fight to win students to become partisans of the working class and to help forge a multiracial workers party that will act as a "tribune of the people," championing the cause of all the oppressed, crucially fighting to achieve black liberation through revolutionary integration in a socialist society. This is what the Hampshire anarchists don't want you to hear!

We fight against race and class privilege in education. The administration is the capitalists' agent on campus—as shown by its vicious ongoing campaign against the unionization of campus workers. We say: Nationalize Hampshire and abolish the administration! For the campuses to be run by those who go to school and work there! We fight for open admissions and no tuition with a state-paid living stipend so poor and working-class students can attend college. Open up elite \$50,000-a-year Hampshire to the black, immigrant, poor and working-class people of the area, including Springfield!

We urge those students opposed to political censorship to protest to Hampshire Dean of Students Dawn Ellinwood at (413) 559-5412 or dellinwood@hampshire.edu. Check out our Web site: www.spartacist.org!



WV Photo

Boston, 1974: Spartacists fought for labor/black mobilizations to defend busing for school integration. Spartacus Youth League pamphlet *The Fight to Implement Busing*, \$1.50 (photocopy), can be ordered from: Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116.

meatpackers, bus drivers, teachers and others—to organize labor/black defense of the bused black schoolchildren.

In Boston, the liberals caved in to the racist mobs, ushering in decades of attacks on school desegregation nationwide. Even tokenistic affirmative action programs in higher education have been drastically curtailed, to the point that they barely exist outside of some elite universities. Today's education reformers have adopted the racist code word "school choice," which, in the period of the civil rights movement, meant allowing white students to attend all-white public schools and creating all-white private academies, aided by state grants to students' families. Fore-shadowing the policies pursued by George W. Bush and Barack Obama was the school voucher system, which also served to perpetuate racist discrimination.

A defining trait of the race and class inequality woven into the fiber of the U.S. public school system is the role of local taxes in education funding. The wealth or poverty of a particular school district essentially determines the quality of its schools. Predominantly white suburban schools often spend twice what urban school districts do and three times what poorer rural areas spend. And when they find government funding insufficient, donors in wealthier areas shell out the cash for reading specialists, music and arts, science labs and computers as well as the extra-curricular field trips and activities that make for a quality learning environment.

Decades ago, the Spartacus Youth League, forerunner to today's Spartacus Youth Clubs, explained:

"As socialists, we oppose all class-biased and racially discriminatory privileges in educational opportunity. Thus, we are opposed to educational funding based on local property taxes. Instead, we call for

all public schools to be funded at the national level. In addition, all social services—from welfare to health care—should be federally funded."

—"Public Education: Separate and Unequal," *Young Spartacus* No. 52, March 1977

The Spartacist League/SYC's fight to extend the right to education to the university level, demanding open admissions, no tuition, a state-paid living stipend for students and the nationalization of private universities.

The fight for equality in education must also include a struggle against the wretched condition in the ghettos and barrios and in impoverished rural areas as well. How can you be expected to study when you're homeless or hungry, when your families live in fear of immigration raids or are stuck in overcrowded, rat-infested projects?

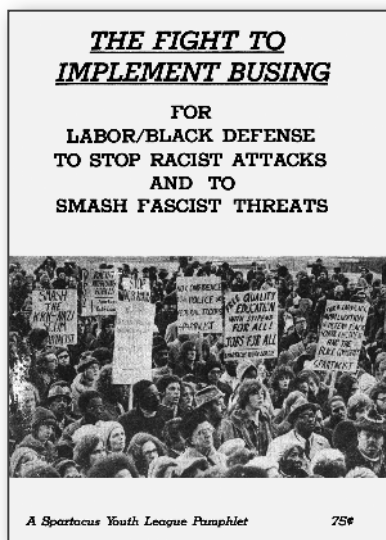
While fighting against discrimination and segregation in schools and housing, we understand that racial oppression cannot be rooted out short of the revolutionary overturn of the capitalist system. Like winning jobs for all, eradicating race and

class bias in education, so that everyone can have access to the quality education that the children of the bourgeoisie get, requires the working class taking power. The road to black liberation and the emancipation of all the oppressed lies in the fight for an egalitarian socialist society, where production is organized to serve human need, not the capitalists' bottom line.

Laissez-Faire Schools Disaster

Some of America's biggest billionaires and venture capitalists have joined with the bourgeois press and Democratic Party hacks in a propaganda offensive aimed at pushing through anti-union school "reform." The moneybags include hedge-fund managers tied to Joe Williams, whose political action committee Democrats for Education Reform was set up to push charter schools, as well as the foundations of Microsoft mogul Bill Gates, union-busting Wal-Mart founder Sam Walton and Eli Broad, who got his billions in housing, insurance and savings rackets.

For these capitalist profiteers, the



A Spartacus Youth League Pamphlet

75¢

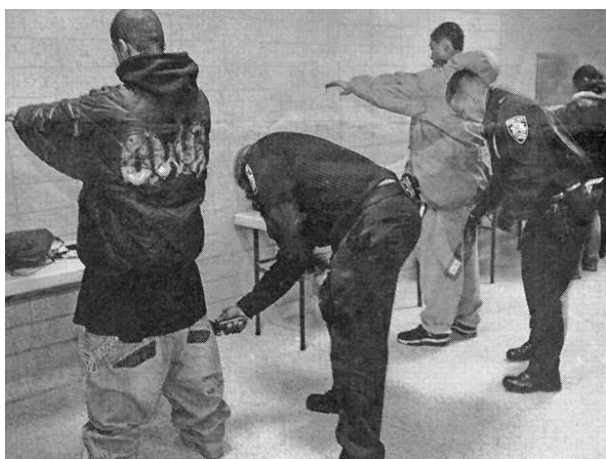
crux of education reform is the application of "free market" principles. This scheme dates back to the 1950s and right-wing economist and longtime University of Chicago professor Milton Friedman. Friedman's "Chicago Boys" gained notoriety by serving as economic advisers to the CIA-backed Chilean dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, which overthrew the popular-front government of Salvador Allende in 1973 and massacred 30,000 workers, peasants and leftists, and imprisoned and tortured thousands more. Once he retired from the University of Chicago, Friedman wrote *Free to Choose*, a playbook for market-based reform, including privatized schooling, and became an adviser to President Ronald Reagan.

Today's "Chicago Boys"—Obama, Education Secretary Arne Duncan and their pals—share Friedman's ideological commitment to "free market" education, embracing privatization, tying funding to test scores and ending union protections like tenure for teachers. An early implementer of this union-busting program was Diane Ravitch, an influential historian and education policy wonk who served in the Bush Senior and Clinton administrations. Ravitch has since had second thoughts. From the standpoint of wanting to further America's national interests, Ravitch's book *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* (2010) laments how the laissez-faire market approach of what she calls "the billionaire boys' club" has gutted government-run education.

As Ravitch documents, turning out higher test scores has become the top priority for financially shaky schools, taking over the school day and spilling over into weekend classes and extra tutoring. Jonathan Kozol aptly describes how "inner-city kids are being trained to give prescribed answers and to acquiesce in their subordinate position in society" (*Huffington Post*, 10 September 2007). Another result is the large-scale falsification of test scores.

The drive to improve test scores or face the ax also puts pressure on schools to get rid of their lowest-scoring students. This process has been expedited by the closing of large "failing" schools and the opening of small facilities in their place, with the lowest-scoring students shunted off to resource-starved and decrepit schools apart from better-scoring students. What we said about Bush Senior's education reforms is as much the point today: "Just test rich and poor 'equally,' and when the poor flunk, well then, that supposedly proves the ruling class shouldn't waste its money on the swelling ranks of the underclass"

continued on page 8



Kamher/NY Times

Kennedy High School in the Bronx. Students are treated like prisoners in inner-city schools across the country.

Education...

(continued from page 7)

("Education U.S.A.—Separate and Unequal," WV No. 544, 7 February 1992).

The Charter School Onslaught

The keystone of the current "reform" package is the mushrooming of charter schools. While part of local school systems, charters are privately owned and operated outfits that take money away from existing public schools and are exempt from Department of Education regulations, as well as from any union contract carried over from the school systems. Some are explicitly operated as money-making ventures, and some are religion-based schools in everything but name.

Charter schools increase racial segregation and class inequality in education and also serve as a tool to smash unions. As a rule, charter schools are opened in the poorest and most segregated parts of cities, often on public school grounds. The better-off white suburban schools remain untouched. Usually, the new schools are even more segregated than the ones they replace. According to a February 2010 study by the UCLA Civil Rights Project, nearly three out of four black charter school students attend "intensely segregated" schools where 90 percent or more of the students are minorities. This is two times higher than the rate at regular public schools.

The proliferation of charter schools has certainly done nothing to integrate schools in Chicago, long known as "Segregation City." Before landing in Washington, Arne Duncan ran the Chicago public school system from 2001 to 2008. By his own account, he oversaw the closing of some 60 schools, primarily in black and Latino neighborhoods, and the expansion of charter and military schools.

It says a lot that the Obama administration has taken the dilapidated and segregated Chicago system as a national model. Only about half of its students graduate high school; the rate is even lower for black male students. In a city that is nearly 40 percent white, white students make up just 8 percent of public school students, and a third of the public schools have not even one single white student enrolled. In 2009, the capitalist courts ended the 1980 consent decree that provided whatever shreds of integration existed in Chicago public schools, primarily in the magnet and selective schools. The decree imposed by the federal government has now been deemed unnecessary because the "vestiges of discrimination" have been eliminated "to the extent practicable"!

From 2004, when Duncan brought out his Renaissance 2010 education blueprint, to the present, over 80 Chicago public schools, largely in minority neighborhoods, have been shut down and replaced with smaller schools—about two-thirds of them charter schools. Charters now comprise 10 percent of the city school system, and almost all are non-union. The system's current "CEO" (the actual title), ex-cop and former Chicago Transit Authority president Ron Huberman, has continued Duncan's "turnaround schools" plan, under which all teachers and staff at "low-performing" schools are fired and replaced by much younger, less experienced teachers who receive far lower wages. Across the country, idealistic young college graduates, mainly white, are being recruited and given a pro forma training course for exactly this purpose by Teach for America and the New Teacher Project, which are supported by the Gates, Broad and Walton foundations. Many new hires burn out quickly—in Chicago it's common that they don't even get through their first school year.

Many black and Latino parents turn to charter schools hoping that they provide an alternative to the decaying inner-city public schools. Schools like Harlem Success Academy are touted as miracle stories, where the black-white "achievement



Chicago JROTC

More than 9,000 Chicago students are enrolled in programs and schools run by the military, the most in any U.S. city. As CEO of Chicago Public Schools, Arne Duncan expanded military presence.

gap" is supposed to be a thing of the past and "behavior problems" are rooted out (including through its "kindergarten boot camp"!)). In order to raise standardized test scores, Harlem Success spends hundreds of thousands every year to recruit the students it wants while pressuring those who score low to transfer elsewhere. It offers no teachers of English as a Second Language and no classes for students with disabilities. Eva Moskowitz, CEO of Harlem Success, coldly told one teacher, "The school is not a social service agency" (*New York* magazine, 25 April).

Belying the hype over such "successful" charters lies a stark fact: charter schools do not even measure up to public schools. According to a 2009 Stanford University study, 46 percent of charter

ished blacks. In addition to terrorizing the black population, boarding up public housing and axing social services, this meant gutting public education. One of black Democratic mayor Ray Nagin's first acts after the floodwaters drained was to fire all 8,000 unionized schoolteachers in an all-out drive to replace public schools with charters. Two-thirds of the city's children are now enrolled in charter schools.

Obscenely, the Brookings Institution think tank has declared that Haiti should follow the New Orleans model, which, it opines, shows how "a fundamentally different education system can be built in the wake of a disaster." *Nothing* is being rebuilt as the desperately impoverished Haitian masses continue to groan under imperialist subjugation, carried out through

Members of Havana youth literacy brigades in 1961. After overthrow of capitalism, Cuba achieved one of highest literacy rates in the world.

Mario García Joya



schools perform comparably to public schools—and 37 percent perform significantly *worse*. Examples of financial skimming and haywire accounting abound. Of the 64 schools in Los Angeles that have had their charters revoked, almost all were accused of financial or administrative mismanagement.

Charter schools represent a major erosion of the separation of church and state supposedly enshrined in the Constitution. A case in point is Chicago, where the parochial school system is already the largest in the world and has long functioned as an escape from integration for white families. Sister Mary Paul McCaughey, superintendent of Chicago Catholic Schools, recently announced that a number of their schools may be converted into charters. In Washington, D.C., seven low-performing Catholic schools became charters on archdiocese property, which, like all church property, is exempt from taxation. We oppose government funding for any religious institution, including schools, and fight as well against any encroachment of religious teaching into the public schools, such as the attempt to promote "intelligent design" at the expense of teaching the *fact* of evolution.

In a chilling sign of how the administration's "reform" schemes will further depress the quality of education, earlier this year Education Secretary Arne Duncan ghoulishly declared that Hurricane Katrina was "the best thing that happened to the education system in New Orleans"! The racist rulers viewed the unfolding disaster of Hurricane Katrina as an opportunity to "change the demographics" of New Orleans—i.e., get rid of impover-

the UN occupation force supplemented by U.S. National Guardsmen.

Before the earthquake, the vast majority of schools in Haiti were private, and more than half of school-age children did not attend school. Next door in the Dominican Republic, free public elementary education is well-established in the cities, although less so in the rural areas. The contrasting results are stark: the literacy rate in the Dominican Republic is 85 percent; in Haiti it's 53 percent. Even so, the situation in the neocolonial Dominican Republic pales in comparison to that in Cuba, a bureaucratically deformed workers state. Since the overthrow of capitalist rule in 1960-61, Cuba has achieved one of the highest literacy rates in the world—higher than the U.S.—as well as the highest doctor-patient ratio.

The War on Teachers Unions

America's capitalist rulers and their media mouthpieces are seeking to manipulate justified anger over the state of public education to bolster their attacks on overworked and underpaid teachers and their unions. Obama & Co. seek to reverse gains for teachers, whose unions grew substantially through a series of labor struggles in the 1950s and '60s. Before that, they had little protection against meager salaries, political favoritism, domineering principals and sex discrimination against a mostly female workforce.

In mid August, the *Los Angeles Times*, which for over a century has specialized in bashing unions, ran a series of attack pieces on the United Teachers of Los Angeles. The paper published a database rating some 6,000 elementary school

teachers by the test scores of their students, promoting this as a tool for firing teachers—an approach endorsed by both Arne Duncan and Democratic California Education Secretary Bonnie Reiss. This witchhunt has since been implicated in the suicide of Rigoberto Ruelas, a dedicated teacher from an impoverished district in South Los Angeles where students scored lower on tests than those in more affluent neighborhoods.

In many public schools, if students get any education at all, it is testament to the dedication of poorly paid teachers who struggle against cutbacks, decaying facilities and increased administration meddling. With the government refusing to shell out for the most basic classroom materials, some teachers spend thousands of dollars of their own money on school supplies.

There is plenty of anger among the membership of the teachers unions over the attacks on their wages and job protections, and over the state of public education. In California, the Oakland Education Association went out on April 29 for a one-day strike against wage freezes, although its members continue to work without a contract. On October 14, Baltimore teachers voted down a contract that would have effectively gutted seniority. But the unions are saddled with a leadership that acts as labor statesmen for the capitalist government, willingly offering up greater concessions from their members in the name of "sacrificing for the kids."

The union tops' class collaborationism is all the more blatant with the Democratic Party, which they falsely promote as the friend of labor and the oppressed, running things. In the last 30 years, the teachers unions have shelled out nearly \$57.4 million to bourgeois politicians in federal elections alone, 95 percent of that to Democrats. Ten percent of the delegates to the Democratic National Convention in 2008 were teachers union members. Under Obama, the Democratic Party has put itself in the front lines of the anti-teacher offensive. Republican Congressman John Kline pointed out (*New York Times*, 1 September) that many of Obama and Duncan's ideas have been pushed by Republicans for years. The union tops' support for the Democrats makes their realization possible. As the *Times* reported, Kline told Duncan, "Arne, only you can do that.... You're the secretary of education for a Democratic president."

AFT president Randi Weingarten, formerly the head of NYC's United Federation of Teachers (UFT), exemplifies the role the labor bureaucracy plays as the bosses' cops inside the unions. Weingarten's mentor, longtime AFT head Albert Shanker, was a raving anti-Communist who acted as one of U.S. imperialism's main labor agents in its drive to smash militant unions and suppress left-wing parties around the world during the anti-Soviet Cold War. Weingarten backs charter schools and various types of "performance pay," in line with Obama's calls for "more accountability" from teachers. No wonder that Duncan told the *New York Times Magazine* (19 September), "I'm a big fan of Randi's." This, to say the least, is not the opinion of AFT members who booed and heckled her at a May union meeting in Detroit. Weingarten's successor at the UFT, Michael Mulgrew, has played his part by agreeing to link teachers' evaluations to standardized test scores and to make it easier to fire teachers whom administrators deem "incompetent."

We Need a Workers Party!

In our articles denouncing Obama's vaunted health care package—a gift to the bankers and insurance companies—we made the point that if the labor movement fought for free, universal, quality health care, it would have broad support among the population, helping to revitalize the trade unions in this country. Similarly, if the teachers unions waged some class struggle in support of free, quality education for all, they would find allies

Afghanistan...

(continued from page 1)

operate out of a string of bases along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, often using extreme ruthlessness against the civilian population. One report of a “home breach” speaks of an Afghan man who was “injured” when Afghan paramilitaries carried out the “traumatic amputation of fingers” on his left hand. Private Bradley Manning, who was stationed in Iraq, has been accused of downloading classified information and faces the threat of court-martial. Whether or not Private Manning was involved, the release of this data, far from being a crime, was a useful and brave act of solidarity with those suffering under the imperialist boot. We demand: Release Private Manning and drop the charges against him!

The U.S. air attacks in Pakistan have unleashed a wellspring of anger among all classes of the Pakistani population. While the increasing Predator drone attacks, run by the CIA out of military bases in Pakistan, have been carried out with the tacit approval of the military-backed regime, manned cross-border air strikes openly targeting Pakistani soldiers are something else again. Those attacks reportedly came after the Pakistani government turned a deaf ear to a demand by its imperialist patrons in Washington that it launch a military offensive in the North Waziristan tribal area against forces accused of fighting U.S./NATO troops in Afghanistan. At the insistence of Pakistan’s military chiefs, Islamabad retaliated by temporarily closing a key border crossing at the Khyber Pass. While U.S. military supplies were allowed to transit through a different border crossing, more than 100 supply trucks caught in the eleven-day traffic jam at the Khyber Pass were torched by Islamic insurgents.

Washington’s drive to carry the war into Pakistan’s northwestern tribal areas, a stronghold of the Taliban and other Islamic insurgents, comes as U.S./NATO forces have manifestly lost control of the military situation in Afghanistan. Despite Obama’s touted “surge” of troop levels, a highly publicized offensive early this year against rural Marja in southern Afghanistan collapsed after U.S. Marines proved unable to uproot Taliban control of the



AFP

NATO oil tankers en route to Afghanistan torched by insurgents in Pakistan.

area. Following that setback, the military brass stepped back from a planned offensive in Kandahar that, they had previously boasted, would break the back of Taliban power in the country’s second-largest city. That operation finally got underway recently to little fanfare, as chastened U.S. generals cautioned their Commander-in-Chief not to expect “significant” progress before his scheduled year-end status review on Afghanistan.

Following the Marja setback, the Obama administration let it be known that it was “revising its Afghanistan strategy to embrace the idea of negotiating with senior members of the Taliban” (London *Guardian*, 19 July). This policy did not sit well with many in U.S. ruling circles, with CIA chief Leon Panetta asking what the point of negotiations was if Islamic insurgents were not convinced “that they’re going to be defeated.”

The U.S./NATO occupation has meant unbridled corruption by Washington’s quislings in Kabul, continued brutal oppression of women and warfare among the various tribal warlords. As revolutionary Marxists, our starting point is proletarian class opposition to the U.S. rulers and the capitalist-imperialist system as a whole. Insofar as the forces on the ground in Afghanistan and Iraq aim their blows against the imperialist occupiers, we call for their military defense while maintaining our political opposition to these forces, in the main Islamic fundamentalist. We call for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. and allied troops and bases from Iraq, Afghanistan

and Central Asia and demand as well: Hands off Pakistan and Iran!

As we have repeatedly stressed, the chief means of defending neocolonial Afghanistan and Iraq against the overwhelming military might of the U.S. and its allies lies in international working-class struggle, especially by the multi-racial American proletariat. The bourgeoisie’s relentless drive for profits necessarily results in neocolonial pillage and wars. Only by wresting the means of production from the hands of the capitalist rulers and creating an international planned economy can the needs of the working people in this country, and of the billions of toilers around the world who are now consigned to hideous poverty, begin to be met. Against the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy, which swears allegiance to U.S. imperialism’s “national interests,” we fight to forge a workers party that will lead the exploited and oppressed in socialist revolution.

For a Socialist Federation of South Asia

By increasingly ratcheting up their military intervention in Pakistan, the U.S. imperialists are intensifying the contradictions that are tearing at the fabric of that society and could well lead to the disintegration of that nuclear-armed state. Pakistan, like India, is a product of centuries of British colonial divide-and-rule domination culminating in the 1947 partition of the Indian subcontinent and the accompanying orgy of communalist slaughter among Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs.

Today, the same arrogant and brutal Punjabi ruling class that was carried over from British colonial rule lords it over Baluchis, Pashtuns and other oppressed nationalities in Pakistan. This “prison house of peoples” is held together through stark repression meted out by the army, which has ruled directly throughout most of Pakistan’s history. While the landed aristocracy, textile bosses and upper echelons of the military plunder the country’s wealth, the desperate poverty of the laboring masses can be gauged by the fact that fully 60 percent of children are stunted—many severely—by malnutrition.

It was against this backdrop that Pakistan was hit in August and September by massive flooding of the Indus River, which engulfed a fifth of the country’s surface—an area half the size of Italy—and left a staggering 20 million people homeless. The government largely left flood victims to fend for themselves, while the notoriously corrupt president Asif Zardari went on a pleasure junket to his French chateau. As for relief offered by the U.S. military, with most Pakistanis viewing the U.S. as an enemy, Islamabad imposed tight constraints: American troops delivering aid were not allowed to carry guns, and relief flights by military cargo planes over Pakistani territory were eventually ordered to cease. Meanwhile, with the country still reeling from the effects of the deluge, several Pakistani cities were hit with renewed sectarian terrorism, including a September 3 attack on Shi’ites in Quetta that left 73 people dead.

While many of Pakistan’s textile factories have been mothballed due to the global economic crisis, Pakistan has a significant working class, one with a history of combative class struggle. The task of liberating all the exploited and oppressed of the Indian subcontinent demands the forging of Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard parties dedicated to the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeoisies in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and the establishment of a socialist federation of South Asia. Only an internationalist perspective, uniting class and other social struggles on the subcontinent with the fight for workers revolution in the U.S. and other advanced capitalist countries, can open the door to liberation for the impoverished masses, which will be achieved through the building of a socialist world order. ■



Washington/NY Times

Teachers union head Randi Weingarten in 2002 with NYC mayor Michael Bloomberg, who went on to lead drive against union, public schools.

in millions of working-class, black and Latino families. When teachers unions have gone on strike in cities like Chicago, Los Angeles and Oakland, they have won support in the ghettos and barrios. To mobilize the unions in such struggle requires fighting against the class collaborationism of the labor bureaucracy, which places its reliance on phony “friends” in the bourgeois government.

In the same camp as the labor sell-outs, the reformist International Socialist Organization (ISO) complained in an article by Gillian Russom in *International Socialist Review* (May-June 2010): “Education should be at the center of a national debate on social priorities, led by a president who promised ‘change.’ Instead, the economic crisis is being used by the White House to dramatically accelerate a neoliberal agenda for education.” This is simply the language of disappointed suitors, as seen in an exchange

among ISO leaders over just how low to bow before the imperialist Commander-in-Chief, whose election the ISO hailed (see article, page 2). Earlier, the ISO’s *Socialist Worker* (2 November 2009) offered that a “real ‘Race to the Top’ program” could “start by taking the largely taxpayer-funded \$23 billion in bonuses that Goldman Sachs is giving out this year, and put that money toward giving nearly 6 million families that \$4,000 income supplement.” Or, as Oliver Twist begged, “Please, Sir, I want some more.”

The labor bureaucracy and the reformist left seek to obscure the understanding that this is a *capitalist government*, whose purpose, as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels instructed over 150 years ago, is to be the executive committee of the ruling class as a whole. Following the years of George W. Bush, the Obama administration was put into office to provide a much-needed facelift for U.S. imperialism in order to further its predatory interests abroad and grind down the working class, blacks and immigrants at home. While handing out billions to bankers and auto bosses, Obama has appealed to everyone else to embrace a “spirit of sacrifice.” Meanwhile, he repeats the disgusting tirade that crumbling schools and poverty are “no excuses” for the black masses and that “hardships will just make you stronger.” Enough! We say: Break with the Democrats! For a workers party that fights for a workers government!

After escaping slavery and educating himself as a fighter in the left wing of the abolitionist movement, Frederick Douglass observed that, in the eyes of the slaveholders, to educate a man “would forever unfit him to be a slave.” The logic

of this statement remains unchanged a century and a half later. To give all people the means to attain their full creative potential requires overturning the present social order, based on the exploitation of labor, vicious racial oppression and grinding poverty. Only after a multiracial

workers party leads the proletariat, at the head of all the oppressed, in overthrowing the decaying capitalist system and constructing an egalitarian socialist society will mankind be freed of the fetters of scarcity and want, and real human history will begin. ■

Spartacus Youth Club Events

CHICAGO

Wednesday, Oct. 27, 6:30 p.m.

Black History and the Class Struggle: For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

University of Illinois at Chicago
African American Cultural Center
Addams Hall
Gallery Room 207
830 S. Halsted Street
(take Blue Line—UIC Halsted stop)
Information and readings: (312) 563-0441
chicagosyc@sbcglobal.net

VANCOUVER

Wednesday, Nov. 3, 6:30 p.m.

The Russian Revolution: How the Working Class Took Power

University of British Columbia
Student Union Building
Room 212
Information and readings: (604) 687-0353
trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

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

NEW YORK CITY

Wednesday, Oct. 27, 7 p.m.

The Russian Revolution and the Fight for New Octobers

CCNY, Room NAC 1-211A
138th St. and Amsterdam Ave.
(1 train to 137th—City College)
Information and readings: (212) 267-1025
nysl@tiac.net

LOS ANGELES

Wednesday, Nov. 10, 6 p.m.

Over 160 Years of the Communist Manifesto Workers of the World, Unite!

UCLA, Rolfe Hall, Room 3131
Information and readings: (213) 380-8239
slsycla@sbcglobal.net

TORONTO

Wednesday, Oct. 27, 6 p.m.

Revolution vs. Reform: Smash the Capitalist State!

University of Toronto, OISE
(Ontario Institute for Studies in Education)
252 Bloor St. West, Room 4420
Information and readings: (416) 593-4138
spartacan@on.aibn.com

Elections...

(continued from page 1)

struggles, sometimes massive. These have been directed against capitalist governments of both the right, such as Sarkozy's in France, and the left, such as Zapatero's Socialist party regime in Spain. As we go to press, a national day of action is taking place in France, where strikes and protests mainly against attacks on pensions have recently drawn in public employees, oil refinery workers and truck drivers as well as working-class and minority high school youth. But the workers' reformist misleaders are simultaneously pushing virulent economic protectionism, which binds the workers and their unions to "their own" ruling classes, whipping up racist reaction against immigrants and dividing workers along national lines. That program disarms the workers, blocking the road to the only way out of capitalism's ruinous boom-bust cycles: proletarian revolution, leading to a Socialist United States of Europe.

In this country, the anti-immigrant drums are pounded not only by the Republicans but also by the chauvinist trade-union bureaucracy and the Democratic Party in which it invests its members' dues and political activity. The Obama administration has exceeded the Bush White House in carrying out deportations and sent even more troops to the Mexican border. As Marxists, we call for the unions to mobilize in defense of immigrants, demanding full citizenship rights for all immigrants. Labor must fight to organize the unorganized, not least in the open shop South, which requires a hard struggle against entrenched black oppression as well as anti-immigrant bigotry. A new, class-struggle labor leadership would link the struggles of workers in the U.S. to those in Latin America and beyond under the call raised by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the 1848 *Communist Manifesto*: Workers of the world, unite!

Even by the government's minimizing standard, the number of Americans living in poverty today is the highest since Washington started keeping such statistics 50 years ago. There is no "recovery" for the record numbers of people suffering long-term unemployment. The federal, state and local governments are slashing services to the bone, hitting hardest at the poor. There is a desperate need for *class struggle*, placing a revived labor movement at the head of the ghetto and barrio masses in a fight against the common capitalist class enemy.

Such struggle needs a political expression: a workers party organized independently of, and in opposition to, the Democratic and Republican parties of capital. The U.S. is the only advanced capitalist country without a party of the working class, even one with a reformist leadership. The lack of this basic level of class consciousness is based in the main on the ethnic, religious and, especially, racial divisions in the working class that have historically been fostered by the capitalists: native-born against foreign-born, white against black.

The Spartacist League and Spartacus



AFP



WV Photo

October 2 "One Nation" rally called by AFL-CIO tops, NAACP in Washington, D.C., to mobilize votes for Democrats in midterm elections. "Socialist Contingent" and rest of reformist left supported rally, which was backed by the Commander-in-Chief himself.

Youth Clubs aim to win working-class militants, anti-racist fighters and revolutionary-minded youth to the perspective of forging a workers party that fights for a workers government. The bloody imperialist carnage in Afghanistan and elsewhere, the drive to extract ever more profit from workers' labor, the grinding oppression of black people, the all-round social bigotry—all these are part of a *system* of capitalist rule. Only when that system is destroyed root and branch by victorious workers revolution—when the capitalist state is smashed and replaced by a workers state—will the proletariat and the oppressed be emancipated.

Elections 2010: Starving Workers, Bashing China

V.I. Lenin, leader of the Russian October Revolution, wrote in his 1918 polemic, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*: "Bourgeois democracy, although a great historical advance in comparison with medievalism, always remains, and under capitalism is bound to remain, restricted, truncated, false and hypocritical, a paradise for the rich and a snare and deception for the exploited, for the poor." The satirist Juvenal coined the term "panem et circenses" (bread and circuses) in tracing the decline of the Roman Republic and the rise of the Roman Empire, with its spectacles of gladiator combat and showering of bread upon the plebeian masses. In American

imperialism's decline, they're withholding the bread but giving us the spectacle of electoral circuses.

Who cannot find the "I'm not a witch" ad by Delaware Republican Christine O'Donnell hilarious in a sick way, or find the Nazi "re-enactor," Ohio Republican and Tea Party favorite Rich Iott, a grotesque insult to just about anyone but a card-carrying fascist? Who did not recoil in horror at New York Republican gubernatorial candidate Carl Paladino's rant against gay people, fresh on the heels of a rash of suicides by gay youth and the horrific torture of gays by a gang in the Bronx?

All this may give ammunition to the Democrats, the supposed "friends of labor" and the downtrodden. But the writer Gore Vidal, one of the most incisive American political and social commentators, put it well in an interview with TV host Bill Maher in April 2009:

"There is only one party in the United States, the Property Party...and it has two right wings: Republican and Democrat. Republicans are a bit stupider, more rigid, more doctrinaire in their laissez-faire capitalism than the Democrats, who are cuter, prettier, a bit more corrupt—until recently...and more willing than the Republicans to make small adjustments when the poor, the black, the anti-imperialists get out of hand. But, essentially, there is no difference between the two parties."

In Obama's version of this picture, when racist yahoos "get out of hand" he bends over backward to accommodate them, as seen in the firing of black Department of Agriculture official Shirley Sherrod after a Tea Party operative concocted a lying story of her "racist" treatment of a white farmer (see: "Shirley Sherrod Thrown Under the Bus—Obama: CEO of Racist American Capitalism," WV No. 963, 27 August).

Faced with this "choice," much of the Democrats' historic base might well sit this one out. So up step the craven union "leaders" and the likes of the NAACP to rally support from the workers, black masses and youth for the "lesser evil" of the Democratic Party. Teamsters Local 237 president Gregory Floyd put it succinctly in New York's *Amsterdam News* (7 October):

"We cannot allow misguided voters to change the course of history this November. Every voter who supports public policies that promote broad-based pros-

perity and equality must understand that not voting is the same as voting for the other side.

"We must take our own anger—our passion—to the polls and make sure we protect people with the interests of our community at heart. We are also angry, but we must show that emotion by storming the polls and demonstrating that we are truly one nation working together."

As Barack Obama has made clear in hitting the campaign trail, the aim is to rekindle the "spirit" of 2008, when the elections placed the first black president in the White House. The truth is that the plight of the black masses, like that of the working class in general, has demonstrably worsened on Obama's watch. There is no mystery here. The race-color caste oppression of black people has always been a defining feature of American capitalism. Compare black incarceration in prison hellholes with black university attendance, now even more attenuated by the economic crisis and the last gasps of affirmative action; compare the massive level of black youth unemployment with any other sector of the population; look at the daily cop terror in the ghettos. It will take a third American revolution, a socialist revolution, to fully emancipate the black masses, a revolution in which black workers are destined to play a leading role.

Having overseen the continued hemorrhaging of jobs and slashing of social services, the Democrats are dishing out a heavier dose than usual of national chauvinist poison, especially the anti-Communist type directed against China, a bureaucratically deformed workers state. While both capitalist parties bash China, it's the Democrats who have been in the forefront. The *New York Times* (9 October) reports: "Democrats, in particular, have been eying China as a line of attack. This spring, national Democrats, including the House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, began to encourage candidates to highlight the issue after reviewing internal polling that suggested voters strongly favored eliminating tax breaks for companies that do business in China."

The Democrats have been flooding the airwaves with ads attacking Republican candidates for taking secret contributions from foreign interests and, in particular, supposedly selling out American jobs to China. Running point for the Democrats are the same labor bureaucrats who have proven utterly bankrupt when it comes to defending their members against the profit-bloated U.S. bosses. In *USA Today* (30 September), AFL-CIO chief Richard Trumka railed, "We're in a trade war with China," declaring, "It's time for action." On October 15, the United Steelworkers bureaucracy hailed Obama for accepting the union's complaint against China's "predatory" trade practices—i.e., its state investment in energy-producing technology and other industries, which has helped China's economy grow by huge strides while the world's capitalist economies have been mired in recession.

Although administered by a parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy, and despite capi-

CORRECTION

In "Appeals Court Hearing on Death Sentence for Mumia Abu-Jamal" (WV No. 966, 8 October), we wrote, referring to a November 9 hearing to be held by the Third Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia, "The new hearing is a result of a January U.S. Supreme Court ruling that vacated Yohn's decision, which had been previously upheld by the Third Circuit." In fact, the Supreme Court decision did not vacate Judge William Yohn's 2001 decision, which overturned Mumia's death sentence while upholding his frame-up conviction. It vacated the Third Circuit's March 2008 ruling that had upheld Yohn's decision. In the upcoming hearing, the prosecution is seeking to reinstate Mumia's death sentence.



AFP

Unemployed workers line up outside job fair in El Monte, California, September 4.

talist inroads resulting from “market reforms,” China’s core economy remains based on collectivized property, providing examples of what can be done when the guiding principle is not the generation of profit. As Trotskyists, we unconditionally defend the Chinese deformed workers state against imperialist attack and internal capitalist counterrevolution. Simultaneously, we fight for proletarian political revolution to sweep away the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy and place power in the hands of workers and peasants councils committed to the fight for world proletarian revolution.

October 2: Sniveling Reformism in Action

When the AFL-CIO officialdom and NAACP called for a national demonstration in Washington, D.C., to get out the vote in November, the reformist left jumped all over the rally. The October 2 demonstration was held under the slogan “One Nation Working Together” and explicitly supported by Obama. One of its backers, the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL), noted on its Web site: “The demonstration had been planned for months, but an obvious spur that motivated many participants to make such sacrifice to attend was the Aug. 28 ‘Tea Party’ rally staged by right-wing media personality Glenn Beck on the National Mall.” The reformists are quaking in fear



Spartacists at Philadelphia demonstration for death row political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, April 2008.

Democrats’ tow, the International Socialist Organization (ISO), which endorsed the October 2 march, opined (socialistworker.org, 4 October) that Roosevelt was “forced by both pressure from below and the intractable economic crisis to take bold



Campaign ad by Pennsylvania Congressman Joe Sestak, part of nationwide China-bashing barrage by Democratic Party.

of a Republican victory, having done their part two years ago to help the Democrats gain control of the White House as well as Congress. Their framework is to mobilize people “in the streets” in order to pressure the capitalist state to do the right thing by workers, blacks and others, through the agency of the Democrats in office. Since the bloom is off the Obama presidency, the reformists’ current tack is to hold up the sacred image of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal of the 1930s. The Progressive Democrats of America Web site (4 October) put it baldly: “When FDR was confronted with unemployment and the Great Depression, it was the progressive movement that met with him, just as we’re going to be on the streets to hold our president accountable. And at that time FDR said, make me do it. Well, we are here to remind Barack Obama to get on and do it.” In the

and risky actions—and put people to work.” (For more on the ISO, see article, page 2). Roosevelt was indeed able to finish off the Depression—by cranking up industry to prepare for World War II, an inter-imperialist conflict which the U.S. fought with the aim of world domination. His New Deal reforms were seized upon by the reformists of the day to tie labor’s fortunes to the capitalist Democratic Party. The nostalgia of the “progressive” movement for FDR’s reforms is rife with “national unity” appeals. Indeed, the October 2 demonstration was a sea of red-white-and-blue. Adding a pink tinge to the patriotic outpouring was the self-styled “Socialist Contingent” sparked by Dan La Botz, formerly a leader of the Teamsters for a Democratic Union and currently Socialist Party candidate for U.S. Senate from Ohio. Joining this lash-

up were, among others, the ISO, Socialist Action (SA), Solidarity and Socialist Alternative. From our vantage point, it appears that two unifying principles were supporting suing the unions in the bosses’ courts and bashing China. SA’s Jeff Mackler, while making some noises about the “lesser-evil” electoral scam, raved: “The power that working people generate in Washington on Oct. 2 with their sheer numbers can serve to remind them they are a social force capable of great deeds” (Socialist Action, October 2010). In fact, the purpose of the rally was to galvanize as many voters as possible. By giving some left gloss to this flag-waving, Democratic Party mobilization, Mackler, the ISO et al. do their bit, as always, to herd working people across the class line. This is also the effect of the PSL’s candidacy for California governor on the ticket of the petty-bourgeois Peace and Freedom Party, as well as the Workers World Party’s support for black Democrat Charles Barron, running for New York governor under the auspices of the “Freedom Party.” The Freedom Party’s “inde-

pendent” posture is belied by the fact that it originated after Barron and others complained that the Democrats were not running enough black and Latino candidates. Campaigns such as the PSL’s are nothing new. The ISO, for one, has run candidates for the small-time capitalist Green Party. As we wrote in “Parliamentary Cretinism—ISO Goes All the Way with Capitalist Greens” (WV No. 866, 17 March 2006): “The avowed socialists of the ISO are trampling on the most fundamental of Marxist principles: the political independence of the proletariat. More than 150 years ago, Karl Marx argued against calls for the German workers to support a petty-bourgeois party. In his 1850 ‘Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League,’ Marx declared, ‘The proletariat would lose its whole independent, laboriously achieved position and once more sink down to being an appendage of official bourgeois democracy. This union must, therefore, be most decisively rejected’.”

Upholding the political independence of the proletariat from the bourgeoisie, a workers party might well run for and even serve in Congress or in local or state-wide legislative bodies—but only as a revolutionary opponent of the capitalist state and all its institutions. In keeping with that understanding, the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), of which the Spartacist League is the U.S. section, opposes on principle running for executive offices of the capitalist state—e.g., mayor, governor, president. As we wrote in “Down With Executive Offices of the Capitalist State! Marxist Principles and Electoral Tactics” (Spartacist [English-language edition] No. 61, Spring 2009):

“The question of the state is a life-and-death question for a revolutionary workers party. It is the question of revolution. In adopting our position against running for executive offices of the bourgeois state and in critically reviewing the policies and practices inherited from our forerunners, we seek to illuminate the political gulf between the ICL and all the opportunists who falsely claim to be Marxists and to represent the historic interests of the working class. Our task is nothing other than the organizing, training and steeling of the proletarian vanguard parties, sections of a reformed Fourth International, necessary for the seizure of state power and the establishment of workers rule around the globe.”■

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Defend the Teachers Unions!

Obama's War on Public Education



Left: Barack Obama with Education Secretary Arne Duncan, administration's hatchet man against teachers unions. Right: California School Employees Association protest, San Jose, August 2009.

Under Democratic president Barack Obama's administration, "school reform" amounts to a massive assault on public education carried out through brass-knuckle attacks on teachers unions. Revamped federal funding rules turn the screws on schools described as failing, shuttering classrooms in ghettos and barrios nationwide, and give a green light for a prolifer-

Young Spartacus

ation of privately run charter schools. From Los Angeles and Chicago to New York City and Washington, D.C., Obama & Co. have made the Bush gang's policies look like child's play.

For decades, the arrogant U.S. imperialist rulers have starved education of funding. With fewer and fewer industrial jobs, America's racist capitalist rulers see little value in paying union wages to educate working-class, black and immigrant youth. The high school graduation rate in the U.S. is below 70 percent; in urban centers including Los Angeles, it falls below 50 percent. U.S. students rank 35th internationally in math, between Azerbaijan and Croatia, and 29th in science, between Latvia and Lithuania—countries many Americans cannot identify on a map. The ruling class cynically blames the teachers unions for this woeful state of affairs as it guns for the wage gains, benefits and job protections that come with a union job.

The Race to the Top program, the centerpiece of the Obama administration's "reform," has been described as No Child Left Behind part two, after the plan pushed by late Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy and George W. Bush. Obama's scheme pitted cash-strapped state school

systems against each other in a competition for \$4.35 billion in funding—almost 10 percent of the federal budget for education. When the states' applications were judged, the most weight was given to commitments to eliminate teacher seniority and tenure. Aiming to have "no child left untested," rewards were also based on states' plans to track student test scores. Among other things, this is a setup for victimizing individual teachers whose classes don't measure up well, particularly threatening those in the poorest school districts.

The Education Department has classified as many as 5,000 schools as failing. One reform that might actually improve them—adequate funding—is not what the administration has in mind. "We can't spend our way out of it," Obama told the *Today* show (27 September), which is rather piquant coming from a man who saw through the \$700 billion bank bailout. In order for school districts to qualify for funding under Obama's School Turnaround program, they have to do one of the following to "failing" schools: close them; have a charter take them over; fire the principal and entire staff and rehire no more than half; or fire the principal, lengthen the school day and implement other onerous changes. This all spells a direct attack on the teachers unions, as Obama made clear in March when he endorsed the firing of the entire staff at Rhode Island's Central Falls High School (see "Labor: Fight Union Busting Attack on Rhode Island Teachers!" WV No. 954, 12 March).

The government's campaign to cripple the teachers unions is part of a broad attack on public employees. With the erosion of industry and the acquiescence of the pro-capitalist labor tops to the proliferation of non-union shops, public

employees now, for the first time, make up the majority of union members in the U.S. (Many of these are cops who, as the hired guns of the capitalists, should have no place in the unions.) The two national teachers unions, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association (NEA), represent about a quarter of all union members nationally, with 4.6 million members.

Like capitalist governments in Europe and elsewhere, American federal, state and local governments, under both Democrats and Republicans, have seized on the biggest economic crisis since the Great Depression to slash payrolls and extract massive concessions—from working hours to pensions. Some 60,000 school employees were laid off last year, and many more have already lost their jobs this school year as the bourgeoisie further cuts spending for education. Thirty-eight of the 100 largest school districts have instituted wage freezes and another ten have cut wages. The ruling class sees teachers unions as potential obstacles to slashing public education budgets. A big reason it has been able to push through its attacks on education and other services is the decades-long decline in labor struggle, overseen by a miserable trade-union "leadership" that serves as the bourgeoisie's lieutenants inside the labor movement.

The working class, black people and other minorities have a vital interest in defending public workers unions and fighting against the attacks on social services, including the bourgeoisie's attempt to turn back the clock on universal, integrated, secular public education. We oppose charter schools because they are an attack on the democratic right to public education and provide an opening for religious groups to get government funds to run schools, and contribute as well to furthering

school segregation. The drive to expand charter schools underlines the link between racial oppression, union-busting and the promotion of religious obscurantism.

Like the fight for decent health care, the battle for quality education, including bilingual instruction, for the working class and the black and Latino poor requires hard struggle against the capitalist class, a tiny handful of people whose obscene wealth is gained from exploiting labor and whose rule is reinforced by racial and other forms of social oppression. The money and resources exist for massive construction of schools, hospitals and other infrastructure gutted by the profit-bloated capitalists. To seize that wealth requires breaking the power of the bourgeoisie through socialist revolution.

Education U.S.A.—Separate and Unequal

Education in capitalist America is class- and race-biased from top to bottom. From public education's earliest days in the industrial revolution of the 19th century, when class bells and the structure of the school day were used to facilitate the transition from the family farm into the factory, education has been crafted to meet the needs of the capitalist class. Ruling-class offspring are guaranteed places at expensive private schools and universities. In addition, the bourgeoisie needs a layer of educated technicians, professionals, managers and ideologues. The last serious effort to promote science education in this country was after the Soviet Union launched its Sputnik I satellite in 1957. Fear of a Soviet lead in military technology led President Eisenhower to demand a billion-dollar program to improve science education in American schools and to sign the National Defense

continued on page 6

For Free Quality Integrated Education for All!